Enhancing Pre-service Teachers’ Reflective Practice via technology competencies and ePortfolio Development

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Abstract: The movement from paper portfolios to ePortfolios has arrived at Lyndon State College (LSC) and Castleton State College (CSC). At LSC, the focus is on pre-service teacher technology competency and ability to reflect on technology’s influence on student learning and teaching practice. Students used different products to organize and showcase ePortfolios, and different strategies to enhance reflective skills associated with learning and teaching. At CSC, students completed ePortfolios using Microsoft Word and iMovie. The complexity of the software became the focus instead of the portfolios content. A developmental approach to learning software programs and learning to write reflectively had been established. Students used blogs to establish a web presence, to learn to write reflectively and to solicit feedback from peers. Skill development and incorporation of peer feedback yielded a richer understanding of how to use technology to express ideas. This paper examines the different approaches to developing skills and competency in technology, reflective practice, and ePortfolio development of pre-service teachers at LSC and CSC. We compare and contrast the resultant course and licensure ePortfolios.

Introduction

The movement from paper portfolios to ePortfolios has arrived at the Vermont State College system. Lyndon State College (LSC) and Castleton State College (CSC) have approached the project in both similar and distinct ways. Teaching portfolios that address course and state licensure requirements, and technology competencies are common products expected from students in these teacher education programs. The PT3 grant has connected Professional Development Coordinators at LSC and CSC to support the generating and sharing of resources across the state to support technology education, reflective practice, and ePortfolio development among pre-service teachers.

At LSC, the Education Department has a developmental approach that focuses on pre-service teacher technology competency and pre-service teacher ability to reflect on how technology influences student learning and teaching practice. Students need to develop the ability to reflect on their products and performance. Without this skill, teachers make fewer connections between theory and practice and are less likely to improve their practice (Levin & Camp, 2002).

Over the past two years, LSC teacher education students have used three different products to manage and showcase ePortfolios, and two different approaches to acquire and enhance skills in reflective practice. Students used either Mozilla, IBM’s Teachers’ Workplace (TWP), or Blackboard’s ePortfolio Content System (BB), and a variety of programs and multimedia to assemble evidence of teaching and technology competency. Faculty at both LSC and CSC used The Johns Hopkins University Digital Portfolio and Guide (2006) and The Reflection Cycle (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction) to support reflective practice in developing portfolios and enhancing teacher practice.

Students at CSC completed licensure and course-based ePortfolios using Microsoft Word and Apple’s iMovie. The complexity of the software program became the focus instead of the content of the portfolio. In subsequent semesters, a developmental approach to learning complex software programs and learning to write reflectively has been established. For example, early in the program of studies, students learned to use Word to
create hyperlinks and to incorporate multimedia. Students used blogs to establish a web presence as well as to learn to write reflectively and to solicit feedback from peers. Students in the final student teaching semester have become more comfortable using Word. This progressive development of computer skills and learning to incorporate peer feedback should demonstrate a richer understanding of using technology to express ideas in the final licensure portfolio.

This paper examines the different approaches to developing skills and competency in technology, reflective practice, and ePortfolio development of pre-service teachers at LSC and CSC. We compare and contrast the resultant course and licensure ePortfolios.

References
