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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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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
The Study

• 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 every day experiences, to gain a deeper understanding of ‘it’.
Methodology

- Initial survey - results used to determine focus of questions.
- 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
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.
Explosion

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