



In May 2005, Stephen Downes wrote his famous article in which he proposed the term “E-learning 2.0”. Since then, a lot of discussion has taken place among teachers and educational technologists, who are increasingly active as bloggers. Traditional e-learning, as managed in the past decade, has started to show some signs of crisis. From a pedagogical point of view, if we observe closely we can see the application of the Web technologies has not yet had a meaningful impact on education. E-learning has often been translated into a “teaching machine”, in which one takes advantage only of the communication capabilities of the Net, using it as a mere transmission channel, similar to radio or TV i.e., the media used in the previous generation of distance education. Furthermore, most investments have been devoted to content authoring, and developing interoperability standards for content and virtual learning environments. Great economic investment have been made for Learning Objects (LOs) and for developing Learning Management Systems. The coupling between LO and LMS is a leit-motiv in every context of network learning, from schools to universities to the corporate sector.

This way of interpreting e-learning is running into a crisis: the promised economic effectiveness of content re-use is often hard to demonstrate or it is limited to specific contexts, while a general feeling of discontent is arising. The first phase of the read-only Web, that we can relate with the first phase of e-learning, based on delivery and the transmission of the knowledge, has been substituted by a new vision (the Web 2.0) in which users are more active, producing and not only consuming Knowledge in the Net. This “writable” Web, easily authored also by normal users, reveals the real strength of the Net, i.e., to facilitate the interaction between persons, rather than between persons and content.

These events occur in a historical context in which the traditional model of instruction is also running into crisis. The schema with education time limited to the first phase of one’s life, in order to prepare individuals for the future working life is now definitely considered obsolete. Nowadays, workplaces are ever more complex, technologies induce a very fast obsolescence of most Knowledge and

competencies. Then, it is necessary to revise the model: lifelong learning is now a need for our society, but it is an extraordinary chance for individuals, too.

Beside the traditional model of formal learning, based on schools and other educational institutions, new ways of learning are now emerging, based on *informal* ways of learning: Knowledge, competencies, and abilities are learned by joining communities, on the workplace and in daily life.

Learning assumes more the sense of construction of networks than of gathering knowledge: it is considered more important to know where/from whom/how to get information, rather than directly know it. Furthermore, Knowledge is no longer a scarce asset; on the contrary it is ever more a mass-consumption asset, which is easily and widely available. However, this enormous information flow is often a problem: we have to fight against the growing information overload, a real risk for those who want to learn in the Net.

These are, concisely, the main themes in the debate on e-learning 2.0. This thematic issue gathers contributions related to one of more of these themes. The volume is arranged in two sections: in the first (Methodologies and Scenarios) articles from selected, international authors are presented. The invited authors, all of whom are also active as bloggers, include: Wolfgang Greller, presently Head of E-learning at University of Klagenfurt (Austria), Scott Wilson, Assistant Director of CETIS (Centre for Educational Technology & Interoperability Standards) (Great Britain), Graham Attwell, Director of the independent Welsh Research Institute, Pontydysgu (Bridge to Learning) (Great Britain) and Leigh Blackall, Educational Technologist at the Otago Polytechnic (New Zealand) and a very well-known blogger.

They contribute with individual or collective works on general themes: Wolfgang Greller and John Casey present a critical point of view on e-learning standards. This is a wide and complex landscape in which the authors stress the prospective of educational institutions and especially of universities. AICC, SCORM and LOM have been very popular in many e-learning experiences, especially in the corporate context. Academics have often been critical about standards, which have been considered too close to technological issues. The article proposes the challenging concept of RDA, from the Food Sciences, to aim at getting a balanced use together with the development of higher standard levels, more suited with the changes and the new roles that universities have in task. The article by Scott Wilson, Oleg Liber, Mark Johnson, Phil Beauvoir, Paul Sharples and Colin Milligan is almost complementary to the first one, proposing an innovative and alternative design for educational systems, focused on connections with a wide range of services, in various contexts (SOA architectures) and related to both formal and informal learning. LMSs, today largely used in most institutions, should work side by side, or evolve to more user-centred systems, which are able to support a wider range of learning. Closely related to that concept is the Graham Attwell paper. It focuses on e-portfolios, intended as the grassroots (they would be the DNA, according to the

title of the article) of the emergent educational technology which aims to focus on the person, rather than on the institution. Personal Learning Environments, whose acronym remember, conversely, the well known Virtual Learning Environments, would be grounded in portfolios and their digital version: digital systems able to support education and professional progress during the individual's entire life. Leigh Blackall points to the openness of educational resources and considers the issues and benefits for an educational institution in adopting them. The Wikipedia experience with its related debate on completeness, reliability and precision of this on-line encyclopedia is very well known. These discussions risk putting the real innovation of Wikipedia and wikis in general i.e., collaborative Knowledge building in the shade. Starting with these considerations, Leigh deals with the legal issues of copyright and copyleft licences for Open Educational Resources (OERs). Then, through her own experience at Otago Polytechnic, she proposes a reflection on the problems and benefits for education institutions in adopting these, and in becoming involved in the development of OERs.

The second section (Applications) includes articles from Italian authors; these mostly illustrate experiences, projects and research: Alfano, Lenzitti and Visalli propose a system for extracting pedagogically relevant contents from public resources available on the Web, with a view to the use and re-use of valuable existing contents. Colazzo and Molinari approach the theme of online communities, showing their experience in a university course managed by a Virtual Community System rather than by a traditional Learning Management System. Two works by Brunk, Caporali, Rubegno and by De Pietro, Piu and De Rosa, even if both related to formal education (especially HE), offer innovative models for the re-arrangement of the pedagogical formats: in both cases they start with audio-video recording of the lessons F2F to elaborate, annotate, and index them in a rich learning environment. Finally, Penna and Stara deepen the pedagogical point of view on *learner centred* approaches in designing online courses: it is a very interesting theme, referred to by most of the other articles in this issue, since the focus is on the *learner* (and his/her relations with the real world) as the centre-point in the promising new paradigm of e-learning.

In the Communication section, Ranieri and Mangione report on the Web 2.0 work session at the TICE Méditerranée 2007 Conference.

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