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Wed 15th - Fri 17th June 2011



**Maintaining a sustainable Future  
for IT in Higher Education**

**Wednesday 15th June 2011**

**Time: 11:30 - 12:00**

## **Social Networking in Education (Engaging Students in a Collaborative Learning Experience)**

**Speaker:** David Hamill, Trinity College Dublin

### **Abstract:**

There are many issues and problems that students in 2nd and 3rd level education may have to overcome if they wish to engage in a learning process, including social, economic, geographical, educational and physical disabilities. More recently students have become engaged with 'Social Networking' sites, like Bebo[1] and Facebook[2]. These virtual environments emphasise the social collaboration between users with the explosion of diverse Web 2.0 applications available to imbed into a users environment. This research study asks the principle question: In what ways could a Web 2.0 social network engage students in collaborative learning experience? This study examines socially excluded underprivileged students from across various economically and socially deprived areas within Dublin who are given the opportunity to realise their full educational potential via the Trinity Access Programme (TAP). The study involved the development of a custom-built VLE (<http://tap2008.ning.com>), using a social-networking online-platform called Ning[3] to facilitate collaborative learning with various activities/components. Initial evidence from detailed analysis suggests Blended Learning as a successful approach using the Web 2.0 VLE. Furthermore analysis suggests successful interaction between mentors and students. There were some interesting unexpected outcomes with regard to tutor's experience of Web 2.0 technologies, censorship and the issue of copyright of content published within the VLE.