Identification of Key Issues in Adopting a Web 2.0 E-Portfolio Strategy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the paper is to identify key issues relating to best practice and sustainability in Web 2.0 as an e-Learning strategy for supporting e-portfolios in Higher Education. A practical guidelines framework was developed for best practices, which can be justified by the lack of available frameworks in the e-Learning literature. A literature search was undertaken covering publications dated from 2000 to 2009 to ascertain the level of progress made on tackling issues on implementing Web 2.0 as an e-Learning campus wide educational strategy. The findings show that the recent adoption of e-Learning and Web 2.0 initiatives has been marred by lack of research into the issues associated with long term strategy, implementation, best practice frameworks and solutions. The paper fulfils an identified information need and offers practical help to institutions implementing an e-portfolio Web 2.0 initiative.

Keywords: Best Practice, E-Portfolio, Frameworks, Good Practice, Guidelines, Models, Sustainability, Web 2.0

INTRODUCTION

The recent rise in the use of social networking Web technologies has caused interest among academics for its uses in education. Not much has been written in the literature about the impact Web 2.0 (or e-Learning 2.0) is having on education in terms of the key issues and success factors (O’Hear, 2006; Harris & Rea, 2009, p. 143). Web 2.0 has been defined as: “the social use of the Web which allow[s] people to collaborate, to get actively involved in creating content, to generate knowledge and to share information online (Grosseck, 2009, p. 478)”.

A general literature search will be conducted on the area of e-Learning to identify the types of problems, issues, and enabling factors related to implementing and sustaining a campus wide e-Learning strategy. The range of inhibitors that affect the successful implementation of Web 2.0 as an e-Learning strategy (examples: e-Portfolio, blog, wiki and other social software) for initiatives such as personal development planning (PDP) will be examined to establish
how barriers to success and enabling factors were resolved. Tamkin et al. (1995, p. 1) within the context of employability have defined PDP as: “... a particular approach to planning career and skill development activates for individuals within employing organisations. The concept of a PDP is of a clear development action plan for an individual”. Within the context of Higher Education PDP has been defined as: “a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development (HEA, 2010)”.

An e-portfolio (electronic portfolio) has been defined by Sutherland and Powell (2007) as: “a purposeful aggregation of digital items – ideas, evidence, reflections, feedback etc, which ‘presents’ a selected audience with evidence of a person’s learning and/or ability”. In an educational context PDP “can involve different forms of reflection and reflective learning (Moon, 2001)”. As a result examples of best practice models, frameworks, and guidelines will be provided as indicators of what should be considered as important steps to take when employing an approach to implementing Web 2.0 education initiatives. In this instance the term ‘best practices’ relates to performance measures as defined by Bogan as providing: “... a simple and powerful approach to drive performance improvements (Bogan, 1994, p. 135)”. Roberts et al. (2005, p13) state that e-portfolios have been introduced in to education by governments for the purposes of creating knowledge economies. As a result ‘The British Department for Education and Skills’ (2005) maintain that they will provide integrated e-portfolios for learners so as to provide a personalised learning space (DfES, 2005). Personal Development Planning (PDP) are being used within education as a process where a person reflects on what they have learned, their performance and achievement as well as to plan for their personal, professional and educational development within their personalised learning space (QAA, 2009, p. 2; HEA, 2010).

Web 2.0 tools and their significance in terms of what they are and what they do will be discussed in relation to what their implications are for education, as well as, who the stakeholders are behind the push for these initiatives. Educative frameworks, e-Learning issues with regards to web 2.0 technologies in addition to didactics (reflection of practice: Qvortrup, 2006) will be investigated to ascertain what qualifies as enablers and limiters in the introduction of Web 2.0 educative frameworks.

Recommendations are made aimed at providing: (1) a greater appreciation of the key issues and their etiologies as well as critical success factors underlying the implementation of Web 2.0 educational initiatives; (2) a practical framework that will help inform best practice development of guiding principles; (3) published works pertaining to best practice strategies and scenarios of use; and (4) more information on the sorts of issues and approaches associated with developing successful and sustainable Web 2.0 educational frameworks.

Best Practice Models for Web 2.0 Social Networking Applications

In this paper we will identify and discuss examples of best practice studies in Web 2.0 e-Learning. Several models will be presented which were constructed from the available literature on best practice strategies implementing e-Learning initiatives. In addition, six main areas were identified by Stansfield et al. (2009) as problem areas within e-Learning which are considered as a good starting point for exploring the Web 2.0 literature on its educational uses. These areas can be used to create a summary of the key issues that are identified from the available literature. Stansfield et al. suggest the value of the models lies in their ability to highlight key issues in a visual manner that can generate debate among relevant stakeholders and interested parties. In addition, there appears to be not much published in the literature that reflects upon best practices within the context of Web 2.0 applications, as well as providing
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