

ePersonal Development Planning: Issues and Possibilities

Possible institutional advantages of adopting an ePDP system

- An obvious and tangible signal of the importance of PDP to the institution
- Possibility of becoming sub-regional hub for ePDP in colleges and lifelong learning [LLL plan]
- Meets the HEFCE eLearning Strategy Joint Implementation Plan to develop *'e-based systems of describing learning achievement and personal development planning.'*
- Meets DfES eStrategy requirement that we *'offer online learning space to store coursework, resources, results and achievements ... an electronic portfolio, making it simpler for learners to build their record of achievement throughout their lifelong learning.'*
- One system which could support the institution in addressing many different agendas including:
 - Employability and career planning
 - Study skills
 - Student 'soft skills'
 - Autonomous learning and high level thinking skills
 - Inclusivity
 - Student-centred learning

An ideal system would be:

- A learning tool - encourage reflection and developmental learning
- A presentational tool - provide a number of presentational outputs such as CVs and web portfolios.
- Holistic – encouraging recording reflection and reporting of achievements from formal learning, informal learning and the whole student experience.
- Flexible – allowing subjects and departments to customise it to emphasise areas that are particularly important to them.
- Student owned and controlled - allow students to enter materials, set categories, and set read rights.
- Inclusive - feel student owned and controlled – allowing students to customise display, layout and presentation.
- Portable – allowing students to take the material with them or at very least access and update it beyond their time as a student
- Interoperable – able to draw on material from other systems so students do not have to enter details more than once and so institutional and student-entered material can be presented together.
- Secure - allow institutional and personal data to be included securely.

Currently it is not apparent that any system can meet all these demands.

The strengths and limitations of current options

1. ePDP options associated with systems we already use - eg PDP modules for SITS or WebCT
 - a. Costly both for initial purchase and annual subscription
 - b. Some support would be available from the company but would still require some local IT support
 - c. SITS available now, WebCT ePortfolio under development
 - d. Interoperable with current parent system – but not other systems – eg SITS will work with SITS but not WebCT
 - e. Both appear to be dominated by presentation aspect with limited support for student learning and reflection
 - f. Will look institutionally owned, very limited subject customisation
2. Stand alone commercially available ePDP systems - eg PebblePad
 - a. Costly for initial purchase and annual subscription
 - b. Support would be available for installation, customisation and some upkeep but some local IT support would be required
 - c. Not interoperable with current systems
 - d. A lot of features – both reflective and presentational
 - e. Complex to use – set stages for users to complete
 - f. Some user adaptability but still institutionally owned
3. Stand alone open source ePDP systems - eg LUSID or ePET
 - a. 'Free' with support available from the developer and other users
 - b. Would require local IT installation, customisation and support
 - c. This would allow for more customisation than first 2 options
 - d. Not interoperable with existing systems
 - e. Offer a range of modules within the package, eg. LUSID has skills diagnostics, study skill support and other materials alongside PDP and CV tools – it is not clear that they are interoperable!
4. A 'home grown' ePDP system – eSQP?
 - a. Costly in terms of local expertise for IT development – programming and pedagogy
 - b. Might allow creation of a system which was interoperable with our current systems
 - c. Customisation could be built-in but would still be institutional
 - d. Long lead-in time?
5. Allow 1000 flowers to bloom
 - a. 'Free' – staff use currently available systems individually
 - b. Not interoperable or intended to be
 - c. Blogs and Wikis useful as learning rather than presentational tools
 - d. Not an institutional signal or a basis for sub-regional development or development bids