Chapter 33
Assessing Learning with Web 2.0 Tools: Lessons Learned from a Portuguese Initiative

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ABSTRACT
The emergence of new skills to better fit the networked information economy presses higher education institutions to invest in digitally rich environments that allow learning to be personalized, taking place in multiple locations and at time that suits the learner. Social Web tools prioritize collaboration, participation, and reflection, offer new opportunities for knowledge construction and sharing, but they also demand new pedagogical strategies and assessment methods that are not consistent with standards that value what is taught instead of what is constructed, what is pre-established instead of what is democratically agreed. In this chapter, the author presents the results of a research project where different Web 2.0 technologies were used as tools for assessing learning in teacher education programs at the University of Minho, Braga, Portugal between 2006 and 2012. In order to provide rationale for embracing Web 2.0 tools as well as recommend alternative methods to create, capture, and assess learning outcomes that result from the integration of authoring tools in teaching and learning activities, the authors discuss the evidence obtained and reflect on the affordances and challenges of setting up authentic tasks that engage students in the learning process and that provide inferences to assess learning outcomes.

1. CONTEXT
Web 2.0 tools can be defined as “social Web technologies that enable communication, collaboration, participation and sharing” (JISC, 2009, p. 5). They allow any web user to create and publish contents and so they are authoring tools with innumerous potentialities for teaching and learning. In fact, with Web 2.0 tools both teachers and students can perform a multiplicity of activities related to teaching and learning. For teachers´ Web 2.0 tools offer opportunities for designing instruction in a wide range of media formats, for creating contents and leaving them
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Assessment is central for any educational system because it directs learning and may be used to indicate to students which aspects of their learning are valued and will be rewarded (Anderson, 2004). Considering the multiplicity of assessment methodologies available in the literature (Cardoso et al., 2003), for this particular research that involved only adult learners, we consider Erwin’s (1991) definition for assessment as “the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students. More specifically, assessment is the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and using information to increase students’ learning and development” (Erwin, 1991, p.14).

2. ASSESSING LEARNING IN THE SOCIAL WEB: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Assessment is central for any educational system because it directs learning and may be used to indicate to students which aspects of their learning are valued and will be rewarded (Anderson, 2004). Considering the multiplicity of assessment methodologies available in the literature (Cardoso et al., 2003), for this particular research that involved only adult learners, we consider Erwin’s (1991) definition for assessment as “the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students. More specifically, assessment is the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and using information to increase students’ learning and development” (Erwin, 1991, p.14).
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