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Purpose and design of an ePortfolio

Jean Claude Callens¹, Jan Elen²

University College, South-West-Flanders; Catholic University of Leuven

Key words: *ePortfolio, design of an ePortfolio*

Abstract:

The focus of this contribution is the relationship between the purpose to use an ePortfolio and its design. By highlighting the relationship between purposes and design of an ePortfolio, we want to present a framework that gives directives to use an ePortfolio in an educational context. When used for lifelong learning and / or 'assessment for learning', student-ownership and reflection are important characteristics. When used for accreditation (= 'assessment of learning') the use of 'standards' is at least equally important.

1 Introduction

There has been a significant increase in the use of ePortfolio's [1].

Meeus, Van Looy, and Van Petegem [2] note that information stored in a portfolio can be used for varied purposes. The focus of this contribution is the relationship between the purpose to use an ePortfolio and its design: 'Can one type of an ePortfolio serve several purposes?'

By highlighting the relationship between purposes and design of an ePortfolio, we want to present a framework that gives directives to the use of ePortfolio's in educational contexts. To do this, an literature analysis has been conducted.

2 Results

Callens and Elen [3] determine on the basis of a literature analysis, a clear conceptual link between the design of an ePortfolio and the purpose of it.

Design of an ePortfolio? → depends of the purpose		
Assessment of learning	Assessment for learning	Lifelong learning
-The use of standards -(Reflection)	-Reflection -Student-ownership	-Student-ownership -Reflection
Positivist paradigm	Constructivist paradigm	Constructivist paradigm
CS-approach	GT-approach	GT-approach

Fig. 1: purpose and design of an ePortfolio

2.1 Student-ownership/the use of standards

When the purpose to use an ePortfolio is life-long learning and/or 'assessment for learning'; 'student ownership' and reflection are often indicated as the most important characteristics. After all, lifelong learning asks for continuation; this implies the idea that students maintain their portfolio after graduation. To do this, students have to be motivated. An important element to motivate students to maintain their ePortfolio after graduation, is to give them

ownership over content (artifacts, reflections,...), purpose (the reason for creating the portfolio) and process (sequence of activities, the evaluation criteria, the rules,...).[4] The literature analysis also revealed that student-ownership is an important characteristic of an ePortfolio when the purpose is 'assessment for learning'.

The results of the research of Tartwijk et al. [5] show that students are often more motivated to 'maintain' their ePortfolio during their study, when they can choose the 'look and feel' of the ePortfolio.

When the ePortfolio is used for accreditation (cf. 'assessment of learning ') the evidence in an ePortfolio has to be checked on validity by using standards [4, 5], and on authenticity of the artifacts (e.g. by using a supervisor). [6]

In addition, Gibson and Barrett [7] distinguish two ePortfolio-systems: 'generic tools' (GT) and 'customized systems approaches' (CS). A CS-approach is more top-down organized and can be related to the purpose 'assessment of learning'. A GT approach, at the other hand, gives more initiative to the student, here the purposes 'lifelong learning' and/or 'assessment for learning' fit very well. In daily practice, many ePortfolios can be characterized as hybrid systems; with characteristics of both ePortfolio-systems. [3]

2.2 Reflection

The literature analysis revealed that when the purpose to use an ePortfolio is lifelong learning[8] and/or 'assessment for learning' [9, 10, 11,12,13] reflection is argued to be an important characteristic of an ePortfolio. After all, when we aim at those purposes, students have to be able to determine their needs for further training; therefore reflection on what they have learned can be seen as an important step to do this.

When used for accreditation (= 'assessment of learning') it's more obvious to use a 'show-case portfolio' than a 'reflection portfolio'. [14] However, the importance of reflection in a 'show-case portfolio' depends on the context. When used for AP(e)L (=accreditation of prior experiential learning), we assume that reflection is important when we want to assess the general competence 'critical reflection'. Reflection-assignments, used during an educational programme, seem less important when an ePortfolio is considered as a 'show-case portfolio'. [14] When the show-case portfolio is used for application, Giorgini (Giorgini Fabrizio, ePortfolioconference 26-10-2005) assumes that 'the reflections' stored in an ePortfolio can be useful for HRM and selection/assessment; however the literature analysis revealed no specific evidence or argumentation.

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Author(s):

[1] Jean Claude Callens
University College, South-West-Flanders,
KATHO, Impulscentrum & Expertisecentrum Afstandsleren
Doorniksesteenweg 145
B-8500 Kortrijk
Jeanclaude.callens@katho.be

[2] Jan Elen, Professor, PHD
Catholic University of Leuven
Faculteit Psychologie en Pedagogische wetenschappen,
Centrum voor Instructiepsychologie en -technologie