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**A SURVEY ON THE USE OF PORTFOLIOS AMONG LECTURERS AND  
TRAINEES IN BATU LINTANG TEACHERS' TRAINING COLLEGE**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page	
ABSTRACT	i	
ABSTRAK	ii	
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii	
LIST OF TABLES	iv	
CHAPTER		
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Background of the Study	1
	Statement of Problem	3
	Research Questions	3
	Significance of the Study	4
	Definition of Key Terms	4
II	LITERATURE REVIEW	6
	Introduction	6
	Definition of Portfolios	6
	Features or portfolios	9
	Types of Portfolios	10
	Guidelines for using Portfolios	12

	Related Studies	13
III	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	18
	Introduction	18
	Research Design	18
	Population and Sampling	18
	Research Instrument	19
	Questionnaire for Lecturers	20
	Questionnaire for Trainees	20
	Pilot Testing	20
	Procedure for data collection	21
	Procedure for data analysis	21
	Limitation of the Study	22
IV	ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS	23
	Introduction	23
	Questionnaire for Lecturers (Appendix I)	24
	Section A; Demographic data of Lecturers	24
	Section B	25
	Questionnaire for Trainees (Appendix II)	33
	Section B; Demographic data for Trainees	33
	Section B	35
	Discussion of the findings	40

	To what extent do lecturers use the Portfolios	40
	Types of Portfolio	41
	Lecturers' view about benefits and constraints of using the Portfolio	43
	Trainees' view about benefits and constraints of using the Portfolio.	46
	Suggestions of using the Portfolios	51
V	IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	52
	Introduction	52
	Summary	52
	Recommendation	53
	Future Direction	54
	References	56
	Appendices	
	Appendix I - Questionnaire for lecturers	
	Appendix II – Questionnaire for trainees	
	Appendix III -Approval Letter from Ministry of Education (Malaysia)	
	Appendix IV – Approval letter from State Ministry of Education (Sarawak)	

## Abstract

### **A survey on the use of portfolios among lecturers and trainees in Batu Lintang Teacher's Training College**

**Aben Anyi**

The objective of the survey research was to find out the use of portfolios among lecturers and trainees in Batu Lintang Teacher's Training College. The various types of portfolios as well as the benefits and constraints were also the main focus of the study. The samples comprised 50 lecturers and 200 trainees in Batu Lintang Teacher's Training College and the research instrument was questionnaire. The findings showed that the portfolio was used in the teaching and learning process as 7 respondents (35%) among the lecturers whereas 132 respondents (66%) among the trainees used the portfolios in Batu Lintang Teacher's Training College. This indicated that that the portfolio was used due to its benefits in teaching and learning. However, there were some constraints of using the portfolio and these could hinder the practice of using the portfolio among the participants. Therefore, there were benefits and constraints of using the portfolio among lecturers and trainees in Batu Lintang Teacher's Training College.

## Abstrak

### **Kaji selidik tentang penggunaan portfolio di kalangan pensyarah dan pelatih di Maktab Perguruan Batu Lintang**

**Aben Anyi**

Kajian ini diadakan untuk mengkaji penggunaan portfolio di kalangan pensyarah dan pelatih di Maktab Perguruan Batu Lintang. Di samping itu, pelbagai portfolio yang digunakan serta faedah dan kekangan yang dihadapi dalam menggunakan portfolio merupakan fokus utama dalam kaji selidik ini. Sampel terdiri daripada 50 pensyarah dan 200 pelatih dan kajian soal selidik digunakan dalam kajian ini. Hasil kajian menunjukkan portfolio digunakan dalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran kerana 7 responden (35%) daripada pensyarah manakala 132 responden (66%) daripada pelatih menggunakan portfolio dalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran di Maktab Perguruan Batu Lintang. Ini menunjukkan bahawa terdapat faedah menggunakan portfolio dalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat beberapa kekangan dalam penggunaan portfolio dan ia dapat menghindarkan penggunaan portfolio di kalangan peserta.. Oleh yang demikian, terdapatnya faedah serta kekangan dalam menggunakan portfolio di kalangan pensyarah dan pelatih di Maktab Perguruan Batu Lintang.

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## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>		<b>Page</b>
1	Type of courses taught last semester	24
2	Distribution of respondents based on Highest Qualification	25
3	Distribution of Respondents based on courses attended	25
4	Respondents' experiences of using the Portfolio	26
5	Number of Respondents who used the Portfolio last semester	26
6	Types of Portfolios based on respondents' and researcher' descriptions	28
7	Number of respondents who provided the guidelines to trainees	27
8	Data showing the medium of guidelines	29
9	Number of respondents who explained the rationale of using the Portfolio	29
10	Respondents who provided rationales orally, written or both	29
11	Number of respondents who used the Portfolio as requirement or at their own choice	30
12	Number of Respondents who awarded grade	30
13	Marks allocated for various Portfolios	31
14	Distribution of Respondents based on Programmes	33
15	Distribution of Respondents based on Years of Intake	34
16	Number of Respondents based on Majors	34
17	Number of Respondent who used the Portfolio last semester	35
18	Number of Respondents who used the Portfolio as requirement or at their own choice	35
19	Number of Respondents who were provided with the guidelines	37
20	Number of Respondents who were provided with the rationale	37
21	Number of Respondents whose Portfolios were graded	38
22	Number of Respondents who received the feedback	38
23	Number of Respondents who regarded the portfolio was useful as a Trainee	38

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background of the Study

Assessment, an essential element in the teaching and learning process is implemented in education program at all levels from kindergarten to tertiary levels. Generally, there are many forms of assessments, one of the common form is definitely the examination. This is probably due to the fact that examination is widely practiced in every institution as an absolute evidence of one's ability in every aspect that is assessed. However, its status as the most common type of assessment is denied as it emphasizes too much on the quantitative type of performance (Klenowski, 2002). This implies that qualitative form of assessment is less emphasized. For this reason, Hackett clearly states that, "too much emphasized on the examination might lead to students being over examined" whereas Guttenplan says, "too much emphasizing on examination is just testing children to destruction" (cited in Klenowski, 2002, p.2). These statements show the probability of the consequences that might occur if too much is stressed on examination. As one of the alternatives, the use of the portfolio in the teaching and learning process is recommended so as to redress the imbalance caused of emphasizing too much on examination. As such, this initially promotes the implementation of using the portfolio in learning and assessment.

Next, the rationale of choosing the portfolio in learning and assessment is perhaps due to the belief that it offers an apparent picture of students' or trainees' performances that provide good grounds for assessment (Loughran & Corrigan, 1995). This is supported by Wolf who states that the implementation of using the portfolio in the pre-service teacher education program at Monash University is useful to the pre-service teachers as it has the potentials to reflect on their learning and obtaining new experiences in their teaching (cited in Loughran & Corrigan, 1995). These provide some insights concerning the potentials of using the portfolio in the teaching and learning process that generally aims towards a more balanced form of assessment between the quantitative and qualitative form of assessments.

Nowadays, the portfolio is also used in other careers. This includes artists, writers and photographers to present their work samples and collection of their selected pieces of work (Klenowski, 2002). Nevertheless, to achieve the fullest potentials of its implementation is yet to be fully exploited as there is also the probability of ending up with a failure if it is made into something else (Herbert, 2001). To be specific, it is only appropriate to narrow down the scope of the study to the use of the portfolio among lecturers and trainees in teachers' training college.

## **1.1 Statement of Problem**

At teachers' training college, the portfolio is used in the teaching and learning environment. Basically, different portfolios serve for different purposes and could be determined by the lecturers. This is an indication that there are several kinds of portfolios that are yet to be revealed. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out to what extent does the use of portfolios among lecturers and trainees in Batu Lintang Teachers' Training College and the various types of portfolios that are used. It would further focus on the benefits and constraints of using the portfolio among lecturers and trainees.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

The study attempts to answer the following research questions;

- i. To what extent do lecturers use portfolios in the process of teaching and learning in Batu Lintang Teachers' Training College ?
- ii. What are the types of portfolios that are required by lecturers of teaching trainees in Batu Lintang Teachers' Training College?
- iii. What are lecturers' views about benefits and constraints of using portfolios in Batu Lintang Teachers' Training College?
- iv. What are trainees' views about benefits and constraints of using portfolios in Batu Lintang Teachers' Training College?

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this research would offer some useful information for lecturers and trainees regarding the potentials of using the portfolio in the teaching and learning processes. Besides that, it would equip the trainees who would be future teachers in the teaching profession of using the portfolio as assessment. With this information, it is also hoped that the authorities concerned would take appropriate steps in assisting them to explore the fullest potentials of using the portfolio as assessment in teaching and learning environment.

### **1.4 Definition of Key Terms**

#### *Trainees*

In this study, “trainees” refers to the various group of teachers’ trainees attending various programs at Batu Lintang Teachers’ Training College: Bachelor in Education (B.Ed), Diploma Courses in Education (KDPM), Post Graduate Teaching Courses (KPLI) and Special Graduation Program for teachers ( PKPG).

#### *Lecturers*

For the purpose of this study, lecturer refers to a person who teaches at Teachers’ Training College.

## *Portfolio*

The concept of portfolio refers as a collection of trainees work with priorities established by the lecturers and also the choices given to the trainees to be selective in determining the materials that are relevant to their courses of studies.

Portfolio is a “ systematic and organized collection of evidence used by the teacher and students to monitor growth of the student’s knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a specific area” (Vavrus 1990 as cited in Kronowitz, 2004, p. 98).

The next chapter provides the literature review. The third chapter describes the research methodology that is designed for this study. Then the fourth chapter presents the data analysis and also the discussion based on the findings. The last chapter offers the summary of the study and finally followed by some implications and recommendations to the authorities concerned for further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the various definitions and views concerning the use of portfolios in teacher training. It also addresses the various types of portfolios that are implemented and the potentials as well as the constraints of using portfolios in the teaching and learning process based on related studies.

#### **2.1 Definition of Portfolios**

The various interpretations of portfolios contributed to the diversity in its functions and meanings. It is essential to have clear definitions derived from related studies as to enable readers to have a clear understanding about it. Thus, the following definitions may be considered;

Bird (1990) defines portfolio as " a container of documents that provided evidence of someone's knowledge, skill and disposition" ( cited in Carroll, et al., 1996). Thus the portfolio is a representation of ideas concerning knowledge and understandings on the subject matter as the information collected is related to the topic required. Besides that, it is a tool that helps the user to be skilful in organizing the information systematically. These enhance one's understanding on the subject matter more

thoroughly by referring to the information gathered. Hence, this is an indication that shows an additional potential of using the portfolio over the examination. Generally, it is due to the fact that examination is carried out in a time frame whereas the portfolio allows one to develop it continuously.

Vavrus further defines that a portfolio is a “systematic and organized collection of evidence used by the teacher and students to monitor growth of the student’s knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a specific area” (cited in Kronowitz, 2004, p. 98). This is an indication that the use of the portfolio in the teaching and learning environment could be a useful resource to enhance students’ ability in arranging all the materials that are collected systematically. This would save time when looking up for the information collected in a well-organized portfolio.

Paulson et al. define that the portfolio “is a mean of collecting students’ effort, progress and achievement in certain areas” (cited in Carroll, et al. 1996, p. 253). This indicates that portfolio is a record of the students’ progress through out their learning. With this ability, lecturers can trace the trainees’ progress and on the other hand the trainees would be more responsible for their own learning. This can be instilled through the process of selecting the appropriate items to be included in their portfolios.

Similarly, Arter & Spandel (1992) describe the portfolio as “a purposeful collection of student work that tells the story of the student’s efforts, progress, or

achievement in a given area which includes student participation in selection of portfolios content, guidelines for selection, criteria for judgment merit and evidence of students' self-reflection" (p. 36). This indicates the potentials of portfolios in the teaching and learning processes contributing to its widespread practice in the education field that could assess students qualitatively.

Winsor and Ellefson (1995) describe portfolio as "a fusion of processes and product which includes the processes of reflection, selection, rationalization and evaluation together with the product of the processes" (pp. 68-69). The process of rationalization by trainees, help them to build up their critical thinking. This is supported by Klenowski (2002) as "portfolios promote the development of important skills such as reflection, self-evaluation and critical analysis" (p. 2). Therefore, the implementation of portfolio in the teaching and learning processes could be useful to trainees as it teaches them skills that are needed as a teacher.

Apart from that, Olson defines the portfolio as just a convenient case for carrying selected items in form of loose papers (cited in Wenzlaff & Cummings, 1996). Hence, this made it convenient to carry the items that are included in the portfolio. Therefore it is believed that "the portfolio is a collection of a person's professional life, which includes the artifacts of the work, feelings about the work and indicators of professional growth"( *ibid*). This view is supported as shown in the statement below;

The portfolio can fulfill a full range of various assessment purposes; accountability summative assessment, certification, selection, promotion, appraisal and formative assessment in support of teaching and learning processes.

(Klenowski, 2002, p. 11)

This indicates that portfolios enhance teaching and learning processes among the users ( trainees in this context).

Burke and Rainbow (1997) state that the development of the portfolio requires important cognitive and metacognitive skills such as monitoring, planning, reflecting and self- evaluation. Furthermore, they state that in higher education in England, it is found out that portfolios assist students in improving their self-assessment skills. Hence, portfolio with collections of evidence and achievement collected can improve students' overall achievement.

## **2.2 Features of portfolios**

Barton & Collins (1993) mention that the information in the portfolio must be meaningful and useful. This is due to the fact that the portfolio shows a learning process over time. As such, it plays as an important instrument for the evaluator to trace the progress of the students over period of time in their learning environment.

Krause (1996) further elaborates that the portfolio should provide the students with authentic learning materials. It is important so as to motivate the students of using the

portfolio in their learning. With this feature, it would increase the use of the portfolio among students as they have the motivation towards their own learning.

Apart from that, Johnson states that the portfolio shows an individual learning route (cited in Tanner, et al., 2000). The ability to understand an individual learning style promotes the effectiveness in teaching and learning process as teachers could adapt the appropriate technique based on the students learning styles. As such, the effectiveness in teaching and learning process is further achieved.

### **2.3 Type of portfolios**

There are different types of portfolio that are used in teacher education. Gredler (1995) categorized the first as the “Ideal” format that classify the portfolio into three components as shown:

- i. Biographies of works- This component illustrates the student’s depth of effort in the subject area.
- ii. Variety of student work-This illustrates the breadth. For instance a portfolio may contain journal entries, poems and tape recording of class presentations.
- iii. Student’s reflection – This is particularly important for student growth in learning as they are required to describe the characteristic features of their work, progress in their development and goals yet to be accomplished.

Apart from the above, Valencia and Calfee (1991) classify several types of portfolios based on their descriptions and purposes. The classifications of the portfolios are summarized below;

- i. Ideal format portfolio-This type of portfolio contains the biographies of works and students' reflections indicating their abilities to analyze and assess their work.
- ii. Showcase Portfolio- This category refers to a collection of the student's best work primarily selected by the students. The purpose is to provide example of students work for exhibition to parents and others.
- iii. Documentation-This type of portfolio is a systematic continuous record of student progress with some students' reflections as well as teachers' evaluation, observations and checklists. The purpose is to provide a systematic record in term of students' work for quantitative and qualitative evaluation.
- iv. Evaluation Portfolio- It is a collection of students' work with priorities established by the teacher and pre-determined criteria for evaluation. As such, the purpose is to provide a largely standardized report of students' achievement for parents and administrators.
- v. Class portfolio- This portfolio is a three-section binder with summary sheets for students describing their performance, teachers' detailed notes and observations for each student, and finally teacher's curriculum and instructional plans for the year. The rationale is to show all the students' accomplishment to parents,

administrator and others.

#### **2.4 Guidelines for using Portfolios**

There is a suggested guideline for using portfolio in Teacher Education Program according to Campbell, Cignetti, Melenyzer, Nettles & Wyman (2000, pp.17 –22);

- i. A rationale for portfolio development
- ii. Explanation of the chosen standards.
- iii. A list of artifact possibilities.
- iv. A description of an overall organizational system for the portfolio.
- v. The requirements of cover sheets with rationales.

The rationale for portfolio development has to be explicitly defined so as to provide a clear goal for the portfolio development. This is essential as the goals for the portfolio development vary from one institution to another. Hence a standardisation of the goals in specific institution such as in the Teachers' Education Program can be achieved.

An explanation regarding the chosen standards is necessary so as to familiarize the students with the chosen standard. The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) clarify ten standards in portfolio development with the aims of assisting students to have an in-depth understanding of these standards.

A list of possible artifacts regarding the content of the portfolios could benefit the students/trainees to grasp the range of possibilities and assist them to include a variety of artifacts.

A description of the organization of the portfolio is crucial so as to enhance understanding concerning the subject matter. In teacher education program, it is preferable for both faculty and students to organize the portfolio on the chosen standards.

Artifacts or documents that are included in the portfolios require sufficient explanation so as to justify the value of selecting them. This is to avoid confusion or misleading information regarding the chosen artifacts.

## **2.5 Related studies**

Several studies have been done regarding on the use of portfolio in Teacher Education Program as elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Loughran & Corrigan (1995) did a study on the pre-service teacher education course (Diploma in Education). They found out that portfolios act as a tool for reflecting on learning and also as a way of getting new information in teaching. This signifies some of the potentials of using the portfolio in teaching and learning process.

Wade & Yarbrough (1996) carried out a study among the pre-service teachers in the program to create portfolios to document their learning and growing in the Youth and Elderly in Service (YES). They found that the portfolio was also an important tool for reflection in teacher education that was based on the constructivist theory of learning. Thus, it shows the potentials of the portfolios in the teaching and learning process.

Another point that supports the implementation of portfolio is due to the fact that it is a more open-ended type of assessment. As a result, its development in the educational field has increased tremendously as it is able to measure the capability of students more thoroughly as compared to the traditional approach that greatly emphasizes examination. Thus, Baker, Freeman and Clayton maintain that portfolio is intended to “measure complex intellectual capabilities that focus on important and teachable learning processes.” (cited in Gredler, 1995, p. 431). Therefore the use of portfolio is increasingly important for learning and assessment purposes.

Mokhtari, Yellin, Bull and Montgomey (1996) of Oklahoma State University did a study on 66 Caucasian female junior and senior elementary education majors. The purpose of the study was to find out the use of portfolios in a language arts course. Thus the candidates were required to keep a portfolio of their works. The results of the study demonstrate that exposure to the portfolio in their education course has greatly enhanced the candidates’ knowledge and attitudes toward the portfolio

assessment. These results are consistent with a pilot study by Ford and Ohlhausen (cited in Mokhtari et al 1996).

Doner & Gilman (1998), did a study on 621 university elementary undergraduate teachers concerning their experience in developing and being evaluated using the portfolio. The findings from the study showed several benefits as summarized below (pp. 192- 164);

- i. A more accurate reflection and knowledge about the teaching and learning process.
- ii. Develop skills in organization and self- development.
- iii. Improved relationships with professor in-charge and fellow classmates.
- iv. Practice in building portfolios.
- v. A reference work for their beliefs and knowledge base for the teaching profession.

Tanner, et al. (2000), did a study among pre-service teachers regarding the use of the portfolio in their course to relate the contents of their portfolio both to their teaching practice and to their university course. The findings show that portfolios are an extremely valuable way of encouraging student teachers to develop individually and professionally. Furthermore, it offers the trainees with more information regarding the effectiveness of the portfolio.