

Abstract

The portfolio approach to teaching and learning supports the educational practitioner in their lifelong quest for learning. Through the intentional sharing of knowledge and narratives within the practitioner's overlapping communities of inquiry, all participants in these communities can benefit from each other. The portfolio approach offers a set of overlapping processes embedded in three spheres of intentionality, the personal portfolio, the community of inquiry, and the demonstration of competency, that together provide the 21st century educator a way of being. An examination of the three spheres answers three corresponding questions: 1) What are the range of skills and processes that will allow practitioners to present their own unique voice to their community of inquiry and their stakeholders? 2) What processes and skills must we develop as practitioners in order to participate in communities of inquiry and benefit from each other? 3) How can we work with other educators and students to allow them to determine their own voice without abandoning the institutional voice that comes from learning outcomes, program outcomes and the demands of the professional workplace? Research methodology includes an autoethnographic review of the author's work, reviews, interviews, observations and focus groups with student teachers from the Sharjah Higher Colleges, and with teachers at several schools in the United Arab Emirates. The reflective process ensures that we continually look back to see where we were, what we did, and where we were successful. Through demonstrations of competency and the setting of goals informed by our stakeholders, we can also see and share our professional aspirations for the future and in a healthy community of inquiry, contribute to not only our own, but our colleagues' futures. The research concludes that the 'time is ripe' for the portfolio approach to make use of 21st century tools to pursue a collection of non-linear, integrated processes that will help the practitioner share their materials online for their

community of inquiry to access and for stakeholders to see their demonstrations of competency.

Challenges for the future include examining how the portfolio approach can contribute to a practitioner's social identity.

Keywords: portfolio, relational construction, knowledge, education