

**Abstract**

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**Title: The Implementation and Evaluation of a Digital Portfolio within a Pre  
Service Teacher Education Programme**

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## **Introduction**

This paper will consider the implementation and evaluation of an e-portfolio within the professional education (TEAP) papers of the Bachelor of Teaching Programme (BTeach) at Victoria University, Wellington (VUW). The portfolio, in its current state of implementation, has been in place for four years. This paper will consider the feedback / data obtained from student and staff evaluations and discussions (Lamont, 2006), and relevant points arising from the report from the external monitor of the programme (Mutch, 2006). Aspects of validity, reliability and manageability will be considered and a proposal will be presented for revised implementation.

## **Bachelor of Teaching Programme**

The Bachelor of Teaching degree forms part of the conjoint degree offered by Victoria University. The conceptual framework for the degree incorporates the BTeach graduate profile and the Professional Standards for Beginning Teachers (Ministry of Education N. Z., 1998). The degree is made up of curriculum studies (CUST) and professional studies (TEAP) papers delivered over a four year period. The student e-portfolio is developed and maintained throughout the programme and is a terms requirement of the TEAP papers.

## **Purpose and structure of the e-portfolio**

The current purpose stated for the portfolio is to assist students to evidence their progress towards integration of theory and practice; reflection and development of practice, and analysis of practice in relation to theory. The e-portfolio is in the form of a web (html) document with hyperlinks which link to student artefacts and other relevant sections of the document. Essentially the portfolio is a digital template with links from each trimester of the BTeach programme to the relevant learning outcomes for that trimester. The e-portfolio template provides a structured framework for students to analyse their practice and reflect on learning.

The student portfolio begins as a working portfolio to “assist in the *development* of knowledge, behaviours and dispositions considered essential for the teaching profession” (Watson, 2002, p. 2). By sharing the portfolio with the staff professional development mentor (PDM), the student is *formatively* assessed and supported in selecting and presenting suitable evidence of their professional growth. For the final paper, following the final teaching experience, elements of the portfolio are selected by the student to be incorporated in a PowerPoint presentation which is graded as a *summative* course assessment. This paper will focus on ways in which the formative assessment can be enhanced, although closer links with the summative assessment will be considered in due course.

### **Procedures for assessment of the portfolio**

Currently, there are no criteria for the formative assessment of the portfolio. Each trimester, students are required to complete a portfolio entry which consists of reviewing goals for the previous trimester; setting a new goal; adding and annotating an artefact, and writing up reflections on their learning. Guidelines, based on a reflection model by Smyth (1992), are provided in the template for the structure of students’ entries. Guidelines are also provided for PDMs. The development of the portfolio and regular consultation with PDMs are terms requirements for students. The students receive formative feedback from their PDMs. They are not graded on their portfolio entries; however, if the terms requirements are not fulfilled, the students do not pass the associated TEAP paper.

### **Critique of procedures**

#### Assessment criteria

In its current form, there are no assessment criteria for the portfolio. The learning outcomes and structure for reflection serve more to give the portfolio definition and boundaries. Although the structure of the e-portfolio provides the necessary framework for students to fulfill the

requirements, the process falls short of assessing whether or not students are learning and achieving the objectives of the portfolio implementation. In order to put procedures in place which address these issues of content validity and sensitivity (Hall & Jones, 2004), it is necessary; first to determine what aspects of learning we wish to take place and then determine a process to assess that learning.

#### Student evaluations

Although some students found the e-portfolio process very valuable, others perceived it as tokenistic. Most students did value the discussions with their PDM. Possibly due to the lack of references to the portfolio in other papers, many students perceived the portfolio as low priority. Although the structure of the portfolio reflects the BTeach conceptual framework and graduate profile, the links and purpose are perhaps not made explicit enough for the students.

#### Manageability and reliability

The portfolio process, to an extent, has sacrificed reliability in favour of manageability.

Although there are regular faculty review meetings about the structure and process of the e-portfolio, and briefings for PDMs to introduce their role and the portfolio structure and process, to date there is no process for moderating portfolio entries and the actual quality and depth of the student learning and reflection. When samples of portfolio entries were reviewed, the quality of student work in terms of depth of reflection and analysis varied immensely.

The process is designed for maximum manageability. Timeframes have been carefully managed to allow all students the opportunity to meet with their PDM within the assigned timeframe. The students also report variation in the quality of mentoring and level of priority given to PDM meetings by PDMs. In her recommendations, the external monitor of the BTeach programme also highlighted issues to be addressed in terms of PDM support. “Reliability as *dependability*” (Hall, 2006, p. 6) of the current portfolio assessment process, therefore, would seem to be

compromised due to variations in staff attitudes and performance; inequity of support, advice and guidance for students, and lack of moderation processes.

### **Enhancements**

By raising the profile and awareness of the portfolio for students and staff; reinforcing CUST and TEAP links, and clarifying and reinforcing portfolio assessment requirements in these workshops, the portfolio process will be a more meaningful and integral learning experience for the students. The incorporation of self and peer assessment will promote self monitoring and support the notion of sustainable assessment which “encompasses the abilities required to undertake those activities that necessarily accompany learning throughout life in formal and informal settings... [and meets] the specific and immediate needs of a course as well as establishing a basis for students to undertake their own assessment activities in the future” (Boud, 2000, p. 151). In addition to existing portfolio requirements, reflective journal summaries will be used to inform and scaffold all workshop portfolio sessions. The summary sheets will be designed to help students reflect on their learning through collaboration with peers and mentors. The reflective summaries will be discussed with the students and formatively assessed by PDMs each trimester.

PDMs will have increased involvement with students where possible within TEAP portfolio workshops. PDMs will be drawn from a much reduced group of staff; will undertake professional development, and implement a portfolio moderation process. These developments will address issues of reliability and dependability as well as issues of inequity with PDMs, as highlighted by Mutch (2006, p. 3)

### **Conclusion**

There is a proliferation of literature on the use of e-portfolios in pre-service teacher education which focus on the types of applications used, and their use within the context of ‘assessment

and showcase / presentation' tools. There is much less on the use and effectiveness of the 'learning e-portfolio' to support metacognition, represent new knowledge and scaffold individual and collaborative reflection on practice. By implementing the recommendations arising from the evaluation reports, the e-portfolio in the BTeach programme has the potential to play a significant part in the lifelong learning and assessment of student teachers within the teacher education programme and throughout their careers.

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