Chapter 11
Using ePortfolios in Higher Education to Encourage Learner Reflection and Support Personalised Learning

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ABSTRACT

Personalisation, with its emphasis on learner choice and lifelong learning, challenges educators to provide an innovative, student-centric educational experience. New technologies have great potential to support personalisation; however, institutions must review their approaches to assessment and feedback and their strategies to learning and teaching as well as increasing opportunities for collaborative learning and extending their external partnerships. This is a significant agenda for any institution. In this chapter, through the authors’ four case studies drawn from different subject areas in a higher edu-

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to contribute to current debate and inform practice on how, and in what ways, an ePortfolio can be used to encourage learner reflection and support a personalised learning experience in the higher education setting. In this chapter we:

• briefly outline personalisation and the theoretical and practical challenges that it presents for educators;
• discuss how reflective learning supported by an ePortfolio can help educators rise to these challenges and support learners to become independent, autonomous lifelong learners;
• provide exemplars, drawn from a range of subject areas, to demonstrate ‘ePortfolios in action’;
• offer suggestions on how ePortfolios, when integrated within the curriculum, can encourage reflective learning and help educators to support a truly personalised learning experience.

PERSONALISATION OF LEARNING: AN OVERVIEW

Personalisation of learning has emerged as a key concept in the vision for the United Kingdom (UK) Government’s reform of the public service sector including education. Although the discourse on ‘personalization’ originated in the United States, recent UK policy documents and political debates imply that for school education, personalisation seeks to improve learner engagement, achievement and progression with the learner at the centre of a supported educational experience where there are opportunities for dialogue between learners and advisors (AoC, 2006; Pollard & James, 2004). Central to the personalisation agenda are:

• choice for pupils to decide what they learn and how they will learn it with the aim of removing barriers to learning and engaging all learners, especially vulnerable, disadvantaged and disengaged young people (DfES, 2006);
• developing learner autonomy and skills for lifelong learning which includes:
  ◦ setting and having high expectations of learners;
  ◦ developing the learning experience to reflect how learners learn, especially through interaction and collaboration;
  ◦ focusing on the learning of skills as well as the transmission of knowledge;
  ◦ fostering independent learning and decision-making so that learners can identify, plan and take responsibility for their own learning according to their specific needs. (DfES, 2006; Leadbeater, 2004; Miliband, 2004).

The Department for Education and Schools (DfES, 2004) has set out five key components of personalisation which schools need to address (see Figure 1).
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