Frameworks for ePortfolio Practice

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Sharing our experiences as early adopters: a personal reflective account

• What we have done in the Bachelor of Education
• Why we introduced an eportfolio
• How we have introduced an eportfolio
  - our work with frameworks.

• Issues and challenges

• Discussion
So how did we get into eportfolios?

- Our Bachelor of Education students were not always technologically capable or confident.

- Teachers wanted to expand their own ICT capability and its use within the curriculum.

- Our students would have to produce evidence of their competence over the next two years to gain registration.

- We also wanted to assist them in gaining their first employment and prepare them for lifelong and professional learning.

However our students were:
- Already familiar with the concept of portfolios.
- Using reflective practices and approaches to learning.
So.........................

- The (TEC) e-Learning Collaboration Development Fund project for the development of an e-portofolio (Eduforge, 2006).

- Initially involved the creation of an open source platform for the New Zealand Tertiary sector, which was named Mahara.

- Also included implementation of Mahara within a variety of tertiary settings. Implementation had to:
  - occur within a degree programme, cohort or area of study
  - with more than 20 students, with preferably diverse characteristics, for example, part time and full time students
  - offer mandatory and voluntary choices, and
  - include both summative and formative assessment.
The Mahara Implementation

• Third (final) year Bachelor of Education students
• 75 students and 8 teachers
• Strong institutional support - at all levels and especially our Flexible Learning Adviser and Flexible Services manager.

• Introduced across a range of courses – curriculum, practicum and educational/theoretical.
• No high level integrative framework – each teacher chose a mix of summative and formative activities that best suited the learning outcomes for their course, for example:
  - Weekly reflections on practicum incidents.
  - Philosophy statements.
  - Exemplars eg lesson plans, school policies, photos, children’s work.
  - Feedback from peers and teachers.
Redevelopment for 2009

Reflecting on our programme:

- Our students had a fragmented view of their learning and did not see the ‘big picture’
- Difficulty connecting their practicum to theoretical concepts and/or what they learned at university and vice versa.
- Difficulty understanding the roles of the three strands (curriculum, practice and contextual/theoretical)
- Little understanding of wider expectations e.g. for graduation and registration

We wanted to introduce a more student driven, experiential and holistic approach to student development.
Frameworks

Taken for granted in eportfolio practice?

Greenberg’s (2004) concept of a structured portfolio:
“a predefined organisation exists for the work that is yet to be created” (p31).

Benefits

• **For students**
  - an effective focus for student’s time and attention
  - can demonstrate their evolving skills against a standard
  - can facilitate discussion of their development with peers
  - can assist their career preparation and planning,

• **For teachers** – facilitates assessment, review and evaluation

• **For curriculum** – can promote consistency across students, facilitate new forms of assessment, especially authentic assessment

• **For institutions** – can support broad goals for its graduates as well as programme specific skills.
Ring and Foti’s study (2006)

Identified benefits for students:

• raised their consciousness of the standards (the Florida Accomplished Practices) and helped them to understand what was expected professionally

• helped them to understand the complexity of being a teacher and the need to reflect and “examine the appropriateness of their teaching choices”’ (p344)

• Increased student ownership through their involvement in the process ie selected artefacts and connected them to the standards: their responsibility!

• Some evidence of transformative potential i.e. student learning through making decisions, and justifying them against the standards – addressing the challenge of explaining the connection between their practice and the standard.
Barrett’s (2005) discussion of conflicting paradigms of Eportfolios - based on Pearl and Paulsen’s (1994. p.36) work:

**Positivist Portfolios**

“The purpose of the portfolio is to **assess learning outcomes** and those outcomes are, generally, **defined externally**. Positivism assumes that **meaning is constant** across users, contexts, and purposes… The **portfolio is a receptacle** for examples of student work used to infer what and how much learning has occurred…. **Selection of items that reflect outside standards and Interests”**

**Constructivist Portfolios**

“The portfolio is a learning environment in which **the learner constructs meaning**. It assumes that **meaning varies** across individuals, over time, and with purpose. The portfolio presents process, **a record of the processes** associated with learning itself; a summation of individual portfolios would be too complex for normative description… **Selection of items that reflect learning from the student’s perspective.”**
Frameworks in Practice

Occur at different levels:

Learning outcomes for a SINGLE COURSE

Graduate profile or outcomes for a PROGRAMME
eg B Ed Graduate profile excerpt.ppt

Graduate statements or skills or competency descriptors for a UNIVERSITY graduates (eg inquiry, creativity, leadership, writing, life management, values based decisions)

REGIONAL OR NATIONAL standards statements and generally relating to professional or occupation requirements
Eg NZTC
Frameworks also can be:

Unidimensional .............

Multi dimensional/matrices incorporating:
Different learning settings
eg Walz (2006) Florida State University (Walz)

OR

Time/developmental stages
eg Hakel, Gromko & Blackburn (2006) Bowling Green State University (Hakel)
Chosing A Framework for the B. Ed

Two possibilities

The NZTC Graduating Standards
- Clearly communicate national expectations
- Important for registration over the following two years
- But complex with 7 standards comprising 29 substandards

The B. Ed Graduate Profile
- Reflects the School’s local culture and values and the students’ learning experiences
- Describes our graduates special character which is important for employment
- Simple with 12 characteristics
Unidimensional or Matrix?

Advantages of a matrix framework:

- Is holistic and presents or enable the student to deal with “the big picture” rather than atomized papers, years or credits
- Can be more constructivist and student focused
- Shows development over time, which is especially valuable for students.
- Develops students own voice.
- Can provide a scaffold for learning
- Facilitates both formative and summative assessment
- Can support learning AND employment and registration
- Easy to access on a year by year basis for students and their peers
- Easier for teachers for marking
- Easy to produce a showcase from the third year
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Self assessment/reflection</td>
<td>Evidence located at ..........</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate Profile 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; characteristic</td>
<td>Self assessment/reflection</td>
<td>Evidence located at ..........</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenges: Where to start?

Anchored in the Professional Practice and Inquiry Papers:

- Full year papers from the beginning to the end of the programme.
- Already a strong emphasis on teacher identity, philosophy, becoming a competent teacher and professional growth.
- Strong connections to practicum and actual student teaching, easier to build connection between theory and practice.
- An existing pedagogy based around reflection, goal setting and evaluation and ICT development deliberately developed and embedded across the three years (AUTOnline, Powerpoint, Blogging, Smartboards, Digital stories).

A learning progression for students where:

- students make choices of artefacts
- we specify the minimum number of artefacts and increase them until last year when students decide
- We indentify relevant Standards or Profile characteristics at the beginning.
Learning and support issues

1. Ensuring that students understand WHY eportfolios are being introduced and how they relate to their learning and development.

2. Technology support to cater for a wide range of learners

3. New thinking skills?
   • Reflection
   • Hamiltons (2006) idea of matrix thinking’ – the need to write a reflection for each cell of the matrix ie to relate the artefact to the row and column component
   • Using evidence to justify a position and explaining that position
   • Whole picture or integrated thinking.

The tension between showcase and developmental portfolios for students - however see Pellicconne, Dixon and Giddings (2005) research which shows increasing support for self reflection and professional growth.
Assessment

A combination of assessment FOR learning and assessment OF Learning.

Additional formative activities for the eportfolio:
• milestones with teacher/peer feedback
• students working in pairs/teams
• feedback from peers.

Summative assessment
• Is embedded within the PIP papers themselves
• Initially receive formative feedback on EP
• Increasing emphasis in year 2 on summative assessment of EP
• Last year – final assessment PIP 3

(a) Students choose aspects of their development and present these through their eportfolios.
(b) assessment team (teachers) to choose others.
Teachers

- Commitment from everyone who is using the eportfolio.
- A collegial decision making model
- Workload
- Professional Learning:
  - about a new technology
  - development of an eportfolio pedagogy, especially the role of an eportfolio within a blended environment.
  - issues of transition and change.
Concluding comments

The framework is a fundamental aspect of introducing an eportfolio to students.

Eportfolios which are built on a matrix framework have the potential to introduce new forms of thinking which are integrated, and relational.

Choices are underpinned by the educational and professional setting as well as the philosophies of the teachers.

Scholarship can help to inform the decision making process.

Collegial discussion and decision making promotes professional learning, development of the new curriculum and commitment.
References


Eduforge/NZ e-portfolio Project retrieved 14.06.2007 from https://eduforge.org/projects/nzE_portfolio


