

Chapter 17

ePortfolio Integration in Teacher Education Programs: Does Context Matter from a Student Perspective?

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ABSTRACT

Though ePortfolios have grown in acceptance by teacher education programs across the United States, there still remain many questions regarding whether the tools are meeting student and teacher education program needs. This chapter will address this concern by first describing ePortfolios within teacher education. Next, the chapter will present a stakeholder interaction model and identify the individuals involved in an ePortfolio system. Then, a series of integration questions will be highlighted from a teacher education perspective. Two teacher education programs' ePortfolio initiatives are evaluated using the Electronic Portfolio Student Perspective Instrument (EPSPI) (Ritzhaupt, Singh, Seyferth, & Dedrick, 2008) in relation to several integration characteristics. Finally, recommendations to teacher education programs are made.

INTRODUCTION

ePortfolios have moved to the forefront of teacher preparation programs across the United States. Wheeler (2003) defines an ePortfolio as “a collection of purposefully-organized artifacts that

support backward and forward reflection to augment and assess growth over time” (Wheeler, 2003, p. 2). There are several possible explanations for the widespread adoption. One explanation is the widespread acceptance of constructivism whereby preservice teachers learn to use tools for learning and are guided by self-discovery (Meeus,

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Questier, & Derks, 2006; Strudler & Wetzel, 2005a). A second explanation is the ease of accessibility and use of information and communication technology (Meeus, Questier, & Derks, 2006). And yet a third explanation is the organizational uses of ePortfolios which emphasize documenting preservice teachers ability to meet curricular standards for assessment and accountability (e.g., accreditation) (Ritzhaupt et. al., 2008; Ritzhaupt, Ndoye & Parker, 2010).

EPORTFOLIOS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

How do we describe an ePortfolio in a teacher education program? This question is one that cannot be completely answered at this time as ePortfolios are still in their early years of integration into teacher education programs (Strudler & Wetzel, 2005). What we do know, however, is that ePortfolios have key purposes for pre-service teachers, the primary stakeholders, and other stakeholders. ePortfolios can serve as learning systems for personal and professional development, employment portfolios, and as tools for their organizational uses (Hartnell-Young & Morriss, 1999; Ritzhaupt et. al., 2008). While the structure and nature of ePortfolios vary depending on its purpose, the different expectations of stakeholders (e.g., field-experience coordinators, department chairs, students, hiring officials and other school administrators) pose an indefinite challenge. The reality of ePortfolios fulfilling multiple functions is questionable because there are times when one function may conflict with another.

From a pre-service and in-service teacher perspective, ePortfolios serve in three ways - known as the three “R’s” (Acker, 2005; Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005): representation, reflection and revision. Representation, the first “R”, refers to the use of ePortfolios as a means of documenting student products and skills acquired over time. The second “R”, reflection, emphasizes how self-critique and

feedback from other stakeholders can enrich the learning experience. And finally, revision, which is the third “R”, is when the pre-service /or in-service teacher takes the step to improve his/her products or skills using the feedback or critiques received from other stakeholders. In this manner, ePortfolios serve as a learning system.

ePortfolios can also serve as an employment portfolio. In a survey conducted by Temple, Allan, and Temple (2003), results indicated that students and career professionals both agreed that the ePortfolio was an effective way to address key selection criteria questions. Additionally, employers responding to the survey revealed experiencing a missing link between candidates’ statements of what they can do and their abilities to actually do it, and that the ePortfolio can fill that void by showing evidences of teacher candidates’ competencies through artifacts, video and other digital means. Thus, ePortfolios also provide an employment capacity, if properly designed to reach the hiring officials (e.g., principals).

Finally, ePortfolios also serve organizational uses, which can be plentiful. Literature illustrates a number of organizational purposes, including meeting requirements from accrediting boards (Siemens, 2005; Strudler & Wetzel, 2005); meeting states’ approved technology standards (Curts, Yanes, & McWright, 2003); formative and summative evaluation of a teacher education program (Barrett & Knezek, 2003); and aiding in the tenure, promotion and review process (Ritzhaupt & Singh, 2006). The organizational uses refer to things that directly benefit the teacher education program as oppose to the primary user - the pre-service teacher.

STAKEHOLDER INTERACTION MODEL

Since ePortfolios are both instructional and informational tools that can be used for a variety of purposes, their audience is diverse. University

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