



EDUCATION RESEARCH FUND, 2022

Build it in Beta: ePortfolio Use in Teacher Education in Orillia

RESEARCH REPORT

July 2022 // Report prepared by Helen DeWaard, Steven Secord, & Lucas Johnson

The primary objective of this research is to determine the student and faculty perceptions of satisfaction and efficacy of using e-portfolios in the Year One course work and reflections. Additionally, knowing how e-portfolios are used and integrated into other Faculty of Education courses is helpful in understanding the depth of use across the teacher education program in Orillia. Determining if student use of e-portfolio technology enhances student perceptions of digital literacy and/or competency with technology would additionally support the use of e-portfolios in order to meet the Ontario College of Teachers requirements for accreditation.

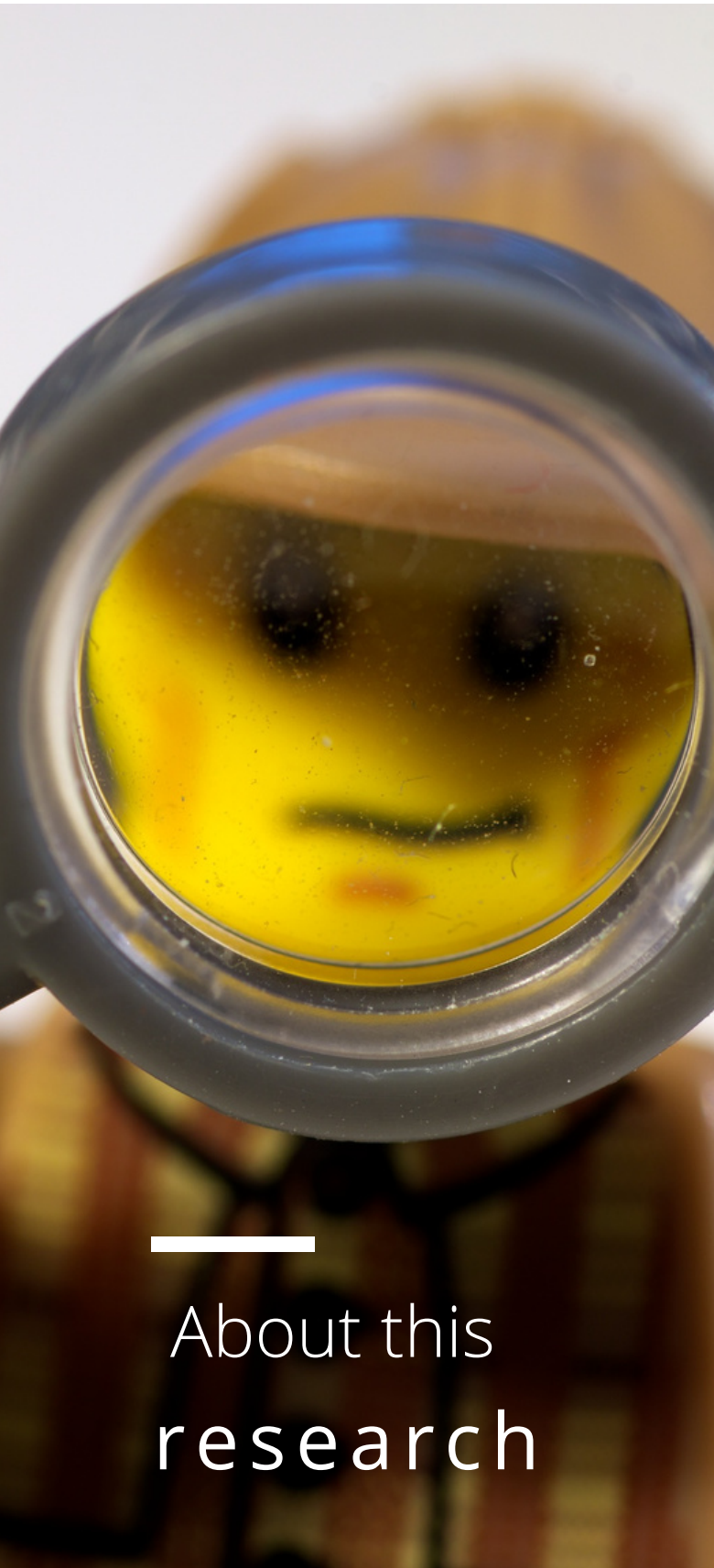
Build it in Beta: e-Portfolio Use in Teacher Education in Orillia

What?

The integration of student created e-portfolios has been done in the EDUC 4350 course in Orillia over the past three years. Initially integrated into this course in the fall of 2019, this preceded the pivot to online instruction that occurred in the spring of 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Each year, e-portfolios are introduced to all year one students during the first month of the program, through in-person and virtual presentations. In the past, students were able to use the university's Google sites application, but changes to this application's availability have resulted in a less technological deterministic approach, moving toward increasing student agency in the selection of e-portfolio platforms.

Faculty and students were invited to participate in a survey. Two separate surveys were prepared for each group of participants. Survey questions focused on identifying usage, perceptions, and supports needed. The survey links and information were emailed from the main office to all faculty and students in April 2022.

Approximately 15% of students of the 288 Year 1 students and the 263 Year 2 students responded. Fourteen faculty responses were completed from the approximately 40 instructors (35% response rate). Survey results were analysed to determine themes and connections. Data was coded to determine perceptions about the e-portfolio integration into the EDUC 4350 course and the program generally.



About this
research

So What?

Student Results

- 49% had little or no web publication experience prior to creating their e-portfolio
- a combination of web publishing tools are used but almost half used Wix
- 67% stated they gained skills from creating the e-portfolio
- 46% claimed they gained fluency in their chosen platform
- students used peer support and trial and error to problem solve rather than reaching out to faculty
- problem-solving strategies included switching platforms, 'googling it', watching YouTube videos, and referencing the course choice board
- some used resources provided e.g. workshop presentation notes, exemplars
- many questioned the length of the reflections
- based on feedback from associate teachers, job-readiness as a primary purpose of the e-portfolio was suspect
- some noted the benefits of gaining experience in their reflective practice and enhancing their web related creativity

Faculty Results

- The majority of faculty respondents indicated awareness of the e-portfolio as an assignment
- 50% indicated that the e-portfolio was integrated into sharing of assignments, projects and reflections for the course.
- Respondents often encouraged "students to profile their work from courses in their e-portfolio".
- There was an expressed desire from some respondents for further integration of e-portfolios into other courses, even lamenting that "because it is not, I struggle to get students to do it at all and/or to see its value".
- 50% suggested exemplars as a resource for faculty use
- Benefits identified by the faculty respondents include: a place to demonstrate learning; job interview/applications; and to serve as a collection of student work e.g. "It is a fantastic place for students to keep ongoing reflections and to showcase their work throughout their time in the faculty of education".
- suggested greater support for work load and time commitments in the creation of e-portfolios, consistency in application, and improving student responsiveness toward the e-portfolio.

These responses speak to the need for strategic faculty support, and clear and consistent messaging about the overall purpose of the e-portfolios in the faculty program.



Student response suggests a problem-solving strategy: "I would consult friends or use google if I ran into any problems or issues"

One respondent shared that they "learned to design a professional but easily manageable website to publish my teaching successes, tips and tools, as well as what I have learned and gained within the field".

Now What?

The results from this survey indicate a lack of experience with web publication for both students and faculty. Analysis shows findings similar to those from the University of Ottawa's digital hub strategy research. Hagerman and Coleman (2017) outline challenges and benefits of applying a programmatic approach to e-portfolio integration as echoed in research literature (Mueller & Bair, 2018; Paulson and Campbell, 2018; Stansberry & Kymes, 2007).

Our survey results indicate the following:

Challenges:

- student and faculty lack of knowledge, skills, and technical fluency;
- tensions that emerge between coursework (grades, assignments) vs developing a professional identity;
- time vs value and benefits;
- clarity of expectations and purpose

Benefits:

- professional value particularly in creating a digital persona; which has potential to link to future use for jobs or sharing with employers;
- sharing, participating, and/or curating resources
- exhibiting individual creativity;
- gaining technical skills and fluencies while experiencing web publication;
- pride of ownership, production;
- environmental sustainability by going paperless
- reflection



Forsythe, G. (2011). E-portfolio needs assessment. <https://flic.kr/p/9hc3FU>

Since e-portfolio work is challenging and complex at individual and institutional levels, our intention is to "accept the aspirational challenge of promoting flourishing" and "to accept that we intend to change and to persevere through the difficulties of working towards the reimagining of the Faculty" (Flourishing as a Faculty, 2021, p. 5).

Recommendations

These recommendations emerge from the survey results and respond to faculty and student suggestions for:

- **Guidance and support** - general, content, design, technical
- **Programmatic directions/ messaging** - clarity, faculty awareness, purpose
- **Identifying professional value** - make explicit connections to directions by external agents in education sector and to OCT professional & ethical standards
- **Choice and voice in web publication** - privacy, purpose, agency