

# A Study of Facebook and Learning Management Systems for Course Management

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What is the real value of technology in the classroom? Some teachers remain skeptical about the utility of any use of technology in enhancing teaching and learning. Other teachers enthusiastically brave the uncertainty and try emerging technology as soon as possible. The most prevalent group of teachers are willing to try new tools and applications, but desire to better understand “how” the inclusion of technology will enhance learning environments that foster interactions between students, course materials and content, the teacher, and the context of learning.

The model of an individual faculty member venturing into areas such as the online learning and Web 2.0 is being replaced by a collaborative framework, whereby information technologists, instructional designers, and librarians share information and collaborate to assist faculty in combining applications in ways that foster learning. Whereas with Web 1.0 most of the interaction was with sites that provided information without very much interaction. Web 2.0 has opened up the Internet to anyone wanting to share information about themselves or their passion in spaces like Facebook, Twitter and blogs or wikis. Even individuals or groups with very little understanding of web design or html can easily create content, add their own media, and communicate with others, thereby expressing their perspective, understanding, interpretation, and creativity about anything.

Teachers braving the world of Web 2.0 are currently identifying ways to incorporate existing tools into course management systems like Blackboard, Moodle, and Sakai. Using Web 2.0 tools in course management systems offers alternatives for students to become a part of the landscape of the course. This is accomplished through their interactions with each other and the teacher, as well as through their interpretation and communication of what they are learning, as they explore the course content in a more authentic context. This resource provides perspectives from individuals who are thinking about or who have used Web 2.0 applications, sometimes with course management systems, to create classrooms that leverage the co-construction of knowledge to facilitate learning.

## Key Questions for Discussion

- How does the use of these blended tools specifically facilitate deep learning, the development of common values, and skills in the discipline, as well as reading, writing, talking, and thinking?
- What is the value-added for a teacher in using social networking applications in course management systems that already have some of the same functions (e.g., discussion boards, chat, wikis)?
- How does the functionality of different applications enhance the overall learning experience for students in ways that align with their needs as students and after graduation?
- How do different stakeholders develop common perspectives of learning using these tools that complement the teacher’s ability to teach and the students’ ability to learn that are effective, efficient and fiscally responsible?

## Resources for Further Exploration

Blees, I., & Rittberger, M. (2009). *Web 2.0 learning environment: Concept, implementation, evaluation*. Retrieved September 15, 2009, from <http://www.elearningeuropa.info/files/media/media19743.pdf>

These authors report on their learning environment model based on Web 2.0 applications. It provides an international perspective on how teachers are conceptualizing the use of Web 2.0 applications in course design and management.

Craig, E. M. (2007). Changing paradigms: Managed learning environments and web 2.0. *Campus-Wide Information Systems*, 24(3), 152-161.

Written for an information professional audience, Craig describes challenges for information technology professionals in the movement towards virtual learning environments that use social networking and other web-based applications.

Franklin, T., & van Harmelen, M. (2007). *Web 2.0 for content for learning and teaching in higher education*. Retrieved September 15, 2009, from <http://staff.blog.ui.ac.id/harrybs/files/2008/10/web-2-for-content-for-learning-and-teaching-in-higher-education.pdf>

A report written for the Joint Information Systems Committee in the United Kingdom, the authors provide useful background information on Web 2.0 applications and how they can be used for content development and interaction in higher education.

McLoughlin, C., & Lee, M. J. W. e. (2007). Social software and participatory learning: Pedagogical choices with technology affordances in the web 2.0 era. *ICT: Providing Choices for Learners and Learning, Singapore*. Retrieved September 15, 2009 from <http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/singapore07/procs/mcloughlin.pdf>

This conference presentation provides a succinct overview of emerging pedagogical models in higher education that use Web 2.0 tools, including blogs, wikis, Really Simple Syndication (RSS), podcasting, social networking sites, tag-based folksonomies, and peer-to-peer media sharing utilities.

Severance, C., Hardin, J., & Whyte, A. (2008). The coming functionality mash-up in personal learning environments. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 16(1), 47-62.

This article provides a perspective on how personalized selection and integration of existing tools can allow teachers to create useful learning spaces that are not possible with larger course management systems. The section "Use Cases and technical architecture for functionality mash-up" (pp. 53-55), provides some examples of how mash-ups could be used to enhance learning.