

## Considering portfolio as a students' assessment in learning

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### Abstract

Portfolio as an alternative authentic assessment is more revealing of the students' capability to see possibilities for reflection, redirection, and confirmation of the students' own learning efforts. As it covers various aspects of students' capability, it might be more preferable for the final evaluation of their achievement in learning. Results of portfolio might also help teachers get feedback in education process they are conducting.

**Keywords:** portfolio, authentic assessment

### INTRODUCTION

Assessment, as stated by Griffin & Nix (1992), is a tool of teaching. The goal of teaching could be described as helping students take increasing responsibility for their own learning. Teaching is not an end but as a means to an end. So, the central purpose for assessment is to discover whether learning is taking place and where it is being obstructed, and to suggest ways in which students might be helped to attain their maximum potential. Teacher must shift the focus from testing and standardized assessment that is teacher-centred to a focus that is student-centred. Some testing is still appropriate, but it should always be complemented by a range of other assessment procedures. Multiple assessments should be the method of giving the final judgment of the students' achievement. Assessment give feedback about education process to teachers, students and parents. It is so important point as a fair treatment in assessment process as well. A question may arise, "How can the teacher know whether or not learning has really occurred?" Students' learning level can be measured not only by exam tests but also other alternative evaluation tools extensively, such concept map, performance tasks, project, self evaluation, structured grid, rubric, branched tree, drama, observation, control list, portfolio, etc. (Leithner, 2011). Complex mixture of assessment models are taken into

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consideration in higher education for comprehensive assessment; exam tests, presentations, tasks, assignments prepared by students can be used altogether in education (Powell, 2013).

Appropriate assessment practices are a vital component of any educational program, as these practices have specific purposes and be consistent with the goals and objectives stated in the syllabus. Brown (2003), Ariatmi & Fatmawati (2013), Basuki & Hariyanto (2014) have all stated clearly that assessment is an ongoing process that encompasses a much wider domain than test; it is an ongoing pedagogical process that includes a number of evaluative aspects done by the teacher. In portfolio, consideration for the final evaluation of a student may include such things as students' participation, motivation, presentation, performance, paper, presence, homework, and many others. The students' final decision should not be based on only one of the above aspects; it must include all of them to determine the student's final achievement in learning.

Several experts like Griffin and Nix (1992) and O'Malley and Pierce (1996) consider that testing alone is not enough in defining the students' final judgment, as it only includes procedures of giving regular tests, marks and ranks of students. The students' progress and development cannot be measured only by a test, a mark, or a rank. Test scores only does not show *why* the students may not be learning well as expected. Moreover, testing, marking, and ranking procedures seldom prompt the teacher to revise the program in order to help students in their learning.

The main concern in assessment is the progress and development of student's learning, within which students' progress and development can be described and monitored. The assessment system should provide a basis for planning the instruction of students, as their individual and group needs are identified. The system should also help to develop communication between all stakeholders (Griffin and Nix, 1992) particularly between teachers, teachers and parents, and teachers and students. Effective communication will enhance the teaching and learning process throughout the school. All of these could only be mirrored through portfolio.

## **PORTFOLIO**

Portfolio may be defined as a collection of documents of the students' works that can be used as an additional information of the students' performance in learning (Brown, 2007). Portfolios are being heralded as vehicles that provide a more equitable and sensitive portrait of what students know and

are able to do (Barrett, 2002). A systematic and purposeful collection of students' working documents on their course is defined as portfolio (Arter & Spandel, 1992; Chang, 2008; in Eskici, 2015). Portfolio can be used as a tool of knowledge, ability, performance and skill assessment in higher education (Powell, 2013). According to Trevitt, Stocks & Quinlan (2012) portfolio should include five elements: representations of practice; engagement with key ideas in education, and/or the educational literature reflective commentary –an autobiographical/autoethno-graphic aspect that takes an inquiring and critical stance; integration or linkage between the first three elements; and sufficient breadth to include multiple aspects of teaching practice, e.g. course design, teaching, assessment.

As one of the kinds of authentic assessment, portfolio is a promising alternative for learner-centred and self-directed learning. Many other assessments translate levels of students' achievement into scores or numbers, which are not actually the only way to state about the student's progress and development in their final achievement. Meanwhile, words, pictures, illustrations, examples, participation, paper, performance, and many other means can also be used to convey meaning about student's achievement authentically.

There is now not only test that should be conducted to know the students' learning achievement. Teachers may add more information on the students' achievement by using portfolio as one of most popular forms or kinds of alternative assessment. Portfolio is a purposeful collection of students' work that demonstrates to teachers and others, their efforts, progress, and achievements in given areas (Genesee and Upshure, 1996, in Brown, 2003; Brown, 2007). Portfolios include essays, compositions, poetry, book reports, art work, video or audio recordings of a student's oral production, journals, and anything else one wishes to specify (Brown, 2003). It can be restated that portfolio is a collection of student work assembled to demonstrate student achievement or progress and development. The material to be collected and the story to be told can vary greatly as a function of the assessment context. These context factors can come together in many combinations. In Buku Guru Bahasa Inggris '*When English Rings a Bell*' (2014) of Scoring Rubric of Portfolio in Table 1, for example, a teacher of English as a foreign language might use an audio portfolio to help students see and be motivated by their improvement in speaking proficiency, or a continuous series of recordings of speaking samples made during the semester might be used, and a writing teacher might diagnose student needs by having students collect papers written by them.

**Table 1. Example of Rubric in Portfolio in Day-to-Day Activities**

Student's name : ..... Date : .....  
 Subject/Topic : .....

No.	Aspect	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1	Summary of stories read				
2	Composition written				
3	Videos made				
4	Clippings prepared				
5	Student's work:				
	a. Drafts				
	b. Revisions				
	c. Editing				
	d. Final work				
6	Result of test				
7	Result of exercises				

In earlier decades portfolios were thought to be applicable only to younger children who assembled a portfolio of art work and written work for presentation to a teacher and/or parent. But now, learners of all ages and in all fields of study are benefiting from the tangible, hands-on nature of portfolio development (Brown, 2003).

**Function of Portfolio**

Paulson *et al.* (2003) stated that portfolio functions as a means for both teachers and students to understand the education process at the level of individual learners. Meanwhile, O'Malley & Pierce (1996) stated that the key function of portfolio in the classrooms is to engage students in self-assessment that involves students and enables them to see possibilities for reflection, redirection, and confirmation of their own learning efforts. Students often need support in understanding the importance of self-assessment, in becoming independent evaluators of their own progress, and in setting goals for future learning.

The self-assessment according to Carter & Nunan (2001) is carried out to collect information on the students' proficiency and/or achievement that can be

used by the stakeholders in a certain program for various purposes, like in language learning program, including :

- selection: e.g. to determine whether students have sufficient proficiency to be able to undertake further study
- certification: e.g. to provide people with a statement of their language ability for employment purposes
- accountability: e.g. to provide educational funding authorities with evidence that intended learning outcomes have been achieved and to justify expenditure
- diagnosis: e.g. to identify student's strengths and weaknesses
- instructional decision-making: e.g. to decide what material to be presented next or what to revise
- motivation: e.g. to encourage learners to study harder.

### **Kinds of Portfolio**

Considering that portfolio is a collection of student's work, It should be considered in mind that the collection also includes samples of the best student's work. For ELL students, portfolio tends to mean different things to different people and is by no means standardized to suit every student's needs. For this, according to O'Malley and Pierce (1996) there are three basic different kinds of portfolio: showcase portfolio, collection portfolio, and assessment portfolio.

#### **Showcase portfolio (show portfolio)**

Showcase portfolios are typically used to display students' best work to parents and school administrators. As showcase pieces, entries in the portfolio are carefully selected to illustrate student achievement in the classroom. The limitation of showcase portfolio is that in showing only students' best work, they tend to leave out the path by which students arrived. The process itself is missing. A showcase portfolio is one which tends to hold only finished products and therefore may not successfully illustrate student learning over time. This show portfolio is purposeful collections of a limited amount of material designed to reflect the best student work to be used for a number of educational purposes including selection, certification, and classroom assessment.

### **Collection portfolio (working portfolio)**

Collection portfolio literally contains all of a student's work that shows how a student deals with daily class assignments. These are also called *working folders or working portfolio* which is equivalent to the artist' studio, and may include rough drafts, sketches, works-in-progress, and final products. This type of portfolio may contain evidence of both process and product and has the advantage of containing everything produced by the student rather unwieldy for assessment purposes because it has not been carefully planned and organized for a specific focus.

### **Assessment portfolio (documentary portfolio)**

Unlike showcase and collections portfolios, assessment portfolios are focused reflections of specific learning goals that contain systematic collections of student work, student self-assessment, and teacher assessment. The contents are often selected to show growth over time. Each entry in the portfolio has been selected with both student and teacher input and is evaluated based on criteria specified by both student and teacher. These criteria may take the form of rubrics, checklists, rating scales, etc. Whereas the portfolio itself does not receive a grade for a rating, the different entries may be weighted to reflect an overall level of student achievement. This kind of portfolio contains the final products of student work and evidence of the processes that students use to develop those products.

## **ASSESSING IN A PORTFOLIO**

For some teachers, the whole idea of scoring this kind of authentic assessment is problematic. Writing teachers, for example, commonly use portfolio as teaching tools. Teachers may ask students to go back to earlier writing and rework it based on new found abilities.

Scoring work portfolios is a matter of professional judgment. Judgment has to be calibrated against standards prepared by the professionals together with the understanding and support from the public. When we are thinking of assessment, we are led quickly to curriculum framework. Everything we can find on the student's writing, based on curriculum, is a part to be assessed. This would mean that assessment is not only done at the end, it is done from the beginning through the end. Authentic assessment is a contextualized, complex intellectual challenge, not fragmented and static bits or tasks.

In order to make sure that portfolio is beneficial both for students and teachers, let us have an example of how to assess in a portfolio. Following

O'Malley and Pierce (1996), Brown (2003), and McDonald (2011), Usadiati (2014) in Writing subject, assessment may be done as in Table 2.

To determine how to grade the portfolios, the guidelines by McDonald (2011) may be followed: looking for an overall mastery of skills to grade the students' work collected. The most efficient way to grade a portfolio is through a rating scale. If specific skills are needed, begin with a checklist that ensures that all the necessary pieces are included: whether the work is completed correctly (shown in the aspects of grammar, vocabulary, mechanics), with complete information and comprehensive (shown in the aspects of content, organization). Each area may be marked on a rating scale of 1-4 as stated in Table 2.

Meanwhile, there are two important components in the authentic assessment of Writing, they are the nature of the task (prompt) and the scoring criteria. The nature of the Writing task defines the task for student assessment. The task consists of question or statement students will address in their writing and the conditions under which they will write. This prompt can be specified to a particular purpose in order to elicit narrative, informative, or persuasive writing. For example, a narrative prompt might ask the student to write about an event that was shared by all students in the classroom.

**Table 2. Rating Scale and Rubrics of Writing**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Scoring/Rating scale</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
Content	4	The topic is complete and clear and the details are relating to the topic
	3	The topic is complete and clear but the details are almost relating to the topic
	2	The topic is complete and clear but the details are not relating to the topic
	1	The topic is not clear and the details are not relating to the topic
Organization	4	Identification is complete and descriptions are arranged with proper connectives
	3	Identification is almost complete and descriptions are arranged with almost proper connectives
	2	Identification is not complete and descriptions are arranged with few misuse of connectives
	1	Identification is not complete and descriptions

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		are arranged with misuse of connectives
Grammar	4	Very few grammatical or agreement inaccuracies
	3	Few grammatical or agreement inaccuracies but not affect the meaning
	2	Numerous grammatical or agreement inaccuracies
	1	Frequent grammatical or agreement inaccuracies
Vocabulary	4	Effective choice of words and word forms
	3	Few misuse of vocabularies, word forms, but do not change the meaning
	2	Numerous confusing words and word forms
	1	Very poor knowledge of words, word forms, and not understandable
Mechanics	4	Uses correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization
	3	Has occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization
	2	Has frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization
	1	Is dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization

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Each prompt should meet the following criteria (O'Malley and Pierce, 1996):

- invite the desired type of writing
- engage the thinking, problem-solving, composing, and text-making processes central to the type of writing
- be challenging for many students and accessible to all
- provide equitable opportunities for all students to respond
- produce interesting, not just proficient writing
- be liked by many students

The students should be told that they will be valued in their writing. That is, the students should know in advance on what criteria their papers will be evaluated. One way to do this is to present a checklist of criteria at the end of the prompt that students can use to edit and revise their writing. The following example of checklist is intended for students in analyzing their own narrative writing (O'Malley and Pierce, 1996):

- Did I write on the assigned topic?



- Did I write for the assigned audience?
- Did I identify a central theme?
- Did I explain the key ideas or events for the theme?
- Did I use complete sentences?
- Did I correct errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and usage?

Scoring of authentic assessment should always be defined before the exercises and assessment procedures are developed. Rather than rely on right/wrong answers, unfair distracters, or other statistical numbers, authentic assessment may identify hidden strengths (and weaknesses) of the students in Table 2 concerning what the students can do to show off.

To avoid subjectivity in the judgment of the teacher to score the student's portfolio, inter-rater reliability is important, mainly to ensure consistency and fairness (Herman, Aschbacher, and Winters, 1992, in O'Malley and Pierce, 1996). Without reliability, some teachers may give students the impression of "rating hard (penurious)" while others are "rating easy (lenient)". Even further, teachers can give the impression of rating students inconsistently. The teacher should have a confidence that a score or grade is based on the actual student performance rather than some idiosyncratic or indefensible application of the scoring criteria. Scores can be based on a scoring/rating scale that assigns a numerical value to the performance depending on the extent to which it meets pre-designated criteria.

Following Eskici (2015) and Mogonea (2015), another example of a checklist (Table 3) may be developed by a researcher to know the teachers' opinions towards the use of portfolio related to their evaluation for their students' final score.

**Table 3. Checklist on the use of portfolio**

No.	Aspect	Totally agree	Partly agree	Completely disagree
1	Teacher obtains information on student's weaknesses from the student's portfolio			
2	Teacher obtains information on student's strengths from the student's			

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portfolio

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- 3 Inclusion of student's portfolio in the final evaluation process is fair

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  - 4 Portfolio is important for the student's final evaluation

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  - 5 It is a tool by which we can assess both individual work and collective work

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  - 6 Etc.
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The above checklist may be accompanied by an open ended questions regarding the types of portfolio the teachers use, which includes, among others, pictures, illustrations, examples, paper, performance tasks, presentation, participation, project, etc. done by the students. All of these may reveal the students' capability for fairer final judgment of their proficiency.

## CONCLUSION

Beneficial impact may be obtained in using portfolio because it is suitable as a tool of students' authentic assessment. Teachers may translate levels of students' achievement into scores or numbers, but they are not actually the only way to state about the student's progress and development of their capability and performance. By having portfolio, various hidden capabilities of the students may be unlocked, and their process and product can be described and monitored that exhibit their proficiency in a wide range of abilities, which is previously unnoticed by the teacher. Portfolio is worth considering to help judge the students' final achievement fairer, since all of the aspects of students' learning are covered in it.

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