Reconnecting relationships through technology

Transitioning e-portfolio implementation from early adoption to widespread use

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While e-portfolio use in higher education has increased steadily over the past decade (Lu, 2021, McAllistar & Hauville, 2017) challenges and barriers in broad implementation remain (Paulson, & Campbell, 2018). After several years of 'piloting' an e-portfolio platform in our faculty, we find ourselves in a position described by Reynolds and Pirie (2016) as the 'chasm' between moving from early to majority adoption. This presentation will discuss key barriers we have experienced in transitioning to widespread use of e-portfolio across the faculty and how we have addressed these to date.

Academic buy-in - the value of 'champions'

The pedagogical benefits of e-portfolio adoption for formative assessment and reflection on learning are widely documented (Paulson & Campbell, 2018, Miller & Morgaine, 2009). Integrating the e-portfolio for these purposes at the subject level requires an intentional re-design of the assessment schedule, often resulting in increased opportunities for iterative feedback throughout the semester (Fallowfield et al., 2019). Although this is beneficial to student learning, it can place extra pressure on stretched academic workloads.

Furthermore, while e-portfolio adoption can benefit individual subjects, it is most valuable when it is embedded at the course or program level (Hallam et al, 2010). To achieve the programmatic implementation of an e-portfolio platform, however, requires complex collaboration across a range of stakeholders. In particular, our experience shows that success in embedding e-portfolio at the program level relies upon the program director championing the new education practice (in our case, the program director of the Bachelor of Media & Communications, or BMC). Partnering with a high level and committed champion of change in academic leadership helped to secure buy-in across the teaching team, and agreement on a coherent pedagogical approach.

Technology and student support - collaborative and sustainable

While cross-team collaboration is an essential factor for e-portfolio adoption at the unit level, successful rollout can generate resourcing challenges for teams involved (in addition to the aforementioned academic workload). In our experience, student training and support was largely provided by professional staff at the faculty level. The onerous nature of synchronous training lead to the development and implementation of asynchronous orientation modules and a focus on 'just-in-time' instructional resources.

Resource issues were exacerbated further due to the lack of a central e-portfolio solution within the University. Individual faculties have selected various platforms to meet their pedagogical and disciplinary needs, and supported the use of these 'in-house'. Our faculty team was often consumed by supporting technological issues, hampering our efforts to focus on wider implementation. This piecemeal approach to support makes it difficult to affect change (Paulson, & Campbell, 2018). In order to address this issue, we drew on the successful integration of the e-portfolio in the BMC as a model of best practice and a strong case on which to secure University-level and vendor technical support for the platform.

As we continue to 'cross that chasm', we welcome more units onto our e-portfolio platform, and seek further opportunities to build the broader collaborative networks and academic enthusiasm necessary for widespread adoption.

Keywords: e-portfolio, implementation, chasm, barriers, academic buy-in, champions, technology, student support, collaborative and sustainable.

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