

### Introduction - What we aim to achieve, and hope to avoid!

Personal Learning Environments encompass all sorts of user owned technologies which can be defined as being managed and manipulated by the learner. There are affordances in learning and teaching, which we hope to demonstrate through the use of these environments via research based practice.

At the University of Chester we are promoting and supporting the use of personal learning environments to motivate and empower learners which we anticipate will encourage and embed active and social learning, and also in turn emphasise lifelong learning within the University learning and teaching practices. We also foresee that social learning and communities of practice will be encouraged by the capacity to network past the closed gates of the Institutional

VLE, however we recognise that additional support may be needed in stimulating active, social and lifelong learning skills in a distributed environment. There are issues with barriers to technology, integration of work, life and study, educational culture, usability, accessible concerns and student motivation amongst much more.

Nevertheless active, social and lifelong learning are vital for sustaining a dynamic and skilled workforce in our knowledge based economy. This poster offers the reader some thoughts on the various affordances and drawbacks of supporting and promoting the use of personal learning environments in Higher Education.

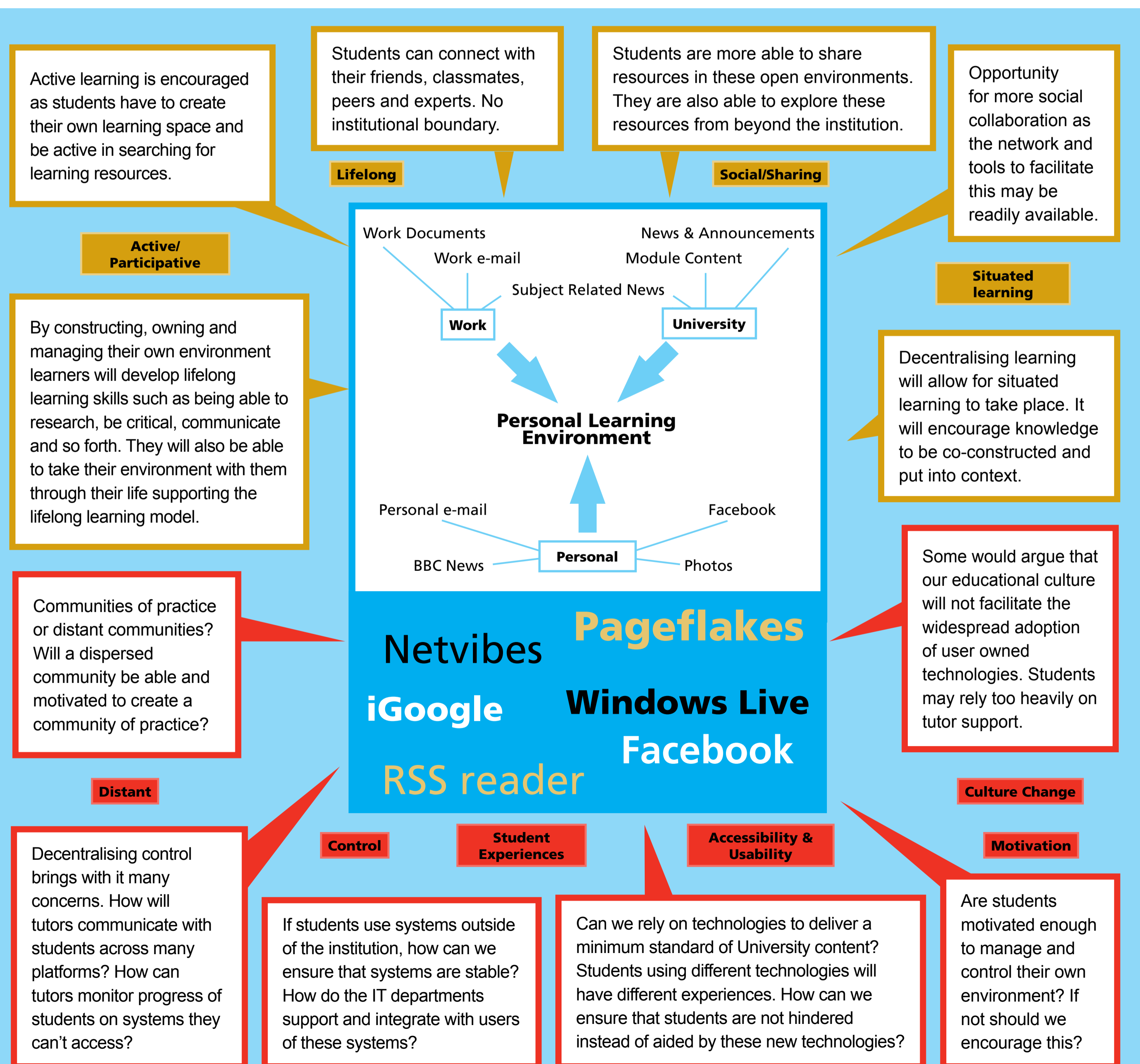
### Conclusions so far...

The various affordances and drawbacks that user owned technology may have for learning and teaching has been touched on above. However there are a number of other themes that could be explored, most of which are naturally interwoven. The sister poster that accompanies this poster demonstrates what we have accomplished so far in our pilot project, and what we hope to introduce in the coming months to encourage a constructive implementation of user owned technology to help contribute to an active, social and lifelong learning and teaching environment in Higher Education.

### The Pilot in practice

Since starting the PADDLE project in May 2007 we have piloted the use of personal learning environments/user owned technology with a continuing professional development (CPD) Health Informatics programme. There have been a number of interesting technical, learning and teaching developments that have been borne out of the pilot which we have tried to demonstrate below. The conclusion below also highlights what developments we aim to implement, to build on and encourage an active, social and lifelong learning and teaching environment in Higher Education.

We based our pilot project on previous work undertaken by JISC CETIS specifically the PLE report which identified a number of themes critiquing current learning technology, and themes that argued the need for technological and pedagogical change. In doing this, we have focused strongly in our project in identifying where possible toolkits and resources that we can reuse or repurpose. Although it has not been possible in this presentation to illustrate the full exploration of user owned technology that we have benchmarked against the various themes identified in the PLE report, we would encourage you to visit our project pages @ [www.chester.ac.uk/ple](http://www.chester.ac.uk/ple) where you can keep up to date with our research activities and findings.



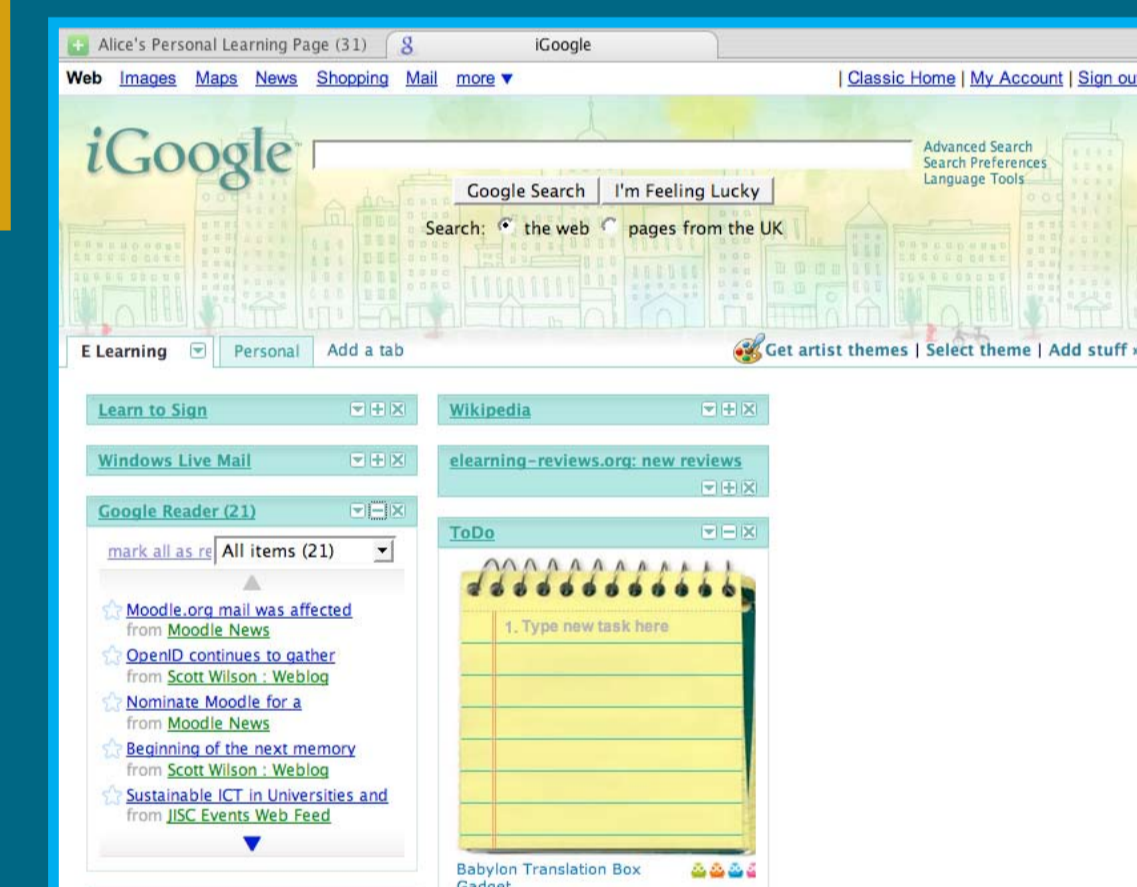
University module content widgets can now be integrated in students a personal learning environment. These links expand to reveal the complete module content.

- (3) CO1601 - Individuals, Organisations and Information
- Online Learning
  - Module Schedule
  - Assignments
  - Information Systems Evaluation In University
  - Can Nhs Be Fixed?
  - Systems Development Environment
  - Nhs One Year On



User owned technology also includes giving learners the choice to utilise mobile platforms for learning and teaching which could be especially useful for CPD courses.

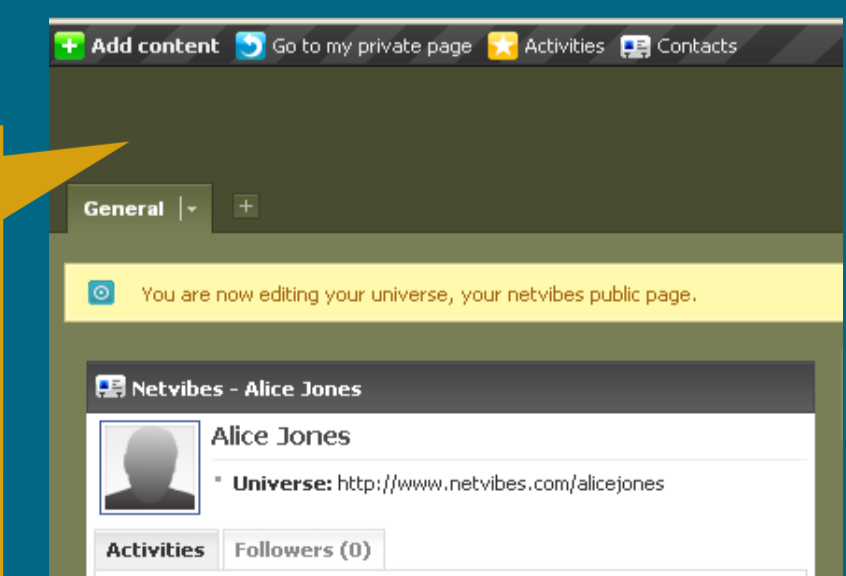
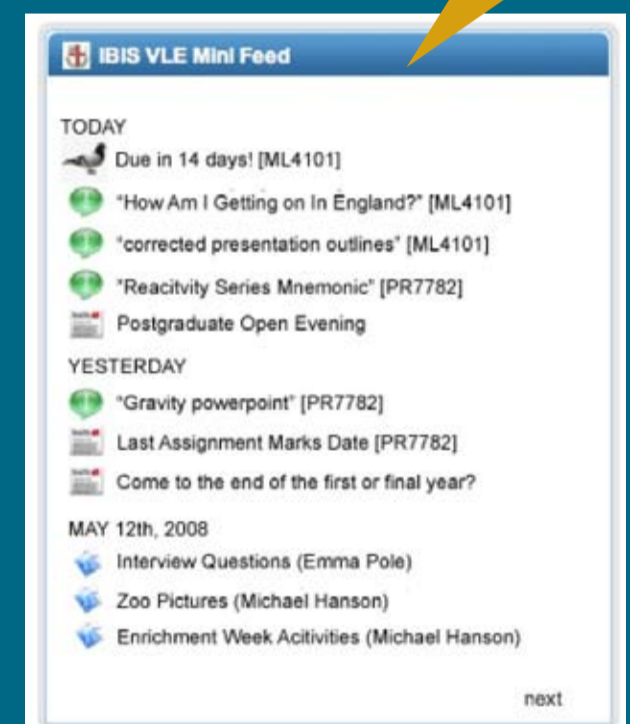
Work, personal and University content can be integrated in one environment encouraging situated learning.



Netvibes, Pageflakes, iGoogle, Windows Live, RSS reader, Facebook

We aim to encourage in our next development cycle a social approach to learning within their personal learning environment. We will utilise and reuse components that already exist such as the Netvibes Universe platform that will allow students to connect with their fellow classmates, colleagues and friends.

Students at the University of Chester can now receive a mini-feed similar to a mini-feed in Facebook that keeps them up to date with tailored module, programme and university announcements.



### Conclusions so far...

As you can see our developments so far have focused on integrating work, personal and University content into a learners own environment. In doing this we have experienced a number of challenges which you can read more about on our project website @ [www.chester.ac.uk/ple](http://www.chester.ac.uk/ple). In the coming months we are planning on introducing an more widgets that will allow learners to integrate easily their University email within their chosen environment

and also take steps towards supporting environments that are social where learners are supported in creating communities of practice. We also plan to roll out this pilot project with another CPD programme this September to gain further insight into learner experiences with UOT.

We have taken valuable steps forward in understanding how the technical, learning and teaching issues with user owned technologies work in practice but there is much more still to explore. Please feel free to contact the project team to discuss the project in more detail.