

Student and Lecturer Experiences of Eportfolio Assessment for Virtual Classes at a Private University in Malaysia



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ABSTRACT: Assessment during virtual learning is a challenge to both lecturers and students in institutions of higher education. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Movement Control Order (MCO) that followed soon after created pandemonium in the education fraternity globally. Though blended learning was becoming the norm at private universities prior to COVID-19, there was still the avenue for face-to-face assessment until the outbreak of COVID-19. At this private university, ePortfolio as an ongoing assessment was introduced during the MCO. Seven students were involved in this case study which was carried out as part of a more extensive study on the use of ePortfolios as an ongoing assessment in institutions of higher learning. The findings of this study revealed students and their lecture's experiences on the use of ePortfolio as an ongoing assessment in the virtual classroom. Findings show that students, though digital natives, were challenged by a number of factors including the technicalities of designing and managing an ePortfolio, lack of stable internet connection and the use of malfunctioning hardware. The student's also highlighted the need for more support from the lecturers to understand the use of ePortfolio as an on-going assessment.

KEYWORDS: ePortfolio, classroom, online learning, on-going assessment, COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

Countries around the globe are struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic now and education is one of the hardest hit industries. More than 1 trillion students from primary to tertiary levels are affected by this pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). Educational institutions such as schools, colleges and universities have been clamoring to transform to digital platforms as a means to stay afloat in this uncertain time of an unprecedented disaster.

In Malaysia, since 18 March 2020, the Movement Control Order (MCO) has been in place to ensure safety of the nation and to fight the menace of the COVID-19 merciless spread and infection. Higher Education Institutions (HEI) globally are challenged with the need to transform delivery of course contents digitally to ensure continuity of effective learning (Chin, 2020). This global transformation in delivery of education digitally is racing like an unbridled horse.

Effective assessment to match the above-mentioned forced transformation of teaching and learning methods to digital platforms is a major concern. When teaching methods and delivery change, assessment has to change as well (Stan nard, 2020). He further asserts that assessment must be collaborative, inclusive, formative, reflective, continual, embedded, learning and autonomous. This research augured well for the possibility of the e-portfolio as an assessment that supports Standard's assertion.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The pressure has always been there for institutions of higher education to provide accountability on quality of teaching and learning (Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia et al., 2018). Assessment has always been a major concern in education and it is more so now amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (Stan nard, 2020). The main focus of portfolio assessment is to document learning and the related experiences (Perla & Maffit, 2019, p.312) and is an instrument for assessment that can support accountability in the teaching and learning process.

Assessment is a core component of the teaching and learning process (Stan nard, 2020). According to Daniels et al. (2019), in higher education, inclusive teaching and learning engages with the three main factors which are pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. They assert that the dynamics of these three factors engage students in the learning process effectively (Daniels et al., 2019).

The term portfolio is not new in the field of education. Portfolio emerged in the educational context in the early 1990s with various definitions for different assessment purposes (V. Klenowski, 2010). Student portfolios have been defined as an intentional collection of student work to document their effort, progress and achievement over time (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991, p. 30 cited in

Student and Lecturer Experiences of Eportfolio Assessment for Virtual Classes at a Private University in Malaysia

Perla & Maffit, 2019, p.311). Nevertheless, a clearly defined purpose is necessary for the creation and use of portfolios (Perla & Maffit, 2019, p.316).

In the teacher training fraternity in Malaysia, it was the buzz word in the early 2000s when the English Language Teaching Center, Ministry of Education introduced it as part of its effort to improve the quality of teaching and learning English literature in secondary schools.

With blended learning and now with the current drastic transformation to fully online teaching and learning, e-portfolios can come to the rescue to address the need for effective assessment. Stan nard (2020) also confirms the use of e-portfolio as an effective assessment in online teacher training programmer.

The use of ePortfolio for assessment has the potential of moving from being an alternative assessment to main stream assessment. However, it needs to be carefully designed with sufficient support for the learners (Stan nard, 2020). He claims that it is extremely challenging for learners to adapt to this new form of assessment but they get the hang of it and appreciate the learning they experience with the ePortfolio.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown off balance the education sector in all countries. Even though many universities have scrambled to provide a reliable platform for online learning, it was expected that there would be hiccups especially in the early stages. Arumugam (2020) highlighted that lack of internet access with sufficient bandwidth and stability could pose a problem. He further asserted that it is very likely that rural students will face the brunt of this challenge. He also fore-warned that there could be digital platform crashes due to a surge in use (Arumugam 2020). Further, Khan et al. (2018) proposed a “digital literacy framework” for the higher education institutions in Malaysia, which inevitably will include the need for digital assessment.

Classes are conducted fully online through various platforms like, Zoom, WebEx, Google Meet, etc. but assessment is not so easy to be carried out online. The main challenge in this sector is the need for effective assessment formats (Rayon, 2020). Universities provided special guidelines on tests to be carried out online but the question of reliability and trustworthiness of the scores is still an issue. Universities were forced to conduct online assessment and in Malaysia, the Education Ministry and MQA (2020) approved alternative methods of assessment to replace Final Examinations in a circular dated 29 March 2020. Universities were given immediate approval to transform teaching and assessment to online modes to meet the challenges of the pandemic. Online assessment has become the norm but the practice of online assessment was not common in universities due to the challenges it poses. Yet, a form of effective online assessment method was the dire need now.

There are numerous challenges that have to be addressed to ensure that the ePortfolio can be used as an effective online assessment method. There was a need to prepare learners by scaffolding their transition to adopt ePortfolio as an assessment (Stan nard, 2020).

On 17 June 2020, Pfordten (2020) reported in The Star that universities were “thinking outside the box” to replace traditional written final examinations with alternative assessments. This is the most pressing current looming issue in the education fraternity globally and local university lecturers are advised to seek best practices from colleagues at other universities because there are no standards in place yet for effective and reliable online assessments of the Learning Outcomes Clusters. Lecturers at universities globally were discussing through webinars and other professional platforms like TESOL Association ways to transform face-to-face evaluation methods to online methods. One of the online methods that I piloted was the ePortfolio.

ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have experienced increasing pressure to provide accountability data and consumer information on the quality of teaching and learning. Existing ratings and rankings of HEIs tend to neglect information on student learning outcomes (Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia et al., 2018). They claim that ranking and rating based on research outputs, number of publications and activities do not indicate the actual development of graduates within the university. They further assert that in most countries there is a lack of information on quality of programmer, information on approaches to achieve learning outcomes are not broadly shared, and features of assessment instruments are vague. Concurring with Daniels et al. (2019) findings, portfolio is a qualitative assessment method that engages the teaching and learning process to the assessment (Cummins & Davesne, 2009). Pereira et al. (2016)’s report based on an 8- year study(2006-2013) assert that diversity of assessment methods, including alternative assessment methods, used in European countries have had different kinds of impact. They examined assessment methods used, the modes of assessment and also assessment used that matches the teaching-learning methods. They also examined the key issues of assessment in higher education in the European countries. Apart from engaging teaching and learning to the assessment process, portfolios complement other quantitative assessment tools (Cummins & Davesne, 2009).

Students had self-confidence in using ePortfolio to manage their learning experiences (Lopez- Fernandez & Rodriguez-Illera, 2009). Nevertheless, they claimed that the ordinary impact on their learning was not too great. Incidentally, they reported that the students claimed that the ePortfolio was effective as an individual developmental learning instrument.

Assessment in higher education is still a major concern globally, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic that has forced an

Student and Lecturer Experiences of Eportfolio Assessment for Virtual Classes at a Private University in Malaysia

unprecedented transformation to fully online learning in all universities around the world. In Chapter 8 of their book, the researcher highlight the importance of assessment by concluding that assessment of student learning can either reinforce or subvert the goals of transformation (Aagaard et al., 2019). In the past reforms have been slow in education due to “widely held misconception of the nature of learning” (vanOostveen et al., 2019) but with the advent of COVID-19, all hell has broken loose and reforms and transformation in teaching and learning are the rule of the day. These researchers assert that the very core idea of how learning happens has changed with online teaching and learning. There is a need to adopt new ways to address old problems.

PORTFOLIOS

Portfolio is an assessment tool that empowers the learner (Cummins & Davesne, 2009). A portfolio is defined as “a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for judging merit and evidence of student self-reflection” (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991, p. 60 as cited in Zahiruddin et al., 2019).

They further concur with Teaching @ UNSW (2017) that a portfolio can be viewed a product or a process. The portfolio functions as product as it stores records and documents, and it's a process because it monitors the learner's progress systematically through reflections (Teaching @UNSW, 2017 cited in Zahirudd in et al., 2019).

The ePortfolio has the unique ability to link teaching and learning to assessment for language learning (Cummins & Davesne, 2009). Advanced student portfolios are developing significance in higher education as a new assessment technique which advances self-confidence of autonomous learners in the virtual environment (Lopez-Fernandez & Rodriguez-Illera, 2009). This creates the possibility of expending this ability of the ePortfolio to other courses offered in higher education as well.

Portfolios are grasped widely in higher expert instruction as compelling devices for understudies to speak to their learning and help set them up for future practice. They are assorted, utilized for both developmental and summative purposes; in any case, concerns are raised that the current accentuation on scholarly guidelines or potentially the emphasis on employability may prompt the view of portfolios basically as intends to depict accomplishments (Clarke & Boud, 2018).

Today e-portfolios have developed as an energizing open door for students to record and break down their learning in an advanced domain; nonetheless, much exploration is expected to comprehend the suggestions for sometimes later (V. Klenowski, 2010).

Khan et al. (2018) cautioned a digital literacy divide is looming as access to technology is still limited. This can never be closer to truth than now when all universities are forced to transform into online teaching mode. Normally, people tend to assume that youths are digital natives however exposure to technology alone does not consider as digital literate person. In actuality, students are struggling with online learning (Khan ET al.2018; Stan nard, 2020). Khan et al. (2018) confirmed that students need support to be digitally literate for educational purposes and education.

Klenowski et al. (2006) claimed that the use of portfolios for summative evaluation can be overwhelming. They further asserted that what is missing is research that gives experiences into how a portfolio for learning can be utilized in HIM to form understanding into one's own learning, appraisal and expert practices. They assert that past research had identified portfolio use for learning purposes based on three contextual investigations: the significance of setting up the motivation behind the portfolio; the effect of portfolio to deal with learning, to instructing and to effective outcomes, the progressions to effective practice; and the need to consider issues identified with morals and privacy (Klenowski et al., 2006).

The long term use of portfolios might be especially useful to record student progress, especially students who are challenged since their efforts and improvements might be all the more promptly valued and evident in a portfolio that has been documented over a period of time (Carothers & Taylor, 2003 cited in Perla & Maffit, 2019, p.314).

According to Zahiruddin et al. (2019), there are a number of limitations to the use of portfolio-based assessment. According to them, these include a need for hardware and software, skills to manage online resources, need for higher levels of motivation, acceptance of online platform for learning, ability to understand the effectiveness of an ePortfolio, and to ensure that student success to sustained (Zahiruddin et al., 2019).

Yang et al. (2017) inspects the role of e-portfolios as advanced appraisal devices in upgrading the nature of learners' learning results in higher education. E-portfolios tap into the capability of advanced innovations to help learners' self-observing, self-assessment, and sharing of learning. In this way, e-portfolios have been accounted for as achieving enhancements in the learning process. Then again, existing examination likewise shows difficulties for educators of institutions of higher education (HEIs) while receiving e-portfolio appraisal. To define procedures for improving the learning capability of using e-portfolios, a study with the research question: How are e-portfolios utilized as advanced evaluation devices to upgrade the nature of learning results in advanced education? (Yang et al.2017).

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Similar to other businesses, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have been misusing developing advancements as an approach to improve execution and adjust to the inexorably innovation-driven society. Albeit advanced change is frequently connected with business associations, it is likewise a significant issue for HEIs and presents a few difficulties that must be viewed when characterizing computerized arrangements and procedures (Rodrigues, 2017).

Student and Lecturer Experiences of Eportfolio Assessment for Virtual Classes at a Private University in Malaysia

The widespread development of advanced innovations affected the instructive framework, as well. Schools and advanced education organizations have an essential need to rearrange themselves and apply new innovations effectively. Simultaneously, this procedure involves various difficulties (Kovba, 2019).

Xiao (2019) findings show that digitalization by colleges highlights in instrumentality (e-grounds development and application) and modernization (supporting and productivity advancements in instructing and learning), a circumstance likewise observed in different nations.

In Malaysia, with the need for online learning, the corporate sector is supporting students with access for home based learning. According to a British Council Report, since March 2020, the telecommunication company, Digit has given unlimited data access to students in national curriculum schools, whilst YTL Group has given free mobile data and online resources to ensure public school students are not disadvantaged (British Council, 2020).

This study examines the challenges faced by students and the lecturer when using ePortfolio as a digital on-going assessment in virtual classes.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The objectives of this study are to identify student experiences of ePortfolios assessment for virtual classes, to identify lecturer experiences of using e Portfolio in virtual classes, and to promote and encourage use of ePortfolio as an ongoing assessment method in higher education based on student's perspective.

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are student experiences of ePortfolio assessment in virtual classes?
2. What are the lecturer experiences of using ePortfolio as an assessment method in virtual classes?
3. What are the advantages of using ePortfolio as an on-going assessment tool in higher education from the student's perspective?

METHODOLOGY

The theory underpinning this case study is connectivism. Connectivism is a recent addition which is described as a learning theory of the digital era. Utecht & Kelle (2019) claim that Connectivism Learning Theory can be applied in K-12 and higher education. They further claim that the adoption of this theory will allow institutions to take advantage of technological platforms as they exist today and in the future. They further assert that though the internet has brought with it the possibility of connecting and collaborating in the field of education for the benefit of learners, its full potential is still far from achievement (Utecht & Keller, 2019).

George Siemens is a familiar but controversial face at numerous e-learning conferences. In his article "Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age", from 2004 Siemens asserts the limitations of past learning theories i.e. behaviorisms, cognitivism, and constructivism, and introduces connectivism as a learning theory for the digital era (Herlo, 2017).

In this case study, connectivism as the underpinning theory of the digital age, connects teaching, learning and assessment as the dynamics that result in student engagement in their own learning. The students learning are captured in the ePortfolio through Reflections which was introduced as an on-going assessment throughout the semester. The diagram below (Diagram 1) encapsulated the dynamics of elements in the conceptual framework.

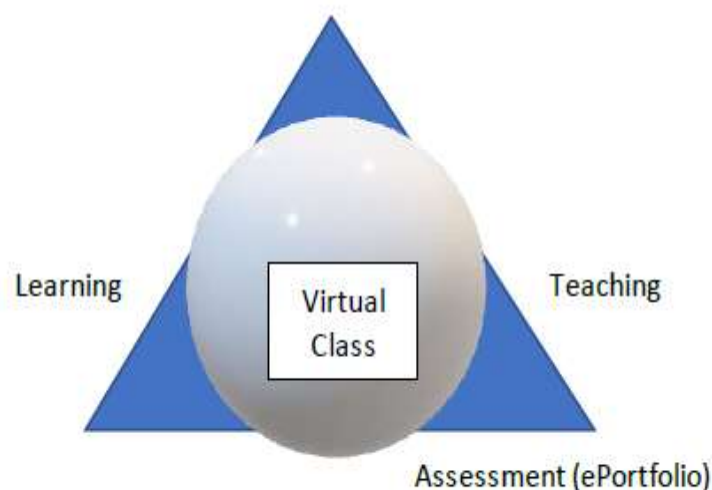


Diagram 1: Conceptual Framework

Student and Lecturer Experiences of Eportfolio Assessment for Virtual Classes at a Private University in Malaysia

RESEARCH DESIGN

As is the accepted practice in educational research, teacher research has the intention to contribute both to research and practice (Groothuijsen et al., 2019). They further assert that there are slight differences in the concerns focused by researchers and teachers, and they propose collaboration between teachers and researchers to enhance research and practice. Thus, the role of the researcher in this study is two-fold with the intention to enhance practice.

This study used a qualitative approach using interview protocols as the main data collection instrument. Student sample was identified using the purposive sampling procedure and the researcher was the lecturer. The interview protocol for students was designed to gather data online.

A study was carried out from March 2020 to June 2020 at one of the private universities in Selangor. Seven students from the Bachelor of Arts in Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program were involved as sample in this study.

Data collected from interviews was analyzed to identify emerging trends and patterns. Data is presented in different themes for clarity to answer each research question and to achieve the research objectives.

INSTRUMENTS AND DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected from a private university in the Klang Valley. Participant identified based on purposive sampling were interviewed and their course-related documents were analyzed to gather in-depth insights into their assessment practices. Participants provided informed consent before data was collected.

The qualitative instruments used were interview protocols. Rich qualitative data was collected from the sample to ensure reliability of this study. Data was collected till saturation point to ensure findings from the analysis will be valid and reliable. The ePortfolio submitted by students was analyzed closely to identify areas focused by the students and the lecturer. Assignment Briefs provided by the lecturer was studied to identify the focus in assigning tasks in higher education. Course syllabus related to the courses was studied to identify matches and mismatches, if any, in assessment focus.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study is timely as ePortfolio can be used as an assessment tool in face-to-face classes as well as virtual classes which has become the norm due to the pandemic. It is versatile to be used in schools as well as in higher education. It allows for student's autonomous learning and learning without boundaries. Lecturers in universities will be able to understand their own challenges with better clarity and their students' experiences and challenges that they face when adopting ePortfolio as a form of online assessment.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This case study involving 7 undergraduate students on Bachelor of Arts in Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) was carried out from March to June 2020. These students had completed an ePortfolio as an on-going assessment throughout the semester and an interview protocol with 5 questions were sent out to these students at the end of the semester.

The data analyzed sought answers for the three research questions guiding this study. The data is presented and discussed below based on the research questions.

Research Question 1: What are student experiences of ePortfolio assessment in virtual classes? Most of the students had past experience of preparing portfolios for assessment.

Student Responses:

"Yes, I had experience creating both portfolio and e-portfolio."

"Before this, I have experience creating few portfolios for work, during high school times but it is different than the university one."

"Yes. I have experience creating portfolios in the last semester for teaching of writing and also have experience creating e-portfolio this semester for teaching for prose form and poetry." "it was a fun experience as I never did this before."

So, the introduction of ePortfolio was not exactly alien to these students. Yet the data shows that shifting from print to digital portfolio was a real challenge for these digital natives. This finding concurs with Khan et al. (2018) and Stanard (2020). Khan et al. (2018) assertion that students need technical support to manage virtual classes is confirmed by the findings of this study as well. The students were able to compare and contrast between print portfolio and ePortfolio. All of them preferred ePortfolio for various reasons which will be discussed below.

The students also highlighted numerous issues including

i. Technical challenges

Students raised the issue of unstable internet connections and lack of hardware to support stable internet connections.

Student Responses:

Student and Lecturer Experiences of Eportfolio Assessment for Virtual Classes at a Private University in Malaysia

“the slow internet connection”

“Sometimes I have difficulty with my internet connection...”

“Maybe after this If it needed me to do my e-portfolio I can try and error to do it with google words to find which way is better.”

ii. Understanding the task

Though an assessment brief is standard practice at this university and a briefing is conducted on the first day of lecture for every course, it seems like students did not understand the task clearly.

Student responses:

“I think it will be better if the lecturer showed the examples of the portfolio to the students because most the students don't know what portfolio is, the lecturer can show them the portfolio created by the previous students.”

“Understanding what e-portfolio and how to create one.”

“Maybe my lecturer can give me draft or example in Microsoft words of e-portfolio to make me better understands on the arrangement of e- portfolio and shared with me via email. Because I kind of confuse with the instructions and it need me to ask my friends various time to understand the instructions. Although my lecturer already explain (sic) the instruction every time we had online class however I am still confuse on how do I organize my e-portfolio.”

“I am able to understand better when I ask one of my friends to share her work tome on how she organizes her e-portfolio. Others that that I think that the instruction and the rubric that lecturer give me are clear.”

“difficulties to understand the instructions.”

“Although my lecturer already explain (sic) the instruction every time we had online class however I am still confuse on how do I organize my e-portfolio.”

The students requested for a sample ePortfolio, but based on my experience as an ESL teacher for over 30 years, I have come to realise that task samples destroy the creativity of students and they end up producing clones of the sample shown. Hence, it was intentional on my part not to provide a sample ePortfolio. However, a more thorough briefing needs to be carried out based on the findings.

Further, the students failed to understand the difference between links and book marks within a single document. Among the 7 students, only one student submitted a perfect well-linked and bookmarked documentation of Weekly Reflections with sufficient supporting evidence for each Reflection based on the course topics.

iii. Time consuming

Students also highlighted the fact that preparing ane Portfolio is time consuming as they had to search for materials that link to the topics covered in the course. Thus, they had to discriminate materials available in the internet by reading, comprehending and analysing contents to match the course topics.

Student Response:

“It takestime for me to really understand on how to organize my e-portfolio.” “Sometimes it is hard to find appropriate materials related to the subject.” “...make the process to upload my e-portfolio takes so much time.”

Research Question 2: What are the lecturer experiences of using ePortfolio as an assessment method in virtual classes?

I first introduced portfolio as an alternative assessment in 2004 during an in-service teacher training programme that I was conducting. I can categories my experience of using ePortfolio as below:

i. Digital natives are not necessarily techsavvy

My students are generally in their early 20s and are in the generation to be considered digital natives. Students in the age group have been assigned print portfolios in previous semesters. Print portfolio as an assessment instrument has worked well for most students in higher education but there was a need to print loads of materials for the portfolio. This was also highlighted by the students where they confirmed this waste of resources. I have been introducing print portfolio for the past few semesters and students did not have these many issues understanding the task. At the end of the semester all students submitted their portfolios as assigned. However, it was evident that assigning an ePortfolio to the students was a real challenge for them to navigate. Though they highlighted the advantages of an ePortfolio compared to the print version, the general feel is that students were technically challenged by the assigned task. This brings me to my next experience.

ii. Task Briefing

Virtual classrooms create a communication vacuum due to the lack of physical presence that slows down students' engagement in the lesson. Students seem to take more time to engage in the classroom activities in an in-depth manner. Instructions given are often misconstrued.

Students acknowledge that I had given them clear instructions repetitively e.g . “providedus with ongoing assessment” and “I

Student and Lecturer Experiences of Eportfolio Assessment for Virtual Classes at a Private University in Malaysia

think that the instruction and the rubric that lecturer give me are clear.”, yet they were struggling to understand the task. This finding concurs with the claim that teaching, content and assessment engage students in the learning process effectively (Daniels et al., 2019). Once the instructions are well understood, the students were able to complete the assigned task with much ease.

iii. Pace of Lesson

There is a need to go at a slower pace during virtual classes to ensure that students are engaged in the learning in an effective manner. The use of the Zoom Chat box to keep students engaged in simple quizzes worked well in my virtual classes. Instructions for tasks needs to be repeated to ensure that everyone heard it loud and clear as unstable internet connections and noise distractions can affect students' understanding of instructions given. The university's support for online classes with the availability of platforms such as LMS and Panapto enabled me to record and upload all lecture videos.

Research Question 3: What are the advantages of using ePortfolio as an on-going assessment tool in higher education from the student's perspective?

Assessment for virtual classes is a serious concern now globally. According to the students' perspective, they were engaged in the completing the ePortfolio for assessment. They listed various advantages of the ePortfolio that was assigned to them as an on-going assessment.

Students, though struggled in the beginning to understand the assigned task and instructions given, they were able to complete the task successfully and documented the advantages of using the ePortfolio as an assessment tool. The advantages from the student's perspective can be categorised as:

i. Convenience and easy access

Students highlighted convenience and easy access as one of the three main advantages of ePortfolio. They confirmed that the use of ePortfolio saves time, effort and money as all relevant materials are only a click away and there is no need for printing pages of materials as required in the print portfolio. Students prefer ePortfolio as it provides easy access to both students and lecturers.

Below are the student responses:

“I think the e-portfolio is **more convenient**. For example, I can put hyperlink of the video in the portfolio, the lecturer just clicks it, then he/she can watch the video I found, it **saves more time**.” “Besides, **students don't need to print** their portfolio and submit to the lecturer.”

“If I **want to look again** at the materials I can just click at the link and the link will bring me to the site.”

“For e-portfolio I **can access** to the video anytime I want because I always have my Smartphone with me.”

“In addition my **lecturer can check** my e-portfolio anytime because my E-portfolio can be “shared” in goggle drive.”

“unlike print version you **don't have to take too much time** creating, designing, arranging your portfolio.”

“you **can refer it in future**”

“My **lecturer can have access** to my work and can check my work if I need to do correction or need to put more info.”

“I can **have access to my work** not only in this semester but more than that (2 months later, 1 years later) for my future review.”

ii. Autonomous learner

Students responses highlighted that the ePortfolio supports students endeavour to be autonomous learners as they take responsibility for their own learning. They assert that ePortfolio extends their understanding of the subject as they explore topics on their own.

As they use the digital platform, their work is neat, organised, creative and fun as all submissions are done electronically.

Student Responses:

“It helps students to **extend their understanding** of the subject.”

“My work is **neater and organizes** (sic) because I can justify my work and I can type my e-portfolio at Microsoft word.”

“I can be **more creative** and make my e-portfolio more colourful by include many picture I found on the goggle image.”

“e-portfolio is **much fun** as we could do **everything on virtual**.”

iii. Documents the students' learning process

The ePortfolio with Weekly Reflections as a core component was an effort to document student's new learning experiences. Thus, students realized that the ePortfolio allows them to record the learning experiences. They also have a platform to elaborate their own learning experiences and exploration they carried out on their own by sourcing for information in the internet. Students were encouraged to watch TED Talks, You Yube videos, documentaries, read articles, watch movies, etc.

The Student Responses are:

“I get to **record the improvement of my strength and weaknesses** when writing weekly portfolios.”

“I get to elaborate more **about my own experience** regarding to the chapter of the subject.” “I get to **post pictures and videos** that is regarding about the chapter itself.”

Student and Lecturer Experiences of Eportfolio Assessment for Virtual Classes at a Private University in Malaysia

“I get to **elaborate about the learning experience** from the chapter of the subject that I have learned from.”

“And I also need to include various materials related to the subject, such as video, picture, poster, and so on.”

“**enhance creative thinking skills**”

Taking into consideration the data analysed above, the ePortfolio is an effective assessment tool for any virtual class as digitally students are able to explore various online media. A student claimed that “This is really different with print out portfolios which I can only show my work to my lecturer at class time only”.

The limitation of this study includes the sudden use of ePortfolio with little time for preparation and as a case study conducted at a private university, these findings might lack the strength for generalizability. Further, it is a part for a larger study and as such findings might differ later as students get exposed to the forced-trend of online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nevertheless, this study can be used as a pilot for a nation-wide study to evaluate the use of ePortfolios in higher education. The main assumption in this study is that all higher education students and lecturers have access to internet and personal computers/laptops.

Conclusion

This preliminary study concurred with past study that it's a misconception that the current generation of students are digital natives and thus are tech-savvy. These students struggled with the demands of a digital ePortfolio. There is a need to provide sufficient academic and technical support to ensure that the ePortfolios can function to replace traditional written tests and examination as a valid assessment instrument.

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