

Learning by doing: Going mobile in the field

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ABSTRACT: Active learning – or learning by doing – involves instructional teaching methods that engage students in the learning process by doing meaningful learning activities and thinking/questioning what they are doing. Fieldwork in particular offers a novel learning environment (Rickinson et al. 2004) that can provide opportunities for experiential or ‘hands-on’ learning (Keeton and Tate 1978 ; Kolb 1984) which can motivate (Parr and Trexler 2011) and benefit students that find other teaching methods less rewarding (Kern and Carpenter 1984, 1986). The ubiquity and advanced functionality of mobile computing devices and smartphones has increased their utility in teaching and research activities. Melhuish and Falloon (2010) identified five main benefits as of using mobile devices in education: portability, affordable, ubiquitous access, situated “just-in-time” learning opportunities, connection and convergence and individualised and personalised experiences. In particular, such devices provide many opportunities to support active learning during practical work in the field and lab, for instance see France et al., 2015 and Welsh et al 2015. This workshop will explore innovative ways to bring active learning into field and practical work and how mobile devices can be used to engage students in their learning, particularly in the context of geography, environmental and biological sciences. Participants will be asked to reflect on their current teaching practice and there will be time for audience discussion of their own experiences of the use of mobile technology in the field. The facilitators will provide examples of ways to make student learning more active and will compare low and high tech approaches suitable for practical situations. Mobile devices will be available, but participants will be encouraged to use their own mobile device for the activities. Participants will be encouraged to set future targets for enhanced teaching practice and will be provided with an on-line suite of resources to support the integration of mobile devices for data capture into their future teaching activities. This workshop will be run by members of the Enhancing Fieldwork Learning team (www.enhancingfieldwork.org.uk).

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