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Using e-portfolio for developing preparatory stage students' EFL critical writing skills

A thesis submitted for the M.A Degree in Education

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Abstract

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The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effect of using e-portfolio for developing the 2nd year preparatory stage students' EFL critical writing skills. Participants of the present study were 60 second year prep stage students (N=60). They were assigned equally to two groups; a control group and an experimental one. The instruments used in the present study were a pre-post test to measure the students' critical writing skills, and a critical writing skills' checklist. The suggested program was administrated to the experimental group in the first term of the academic school year 2014-2015 at Elshrouk private school in Giza governorate. Results showed that the program was effective in enhancing the experimental group members' critical writing skills. Implications and recommendations, as well as suggestions for further studies were provided.

Key Words: e-Portfolio - critical Writing Skills .

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Table of contents

Abstract **I**

Acknowledgment **II**

1) Chapter one: Background and problem **1-11**

1.1 Introduction . 1

1.2 Context of the study. 4

1.3 The pilot study 6

1.4 Statement of the problem 8

1.5 Study questions 8

1.6 Hypotheses 9

1.7 Delimitations 9

1.8 Significance of the study. 9

1.9 Definitions of terms 10

Chapter Two: Review of literature and related studies **12-75**

2.1 Nature of electronic portfolio 13

2.2. The Advantages of using e-portfolio: 15

2.3 The main features of e-portfolio: 22

2.4 The disadvantages of using e-portfolio 28

2.5 Purposes of using portfolio. 29

2.6 Types of e-portfolios. 31

2.7 Steps for an electronic portfolio development process. 31

2.7.1 Pre-implementation stage. 31

2.7.2 Implementation stage. 32

2.7.3 Post-implementation stage. 35

2-8. Contents of electronic portfolios. 36

2-9. Assessment and e-portfolio. 37

2-10. Levels of e-portfolio development. 39

2.10.1 Level 1: Portfolio as storage/collection. 39

2.10.2 Level 2: Portfolio as workspace/process. 40

2.10.3 Level 3: Portfolio as showcase/product. 41

2.11 Teachers, parents and students with the e-portfolio 42

2.11.1 Teachers' reflections and roles in e-portfolio. 42

2.11.2 Parent's reflections and roles in e-portfolios. 43

2.11.3 .Students' reflections and role in e-portfolio. 44

2.12 Nature of critical writing. 45

2.13 Importance of critical writing. 50

2.14 Principles of critical writing. 56

2.15 A checklist of the critical writing skill 59

2.16 The features of the critical writers. 70

2.17 Rationale for using e-portfolio in developing the critical writing skills. 72

Chapter Three: Method 76-87

3.1 Research design. 77

3.2 Participants. 77

3.3 Instruments. 77

3.4 The writing skills' checklist (see appendix) 78
3.5 The critical writing tests :(see appendix) 79
3.6 The proposed program (see appendix). 79
3.6.1 Aim of the program: 80
3.6.2 Objectives of the program: 80
3.6.3 Content of the program: 80
3.7 Teaching strategies. 83
3.8 Duration of the program. 83
3.9 Instructional aids and equipments . 84
3.10 Assessment procedures. 84
3.10.1 Self –assessment. 84
3.10.2 Formative assessment. 84
3.10.3 Summative assessment. 85
3.11 Teachers and students' roles in the program. 85

Chapter Four: Statistical analysis and results 88-109

4.1 Data analysis, results &effect size. 89

4.2 Dissussion and interpretation of results. 100

4.3 Qualitative assessment of students' critical writing works. 102

4.4 Some common remarks concerning the students' critical writing before applying the program. 106

4.5 Some changes that occurred in the experimental group students' performance as a result of applying the program. 107

4.6 Conclusion. 108

Chapter Five: Summary, conclusions and pedagogical implications 110-115

5.1 Introduction. 111

5.2 Summary. 111

5.3 Discussion of results. 112

5.4 Pedagogical implications 114

5.5 Suggestions for further researches 114

5.6 Recommendations 115

References 116

Appendices

Appendix (A) The supervisors'/ teachers' questionnaire. 129

Appendix (B) Test of pilot study. 133

Appendix (C) checklist of critical writing skills. 139

Appendix (D) The critical writing scoring rubric. 141

Appendix (E) The final version of pre/post test.. 145

Appendix (F) The program. 164

Appendix (G) Samples of students' answers. 165

List of tables

Table (1) Mean-comparisons (T-Tests) between total scores of the experimental and control group on the pre-Administration of the critical writing test. 89

Table (2) Mean-comparisons (T-tests) between total scores of the experimental and control group on the post-Administration of the critical writing test. 90

Table (3) Mean-comparisons (T-Test) between total scores of the experimental group on the pre- and post- Administration of the critical writing test. 94

Table (4) the percentage change for each case of the experimental group. 97

List of figures

Figure (1) Portfolio as storage. 39

Figure (2) Documentation of learning. Portfolio as workspace. 40

Figure (3) Documentation of achievement. Portfolio as showcase. 41

Figure (4) Core abilities. 54

Figure (5) Sample of mind mapping. 56

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM

CHAPTER ONE

Background and problem

Introduction:

In this age the speed at which technology has developed plays a major role in the changes taking place around us. Technological devices are definitely influential in our lives. It can enhance the learning process in schools in various ways. With the increasing popularity of computer technology, it is essential for administrators to encourage computer technology in the education system.

Technology is important in education because it motivates us to reconsider how people learn, how they are empowered, and the nature of learning and useful information is. We cannot avoid the role of technology in our schools because it enables educators to re-evaluate the nature of what and how we teach.

Technology is at the core of virtually every aspect of our daily life and work. We need to leverage it to provide powerful learning experiences and content, as well as resources and assessments that measure the students' achievement in more complete, authentic, and meaningful ways. Technology-based learning and assessment systems will be pivotal in improving the students' learning and generating data that can be used to continuously improve the education system at all levels. Technology will help us execute collaborative teaching strategies combined with professional learning that better prepare and enhance educators.

(National Education Technology Plan, 2010)

One of the most important uses of technology is in the field of assessment. Assessment that makes use of technology is far from being traditional.

Traditional assessments, which are made according to a student's memory of the messages given by instructors, are unable to effectively measure the results of these two learning theories. The changes in the student's cognition and learning process, involvement and interaction have become the new foundation for learning effect assessment. **(skaalid ,2003)**

Therefore, when traditional assessment is unable to effectively reflect a student's learning process, there is a need for new types of assessment.

E-portfolios are a valuable learning and assessment tool. An e-portfolio is a digitized collection of artifacts including demonstrations, resources and accomplishments that represent an individual, group, or institution. This collection can be comprised of text-based, graphic, or multimedia elements archived on a website or on other electronic media such as a CD-Rom or DVD.

An e-portfolio is more than a simple collection. It can also serve as an administrative tool to manage and organize work created with different applications and to control who can see the work. Eportfolios encourage personal reflection and often involve the exchange of ideas and feedback.

In general, e-portfolios are helping students become critical thinkers and aiding in the development of their writing and multimedia communication skills. E-portfolios can help students

learn information and technology literacy skills and how to use digital media. **(Lorenzo & ittelson,2005).**

(Thomas, 2000) declared that critical writing is a kind of self-expression or personal visions. It is innovation not imitation and it is characterized by the beauty of language. It has a strong influence on the listeners and readers' minds. It helps to develop imagination and creativity. It starts innate and develops by training. Critical writing provides a fertile area to practice the use of language, as it helps to master the skills of reading, writing and enables the students to express thoughts and emotions and transfer them to the others.

Success in teaching critical writing is based on an interesting education process. That is far from the traditional method of teaching. Critical writing is viewed as a productive skill as well as, it is related to the critical ability that not everybody has. Critical writing, thus, is one of the most difficult skills.

Because of the tremendous development in the field of communication and information, and what the age of globalization has imposed, openness to different cultures, in addition to the complexity of life, innovative non-traditional solutions for old problems was necessary to develop critical writing skills to the learners. This will not come unless there is sufficient awareness of the importance of transferring from instructional goals to the conservation to move towards a culture of innovation, and must use methods and modern trends that make education based on the higher

levels, hence the need to use e-portfolio for developing preparatory stage students' critical writing skills.

Context of the problem:

There are no space for pilling papers or accumulating materials for learning and assessment in the classrooms. To have access to the students' performance / results anytime, anywhere, e-portfolio is one of the most important devices for analyzing and judging the students' work.

An e-portfolio is more than a simple collection. It can also serve as an administrative tool to manage and organize work created with different applications and to control who can see the work. E-portfolios encourage personal reflection and often involve the exchange of ideas and feedback.

In general, e-portfolios are helping students become critical thinkers and aiding in the development of their writing and multimedia communication skills. E-portfolios can help students learn information and technology literacy skills and how to use digital media. **(Lorenzo and Ittelson, 2005).**

As the world changes, technology should be connected to assessment. Electronic assessment is a process of assessment through the use of multiple electronic media as a part of the e-learning process.

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In a study conducted in the **University of Leceister, (2009)** an important question was raised. Why there is a need for cw?

With critical writing students are participating in the academic debate. This is more challenging and risky. Students need to weigh up the evidence and arguments of others, and to contribute their own. Students will need to consider the quality of the evidence and

argument they have read, identify key positive and negative aspects they can comment upon; assess their relevance and usefulness to the debate that they are engaging in for their assignment, and identify how best they can be woven into the argument that they are developing.

The pilot study:

The current research problem is the weakness of the preparatory stage students in critical writing skills. Therefore, the researcher made two pilot studies to further investigate this problem.

*__First__ a questionnaire was designed for English teachers and supervisors in the preparatory stage, where the researcher conducted the pilot study, the schools were Pioneer, Royal international, Ecole Franco city, Badr tiger.. and other schools at El-Mohandseen and 6th of October city. The questionnaire presented in the form of a structure interview **(appendix A)**

The researcher got the following results:

1- Ten teachers mentioned that the preparatory stage students do not know what is critical writing?. Four teachers saw that the class time is not enough for developing this linguistic domain. Three of them mentioned that the lack of supported devices of the learning process like, labs and school magazines may be the reason, and three others referred to the lack of clear strategy that describes how to develop critical writing. Five teachers indicated that most teachers do not care for developing the critical reading and writing, as most students do not prefer to participate or engage in dialogues during class.