Chapter 11
Use of E-Portfolios in Health Professions Education

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ABSTRACT

In light of the changing landscape of workforce demand, digital technologies are becoming increasingly important to support students with their studies and professional preparation. As such, tertiary institutions are embedding curriculum approaches focused on the development of employability skills and drawing upon technology in order to prepare students for the real world of work in a manner that is scalable and transferable. Digital technologies such as ePortfolios have become an increasingly utilized platform for reflection, evidencing professional competencies and professional branding. Within this chapter, the authors discuss the benefits and limitations of these platforms from the perspectives of students, staff, professional, and institutional contexts. Case studies are utilzsed to demonstrate ePortfolios in practice across the allied health disciplines and key research questions and solutions for the future are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The use of portfolios as a repository for learning artefacts is not a new phenomenon. Professions such as teacher education (Allan & Cleland, 2012; Lee & Pohio, 2012), construction (Williams, Simmons, Levett-Jones, Sher, & Bowen, 2012) engineering (Faulkner, Aziz, Waye, & Smith, 2013), and the creative arts (Blom & Hitchcock, 2017) have been using portfolios as a means of recording achievements and collating resources for decades. The introduction of the ePortfolio has resulted in an increase in the availability, practicality and assimilation of portfolios, with various forms of technology. The electronic format of the portfolio evolved as a popular alternative to the paper-based approach, due to its functionality and ability to provide instructors the access to evaluate and provide feedback asynchronously. In addition, ePortfolios have the capacity to promote and track student learning, and provide a tool for student reflection as they develop an awareness of what they have learned across a curriculum (Chen & Penny Light, 2010). ePortfolios can be used to document subject, degree and graduate competencies/capabilities as well as provide a space to document and track the development of employability skills with the overarching goal of creating work-ready graduates.

BACKGROUND

A Short History of the Portfolio and ePortfolio

Portfolios have been utilized for career purposes since the early 1800s to showcase achievements in music, fine arts, photography, architecture, and graphic design (Blom & Hitchcock, 2017). Portfolios remain a widely used tool for evidencing professional competencies where selected items of work are compiled to demonstrate the achievements and abilities of the owner.

   The use of ePortfolios in education evolved out of print-based student portfolios with significant writing components. Due to the challenges of handling media in the infancy of the internet, ePortfolios emerged as written works in disciplines such as English studies (Connolly, Gould, Hainey, Waugh & Boyle, 2010). Portfolios and ePortfolios have both been used for the owner to analyse and reflect on their work – students collect their work, select examples to showcase, and reflect on what they learned (Yancey, 2001).

   With improvements technology, the content in ePortfolios developed to more closely resemble a modern version of an artist's portfolio (Meyer, Abrami, Wade, Aslan & Deault, 2010), containing electronic artefacts such as text, audio, images, video, multimedia, certificates, and digital badges. In addition to the enhanced content

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