From the ICL2008 ePortfolio Special Session Chair

The recent rise of ePortfolios is a global phenomenon: in Europe, Australia, the USA and Canada, there are now hundreds of thousands of ePortfolio owners and there will be millions by the end 2010. The ePortfolio movement is a movement that goes far beyond the field of initial education: ePortfolios are now becoming essential tools for personal development planning (PDP), managing continuing professional development (CPD), gaining accreditation for prior learning (APL) and career management. ePortfolios are also a central element in some national learning policies, as in Wales, England and The Netherlands, or regional policies, like in Tasmania (Australia), Minnesota (USA) and more recently in France, where several regions are building regional ePortfolio platforms inspired by the Welsh vision or providing ePortfolios to all of its citizens.

This worldwide development was well illustrated in a number of papers presented during the 11th international conference on Interactive Computer Aided Learning, 24-26 September 2008 Villach, Austria. The authors addressed a number of issues related to ePortfolio practice, competencies and technologies.

The paper presented by Wolf Hilzensauer and Gerlinde Buchberger present the construction and implementation of a course for training the trainers to using ePortfolios as a tool for the improvement of teenagers' self-esteem. This course, with freely accessible online resources, is an opportunity for all those who want to discover what ePortfolios are about and how to implement ePortfolio practice. The paper presented by Elena Mănucă and Sevastian Alexandru explores the different didactic functionalities ePortfolios should provide. One particular issue raised in this paper is the link between individual and organisational ePortfolios, i.e. the use of individual ePortfolios to create the organisational ePortfolio of the school of education. This is certainly a promising direction that should be explored further. Gerhard Bisovsky and Sandra Schaffert present a view, based on the interview with experts on the competencies educators need to work with ePortfolios.

In the last paper, Klaus Himpsl and Peter Baumgartner, provide a comparative analysis of a number of ePortfolio platforms. It is interesting to note that one of the platforms, Drupal, which is not an ePortfolio Platform per se, but a regular content management system (CMS) ranks very high in terms of functionalities available to support ePortfolio practice. This very interesting study calls for more studies to address the issue of ePortfolio management for large cohort of students, in particular, what systems/architectures best balance the need for individual freedom and creativity with organisational management and accountability.

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