Title: 'How we live now': students' attitudes to technology and learning

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

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

- o Undertake their own investigations into student attitudes to technology and learning using the tools and methods described
- o Define digital literacy and consider the challenges facing students in their own organisational context in becoming digitally literate
- o Explore how institutions can respond to students' attitudes to learning and technology

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:
Digital and information literacies
Engaging students in their own development
Learners' experiences of learning in a digital age

Conference themes addressed are:
    Using technology to engage students in their learning development
    Developing joined up approaches for all staff involved in the support of learning

The University of Plymouth (UP) received funding under the JISC Building Capacity programme (BC) to investigate students' use of technology for learning, and to make recommendations for the integration of a digital literacies agenda into curriculum practices and relevant organisational strategies. In order to provide a baseline for development, the UP undertook a strategic digital literacies audit[1], an online survey of student technology ownership and use (n>2000)[2] and a series of student focus groups using techniques pioneered in the JISC 'Learners' Experiences of e-Learning programme[3].

This paper outlines the methods used for the BC investigations, which were underpinned by a digital literacies framework. It reports on findings from the UP, with reference to comparative studies at a number of other UK HEIs, and focuses on the experience of living, working and learning in settings that are infused with digital media. It goes on to outline how the UP has responded to these findings, through a comprehensive institution-wide initiative and by assessing the impact of ICT infrastructure and practices on students' experiences of learning.

Participants will engage with the research via hands-on opportunities to try the investigative techniques used, and live discussion of how institutions can respond to the challenge of developing digitally literate graduates.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Background: the digital literacies challenge (10 mins)
Activity: 'what do you know about your learners'? (5 mins)
Methods: investigating students' use of technology for learning (5 mins)
Activity: practising a card-sort interview in pairs (5 mins)
Findings: what learners are saying (with learner quotes) (10 mins)
Final discussion: how should institutions respond? (10 mins)

Investigative and methodological resources will be available as hand-outs and online for participants to take away and use in their own contexts.
Discussion will focus on pragmatic responses and developing a shared understanding of how digital literacy is developed and supported across different organisational roles.

References

Beetham, H., Littlejohn, A. and McGill, L. (in review) Learning at the digital frontier: a review of digital literacies in theory and practice, *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*.

Witt, N. et al. (forthcoming 2011) *Students' access and use of ICT: a cross-institutional survey*

[Towle, G. & Draffan, E.A. (2008) Enabling learners' voices, in S.Walker, M. Ryan & R. Teed (eds) *Proceedings of the e-learning@Greenwich conference*, University of Greenwich, 8 July 2008, p, 37-42.