IMPLEMENTING AN EPORTFOLIO SYSTEM THROUGH NON ACADEMIC AREAS. THE TECNOLÓGICO DE MONTERREY'S EXPERIENCE IN THE MEXICO CITY CAMPUS

Marco Antonio Mendoza Calderón

Proyectos Especiales, Universidad Virtual, Campus Ciudad de México

Tecnológico de Monterrey, México

mamc@itesm.mx

Francisco Xavier Sánchez Hernández

Proyectos Especiales, Universidad Virtual, Campus Ciudad de México

Tecnológico de Monterrey, México

xavier.sanchez@itesm.mx

Abstract In 2002, Tecnológico de Monterrey implemented an original model of ePortfolio in the Mexico City Campus. This model was based on the writings of Barret, PhD (2000), Levin and Camp (2002) and Meza, PhD (2002), with the objective of showing student's reflections on what they know and how they had developed that knowledge. Our model is grounded on student's reflections in three broad areas of student's lives. The first being personal reflection including student's values, feelings, attitudes. The second is the academic area, where students reflect about their life plan and goals in relationship to their major. The last area deals with reflection about the way students construct their competencies for their future careers. Jesus Meza, PhD launched the project in august 2002, with 60 students studying two different majors. By January 2005, the number of student's portfolios had grown to 5.000, covering 18 different majors. This growth was obtained when Student Life Areas implemented e-Portfolio activities to their programs (sports, community service, cultural events, etc), obtaining better acceptance to the project. According to the mission of the Tecnológico de Monterrey for the year 2015, the e-Portfolio project seeks to be a comprehensive communication tool reflecting the personal, academic and professional achievements of students at the Tecnológico de Monterrey, which will be important to them in the present and future lives.

1 Introduction

Commonly electronic portfolios implementations in universities are taken to the end in faculties of education. Since 2002 Tecnológico de Monterrey at their Mexico City Campus has implemented and original model of electronic portfolios (ePortfolios) for their students of all majors. (Social Sciences and Humanities, Engineering and Architecture, Sciences of the Health and Businesses) Using as base the New Conceptual Model of Electronic Portfolios redesigned on 2004. This Model bases the ePortfolios to reflect student's leanings at the end of each semester and select the most representative and significant leanings of that semester.

Taking as a starting point the mission statement of the Tecnológico de Monterrey's toward 2005, the ePortfolio project is an endeavor to give the students the ability to be educated while they reflect upon the contents that they regard as significant and important in their professional studies. The main purpose is that the students focus themselves on learning, not on their grades. By these means are conformed student records and profiles about their time at the university, as well as the academic and extracurricular activities that contribute to the students' personal and professional formation in a holistic manner.

2 Implementation

In its beginnings, the project was proposed ePortfolio was integrated in a course named *Introduction to (name of the major) Program*. For example to student who has enrolled to Business Administration the name of the course is *Introduction to Business Administration Academic Program*. This course is parte of

the curriculum of all major, and has the objective to teach basic knowledge of major chosen and areas of specialization and their field of application. It also introduces the student to Tecnológico de Monterey Educative Model and Campus life.

The students were supposed to integrate all their portfolios, starting with the first semester, paying special attention to the personal part. Nevertheless, experience showed us that in order for the students to achieve this objective, the project must be explained in different courses to develop simultaneously the academic growth of the student, and also to seek subjects adequate for the contents they were asked to create. This strategy delays the project implementation and relevance to students' learning.

In May of 2005 we foresee the convergence of student academic and extra academic information. At this point we decided to work with Dirección de Asuntos Estudiantiles (DAE). DAE is the office in charge of all extra curricular formation of our students. These include sports activities, community service, cultural events and workshops, students' politics, etc. The most important area of DAE is Difusión Cultural (DC). DC offers 360 workshops by semester of Music, Dance and Visual Arts. The acceptance of this area by the Tecnológico de Monterrey Community assures the importance of implement ePortfolio in DAE.

The strategy of implementation consist in create ePortfolios for DC's instructors. In this virtual space instructors integrate syllabus, CV, teaching courses, photos and opinions of previous students about workshop. By august 2005 a course of 15 hours was designed to introduce instructors in the Conceptual Model of ePortfolio Project at Tecnológico de Monterrey and in the use of SEADI, the ePortfolios platform. Forty Teaching ePortfolios were created and thirty six were approved. This approved ePortfolios was announced on October 2005 at the closing ceremony of the Culture Week event.

The next step was use this teaching ePortfolios as a communication media between instructor and alumni. Twenty students who integrate the representative groups of DC were chosen to update their ePortfolio with reflections of its learning in the workshops offered by DC. These Student ePortfolios were linked with Instructors' Teaching ePortfolios correspondent course.

These ePortfolios Student and Teaching were linked to inscriptions system in January 2006. So the student can now see information about the workshop, opinion of student about workshop, photos, etc before taken it. Other students that are not enrolled to courses with ePortfolios in it, started to update their old and forgotten virtual space. By April 2006 we obtained 500 updates for students who forgotten to use their ePortfolios to reflect on their lernings. Each student in these reflection spaces builds new knowledge and is receptive to the transcendence of this way of thinking, creating a linkage between theory and practice in their formation. The SEADI gives our students the opportunity to interpret their formative experiences, be they personal, academic, or professional. The DAE ePortfolios implementation continues with the creation of a virtual community, a non-academic space that eases the communication among users—students and professors—outside the strictly academic environment.

3 Technologies
For this new implantation we used the ePortfolios web system SEADI version 2.0, this system allows the students to select privacy for their reflections, place images on its experiences, place doc or pdf archives as well betters the way distribute and publish the ePortfolios. This version continues handling the ease of use.

This is important for students non-familiarized with the creation of web pages, since it is enough with writing and clicks a button to publish his reflections and to share them with the community.

3 Results

Although the implantation of this strategy has left many important experiences in the instructors who used the tool, the results to which we focused are those making by students with the increase in the use and update of the ePortfolios. Using the extra academic courses as examples of their reflections in learning increased the participation and enthusiasm of the students in the use of ePortfolios. In other words to find a meaning to also make this type of activities (for those who did not do them) like the meaning to reflect on which they learn in the formal curriculum and in the informal curriculum. These are combined with the fact to share these experiences with the rest of the community and to be an evidence of their formation. These reflective activities give the student awareness, and compromise them with its formation and responsible to improve it: *"yo soy yo y mis circunstancias, pero si no las mejoro a ellas, me hundo yo"*, it says the famous phrase of Ortega y Gasset.

In the SEADI our students have a tool to reflect upon their learning and self-assessment, and they will also have virtual spaces of expression and non-academic linkage with the Tecnológico de Monterrey community. These reflection spaces will let students recognize their significant learning, go deeper into their beliefs and practices and value them, with the intention to validate them and confirm them, or to repurpose, enrich, and transform them. The SEADI gives our students the opportunity to interpret their formative experiences, be they personal, academic, or professional.

By these means the students are trained to get involved in the knowledge society, since they assess their own knowledge building. The SEADI is part of an intensive effort to innovate and change our institution. Hence, it has the potential to transcend the curriculum, the technological integration level, and the learning process through reflection, as well as the administrative decision making related with the program assessment.

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