



The PUPPI Project: The Plymouth University Phase 2 PebblePad Implementation Project

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A case study from PebblePad's 2016 'Future Ready' conference on preparing and equipping learners for their journey.

The Context

Plymouth University has been using PebblePad since 2009/10 when it began with PebblePad Classic, initially to support Nursing and as a solution for PDP. In 2013 we moved from Classic to PebblePad3. During these early years the use of PebblePad occurred largely through organic development. Staff would hear of PebblePad through word of mouth, and at that point a learning technologist would get involved to help develop ideas, work collaboratively to build templates and workbooks, and design activities. Engagement with PebblePad was making some progress, but as an institution we wanted to scale up practice and increase usage in areas not yet involved with eportfolio.

The Problem

As an institution we wanted to increase PebblePad usage and develop a wider range of uses for the system, but we had not developed a plan for how to do this in a systematic or strategic way. This case study is about the unexpected inspiration and opportunity that arose from attending a workshop in January 2015 about a new PebblePad Implementation Toolkit. At the time the toolkit consisted of a set of 16 'viewpoint' cards covering four implementation phases:

- Vision and Scoping
- Planning and Design
- Implementing and Supporting
- Scaling and Sustaining

Each set of viewpoint cards had accompanying activities and discussion points that institutions new to eportfolios could use to guide and plan their implementation and rollout.

The workshop day was primarily focused on looking at how to implement PebblePad, using the Toolkit, into an institution that was new to the system. Would this approach work for Plymouth, as we had already implemented PebblePad? Could the Toolkit be used to support a Phase 2 Implementation and increase usage?

The Approach

Following the Toolkit workshop the idea of a project for the PebblePad phase two implementation was taken to the leadership team. It was vital to have senior management backing for this project to enable the team to be given the time and resources needed and an official route to report back on the project. The go ahead was given and in March 2015 phase two began, based on the Implementation Toolkit.

The project team, PUPPI (Plymouth University Pebblepad Project Implementation), consisted of two experienced users of PebblePad that had been involved with phase one of PebblePad at Plymouth University and a Project Manager/Co-ordinator who had some knowledge of PebblePad, but more importantly had attended the Implementation Toolkit day. The rest of the team was made up of other Learning Technologists with differing levels of experience with PebblePad. The diversity of the team allowed us to draw from each other's experiences of PebblePad and allowed us to share communication across different networks and contexts.

A series of workshops was designed around the Toolkit viewpoint cards. A timeline was built around the academic calendar, designed to ensure that there was enough time to action the activities agreed in each workshop. We ended up running four workshops, each lasting three hours, spread over a 12-month period. The final two workshops were quite close together as they focussed on implementation and evaluation.

Workshop 1: Vision and Scoping

The cards and knowledge gained from the PebblePad Toolkit day were used as a guide for each of the workshops, with the initial workshop focussing on vision and scoping. This workshop began with an introduction to the project followed by discussions around visions for the future of PebblePad at Plymouth. Team members already working closely with existing users shared details of current practice with the rest of the team.

"The diversity of purposes for e-portfolios can lead to misunderstandings and ineffective implementation. There needs to be clarity over this at the start of the implementation"

JISC1 (2013)

Resources included in the Toolkit, such as the Touch Point Diagram, allowed us to explore a range of potential uses for PebblePad; these were then ranked in order of their importance to

Plymouth University. From this activity we could identify 'quick wins' and spot areas that might be more challenging. We were then able to specify the 'work streams' or broad areas that we wanted to target with the implementation of PebblePad:

- Curriculum Development including CEP (Curriculum Enrichment Project).
- Promotion via Case Studies (current use of PebblePad) and the Website (keep it updated).
- Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry (PUPSMD) including BMBS (Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery).
- Student Engagement – Induction, HEAR, Careers, Placements, Plymouth Award, Lab work, Field work.
- Staff Processes such as PDR (Performance Development Review), CMALT (Certified Membership of Association of Learning Technologies), and PGCAP (Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice).
- Research – Personal Tutoring, Conference Papers, Posters, Publications.
- Benchmarking
- Help and Support – Help materials reviewed, revised, and updated.
- Infrastructure/Technical – Single sign on project, data island, PebblePocket

Project members were able to choose their own work streams, creating ownership over each area, and then began the task of plotting milestones for the next few months. These milestones included an acknowledgement of department deadlines, workloads, and busy times for the university such as assessment weeks, etc.

To ensure that this project was a success the PUPPI team needed to be upskilled and supported throughout. Less experienced team members were given four PebblePad scenarios to work through. These scenarios were based on support requests commonly received from academics. For example, a tutor in Health needs to set up a workbook with 4 pages, each page consisting of x, y and z, and then the workbook needs to be set as an auto submit resource for students. The aim was to provide these team members with real life scenarios/problems to solve to help them build their confidence with PebblePad. On completion, the more experienced members of the team talked through the tasks and shared how they would approach them.

The project coordinator also set up monthly work stream coordinator meetings. These were informal meetings to provide support to team members, discuss what was going well and not so well, and highlight any major issues.

Workshop 2: Planning and Designing

The aim of Workshop 2 was to develop a good communication strategy and clear roles and responsibilities within the team. This allowed the team members to juggle other workloads as we were not solely working on PebblePad. The project leader and more experienced team members

provided the team with a strong expert knowledge base that could provide support and guidance in ensuring the project was organised and carried out efficiently. We also had a designated team member responsible for liaising with PebblePad about any technical issues / questions. This helped streamline the flow of information to efficiently resolve any issues encountered.

The Project Manager role ensured the team as a whole was kept on track. This was vital to feeding back to senior management on how the project was progressing, which included monthly update reports from each of the work streams. Google Docs and Trello were utilised to collate this information for each work stream, including progress to date and any blockers / challenges (AGILE). This allowed the team to monitor progress and highlight any issues that needed to be dealt with by management.

“The ePI study found that the e-portfolio implementation manager role was critical for effective implementation.”

(JISC2, 2013)

Workshop 3: Implementation

During this workshop each work stream presented on the progress they had made and updated timelines and plotted final milestones. By this time we were aware of a range of staffing changes which could have had an impact on the project. However due to the organisation, reports, timelines and support meetings the handover process to new staff on the project was made much easier.

Workshop 4: Evaluation and Dissemination

This workshop was to look at how we could evaluate and disseminate what we had done, both in terms of the project process (this case study) and the progress on the work streams. From this meeting we highlighted things we could complete, such as writing up case studies, and where these could be disseminated, such as in our team newsletter and on our website. We also highlighted conferences in house at Plymouth University and wider afield such as ALT/CRA and PebbleBash.

The future of the project with current staffing and work streams was discussed. With the pending implementation of Flourish and the HTML5 version, the focus of this project was bound to change. It was important, however, that work streams that had made progress were supported to continue as much of the practice was still in the early days of implementation.

The Results

By broadly following but adapting the Toolkit cards to fit our institution context (we already had PebblePad) we have established a project team with defined project roles, organised and carried out 4 dedicated workshops, and produced work streams as areas to focus the PebblePad implementation. From these work streams various PebblePad instances have been initiated:

- Curriculum Development and Promotion
- A new staff development workshop, Embedding PebblePad in the Curriculum, has been promoted through the university teaching, learning and quality committees, both Faculty and School wide. The website has been updated. PebblePad has also been promoted through the CEP projects by our education development team.
- PUPSMD
- BMBS have successfully rolled out a Portfolio Analysis (providing evidence that the medics' professionalism skills are developing) for years 1 to 3 with around 250 students using the system. In the future they are looking to roll it out for clinical logs and across the dental school.
- Student Engagement
- A student competition around 'My life at University' was developed and implemented. The aim was to raise awareness of PebblePad and to try to engage students in its use outside of the curriculum. Two winners have recently been notified.
- Staff Processes
- A CMALT template has been created for any of the Plymouth TEL team to use for their CMALT application. Discussions are ongoing with PGCAP leads and we have created mock-up workbooks and templates for use on their course.
- Research
- PUPPI project interim findings were presented at the AAEEBL annual Conference in 2015 and the finished project submitted to multiple conferences in 2016.
- Benchmarking
- An initial scoping exercise to outline the existing practice and to identify new areas for future focus.
- Help and Support
- New staff and student help and support documents have been created on the Digital Learning Environment.
- Infrastructure/Technical
- Single sign on was successfully implemented for our PebblePad installation along with a new landing dashboard. We also implemented a Data island to populate workspaces with users and rolled out PebblePocket across the institution.

Through upskilling the PUPPI team we have been able to further support our faculties outside of this PebblePad project, encouraging staff to attend the workshops and actively use PebblePad in their teaching and learning.

Lessons Learnt

- Having a dedicated project team, agreed by management, with allocated time and resources, really helped to drive the project forward.
- A project leader was vital to keep the team on track through organising and preparing meetings, and collating actions and documents (via Google Docs and Trello).
- Having two experienced PebblePad users in the team enabled everyone to get off to a solid start with these users being able to share details of existing practice.
- The logistics of getting the whole team together were difficult – a whole day is not advisable. Any project also needs to factor in the time taken to arrange and prepare for the workshops. The plan was to cover a set of cards per session, however we needed to meet beforehand to pick out key aspects and pre-plan before meeting with the wider team.
- Time management and prioritising tasks was essential for the process to work. Careful consideration needed to be given to how much time was allocated to tasks. This was especially the case where we all had other workload and project commitments.
- Despite the feedback to management, the project would have benefited from more publicity around the implementation process itself rather than a focus on information about what PebblePad is.
- The project itself will be transformed into the next phase of PebblePad implementation involving the new HTML5 version. We will take the lessons we have learnt from this experience forward to this next phase

In Brief – Using the PebblePad Implementation Toolkit to support PebblePad innovation.

- By using the framework you can ensure a strategic approach to implementation where there is buy in from all stakeholders and support is planned in all the required areas from the outset.
- Nothing is forgotten; following the prompts given in the Toolkit viewpoint cards ensures you have a plan for all stages of the implementation.
- The applicability of the Toolkit is not restricted to just those institutions who are new to implementation. It can be adapted to work where previous practice has developed organically and where original implementation has been less structured.

References

JISC1 (2013) *eportfolio Implementation Toolkit*. Retrieved from <https://epip.pbworks.com/w/page/40808726/Implementation%20guidance%20for%20senior%20managers>

JISC2 (2013) *eportfolio Implementation Toolkit*. Retrieved from <https://epip.pbworks.com/w/page/40808690/Implementation%20guidance%20for%20practitioners>