Institutional PLEs. Paradise or Paradox?

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Is it possible to create an institutional personal learning environment? This question has recently triggered considerable debate amongst those concerned with implementing learning and teaching technologies within higher education,

For some the argument lies in the fundamental (linguistic) paradox of claiming that the institutional can be personal. Others would derive from this a pedagogic perspective and argue that reliance and use of any institutional initiative and infrastructure would necessarily sabotage and undermine personal autonomy. Reliance on an institutional infrastructure would therefore detract from the inherent levers for independent learning which are cultivated by individually assembling and thus creating a personal learning environment. However, there is clear evidence of institutions attempting to build environments that will provide their students with some of the benefits of Personal Learning Environments.

From a technological viewpoint one can argue that a technology provided for the individual by an institutional could never be personal. The institution has already decided upon the technical framework and thus may have removed or severely constrained the learner's choice – for example in platform, software and mode of interaction.

This symposium will encourage open discussion and debate around the technical feasibility and pedagogic suitability of Institutional PLEs.

Format

We are proposing a 60 -90 minute symposium (whatever fits the programme) in which protagonists from all aspects of the argument will be pre-selected (once we know who is attending the conference) and invited to present their argument for 5 minutes.

	It can be made to work	It can't be made to work
Technically	Person 1	Person 2
Pedagogically	Person 3	Person 4

The remaining time will be given to a structured participative discussion, which will culminate in a vote!

A number of members of the Southampton SLE team will attend this symposium, including technical directors and educational leaders, which will guarantee the "for" side of the debate, but the organisers will actively seek out and invite people from the other side of the argument,