Chapter 4.31
Sustaining ePortfolio:
Progress, Challenges, and Dynamics in Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

The teacher education programs at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) and its professional community have undergone substantial changes, as developing and sustaining interventions for systemic impact involve changes in culture, policy, and practice. This chapter discusses the progress, challenges, and changing dynamics associated with sustaining an ePortfolio. An ePortfolio is an integral part of a Web-based Education Accountability System (EAS) developed and implemented by the author and the Department of Education to facilitate community-based teaching and learning, to help address national and state accreditation mandates, and to ensure continual improvements.

INTRODUCTION

The teacher education programs at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) and its professional community have undergone substantial changes, as developing and sustaining interventions for systemic impact involve changes in culture, policy, and practice. This chapter discusses the progress, challenges, and changing dynamics associated with sustaining an ePortfolio. An ePortfolio is an integral part of a Web-based Education Accountability System (EAS, http://education.umbc.edu) developed and implemented by the author and the Department of Education to facilitate community-based teaching and learning, to help address national and state accreditation mandates, and to ensure continual improvements.[1]

The discussion of ePortfolio endeavors will be provided in the rich context of EAS and the

UMBC educational community. The first section discourses conceptual issues relating to the design of the ePortfolio and the EAS. The structure of EAS with technical specifications is then described, followed by a discussion of the progress, challenges, and changing dynamics in organizational culture and infrastructure; in program, curriculum, and assessment; and in resources, support, and system renewal. Finally, critical factors in sustaining an ePortfolio as a viable profession-based teaching, learning, and assessment medium for preparing teachers within the education community are summarized.

CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

The framework of EAS is built upon capacity and linkage building. Capacity is viewed as existing within discrete yet interconnected policy domains, and is embodied by individuals within these domains. Capacity building for sustainable reform within institutions and communities requires engaging interventions for individual capacity, collective capacity, and material capacity (Spillane & Thompson, 1997; Fullan & Stielgelbauer, 1991; Fullan, 2000). Linkage facilitates connection, communication, and transfer of capacity. Linkage building critically increases the probabilities for successful and sustainable reform. The EAS implementation thus devotes much energy to building structural, relational, ideological, and temporal linkages among the capacities.

Grounded in such a conceptual framework, the EAS model (see Figure 1) takes a holistic approach by actively engaging and encouraging collaborative interactions among stakeholders of the UMBC teacher education programs, its P-12 professional development schools (PDSs), and national and state accreditation agencies. Core to the EAS are three integrated production components: Accountability Center, Performance Assessment, and Electronic Portfolio. These three sub-systems are orchestrated through a centralized content management component. The community-based model enables opportunities for continual observation and influence of interactions among constituents in the community. The fully integrated model further provides viable solutions to the competing and often conflicting paradigms in the assessment management system and electronic portfolio (Barrett, 2004; Barrett & Wilkerson, 2004), as degrees of differences exist in needs, goals, and functionalities.

Education Accountability System (EAS)

The EAS is based on national and state standards. The goals are reflective of UMBC's mission of developing teachers with strong academic background through an authentic professional development continuum. Summaries of major objectives are as follows: First, the learning and assessments are continual and systematic to promote collaboration, encourage reflection, maximize learning opportunities, facilitate growth, and increase effectiveness. Second, the learning and assessments are inclusive of qualitative and quantitative performance opportunities and measures, including coursework, evaluative observations

Figure 1.