

Chapter 3

Fulfilling the Promise: Addressing Institutional Factors that Impede the Implementation of E-Learning 2.0

Judi Repman

Georgia Southern University, USA

Cordelia Zinskie

Georgia Southern University, USA

Elizabeth Downs

Georgia Southern University, USA

ABSTRACT

As online learning continues to expand and evolve, new challenges emerge regarding the implementation of Web 2.0 tools and technologies in online pedagogy. The business model approach to online learning being embraced by many institutions may actually work against faculty who want to utilize Web 2.0 technologies to create e-learning 2.0 experiences for their students. Faculty and administrators need to recognize that differences in perspectives may significantly impact future directions of online courses and programs.

INTRODUCTION

Online learning is changing the postsecondary landscape (Cox, 2005). The 2008 *Horizon Report*, a collaboration between the New Media Consortium and the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative, identified several ways that technology is impacting higher education including the growing use of Web 2.0 and social networking, the evolution of how we collaborate and communicate, access and portability

of content, and the continual widening of the gap between students and faculty regarding their perceptions of technology. These trends also portend some of the challenges that exist with regard to e-learning and specifically to the incorporation of Web 2.0 technologies into online instruction.

Online learning by itself has proven to be a significant force in the reform of higher education as a result of increased access to courses and degree programs to students anytime/anywhere (Beldarrain, 2006). This rapid growth is challenging traditional

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instruction in higher education with the movement from teaching-centered to learning-centered and synchronous to asynchronous (Hartman, Dziuban, & Moskal, 2007). Course instructors must assume a different, broader role as the model of instructor as the center of the classroom is no longer effective in all situations (Grush, 2008; Levy, 2003).

As e-learning continues to expand and evolve, new challenges emerge at the institutional level regarding implementation of Web 2.0 tools and technologies in online pedagogy. One such challenge is the growth of the business model of online learning which emphasizes control and efficiency, with less value placed on the innovation, creativity, and sense of community that comes with the use of Web 2.0 technologies. This chapter explores our belief that the growth of the business model of online learning may hinder or prevent the widespread development of E-Learning 2.0 communities.

The objectives of this chapter include the following:

- Briefly define the potential of Web 2.0 technologies to create E-Learning 2.0 communities of practice;
- Summarize key factors related to the business model with regard to online learning in higher education;
- Describe and discuss the disconnect between the “business model” approach and the use of Web 2.0 technologies within the online learning enterprise; and
- Suggest a series of action steps for faculty and university administrators to ensure that campus online learning initiatives avoid “swapp[ing] the little red schoolhouses for the little online boxes we call course management systems” (Gary Brown, as quoted in Grush, 2008, p. 20).

BACKGROUND

Definition of Terms Used

The literature related to online learning frequently uses terms such as online learning, distance learning, and e-learning synonymously. For the purposes of this chapter, we are defining online learning as the widely used model that centers around the use of a course management system for synchronous and asynchronous communication between faculty and students. In the context of this chapter distance learning refers to the broader historical span of the field, dating back to correspondence courses and interactive television courses. We use the term e-learning 2.0 to indicate a newer model of online learning that incorporates the use of learner-centered Web 2.0 tools and technologies (blogs, wikis, social networking, folksonomies, etc.) as additions to or replacements for course management systems. Finally, the discussion presented in this chapter focuses on learning delivered entirely online, not on the use of online tools to support face-to-face instruction or on blended classes which substitute online technologies for parts of a face-to-face course.

The Growth of Web 2.0 Technologies

Web 2.0 tools including blogs, wikis, podcasts, and folksonomies provide opportunities for knowledge building and collaboration for higher education in the 21st century, and these tools are learner-centered, affordable, and accessible (McGee & Diaz, 2007). It is easy to document the growth of Web 2.0 technologies. The blog index Technorati estimates 175,000 new blogs are created daily (“Welcome to Technorati”, n.d.) while the social networking site Facebook reports 100 million active users. Facebook statistics indicate that the fastest growing group user is adults over age 25 (“Facebook statistics”, 2008). The use of

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