Preface

Based on 16 chapters written by 29 authors from 11 countries (Sultanate of Oman, Nigeria, Portugal, France, Romania, Tunisia, Australia, Malaysia, Germany, Spain, and South Africa), during a period of 7 months after release of the call for chapters, this book was written following a usual double (sometimes triple) blind review process during 3 waves of submissions. In order to keep anonymity for both authors and reviewers, the reviewers have not been informed of the authors’ names or institutions in the submitted chapters.

In chapter 1, “E-Learning and Web 2.0: A Couple of the 21st Century Advancements in Higher Education,” Bejjar Mohamed Ali, and Younes Boujelbene show two primary contributions. First, they give an overview of learning theories that have contributed to the understanding of the concept of learning. The concept of e-learning has been explained and the importance of Web 2.0 technologies in the practice of e-learning has been highlighted. The chapter also explains the concept of Web 2.0 and credibility in academia. Secondly, the chapter advances e-learning literature incorporating Web 2.0 technologies in higher education based on the adequacy between student learning styles/preferences and technology.

In chapter 2, “Effective E-Learning Strategies for a Borderless World,” Neeta Baporikar sheds light on the coming of the Digital Age in the 1990s, along with the appearance of E-Commerce, e-Business, e-Shopping, and other terms beginning with the letter “e” that refer to the electronic world and the Internet. Today, when we talk about e-Learning, the associated concept with public Websites or an Internet that is available to everybody, an illustrated encyclopedia in electronic format, or even a multimedia-based presentation. In fact, all these ideas are far beyond an e-Learning definition. Electronic learning is not only a kind of virtual or distance education to deliver content by electronic means through the use of the Internet, Intranet, or CD-ROM, but is aimed at effective learning in real time. Formerly known as Computer-Based Training (CBT), e-Learning is increasingly oriented to real-time learning, that is, activities facilitating simultaneous interaction between learners and instructors. In this regard, it is important to analyze effective strategies used for making e-Learning effective both as a pedagogy and as a knowledge management tool. This chapter aims to analyze effective strategies used for making e-Learning effective in this borderless world.

In chapter 3, “Librarians without Building in an E-Learning Environment,” Jerome Idiegbeyan-Ose discusses the concept of librarians conducting their work without buildings in an e-Learning environment. The concept of e-learning, its advantages, and challenges are also discussed. The chapter further explains the term “librarians without buildings” and the characteristics and skills of librarians without buildings in an e-learning environment. It also empirically evaluates the need for e-Librarians in e-Learning environments, the needed skills for such librarians, and their challenges. Possible solutions to the identified challenges are also discussed. A survey research method was used for the study; a questionnaire was
designed and administered to a study group composed of 138 librarians from academic libraries that included universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education in the six geo-political zones of Nigeria.

In chapter 4, “The Impact of Combining Video Podcasting and Lectures on Students’ Assimilation of Additional Knowledge: An Empirical Examination,” David Raquel Jiménez-Castillo and Raquel Sánchez-Fernández explain how educational institutions are investing substantial resources in providing supplementary e-Learning tools for lectures according to the belief that the conventional method of teaching has failed to sufficiently engage students in the learning process, and that information technologies can be used to compensate for inefficiencies inherent in the traditional environment. By increasingly complementing traditional classes with innovative computer-based tools, institutions encourage students to foster the active assimilation of additional knowledge in order for meaningful learning to occur.

In chapter 5, “Higher Education and Web 2.0: Theory and Practice,” Pedro Isaías, Sara Pífano, and Paula Miranda explain that there is empirical evidence of Web 2.0’s effective employment in educational contexts, and it seems that the background of hesitation that has always accompanied Web 2.0’s didactic progress is now more concentrated on questioning how to use it rather than whether or not it should be used. In light of this predicament, this chapter aims to analyze how some Web 2.0 tools are being used in higher education as well as to uncover what best practices should guide their successful deployment.

In chapter 6, “Online Learning Communities: Use of Micro Blogging for Knowledge Construction,” Xavier Inghilterra and William Samuel Ravatua-Smith highlight the potential of educational micro-blogging as a mediation system to support the process of distance learning. A participant observation, as part of training with Masters students, was conducted in order to place the learner at the heart of a pedagogical device, thus permitting interaction mediated by the device with peers and with the tutor during the course or out of class. In their corpus of research, playful immersion combined with community dynamics of social networks is seen as a fruitful heuristic for individualized training pathways and suggests less academic/formal ways of promoting informal learning.

In chapter 7, “Social Media Tools in Initial Teacher Education,” Liliana Măță investigates the current context of integrating and exploiting social media tools in initial teacher education. The theoretical part highlights the latest approaches of social media on an international level from the perspective of the following elements: a) the concept of social media, b) the categories of tools, c) the implications of integrating social media technologies in the field of teacher education, and d) the configuration of an innovative model of social media in the context of teacher training. The methodological part presents the results of a content analysis study pertaining to the way in which new social media tools may be used in initial teacher training. The research results contribute to establishing the main issues in this field as well as new solutions and directions for improving initial training programs for teachers with the use of social media tools.

In chapter 8, “An E-Portfolio to Support E-Learning 2.0,” Hedia Mhiri Sellami shows how higher education faces a challenge: learners are accustomed to very facilitative, usable, and adaptive tools both for learning and socializing, why would they choose to accept standardized, unintuitive, clumsy tools in a formal education settings that they are paying for? Students may abandon the Learning Management Systems (LMS) in favor of other tools. In fact, nowadays student learning is changing, and the university is being confronted with e-Learning 2.0, which is based on Web 2.0. E-Learning 2.0 is essentially based on tools that combine ease of content creation, Web delivery, and integrated collaboration. These tools or digital applications are used for blogging, podcasting, collaborative content (e.g. wikis), social networking (e.g. Facebook), multimedia sharing (e.g. Flickr, Youtube), social tagging (e.g. Deli.cio.us), and gaming (e.g. Second Life). Fundamentally, the expectation of e-Learning 2.0 is that sharing and learning
should become an organic action directed and driven by the learners. Learners are then autonomous in acquiring and in producing knowledge, and this contributes to enhancing the student’s competency.

In chapter 9, “Using an Audiovisual Case Methodology to Develop Critical Thinking Competence in Distance E-Learning Environment: The Open University of Catalonia (UOC) Experience,” Ines González-González and Ana Isabel Jiménez-Zarco analyze how universities can combine ICT with new methods and learning resources in order to improve the acquisition and implementation of key competencies in the workplace. In particular, they present a teaching innovation project that was developed by the Institute of Economics and Business Studies at the Open University of Catalonia. The project was defined in order to advance the development and assessment of one of the primary competencies required of students according to the White Paper of Business and Economy of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) in Spain.

In chapter 10, “Affect Recognition for Web 2.0 Intelligent E-Tutoring Systems: Exploration of Students’ Emotional Feedback,” Oryina Kingsley Akputu, Kah Phoii Seng, and Yun Li Lee evocate the growing concerns over the user friendliness and other usability issues of South African Universities’ Web Portal Interfaces (UWPIs), which obviously will negate the user acceptance of the UWPIs. The main goal of this study is to develop a framework that could be used to evaluate and provide additional guidelines to improve the usability and user acceptance of South African UWPIs. The study applied a triangulation of Ubiquitous computing Evaluation Areas (UEAs) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as theoretical foundations to derive the research model for this study. Based on the research model, hypotheses were formulated and tested. Multiple regression and stepwise regression analyses were used. The results suggest that interaction and invisibility of UWPIs are the most important measures that have a huge impact on user acceptance and usability respectively. The results of the study will provide guidelines for the design and development of South Africa UWPIs to meet their usability and user acceptance.

In chapter 11, “E-Learning in Higher Education: Methods, Tools, and Reality of Uses in the Tunisian Context,” Emna Ben Romdhane shows how Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) acceptance research within the field of Information Systems has been limited in its application to higher education. There is a current need to examine the utilization of e-learning as well as the learner’s satisfaction towards it in order to improve the success of information system implementation across the higher education sector.

In chapter 12, “Some Cultural Issues in the Adoption of E-Learning: A Structuration Theory Approach,” Wiem Abderrazek shows that technology acceptance has been one of the significant research streams in Information Systems (IS) literature. It is crucial that technology be accepted, adopted, and then used by organizations. Researchers utilized a variety of theoretical frameworks to understand the determinants of individuals’ technology acceptance behaviors, including the Technology Acceptance Model, Theory of Reasoned Action, Diffusion of Innovation, Theory of Planned Behavior, Domestication Framework, and Hospitality Metaphor. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) have been two of the widely utilized models in the IS literature.

In chapter 13, “Pre-Service Teachers’ Perspectives and Practices in Utilizing Ubiquitous Technologies for Academic-Oriented Learning and Knowledge Management,” Anna Liza Daunert and Christian Harteis tell us that technological innovations are rapidly growing and changing, and it is hard to ignore their role and influence in people’s daily activities. This particularly applies to the learning activities of students. These technologies have become ubiquitous in that more and more people, including students in higher education, multitask with these technological devices (e.g., smartphones, iPads, and laptops, among others) and Web-based tools or applications (e.g., Web 2.0 software, i.e. blogs, wikis,
social networking system, etc.). This is confirmed by the survey results conducted among pre-service teachers, which showed that each of the respondents (N = 331) uses these technological devices and/or Web-based tools every day. However, despite the widespread use of these technologies, their role in supporting academic-oriented learning and knowledge management still needs to be further explored. In addition, empirical studies on students’ practices with ubiquitous technologies (u-technologies) in their daily academic-oriented activities are needed. All these prompted the authors to focus their inquiry on the experiences of students with the tools, specifically on their academic-oriented activities.

In chapter 14, “Effective Implementation of an Interuniversity E-Learning Initiative,” Daniel Perez-Gonzalez, Pedro Soto-Acosta, and Simona Popa explain why the advent of the Internet and its associated Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is affecting not only how firms do business and the way people interact but also higher institutions’ learning offer. Nonetheless, although the business context has reached high levels of ICT adoption, other important contexts for the future of generations such as higher education remain certainly laggard in comparison. Academics and professionals agree that to adapt higher education institutions to the 21st century it is imperative to extend the use of ICT as well as the virtualization of many human-interaction activities. In this sense, public institutions and international reports suggest the need to deepen the application and study of e-Learning within higher education as a means for achieving flexible, dynamic, and personalized e-Learning initiatives. More specifically, reports point out that the implementation of ICT within the higher education system is still very basic, with high levels of resource underutilization, considering its potential. Therefore, it is necessary to move from the use of ICT as support tools to an e-Learning instrument based on virtual environments.

Finally, in chapter 15, “Problem with Multi-Video Format M-Learning Applications,” Michael O. Adeyeye, Adebola G. Musa, and Adele Botha explain to us that a number of research works have been done on collaborative learning and how to improve teaching and learning using modern day technologies. Technology has the potential to not only enhance teaching and learning but may change the concept of education as constrained by time and space. Technology proficiency is considered a core competency for the twenty-first century. Technology due to its inherent characteristics have the ability to represent content, engage with students, model skills, and assess a student’s progress, resulting in more effective and quality learning. A particular technology can provide affordances that concurrently influence the content, the pedagogy, and/or the assessment in a curriculum. Digital technologies comprise a new context for teaching and learning with individuals having personal handheld access to processing power and information. The possession or access to these technologies does not imply learning, and only when the technology is meaningfully integrated into a learning environment does the potential of the technology for learning become realized. Learning in the digital age includes the acquisition of information skills or 21st century skills rather than the mastery of a stable body of knowledge.

As a conclusion, covering a wide range of topics related to e-Learning from diverse disciplines and from various perspectives, each chapter of this book makes a separate and important contribution to e-Learning academic literature and offers valuable managerial insights and implications.

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