The Australian ePortfolio Project: Research findings and the goals for AeP2

Gillian Hallam
Project Leader
Context: Review of Australian higher education discussion paper (2008)

Australia’s society and economy are changing in ways that will increase the importance of higher education to the nation...

Our future national prosperity must be built in the competitive, knowledge-based global economy.

Australia’s capacity for innovation and adaptability in industry and society will be a key determinant of our success.

We will need to make the most of our ‘human capital’ – our people – by encouraging individuals to upgrade their skills and knowledge and by providing education and training opportunities for people from all backgrounds.
Australian ePortfolio Project (AeP)

- **Commissioned grant from ALTC (formerly Carrick Institute)**
  (National / Higher Education / Quality of Teaching & Learning)

**Consortium of four universities:**
- Queensland University of Technology (QUT) (lead institution)
- University of Melbourne
- University of Wollongong
- University of New England

**Reference group:**
- included wide range of players
- Rob Ward, Centre for Recording Achievement (UK)
- Angela Smallwood, Centre for International ePortfolio Development (UK)

**Incorporated examination of links with Diploma Supplement / Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS)**
Project goals

- **Goal 1:** To provide an overview and analysis of the national and international context related to the development of portfolios, particularly ePortfolios, in tertiary education and schools.

- **Goal 2:** To document the types of portfolios, particularly ePortfolios, used in Australian higher education (including the different approaches, purposes, audiences and infrastructure).

- **Goal 3:** To identify any significant issues related to the approaches being developed in Australian education and the likely impact on what is happening in Australian higher education.

- **Goal 4:** To examine the potential relationship with the National Diploma Supplement work being conducted by a consortium of universities led by the University of New England and the University of Melbourne.

- **Goal 5:** To recommend ways to share excellent practice in the implementation and use of ePortfolios.

- **Goal 6:** To identify areas in which further development could be supported.
AeP research activities

• **Data collection**
  – Literature review and environmental scan
  – National audit
  – Focus groups
  – Semi-structured interviews
  – Student surveys: expectations and experiences
  – Mature users
  – Case studies

• **Different perspectives**
  – Educators
  – Academic managers
  – Educational technologists
  – Human resources staff
  – Learners

• **International Symposium**
  7–8 February 2008 at QUT, Brisbane

• **Final Report:** 22 October 2008
AeP
Australian ePortfolio Project

Australian ePortfolio Project
ePortfolio use by university students in Australia:
Informing excellence in policy and practice

Final project report August 2008

Key research findings

- High level of interest in the use of ePortfolios in the context of higher education
- Potential to help students become reflective learners
  - Conscious of their personal & professional strengths and weaknesses
  - Able to make their existing and developing skills more explicit
- Some good examples of early adoption in different institutions, distributed across the sector
- Greatest use in coursework programs, rather than research programs
- Implementation generally at subject or program level, with little faculty- or university-wide activity
- Responsibility for implementation frequently rested with the individual teaching unit
- An alternative centralised model of coordination by ICT services, careers and employment or teaching and learning support beginning to emerge
The current picture

- ePortfolio practice in Australian universities is fragmented
- Lack of a common language has led to some confusion amongst practitioners
- Variety of software tools available
- Scant research activity around the role of ePortfolios in education and employability skills
- Not yet equal to leading edge practice in other countries, but clear evidence of strong interest across the sector
- The AeP project itself has stimulated interest and engagement

- How can we achieve scalability of implementation?
The ePortfolio environment

- Four individual, yet interrelated, contexts where strategies may be employed to support and foster sustainable ePortfolio practice:
  - Government policy
  - Technical standards
  - Academic policy
  - Learning and teaching

- Need for cohesion to bring together the puzzle pieces to benefit:
  - Individual students
  - Quality of learning
  - Value of higher education outcomes
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Policy and practice factors</th>
<th>National relationships</th>
<th>International relationships</th>
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<td>HE policy</td>
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<td>HE sector, Schools, VET RPL</td>
<td>International research collaboration, InterNational Centre for ePortfolio Research, SURF NL</td>
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<td>Institutional relationships, VET Employers</td>
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<td>T&amp;L policy (faculty, course), T&amp;L support services, T&amp;L culture, ICT support services, Careers &amp; employment services</td>
<td>Discipline relationships, Professional bodies, Employers</td>
<td>International academic collaboration, Bologna AHEGS</td>
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<td>Individual</td>
<td>Personality, Attitudes, Experiences, Reflection, Learning styles</td>
<td>School, VET RPL</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Hallam, Harper and Hauville model of ePortfolio factors, stakeholders and relationships
Government policy environment

- Seeks to:
  - Enhance the quality of education
  - Encourage widened access to education opportunities
  - Support integration between vocational education and training and higher education

- With aim of:
  - Developing a highly skilled workforce that is committed to lifelong learning
Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the government departments with responsibilities for education engage with peak industry, professional and employer bodies to develop a shared understanding of the potential of ePortfolio practice to articulate employability skills.

2. It is recommended that government policy recognise ePortfolio practice as a strategy to build an integrated relationship between higher education and the vocational education and schools sector, in order to support the individual’s lifelong and lifewide learning needs and to increase the potential for career progression.
3. It is recommended that the higher education sector acknowledge the role of the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement as an authenticated document reporting student achievement, compiled and verified by the academic institution at the time of graduation, while further acknowledging the value of the ePortfolio process to articulate the integrative aspects of student learning.
Technical standards

- Learner mobility issues
- Within and between:
  - Education
  - Training
  - Employment
- Within and between
  - Institutions
  - Sectors
  - Jurisdictions
- Requires:
  - Transferability of data about individuals
  - Interoperability of systems
Recommendations

4. It is recommended that Australian ePortfolio stakeholders continue to develop the collaborative relationship with partners in the eFramework for Education and Research initiative in order to ensure that aspects of ICT in education and research are developed and implemented strategically.

5. It is recommended that the international information standards for ePortfolio practice be adopted as an Australian technical framework, in order to facilitate the exchange of information and data across institutional, sectoral and jurisdictional boundaries.
Academic policy

- Academic managers need a broad understanding of the value that ePortfolios can bring to:
  - Learning
  - Teaching
  - Career development

- Scope for ePortfolios to become a fundamental aspect of the academic environment
  - Integration with current and future eLearning strategies

- Academic policy makers need to be conscious of the potential of ePortfolios to contribute to:
  - Student-centred learning strategies
  - Transparent learning outcomes
  - Employability skills for graduates

- Requires strong alignment between the strategic, tactical and operational areas of academic management
Recommendation

6. It is recommended that academic policy in higher education institutions recognises the value of ePortfolio practice as a component of different pedagogies that enhance the quality of learning and teaching across the institution.
Learning and teaching

• Adopters of ePortfolio practice recognise the value of the ePortfolio process, when embedded in learning and teaching activities, to help students:
  – Move beyond knowing what they have learned to consider how they have learned
  – Reflect on their learning and achievement
  – Plan for their personal, academic and career development

• Need for teaching staff to:
  – Reduce isolation
  – Work collaboratively across disciplines and institutions
  – Engage in communities of practice
Recommendations

7. It is recommended that the various stakeholders in higher education who are interested in ePortfolios utilise the ePortfolio toolkits to guide and inform their practice.

8. It is recommended that ePortfolio stakeholders establish a Community of Practice to share learning and experiences of quality ePortfolio practice in higher education, in order to foster scholarship and research and to provide a forum for dissemination about good practice.

9. It is recommended that a regular Australasian conference be convened to explore and discuss ePortfolio research and practice.
Australia is in the early stages of ePortfolio research

AeP is the first major research project to investigate ePortfolio practice in higher education

In the vocational education sector, the Australian Flexible Learning Framework is examining issues and developments associated with ePortfolios

Cross-sector activity emerging in the areas of:
- Policy
- Technical standards
- Recognition of prior learning

Scope for further research into the impact of ePortfolios on learning processes and outcomes within and beyond the university
10. It is recommended that the Australian Learning and Teaching Council adopt a leading role to foster and support further research into the educational benefits of ePortfolio practice.
Which has led to AeP2... with the goals:

- To develop a forum within the ALTC Exchange to support an ePortfolio Community of Practice
- To develop strategies to encourage interest in and engagement with community of practice activities
- To develop and promote resources to support the diverse stakeholders in ePortfolio practice
- To collaborate in the establishment of a cross-sector ePortfolio Community of Practice
- To host a second Australian ePortfolio Symposium (AeP2) to disseminate the findings from the Australian ePortfolio Project, to explore innovative practice in ePortfolio use in higher education; to articulate policy developments and to stimulate discussion on international ePortfolio issues
- To host an associated trade display as a forum for strengthening the higher education sector’s understanding of the features and functionality of ePortfolio platforms.
- To develop resources to support an ePortfolio symposium model that may be adopted for future events.
The value of AeP2

- The work undertaken in Australia, funded by the ALTC, has been recognised nationally and internationally as having focused interest on ePortfolio policy and practice.
- It represents an opportunity to move beyond simple project work to offer the potential for sustainable activity.
- To join up the puzzle pieces:
  - Linking with other ALTC projects
  - Opening up cross-sector dialogue
    - Schools
    - VET
    - Employers and professional associations
  - Helping students to understand their courses, their curriculum, their future careers
AeP2 Symposium

Day 1

- The theme of developing sustainable communities of practice
  - International, national, regional perspectives
  - Industry, institutional, discipline perspectives
- International examples: NL and UK
- Some of the challenges we face in Australia
- Some of the opportunities for cross-sector engagement
- The linkages with other key areas of interest:
  - National Graduate Attributes Project
  - First Year Experience: Curriculum Design
- Strategic collaboration at the international level
- Institutional perspectives:
  - Curriculum design
  - Strategies and frameworks to support scalability and sustainability
AeP2 Symposium

Day 2

- Discipline initiatives that focus on employability:
  - Health sciences, law, education, engineering
- An industry-wide pilot project to investigate education, employability and career development
- Support for student transition and student mobility
- Academic development issues
- And the future… round tables to collectively stimulate the creative juices
- Some preliminary steps – the ePortfolio practice group set up within the ALTC Exchange
- Ideas, discussion and conversations… around research, policy, practice, processes and tools
The take-aways…

- What will you take away with you?
- Who will you stay in touch with?
- Who will you talk to when you are back on campus?
- What will you do?
For further information

AeP website
www.eportfoliopractice.qut.edu.au

AeP Final Report

Gillian Hallam
g.hallam@qut.edu.au
Building Communities of Practice: experience from the UK

Janet Strivens
Director, Centre for Lifelong Learning
University of Liverpool
and Senior Associate Director, CRA

with

Bill Greenwood
Project Director, Recording Achievement
and Higher Education Project

Mike Killingley
Senior Manager Executive Education
HSBC
Ten universities from mainland Europe, the UK and the US are participating in the 2007-10 cohort of the Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research.

The most recent edition of the INCPER Newsletter can be downloaded [here](#).

An introductory outline for cohort IV can be downloaded [here](#).

**Developing sectoral policy in e-portfolio practice to support employer engagement and workforce development.**

The Employer Engagement Project aims to encourage policy development in within the UK higher education sector, to ensure that the development of e-portfolios is fully informed by employer needs and expectations.
Topics highlighted in the video

- Communities of practice
  - The story
  - The learning along the way
  - A bit of a walk down memory lane
  - Some thoughts about paths for the future

- The importance of continuity for learners, across their learning journey
- Cross-sector collaboration
- Stakeholder involvement
- Engaging with professionals
- The value of sharing knowledge and understanding
Further topics in the video

- Community activities through CRA
  - Residential seminars
  - Professional development days
  - Sub-group activities
    - Regional groups
    - Technology-related
    - Project focused
  - User support groups
  - eLists
    - Information and resource sharing
  - Newsletters
- Case study:
  - National Action Research Network (NARN)
National Action Research Network
Researching and Evaluating
Personal Development Planning (PDP)
and e-Portfolio

The introduction of student Personal Development Planning (PDP) was the first attempt in UK Higher Education to implement a particular framework for enhancing and capturing student learning by sector wide agreement. In order to maintain and enhance practice in ways which ensure maximum efficacy, it is now essential to deepen our understanding of its impact on the student learning experience.

National Action Research Network on Researching and Evaluating Personal Development Planning and e-Portfolio Practice is managed by Sue Burkinshaw (University of Bolton), Dr John Peters, (NTF 2001), University of Worcester, and Rob Ward, Director of Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) drawing on the expertise and network power of the CRA.

The project brings together those at the forefront of PDP implementation across the Higher Education Sector.
Rob concludes…

- Communities of practice offer the opportunity for collaborative activities
  - Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research (I/NCEPR)
  - Cohort III
- Opportunities for collaboration between Australia and UK
- His good wishes for the symposium and the opportunities for networking