

# Chapter 6

## Rethinking Web 2.0 Learning via Third Space

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### ABSTRACT

*Web 2.0 technologies are frequently represented as collaborative and interactive tools, and these capacities are particularly attractive to education. This chapter analyses how 26 beginning teachers in Victoria, Australia, used Elluminate Live!® (Elluminate) to support their professional learning. Drawing on Third Space theory and a case study approach, this chapter explores issues around change and emerging technologies. In particular, how beginning teachers appropriate features of this tool to engage in both receptive and collaborative learning spaces, ultimately transforming their professional learning space. It raises numerous issues and challenges for eLearning in the Web 2.0 environment.*

### INTRODUCTION

*If ICT is to be successfully and effectively used for educational purposes... it is essential that the myth of omnipotent teaching and learning technologies is challenged by those within the educational community and ICT's are (re) constructed and (re) contextualised along more appropriate and realistic lines (Selwyn, 2002, p. 179).*

*The educator who endeavors to rattle complacent cages, undoubtedly faces the treacherous ghosts of the other's fears and terrors, which in turn evoke one's own demons (Boler, 1999, p. 175).*

The development of Web 2.0 technologies has been greeted with considerable interest by educators (Waycott & Sheard, 2011). These 'social technologies', encompassing a range of applications

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-3649-1.ch006

such as blogs and wikis (Hanewald & White 2008; Terrell, Richardson & Hamilton, 2011), are seen as highly desirable as they have features designed to enable users to create content, share information and collaborate (Waycott & Sheard, 2011).

This enthusiasm for new technologies, what Selwyn (2002) refers to as a “technological evangelism” (p. 8), is common to education technology research. In early research, claims of ‘possibilities’ and ‘potential’ often associated with learning were made (Bigum, 2008; Groff & Mouza, 2011; Zhao, Pugh, Sheldon & Byers, 2002) as justification for their introduction of technologies. As Lankshear, Snyder and Green (2000) describe, “the history of the new information and communication technologies in Australian schools has been characterized by large quantities of faith, with returns that at best are difficult to identify” (p. 37). Techno-centric views were commonly evidenced, in which the technology was focused on and the context downplayed or ignored (Harris, 2005). Often this introduction was underpinned by binaristic thinking, in which the new technology was pitted against the old (Lankshear, et al, 2000; Snyder, 1993). For example: the new was seen as superior to the old; the new seen as providing solutions to perceived problems with the old (Zhao & Rop 2001) and therefore needing to replace it. There was little consideration that both the old and the new could co-exist.

Alongside techno-centric approaches, there was generally little acknowledgement that teacher adoption is complex, and that changing practice takes time, is gradual and differs from individual to individual (Hall, 2010). Change models, such as Roger’s (2003) theory of Diffusion of Innovations, were commonly used by education departments and government to guide teacher professional learning (Lloyd, 2008; Wilson & Stacey, 2003). A difficulty with these models is that they assume teachers can change their practice by moving along a predetermined set path (Orlando, 2009). The reality in education contexts is somewhat different (Zhao, Pugh, Sheldon & Byers, 2002).

Research suggests that teachers are relatively slow to take on change (Brown & Warschauer, 2006) and purposively select technologies based upon whether they ‘value add’ to their current practice, rather than transform it (Becker, 1999; Tyack & Cuban, 2000).

More recently, numerous researchers have advocated a new research agenda (Harris, 2005; Selwyn, 2002), one which offers alternate narratives about the introduction of new technologies, and one which takes into consideration some of the complexities in both how and why technologies can be used in educational contexts. This chapter in part responds to this call. It aims: to examine how beginning teachers used Elluminate for professional learning; to explore their decisions and choices regarding features in this technology; to consider the possibilities, risks and benefits for learning and more specifically educational contexts. To do so, we draw upon Third Space theory to consider alternative conceptualizations of uptake and use, in particular, to explore how learners, bridge, navigate and/or transform learning in Web 2.0 environments.

## **BACKGROUND**

Recently, educational technological research has suggested that technological tools, with features that enable interaction and collaboration, could be valuable in supporting professional learning, in particular for beginning teachers (Schuck, 2003). For some time now, researchers here in Australia and overseas have agreed that beginning teachers face difficulties when they enter the profession, as well as the sometime related issue of high rates of attrition (Darling-Hammond, 1990; De Wert, Babinski & Jones, 2003; Maxwell, Harrington & Smith, 2010; Schuck, 2003). Herrington, Herrington Kervin & Ferry (2006) suggest that in Australia around a quarter of beginning teachers leave within five years, and that in the United States, this figure is higher, with around a third

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