



Understanding the pedagogical value of the ePortfolio for final year midwifery students

Dr. Zoey Spendlove

Assistant Professor

Division of Midwifery, School of Health Sciences

Background: Portfolio use in Higher Education



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Within Higher Education there has been increasing interest in the portfolio as both a teaching and learning method for undergraduate students (Kuisma, 2007).

Portfolio use has become increasingly popular within undergraduate nursing and midwifery education settings (Lombardi, 2008).



In the last decade there have been significant changes in portfolio pedagogy (Kimball, 2005).

Traditional paper portfolios → electronic portfolio systems.

The ePortfolio encourages an active learner-centred experience, whereby new knowledge builds on the foundation of previous knowledge and is subject to social discussion, validation and application in real world contexts (Honebein, 1996; Jonassen, 1991; Kanuka and Anderson, 1999).

The ePortfolio allows the creative design of assessment within a balanced curriculum to help students understand and cultivate professional values and qualities (Chan, 2012; Green et al. 2014; Huang et al, 2012; Karsten, 2012; Pincombe et al. 2010).





ePortfolio is not a panacea for professional programmes with stringent competency and regulatory requirements (Chan, 2012) particularly,

- if staff are not adequately trained to ensure constructive alignment (Garrett et al, 2013),
- the ePortfolio is subsequently not fully utilised through well planned assessment criteria (Norris and Gimber, 2013).

Student dissatisfaction is also noted

- with lack of training and guidance (Garrett et al. 2013)
- uncertainty of purpose (Timmins and Dunne, 2009)
- poor understanding for what an ePortfolio is (Barett and Carney, 2005)

Despite uncertainty, the use of the ePortfolio in healthcare education is embedded in curricula, albeit in its infancy.



Practical Pilot Study

Piloting the ePortfolio as a stand-alone assessment tool within the development of the 2015 curriculum module, prior to formal use in 2017/2018.

Qualitative Research – ‘User Evaluation’

To explore the pedagogical value of the ePortfolio for final year student midwives in evidencing learning in practice.

More specifically, to **explore student perspectives of ePortfolio usage, versus traditional paper portfolios, in demonstrating competency and learning outcome achievement in clinical practice, including the development of reflective skills.**

Methodology: Qualitative



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- **Purposive sampling** – International Erasmus Placement
- **Recruitment and consent** – 8 students (2 cohorts) self-selected & consented
- **ePortfolio instruction** - Pebblepad e-Portfolio training & content guidance
- **Student support** – email support during international placement
- **Sharing of student ePortfolio** – sharing of completed ePortfolio
- **Focus groups** – 2 focus groups conducted & recorded
- **Thematic analysis of focus group transcripts** – Analysed in NVivo



Main advantages of ePortfolio use were

- Encouraging adaptability in learning styles
- Professional skill development
- Private space with ability to share work instantly
- The instant nature of ePortfolio access – Pebblepocket
- Demonstrate learning outcomes and competency achievement in creative ways – inclusive evidence gathering

Findings: Student ePortfolio

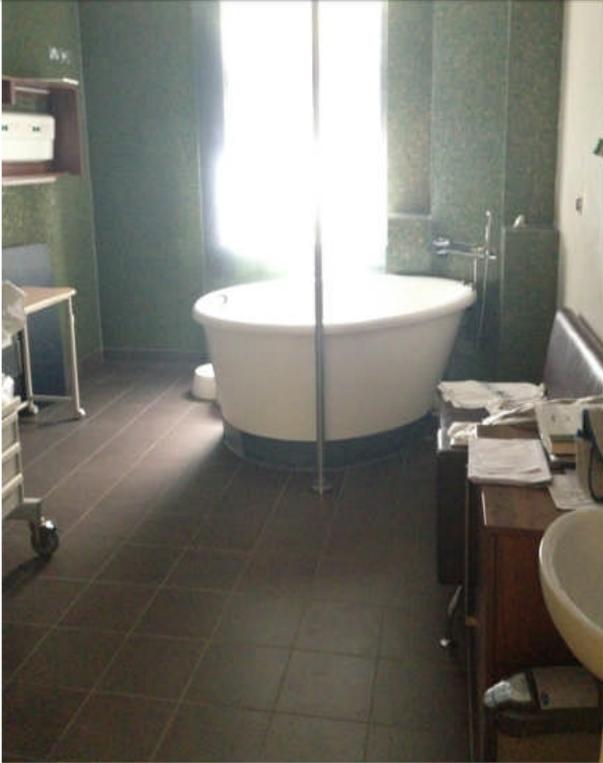


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This is the relatively unused pool room in Cork, women are allowed to labour in the pool but are not allowed to deliver in the pool, highlighting a stark contrast to the care women receive in the UK.

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Findings: Student ePortfolio



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PebblePad

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Introducing myself and my placement experience

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Findings: Student ePortfolio



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Contents Outcome 2

“

In the United Kingdom (UK) the perineal trauma (tear or episiotomy) rate of women who have a vaginal birth was 85% as reported by Albers et al (2005).

If you **google** *'fears of childbirth'*, tearing features on **almost all** of the results...

See [here...](#) and [here...](#) and [here...](#)

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Main advantages of ePortfolio use were

- Encouraging adaptability in learning styles
- Professional skill development.
- Private space with the ability to share work instantly,
- Demonstrate learning outcomes and competency achievement in creative ways – inclusive evidence gathering
- The instant nature of ePortfolio access – Pebblepocket

Consistent with a social constructivist pedagogical foundation (Anderson and Dron, 2011) the ePortfolio appeared to encourage an active learner-centred experience.

Instant access encouraged in-action reflection (Schon, 1991).

Freedom of completion both during and after placement facilitated both 'in-action' and 'on-action' reflection (Schon, 1991).

Main disadvantages of ePortfolio use were

- Lack of knowledge and skill regarding ePortfolio building
- Functionality of Pebblepad/Pebblepocket - Creativity with limits
- Professional issue – Pebblepad/Pebblepocket usage on placement
- Lack of mentor awareness and ‘buy-in’

Whilst the students felt the ePortfolio had clear advantages over the traditional paper-based portfolio in terms of student-centred learning – frustration was evident with the limitations of ePortfolio use in practice.

Summary



The ePortfolio was viewed positively beneficial in

- assisting students with depth of both 'in-action' and 'on-action' reflection (Schon, 1991)
- creatively evidencing individual learning and competency achievement from diverse learning experiences.

Limitations of the use of the ePortfolio in practice are evident, and need to be addressed in order for the ePortfolio to provide optimum pedagogical value for final year healthcare students.



The limitations of the study were

- the small number of participating student midwives
- the time restriction of 9 week ERASMUS placement
- the student workload during placement.

Despite being a small scale research study, the findings make a valuable contribution to knowledge and a foundation for future research.

Pilot study

- Pilot supports the practical use of Webfolio as a stand alone formal assessment
- Awareness building and in-depth ePortfolio training led by the eLearning team is required for both students and staff, along with clear guidance documents
- Awareness building amongst mentors to increase acceptance

Contribution to knowledge

- Findings tentatively suggest that the stringent competency and regulatory requirements of healthcare professional training do not negatively affect the pedagogical advantages of the ePortfolio for final year student midwives.
- Tension of technology usage in practice has not previously been explored in the literature.

Recommendations



Further research, with extended time frames and with other healthcare professional training programmes, is recommended to validate highlighted findings.

Future research should aim to rigorously explore the scope and limitations of ePortfolio usage in demonstrating competency achievement – comparing paper and ePortfolio completion.

To explore the wider creative possibilities of Pebblepad used in combination with additional applications such as Microsoft Publisher, Powerpoint and Word.



Thank you for listening

Any Questions?



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