

Absolutely Amazing Ways Reflective ePortfolios Enhance Education And Assessment

With Celeste Kong

Boston University

While ePortfolios might seem new to some people, the support for using them as a reflective learning tool to enhance education and assessment in higher education has increased over the past decade, partly due to the growing need for better accountability of student academics.

ePortfolio pedagogy includes an evidence-based learning process and should ideally utilize technology that supports the long-term storage of academic work beyond the scope of students' college careers. A well-structured electronic portfolio will improve learning and teaching as students can collect, store, and access their work and document learning experiences over time. In addition, since these tools encourage long-term collection and storage of works, it is an ideal virtual space that allows students to reflect critically on their academic works.

An assessment ePortfolio has become increasingly essential for students in today's fast-paced and technologically advanced world. It is a wise choice and a powerful tool that can propel students' careers to new heights and offer institutions invaluable insights into the student's learning journey and overall experience.

Students can do more with their ePortfolio by sharing their selected works with others, including their advisors, professors, colleagues, or potential employers; it can be used for goal setting, resume building, and career development.

Harnessing the Power of the Assessment ePortfolio to Propel Professional Growth

While speaking as a guest on our recent Digication Scholars Conversations podcast, Dr. Celeste Kong, then Professor and the Chair at The Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine at Boston University, shared her reasons and the motivation behind encouraging her students to adopt these tools.

Celeste eagerly shared her experience as Director, where she challenged her students to create cases that required innovative designs and models for their patients. Initially, the students would painstakingly put their ideas on paper, only to later transfer them to PowerPoint for presentation, showcasing their remarkable "before" and "after" processes. They would even display their impressive designs and models to patients.

But then, a revolutionary idea struck the soon-to-be-retired professor. What if the students started creating ePortfolios to assess these exceptional cases? What if they could effectively document their enlightening learning journeys and invaluable experiences using a versatile medium they could

easily carry wherever they go? The possibilities were endless -- they could effortlessly demonstrate countless versions of their brilliant creations, allowing people from all walks of life to deeply admire and appreciate their outstanding works.

Afterward, she encouraged her students to show their work to prospective employers or Directors if they plan to go Post-Doc. Celeste has been using ePortfolio technology for a few years after attending a workshop where she was introduced to Digication. She's convinced Digication has the right technology to help scale her students' careers by assessing their projects anywhere they go.

“What I wanted our students to do was to shine, to make themselves shine in a way that was more mobile because carrying castes and models of patients to an interview - that's tough, and you know it's much better if you can do it digitally.”

Dr. Celeste Kong

Professor and Chair, Goldman School of Dental Medicine, Boston University

How ePortfolios Enhance Other Core Skills When Used in Collaboration with Other Practices

A crucial point Celeste mentioned was that many people, including her colleagues, had difficulty adjusting to ePortfolio for assessment. Additionally, the transition to utilizing an assessment ePortfolio posed difficulties for faculty members and students when evaluating alternative skills.

Although people initially perceived the process as tedious to read through, arrange, organize, and upload documents, projects, artifacts, and other items, the benefits were clearly seen and appreciated. All these collections help endorse individuals for their specific skill sets, knowledge, and experiences.

Often, people are surprised to see how much students improve when exposed to reflective and experienced-based learning. This is because each entry is a statement, telling the story of the individual's undertakings, accomplishments, experiences, learning, and skill acquisition process.

Using ePortfolios in collaboration with other practices provides opportunities for students to assess the less-talked-about skills like critical thinking, evidence-based practices, visual thinking, and communication.

Several of our findings at Digication revealed that learning with ePortfolio enhances the learning experience when students are presented with their virtual space to reflect and evaluate what they've learned. In line with our results, Celeste acknowledged that ePortfolio is a great tool to enhance critical thinking and communication skills and make connections between various educational experiences.

Celeste also pointed out the limitations of current assessment systems, which predominantly rely on multiple-choice questions and fail to foster critical thinking through the essay writing element. She noted that the accreditation process of the Dental School emphasizes the need for students to possess good communication and critical thinking skills.

Are any successes recorded from commissioning a reflective ePortfolio module as a tool for assessing students' reflection?

The exceptional results the students showed mean they could evaluate their learning and accurately document their experiences meaningfully after processing their thoughts -- using ePortfolio.

"We have them (students) reflect, and we have them post on their ePortfolios, and I think that went well. In fact, during our last accreditation, one of our students was asked to show them (accreditors) what she had online, and she showed them a case, something that she had posted on her portfolio - which is, of course, on Digication."

Dr. Celeste Kong

Professor and Chair, Goldman School of Dental Medicine, Boston University

Conclusion

ePortfolios are valuable tools with limitless pedagogical and career benefits. You can start documenting your career process and tell your story. Digication is a platform that allows students to own their virtual space by building ePortfolios throughout their academic years.

"We can only chase the future of education and assessment in medicine if we understand how far we've come and how to use what we've learned in the basics, old-fashioned way to enhance the future with technology."

Dr. Celeste Kong

Professor and Chair, Goldman School of Dental Medicine, Boston University

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