

## Portfolio Assessment: Its Role in Supporting Assessment for Learning in Schooling

Mary Grosser

School of Educational Sciences

North-West University: Vaal Triangle Campus

BJJ (Kobus) Lombard

School of Educational Sciences

North-West University: Vaal Triangle Campus

### Abstract

*Educational assessment in South African schools is in a process of transformation. With the implementation of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act of October 1995, assessment moved away from the traditional examination driven approach to an alternative approach that is seen to have greater educational value in terms of the kind of teaching and learning it encourages. Traditional approaches to assessment such as pen-and-paper tests are seriously questioned and alternative approaches are proposed by the Department of Education (DoE, 2000:8). These include open-ended questions, exhibits, demonstrations, projects, performance assessment, hands-on-experiments, computer simulations and portfolios (Herman, 1992:74; DoE, 2000:8). Experimenting with alternative measures of assessment, in which learning and assessment do no longer exist in separate vacuums, involves serious questioning as to whether new approaches to assessment promote the quality of learning. One important aspect relating to quality refers to the extent to which assessment promotes the motivation and desire to learn and to continue learning (Herman, 1992:75). Educators and educationists therefore need to examine the alluring promise that many of the alternative assessment approaches hold against their potential to rise to the challenge of promoting assessment for learning. The new South African school curriculum, Curriculum 2005, places a strong emphasis on assessing learning progress by means of portfolios. Portfolios represent continuous assessment of learner progress, possibilities for integrating assessment with instruction and learning, the nurturing of higher-order thinking skills and a collaborative approach to assessment that enables teachers and learners to interact in the teaching,*

*learning and assessment process. Through the utilization of portfolios in the assessment process, learners should develop the skills and understanding they need to learn and to continue in the world of further education and training and work. In short, learners need to become expert learners: strategic, self-regulated and reflective.*

**Key words:** Assessment of learning; Assessment for learning; Portfolios; Reflection

### Introduction

In October 1997 the then Minister of Education promulgated a new national curriculum policy. As a result, in terms of the National Education Policy Act, Act 27 of 1996, an outcomes-based curriculum was published in the Government Gazette (No. 18490, October 31, 1997), which all schools are obliged to implement. The new curriculum, Curriculum 2005, was probably the most significant curriculum reform in South African education during the last century. As the first major curriculum statement of a democratic government, it signalled a paradigm shift and a dramatic break from the past. This implied, among other things, a move away from traditional approaches to assessment that focus on assessment of learning. According to the National Department of Education (henceforth referred to as DoE), educational assessment is in a process of transformation (DoE, 2002a:2), characterised as a "... move from the judgemental to the developmental role of assessment" (DoE 1998:3). Traditional approaches to assessment, such as pen-and-paper tests and examinations, are seriously questioned and alternative approaches that focus on assessment for learning are proposed. These include open-ended questions, exhibits, demonstrations, hands-on-experiments, computer simulations and portfolios (Herman, 1992:74). Although experimenting with alternative approaches to assessment is welcomed, it also needs to be established whether these approaches promote the quality of learning. According to Herman (1992:75), one important aspect relating to quality refers to the extent to which assessment promotes the motivation and desire to learn and to continue learning. Through the assessment process learners should develop the skills and understanding they need to learn and to continue their learning in the world of further education and training and work. Based on the fact that Curriculum 2005 places a strong emphasis on assessing the progress for learning by means of portfolios, the alluring promise that this alternative assessment

approach holds against its potential to support assessment for learning needs to be investigated further.

#### Assessment for learning

Learning and assessment do not exist in separate vacuums, in fact "... assessment should be integral to teaching and learning" (DoE, 1998:7). Assessment methods have been shown to shape the learning approach of learners (Willis, 1993:385). It remains imperative when discussing assessment to ask: what kind of learning is desired? Traditional approaches to assessment view learning as a product and therefore rely on assessment which focuses on reproduction. This in turn expects from learners long hours of tedious work. According to Willis (1993:385), learners who lack the necessary motivation to undertake such study find learning boring and irrelevant. This eventually culminates in a pattern of declining effort and increased incidence of examination failure. It is not surprising that learners ultimately switch off and decline further involvement in learning. Based on the effect of the traditional approaches, which focus on **assessment of learning**, it has become important to look for ways of developing alternative approaches to assessment, namely approaches which support **assessment for learning**.

Educators have become increasingly convinced that rich and descriptive information about the process and products of learning cannot be gathered by conventional teaching and testing methods (Baroothci & Keshavarz, 2002:280). The conceptual framework guiding instructional practices has thus undergone significant modification. This modification is distinguished from prior practices by its focus on holistic, learner-centered, performance-based and process-oriented instruction. Process learning and product assessment are, however, incompatible. The information needed for process-oriented assessment and the information obtained through standardized testing require alternative forms of learner assessment. Standardized measures, traditionally used to assess learners' progress, need to be complemented with other indicators, including alternative assessment methods that show how learners are learning (Baroothci & Keshavarz, 2002:280).

In contrast to assessment of learning, assessment for learning occurs during teaching and learning, rather than after it. Educators who assess for learning use day-to-day classroom assessment activities to involve learners directly in their own learning, increasing their confidence and motivation to learn (Willis, 1993:385). According to Stiggins (2000:759) and Dochy, Moerkerke and Martens (1996:329), emphasis is placed on progress and achievement rather than on

failure and defeat. Cangelossi (2000) and Chappius and Stiggins (2002:40-43) are also of the opinion that classroom assessment that provides accurate descriptive feedback to learners and involves them in the assessment process can improve learning. When the goal of assessment is to increase learner motivation and learning, teacher feedback should be productive and effective. It should tell learners what they are doing right, how to develop strengths further, and indicate why responses were right or wrong. Learners should also generate their own descriptive feedback by comparing it to that of the teacher (Chappius & Stiggins, 2002:42). These authors are furthermore of the opinion that learners engage in the assessment for learning process when they use assessment information to set goals, make learning decisions related to their own improvement, develop an understanding of what quality looks like, self-assess and communicate their status and progress toward established learning goals. This opinion clearly indicates the importance of reflective thinking skills in assessment for learning. Reflection is seen as the vehicle through which learner development can be effected and monitored (Gwele, 2001:93).

With the above in mind, it is hoped to realize the general aim of assessing learners in outcomes-based education, namely for growth, development and support in order for them to progress (DoE, 2002a:3). In order to achieve this, a variety of methods, tools and techniques must be utilized (DoE, 2002a:5). It also requires that assessment should be conducted on a continuous basis and should form an integral part of teaching and learning (DoE, 2000:8). One of the alternative assessment approaches introduced by the Department of Education in an attempt to nurture the notion of assessment for learning, is the portfolio.

#### Portfolio assessment

In the literature, portfolios are defined in a variety of ways. However, a definition by Martin-Kniep (1993) captures its essence when he states that "a portfolio is a purposeful collection of students' work that exhibits the students' efforts, progress and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit and evidence of student self-reflection."

According to Klenowski (2000:219), portfolios can be used for learning, assessment, appraisal and promotional purposes. Du Toit and Vandeyar (2004:123) also mention that the portfolio can be used for developmental purposes and continues by saying that an assessment portfolio can either be used formatively

or summatively. Furthermore, different types of portfolios can be distinguished. These are the process portfolio (which is also referred to as a working portfolio), documentary portfolios (which represents a systematic collection of a learner's work and assessment thereof) and showcase portfolios (representing examples of the learner's best work) (Du Toit & Vandeyar, 2004:124-126, DoE, 2003:3).

According to the DoE (2002b:15), the evidence of all learner performances in tests, assignments, investigations and projects should be stored in a portfolio. Learners' work is thus built up purposefully over a period of time and retained so that it provides visible proof of the development and improvement of achievement, as well as the skills, abilities and dispositions acquired (DoE, 2000:11; Gwele, 2001:92). Portfolio assessment therefore tells learners how well they are developing their skills, knowledge and dispositions and what they need to do to develop them further (Barootchi & Keshavarz, 2002:281; Combrinck, 2003:57). In this regard the use of portfolios gives learners a chance to take charge of their own learning – to assume ownership of it by realizing that assessment forms an integral part of learning (Ellery & Sutherland, 2004:100). In addition, portfolios provide learners with profiles of their emerging skills to help them to become increasingly independent learners (Barootchi & Keshavarz, 2002:281). Portfolios thus represent the possibilities for integrating assessment with instruction and learning, the development of higher-order thinking skills and a collaborative approach to assessment that enables teachers and learners to interact in the teaching, learning and assessment process and the encouraging of learners to reflect critically on their experiences (Gwele, 2001:92,94).

The discussion so far indicates the importance of reflection in the development of portfolios and the critical role of teachers in facilitating the implementation of portfolios. Reflective thinking leads to creativity, moving away from concern of product to a concern with process (Kish, 1997). Learners display reflective thought through planning, control, awareness of knowledge and skills possessed or lacked and the utilisation of appropriate strategies to acquire knowledge (Ertmer, & Newby, 1996:1). Reflection during assessment comprises two categories, namely **reflection on practice** and **reflection in practice** (Schön, 1983; 1987). Both categories are involved in the development of portfolios. Reflection on practice refers to making sense of past assessment experiences for the purpose of orienting oneself for current and/or future actions or thought. Reflection in practice refers to the managing of the assessment experience through careful planning, monitoring and evaluating while it is taking place, and constantly adjusting and changing (Ertmer & Newby, 1996:11-13).

### Statement of the problem

In order for a learner to obtain a General Education and Training Certificate at the end of Grade 9, the evidence of the school-based continuous assessment which is reflected in the learners' portfolios will contribute 75% to the final decision-making process for each learning area, whereas the external assessment component for each learning area, the Common Tasks for Assessment (CTA), will contribute 25% (DoE, 2002b:5). Emanating from the above, which highlights the emphasis that is placed on the evidence in the portfolio for obtaining the General Education and Training Certificate, as well as from the potential portfolios held to nurturing learning, it was found necessary to examine whether the utilization of portfolios in assessment is a promising alternative assessment method which is effective in motivating learners to learn, giving them a chance to take charge of their own learning and to develop skills to become independent learners.

This article will attempt to answer the following question:

### To what extent does the use of portfolios rise to the challenge of addressing the prerequisites of assessment for learning?

A preliminary study, exploratory in nature, was conducted to determine the extent to which the use of portfolios supports assessment for learning. The research was specifically conducted as a pilot study. The focus of the study was not to examine compiled portfolios in a particular learning area. In general, teachers comply with the Departmental regulations in terms of compiling show case portfolios that contain the specified number of assessment forms (DoE, 2003:4-15), but the portfolio itself provides very little, if any, information on the process preceding its compilation. Therefore the focus of the research was to determine how teachers conduct the process of compiling a portfolio and how the learners experience this process.

### Method of research

The information gathered from primary and secondary sources was utilized to determine the prerequisites of assessment for learning. Subsequently, a questionnaire and a focus group interview were constructed to determine the perceptions of educators and learners with regard to the extent to which the use of portfolios

addresses the prerequisites of assessment for learning. An exploratory study, both qualitative and quantitative in nature, was conducted to determine to what extent the use of portfolios in assessment meets the prerequisites of assessment for learning. Based on the information gathered through the literature study, a questionnaire was designed, requiring teachers to critically reflect on the experiences while assisting learners in compiling portfolios. All the questions addressed the prerequisites of assessment for learning. The questionnaire comprised twenty eight questions, grouped into three main categories, namely:

- Questions 1-4: Learner factors
- Questions 5-19: Learner control
- Questions 20-28: Teacher-learner engagement

Pilot testing of the questionnaire was done with a selected group of respondents from the population (50 teachers) to determine its qualities of measurement and appropriateness and to review it for clarity. A Cronbach Alpha test was utilized to determine the reliability of the questionnaire before it was administered. The calculated value (0.973) indicated that the questionnaire complied with reliability criteria. Validity was arrived at by considering content validity, supported by the fact that the specific items in the questionnaire were constructed strictly according to the prerequisites of assessment for learning. The validity of the study was extended to include interviews.

As a means of triangulation, focus group interviews were conducted with groups of six learners at a time. De Vos (2002:306) describes a focus group as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. The questionnaire served as a guideline to formulate an open-ended question for the interviews. The focus group interviews required learners to critically reflect on their experiences while compiling their portfolios. The researchers argued that one unambiguous and well-focused question would allow respondents to express their experiences without any restraints. We also argued that only prompting questions would be asked to ensure that a saturation point in terms of the central problem to this study would be reached. By following this approach, it was also hoped to increase the trustworthiness of the responses. The following question was formulated: **How did you experience the use of portfolios in assessment?** Responses were tape-recorded and transcribed at a later stage.

### Population and sample

The research was conducted in the D7 district (Vereeniging, Meyerton, Sharpeville) of the Gauteng Department of Education, and involved Grade 10 learners and teachers. The reason for including Grade 10 respondents was the first-hand experiences they gained from compiling portfolios during their Grade 9 year. The randomly selected sample comprised the following respondents:

- schools (n = 3)
- teachers (n = 82)
- learners (n = 18)

### Statistical techniques

The Statistical Consultancy Services of the North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, was approached for assistance in the analysis and interpretation of the data collected. Descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the data gathered from the questionnaires. Frequencies and means were calculated for the various responses in order to determine the extent to which the use of portfolios addresses the prerequisites of assessment for learning. In analyzing the focus group interviews, the researcher considered the words, context, and the internal consistency, frequency of comments, extensiveness of comments and specificity of comments. The tape-recorded data was transcribed and categorized according to emerging themes.

### Data analysis and interpretation

#### Questionnaire

The following results were noted for the total teacher sample's perceptions regarding the extent to which the use of portfolios addresses the prerequisites of assessment for learning. The interpretation of the data focused on the following three categories into which the various questions were divided: learner factors, learner control and teacher-learner engagement.

#### • Learner factors (Questions 1-4):

It is clear that important factors, such as motivation, concentration, willingness to learn and building confidence to learn need to be improved - all necessary to improve the quality of learning.

Table 1: Frequency distribution and average percentages for the extent to which the use of portfolios meets the prerequisites of assessment for learning: learner factors (N = 82)

LEARNER FACTORS	Always	%	Often	%	Some Times	%	Never	%
1. encourage learners to learn	20	24.39	16	19.51	36	43.90	10	12.20
2. make learners confident to continue learning	16	19.75	24	29.63	33	40.74	9	10.97
3. enable learners to keep their concentration and motivation high	12	14.81	12	14.81	41	50.62	17	20.73
4. enable learners to increase their willingness to continue learning in the absence of direct control	13	15.85	10	12.20	33	40.24	26	31.71

• **Learner control (Questions 5-19):**

It is furthermore clear that the use of portfolios is not yet enabling learners to take charge of their own learning, as important meta-cognitive skills such as planning, monitoring and evaluation are not reinforced. Learners are not fully able to set their own goals, select, modify and adjust their working strategies on a task, monitor their own progress and determine whether they have delivered work of good quality, in order to become increasingly independent learners.

Table 2: Frequency distribution and average percentages for the extent to which the use of portfolios meets the prerequisites of assessment for learning: learner control (N = 82)

LEARNER CONTROL	Always	%	Often	%	Some-times	%	Never	%
5. encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning	20	24.39	21	25.61	34	41.46	7	8.54
6. enable learners to watch their growth over time	20	24.69	22	27.16	25	30.86	15	18.29
7. make learners feel in charge of their own learning and success	21	25.61	24	29.27	32	39.02	5	6.10
8. enable learners to set their own goals	18	21.95	23	28.05	27	32.93	14	17.07
9. enable learners to monitor and evaluate their progress	21	25.93	27	33.33	20	24.69	14	17.07
10. enable learners to consider a variety of ways/plans to approach a learning task	15	18.29	23	28.05	34	41.46	10	12.20
11. enable learners to revise, modify or adjust their working plans on a task when necessary or when obstacles occur	10	12.50	24	30.00	32	40.00	16	19.51
12. enable learners to utilize different learning strategies to master a learning task	14	17.07	24	29.27	29	35.37	15	18.29
13. enable learners to self-assess the final results/efforts of their learning	14	17.28	24	29.63	31	38.27	13	15.85
14. enable learners to extract meaning from past learning experiences for the purpose of future learning	8	9.76	23	28.05	42	51.22	9	10.98
15. enable learners to know how well they did on a task before assessed by the teacher	29	35.37	19	23.17	25	30.49	9	10.98

LEARNER CONTROL	Always	%	Often	%	Some-times	%	Never	%
16. enable learners to use the feedback they receive on their assessment to manage their own future learning	18	21.95	29	35.37	28	34.15	7	8.54
17. enable learners to be sensitive to the social and physical environment of their learning	7	8.64	19	23.46	37	45.68	19	23.17
18. enable learners to plan and take the next steps in their learning independently	11	13.58	17	20.99	43	53.09	11	13.41
19. enable learners to determine on their own whether they have delivered work of good quality	24	29.27	26	31.71	24	29.27	8	9.76

#### Teacher-learner engagement (Questions 20-28):

According to the responses, teacher and learner engagement needs to be nurtured more. It is through this engagement that motivation can be improved. Literature highlights the fact that the value of the portfolios lies in, among other things, the constant dialogue between learner and self, and learner and teacher (Swele, 2001:98). Frequent learner/teacher discussions are important for learners to become aware of their progress (what they are doing right and what they are doing wrong) in order to determine new goals, to get feedback regarding their work and to compare their own interpretation of their efforts with that of the teacher. It is through this engagement that the reflective function of evaluation is nurtured and improved.

**Table 3: Frequency distribution and average percentages for the extent to which the use of portfolios meets the prerequisites of assessment for learning : teacher and learner engagement (N = 82)**

TEACHER AND LEARNER ENGAGEMENT	Always	%	Often	%	Some-times	%	Never	%
20. enable learners to have frequent learner/educator discussions	18	22.50	21	26.25	30	37.50	13	15.85
21. enable learners to become aware of their achievements and progress rather than their failures and defeat	23	28.05	24	29.27	31	37.80	4	4.88
22. enable learners to be involved in day-to-day classroom assessment activities	17	20.73	34	41.46	22	26.83	9	10.98
23. enable learners to receive descriptive feedback regarding their work from their educator	22	27.50	33	41.25	20	25.00	7	8.54
24. to provide learners with information on their progress in order to determine new goals	27	33.33	26	32.10	24	29.63	5	6.10
25. to inform learners what they are doing right	32	39.02	29	35.37	16	19.51	5	6.10
26. to inform learners how to develop their strengths further	23	28.05	28	34.15	26	31.71	5	6.10
27. to indicate to learners why certain responses were wrong	25	30.49	28	34.15	21	25.61	8	9.76
28. to compare learners' own feedback with that of their educator	23	28.05	28	34.15	23	28.05	8	9.76

From the above, it is clear that the potential of portfolios to promote assessment for learning is questionable. Learners are not fully able to make decisions related to their own improvement, to develop an understanding of what quality looks

like, to self-assess and communicate their status toward established learning goals. It can be concluded that learners definitely need more practice in being effective in anticipatory planning. This will serve three important purposes: it will ease the execution of the task, it will increase the likelihood of successfully accomplishing the task, and it will increase the delivery of a product of quality.

It is also important that teachers do more to assist learners in becoming more confident with monitoring of the own learning process and to determine the supportiveness of their learning environment. The results imply that the learners are not able to look backward at their plans of action to determine if the steps are performed in the correct order as well as to look forward to the steps still to be performed. Furthermore, it is implied that the learners are not able to determine whether or not they are making progress toward the specified goal. According to the results it also appears as if the learners are not equipped adequately to reflect on the outcomes of a task. This skill is extremely important to determine how effective the goal achievement was in order to modify plans, if necessary, before being used with similar tasks in future.

**Focus group interviews**

From the learner responses it became clear that the portfolio impacts on the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains. The emerging categories: knowledge, skills and values and attitudes were thus identified. This corresponds well with the opinion of Gwele (2001:92, 94) which indicates that the use of portfolios must focus on transformation of experience in knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Table 4: Main ideas emanating from the focus group interviews

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	VALUES AND ATTITUDES
Awareness of different perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-dimensional viewpoints</li> <li>Learning as discovery</li> </ul> Self-awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working hard to achieve something</li> <li>Stress under pressure</li> </ul>	Gathering information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Search for information</li> <li>Analysing/synthesizing/evaluating information</li> </ul> Applying information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpretation of information</li> <li>Expressing own ideas</li> </ul>	Interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Realising that information can broaden perspectives</li> </ul> Motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanding personal knowledge</li> <li>Marks as driving force</li> <li>Challenging tasks</li> <li>Intrdependence ("what you put in is what you get out")</li> </ul>

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	VALUES AND ATTITUDES
Working independently <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with others</li> </ul> Awareness of others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interdependence of group members</li> <li>Different abilities</li> <li>Different attitudes</li> <li>Interdependence on teacher guidance</li> </ul>	Time management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Realising time restrictions (normal school work, portfolios, extra-curricular activities)</li> <li>Time impacts seriously on data collection process</li> </ul> Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structuring of product</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Valuing positive and negative feedback for improvement</li> <li>Pride in final product</li> <li>Broadening perspectives</li> <li>Importance of time management</li> </ul> Interdependence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working together implies relying on one another</li> <li>Assisting/encouraging one another</li> <li>Bigger pool of ideas</li> <li>Discouraged by passive group members</li> </ul>

The responses of the learners indicate that important task-related knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, which are in line with the ideals of the National Department of Education (GDE, 2000:1), are acquired through the use of portfolios. However, the responses of the learners indicate an absence of emerging skills to help them to become increasingly independent and take charge of their own learning. This is in line with the evidence emanating from the teacher responses. These skills become particularly important to enable learners to become the type that Curriculum 2005 envisages: independent and confident life-long. It is important that the reflective capabilities of learners have to be cultivated in order for them to initiate and regulate their own learning process.

**Conclusion and recommendations**

It is acknowledged that this research was only exploratory in nature. Nevertheless, there are a few key messages that emerge from this research.

It is agreed that assessment must go beyond memorization, conditioning and repetition. If learners experience assessment as fixed predetermined procedures of recollection and reproduction, then the aim of education is defeated (Kotze, 2002:78). There is an urgent need to expand assessment practices to become more authentic. It should be developmental, encourage a kind of self-reflection and foster a perceptual shift that defines higher orders of consciousness. Although the use of portfolios in assessment is difficult and challenging, and its current implementation is not fulfilling, the expectations of assessment for learning, the implementation thereof is not negotiable. It appears as if portfolios only remain

show case documents, bearing little evidence of learning independence acquired by the learner during the process of its compilation. Therefore a number of factors are identified which can be seen as influential in improving the implementation of portfolios in assessment.

The implementation of portfolios needs to be improved in a manner which promotes the quality of learning. Quality learning can only be promoted if portfolios nurture reflection on the process of learning. This will in turn encourage learner motivation, willingness and confidence. Portfolios should promote reflection on the process of learning, as this is believed to be an essential ingredient in the development of expert learners, learners who are strategic, self-regulated and reflective (Ertmer & Newby, 1996:1). Teachers should realise that promoting reflection on the process of learning, will not happen by listening or reading. It only becomes a habit through use. If it is argued that teachers play an instrumental role in the development of portfolios, it seems reasonable to expect that teachers should themselves become reflective thinkers.

Important implications for staff development and teacher training can be drawn from this research. New ways of assessment will not automatically improve the quality of learning. If teachers are being asked to make fundamental changes to their assessment practices, they need practical training as well as sustained support to learn and try out new practices and to learn the new theory and acquire the skills to implement the new practice on a macro and meso level (Combrinck, 2003:61-66). On a macro level, the departmental training sessions and manuals provide extensive information on the theory of what a portfolio is, what the contents of a portfolio should be, the types of assessment forms to be utilised in the compilation of a portfolio, but they lack critical information on the strategies needed to nurture the reflective process that will in turn lead to independent learning during its implementation. In addition to this, schools could do more on a meso level by considering additional staff training to assist teachers in becoming acquainted with the skills and strategies needed to implement portfolios in assessment.

Educator training programmes should be developed to provide the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure that prospective teachers will be able to implement portfolios according to the prerequisites of assessment for learning. Implementing portfolio assessment in a manner which encourages reflective thinking has many potential benefits, as indicated by Kish (1997). Firstly, it enables learners to determine why they learn or fail to learn, what skills they have acquired and what

they have yet to acquire to progress further. Secondly, it allows for examination of socio-cultural influences and personality development. The benefit of witnessing one's own progress is to develop positive attributions of learning to oneself, which later develop into self-esteem and positive socio-emotional growth. Thirdly, it can promote personal growth by having learners reflect on their own current knowledge, as well as alternative viewpoints to deepen that knowledge. It is important to strive to retain these critical benefits. One challenge will undoubtedly be to develop ways to promote reflective thinking through the use of portfolios. In doing so, we will arm our learners with important skills required of 21st century citizens, namely a kind of thinking that leads to creativity and curiosity, a thinking that investigates and leads to independence and personal growth.

## References

- Acts see South Africa
- Barootchi, N. & Keshavarz, M. H. (2002). Assessment of Achievement through Portfolios and Teacher-Made Tests. *Educational Research*, 44(3)279-288, Dec.
- Cangelosi, J.S. (2000). Assessment Strategies for Monitoring Student Learning. New York: Longman
- Chappius, S. & Stiggins, R. J. (2002). Classroom Assessment for Learning. *Educational Leadership*, 60(1):40-43, Sep.
- Combrinck, M. (2003). An International Comparative Perspective on Outcome-based Assessment: Implications for South Africa. *Perspectives in Education*, 21(1):51-66, March.
- Department of Education (DoE) see South Africa. National Department of Education.
- De Vos, A. S. (2002). Research at Grass Roots. For the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Dochy, F. J. R. C.; Moerkerke, G. & Martens, R. (1996). Integrating Assessment, Learning and Instruction: Assessment of Domain-specific and Domain-transcending Prior Knowledge and Progress. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 22(4):309-339.
- Du Toit, P. H. & Vandeyar, S. (2004). Innovative portfolio assessment – portfolios as performance assessment tools. In Maree, J.G. & Fraser, W.J. (eds.) *Outcomes-Based assessment*. Sandown: Heinemann.



- Ellery, K. & Sutherland, L. (2004). Involving Students in the Assessment Process. *Perspectives in Education*, 22(1):99-110, March.
- Ertmer, P. A. & Newby, T. J. (1996). The Expert Learner: Strategic, Self-regulated and Reflective. *Instructional Science*, 24:1-24.
- Gwele, N. S. (2001). Reflections of graduate nursing education students on their experiences in developing portfolios. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 15(1):92-99.
- Herman, J. L. (1992). What Research Tells Us About Good Assessment. *Educational Leadership*, 49(8):74-78, May.
- Kish, C. K. (1997). Portfolios in the Classroom: A Vehicle for Developing Reflective Thinking. *High School Journal*, 80(4):254-260, April/May.
- Klenowski, V. (2000). Portfolios: promoting teaching. *Assessment in Education*, 7(2): 215-222.
- Kotze, G. S. (2002). Issues Related to Adapting Assessment Practices. *South African Journal of Education*, 22(1):76-80.
- Martin-Kniep, G. O. (1993). Working definition of Portfolio. Northwest Evaluation association, February.
- National Department of Education see South Africa. National Department of Education.
- Risko, V. J., Vukelich, C. & Roskos, K. (2002). Preparing Teachers for Reflective Practice: Intentions, Contradictions and Possibilities. *Language Arts*, 80(2):134-144, November.
- Scanlan, J. M. & Chernomas, W. M. (1997). Developing the Reflective Teacher. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 25:1138-1143.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco : Jossey Bass.
- Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco : Jossey Bass.
- South Africa (1996). National Education Policy Act, No. 27 of 1996. Pretoria : Government Printer.
- South Africa. National Department of Education. (1998). Assessment policy in the General Education and Training Band, Grade R to 9 and ABET. Pretoria, Department of Education.
- South Africa. National Department of Education. (2000). Circular 5/2000. National Assessment Policy as it relates to OBE and the Implementation of Curriculum 2005 and Assessment in GET Grades. Pretoria : Department of Education.

- South Africa. National Department of Education. (2002a). Circular 22/2002. Guidelines for Outcomes-Based Assessment in all Grades in Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phases implementing OBE (excluding Grade 9). Pretoria : Department of Education.
- South Africa. National Department of Education. (2002b). Circular 23/2002. Guidelines for the Assessment of Learners in Grade 9 in 2002. Pretoria : Department of Education.
- South Africa. National Department of Education. (2003). Circular 7/2003. School Based Assessment for Learners in Grade 9 in 2003. Pretoria: Department of Education.
- Stiggins, R. J. (2000). *Assessment Crisis: The Absence of Assessment for Learning*. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 83:758-765, June.
- Willis, D. (1993). *Learning and Assessment: Exposing the Inconsistencies of Theory and Practice*. Oxford Review of Education, 19(3):383-402.

---

**Mary Grosser**

Senior Lecturer: Teaching and Learning  
 School of Educational Sciences  
 North-West University: Vaal Triangle Campus  
 P.O. Box 1174 Vanderbijlpark  
 Tel: 016 910 3063  
 Fax: 016 910 3060

**BJJ (Kobus) Lombard**

Associate Professor  
 School of Educational Sciences  
 North-West University: Vaal Triangle Campus  
 P.O. Box 1174 Vanderbijlpark  
 Tel: 016 910  
 Fax: 016 910 3060  
 E-mail: opwbjij@puknet.puk.ac.za