INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
Practical and Pedagogical Issues in English Education
ISSN: 2980-9533
Arad Institute of Higher Education

The Effect of Portfolio Assessment on Iranian EFL Learners' Writing Ability

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Abstract

Much criticism of the traditional methods of assessment has been presented in the literature along with convincing arguments in favor of a need for alternative methods of assessment. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the effects of a new form of assessment called Portfolio Assessment on promotion of the writing ability of Iranian EFL high school students. Two groups of high school students served as the subjects of the study. One group served as the experimental group and the other group as the control group. They attended writing classes two days a week, one hour a day. The experimental group received the special treatment which was the use of portfolio assessment during a ten-week period, while no treatment was given to the control group. The control group was managed by the ordinary method of teaching and evaluation. At the end of the experiment, a test of writing composition was administered to both groups. The experimental group performed significantly better than the control group. The results of the study showed that portfolio assessment had a positive effect on improving the writing ability of the experimental group.

Keywords: Assessment, Feedback, Formative Assessment, Inter-rater Reliability, Portfolio Assessment.

Introduction

During the last decade of the 20th century, there was a growing global discontent with conventional, quantitative assessment methods. This dissatisfaction largely arose from concerns regarding the underlying philosophy of learning that informed these assessments and their effects on educational practices. The traditional quantitative assessment methods have faced criticism, leading to the emergence of alternative approaches like portfolios.

Traditional assessment methods bring about two dangerous problems: a) the assessment and evaluation based on one-shot exams and single test scores are not reliable, and b) more important than the first one, such methods of assessment do not result in meaningful learning, but merely encourage sole reliance on and practice for rote-learning through over-learning and memorization.

Therefore, the present study was aimed at investigating whether portfolio assessment as an alternative form of assessment can help overcome the above-mentioned shortcomings.

Basically, portfolio assessment is a teacher's response to a collection of texts (portfolios) produced by the student over a specified period of time, while portfolios may include specific points made during the semester and papers developed in class workshops, etc. Teachers respond to the submitted materials not to provide an evaluation with a grade or score but to provide suggestions for revision as well as some general commentary about the individual's development as a writer (Mousavi, 1997).

Beyond being merely a compilation of documents, the portfolio is a systematic and organized collection of evidence used to monitor and assess students' progression in knowledge, abilities, and perspectives. Its aim is to demonstrate advancement and maturation over a period and allow interactive dialogue about a student's strengths, weaknesses, and future goals (De Fina, 1992). The portfolio procedures comprise collection, selection, self-assessment, reflection and delayed evaluation and are embedded within multiple feedback sources (Burner 2014) . Baker (1993) believes that teacher in a writing class should act as a mentor or coach. In classes where portfolio is used, as Klenowski (2002) believes, the teacher assumes the important role of facilitator of learning and is engaged actively in the assessment task. The teacher is expected to work collaboratively in the development of progress maps or learning continua that require the analysis of performance. Such assessment practice enables a wider range of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be recorded. This learning is enabling and students gain valuable skills in organization, evaluation, reflective thinking and management. A portfolio is an authentic assessment that students do together with their teachers. It is not just a collection of student work, but a selection - the student must be involved in choosing and justifying the pieces to be included. It provides samples of the student's work which show growth over time. By reflecting on their own learning (self-assessment), students begin to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their work. These weaknesses then become improvement goals. The criteria for selecting and assessing the portfolio contents must be clear to the teacher and the students at the outset of the process. Students may assume authority over their writing to a much greater extent in portfolio-centered classrooms. Students in portfolio-based classrooms (in comparison to those in more standard process-centered classrooms) display a more positive attitude toward their writing and an increased willingness to revise their work. As Baker (1993) believes, students who experience such instruction may demonstrate a more positive attitude toward writing than those in more traditionally-oriented classroom. Portfolio systems work toward making students more aware writers and more effective self-evaluative writers. Benson and Smith (1998) found three major benefits of portfolios: (1) a means of communicating more effectively with families, (2) a tool to motivate, encourage, and instruct students in the skills of self-assessment, and (3) a mechanism to monitor and improve their own instruction in the classroom. In secondary school, writing portfolio assessment is described as a catalyst that enhances learning by helping students develop reflective skills, metacognitive thinking, and self-regulated learning abilities. This is particularly important when students are required to write for exams, learn formal written English, and communicate effectively with others (Burner, 2014).

The present study has tried to investigate how portfolio assessment can enhance the writing skills of secondary school students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment. The focus was on engaging students in the teaching, learning, and assessment of writing through portfolio assessment and providing corrective/supportive feedback, instead of relying solely on traditional assessment methods like one-time tests. The study sought to address the limitations of traditional assessment approaches, which do not actively involve students in the teaching-learning-testing processes and may lead to negative attitudes towards learning and testing. The expectation was that using portfolio assessment would help mitigate these shortcomings and provide a more accurate reflection of students' competence. In addition, by using this new method of assessment and evaluation we can direct learners away from sole adherence to and reliance on their memory towards real attempts for meaningful learning. The positive and supportive environment of portfolio classes can boost student performance, leading to improved scores that serve as motivation for continued learning and increased engagement. Incorporating the elements of learner involvement, continuous feedback, students' own reflective thinking on their own performance, their own participation in the processes of teaching and formative assessment and evaluation altogether in the form of portfolio assessment of writing skill can be an acceptable alternative to traditional methods of testing.

Portfolio Assessment in Constructivism

Developments in constructivist theories of learning and educational assessment have supported the move towards authentic, alternative assessments, such as the portfolio. Portfolio use requires a constructivist pedagogy characterized by: opportunities to analyze learning; teacher facilitation of learning; group and pair work; student-teacher dialogue about the student's learning; available support and collaboration.

Constructivism is in accordance with Vygotsky and Bruner's learning theories. Vygotsky (1978) argued that higher order functions such as cognition develop in a social context. The implication for assessment from this perspective is that an important function is to help identify a student's zone of proximal development and to explore progress within it. Vygotsky's theory of zone of proximal development led Bruner (1986) to define areas beyond an individual's generative competence; that is where an individual could follow someone else's thoughts and actions without being able to construct them personally. Bruner (1990) sees learners as constructors and generators of knowledge through social interaction and recursive thought. These learning theories describe learning as socially embedded-learning by and with others –have underpinned the conceptualization of portfolio use.

Klenowski (2002) believes that all students need to acquire skills in self-management, self-regulation, continuing learning, self-evaluation and planning of future work because of the rapid, radical changes to assessment, pedagogy and the curriculum as described through the use of the portfolios.

An epistemological view of social construction includes these elements: a.) Knowledge is built through interactions; b.) Meaning is made through internal and external problem solving; c.).

Knowledge is socially structured; and d.)Meaning is negotiated by our schemata and expectations(Coppola, 1999). In a constructivist writing class, students typically create their written work in comfortable, familiar environments like their own home offices. The writing process involves multiple stages, including drafting, revising, and integrating feedback from peers, writing conferences, and comments. Students are encouraged to choose their own writing topics in order to engage in critical thinking about important communication issues.

Key processes in portfolio Development

These learning processes involve Self-evaluation, Substantive conversations, Meta cognitive development, Reflective thinking, and practice.

Self-evaluation: Creating a portfolio involves choosing specific pieces of work that showcase one's skills and accomplishments to a specific standard. This process requires students to carefully evaluate their own learning, grasp the performance expectations, and evaluate their work based on these standards. Sadler (1985) defines standards as 'particular levels used as reference points' and criteria as the 'dimensions relevant to an evaluation' (p.285).

According to Klenowski(2002) some authors use self-evaluation and self-assessment interchangeably; however, the term self-evaluation is used in a broader sense than self-assessment. For, it refers to ascribing value to the learning experience, first in the identification and understanding of the criteria and standards used, second by judging what is considered meritorious, and third by synthesizing the implications for future action. In an educational setting, this process is a collaborative effort between the teacher, students, and peers to support and manage development. This self-evaluative process is also broader than self-assessment as students are engaged in more than just ascribing grades or identifying the standard attained. They evaluate their performance and indicate progress against criteria and standards that emerge from the performance, have been given, are self-selected or negotiated with the teacher or peers.

A learning log exemplifies immediate self-assessment where students are prompted, on a daily or weekly basis, to reflect and document their learning experiences. Learning logs serve various purposes:

Dialogue journals: Students who are less comfortable with writing are given a purpose and encouragement to put their thoughts into words in a less threatening manner. The writing can be treated as a dialogue, meaning that what students write down will be responded to.

Classroom ritual: Scheduled regularly, these logs offer students a consistent method to evaluate their learning experiences, granting authority to their reflections as a form of assessment instead of traditional exams or papers.

Review: Students can document specific ideas or terms they have learned, serving as a substitute for quizzes or as a study aid. This practice can be particularly useful for adult learners who may not be accustomed to organizing their learning materials. Journals can help sort things out.

Question-and-answer session: Students can use the log to ask the teacher questions about the subject or the class, providing a more private avenue for communication that may not be feasible during regular class time. This allows for a deeper understanding of students' comprehension levels and concerns (Trunnel, 1992).

Substantive Conversation: The acts of constructing, presenting and reflecting on the contents or evidence of a portfolio are powerful portfolio processes for teachers and students at all stages of their teaching and learning.

Klenowski (2002) believes that dialogue, interview or 'learning conversation' in the assessment process are important. This follows Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development. The dialogue that takes place is a form of focused intervention and enables joint problem-solving in the zone of proximal development with guidance from the teacher (or someone more skilled than the student).

Formative and developmental forms of assessment are fundamental to the portfolio process and require dialogue between teacher and student. Torrance and Pryor(1998) believe that the model of formative assessment illustrated in portfolios derives from the social constructivist perspective in cognitive psychology that stresses the role of teacher-student interaction in the learning process (p.15). In referring to the work of Vygotsky and the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) these authors believe that it is important not only to state what students have accomplished but to indicate what they are ready to achieve with help.

An important purpose of formative assessment is to identify learning needs (kashef & Ashrafi, 2023) ; therefore, it is criterion-referenced, domain-referenced and student referenced. It is therefore a self-referenced approach where information is used diagnostically in relation to the individual student. Feedback becomes fundamental and needs to be specific to the particular learning needs of the individual student (Klenowski, 2002). The interactions help students identify strengths in their own learning and preferred learning styles. When this meta-cognitive insight of the student is shared with the teacher, it is valued as it assists the teacher in the facilitation of further learning.

Meta-cognitive Development: Meta-cognitive development is an important aspiration for alternative forms of assessment such as the use of a portfolio. Meta-cognition involves thinking about one's own thinking or knowing about one's learning and oneself as a learner. Today self-appraisal and self-management of cognition are considered to be fundamental characteristics of meta-cognition. For effective language learning and teaching, both learner skills and learner assumptions should be given due attention. To support this concept, students should be given the chance to clarify and assess their preferences, particularly in reference to definition of objectives in general and awareness of learning strategies (Bada and Okan, 2000).

Reflective Thinking: One of the main benefits of portfolio assessment is the promotion of learner reflection (Gottlieb, 1995). As part of the portfolio process, students are asked to think about their needs, goals, weaknesses, and strengths in language learning; they are often asked to select their best work and to explain why the work is valuable to them. In designing reflective tasks teachers should introduce reflective thinking to the students early on in the portfolio process and build reflective activities into the curriculum. Also, they should realize that the experience of engaging in reflection may be more instructional for the learner than the teacher's explanations.

The importance of portfolio assessment on students' writing has been proposed and emphasized by some educators (Baker, 1993; Brown and Hudson, 1998; Klenowski,2002; De Fina,1992; Dysthe and Engelsen,2004; Gearheart and Herman,1998; Hewitt,2001; Lam,2018; Lopez-Nernery and Binder,2004; Mathews, 2004; Santos,1997; …).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

To investigate the effectiveness of portfolio assessment for improving the writing ability of Iranian EFL students, the following questions were posed:

1. Does portfolio assessment have any effect on the promotion of the writing ability of Iranian EFL learners?

2. Is there any significant difference between using portfolio assessment and a single test assessment when evaluating the writing ability of Iranian EFL learners?

In order to investigate the above-mentioned research questions the following null hypotheses were stated:

1. There is no relationship between portfolio assessment and the writing ability improvement of Iranian EFL learners.

2. There will be no significant difference between using portfolio assessment and single test assessment when evaluating the writing ability of Iranian EFL learners.

Method

The Design of the Study

The Pre-test-Post-test Equivalent Group Design which is a sub-category of the True Experimental Design was the appropriate design to follow in this study.

R	O1	X	O2	Xgain = O2 – O1
R	O3	C	O4	Cgain = O4 – O3

R = Random assignment of subjects to the experimental and control groups.

X = Exposure of a group to an experimental variable treatment.

C = Exposure of a group to the control condition.

O = Observation or test administration.

Participants

The students who participated in this research project were 90 Iranian high school students. They were Persian speakers, female and about the same age. They were eighth grade students. They attended the writing classes two days a week, one hour a day. They were randomly selected, 45 for the experimental group and 45 for the control group.

Instrumentation

At the outset of the study, an achievement test was administered to check the degree of the homogeneity of general language ability of the two groups of subjects. As a course book, a pamphlet at the level of the students was provided by the researcher and given to them. It included the characteristics of writing, a writing progress checklist, a composition grading scale and also meaningful drills at grade one level. A questionnaire was also used as part of the portfolio assessment. These seven questions were not related to the content of the course, but they were aimed at involving the students in the classroom procedures such as teaching, learning, and assessing. At the end of the course of study, after the experimental group had received the treatment, a post-test was given to the students of both groups. The type of the writing test and the topic on which the students wrote in the posttest were of the same nature and characteristics as that in the pretest. It was administered to check whether there was any significant difference in the performance of the two groups.

Procedures

The language achievement test was administered to check the degree of homogeneity of general language ability of the two groups of students who were the subjects of the study. To find out whether the students of the two groups were homogeneous and did not differ from each other significantly, an f-test and a t-test were carried out based on the students' scores on the language achievement test. The results of this analysis are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

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Table 1

F test for the achievement test (EG and CG)

	F observed	F critical
Experimental G. / Control G.	0.31	1.66

F critical > F observed

1.66 > 0.31

Table 2

T-test for the two groups of students (achievement test)

T-observed =0.55 (n=45, p<0.05), T-critical =2.021 (df = 44)

Based on the results given in table 2, the value of t-observed did not exceed the t-critical value. It indicated that the difference between the two groups was not significant. In other words, the results of the T-test for comparing the mean performance of the two groups showed that the means of the two groups were not significantly different.

During the course of study, the researcher asked the experimental students write eight compositions with appropriate revisions. The students in the portfolio-based group were told about the format of portfolio-based instructional procedures. The concepts of reflective thinking, self-involvement, self-monitoring, self-assessment, and portfolio assessment were defined and exemplified for the students in the experimental class. A writing progress checklist was used as part of ongoing assessment. Another tool or organizer as part of ongoing assessment was writing a conference record (or reflection piece). The students were required to provide folders, which included the student's name, table of contents, entries (core and optional) in order or with date, and reflections. They bring these folders with themselves every session. A questioner as a learning log was explained and distributed to all of the experimental subjects. The questions encouraged students' reflective thinking and critical analysis of their own learning and the teacher's method of teaching.

The researcher provided comments, suggestions, and solutions for each individual student's portfolios. These comments and recommendations were presented in the form of qualitative assessments ranging from average to excellent, or detailed explanations addressing specific issues or comprehensive comments on each student's responses. For common problems, the researcher tried to describe the answer for all of the students in class. Bi-weekly conference sessions were scheduled for students to thoroughly review their portfolios, with the researcher ensuring active participation in the portfolio assessment, self-reflection, and self-assessment process. The immediate delivery of oral reports during these sessions served as an indicator of students' engagement in evaluating their portfolios and identifying their learning strengths and weaknesses. However, in the control group, the classroom was managed and conducted in the usual way. Students completed compositions and exercises without engaging in self-reflection or receiving teacher feedback unless requested. There were no conference sessions held. Contrastingly, in place of the conference sessions, self-reflection, and self-monitoring activities present in the experimental group's classroom procedures, students in the control group were assigned additional exercises as a placebo.

Two raters, the researcher and another rater scored all of the compositions. They rated the compositions both holistically and analytically, and the average of holistic and analytic marking was assigned as the final score of each rater.

Results and Discussion

The students in this study were not at so high a level to be tested in language proficiency test; so, an achievement test was prepared to measure how much each student knew English at the eighth grade in high school. So, the pretest in this research was a kind of achievement test. The Language Achievement Test consisted of four subtests of grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension and a writing test. It was a valid test. To check the consistency of the achievement test scores, the reliability of the test was calculated (Table 3). The reliability indexes were optimal in every group of items.

Table 3

Summary of the language achievement test statistics

Sub tests	Number of Items	Mean	Variance	S.D.	Reliability
Structure (30 items)	21	14.61	12.15	3.49	0.66
Vocabulary (30 items)	23	11.13	21.40	4.63	0.77

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Reading comprehension (20 items)	17	7.89	14.50	3.81	0.75

Total number of the students = 90

The researcher and another scorer scored the same papers and then a correlation coefficient was computed between the ratings. The inter-rater correlations and the inter-rater reliability were found to be significantly different from zero. The average was 0.99(Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4

The inter-rater reliability of compositions in control group

Writing test	School	Your English Teacher
Correlation coefficient	0.91	0.94
Inter-rater reliability	0.99	0.99

Table 5:

The inter-rater reliability of compositions in experimental group

Writing test	School	Family	A Typical Day in Your Life	A Good Friday	Go Shopping	Zoo	A Letter To a Friend	Your English Teacher
Correlation coefficient	0.96	0.94	0.92	0.91	0.91	0.91	0.82	0.95
Inter-rater reliability	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99

Since in all of the scored compositions the magnitude of the observed correlation coefficient (0.99) was larger than the critical value (0.3044), the correlation coefficient was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. In other words, there was only a 5% probability that this correlation coefficient occurred by chance alone.

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To determine whether the samples met the criterion of equality of variance, the F tests were computed (Table 6).

Table 6

5 F tests

	F test	F critical > F observed
the language achievement test (EG and CG)	0.31	1.66 > 0.31
pretest (EG and CG)	0.04	1.66 > 0.04
post test (EG and CG)	0.02	1.66 > 0.02
EG (post test and pretest)	0.02	1.66 > 0.02
CG (post test and pretest)	0.03	1.66 > 0.03

So, the researcher concluded that the variances fulfilled the condition of homogeneity and that the method of pulled variances was appropriate.

The nature of this research project involved the use of the statistical T-Test to compare the means of the two groups for the purposes of:

1) determining the homogeneity of subjects.

2) checking the differences between the performance of the two groups on the writing test.

3) checking the differences between the posttest and pretest in each group.

To test the differences between experimental and control group means on the achievement test (whether they are homogeneous), an independent t-tests was conducted to compare the means of:

- The two groups (control and experimental) on the Language Achievement Test. The results are stated in table 7:

Table 7

T-test of EG and CG on the language achievement test

	N	Mean	S.D.	T observed
Experimental G.	45	46.18	12.22	0.55

Control G.	45	47.62	10.46	

2.021>0.55

For the first null hypothesis, two independent t-tests were computed to compare the means of:

- The two groups (control and experimental) on the pre writing test (Table 8).

- The two groups (control and experimental) on the post writing test (Table 9).

Table 8

T-test of EG and CG on pretest

	N	Mean	S.D.	T observed
Experimental G.	45	7.51	3.08	0.35
Control G.	45	6.98	2.25	

2.021>0.35

Table 9

T-test of EG and CG on post test

	N	Mean	S.D.	T observed
Experimental G.	45	16.64	2.16	4.51
Control G.	45	11.27	3.14	

2.021<4.51

Since the t-value of 4.51 exceeded the t-critical value of 2.021 for a two-tailed test at the 0.05 level at 44 degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis was rejected. Here, in all of the cases of T-test analysis:

df = 44 $p < 0.05$ T-critical = 2.021

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Therefore, the first null hypothesis "there is no relationship between portfolio assessment and the writing improvement of Iranian EFL high school students" was safely rejected.

The results clearly indicated that the experimental group surpassed the control group following the treatment, though they were homogeneous prior to the experiment. So, the treatment had been effective as far as this research project was concerned.

For the second null hypothesis, two matched T-tests were run to compare the means of:

- The post writing test and prewriting test (in experimental groups) to show the improvement of the students during the course of study (Table10)

- The post writing test and prewriting test (in control group) to show the improvement of the students during the course of study (Table11)

Table 10

T-test of pretest and posttest in EG

Experimental G.	N	Mean	S.D.	T observed
Pre test	45	7.51	3.08	3.66
Post test	45	16.64	2.16	

3.66>2.021

Since the t value of 3.66 exceeded the t-critical value of 2.021 for a two tailed test at the 0.05 level at 44 degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 11

T-test of pretest and posttest in CG

Control G.	N	Mean	S.D.	T observed
Pre test	45	6.98	2.25	3.90
Post test	45	11.27	3.14	

3.90>2.021

So, the second null hypothesis was safely rejected. The results indicated that the students in the experimental group made progress outstandingly in the portfolio system, while in the control group

for which the traditional method was used, students did not make so much progress. So, the treatment was successful as far as this research project was concerned.

Conclusion

In the experimental group for which portfolio assessment was used, the scores were nearer to the true score of the students than the control group who were evaluated by only a single score. Also, the students in the experimental group made more progress in their writing ability. Such a significant difference after implementing portfolio assessment, clearly demonstrated that engaging learners in their own learning and classroom activities through self-monitoring and feedback from teachers boosted their learning outcomes and aided their performance in educational tasks.

Portfolio use requires a constructivist pedagogy characterized by: opportunities to analyze learning, teacher facilitation of learning, group and pair work, student-teacher dialogue about the student's learning, available support and collaboration. Implementing portfolio assessment within classroom activities allows learners to actively engage in their learning processes, monitor their performance, and make necessary adjustments, ultimately leading to meaningful learning outcomes. Le Francois (1991) describes this approach as empowering students to achieve tasks beyond their usual capabilities. Through portfolio assessment, students not only focus on task performance but also develop critical thinking and self-evaluation skills. This study suggests that encouraging learners to critically evaluate their work, alongside receiving feedback from teachers, can enhance their learning experience and promote long-lasting knowledge retention. Critical, reflective thinking and feedback in portfolio assessment help students identify strengths and weaknesses in their work, fostering a sense of achievement and motivation for further learning. By addressing weaknesses through teacher feedback and self-evaluation, students can make conscious efforts to improve and progress in their learning journey.

The research findings align with the previous studies by Gimenez (1996), Matsumoto (1996), Puhl (1997), Black and Wiliam (1998), and Lam (2018) which also found positive associations between continuous portfolio assessments and significant learning advancements.

Curriculum for the Twenty-first Century

The researcher advocates a post-modern curriculum of open-ended design to promote teaching that:

- encourages students to be active creators rather than passive receivers of knowledge;

- provides students with opportunities to exercise choice and leadership not ordering and following; and

- is interactive and uses communal conversation for dialogic learning not isolated and programmed learning approaches (Doll,1993).

The theory of knowledge on which such a curriculum is conceived is interactive and dialogic. Knowledge, creation, discovery and negotiation are emphasized rather than verification of meaning. It is a generative curriculum that facilitates the creative, interactive transformations between teacher and student, student and student (Klenowski, 2002).

A curriculum designed for the modern era needs to move away from focusing solely on content and objectives and instead, prioritize skills and processes. It should embody a transformative approach to knowledge that empowers learners to apply what they have learned. This curriculum should also promote the generation of new knowledge, stress the interconnectedness of different areas of knowledge, and highlight the practical application of school knowledge to real-life issues. These changing emphases and conceptions of curriculum suggest the need for corresponding changes to teachers' roles and responsibilities. Teachers need to shift from being implementers to creators and developers of curriculum.

This reconceptualization of curriculum has important implications for the assessment of learning. A norm-referenced approach to assessment that is derived from a deficit model is no longer suitable. This is because the assessments of learning are made in terms deviation from the norm or standard. Today, assessment of the quality of work generated is considered more important in a curriculum context that encourages feedback focused on the learning purpose and that values critical, reflective, iterative processes for development and improvement. The notion of a portfolio of work, developed over time, incorporating critical reflection and self-evaluation of what has been achieved makes for a more compatible assessment system. Reflecting on the inclusions in the portfolio (assignments, written papers or tests), or what has been achieved, provides the opportunity for another level of analysis (internal analysis) of the extent to which intentions and purposes have been achieved (Young,2013).

Assessment, pedagogical practice and curriculum need to be aligned so that active student engagement in learning is encouraged and opportunities exist for students to take greater responsibility for their learning. Student agency needs to be promoted. This requires educators, policy officers and political advisors to keep pace with the important developments in assessment and to understand the vital links between assessment and the teaching and learning cycle.

As students gain a deeper understanding of the many decisions, they make in enhancing their writing, recognize the steps required for creating impactful written pieces, and evaluate their work against personally established criteria, they demonstrate the cognitive patterns typical of writers. Active involvement, critical analysis, and self-evaluation are vital for educating individuals in the contemporary era. Portfolio assessment provides the adaptability needed to track individual student advancement in line with community, state, and national guidelines.

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