Chapter XXIX
The ePortfolio: A Learning Tool for Pre-Service Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The study reported here explored the use of an ePortfolio in teacher education, focusing on its possibilities for development of competencies in technology. The goal was to assess this competency development over a three-month period and to examine pre-service teachers’ perception of the ePortfolio as a learning tool. Results show that pre-service teachers’ competencies with technology increase while working on the ePortfolio and that they respond favorably to the ePortfolio as a learning tool. Pre-service teachers feel that the ePortfolio fosters reflection and the development of organizational skills and self-esteem while giving them better chances of finding employment. Solutions and recommendations about improving the use of an ePortfolio as a learning tool in a teacher education program are proposed.

INTRODUCTION

The province of Quebec has invested considerable time and effort to reform the curricula for all its programs. Preschool, primary, secondary, and teacher education programs have all been targeted, and all curricula are based on students developing various competencies. With
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Figure 1. Professional competencies for teacher education in Quebec

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>To act as a professional inheritor, critic, and interpreter of knowledge or culture when teaching students.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>To communicate clearly in the language of instruction, both orally and in writing, using correct grammar, in various contexts related to teaching.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To develop teaching/learning situations that are appropriate to the students concerned and the subject content with a view to developing the competencies targeted in the programs of study.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>To pilot teaching/learning situations that are appropriate to the students concerned and to the subject content with a view to developing the competencies targeted in the programs of study.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>To evaluate student progress in learning the subject content and mastering the related competencies.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>To plan, organize, and supervise a class in such a way as to promote students’ learning and social development.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>To adapt his or her teaching to the needs and characteristics of students with learning disabilities, social maladjustments, or handicaps.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>To integrate information and communications technologies (ICTs) in the preparation and delivery of teaching/learning activities and for instructional management and professional development purposes.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>To cooperate with school staff, parents, partners in the community, and students in pursuing the educational objectives of the school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>To cooperate with members of the teaching team in carrying out tasks involving the development and evaluation of the competencies targeted in the programs of study, taking into account the students concerned.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>To engage in professional development individually and with others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>To demonstrate ethical and responsible professional behavior in the performance of his or her duties.</td>
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</table>

This reform, all pre-service teachers must now develop 12 new competencies (see Figure 1).

The eighth competency focuses on technology. The pre-service teacher must develop the ability “to integrate information and communications technologies (ICTs) in the preparation and delivery of teaching/learning activities and for instructional management and professional development purposes” (MEQ, 2001, p. 92). Furthermore, pre-service teachers are expected to develop critical judgments about ICTs, to understand the various possibilities offered by these tools, as well as use them in different aspects of their job. In addition, they are expected to be able to transmit the ability to use technology to their students.

Unfortunately, many researchers have found that teacher education programs do not adequately prepare future teachers to integrated technology in their classrooms (Benson, 2000; Wildner, 1999). To better prepare future teachers, one solution proposed has been to integrate technology throughout the program (Gilligham & Topper, 1999; Peters, 2005).

To foster development of competencies with technology in our pre-service teachers, the faculty at the University of Quebec at Montreal (UQAM) decided in 2003 to integrate a technology component throughout our four-year program to teach language teachers. There is the typical compulsory technology integration course offered in the third year of the program. In addition, our students take a course called Becoming a Teacher during their first semester which presents all the basic information needed to function during the teacher training program, including some technology components such as searching the Web for references, making an oral presentation with PowerPoint, preparing a table of contents for a term paper, communicating with a discussion.
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