

# Chapter 64

## Integrating E-Learning 2.0 into Online Courses

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper provides an overview of e-learning 2.0 concepts and presents a case study that involves the design, development, and teaching of two online courses based on e-learning 2.0 concepts. The design and the construction of e-learning 2.0 courses, and their effects on the students' learning experience are examined. In addition, students' preferred Web 2.0 tools are included, as well as their opinions regarding the e-learning 2.0 instructional approach.*

### INTRODUCTION

Combined with the ever-increasing accessibility of online information, the emergence of Web-based communication tools is serving to change teaching, learning, and the ways in which instructors and learners interact. Today, the Web has become more than just an information repository or a place to search for resources. While traditional Web applications allowed users to browse and search for posted information, the new Web (aka., Web 2.0 or the Social Web) has developed into a place to find and connect with other users, to exchange thoughts, to develop ideas, and ultimately to create new knowledge. Web 2.0 tools and services such as blogs, podcasts, wikis, social networking, and social bookmarking have shaped the Web into an application platform that is rich, interactive, and

user-friendly. Web 2.0 allows users not only to read, but also to write and publish on the Web. A unique feature of many Social Web applications is that they harness the collective intelligence of users. Learners become part of a global human network in which they can access and utilize the knowledge and intelligence of people all across the globe in a way that was never before possible. Through interactive Web 2.0 tools, learners are now able to interact with other learners, gain from others' experiences, and use what they have encountered to construct their own knowledge. For educators, the advent of Web 2.0 technologies allows for the empowerment of learners and for the creation of exciting new learning environments and opportunities. Through Web 2.0 tools, the new Web, rather than being a Web of static information, is instead a Web of interactive, responsive

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knowledge, and an essential component for the creation of e-learning environments (Ghali & Cristea, 2009).

## **E-LEARNING 2.0**

The term e-learning describes all forms of electronically supported or enhanced teaching and learning. Since its conception, the traditional model of e-learning was one in which learning content was provided by courseware authors, structured into courses through a learning management system (LMS), and ultimately consumed by students. Unfortunately, the traditional approach to e-learning, too often driven by the needs of educational institutions, often does little to meet the needs of individual learners; in consequence, the early promises enmeshed in the idea of e-learning have not yet been fully realized (O’hear, 2006).

Fortunately, educators’ continuing exploration of the potential of e-learning, together with the widespread proliferation of Web 2.0 applications, has now created an opportunity for educational institutions to extend the possibilities of e-learning. Over the past several years a new model of e-learning has begun to emerge. E-learning, in combination with the Social Web, or Web 2.0, has resulted in, the second generation of e-learning: e-learning 2.0, which uses social media or Web 2.0 tools to enhance traditional e-learning environments (Ghali & Cristea, 2009). The term e-learning 2.0 was coined by Stephen Downes (2005) in response to a critical assessment of the traditional vision of e-learning and its ‘transmission of knowledge’ paradigm (Calvani, Bonaiuti, & Fini, 2008). In contrast, e-learning 2.0 takes a ‘small pieces, loosely joined’ approach that combines the use of discrete but complementary tools and Web services - such as blogs, Wikis, and other social software - to support the creation of ad-hoc learning communities (O’hear, 2006).

Schlenker (2008) described e-Learning 2.0 as, “The idea of learning through digital connections

and peer collaboration, enhanced by the technologies driving Web 2.0” such that “Users/Learners are empowered to search, create, and collaborate, in order to fulfill intrinsic needs to learn new information” (para. 1). Similarly, Sbihi and El Kadiri (2010) explain e-learning 2.0 as “a new environment for Elearning that places the learner at the centre of the training through the tools of Web 2.0” such that the learning process transitions from simple transmission to collaboration (p. 1). Though no universally agreed upon definition of e-learning 2.0 currently exists, Trondsend (2006) suggests that e-learning 2.0 contains the following features: a) facilitation of content authoring, b) knowledge and information sharing, c) diversity of learning content and media, and d) ease of collaborative learning. Similarly, Kumar (2009) argues that e-learning 2.0 implies: a) people-centered learning, b) a bottom up learning approach, c) content creation, d) dynamic content publishing, and e) folksonomy. Regardless of the details, e-learning 2.0 environments equip learners with a range of technologies which allow users to contribute content, communicate, and collaborate with other learners (Edmonds, 2006). Logically enough, one of the core methodologies behind e-learning 2.0 is connectivism, which focuses on making connections among learning resources and people. Additionally, the syndication, reuse/re-purposing, adaptation, and personalization of content are central tenets of e-learning 2.0 (Downes, 2005).

Traditional e-learning, or e-learning 1.0, was all about delivering content to learners, primarily in the form of online courses managed by an LMS and produced by teachers or subject matter experts. In contrast, e-learning 2.0 is about creating and sharing information and knowledge with other learners. E-learning 2.0 places increased emphasis on social learning and use of social software such as blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, podcasts, social networks, and virtual worlds to support a collaborative approach to learning (E-learning, n.d.; Hart, 2011). Instead of learners simply

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