Case studies in e-RPL and e-PR

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The use of ePortfolios for recognition of prior learning (e-RPL) and for professional recognition (e-PR) is slowly gaining in popularity in the VET sector however their use is sporadic across educational sectors, disciplines, educational institutions and professions. Added to this is an array of purposes and types of e-RPL and e-PR models and practice. The aim of this paper is to build on the conceptual framework developed by Cameron (2012) for e-RPL and e-PR and to provide case studies for each of the four types developed within this framework: e-PR for Professional Accreditation; e-RPL for Workplace Recognition; e-RPL for Access and; e-RPL for Self Recognition. We use the case studies to explore the four types and the two dimensions or continuums central to the framework. The vertical dimension is a continuum between RPL as process and RPL as product and the second horizontal dimension is a continuum
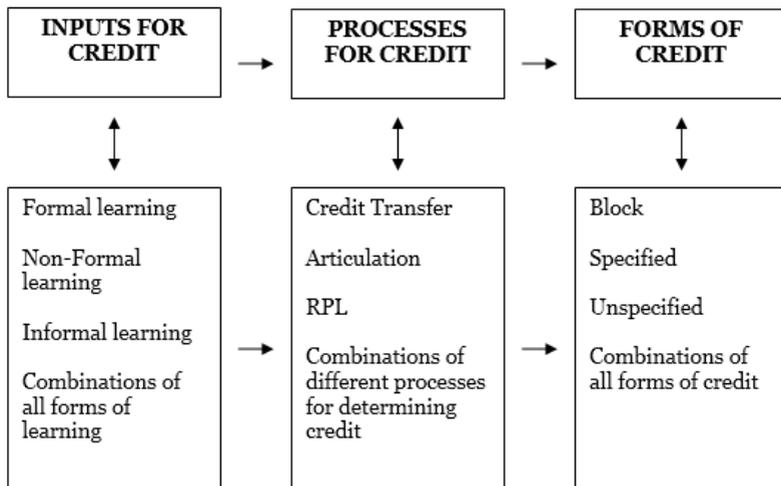
between formal learning contexts and low learner control as opposed to informal learning contexts and high levels of learner control. The case studies have aided the further development of the framework and its theoretical and practical applications.

Introduction

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) has been a mainstay of the national qualifications framework since its inception in the late 1990's. All vocational education and training (VET) providers offering accredited training must also offer RPL. In 2009 RPL became subsumed into the Credit terminology framework as one of three types of processes for credit (AQFC, 2009). 'Credit' becomes the principal overarching concept for recognising learning, supported by 'credit inputs', 'forms of credit' and 'credit processes'. 'Credit inputs' provide the basis for credit through the different forms of learning that can be recognised. 'Forms of credit' are the different credit options and outcomes. 'Credit processes' are used by training providers to determine credit decisions (AQFC, 2009:9).

Figure 1: *Credit terminology framework*

INPUTS FOR CREDIT	PROCESSES FOR CREDIT	FORMS OF CREDIT
Formal learning Non-Formal learning Informal learning Combinations of all forms of learning	Credit Transfer Articulation RPL Combinations of different processes for determining credit	Block Specified Unspecified Combinations of all forms of credit

Source: Adapted from AQFC (2009)

The AQF (2011:97) defines RPL as follows:

Recognition of prior learning is an assessment process that involves assessment of an individual's relevant prior learning (including formal, informal and non-formal learning) to determine the credit outcomes of an individual application for credit.

Increasingly ePortfolios have been used to assist learners undertake RPL processes (Cameron, 2011). This has now spread to professional recognition (PR) with ePortfolios becoming the tool used by many tertiary education providers to map professional competencies acquired during professional education for professions such as engineering, teaching and nursing. As a result, the use of eRPL and ePR is an emerging field of practice which deserves greater scrutiny and analysis. In relation to the use of ePortfolios for recognition, we note a lack of critical engagement within the literature thus far, and a preoccupation with descriptive accounts of adoption issues, operability and barriers to implementation. We wish to examine these eRecognition practices using a recently developed eRecognition framework, which assists the analysis of these practices along several dimensions (product versus process; formality versus informality; learner control and voluntary or mandated use). We also argue that RPL is not only another form of assessment or credit process but can be utilised for several other purposes such as workplace recognition and self-recognition or personal development.

Due to the emergent nature of this practice and associate pedagogies this study has adopted an exploratory approach to build on the conceptual framework developed by Cameron (2012) for e-RPL and e-PR, and to provide case studies for each of the four types developed within this framework: e-PR for Professional Accreditation; e-RPL for Workplace Recognition; e-RPL for Access and; e-RPL for Self-recognition. We have used a case study methodology to explore the four types of eRecognition and the two dimensions or continuums central to the framework.

First, we introduce the eRecognition framework before briefly describing the methodology employed in this study. This is followed by a presentation of the selected case studies aligned to the four types of eRecognition in the framework. The paper concludes with some recommendations for the further development of the framework and its theoretical and practical applications.

An eRecognition framework

A framework for e-RPL and e-PR was been developed by Cameron (2012) and will now be referred to as the eRecognition framework in this paper. The purpose of this paper is to test the eRecognition framework by applying authentic cases against each of the four types of eRecognition within the framework.

The following are definitions for the key terms (e-RPL and e-PR) embedded in the eRecognition framework taken directly from Cameron (2012:99):

e-RPL is defined as the unique practice of utilising electronic, digital and mobile web connectivity technology to collect and record evidence of prior learning acquired either formally, non-formally or informally or a combination thereof.

e-PR: Professional Accreditation is defined as the unique practice of utilising electronic, digital and mobile web connectivity technology to collect and record evidence of prior learning and continuing professional development against the professional standards of a specified profession as determined by that profession's accrediting body.

Cameron (2012) developed this framework by combining concepts from work undertaken by Cameron and Miller (2004) on models of RPL, and in particular the concepts of *RPL as process* and *RPL as product*. These concepts were extracted and added to the Smith & Tillema (2003) typology of portfolios as additional dimensions. The additional dimensions of *level of learner control (high and low)* and the *learning continuum (from formal to informal)* from the Cameron and Miller (2004) models of RPL were also incorporated into the new

eRecognition framework. These added dimensions have resulted in three types of e-RPL: e-RPL for Access, e-RPL for Self Recognition and e-RPL for Workplace Recognition. Definitions for these types of e-RPL are as follows:

e-RPL for Access is defined as the unique practice of utilising electronic, digital and mobile web connectivity technology to collect and record evidence of prior learning (acquired either formally, non-formally or informally or a combination thereof) for access to a course or programme of formal learning that leads to an accredited qualification. This process is formalised by mandated processes as determined by the provider of the accredited qualification which is usually an institution of formal learning.

e-RPL for Self Recognition is defined as the unique and voluntary practice of utilising electronic, digital and mobile web connectivity technology to collect and record evidence of prior learning acquired either formally, non-formally or informally or a combination thereof. The purpose(s) for this type of activity is determined by the learner who has complete control over the process.

e-RPL for Workplace Recognition is defined as the unique practice of utilising electronic, digital and mobile web connectivity technology to collect and record evidence of prior learning and current competencies that are required by an organisation/employer. These purposes could be related to human resource management issues (job design requirements, occupational and industry standards, job related competencies, knowledge and skills) or for human resource development related issues such as: skills audits; skills gap analyses; performance appraisal; promotion; and recruitment (Cameron, 2012:99-100).

Figure 2 below provides a visual depiction of the eRecognition framework and its types and dimensions.

Figure 2: *Expanded Typology of Portfolios for e-RPL and e-PR*
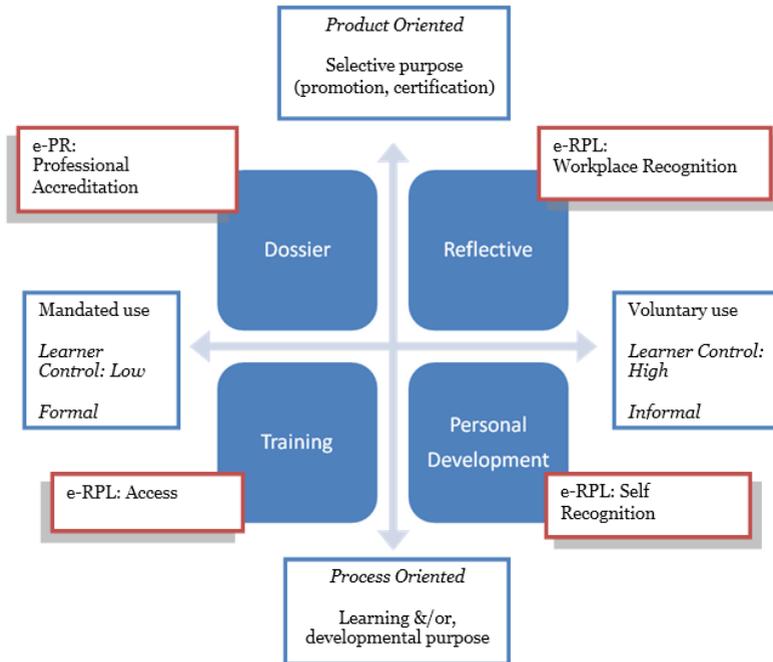
Source: Cameron (2012:100)

Methodology

The approach taken in this study is exploratory and utilises a qualitative case study design involving four cases which reflects the nature and structure of the eRecognition framework. The study aims to test the eRecognition framework against authentic case studies of e-RPL and e-PR practice. A collective case study (Johnson & Christenson, 2012) or what Yin (2014) refers to as a multiple-case design has been chosen. In these types of case study research, several cases are studied to enable the researcher to obtain 'greater insight into a research topic by concurrently studying multiple cases on one overall research design' (Johnson & Christenson, 2012: 397).

The research questions posited for this study are as follows:

RQ1: What authentic e-PR and e-RPL practices can be applied to the eRecognition framework?

RQ2: How can the eRecognition framework be utilised by practitioners to assist them in e-PR and e-RPL approaches and associated pedagogy?

Zikmund, et al. (2010) explain that 'case studies simply refer to the documented history of a particular person, group, organization, or event' (Zikmund, et al., 2010:140). Case studies are known as methods which are commonly applied in business and educational research. Burns (1997:365) describes the utility of a case study methodology as follows:

While a case study can be either quantitative or qualitative, or even a combination of both, due to the constraints of a sample of one or a single unit being studied, with the restrictions that brings for statistical inference, most case studies lie within the realm of qualitative methodology. Case study is used to gain in-depth understanding replete with meaning for the subject, focussing on process rather than outcome, on discovery rather than confirmation...The case study is the preferred strategy when 'how', 'who', 'why' or 'what' questions are being asked, or when the investigator has little control over events, or when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within a real life context.

Snowball sampling has been used to select the cases as one of the authors has detailed knowledge of e-PR and e-RPL practices across the Australian VET sector due to her previous and current professional roles and employment. Snowball sampling is also known as network, chain referral or reputational sampling (Neuman, 2006) which uses the metaphoric image or analogy of a moving snowball which gets bigger and bigger as it descends a hill (Johnson & Christenson, 2012; Neuman, 2006).There are limitations to the sampling undertaken in terms of wider coverage across other educational sectors other than the VET sector however, the emergent nature of these practices means their capture tends to be through

knowledge of innovative practice, small funding opportunities and a small but growing community of practice.

eRecognition case studies

One case study for each of the four types of eRecognition from the eRecognition framework has been selected as depicted in Table 1 below. Three of the four cases are derived from the Australian VET sector. The fourth is from the Australian adult and community education (ACE) sector.

Table 1: *Summary of Case Studies*

e-PR for Professional Recognition	**e-RPL for Workplace Recognition**
Case Study 1: • TAFE NSW, Sydney Institute - Australian teacher registration application processes for overseas trained teachers (migrant teaching professionals).	Case Study 2: • TAFE NSW, Western Sydney Institute – ePortfolios for Hairdressing apprentices. Using ePortfolios in informal work based learning contexts.
e-RPL for Access	**e-RPL for Self Recognition**
Case Study 3: • WideBay Institute of TAFE –Creative Arts students using ePortfolios created during a course for purposes outside and beyond the course (personal learning record).	Case Study 4: • YNH Services Victoria - 'Connect & Reflect' training using ePortfolios to develop a personal learning network.

We have presented each of these cases using a series of sub-headings which has allowed us to present each case in a consistent manner as well as, align the cases to the dimensions of the eRecognition framework.

Case Study 1: e-PR for Professional Accreditation

TAFE NSW, Sydney Institute - Australian teacher accreditation for overseas trained teachers

Description of project:

In this case study ePortfolios were used with overseas trained teachers (OTTs) looking to prepare themselves for a specific English proficiency test by creating their own professional, updatable and portable reflective ePortfolios in English at TAFE New South Wales (NSW) – Sydney Institute (Cross, 2012). Overseas trained teachers must undertake the Professional English Assessment for Teachers (PEAT) as part of the process to become registered teachers in NSW. This case documents a pilot course for OTTs in which they can undertake full time study in a course titled Career Development (PEAT) in which the ePortfiolio is embedded. The OTTs also enhanced their professional and personal self-esteem by being empowered through the introduction to and training in a range of emerging technologies for the purpose of creating their own Reflective ePortfolios (Cross, 2011). Table 2 provides a summary of the project.

Table 2: *e-PR Summary*

Educational Sector	Project Type	Funding	Learners
Vocational Education and Training (VET)	One off	Funded by the Australian Flexible Learning Framework as an Innovations Project in 2010	Overseas trained teachers (OTTs)

Purpose:

The purpose of this project was to assist overseas trained teachers (OTTs) to prepare for their Professional English Assessment for Teachers (PEAT) through the use of an ePortfolio. The PEAT is an extremely challenging test with only a 15% pass rate, and is only one of the first steps involved in gaining approval to teach in NSW public schools (Cross, 2012).

Description of students and or cohorts:

This project involved four overseas trained teachers (OTTs) who were described as coming from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), and were:

"...non-native speakers of English and predominantly female migrants. Usually they are also already experienced teachers of Language, Mathematics, Science, and other key learning areas in their first homelands. More often than not, they have migrated to an education system considerably different from the one in which they were educated and to a life in suburbs that are geographically widely dispersed" (Cross, 2012:39).

Technology used:

The technology used in this case study was the Mahara ePortfolio (Eskills Mahara) system. The project originally looked at Adobe Acrobat Pro 9 to create the students' ePortfolio because of the professional and sophisticated interface as they found Mahara quite cumbersome. However, the cost of Adobe Acrobat Pro 9 software and having free access to the Eskills Mahara site meant the project ended up using Mahara. The participants (OTTs) also investigated alternative e-tools for their ePortfolio (e.g., wikis).

Any interesting features or aspects of the project:

This approach to using ePortfolios offered the learners an interesting and relevant alternative to developing their English literacy skills, while at the same time developing their educational ICT knowledge. This ensured multiple outcomes for the learners in terms of their future professional practice.

Relationship to the eRecognition framework:

Why this case is considered e-PR?

This case study was considered an example of e-PR as the OTTs already had prior teaching experience but needed to demonstrate to the NSW Education Department that they had the English proficiency to be registered as a teacher in NSW. The OTTs used their ePortfolios to incorporate a record of their professional qualifications, achievements, lesson plans, methodologies and reflections.

What elements of the e-PR typology are present? (product oriented, mandated use, low learner control and formal)

The learners in this particular case were tasked with developing a reflective ePortfolio to support their English proficiency training. Initially they were expected to produce this using the Eskills Mahara ePortfolio system, and then moved to using more user-friendly free online sites for ongoing use beyond the project.

This case demonstrated the elements of the e-PR type as the activities involved professional registration, and the learners would be judged on the evidence provided in the end product (the ePortfolio). The end product (the ePortfolio) would represent the evidence on which these OTTs would be assessed as passing this first stage in Teacher Registration. Cross (2012: 39) notes the stringent nature of this aspect of the PEAT:

> the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), are not accepted by the NSW Department of Education (DET) as alternatives to the PEAT, even though this option does exist for other professions (Medicine, Nursing, Psychology) in NSW and also for teaching in other states of Australia. The PEAT is, in other words, an extremely challenging test (pass rate of 15% or less per administration) with vocational language requirements seemingly more stringent than presently exist to gain access to other professions or a teaching career in other educational institutions and states in Australia.

The use of the ePortfolio was not mandated for the PEAT by the NSW Department of Education however enrolment in the Career Development (PEAT) course option was. There is very little learner control over what is to be assessed for the PEAT however the TAFE teachers of this pilot course demonstrated a level of flexibility in terms of the pedagogy they used in this pilot:

> A minority elected to study full-time in order to have the opportunity to be supported in developing their careers whilst preparing for the twin requirement of the PEAT: accuracy and appropriacy. They consciously opted for a course of study encompassing more than test preparation: they signed up to a program in which they would develop their career prospects by preparing for the PEAT via a process of learning to use emerging

technologies as teachers and by creating their own reflective ePortfolios (Cross, 2012: 42).

The project received funding based on utilising an ePortfolio and this amounted to mandated use, reduced learner control and involved formal learning activities. However, the move to more user-friendly free online sites presents an element of flexibility which catered to the learners' ongoing learning and recognition needs.

Case Study 2: e-RPL for workplace recognition

TAFE NSW - Western Sydney Institute – ePortfolios for Hairdressing Apprentices

Description of project:

The case study involves teachers from TAFE NSW Western Sydney Institute (WSI) who have been using an ePortfolio tool with their Hairdressing Apprentices since 2010. The Hairdressing Apprentices use their ePortfolio to capture on and off the job evidence of their competence (Baihn & Hobbs, n.d). Table 3 provides a summary of the project.

Table 3: *eRPL for Workplace Recognition Summary*

Educational Sector	Project Type	Funding	Learners
Vocational Education and Training (VET)	*On going	Internal with some National VET E-learning Strategy Funding in 2012	Certificate III in Hairdressing students

* TAFE NSW Western Sydney Institute initial use of eportfolios with hairdressing apprentices started in 2009. They are now in the process of scaling up and out the use of eportfolios across their institution.

Purpose:

The use of ePortfolios was originally internally funded by TAFE NSW WSI, but received National VET E-learning Strategy Funding in 2012 to review their existing provision and support processes around learners use of an ePortfolio for assessment and to achieve

progression though their learning pathway. The outcomes of the review enabled WSI to document and share institutional lessons learned during the implementation of the WSI ePortfolio as well as share good practice models of ePortfolio usage.

In the Certificate III in Hairdressing, learners create ePortfolios to address the knowledge component of design elements and principles unit of competency WRHHC307A – Combine haircut structures for traditional and classic designs on men. This unit explores the styles of hairdressing for men, and requires the learner to demonstrate competence in communication, analysis, planning and then selecting and applying tools and equipment to create finished hair designs.

Technology used:
The technology utilised in this case was the Mahara ePortfolio tool (Foliospaces), an external service on which the WSI ePortfolio is hosted and support services are provided as TAFE NSW does not have an official ePortfolio system/service. WSI also utilises CLAMS – (Classroom Management System) and (SIS), the TAFE NSW Student Information System for recording and reporting of assessment (Stowell & Lamshed, 2011).

Any interesting features or aspects of the project:
This is an effective example of the use of ePortfolios in assessment of hairdressing apprentices. The ePortfolio is being used for both on-campus (formal learning) and off-campus (work based learning) assessment tasks to collect evidence and record it in a secure way. Photographs are also used to collect assessment evidence (Stowell & Lamshed, 2011).

Relationship to the eRecognition framework:

Why this case is considered e-RPL for Workplace Recognition?
The apprentices are required to undertake on and off-the-job training and assessment. The ePortfolio tool allows both the on-the-job supervisor and off-the-job assessor to have a better means of communicating with one another regarding the learner's progress

through the program of study via the ePortfolio. This provides on-going feedback mechanisms to the learner about their leaning and assessment.

What elements of the e-RPL typology are present? (product oriented, voluntary, high learner control and informal)

This case is product oriented as the ePortfolio (product) becomes crucial to assessment and judging the learner's progress. Templates are provided to learners initially to enable them to be clear about the assessment pieces they need to include in their ePortfolio as this must align with the unit of competency. However, the learner has the opportunity to customise their ePortfolio and become creative in how they provide the evidence. This aspect of the case study means there is opportunity for the learners to have some control over what types of evidence they provide. The unit of competency however are not open to negotiation. The following excerpt is testament to the level of learner control:

"Learners have control and are able to share their learning progress and outcomes with current and future employers, workplace supervisors, family and friends if they choose to do so. Employers and workplace supervisors can provide feedback within the ePortfolio where permission has been granted by the learner. This allows for easy verification of authenticity and collaboration with teachers and the individual learner" Baihn, N & Hobbs, E (n.d.).

The levels of formality and informality in this particular case are interesting as the ePortfolio is used for both on- and off-job-training. The on-job training is conducted in the workplace and has relatively higher levels of informality as compared to the formal learning which takes place in the off-job training in an institutional setting. This means it is the off-job training component which most suits this particular form of e-RPL, as the workplace learning setting is informal compared to the institution based off-job training component. The voluntary use aspect from the eRecognition framework is not present in this case as it is an assessment requirement that the learner completes an ePortfolio or at least a paper based portfolio. This case introduces a problem in the use and application of the eRecognition

framework when, such as in this case, not all aspects (*product oriented, voluntary, high learner control and informal)* of the type or form of e-RPL are present.

Case Study 3: e-RPL for access

Wide Bay Institute of TAFE - Creative Arts students gaining access to HE, exhibitions and grant funding opportunities

Description of project:

Since Semester 2, 2010, the Wide Bay Institute of TAFE, Queensland has been using the VUMI ePortfolio system with students enrolled in the Certificate IV and Diploma in Visual Arts in core and elective units (Miller, 2011).

Learners use their ePortfolio to present work for assessment tasks, as well as, for stand-alone projects. The ePortfolio allows the learners to collect electronic evidence which demonstrates the learner's abilities and self-expression. The ePortfolio is also used by the learners as a 'personal learning record' for assessment, RPL (recognition of prior learning), grant applications, employment and higher education course admissions and networking (Breikers, 2010). It is this "out of course" use of the ePortfolio which is the focus of this particular case (e-RPL for Access). Table 4 provides a summary of the project.

Table 4: *eRPL for access summary*

Educational Sector	Project Type	Funding	Learners
Vocational Education and Training (VET)	*Ongoing	The initial trial was internally funded by Wide Bay Institute of TAFE	Visual Art students - Certificate and Diploma in Visual Art

* This activity was initially started as a trial and has now gone on to be a continued activity within the Visual Arts Department at Wide Bay Institute of TAFE.

Purpose:

As well as using their ePortfolio for set assessment tasks, some learners used their ePortfolio for an array of purposes including: to apply for grants; applications to do further visual art study at university; presenting their work for inclusion in an online gallery and; negotiating with a local gallery to have their work included in an exhibition (Miller, 2011). Breikers (2010) stated that it was unknown whether the grant funding or applications to university had been successful at the end of the 2010 trial, however, the learners' application for exhibiting both online and in a local gallery had been successful. The focus of the case study is on these out of course activities and processes that the ePortfolio are being applied.

Technology used:

The technology utilised in this case is the VUMI ePortfolio system. In addition to this software, the TAFE Queensland learning management system (my.tafe) and videoconferencing (Breikers, 2010) are also utilised.

Any interesting features or aspects of the project:

Wide Bay Institute staff encouraged students to use their ePortfolio beyond the need for recording and evidencing formal learning and assessment through fostering a life-wide approach to collecting and presenting information for different audiences.

Relationship to the eRecognition framework:

Why this case is considered e-RPL for Access?

This case has been identified as e-RPL for Access as the ePortfolio is used to enable learners to represent themselves online and outside the confines of the course. The ePortfolio has allowed the learners to present themselves to a variety of audiences for a variety of purposes. These include RPL into further education, RPL as evidence in grant writing and for exhibition opportunities.

What elements of the e-RPL typology are present? (process oriented, mandated use, low learner control and formal)

Although the ePortfolio was introduced as a mandated tool for assessment, the process of allowing the learners to use the ePortfolio in other formal settings (RPL and evidence for grant writing) provides an extended process orientation to the case. However, the use of the ePortfolio as a product is also evidenced in this case as the ePortfolio is a product submitted as evidence to support application processes and to display visual works. Low learner control and formality is attached to the assessment use of the ePortfolio, however the extended use of the ePortfolio in the evidence for exhibition applications and the use of the ePortfolio as a personal learning tool outside the course, breathes aspects of learner control and informality into the activity. As in Case Study 2 this particular case does not completely sit within the model and highlights issues in trying to match applied cases to theoretical frameworks. This also highlights the multiple uses of the ePortfolio and how some providers wish to encourage students to utilise and continue to utilise the ePortfolio as a lifelong learning tool beyond the formal training course or original engagement with the ePortfolio.

Case Study 4: e-RPL for self-recognition

YNH Services - Reflect and Connect – Encouraging the use of ePortfolios in adult and community education

The fourth and final case study to be presented is from an organisation whose core business is focused on the adult community sector (ACE). This organisation is also a registered training organisation (RTO) and the case study involved the delivery of VET a unit of competency from a primarily ACE sector provider: Yarrawonga Neighbourhood House (YNH) Services, based at Yarrawonga in north eastern Victoria.

Description of project:

ePortfolios were used in two projects to provide evidence for assessment in a nationally accredited VET course in an attempt to make a difference in the way teachers/trainers used e-learning

in their classes and to assess their learners' work as the uptake of e-learning and ePortfolios in small ACE organisations was traditionally quite low.

The first project undertaken by YNH Services enabled people training as teachers/trainers for the VET sector with e-learning skills to better equip them in delivering e-learning and to assess their students' work using ePortfolios. Part of this course involved these developing teachers/trainers creating an ePortfolio using Mahara to present as evidence for a unit of the course.

The second project is the focus of this case study and was the online delivery of *Reflect and Connect* using Moodle and Mahara. This second project was a natural progression from the first and aimed at further extending the teacher/trainers' e-learning skills through embedding the practice of using ePortfolios as a means of assessment (Wilson, 2011a).

After the completion of both projects, a small number of learners continued to use their ePortfolios for self-promotion by gathering further evidence of their learning beyond the formal training. Table 5 provides a summary of the project.

Table 5: *eRPL for self-recognition summary*

Educational Sector	Project Type	Funding	Learners
Adult and Community Education (ACE)	Offered yearly in 2010, 2011 and 2012.	The 2010 program was a fee-for-service program ($270). The 2011 program was funded by the Australian Flexible Learning Framework's Victorian Innovations funding.	**ACE participants

* This program has been run in 2010, 2011 and 2012 as part of the Certificate IV in TAE at YNH Service.

**Participants were local and international business professionals and educators who wanted to learn how to become digital citizens with their own personal learning network and to develop their own ePortfolio. The

professionals were in the fields of micro tourism, health and community services.

Purpose:

The main activity represented in this case was a six week intensive course in professional development for teachers/trainers. The *Reflect and Connect* course was designed to empower people to build their own personal learning network (PLN), e-Portfolio, and to manage their digital identity as a responsible digital citizen (McCulloch, 2011a).

The *Reflect and Connect* learners researched why networking was so important and how they could keep current with the ever changing world of technology by developing their PLN. The course helped the teachers/trainers recognise the importance of being responsible for their own training and development and how their PLN could assist them to maintain their professional standing. The teachers/trainers were encouraged to form action partnerships and build a community of practice around their networks. Teachers/trainers were empowered and provided with the necessary skills to enrol in other totally online courses offered locally and internationally (McCulloch, 2011b).

Upon satisfactory completion of the course, YNH Services issued participants with a Statement of Attainment for: CHCORG428A *Reflect on and improve own professional practice.*

Wilson (2011b) listed the benefits of the ePortfolios for the learners as follows:

- documenting Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- presenting assessments from remote locations
- can be used again by participants for other purpose such as another course of study or for an RPL application/s
- employment applications

Technology used:

The technology utilised in this case was totally online, incorporating an ePortfolio approach course in Mahara, Moodle and Blackboard Collaborate.

Participants accessed their learning materials via a Moodle course and had access to a Mahara ePortfolio system (eWorks Mahara). They also participated in virtual classroom sessions using Blackboard Collaborate on a regular basis to communicate with their group and action partners in real time in their own virtual classroom.

Any interesting features or aspects of the project:

The learning approach was through collaborative, learner-generated experiences supported by action partners and group facilitation. Participants also developed their own PLN spaces and ePortfolios, guided by templates and scaffolded by their facilitators. The ePortfolio approach to learning used a guided process of reflective practice. Forums provided advice shared by all involved and a sense of community was built which resulted in a network of colleagues and teams that emerged from these programs.

Relationship to the eRecognition framework:

Why this case is considered e-RPL for Self recognition?

Participants used a range of e-tools to gather and collection evidence about themselves. The purpose of the course/training was to reflect and connect informally with no accredited qualifications sought, although a Statement of Attainment and ongoing use of the ePortfolio was provided to the participants as a means of encouragement and recognition.

What elements of the e-RPL typology are present? (process oriented, voluntary use high learner control and informal)

Participants commenced using their ePortfolios to support their understanding of reflecting and connecting. Some of the participants have continued to use their ePortfolio from the program and/ or developed another ePortfolio. This case is very much about the

process as opposed to the end product however the end product becomes organic and a constant work in progress. This case is also a strong example of voluntary use with very high learner control and informality as the participants continued to utilise their ePortfolio as a tool to gather evidence about their ongoing skills development, to pursue career goals and to connect with others. To this extent it can be concluded that the *Reflect and Connect* program is a very atypical case of the e-RPL for Self Recognition type from the eRecognition framework.

Conclusion

The small but increasing popularity of e-RPL and e-PR across educational sectors, disciplines, educational institutions and professions requires closer examination in terms of purposes, practices and pedagogic implications. This paper aimed to study authentic cases of e-RPL and e-PR against a conceptual eRecognition framework developed by Cameron (2012) for each of the four types developed within this framework: e-PR for Professional Accreditation; e-RPL for Workplace Recognition; e-RPL for Access and; e-RPL for Self Recognition. Case studies were used to explore the four types and the two dimensions or continuums central to the framework. The vertical dimension is a continuum between *RPL as process* and *RPL as product* and the second horizontal dimension is a continuum between formal learning contexts and lower learner control as opposed to informal learning contexts and high levels of learner control. We found that the cases selected did have varying degrees of the dimensions present.

Case Study 1 in e-PR was linked to professional registration and did hold true to the typology however there was a degree of flexibility within the program that allowed learners to engage with more user-friendly software without compromising the product oriented focus. Case Study 2 in e-RPL for Workplace Recognition was complicated by the dualism of both on-the-job and off-the-job training and assessment. As a result, this case study demonstrated how one program/course could have both elements of informality and formality and corresponding degrees of learner control within,

whilst maintaining a product orientation. This Case highlighted the problems of trying to match authentic cases to theoretical frameworks and provide insights into how to further progress the development of the framework to take issues like this into account.

Case Study 3 in e-RPL for Access was interesting in that the ePortfolio was utilised for several purposes ranging from assessment to personal presentation of work. This case demonstrated how the ePortfolio could be said to typify more than one of the types in the framework depending on the purpose. Case Study 3 also highlighted the fact that some providers encourage students to utilise and continue to utilise the ePortfolio as a lifelong learning tool beyond the formal training course or original engagement with the ePortfolio. The last case study in e-RPL for Self Recognition was a very atypical example of this type of e-RPL where the focus is on the voluntary process with high levels of informality and learner control.

The application of these authentic cases taken from the VET and ACE sector has allowed for the authors to identify ways in which the framework could be further developed through its theoretical and practical applications. In particular Case Studies 2 and 3 have demonstrated how there maybe multiple purposes for e-RPL practices within one program or course and outside or beyond the original course or engagement with the ePortfolio. It is argued this adds to the value and of the learning experiences for those participating in the programs and encourages lifelong learning. Participants can be engaged in mandated product oriented practices and pedagogy but can also be exposed to more informal practices and pedagogic processes which provide them with opportunities for high levels of learner control in more informal settings supporting both lifelong and lifewide application of ePortfolios and the dynamic nature of learning. The framework allows researchers and practitioners to better reflect levels of flexibility and innovation in applying ePortfolios across these various eRecognition purposes as represented in the framework.

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