

What is Web 2.0?

- Web 2.0 is the term used to describe the second generation of the World Wide Web
- The main change from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 is that web pages are no longer static, "read only" but are instead becoming dynamic and sharable. A prime example of this change is the rise of social networks in the past 10 years
- The emphases of this new breed of web tools are participation, connectivity, collaboration and sharing of knowledge and ideas
- This all leads to the possibility to engage and motivate your pupils in ways that were not previously possible using the traditional 'classroom' paradigm as it gives your pupils the opportunity to publish content that can then be read by the entire world and allows them to connect with other pupils with similar interests throughout the world.
- Web 2.0 effectively allows for vast numbers of contributors to engage in large scale group work with the aim of documenting accurate information about topics in which they are interested.

Social Software

- Web 2.0 has many social aspects that are very useful in education in the 21st century. Suter et al. (2005) identified three definitions of social software, these were:
 - A tool** – for augmenting human, social and collaborative abilities
 - A medium** – for facilitating social connection and information interchange
 - An ecology** – for enabling a 'system of people, practices, values and technologies in a particular local environment'
- The best known social software available currently are Social Networks such as MySpace and Facebook, these sites, "have shown, among other things, that students will invest time and energy in building relationships around shared interests and knowledge communities" (Maloney 2007)
- Many of our pupils use these social networking sites religiously and this proves that these technologies are likely to be embraced by pupils if they are used in schools.

Affordances

There are many affordances offered by the Web 2.0 phenomenon, not all related to education, but the possibilities for use in today's second level schools are vast and almost overwhelming. Some of these affordances include:

- "Connectivity and social rapport
- Collaborative information discovery and sharing
- Content creation
- Knowledge and information aggregation and content modification" (McLoughlin and Lee 2007)

It also reduces the technical skill needed to use its features effectively allowing pupils to focus on the learning task and not the medium through which they are working

Problems

As with any innovation in education there are problems that come with the introduction of Web 2.0 technologies into the classroom.

- There have been questions asked about young people's ability to use Web 2.0 safely.
- The use of Web 2.0 in the classroom could be disruptive as it changes the traditional notion that school is from 9 to 4 to being a 24/7 being
- Young people do not like the older generations interfering with their cultural forms i.e. intruding on pupils' use of social networks

Conclusion

Web 2.0 is best summed up by McLoughlin and Lee (2007) when they say:

"Many earlier e-learning efforts simply replicated traditional models of learning and teaching in online environments; by contrast, Web 2.0 tools and technologies offer rich opportunities to move away from the highly-centralised industrial model of learning of the past decade, towards achieving individual empowerment of learners through designs that focus on collaborative, networked communication and interaction"

References

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