

The iPortfolio: Capture, Reflect, Connect

Brian R von Konsky, Beverley Oliver, Arun Ramdin

**Curtin University of Technology
Office of Teaching and Learning
GPO Box U1987
PERTH WA Australia 6845**

{B.vonKonsky, B.Oliver}@curtin.edu.au

ABSTRACT

This paper examines pedagogical benefits of an electronic student portfolio to critically reflect on formal learning and life experiences that enhance employability skills. Goals of the approach are to 1) provide a framework for reflection on the attainment of graduate attributes, professional competencies, and course learning outcomes; 2) capture artefacts and reflections when and where learning occurs; 3) promote global citizenship and interdisciplinary collaboration; and 4) foster on-going professional development and professional networking with industry relevance and focus. The approach places emphasis on learning that takes place both within and outside of traditional classroom settings. This includes learning arising from course requirements, including work-integrated learning, practicums, and fieldwork. It also includes critical reflection on the development of employability skills gained in extracurricular activities, volunteer work, community service and other life experiences.

INTRODUCTION

Comprehensive Course Review (CCR) at Curtin University of Technology includes a Curriculum Map that shows exactly where students are assessed in relation to graduate attributes, professional competencies and course learning outcomes specific to their program (Curtin University of Technology 2009b).

Curtin has also adopted the “triple-i curriculum”, meaning we emphasise Industry (graduate employability) Intercultural understanding (global citizenship), and Interdisciplinarity (through rich educational choices). In the same vein, Curtin’s electronic portfolio (under construction) is an “iPortfolio” (Curtin University of Technology 2009a).

Electronic portfolios are primarily tools for critical reflection—on curricular experiences as well as life experiences and learning that takes place outside of the traditional classroom (Hallam, Harper et al. 2008). It is envisioned that Curtin students will use mobile devices to capture and upload artefacts to an electronic portfolio to enhance this experience.

Increasingly, students have access to mobile devices that include cell phones, personal digital assistants, and laptop computers (Oliver and Goerke 2007). Using these devices for a variety of learning purposes that include downloading podcasts and lecture notes from Learning Management Systems is increasingly common (Attewell 2004).

At the tertiary level, there is less evidence that these devices are also being used to capture and upload artefacts from life experiences that complement formal learning or that enhance one's employability. Given the ubiquity of mobile devices, it is reasonable to suggest that they could be used for this purpose in the iPortfolio.

The existence of social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace, and You Tube demonstrates that a many young people possess the IT skills and technology necessary to capture and upload digital artefacts (Kennedy, Judd et al. 2008). However, these sites generally lack the ability to collate artefacts with personal reflections. Students would be encouraged to use the iPortfolio to reflect on life experiences and formal learning that have industry, international / intercultural / indigenous, and interdisciplinary components.

Using their iPortfolio, students would publish different views of stored artefacts and reflections, targeted for specific constituents. For example, unique views might be published for potential employers, referees and references, examiners, and academic supervisors.

However, the principal constituents of an iPortfolio would be the portfolio holders. The iPortfolio would be positioned as a means of reflecting on one's goals and current skills and for planning one's own professional development.

SCENARIOS

Consider the following hypothetical examples:

A student Pharmacist on field placement discusses a patient interaction with the supervising pharmacist. The student records the video on his mobile phone and sends it with text reflections directly to his iPortfolio. He chooses to make this artefact accessible by teaching staff and potential employers.

A student Mechanical Engineer works as a member of an interdisciplinary team comprised of engineers from other engineer disciplines as part of the Student Guild Motor Sports Club. Stored iPortfolio artefacts include videos of the team tuning the engine and engineering drawings of the team's vehicle. She reflects on the contribution of this experience to her long-term goal of going into engineering management. The iPortfolio highlights that she is not as strong in graduate attributes related to leadership. Consequently, she enrolls in a suitable optional subject to enhance these skills.

SIGNIFICANCE

Mobile devices are ubiquitous- Students carry these devices with them as part of daily living, so it makes sense to use them to capture learning when and where it occurs.

Holistic Approach to Life and Learning- One's life experiences differentiate individuals from others with similar formal learning backgrounds. The approach described here highlights the interconnectedness and relevance of these experiences to formal course learning outcomes

REFERENCES

- Attewell, J. (2004). Mobile technologies and learning: A technology update and m-learning project summary, Technology Enhanced Learning Research Centre.
- Curtin University of Technology. (2009a). "Curriculum 2010 - Introduction." Retrieved 13 February 2009, 2009, from <http://c2010.curtin.edu.au/>.
- Curtin University of Technology. (2009b). "Curriculum 2010: Comprehensive Course Review." from <http://c2010.curtin.edu.au/task2.html>.
- Hallam, G., W. Harper, et al. (2008). Australian ePortfolio Project, ePortfolio use by university students in Australia: Informing excellence in policy and practice.
- Kennedy, G. E., T. S. Judd, et al. (2008). "First year students' experiences with technology: Are they really digital natives?" Australasian Journal of Educational Technology 24(1): 188-122.
- Oliver, B. and V. Goerke (2007). "Australian undergraduates' use and ownership of emerging technologies: Implications and opportunities for creating engaging learning experiences for the Net Generation." Australasian Journal of Educational Technology 23(2): 171:186.