

Computing Science and The eLearning Paradigm – Technology Focus or Goal?

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Abstract: Today's prospective entrants to Computing Science degrees have grown up surrounded by technology. They watch digital TV, play computer games, listen to music on their iPods/Mp3 players, chat to their families on MSN and their mobile phones, share pictures, author their own blogs and websites and post stories and meet new people on social networking sites. As Computing Science academics we are in a unique position because we have access to all of these technologies for teaching our students. We feel it is safe, to an extent, to assume that new entrants to our programs are comfortable with learning new technologies and are also expecting us to use a variety of technologies to teach them effectively. It is also perhaps reasonable to assume that the technologies we provide will be perceived by our students as an enhancement to their learning and that their expectations of ways to communicate and learn are being met. If this is not the case, then differences in expectations and experience could have wide implications for our approach to technology and eLearning provision in Computing Science at tertiary level. In this paper, we describe our 'blended' approach to eLearning and explore the pedagogical implications of student technology ownership, usage and experience for that approach based on the results of a study conducted amongst new entrants to the School of Computing Science at Newcastle University in the academic year 2007-08. We also present and analyse student feedback and experiences of using the technologies we provide for teaching and learning at all other programme levels including our VLE NESS (NESS, 2008), wikis and discussion forums. We then discuss the implications of these findings for future development of our blended learning materials and make some proposals for the adoption and inclusion of web 2.0 technologies in the wider Computing Science curriculum.

Keywords: eLearning, technology ownership, blended learning, Computing Science, Web 2.0

References