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# “IS ANYBODY OUT THERE?” DEVELOPING THE SKILLS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING: TOWARDS A MODEL OF ENGAGEMENT IN THE E-PORTFOLIO PROCESS.

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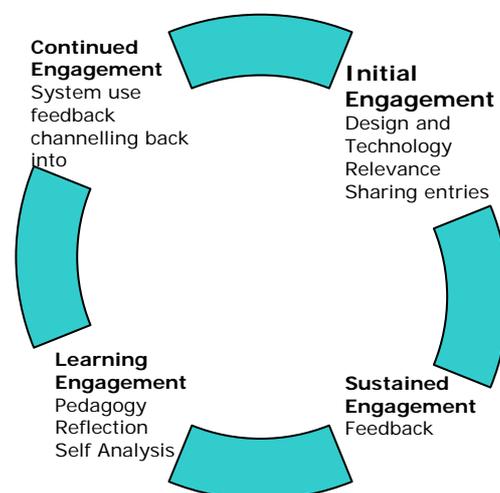
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## Introduction

Sections of the academic world declare that the use of e-portfolios has “a potential to alter education at its very core.” (Batson, 2003) There are claims that e-portfolio use promotes learner-centred development, enables the reflective process and supports lifelong and, the newer notion of, life-wide learning. But do the users and potential users of e-portfolios feel the same?

Recent papers reports and presentations on user engagement (Tosh et al, 2005; Epistle project report 2006; Murray 2006) have attempted to analyse and delineate these factors and there are common themes which emerge through all of this research: Relevance, Technology, Organisational Culture/Support. These issues fall into the categories of internal and external factors and impact not only on initial use of the use of the e-portfolio but also on the ‘type’ of usage experienced by the learner.

This paper will attempt to build on this research ask and answer the following questions: What makes an individual delve in to the learning world of e-portfolios? Which environments and individual learner traits support engagement? What type of engagement is needed and are there factors which affect the ‘type’ of engagement experienced? It will also attempt to revise and expand an earlier model of learner engagement in the e-portfolio process (Figure 1)



**Figure 1: Model of E-portfolio Engagement (Murray, 2006)**

The revised model of engagement adds in to the equation the type of engagement as the main focus *not* the stage of engagement as illustrated above. Ultimately it is individuals who populate the use of the e-portfolios. Individuals with different needs and ingrained approaches to their own learning.

## **The Enhancing Learner Progression Project (ELP)**

The ELP project is a partnership project involving the University of Bradford, The University of Leeds and Leeds Metropolitan University. The project commenced in July 2005 and will finish in Dec 2006.

The main purpose of the Leeds project is to explore the use of e-portfolios at key transition phases; From College/6<sup>th</sup> Form to university and from university to work. To pilot the project 3 broad cohorts of students/trainees were selected: Students from local colleges and 6<sup>th</sup> forms who wished to apply to university to study healthcare courses or medicine; post and undergraduate nurses undertaking clinical placements and a group of newly graduated medical students embarking on their first position as Pre-Registration House Officers (PRHOs) and undertaking the newly developed two-year 'NHS Foundation Years Training for Doctors'.

Initially the project planned to (ELP Project Report 2005):

- Enhance the capacity building of individuals and groups through the effective use of technology to assist learners to access, piece together and manage their learning in a range of institutional, informal and work-based settings.
- Facilitate wider participation in HE through raising aspirations and attainment by providing learners with:
  - a more seamless learning experience,
  - better learning tools,
  - easier access to personal learning planning and portfolios.
- Support and develop staff by providing guidance on how to mentor and guide students using these e-Learning systems and resources.
- Share materials and resources common to Compact Schemes, including study/learning skills and mentoring.
- Engender a sense of students belonging to a wider community of learners and promote greater interaction amongst learners at different partner institutions.
- Support greater communication, collaboration and information interchange across the consortium.
- Implement e-portfolios – personal development planning, recording of achievement, tutor, peer and self-assessment tools to support progression from higher education into work.
- Provide electronic evidence of achievement that can raise aspirations
- Facilitate student progression into work by enhancing the student experience in work based placements
- Support and develop work based teaching staff by providing guidance and training on e-portfolio systems.
- Establish good practice guidelines in e-support of students prior to entry and after graduation – in particular access to content and services.

The three strands operated in 3 different environments Further Education, Higher Education and the work place.

### ***Purpose of The E-Portfolios***

All of the e-portfolios were created within the University of Leeds Bodington VLE system. The system allows learners to create entries, upload files and determine who they would like to share their work and entries with. The students can access the e-portfolio directly from a hyperlink and have all been assigned usernames and passwords. All learners were introduced to the e-portfolio system and how to use it, in addition they were provided with a users manual, access to a website with instruction on use and given both telephone and e-mail details of staff who could offer assistance if they experienced problems. All of the e-portfolios are developmental and are for learning purposes.

## *PRHOs*

The impetus for the inception of the Foundation Year e-portfolio arose from the nationwide 'Modernising NHS' agenda. Previously the training of PRHOs was conducted on a local basis with each local deanery setting guidelines and outcomes. These local arrangements were replaced in July 2005 with a nationwide portfolio approach through the publication of the 'Foundation Years Curriculum for PRHOs'. Each PRHO would spend blocks of time in different departments and be assigned an educational supervisor who would oversee each placement, providing feedback on assessments and progress. Using this feedback each PRHO was required to formulate regular personal development plans highlighting their own training needs and discuss any areas for improvement. The portfolio also required PRHOs to reflect on their experiences and learning and share these, if they wished, with their supervisor. The practical assessments themselves took place on wards and in discussions with clinical and educational supervisors.

The paper-based version of the portfolio was converted into an e-version in conjunction with a manager at the hospital. Assessments would be scanned into the e-portfolio and the formation of PDPs, self assessments, reflective comments and provision of feedback would be provided within the main body of the e-portfolio tool. In order to continue on to the second phase of their training PRHOs will need to have completed a required number of assessments and have successfully signed off various compulsory forms such as 'Personal Development Plan', 'Initial Learning Agreement' and 'End of Placement Review'. There were also voluntary sections of the portfolio which are not required to move on to the next stage of the process but which were designed to facilitate learning these included 'Careers Management', 'End of Placement Self Evaluation' and 'Mid-point Review'.

The e-portfolio was launched to 33 PRHOs through a presentation in July 2005 and through an additional training session in Oct 2005. Additionally 33 educational supervisor accounts were created. No training was provided for the supervisors due to their workload and commitments. It was assumed by hospital staff that the supervisors would intuitively be able to use the e-portfolio.

## *Nurses*

The School of Healthcare was attracted to the use of e-portfolios as a means to communicate remotely with students whilst they were on clinical placements. As part of their training requirements students were required to complete a 'Practice Evidence Record' which enabled them to illustrate learning on placement. This was shared with their clinical supervisor on the ward and with their tutors when they returned to university. The e-portfolio enabled this feedback to be provided by all of these parties whilst the student was still on placement and speeded up the provision of development as students were able to implement any necessary changes whilst still actively on placement. The e-portfolio also provided students with the facility to reflect on their experiences and learning and cross reference their learning and evidence with the required learning outcomes.

Fifteen nurses attended an introductory session in June 2005 7 agreed to use the e-portfolio. A second cohort of students attended an introductory session in Oct 2005, 23 signed up to use the e-portfolio.

## *FE/6<sup>th</sup> Forms*

Widening participation to Higher Education is a major cornerstone of the governments economic and inclusion agenda. Medicine and healthcare courses are traditionally extremely competitive areas and approximately 1 in 10 people who apply to these courses will be successful (Heap, 2006). Medicine in particular is heavily composed of individuals from families with professional and managerial backgrounds (UCAS, 2006) An on-line careers education programme was developed within the e-portfolio tool containing exercises designed to raise awareness of these careers, the types of skills the students would be expected to demonstrate and develop, formulating applications and a personal statement to apply to university, putting together a back-up plan and preparing for a university interview. Each student receives feedback on their entries from the project officer and an undergraduate medical student.

Not only is the use of the e-portfolio designed to improve students chances of gaining a place on their chosen course, it is also designed to introduce them to critical reflection and the use of an e-portfolio, both of which are used on medical and healthcare courses and in post-graduate training.

The pilot was launched with 4 colleges in July 2005 with a total of 49 e-portfolio logs being created. A second cohort of students from 2 colleges and 3 sixth forms was identified between February and May 2006.

The numbers involved and the nature of their e-portfolio is listed below in table 1 below:

Organisation	Type of Learner	Assessed/Voluntary	Numbers
West Yorkshire NHS Deanery Large inner-city hospital	PRHO	Contains a record of assessments. E-portfolio must be verified before trainee can move onto Yr2.	33 (trainees) 33 (Educational Supervisors)
University of Leeds School of Healthcare	Under and Post graduate nurses	Voluntary use of e-portfolio but work assessed	7 (June 2005) (first cohort) 23 (October 2006) (second cohort) 4 (Nursing Supervisors)
College/6 <sup>th</sup> Form Students	FE/Yr12/13 students	Voluntary	49 (2005) (first cohort) 92(2006) (second cohort)

**Table 1: Breakdown of ELP Project participants.**

## Methodology

Qualitative evaluation of the project has taken place at various points throughout the pilot through a combination of online questionnaires, focus groups and interviews. Quantitative data has also been collected by analysing user patterns from e-portfolio management reports.

Data was collected through the use of a questionnaire at different stages of the e-portfolio pilot.

Formative evaluation focusing on the use of the e-portfolio, the technology, training and perceived benefits of using the tool has taken place with the PRHOs (n=33), Nurses (n=7), Nursing Supervisors (n=4), FE students (first cohort) (n=7), FE students (second cohort) (n=92). Formative evaluation response rate was 53%.

Summative evaluation focusing on the reasons for use/non-use and impact on learning has so far been completed with the Nurses (n=31) and FE students (first cohort) (n=7). Questionnaires have also been sent to PRHOs (n=33) and Educational Supervisors(n=33). Summative evaluation response rate to date is 21%.

In addition structured focus groups have taken place with the FE students (first cohort) (n=4) and semi structured interviews with careers adviser supporting the students in colleges (n=3), NHS Deanery staff (n=1) and the head of nursing at the university of Leeds (n=1).

The evaluation of the project has also been supplemented by comments collected throughout the pilot with a range of users through informal and unstructured conversations.

## *Defining Types of Engagement*

Over the last 14 Months 204 learners have attended e-portfolio induction sessions. Approximately 60% (n=204) of these learners accessed the e-portfolio and read some, or all of the contents. 55% (n=124) of those who accessed the e-portfolio progressed to make a post in their respective logs.

None of the users had used an e-portfolio before. Once users had started posting to their logs definite patterns of usage were displayed.

From the research conducted 4 categories of users were identified.

<b>Type of Engagement</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Percentage (n=124)</b>
Reader	Makes no entries in the e-portfolio. May access once or on multiple occasions just to read the content.	45%
Tentative	Makes 1 or 2 entries then stops.	13%
Selective	Makes entries but only in sections they feel they can benefit from. May proceed to output stage	21%
Continuous	Makes continuous entries and proceeds to output stage.	21%

**Table 2: Percentage of Users by Relationship Type**

The main focus of this paper will be the 'type' of relationship formed by the learner with the e-portfolio and the factors which have impacted on this. Factors which impacted on the 40% of learners who did not access the e-portfolio will be carried out at a later date before the project completion in Dec.

From an analysis of the feedback provided two main types of factors impact on individual use of the e-portfolio: Internal and external. Within these factors distinct themes can be identified:

- Internal Factors
  - Learners Attitude to Technology
  - Relevance
  - Gender
- External Factors
  - Feedback Provision
  - Organisation Attitude to Technology
  - Design of E-portfolio Content

## **Internal Factors**

### ***Learners Attitude To Technology***

Many have spoken about the barrier that technology itself can present to people (Dublin.L ,2004<sup>1</sup>). If the technology is deemed not to work or to be complicated then this can lead to disengagement in the e-portfolio journey before it has begun. Technological confidence is especially important to move into and then use the e-portfolio tool.

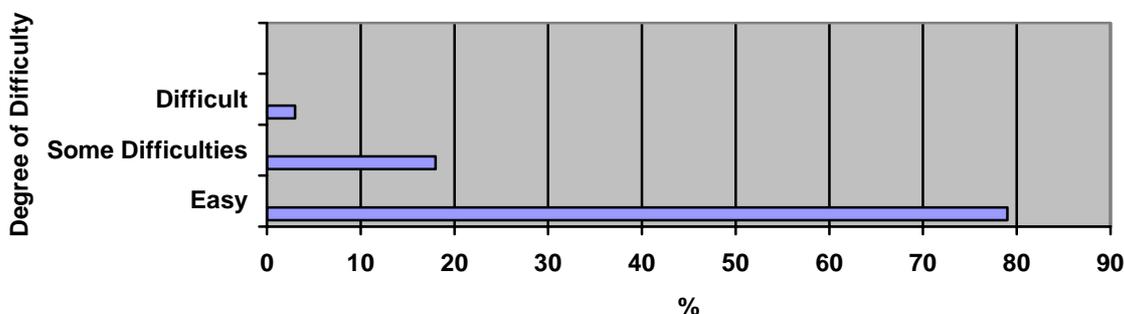
The first cohort of FE students consisted of 49 students from 4 colleges. In 2 of these colleges problems with caching and firewalls prevented the system from being demonstrated thoroughly and as students logged on to their own portfolio areas they were presented with the 'confidential' e-portfolio logs of others. As a result of this the 2 colleges withdrew from the project. On the face of this evidence it would appear that lack of confidence in the technology led to the disengagement of 27 students but a closer look at the available data, illustrates a different view. 15 of these students

independently logged onto the system after this initial training session indicating that a sizable percentage of the students still displayed some interest in the e-portfolio.

### *Ease of Use*

In response to the question, how easy did you find the e-portfolio to use? The following responses were noted from learners: (n=66)

**Figure 2: How Easy Is The E-portfolio To use (Learners)?**



All of those who found the e-portfolio difficult to use were PRHOs. These results however do not correlate with actual use. All of those who experienced difficulties have continued to use the tool to varying degrees. Only 42% (n=52) of those who stated the e-portfolio was easy to use have uploaded or made any entries into their respective logs. It would appear that even if users experience problems using the e-portfolio they are still prepared to work through them, especially when assessment is involved and conversely if they find the tool easy to use this does not guarantee they will load entries or access the e-portfolio.

Of the learners who have completed summative evaluation to date 19% (n=16) stated they have a blog or their own website. None of those users have used the e-portfolio. Prior use of ICT does not preclude usage of the e-portfolio.

### *Relevance*

An important factor in engagement and type of use is the relevance of the e-portfolio tool. Assessment is extremely relevant and exerts a large influence over usage and the type of usage displayed. If the contents of the e-portfolio are deemed irrelevant to the user no progress is made from induction to the e-portfolio tool nor from the reader to the “posting” stage.

### *Assessment*

The PRHOs were the only group of learners for which use of the e-portfolio was deemed compulsory, of these 87% (n=33) accessed their e-portfolio log. Taking this into account indicates that only 23% (n=171) of users who were given the choice of using the e-portfolio, accessed and posted to the system of their own free will.

An analysis of usage of each cohort of the e-portfolio can be found below:

Type of user	Attended Training	Accessed E-portfolio	Posted to e-portfolio
Voluntary User	171	95 (55%)	39 (23%)
Assessed users	33	29 (88%)	29(88%)

**Table 3: Differences in usage between assessed and voluntary tools.**

The relevance of assessment has clearly impacted on the use of the e-portfolio with over three times as many learners making entries to their e-portfolio spaces. Assessment also impacted on the type of engagement displayed by users: 55% of the assessed users only submitted entries to the sections of the e-portfolio they needed to complete this phase of training compared to 41% of the PRHOs who used the e-portfolio continuously and 3% who used the e-portfolio tentatively. The PRHOs recorded the lowest percentage of non-use (did not access) with 12% not accessing the e-portfolio tool at all compared to 59% of the voluntary users who did not log on to the system after the initial induction.

### *Voluntary Use*

After attending the initial training session 55% (N=171) of the voluntary users accessed the e-portfolio independently. Surveys highlight individual relevance as one of the major factors which influence the move from induction to reading and from reading to posting. Technology itself does not factor heavily in to this relevance. 88% (n=66) of the learners felt that the training they received was adequate. What is contained in and the purpose of the e-portfolio tool itself exerts the greatest influence.

All of the FE users were asked what they believed they could gain from using the e-portfolio, 93% (n=62) stated that they believed it would help them to put together an application for university, only 40% thought it would have any affect on their learning or introduce them to a new way of learning. . 26% (n=39) of this group who posted to the e-portfolio, have used the e-portfolio selectively and 36% have used the tool continuously. When the first group of FE users were asked what was the biggest source of assistance in making their university application. The e-portfolio did not factor. Human interaction with their careers adviser or tutor emerged as the largest source of help, the e-portfolio contents served as a stimulus to their conversations with these staff members.

Further research needs to be carried out into this area of relevance as it appears that the majority of users who were inducted on the use of the e-portfolio have decided to find this assistance elsewhere with 78% (n=171) choosing not to post to the e-portfolio, but, as previously mentioned, only 10% (n=66) of this group experienced difficulty in using the tool.

Some comments from non-users also back up this line of thinking,

*"I can receive this type of support in college and do not want to repeat any work I had already done"*

Similarly one of the careers advisers in one of the colleges which withdrew from the project stated,

*"They have done a lot of this work already"*

Others who did not post to the e-portfolio questioned their need to access and post to the e-portfolio as it would not be assessed, would not help them to gain a qualification and they would not receive any UCAS points towards their university application. As one student noted,

*"Why should I do this? It's not for educational purposes/ qualifications"*

Some of the main reasons stated by non-users relate to lifestyle, time and lack of "added value". As noted by 2 non-users

*"It was just something extra on a long list of work that needed to be done and wasn't a priority"*

*"...was easier just to use the methods I was used to."*

To some the e-portfolio process is not viewed as an integral part of learning but as an addition to pre-existing work. It is not perceived as a tool in which to carry out or improve the standard of this work.

Some have stated that e-portfolio users do not utilise all of the functions available to them and will only use the sections or functions that they identify as being of most use (Greenberg, G. 2004) This pattern is certainly illustrated through the nurses use of the e-portfolio. The majority, 67% (n=6) of nursing students (first cohort) believed that using the e-portfolio would help them to reflect but all of the nursing students felt that using the e-portfolio to present their 'Practice Evidence Records' would enable them to receive feedback from multiple sources and much more quickly than normal. This was the 'added value' and the relevance for using the e-portfolio. All of these users were 'selective' in the

use of the e-portfolio. They all only made entries in the 'Practice Evidence Record' and 'Reflective' sections, representing 4% of the entire e-portfolio tool available for recording.

After the second cohort of nurses began using the tool the need to complete 'Practice Evidence Records' for assessment purposes disappeared removing the main impetus of use which the first cohort of nurses had utilised.

### **Gender**

Gender has often been a contested issue in learning. Many have put forward theories for the differences in the way males and females learn (Belenkey et al 1986, Sadler-Smith 1999). In the case of e-portfolio usage there is a distinction between the usage patterns of females and of males. This concept does need to be explored further but the emerging trends can be seen below.

54 males and 150 females attended the initial induction to the e-portfolio tool of these 55% of all males and 64% of all females accessed the e-portfolio. Once the e-portfolio was accessed 30% of all males remained readers compared to 51% of females. A greater percentage of males moved from reading the e-portfolio to making posts. Once this step had been taken the engagement type by gender is illustrated below:

<b>Usage</b>	<b>Male (% of all males posting)</b>	<b>Female(% of all females posting)</b>
Selective	52% (n=21)	32% (n=47)
Tentative	24%(n=21)	23% (n=47)
Continuous	24%(n=21)	45% (n=47)

**Table 4: Type of Engagement by Gender**

Males are more likely to post to the e-portfolio but they are more likely to be tentative or selective about their usage, females however are more likely to access the tool after induction but are reluctant to take the next step to posting. When they do engage in usage they are more likely to engage with the process continuously and are more likely to note the pedagogical benefits derived from this use. These comments are all from females on the use of the e-portfolio. No males have made comments on the pedagogical use of the tool.

*“Good to have all your evidence in one place so you don’t lose it and it looks far more presentable.”*

*“Makes me think about things I have done that I wouldn't normally think about.”*

*“So far when using the e-portfolio I have thought about decisions more and I question more things”.*

*“Very helpful introduces to new ways of thinking”*

*“It makes you more motivated and you look forward to applying to the course you want, so you feel more confident!”*

### **External Influences**

#### ***Organisational Attitude To Technology***

As noted above the learners attitude to technology had little impact on the use of the e-portfolio. It is the attitude of those working in the organisations who provided support to the e-portfolio users and those who provided feedback which impacted to a larger extent on the use of the e-portfolio.

In the colleges where the caching and firewall problems existed it was the lack of support from those in daily contact with the learners which impacted on the numbers moving in to the posting phase. Both of the colleges were offered additional training to rectify the problem. The link staff in these colleges

did not respond to the offer. One of the students who was particularly interested in the project had contacted the university independently and was informed about the additional training session, which they alone attended. He confirmed to staff that no other students had been informed of the additional training session. The lack of confidence in the technology had not led to the disengagement of these students, the staff supporting these students had disengaged and in turn did not support or promote the use of the e-portfolio: Comments from 2 staff from these institutions included:

*“It doesn’t seem like a good idea. It doesn’t seem to work very well”*

*“I wouldn’t recommend it to anyone. The students could see there were problems with it”*

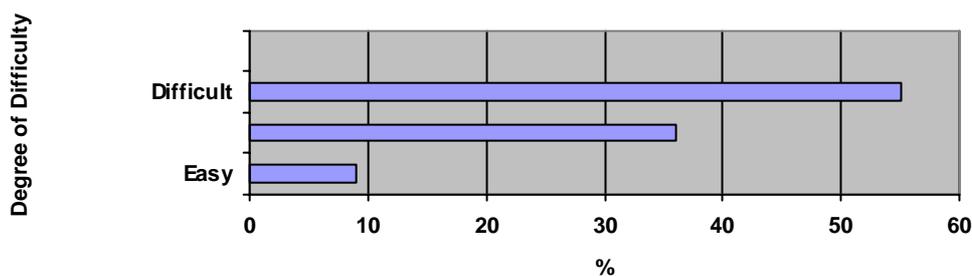
Organisational support is paramount to the successful implementation of an e-portfolio tool, even if this tool is being offered by a third-party and involves no additional work for staff involved.

In the remaining colleges the initial training was successful and staff supported the students and the e-portfolio process. These colleges had a higher proportion of students who initially engaged in the e-portfolio journey. 55% (n=20) of the students in these remaining colleges engaged with the e-portfolio and posted entries for feedback.

### ***Ease Of Use***

The results on figure 3 illustrate that those who provide feedback to the learners experience the most difficulty when using the e-portfolio. Only the project officer providing feedback to the FE students found the tool easy to use. All of those who found the e-portfolio hard to use were Educational Supervisors supporting the PRHOs. Out of this group 60% (n=33) signed on to the system during the pilot. No supervisor signed on more than 5 times with the majority signing on an average of 2.05 (n=20). Only 2 of the supervisors placed feedback into the PRHOs log directly, the majority who provided feedback 88% (n=17) did so under the PRHOs log-in whilst sat next to them. Those who provided feedback to the nurses experienced some problems but were prepared to work through these and ask for advice.

**Figure 3: Ease Of Use of E-portfolio Tool (Feedback Providers)**



### ***Design***

The design of the e-portfolio tool is of paramount importance in encouraging access and confidence in users. It is of importance to learners who need to be able to find information quickly and to know what is expected of them in the learning process. A tool that is not intuitive to use can lead to frustration and ultimately disengagement.

When feedback providers have been involved in the design of the contents and structure of the e-portfolio tool engagement by these groups of feedback providers has been high. Within this project only the educational supervisors supporting the PRHOs were not involved in the design or content of

the tool. The original paper-based portfolio was copied into the system with areas for input and the uploading of assessment forms.

This lack of control of the contents is mirrored by the feedback providers lack of ownership over the material and by the number of those logging on and providing feedback as Table 6 illustrates:

	Ownership	% providing feedback in the e-portfolio
FE Portfolio (n=1)	100%	100%
Nurses Portfolio (n=4)	50%	75%
PRHO Portfolio (n=6)	0%	0.6%

**Table 6: Feedback Providers Feelings of Ownership Over The Contents of the E-portfolio**

This lack of ownership over the design of the contents has affected the number of educational supervisors who provided feedback within the e-portfolio tool itself. The e-portfolio and the foundation years curriculum was enforced on to them. It did not develop from them.

### **Feedback Provision**

Once users had posted to the e-portfolio tool the provision of feedback has impacted on the type of engagement demonstrated by users. Knowing that there is an audience out there receiving and reading their work has a major impact on the type of use demonstrated by the learner. Feedback was also seen by some as the ‘Added Value’ of using the e-portfolio tool. When asked which features of the e-portfolio they liked the following responses were noted:

*“.. it's a great idea especially as you are able to get feedback from tutors as well as mentors.”*

*“I really liked the mentor support. They were really good at making useful comments and suggestions”*

During a focus group session one of the FE students (cohort 1) noted,

*Being able to present entries and work to somebody who knew what they were taking about was a great it made me feel more confident about what I was doing”*

68 learners posted to the e-portfolio of these, 46 received feedback and 22 did not. Where feedback is provided a clear pattern of engagement emerges.

	Tentative	Selective	Continuous
Feedback (n=46)	17%	26%	57%
No Feedback (n=22)	36%	66%	0

**Table 7: Type of Engagement Related to Feedback Provision**

Once engaged in the e-portfolio process feedback fuels the journey from tentative to continuous user.

The provision of feedback encouraged users to post into the reflective sections of their logs. Where feedback has been provided 86% (n=46) of users have posted public reflections.

Another pattern which emerged during the analysis of the assessed e-portfolio was the extent to which those receiving feedback in their log utilised the voluntary (non-assessed) sections of the PRHO e-portfolio.

All of the trainees receiving feedback in their e-portfolio made an entry into one or more of the voluntary sections, but only 68% of those not receiving feedback made entries into at least one of these sections.

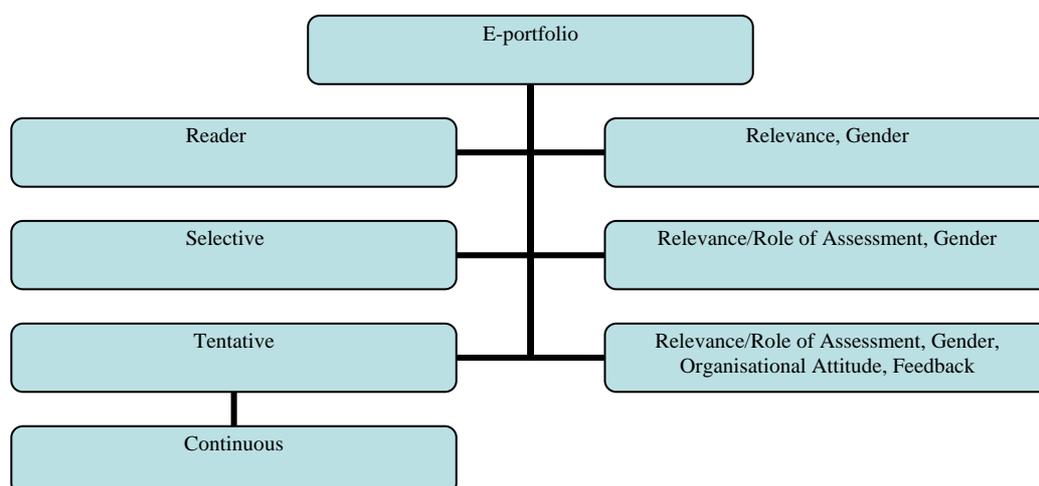
It is only through this feedback that learners are encouraged to continue with the process and give relevance to their work and through feedback learners are encouraged further to reflect and ask questions. One of the students from the second FE group noted,

*“Why would I bother using the e-portfolio if no one is going to look at it!”*

As part of the summative evaluation learners were asked what they felt was the main purpose of an e-portfolio, 80% (n=16) felt it was a tool to share with others only 12.5% felt it was a tool to develop their own learning.

## Conclusions

A revised model of engagement (see figure 4 below) needs to take into account the types of engagement demonstrated by learners. The stages of ‘Initial Engagement’, ‘Sustained Engagement’ and ‘Continuous Engagement’ are too broad to define the characteristics of the individuals who inhabit the e-portfolio journey. To move to a continuous and deep learner of the e-portfolio relevance and feedback are required.



**Figure 4: Revised Model of Engagement by User Type**

The majority of learners did not find the e-portfolio difficult to use. Where problems were noted the assessment nature of the process ensured users found ways to overcome these difficulties. Gender has impacted on the manner in which learners have interacted with the tool. Females are less likely to post to the e-portfolio but once engaged they are more likely to use the e-portfolio continuously than males who prefer a selective approach. From this data it would appear that males need more support in developing the concept of critical reflection and females more support and encouragement in using the tool.

Relevance of the e-portfolio tool is the most important factor impacting on initial engagement and impacts on the move from the induction to reading and from reading to tentative user. If entries and work are being assessed or are needed to move onto the next learning stage, usage is high and the number of selective users is high. If there is no assessment a perception of personal benefit drives the learner. If the purpose of the e-portfolio does not meet their learning needs or if learners perceive this knowledge can be gained elsewhere then usage falls. Some studies (Entwistle, 1998) have stated that if users have a choice over how they learn they are more inclined *to* learn at a deeper level, voluntary users may have exercised this choice and looked elsewhere for the knowledge they require. The e-portfolio represents just one choice of many, one with which learners have had no prior relationship.

The technological aspects involved in e-portfolios exert an influence over those providing feedback to the users, both in terms of use of the technology and the design of the learning tool within the e-portfolio space. If feedback providers encounter problems with the tool, do not possess the correct level of ICT competency and if they have no ownership over the learning materials they are less likely to provide feedback to learners and subsequently learners are less likely to engage or move from the tentative stage to the selective or continuous stage. Training to develop ICT confidence and consultation on the design of the tool is vital. Somebody has to be 'out there' to facilitate this learner movement once the learner has engaged with the relevance of what is on offer.

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