Title: **Enhancing the Personal in Learning Environments and experiences**

Presenter: **Brian Whalley**
                      University of Sheffield

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

1. Identify the variety of individual and personal needs of students – via discussion leading to:
2. Identification of where existing practice tends to cater for a mass audience or 'average' student rather than personalised for individuals
3. Appreciate how students' and tutors' use of tablet computers and smartphones can enhance the engagement and performance of students via digital media
4. See how institutions can identify and incorporate personal learning environments/spaces into curricula by module design.

Session Outline

The term 'Personalised Learning' has been current in the compulsory educational sector for some time. It has also been seen in the HE sector although with perhaps a slightly different emphasis as in, 'Personalised Learning at the University of .... is designed to ensure that you have a rich and varied experience that will allow for choice within the academic programme, present the opportunity to be part of a learning community and fulfil your potential'. Such statements from HE would seem to be at variance with the tenor from compulsory education; 'taking a highly structured and responsive approach to each child's and young person's learning, in order that all are able to progress, achieve and participate. It means strengthening the link between learning and teaching by engaging pupils – and their parents – as partners in learning'. We shall explore this dichotomy.

After a brief overview of Personal Learning Environments (PLE) from our project experience, We shall then look at 'personalised learning via some of your ideas about 'enhancing the personal'. We then explore how much personalization exists currently in our institutions and how this might be improved in the participants' areas.

Tablet and smartphone technologies can support initiatives (especially by JISC) in employability, digital and information literacies and in assessment practices. You can explore their potential, with relevant apps, in the workshop. In particular, we want to see if, using such technology, less can actually be more in modules for the future. Not only can students and tutors do more in lectures with tablets but novel apps can help accessibility generally.

The significance of Bring Your Own Devices will be explored as well as other implications for institutions and higher education practitioners and what value students will get for their time and money spent in higher and further education.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is a follows;

10 minutes introduction and scene setting:
The session will start with an overview of our 'Enhancing Fieldwork Learning' project. In this we have shown how contact with students in the field helps to personalise their learning. Task orientated and problem-based exercises in fieldwork provide a basis for active involvement that can include side issues such as employability' and 'digital and information literacy'. A variety of assessment methods ('Assessment for Learning') helps personalise students' education. Students' use of smartphone and tablet technologies greatly helps in   Our findings will be shared throughout the workshop to suggest ways in which personalisation can be enhanced.

10 minutes small group activity:
In this you will be stating some of your personal views on what has helped you (or not) in your education.

10 minutes exploration and practice of smartphone/tablet devices and apps.

10 minutes pooling ideas and discussion:
Here you will be sharing your 'key experiences' with everyone under (simulated) distance learning conditions and illustrating the conclusions. (And by the way, the institution also wants to save money by doing away with computer suites on campus.)

10 minutes resume and 'solutions' proposed
Placing the results in a space for all to share and discussion. The concept of Personal Learning Environments, your views on how it can help students' education.

30 minutes group activity:
Exploration of current practice and looking to the future. Your institution wants to save more money by laying off computer/library staff and perhaps do away with the VLE and cut yet more library subscriptions.

You have to design a distance-learning module (or MOOC) that includes employability and skills along with academic content and maximise

10 minutes discussion and sharing experiences; evaluation.

References

JISC 2014, Guides to: 'Electronic assessment management'; 'Feedback and feed forward'; 'Changing assessment and feedback practice'; 'Enhancing student employability through technology-supported assessment and feedback'.