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Narrative portfolio in foreign language teacher education

Riitta Jaatinen

Abstract

This article is practically oriented based on my experiences and practices as a teacher educator. In the first part I give a brief account of what the portfolio as narrative texts is, why we should adopt the portfolio in teacher education, and what types of portfolios exist. I also discuss the conceptions of learning that underlie the portfolio and the importance of reflection in learning to be a teacher. I will briefly explain what a student teacher's portfolio usually consists of and what processes student teachers as compilers of the portfolio go through. In the second part I concentrate on portfolio work in FL (foreign language) teacher education. As a case study, I use my student teachers' portfolio work. First, I set the learning objectives for the narrative portfolio work and then present our model, i.e. how the process to become a FL-teacher is designed in our application. Finally, I present some difficulties faced when reading autobiographical and multi-voiced texts of student portfolios and suggest a few ways we could read them.

Keywords: autobiographical knowledge, language education, narrative, portfolio, teacher education

Introduction

The narrating, conceptualizing and interpreting of personal experiences of learning to be a teacher and oneself as a teacher, and developing teachership based on such activity has been considered central, important and almost inevitable in teacher education since the late 80's and early 90's. The pedagogic literature has emphasized the view of teachers as reflective professionals inquiring about themselves and their work at school. Teachers have been encouraged to simultaneously recall and narrate their experiences, and to reflect and conceptualize them using the theoretical knowledge connected to their experiences. Both pre- and in-service teachers have been guided to see themselves as "researchers" who have a reflective, inquiring approach to their work. (Knowles 1993; Ojanen 1996; Zeichner & Liston 1987.)

Within the reflective approach is the idea that conceptualizing experiences with the help of scientific theories, and interpreting and analyzing them helps student teachers understand more deeply what they have experienced. Seeing their worlds and themselves anew, in a different way, is thought to lead to qualitatively different and better teaching and education. Student teachers learn to build up a body of professional knowledge (factual, strategic and ethical), use the knowledge in critical ways in new situations, widen the range of criteria which includes a reflective/critical process, and build up a personal set of criteria as a result of their reflective critical process (Proctor 1993, 93–94; cf. Boud 2001). The portfolio has been found and further developed to help this difficult and demanding process in teacher education.

In 1990–2010 there have been many researchers in Finland who have developed the portfolio pedagogy in FL-teaching and FL-teacher education. Professor Viljo Kohonen from the University of Tampere is the pioneer. He brought the idea originally from the United States while he was working there as a visiting professor in the late eighties, but he has further developed it from a teaching and assessment tool towards a holistic approach in education. Other Finnish researchers that I will be referring to in this article are Vuokko Kaartinen from the University of Turku, professor Pirjo Linnakylä from the University of Jyväskylä, and professor Anneli Niikko from the University of Eastern Finland. I have used portfolio as an approach and tool for reflection in teacher education for six years and before that in foreign language teaching in schools for ten years. There are various definitions for '*portfolio*' in pedagogical literature. In this article I use the

definition by Jones and Shelton, which is very comprehensive and covers the main processes of portfolio work. According to Jones and Shelton (2011, 21–22)

> Portfolios are rich, contextual, highly personalized documentaries of one's learning journey. They contain purposefully organised documentation that clearly demonstrates specific knowledge, skills, dispositions and accomplishments achieved over time. Portfolios represent connections made between actions and beliefs, thinking and doing, and evidence and criteria. They are a medium for reflection through which the builder constructs meaning, makes the learning process transparent and learning visible, crystallises insights, and anticipates future direction.

The core ideas of portfolio work are as follows: Student teachers collect and produce narrative material that is reflected upon, analysed, evaluated, selected, presented and "published" by giving well-grounded reasons and motives for their choices and action. The above definition is a kind of "summary" of this process and my article as well. My purpose in this article is to expose how these ideas of portfolio are realised and further developed in the context of pre-service FL-teacher education at Tampere University.

Why adopt a portfolio in teacher education?

Portfolios are widely used in FL-teaching especially in European countries. In FL-teacher education at Tampere University we began to use portfolio almost twenty years ago. There are at least four different arguments for adopting the portfolio that I consider important and worth noticing. First of all, the portfolio is a pedagogical tool used during the student teachers' pedagogical studies. Through narrative writing, student teachers are able to express their personal voices and become heard by their supervisors and peers, i.e. other student teachers (cf. Bruner 1996, 39). Therefore, the writing helps not just the student teacher but all of us, i.e. other student teachers and supervising teachers, follow the whole process of a student teacher's learning to become a teacher, and to mentor, guide and support his or her processes of learning. Through the portfolio process, its narrative writings, peer support and supervisory discussions, student teachers learn to develop

their learning/teaching strategies and practise reflection and self- and peer assessment.

The second argument concerns student teachers' future work and in it teaching methods in particular. The portfolio teaches an approach of how to act as a teacher. It teaches the student teacher important "methods" of how to work as a FL-teacher, such as to collect (teaching) material, analyse and classify, evaluate and file, follow and evaluate her/his own work and development as a teacher, narrate, i.e. make her/his work visible and transparent to other people, and to collaborate with students and fellow-workers. Both the European Language Portfolio and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – the two documents that provide European language teachers with important guidelines for teaching – take for granted that a FL-teacher possesses such skills and qualities (CEFR 2001; ELP 2011).

The third argument is to see the portfolio as a valuable toolkit for the first few years of teaching. Many recent studies have shown that newly-qualified teachers need support and mentoring in the induction phase (Ruohotie-Lyhty 2011). It is possible to alleviate their workload beforehand. For this purpose the teacher student's portfolio contains a personal in-practice theory, samples of different lesson plans, syllabus plans, tests, authentic assessment, lots of teaching materials, reports, essays and articles on didactics and education, reflections of what to pay attention to in particular, photos, pictures, videos, CDs, games, i.e. whatever the student teacher has developed and collected during his or her pedagogical studies.

The fourth argument concerns the meaningfulness of the student teacher's personal commitment and engagement in portfolio. At its best, the portfolio is a personal remembrance, personal memories of one's pedagogical studies, a certain special period in one's life with its people, happenings, etc. Storing up memories and experiences in narratives, pictures, etc. has always been important for most of us. We have our diaries. We collect photographs in photo albums. We want to save memories and experiences. We want to remember what happened, who we met and whom we spent time with. Memories and remembrances are part of our identities and reflecting on them promotes lifelong learning and develops us as human beings (Ropo & Gustafsson 2008, 52). In the Finnish education and degree system the year of a teacher's pedagogical studies is very different from the other years at the university. It is the first experience with school life -the future work-

after one's own school years. It is full of important and unique educational experiences with new people and in new settings. For many students it is the year that changes and develops them most as human beings and therefore, it is unique and worth filing in the portfolio.

According to Niikko (2001) there are four types of portfolios available in teacher education: A student portfolio can be just a collection of a student teacher's pieces of work – *a dossier*. Or, it can be a chronologically arranged collection of a student teacher's work to show her or his progress during the studies, her or his development – *a personal development portfolio* or *a process portfolio*. It can also be compiled or composed of the items that are to be used as a method for evaluation – *an assessment portfolio*. At the end of the studies or when applying for a job, student teachers can produce a portfolio with which they are able to expose their in-practice theories, show what their goals and aims concerning the teacher's work are, what they are able to do (competence), in which skills they are good at, etc. and prove these with samples taken from their dossiers. Such a portfolio is called *a presentation portfolio*. (Niikko 2001, 12–19.)

The portfolio implementation in our FL-teacher education is a combination of these four types. We emphasize student initiative, autonomy, personal development and individual choices (dossier, process portfolio). However, student teachers are required to produce a presentation portfolio that is needed for the final evaluation of their pedagogical studies (assessment portfolio, presentation portfolio). (Niikko 2001, 12–19.) In their discussion with the supervising lecturer at the end of studies our student teachers are asked to select items/examples from a range of their completed work, interpret and assess their progress during their pedagogical studies, and illustrate their progress with samples from the portfolio. Thus, in the evaluation of the student teachers' pedagogical studies all four portfolio types are used hand in hand. Such evaluation helps student teachers assess their own goals and aims, their growth, strengths and weaknesses of becoming a FL-teacher.

Conceptions of learning underlying portfolio pedagogy in teacher education

The theoretical foundations for the use of portfolio in FL-teacher education lie in the conceptions of language education, socio constructionism and a narrative approach. In our country 'language education' is the established term for modern teaching of languages. Language education covers the field of problems which a learner faces in getting familiar with different languages. Hence it is connected with the development of the learner's language identity and/or plurilingualism. Essentially consisting of the attribution of meanings to the world and its phenomena, language is seen as an inseparable part of an individual's being-in-the-world. Consequently, it is impossible to separate language and culture without damage to one or the other. When referring to language, culture and identity, it is always important to realise the relations between and interdependence of these concepts. In FL-teacher education student teachers are called on to join in inquiries into issues related to teaching and learning languages and linguistic cultures along with more extensive issues concerning multicultural and/or intercultural education and learning as regards both individuals and communities. (Kohonen et al. 2001; Kaikkonen 2004; Kohonen 2005.)

'Socio constructionism' aims to account for the ways in which phenomena are socially constructed. We cannot know the world on its own terms, but only through the conceptual and linguistic structures of our own culture. The culture is mediated to us by the significant others. Learning is then social and the language with its concepts important, because it opens the world to us. We do not just construct our knowledge as such, but creatively shape our reality through social interaction and language. Learning thus takes place through social interaction and cooperation with the others. (Berger & Luckman 1966, 151.) 'The narrative approach' is closely connected with the ideas of socio-constructivism. One of its basic arguments is that people constitute their identities through telling or writing narratives/ stories of themselves, their environments, their lives. Through narratives people create and re-create selfhood. (Bruner 2002, 85.) According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990) writing field notes, interviews, journals, letters, autobiographies, and the oral telling of stories are all methods of the narrative approach. Stories told by different people are not separate. They interact and mix – they are interdiscursive and overlapping. (Cf. Ropo 2009,

142–143.) According to this approach, the portfolio consisting of various types of narratives is a collaborative document, a mutually constructed story of the lives of a student teacher, her or his peers, supervising teachers and significant others.

The portfolio approach in teacher education is research oriented. According to Kohonen (2007) learning to be a teacher is clearly based on the student teacher's commitment and active knowledge construction process with others in various environments. It takes place best in authentic or simulated real-life situations and is based on cooperative and collaborative principles thus best taking place in groups. Learning to be a teacher is best approached through dialogue and reflective practices. The cognitive-emotional processes, such as thinking and memorizing, are important organizers of all of the tasks that we perform. They enable conscious planning, goal setting, sustaining future-oriented problem solving activities, following, assessing and managing progress on learning, i.e. the skills that help student teachers towards autonomy and self-direction in studies, work and life. (Kohonen 2007.)

David Little (1991; 2004) discusses the concept of learner autonomy. The learners should develop in themselves "capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action" (1991, 4). Jiménez, Lamb and Vieira (2008, 1) define autonomy as "competence to develop as a self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware participant in (and beyond) educational environments, within a vision of education as (inter) personal empowerment and social transformation". The same demands and definitions apply to pupils/students, student teachers and teacher educators equally. On our way to become more autonomous we have to become more aware of ourselves as persons, teachers, and of our actions at school. Reflection plays an important role in this process. It enables understanding through the transformation of experience by constructing a bridge between practical experiences and theoretical knowledge in learning situations. It enables us seeing ourselves anew. (Cf. van Manen 1995.) The student teachers have to learn to reflect in themselves and their daily work at school. They have to act and experiment, observe the experienced, reflect and conceptualize it. (Cf. Dewey 1938; Kolb 1984; Schön 1983.) To succeed in this process of teacher education student teachers need storing up or recording of what they have faced, acted, experienced and understood.

Narrative texts and mental processes in portfolio pedagogy

The recording of student teachers' experiences in teacher education, and to some extent also before, can be guided with portfolio assignments. A student teacher's portfolio usually consists of a number of narrative texts representing various genres and text types. Typical portfolio assignments according to Kaartinen (2003) are as follows:

- Letter with grounds and reasons for the selected contents of the portfolio
- Teaching philosophy with samples of one's work that support the philosophy
- Analysis of one's growth, a report and samples of one's learning diary/journal
- Feedback that has been analysed
- Vision for the future: personal goals, targets, dreams
- Analysis of competence with samples of one's work that support it
- Assignments done in didactical/pedagogical studies
- Samples of how one has applied theory to practice (a lesson and/or syllabus plan/slide /test/exercise/teaching a theme/video etc.)
- Samples of teacher's work other than the teaching of a subject (concerning happenings at school/teachers' and parents' meeting/ remedial instruction etc.)
- Other samples that describe a student as a teacher or her/his growth to be a teacher (concerning e.g. her/his hobbies and interests)

The above list shows that in student teachers' portfolios most materials are narrative texts rising from student teachers' experiences, from their subjective life-worlds. They are first-person narratives, stories told from the perspective of the author, the student teacher, and in that sense they are also autobiographical. The inquiring process of portfolio takes place by narrating, giving meanings to the experiences and inferring meanings from the different events in the context of personal situations in teacher education, society, and the world. Autobiographical knowledge, as Bertaux (1981) states, is the experiential and subjective knowledge of oneself. We have "collected" that knowledge in the course of our life histories. It is not a direct reflection of what has happened or how things have been in our lives, but it is our narrated description of the past events told or written

retrospectively via memory. The narrative texts reflect the narrator's personality, self-conception and identity. (Bertaux 1981, 7–11.)

Student teachers' free-form narrations of their lives and experiences, what each of them considers important, significant and worth narrating, are created by the linguistic interaction of the narrator and the one(s) reading and/or listening to the narration (a supervising teacher, other student teachers, etc.). Liz Stanley has adopted the term 'auto/biography' (with a slash) to describe the many layers of the biographic study process. When a person reads and interprets the biographic material his or her own experienced world will be an essential part of that study process. Writing of personal experiences is writing to someone. In it, too, the worlds of the writing self and the others are nested. (Stanley 1993, 47–48.) In such knowing it is interesting and challenging (from the supervising teacher's point of view in particular) the nesting, multi-voiced and multi-layered nature of knowing of oneself and the others and the multiplicity/variety of knowledge. The reading and writing processes of the auto/biographic narratives should, therefore, always include analytic self-reflexive activity. (Jaatinen 2007, 30–31.)

According to Kaartinen (2003; cf. Boud 2001; Linnakylä 1994) student teachers go through and develop various mental processes when compiling portfolios during their studies. The student teacher for example

- Analyses, selects and sets goals and targets for her/himself
- Makes plans and selects learning tasks and methods that enable her/him to progress towards the goals and targets
- Studies, seeks and applies information independently
- Observes, reflects on and evaluates her/his work, including process and products
- Reflects on and discusses grounds and reasons for productive and fruitful learning and the meaning of collaboration and her/his own endeavour
- Becomes aware of her/his strengths, weaknesses, interests and learning challenges.

Through the samples selected for their portfolios the student teachers are able to show such qualities as goal/target orientation, ability to self-evaluate, responsibility for making progress, ability to inquire into the theory behind their own actions, apply the theory in their practice, and innovativeness. Through their portfolios student teachers are able to show various aspects

of their competences and their in-practice theories, and illustrate them with examples/samples. All of this requires a huge and thorough writing, reading and reflecting process based on written and oral narratives produced during the pedagogical studies. (Kohonen 2009, 32–38.)

Ten steps to becoming a language teacher

As part of the teacher education programme at Tampere University, pedagogical studies aim to educate teachers with a research-oriented approach to their work and their working community. It is the integration of theoretical knowledge with pre-service experiences that lies at the core of the teacher's professional growth. In teacher education, all of these areas – theoretical knowledge, experiential knowledge of oneself and from teaching in schools, and reflecting in them – serve the purpose of developing the student's own didactical in-practice theory. (Opettajan pedagogiset opinnot. Opinto-oppaat 2010–2011.)

It has been a constant challenge to integrate the theoretical knowledge with the teaching practice and the teaching practice with the theoretical knowledge (figure 1). A vital part of teachers' pedagogical studies is teaching practice with a group of professional teachers at school and a lecturer from the university as supervisors. The contents and the programme of the
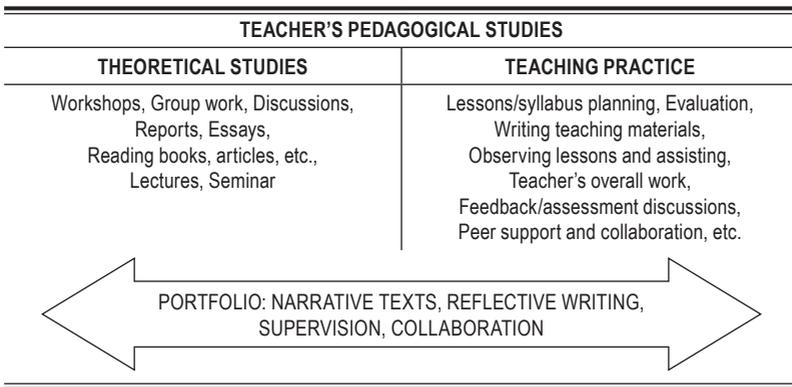
TEACHER'S PEDAGOGICAL STUDIES	
THEORETICAL STUDIES	**TEACHING PRACTICE**
Workshops, Group work, Discussions, Reports, Essays, Reading books, articles, etc., Lectures, Seminar	Lessons/syllabus planning, Evaluation, Writing teaching materials, Observing lessons and assisting, Teacher's overall work, Feedback/assessment discussions, Peer support and collaboration, etc.

PORTFOLIO: NARRATIVE TEXTS, REFLECTIVE WRITING, SUPERVISION, COLLABORATION

Figure 1. The dilemma of theoretical studies and teaching practice

teaching practice are agreed upon in each student's individual study plan. The plan is in a constant process of evaluation and adjustment during the student's teaching practice by means of a personal portfolio, supervisory discussions and collaboration.

Narrative writing through different types of assignments included in portfolio is a good way to enhance and promote the integration of theoretical studies with experiences of teaching and educational environments. In their writings student teachers transform experiences into themes and subjects that afterwards can be discussed and reflected upon together. The narrative autobiographic writing opens an opportunity here. When writing about their experiences, the student teachers look at themselves "from a distance." They can look at their lives, what they did and what happened to them again; interpret, analyze and thus, clarify their conceptions of themselves, their teacher identities. They constitute themselves as teachers and, thus their readiness to encounter other teachers, students and their parents, etc. Both free-form and guided writing about their experiences is a form of self-inquiry. Such writing develops their ability to see and understand themselves and their actions better. (Jaatinen 2007, 68–69.) Thus narrative writing becomes as van Manen (1989, 238) has written, "a kind of self-making or forming. To write is to measure the depth of things, as well to come to a sense of one's own depth".

The learning objectives for the narrative portfolio work within FL-student teachers in our teacher education course are open-ended and serve as criteria for how portfolios are compiled and student teachers are evaluated. In her/his portfolio the student teacher shows that she/he is able to

- develop and report her/his own in-practice theory (teaching philosophy)
- practice a pedagogical action based on experiential and theoretical knowledge, i.e. planning, actual teaching, assessment/evaluation and teacher's work in school, societal and global context
- present her/his action with samples of lesson/syllabus plans, teaching materials, and assessment (transparency)
- evaluate her/his teaching (self-evaluation)
- collaborate, give, accept and utilize feedback and peer assessment
- develop her/himself as a teacher and her/his teaching methodology.

For the purpose of combining the theoretical knowledge and teaching practice and thus make the above goals and objectives achievable I have resorted to a ten-steps-process (figure 2). The ten-step-process consists of various written and oral open-ended narrative assignments the purpose of which is to help student teachers guide, control and evaluate their development in becoming FL-teachers. Some assignments are personal but many require demanding reflection individually and in groups or with a supervisor. Thus the portfolio here can be understood as a collaborative effort, the production of narrative texts and assignments individually and in various combinations of students, teachers and significant others.

1	August	PRE-ASSIGNMENTS	T	T
2	**September, October, December**	Guided **PORTFOLIO- ASSIGNMENTS** for the period of teaching practice in the autumn/fall semester	E	H
3	**November, December**	Student teacher as a researcher: **INQUIRING** into her/his development through reflecting in narratives in portfolio and writing a **REPORT** (including personal goals and aims)	A C	E O R
4	**December, January**	Supervisory **DISCUSSIONS**/dialogues with the supervising lecturer(s)	H I	E T
5	**February, March, April**	Guided **PORTFOLIO ASSIGNMENTS** for the period of teaching practice in the spring semester	N G	I C
6	**February, March, April**	Student teacher as a researcher: **INQUIRING** into her/his development through reflecting on narratives in the portfolio and writing a **SEMINAR PAPER** (combining theory and practice)	P R	A L
7	**April, May**	Student teacher as a researcher: **SEMINAR** on language education (paper, presentation, peer critique, discussion); Sharing research results with the others	A C T	S T U
8	**May**	**EXHIBITION**: Presenting, sharing and discussing selected teaching experiment(s), e.g. ideas, assignments, lesson plans, teaching methods, etc. developed during the year	I C	D I
9	**May**	Student teacher as a researcher: a semi-guided **ESSAY** on her/his development during the pedagogical studies including her/his teaching philosophy, in-practice theory (transparency)	E	E S
10	May	**DISCUSSIONS** / dialogues with the supervising lecturer(s)		

Figure 2. Ten steps to become a teacher

The FL-student teachers' portfolios are typically thick and rich folders, CDs, DVDs, digital items, or combinations of these. With the help of portfolios the student teachers show and make transparent the work they have done and how they have developed during the academic year of teacher's pedagogical studies. The individual and collaborative teacher-researcher projects carried out by student teachers are open-ended, but in a certain accumulative temporal order (see figure 2). They consist of compulsory tasks such as

> Learning assignments that integrate didactical studies/language education and teaching practice. They are given at the beginning of each period of teaching practice. The assignments are of such themes as analysing curriculum thought, observing and internalising student-centred activities, personal language learning stories, conceptions of man, learning and teaching, the job-description of a FL-teacher at different stages of the Finnish educational system, analysing one's position with children and young people, in a student teacher group and in supervisory discussions, critical reading, experiences of creative activities and notions on inclusion in language class, etc.

> Student teacher's own lessons (10 x 75 min.) during their teaching practice. Reported, reflected in and evaluated + documented lesson plans, and the materials he/she has produced her/himself for each lesson + peer assessment and the supervising teacher's assessment.

> Experiences and materials from Specializing Teaching Practice (outside university teacher training school).

> Teacher's work at school (other than language lessons) documented and with personal reflective comments.

> Report at the end of the first teaching practice which is based on inquiring into a student teacher's own work and progress at school (including self-evaluation and personal goals and aims for the spring semester).

> Reflective essay at the end of the pedagogical studies which is based on inquiry into a student teacher's own work and progress at school (including self-evaluation and his/her own teaching philosophy/in-practice theory at the end of the pedagogical studies).

> Writing a blog, discussing and commenting on other student teachers' blogs.

Following the discussions, articles, etc. concerning school and educational issues in Finnish society and globally through different media.

Table of contents (portfolio must be organised).

Name for the portfolio showing the personal nature of portfolio and describing the whole process of becoming a teacher.

The FL-student teacher's portfolio also consist of individually chosen and/ or optional tasks such as

Everything that a student her/himself wants to file, save, remember, utilise, exploit e.g. good and "bad" materials, drafts, plans, brochures on study visits, etc.

Good ideas and thoughts, significant experiences and things learnt from various environments and discussions

Feelings and sensations, observations and impressions

Everything that demonstrates the student teacher's own interests and her/his teaching philosophy/ in-practice theory

Visualisation, aesthetics, and creativity, pictures, photos, videos, colours, fonts, etc.

The compiled material in portfolios can be exploited in various ways. In our application the portfolio is each student teacher's own property, it is not returned (as such) to be evaluated or marked. Through her/his portfolio a student teacher reflects in her/his learning, development of teacher identity, feelings and experiences, follows and develops her/himself, her/his studies and teaching practice. The portfolio is a story or stories of a student teacher. It is an auto/biographical source for setting personal goals and targets during and at the end of the studies. From the portfolio a student teacher acquires material for and during the supervisory, evaluation and feedback discussions with the university lecturer and supervising teachers at school. Consisting of various types of auto/biographical and narrative texts, the portfolio is a rich source for writing reports and reflective essays during pedagogical studies. The student teacher is encouraged and guided to inquire into her/his portfolio regularly, during and between the periods of teaching practice and at the end of the pedagogical studies in particular. The portfolio is also used for collecting samples of one's work and progress for the benefit of other

student teachers and for sharing with peers what each of the student teachers has developed and learnt. At the exhibition in the spring, each student teacher presents things that she/he has made and selected to be presented to the others. The presentation is both visual and oral including discussion and debate with peers. At the end of the pedagogical studies, the portfolio is used for compiling a presentation portfolio that is to be used for evaluation and when moving on to a working life and applying for a teaching job.

How should we read narrative texts in teacher education portfolios?

In narrative texts of portfolio assignments student teachers assign meanings to the events, behaviours, experiences, feelings and psychological processes they encounter in their pedagogical studies. Since the narratives are auto/biographical and multi-voiced and represent different genres and text types, reading and researching them is often a huge effort, time-consuming and extremely challenging. From both the writer and the reader(s) are required various modes of narrative inquiry and reading strategies. Approaching and engaging autobiographical narratives Smith and Watson (2001, 165–179) offer guidelines, a few of which I have adapted to my purposes as a teacher educator and reader of student teacher portfolios. Many of the guidelines provide the readers of portfolio narratives with various important points of view for interpreting the texts but are valuable points of departure for student teachers' narrative writing as well. I conclude this chapter with a set of questions that I consider important and essential to pose when approaching auto/biographical narratives in student portfolios.

Is the narrative text a product of more than one person? Is there only one voice or multiple voices? What kind of collaborative involvement has there been? What other people inhabit the text? Are we able to read the voices of these others (peers, supervising teachers, and significant other people) in the text? What do they say? In what way is the supervisory group or the whole student teacher group involved in the text? How are their distinct values and languages seen in the text? Are there "as-told-to" narratives? In case of collaborative writing is it possible to recognize the persons in it?

In what way can such social locations as schools, political beliefs and practices, family history, work, and societal and cultural stereotypes be

recognized in narratives and is the student teacher conscious of their influence on her or his teacher identity? What modes of teacher identity have been socially and culturally available to the student teacher at her or his particular moment of teacher education? What qualities or experiences seem to have been included and excluded in conforming to particular modes of an ideal teacher in society? Is it possible to distinguish the student teacher's individual goals and aspirations from the common goals and support them? What narrative patterns are used to structure the teacher identity?

At what stage in her or his life does the student teacher compose the texts? How are the past, present, and future organized in her or his experiences? Is the knowledge of her or his growth continuous or discontinuous in texts? Does the student teacher give space to multiple kinds of knowledge – intuitive, irrational, mystical, symbolic? What is the relationship of the narrator with knowledge of the world, of others and self-knowledge? Are the narratives coherent? Are there contradictions, omissions, gaps, or silences that should be discussed?

Is the student teacher addressing the text to him/herself or to the supervising teacher(s) or who is the audience? How is the reader posited in the text? Are the interpretations of the readers' positions signalled in the overall patterns and beliefs of the texts? The student teacher as a narrator is not the only one engaged in interpreting what constitutes experience. How does the reader's (supervisor's) historical, social and cultural situation affect the text and its interpretation?

The ethical issues of writing and reading autobiographical narratives are many. Which texts are private and which are shared? Who is or are allowed to read the texts? Are there such revelations in the texts that might be hurtful, embarrassing or harmful to student teachers? Are there justifications for sharing personal, intimate and potentially sensitive details of one's growth to be a teacher with the supervising teacher(s)? What is the ethics of readership?

Conclusion

Portfolios in teacher education are a constant process during students' pedagogical studies: theoretical studies and teaching practice. They consist of numerous texts that are mainly narratives and are supported by

supervisory discussions (i.e. dialogues) and collaboration with supervisory teachers and significant other people. Our student teachers' narrative texts in their personal development portfolios are private or semiprivate auto/biographical sources for inquiry, reflection and discussion. Presentation portfolios are in a form of an essay with samples taken from their personal development portfolios showing the student teacher's development with in-practice theory (teaching philosophy) and competence as a FL-teacher. The portfolio process is supported by supervisory discussions and collaboration with the student teacher's supervisory teacher at the teaching practice school, the other student teachers of the student's supervisory group, and the supervising lecturer in language education from the university.

Favourable and beneficial consequences of using portfolio in teacher education are as follows: Based on writing, reading and interpreting auto/biographical narrative texts, student teachers are able to reflect on certain specific aspects in their development during their studies. Portfolio work promotes collaboration and a favourable atmosphere for it. This happens through co-operative studying, peer feedback and authentic assessment. As the student teachers are encouraged to set their own goals, the portfolio promotes their autonomy. Continuous, realistic but supporting assessment and dialogue develop the student teacher's self-awareness and self-esteem. Portfolio work motivates learning because the goals, targets and assignments can be differentiated and individualised. It is open-ended and personal.

Portfolio work may also become tedious and time-consuming. Writing, reflecting and self-assessment can become endless work and take much time. It is therefore important to discuss the approach with student teachers, give reasons for why we have adopted this kind method, guide and support them. A good supervisory relationship with the student teachers and mutual trust are prerequisites, not to mention enough time and possibilities for face-to-face discussions. Student teachers should be encouraged to make personal choices and creative actions and decisions. Portfolios can be works of art. Writing about and reflecting on difficult, even sensitive aspects of personality, relationships and teaching practice is important as well. For this, student teachers need space and privacy. Reading, interpreting and reacting upon auto/biographical narrative texts is delicate and demanding. More attention should be paid to the reader's self-inquiry and ethics of readership. Various reading strategies and viewpoints of how to approach

the student teacher's auto/biographical texts in portfolios should be used, inquired into and further developed.

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