The development of an e-portfolio: Participant-centred assessment as a by-product of innovation

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Questions to be addressed

- What is the context in which the e-portfolio is used?
- Why was it developed?
- How was it developed?
- What is it used for?
- How do principles of participant-centred learning apply to the educational tool?

Context for the Development

- Graduate Certificate in Health Professional Education (GCHPE)
- Interprofessional course for any teacher in the health professions
- 1 year part-time programme since 2003
- Monash University approved for probationary training
- 4 core units

Why was the e-portfolio developed?

- As an example of contemporary educational practice
- To integrate the assessment of professional teaching behaviour into all units of the course
- To provide a reflective tool available in the workplace
- To enable the preparation, sharing and submission of assessment items in the actual workplace of the course participants and to facilitate self, peer and tutor feedback.

How was it developed?

- E-portfolio developed with innovative teaching grant from Faculty IT committee
- Developed as a pilot for undergraduate arena
- Web-based - system is written in Coldfusion MX and hosted on a Microsoft SQL Server 2000.
- Tutor, participant and administrator ‘views’

Underpinning assumptions and philosophies

- Opportunity to provide structured reflection
- Opportunity to complete reflection augmented by group activity
- Opportunity for participants to present evidence for assessment of professional behaviours in relation to teaching practice
- Mirrored in other aspects of course delivery
Description of e-portfolio activities: Participants

- Password-protected access
- Personal journal (NOT accessible to tutors).
- Space for submission of assessments to share with tutorial group members, tutors or whole cohort prior to submission if desired.
- Opportunities to exchange views with other participants
- Access to web-based feedback (giving and receiving)

Description of e-portfolio activities: Tutors and administrators

- Access anywhere
- Simple and flexible assessments
- For tutors, the e-portfolio provides information on and access to participants' assessment tasks and space to provide feedback.
- For administrators, the e-portfolio allocates participants to tutors, allows design of assessment tasks and maintains records of participants’ and tutors’ submissions. Electronic reminders of impending assessment deadlines are generated via the system.

Examples of assessment tasks

- Practice in written feedback
- Critical incident analysis
Participant-centred teaching 1

- A climate of trust – curiosity and natural desire to learn can be enhanced
- Participatory mode of decision making (participants, teachers and administrators)
- Achieving results participants appreciate / consider worthwhile

Rogers 1983

Participant-centred teaching 2

- Uncovering the excitement in intellectual and emotional discovery
- Developing the attitudes research shown effective in facilitating learning
- Helping to develop rich satisfaction between learners and teachers

Rogers 1983

1. A climate of trust – curiosity and natural desire to learn can be enhanced

- Personal Journal space – completely private
- Levels of access / sharing work-in-progress
- Formal teaching on ways of giving effective feedback

2. Participatory mode of decision making (participants, teachers and administrators)

- Possibility for multiple entries / revisions
- Access to peer work to aid reflection / promote thinking
- Choice of assessment topic to align with workplace

3. Achieving results participants appreciate / consider worthwhile

- Consistent emphasis on “work” (i.e. the workplace)
- The nature of feedback provided from peers and tutors (Use of non-final vocabulary)
- Ref: David Boud / Rorty 1989
4. Uncovering the excitement in intellectual and emotional discovery

- Use of contemporary educational technology
- Involvement in a pilot requiring LOTS of feedback from staff, participants and administrators: (can there be too much excitement in learning?)

5. Developing the attitudes research shown effective in facilitating learning

- Considerable debate about what is effective in the clinical context
- Emphasis on BEME
- Inclusion of assessment of attitudes as an integrated (and significant) component of all units

A simple model of competence


6. Helping to develop rich satisfaction between learners and teachers

- Peer-to-peer feedback
- Participant to participant interaction and feedback
- Staff to student interaction and feedback
- Opportunities for self and peer review and revision prior to submission of items for assessment
- ‘Potential' for immediacy in feedback

Examples of limitations to a student-centred approach

- “Talking to the dying” – Monash time-out requirements
- Summative assessment requirements
Summary / personal reflections

- Participant-centred learning can NOT be achieved by the use of a single educational tool / instructional method.
- The process for IT innovation needs to be driven by people who understand learning to promote participant-centred learning (not ALL academics!)
- Assessment always leads to learning – the challenge is to tailor it to the type of learning that is desirable!