Chapter XXXI
Using ePortfolios to Facilitate Professional Development Among Pre–Service Teachers

Gail Ring
Ball State University, USA

Sebastian Foti
University of Florida, USA

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study was to examine an electronic portfolio project as it was implemented in a teacher education program in a College of Education to determine how these electronic teaching portfolios affect a student’s professional development. Much of the recent portfolio research discusses portfolio implementation in an anecdotal manner, focusing on studies undertaken in a single class, or with a small population of pre-service teachers. This study investigated the implementation of an electronic portfolio project throughout a four-year period, collecting data from students enrolled in the Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education programs. It explored the impact the development of an ePortfolio had on the professional growth of these students.

INTRODUCTION
Mokhtari, Yellin, Bull, and Montgomery (1996) contend that, “In classrooms, portfolios encourage teacher self-direction and reflection and form the basis for professional development” (p. 247). This chapter focuses on the experiences of students during the implementation of an ePortfolio project in a College of Education. The central issue of this chapter pertains to the impact the development of an electronic portfolio has on a student’s professional development. Specifically, do students who maintain an electronic portfolio critically understand the
standards that govern the profession better, become more reflective practitioners, better collaborators, and more proficient users of technology? Arter and Spandel (1992) stress the significance of these characteristics for students: The perceived benefit for instruction is that the process of assembling a portfolio can help develop student self-reflection, critical thinking, responsibility for learning, and content area skills and knowledge (p. 38). The development of an electronic portfolio, particularly reflection in the process and on the process, can encourage students to take charge of their learning. It is our contention that functioning within the proper framework, portfolio development can aid students in making links between theory and practice—what they learn in their courses to what they do in their teaching internship—thus contributing to their professional development. Kozma (2000) pointed out that if learners are not yet skilled in taking charge of their learning, our tools and environments should help them move in that direction. This chapter justifies the use of digital portfolios as a way to facilitate the professional development of students.

BACKGROUND

Electronic Portfolio Project Goals

Beginning in the 2000-2001 academic year, students enrolled in the PROTEACH (Professional Teacher) program in the College of Education were required to develop and maintain electronic portfolios that demonstrated their competency in the 12 Florida Accomplished Practices (FAPs) (Appendix A). Implemented in the early 1990s by the Florida Education Standards Commission, the FAPs are essentially the best practices of teaching. The Electronic Portfolio Project was designed to provide a forum through which students demonstrate their proficiency in these 12 practices. Campbell, Cignetti, Melenyzer, Nettles, and Wyman (2001) suggest: “As students connect their work to standards, they begin to see the value and relevance of their work” (p. 50). We made the prediction that portfolio development would facilitate students’ connection-making, and highlight the value and relevance of their teacher preparation work. In addition to demonstrating their competence in the FAPs, these student portfolios addressed other aspects of the educational experience such as a student’s self-assessment and decision-making skills, ability to reflect on teaching and learning, as well as his or her ability to use technology.

Historically the burden of accountability was placed on the professors; however, accountability is becoming a shared responsibility among teacher preparation programs, faculty, and students. Responding to the challenge of shared accountability, faculty in our college decided collectively that each student should be responsible for the selection, storage, and presentation of their illustrations for each of the 12 Florida Accomplished Practices in a Web-based electronic portfolio. The Electronic Portfolio Project was a college-wide innovation that impacted administrators, professors, and students, as well as the curriculum of our teacher education program. As such, it has been a catalyst for change in the teacher education program.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine an electronic portfolio project as it was implemented in a teacher education program in a College of Education to determine how these electronic teaching portfolios affect a student’s professional development. Much of the recent portfolio research discusses portfolio imple-
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