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TEACHERS' BELIEF, IMPLEMENTATION, AND CHALLENGES IN PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT IN WRITING

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate teachers' practices and challenges in portfolio assessment. The portfolio becomes an attractive alternative way of increasing students' writing skills. This study involved four English teachers who had more than five-year experiences in one of the private schools in the Yogyakarta region. A semi-structured interview and document analysis were conducted with three aims. Firstly, this study explains how English teachers perceived portfolio assessment. Secondly, it describes how English teachers implemented portfolio assessment; and the last, it illustrates the difficulties the English teachers faced in implementing the assessment. From the process of a case study conducted, the writer revealed that the teachers had positive perceptions toward portfolio assessment. They used portfolio assessment since the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture implemented the 2013 Curriculum. The implementation of portfolio assessment was reflected in the lesson plans they made. The lesson plan comprised core competence, basic competence, the steps in teaching-learning activity, as well as the assessment, including portfolio assessment. In applying a portfolio assessment in the teaching-learning activity, teachers followed some portfolio development steps. The English teachers also faced some challenges in applying the assessment. The difficulties teachers found in implementing the assessment were time-consuming, reliability in scoring, and designing a rubric for assessment.

Keywords: Teachers' belief, Implementation, Challenges, Portfolio assessment

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INTRODUCTION

One of the essential parts of the teaching-learning activity is assessment. It provides teachers an insight into students' abilities, achievements, and whether they have achieved the learning goals or not. Brown (2004) states that assessment is an ongoing process to ensure that class objectives and goals are met. According to Chapelle and Brindley (2002), assessment refers to the act of collecting information and making judgments about learners' knowledge of the language and abilities to use it. In other words, assessment is important to know whether students' abilities have achieved the goals of the teaching-learning process.

In terms of assessment, the 2013 Curriculum emphasizes a shift from traditional to alternative assessments integrating aspects of attitude, skills, and knowledge during the teaching-learning process. One of the alternative assessments is a portfolio. Brown (2004) states that a portfolio is one of the most popular alternatives in assessment, especially within a framework of communicative language teaching. Assessment of language teaching integrates the four skills, namely listening, reading, speaking, and writing. This is because the students learn all these skills and therefore were expected to master these four basic skills of English language (Purwanti & Hatmanto, 2019). Out of the four skills, writing is considered as the most difficult language skills to be achieved by the students. It is also regarded to be difficult for teachers to teach (Alwasilah, 2004). Besides, assessing writing is not a simple task as it can be carried out in a variety of ways (Brown, 2004).

Before going further, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by portfolio assessment. Portfolios emerged from artists' collections of their works and have long been used to demonstrate competencies. Portfolios have become a popular alternative to traditional assessment methods due to the increasing need for alternative and more authentic assessment practices (Sharifi & Hassaskhah, 2011). There are several definitions of a portfolio created by experts. A portfolio is defined as a systematic collection of students' works analyzed to show progress over the period concerning specific instructional goals (Winch et al., 2001). Gee and Upshur (as cited in Brown, 2004) assert that portfolios include materials, such as essays and compositions in the draft and

final forms, reports, poetry, journals, photos or newspaper clippings, and self-and peer assessments (comment, evaluations, and checklists). Thus, through the use of portfolios, the collection of students' works can be in various forms, such as reports, essays, and other products, which can provide accurate proof of students' learning achievements.

O'Malley and Pierce (as cited in Gomez, 2000) identify portfolio assessments as the structured collection of students' works assessed based on certain criteria consisting of several points, such as scoring guides, rubrics, checklists, and rating scales. In scoring the contents of the portfolio, the assessment utilizes specific criteria. Therefore, the use of portfolio assessment is considered a criterion-referenced assessment. Efendi, Usman, and Muslem (2017) argue that portfolios used for educational evaluation must provide more than a showcase for student-produced works; it should be the result of a detailed evaluation process that has been systematically arranged, implemented, and evaluated. A portfolio should be a set of the works, observations, exhibits, and self-ratings of a student. In a nutshell, portfolio assessment is a kind of authentic assessment designed and prepared by teachers to gain a broad view of students' learning development through collecting their works over a particular time by using a systematic way of analysis. Brown (2004) suggests that successful portfolio development should be based on seven steps. The first step is providing the objective, followed by providing guidelines on what material to be included, communicating assessment criteria to students, designing time allocation, establishing the review schedule regularly, designing an accessible place to keep portfolios, and providing a final assessment positively.

As an alternative for assessment, portfolios are very flexible to be implemented in the classroom as teachers can design them for a variety of purposes. Moreover, portfolios can be adapted and modified based on students' needs. Students find portfolios appealing and engaging since they are actively involved in selecting their works to be included. Also, they do not need not be judged or given a low grade if they cannot complete their work well in the first work. Teachers can assist them in improving their works by directing their learning and giving comments and feedback. Mokhtaria (2015) points out

several issues related to the implementation of portfolios, such as (1) the time factor is an issue voiced by teachers and principals, (2) parental and group support for such new unknown evaluation systems, (3) the lack of knowledge and experience to carry out portfolio assessment, (4) reliability and validity; sometimes it is difficult to establish accurate scoring systems and the existence of problems in evaluating portfolio content as evidence often presents a threat to its validity.

In applying a portfolio as a tool to assess students' writing, there are some steps to do in developing students' writing. Some previous studies focus on portfolio assessment in writing in the Indonesian context (e.g., Eridafithri, 2015; Virgin, Anggani, & Bharati, 2020). Eridafithri (2015) investigated teachers' perceptions in applying portfolios to assess writing progress. The study examined teachers' background knowledge related to portfolios and the difficulties they faced in applying them. It was found that many teachers, especially in a secondary school in Banda Aceh, had difficulty in using portfolio assessment, particularly in designing the rubric. The factor was the complexities of correcting portfolios. Another broader study was conducted by Virgin et al. (2019). The study explored teachers' perceptions, plans, and implementation of portfolio assessment in students' writing assessment. This study revealed that teachers had a positive perception of portfolio assessment in students' writing assessment. Unfortunately, their portfolio knowledge was insufficient. The main problems they faced in developing a portfolio were regarding how they managed time, kept students' works, and assessed the portfolios.

Furthermore, teachers' positive perception was not aligned with their portfolio plan. These two studies were conducted during the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum but at different times. Eridafithri's study was done at the beginning of the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, while Virgin et al. (2020) conducted their study in recent times. However, the findings are similar. Therefore, this study focuses on revealing teachers' implementation and the challenges in applying portfolio assessment in writing. Therefore, by understanding portfolio assessment in writing, it is essential for teachers to investigate how they apply the portfolio assessment, the difficulties they face, and the way to cope with the challenges in portfolio assessment.

This research investigates the English teachers' implementation of portfolio assessment in writing and the difficulties they find in applying the assessment. The purpose of this study is to describe how English teachers apply portfolio assessment and to identify the difficulties they find in implementing portfolio assessment in writing. Theoretically, this study is expected to increase teachers' knowledge of the alternative ways in assessing writing, that is the portfolio. Furthermore, it can increase the quality of the teaching-learning process. While practically, this study can help teachers to understand how to implement portfolio assessment in writing.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a case study aimed to investigate the implementation and challenges in applying portfolio assessment in writing. This qualitative study involved four teachers in SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Yogyakarta as the participants. This study utilized a small number of samples, and purposive sampling to select the participants. The assumption of using purposive sampling is that "the researcher wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned". The participants chosen were those who had at least five years of teaching experience (Kyriacou, 2001). The teachers' names were pseudonyms. Mrs. Rini (Teacher 1) was a qualified teacher meeting this criterion as she had more than twenty years of experience in teaching English. Mrs. Hana (Teacher 2) and Mr. Iwan (Teacher 3), both had above ten years of experience in teaching. The last was Mr. Putra (Teacher 4), who had five years of teaching experience. Another purpose of choosing these four participants was that

they represented the three different levels of teaching, grade X, XI, and XII, and handled two types of English subjects, namely *Bahasa Inggris Wajib* (Compulsory English) and *Bahasa Inggris Peminatan* (Elective or Specialization English). Thus, hopefully, the results of this study cover the implementation and difficulties in all grades. Another requirement was that the school had implemented the 2013 Curriculum for three years since a portfolio was used as an alternative assessment of this curriculum.

The data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The semi-structured interview has several advantages that the questions have structured guidance, but it still allows the researcher to explore the issues during the interview. Datko (2015) explains that the researcher has guidance in the conversation, but the participants have the freedom to change or elaborate on the topic of the conversation.

To ensure the trustworthiness of data, this research employed data triangulation. Triangulation is a data-gathering technique combining various data resources. Susan Stainback (as cited in Sugiyono, 2011) states that triangulation aims to improve one's understanding of the object being studied instead of revealing the truth of a social phenomenon. The researcher reviews the lesson plans they used in teaching-learning process.

The researcher formulated six questions, which were divided into two parts to fulfill the objectives of the study. The first part dealt with teachers' belief in portfolio assessment. Meanwhile, the second one was about the implementation of portfolio assessment in writing. The last part concerned the difficulties in applying the portfolio assessment. In the last section, the researcher allowed the teachers to state a final remark before finishing the conversation. Since the primary data were in the form of audio, they had to be converted and transcribed into written data. As suggested by Creswell (2012), the next step was the coding process. The first step of coding was reading the transcripts repeatedly. Next, the transcripts were classified into smaller categories to identify the information related to the topic. Then, identifying similar or redundant codes and grouping them into fewer codes. The last was reducing the codes to form broader categories.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interview, it was found that the teachers had applied the portfolio assessment in writing. This part describes the results of how the teachers implemented the assessment and the difficulties they faced in using it.

Teachers' Belief toward Portfolio Assessment

Interviewing four English teachers concerning the portfolio assessment resulted in several findings. The data analysis revealed that teachers had a positive belief toward the use of portfolio assessment to assess students' writing skills. The followings are the teachers' opinions and knowledge regarding portfolio assessment.

I agree with the portfolio because we finally know the real example from students' works. (Mrs. Rini)

I think the portfolio is an effective way. It helps us to know the students' development. It's great I think. (Mrs. Hana)

When we use the portfolio, we usually examine and correct some points, such as ideas, grammar, and conjunctions, so it will help students to reflect on their writing. (Mr. Iwan)

A portfolio is suitable for writing. In my opinion, students can learn and think critically toward the comment or evaluation from the teacher. (Mr. Putra)

The results of the interviews indicated that the four English teachers had similar opinions about portfolio assessment. They agreed with the statement saying that the portfolio is good and suitable for writing assessment. There were various reasons they delivered. Mrs. Rini agreed with the statement because the portfolio contained a record of real examples of students' works continuously. While Mrs. Hana had an idea

that the portfolio was good because it helped the teachers to know the development of their students since the portfolio showed the works in progress. Mr. Iwan stated that the portfolio was useful for students because they could make self-reflection to the results of the works. Furthermore, Mr. Putra agreed that the portfolio could be a reflective way to examine the students' abilities as it contained teachers' or friends' comments or evaluations.

Borg (as cited in Virgin et al., 2019) argues that teachers' perception affects classroom practices. Thus, the researcher believed that what the teachers know and believe about portfolio assessment would influence the way they implement the portfolio assessment in their classroom. As the teachers obtained several good points from the portfolio in the teaching-learning process, they showed positive perceptions. A portfolio could be a tool to raise students' responsibility. Furthermore, it could also be utilized as a record of students' development in the learning process. Besides, they agreed that the portfolio was one of the reflective ways for students since they received comments or evaluation from the teacher or their friends.

The Strengths of Portfolio Assessment

The strengths of portfolio assessment, especially in writing skills, are shifting from assessment by considering the score to the development of students' skills during the process of the lesson and giving feedback as well as evaluation. A portfolio helps teachers to evaluate skills and knowledge in writing without separating students' creativity and individual ability. The teachers' opinions related to the strengths of the portfolio assessment are as follows:

Well, the portfolio is very comprehensive. We can figure out students' writing skills and knowledge from their works. (Mr. Iwan)

They feel free to express their ideas or opinions. We can also know their responsibility in completing the tasks. The final product will differentiate whether the students do the task seriously or not. (Mrs. Hana)

There were some advantages of using portfolio assessment to assess writing skills derived from the two opinions. It became an authentic assessment of students' achievement, a comprehensive view of students' performances, and encouraged students to develop themselves as independent learners. Furthermore, it also could encourage students to be responsible for their learning (Birgin & Baki, 2007).

The Implementation of Portfolio Assessment

Based on the results of the interviews and document analysis in designing portfolio assessment, the aspect of assessment was considered since it was used to obtain the reflection of students' level in authentic assessment. By using portfolio assessment, the evaluation became a positive force to encourage growth, maturity, and independence of students. Therefore, students could receive an excellent learning and teaching process and motivation to study English.

Since the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture issued the 2013 Curriculum and the new role of Minister of Education and Culture Regulations No. 23 of 2016 about the standard of education assessment, automatically, the assessment had a new version. In chapter VI of the regulation regarding the mechanism of assessment under article 9 point D, skills assessment can be carried out through practice, product, project, portfolio, and other appropriate techniques to assess competence. One of the techniques of skill assessment is a portfolio, which is suitable for this research. The teachers used the portfolio assessment to assess the students' works. In the 2013 Curriculum, teachers connected a scientific approach with portfolio assessment to obtain good results of students learning process. The scientific approach is as follows:

Observing

Observing is a meaningful learning method. The learning activities are gained through reading, listening, and observing.

The enhanced competencies are trying seriousness, carefulness, and seeking information.

Questioning

Questioning is learning activities by asking questions about unknown information to obtain sufficient information. The enhanced competencies are developing creativity, building critical thinking, and formulating questions.

Experimenting

Experiments are learning activities by reading from other books and observing objects, events, activities, and interviews. The enhanced competencies are developing communication skills and attitude, applying the procedure, and developing inductive and deductive thinking.

Associating

Associating is learning activities deal with processing the unlimited information obtained from experiment activities or observed activities and collecting the information. The enhanced competencies are developing integrity, good attitudes, and hard work.

Communicating

Communicating refers to learning activities carried out by informing the results of observing and analyzing conclusion, written, or other media. The enhanced competencies are building systematic thinking, expressing the argument, and building good language communication.

From this scientific approach, teachers can use the compatible assessment for the students. Teachers stated that not all skills could be assessed by using portfolio assessment as it depended on the indicator, basic competencies, and core competencies.

Teachers Planning of Portfolio Assessment

Planning is an essential step in portfolio assessment, as it can be reflected in teachers' lesson plans. A lesson plan is a guideline the teachers follow in the teaching-learning process. It plays an essential role in the success of the teaching-learning process. Teachers should prepare their lesson plans to achieve effective teaching processes. There are three basic components in a lesson plan, namely objectives of the lesson, step-by-step of learning and teaching activity, and an assessment to check students' understanding and achievement in a particular topic. Furthermore, the lesson plan should be in line with the recent curriculum, the 2013 Curriculum.

The first part of the lesson plan comprises information about the school identity, including school name, subject, class and semester, material, and time allocation. Whereas, the next part consists of core and basic competencies, and indicators of competency achievement. This part is crucial because it determines what competencies students should achieve both in cognitive and psychomotor domains. Indicators show how the students obtain the knowledge and skills. Teachers then continue with teaching objectives. The objectives are taken from the basic competencies and combined with some education characters the teachers want to emphasize. The next discussion is the learning steps. This part generally follows the five phases of the scientific approach, observing, questioning, experimenting, associating, and communicating. Teachers are also able to learn models, such as Discovery Learning, Problem Based Learning, and Project-Based Learning. The last part is the assessment. In the 2013 Curriculum, the assessment involves three domains, namely cognitive, psychomotor, and affective. Each assessment followed by the forms, techniques, and procedures. The technique to assess the cognitive domain is oral or written tests, whereas the psychomotor domain can be carried out through project, portfolio, role play, and presentation.

In a particular period of study, one semester, the teachers in senior high school observed in this study prepared some lesson plans. The number of lesson plans depended on the basic competencies covered in one semester. Three of four teachers stated they always included the portfolio assessment

in their lesson plans in one semester. The step before they included portfolios was identifying the material. There were some materials, on average, about 6-7 basic psychomotor competencies in one semester, and they had to choose which materials were suitable for portfolio assessment. They had to identify which basic psychomotor competencies they wanted to assess with portfolios. From the interviews, it was found that the materials chosen were mostly related to the genre of the text (e.g., descriptive, exposition, explanation, and short story), and functional text (for example, personal letter, banner or pamphlet, and application letter). After choosing the material for the portfolio assessment, they should attach some rubrics or instruments to assess the assignments. However, not all teachers were ready with the instruments due to several reasons. They told them to adjust the instruments with the assignments.

Steps of Developing Portfolio Assessment

The discussion about the implementation of portfolios utilized the steps suggested by Brown (2004). There are seven steps in developing portfolios. The first step was determining the objectives of portfolios. Here, teachers stated the objectives of portfolios, which was appropriate with basic competencies. The second step was determining the rules. In this stage, teachers should tell students what kinds of works they preferred. Based on the interviews, the teachers delivered the instruction of the portfolio at the early meeting in general. The next step was informing students about the criteria of the portfolio assessment. Most teachers in this research skipped this step. Consequently, the students' works did not meet the criteria of their assessments. The next step was allocating time for the portfolio works. The teachers only took one portfolio work in one semester. They stated:

For this semester, I think exposition text is the most suitable material for the portfolio assignments. (Mrs. Rini)

There can be some basic competencies. But, I choose only short story text material for collecting students' portfolios. (Mrs. Hana)

I choose writing invitation as it is suitable for portfolio assignments in this semester (Mr. Iwan)

From this step, the duration of the portfolio works was limited because the teachers assessed only at the time when they delivered the material. The teachers explained that it was impossible to spend an extended period for assessing one writing skill of a particular material. The next step was scheduling the periodic review or conference. At this step, the teachers argued that it was hard to schedule several reviews because most teachers handled many classes. Therefore, it spent much time to give comments or evaluation of the works. The next phase was providing space for keeping the portfolios. The teachers stated that the students kept their works since there was no enough place both at the classrooms and the teachers' rooms to keep them. The last step was giving the final assessment. This step was done by the teachers as soon as they finished scoring and giving comments or evaluations.

Challenges in Developing Portfolio Assessment Time Consuming

One of the difficulties in portfolio assessment was time-consuming. When teachers implemented the portfolio, they needed much time to handle portfolio works. The teachers asserted:

One of the problems I face in using a portfolio is time-consuming. It needs a lot of time to analyze the students' works on a big scale. It is such a heavy job for the teacher. It consumes much energy. (Mr. Putra)

I teach seven classes for grade XI and you know, every class is about 30 to 36 students. To check all my students' works and give evaluations and comments, I have to spend a long time after school. (Mrs. Rini)

Based on the above opinions, it can be inferred that teachers needed more time and energy to examine the portfolios. In

assessing portfolios, the teachers needed to do a periodic review to know the progress of students' knowledge. Consequently, they spent more time and much energy to analyze the students' works, especially when they handled many classes with a large number of students. Several researchers reported that the implementation of portfolios was time-consuming (Kalra, Sundrarajun, & Komintarachat, 2017).

Afrianto (2017), in his research, also found that the ultimate issue of using portfolios in Indonesian schools was also a large class. It is a fact that most classes in Indonesia were made up of over 30 or even 40 students. It is quite reasonable to see that many teachers are concurrently teaching more than two students. Hence, it is understandable why a teacher finds it difficult to manage and use portfolio assessment.

Reliability of Scoring

Reliability was another factor in assessing portfolios. Teachers admitted that it became the problem in portfolio assessment. They said:

Well...sometimes when I compare how we give the mark to students' works with other teachers, I found we have different results. (Mr. Iwan)

I think assessing portfolios is very subjective. Why? Because you know that every teacher has his or her own standards although we use the rubric. (Mrs. Hana)

When I check students' works, I still think of many considerations. Say, for example, their abilities, creativity, and the length of the text. Sometimes the results will be different though their writing is almost the same. (Mrs. Rini)

The opinions above indicated that it was hard for the teachers to make a consistent mark on the students' works. Brown (2004) states that a reliable test means that the test yields consistent results. If the students' works marked at a different time by several teachers, the result should be the same or at least almost the same. Thus, the issue of reliability becomes a difficult problem for teachers. Nystrand, Cohen, and Dowling (1993) argue that assessing a portfolio means examining a text differing in content, genre, topic, length, and collected in different conditions. It raised the reliability problem in portfolio assessment. The reliability of students' works became uncertain. Teachers argued that the score to the same works could be different among teachers because it was very subjective. When the specific, clear, and measurable criteria for each item were used in portfolios, the reliability could increase. If the purpose and assessment criteria of a portfolio were unclear, the portfolio could be just a collection of works that could not reflect students' achievement. Teachers sometimes discussed the questions of whether the students did the works by themselves or with others. This statement might cause anxiety about the validity and reliability of the portfolio assessment since the works did not show students' real abilities. Several previous studies supported these findings. In this case, students' scores in portfolios might not show their real performance (Birgin & Baki, 2007).

Designing Rubric for Assessing Portfolio

Ariyani (2013) states that a rubric in a language assessment is crucial because it is used as a reference to measure the success of the learners. In addition to using rubrics, teachers were able to accurately assess students' mastery of writing. Teachers should include a detailed description of the parameters to be measured in the rubric to obtain an accurate measurement. Thus, the rubric would be utilized to evaluate students' performance. Nevertheless, in reality, portfolios were difficult to assess due to the rubric designed:

Creating a rubric for assessing students' works is not as easy as we think. Different work will use a different rubric. Sometimes, we are confused because there are many categories. (Mrs. Rini)

Every time we give a portfolio task, then we think what the suitable rubric for the task is. We also think about how to make

the rubric not too complicated so that it is easier to check. (Mr. Putra)

The results of the interviews revealed that teachers did not know how to make a good rubric. They had used the rubric as the scoring measurement tool, but they did not know what components should be included. They made the rubric by copying it from some resources, such as books, other lesson plans, or downloadable resources from the internet. Birgin and Baki (2007) state that the first time of developing portfolio assessment criteria, rubrics, and determining the works can be difficult for teachers. Being one of the instrumental tools to assess students' works, teachers need to understand how to create the rubric.

CONCLUSION

A portfolio plays a vital role in improving students' writing skills. It is an effective instructional technique as well as an assessment tool that can provide evidence of knowledge and skills. Furthermore, portfolio assessment can offer authentic information about the progress of students and can be used as a means of assisting students to overcome their writing anxiety in foreign or second language learning. The results of the research showed that the teachers believed that the portfolio, as an alternative assessment, became an effective way to increase students' writing achievement. However, the implementation in the field, teachers had not applied the portfolio as their technique in teaching writing. Teachers' lesson plans, which reflected their preparation for teaching, had not included planned portfolio development. They also followed some steps in portfolio development.

Teachers were restricted to some problems in implementing a portfolio in teaching-learning activity. Firstly, they asserted that the portfolio was a time-consuming task. Secondly, they need the training to make them aware of the effectiveness and flexibility in designing writing activities and how to assess them. In this study, other problems found were related to designing a rubric and determining the components to assess. Teachers found it difficult to examine the portfolios of students from different classes to ensure consistency. This research has shown the implementation and challenges in portfolio assessment in writing. However, it has not been found about the strategic ways in using portfolio assessments in writing in spite of the shortages. Thus, future research on how teachers make use of portfolio assessment in effective and strategic ways should be undertaken.

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