

Missing the Process for the Product: Tension Between Instructor Goals and Student Perceptions of ePortfolios as Personalized Action Research

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The creation of ePortfolios as a capstone project for school counselors-in-training has many benefits for the students, instructors, and program. However, there can be tension due to misalignments in goals and lived experiences of the ePortfolio even when the students find ePortfolios useful. This paper explores this tension between instructor goals and student perceptions of the purposes and values of ePortfolios created as part of a capstone in a graduate school counseling program. While the school counseling instructor conceptualized the ePortfolio process and product as a form of personalized action research focusing on aspirational goals, the school counselors-in-training experienced the ePortfolio as a useful product for reflection and job preparation but did not grasp the process as a form of personalized action research. Reflections on this disconnect suggest recommendations for better alignment of instructor goals and student experiences in order to use ePortfolios as a form of personalized action research.

There are a variety of reasons to create and use ePortfolios in graduate education and a growing body of research shows that they are useful for students and instructors in terms of professional growth, critical thinking, reflection, assessment, and evaluation (Cordic, Sailors, Barlow, & Kush, 2019; Scholz, Tse, & Lithgow, 2017). ePortfolios can be considered a high impact practice (Batson, 2011) and have many positive benefits for students, instructors, and programmatic level assessment (Harring & Luo, 2016; Kahn, 2014; Wakimoto & Lewis, 2014). However, there are challenges and issues to overcome in using ePortfolios to their full potential and aligning instructor hopes and goals with students' lived experiences of the ePortfolio process and product. These tensions and potentials for misalignment in the process and product of ePortfolios form the reflections and basis for this paper.

The practical advantages of ePortfolios are well-documented in the literature at both the individual and programmatic levels (Harring & Luo, 2016; Roberts, Maor, & Herrington, 2016; Yu, 2011). As a finished product, the ePortfolio serves to document how students meet program, institutional, and state requirements for evaluation purposes. At the individual level, the ePortfolio can help graduates in their job searches by giving them a competitive edge showcasing their work in a digital format, as well as improving their preparation and confidence for interviews (Harring & Luo, 2016; Yu, 2011).

However, ePortfolios can also be viewed as embodiments and processes to reach aspirational goals. Research shows ePortfolios provide space to document professional agency, action, and reflections (Boulton, 2014). They can actively invite students and professionals to create personalized identities as learners and people, recognize their own agency as engaged learners, see themselves as participants in

creating their own world, and even see themselves in the global environment (Rhodes, 2018). Viewing ePortfolios within the framework of situated learning has ePortfolio as a high impact practice that can be transformational for the students (Batson, 2011). Research has shown that ePortfolios are valuable reflective tools for graduate and counselor education students completing their programs (Chen, 2009; Cheng & Chau, 2013). ePortfolios can also document the changing values in an evolving counselor education program (Luther & Barnes, 2015).

Because of these twin aspects of ePortfolios— aspirational values as processes and practical values as products—there exists the potential for tension and misalignment of instructor and student goals and perceptions. This misalignment can be viewed as a difference in understanding the goals and values of the ePortfolio process and product by instructors and students (Scholz et al., 2017). While misalignment does not necessarily mean that the ePortfolio process will not be valuable, it can create tensions and frustration for both parties. Some of this tension can come from the difference in the instructor's intended goals for a project, such as an ePortfolio, versus how the students experience the enacted lesson and process (Maybee, 2015). Scholz et al. (2017) noted that best practices, including grading the ePortfolio, can help with creating a positive experience and alignment, but that further research is needed to tease apart the factors that facilitate the alignment of goals. It is unsurprising then that the tension that is inherent in learning appears in the study of ePortfolios and the many, sometimes competing, reasons for creating them for student, instructor, and programmatic goals.

While there is research showing the benefits of ePortfolios—and the portfolio process more generally—for professions allied to school counselors,

such as teacher education (Rhyne-Winkler & Wooten, 1996), there has been little research focus on ePortfolios in school counselor training. While the literature on ePortfolios is growing (Boes, VanZile-Tamsen, & Jackson, 2001; Cheng & Chau, 2013; Roberts et al., 2016; Wakimoto & Lewis 2014; Yu, 2011), there is a lack of studies on ePortfolios used in school counselors-in-training programs (Carlson & Yohon, 2008; Luther & Barnes, 2015; Rhodes et al., 2014). This paper partially fills this gap by exploring how school counselors-in-training conceptualize the ePortfolio process and if this aligns with the goals of the instructor. This paper is both a cautionary tale and a case study of how ePortfolios can be conceptualized and experienced in very different ways by the instructor and the students. However, it is also a hopeful tale of how, even with tension and some misalignment in realized goals, students still found benefit in the ePortfolio process.

This study explored how school counselors-in-training view ePortfolios, especially in terms of the tension between process and product, via the following questions:

1. How do school counselors-in-training reflect on and conceptualize the process of creating ePortfolios?
2. Do school counselors-in-training see ePortfolios as a form of personalized action research? If so, in what ways?
3. What similarities and differences are seen in the way that school counselors-in-training conceptualize the ePortfolio creation process?
4. What might school counselor educators learn from understanding school counselors-in-training conceptualizations and uses of the ePortfolio creation process?

Method

Background and Context

California State University, East Bay is one of the most diverse campuses in the United States with an enrollment over 14,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs. The School Counseling and Marriage and Family Therapy program has a social justice and advocacy orientation woven throughout the action-oriented and strengths-based curriculum. Graduate students are grounded in the ASCA National Model, systems, families, and relational practices. The action-oriented, strengths-based perspective fosters an aspirational ethic concerned with using one's knowledge skills and practices to improve the place where you work or live (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). From an aspirational ethical perspective, counseling

and education are understood as developmental processes that foster human liberation and autonomy.

In 2010, the faculty coordinator of the school counseling program, which is part of the Educational Psychology Department, invited a faculty member from the Library Department to collaborate in moving the Professional Practice Portfolios online. During the nine-year collaboration, the two faculty members conducted research and maintained a continuing conversation between each other and their graduate students about the power of ePortfolios (Wakimoto & Lewis, 2014, 2019). Relationships were key. Both faculty members fostered the graduate students' formative development and aspirational process in constructing ePortfolios. The library faculty member assisted the students with the technical and design aspects of the ePortfolios whereas the counseling faculty was responsible for summative assessment and judgment regarding how the ePortfolios were evaluated. During the current study, due to taking Faculty Early Retirement Program (FERP) at the university, the school counselor educator was no longer program coordinator and in a continuous mentoring relationship to graduate students as he had been for six of the nine years of the research collaboration.

As part of the process of guiding and supporting reflective practitioners in the program, the school counselors-in-training have been developing electronic Professional Practice Portfolios (ePPP or ePortfolios) for nine years. The ePortfolios and the rubrics designed to assess the portfolios were structured to address the School Counseling Standards defined by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, which are informed by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and the California Standards for the School Counseling Profession (California Association of School Counselors, 2009).

During the ePortfolio creation process, the school counselors-in-training were encouraged to form their own communities of practice to provide mutual support for one another as they reviewed previous ePortfolios and became familiar with the assessment rubric. Because ePortfolio construction has been part of the school counselor curriculum since 2010, subsequent cohorts have been able to view previous cohort members' ePortfolios after securing permission to view the ePortfolio from the owner. Previous ePortfolios serve both as models and inspiration for the following cohorts to build upon. Also, the completed ePortfolios provide proof of the faculty members' assertions that everyone in the program creates a professional, reflective ePortfolio. The community of practice has informal and formal qualities: informal in that they are encouraged to share their ePortfolios with each other during the process and formal through required

formative peer reviews of the ePortfolios using the ePortfolio rubric to guide their assessment.

For the past 12 years, graduate students have been required to complete a capstone action research project involving classroom, counseling department, school-wide, or even district public school level interventions concerned with including K-12 students' voices in "making one thing better." The action research project is designed to orient school counselors toward aspirational values inherent in systems change and relational practices. Graduate students share their action research process and results with their school and the entire professional community (e.g., Tanaka, 2018; Williams, 2017). Graduate students are invited to author chapters regarding their action research practice and articles as co-authors exploring the lifescaping action research pedagogy and the importance of engaging with K-12 students in improving their school community (e.g., Lewis, Herb, Mundy-McCook, & Capps-Jenner, 2018).

Such experiences led the counselor educator to view ePortfolio development as a form of personalized action research enabling school counselors-in-training to reflect as action researchers concerned with themselves as subjects and authors of their own career development. This led him to wonder if simply framing the ePortfolio as personalized action research might disrupt graduate students' view that the ePortfolio is merely a product used to meet bureaucratic requirements defined by the program and state.

Research Design

This study was inspired by action research, and the two faculty members wanted to include as many voices from the school counselors-in-training as possible. Action research is defined as radically different from research that is designed to describe the world "as is" (Gillies, 1993; Luck & Webb, 2009; Young, Gonzales, Owen, & Heltzer, 2014). Lifescaping action research is defined as research designed with others to transform the world in a more desirable direction (Gergen, 2015; Lewis & Winkelman, 2017). In this study of ePortfolios, lifescaping action research was applied with the intent to engage individuals developing their ePortfolios in a liberating process where they could reflect upon and give direction to their own careers. This was in contrast to framing the ePortfolios as merely created to comply with bureaucratic requirements defined by the institution, accrediting bodies, or the state (Bradbury, Lewis, & Embury, 2019; Lewis, in press).

To engage school counselors-in-training with this research, the faculty members solicited participation from the students in two ways: (a) through writing reflections based on prompts throughout the last year of

the program when they were creating their ePortfolios, and (b) through participating as co-authors in reviewing and adding their reflections to the paper. This aligns the need in education to prepare students for a life and profession of change that leads to the need for students and instructors to be co-researchers to deal with these changes (Batson, 2011). The counselor educator and library faculty member were also able to share their personal reflections through this study.

Participants

The school counseling cohort graduating in 2018 consisted of 12 graduate students. All were sent invitations and consent forms inviting them to participate as survey respondents and co-authors. Five cohort members returned forms to become survey respondents, and four of these also returned forms to join the faculty as co-authors. All five research participants were women. Two were Latinx, two were European-American, and one was Asian-Pacific Islander. As cohort member and co-author Rush stated:

I was excited when I was given the opportunity to collaborate as a co-author. I had the opportunity to contribute my insight and perspective on the ePPP [ePortfolio], which is an opportunity that participants are not typically offered. On the same token, collaborating as a co-author was overwhelming at times based on the time of the year, and the timing heavily impacted my responses that were sometimes brief. Job interviews became a priority considering I had not worked for two years being in the master's program; school work and this study were put lower on my priorities list.

Data Collection

In order to collect the reflections and perspectives of school counselors during the time period the ePortfolios were being developed, five online surveys were designed to be answered at different times during the 2017-18 academic year: (1) one at the end of fall term, (2) one during winter term, and (3) three during spring term. The online surveys asked the school counselors to reflect on their experience of creating their ePortfolios. All the survey questions were in the form of open-ended writing prompts (see Appendix).

Data Analysis

The resulting qualitative data were analyzed in an iterative process. This qualitative content analysis uncovered overarching themes that emerged from the open-ended question responses (Saldaña, 2009).

Reliability of coding of data was ensured by having faculty co-researchers review and categorize the responses into themes and compare them. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion. Each quotation is numbered to link it to a specific student response while retaining the confidentiality of the student respondent. No identifying information was collected via the written prompts. The student co-authors, Rush and Nogueiro, offered their perspectives and voices as participants in the ePortfolio process and checked the faculty members' analyses by reviewing the article manuscript.

Results

The school counselors-in-training who agreed to participate in this study completed five sets of prompts, as noted previously. All five participants completed the first survey and four completed the subsequent four surveys. ePortfolios were seen as showcases for the work completed in the school counseling program, with much support coming from cohort members, while challenges noted are those that face most intense projects: time management, realistic expectations, and collecting documentation. The ePortfolios were conceptualized in an instrumental, practical manner that has implications, discussed in a later section, for those instructors who hope to facilitate an ePortfolio creation process conducted as a personalized action research supporting aspirational goals.

Survey Responses

As the first set of survey prompts was completed at the end of the fall term and the ePortfolio had just been introduced, the responses focus on the beginning of the journey of ePortfolio creation. The themes of support, especially from cohort members, usefulness of model ePortfolios from past cohorts, as well as hopes and concerns were found in the reflections. As one respondent reflected on reviewing past ePortfolios, "They are very helpful for the most part. It seems a little daunting, but exciting to create an artifact that reflects my experiences in graduate school" (Participant 3). Concerns focused on having time to complete the requirements and creating an ePortfolio that was presentable. Hopes for the ePortfolio focused on showcasing and marketing oneself and that it would boost confidence as a new school counselor: "helping me see my worth as a school counselor and show the progress I have made" (Participant 4).

On the second set of survey responses at the end of winter term, the challenges were defined more concretely than in the first survey responses. These responses focus on the structure of the ePortfolio and following the grading rubric, while maintaining a sense

of self and pride in their work in the program. One respondent noted their greatest challenge was "following the rubric because I section information and language differently in my head" (Participant 4). This difference in the instructor's language versus language that resonated with the school counselors-in-training is discussed in a later section. The cohort members continued to provide support to one another in the process. There was the sense that the ePortfolio was helping to foster reflection on personal philosophy and competency as a school counselor: "I do appreciate the push to write a professional philosophy" (Participant 4). Only when prompted did the reflections show engagement with the idea that the ePortfolio could be a form of personalized action research, but these reflections were grounded in the very practical aspects creating and completing their ePortfolios.

In the third set of survey responses at the midpoint of the spring term, there was more reflection on the work completed in the program as a whole as the school counselors-in-training had worked much more intensely with their ePortfolios by this point in the program. The focus of the ePortfolio continued to be a showcase of evidence of how the school counselors-in-training had completed course and standard requirements and how their work reflected their own goals as school counselors. The ePortfolio also helped graduate students reflect on the program, both what was done and what they wish they could have completed: "I wish I would have saved more of my pre and post test data because it would have shown my effectiveness in implementing guidance lessons" (Participant 2). The question that frames much of the school counseling program for the school counseling faculty member, "How do you make a difference in the lives of the students you serve?" divided respondents on whether such a question framed their work in a positive or negative manner. One respondent stated, "The question 'how do you make a difference in the lives of the students' seems at odds with the ambiguous nature of counseling" (Participant 1) as not all change can be quantified.

The fourth set of survey responses at the end of the spring term came at the end of the program as the school counselors-in-training had finished and submitted their ePortfolios. The mutual support of cohort members was still seen as important to the process, with this term having seen the school counselors-in-training providing peer reviews of their ePortfolios. The majority of the experiences with the peer review process was positive, "Helping others did evoke a sense of confidence and competence for me. I also felt challenged to produce a higher quality ePPP [ePortfolio] by seeing my cohort members' ePPP and looking at previous years' work" (Participant 2). One reflection voiced that instructor grading of a cohort

member's action research project in another course negatively impacted their perception of the ePortfolio process. There was a greater focus and appreciation for the ePortfolio being useful for preparing for job interviews: "it helped me prepare answers with evidence for different domains of counseling" (Participant 4). The ePortfolio was not seen as personalized action research as students focused on meeting each of the standards spelled out in the ePortfolio rubric.

The fifth and final set of survey responses were also collected at the end of spring term. The school counselors-in-training reflected on the ePortfolio process and product as a whole. Similar themes about completing the ePortfolio requirements were seen in these responses. The ePortfolio itself was seen as a showcase of work completed in the program: "A compilation of my work, philosophy, and growth as a school counselor" (Participant 4). It served as job interview preparation and locating evidence in one place, "having something to always reference to in the future and to use in interviews" (Participant 3). Reflections on challenges did not reveal new issues but reiterated the constraints of time, templates, and locating their own documents to upload to the ePortfolios. The ePortfolio process was seen as producing a product, rather than as an example of personalized action research that cultivated an aspirational ethic: "I had the frame of mind that creating the ePPP [ePortfolio] is a set practice used to fulfill CTC and CSUEB school counseling program requirements by illustrating competence of the standards" (Participant 2). Another wrote that the ePortfolio was "kind of not really. More of a reflection" (Participant 3) in response to the question of viewing the ePortfolio as personalized action research. However, ePortfolios were seen as valuable. One school counselor-in-training suggested that there should be an entire course on marketing oneself in digital space, with the ePortfolio being part of the course. Another school counselor-in-training hoped to continue to add to their ePortfolio as a professional.

Discussion

After reviewing the responses and resulting themes in the preceding section, it was possible to see the possibilities, misalignments, and ideas for future refinement in the ePortfolio process. This allowed for answering the posed research questions along with making recommendations to improve the ePortfolio process to make explicit the connections with personalized action research and larger aspirational goals.

The school counselors-in-training conceptualized and experienced their ePortfolios as products rather than a process, although their responses did show some

variations. Overall, the school counselors-in training saw ePortfolios as most beneficial for preparation for job interviews and for reflection on the work completed in the program. One student noted that the ePortfolio was "beneficial in reflection and to showcase your best work" (Participant 2) while another simply found it was a "digital version of a binder of completed work from graduate school" (Participant 1). ePortfolios did support aspirational goals of building confidence and community, especially through working with other cohort members in supporting each other and through the peer review process. Interestingly, while one of the respondents found the ePortfolio to just be a digital binder, the same student also wanted the project to be expanded into a course for students to be able to "market themselves as professionals via technology" (Participant 1). This deserves further exploration as a way to meet the needs of students in professional graduate programs.

ePortfolios as Personalized Action Research (or Not)

As shown from the responses, ePortfolios were not seen as a form of personalized action research. As a student wrote, "It doesn't feel like a form of my own personalized [action research]" (Participant 1). Another wrote it was not personalized action research because creating the ePortfolio was "a set practice used to fulfill CTC and school counseling program requirements by illustrating competence of the standards" (Participant 2). Even when asked to define personalized action research, one wrote "no idea" (Participant 1) and two declined to answer this question but wrote that they did not consider it personalized action research in response to a later question on the final survey connecting ePortfolios with personalized action research. Personalized action research was never addressed without prompting from a specific question in the responses to the survey questions. This was the main source of tension and misalignment between instructor and student goals, as well as the valuation of the ePortfolio process and product. This followed the finding of Habron (2015) that students focus on course requirements unless specifically, explicitly told to focus on other aspects such as framing the ePortfolio as a form of personalized action research and using it as a vehicle for aspirational goals.

While the ePortfolios were not seen as personalized action research, they were viewed more favorably as vehicles for reflection. As students noted, "I had to reflect on my growth and experiences throughout the program" (Participant 4) and "[reflection] showed me where I have an opportunity to grow as well as what I prioritized during my time in graduate school" (Participant 1). This finding aligns with previous research demonstrating the value of ePortfolios for

reflection on development and completed work (Harring & Luo, 2016). As some students have found value in the ePortfolio for reflection on their work and growth as professionals, this may provide one avenue to focus on in order to achieve the goal of using ePortfolios as a form of personalized action research.

A Reflection by Lewis, School Counselor Educator

Many faculty dream of bringing about a better world. I envisioned the ePortfolio as a place where professionals-in-training would be able to navigate their way between ubiquitous bureaucratic rocks and their professional dreams. These findings point to the need that if instructors want students to interact with ePortfolios in a more aspirational, personalized action research vein, then the ePortfolios need to be integrated throughout the graduate program, from the very beginning and even as part of the entrance into the program. The way faculty approached teaching ePortfolios in this study by orienting graduate students during the second year in the program was not getting translated into fostering students' aspirational values or framing professional development as a continuous personalized action research project.

Even though the ePortfolio is designed to help students show the work they are most proud of, it is crucial to help them see the ePortfolio as a space to reflect on ways to enhance their own professional development and guide their professional story. Change is necessary to integrate the ePortfolio throughout the program. Integrating the ePortfolio throughout the program would involve coordinating and defining with program faculty, both tenured and adjunct, when and where in the graduate program the ePortfolio would be introduced, advanced, and assessed. Such a shift is necessary if we are truly going to nurture both aspirational values and professional development as a continuous personalized action research project. Otherwise, we are faced with recognizing that we are training professionals to merely survive meeting external bureaucratic demands, rather than developing communities of practice where one's work as a school counselor can be shared, developed, and guided by aspirational values grounded in wisdom and compassion. After all, the key goal is to help school counselors focus on making a difference in the lives of K-12 students and their families.

A Reflection by Wakimoto, Library Faculty

It has been rewarding to work with the school counselors-in-training on their ePortfolios and see the increase in their confidence and sense of accomplishment as they reflect on all the work they have done throughout the program. However, reviewing

the responses through this research has made clear to me the need to revise and reframe the ePortfolio if we would like to emphasize the aspirational goals and personalized action research process within the constraints of evaluation and assessment. The tension is always inherent but through clearer discussion about the goals of the ePortfolio, and really the aspirations of the entire program, there may be a change in how the school counselors-in-training interact with and use their ePortfolios. As my part of the process is focused on the technical and ensuring the school counselors-in-training can have their ePortfolios look and work the way they want to, I am less involved with setting the aspirations or inspiring students in this way. However, I am reflecting on how—if the new coordinator of the school counselor program desires collaboration—I, too, can help make clear the aspirational goals of the ePortfolios and their potential as so much more beyond the end of the program and beyond preparing for the first set of job interviews.

A Reflection by Two School Counselors-In-Training

Two of the four school counselors-in-training who indicated interest in being co-authors returned feedback and reflections on the draft of this article in Fall 2018 after they had begun work as professional school counselors. Their reflections follow and provide a counterpoint to the reflections of the faculty members, providing insight for instructors who want to make the ePortfolio process more valuable both to graduate students and to early career school counseling professionals.

Rush's reflection. The time given to complete the ePortfolio was ample enough, and we received support throughout the process from Dr. Lewis, Dr. Wakimoto, and our peers in the cohort. The finished ePortfolio aided me in gaining confidence in my skills as a professional. As a project that seemed to align with CTC standards, I viewed the project as more of a requirement to demonstrate competence in the profession to the school program and to the state. After reading through a draft of this article, however, I became more aware of what the study was trying to measure. I think more time, examples, and explicit instruction were needed for the participants in the study to better understand the concept of personal action research. For many of us, action research was a new concept, or at least unfamiliar, so diving into our own personal action research connected to the ePortfolio was not a goal or thought at that point-in-time.

Nogueiro's reflection. When thinking back to constructing my ePortfolio, at times it did feel like we were scrambling to gather evidence to show that we were competent school counselors in terms of meeting and exceeding the standards laid out by the rubric and

the state. If I had the opportunity to alter the ePortfolio process, I wish more information could have been front-loaded at the beginning of the program about what would be expected in terms of including evidence and such. I also agree that having a grade attached to the assignment shifts things so that we approached the project as students do rather than as young professionals. Now that I am a practicing school counselor, having completed the ePortfolio, demonstrating my abilities in a clear, concise manner allowed me to feel confident when interviewing for jobs and when being evaluated by my district now that I am a professional school counselor.

Additionally, I have taken on the responsibility of building a website for my department to highlight the work we do, and also to help our students and their families have easily accessible information. The ePortfolio helped me conceptualize the importance of collecting data and left me with a trajectory of what I needed to do in order to be an effective educator. In this way, the ePortfolio did leave me asking, “How do I enrich the lives of students?” and I do feel that I entered the workforce with the different school counseling domains in mind.

Takeaways for School Counselor Educators

There are ways of aligning instructors’ aspirational goals with the students’ needs to complete the ePortfolio as a capstone project; however, these require explicit discussion and reinforcement. The tension and misalignment of the aspirational goals of the ePortfolios found in this study is similar to that found by Scholz et al. (2017): students still had an overall positive experience but there were clear misalignments in the goal of having the ePortfolio act as a form of personalized action research. Baston (2011) noted that ePortfolios, along with other curriculum, can be used to encourage student agency and responsibility that will mirror work after graduation. Best practices in using ePortfolios such as including reflective writing assignments, personal mission statements, personalization through evidence chosen, and scaffolded use of technology (Cordie et al., 2019) also apply to using ePortfolios in school counseling education. Specifically, having explicit reflection on the ePortfolios with discussion on how they can serve as personalized action research projects may better align goals and alleviate tension seen in this study. Furthermore, the technical aspects of creating the ePortfolio might be well-served by integrating them into the curriculum at an earlier point. Also, having the school counselors-in-training add to their ePortfolios as a graded part of all of their courses instead of in the last term may also provide the necessary time for reflection and understanding of

the integration of the ePortfolio as part of their developmental process instead of only a capstone project (Lowenthal, White, & Cooley, 2011).

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides some interesting insights into exploring ePortfolios, there are of course limitations. The sample size was small and self-selected, only using one year’s cohort to reflect on the use of ePortfolios. Therefore, we cannot state that all viewpoints were represented. This could be ameliorated by collecting additional viewpoints and running a longitudinal study across cohorts, similar to previous studies on ePortfolios and school counselors-in-training (Wakimoto & Lewis, 2014, 2019). There are many avenues for future research on school counselors-in-training, school counseling professionals, and ePortfolios. Interviews with school counselors-in-training might illuminate more fully how ePortfolios are used and perceived. Having students involved in “talk aloud” methodologies while working on their ePortfolios might be similarly useful in understanding more fully the selection process for evidence showcased in the ePortfolios. Also, having instructors and students come together to determine rubrics for ePortfolio assessment and evaluation, along with how to use ePortfolios throughout the program could be especially useful for instructors who want to infuse action research and reflective practices more fully into the ePortfolio process. One way to accomplish this may be to investigate how the ePortfolio experience changes when the ePortfolios are introduced at the beginning of the graduate program.

Conclusion

While the school counselors-in-training perceived ePortfolios more as a product than a personalized action research process, ePortfolios still had value for reflection, preparation for job interviewing, and professional development. Through a refinement of the ePortfolio process, along with further research, we can begin to assess if what is conceptualized by the instructors—an ePortfolio process with emphasis on aspirational, personalized action research process that also produces a practical product—is what is enacted in the classroom as meaningful to the school counselors-in-training. ePortfolios show promise in many aspects of learning and development, but there needs to be better integration from the beginning of the program. If the aspirational and liberatory potential of ePortfolios is to be achieved and valued by the school counselors-in-training, then more dialogue and student involvement in framing the process as personalized action research is required.

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Appendix

Writing Prompts from Surveys

End of Fall Term Writing Prompts

1. Who are the people you talk to about developing your ePortfolio?
2. How helpful have the model ePortfolios been that are posted on East Bay Helping Professionals?
3. What is your greatest challenge to developing your ePortfolio?
4. What gives you the greatest hope in being able to complete your ePortfolio?
5. How is the ePortfolio process influencing the way you think about yourself as a professional school counselor?

End of Winter Term Writing Prompts

1. Given the four phases of lifescaping action research described by Lewis and Winkelman (2017), what phase are you in if you view your ePPP as a form of personalized action research?
2. What is your greatest challenge to developing your ePortfolio?
3. What gives you the greatest hope in being able to complete your ePortfolio?
4. How is the ePortfolio process influencing the way you think about yourself as a professional school counselor?

Mid-Term Spring Term Writing Prompts

1. How has your work shown your professional response to the key question: “How you make a difference in the lives of the students you serve?”
2. Has that question influenced how you view your work? Has the question helped you to see yourself as a professional? If so, how?
3. Are you seeing things in your ePortfolio where you wish you might have done something differently earlier in the program? Would you be willing to share?
4. Has the ePortfolio process given you direction or goals for after your graduation?

End of Spring Term Writing Prompts

1. What is your greatest challenge to developing your ePortfolio?
2. Did you coach fellow cohort members in helping them improve their ePortfolio? If so, did the process evoke a greater sense of confidence and competence for you? Any other thoughts/feelings that bubbled up from this process of reviewing fellow cohort members’ ePortfolios?
3. Did the peer review process deepen your reflection about your own ePortfolio and ways you might improve your own ePortfolio? Did the peer review process deepen your own sense of pride, confidence, and competence in your own professional development?
4. Now that you have completed your ePortfolio, what is the most significant learning you have been able to document? Is there any aspect of your professional development that has not been captured that you would like to share?
5. How has the ePortfolio process influenced your confidence applying for professional positions?
6. Using the Participatory Inquiry Process (PIP) phases, please describe how you might see the process of developing your ePortfolio development during each of the four phases: Phase one: Initiating Conversations and Identifying Challenges; Phase two: Engaged Inquiry; Phase three: Collaborative Action; Phase four: Community Assessment and Reflection.

Final Survey Questions at End of Program

1. How would you describe an ePortfolio for Professional Practice if asked?
2. What were some of the challenges in creating your ePortfolio?
3. What were some of the benefits of creating your ePortfolio?
4. How did/didn’t reflection play a part in the creation of your ePortfolio?
5. How did you determine the structure of your ePortfolio?
6. How did you determine what evidence to include in your ePortfolio?
7. How do you define personalized action research?
8. How does/doesn’t the creation of your ePortfolio fit as a form of personalized action research?
9. Did you consider personalized action research as you created your ePortfolio? Please explain.
10. Any other thoughts about your ePortfolio that you’d like to share?