

Blossom Project interviews

Benefits

Neil Currant - Bradford

I think that one of the biggest unexpected benefits that we've had is using pebblepad as our institutional blogging system. We were looking, when then early days of implementing, we were looking at blogging system, and we decided that no, we didn't need one as we already had pebblepad, and from that point onward, particularly with learning support services, we've a number of different people who have blogs which are publicly available blogs which are then fed through RSS feeds to various places on our website and they're updated really mainly for news on services and that sort of thing. so internal communication I see is quite a way forward of using the system and we're also looking at using it for CPD internal communication around staff development and education development the only problem there is that we're competing against, we're using social networking software to do some of that discussion we're using our VLE to have some of that discussion as well. so that the e-portfolio bit may be muddled in that water a bit and may loose out.

On a very small scale note, we've just got in our NVQ qualification, we've just got 2 students through their first module quicker than we've ever done in the past, now, and this is the first year that we've used the e-portfolio, whether that's due to the e-portfolio, obviously we don't know at this point, but it's certainly an interesting thing to look at for the future.

Phil Vincent – York St. John

Some of the benefits we're hoping to see from using e-portfolios for CPD, is that recording the CPD activity becomes a more inherent process becomes more the norm, more routine for staff, on a regular basis keep up to date their activities, keep up to date their e-portfolio hopefully let them see themselves the distance that they've traveled, since becoming a member of staff here and hopefully make the process of performance development review and appraisal a less painstaking process, in that the evidence is already there for them to demonstrate how they've moved on. We're hoping that the benefits, those will be the benefits to staff.

Other benefits that we hope to gain from using the e-portfolio tools for CPD is that we hope to as an institution gain a clearer overview of the CPD activities taking place, we'd like to professionalize and formalise the system for recording CPD. so it becomes part of the policy and procedure, part of the day to day routine for members of staff. We'd also like to raise awareness and profile of CPD itself, to encourage members of staff who wouldn't normally see themselves as having to record their CPD. It raises awareness and the benefits for things like career planning progression, perhaps promotion and showing the reasons why they should be recording their CPD.

Susi Peacock – Queen Margaret

One of things that have really occurred is that students have said that they have enjoyed using our e-portfolio system for whatever reason, for PDP for learning and teaching and they've said that after they have left us they want to continue to use it. So we're doing on a trial basis, alumni access, students have to opt in and they will then use the e-portfolios system for a year and then they will have to opt in again if they want to carry on using it. and the idea is that, well some of the students say to me that they want to use it and have used it to prepare for interviews after

they've left us so they will often come back in and say, well I've got my portfolio this reminds me of I can do this, I've got my reflections, I remember when I worked in a group so it's helped them prepare for an interview. Then others have said, well now that I've got my job as a physio, OT or whatever I can continue to use it to remind myself about my CPD and link my learning in the workplace after graduation with my learning that happened within the institution. So that's been one of the real clear benefits.

Another example is how staff who are studying for their own PhDs will often use the e-portfolio, we've probably got about half a dozen of these who have been introduced to the e-portfolio very much in the learning and teaching mode, but also see it as useful as something for them to record what they're doing each week regarding their PhD to keep them focused and sometimes staff use blogs and then the action planner so they'll say so this is what I've done this week and then in the action planner, what am I going to do next week. Some of them will also share the blog with their tutor for their PhD study and it's very interesting some tutors have got really excited about this, put comments on it engaged themselves with it others just don't want to see it and they'll say can't you just talk me through this when we have a meeting. And it's also very interesting, the ones, the PhD staff who use this are so much better when they introduce it to their students and I had a recent example of this. I had two members of staff who used the blog tool for their own PhD studies and they introduced it to their students when I was there and it was super they could really engage with and they could really talk to their students. And I had two who never use it and you could see that it was sort of like going through the motions and it really, I always emphasise to the staff that they must use the tool as much as their students, but it's really up to them at the end of the day.

David Eddy – Sheffield Hallam

In terms of benefits or possible impact of using it again, it's very early days in terms of our experiences. In terms of staff CPD so we're very much involved in the doing at the moment rather than, the evaluation of how it has gone. Looking forward what I would like to see is, is a much closer integration between staff CPD and faculty and university quality and validation mechanisms in that when members of staff run modules they have to evaluate that and they have to be reflective on thinking about their practice for module delivery next time and I would like to see things like module evaluations would be more formally linked and tied into staff CPD and that staff perceived that as a CPD activity rather than, that's just me doing my job and that CPD is just something else that I have to do over and above. and in the same way one of the things that we're going to try and do is build this into validation by using the webfolio facility within pebblepad to enable service managers and service users as well as academics colleagues to be able to feed in and comment on the validation document as it's developing and evolving and this will hopefully minimize the amount of time people have to have meetings and travel from all over the UK to come and actually attend meetings about the validations. So we're hoping that that will be useful. And it will also be a way in which we can incorporate the comments and the feedback from some of our international partners because we have a number of international students as well and it would be great to reflect their thinking in the validation documents as well. and it will also neatly give as a way of evidencing that we have actually got that involvement as part of the validation process as the comments will all be there and documented as part of the webfolio so that's a bit speculative but we'll have to wait and see how it goes.

Sarah Chesney – Cumbria

Any unexpected benefits? Well, yes, I think we would agree that actually using the e-portfolio has given staff the confidence to try other forms of technology for instance audio files to give feedback to their students or linking their pebblepad blog with their facebook. So they've

beginning to experiment more and feel probably a bit more comfortable with the technology, I guess it's perhaps it's come from the feeling of ownership, that they're not really going to do anything wrong because it's their account and they're taking, they might think that they're taking a risk, in fact it's very secure. But I think that they're feeling that this is their own thing and they can do something with it, so I would say that it's actually helped staff become more comfortable with technology and have a go at other things. They've also used it to feed back to me questions about how do I say, for instance, how do I create an audio file that I can I give feedback from my students, is one example and I was able to give them that support through pebblepad. So yes, there have been quite a few unexpected benefits but I would say that is the main one.