

IN-SERVICE TEACHER PORTFOLIOS: PARTICIPANT VIEWS ON ASSESSMENT

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Introduction

The assessment of portfolios consisting of samples of work produced by learners over a period of time is called portfolio assessment. Portfolio assessment has gained greatly in popularity in recent years (Tillema and Smith, 2007: 442). Portfolios are widely used nowadays in schools, colleges, universities and teacher education contexts in many different countries. This is because portfolio assessment seems to have several advantages over a single test (Herman et al., 1993: 202; Weigle, 2007: 199).

This research is carried out in the context of an in-service teacher education programme. The teacher trainees who attend the in-service programme assemble portfolios during the training course. The main reason for undertaking portfolio assessment is to develop teacher trainees' abilities to write for different purposes in a variety of genres. The portfolio consists of all the writing tasks undertaken over a period of two months, self-assessment reports and pieces of reflective writing.

The study seeks to answer the following main research question:

- ◆ What are the teacher trainees' views on how portfolios should be assessed?

The article is organised as follows. In the next section, the literature on the scoring of portfolios as it pertains to the issue of criteria and scales used is reviewed. In the third section, the local context of the study is explained. In the fourth section, the study pertaining to the views of teacher trainees about assessing portfolios is presented. The main findings and limitations of the study are also addressed.

Literature Review

This section considers how portfolios are used and assessed in different second language study contexts. I will attempt to give an overview of portfolios and their assessment together with an account of different criteria used as documented in the literature.

Portfolios and ESL contexts

Portfolios are used in different contexts for different reasons. There are different types of portfolios, depending on the purpose, the focus and the type of evidence required (Tillema and Smith, 2007: 445). However, a portfolio may be broadly defined as "a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits to the student (and/or others) the student's efforts, progress, or achievement in (a) given area(s)" (Northwest Evaluation Association, 1991: 4 cited in Weigle, 2002: 198).

Much of the literature on portfolios addresses their use in writing classrooms (Mullin, 1998: 79). Reckase (1995: 13) indicates that more work has been done to apply portfolio assessment methodology to the area of writing than to any other content area. This is because portfolio-based assessment of writing reflects the complexities of the writing process itself (Elbow and Belanoff, 1986 cited in Sommers, 2003: 378). Herman et al. (1993: 202) support this view indicating that portfolios "have the potential to provide a more equitable and a more sensitive portrait of students' strengths and weaknesses". Ruetten's (1994 cited in Song and August, 2002: 63) study and research show that ESL students found the holistically scored timed impromptu essay particularly difficult. The study showed that ESL students assessed on the basis of portfolios achieved better results than those assessed by non-portfolio measures. Studies undertaken by Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) and Song and August (2002) confirm this and demonstrate that portfolio-based assessment of writing is a more appropriate assessment type for the ESL population.

Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) present a convincing argument in favour of introducing portfolios in ESL contexts. According to them, the portfolio provides an accurate description of the writer's abilities and it does so "far more extensively than could a sample of the same writer's performance on a one-shot essay test" (2000: 4). Weigle (2007: 199) demonstrates that portfolio assessment is a potentially more valid way of assessing many aspects of writing than a single test. Hence, portfolio-based assessment of

writing seems more appropriate in an ESL context than a single test.

Portfolios and teacher education contexts

Several research studies have found portfolio a useful learning and professional development tool (Wade and Yarbrough 1996; Shulman 1998; Smith and Tillema 2003). The portfolio has been viewed as a tool for promoting reflective practice (Borko et al. 1997, cited in Darling 2001: 108) and as a vehicle for teacher learning and growth (Athanases 1994, cited in Darling 2001: 108). Teachers' portfolios, in particular, are found to be useful for documenting professional competence, certification and advanced teaching certificates (Tillema and Smith 2007: 443). Darling (2001: 117) argues that portfolios may play a major role in the evaluation of students' performance in teacher education programmes. Van der Schaaf et al. (2005:28) confirm this, reporting that in many countries there is a growing interest in the assessment of teachers' competences by using instruments such as portfolios.

However, the studies on portfolio that have been undertaken so far in teacher education contexts primarily examine teachers' teaching competencies (e.g. Darling 2001; Van der Schaaf et al. 2005). There are few examples of portfolios being used to assess teachers' own language competence, especially in the area of writing. Van der Schaaf et al.'s (2005) study, for example, looked at teachers' abilities to design tasks that were needed to develop students' research skills. Accordingly, the portfolio included a series of research assignments given to students, the assessment of students' work by the teacher, student evaluations of the teacher, and teachers' reflections on their strengths and weaknesses and on how to improve their teaching.

Furthermore, in a study conducted by Tillema and Smith (2007) in a pre-service teaching education context, the portfolio consisted of teaching observations, accounts of lessons, personal reflections and lesson materials prepared by student teachers. However, they found that the grade the student received was highly subjective, as there were no open, nor specified criteria to assess the portfolios. Additionally, the students and assessors differed in their perception of what was required of a portfolio primarily because of the lack of explicit and shared assessment criteria. Tillema and Smith (2007: 453) argue that it is possible to overcome these problems by having open and shared criteria to assess portfolios.

Criteria for assessing the portfolio

The process of designing rubrics/criteria for assessing portfolios is important in order to develop a shared understanding among teachers and assessors. Underwood and Murphy (1998: 203) argue that a shared understanding of the criteria among teachers and assessors is essential, especially to achieving inter-rater reliability in portfolio assessment.

Several researchers argue that students should be involved in the process of developing the criteria and standards by which portfolios are judged. Wade and Yarbrough (1996: 65) indicate that students might "give input as to what parts of the portfolio are evaluated and which criteria are used for judging merit." According to Lynch and Shaw (2005: 265), one of the essential features of portfolios is that "[t]he students participate in deciding the criteria for evaluating the portfolios". They (ibid) conducted a longitudinal study in an MA TESOL programme where criteria had been developed for assessing portfolios from a process of student - faculty consultation. Here, it was decided that both the process and product of assessment tasks should be evaluated. Arguing along the same line, Darling (2001: 118) states that negotiating evaluative criteria helps students "become clearer about the broader purposes for constructing portfolios and the goods associated with them..."

Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000: 5) draw our attention to two particular factors that may have a considerable influence on the components of the portfolio and the process of assessing it. These are the present needs of the writers producing portfolios and the concerns of teachers teaching the students and evaluating the portfolios. Hence, they argue that it is essential to involve all the stakeholders, especially the writer and the teacher, in the evaluation process. The portfolio system has this potential. Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000: 6) point out that the strength of portfolio-based writing assessment, vis-à-vis the traditional psychometric test, is that the portfolio has the potential for open, shared assessment. Above all, as Paulson et al. (1991: 63) argue, a portfolio becomes a portfolio "when the student is a participant in, rather than the object of, assessment".

However, in many contexts, the criteria for assessing portfolios appear to have been designed by programme staff and evaluators. For example, in a study conducted by Song and August (2002), the evaluation criteria for portfolios were determined by the department based on discussions with instructors and a survey of

literature. Hence, for them, presenting portfolio work – labelling the drafts, stapling the final draft on top of the others, typing or writing neatly, including the writer’s name, date, professor’s name, etc. – becomes a key criterion. Adopting a top-down approach to portfolio assessment, as indicated by several researchers, goes against the basic tenants of portfolio theory.

The criteria used for assessing portfolios, as stated earlier, vary considerably. LeMahieu et al. (1995 cited in Johnson et al., 2000: 69), for example, used the following evaluative dimensions for assessing the writing portfolios in the Pittsburgh public school district:

- i. accomplishment in writing
- ii. use of processes and strategies for writing
- iii. growth, development and engagement as a writer

On the other hand, the dimensions used by Willard-Traub et al. (1999: 60) at the University of Michigan included:

- i. attributes related to the reflective piece
- ii. attributes related to the range of tasks represented in the portfolio
- iii. attributes related to the writer’s engagement with the subject matter
- iv. attributes related to control of grammar, mechanics, and style

In this set of criteria, the first two categories were specific to portfolio assessment whereas the latter were important in assessing single samples of writing. These attributes were evaluated from “consistently absent or low” to “consistently present or high”.

Song and August (2002: 69) used a holistic scale for assessing the portfolios of ESL students. The evaluation criteria included finding and organising ideas, using the writing process, editing and presenting work. Some of the specific items included in the criteria were as follows:

- i. writing in depth
- ii. establishing a focus
- iii. writing clearly
- iv. using drafting process effectively
- v. basic mechanical competence (correct verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, correct punctuation, etc.)

It is worth noting that the presentation of portfolio work was one criterion for portfolio evaluation.

The different criteria discussed, thus far, may be used in two ways: (i) to assess the portfolio as a

whole, putting all the pieces together to provide a single report of the results (Black et al. 1992, cited in Reckase 1995) or (ii) to look at the individual pieces, score them separately and sometimes in a number of ways, and then either combine the scores into a single total score (Nystrand et al. 1993, cited in Reckase 1995) or report a profile (Koretz, et al. 1992 cited in Reckase 1995). Birenbaum (1996 cited in Lynch and Shaw 2005: 265) suggests that a set of criteria with descriptors and clearly distinguished levels is useful in reporting the assessment results. According to him, it is important to report the assessment results as a qualitative profile rather than a single score or other quantification.

In sum, portfolios vary from context to context, as do their assessment. Portfolios are frequently used to develop as well as to assess writing skills in ESL contexts. While designing rating scales for portfolios, it may be desirable and useful to involve various stakeholders so that full justice is done to portfolios.

In the following section, I shall give an overview of the background in which this study is undertaken.

Background to the study

As discussed in the previous section, portfolios differ in purpose, content and focus. They also differ in terms of who is expected to assess them (teacher, outside examiner, peer or self) and also in the form that the judgment takes (grades, holistic or analytic scores or narrative commentary). It is important, therefore, to understand the type of portfolio used in a context, the procedures followed, and the tasks included before examining the assessment procedures.

The context for the study was an in-service teacher training programme. The teacher trainees involved in the study belonged to one cohort (67 in number) and they assembled portfolios in their writing classes during a two-month primary-level in-service teacher development programme at the Regional Institute of English South India, Bangalore. These teacher trainees were deputed by the Department of Education to undergo the in-service training in English language teaching.

The teacher trainees teach English to grade V (age, 10 years), grade VI and grade VII children in government primary schools. Writing and teaching writing in a second language are the most challenging areas for these teacher trainees. Also, one of the major expectations of the teacher trainees from the training programme is improving their own writing skills. Hence, they were

introduced to the idea of writing portfolios in the training programme.

In implementing portfolios, a process-oriented approach to teaching writing was followed. The writing classes in the training programme were based on the portfolio theory and the pedagogical practice related to this theory. Each week, one writing task was administered to the teacher trainees. The task was completed using the process-oriented approach which involved various stages such as free writing, prompted discussion, brainstorming, peer assessment, revising and editing. Teacher trainees produced the final piece using the process strategies. The process data such as initial drafts, comments from peers and feedback from trainers were kept in individual portfolios along with the final products. Teacher trainees carried out self-assessment regularly using the self-assessment checklists provided to them. After the completion of all the tasks, teacher trainees recorded reflections on the processes of writing they followed and on their own development in writing over a period of time.

Goals and contents of portfolios

The purposes of the portfolio in the in-service teacher training programme were as follows:

1. To develop the writing abilities of the teacher trainees
2. To train teacher trainees in the pedagogical aspects of portfolio assessment
3. To use portfolios for assessment and certification purposes

Hence, the portfolio was used as a teacher development tool, as well as a teacher assessment tool

The portfolio consisted of four core elements: (1) writing tasks with multiple drafts of each task; (2) comments from peers; (3) feedback from trainers; and (4) self-assessment and reflection. The portfolio covered a wide range of tasks. The curriculum was built around these tasks. Some tasks had an element of choice within them, whereas others were common to the whole class.

The portfolio included texts in a variety of forms or genres, written for a variety of audiences and for a variety of different purposes as illustrated below:

- A diary entry/ a curriculum vitae;
- Writing a message;
- A brief biography;
- A report on an event;
- A review of a book/movie;

- An essay on a given topic: descriptive/argumentative/narrative;
- Designing activities to teach vocabulary/grammatical structures.
- A letter to the editor of a newspaper.

The texts chosen for the portfolio were based on the needs of the teacher trainees. However, individual teacher trainees did not have much choice and autonomy in deciding on the type of text to be included in the portfolio.

The variety and the range of texts included in the portfolio would make it difficult to identify consistent features of writing at different levels. This is pointed out by Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000: 54) as well as Weir (2005: 165). They indicate that if portfolios vary widely in what they contained, as well as in the quality of the work, this adds a degree of difficulty to readers. Moreover, where a selection of topics is provided, it is difficult to compare performances. Hence, it was decided to have two sections in each portfolio: an optional and a compulsory section. The tasks and the specifications in the optional section were as follows:

Task 1

- The following is an extract from the diary of a young girl called Anne Frank. Read it carefully and note how she shares her experiences and feelings in her diary. Now recall one of the days you spent in the training centre, write down all the special things that happened on that day. Make a diary entry for the day.
- Imagine that you are applying for the post of an assistant teacher in a secondary school. Write curriculum vitae giving details of education, experience, achievements, etc.

Task 2

- Read one of the following books and write a review of the book for the wall magazine OR Write a review for an English newspaper of one of the movies you have watched recently.

Task 3

- Write an essay to an educated reader on one of the topics given below (Use 450-500 words):
- “Television does more harm than good”
- “Journey by train is a pleasant experience”

- “One of the best places I have ever visited”

Task 4

- Design an activity each to give practice in vocabulary and a grammatical structure. Mention the level and time required. Describe the classroom procedure clearly. If possible, suggest variations.

On the other hand, the tasks included in the compulsory section were as follows:

Task 1

- Write a brief biography of your favourite person by giving details of his/her life, works and achievements.

Task 2

- Write a detailed report to the coordinator of the primary teacher development programme on the inauguration of your course and the icebreaking activities held as part of it. Mention how the activities were conducted, the implicit intentions, whether things could have been done in a different or better way. Also, write about your overall impressions of the morning. Write in not more than 150 words.

Task 3

- Someone phones your friend who has gone out to buy something. You happen to pick up the phone and this is what you hear on the phone.

...oh he isn't there...I wonder if you could take a message and leave it for him...thanks...tell him that Shilpa called...I was going to meet him at the library around 1.00, but I can't make it now - perhaps he could ring me back to arrange some other time...got that? ...Thank you. Bye.

Now write a clear message for your friend.

Task 4

- Read the newspaper report given below and write a letter to the editor of the newspaper expressing your reactions to the event.

For the final assessment, the four compulsory tasks and the reflective responses were taken into account. The selection of four tasks made it easier to compare the portfolios as there was a greater resemblance from one teacher trainee to the next. Also, it would be easier for readers/assessors to agree regarding scores and grades.

Procedure

The following process was followed in implementing the portfolio:

The teacher trainees were introduced to the concept of portfolio. The principles of portfolio design and the characteristics of portfolios were explained in the first week of the training programme. As the assessment criteria for portfolios were not developed at the time of the implementation of portfolio system, teacher trainees were not informed about the criteria. As writing was taught only for four hours in a week, it was decided, in consultation with the teacher trainees, that one task was added to the portfolio every week. Two faculty members/trainers were involved in examining the portfolios after the completion of each task. The faculty members gave critical feedback in writing on the draft texts produced by the teacher trainees. The following were some examples of the feedback given:

Task 2

“You’ve included your own personal experiences. That’s good really. Could you add more content? You’ve missed out one or two important details. While writing, you need to concentrate on spellings.”

Task 3

“I’m glad that you’ve followed the format of a message. However, you don’t need to write full sentences in a message. Use abbreviations and short forms.”

Portfolio conferences were held on alternative weeks to discuss the processes the teacher trainees followed in completing the tasks and to find out the strengths and weaknesses of their writing. The whole class was divided into two groups for this purpose. One faculty member was responsible for each group. Each teacher trainee was given 15-20 minutes to share his/her experiences of doing various tasks. The portfolio was submitted for assessment at the end of the course.

The portfolio not only included final versions of the texts but all the drafts as well. All the work, except the self-reflection recordings, was taken directly from classroom activities. The portfolio thus reflected the teacher trainee’s work over a period of two months.

Each portfolio was assessed for 20 marks based on the indicators shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Indicators for assessing portfolios

Indicators	Marks
Learner effort: planning, revising and editing	06 marks
Overall development: content, style, structure, vocabulary and spelling	05 marks
Reflections recorded: strategies adopted, resources utilized, feedback received	04 marks
Presentation and organization	03 marks
Punctuality	02 marks

The indicators for assessing the portfolios were decided by the faculty members. The marks scored on 20 were considered for internal assessment. The writing module carried 100 marks and so there was a separate written test for 80 marks at the end of the course. The marks scored on the portfolio were added to the marks obtained in the written test. The final score on writing module was reflected in the certificate.

There is, now, a move to give more weight to portfolios and to use only portfolio score for the final assessment. In order to use portfolios for high-stakes purposes, it is essential to develop a set of assessment criteria. In the case of portfolios, the assessment criteria may be established by involving various stakeholders such as teacher trainees who have assembled the portfolios, the trainers who were part of the portfolio design, and the raters who have expertise in assessment.

In this study, I attempted to involve teacher trainees in establishing a set of criteria for assessing portfolios. The following section presents and describes the methodology adopted and the instrument used for this purpose.

Teacher Trainees' Views On Assessing Portfolios

Methods and techniques

There are many tools available for gathering information while doing primary research (Brown 2001: 2). Questionnaires and interviews are two such tools that are useful for gathering survey information. I decided to use questionnaires to gather teacher trainees' views on how portfolios should be assessed. This is because questionnaires tend to be more reliable and they encourage greater honesty as they are anonymous (Cohen et al. 2007: 351).

The questionnaire I used had different parts which functioned in different ways. There were

questions that elicited background data from the teacher trainees such as the years of teaching experience, the knowledge of portfolios, etc. The other parts in the questionnaire elicited teacher trainees' views on how portfolios should be assessed (see Appendix 1 for details). There were three sections: Section A, Section B and Section C. The questions in Section A and Section B required Likert scale answers and the questions in Section C required rank-ordering of items. I used Likert scale questions as they are effective for gathering respondents' views, opinions, and attitudes about various language-related issues (Brown 2001: 41). Cohen et al. (2007: 325) indicate that Likert scales are very useful for the researcher as they build in a degree of sensitivity and differentiation of response while still generating numbers. Section A in the questionnaire sought to gather the views of the teacher trainees about the overall approach to assessing portfolios while questions in Section B sought their views on the dimensions/criteria they considered important in assessing portfolios.

In Section C, teacher trainees were asked to rank the dimensions in terms of how important they thought each of the dimensions was. The dimensions included in the questionnaire – the dimensions of writing (B1 to B6) and the dimensions of portfolio (B7 to B10) - were largely drawn from an extensive review of the literature as discussed in section 2.

Altogether, 67 teacher trainees attended the training programme and assembled the portfolios. However, for the study I selected a smaller group of 30 teacher trainees as using a sample helps in collecting data practically, efficiently, and effectively (Brown 2001: 72). I used the strategy of random sampling for selecting samples from the entire population of teachers. However, not all the 30 teachers responded to the questionnaire. This is one of the disadvantages of using a questionnaire; the return rate is too low (Cohen et al. 2007: 351). I gained responses from 19 teachers, of which 4 (21.1%) teachers had teaching experiences ranging from 1-5 years, 5 (26.3%) had teaching experiences of 5-10 years, 3 (15.8%) had 10-15 years of teaching experiences and 7 (36.8%) of them had more than 10 years' experience in teaching. This subgroup/sample is representative of the larger population.

Table 2 Overall approach to assessing portfolios

Item ¹	N	Mean	Frequency and percent Strongly agree	Frequency and percent Agree	Frequency and percent Not Sure	Frequency and percent Disagree	Frequency and percent Strongly disagree
A1	19	2.68	4 (21.1)	4 (21.1)	6 (31.6)	4 (21.1)	1 (5.3)
A2	19	3.16	2 (10.5)	5 (26.3)	3 (15.8)	6 (31.6)	3 (15.8)
A3	19	1.37	15 (78.9)	2 (10.5)	1 (5.3)	1 (5.3)	-
A4	19	3.63	1 (5.3)	3 (15.8)	-	13 (68.4)	2 (10.5)
A5	19	1.42	11 (57.9)	8 (42.1)	-	-	-
A6	19	1.53	12 (63.2)	6 (31.6)			1 (5.3)
A7	19	4.11	-	1 (5.3)	2 (10.5)	10 (52.6)	6 (31.6)

Table 3 Dimensions for Assessing Portfolios

Item ²	N	Mean	Frequency and percent Strongly agree	Frequency and percent Agree	Frequency and percent Not sure	Frequency and percent Disagree	Frequency and percent Strongly disagree
B1	19	1.37	13 (68.4)	5 (26.3)	1 (5.3)	-	-
B2	19	2.11	4 (21.1)	10 (52.6)	4 (21.1)	1 (5.3)	-
B3	19	2.21	2 (10.5)	12 (63.2)	4 (21.1)	1 (5.3)	-
B4	19	1.26	14 (73.7)	5 (26.3)	-	-	-
B5	19	1.47	10 (52.6)	9 (47.4)	-	-	-
B6	19	1.95	4 (21.1)	12 (63.2)	3 (15.8)	-	-
B7	19	1.79	8 (42.1)	8 (42.1)	2 (10.5)	1 (5.3)	-
B8	19	1.47	12 (63.2)	6 (31.6)	1 (5.3)	-	-
B9	19	1.21	15 (78.9)	4 (21.1)	-	-	-
B10	19	2.11	5 (26.3)	9 (47.4)	3 (15.8)	2 (10.5)	-

Results

I will first present the teacher trainees' responses to the questions in Section A of the questionnaire. Since Section A consisted of a Likert scale, I used data coding procedure and analysed the resulting data statistically by examining frequencies and percentages. Brown (2001: 125) suggests that frequency and percentage analysis could be applied to the answers that participants give to the Likert scale questions. Following this, I calculated the frequencies and percentages for all the 7 items in section A, as shown in Table 2.

The majority of teachers, 89.4% (17 of 19) strongly agreed or agreed that A3 (the development of the topic from first draft to final draft) should be considered while assessing portfolios. A fairly large number, 84.2% (16 of 19), strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that only the best pieces of work should be looked

at (A7). However, they were divided in their opinions about the overall approach to assessing portfolios; they were not sure whether the individual pieces in the portfolio should be rated, and then individual scores should be added up (A1) or whether the rater should make a single judgment of the portfolio as a whole (A2).

Let us now look at Section B in the questionnaire. The teachers' responses to the dimensions included in Section B are shown in Table 3, which indicates that the majority of the teachers strongly agreed or agreed with all the statements. None of them expressed strong disagreement with any of the statements. All the dimensions seemed to be important for them in assessing portfolios: the dimensions of writing ability, as well as those related to the features of the portfolio.

Finally, in Section C, teachers were asked to rank order the dimensions according to the degree of importance they attach to each dimension. Each of the teachers ranked the dimensions in different orders. Some of them, however, did not rank all the dimensions. For example, Teacher 6 did not rank B8, B9 and B10 and Teacher 19 did not rank any of the dimensions.

An analysis of Spearman Correlation shows a negative correlation between the items indicating that each teacher ranked the dimensions in a different order. Additionally, a calculation of frequencies and percentages sheds some interesting light on the emerging patterns. 50% of the teachers gave the highest priority to dimension 1 (Adequacy and relevance of content) and the same percentage of teachers gave the lowest priority to dimension 10 (Presentation of portfolio work). The statistics clearly suggest that some dimensions were ranked as highly important by the teacher trainees, some were ranked as being of medium importance and one dimension, in particular, was ranked as of very little importance. Dimensions such as “adequacy and relevance of content”, “reflective thinking”, “organization of ideas” and “growth, development and engagement as a writer” were ranked as highly important by the teacher trainees. Other dimensions such as “accuracy and appropriacy of syntax and lexis”, “ability to write for different audiences and purposes”, and “ability to use processes and appropriate strategies for different pieces” were ranked as being of medium importance. The next section sheds further light on these aspects.

Discussion and Conclusion

Teachers seemed to suggest that the following dimensions were important in assessing portfolios:

- Adequacy and relevance of content;
- Growth, development and engagement as a writer;
- Reflective thinking;
- Control of grammar and mechanics/
Accuracy and appropriacy of syntax and lexis;
- Coherence and cohesion/ Organisation of ideas.

Of the five dimensions listed above, some are related to features of writing and some to the features of portfolio. However, the presentation of the portfolio itself did not appear as an important dimension for most of the teachers. This is a useful data because in some contexts where studies on portfolios have been carried out,

presentation of portfolio work - labelling the drafts, stapling the final draft on top of the others, etc.– has been of greater importance in evaluating portfolios.

Teachers also seemed to suggest that rather than focusing on the final drafts, we should take the processes and strategies used to arrive at the final products into account when assessing portfolios. This goes against the idea of grading only papers designated as final drafts in summative assessment. Teachers’ views do not support the argument of several researchers such as Ford and Larkin (1978 cited in Sommers, 2003: 380), Burnham (1986 cited in Sommers, 2003: 380), and Elbow and Belanoff (1986 cited in Sommers, 2003: 380) for whom a portfolio is “a sampling of finished products selected by the student for evaluation.” Furthermore, the idea of having two portfolios, one containing a sample of ‘best work’ for summative assessment purposes, and another containing broad and various samples of work for formative purposes, as is done in some contexts, does not appear to be attractive to teachers. However, this needs further investigation, as the sample is too small to generalise the findings.

The advantages of adopting a procedure such as this, where teachers are involved in the assessment process, are many. The data gathered will help the faculty members to develop indigenous criteria for assessing teacher trainees’ portfolios. The study will also help in carrying out further studies involving expert raters in the assessment of authentic portfolios. In addition, the involvement of teacher trainees in the study will enable them to gain knowledge and expertise in the development of assessment criteria. It will also help them to develop criteria when they assess their students’ portfolios.

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Appendix:**QUESTIONNAIRE**

This questionnaire is about assessing the writing portfolios of in-service teacher trainees. The trainees, who attend two-month primary-level in-service teacher development programmes at the Regional Institute of English South India, Bangalore, assemble portfolios in their writing classes. This research study attempts to examine the trainees' views on assessing such writing portfolios. Hence, your views on the criteria to be applied for portfolio assessment are important for this study. Please provide the information as required.

Name (optional):

Years of teaching experience: Nil/1-5/ 5-10/10-15/more than 15 years

How do you rate your knowledge of portfolios? adequate/limited/inadequate

Have you assessed teacher portfolios before participating in this project? Yes/No

A. If I were to assess a portfolio, I would (underline one of the following):

- | | |
|-----|---|
| A1. | look at individual pieces, rate them and add up the individual scores |
| | Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree |
| A2. | make a single judgment of the portfolio as a whole |
| | Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree |
| A3. | consider the development of topic from first draft to final draft |
| | Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree |
| A4. | mainly focus on the final drafts |
| | Strongly disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly agree |
| A5. | take into account the processes and strategies used for writing |
| | Strongly disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly agree |
| A6. | look at drafts as well as completed products |
| | Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree |
| A7. | look at only the best pieces of work |
| | Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree |

A8. Any other (please specify)

B. If I had to assess a portfolio, I would use the following dimensions for assessment:

B1.

Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree

B2.

Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree

B3.

Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree

B4.

Strongly disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly agree

B5.

Strongly disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly agree

B6.

Strongly disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly agree

B7.

Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree

B8.

Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree

B9.

Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree

B10.

Strongly agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree

B11. Any other (please specify)

C. Which of the above dimensions are most important in assessing a portfolio? Rank them in order of importance and distribute 50 points among these dimensions.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Thank you for your time.