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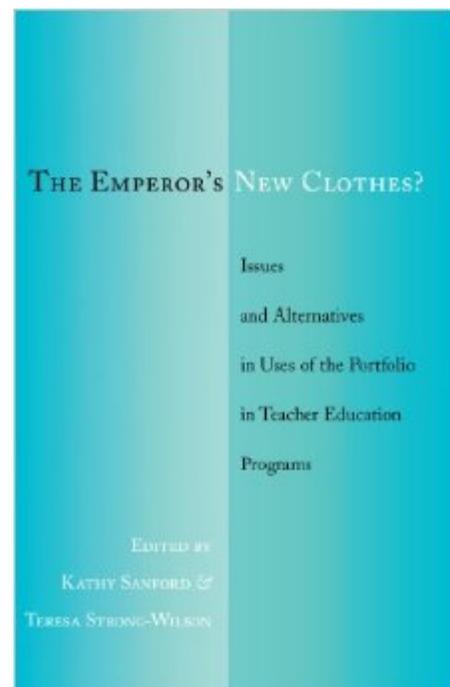
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Sanford and Strong-Wilson (2013) make the assertion that the rhetoric concerning the importance, value, reasons, purpose, and use of portfolios is often misunderstood or misrepresented. The value of portfolios in teacher education has become increasingly important as colleges of education have struggled with the difficult task of providing a culminating experience for teacher candidates that is both meaningful and measureable. The original binder and paper version has given way to the development and proliferation of electronic portfolio systems, both commercial and in-house (RiCharde, n.d.; Hebert, 2007). The debate still remains as to importance of the student portfolio. Is the real intent of the portfolio to be a creative work of reflection, or is it more of a tool used for assessment and accountability (Sanford & Strong-Wilson, 2013)? No matter what medium is used, the conflict still remains, allowing for further discussions in alternative and innovative ways for educator preparation units to provide meaningful and useful tools for their developing candidates. The book, *The Emperor's New Clothes? Issues*



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and Alternatives in Uses of the Portfolio in Teacher Education Programs (2013) provides a platform in which challenges and alternatives to the traditional portfolio can be presented.

Gathering an array of articles, the editors provide a wide variety of ideas, perspectives, and research concerning the use of portfolios in teacher education. Their research focuses on many viewpoints including U.S. universities, Canadian universities, undergraduate, graduate, and the use of portfolios in the P-12 setting. The book is organized in two main themes: portfolio issues and portfolio alternatives. Each of the twelve chapters in this book has a different author and research article or discussion point. This gives the reader the ability to select individual articles without having to read the entire book or lose the context between chapters.

Part one of the book, “Issues”, contains five chapters from authors who write about their specific concerns and relating to their use of portfolios. The most common theme throughout this section is the difficulty faced in the purpose or context in which the portfolio is used (Barrett & Carney, 2005). Two specific examples from this section of the book follow.

Chapter 2, “Supporting the process of creating a teaching portfolio”, starts the discussion with an explanation of how difficult it is to define what a portfolio is, different terms used for portfolios, and the multitude of purposes portfolios fill. This in itself is one of the biggest challenges portfolios bring into teacher education. Is the portfolio a reflective work, accumulated throughout a semester or all coursework, and/or used for certification purposes or student growth? Students, faculty, administrators, and potential employers look at a portfolio’s use in different ways (Lowenthal, White, & Cooley, 2011). Regardless of the perspective, Wray (2013) clearly describes the struggle teacher candidates have when faced with creating a portfolio and ways educators can assist them throughout this journey. Faculty mentoring, teacher learning communities, student collaboration, and technological support are specific examples used to help candidates and preparation units capture “the salient component of any quality teacher education program” (p. 27).

Chapter 3, “Negotiating the contested terrain of the initial teaching portfolio”, details the use of a paper-based portfolio and the “contested nature” (p. 31) a portfolio

brings in these areas: purpose, assessment, reflective quality, time and effort, and support. Berrill, Hill, & Mac Donald (2013) use the theoretical framework which describes a teacher's professional knowledge as being either secret, sacred, or a cover story. After participating in an 18-month self-study, the authors explore how two of them contend with the often conflicting nature of portfolios. Conflicts could be found in the purpose of the portfolio, the grading as an assignment, difficulty in meaningful reflection, and using the portfolio for employment purposes. The perspectives seemed to vary depending on position, current status as a teacher, and the individual's depth of reflection. The perceptions of the portfolio changed between pre-service teachers, graduate level teachers, and specifically on the "instructor's interest and involvement in portfolios" (p. 45) within their programs. With their stories in mind, the authors stress the importance of identifying these hurdles in the portfolio process and the need to address them in a thoughtful and purposeful manner. Although this chapter is written about a paper-based portfolio, those educators who use electronic portfolios will experience the same difficulties and terrain challenges (Lowenthal, White, & Cooley, 2011; Ntuli, Keengwe, & Kyei-Blankson, 2009).

Part two of the book, "Alternatives", containing six chapters, brings together different approaches to portfolios in general, or new and different ideas in how to implement, evaluate, or view the portfolios you may already have developed. Two specific examples from this section of the book follow.

Chapter 10, "More than window dressing? The place of photographs in teacher identity construction", describes a qualitative research study expounding upon the idea that a picture is worth a thousand words. The framework used focuses on the teacher narrative and the importance of visual imagery within that narrative. The teacher narrative is a reflective portfolio that describes his/her identity as a teacher (Strong-Wilson, Cole, & Noozi, 2013). The use of visual images can be very powerful as we have all seen in books, movies, newspapers, and on TV. The same is true of teacher candidates and practicing teachers. The study suggests that photographs, taken during pre-service experiences and purposely reflected upon, provide teachers a different way of viewing themselves or a new "lens" (p. 177) in which they can discover their true identity as an educator. The authors

recommend including photographs in student's reflective work and the pictures "be made to speak: for teachers to tell the stories about why they are there" and to uncover the hidden ideas that "may lie in and around and behind the photographs" (p. 177). Their findings show the power the photographs that instigated the candidates to have new conversations about themselves and their true teacher identities.

Chapter 12, "Case Studies on three iterations of e-portfolios", delves into the implementation of electronic portfolios (EP) within programs and looked to determine the portfolio's ability to facilitate the student's authentic learning process. As discussed earlier, those using portfolios struggle to meet the competing agendas that include the ability to demonstrate student learning, certification requirements, course outcomes, and a job search tool. This assertion is true of traditional, alternative, and electronic portfolios. Their research questions focused around five main concentrations: current use of the electronic portfolio, purpose for adoption, how the EP connect to pedagogy, how the EP connected to assessment, and technological support of the EP (Gerrity, Hopper, & Sanford, 2013). The three case studies of international EP adopters gave some insight that may be indicative of other adopters. All three EP initiatives struggled to meet the promise to show student learning. All three had individuals leading the EP charge but received push-back from both faculty and students when it came to the value of learning vs. a measurable outcome. Most importantly, students must see the value in their learning and the portfolio process. On the positive side, this study provides a ray of hope for those EP users. Educator preparation units, faculty, practitioners, and teacher candidates who are socially interlinked with interaction between all parties, have the best chance of seeing the true benefits of their EP (Tang, & Lam, 2014).

*The Emperor's New Clothes?* is a book that can be a recommended read for anyone who is concerned with the efficacy of teacher preparation programs, the use of portfolios in education, or electronic portfolio advocates. Having developed and implemented an electronic portfolio system over the past ten years, the content of this book provided some challenging perspectives into areas of teacher candidate performance, outcomes, and the use of portfolios I had not considered. One aspect of teacher preparation not discussed with any depth is the difficult struggle between the educator preparation program's

struggle to do what is best for student growth and the ever-increasing demand for data documenting their impact on those students. Accredited teacher preparation programs have seen an increase in the demand for verifiable data over the past ten years. Looking ahead at the transition from National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) into Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) reveals a heightened emphasis on data based evidence of program and candidate impact (CAEP, 2013). No matter what your portfolio experiences are, this book will provide different perspectives on the use of portfolios in educator preparation.

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Tony Kirchner, Ed.D. is the Director of Educational Technology for the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences (CEBS) at Western Kentucky University. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, a Master of Science in Library Media Education (Educational Technology), and an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership. He developed the CEBS Electronic Portfolio and Accountability system and has researched, written, and presented on the topic of electronic assessment systems in teacher education.



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