

E-PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT IN GENERAL EDUCATION: A PRACTITIONER'S PERSPECTIVE

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PAPER ABSTRACT

The use of portfolios in teaching and learning has a long history, with multiple purposes including showcasing achievements for career preparation and assessing learning processes. Stemming from its paper-based counterpart, an e-portfolio presents itself as a student-centered learning and assessment tool with additional flexibility, providing a platform for interactions. The development of e-portfolios across various disciplines in higher education has since been gaining momentum amid the growing popularity of e-tools and web-based technologies, leading to many new teaching and learning practices and pedagogies (Butler, 2006). On the other hand, challenges for applications of e-portfolios have also been identified in different context and at various levels (Lorenzo and Ittelson, 2005), calling for more effort into both practices and research in this ever-changing field.

The present study aims to demonstrate, with the experience of an actual implementation of e-portfolio assessment, the potential benefits and limitations of the use of e-portfolios in a medium-sized class of students with diverse backgrounds. The element of e-portfolio was integrated, as a component of the continuous assessment leading to an end-of-semester group presentation, into a general education course in elementary statistics consisting of mainly first year undergraduate students from various disciplines. Aiming to help students establish a proper statistical perspective in everyday life, there was a need for a platform for constant reflections throughout the course. Linking up with other existing components of the course, the student e-portfolio provided not only such a platform, but also a foundation for potential peer-learning opportunities.

Feedback from students obtained in a questionnaire survey is analyzed and benefits in these aspects are discussed. While the integration of e-portfolio assessment into the course was generally valued by the students, students also expressed mixed attitudes toward the hands-on experience with e-portfolios, as various technical issues could potentially pose a threat to the overall effectiveness. Both such benefits and limitations arising from the process of the implementation are explored in this case study, which aims to shed light on directions for possible improvements and further investigation in the aspect of e-portfolio assessment from a practitioner's perspective.