

Y go E? E-portfolios and Emerging Professionalism – An Evaluation of the First Year Health Sciences Student Experiences

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Introduction

Becoming a Professional (BP) and Becoming a Health Professional (BHP) are courses which introduce all first years in the Health Sciences Faculty to the process of developing professional conduct. The educational approach is participatory and experiential. Students are required to engage actively in small learning groups.

Students are introduced to the Integrated Health Professional diagram (Olckers, Gibbs & Duncan, 2007) (figure 1). This helps in conceptualising holistic and integrated professional development.

Students are required to use reflective portfolios to systematically reflect on experiences and consolidate theory and practice.

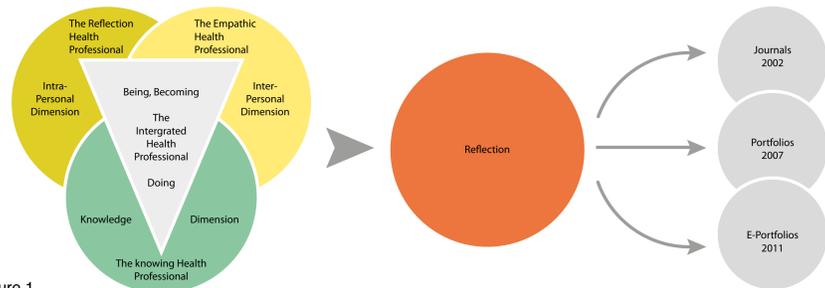


Figure 1

Reflection is a process to strengthen the integration of students' own life worlds. (Ekebergh, 2009).

Rationale

In 2011, the decision was made to change from paper-based to e-portfolios. This was in response to both external and internal influences.

External

- Pilot more technologically appropriate methods for the current generation of technologically-savvy students
- Be responsive to the current trend in higher education to increasingly move education to electronic platforms.
- Adapt and manage higher education provision in a climate of increasing student numbers and shrinking budgets.

Internal

- Facilitate a means of more regular contact between students and their facilitators
- Monitor students' work for plagiarism

Methodology

Purpose

- Formative evaluation of e-portfolios
- Quality enhancement
- Improvement of teaching, learning & assessment

Research Design

- Evaluative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001)
- Qualitative Study
- Open-ended questions
- Likert scale

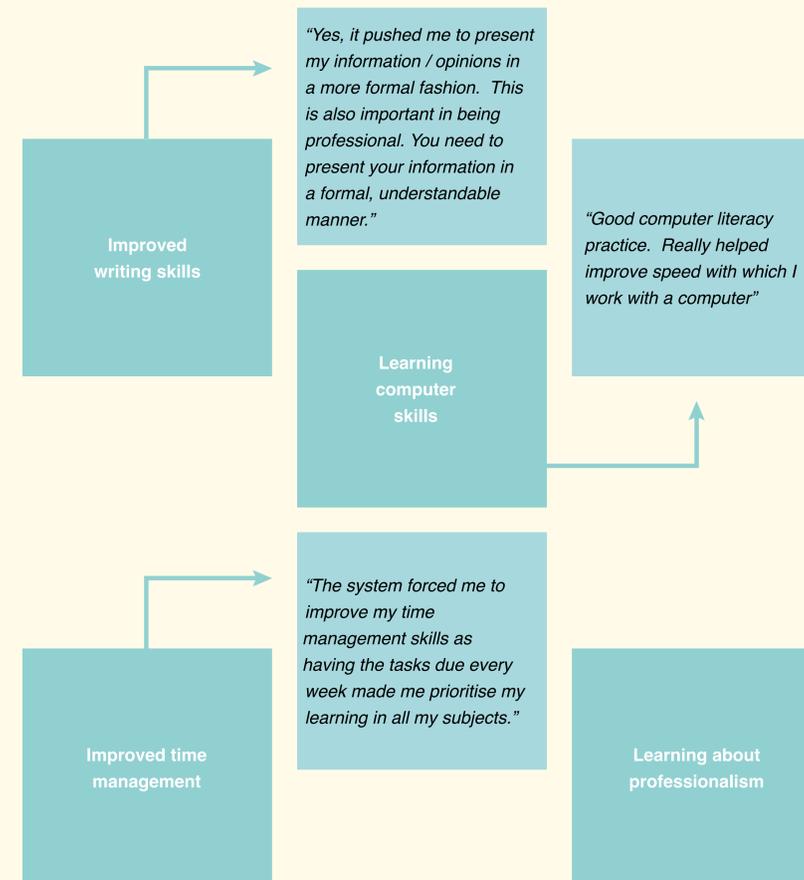
Participants

- Purposeful sampling
- Response rate: 79.5% of all first year students (290/365 students)

Results: Use of e-portfolios as an electronic tool

Through analysis of the data, distinct theme areas emerged. These can be grouped under two areas: the use of a portfolio as an electronic tool and the use of a portfolio as a reflective tool.

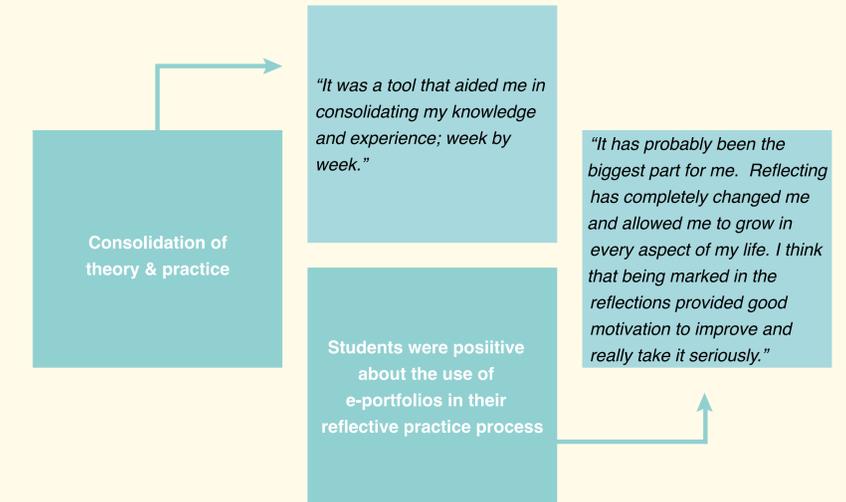
Most students highlighted these theme areas as benefits of using e-portfolios as an electronic tool.



Some students mentioned these themes as challenges of using e-portfolios.



Results: Use of portfolios as a reflective tool



Conclusion

- These results are solely based on the students' perspective.
- The results reinforce the value of portfolios as a reflective tool and the additional value of e-portfolios as an electronic medium.
- Some challenges were evident including the dates and times of submission and the number of them required.
- Further study needs to explore the experiences of educators/markers.
- Overall, students appeared to be very positive about the use of e-portfolios for their learning.

References

1. Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. (2001). *The practice of social research*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press
2. Ekebergh, M. (2009). Developing a didactic method that emphasizes lifeworld as a basis for learning. *Reflective Practice*, 10 (1) 51-63
3. Olckers, L, Gibbs, T and Duncan, M. (2007). Developing Health Science Students into 'Integrated Health Professionals – a practical tool for learning. *BMC Medical Education*, 2007, 7:45.

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