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Published in:
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF VIRTUAL AND PERSONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

DOI:
[10.4018/jvple.2011010103](https://doi.org/10.4018/jvple.2011010103)

Published: 01/01/2011

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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Please cite the original version:
Orava, J., & Worrall, P. (2011). Creative Networks of Practice Using Web 2.0 Tools. *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF VIRTUAL AND PERSONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS*, 2(1), 37-53.
<https://doi.org/10.4018/jvple.2011010103>

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Creative Networks of Practice Using Web 2.0 Tools

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the professional implications for teachers and managers in new and evolving forms of professional development using Web 2.0 tools in a European context. Research findings are presented from the “Creative Use of Media” learning event developed through a European eTwinning Learning Lab initiative in spring of 2009. The Creative use of the Media online learning event supported a series of initiatives celebrating the European Year of Creativity and Innovation and involved 135 participants from 27 countries. The key objective was to introduce a range of learning themes constructed around a phenomenon-based inquiry model, which supported interdisciplinary approaches and collaborative online learning methodologies to stimulate new teaching and learning rationales. Digital Web 2.0 technology was used as an independent creative medium and as a powerful facilitating tool to enhance and blend with the more traditional forms of visual, audiovisual and multimedia inquiry. In developing models encapsulating risk taking and experimentation this online learning project supported a general principle that future education models and professional development would be based on social learning and “customer-driven collaborative knowledge building” in relation to open source materials.

Keywords: *Collaborative Knowledge Building, Creative Use of Media, Innovation, Phenomenon-Based Inquiry Model, Professional Development*

INTRODUCTION

Web-based learning has made rapid advances over the last decade with the development of interactive communication tools permitting computer users to move from passive receivers and consumers of information to critical co-creators and producer-consumers (Toffler, 1970; Bruns, 2008; Baldwin, 2009). The use of Web 2.0 applications has enabled users to participate in a social communication networking revolu-

tion on a global scale. Mobile technologies are transforming professional competencies through the use of personalised virtual spaces and these are developing new pathways for screenbased experiential learning (Redecker et al., 2009; Pascu, 2008). Global educational policies reflect these changes, advocating the use of Virtual Learning Environments incorporating eportfolios, for students’ to access information, interact with others using (blogs, forums and wikis) and co-construct and publish within local, national and international communities.

Social computing and Web 2.0 applications are merging with pedagogical approaches

DOI: 10.4018/jvple.2011010103

across both formal and informal educational contexts, however it remains important that the construction of technological solutions are based on pedagogical imperatives (models and concepts), rather than the reverse. New media courses incorporating elearning also require robust technological infrastructures, to enable fast networked internet access, to multimedia content streams. There is also a well-recognised need (and challenge) to modernise current curriculum content, due to these rapid technological advances. Reconceptualising curriculum models to include digital literacies will support employability and prosperity in the emerging national and global information economies (European Commission, 2006, 2007).

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AND ONLINE LEARNING

Although Web 2.0 applications were not widely available in 1998, the theoretical concept and pedagogical models applied using ICT were learner oriented, focusing on collaborative and co-operative learning. Between 1998 and 2005 Jukka Orava coordinated the European Schoolnet's Virtual School Art Department developing an extensive range of online projects in cross cultural contexts (Orava, 2006). During this time early theoretical concepts were built around experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Räsänen, 1997) and problem based learning, in a socio-constructivist knowledge paradigm.

A web-based online learning structure had also been developed in 1998 for the University of Art and Design Helsinki (UIAH) as a learning model and concept for media education and web-based media related studies (1998-2007) for teacher training in art. These learning models and structures were further developed and implemented through international curriculum development partnerships between Schools' of Art at the University of Art and Design Helsinki (UIAH), the University of Central England in Birmingham (UCE) and the Federal University of Minas Gerais in Belo Horizonte, Brazil (Worral, 2000; Davies, et al., 2003; Orava, 2006). In

contrast to the popular models of online learning developed over the last ten years, that could be described as highly organized and reliant on the use of professional learning management systems, our models harnessed the web based sources and built upon specifically tailored structures using ordinary web pages (Orava, 2006). The use of web pages and standard code, (HTML, PHP and CGI-programming) kept the focus away from the learning management system, allowing users to concentrate fully on the learning process and develop online learning as a collaborative, holistic and integrated process resulting in collaborative knowledge creation.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LEARNING LAB WORKSHOPS

In 2009 we were invited by Anne Gilleran, Pedagogical Manager, European Schoolnet to design and coordinate an online, eTwinning event for European teachers. It is worth noting that eTwinning is an online resource within the European Schoolnet, representing a hub for schools in Europe to exchange ideas and engage in online projects. We based the pedagogical concept for the eTwinning course, entitled the Creative use of Media on previously designed and trialed models of experimental workshops in Europe and Brazil, exploring the interface between Creative Arts practice across the curriculum and the use of ICT in an intercultural context (Orava, 2006).

The workshops were designed for European teachers to explore the creative and innovative use of Web 2.0 applications in teaching, learning and for professional development. The event encapsulated a model that encouraged the participants to critically experience and contextualise the potential for the use of social media within their own domain of skills' development. The key components of the Creative use of Media learning event were:

1. A Pedagogical Model – The workshops were introduced through a flexible pedagogical model to scaffold the learning

process around the core phenomena of the creative use of media. The model provided a structure for the professional and collaborative development of skills and competences and also introduced and implemented the use of Web 2.0 applications in a developmental context.

2. **Online Resources** - Exploring the creative use of media in learning and teaching through the use of a range Web 2.0 applications including Flickr (image sharing and discussion), Youtube (video sharing) and Ning (social networking). Visual resources and websites were also provided by the course designers to introduce each workshops.
3. **Scaleable Thematic Content** - The participants could personalise and adapt exemplar workshop content for teaching and learning for use in the school curriculum, in different subject areas, with any age group and in a cross curricular context.
4. **Interconnected Modules** - The workshops introduced themes through a carefully structured series of activities incorporating visual media and timebased media, designed to develop metacognitive and communication skills.
5. **Differentiated Tasks** – Each workshop included extension tasks to enable the participants to develop higher level skill sets.
6. **An Ementoring Infrastructure** - Our transparent online support-line provided the scaffold to participants progress. Emphasis was placed on encouraging the co-creation of ideas through social interaction and through discussing the intercultural value of the workshops.

135 teachers were accepted for the Creative use of Media learning event and they were selected by the eTwinning Central Support Service from a total of 581 applications (Crawley et al., 2009). The age range of the participants was between 25 and 55 evenly distributed between primary, middle secondary and upper secondary teachers. There were 117 women and 18

men and 67% had prior experience of online training and 19% had none. It is also worth noting that prior to the start of the course it was not possible to gain a full understanding of the participants' technological infrastructures such as internet connectivity, English language understanding and the different levels ICT skills and competences.

WORKSHOP CONTEXT AND STRUCTURE

The key components underpinning the learning event reflected the eTwinning rational for Learning Labs, i.e., short experimental “taster” workshops that would sample online media and develop new competencies (Gilleran, 2008). It was essential that a carefully constructed infrastructure would support self guided study in a collaborative setting and that outcomes could be adapted in a wide range of professional and personal contexts. The Learning Lab workshops took place during the school term, consequently the workshop activity for the majority of the teachers took place outside school hours, although a small number of teachers were able to share the activities with pupils in real time using interactive whiteboards. Establishing a clear routine for the participants was important and ementor participation in discussion areas such as Flickr and Ning during the day and engaging in Question / Answer sessions at the end of the day were essential in establishing professional online social relationships with the participants.

Every eTwinning participant was provided with a professional virtual learning environment (Liferay.com) for the workshops, consisting of a sophisticated learning management system (portal) and an online personal space (social office). Liferay is an open source product providing the functionality of popular Web 2.0 apps with its own set of message boards, blogs, forums, wikis, RSS feeds, image archives, shared document library and calendar showing the events for the day. The blogs provided tools that allowed dynamic RSS feeds to email and

a “Recent Blogs” display. Forum tools included RSS alerts, email-based subscriptions and replies and an activity tracking feature. This meant activities of each participant could be located from their personal pages “activity history” list and it also located comments and activity wall postings, including the participants active friends. This made collaboration between participants much easier, as team work could be supported and made visible without separate documents or workspaces. The personal pages were transformed by activity tracking into a virtual portfolio, tracking down all activities and user submissions creating a perfect node to all submissions (documents, comments, messages etc.).

At the start of the learning event each participant completed an online resumé-style profile on their personal pages providing information about the school, age group taught, subject specialism and interests, hobbies and aims relating to the learning event. Everyone created a link to the ementors as “friends” so that their personal pages could be used for tutoring and mentoring (i.e., a direct access to personal Wall-to-Wall messaging) and the Friends / Contacts feature allowed users to keep track of people participating in the event. It was also possible to email the whole group of members and Instant Messaging (chat) enabled instant access to all logged-in participants. The Learning Lab acted as a collective hub for all participants to share their biographies (through personal pages), meet with their peers, experts and mentors, present outcomes and link to the creative use of the Web 2.0 applications which is the central focus of this paper.

THE PROGRESSIVE INQUIRY MODEL

The etwinning Liferay Learning environment presented contextual information about the workshops including a conceptual rationale to support problem-based learning, the *Progressive Inquiry* model (Hakkarainen et al., 1999). The phenomenon-based model (Figure 1) describes the critical elements of collabora-

tive knowledge-advancing inquiry and highlighting the pragmatic and socio-cultural aspects of inquiry, aiming at facilitating the same kind of productive practices of working with knowledge in education that characterizes scientific research communities. The key stages are as follows:

- Stage 1. Setting up the Learning Context - Each learning event starts with setting up the context to investigate online. This stage is prepared by the course designers.
- Stage 2. Setting the Learning Goal - The second step involves setting the objectives and research problem, (learning goal). This stage is prepared by the course designers.
- Stage 3. Creating Working Theories - The third step is to realize and become aware of our own intuitive conceptions and prior knowledge. This stage involves the participants preliminary responses to Stage 1.
- Stage 4. Searching for Deeper Knowledge - The fourth step is to search and create new information by experimenting and collaborating. This stage involves discussion regarding the preliminary responses in Stage 3.
- Stage 5. New Theory - The fifth step is the creation of new knowledge and new theory. In this case participants take ownership of their learning process through developing authentic personalised outcomes. This stage involves participants creating new interpretations through shared knowledge.
- Stage 6. Distributed Expertise - The core function in Progressive Inquiry is distributed expertise. Sharing and reflecting experiences help to create structure for new knowledge within a dynamic community.

The model emphasizes shared expertise for knowledge building and inquiry, by setting up the context, using questions, explanations, theories, and scientific information in the cycle of deepening inquiry (Hakkarainen et al., 1999). In a progressive inquiry process, the teacher or learning facilitator creates a context for inquiry

Figure 1. Diagram of the progressive inquiry learning model used in the workshops

by presenting a multidisciplinary approach applied to a theoretical or real-life phenomenon, after which the learners start defining their own questions and intuitive working theories about it. Participants' questions and explanations are then shared and evaluated together, which directs the utilization of authoritative information sources and iterative elaboration of subordinate study questions towards more advanced theories, explanations and writings.

It is important to note that distributed expertise can take place at any point of the working model. It can happen between each step or stage depending on the problem at hand. During the learning event blogs, forums, web forms, email and messaging were used as tools to distribute expertise among participants, but we also developed intermedia expertise / literacy through the use of audio, visual and time based media. Distributed expertise can have many forms but when it is interactive and in real time it creates a new spatial learning dimension.

INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKSHOP MODULES

Our objective as course designers and ementors was to provide a sequential set of structured

online activities that would progressively develop participants' media and digital literacy in a social context. Careful consideration was given to introduce universal themes that could be used in a cross curricular context to teachers of different age-groups and specialisms. In addition, it was important to provide participants with information rich content to act as a starting point for each workshop to inspire and provoke discussion threads. After careful consideration two modules were designed that incorporated our (ementor) different strengths and expertise in elearning (Figure 2).

The modules were designed to incrementally develop media literacy through social interaction, as the participants progressed through a series of interrelated workshops. Module 1 "Interaction through Visual Media" introduced the online learning model in practice and it was extremely important to develop the participants trust and motivation on the first day by engaging with the workshop, monitoring participants progress and responding to specific questions. During this time the ementors used the Personal Page Blog and Activity Wall and the public discussion forums as a diagnostic resource for feedback and to discuss issues that related to the learning event workshops.

Figure 2. Workshop module structure

Etwinning Learning Labs VLE (Liferay) – used for Personal Profiles, Message Boards, Communication and Online learning				
Module 1 - Interaction through Visual Media			Module 2 - Social Networking and Cultural Contexts	
Workshop 1	Workshop 2	Workshop 3	Workshop 4	Workshop 5
Image Reading	Impossible Images	Frontpage News	Ning / Shared Space Video	Creative Media Friday
Visual Literacy	Media Literacy	Online Publishing	Networked Communities	Shared outcomes and Evaluation

Module 2 “Social Networking and Cultural Contexts” was designed to develop participants’ autonomy through setting up and managing an individual social environment and use the customisable features such as photo and video sharing, forums and blogs. Participants also created and shared videos that could be used in the curriculum using Youtube and these were embedded in the social site Ning which was also used to present their work. The process of evaluation and dissemination was also completed during this module.

MODULE 1 – INTERACTION THROUGH VISUAL MEDIA

The first module introduced the interpretation and meaning of images and texts was designed in three interrelated stages. Image Reading (Workshop 1) initially developed participants shared understanding of the importance of deconstructing images. Impossible Images (Workshop 2) addressed the phenomenon of the manipulation of visual information through altering the composition of an image for subversive or political purposes. Frontpage News (Workshop 3) introduced the phenomenon of texts and images in newspapers.

Image Reading - Day 1

In preparation for the workshop a set of images were uploaded into Flickr, an online image and

video sharing website. Subject matter included cities, eco issues, identity, human conflict, faith, science and technology. The “image reading” activity provided the opportunity for teachers to deconstruct of images through the inherent formal qualities of line, tone, texture, colour and emotional content whilst sharing initial responses to the images in a social context. It also acted as an icebreaker for a group of teachers who had never met before online.

Here is an extract from the task script submitted online for the participants:

Please select 6 images and write down your comments – this could include:

Your first response to the image (please give your reason)

A description of the image.

The meaning of the image? (for you)

The use of the image in the curriculum.

In addition, please show the images to your pupils and ask them to write down their responses.

The following represents a section from 8 participants discussion thread, related to the Faith image:

Figure 3. Image reading – Faith

- A collection of symbols. The message could be related to the efforts of human vanity in front of the divine will.
- In the Orthodox culture, the image of Christ is placed to a clean wall, usually on the East side, because there is light which is giving color to the other things. It is a privileged place, to which people were educated, and used to watch every day, even in times of tribulation, or when Time is hardly touching them. Today their faith, or what was left of it, is an image that are undistinguished from background, suffocating crowd of other things that have gained in value today. Under the sway of a time that took it crazy (the clock up the Christ) or other threats (gun), faith gradually loses strength and distinction.
- Yes, impious as it may seem to a strictly orthodox Christian (broadly speaking) I can see piety, bitterness, an outcry to all things that re-cruxify Christian spirit of love and humanism: Violence, materialism, hedonism, what have you. Christ's arm is missing. Very forceful use of a broken religious item.
- This image is symbolic in many ways: there are numerous of mixed up objects around Christ; chaos of modern society is rather intense and Christ is incapable of helping: he lost his left arm just as people lost their faith in him. But maybe people are not responsible for loosing their faith, maybe it is only because they got tired of religion in every aspect of it (that's why there are numerous objects) and the way in which religion perpetual repeats-recycles the same old patterns for social plagues (besides, it is a recycled art image).
- The image is representative for the place religion and faith have in our life, surrounded by money, violence, trifles, running against time, being a victim of this modern world (one-handed Christ).
- Well! I think that is a picture of our times. Christ, the only standing point in chaos. Or Christ part of chaos. We are used to see Him standing above the people trying to close the world into His arms. But as our lifes are upside down probably He will come down.
- Hi everyone,

Your comments are make me realise that there are so many ways to look at images. So thank you for your comments. You may be interested to know that this is a mixed media artwork that was for sale outside a Baroque Church in Ouro Preto, Brazil. Pete Worrall.

- Ja, thank you for telling us the location, Pjaworrall. I think it is interesting, but catholic people have always been courageous to express their faith in different way (even ex-centric), but for sure I never seen something like that ...

The discussion thread (above) relates to the image titled “Faith” and this is the only information the participants are provided with to begin with, although as with many of the images offered for this first workshop the criteria for the selection was the universal, provocative and multi-textural qualities of the images. The participants’ discussion thread includes a mixture of objective and subjective responses including the composition of the artwork, historical contexts, the contemporary message within the artwork and broader concerns regarding a society in chaos. It is also worth noting the ementors’ penultimate contribution provides additional contextual information regarding the provenance of the image.

After investigating the Flickr content stream of images, the participants curated an online exhibition of six images from the Flickr set with alternative titles uploaded into Flickr or in the learning event VLE. This was followed by an extension task, inviting the participants to present a second set of their own personal images that could be used in a school project. During the workshop a number of participants, who had prior experience of using Flickr in an informal context reported that they would now begin to use Flickr as a resource in school. It also transpired that other participants shared the learning event workshop with their students in real-time in school through interactive whiteboards. In addition many participants curated their own

sets of thematic resources and uploaded their images into their Flickr accounts.

IMPOSSIBLE IMAGES – DAY 2

“The growing circulation of the new graphic currency that digital imaging technology mints is relentlessly destabilizing the old photographic orthodoxy, denaturing the established rules of graphic communication, and disrupting the familiar practices of image production and exchange. This condition demands, with increasing urgency, a fundamental critical reappraisal of the uses to which we put graphic artifacts, the values we therefore assign to them, and the ethical principles that guide our transactions with them” (Mitchell, 1994).

The re-presentation of all forms of digital information through the use of software by news organisations, advertising companies and political parties result in increasingly cohesive montages of images that distort realities to sell “messages” and product brands. A critical visual methodology regarding “viewing” the prevailing “digital styles” involves and understanding the formal elements of the medium, the technology used and the intention of the maker. During this workshop the social, cultural and ethical implications of image manipulation were introduced to participants through specific contextual websites (Figure 4).

Here is an extract from the task script submitted online for the participants:

In this workshop we will be learning about image manipulation beginning with a short history of image manipulation (i.e., <http://www.cs.dartmouth.edu/farid/research/digitaltampering/>).

1. *Share and post your ideas using the Message Boards (here you can see what is said, please comment on different discussion threads).*
2. *You can download articles into the Image Manipulation Document archive.*

Figure 4. Schematic concept map of the image reading and impossible images workshops

3. Download Images into the Image Gallery: Impossible Images or curate your own set of impossible images in Flickr.
4. Link videos relating to image manipulation using the Message Boards.

To reinforce skills developed in the first workshop participants curated an exhibition of manipulated images in Flickr. As an extension task they were invited to manipulate their own digital images using free open source graphics tools such as Gimp (gimp.org), Picasa (picasa.google.com) and Picnik (picnik.com).

Here is an extract from a participants post, for the ementors:

“while reading down the thread of your posts on the message board I thought that, despite our geographical distances, we share a COMMON way of thinking and fear the same things: propaganda, dishonesty, fake and lies. The Impossible Images task was really insightful about our everyday life because we are surrounded by images: in magazines, newspapers, on TV, on the WWW, everywhere. In this way, the development of media literacy seems obligatory. The more knowledge and information is growing, the less time we have at our disposal to access all these sources and make our own unique picture of the world. So, we resort to images to understand what’s happening around. And this is where

danger is lurking ... Image manipulation, apart from its artistic and entertaining side, can easily bias our perceptions of life. By reading the history of image tampering, I was intimidated and frustrated because I realized that facts and truth don’t exist. We’re simply aware of the reality shown to us, but not the hidden one. As a result, we and our students should be cautious enough and ready to question the truth of certain issues, especially when chances of personal experience are rare. The ethics behind altering the authenticity of photograph could be discussed in class and certain proposals to minimize the harm can be suggested. As you’ve already discussed relevant things for this task in great detail, I’ll illustrate my points by pasting the link to what mostly impressed me ...”

It is informative to summarise key sections of this “longer than usual” post. The participant has clearly been reading reading discussion threads on the message board and these have reinforced common concerns despite our geographic distances apart. The impossible image workshop post also raises issues about the importance of teaching media literacy because image manipulation can bias our perceptions of life. The participant clearly values the website link (history of image tampering), and (she states) on this evidence (teachers and students) should question the truth and authenticity of

digital representation and this should be discussed in class. At the end of the post extract the ementors involvement in discussion is noted and a further link is indicated to key points. In this discussion extract the social construction of knowledge related to the exemplar resources and through the discussion group develops a model for the participant to develop in the curriculum.

FRONTPAGE NEWS – DAY 3

“With the multimedia ‘text’ the consumer or user is seen to be empowered by being able to navigate through a potentially immense range of knowledge and information. In making their own connections, choosing their own pathways, by being active in making their own sense of the material, they are thought to be newly included in the construction of meaning” (Lister, 2001).

The Frontpage design brief completed module 1, further extending the image reading and Impossible Image workshops through the design of a newspaper frontpage. This authentic ‘real world’ activity introduced participants to multimedia juxtaposition of text and image in the format of an online front page newspaper broadsheet.

The participants were invited to design the frontpage of a newspaper for the date on which the workshop took place (April 1st) and a key objective was to introduce online publishing skills related to web based resources and information. The end result was a published frontpage with nine news items and participants were responsible for sourcing articles, prioritising news items, and justifying their selection. The workshop was also designed to extend skills consolidated during the previous two tasks, through taking ownership of the activity by making objective decisions on the relevance and value of live news information and by presenting this to different audiences (students and teachers) for review and discussion.

Here is an extract from the task script submitted online for the participants:

1. *Browse one of these sites: CNN Europe or BBC Europe.*

Choose 3 news items that are relevant to your students and explain why you selected them.

Decide which one of the 3 should be the headline. Please include the URL of each news item.

2. *Browse Icom Virtual Museums online.*

Choose 3 exhibitions that are relevant to your students and explain why you selected them. Decide which one of the 3 should be the headline. Please include the URL of each exhibition item.

3. *Choose 3 more websites sites of your choice to include additional articles.*

Explain why you like the website, share the URL and explain why you selected them.

Extension task: Time permitting, you might want to try constructing your newspaper frontpage, using programs like OpenOffice or Word.

The submission of articles (Figure 5) provided opportunities for curriculum development in school, for example, “Thousands protest ahead of G-20” article could be used by her students to explore other protest movements in Europe and the Twitter Traveller article could introduce a class discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to a social net and “a report about the main ideas in the group could be written afterwards.” In her role as an online journalist she selects a breadth of news items including The UN Human Rights Council, International Women’s Day, The Saatchi Gallery plus a link to the Independent newspaper cartoon to provide a balance for her readers, in

Figure 5. Frontpage News – participant submission

Main News Items	Reason for Selection
1. US seeks seat on UN Human Rights Council	'Education in Values is one of the aims of the school, so reading about Human Rights situation is always good'.
2. Thousands protest ahead of G-20	'There is a protest movement against Bolonia Agreement for University. With the news about protests in London they (students) will explore other protest movements in Europe'.
3. Man completes world trip relying on Twitter friend	'The one about the twitter traveller connects with one of their leisure time activities: social nets. It could be followed by a discussion on advantages and disadvantages of belonging to a social net. A report about the main ideas in the group could be written afterwards'.
Museums	
1. The Saatchi Gallery	'Contemporary art will be explored. I think this is very important for our students because they live in an ancient town where artistic examples are Romanes, Renaissance. So, a comparison would open their minds.
2. Welcome to the Women's Library	As a way to finish celebrations for International Women's Day to know about women's magazines have influenced of have been influenced by society'.
3. Museo Vostell Marlpardida. Wolf Vostell	It is not a famous museum but it is important for Modern Art. Happenings, Conceptual Art, Video-Art. I find it interesting for our students who are used to visiting, if any, painting museums.
Other Sites	
1. The Guardian	It gives student a different point of view for news. Besides it has an educational section for languages.
2. BBC	Learning English It contains articles for students with vocabulary and grammar structure study, so

this context the other course participants and her students.

The sharing of useful websites using the VLE message boards was a frequent occurrence throughout the course. On the morning of April 1st one participant shared a Web 2.0 site that provided a tool to create and publish an online newspaper and some participants used this site to submit their newspaper designs, whilst others submitted their designs in full desktop (text and image) format, using Word and Publisher, however the majority were submitted in tables, as in Figure 5.

This multi-layered design brief modeled professional competences in the form of critical thinking, applying selection criteria and publishing online to an audience. On a broader level the task introduced the use of local, national, international sources of information and introduced bias in reporting using different websites including CNN and BBC. In an educational context, it was also evident that interdisciplinary, collaborative and intercultural activities could be transferred to a student production team of editors, journalists and news photographers to engage directly in a 21st Century workplace scenario.

MODULE 2 – SOCIAL NETWORKING AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

The underlying themes developed in Module 2 were time based media in the curriculum, sustainability through social networking and self evaluation. In this module participants were introduced to the Web 2.0 resource Ning, a social networking service and social platform with customisable features, such as photo and video galleries, forums and blogs. A brief introduction to digital video using Youtube provided opportunities for participants to upload and embed digital video into Ning for use in the curriculum. Evaluation and self reflection using a range of diagnostic tools completed the Learning Lab week.

NING AND SHARED SPACE VIDEO – DAY 4

The focus on interaction and social collaboration using new media continued through the introduction to the contrasting online environments of Ning and Youtube. Ning was selected because it offered a functional solution for the social networking with an easy-to-use interface that could be used to embed audio visual media, including digital video. The interrelationship between Ning, Youtube and the range of Web 2.0 media explored during the week provided opportunities for participants to present workshop outcomes in a new format.

Forty five participants signed up for the social platform immediately and for the majority, the Ning site was a new experience. By the end of the day the Ning environment had grown to more than 56 blog entries and 40 forum entries, 45 videos, animations, slideshows and concept maps with many participants experimenting with new Web 2.0 applications (through suggestions posted on message boards).

The Shared Space design brief was designed to introduce the use of digital video in teaching and learning. The participants searched

for creative videos that had potential for use in their subject areas using Blip.tv, Youtube, TeacherTube and YouTubeEDU and after locating 3 examples, they were invited to write a short explanation (including the url) about how they would develop the use of the videos in the curriculum and submit this in their blog and / or Ning site. An additional option was to create a 1 minute film called Shared Space Video introducing a snap shot of local cultural space (classroom activity, local environment or interview) and upload it into Youtube, the VLE blog or the Ning network.

Here is an extract from the task script submitted online for the participants:

1. *We invite everyone to join this totally open social network even only for one day. Follow the link to the page: Sign Up and fill in the personal data and passwords etc., follow the process and you will be granted access immediately. There is no validation process.*
2. *Explore the site, it's post's and discuss whether you could see yourself using this type social network tool / area using the forum.*
3. *You can upload materials such as videos, images and post messages, write blogs etc. and you can link these materials to the Liferay VLE.*
4. *Search for 3 videos you could use in the curriculum using Youtube, Teachertube or YoutubeEDU add the link to the video in your blog or Ning area and explain why you would use it in your curriculum area.*
5. *As an optional task is to create a one minute film called Shared Space Video, introducing a snapshot of your local space and upload this into Youtube, Ning or the Learning Lab (Figure 6).*

This workshop was more demanding than the previous days, however it was encouraging to observe that participants suggested numerous Web 2.0 sites for use in the curriculum and

engaged in extended discussions regarding the use of digital video in learning and teaching. Ning was also used as a dual purpose social facility to develop educational partnerships and as a multimedia presentation resource to present the previous workshop outcomes. Ning was an appropriate resource to complete the week's activities as the eTwinning Labs would close a month after the event had finished. As a post-script it is worth noting that The Creative use of Media Ning social network is still active in 2010 with over 120 members.

CREATIVE MEDIA FRIDAY – DAY 5

The final workshop was reserved for reflection and evaluation, with the main task designed to use Web 2.0 applications to capture the experiences and responses of the learning event. Each participant wrote a hundred words "event summary" in a Creative Friday Blog, however participants also used different multimedia forms to present the past weeks online activities using Jingproject.com (sound / video recording), Slide.com, (slideshows), Wordle.net (word maps) and Bubbl.us (concept maps). A formal evaluation was also completed by each participant and the main criticism related to the

design and usability of the eTwinning Liferay Learning Lab platform. The user interface and lack of any kind of "help" or guidance materials made the navigation and use of the virtual environment challenging for some participants.

The range of evaluation data gathered from this event was challenging for the ementors to process, due to the volume and the multi-layered forms of responses and it is worth noting here that they will be the subject of a second paper. In general terms the Creative Media Friday (according to the end of the week event polls) was the most valuable workshop with 26% of the total votes, next was the Creative Friday online discussion with 22% of the votes, followed 13% for both the Impossible Images and the Ning Social network with Image Reading gaining 9% of the votes. Another proof of learning and actionable knowledge creation (albeit difficult to document) was through the changes in practice that many of the participants displayed during the event (Dewey, 2003).

Here is an extract from a blog comment written on day 5:

"The second day was a continuation of the first one, going deeper and deeper into the world of images. Re-writing history through images is a dangerous issue, but there is always somebody

Figure 6. Schematic diagram showing the key areas used by participants in Module 2

to teach us how to find out ... I never read the 'or' in the activity description. I only saw 'and,' so I entered every link we were suggested and kept on reading and reading. I went to bed at 2:00 in the morning ... But I can use slide.com and other tools to create short things to express my feelings. It was very funny. And signing up for the social net was the best way to finish a working day. I've participated in other social nets but yesterday I joined new ones and even created my own social net for the school. I have invited all the departments, let's see what happens. Such as I posted, sometimes, working with ICT at school is not very popular. The new links we have been given today are very useful I knew the one to create concept maps, in fact I started using it with my youngest students as a research and reinforcement vocabulary exercise. I'm looking forward to the live discussion. It's been a tiring lab... Thank you very much for giving me this possibility. See all of you in the Net and thanks for sharing. Bye."

The post is both personal and reflective regarding the value of online collaboration using Web 2.0 tools to express her feelings. There is an underlying sense of achievement and autonomy combined with a real need to translate the learning labs experience for her students. What is clear here is that through the process of experimenting with new media pedagogies in a practical workshop context the teacher is now empowered to transfer and blend this new elearning process with her students in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

The eTwinning learning event, The Creative use of Media introduced a phenomenon-based progressive inquiry model for participants from 27 different European countries to learn and experiment with digital media in a collaborative knowledge building context. The event was structured to encourage experimentation and creativity, whilst developing the participants shared interests in particular domains and areas (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The event was time

intensive from an ementoring perspective, however a coherent course structure ensured that the participants learnt together and developed new professional skills.

The Virtual Learning Environment (Liferay) used in the Creative use of Media learning event, allowed and hosted fluid and transparent interactions with Web 2.0 applications in a very demanding intercultural and cross-disciplinary training context. During the course of the week, it is worth noting that the ementors were working in their respective countries and engaged in full-time jobs, so most of the course planning and ementoring took place in the evenings. In this context the Liferay VLE was well designed and provided excellent open source management tools to facilitate our own ementoring needs and to easily locate and 'monitor the participants' activities in the VLE.

The cyclic structure of the progressive inquiry model and learning process was successfully implemented into the event structure and target audience. The pedagogical model scaffolded fluid knowledge development through sharing of experiences and social networked collaboration. Synergies were created between participants as insights were shared. The feeling of belonging to a 'real' knowledge sharing and knowledge building European community of professionals (teachers) was articulated in the evaluations and the desire to continue and preserve this network of practice was realised as the participants transferred from the Liferay VLE to the social network Ning.

Monitoring the participants engagement, motivation and commitment during the eTwinning event was only possible after the event had been completed through the recording of individual audit trails across a range of online locations. Solutions to these problems are perhaps easier to resolve when sustainable forms of collaborative knowledge construction models are established. In this field we have much to learn from the open source communities and their culture of engagement. Improvements to the next learning event will include instructional design through developing multiple media forms such as video and sound

files complemented by embedded translation tools to enhance social and cultural inclusion.

Social Software and Web 2.0 tools can enhance and gain value from social interactions and behaviour, and can provide opportunities for collective intelligence, so adding value to data and concepts (Becta, 2006). Online exchanges of information and knowledge enable participants to begin to form an initial understanding of the person and personality 'behind the screen' through the value judgments expressed. From an ementoring perspective a diagnostic analysis of discussion thread data informed decisions regarding the second Learning Lab course in November 2009.

The Web 2.0 tools also provided new opportunities for the collaborative creation and sharing of knowledge, providing new means for fostering lifelong learning and supporting the ongoing vision of personalized learning spaces in the knowledge society. In educational contexts it also raised issues relating to professional development (Redecker et al., 2006). We believe that social computing and Web 2.0 applications and services can be and need to be utilized for professional development in a wide range of education contexts. The need and reasoning comes from the simple realization that social computing and Web 2.0 is an integrated part of the new global knowledge paradigm and as such it part of the active reality today.

Ementoring is a new role for many teachers who may require new professional competencies to manage future online learning initiatives. Elearning courses should, as a minimum requirement, support "blended" learning methods to enable teachers to manage course content delivery and the student interface between physical experience (tactile sensory and manipulative) and the virtual online world of audio visual information. The effective balance of the virtual / physical experience is complex and variable, however this is often the creative key to success. The social learning taking place during the workshops was externalised in thousands of discussion threads and in this context the role of the ementors was to make the social

learning taking place "visible" through discussion and discuss the value of this new learning. Social learning will provide further challenges for teachers as long as traditional curriculum infrastructures and course requirements do not adapt to embrace these new conceptual collaborative tools.

The potential for events such as these to develop local, national and international communities of practice are enormous (and the tools are there), but as yet the vision is unrealized. It was clear that the group of teachers who enrolled for the learning event shared an interest in elearning and creative practice and by the end of the event they had formed a creative "community of practice" in Ning that continues today. A dedicated and mobile network of pedagogical experts and e-mentors is required in order to develop social learning hubs in Europe at all levels. In this context Etwinning learning events provide natural opportunities to identify individual participants as potential ementors. In times of austerity and economic problems, it would seem obvious for politicians to prioritise on maximising the development and implementation of online communities:

The contribution of ICT to the European economy is fundamental for the development of productivity and knowledge-intensive products and services. There is an important need to address ICT-related skills (e-skills) issues in order to respond to the growing demand for highly-skilled ICT practitioners and users, meet the fast-changing requirements of industry, and ensure that every citizen is digitally literate in a lifelong learning context requiring the mobilisation of all stakeholders (European Commission, 2007).

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