ePortfolio-based Professional Development: Insights from a Southeast Asian Online Educators' Community of Practice

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation and impacts of an ePortfolio-based professional learning initiative within a Southeast Asian online community of practice (CoP), part of the SEAMEO-AUS EduLink Project. Targeting the development of educators' competencies in ePortfolio pedagogy, the project engaged 541 educators from various Southeast Asian countries in two online self-paced courses and a series of four expert-led webinars, culminating in a final project webinar. The research utilised course analytics and post-webinar surveys to analyse participant engagement, satisfaction, and perceived learning outcomes. The findings indicate substantial engagement with the courses and positive reception of the webinar series. About 75% of participants completed the asynchronous courses, while 64% found the webinar content immediately applicable to their practice. The webinars, focusing on diverse aspects of ePortfolio use, successfully complement the online courses, with 91% of participants expressing intent to attend future events. This study underscores the effectiveness of combining asynchronous and synchronous learning modalities in professional development, particularly in the context of ePortfolios. It highlights the role of ePortfolios in promoting reflective practice, collaborative learning, and authentic assessment. Additionally, the project's success in fostering a supportive CoP model illustrates the potential of online communities in professional development, especially in regions with emerging ePortfolio practices. The paper concludes by emphasising the value of ePortfolio-based initiatives in enhancing educators' skills and fostering cross-cultural educational collaborations. It offers recommendations for educators and policymakers on implementing similar initiatives, underlining the need for sustainable and contextually sensitive approaches in professional development.

Keywords: Online community of practice, professional development, ePortfolio pedagogies and practices, South-East Asian education.

Citation

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Introduction

Despite demonstrated ePortfolio pedagogies and practices worldwide, ePortfolios are not commonly used in Southeast Asian classrooms. To encourage ePortfolio use, the SEAMEO-AUS EduLink[1] Project brought together Southeast Asian educators to learn about ePortfolio pedagogy. The participating educators examined the practices and principles of using ePortfolios for teaching and learning and their professional development.

Extant literature highlights several characteristics of highly effective professional development, including an emphasis on learning experience; quality reflective inquiry of pedagogy; concentration on teacher development of content knowledge and pedagogy grounded in practices; and involvement of external experts (Walan, 2020). Curtis, Slade, Bretag and McNeill (2021) found that expertly facilitated workshops can be effective learning experiences when part of a broader suite of focused professional learning opportunities. Further, Goldsmith, Doerr and Lewis (2014) acknowledge that teacher learning 'tends to occur incrementally and iteratively' (p.20). The CoP also encouraged reflection on experiences as an integral part of the learning process. Hence, during the project, members reviewed their experience in developing their ePortfolio projects to consider and understand the impact of their actions, determined if improvements could be made, and articulated how they could use these improvements in similar situations in the future (Kolb 1984).

The participating educators in the CoP created ePortfolios themselves to gain first-hand experience of the benefits and challenges of creating ePortfolios. In doing so, they then felt able to design scaffolded learning experiences for their students. Not only did they learn about the affordances, challenges, and implications of ePortfolios in education, but they also engaged in an iterative seeking, receiving, and responding to feedback process within this CoP when developing their ePortfolios. The educators applied what they learned in their contexts and shared with other CoP members thus learning from each other's live experiences. This, combined with asynchronous online training, led to the members applying a more refined understanding to their practices as they developed a deeper insight into ePortfolios.

This paper aims to bridge this gap by reporting on the impacts of ePortfolio-based learning in the SEAMEO-AUS EduLink Project, offering insights into effective strategies for ePortfolio integration in Southeast Asian education.

Literature

ePortfolios are increasingly being adopted in education as tools for students and educators to document their learning and development (Gordon & Campbell, 2013; Eynon & Gambino, 2016). The SEAMEO-AUS EduLink Project investigated the use of blended learning, comprising online courses, webinars, and an online community forum, to enhance Southeast Asian educators' knowledge and practice of ePortfolios (SEAMEO EduLink, 2022). This literature review examines

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[1] Note: SEAMEO-AUS EduLink is a coined name to signify that this project was initially submitted for the SEAMEO Australia Education Links Award supported by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

existing research on ePortfolios, online learning, and blended learning to evaluate the potential effectiveness of the EduLink Project's approach.

ePortfolios in Education

ePortfolios offer significant pedagogical benefits for both students and educators. For students, they promote self-reflection, critical thinking, and metacognition (Segaran & Hasim, 2021; Alexiou & Paraskeva, 2019), and are instrumental in assessing learning outcomes and developing personal and professional identities (Segaran & Hasim, 2021; Salinas & Pizarro, 2023). For educators, ePortfolios serve as a platform for documenting teaching practices and supporting professional development (Totter & Wyss, 2019; Costelloe, 2021).

The efficacy of ePortfolios in professional development is well-documented. Hoven and colleagues (2021) and Dune and Logue (2021) highlight their role in facilitating reflective thinking, enabling educators to critically analyse their teaching practices. Similarly, Segaran and Hasim (2021) emphasise the role of ePortfolios in fostering self-regulated learning among educators, a crucial component in professional growth.

However, in Southeast Asia, the adoption of ePortfolios is still in its early stages, contrasting with their more widespread use in Western educational settings (Segaran & Hasim, 2021). This disparity highlights the need for region-specific research and development initiatives, such as the SEAMEO-AUS EduLink Project.

Online Learning and community engagement

The flexibility and accessibility of online learning environments are crucial for educators who do not have the time to attend formal training in person due to their teaching schedules. Asynchronous courses lay the groundwork for knowledge acquisition and facilitate self-paced learning, while synchronous components such as webinars and interactive sessions provide real-time engagement (Puspitasari, 2021). This combination fosters a dynamic educational experience, crucial for applying ePortfolio concepts practically. It allows for immediate feedback and discussion, which are vital for applying ePortfolio concepts in real-world contexts.

This hybrid approach aligns with the findings of studies on ePortfolio development that emphasise the benefits of combining self-directed online learning with collaborative, interactive activities (Moorhouse & Wong, 2021). By integrating both asynchronous and synchronous elements, educators can benefit from the flexibility and self-directed nature of online courses whilst also engaging in the community aspects and real-time feedback that enhance learning outcomes.

The concept of online communities of practice (CoP) as platforms for professional learning has also gained increasing attention. CoPs are groups of individuals who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Karkowski et al., 2023). In education, CoPs have been identified as effective in promoting collaborative learning and knowledge sharing (Harvey et al., 2021).

Webinars for Professional Development

Webinars, as real-time online seminars, offer a valuable tool for professional development in education (Gegenfurtner & Ebner, 2019; Gegenfurtner, Zitt, & Ebner, 2020). They provide

opportunities for educators to access expertise from renowned scholars and practitioners, engage in interactive discussions, and receive immediate feedback on their practice (Gegenfurtner, Zitt, & Ebner, 2020; Tanucan & Uytico, 2021). The effectiveness of webinars is further enhanced when they are integrated with other learning resources, such as online communities and collaborative activities (Gegenfurtner, Zitt, & Ebner, 2020; Lieser & Murphy-Hagan, 2018).

The SEAMEO-AUS EduLink Project

The EduLink Project's blended learning approach, combining online courses, webinars, and a community forum, aligns with the findings of the reviewed literature. The online courses provide a foundation for acquiring knowledge and skills in ePortfolio development, while the webinars offer opportunities for expert guidance, real-time interaction, and feedback. The online community forum facilitates peer collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the development of a supportive learning environment. This approach addresses the benefits of ePortfolios for educators and students, tailored to the unique needs of Southeast Asian educators.

Integrating ePortfolios within CoPs, as in the SEAMEO-AUS EduLink Project, represents an innovative approach to professional learning. The project resonates with the principles outlined by Walan (2020) and Zwozdiak-Myers (2018) who emphasise quality reflective inquiry and teacher development grounded in practice. Curtis et al. (2021) support this, suggesting that expertly facilitated workshops within a comprehensive professional learning framework can significantly enhance learning experiences.

Challenges in Implementing ePortfolios

Despite these benefits, challenges persist in the implementation of ePortfolios, especially in non-Western contexts. Cultural differences in perceptions of technology and assessment, as well as varying levels of digital literacy, can impact the adoption and efficacy of ePortfolios (Segaran & Hasim, 2021). These factors necessitate tailored strategies for implementing ePortfolio initiatives in Southeast Asian educational settings.

The future of ePortfolio usage in education lies in exploring adaptive strategies that cater to diverse cultural and educational contexts. Further research is needed to understand how ePortfolios can be effectively integrated into different educational systems, considering local cultural nuances and varying levels of technological infrastructure.

While the benefits of ePortfolios in education, as outlined earlier, are well-supported by research, it is also important to acknowledge and address the critical perspectives that exist in the literature. Some scholars have raised concerns about the implementation and effectiveness of ePortfolios in certain educational contexts.

For instance, a critique by Abd-Wahabet and colleagues (2016) suggests that while ePortfolios are praised for fostering reflective practice, they may also place an additional burden on students and educators in terms of time and technical skill requirements. This perspective highlights the potential for ePortfolios to inadvertently widen the digital divide, particularly in regions with limited technological resources or training.

Additionally, concerns regarding privacy and data security in the digital management of ePortfolios have been raised by Wilson and colleagues (2018). These concerns are particularly pertinent given the increasing reliance on online platforms for educational purposes.

These critiques highlight the need for careful planning, support, and contextualisation when implementing ePortfolios in educational settings. It is essential to consider these challenges and to develop strategies that mitigate potential downsides while maximising the benefits of ePortfolios for all stakeholders involved.

In light of these critical views, our study aims to not only explore the positive impacts of ePortfolio use within the SEAMEO-AUS EduLink Project but also to consider these challenges and limitations. This balanced approach will provide a more comprehensive understanding of ePortfolios' role in professional development and educational practices, particularly in the context of Southeast Asian education.

Conclusion

The literature indicates a growing recognition of the value of ePortfolios in professional development, particularly when integrated within online CoPs. However, region-specific challenges and cultural considerations must be addressed to fully leverage their potential in enhancing educational practices.

The SEMEO-AUS EduLink Project represents a promising model for enhancing ePortfolio knowledge and practice through online collaborative learning. It leverages the strengths of online courses, webinars, and community forums, potentially empowering educators to integrate ePortfolios into their teaching and professional development effectively. Evaluating the outcomes of this project will offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of professional learning approaches in diverse educational contexts.

Method

An action research approach (plan, act, reflect) was undertaken in this project to understand the outcomes and impacts of the suite of ePortfolio professional learning opportunities provided to participants. The action research approach was specifically chosen for this study due to its iterative nature, which aligns well with the developmental goals of the SEAMEO-AUS EduLink Project. Action research is characterised by a cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, making it particularly suitable for projects that aim to implement and refine educational practices in real-world settings. This approach allows for continuous improvement based on feedback and reflection, which is crucial in a project focusing on the implementation and adaptation of ePortfolios in diverse educational contexts. Additionally, action research fosters collaborative learning and community engagement, echoing the ethos of the Community of Practice (CoP) model used in the project.

### ePortfolios as foundational in the Community of Practice

EPortfolios were initially chosen as a pedagogy of this CoP based on the first author's first-hand experience of the benefits of using ePortfolios in her own professional practice, which involved receiving support and feedback from peers and staff. Opportunities to visit and provide feedback

on ePortfolios of other students, who were from all over the world working in different disciplines, enhanced her learning as well as drew her attention to the power of feedback, collaborative learning, and authentic assessment. Hence, at the time when she submitted this project grant application, she set the project's initial goal for the CoP members, including herself to learn together about using ePortfolios to promote collaborative learning and authentic assessment. She was also aware that there were several experts in ePortfolios Australia and the University of Queensland, so she proposed mentorship from other authors to support the community with deeper insight into using ePortfolios in education.

The Project initially assumed that most participants had little to no prior knowledge of ePortfolios and as such were provided with a series of scaffolded professional learning opportunities to develop their pedagogical understanding and application skills (Figure 1). Hence, from November – January 2022, the members completed two online courses: 'Introduction to ePortfolios' and 'Creating your ePortfolio' created by the first author. Upon completing these courses, the members were able to create their own ePortfolios relevant to their teaching contexts, using their preferred platform. During this period the CoP members provided each other with both technical assistance and pedagogical feedback.

Figure 1

Timeline and Structure of Eportfolio Professional Learning Opportunities
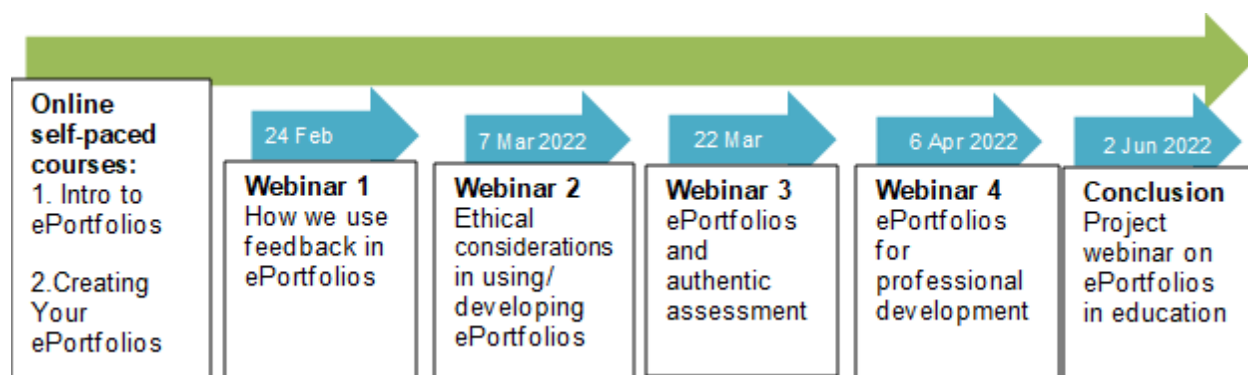
From February to April 2022, the members participated in four interactive 90-minute webinars by international ePortfolio experts (Authors 2, 3 & 4) on a range of related topics. The details of each workshop are summarised in Table 1. To conclude the program, the final project webinar hosted by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) incorporated the showcase and reflections of CoP members and guest speakers.

Table 1

A Series of Webinars on Eportfolios in Education

Workshop	Date	Topic	Facilitators
1	February 24 2022	How we use feedback in ePortfolios	Shari Bowker Christine Slade

2	March 7 2022	Ethical considerations in using/developing ePortfolios	Christine Slade Christine Brown Wilson
3	March 22 2022	ePortfolios and authentic assessment	Christine Slade Shari Bowker
4	April 6 2022	ePortfolios for professional development	Christine Brown Wilson Christine Slade Shari Bowker
5	June 2 2022	SEAMEO-AUS EduLink webinar on ePortfolios in education	Nantana Taptamat Christine Slade Shari Bowker Christine Brown Wilson

Participants

The participants were educational practitioners and administrators working in K-12 and higher education institutes and postgraduate students. The participants had citizenship from one of 11 countries in Southeast Asia: Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam. As of August 2022, 541 people registered on the community website.

Data collection and analysis

We sought preliminary insight into professional growth, so data were collected through course analytics and post-webinar surveys. Written consent for data collection was obtained from participants.

To assess the professional growth of participants, the data collected from course analytics and post-webinar surveys were meticulously analysed. Course analytics provide quantitative insights into participant engagement and progress, such as time spent in courses, completion rates, and performance on assessments. This data helps us evaluate the effectiveness of the ePortfolio content and the learning platform in facilitating the educators' professional development.

The post-webinar surveys, which capture participants' feedback on the content, presentation, and applicability of the information provided, offer qualitative insights. Analysis of these surveys enables us to gauge the participants' perception of the usefulness of the webinars in enhancing their understanding and application of ePortfolios in their teaching practices. We particularly focus on how participants plan to apply the learned concepts in their contexts, thus gaining insights into the real-world impact of the professional learning opportunities provided.

By combining these quantitative and qualitative data sources, the study aims to provide a comprehensive assessment of how the suite of ePortfolio professional learning opportunities contributed to the participants' professional growth and development.

Course analytics

The CoP website integrated a learning management system, LearnDash, with a Tin Canny Reporting plugin to enable course analytics. The information obtained from the courses included the number of enrolments, time spent in the courses, marking scores, responses to open-ended questions and learning progress.

Webinar participant surveys

After each webinar, a survey was administered to capture the participants' opinions. Ten questions asked participants about the content, presenters and how they were likely to apply such information in their teaching. Likewise, similar questions were used for the conclusion webinar. Once the survey closed, the responses were converted to numerical input for test statistics. Data screening was carried out to identify entry errors. Descriptive statistics (*e.g.*, mean and percentage) were used to analyse quantitative data (*e.g.,* survey) using Microsoft Excel 365.

Findings

This section summarises some outcomes of online self-paced learning and a series of webinars on ePortfolios in education.

Asynchronous online self-paced learning

From November 2021 – May 2022, the participants engaged in two asynchronous online courses where they could explore the course content at a time that was convenient to them. As shown in Figure *2*, 541 participants registered to the community website. Additionally, 305 participants (75.68% of those who enrolled in the Introduction to ePortfolios) had completed the course where they spent 1 hour 45 minutes on average. In comparison, 281 participants (69.73% of members who enrolled on the Creating Your ePortfolio) had completed the course and spent about 1 hour and 16 minutes. To complete the second course, they also needed to create their own ePortfolios, where they had spent various times preparing documents and crafting their work.

Figure 2

Enrolment in the Course

| 735 People Consented to Participate in the Project. | 541 people registered on the community website. |

2 Online courses were offered.

Course 1: Introduction to ePortfolio	Course 2: Creating your ePortfolios
• 403 enrolled	• 403 enrolled
• 281 completed	• 281 completed
○ 75.63% completed	○ 69.73% completed
○ 15.38% in progress	○ 16.87% in progress

o 13.15% not started		o 13.40% not started

In addition, participants submitted 1,057 comments, 1,525 polls and 1,044 surveys to 20 lessons in the courses. They also submitted 4,148 long answers, ranging from a few sentences to several paragraphs, responding to different open-ended prompting questions. These questions reflected their learning goals and intended ePortfolios outcomes, their ePortfolios audience, how they might use ePortfolios, and their experience within the courses. Table *2* provides selected discussions in each lesson involving over 50,000 words.

Table 2

Selected Quotations from Participants in the Two Online Courses

Introduction to the course	Why ePortfolios?	Check Point 2
"This is so challenging for me. I believe this would change my perception into learning-teaching perspective. A venture into a totally different concept. I will surely look forward to learning with you."	"I can see that learning these types of ePortfolio will help me deepen my passion for teaching. These will also help me track my direction as a tertiary professor or educator to effectively deliver the mandates of the CHED because, at the end of these undertakings, it is still me who will benefit from the consolation of my performances."	"Speaking of Portfolio evaluation, I feel like butterflies fill my empty stomach! But in the long run, I have to prepare those three pages, which are essential for sharing and providing feedback. Thank you so much for the video lessons on how to create and edit ePortfolio. It means a lot to me!"

A series of synchronous webinars about ePortfolios in education

We found participants were well-engaged and perceived the webinar highly positively (Table *3*). Overall, 6,109 distinct people attended webinars: 57, 32, 39, 45 and 5,936 people in Webinar 1, Webinar 2, Webinar 3, Webinar 4 and Webinar 5 respectively. Total engagement for Webinars 1-5, was above 1,600 indicating members visited materials multiple times. In addition, the recordings of these webinars had been viewed 320,355 times as of August 15, 2022. The webinar pages contained information on the descriptions of the webinars, speakers, webinar recordings, and summaries of attendance. Comments were allowed for each webinar webpage, where they received more than 1,300 views individually. Other materials include PDF documents and posts.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics on Engagement with the Webinars (As of August 15, 2022)

Platform	Web1: Feedback	Web2: Ethics	Web3: Assessment	Web 4: Professional Development	Web 5: Conclusion	Total
Live attendance	57	32	39	45	5,936	6,109

YouTube views	225	138	220	98	294,401	295,082
Webinar Page views	1,530	1,410	1,390	1,466	11,508	17,304
Other materials	1,142	8	7	2	701	1,860
Total engagement	2954	1588	1656	1611	312,546	320,355

After each webinar 1-4, the participants answered the exit survey containing 10 questions: 7 Likert scale questions and 3 open-ended questions. Table *4* outlines the responses to key quantitative survey questions.

Table 4

Quantitative Outputs of Participants' Responses to Webinars 1-4

Questions		Web1: Feedback (%)	Web2: Ethics (%)	Web3: Assessment (%)	Web 4: Professional Development (%)
1. What percentage of the information was new to you?	100%	25.5	10.0	9.5	22.6
	75%	48.9	55.0	47.6	48.4
	50%	21.3	30.0	33.3	29.0
	25%	4.3	5.0	9.5	-
2. You can use this session information	Immediately	46.7	55.0	61.9	64.5
	In 2-6 months	42.2	40.0	33.3	25.8
	In 7-12 months	11.1	5.0	4.8	9.7
3. Rate the speakers' knowledge of the topic	Excellent	85.1	95.0	85.7	100
	Good	14.9	5.0	14.3	-
4. How did the session compare to your expectations?	Excellent	78.3	80.0	81.0	93.5
	Good	21.7	20.0	19	6.5
	Fair	-	-	-	-
5. How likely are you to recommend this session to a colleague?	10 (most likely)	59.6	70.0	76.2	77.4
	9	25.5	30.0	19.0	19.4
	8	12.8	-	-	3.2
	7	2.1	-	4.8	-
9. Are you likely to participate in one of our events in the future?	Yes	91.3	100	100	96.7
	Maybe	8.7	-	-	3.3
	No	-	-	-	-
10. Please rate your overall experience (10 = most satisfied)	10	63.8	65.0	71.4	77.4
	9	27.7	30.0	19.0	19.4
	8	6.4	5.0	-	3.2
	7	-	-	4.8	-
	5	2.1	-	4.8	-

According to Table *4*, participants perceived that the content of webinars was new to them, and they could apply what they learned in their practices. For example, in Webinar 1, 25.5% of participants thought the information was completely new to them whereas only 4.3% of participants (1 person) indicated 25% of the information was new to them. Additionally, 49%, 55%, 48% and 48% of participants suggested that 75% of information was new to them in Webinar 1, Webinar 2, Webinar 3 and Webinar 4 respectively suggesting new and incremental learning across the learning experiences.

About 47%, 55%, 62% and 65% of participants indicated that they could use the sessions' information immediately (Question 2). In comparison, about 1 or 2 persons (11%, 5%, 5% and 10% respectively) in each webinar thought that they would use the information within 7-12 months. None of the participants indicated they would never use the content presented to them in their practices. They rated the speakers' knowledge extremely high (Question 3), where they expressed that the session exceeded their expectations (Question 4). They were very likely to recommend the webinars to their colleagues (Question 5) and to attend future webinars held by CoP. Finally, 64%, 65%, 71% and 74% of participants in Webinar 1, Webinar 2, Webinar 3 and Webinar 4, rated their overall experience as 10 out of 10. Only 1 or 2 persons rated their overall experience in each webinar less than 8 out of 10 where 10 is being most satisfied.

In addition to quantitative data, the participants also provided their opinions on three open-ended questions, listed below.

- Which elements of the event did you like the most? What did you most enjoy about today?
- What, if anything, did you dislike about this event? What can we improve on?
- Is there anything else you would like us to know?

What they enjoyed the most

The elements of the webinars that the participants appreciated and enjoyed the most were the content, the activities, and the practical examples. For example, in Webinar 1, one participant wrote:

> Feedback mechanism using information technology, I learned that there are many apps that we can use in our teaching; I'm planning on using them one by one in my teaching.

And another participant said:

> The rich discussion and the fact that the presenters used a lot of literature to support their talk. I love polls and interactive activities. Thanks

Similarly, in Webinar 2 about ethical considerations in ePortfolio use, one participant mentioned that they liked "Scenario analysis, the interaction between speakers and participants" whereas another wrote:

> I like how it emphasizes the importance of being ethical in using digital materials and resources and always placing the students in the centre of everything. I also loved the breakout sessions!

In Webinar 3, the participants described what they liked about the event on ePortfolios and authentic assessment: "the timeliness of the topics", "the wisdom and knowledge shared as well

as the facilitators' optimism and positive vibes" and "the discussion about the differences between assessment and cultures."

In Webinar 4: ePortfolios for professional development, participants indicated their satisfaction diversely. For example, one participant wrote, "Participants are readily accommodated and can freely participate, not just an audience" while another said, "I liked how informative and interactive this session is! The ideas shared can easily be translated into actions" and another "sharing the update of my portfolio through the Padlet platform. That was my first time using the Padlet."

In addition to the valuable feedback received on the content and delivery of the ePortfolio professional learning opportunities, participants also expressed a strong desire for the continuation and further support of the project. This sentiment reflects the significant impact the project has had on their professional development and the high value they place on ongoing learning and collaboration.

Participants specifically indicated their hope that the project would not conclude with the end of funding. They emphasised the importance of sustained support and resources to continue applying and evolving their ePortfolio practices. This feedback highlights the need for long-term strategies to maintain and expand upon the successes of the project.

Moreover, the participants expressed a strong interest in remaining part of the ongoing international collaboration between Australia and Southeast Asia. They valued the cross-cultural exchange of ideas, practices, and expertise, seeing it as a vital aspect of their professional growth and development. This desire for continued international collaboration underscores the project's role in fostering a global community of practice, connecting educators across different regions and cultures.

Incorporating these suggestions for improvement and aspirations for future involvement, the project can explore avenues for sustained engagement and support beyond the initial funding period. This could involve seeking additional funding sources, developing partnerships for continued collaboration, and creating platforms for ongoing communication and resource sharing among participants. The clear interest in maintaining and expanding this international educational collaboration presents an opportunity to build a lasting legacy from the SEAMEO-AUS EduLink Project, contributing to the professional development of educators well into the future.

What can be improved?
The suggestions for improvement identify important learning when delivering specialty webinars for a diverse group of educators across multiple countries including technical difficulties, time conflicts and language difficulties:

Timing: it is the evening time in Malaysia. Everyone is on the way back home. Don't really can concentrate on the meeting.

"My limitation on English language. I lost context when the speaker was in speed. I'm sorry."

Equally, other participants identified ways of improving content such as "to provide us samples of portfolio and how it was successfully done." Another participant requested additional information for their specific context "outcome-based assessment from the University point of view," whilst others suggested advertising the events on other channels so other people could attend.

In summary, the survey results indicated that the participants highly regarded the ePortfolio webinar series where they appeared to appreciate the content, activities, speakers, and organisers and also acknowledged their involvement as members of the community. The participants' data showed that they had used and intended to use what they learned in the online courses and webinars in their practices.

Discussion

The outcomes of the SEAMEO-AUS EduLink Project highlight the synergistic effect of combining asynchronous and synchronous learning modalities. This dual approach effectively catered to diverse learning preferences and schedules, as evidenced by the significant completion rates in the asynchronous courses. This finding is in line with the work of Moorhouse and Wong (2021) and Tanis (2020) who emphasised the flexibility and accessibility of asynchronous learning, making it a key component in adult education, particularly for professionals balancing work and learning.

CoP members identified how these activities not only provided information to create and implement ePortfolios but also built their confidence in using ePortfolios in practice. Similarly, Baki, Birgoren and Aktepe (2018) demonstrate the importance of students being able to master online tools to develop their confidence. The opportunity to give and receive feedback on their own ePortfolios also developed a sense of belonging where members could ask for support from others in the CoP as they needed it.

Asynchronous online learning is an effective mechanism for students to engage in learning at their own pace at a time that suits them (Tanis, 2020). In this project, over 70 % completed the asynchronous online self-paced courses. Each course had a level of interactivity with discussion boards, polls and Q&A for completion thus supporting participants in demonstrating engagement with the material. The use of technology-enhanced learning such as this provides a more student-centred experience (McKenzie & Zeimann, 2020, Tanis, 2020). Participants' comments on the course interface demonstrate critical reflection on their own teaching whilst being exposed to other members' ideas, experiences and practices. Time spent, and comments made in each lesson in the courses also demonstrated that participants took some time to make sense of the content presented to them and connect new understanding to their previous experience through reflective writing. It is worth noting that many participants had been teaching for a long time, hence their comments were valuable for other participants' learning.

The project also highlighted the importance of reflective practice and community building in professional development. Participants engaged actively in discussions, polls, and reflective writing, indicating a deep level of cognitive processing and engagement. This aligns with Slepcevic-Zach and Stock's (2018) concept of reflective practice as a core component of professional learning, wherein individuals critically examine their experiences to derive deeper insights and learning. The project's emphasis on reflection, especially through ePortfolios, provided a platform for educators to critically analyse and improve their teaching practices, resonating with findings by Carl & Strydom (2017).

The high level of engagement in the synchronous webinars further demonstrates the value of real-time interaction for professional learning. According to the survey of the ePortfolios series

(Webinar 1-4), participants expressed their satisfaction with webinars and used ideas presented throughout the program to improve their ePortfolios as well as used in their teaching. This finding resonates with Steel, Ehrmann and Long's (2008) study which found that a half-day interactive workshop with international experts also created wider interest in ePortfolios in the academic community. Similarly, Curtis and colleagues (2021) support how short professional development workshops led by subject matter experts positively impact staff knowledge of the topic under consideration. This is particularly relevant in the context of ePortfolios, where nuanced understanding and application are vital.

Moreover, the CoP model facilitated a supportive environment for continuous learning and collaboration. Karkowski et al. (2023) and Harvey et al. (2021) highlighted the significance of CoPs in fostering shared learning and knowledge creation. This project's CoP model not only encouraged knowledge sharing but also fostered a sense of belonging among participants, a crucial aspect for sustaining engagement in professional development initiatives.

The project's focus on ePortfolios as a tool for professional development was particularly impactful. Participants' feedback and engagement with ePortfolio creation and application reflect the growing recognition of ePortfolios as a versatile tool in education. Several members shared their personal portfolios, videos and memoirs within the CoP. These artifacts reflected their professional understanding of ePortfolio pedagogy gained from connecting what they learned to their personal experience in developing and implementing their own ePortfolio projects. The practical experience of creating and using ePortfolios provided participants with firsthand insights into the benefits and challenges of these tools, enhancing their teaching and assessment practices. Similar results related to the role of ePortfolios as a reflective tool have been documented in various studies (e.g., Carl & Strydom, 2017; Slepcevic-Zach & Stock, 2018). As ePortfolios were new to the participants, their perceived support and confidence could be two of the significant factors contributing to whether or not they continue to use ePortfolios in the future.

The project's setting in Southeast Asia brought unique cultural and contextual considerations to the forefront. The diversity of the participant group, encompassing various Southeast Asian countries, presented opportunities for cross-cultural learning and exchange. The findings emphasise the importance of understanding cultural nuances in educational practices. The project demonstrated the feasibility and effectiveness of implementing ePortfolios in a region where such practices are still emerging, offering a model for other regions with similar cultural and technological landscapes.

The participants expressed their interest in the continuation of the project and further support post-funding highlighting the need for sustainable professional development initiatives. The project's success in building a productive CoP and fostering deep engagement with ePortfolio pedagogy suggests that continued support and resources are necessary to maintain the momentum and further embed these practices in participants' professional contexts.

Conclusion

The SEAMEO-AUS EduLink Project successfully achieved its goal of enhancing Southeast Asian educators' understanding and application of ePortfolios. The integration of asynchronous online courses and synchronous webinars appeared to be effective in facilitating learning, reflection, and

practical application of ePortfolio pedagogies. Participants demonstrated significant engagement, completion rates, and satisfaction with the learning experiences, indicating the project's success in meeting its objectives.

The educators' active participation and their expressions of hope for the project's continuation reflect the project's substantial impact on their professional growth. The desire for ongoing support and international collaboration emphasises the need for sustained efforts and long-term strategies to maintain the momentum achieved. This project has not only advanced the participants' competencies in ePortfolios but has also fostered an enduring community of practice, bridging educators across Southeast Asia and Australia.

In summary, the SEAMEO-AUS EduLink Project serves as a model for professional development in ePortfolio pedagogy, demonstrating the effectiveness of blended learning approaches in international educational contexts. The insights gained from this project provide a foundation for future initiatives aimed at enhancing educators' skills and fostering cross-cultural educational collaborations.

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Author contributions

Nantana Taptamat: Writing - original draft, Conceptualisation, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data curation, Visualisation, Supervision, Project administration and Funding acquisition. **Christine Slade**: Writing - Reviewing and Editing, Resources. **Shari Bowker:** Writing - Reviewing and Editing, Resources. **Christine Brown Wilson:** Writing - Reviewing and Editing, Resources.

Conflict of Interest

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