Chapter 8.1

Pedagogical Mash Up:
Gen Y, Social Media, and Learning in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter we outline how educators are creating a "mash up" of traditional pedagogy with new media to create a 21st Century pedagogy designed to support the digital learning styles of Gen Y students. The research included in this paper is intended as a directional means to help instructors and course designers identify social and new media resources and other emerging technologies that will enhance the delivery of instruction while meeting the needs of today's digital learning styles. The media-centric Generation Y values its ability to use the web to create self-paced, customized, on-demand learning paths that include using multiple platforms for mobile, interactive, social, and self-publishing experiences. These can include wiki, blogs, podcasts and other developing social platforms like Second Life, Twitter, Yackpack and Facebook. New media provides these hyper-connected students with a medium for understanding, social interaction, idea negotiation, as well as an intrinsic motivation for participation. The active nature of today's digitally connected student culture is one that more resourcefully fosters idea generation and experience-oriented innovation than traditional schooling models. In addition, we describe our approach to utilizing current and emerging social media to support Gen Y learners, facilitate the formation of learning communities, foster student engagement, reflection, and enhance the overall learning experience for students in synchronous and asynchronous virtual learning environments (VLE).

INTRODUCTION TO WEB 2.0 & GENERATION Y

The basic idea of the Web is that an information space through which people can communicate, but communicate in a special way: communicate by sharing their knowledge in a pool. The idea was not

just that it should be a big browsing medium. The idea was that everybody would be putting their ideas in, as well as taking them out.

— Tim Berners-Lee

Web 2.0: It's All About Relationships (and Interaction)

In the past social interaction required students and teachers to be tied to a physical space—such as a brick and mortar classroom. But as the Web has evolved, students and teachers have been able to utilize new media technologies to replicate face-to-face social interactions into Web-based learning environments.

This movement of using Web-based platforms for social interaction has been dubbed "Web 2.0." One of the main attributes of Web 2.0 is the transition of the user as passive participant to an active co-participant who creates both the content and context for their experience.

Web 2.0 (social media) is based on three very simple, yet often overlooked principles: 1) humans are inherently social creatures; 2) the continued viability of any social system is rooted in an individual's ability to trust the members of the group and control their level of interaction; and 3) social networking should be used in a situated and engaging context.

A 2005 study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (Lenhart & Madden, 2005) reported that 48% of teens feel that using the Internet improves their relationships, and 74% report using Instant Messaging (IM) as the technology of choice when it comes to fostering and supporting social relationships with their peers.

In an educational context, social technologies, such as those outlined in the Pew Internet Study, have the potential to engage students in the learning materials and allow them to be included as active participants. Since Gen Y students are drawn to Web 2.0 tools, learning is facilitated by technology as they construct a learning landscape rooted in social interaction, knowledge exchange, and optimum cognitive development with their peers.

Meet Generation Y: Wired, Digital, and Always-On

Raised in the world of interactive, Web-based new media, today's student has different expectations and learning styles than previous generations. A key attribute valued by Gen Y is their ability to use the Web as a platform on which to create a self-paced, customized, interactive, on-demand experience, with plenty of opportunities for social networking with peers, and self-publish content to the Web.

A recent study conducted by the US-based Kaiser Family Foundation (Rideout, Roberts, & Foehr, 2005) found that teens routinely incorporate multiple forms of new and old media into

Table 1. What are the key attributes of Web 2.0?

Foundation Attributes **User-contributed value: Users make substantive contributions to enhance the overall value of a service.** **Network effect: For users, the value of a network substantially increases with the addition of each new user.**
Experience Attributes: **Decentralization:** Users experience learning on their terms, not those of a centralized authority, such as a teacher. **Co-Creation**: Users participate in the creation and delivery of the learning content. **Re-mixability**: Experiences are created and tailored to user needs, learning style, and multiple intelligences by integrating the capabilities of multiple types of social media. **Emergent systems**: Cumulative actions at the lowest levels of the system drive the form and value of the overall system. Users derive value not only from the service itself, but also the overall shape that a service inherits from user behaviors.

(Schauer, 2005)

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