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Writing Portfolio-Formative Assessment and Motivation

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Abstract

The current study aims at investigating teachers' views about the effect of writing portfolio formative assessment in developing students' writing skills and how it promote their motivation to learn effectively. The participant were 100 English Language teachers who were asked to show their perspectives about the usefulness of WPFA regarding students writing skills and how does it promote their motivation to learn writing effectively. All the participants' responses were taken into account, here are some of the significant findings: Writing portfolio formative assessment is found as a useful tool for developing students writing skills, it draws a clear map for students to write, it allows teachers to give immediate, clear, descriptive and effective written feedback to students. In addition to that, WPFA is found as an effective tool for developing students' metacognitive strategies, such as critical thinking, discussion etc. And also, Writing portfolio assessment is found as a motivation tool for the students to learn, students become more interest, confidant and reflective. Finally, WPFA engages students with learning and fosters their autonomy learning.

Introduction

As it is known that, motivation is crucial in education. The teacher is not able to motivate the student when the student him/herself is not motivated to learn. However, by using the means of assessment, the teacher might be able to at least partially help the student to find his/her motivation again. The student should not feel that assessment is something s/he has no control over. They should be motivated to work on their learning and constant improvement. The teacher relies mostly on the positives of the students' performance, not only on his/her imperfections (Kratochvílova, 2011).

According to Kolar and Sikulova, (2005) motivational function of assessment is the strongest and also the most frequently used function. Teachers sometimes use motivational function as an instrument to keep discipline in class. This unfortunately leads to assessment being the only motivation that makes the students learn (so-called learning for a grade) (extrinsic motivation(EM)). However, by engaging the students in the creation of the criteria according to which they will be assessed and also in the assessment itself, the teacher might increase the sense of responsibility of the students and motivate students to learn(intrinsic motivation(IM)). Therefore, this study is intended to explore the effect of writing portfolio formative assessment to foster students motivation. The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the teachers perspectives about the usefulness of writing portfolios formative assessment in the developing of writing skills ?
2. How does writing portfolios formative assessment motivate students to learn effectively ?

Theoretical frame work

Definition of Writing Portfolios
Hamp-Lyons & Condon (2000: 140-141) define a writing portfolio as a collection of the writer's work over a period of time, usually a semester or school year.
They explain that the writer, perhaps aided by classmates or the teacher, makes a selection from the collected work through a process of reflection on what she/he

has done and what it shows about what has been learned. There are three elements (collection, selection, and reflection)which areconsidered the core of a portfolio. It is also typical for a student's portfolio to include some elements of the processes the learner went through to arrive at a final text. These process elements become visible and can be evaluated in a writing portfolio to promote the formative use of assessment.

Advocates of writing portfolios argue that portfolio assessment is the best known and now most popular form of alternative writing assessment (AWA) (Belanoff& Dickson, 1991). It is suggested that writing portfolios can be used as a learning and assessment tool for formative assessment to measure the growth of students' abilities as writers, promote ownership of students' own writing, and, along with a scoring rubric, provide a mechanism by which students can assess their own strengths and weaknesses as writers (Baak, 1997). It is also argued that writing portfolios can examine multiple pieces of writing over time under different constraints rather than a single essay within a specific time as a response to the local needs of students (Coombe& Barlow, 2004: 19).

As shown above, writing portfolios can be used as a learning and assessment tool for formative assessment to promote student learning. Key elements in writing portfolios like process writing portfolios, writing portfolios as a tool for motivation are described in the next sections.

The Process of Writing Portfolio

 As suggested by the proponents of writing portfolio, process writing is one of the key elements in a writing portfolio program to enhance student writing ability (Hamp-Lyons, 2006). It is observed that "too often students and teachers approach writing with a 'one and done'(final product rather than process) mentality (Schell, 2002)". However, as argued by Muschla (2006: 4), 'Writing is a process composed of at least five stages: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Although the stages are distinct, the process is recursive.'

A process approach to writing is recommended because it motivates students to write and focuses on learners exploring and being aware of what they do, and the choices they make, during writing. Hamp-Lyons (2006: 140-141) argues that in process writing classrooms, portfolios are most usually found because they allow students to revise papers based on feedback and incorporate the final draft or a sequence of drafts in the portfolio. Further, feedback in various forms is an essential part of the learning opportunity of each student, and when portfolio-based writing assessment is combined with a process approach to writing instruction, windows of possibility are open for teachers to look closely into students' portfolios and learn about the effectiveness of those learning opportunities. All of these are useful for teachers to adjust their teaching, motivate and improve students learning in formative assessment.

Portfolios Assessment as a tool for motivation

Studies that investigate portfolios for foreign/second language teaching and assessment have emphasized that portfolios can make students more engaged in evaluating their own process of learning, and take fuller control over their writing skills in the writing process (O'Malley and Valdez-Pierce, 1996). Despite the limited knowledge of the effects of portfolios on student writing, research on portfolios in L2 learning has indicated that portfolio assessment is likely to enhance student motivation for writing since constraints such as "test anxiety" and "time pressure" that often occur in timed essay tests, have been removed (Hamp-Lyons and Krolls, 1996). Writing scholars contend that portfolio assessment is likely "to enable teachers to function more as a coach than as a judge, thus decreasing antagonism between student and classroom teachers" (Clark, 1993: 517). The atmosphere of student-and-teacher collaboration, instead, nurtures a learning community where students are more motivated to compose, revise, and proofread the texts they produced, and to develop themselves as independent writers and learners at the end of the portfolio process. Although the portfolio grade is still, after all, a major source of motivation for writing, practitioners argue that the mitigation of student sensitivity to grades may encourage them to master essential writing skills for the production of texts, and to learn how to make necessary changes to their writing with written commentary.

The evaluation of multiple writing samples in portfolios, rather than a single sample written under timed conditions, has its appeal to students and teachers since the diversity and richness of learning evidence included in a portfolio can be adequately judged and can describe a student's writing ability (Huot, 1994). Students are, undoubtedly, motivated to demonstrate their best writing ability and performance through a rich array of writing as evidence that witnesses of their growth and achievements as writers in the learning process. However, Hamp-Lyons and Condon (1993), based upon a study of the portfolio reading process that examines assumptions about how extensively readers attend to all the texts in a portfolio, warn that teachers may not necessarily find the reading of multiple pieces of writing on disparate topics and genres easier than the single-sample text produced under exam conditions, and admit that it is more difficult to make evaluative decisions on a writing portfolio than on an essay composed in 60 or 90 minutes. Portfolio assessment can also focus student attention almost entirely on revision, since the goal of this assessment approach is to motivate students to adopt a trial-and-error attitude to improve earlier texts, and to make extra effort in maximizing their writing development over time (Hamp-Lyons and Condon, 2000). While there are studies that emphasize the portfolio's motivation-enhancing qualities such as the allowance of composing over time and the postponement of evaluation until a student is ready to submit and revise his or her best work, composition scholars argue that " to date, the portfolio has simply been accepted on faith, on writing specialists' feeling that the portfolio is better" (Condon and Hamp-Lyons, 1994: 277). The assessment community, therefore, calls for more empirical research that throws new light on how portfolio-based assessment (PBS) can impact student motivation for writing, and supports the effectiveness of portfolios as an instrument for writing assessment.

Methodology

Participants

In the present study, a sample of 100English language teachers atKhartoum State was selected.They were asked to respond fora questionnaire about the usefulness of portfolios formative assessment in motivating students. All the results of the questionnaire are taking into account. The teachers have different qualifications (B.A , Masters and PHD).

Instrument

To answer the research questions, the researcher used a questionnaire as instrument to compile the primary data about the usefulness of portfolios formative assessment and the effect of writing portfolios formative assessment in motivating students, the questionnaire is based on a 5-point Likert scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree', which contains 20 items that cope in the research hypothesis. **(Appendix A).**

Procedures

The following procedures were followed in order to attain the purpose of the study. First, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the researcher familiarize the respondents with different aspects of formative assessment specially writing portfolios formative assessment. Then the participants were given the questionnaire to respond. The answered questionnaire papers were collected and subjected for analysis to answer the research questions.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The analysis centered on the questionnaires which answered the research questions, Q1 What are the teachers perspectives about the usefulness of writing portfolios formative assessment ?and Q2 How does writing portfolios formative assessment motivate students to learn effectively ? (Appendix A). The data were analyzed by the use of SPSS program. The results were presented on the following tables to show the frequencies, percentage and the mean of each item in the questionnaire.

Table 4.1: *Teachers perspectives about the usefulness of writing portfolio formative assessment (WPFA)*

Items	Reasons for (WPFA)	SA		A		N		DA		SDA		Mean
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
1	WPFAimproves students writing.	82	82	14	14	0	0	4	4	0	0	3.7
2	It provides a clear map.	80	80	16	16	1	1	3	3	0	0	3.6
5	It allows teachers to give effective written feedback to students.	60	60	32	32	2	2	4	4	0	0	3.4
14	Teachers provides immediate, clear and descriptive feedback.	74	74	21	21	2	2	3	3	0	0	3.6
8	WPFA develop students' metacognitive strategies.	66	66	24	24	3	3	5	5	2	2	3.2
12	It enhance students creativity.	58	58	32	32	7	7	3	3	0	0	3.5
15	It allows teachers to use different. teaching techniques and strategies.	25	25	35	35	11	11	20	20	9	9	2.5
17	It accommodate students different learning styles.	23	23	50	50	15	15	8	8	4	4	2.7

The above table 4.1 displays the results about teachers views on the usefulness of using writing portfolios formative assessment. As can be seen from the table, in item (1) the majority 96 (96%) of the teachers responded that writing portfolio formative assessment improves students writing skills, this might be due to its systematic, disciplined and serious process of writing. A few number 4 (4%) of the respondentsdon't think that writing portfolios has positive impact on students writing. The calculated mean value 3.7 indicates the high positive impact of writing portfolios formative assessment on students writing. When they were asked in item (2) if writing portfolios formative assessment provides a clear map to achieve the writing tasks, a gain96 (96%) of them either strongly agreed or agreed, this may might be of WPFA tools, such as rubric and checklists which are used to guide students to select essays' content, organization and language. Regarding teachers feedback in items (5 and 14), writing portfolios formative

assessment is found extremely useful in giving effective written feedback to students 92 (92%) and providing immediate, clear and descriptive feedback 95 (95%).The means of both itemsare 3.4 and 3.6 indicate the high degree of usefulness of teachers' feedback in writing portfolios. As shown in the table, in item(8) 90 (90%) of the teachers reported that writing portfolios formative assessment develop students' metacognitive strategies while only 7 (7%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean value calculated is 3.2, indicates that the appropriateness of writing portfolios in developing metacognitive strategies such as, critical thinking, reflecting, judging, evaluating, questioning….etc.).Item (12) depicts that 90 (90%) of the teachers eitherstrongly agreed or agreed that writing portfolios formative assessment enhances students creativity, the rest 10 % remained neutral or disagreed. The calculated mean value (3.5) of this item indicates that WPFA has positive impact in helping students to become active rather than passive.60 (60%) of the teachersthink that WPFA allows teachersto use differentteaching techniques and strategies.On the other hand 40 (40%) of them either disagreed, strongly disagreed or remained neutral. The mean value 2.5 shows slight usefulness of item (15). A respected number of the respondents 73 (73%) believes that WPFA accommodates students different learning styles (item 17) with the calculated mean value of 2.7. 12 (12%) of them either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the same item while the rest remained neutral.

Generally, the range of the means valve calculated 3.7 to 2,5, indicates thatwriting portfolios formative assessment is extremely useful. It is possible to conclude that improving students writing skills, providing a clear map, giving effective written feedback to students, providing immediate, clear and descriptive feedback, and developing students' metacognitive strategies beside enhancing students creativity and accommodating students different learning styles are found to be the major causes of teachers to consider writing portfolio assessment as a useful tool to teach writing skills.

.**Table 4.2 Writing**_PortfolioFormative Assessment motivate students tolearn_
effectively

The teachers were asked to report how writing portfolio formative assessment
motivates students to learn effectively. The aim was to investigate the correlation
between writing portfolios formative assessment and students' motivation.

Items	Motivational Factors	SA		A		N		DA		SDA		Mean
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
7	Students monitor the learning goals and focus their attention	70	70	30	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.0
16	Students engage with learning	64	64	30	30	6	6	0	0	0	0	3.9
3	Students revise their writing	75	75	20	20	5	5	0	0	0	0	4.0
13	It fosters learners autonomy	68	68	23	23	2	2	7	7	0	0	3.7
11	It motivates students for learning	59	59	41	41	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.0
9	It develops students interests in writing	76	76	20	20	4	4	0	0	0	0	3.9
10	Students become more confident.	82	82	18	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.0
4	Students recognize their strengths and areas for improvement	63	63	28	28	3	3	6	6	0	0	3.7
6	It invites students to be reflective about their work and knowledge	48	48	27	27	12	12	10	10	3	3	3.0
18	Students master writing without anxiety and time pressure	47	47	35	35	8	8	8	8	2	2	3.2
19	It builds engaging learning environment	61	61	37	37	1	1	0	0	0	0	4.0
20	Students monitor their growth and achievements over a time	84	84	16	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.5

The table 4.2 depicts the teachers views about the correlation between writing portfolio formative assessment and students motivation. As indicated onthe table, item (7) shows 100 (100%) of the teachers think that writing portfolio formative assessment draws students attentionthrough monitoring the learning goals. The mean value calculated 4.0 indicate positive correlation. Likewise, for item (20) 100 (100%) of respondent either strongly agreed or agreedthat WPFA motivates students to learn through monitoring their growth and achievements over a time, this process can thoroughly engage students with learning. On the same line, 99 (99%) of them said WPFA builds engaging learning environment, this occurs through student-and-teacher collaboration and peers assessment. The mean value calculated is 4.0. When we look at item (3), 95 (95%) of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that there is strong correlation between WPFA and students motivation because the former reinforce the later to revise their writing more often (mean = 4.0). The calculated mean value 4.0, of item (10)indicates therespondents' strong believe about the effect of WPFA to fosterstudents confidence so that they are motivated to write effectively. Regarding item (11), all the respondents indicated that WPFAmotivates students for learning, because it allows them to work harder, the mean value is 4.0. To support this claim the result reveals that, in item (9)96 (96%) of the teachers develop students' interests in writing through WPFA,in item (16) 94 (94%) of them engage students with learning by producing multiple writing drafts, in item (13), it is found that WPFA fosters learners autonomy by developing ownership of learning (Mean = 3.7). The result in item (4) also shows the impact of WPFA on rising studentsself-awareness, theyare able to recognize their strengths and areas for improvement and they become motivated to develop their weak areas (mean = 3.7). Accordingly, in item (6), WPFA invites students to reflectabout their work, knowledge and their progress by holding conferences (Mean = 3.0). Finally, in item (13) WPFA motivates students to write effectively, because by mastering writing students are able to write without anxiety and time pressure (Mean = 3.7).

It is possible to conclude that writing portfolio formative assessment plays a vital role in motivating students to write effectively. From the results obtained in the above table, it is apparent that teachers consider WPFA as a motivated tool because it create engaging learning environment and allow students to engage with learning through revealing of the learning goals and focus their attention, revising their works and producing of multiple writing drafts. In addition to this, students become motivated because WPFA help them to develop confident, and interest development in writing that lead them to master writing without anxiety and time pressure. Moreover, WPFA foster students autonomy learning; students are able to monitor their growth andachievements over a time, able to recognize their strengths and areas for improvement, and able to be reflective about their work and knowledge.

Findings

After analyzing and interpreting the compiled data the researcher found that:

1. Writing portfolio formative assessment is a useful tool for developing students writing.
2. WPFA allows teachers to give immediate, clear, descriptive and effective written feedback to students.
3. WPFA developsstudents' metacognitive strategies, such as critical thinking, discussion,…etc.
4. It accommodatesstudents different learning styles, students with different learning styles are able to handle their tasks.
5. Writing portfolio assessment is found as a motivation tool for the students to learn.
6. WPFA engages students with learning and fosters students autonomy learning.
7. WPFA allows students to become more interest, confidant and reflective.

Conclusion

The results showed that the writing portfolio assessment appeared more motivated and useful tool for developing students writing skills. Through WPFA students get a clear map for their writing because WPFA aid them with different writing activities, such as pre writing activities, drafting,, revising, editing, conferencing, peer assessment. and teachers feedback. As argued by Muschla (2006: 4), 'Writing is a process composed of at least five stages: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Although the stages are distinct, the process is recursive.' Another important point to mention is that WPFA promote students motivation to learn effectively, students are engage with learning and motivated to learn. Writing portfolios assessment plays essential role in increasing students' motivation. Teachers can implement many writing portfolios strategies in their classroom to foster intrinsic motivation in their students. First, developing strong and meaningful connections with students which has a significant impact on their motivation, this kind of collaborations can occur through peer evaluation, teachers feedback, students reflection, teachers-students conferencing…etc. (Kiefer et al., 2014). Second, teachers can work to promote a growth mindset in their classrooms through a variety of teaching methods. This contributes to higher levels of intrinsic motivation and achievement for students. Third, teachers can be mindful to create an environment that meets the unique cognitive needs of the students, this can be attained through providing a clear map to achieve the writing tasks (content, organization and language) through rubric/ checklist. Finally, WPFA is considered as an effective tool to promote students autonomy learning. Proponents of portfolio assessment claim that portfolios can be seen as a positive form of assessment as they develop a learner in a more holistic and integrative way. Portfolios enable students to become lifelong learners by developing their transferable skills, self-reflection and learner autonomy. The possibility of individualizing a portfolio and making it relevant and meaningful beyond the narrow scope of conventional assessments is a highly motivational factor for learners. (Guard et al., 2003).

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Appendix (A)

Questionnaire

Dear Colleague,

This questionnaire has been designed for the study planned to be conducted in Khartoum Locality. It is intended to collect data on teachers perspectives on the use of writing portfolios-formative assessment to enhance students writing skill and the extent to which writing portfolios can foster students motivation. The findings of this study are hoped to contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning writing process and fostering students motivation. All the data will be kept confidential and will be used in this study only. You are, therefore, kindly requested to respond to all the items in the questionnaire.

Thank you in advance!

Personal Information:

Please use a tick (√) to fill in the information in the appropriate space.

1. Name:_____**(optional)**

2. Gender: a. Male   (   )   b. Female   (   )

3. Qualifications

a. Diploma   (   )   b. B.A   (   )   b. M.A   (   )   c. Ph.D.   (   )

4.Years of Experience:

a. (1- 5)   (   )   b. (5- 10)   (   )

b. (10 – 15)   (   )   c. (more than 15)   (   )

General Direction:

Please, respond to each item by putting a tick (√) before the scale the that suit your opinion.

Key:(1) Strongly Agree **(2)** Agree(3) Neutral   (4) Disagree   (5) Strongly Disagree

No	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
	Writing portfolio-formative assessment is useful to…					
1	improve students writing skills					
2	provide a clear map to achieve the writing tasks					
3	help students to revise their writing					
4	help students to recognize their strengths and areas for improvement					
5	allow teachers to give effective written feedback to students					
6	invite students to be reflective about their work and knowledge					
7	help students to monitor the learning goals and focus their attention					
8	developing students' metacognitive strategies					
9	develop students interests in writing					
10	help students to be more confident.					
11	motivate students for learning (students work harder)					
12	enhance students creativity (active rather than passive)					
13	be a tool to foster learner autonomy (ownership of learning)					
14	Help teachers to provide immediate, clear and descriptive feedback					
15	Help teachers to use different teaching techniques and strategies					
16	Help students to engage with learning (producing multiple drafts)					
17	Help to accommodate students different learning styles					
18	Help students to master writing without anxiety and time pressure					
19	To build engaging learning environment					
20	To monitor students growth and achievements over a time					

Your cooperation is highly appreciated