Web 2.0 applications as alternative environments for informal learning: a critical review

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key questions...

• what evidence is there for informal learning taking place within Web 2.0 applications, and if so, in what ways? Can Web 2.0 applications be designed to facilitate informal learning?

• what potential benefits and risks do Web 2.0 applications pose for formal learning in educational institutions such as schools? Does Web 2.0 herald the increased individualization and personalization of informal online learning at the expense of learning in more formal offline settings?
questioning the educational potential of web 2.0

i) social networking sites - the example of Facebook
questioning the educational potential of web 2.0

ii) massively multiplayer online games - the example of Second-life
what is the educational importance of these Web 2.0 applications?

• a lack of rigorous and carefully conducted research
  • informal learning does not map easily onto formal educational objectives
• the limited prevalence of these new forms of online activity in the everyday digital lives of learners.
  • the homogeneity of users
    • issues of ‘e-safety’
what is the potential for “scaling up”?

• beware of simply ‘importing’ informal Web 2.0 applications into classrooms on the presumption of transforming formal education

  • learners do not necessarily expect or even want to use technology in educational settings in the same manner as they do at home

• many young people are rightly mindful of the risks, as well as the opportunities, involved in fully ‘opening-up’ ICT into classroom settings and often share adult concerns over issues such as e-safety and the variable quality of learning that informal ICT uses can engender
the need for learner voice and co-construction of new learning tools

‘learner voice’ questions to frame future debate and research in this area:

• to what extent do learners expect/desire to use ‘informal’ forms of ICT use in the formal educational settings such as the school?
• which ICTs do learners see as being most motivating, engaging and personalisable?
  • conversely, which ICTs do learners see as unsuitable for the classroom and why?
• what unintended consequences and/or risks do learners see as arising from importing ‘new’ informal modes of ICT use into the classroom setting?
• how can these issues (such as e-safety) be addressed without curtailing the informal learning potential of ICTs?
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