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Tablets for teacher educators: a phenomenographic study of teacher educators’ use of iPad and Galaxy Tabs in the UK Lifelong Learning Sector

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ATEE Winter Conference, University of Genoa, Mar 2013
Background

• Consortium for PCET – partnership - ITE in the Lifelong Learning Sector (LLS) between University of Huddersfield and 24 FE colleges
• Capital expenditure distributed across the partnership; shift to tablet PCs
• Distributed in Spring 2011 (One of each per centre)
• Steering Committee required an evaluation of use
Outcomes of the initial survey revealed a clear distinction in the use of the technology that seemed to be related to the perception of the advantages and limitations rather than the actual facilities.

These ranged from those who:

1) responded to the challenges of technology and were able to harness it;
2) were interested in using the technology but needed considerable support;
3) used the technology for personal use only;
4) were overwhelmed by the actual or perceived barriers and resigned themselves to non-use.
Phenomenographic approach – identifies the similarities/differences between the ways people experience or see a phenomenon.

Experiences and conceptions of teacher educators who were involved in the deployment of equipment.

Contrast to phenomenology - understanding the meaning that people give to their everyday experiences, to gain a deeper understanding of ‘it’.
Methodology

• Initial survey - results used to determine focus of questions.
• Interviews – semi-structured. Undertaken by 2 people (one joint). Pilot interview.
• Total of 9 – 2 not centre managers
• Transcriptions. Professional transcriber used.
• Analysis – careful to differentiate from phenomenology.
Analysis

First layer of coding

Second coding – in relation to identified issues from survey

Third layer – common emerging issues that relate to their experiences as teacher educators and their use of IT in FETT
Summary of results

1. Use of tabs – small hesitant steps.
2. No evidence of technological determinism
3. Evidence of aspirations for future use
4. Support from institutions – varied but improvements c.f to 2011
5. Laptops – used differently; smartphones – becoming accepted as a learning tool
6. IT in FETT – essential to use with trainees for the course and to prepare them to use with their learners
Variations

Using the results we can identify 4 categories of IT use by the teacher educator in FE (after Larsson and Holmstrom, 2007)
1. The Brave – challenges the institution – operationally and philosophically. Leads from the front.
2. The Follower – appreciates the challenges, identifies the developments and takes these up. Delegates to a ‘specialist’?
3. The Cautious Adopter – mainly individual use or admin until they feel more comfortable. Will learn from the trainees.
Variations

4. The Reluctant – accepts barriers; hesitates to challenge.
The metaphor of the explosion - the experience of most of those interviewed. Not a hierarchical relationship.
Further thoughts

Teacher educators need to:

• Develop a personal strategy alongside the institutional vision / strategy

• Support for innovation beyond direct training

• Consider issues when introducing an initiative to a teaching and learning system