The student e-Portfolios: Importance and Relevance at Higher Learning Institutions

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INTRODUCTION

Electronic portfolios, or e-portfolios have been increasingly popular since their early implementation in the 1990s but became widespread during the first decade of the 21st century. An e-portfolio is a web-based interface that allows users to add to and modify their e-portfolio contents to be immediately accessible to others. An e-portfolio is a comprehensive electronic collection of multimodal artifacts as learning evidence that can be used in teaching, learning, assessment, and showcasing; it illustrates skills development, focusing on the learning process, progress, and achievement. It requires self-regulation, self-reflection, and self-evaluation to achieve its optimal productivity.[1] In the evolving landscape of global higher education, academic success is no longer appraised solely by grades and transcripts. The student e-portfolio has emerged as a powerful tool for the purpose of documentation, self-reflection, and showcasing the learning outcomes. With changing global scenario, higher learning institutions are placing greater emphasis on outcome-based education, employability, and lifelong learning.[2] Certainly, e-portfolios offer students a dynamic and personalized way to capture their academic achievements, skills and professional growth. Unlike traditional assessment methods, which often offer only a snapshot of performance, e-portfolios provide a holistic and evolving narrative of a student's educational journey.[3] In the post- pandemic COVID 19 era where digital literacy and self-directed learning are becoming more relevant, the integration of e-portfolios into higher learning curricula is not just pertinent, rather it is necessary. This editorial explores the significance of e-portfolios in empowering students, enhancing academic engagement, and bridging the gap between education and the workplace.[4,5]

MAJOR CONTENTS OF AN E PORTFOLIO

An effective and impressive e-portfolio includes a variety of content types that together showcase a comprehensive picture of a student's academic persuits, achieved skills, co-curricular engagements and professional development.[6] The organization and design of student e-portfolios vary across disciplines, reflecting the unique objectives, assessment criteria, and professional standards of each field. Since each field emphasizes different skills, outputs, and ways of presenting evidence of learning or achievement, motifs (themes, structures, and content focus) of e-portfolios vary significantly across disciplines.[7,8] Followings are some of the major and common motifs that delve into the insight of an e-portfolio.

Personal Profile (Section About Me)

The personal profile section of an e-portfolio serves as the student's introduction and helps viewers understand who they are, both academically and personally. It includes full name (as per official document), profile picture (a professional-looking headshot), academic information (current program or degree, major/minor or area of specialization, university or college name, expected graduation year), career objective or personal statement (a brief paragraph describing student's academic interests, goals, and motivations), skills (academic, technical, or soft skills, e.g., critical thinking, data analysis, leadership, communication), interests and values (values relevant to academic or career goals), contact information (hand phone number, institutional email, LinkedIn profile or professional website), quote or motto (optional), a short quote that reflects one's academic philosophy or life outlook.[9]

Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)

The resume or CV section of an e-portfolio provides a concise, organized overview of a student's academic background, skills, experiences, and accomplishments. It is often one of the most viewed sections, especially by potential employers, internship coordinators, or graduate program admissions officers. Essential contents of a resume/CV in an e-portfolio typically include personal information, career objective or professional summary, education [institution, degree(s) pursued or completed, major(s)/minor(s), graduation date or expected date, notable academic honors, scholarships, or GPA], work experience [job title including internships, part-time jobs, or on-campus jobs, organization name, location, dates of employment (month/year – month/year), key responsibilities and accomplishments], skills (hard skills: e.g., Microsoft Excel, Python, laboratory techniques, data analysis, soft skills: e.g., teamwork, leadership, communication, time management, etc.), certifications and training [additional courses, online certificate courses, or workshops (e.g., Google digital marketing, first aid training, SPSS training, etc.)], projects (title, goal, tools used, outcomes, individual or group), volunteering experience or community engagement (organization, date, role, contribution), achievements and awards (Dean's award, scholarships, academic competitions, leadership awards, etc.), language [list languages and proficiency level (e.g., fluent, conversational, basic], professional memberships (academic or industry-related organization, category of membership) and referees (name, designation, affiliation with e-mail of three persons who are able to make comment on the academic or professional aspects).[3, 10]

Academic Work Samples

This section showcases the student's coursework and academic performance that demonstrates subject matter knowledge, writing skills, and analytical thinking. It includes essays and research papers (title, course name, and instructor/supervisor, brief abstract or summary, learning objectives, final grade or teacher's feedback), lab reports (introduction with hypothesis, methodology and data tables, graphs and calculations, reflection on results and practical implications), creative projects (creator's statement, software used, inspirations or thematic goals, link to video or embedded media), group projects or presentations (project role, team collaboration process, link to presentation or PDF, rubric results or peer feedback), reflections and learning journals (topics covered, personal insights, challenges and areas for growth, connections to other coursework or goals), case studies, exams or quizzes.[11]

Internship or Work Experience Reports

Internship or work experience reports in a student e-portfolio is a powerful way to demonstrate hands-on experience and integration of academic knowledge into real settings to validate employability and professionalism. It includes internship report (internship summaries, duration, roles and responsibilities, achievements or skill developed, contributions, supervisor's feedback), self-reflections (rewards, challenges, influence on the career goal), supporting materials (report in PDF, portfolio link to projects, screenshots of works with permission, letter of recommendation, etc.).[8, 12]

Certificates, Awards, and Achievements

A dedicated section of certificates, awards, and achievements in a student e-portfolio adds credibility and showcases accomplishments beyond classroom performance. It highlights recognition and extra qualifications by adding academic certificates, training certificates (online and offline), leadership awards or scholarships. For each item, title of award or certificate, issuing organization, date earned, brief description or context and link to proof should be uploaded.

Co-Curricular and Extracurricular Activities

The inclusion of co-curricular and extracurricular activities in a student e-portfolio provides a holistic picture of interests, leadership, and personal development outside the classroom. The purposes are many folds like demonstration of time management, teamwork, initiative, leadership roles, community engagement, well-roundedness and soft skills. Examples of co-curricular activity include science fairs and exhibitions, biology/medical/math Olympiads, spelling bees or quiz competitions, student council or prefect roles. While, extracurricular activities are sports teams and athletics, music, drama, or visual arts, clubs (e.g., blood donation, medicine, science, chess, photography, environment club, etc.), volunteering or community service, entrepreneurship (e.g., school-based startup or fundraising campaign). For each event, photos, certificates or award scans and

links to performances, presentations, or press coverage should be added.[13]

Media and Creative Artifacts

This motif enriches the e-portfolio with visual and multimedia evidence of learning that engages the viewer to learn about diverse talents of a student. Items under this category may include videos, podcasts, infographics, photography, design samples, audio recordings (e.g., language learning progress).

Contact Information and Links

Incorporation of a clear and professional contact information and links section into a student e-portfolio is essential for enabling mentors, educators, employers, or college admissions office to reach, verify or explore one's work further. Moreover, it establishes credibility and digital professionalism. For contact information, Email, hand phone, LinkedIn profile, links to personal websites/portfolio URL, GitHub, blogs, etc. can be included. For academic portfolios, ORCID, ResearchGate or Google Scholar ID can be added.

Importance and Relevance of Student e-Portfolio

Student e-portfolios are becoming increasingly important and relevant in higher learning institutions due to their multifaceted benefits for students, faculty, and employers. The research found that creating e-portfolios helped students recognize their competencies and plan their career paths. E-portfolios encourage students to engage in reflective learning by documenting their academic progress, co-curricular experiences, and personal growth. This process enhances critical thinking, self-assessment, and lifelong learning skills, which are among the core outcomes in higher education. To showcase their knowledge, skills, and accomplishments in a holistic and multimedia-rich format, e-portfolio provides a dynamic platform for students. Unlike traditional resumes, e-portfolios can include writing samples, videos, project work, and presentations, offering a more comprehensive view of student capabilities. In the present-day competitive job market, e-portfolios act as digital resumes that can be shared with potential employers to demonstrate initiative, communication skills, and proficiency in digital tools, highly valued by employers. Students take ownership of their learning journey through e-portfolios. They have the freedom to choose what to include, how to organize it, and how to narrate their academic and personal growth, which support their personalized education and self-empowerment. For educators and mentors, e-portfolios provide a richer context for assessing student learning over time. Evidence of learning outcomes and skill acquisition in both formative and summative assessment strategies can be available through e-portfolio. Capturing learning across disciplines and outside the classroom such as internships, volunteer work, research, and study abroad programs, aligning with the trend toward holistic and experiential education are well-suited through e-portfolios.[14, 15] Moreover, aggregated e-portfolio data can be used by institutions for program evaluation, accreditation processes, curriculum development and to assess the improvement of the program by looking at how well educational objectives are being met. Finally, by maintaining an e-portfolio, it helps students develop digital literacy, communication, and organizational skills, all of which are key competencies in the 21st century workplace and academia.

CONCLUSION

Learning is not a destination rather it is a voyage, often into unknown spaces. As the world settles into a new normal following the global pandemic, education systems are looking at different forms of educational provision around the globe. As higher learning institutions continue to evolve in response to digital transformation and changing pedagogical landscapes, the student e-portfolio has emerged as a vital tool for personalized learning, skills documentation, and career readiness. Beyond serving as a repository of academic artifacts, e-portfolios foster self-reflection, critical thinking, and lifelong learning habits essential for success in the 21st century workforce. Besides, it is widely accepted that the e-portfolio might foster a variety intercurricular knowledge growth, skills, such as collaboration skills, self-management skills, technological skills, etc.[4]. When thoughtfully implemented, student e-portfolios can bridge between academic learning and professional identity, making them indispensable in shaping agile, reflective, and digitally competent graduates. Thus, an e-Portfolio is a 'practise of governance', a deliberate activity designed to shape students' professional and personal behaviour using tactics that leverage their ambitions, aspirations, and interests. The future of higher education lies not just in what students learn, but in how they demonstrate and narrate their learning. E-portfolios offer that

narrative platform to empower students to take ownership of their educational journey and map a meaningful path toward their aspirations.[16]

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