

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.

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