D. Hoven (2021). (From the Athabasca University M.Ed. Moodle course site: ePortfolio Orientation & Development)

What is an ePortfolio?

Electronic portfolios (e-portfolios) are a collection of web-based artifacts and interactions with accompanying critical reflections that are posted and managed using knowledge management and reflection tools. They are more than "simply electronic versions of physical portfolios" (Roberts, 2006).

E-portfolios are annotated collections of digital objects, which incorporate the expression of ideas, information, arguments, and documentation, in graphic, text, audio, and video formats. E-portfolios are "net native" meaning they can be tagged, searched, archived, syndicated, and displayed in multiple formats on a wide variety of presentation devices ranging from cell phones to lecture halls.

E-portfolios are dynamic and interactive — creating opportunities for peer, instructor, and general public feedback, commentary, and annotation. They are owner-managed in that different views of the content can be created and permission to access granted to different audiences.

Finally, the MEd e-Portfolio is program-centric, allowing students and various audiences to explore how the MEd fosters the development of competencies through individual courses, but more compellingly, as an integrated and comprehensive program of learning and studies.

Purposes of the *Process* (see below) ePortfolio in the MEd Program

The e-portfolio is an integral component of the MEd program and serves a variety of purposes, as outlined below.

- *To promote progress through the MEd program.* The evolving e-portfolio documents the learning journey. It allows students, as well as instructors, to visualize, share, and celebrate program milestones. The e-portfolio can also assist in program planning, as students can review their portfolio with instructors or the MEd Coordinator at key decision points.

- *To foster critical reflection*. E-portfolios add a critically reflective component to student learning through selection, annotation, and public display and discussion of course artefacts and related experiences. Overall, the intent of the MEd e-Portfolio is to encourage thinking beyond coursework, moving

toward reflective practice, lifelong and life-wide learning, and future possibilities outside of the MEd program.

- *As a final, capstone activity.* Students in the course-based route of the MEd program use their e-portfolio is an alternative to the former comprehensive examination. As the final capstone activity, students prepare a culminating, integrative presentation based on selected assignments and other artifacts such as experiences, as well as reflective annotations, interactions, and feedback distilled from the e-portfolio they developed throughout their program. This presentation is reviewed by at least one faculty member, and a synchronous discussion is scheduled, to which all faculty and MEd students are invited. During the culminating discussion, the faculty member(s) and student explore the learning demonstrated in the e-Portfolio, the evidence of development of the competencies illustrated in five selected artifacts, and the process by which learning occurred.

- *Other purposes.* Students may also use their e-Portfolio for personal or professional reasons such as sharing their work with peers or presenting samples of their work to potential employers.

e-Portfolio: A reflective tool

An e-portfolio is predominantly a reflective tool and, therefore, is especially valuable for supporting lifelong learning strategies and knowledge creation throughout your studies in the MEd program, in your work experience, and after completion of your formal studies.

Abrami and Barrett (2005) note that e-portfolios can scaffold attempts at knowledge construction, in, for example, the application of new learning to the workplace. Research supports this contention. In 2007, Lind conducted a pilot study in which pre-service music education students were asked to keep e-Portfolios documenting their learning and fieldwork experiences. She found that the students actively demonstrated connections between their course work and their practicum work. Students also felt that the reflective aspect helped them think "deeply about their pedagogical philosophy and about what was important to them as teachers" (Promising Practices, ¶ 4).

The Edutools website provides a method for comparing and selecting e-portfolio software, as well as a list of definitions. Most noteworthy is the entry for *reflection*:

[Templates for] reflection support conscious and careful consideration about one's actions and about the thinking that accompanies actions. One intended pedagogical impact to the process of reflection is to enable the learner to generalize lessons learned beyond the context in which they were learned and be better able to cope with new situations (Edutools, 2007).

In a well-conceived e-Portfolio, learners create a repository of artifacts, consisting of assignments and other products they have constructed as well as interactions they have experienced during the learning process. These artifacts are accompanied by reflections on the learning experience. Reflections should document metacognitive processes and keep track of goals and progress. In addition to e-portfolio development, these reflections can be used to create resumes for job applications and notes for interviews.

e-Portfolio Forms and Functions

There are different forms and functions of e-Portfolios: process, showcase, and assessment (Abrami & Barrett, 2005). At any given time, an e-Portfolio may serve more than one function.

- The intent of a *process portfolio* is to document the student's growth and progress through their program or period of study. In such a case, it is expected that the learner will provide evidence of self-evaluation, decision-making, reflection, and self-correction. This is the major function of the MEd e-Portfolio.

- A *showcase portfolio* focuses less on describing the journey, but rather demonstrates what has been accomplished. These portfolios are useful for documenting skills and levels of achievement. Students may wish to develop a showcase portfolio based on their MEd e-Portfolio, subsequent to graduation, for potential employers in order to demonstrate the learning they have achieved, the competencies they have developed, their capacity for self-reflection, and how they approach learning and work tasks from a reflective, critical practice perspective.

- The main goal of an *assessment portfolio* is to allow external evaluation or judgment. It has been suggested that e-portfolios support greater *authenticity* in assessment because they offer more contextualized

evidence of learning; as students develop their e-portfolios, they are able to collaborate with members of their communities during the learning process (Abrami & Barrett, 2005). The MEd e-Portfolio has a partial assessment aspect in that the reflections accompanying each artifact and the culminating discussion reflect what students have learned and the competencies they have attained during the program of studies.

E-portfolios may also be classified according to their implementation pattern. *On-going portfolios* are developed over a period of time. *End-of-program portfolios* are retrospective in nature. They require students to select samples of papers, assignments, projects, interactions, and other artifacts, as well as to include or create reflections on their work upon completion of their program of study.

It is strongly recommended that the MEd e-portfolio be implemented as an on-going portfolio and that its development begin early in the program. However, if the student is partially or completely through the program before initiating the development of the portfolio, then its implementation will be, at least partially, a retrospective end-of-program portfolio.

In preparation for the culminating discussion with faculty members and peers in the Capstone eportfolio course: MDDE694, MEd students select samples of their work and experiences, with accompanying reflections, that they consider representative of their learning and attainment of the various categories of MEd competencies. By implementing an on-going portfolio, students can continually add artifacts and reflect upon them during their program while the concepts and processes are still fresh; they can also review this work later for further reflection. The implementation of an on-going portfolio better supports the process aspects of e-portfolios as it highlights long-term cognitive and skill development, the basis for lifelong learning. Apart from these advantages, a major disadvantage of leaving the entire portfolio until the end of the program is that this experience may feel somewhat overwhelming for many students. Research supports the on-going implementation of e-portfolios. Based on the findings of the pilot study cited above, Lind (2007) noted that students returned to their portfolios years later, replacing assignments with new materials that better reflected their changing beliefs and personal growth. Some students continued to revise and refine their portfolios beyond the course requirements and even after the course was completed. This evidence is also being supported by practices of graduating MEd students.

The use of an e-portfolio to document achievement and personal growth is valuable and potentially affirming for students. Regardless of whether the e-portfolio is on-going or implemented at the end of the program, to some degree, either means of implementation will demonstrate growth over time and allow for critically-reflective evaluation of learning achieved throughout the program.

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