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ENHANCING LEARNERS' AUTONOMY WITH E-PORTFOLIOS

Abstract: this article considers how e-portfolios improve learner autonomy in higher education, especially when using open learner models (OLMs). OLMs are artificial-intelligence-built representations of interactions between learners and instructional environments, where learners have access to data about their interaction patterns.

Keywords: E-portfolio; self-directed learning; learner autonomy; open learner models

Several authors have reviewed the literature on e-portfolios. Some focus on specific areas such as medical or nursing education; secondary education; and formative assessment in foreign language learning. Alan and Sunbul (2015) reviewed 17 experiences of implementing and using e-portfolios in the Turkish education system. However, these reviews have not fully addressed higher education or the issue of developing autonomy skills. Although Butler's review of the literature on implementation and impact of eportfolios (2006) did not consider their role in developing autonomy in higher education students, it showed that implementing e-portfolios is a long-term process that "need(s) to be an integral part of a program of study, not an 'added-on' assessment, which may necessitate the review and restructuring of courses". This research also underlined that the type of portfolio, its purpose and its audience must be clear for successful implementation. Bryant and Chittum (2013) highlighted the lack of strong empirical evidence that could help implement e-portfolio approaches. As noted by Scully et al. (2018, p. 8), they found that only 18 out of a set of 118 articles presented "data on learning outcomes, or outcomes associated with learning, such as motivation and reflective practice". Panke (2014) identified instructional scaffolding and peer feedback as the two main factors to support learning and reflection in an e-portfolio approach. The author emphasized the need for a "careful reflection of pedagogical motives, organizational context and instructional setting to successfully orchestrate an e-portfolio process to trigger reflection and learning".

Beckers et al. (2016) pointed out that portfolios may help develop self-directed learning skills. They argue that development of self-directed learning skills can be supported when "faculty development aimed at supervising self-directed learning skills development is provided; the portfolio is integrated into the educational routine (e.g., it is implemented school-wide, it is aligned with course outcomes); teachers coach their students regularly; scaffolding is applied to increase student motivation; the portfolio is designed to at least facilitate basic elements common to most SDL theories: goal-setting, task-analysis, plan implementation, and self-evaluation" (Beckers et al., 2016, p. 44). These reviews reveal factors and conditions which may support self-directed learning using an e-portfolio approach. However, they tell us little of the links between autonomy, eportfolios and OLMs; hence the need for the present review.

From the Education Resources Information Center database, Google Scholar and the Web of Science databases, a primary list of 1243 references containing the keywords "portfolio" or "e-portfolio" was drawn up. The keywords "autonomy", "self-directed learning" and "learner model" were then used as filters to select references relevant to the research question. This left 24 peer-reviewed articles issued

from 2007 to 2018, which constitute the corpus analysed for the present literature review. These articles address the research question – how can an e-portfolio approach using open learner models enhance learner autonomy in higher education? – from two different yet complementary angles. The first explores the material, human, technical (including OLMs) and pedagogical conditions that may encourage autonomy. The second question the effects of the e-portfolio approach. The results outlined below shed light on both aspects.

Guo (2007) and Guo & Greer (2007) emphasized that information provided by the learner model must be as clear and accessible as possible. This is essential to enable teachers to put in place teaching activities that best help the learner. It is also essential to provide the learner with more food for thought when carrying out reflexive practice. Third is taking into consideration the students' views about how the e-portfolio should be structured. Alexiou and Paraskeva (2013) show that student participation in structuring the e-portfolio can help to enhance self-regulated learning. Fourth is setting the e-portfolio approach in a long-term perspective. Lopez and Rodriguez-Illera (2009) show that, although some positive effects of e-portfolios on users' self-efficacy can be seen from the second month of use, students need more time to identify how the platform, the methodology and the activities are working. This result is consistent with the findings of Butler (2006) according to which e-portfolio implementation is more efficient in a long-term perspective. On the effects side, a range of papers conclude that e-portfolios have an overall positive effect on learner autonomy and self-directed learning. Büyükduman & Şirin (2010) showed that the e-portfolio enables students to take the ownership of their learning, raises their awareness of their strengths and weaknesses and allows them to adapt the learning process to their own pace. Some authors highlight the benefits of e-portfolios for developing specific autonomy skills in relation to metacognition; self-reflection; and self-regulation. Students become more active and responsible learners and more engaged into knowledge acquisition. This literature also shows that the e-portfolio approach has other positive effects indirectly or partially related to autonomy development. Using e-portfolios increases learners' ability to mobilize their creativity. E-portfolios also seem to have a beneficial impact on the development of professional identities and competences.

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