CASE STUDY
Using PLE for creating a showcase portfolio in Nursing

CONTEXT
PLE was used in a capstone unit in the Master of Nursing Science. 34 students were enrolled. Students developed an ePortfolio to demonstrate achievement against professional body competency standards. Staff decided to trial the use of an ePortfolio, rather than paper-based documents, so that students had the ability to develop a professional looking portfolio and share work with their academic supervisor (and possibly potential employers).

LEARNER ACTIVITY
Students were asked to submit a final portfolio that incorporates all aspects of their educational experience across their degree studies, including:
- records of clinical practice placements and reflection on each
- evidence-based achievement of ANMC (Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council) competency standards, and a reflection on the ANMC domains
- a plan for post-graduation continuing professional development

The portfolio was worth 50% of the final grade.

FEATURES OF PLE used
Webfolio:
Students were provided with a sample webfolio, and could add this sample portfolio to their own Pebble+ space, add their own detail, and then customize the look.

EXPERIENCE
This implementation plan focused on attempting the use of the system with the least amount of impact on student workload in terms of technical competency with the system. Students had at the very least only to change details on their copied sample webfolio, and had the potential if desired to personalize it further, which they did.

In a focus interview, one student evaluated her experiences holistically:

“I enjoyed using the PebblePad+ format. Once I was able to understand the platform I found compiling the portfolio simple. Using an online portfolio as a student means that going into my nursing career my organisation of professional documents will already have begun and will be easy to continue. Putting all this information into one place has highlighted what I have achieved over the past two years.... At times the limitations of PebblePad+ were frustrating (limited formatting, unable to export as an editable document), however the ease of use, and key features (such as ability to view different media files, and the auto spell check!), more than made up for this.”

Students were able to create ePortfolios as envisaged and required for their course assessment. However, the low level of submission requirements and the fact that students had to collate documents from all prior units of study, meant a less favourable implementation. Most respondents (86%; n=7) agreed that PebblePad met the unit’s purpose or required use. The overall response was that only 43% agreed that they found PebblePad easy to use and 43% recommended that UWA acquire PebblePad as an ePortfolio system for teaching and learning purposes. Most students encountered technical difficulties (86%) with the main problems being the slowness of the system and formatting/display issues, as well as general lack of understanding of the system. In the general feedback, students complained about the amount of time required to scan evidence from previous units.

This implementation and outcomes provide valuable information regarding characteristics of successful implementation of a PLE where the outcome is a professional portfolio demonstrating the achievement of professional standards.

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