

Process Oriented Evaluation in Teacher Education : Portfolio

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Abstract:

Teacher Education field does preach ideal practices both in teaching-learning and evaluation. The ideals, when do not get concretised in real implementation, lose their value as being feasible. Evaluation is an area, where enormous amount of advanced theories have entered into the theoretical realm of teacher education. These advanced theories do have strong research base. Eventhough, somehow, such advancements never get reflected in teacher preparation process. One such advancement is 'using portfolio as an evaluation tool'. Portfolio evaluation methodology has generated great deal of interest among teaching professionals in recent years, with academics taking a lead in exploring ways to use it. Portfolios are often described as a more authentic means of assessment than the traditional classroom tests. Rather than showing that the learner *knows* what has been taught, the portfolio demonstrates that the student *can do* what has been taught.

The evaluation methodology in teacher education process is partly performance based and to a large extent it is memory based. The submissions and term-end examinations mostly assess what students know. Pre service teacher preparation programme is a course wherein a reflective faculty of the student teacher is required to be developed. More than the knowledge, metacognition is required. "Why I am doing what and what could have done" are the reflective zones where an optimum development of pedagogic skills is positioned. This paper presents a framework of portfolio as an evaluation tool to be used in teacher preparation programme. It advocates a shift from product to process.

Key words: Teacher education, portfolio, evaluation tool, reflections.

"How sad and bad and mad it was - but then, how it was sweet"

— Robert Browning

1.0 Introduction:

Teacher education programmes are often blamed to be lacking in coherence and continuity (Elliton,1993). This muddle exists due to its intense inclination on the principle: "good practice consists of consciously applying theory". From this perspective a pattern of teacher education emerged in which priority to development of theoretical understanding was given rather than the practicability of their application in the local situation. In place of such a rigid pattern where each and every 'what, why and how' are fixed so to follow strictly avoiding its feasibility, a system is required where inducted theories are implemented, reflected upon and

thereby individual wisdom on the pedagogical issues is constructed. The curricula of current teacher education courses distinguish between two sorts of competencies. Firstly, future teachers need to acquire the necessary teaching competencies, which include all aspects of teaching, such as preparing lessons; using a pedagogically sound approach; responding to pupils' needs, etc. Secondly, teachers are expected to engage in life-long learning. Students in teacher education, therefore, need to be capable of continuing to learn on their own throughout their teaching careers (Meeus & Van Looy, 2005). The independent learning cycle consists of the following phases: (1) orientation; (2) planning; (3) performing; and (4) evaluation (Pintrich, 1999; Zimmerman, 2001). The greater the number of phases that a student can go through independently, the greater his or her capacity for self-regulation will be. Reflection is the basic component of all the various phases of the cycle of self-regulated learning and can even be considered a necessary prerequisite to self-regulation (Puustinen & Pulkkinen, 2001; van Grinsven, 2003). Reflection is, therefore, a central element in the learning process. More importantly reflection offers to the students the vital skills which are required for their professional growth. This calls for a methodology of evaluation in teacher education which constantly set in motion the reflective faculty of the student teachers.

Portfolio, being a continuous documentation process by the pre service teacher himself for one's own evaluation, help the student teacher become aware of one's learning contexts, establish goal for one's independent learning, allow one to own responsibility of one's own learning by providing evidence of one's own progress towards meeting goals of learning, provide scope for displaying good work, serve as a vehicle for self analysis, and demonstrate mastery of learning.

2.0 The Concept of Portfolio as a Tool for Evaluation :

A portfolio in teacher education as a tool for evaluation is a record of goals, growth, achievement, and professional attributes developed over time and in collaboration with others during the pre service training. A portfolio illustrates and evaluates goals and development over time, and not simply the highest level of achievement. For pre service teachers a professional portfolio is a thoughtfully organized collection of artifacts that illustrates professional status, pedagogical expertise, subject matter knowledge, knowledge of learning processes, and professional and personal attributes that contribute to teaching. The professional portfolio itself is the product of, and cannot be separated from, the reflection and assessment processes required to produce it.

The preparation of portfolio by a pre service teacher involves the complex processes of self and collaborative evaluation. These include somewhat cyclical processes of goal setting, reflecting upon growth, and recognizing achievement, followed by further goal setting to facilitate continued professional development. Portfolio development also requires decision-making and analysis

concerning the selection and arrangement of the artifacts to be included as well as the development of presentation skills to facilitate communication concerning professional development.

A pre service portfolio has value as both a process of assessment and evaluation and as a product of that process, as is true of many processes, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. That is, the meshing of self and collaborative evaluation with products that demonstrate the outcomes of those evaluations is greater than either the processes or the products alone.

3.0 Rationale

The increased focus on the preparation of pre-service teachers for teaching in an ever-changing world impacts how teacher education programs both prepare and assess pre-service teachers (National Commission on Teacher Education, 1996). The most recent impetus for this focus began with a general call for reform of public schools that ultimately demanded high standards and demonstration of performance by both teachers and their students (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 1986; Goodlad, 1990, 1994; Holmes Group 1986). Teacher education programs had to change from a model of paper and pencil evaluation to one in which the teacher is responsible for demonstrating his or her own knowledge and skills in actual teaching situations (Shulman, 1987). Portfolios provide one means of monitoring, documenting and assessing both the pre service teacher and the teacher education program. Portfolios in teacher education provide the opportunity for pre-service and in-service teachers to reflect on their own learning and communicate who they are as teachers. “Ultimately, the portfolio as a process demanding at its best constant reflection on teaching and learning holds the promise—however fragile—of forcing a broader reflection on the ways teachers are educated and continue in their professional development” (Lyon, 1998, p. 4). The portfolio as a means of teacher assessment aligns with the movement toward more authentic assessment in education. Performance-based assessment involves tasks closely related to those found in the real world, which demonstrate proficiency for a given topic (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). It is a type of alternative assessment that asks students to demonstrate what they have learned, how they engage in the learning process and how they apply their knowledge demonstrating their preparedness for teaching (Viechnicki, Barbour, Shaklee, Rohrer, & Ambrose, 1993). “What has emerged is assessment that is authentic in nature, offers multiple indicators of student progress, encourages students to take an active role in their learning, affords teachers new roles in the assessment process, and encourages students to demonstrate what they know in ways that encompass their personal learning styles” (McLaughlin & Vogt, 1996, p. 9). As highly individualized expressions of the teacher they represent, portfolios exemplify authentic assessment. They provide a means to describe current understanding of teaching abilities in a way that is not evident in other formats (Campbell, Gignetti, Melenyzer, Nettles, & Wyman, 2001). While portfolios represent only one aspect of documenting teacher effectiveness, they are

important tools for assessing preparedness for teaching.

The rationale for implementing portfolios stems from a need to “offer a coherent programme of studies that prepares effective teachers rather than a collection of courses based on what professors prefer to teach” (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996, p. 71). It is believed here that that pre-service teachers need a cohesive view of teaching and learning and a theory about learning to teach which gives direction to their practical activities. Reflection is perhaps the greatest benefit of the portfolio process for in-service teachers. Those dedicated to teacher reform identify successful teachers as those who continuously reflect critically about their teaching and adjust classroom practice accordingly (Moss, 1997). Researches have proved that novice teachers have found the portfolio process challenging, yet recognized it as a “significant reflective learning experience” (Lyons, 1998, p. 255). Therefore, portfolio is thought of a great use for pre service teacher too. A second benefit of portfolios is the opportunity for pre-service teachers to document growth or “author their own learning and professional development” (Lyons, 1998, p. 250). They may select artifacts that demonstrate their learning closely tied to actual teaching—such as lesson plans, assessment of student work, and evaluations by supervisors (McLaughlin & Vogt, 1996). The portfolio process helps them learn to identify, analyze and apply principles, content and dispositions that will be needed to accurately and convincingly document their competency as a teacher for independent practice. Furthermore, the portfolio may serve pre-service teachers in a variety of ways after completion of their pre-service experience (Ambach, 1996; McLaughlin & Vogt, 1996; Paulson, Paulson & Meyer, 1991; Vogt, 1994; Wolf & Dietz, 1998). One benefit is during the job search for a teaching position. Their portfolio may provide an edge by drawing attention to their candidacy during the job search (Jonson & Hodges, 1998; Winsor & Ellefson, 1995). An equally important benefit of pre-service teacher portfolios is that they help teachers understand the process so they can better implement this form of assessment in their own classrooms (Stroble, 1992).

The major aims of using porflio as an evaluation tool can be summarised as under.

- to encourage students to reflect on the competences a teacher strives to attain and on the underlying knowledge which feeds these competences;
- to help prepare students for their future profession in a variety of teaching contexts;
- to promote discussion between students and their teacher educators and mentors;
- to facilitate self-assessment of students’ competencies;
- to help students develop awareness of their strengths and weaknesses related to teaching;
- to provide an instrument which helps chart progress.
- to provide support during teaching practice and assist in discussions with mentors; this will help mentors to provide systematic feedback.

4.0 The Proposed Framework of the Portfolio

A pre-service teacher is responsible for his/her own growth. The teacher education fraternity has to offer direction and assistance through their courses for developing this accountability, but ultimately individual pre-service teachers must engage in self-assessment and evaluation to ensure professional growth. Nona Lyons (1998, p. 4), identifies the value of teacher portfolios from three perspectives. First, as a credential (a set of documents and evidence by which a pre service teacher demonstrates his/her teaching ability); secondly, as a set of assumptions about teaching and learning, (his/her vision of teaching shapes choice of portfolio entries) and thirdly, as making possible a powerful, personal reflective learning experience (the portfolio process offers the pre service teacher a compelling opportunity to reflect on his/her own learning and to articulate just who the pre service teacher is). Keeping the aforesaid dimensions in mind a framework of a portfolio has been proposed to assist the pre service teachers develop as competent professionals.

Dimension	Sub Aspects	Artifacts / evidences/ attestations/ reproductions
Pre-service teacher as a person	Who am I? (hobby/interests/ likes/ dislikes/ favourites)	Photographs, certificates,
	My Philosophy of Life	Statement of philosophy
	My C V (Academic qualifications/ Achievements)	Certificates, appreciation letters
Pre service teacher as a professional	Reflections on learning pedagogical theories	Filled in worksheets, details of extra reading
	Reflections on experiences in various phases of practice teaching	Photographs, self appraisal forms, supervisor's comments, feedback from peers, feedback from students,
	Reflections on the process of lesson planning	Group discussion reports, first version and the final version of activities , sample lesson plans,
	Reflections on the preparations of various submissions.	Sample submissions, self appraisal forms, feedback from supervisors, extra reading for the preparation of submissions
	Approaches (to teaching, instruction, student- teacher relationship, classroom management, assessment, use of technology, creating leaning environment, bridging theory and practice) learnt during practicals	Self appraisal forms, video of classroom performances

	Video analysis of five lesson performances (of the self and others)	Video of lesson performances, analysis sheets
	Reflections on experiments/ innovations carried out	Description of experiments/ innovations, photographs / video of such experiments/innovations, comments from peers, supervisor
	Any other	Evidences of participation in co curricular activities.
Pre service teacher as a life long learners	Statements of philosophy of teaching	Reflective diary
	Extra reading	List of must read books
	Inspirations	List of people who inspired.
	Future goals	Reflective diary

The dimension wise division of pre service teacher’s portfolio serves as vehicle for both self and collaborative evaluation; it guides and records the complex processes involved in dynamic assessment of professional development. It may be helpful for pre-service teachers to conceptualize this evaluation process in four steps. The first step is self-evaluation through reflection. Through this reflection, teachers begin to determine the competencies, knowledge, talents, and attributes they have that they believe should be represented in their professional portfolios. From this self-evaluation, teachers quickly move to thinking about how they can represent those competencies and characteristics. The second step is selection of representative artifacts; that is, the assembly of evidence of the characteristics or qualities the teacher wants to demonstrate. This selection requires careful decision-making. The selection process itself is a meaningful act of self-evaluation. The third step is the determination of the rationale for each entry. To a large extent, the selection and rationalization is a two-way process – in some instances pre service teachers decide upon traits they want to represent and then determine artifacts to represent them, and in other instances student teachers have artifacts to be included for which they carefully compose the rationales or belief statements. Either way, this recognition of growth and achievement naturally leads to the identification of areas of improvement and subsequent goal-setting. The fourth step is goal-setting. In this step, pre service teachers set goals to help give direction to their continuing professional development. This step is enhanced by collaboration with others who serve as advisors and mentors to the pre service teacher.

5.0 Assistent to be Provided for Developing Portfolio

Developing a portfolio is a wholistic activity but for purposes of explanation, let’s view it as having three dimensions: a process dimension, a product dimension, and a display dimension. This process is one of reflection, collection, selection, dialogue and further reflection. Deadlines for the various stages of portfolio development should be identified by the pre service teacher in consultation with the super viser at the beginning of the year.

The initial collection of materials, starting with the development of Personal Profile should be guided by the teacher by enabling the pre service teacher shape up one's initial goals and help them to reflect on their growth. Initially help should be rendered in setting up broad categories for potential resources or artifacts. The cycle of goal-setting, reflection, collection, selection and further reflection leads to the product portfolio which will highlight and demonstrate pre service teacher's knowledge and skills in teaching.

At the stage of portfolio development, the pre service teacher must be assisted to make choices about various entries and develop rationales to explain them (e.g., which of your several excellent instructional plans are you going to include in your portfolio and how does your choice contribute to the overall picture you wish to present of yourself?). Because a product portfolio can only be representative and not comprehensive, reflection is key to selection of entries. In the third and final stage of developing portfolio, assistance should be provided in streamlining the product portfolio to create showcase portfolio by choosing artifacts that best display their professional achievements, their advanced understandings about teaching and learning, and their career goals. It is this portfolio that has to be evaluated.

Writing reflections and analysis is the most difficult task on the part of the pre service teachers. When selecting entries pre service teachers should bear in mind that each piece is part of a much larger whole and that together, the artifacts and rationale make a powerful statement about individual professional development.

Asking the following guiding questions can bring quality to the reflective entries in the portfolio.

- What do I want my portfolio to show about me as a teacher? What are my attributes as a teacher?
- What do I want my portfolio to demonstrate about me as a learner? How and what have I learned?
- What directions for my future growth and development does my self-evaluation suggest? How can I show them in my portfolio?
- What points have been made by others about me as a teacher and learner? How can I show them in my portfolio?
- What effect does my teaching have upon my students? How can I show this in my portfolio?
- What overall impression do I want my portfolio to give a reviewer about me as a learner and as a teacher? When decision-making about what to include becomes a challenge, it may be helpful to look at each artifact and ask yourself, "What would including this item add that has not already been said or shown?"

6.0 Evaluation of the Portfolio

As portfolio serves as the best evaluation tool for the assessing the professional growth through the process of teacher preparation course, a rubric has been designed to evaluate the

knowledge, skill, competencies and dispositions developed by the pre service teacher.

category	Excellent (3)	Good (2)	Marginal (1)	Unacceptable (0)
Building of philosophy of teaching	Helps reader to understand the case; all important details included	Appropriate range but lacks details in some areas	Inadequate range and missing important details	Insufficient range and detail provided
Quality of reflection on practice	Identified the critical problem and component issues	Identified the essential problem but needs clarification	Identified the wrong problem or missed some key component issues	Did not include problem identification or issues
Efforts done to improve pedagogic performance	Clear list of what was done; match of efforts to problem	Mix of appropriate strategies but not prioritized	Some inappropriate responses to problem	Did not supply a response to problem or responses did not address problem
Personal learning	Prioritized list of learning that addressed all areas of the life	Appropriate list but too long or too broad	Some items addressed which are outside the practice or not backed by the facts of the case	No reflection on such issues is present
Quality of artifacts and evidences	Apropriate and qualitative selection of arfacts and evidences	Represtative selection of artifacts and evidences	Fragmented artiacts . mismatch between event and artifacts	No evidences produced.
Organisation of the portfolio	Concise, consistent writing ,Included all sections and formatted consistently	Some inconsistencies across document, Included all sections but some format inconsistencies	Needs significant editing, Used a different format but did not justify in cover letter	Inconsistent, rambling, unable to comprehend, Did not include required sections or use a format

Qualitative evaluation of the portfolio should further be used for the improvement of the teacher education programme and the interventions provided to enable the pre service teachers as reflective beings.

7.0 Conclusion

Portfolio in teacher education proves to be a good tool for assessing and promoting critical thinking and reflection in pre service teachers. It encourages them to become accountable and responsible for their own learning (i.e. self-directed, active, peer-supported, adult learning). The gradual development of pedagogic philosophy is constructed by the individual pre service teacher. It can be the focus of initiating a discussion between student and supervisor, facilitate reflection and self-assessment, and can accommodate diverse learning styles, though they are not suitable for all learning styles. Portfolio offers multiple methods of assessment. By taking into account the judgment of multiple assessors. It has high face validity, content validity, and promote creativity and problem solving, promote learning about learning (i.e., metacognition). The pre service teachers' reflections guarantee progression toward learning outcomes.

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