

Chapter 19

Web 2.0 to Pedagogy 2.0: A Social–Constructivist Approach to Learning Enhanced by Technology

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ABSTRACT

Despite the extensive use of technology in teaching and supporting learning, teaching methods and approaches have for some academic staff remained largely unchanged. However, 21st century learners appear to have a different approach to learning and have different expectations regarding the use of technology in learning than their predecessors. For some academic staff this can be seen as a threatening scenario since they appear to believe that they have no role in future learning because it has been usurped by technology. Many suggest therefore, that the role of academic staff must change in the 21st century if they are to remain at the core of the learning process. The new learning paradigms of connectivism, navigationism, pedagogy 2.0 and heutagogy are described and discussed in the light of the role of academic staff. All of these paradigms have strong social constructivist learning theory underpinning their foundations and as such still have at their centre a fundamental role for academic staff. This is a role not in spite of the technology but rather one that is supported and enabled by the technology, particularly with respect to the Web 2.0 social networking tools.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the extensive current use of technology in teaching and supporting learning some have argued that teaching methods have remained largely unchanged in the last century, ‘the school-master from 1909 would feel at home in the classroom in

2009’ (Elliott, 2009, p1). Some go even further by suggesting that ‘lectures ... have existed virtually unchanged for over 800 years’ (Sheely, 2006, p. 770). If teaching has not changed then how about learning? Do 21st century learners, the so-called ‘digital natives’ (Prensky, 2001, p. 1) or ‘Millennials’ (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2003) learn differently from their predecessors? Prensky would argue that they do and that they are ‘digitally wise’ (Prensky,

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2009, p. 1). Does this then suggest that the role of academic staff must change and that perhaps if learners are ‘wise’ then are academic staff necessary in the 21st century? This chapter will argue that academic staff are still vital instruments in terms of supporting learning, but that their new role in the 21st century is different from that of the 20th century.

The aim of this chapter is to posit that in order for learners to actively engage in effective learning enhanced by the use of technology then academic staff must change and adopt a new approach to teaching to enable this to happen, and it will do this by:

- considering the reasons why some academic staff do not engage, or engage very little with e-learning;
- considering the affordances to teaching and learning offered by Web 2.0 technologies;
- discussing paradigm shifts in teaching and learning which could occur with the use of Web 2.0 technologies.

BACKGROUND

In this early part of the 21st century there has been a rapid development of exciting new Web 2.0 tools which have the potential to be used in teaching and to develop a more active and deeper approach to learning. Despite this, there are still some academic staff who appear reluctant to engage in e-learning with their students, and research suggests that there are a number of reasons for this. Some of this research will be discussed below.

A Fear of Change

There appear to be many staff who fear the changes which e-learning brings either because it means exploring unknown territory or because they fear the consequences of the change. Research (Kuit & Fell, 2008; Margaryan & Littlejohn,

2008) has indicated that some academic staff feel threatened by the use of technology in teaching and perceive that they are usurped by the technology. As a consequence some feel that they either have a diminished role, or no longer have a role in supporting learners and learning. This is more apparent in those staff who have not grown up with technology. Kuit and Fell (2008) suggest that the term e-learning divides the views of some academic staff and that this division occurs around the hyphen. Some staff see only the ‘e’ that is the ‘electronic’, or technology part of the term but do not see the ‘learning’, part and as a consequence do not engage with e-learning. The reasons for this vary but Kuit and Fell (2008) suggest that it relates to fear of:

- a perceived, and often undisclosed, inability to use the technology;
- the time it will take to learn how to develop the necessary skills to use yet another piece of new technology;
- their teaching being ‘exposed’ to other staff and their lack of technical ability exposed to learners or to colleagues whom they often perceive as experts in e-learning;
- it threatening what they do in face-to-face sessions;
- their teaching being online so they will become under-employed or worse, unemployed.

In some instances this leads to some academic staff perceiving technology as a threat and therefore they do not engage with it. Consequently this becomes a problem for learners who ‘observe their academic staff’s lack of fluency with modern tools, and view them as “illiterate” in the very domain the kids know they will need for their future-technology’ (Prensky, 2007, p. 40). These findings suggest that perhaps a more appropriate term to describe e-learning should be learning enhanced by technology because the learning should come first. This is a view now supported

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