

Electronic Portfolios as an Effective Tool for Learning and Skills Development with Omani Students

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Abstract:

This paper discusses the rationale for implementing electronic portfolio projects with Omani university students who are engaged in advanced English as a Foreign Language study at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Oman. Electronic portfolios (EPs) are based on a specific software program which the students use to showcase their cumulative academic abilities, accomplishments and personal reflections. In the process, they develop a variety of academic, personal and social skills, and prepare themselves to compete for positions in a globalized economy. The use of electronic portfolios supports Wagner's (2008) vision of how the development of critical skills for the 21st century can be achieved meeting educational, communicative and technological objectives. This helps students in their present and future academic studies, and later in the workplace. Capitalizing on the first-hand experience of two SQU English language teachers, this research explores students' learning using high-tech media and specific application of electronic portfolios in their academic and professional world. It focuses on criteria for successful implementation and highlights the broad ranges of benefits for Omani students enrolled in classes that build EPs. A number of pedagogical, technical and organizational considerations are discussed. Recommendations, guidelines and solutions to potential problems are provided so that instructors in other educational institutions in the Sultanate of Oman who are new to this technology can receive advice about how to implement electronic portfolio projects.

Keywords: electronic portfolio, language learning, skills development