

E-Portfolios in Higher Education

Tushar Chaudhuri · Béatrice Cabau
Editors

E-Portfolios in Higher Education

A Multidisciplinary Approach

 Springer

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ISBN 978-981-10-3802-0

ISBN 978-981-10-3803-7 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-3803-7

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017930953

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Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature

The registered company is Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd.

The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

Foreword I

Promoting Diversity Through E-Portfolios

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, we find ourselves in a time of growing diversity in both our urban spaces and our online spaces. Post-Cold War migration and travel, combined with digital mobility, have ushered in an era often described as *superdiverse*. It is an era characterised by a ‘diversification of diversity’ (Vertovec 2007, p. 1025) stemming from the complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, social, religious, political, economic, educational, gender, sexual and other human variables and affiliations. Preparing students for their future social, working and civic lives in such a diverse and often unpredictable world requires fostering what are sometimes called graduate attributes, or transferrable skills, or twenty-first century skills. These include communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, coupled with the digital literacies to make effective use of new technologies to support these skills, as well as the linguistic and intercultural abilities to negotiate today’s urban and online spaces. In this context, education must make room for students’ pre-existing diversities, allowing them to teach and learn from each other, and to play to their strengths even as they address the areas in which they need to develop or improve. In short, we must support our students in undertaking the personalised learning journeys that will best set them up for their future lives.

While many educators recognise the importance of carving out space for their students’ diverse learning experiences, a number of questions arise. How can students’ scattered learning experiences, taking place both inside and outside the classroom, and across numerous software platforms on multiple digital devices, be captured, collated and evaluated? How can these personal learning experiences be catered for within, or alongside, the standardised learning management systems (LMSs) or virtual learning environments (VLEs) in which educational institutions have invested heavily over the last decade or more? And how can these varied learning experiences be related to the common requirements embedded in courses of study, and the common standards underpinning certifications of achievement?

Portfolios, as collections of artefacts on which learners can reflect, on which they can be assessed, and on which they can base future job applications, are not a new construct. Nor, by the mid-2010s, are *e-portfolios*, the digital versions of portfolios which have also existed for some time. But, in a context of superdiversity, where a premium is placed on the acquisition of twenty-first century skills during personal learning journeys, and where learning can take manifold forms and be demonstrated in manifold ways, e-portfolios are taking on a new salience. This is the right moment to revisit e-portfolios and ask what they might offer higher education; what shapes they might take, both inside and outside the classroom, across different disciplines; and how they might fit in with institutional objectives.

The first part of this book frames the discussion through a conceptual exploration of e-portfolios in higher education. Tushar Chaudhuri outlines the development of a framework which can guide lecturers in the implementation and assessment of e-portfolios across multiple disciplines, neatly summarised in the appendices to the book. Mark Pegrum and Grace Oakley highlight the importance of engaging students, engaging lecturers, and integrating technology to support a successful e-portfolio implementation, while also reflecting on the changes that have occurred in technology and technology users over the last half-decade. Cath Ellis shows how learning analytics, an important development often linked to LMSs, can provide useful individualised feedback for educators and students and, when used in conjunction with e-portfolios, can offer a holistic picture of students' learning and allow them to take greater responsibility for their personal learning journeys.

The second part focuses on e-portfolios employed across a range of disciplines. Chi Shan Chui and Céline Dias indicate the benefits of e-portfolios for students of French and German, showing that language students are able not only to improve their linguistic skills, but to develop twenty-first century skills in areas ranging from digital literacies and intercultural competence through to autonomy and lifelong learning. Turning to the subject of history, Catherine Ladds equally finds support for the idea that students can develop both discipline-specific skills and cross-curricular skills in building e-portfolios. In a chapter about a statistics course, Simon To emphasises the role of e-portfolios in reorienting theoretical subjects towards authentic everyday examples, in helping students to integrate learning experiences, and in promoting sharing and collaboration. Referring to Csikszentmihalyi's work on flow, Warren Linger suggests that employing common, simple tools to underpin e-portfolios makes it easier for educators (and students) to work in a state of flow where they are not distracted by technological issues but can focus on interaction and collaboration around the content and skills being developed. As an ensemble, these papers offer insights into how to address the challenges of effectively implementing e-portfolios, including the need to promote new attitudes to learning and assessment, to ensure students understand the rationale for e-portfolios, and to attend to the technological difficulties that may arise.

Turning to informal, situated, out-of-class learning, Atara Sivan describes the use of reflective, interactive e-portfolios by students acting as 'healthy living ambassadors' in an intergenerational learning community, leading to an enhancement of their twenty-first century skills and digital literacies as well as facilitating

their processes of personal self-discovery. Siu Yin Cheung, Heather Kwok and Peggy Choi write about the reflective e-portfolios submitted by sports and recreation students regarding their internship experiences, again emphasising the value of such an exercise in the development of students' twenty-first century skills and digital literacies, and highlighting the use of multimodal e-portfolios to accompany job applications. Béatrice Cabau outlines the use of reflective e-portfolios by students preparing for work in French multinational companies in Hong Kong, emphasising their development of broad twenty-first century skills in tandem with linguistic and intercultural competence, with students being able to gain a greater understanding of themselves as learners while also beginning to develop their professional identities; the next stage of this project will involve orienting the e-portfolios towards employability. Notwithstanding key challenges such as how to scale and manage e-portfolio initiatives, as well as issues of time and technology, the authors of these chapters, like those mentioned earlier, are in no doubt that it is well worth considering implementing e-portfolios more widely than has been the case in the past.

The third and final part presents institutional perspectives on e-portfolios. In their description of a promising pilot project, Eva Wong, Theresa Kwong and Peter Lau insist on the importance of students developing a holistic picture as they build their e-portfolios throughout their study years, integrating both curricular and co-curricular learning into these records of their learning journeys. Likewise, Paula Hodgson emphasises the integrative aspects of e-portfolios used by students as rich showcases of their individual learning journeys across a range of general education courses, where they can build generic twenty-first century skills while also developing personal beliefs and identities. Employing the lens of embedded librarianship, Chris Chan shows how librarians can support an e-portfolio initiative, bringing to bear their information literacy skills—a key component of digital literacies—as well as their technological skills to support students.

As we head towards the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, it is important to remember that diversity is not a given, but rather is contested terrain. Today, we see many attempts by political, social, religious and military leaders to build barriers to stem human migration, reduce human contact offline and online, and relegate human otherness to the far side of newly constructed, or reconstructed, walls. And at all levels of education, we see attempts to standardise, 'templatise' and circumscribe learning, reducing it to testable, measurable, reportable outcomes linked to the basics of literacy and numeracy. While some standardisation in education is inevitable, and while the basics remain important, this cannot be the whole story of learning in the twenty-first century.

Contemporary digital and especially mobile technologies, coupled with contemporary constructivist, situated pedagogies, can help to support students in undertaking personal learning journeys, engaging with diversity, and representing their emergent understandings in numerous ways. Developing protocols like xAPI will soon make it much easier to track many different kinds of learning and integrate them seamlessly into students' personal learning spaces. The real promise of e-portfolios is perhaps that they constitute a kind of bridge between diversity and

standardisation, making room both for diversified learning and standardised evaluations, and for the customisation of learning journeys alongside the multimodal, multifaceted demonstration of core content knowledge and generic twenty-first century skills. As such, they have the potential to play a key, and growing, role in the future of education.

Perth, Australia

Mark Pegrum

Reference

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Foreword II

E-Portfolios and Academic, Structured Communities of Practice: Recommendations for Building Effective Implementation

I am pleased to welcome colleagues to this excellent book about e-portfolios. This collection of chapters is divided into three parts in order to provide educators and researchers with a comprehensive look at e-portfolios in higher education, with a multidisciplinary perspective in classrooms across many disciplines, and with engagement of e-portfolios from an institutional point of view. This book is timely because, internationally, e-portfolios are capturing the attention of educators and researchers in higher education. This book comes at the right moment, providing the research, guidance and resources needed to make e-portfolio applications more productive for both new and experienced instructors and educational developers.

This Foreword offers readers a key recommendation for successful implementation of e-portfolios in courses, curricula and programmes. My recommendation involves the use of academic, structured communities of practice (CoPs) and cites implementation science to confirm why this approach works well. I have confidence in this implementation process due to my 38 years of experience as facilitator and researcher of academic, structured CoPs in higher education. In general, the outcomes of this CoP process have provided colleagues, students and institutions with effective practices and programmes for teaching, learning, research, and organisational development (Cox and Richlin 2004).

My recommendation is that the readers of these chapters employ structured, academic CoPs when implementing the opportunities of e-portfolios described in this book. In the U.S. we call these CoPs by the name of faculty learning communities (FLCs). Membership in FLCs is voluntary, multidisciplinary, of size 8–10 members, and open to those in all disciplines and professions in higher education. FLCs are yearlong and have the goals of building community, developing evidence-based solutions, and disseminating project outcomes, often as the scholarship of teaching and learning (Cox 2004). FLC outcomes include increased student learning in areas high on Bloom's taxonomy and can include design and

assessment of new curricula or revised programmes developed by the FLC members or as a group in concert (Beach and Cox 2009). These outcomes have also been confirmed recently at Hong Kong Baptist University (Kwong et al. 2016) and are mentioned here in some of chapters of this book.

For over 38 years in the U.S., topic-based FLCs have engaged hundreds of topics, including e-portfolios. There are two types of FLCs: topic based and cohort based. As an example, a cohort-based FLC could consist of early-career academics. Such an FLC can build institutional capacity by developing leaders and scholars (Cox 2006, 2013). Over the long term, FLCs enable an institution to become a learning organisation (Cox 2001, 2006; Senge 1990).

Implementation science confirms why academics and educational developers are successful in using academic, structured CoPs to implement new, evidenced-based approaches such as e-portfolios. Implementation is the art and science of incorporating innovations, interventions, and evidence-based programmes into typical human service settings to benefit the clients of practitioners. An example is the “bench to bedside” approach in the medical profession. There, evidence-based applications developed by researchers at the bench are to be implemented by doctors (practitioners) for their patients (clients) at the bedside. The purveyor of the implementation is the organisation, staff and process that are engaged by the purveyor to achieve the implementation. In the case of e-portfolios, educational developers attempt to find a purveyor to ensure that their practitioners—instructors, staff, and administrators—implement e-portfolios with fidelity and sustainability for their clients—students, programmes and institutions.

Lacking good information about implementation best practices, policy makers in the U.S. have invested heavily in the science of interventions, not in the science of implementation. The national implementation research network reported that the U.S. federal government invests 99% in intervention research and 1% in implementation of that research, leaving implementation to chance (Fixsen et al. 2005). Purveyor approaches to implementation that have not worked include invitations (Please do X), demands (You must do X), incentives, additional evidence that the evidenced-based programme works, and mass media approaches. What *does* work for successful purveyors is diffusion by people talking to people over time who mentor and show why and how. People follow the lead of others they know and trust (Gawande 2013). This description of what does work describes an academic, structured CoP and an FLC approach. Hong Kong Baptist University used this approach to investigate and implement e-portfolios as well as other innovations (Wong et al. 2016).

The authors of this book have provided research results, resources and guidance with perspectives across higher education, classrooms representing many disciplines, and institutional settings. They have shown that e-portfolios are doable, evidence-based approaches that enhance curricula, organisational development, instructor growth and student learning. The academic, structured CoP model as purveyor is successful here because it employs the effective approaches of implementation: CoP members talk to and mentor each other over time as practitioners, instructors and scholars. They collaborate with their CoP colleagues—members

they know and trust—to design, implement, assess and disseminate e-portfolio approaches.

In conclusion, I recommend that readers employ the evidence given in these chapters and use the proven success of the academic, structured CoP model to implement e-portfolios in courses, programmes and institutions.

I extend best wishes for your e-portfolio endeavours.

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Preface

The subject of this book is the experience of integrating electronic portfolios as assessment tools and as instruments for lifelong learning at the course level. The authors who are both practitioners and researchers in Hong Kong analyse their experience critically and provide empirical data to back up their analysis. The reader will therefore find useful insights into introducing e-portfolios as course work in disciplines such as Mathematics or Business Communications, which are traditionally not considered to be “portfolio-disciplines”. At the same time the traditional portfolio disciplines such as Language and Education are also represented and allow a state of the art perspective to the subject. The course level perspective enables the reader to identify challenges faced by instructors and students when implementing e-portfolios in their respective courses but at the same time suggests to them flexible ways of dealing with those challenges.

The second major component of the book from which the interested reader benefits is the introduction to various e-platforms suitable to the hosting of e-portfolios from the point of view of non-IT professionals. Apart from the well-known e-portfolio platforms such as “Mahara” or “My Portfolio” (Blackboard), authors discuss their experiences with Weebly and Google Docs. Thus the book acts as a practical resource for all practitioners who are looking for a non-traditional method of assessment or would like to encourage their learners to engage in self-developmental good practice right at the beginning of or during their educational and formative years. Foremost the book helps teachers who would like to give their students a competitive edge in a world of jobs and careers looking for digitally literate innovators.

But it is not only teachers and practitioners who should be interested in picking up this book. The case studies presented in this book are drawn from a university in Hong Kong. This makes each of these experiences a uniquely Asian one. Therefore each of these case studies also deals with the attitudes towards teaching & learning innovation in the Asian context. In doing so it provides practical insights into teaching and learning in an Asian context. This can translate into useful knowledge for administrators and governance professionals looking for ideas and methods of evaluating the quality of higher education in an Asian context.

Last but not the least the context of this volume is the collective and collaborative work of a community of practice set up to explore the possibilities of implementing e-portfolios in multiple disciplines and come up with a working set of guidelines for all who are interested in the subject of e-portfolios. The volume therefore also addresses administrators and leaders in the academic community who would like to see concrete evidence of the effectiveness of communities of practice within institutions of higher education in Asia.

The editors therefore sincerely believe that the proposed volume will speak to a large target audience drawn from a range of disciplines, roles and geographical contexts within the larger context of higher education in Asia and its relevance to contemporary society.

The book is divided into three parts to better highlight the diverse themes addressed in it. The first part has three chapters which broadly provide the background and the historical development of e-portfolios for assessment purposes. In this part, Chaudhuri provides an overview on research on e-portfolios as assessment tools and asks and answers five essential questions all educators should pose themselves before taking up the e-portfolio challenge; Pegrum and Oakley give an example of how the role and the technology associated with e-portfolios have changed over a five-year period in the education sector, and last but not least Ellis connects up the research on learning analytics with the affordances of e-portfolios thereby putting them right in the centre of outcome-based education and linking the development of e-portfolios to future research in assessment design.

The second part is the core of the book. It includes case studies of implementation of e-portfolios as assessment in academic disciplines at the course level. The case studies included in the former part of this section are drawn from classroom experiences of disciplines such as European Studies (Chui & Dias), History (Ladds), Mathematics (To) and Business Communications (Linger). The chapters in the latter part of this section continue the case studies but look at the out-of-class learning and lifelong learning experiences which can be scaffolded through the e-portfolio implementation. In this part, Sivan analyses qualitative data to reflect on Education students' learning experiences in an intergenerational learning community as reflected in their e-portfolios, Cheung, Kwok and Choi analyse quantitative data from the internship portfolios of Physical Education students and in the final chapter of this section Cabau reflects about her experience in implementing e-portfolios in a final year course in European Studies and the role they can play to ease the transition from university based assessments which students have dealt with and the assessments they have to go through in order to make their mark on the job market.

The third part of the book looks at the university wide efforts of e-portfolio implementation. Wong, Kwok and Lau look at these efforts from an administrator's point of view and pull together other examples of e-portfolio work going on at the university but not highlighted in this volume. They also trace the history and give the rationale of the e-portfolio initiative at the institutional level. This is followed by Hodgson's chapter on how the General Education courses have looked at the potential of e-portfolios for the General Education programme of the university as a

whole and how e-portfolios have been used not only to document the students' GE experience but also as a reflection on the transformation potential of the programme itself. In the last chapter in this part, Chan gives an insight into how academic disciplines can collaborate with other teaching and learning units such as the library to give the student a holistic e-portfolio experience which includes essential twenty-first century information literacy skills.

The appendix part of the book is directed squarely at practitioners who are itching to start with their e-portfolio implementation and are looking for a handy step-by-step introduction and or a template on which to build on. Correspondingly this part includes a set of guidelines (Appendix A) to start with student e-portfolios. Appendix B is a rubric which can be extended and or adapted to the needs of the particular practitioner. Finally it includes a short glossary with the terms usually associated with e-portfolios and a short commented list of free platforms which could be used as e-portfolio platforms in case the institution itself has not opted for one.

The book therefore offers a wide range of e-portfolio experiences both in terms of academic disciplines involved and the level of courses (GE vs. final year) and not forgetting the diverse set of voices ranging from researchers and practitioners as well as administrators and teaching and learning officers. But the most important voice in the book is that of the student which features prominently in the chapters of the book and helps to relativize and put into perspective the affordances of e-portfolios in higher education.

We wish all our readers a productive time with this book and extend our heartfelt thanks to all those who have contributed to it.

Hong Kong
October 2016

Tushar Chaudhuri
Béatrice Cabau

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Béatrice Cabau has been Associate Professor in the Department of Government and International Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University from 1997 until 2016. She has published extensively about language-in-education policy in Sweden. These last years, her research interests were based on her experience as French Stream Coordinator of the European Studies Programme to include pre-departure training for exchange students and the impact of the internationalisation of higher education at the local level in terms of societal ambitions as well as educational perspectives.

Contributors

Christopher Chan is the Head of Information Services at Hong Kong Baptist University Library. He is responsible for overseeing the provision of reference and instruction services, and advises the library's senior leadership team on the future direction of these programmes. His research interests include the assessment of information literacy competencies and the use of social media in academic libraries.

Prof. Siu Yin Cheung is Full Professor of the Department of Physical Education at Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU). She received her Master's and Doctoral degrees in Physical Education from Springfield College, Massachusetts, USA. Her research areas are sport and exercise psychology, elderly wellness, stress management, motor development and motor learning, as well as physical education.

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Chi Shan Chui earned her Master's degree in Foreign Language Teaching from the Justus Liebig University in Giessen, Germany. During her studies, she gained practical experience through internships at the adult education centre in Giessen and at Hong Kong Baptist University. She joined the Department of Government and International Studies at the HKBU in 2012 as lecturer and teaches German language courses in the European Studies programme.

Céline Dias holds a degree in Philosophy from La Sorbonne University and a Master degree specialised in Didactics of French as a Foreign Language (FFL) from the University of Rouen.

She joined the European Studies programme (GIS Department) at the Hong Kong Baptist University in 2010 where she is teaching the Bachelor of Social Sciences core French language courses at all levels. Her research interests focus on the influence of new technologies to learning and teaching FFL on learners' intercultural competences.

Cath Ellis is the Associate Dean (Education) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of New South Wales, in Sydney Australia. Cath has a background in Literature and her current research interests are in the area of higher education, and particularly in learning analytics and academic integrity.

Heather Kwok is Lecturer of the Physical Education Department at Hong Kong Baptist University. She is the Associate Director of the HKBU CIE Wellness Promotion Center. Her research has focused on the biomechanics of Taekwondo, and notational analysis of sports science.

Theresa Kwong, Ph.D. is Assistant Director of the Centre for Holistic Teaching and Learning at Hong Kong Baptist University. Her major responsibilities at the Centre include providing expertise to individuals and departments regarding pedagogical issues, teaching research postgraduate students basic teaching skills and applications of outcome-based approach, taking charge of the evidence collection of student learning and outcomes assessment. Her research interests include faculty professional development, service learning and academic integrity (theresa@hkbu.edu.hk).

Catherine Ladds is Assistant Professor of History at Hong Kong Baptist University, working on the history of colonial communities and China's relationship with the British empire. She has published widely on these themes, including her book, *Empire Careers*, which won the 2013–14 Hong Kong Academy of the Humanities First Book Prize. She is interested in the growth of the digital humanities and in exploring the uses of digital tools in history teaching. She can be contacted at cladds@hkbu.edu.hk.

Peter Lau is Senior Programme Officer of the Centre for Holistic Teaching and Learning, at Hong Kong Baptist University. He is taking charge of various student learning initiatives at the Centre such as arts and cultural education programme, sustainable service learning, creative drama education and graduate attributes

ambassador scheme. His research interests include development and assessment of students' generic skills, co-curricular activity outcomes assessment and e-portfolio.

Dr. Grace Oakley is the course coordinator of the Master of Teaching (Primary) at the Faculty of Education, the University of Western Australia. She has been involved in Higher Education for 16 years and is interested in students' use of e-portfolios to reflect on their learning and identify professional learning needs. Grace lectures and conducts research primarily in the areas of literacy, interventions for learning, educational technologies and mobile learning.

Mark Pegrum is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Australia, where he specialises in m-learning (mobile learning) and, more broadly, e-learning. His most recent book is *Mobile Learning: Languages, Literacies and Cultures* (Palgrave Macmillan 2014).

Atara Sivan is Professor and Head of the Department of Education Studies at the Hong Kong Baptist University. Her research includes teaching and learning approaches, adolescents' leisure and education, learning environments and action learning on which she has published extensively. She is the Editor-in-Chief of *World Leisure Journal* and the recipient of several international awards for her contribution to the field of knowledge and practice.

Simon Kai-Ming To is a Lecturer in the Department of Mathematics of Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), with his Ph.D. in Mathematics obtained from the University of Hong Kong in 2011. His teaching focuses on general education in mathematics, and he is particularly interested in the integration of e-learning elements into university courses. He received an honourable mention in the 2014–15 HKBU General Education Teaching Award.

Eva Wong, Ph.D. is the Director of the Centre for Holistic Teaching and Learning at Hong Kong Baptist University. With education and student learning being central to her work, she joined HKBU in February 2010 to take up major responsibilities for the professional development of academic staff, assisting the implementation of the outcome-based approach to teaching and learning and supporting the University's e-learning endeavours, with the main focus on enhancing student learning via a holistic approach.