Primary ICT e-portfolio Pilot Project

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Background information:

In 2008 the University of Worcester purchased PebblePAD as a Personal Learning System, one function of which is producing e-portfolios.[1] This coincided with the primary ICT team re-evaluating the existing paper-based ICT portfolio which trainees collate as a compulsory component of the course. In January 2008 a pilot primary ICT e-portfolio began with 20 postgraduate trainees undertaking a compulsory ICT module.

Scope of the pilot project:

Two main aims of the ICT e-portfolio project were; firstly, to enable trainees to include digital artefacts and secondly, to facilitate a greater degree of reflection upon practice. The pattern of assessment would also be very different; the existing paper-based portfolio is summatively assessed by tutors at the end of the course and students did not receive significant formative feedback from either peers or tutors.

Shared aims of the e-portfolio project:

- To reduce the overall student workload required in completing the ICT portfolio.
- To emphasise 'quality' rather than 'quantity' of evidence by requesting that students present 2 case studies.
- To introduce a more complete 'reflective cycle' to assist trainees in relating their reflections to future professional practice.
- To strengthen the link between college-based and school-based training.
- To enable students to present evidence in a multimedia format including text, graphics, video and audio files.
- To increase the level of formative feedback students receive by building in a range of self- and peer-assessment opportunities in addition to tutor feedback.
- To develop students ICT capabilities in the construction of the e-portfolio.

I believe it has become vital for ICT trainees to have the opportunity to submit evidence in an electronic format and PebblePAD seems a useful vehicle for linking items together with a cohesive narrative constructed by the trainees. I opted for creating a generic template which was 'shared'[2] electronically with trainees which they could subsequently 'copy' and personalise. This generic template included the following components:

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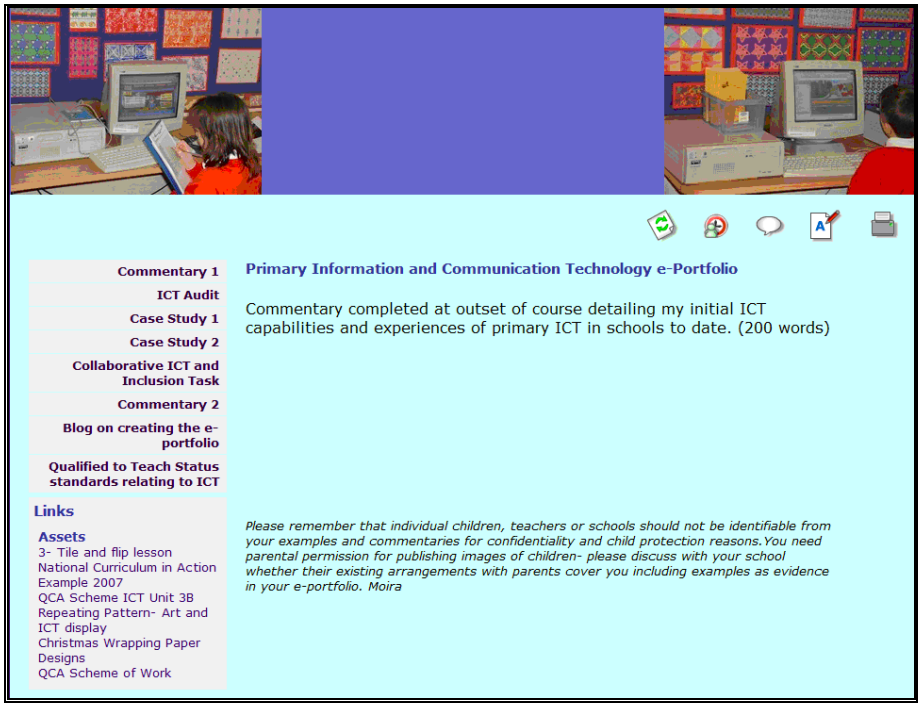
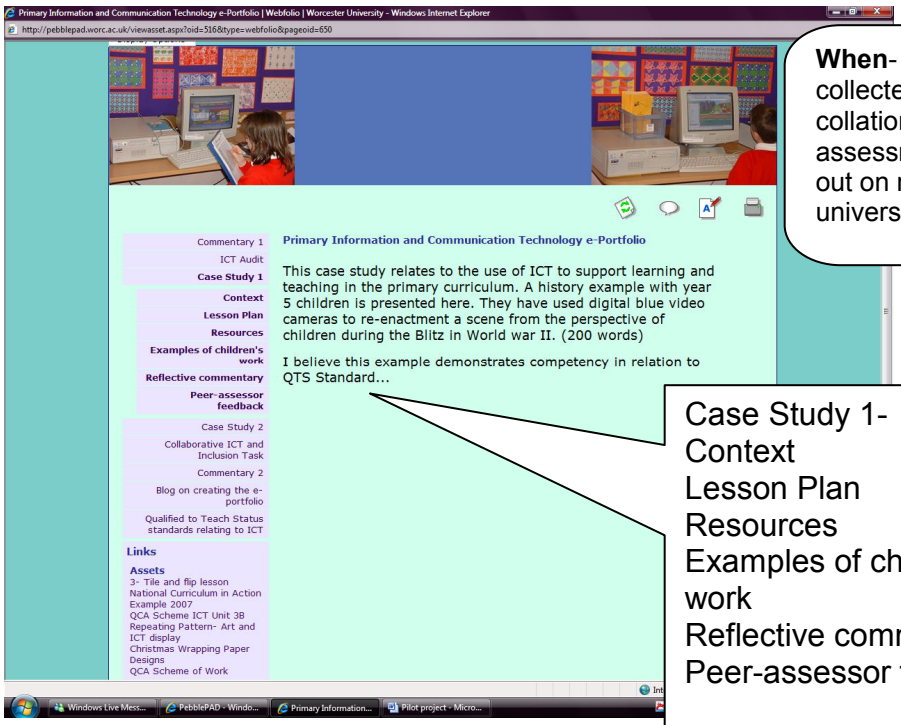
[1] http://www.pebblepad.co.uk/

[2] Assets can be shared with other PebblePAD users. Depending on the settings specified assets can be commented upon, copied etc.

1. An opening commentary detailing initial ICT capability and experiences to date with ICT in schools.



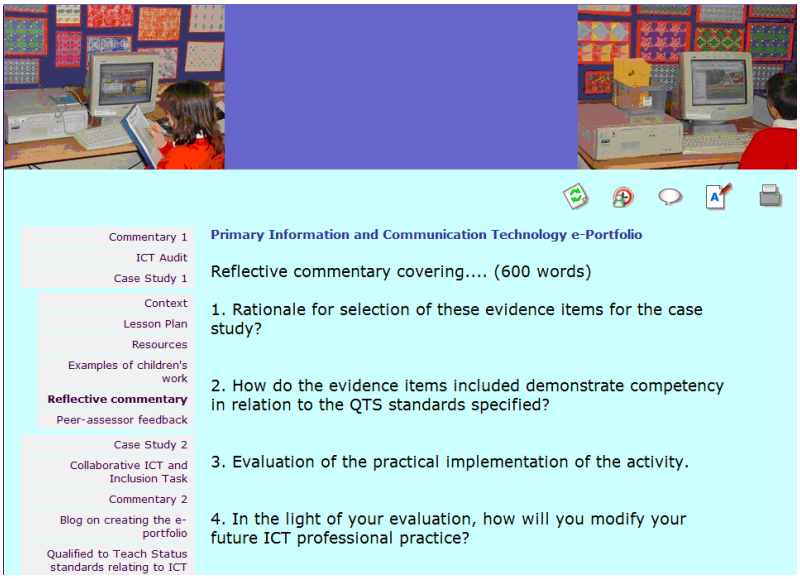
2. Presentation of a case study where ICT has been used effectively to support learning and teaching in the primary classroom.



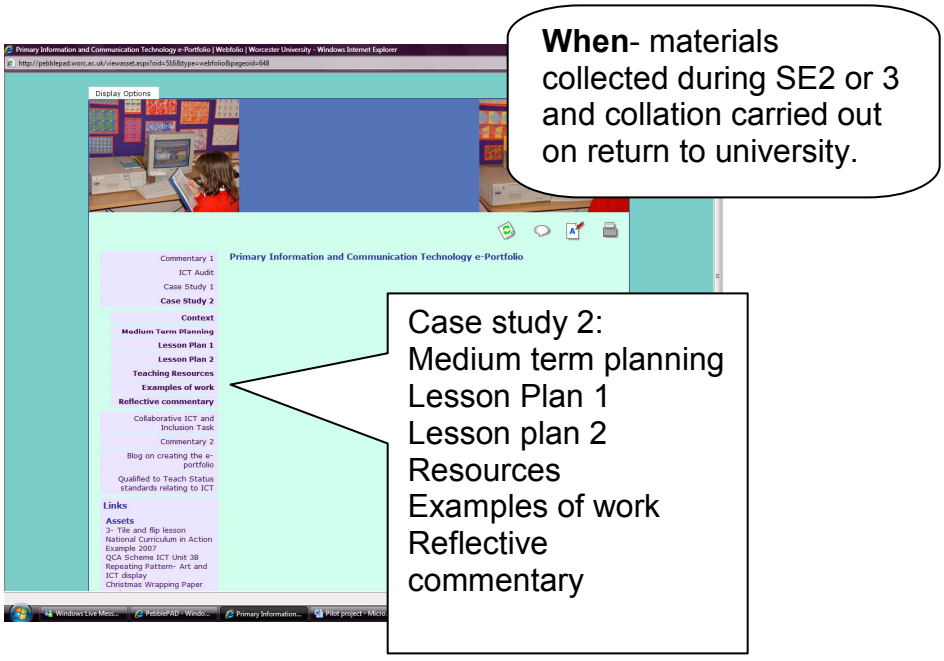
When- materials collected during SE1; collation and peer-assessment carried out on return to university.

Case Study 1-
Context
Lesson Plan
Resources
Examples of children's work
Reflective commentary
Peer-assessor feedback

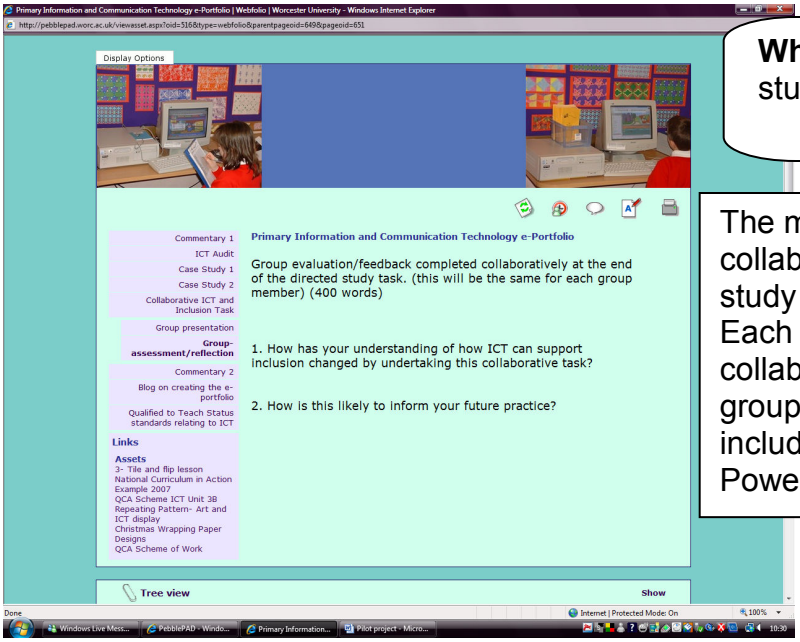
Throughout trainees are asked to write reflective commentaries in response to given prompts. A peer reviewer is self-selected and asked to provide feedback in relation to these prompts.



3. A similar process is completed for case study 2 which demonstrates some focused ICT capability teaching in which a series of progressive ICT learning objectives are identified in sequential lesson plans.



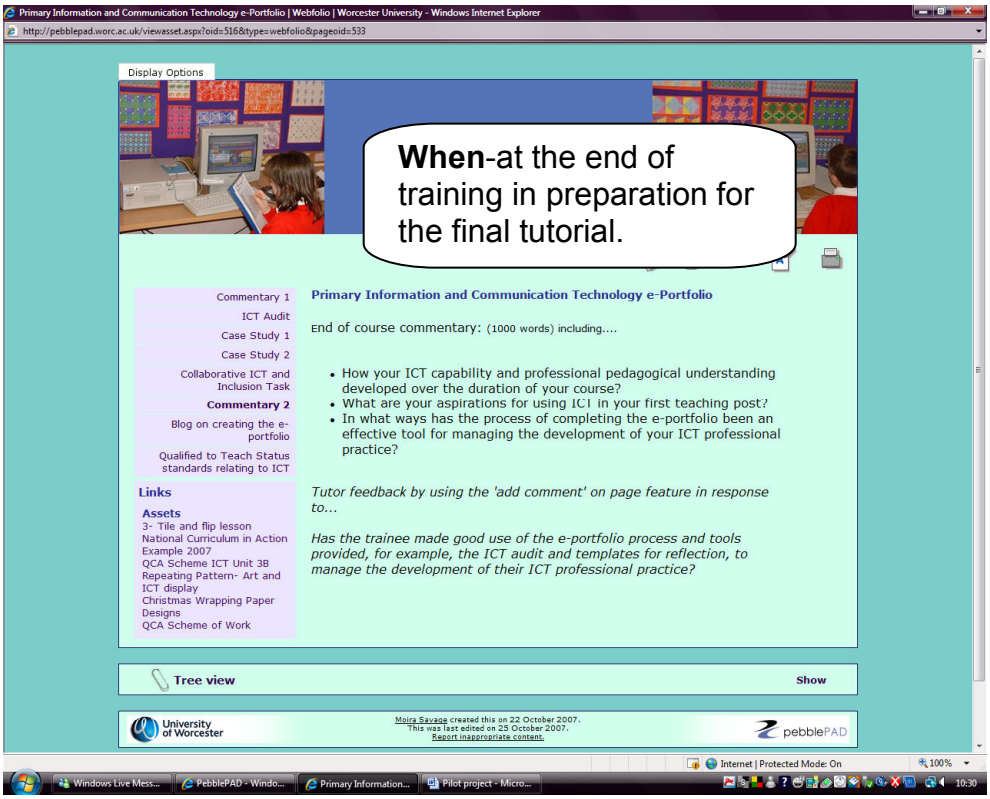
4. ICT and Inclusion - collaborative online (via Blackboard) directed study task



When-existing directed study time within module.

The module includes a collaborative online directed study task on ICT and inclusion. Each group would collaboratively complete the group evaluation/reflection to include alongside their PowerPoint presentation.

5. End of course commentary…



When-at the end of training in preparation for the final tutorial.

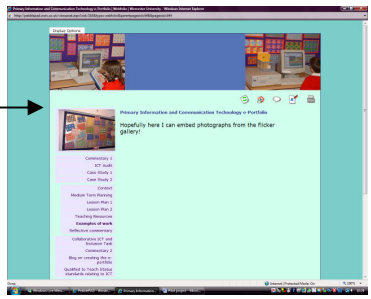
Advantages of PebblePAD Webfolio:
Multimedia capacity - via PebblePAD trainees can potentially include:

- text based documents, for example Word, PDF, Excel,
- photographs and scanned items,
- audio,
- video,
- PowerPoint presentations.

Another feature which I have found very useful is that students can share their webfolio to the Gateway I have setup. Trainees are able to view each other's Webfolios as they progress. What is actually shared is a link to the webfolio, and hence changes and updates are automatically reflected.

But…

Issues and Limitations of PebblePAD:
Multimedia capacity - the Webfolio editor is essentially a 'text only' editor and has limited functionality.



Inserting photographs can happen in one of three ways:
1. a single image can be added via the text editor-see example →
2. the external Flickr website can be used to host photo galleries; I believe these can be added as special pages within the webfolio which will give the impression of them being embedded.
3. photos can be uploaded as assets, links created within the text editor and then the files can be downloaded for viewing.

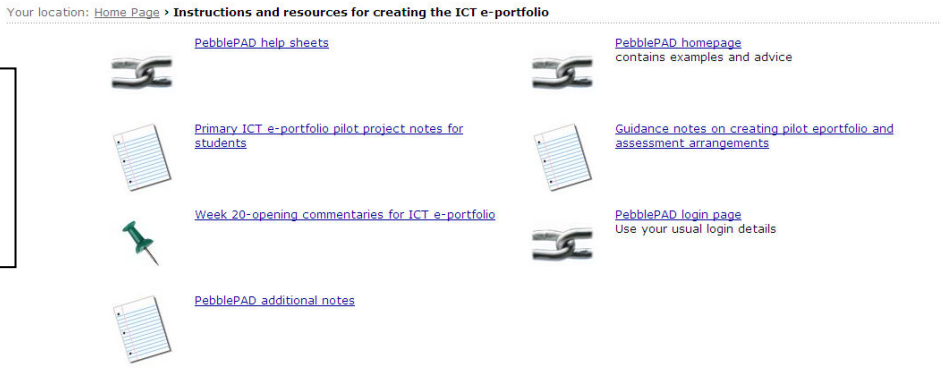
A significant problem in using an external hosting site is that trainees are unlikely to receive school and parental consent to take photographs or video of children working; thereby limiting the affordance of being able to include digital assets.

Inserting video clips also requires the use of an external hosting site, YouTube, which poses the same child protection issues if the video footage includes the trainee working with children in the classroom. Initially PebblePAD gives the impression that small video clips can be uploaded via a text editor in the same way that a single photograph can be. However, the maximum file size is 10MB and when I tried to upload even a very short two-minute video clip this exceeded that specification and failed. Audio files can be uploaded and can be shared without problems**.**

Technical support for students during the pilot project-
A total of 4 additional hours have been made available with the course tutor and Information and Learning Services staff to provide ongoing support with trainees during the PebblePAD ICT e-portfolio pilot project. Further, the module tutor has provided individual tutorial support on request. Trainees will continue to need support in this area during the pilot project until ILS has centrally agreed a training and support programme for students across the University when it is

introduced from September 2008 with all students. Where possible I have included support material and links within the existing Virtual Learning Environment.

Links embedded within the VLE to the e-portfolio system and support materials



Next steps:
In carrying out the pilot I have learnt several valuable lessons including the need to

- Simplify my webfolio template to remove embedded mini Webfolios as this makes the copying and editing processes unnecessarily complicated.
- Compile some personalised electronic help resources in addition to those produced by the manufacturer. I have ordered a screen capture tool, Camtasia, for this purpose.
- Negotiate with University administration staff over the setting up and management of gateways; for example, managing student access.
- Resolve child protection issues related to external hosting sites for video and photographs.
- Negotiate with University student support services training sessions for students.

I plan to implement the revised e-portfolio process with all primary PGCE students in September 2008.

The student experience:
As is often the case with students, their independence in using the tool varied. Generally students remarked that once they had created several pages it was not as difficult as they first feared. In retrospect they would have benefited from a more holistic introduction to PebblePAD as a personal learning system whereas I focused straight in on the webfolio tool. I would estimate that approximately 50% of trainees compiled pages independently, accessing the help sources. Whilst the remainder wanted group or 1-1 support in uploading and creating their webfolio.

Pedagogically one aspect which seemed to have worked well was the capacity to carry out peer reviews of case study 1 via the shared gateway. This enabled everyone to receive early formative feedback and simultaneously view and consider the work of others.

At the outset of the project portfolios were shared on the gateway (they are automatically updated) and as a disabled lecturer preferring to work in an entirely electronic way I found this much easier than paper based equivalents. I am also going to explore options for leaving audio feedback attached to the individual webfolios.

Students were limited in the multimedia artefacts they could include due to the child protection issue with respect to external hosting sites as detailed above. Unless this is resolved this is a serious limitation as although lesson planning and samples of work etc were attached electronically this was simply duplicating what was possible with the paper-based version rather than adding something new.

The pilot project is still underway so I am looking forward to hearing from students the impact it made on their developing ICT practice.