

Can't Engage, Won't Engage – The Impact of Staff and Student E-Literacy on using electronic portfolios.

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Abstract

This paper reports on how staff and student e-literacy and e-fluency have affected the use of and learning from electronic portfolios as part of the Enhancing Learner Progression Project (ELP), a JISC funded distributed e-learning project.

The project has been using e-portfolios with 50 tutors and supervisors and 453 users in a range of different contexts:

- Sixth form / FE college students to aid progression into HE.
- Undergraduate students (Clinical Sciences and Nursing) to aid PPD.
- Trainee doctors and their supervisors undergoing the 'Foundation Years Curriculum' leading to professional registration.

The aim is to use e-portfolios to encourage reflection and deeper learning based on prior experiences. The role of tutors is to encourage reflection and learning through formative feedback using the e-portfolio as well as assessing student learning on completion.

A recurring theme has emerged from all contexts; tutors often have a greater reluctance to engage with electronic portfolios than students. There appears to be a skills gap between what skills tutors need to use e-portfolios for effective learning with students and what skills and attitudes they currently have. Existing pedagogical models do not always work in the e-vironment and time to adapt and learn new skills is cited as a big concern. The barriers for staff are based around the e-bit, whereas for students, the barriers are more around the literacy bit. The potential added value that the technology has to offer portfolios is not being fully realised.

Tutors have a steeper learning curve than the students using the e-portfolio. In this context, the staff are the learners in the first instance. The practical implications in trying to use e-portfolios in teaching and learning are that staff learning and engagement needs to be the highest priority. Without this the students are not going to engage or learn with e-portfolios and the 'added value' of e-learning is lost.