



## ePortfolio practice for student well-being in higher education: A scoping review

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### Abstract

The aim of the study was to map and assess published empirical studies on the contribution of ePortfolio practice to student wellbeing in higher education. Our leading research question was: What is known in the existing literature on the wellbeing outcomes of ePortfolio practice in higher education? A scoping review was conducted to identify affective outcomes of ePortfolio pedagogy. The review included 23 papers. Six thematic groupings around student well-being were identified among the included papers: ePortfolios for achieving human potential, ePortfolios leading to self-awareness, ePortfolios enhancing identity formation, ePortfolios supporting connectedness, ePortfolios fostering self-regulation, ePortfolios as stressors.

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## Introduction

A standard definition of wellbeing does not exist (Ong et al., 2021). Wellbeing is rather described as a complex combination of a person's a) physical, b) mental, c) emotional and d) social health factors linked to life satisfaction. The World Health Organization strongly associates wellbeing with optimal psychological functioning which enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well, work well, and contribute to their community (World Health Organization, 2022). This review addresses subjective wellbeing based on the eudaemonic approach which includes meaning, life purpose, self-realisation, sense of autonomy, mastery and connectedness to people, as well as “flourishing” as a fully functioning person (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Whiting et al., 2018).

Alongside public health and human development studies in wellbeing, there is also growing educational research into the relationship between wellbeing, academic achievement, and retention in higher education (Schmidt & Neville, 2011; Baik et al., 2019; Hartl et al., 2022). According to research, the transition to higher education represents a critical time for young adults given the associated increased stressors; namely financial insecurity, instability and uncertainties (Partridge et al., 2018; Stallman et al., 2022). Poor psychological well-being is identified as one of the factors impacting students' capacity to learn (Baik et al., 2019). Psychological well-being, academic engagement, and success rates are found to be correlated (Davis & Hadwin, 2021). Supporting students to develop healthy coping skills and improving student well-being is proposed as a measure to prevent attrition in higher education (Hartl et al., 2022). With that said, there is no doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic has increased psychological stress for many university students due to isolation and drastic changes to learning environments. Prasath et al. (2021) revealed that well-being was significantly lower during Covid-19 compared to before the onset of the pandemic among university students.

There has been an unprecedented interest in ePortfolios as an alternative online assessment model during the rapid, compulsory shift from face-to-face learning into distance during the emergency teaching phase of the Covid-19 pandemic (Abuzaid et al., 2021). The significance of ePortfolios in developing collaborative, safe and supportive environments – including digital environments – has been acknowledged by educators and researchers in higher education institutions and universities around the world. ePortfolio pedagogy also is argued to support students' own knowledge construction, make otherwise invisible aspects of the learning process visible, and place agency in the hands of students, thus increasing intrinsic motivation to learn (University of Waterloo, 2023).

Despite the increasing appeal to ePortfolios in higher education as an innovative teaching and assessment method, no previous study has mapped existing studies on the impact of ePortfolio practice on student wellbeing. As such, our leading research question was: What is known in the existing literature on the wellbeing outcomes of ePortfolio practice in higher education?

The article is structured as follows. Firstly, we present an overview of theory and practice of ePortfolios in higher education. In the methods section, we describe the various stages of the scoping review. Next, the results of the scoping review are presented with our discussion section elucidating practical implications of the study findings. Finally, limitations and suggestions for future research are identified along with conclusions.

## Literature

Based on social constructivism, ePortfolios are argued to help learning in the process of construction of knowledge by the student (University of Waterloo, 2023). As mentioned earlier, there has been growing interest in the affordances of ePortfolios and their potential to positively impact student learning and achievement in higher education (Farrell et al., 2021). For instance, Rodriguez et al. (2021) analysed how students perceive the use of ePortfolios as an evaluative tool during emergency virtual teaching due to the Covid-19 pandemic. They found that despite the Covid-19 pandemic, implementation of the ePortfolio had a positive impact on students' learning, with positive student perceptions around the value of the ePortfolio for formative progress, evaluation and feedback. In that context, ePortfolios are associated with positive learning outcomes. These include a greater awareness of students' own learning, an increased sense of responsibility for their own learning, and collaborative construction of knowledge by sharing materials and reflections. Furthermore, ePortfolios create opportunity for a shared and fairer evaluation including external evaluation of the teacher, co-evaluation among peers and self-evaluation, and greater awareness and knowledge about the learning process and its development over time with permanent monitoring and feedback (Rodriguez et al., 2021 p.8-9).

Likewise, research conducted by Abuzaid et al. (2021) found that students had a positive experience with the use of ePortfolios in clinical practice courses in Radiology during the Covid-19 outbreak. Accordingly, ePortfolios helped the students to develop self-evaluation and planning skills, thus contributing to professional development. Misdi (2020), based on a case study, likewise reports that ePortfolio as an alternative authentic assessment in the Covid-19 outbreak promoted critical and self-directed assessment, thereby empowering student teachers. Providing students with opportunities for technology-integrated learning, collaborative learning, problem-solving, critical thinking, ownership of learning, active involvement, and planning are reported as educational benefits of ePortfolios (van Wyk, 2018).

Our literature review has shown that researchers tend to agree that the greatest values of ePortfolio practice in Higher Education is 1) promoting reflection/critical reflection skills, and 2) increasing academic engagement and academic self-efficacy (Lackner & Martini, 2017; Chye et al., 2019; López-Crespo et al., 2021; Margolis et al., 2021). Likewise, Janssens et al. (2022) categorise the role of ePortfolio in healthcare disciplines as (1) document and evidence competency, (2) reflection, (3) feedback and assessment, (4) (inter)professional collaboration, (5) support Continuous Professional Development, (6) bridging the gap between theory and practice, (7) employment, and (8) certification. In that context, the plethora of recent research focuses on the impact of ePortfolio practice on academic achievement and professional development (Hsieh et al., 2015; Ciesielkiewicz, 2019; Babaee et al., 2021; Syzdykova et al., 2021; Gutiérrez-Santiuste et al., 2022).

Considering the impact of wellbeing on academic achievement, we need to reconsider the utilitarian function of ePortfolio practice associated with professional/academic competence and knowledge in higher education. Indeed, UNESCO posited four pillars of learning as a foundation for education: 1) learning to know; 2) learning to do; 3) learning to live together; and 4) learning to be (Watty & McKay, 2015), all of which are equally essential in the changing and increasingly unpredictable world. In that context, we believe it is imperative to investigate the wellbeing-related

benefits or outcomes of ePortfolios in higher education. These benefits are closely related to the third and fourth pillars of learning suggested by UNESCO.

## Method

We implemented a scoping review process in five stages: 1) identifying the research question; 2) identifying relevant studies; 3) study selection; 4) charting the data; 5) collating, summarizing, and reporting the results (Arksey & O'Malley 2005). Reporting of the scoping review was guided by the PRISMA-ScR Checklist to a great extent (Tricco et al., 2018).

Taking the trends in ePortfolio literature identified by Bryant & Chittum (2013) into consideration, we aimed to identify and include empirical-affective and empirical-outcome studies and exclude descriptive and technological ones in this scoping review. A systematic and comprehensive search of ProQuest, Scopus, Web of Science, Wiley Online Library, and Google Scholar databases was performed for studies published between 2012 and 2022 using keyword combinations agreed to be relevant to student wellbeing as defined by Jones et al. (2021). We used the following keywords to identify available evidence in ePortfolio practice: identity formation, meaning-making, belonging, community, engagement, retention, self-confidence, improved thinking skills, self-regulation, stress management, and personal development. Some of the keyword syntax used in search are as follows: eportfolios/wellbeing/higher education, eportfolios/higher education/COVID, eportfolios/stress/higher education, eportfolios/assessment/higher education, eportfolios/reflection/higher education, eportfolios/resilience, student wellbeing/assessment/higher education, eportfolios/identity/higher education, eportfolios/self-management, eportfolios/personal development.

Eligibility criteria were agreed upon among the writers before the review started (See inclusion and exclusion criteria below). The eligibility of journal articles was assessed in two steps; 1) title and abstract screening and 2) full-text review. Where doubts arose, the authors came together to reach an agreement for inclusion.

**Table 1**

### *Inclusion/exclusion Criteria*

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Types of studies	Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals	Conference papers, books/book chapters, reviews, thesis/dissertation, opinion pieces, news articles, metanalysis, literature reviews, study protocols, descriptive papers
Period	Between January 2012 and June 2022	Before 2012
Type of participants	Higher education students, graduate students, graduates of higher education, vocational education students, academics, lecturers	Interns, employees, primary/secondary education students, teachers

Phenomenon of interest	Experiences and perceptions of ePortfolios in relation to subjective wellbeing	Experiences and perceptions of ePortfolios in relation to only academic performance and success
Type of outcomes	Reported affective outcomes	Reported academic outcomes only
Language	English	Other than English

## Data Charting

The database and hand searches yielded 893 publications. After 309 duplicates were removed, titles and abstracts for 584 publications were screened. Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, full texts of 232 publications were read. Full texts of 2 studies were not found. 209 publications were excluded as they did not meet the inclusion criteria. The process resulted in 23 publications for inclusion in the review.

An inductive approach was used to categorise and thematically organise data and summarise the results from the included papers to answer the research question (Steindal et al., 2020). Frequent patterns corresponding to wellbeing, student experience and perceptions of ePortfolio practice were identified and coded. The codes were organized in six groups, which also helped create the wellbeing themes to be discussed (Table 2)

## Findings and Discussion

Twenty-three articles were included in the review (Table 2). The sample size of the studies included ranged from 9 to 642 participants. Twelve papers included student participants and their opinion on using ePortfolios, primarily focused on undergraduate levels. The majority of studies focused on ePortfolio practice across a range of disciplines from Arts (e.g. education, English language, business management, arts and social sciences) to various sciences/STEM fields (e.g. applied sciences, computer science, IT, medicine, pharmacy, chemical engineering). While four studies did not report on a specific academic field, eight studies handled ePortfolio implementation in teaching degrees.

Three of the 23 studies included in this review used validated questionnaires including the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (Nyugen and Ikeda 2015), Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) (Sales et al. 2016) and Perceived Control (PC), Psychological Ownership (PO), Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) questionnaires (Buchem et al. 2020). The remaining studies relied on non-validated surveys and questionnaires (n=9), interviews (n= 6), focus group discussions (n=3), and student reflective narratives (n=3). One of the studies did not report on the means of data collection while one of the studies (de Jager, 2019) also analysed student portfolios to source data. Six of the studies reported trying to identify student perceptions of ePortfolio practice as their main objective (Alexiou & Pareskeva, 2020; Er et al. 2019; Galván-Fernández et al., 2017; Gutiérrez-Santiuste et al., 2022; Sharifi et al., 2017; McWhorter et al., 2013). . One of the .

**Table 2***Inductive Coding Process*

Codes identified	Emerging Wellbeing Themes	Articles	#of papers
Motivation, self-actualisation, creativity.	Achieving potential	Alexiou, A. & F. Pareskeva 2020 Hill, J. et al. 2021 McWhorter, R.R. et al. 2013 Nguyen, L. T. & M. Ikeda 2015 Sharifi, M. et al. 2017; Tonni, I. et al. 2016	6
Self-confidence, meaning making, Critical self-reflection, metacognition	Self-awareness	Abd-Wahab et al. 2016; Andrade, M. S. 2019 de Jager, T. 2019; Dunne, K. & P. Logue 2021 Di Silvestro, F. & H. Nadir 2021 Er, H. M. et al. 2019 Galván-Fernández, C. et al. 2017 Gutiérrez-Santiuste, E. et al. 2022 Jasonik, S. M. & T. E. Frank 2013 Landis, C. M. et al. 2015; McWhorter, R.R. et al. 2013 Munday, J. 2017; Rowley, J. & Munday, J. 2014 Tonni, I. et al. 2016; vanWyk, M.M. 2017	15
Sense of self, culture, diversity, belonging	Identity	Bennett, D. et al. 2016; Buchem, I. et al. 2020 McWhorter, R.R. et al. 2013; Rowley, J. & J. Munday 2014	4
Social interactivity, empathy, tolerance, interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence	Connectedness	Abd-Wahab et al. 2016; Andrade, M. S. 2019 Di Silvestro, F. & H. Nadir 2021	5
self-efficacy, personal development, sense of autonomy, self-management, organisational skills, time-management skills, empowerment	Self-regulation	Alexiou, A. & F. Pareskeva 2020 Andrade, M. S. 2019; Buchem, I. et al. 2020 de Jager, T. 2019; Dunne, K. & P. Logue 2021 Er, H. M. et al. 2019 Galván-Fernández, C. et al. 2017 Gutiérrez-Santiuste, E. et al. 2022 Hill, J. et al. 2021; McKenna G. et al. 2017 Nguyen, L. T. & M. Ikeda 2015 Sharifi, M. et al. 2017; vanWyk, M.M. 2017	13
Stress, burnout, negative perception	Stressor	Sales et al. 2016; De Jegar, T. 2019	2

studies aimed to investigate the attitudes of staff and students toward adopting the use of ePortfolios (McKenna et al., 2017). Seven studies explored the impact of ePortfolio practice on students and their effectiveness in achieving different learning outcomes (Andrade, 2019; de Jager, 2019; Rawley and Munday, 2014; Dunne and Logue, 2021; Galván-Fernández et al., 2017; Nguyen and Ikeda, 2015; Tonni et al., 2016). Hill et al. (2021) assessed whether a feed-forward approach can mediate student emotions around assessment (thereby hopefully also improving wellbeing) and applied this in practice through an ePortfolio assessment. None of the studies' objectives were directly related to ePortfolios for students' wellbeing.

## **Themes**

As none of the studies directly set to measure or evaluate the relationship of ePortfolios to support wellbeing, we have needed instead to broadly look for thematic alignments, based on our agreed definitions of wellbeing as per Jones et al. (2021). With a focus on affective outcomes of ePortfolios reported in the studies (motivational outcomes, self-perception outcomes, identity outcomes, socialisation outcomes, and self-regulation outcomes) we inferred the following themes which relate to wellbeing:

### ***ePortfolios for achieving human potential***

Five studies presented evidence (Alexiou and Pareskeva, 2020; McWhorter et al., 2013; Nguyen and Ikeda 2015; Sharifi et al. 2017, Tonni et al. 2016) that learners involved in ePortfolio practice demonstrated more motivation to learn, work effectively and thus achieve their potential (Edgar et al. 2019). Sharifi et al (2017) highlighted that students reported they were more motivated to learn through ePortfolios, which indicates that the ePortfolio fosters learner autonomy and motivation. Nguyen and Ikeda (2015) inferred the positive effects of the ePortfolio-based learner motivated strategies for learning scales. The range of choices provided by ePortfolios in terms of visual presentation and multimedia components contributed to intrinsically motivating students to learn (McWhorter et al., 2013). One of the studies outlined the impact of feed-forward meetings at the first stage of an electronic personal development plan portfolio. It was found that students perceived receiving balanced and clearly directed constructive criticism as a source of motivation for improvement (Hill et al., 2021). We believe motivation is one of the key steps towards self-actualisation and achieving full potential, which can be associated with eudaimonic wellbeing.

### ***ePortfolios leading to self-awareness***

Across 15 papers, ePortfolio practice was reported to enhance confidence for students in higher education. Students perceived ePortfolios provided an opportunity for insight and raised their self-awareness and confidence (Andrade, 2019; McWhorter et al., 2013; Di Silvestro and Nadir, 2021). ePortfolios are reported to have provided students with an opportunity to write about their emotions. According to de Jager (2019), students were able to reflect on who they were and how they had progressed during their schooling careers. Other studies similarly found that participants value the opportunities provided by ePortfolio practice to critically reflect on their career and personal development. Specifically, students of teacher education valued ePortfolios as a means of self-exploration through reflection on how their teaching philosophy evolves and how their personal values impact their approaches to teaching and life (Dunne and Logue, 2021; Rowley and Munday, 2014; vanWyk, 2017). Within the Di Silvestro and Nadir (2021) study, one student

reported that their ePortfolio shows how they continuously challenged themselves to step outside of their comfort zone, which made them stronger and more determined.

Er et al. (2019) findings confirmed that students were engaged in critical reflection during their ePortfolios' preparation. One paper concluded that students were analysing events in a more objective and critical way, taking into consideration the context and their and other people's emotions (Tonni et al. 2016). This was consistent with the studies showing that the students perceived that their self-awareness enhanced, and confidence increased as they progressed through undergraduate and postgraduate programs with an ePortfolio approach (Er et al., 2019; Jasonik and Frank, 2013; Di Silvestro and Nadir, 2021). Three studies confirmed that through reflection, using a reflective portfolio can promote students' deep information-processing and metacognition skills (Galván-Fernández et al 2017; Er et al., 2019; Munday, 2017). One study also found that students value ePortfolio tools for self-knowledge rather than as a means for job searching (Gutiérrez-Santiuste, et al., 2022).

The results suggest that increased self-awareness is an outcome of self-reflection tasks such as reflective journaling in ePortfolios. ePortfolio practice is widely associated with reflective learning and transformative learning pedagogy. Critical self-reflection facilitates deeper understanding and personal growth, increases capacity to act in the world and contributes to collective emancipation (Holdo, 2022). McWhoerter et al. (2013), signaling a link between reflective thinking skills and emotional wellbeing, argue that ePortfolio practice is a development process that helps to bridge external expectations and events to internal evaluations. ePortfolios can also provide students with an opportunity to write about their emotions and the social context and reflect on their transformation (De Jager, 2019). These findings are highly relevant to the development of emotional intelligence, which involves the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought (Mayer et al., 2008).

Self-awareness requires a deep understanding of one's emotions, strengths/limitations, values, and motives and is the keystone of emotional intelligence (Caldwell & Hayes, 2016). Regardless of its significance for wellbeing, emotional intelligence is not necessarily developed or valued across universities or higher education institutions (Riva et al., 2020). The increasing use of ePortfolios among different disciplines around different parts of the world, as shown in our findings, is a positive improvement for developing student emotional intelligence. However, the results show that there is little direct reference to such wellbeing outcomes of ePortfolios. Rather, self-awareness and emotional intelligence tend to be linked to employability and academic outcomes. This is in line with the dominant higher education curriculum guided predominantly by cognitive approaches (Edgar et al., 2019) rather than holistic ones of integrating wellbeing and learning to achieve better physical, emotional, social and educational outcomes.

### ***ePortfolios enhancing identity formation***

ePortfolios are reported to work as a digital extension of physical self and impact the development of professional identity over time. Across four studies, their impact on the "self" or identity construction is discussed (Bennett et al., 2016; Buchem et al., 2020; McWhorter et al. 2013; Rowley and Munday, 2014). According to Bennet et al (2016), ePortfolios represent vehicles through which identity can be negotiated and constructed due to their reflective nature as a documentary record of a student's intellectual journey. They found that the more the students were exposed to an ePortfolio approach, the more confident they were to share their work with



potential employers. According to Rowley and Munday (2014), progressing to an ideal sense of self was the most valuable outcome of an ePortfolio. The ePortfolio allowed the student to construct a narrative and create a sense of self that demonstrates their multiple identities, which also opens avenues for future employment (Rowley and Munday, 2014)

### ***ePortfolios supporting connectedness***

According to Abd-Wahab et al. (2016), the online system makes people feel connected to each other although they live apart. Andrade (2019) demonstrated that the course design based on team ePortfolio development enabled not only effective learning but also application of learning, and consequently, resulted in effective teamwork. Di Silvestro and Nadir (2021) found that students were surprised by the value of engaging in collaboration while they constructed their ePortfolios. One student stated that they enjoyed the creative experience as a result of collaboration with peers and their contribution with thoughtful comments and suggestions (Di Silvestro and Nadir 2021; p. 160). Tonni et al. (2016) reported that students noticed improvement in their communication and interpersonal skills due to the interaction with mentors and peers during ePortfolio practice. Discussion with a mentor and peers was a good way to stimulate/facilitate the reflective process and make it effective with the ePortfolio experience. Tonni et al. (2016) suggested that by the end of the program, the students were analysing events in a more objective and critical way, taking into consideration the context and other people's emotions, thus having improved their empathy skills. According to Hill et al. (2021), dialogue during the instructor-student meetings supported the students to process and manage not just the cognitive (and metacognitive) aspects, but the affective aspects of their assessment tasks in a positive manner.

As the results indicate, the dialogue between the instructor and student supports the students to process and manage not just the cognitive and metacognitive aspects, but the affective aspects of their ePortfolio tasks. This dialogue is likely to lead to positive emotions such as relief and reassurance. An instructor consciously establishing an open and supportive environment – offering balanced, constructive criticism, helping students to understand the weaknesses in their work and providing them with clear direction – enhances student agency to make improvements and develop resilience (Hill et al., 2021). This finding supports the ideal of student-teacher dialogue as praxis, leading to transformation and humanisation as discussed by Roux and Becker (2016) earlier.

Against the neoliberal reformation of higher education, we argue that universities have a duty of care for supporting students in their learning and development, as well as their wider contribution to local communities and society. Like Kahn (2017), we believe that neoliberal agenda fails to satisfy the full range of students' aspirations, responsibilities and needs.

### ***ePortfolios fostering self-regulation***

While ePortfolios were reported to activate self-regulated learning in six papers (Alexiou and Pareskeva, 2020; Buchem et al., 2020; Galván-Fernández et al., 2017; Gutiérrez-Santiuste et al., 2022; Nguyen and Ikeda, 2015; Sharifi et al., 2017; vanWyk, M.M., 2017), it was found across different studies that students perceived ePortfolio practice as a positive impact on their self-regulation and self-efficacy (the belief in their capacity to act and achieve goals, and personal development). Sharifi et al. (2017) found that students felt more responsible for their own learning, thus indicating that ePortfolios have the potential to foster autonomous learning and self-efficacy.

Students felt an ePortfolio approach helped with their decision making and organisational skills, which Andreda (2019) associates with personal growth and learning to be. The ePortfolio not only enabled students to set goals for themselves, but also develop time-management skills (De Jager 2019). In one of the studies, students confirmed that ePortfolio development process helped not just academic achievement but industry and personal achievements (Dunne and Logue, 2021). They reported feeling more clarity in goals and aspirations in both professional and non-professional capacities. Er et al. (2019) and McKenna et al. (2017) likewise suggested that students perceived that the ePortfolio helped with their personal and professional development. Hill et al. (2021) found that the relational feed-forward during the ePortfolio implementation raised self-efficacy for the majority of students with respect to the task in hand and future assessed work. These findings indicate that ePortfolio practice has the capacity to foster self-regulated learning and thus empower students.

### ***ePortfolios as stressors***

Only one study investigated the negative effects of ePortfolios for students. In their study to identify whether specific GP trainee groups are particularly at risk of burnout and the aspects of training they find stressful, Sales et al. (2016) reported that ePortfolios featured repeatedly as a stressor in annual student surveys. Thus, ePortfolios in certain disciplines like medicine, are perceived to be a source of stress as an assessment method (Sales et al., 2017).

Although a positive perception among students in terms of the usefulness of ePortfolios is reported by most of the studies, de Jager (2019) mentioned that some students find ePortfolios “time consuming” (p. 12). It can be inferred that familiarity with digital tools and the possession of relevant technical skills are correlated with the positive perception of ePortfolios by students (Gutiérrez-Santiuste et al., 2022). These findings also indicate the significance of scaffolded ePortfolio design as a formative process, an ongoing support for students. Indeed, how ePortfolios are designed is the leading determiner of the impact of this practice on student wellbeing.

## **Conclusion**

While the studies analysed in this scoping paper did not intend to investigate or report on ePortfolios for student wellbeing directly, we have found that many have addressed what we would consider relevant themes and have discussed what these themes may mean for student wellbeing, relevant to the broader literature. Our conclusion offers some consolidating and additional remarks on what this means for ePortfolio practice and further research.

We conceptualised wellbeing with an eudaemonic approach, putting self-actualisation in the centre. The results show that ePortfolio practice as a student-centred pedagogy may be an enabler of student wellbeing. “If involved in this type of learning, fostered by teachers, students feel more valued, engaged, and noticed, which has a positive effect on their wellbeing” (Riva et al., p. 106). With that said, how an ePortfolio is implemented is paramount in determining the wellbeing outcomes. The interaction between the student and the teacher in ePortfolio creation is the key to wellbeing outcomes.

This scoping review indicates that ePortfolio practice may enhance community and connectedness among students, which has great potential to impact student wellbeing positively. However, this premise mostly is dependent on the features of the ePortfolio in use. Little is known

about the ePortfolio learning design that has the best potential to achieve student-faculty and student-student connectedness. As a matter of fact, digital education might lead to isolation and loneliness, thus impacting wellbeing negatively (Trespacios et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). In that context, it is important to consider the affordances of the ePortfolio and related tools, technologies, pedagogies and practices in designing teaching and assessment that would also lead to wellbeing in addition to the academic outcomes. This gap calls for further studies to review ePortfolio-specific contexts, and advice to guide educators in their learning and assessment design.

The results of this review show that ePortfolios offer potential to promote the flourishing of students individually and as a member of the larger society. The findings also indicate that human qualities and behaviors (including care, kindness and compassion) are needed within the teaching and learning environment to reach that potential. There is also a need for university staff members that are directly involved in the students' academic journey – such as tutors, lecturers, library staff and career advisors – to likewise display these qualities (Riva et al., 2020).

Lastly, it should be underlined that wellbeing is a broad, subjective, and multidimensional term, and further empirical studies are needed to make solid inferences and suggest recommendations highlighting the wellbeing outcomes of ePortfolios. The studies we analysed did not specifically address wellbeing – instead, wellbeing benefits have been inferred through analysing the language and discourses within the literature.

Upon concluding our research and publication process, we encountered a recent scholarly work by Garrett et al. (2023) elucidating the implications of ePortfolios in fostering a pedagogy of wellbeing. Despite the fact that our study predates the publication of this work and consequently did not incorporate it within our scoping review, we recognise its substantive contribution to the understanding of the socio-psychological dimensions of ePortfolios, as beginning to fill gaps in the ePortfolio literature.

Despite some scholarship now beginning to appear to address gaps in understanding the role of ePortfolios for student wellbeing, further studies will be required to determine how and what kind of ePortfolio practice can ensure wellbeing among students. As such, it is important that further ePortfolio research be led by student participant data, while recognising the terminology and relevant themes associated with wellbeing, as a way to further the field. Using relevant instruments or reviewing and modifying the existing survey instruments identified for their relevance to student wellbeing, could be a way forward in building further research in ePortfolios for wellbeing. We recognise that there is potentially some overlap between concepts of wellbeing, particularly identity formation and self-awareness. It may be worth further investigating and developing explicit instruments to review and/or tease out these similarities vs differences.

We believe it is important to acknowledge the potential direct impact of ePortfolio practice on student wellbeing and investigate its further benefits in higher education. The development of tools to evaluate the effectiveness of ePortfolios not only in academic success but also in enhancing self-awareness and emotional intelligence seems imperative in the shadow of increased vicissitudes of life, where student resilience is paramount to prevent attrition and enable academic success in higher education.

If implemented with compassion and care, ePortfolios can be the remedy for the increased commodification of higher education and dehumanisation of students (Kahn, 2017). Through ePortfolios, wellbeing outcomes can be achieved without giving up academic outcomes, as demonstrated by the results of this review.

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