

Electronic Portfolios in Teacher Education

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INTRODUCTION

As a punishment from the Greek gods for his numerous trickeries, Sisyphus was condemned to roll an enormous rock up a hill for eternity. As he reached the top of the hill, the rock rolled back to the bottom of the hill and he had to start anew. For some pre-service teacher education students, the work involved in creating an electronic portfolio becomes a Sisyphean task. However, upon completion of the e-portfolio, the students realize that the task has become a labour of love as they spend much of their spare time fine-tuning the finished product. This chapter describes that task and the pride that they feel at the end of their time in the teacher education program.

The University of Northern British Columbia Education Program's teacher education program has relatively new but very innovative and creationary. The professors teach undergraduate and graduate courses, are actively involved in graduate student supervision, provide professional development workshops to surrounding school districts on a regular basis, and publish research articles and present research findings at learned conferences. Since its inception in 2002, the Education Program has submitted and had approved its Bachelor of Education program by the teacher governing agency, the British Columbia College of Teachers (BCCT). Its graduates are hired by the surrounding districts, throughout BC and Canada, and overseas. It is, without a doubt, a solid program.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1996, the Teaching Profession Act was passed. Section 27(4) of the legislation granted the British Columbia College of Teachers authority over the design and evaluation of teacher education programs. Five years later, In 2001, the largest teacher education program at the University of British Columbia took the BCCT to the Supreme Court of Canada to gain clarification over the issue of who controls teacher education. The ruling

judge indicated that the issue was not one for the courts and argued that there should be a legislated solution. In 2003, as a result of this ruling, the Teaching Profession Amendment Act was passed in 2003 which restricted the power of the BCCT Council and the BCCT Teacher Education Committee. The pertinent amendment was a clearer wording of the College's involvement in the design, rather than design and evaluation, of teacher education programs: "The teacher education committee may cooperate with teacher education institutions in the design of teacher education programs" (BC Ministry of Education, 2003). This amendment caused all teacher education programs to re-consider their individual programs as the BCCT no longer had direct control over the programs in the province.

In 2004, the Deans and Chairs of Education and the BC College of Teachers signed a letter of understanding that set a schedule for Attainment of Standards Report (ASR) and Program Review schedules for the respective institutions to. The intent of the law in the letter of understanding was that teacher education programs would be able to control the "how" of teacher education.

A year later, Trinity Western University and Malaspina University-College agreed to be the first institutions to submit their ASRs to the BC College of Teachers. The Trinity Western University ASR specified the course outcomes rather than the program outcomes such that the course format and content would link directly to the BCCT Standards through the assignments in each course. In direct contrast to Trinity Western University, Malaspina University-College focused on the Faculty of Education Program Outcomes rather than the BCCT Standards as the latter subsumed the former.

In 2006, the remaining institutions, University of Northern British Columbia, University of Victoria, University of British Columbia – Vancouver, University of British Columbia – Okanagan, Simon Fraser University, and Thompson Rivers University, submitted their respective Attainment of Standards Reports.

The University of Northern British Columbia's submission concentrated on the BCCT Standards as

evaluation criteria for recommending their teacher candidates for certification. That is, the first 10 standards were used as evaluative statements that were reflected in the coursework, including practica, taken during the two-year post-degree program. In 2006, the students

were required to create an electronic portfolio that outlined each standard, provided one to three artifacts, and included a rationale for each artifact. In 2007, UNBC's Attainment of Standards Report was approved by the British Columbia College of Teachers.

Table 1. Professional educator theme and corresponding BCCT standard

| Theme | BCCT Standard |
|------------------------|---|
| Professional Qualities | 1 Professional educators value and care for all children, acting at all times in the best interests of children. |
| | 2 Professional educators demonstrate an understanding of the role of parents and the home in the life of students. |
| | 9 Professional educators act as ethical educational leaders. |
| | 10 Professional educators engage in life-long learning. |
| | 11 Professional educators have a responsibility to students. |
| | 12 Professional educators have a responsibility to parents and the public. |
| Background Knowledge | 13 Professional educators have a responsibility to the profession. |
| | 3 Professional educators have a broad knowledge base as well as an in-depth understanding about the subject areas they teach. |
| | 4 Professional educators are knowledgeable about Canada and the world. |
| | 5 Professional educators are knowledgeable about BC's education system. |
| Capacity to Teach | 6 Professional educators understand children's growth and development. |
| | 7 Professional educators implement effective teaching practices. |
| | 8 Professional educators apply principles of assessment, evaluation and reporting. |

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