Competing Paradigms in Electronic Portfolios: Balancing “Portfolio-as-Test” with “Portfolio-as-Story”

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REAL Electronic Portfolios
Reflection
Engagement
Assessment for Learning

A Tale of Two Portfolios
High School graduates in Washington
High school freshman as told by Jim Mahoney

What’s the difference between those two stories?
What are the variables that produce these extremes in attitudes toward ownership of portfolios?

A high school student inquiry
“I am a student in high school. Why is it mandatory for me to make a proficient on my portfolio for me to graduate? I have all of my credits to graduate, but if I make lower than an proficient I don’t get to graduate.”

How would you answer this student?
Read my complete answer in my blog:
http://electronicportfolios.org/blog/

My final advice to that student:
Remember, you are telling us a story, and not just any story. Your portfolio is meant to be your story of your life over the last four years as well as the story of where your life might be going during the next four years: tell it with pride!

(adapted from the Mead School District’s DRAFT Guidelines for Culminating Project)
Legacy from the Portfolio Literature

- Much to learn from the literature on paper-based portfolios
- As adult learners, we have much to learn from how children approach portfolios

“Everything I know about portfolios was confirmed working with a kindergartener”

The Power of Portfolios

what children can teach us about learning and assessment

Author: Elizabeth Hebert
Publisher: Jossey-Bass

From the Preface (1)


From the Preface (2)

“We formed part of our identity from the contents of these memory boxes. We recognized each piece and its association with a particular time or experience. We shared these collections with grandparents to reinforce feelings of pride and we reexamined them on rainy days when friends were unavailable for play. Reflecting on the collection allowed us to attribute importance to these artifacts, and by extension to ourselves, as they gave witness to the story of our early school experiences.”


From the Preface (3)

“Our parents couldn’t possibly envision that these memory boxes would be the inspiration for an innovative way of thinking about children’s learning. These collections, lovingly stored away on our behalf, are the genuine exemplar for documenting children’s learning over time. But now these memory boxes have a different meaning. It’s not purely private or personal, although the personal is what gives power to what they can mean.”

Let’s get personal...

Think for a minute about:

Something about your COLLECTIONS:
- Suggested topics:
  - If you are a parent, what you saved for your children
  - What your parents saved for you
  - What you collect...
  - Why you collect...

Some issues to consider
- What do your collections say about what you value?
- Is there a difference between what you purposefully save and what you can’t throw away?
- How can we use our personal collections experiences to help learners as they develop their portfolios?

The power of portfolios [to support deep learning] is personal.

What is a Portfolio in Education?

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student’s efforts, progress and achievements in one or more areas [over time].

(Northwest Evaluation Association, 1990)

What is a Portfolio in Education?

The collection must include:
- student participation in selecting contents
- the criteria for selection
- the criteria for judging merit
- evidence of student self-reflection

(Northwest Evaluation Association, 1990)

Portfolio Processes

Traditional + Technology
- Collecting
- Archiving
- Selecting
- Linking/Thinking
- Reflecting
- Storytelling
- Directing
- Collaborating
- Celebrating
- Publishing

Metaphors!
- Mirror, Map, Sonnet
- C.V. or Multimedia Resume
- Test
- Story

http://electronicportfolios.org/metaphors.html
Purpose & Goals for the portfolio (Determine Content)

- Multiple purposes:
  - Learning/Process
  - Assessment
  - Marketing/Showcase

Think about the differences between:

- Learning Portfolio and Portfolio Learning
- Assessment Portfolio and Portfolio Assessment

One is more Product, the other is more Process

Learning Portfolios

- “know thyself" = a lifetime of investigation
- self-knowledge as outcome of learning

- Reflection
- The Learning Portfolio (Zubizaretta, 2004, p.20)
- Documentation
- Collaboration

Learning Portfolios

- Support reflection which is central to learning
- Reflections
  - The Heart and Soul of the Portfolio
  - An electronic portfolio without reflection is just a
    - Digital scrapbook
    - Fancy electronic resume
    - Multimedia Presentation
    - Personal web site

Showcase Portfolios

- Marketing
- Employment
- Tell your story
- A primary motivator for many portfolio developers

Assessment Portfolios

- A major movement in Teacher Education in U.S.
- A major new commercial market
- A primary motivator for organizations

More later!
A few thoughts about Assessment -- What Type?

- Assessment OF Learning? or
- Assessment FOR Learning?

**Assessment OF Learning**
- Summative
  - Involves judging pupils’ performance against national standards (level descriptions).
  - Teachers often make these judgments at the end of a unit of work, year or key stage.
  - Test results also describe pupils performance in terms of levels.
  - Carried out for the purposes of grading and reporting (ARG, 1999).

**Assessment FOR Learning**
- Formative
  - While it is not the only purpose, assessment for learning is one of the most important purposes of assessment.
  - While assessment of learning has well established procedures, assessment for learning requires some theoretical ideas to be put into practice if the potential benefits are to be gained.

**Principles of Assessment FOR Learning**
- **Definition:**
  Assessment for Learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.

**www.qca.org.uk ages3-14**
- Research-based principles of assessment for learning to guide classroom practice

**Purposes of Assessment**
- Assessment for learning (formative or classroom-based assessment) is different from assessment of learning (summative assessment)
  - An important aspect of assessment for learning is the formative use of summative data.

**Time Perspective:**
- Past -> Present
  - Assessment OF Learning
  - Assessment FOR Learning

- Present -> Future
  - Principles of Assessment FOR Learning
  - www.qca.org.uk ages3-14
AFL should be part of effective planning of teaching and learning.
AFL should focus on how students learn.
AFL should be recognized as central to classroom practice.
AFL should be regarded as a key professional skill for teachers.
AFL should be sensitive and constructive because any assessment has an emotional impact.

AFL should take account of the importance of (and foster) learner motivation.
AFL should promote commitment to learning goals and a shared understanding of the criteria by which they are assessed.
AFL develops learners’ capacity for self-assessment so that they can become reflective and self-managing.
AFL should recognize the full range of achievements of all learners.
Learners should receive constructive guidance about how to improve.

Overlap of Assessment Types*

Assessment OF Learning

Assessment FOR Learning

*Alberta Assessment Consortium

Portfolios used for Assessment OF Learning

Purpose of portfolio prescribed by institution
Artifacts mandated by institution to determine outcomes of instruction
Portfolio usually developed at the end of a class, term or program - time limited
Portfolio and/or artifacts usually "scored" based on a rubric and quantitative data is collected for external audiences
Portfolio is usually structured around a set of outcomes, goals or standards
Sometimes used to make high stakes decisions
Summative - what has been learned to date? (Past to present)
Requires Extrinsic motivation
Audience: external - little choice

Portfolios that support Assessment FOR Learning

Purpose of portfolio agreed upon with learner
Artifacts selected by learner to tell the story of their learning
Portfolio maintained on an ongoing basis throughout the class, term or program - time flexible
Portfolio and artifacts reviewed with learner and used to provide feedback to improve learning
Portfolio organization is determined by learner or negotiated with mentor/advisor/teacher
Rarely used for high stakes decisions
Formative - what are the learning needs in the future? (Present to future)
Fosters Intrinsic motivation - engages the learner
Audience: learner, family, friends - learner can choose

A Resource on K-12 Portfolios

By Evangeline Harris Stefanakis
Published by Heinemann
Includes a CD-ROM with examples of student portfolios
Assessment for Learning Continuum - Enhanced

Electronic Portfolio or Assessment Management System?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electronic Portfolio</th>
<th>Assessment Management System</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple purposes: Learning, Assessment, Employment</td>
<td>Single purpose: Formative and Summative Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data structure varies with tools used to create the portfolio; common data formats (converted to HTML, PDF)</td>
<td>Data structure most often uses a relational database to record, report data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary type of data: qualitative</td>
<td>Primary type of data: qualitative and quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data storage in multiple options: CD-ROM, videotape, DVD, WWW server, LAN</td>
<td>Data storage primarily on LAN or on secure WWW server</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual design and hyperlinks often under control of portfolio developer</td>
<td>Visual design and hyperlinks most often controlled by database structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner choice of artifacts</td>
<td>Institutional choice of artifacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner-Centered</td>
<td>Institution-Centered</td>
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</tbody>
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Which approach should you take?
- Are you looking for an electronic portfolio...?
- Or an assessment management system?
- What’s the difference? Along a Continuum

Electronic Portfolio or Assessment Management System?

Contrasting Paradigms of Portfolios

- Positivism
- Constructivism


Tension between two approaches

“...The two paradigms produce portfolio activities that are entirely different.”
“...The positivist approach puts a premium on the selection of items that reflect outside standards and interests.”
“...The constructivist approach puts a premium on the selection of items that reflect learning from the student’s perspective.”

How can we address both types of portfolios?
Use three different systems that are digitally linked:

I. A digital archive of a learner’s work
II. An institution-centered database to collect faculty-generated assessment data based on tasks and rubrics
III. A student-centered electronic portfolio

Begin Here

Learning Experiences embedded in curriculum

I. Digital Archive of Learner Artifacts (Working Portfolio)

Interactive Process

Evidence = +Artifacts +Reflection +Validation
Assessor EVALUATES required artifacts

Data collected for certification/licensure (high stakes) and for accreditation

II. Assessment Management System (institution-centered data management system)
Resulting in…

Institution-centered aggregated data leading to certification/licensure and accreditation

Focus on Limited-Term Evaluation

External Locus of Control
- Includes prescribed artifacts and rubrics
- Requires database to manage information
- Focuses on faculty’s formative and summative evaluations

Constructivist Paradigm
(Making Meaning and Assessment as Learning)

Portfolio as Story

I. Digital Archive of Learner Artifacts (Working Portfolio)
Learner COLLECTS artifacts from learning experiences

Learner SELECTS artifacts and reflections to meet self-determined purpose(s)

Resulting in...
Student-centered documentation of deep learning, for developing self-concept and presentation to multiple audiences (peers, employers, etc.)

III. Electronic Portfolio(s) (presentation portfolios for multiple purposes)

Focus on Lifelong Self-Directed Learning
Internal Locus of Control
- Includes choice of artifacts
- Results in personalized e-portfolio
- Focuses on learner's celebration of uniqueness

Both approaches result in a:
Balanced Assessment System

Constructed Meaning
"The portfolio is a laboratory where students construct meaning from their accumulated experience."
(Paulson & Paulson, 1991, p.5)

Portfolio tells a Story
"A portfolio tells a story. It is the story of knowing. Knowing about things... Knowing oneself... Knowing an audience... Portfolios are students' own stories of what they know, why they believe they know it, and why others should be of the same opinion."
(Paulson & Paulson, 1991, p.2)

Portfolios tell a Story
“A portfolio is opinion backed by fact... Students prove what they know with samples of their work.”
(Paulson & Paulson, 1991, p.2)

Some concerns...
- Assessment for Learning
- Portfolios for Learning
- What about Motivation?
Components of Portfolio Development

- **Content**: evidence = artifacts + reflections + validation

- **Purpose**: the reason for developing the portfolio – includes audience
  - Learning & professional development - Process
  - Assessment (of and for learning)
  - Showcase (Employment/Marketing)

- **Process**: tools used, sequence of activities, rules, evaluation criteria (rubrics), collaboration/conversation

Developmental Levels of Portfolio Implementation

- **Extrinsic Motivation**: institutional directed content, purpose & process - external locus of control
- **Mixed Motivation**: learner ownership over one or two of the components
- **Intrinsic Motivation**: learner ownership of content, purpose and process

Learner Ownership and Control of Electronic Portfolio Development

Learner Control vs. Organizational Control
Assumption:
Greater Learner Control leads to more Intrinsic Motivation
Linking Two Dynamic Processes to Promote Deep Learning

Portfolio Development Process
Digital Storytelling

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http://reflectinitiative.com

Research Director
The REFLECT Initiative
A research project to assess the impact of electronic portfolios on student learning, motivation and engagement in high schools

My Final Wish…
May all your electronic portfolios become dynamic celebrations and stories of deep learning across the lifespan.

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