
ePORTFOLIO COMPARISON - FORM OR FUNCTION? - ABSTRACT

Alan White (Academic Registry, Northumbria University)

Abstract: Despite having widespread access to the Blackboard VLE ePortfolio for a number of years, take-up within the author's university has tended to be both sporadic and assessment driven. Concern has been expressed that what is seen as the restrictive nature of the Blackboard ePortfolio is hampering more widespread use and that a different product would be more likely to encourage teacher enthusiasm, individual expression and inter-student collaboration.

At the same time there is recognition that Web 2.0 technologies have the potential to radically alter aspects of teaching and learning within the university, not least with respect to the domains presently encompassed by the concept of ePortfolio. However, it would also be fair to say that the radical and less controllable aspects of Web 2.0 approaches cause a certain amount of discomfort in some quarters of the institution. This tension between those who wish to explore and risk-take compared with those who would prefer for the university to own a product which has clearly delineated parameters and branding capabilities is producing a positive and healthy debate and, amongst other things, has resulted in the requirement for this report.

The aim of this work in progress is to produce a comparison between two marketed ePortfolios (Blackboard VLE ePortfolio and Pebble Pad) as well as a social learning space (Eduspaces) and a social meeting space (Facebook). The intention at this stage is not to recommend a product for purchase but to explore the possibilities offered by various settings as well as to initiate an understanding of what the university requires for future e-learning and e-teaching environments.

The initial phase of the report examines existing comparative trials of ePortfolios in order to devise a matrix of functions. This will then be fitted to the Blackboard and Pebble Pad products and afterwards mapped across to Eduspaces and Facebook. The second stage involves individual qualitative interviews to explore both the outcomes of the mapping exercise as well as personal perceptions of ePortfolio and social e-space usage.

Emerging themes will then be examined in the light of the initial function matrix and further refinements made if necessary. The final report will be presented to the university E-Learning Enhancement Group and will contribute to the overall debate with respect to the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Keywords: ePortfolio, Facebook, Eduspaces, Pebble Pad, Blackboard

Author

Alan White
Northumbria University
Academic Registry
3 Ellison Terrace
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE1 8ST
United Kingdom
alan.white@unn.ac.uk