

How can the Student Portfolio Help Improve Teaching Practices?

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Abstract

The purpose of this work was to inquire into the aspects that college students consider as significant of the faculty collected in the portfolios so that, in the light of this exploration, the faculty can reflect on their teaching practices and put forward proposals for improvement and change. It is proposed as qualitative research where the case is the analysis of student portfolios of the Management of Specific Projects course of the Interculturality Module (*Minorkult*). The tool being studied, also the main strategy for the generation of data, was the student portfolio and the analytical procedure consisted of a hermeneutic analysis of thematic contents. As a result, it is worth noting that, by opting for the portfolio, the faculty has strengthened the voice and visibility of the students, as well as their autonomy in the learning process, and has generated reflective processes within the faculty aimed at improving their teaching practice.

Keywords:

faculty, modular structure, portfolio, higher education, teaching practices

¿Cómo puede el portafolios del alumnado ayudar a mejorar las prácticas docentes?

Resumen

La finalidad de este trabajo fue indagar en los aspectos que el alumnado universitario destaca como significativos del equipo docente recogidos en los portafolios para que, a la luz de esta exploración, el equipo reflexione sobre sus prácticas docentes y plantee propuestas de mejora y cambio. Se plantea como una investigación cualitativa donde el caso lo

constituye el análisis de los portafolios del alumnado de la asignatura de *Gestión de proyectos específicos* del Módulo de Interculturalidad (Minorkult). La herramienta objeto de estudio, y estrategia principal de generación de datos, ha sido el portafolios del alumnado y, el procedimiento analítico ha consistido en un análisis hermenéutico de contenido temático. Como resultados se destacan que, al apostar por el portafolios, el equipo docente ha potenciado la voz y visibilidad del alumnado, así como su autonomía en el proceso de aprendizaje, y ha generado procesos reflexivos en el seno del equipo docente al objeto de mejorar su práctica docente.

Palabras clave:

Equipo docente, Estructura modular, Portafolio, Educación Superior, Prácticas docentes.

Como o portfólio dos alunos pode ajudar a melhorar as práticas docentes?

Resumo

A finalidade deste trabalho foi investigar os aspectos que o alunado universitário destaca como significativos entre a equipe docente, e que estão reunidos nos seus portfólios para que, a partir desta investigação, os professores reflitam sobre suas práticas docentes e apresentem propostas de melhora e mudança. Apresenta-se como uma pesquisa qualitativa onde o caso é constituído pela análise dos portfólios dos alunos do curso de Gestão de projetos específicos do Módulo de Interculturalidade (Minorkult). A ferramenta, objeto de estudo e estratégia principal de geração de dados, tem sido os portfolios dos alunos. O procedimento analítico consistiu numa análise hermenéutica de conteúdo temático. Os resultados destacam que ao se apostar pelo portfolio, a equipe docente visibiliza e eleva a voz dos alunos, assim como a sua autonomia no processo de aprendizagem. O estudo tem gerado processos reflexivos no seio da equipe de professores com o intuito de melhorar a sua prática docente.

Palavras-chaves:

equipe docente, estrutura modular, portfólio, educação superior, práticas docentes.

Introduction

The Spanish university system immersed itself into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and was able to transform its structures, rearranging the institutional organizational dynamics. Signs of these changes are the multiple examples that can be found in the curricular designs of the undergraduate programs based on modular structures (Arandia and Fernández, 2012; Arbizu et al, 2012; Rekalde, Martínez & Marko, 2012; Zelaieta, Aristizabal, Ortiz de Barrón, & Goñi, 2012), which move from a fragmented perspective of the curriculum to an integrative view of learning, in which, as it is well known, the learning process is focused and articulated around the students and the competency-based assessment system, key curricular aspects that accompany the progress of undergraduate program structures (EUA, 2010; Sánchez Pozo, 2008).

This approach implies the acknowledgment that learning does not revolve around content but around competences, and that the prominen-

ce—and responsibility—for learning lies with the students (EUA, 2005). This does not mean that the faculty will lose prominence, but that the role of students will increase (Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities, CRUE, 2010). This transit has required significant modifications in the tasks and the role of the faculty, moving from a role of instructing person to one of facilitator of the learning process (Ion & Cano, 2011). In fact, this transformation undergone by the faculty has shown, both at the organizational level (teamwork, vertical and horizontal coordination, etc.) and at the curricular level (selection and planning of contents based on competences; implementation of active methodologies—simulations, practices, cases, learning based on problems, projects, etc.—; insertion of evaluation systems based on learning results, etc.) that the involvement and coordination of the faculty is necessary.

In fact, Zabalza (2003) reminds us that good university teaching performance is characterized by features such as coordination with colleagues, which means, among other things, abandoning the culture of individuality and ownership, and

moving towards collaborative and coordinated modes of work that require negotiating, renouncing, reaching agreements, and offering consistency to the initial training stage of professionals.

Moreover, we must not forget that institutions with a modular structure require a more detailed monitoring of the teaching-learning process, especially of the competences intended to be developed in the students (Terhart, 2006). For that purpose, certain changes in the way faculty works and coordinates (timetables, spaces, structures...) are required (EUA, 2005; Valcárcel, 2004), with the ultimate intention that university education helps boost students' willingness to responsibly get involved in the exercise of their profession and as active citizens (Martínez & Payà, 2007).

With all this we are referring to a challenge that has implied a formal and organizational change in the university system, but, above all, a change in the university teaching culture (Rekalde et al., 2011). In fact, a modular curricular structure favors the transition towards a collegial model, where professors are grouped in teams, where the approach to teaching is more practical, active, participative, and collaborative (Rekalde et al., 2012). But, in addition, the structure itself offers the opportunity to become a permanent space for the faculty development, where continuous learning among equals, the performance of innovative tasks, and the creation of faculty collaboration networks are possible (San Fabián, 2006). Consequently, it implies a line of professional development that emphasizes the importance of the faculty's growth under a curricular structure (Arbizu et al., 2012).

Interdisciplinary teaching teams in the curricular structure

A team is defined as a group of people who do something together, but what forms a team is not what they do, but the fact that they do it together (Panera, 2008). Teaching teams can take different forms depending on the objectives they pursue and the contexts in which they carry out their activity (Barrington and Mc Alpine, as cited in Martínez & Viader, 2008).

Team-based teaching activity is intended to:

Promote a systemic and continuous performance assessment among the team mem-

bers, especially professors. It also aims to integrate information and documentation technologies into teaching and learning processes, to incorporate successful innovations and experiences into its teaching environment naturally and habitually, and to allow for quality monitoring, assessment and improvement. (Martínez & Viader, 2008, p. 230).

According to Rekalde et al. (2011) the strategies usually used for the conformation and formation of teaching teams are: a) Considering the specificity of the contexts and the variables characteristic of the undergraduate programs and the professors making up the teams; b) vindicating the need to approach the faculty training from the reflection on its performance (by speaking, listening and building together with others), and c) promoting training actions that lead to inquiry, experimentation, innovation, and informed deliberation so that assessing work within the teaching team becomes essential.

According to Arandia & Rekalde (2014), the effects that the formation of teaching teams promotes can be summarized as: a) stressing the use of active methodologies, b) boosting the design, implementation and evaluation of educational innovation projects among professors from different teaching teams, and c) leading to curricular changes and adaptations that better adjust to the academic, personal and professional needs of the students. Bolarín, Moreno, & Porto (2013) underline as a positive effect that interacting and establishing links with other professors generates a space for reflection on one's own performance, creates a positive interdependence, and leads to relationships of friendship and affinity. Sharing ideas, practices, experiences, etc. is a valid and effective form of professional development and learning in relation to both the disciplinary fields and the way of doing teamwork.

In fact, we know from scientific literature that teamwork is considered a key point and a competitive advantage (Rousseau, Aubé & Savoie, 2006; Tjosvold, 1991), and that, according to Bonals (1996), the quality of teaching performance depends, to a large extent, on the capacity for teamwork shown by professors. In this sense, professors must learn to work in teams (Arbizu et al.,

2012) and not mistakenly consider this competence an exclusive task of the students, since teaching teams are in a permanent state of personal and professional growth as they share the daily task of managing interdisciplinary teaching (Zelaieta et al., 2012). In fact, within teamwork, dialogue and reflection are key, as developing and establishing complementary thinking is necessary (Bonals, 1996).

The teaching team must provide students with real contexts for academic, professional and personal growth, where the proposed tasks are: a) authentic, facing the students with the most real situations possible, making it easy for them to experience professional scenarios in order to deal with them in an adequate and meaningful way (Biggs, 2005); b) integrated, having a connection to the curricular project of the undergraduate program, where space, time and grouping are variables dependent on the project and not obstacles to its development (Rekalde et al. 2012), and c) active; integrating knowledge and procedures while leaving a certain margin of indetermination so that they manage to solve the task with margins of creativity, in short, as professionals do in real life (Rekalde, 2011a, 2011b).

In fact, the critical point in competence development processes in higher education lies in the selection of highly relevant situations for professional work, which implies generating spaces of synergy between curriculum and professional practice (Biggs, 2005). From this premise, there are instruments that favor meaningful learning and reflection as a competence in professional development; we are talking about the journal (Biggs, 2005; Brockbank & McGill, 2002; Postman & Weingartner, 1973; Rekalde, 2009) and the portfolio (Bozu & Imbernón, 2012).

Student portfolios: a tool for reflection of the teaching team

The portfolio is a widely extended instrument among working professionals to show their most representative and revealing work. The use of academic portfolios has a long tradition in Anglophone countries and is used to articulate all the learning obtained and to evidence the acquisition of competences (Ojeda, 2007). Shulman (1999) refers to the portfolio as a documented history based on

a sample of the students' works. It is a collection of tasks carried out with support and guidance from the professor, that blend and link the contributions through a reflective and deliberative text. It is not a simple accumulation of works; the students must present and argue their reasons to include the materials presented and their value for their own training. Therefore, the portfolio is an important self-assessment tool (Rodríguez, 2011). In short, it is a didactic resource that promotes formative assessment as it offers the opportunity to clearly see learning outcomes; to boost motivation to learn, to learn to learn, and to take greater responsibility in the learning process (Martínez de Miguel, 2007). This approach makes it possible to contemplate the students' work and progress through multiple perspectives and to recognize more quickly the complexity of their capacities and personal identities (Palomares, 2011).

Fernández March (2005) synthesizes the advantages that the use of the portfolio has for the students as it enables them to show the principles and contents learned in different learning situations, to use tools or materials from the subject/course, to reflect on their own learning experience, and to develop skills to think creatively.

In this sense, Palomares (2011) points out that the portfolio can become an instrument that guides and defines the students' progress, giving their voice and image prominence against the various activities that are compiled in a portfolio. According to Collins, Hawkins, & Fredriksen (1991), the evidence collected in the portfolio attests the learning progress and classifies it into: a) Artifacts: referring to the activities and work carried out during the course in the classroom, whether they are carried out on their own initiative or at the teacher's suggestion; b) Reproductions: referred to work done during the course, but which do not take place in class (such as interviews with professionals, notes from a visit made, a film or report related to the content of the course, etc.); c) Attestations: referring to documents about the work carried out by the students made by other people, such as comments from professors, internship advisors, etc., and d) Productions: referring to documents, materials prepared exclusively to shape and invest the portfolio with meaning and that include the explanation of their own

goals—adding those established by the professors initially, which make the activities carried out meaningful—, reflections made while making and reviewing the portfolio, and headings that refer to reports that justify what each evidence is, why and of what it is evidence. However, the idea of considering the portfolio as a free production that narrates “an apprentice’s story and, therefore, it has to be the students who structure and show their own voice” (Barrett, 2005, p. 13) is also widespread.

Armengol, Mora, Rubio, Sánchez, & Valero (2009) emphasize that using the portfolio “aims to increase the dedication of students to study as well as their autonomy, and to help them carry out continuous work and get to know themselves better as students so that they can face university studies with greater chances of success” (p. 2). Other authors, in addition, emphasize its propaedeutic sense, inasmuch as they understand that the fundamental characteristic of the portfolio is the fact that it represents a learning experience for the future (Klenowski, 2004) or, in the words of Agra, Gewerc, & Montero (2003), “a resource for life” (p.71). However, the review of the literature continuously shows that the portfolio is a tool especially designed to help in the transition process from mechanistic learning habits to more critical and reflective approaches (Barberá, Gewerc, & Rodríguez, 2009). In fact, it is valued as a training tool, as it facilitates a structure to systematically reflect over time on the learning process and to develop attitudes, skills, and habits that promote critical reflection (Zubizarreta, as cited in Hernández, 2008). On the same line, Judith Brown (as cited in Barrett, 2005) values the importance of the portfolio because it helps better understanding what, why, and how students learn throughout their training, favoring their communicative and organizational skills. But above all, as this author alludes to, because this process reinforces the importance of reflection in learning.

In view of the above, the purpose of this experience is to delve into the aspects that university students, in their portfolios, highlight as significant in the teaching team of the module called *Minorkult*, so that, in the light of this exploration, the teaching team reflects on their teaching practices and puts forward proposals for improvement

and change.

The objectives on which this experience is based are the following:

- Discover the educational possibilities that the portfolio, connected to a modular structure, offers as an instrument to convey the thoughts, opinions and feelings of university students.
- To explore the possibilities for development that the portfolio offers to the module’s professors in order to improve interdisciplinary teaching practices.

Method

In coherence with the theoretical framework and the objectives of the study, an interpretative approach to the educational facts has been chosen, articulating it with a qualitative research method focused on teaching-learning processes (Taylor & Bogdan, 1996). The aim is to penetrate and understand the content of the students’ portfolios in order to contribute, by the understanding and reflecting on their contributions, to the transformation of the practices of the *Minorkult* teaching team (Grundy, 1991; Flick, 2004).

This research was conducted with a case study approach, where the case consists in analyzing the portfolios of the students enrolled in the Specific Projects Management course from the Interculturality Module (*Minorkult*), which is part of the Infant and Elementary Education in Basque undergraduate program that is taught in the School of Education and Sports of the Universidad del País Vasco /Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (UPV/EHU) in Vitoria-Gasteiz, during the academic year 2015-2016.

Different authors point out that the case study is one of the most characteristic strategies of the qualitative approach (Bodgan & Biklen, 1982; Stake, 1998; Vázquez & Angulo, 2003). In addition, they find it particularly appropriate to study a case or situation with intensity, identifying this strategy as the examination of an example in action (Stake, 1998). This definition leads us to explore a phenomenon with the intention of understanding it and to a unit of study that can be an

individual, a context, an organization or, as in this case, a formative evaluation tool: the portfolio of university students.

Context

This study is the result of the work begun in the 2012-2013 academic year in the minor of Intercultural Education as a result of the implementation of the new curricula. This minor in Interculturality (*Minorkult*) is taught at Universidad del País Vasco / Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea UPV/EHU, specifically at the Faculty of Education and Sports of Vitoria-Gasteiz and is offered in the 4th year of the Infant and Elementary Education undergraduate program.

To design these programs, a curricular planning model based on subject modules was chosen and justified from a view of overall coherence in the teaching approach, estimating that it favored the interconnection between subjects and the coordination between them, preventing the isolation or overlapping of subjects in the context of a scenario that facilitates development in and of the institution (Zabalza, 2003). It should be stressed that this work is also part of the systematic research carried out since the 2012/13 academic year around the construction and development of the *Minorkult* teaching team, with the aim of adapting and improving the teamwork carried out in this structure.

Throughout these years, the teaching team has been changing their way of proceeding, from establishing a group little by little, to reaching consensus and developing as a *Minorkult* team the module and the course Management of Specific Projects. It is precisely in this course—considered a space of convergence for the interdisciplinarity of the module and a place for the teaching team to meet and debate—that the portfolio is made..

In this research the teaching team is structured by course, and each team designates from among its members a person responsible for coordination. All the professors involved in teaching activities are part of it, and the five departments that make up the teaching team participate in it. *Minorkult* believes that interdisciplinarity “can be an achievement that transcends professions and is a means to build a more just and humane society” (Carvajal, 2010, p.157), and that “interdis-

ciplinary teams can contribute very little if they contribute only with a technical view, without integrating their knowledge with other disciplines” (Carvajal, 2010, p. 158). We have been and still are a teaching team that holds on to pedagogical concepts such as critical thinking, holistic learning, or significant learning—about which there has been debate and dialogue—and this has facilitated our understanding of educational practices. It is true that reaching this objective has demanded that the professors question themselves in order to reflect and be able, from there, to advance as a team, because we are aware that this is the only way to achieve the profound changes necessary to be better professors and to train better students, an approach along the lines of Barret (2005), Rekalde et al. (2011), Rousseau et al. (2006), Van der Linde (2007), and Zárata (2007).

In this sense, the *Minorkult* team has been wondering about some of the objectives of its work such as: What will be the learning outcomes of this module? Are there specific objectives for learning a discipline? To what extent is each discipline represented in the objectives? Are there outcomes associated with interdisciplinary learning? About the content: How to decide on the modular content to be included in the module? How and through what should we give motivating tasks that promote profound learning in the students? How to articulate an evaluation system consistent with the spirit of the module? What instruments are relevant for learning monitoring and evaluation? How to permanently take the student’s voice into account? How to manage it? What voices should be heard? And about evaluation: What are the best evaluation methods? How do we design evaluation methods that allow students to demonstrate the interconnection made between several units of knowledge?

As an answer to the previous questions, students are induced to use the portfolio, based on the assumptions that it is an instrument that promotes reflection (Barberá et al., 2009; Barret, 2005; Fernández March, 2005) and because:

- The students are the main protagonists in the portfolio. For this reason, it is them who autonomously must decide on its meaning, its organization, and its elements.
- Each portfolio is a unique creation; stu-

Table 1
Categorical system for portfolio analysis

Categories:	Subcategories 1
The Minorkult teaching team: (all the actions carried out by the teaching team to generate learning contexts that the students include in their portfolios)	Class climate
	Relationship between the teaching team and the students
	Extracurricular activities
	Coordination between courses
	Use of the class to trigger reflection
Student learning: Impact of the training process on <i>Minorkult</i> students	Principles and contents learned from the program's perspective
	Principles and contents learned from the module's perspective
	Change of perspective
Professional profile: Elements underlined in the construction of the professional profile of the future infant and elementary education teachers.	Key aspects to professional performance

dents decide which works from their learning process it shows.

- The portfolio is fundamental to narrate the learning process and avoid forgetting significant milestones with time.
- The students have a panoramic view of the meaning and purpose of the portfolio thanks to the tools provided by the teaching team.

One of the agreements reached between the teaching team and the students was that the portfolios should be structured in two main parts: one composed of those activities and tasks that are common and compulsory to all students, which guaranteed that the students comply with a certain degree of exigency in their work, and a second part, where the students should have full autonomy to carry out optional complementary and knowledge-deepening activities to show the learning process stages.

In summary, from a teaching perspective, the portfolio is used to develop and evaluate professional performance and encourage the development of reflective and self-assessing practices and attitudes (Rodríguez 2011). That is why in this experience the portfolio is considered, following Barrett (2005), as “truly a story of learning [...] owned by the learner, structured by the learner, and

told in the learner’s own voice” (p.13). It is, therefore, the voices of the learners that we give ear to so that their understanding may shed light on the practices of the *Minorkult* teaching team.

Participants

In this experience the participants are, on the one hand, the *Minorkult* team of the 2015/2016 edition that consists of 9 teachers—5 men and 4 women—, and on the other hand, 30 students—9 men and 21 women—grouped into 8 work teams (14 students from the Infant Education undergraduate program and 16 students from the Elementary Education undergraduate program).

Information Tools

The tool under study and the main strategy for generating data was the student portfolio. All 30 portfolios made during the academic year 2015/16 were taken into account in order to carry out a detailed analysis of them.

Procedure

With respect to the analysis of portfolios, the analytical procedure consisted of a dynamic and systematic process that required identifying, selecting, categorizing, comparing and interpreting the content of the data obtained (Coffey & Atkin-

son, 2003), carrying out an analysis of thematic content (Mucchielli, 2001).

With regard to the ethical aspect, it should be noted that, in order to preserve confidentiality and anonymity, the following nomenclature has been used to identify and encode the voices extracted from the students' portfolios. For example: *8 port -GB*, being 8 the number of the portfolio and GB the initials of the students.

Data analysis

The categorical system used for the analysis of portfolios is articulated in 3 main nuclei: the teaching team, student learning, and the development of the professional profile of future teachers (see table 1).

Results

The results of this experience have been articulated around three main categories: 1) The teaching team of the intercultural module (*Minorkult*) as a generator of empowering learning contexts; 2) the learning developed by the students throughout their formative process and, 3) finally, the significant elements highlighted by the *Minorkult* students in the construction of the professional profile of the future infant and elementary education teachers.

The intercultural module teaching team

Within this category we can include all the actions carried out by the teaching team to generate learning contexts that the students include in their portfolios. Thus, we can see how the students reflect on the *climate of the class* at various times during the course. It must be noted that the module consists of three well-differentiated moments: the beginning of the year, where the students begin to know what the *Minorkult* will consist of; the internship period, where the students carry out their internships in schools; and the return to the module, where the students are fully reintegrated into the university. The transitions between these three periods are carefully addressed by the *Minorkult* team, although, as one student says, there are other variables, such

as work assigned by teachers that can change the climate of the class :

"After Christmas break, the situation changed quite a bit. The environment was not like before, instead of learning from our own concerns, we worked with a sense of obligation, and without initiatives to question or deconstruct reality, in my opinion the desire to move towards utopia was over. Reason? To be honest, I don't know; it could be because of the distance that grew between us when we were in the internship or because our relationship with the professors changed because of the work we had to do. What was clear was that the relationship between us was different and that meant that the climate of closeness and trust had faded" (8 port -GB 3.8).

Language is also another conditioning factor of the class climate. We must bear in mind that in this module there are students from two different linguistic models, which may sometimes cause some conflict. The teaching team, in this case, is faced with the need to respect the language of enrollment and, sometimes, when not all students can be satisfied, mediate conflicts. In this sense a student points out:

"But I believe that if the education and training received is of great contribution and quality (as it was the case), it does not matter so much in what language it is provided, but to be able to share it. This has been the reason why, on some occasions, I have not felt entirely comfortable and well. It is a difficult situation that we have managed together as best we can" (1 port -AP).

From the students' portfolios it can be deduced that the *relationship with the teachers*, in general, is good, being coherent with the lessons they want to transmit:

"As for the classes, I thought that they would be something more theoretical, that there would be a differentiated relationship between students and teachers (as always)... but no. All these ideas turned out to be positive, as we saw that the best way to deal with interculturality topics was

with communication and equality between people. These two aspects are basic in everyday life, but so often we forget it and don't think if we hurt other people. This is how inequality is created in the world, because we are not giving opportunities for communication because it is easier to ignore or not listen. In this module we have been fortunate to see this positive change in a classroom, but unfortunately this is over, and it's only been a year. (4 port -SV).

In addition, the teachers try this approach from the beginning of the course, presenting themselves as a real work team in front of the students:

"This last year, the fourth, has undoubtedly been very special. From the beginning, the professors told us that we were going to build the module. They told us that we were going to abandon the differences in teacher-student roles that we had experienced in the education system until now and that we were going to work as peers and equals. All the professors had the same idea, the same objectives, and the same dreams, and this was transmitted to the students in some way. There was an atmosphere of teamwork, of learning and overcoming difficulties together; I felt very happy to be part of that team (I made the portfolio eagerly and effortlessly. In my opinion, I wrote beautiful texts). (1 port -AP)

In addition, the students point out the importance of the teaching team's arrangements to make possible working on the same case from different perspectives:

"All this is possible because the subjects are closely linked, which gives the opportunity to deal with the same subject from different perspectives: language, society, politics... It is also necessary to respect and value foreign languages and cultures so that they can do the same with ours". (4 port -SV).

Other actions carried out by the teaching team to generate learning contexts for students are the *intercultural education conferences* that are orga-

nized within the *Management of Specific Projects* course and that have a great impact on students. These conferences last one week and feature different associations that work with interculturality projects, students who have done internships on cooperation to development, and hands-on workshops. In fact, the reflections on these conferences have a very important weight in the portfolios:

"Another very relevant aspect for me is the talks we attended, because even though the videos impress me, the people who come to talk to us about their life in another country and how their integration into our society has been seems to me to be the most interesting. In my opinion, it is a way of seeing the real world, changing the opinions that the media leads us into". (4 port -SV)

"Knowing about these experiences has made us see that there are many ways of understanding the world and has helped us open our eyes to see beyond our nose. (6port -GN)

"The conferences were very enriching because the four walls of the classroom were knocked down and because we had the opportunity to experience day-to-day cultural diversity, and we had the opportunity to feel how interculturality was approached in our environment (the street came to class). (22 port -MF)

However, from all the information analyzed in the different student portfolios, the action from the teaching team that makes students reflect the most is, without a doubt, the generation of debates around different topics that, on many occasions, go beyond the classroom walls:

"Educated not to think," "we are a very conformist society, we don't promote anything new," we have heard these kinds of phrases in Juanjo's classes, I nod in agreement, and if I start thinking I tell myself that he is right. But can I do anything to change that? No. And why not? "Educated not to think," "we are a very conformist society, we don't promote anything new." (19 port -GF).

Other students, in this regard, talk about how

the classroom is the context that triggers reflection, in this case on subjects related to interculturality, and above all to their work with respect to it, when they affirm:

"Many times, on my way home and after reviewing what we have seen in class, I wonder if all this makes sense or not. At first, I didn't know how to channel what the teachers were proposing, but then I began to understand. The path of interculturality is not something that someone can mark for us, but something that everyone has to discover themselves and at their own pace. It's a long and complex road with many barriers, and to move forward you have to make a great effort but realizing that and being able to answer all these questions is everyone's job." (17 port -AM)

"Last Tuesday after class, when I got home, I felt the need to write about the debate we had in class. Afterwards, I read what I wrote, and I realized that at that moment I had a rather negative feeling, that professors and students could do nothing on their own. As long as the power did not change all the small changes would be of no use." (10 port - AV)

Minorkult students learning processes

The portfolio, besides articulating aspects that have to do with the class and the teaching team, allows the students to reflect on what they have learned at various levels: at a general level, being able to evaluate their trajectory throughout the program; at a particular level, collecting concrete reflections and learning experiences, evaluating their formative itinerary around the topics in the interculturality module. Finally, it allows us to evaluate the transformation that the module brought about on them, that is, the change of perception that the students experience after studying this module.

With regard to the general perspective that students hold by the fourth year based on their learning experience throughout the program, one student states the following:

"In these four years I have learned a lot; some things were new and others I already knew; I have had good and not so good pro-

fessors; but, the experience in general has helped me find the path." (1 port- AP).

In terms of specific learning and in reference to the pedagogical principles and contents learned, there are many aspects articulated in the different portfolios. It can be seen that, throughout the module, their use of different concepts deepens and evolves:

"It is also interesting to know the differentiation between professor-centered and student-centered education. In the first one, the teacher is simply in charge of giving theoretical information that the students listen to and take notes of, without getting involved in the class. However, the student-centered approach is not so authoritarian, and learning is based on error. That's why I think education in classrooms should be that way, that professors teach so that the students advance and not to satisfy their own needs more easily, because education, in my opinion, is not easy and there are always new challenges to overcome." (20 port -MI)

But, above all, what the students affirm in all the portfolios analyzed is that the module has made them change their view on the phenomenon of interculturality and that this, without a doubt, has brought about an internal change in their way of thinking and approaching educational action:

"These two weeks of class have helped me open my mind a little regarding this subject, even though I know that I still have a lot to learn. Little by little, I'm paying attention to the comments made on television, on the street... and even not to think badly of those with a different skin color. I don't think I'm a racist because I interact with other cultures different from my own, but after hearing some comments in class, it's true that sometimes I do have some discriminatory thoughts." (4 port- SV).

"I won't be able to make big changes in the world, but if we don't start by changing our stereotypes, prejudices, rumors... about other people, we won't be able to move in the right direction. This is a

very difficult step to take, but it can be achieved as I am doing it thanks to this module.” (14 port-OH)

Reflections on the professional profile

The interculturality module becomes relevant for the programs of Infant and Elementary Education as part of the training for future teachers when it provides key professional aspects transferable to the school classes. Some of these key professional aspects such as class climate management, family-school relations, routines, cooperative work, educational inclusion, respect for others and their culture, etc., promote equal opportunities and provide different cultural groups with the necessary resources to be competent and to integrate themselves into a complex and diverse society. All this is reflected in the portfolios of the students in this experience:

“Many things are said in order to determine the role of the teaching team in the classroom. In this text we know that we have to consider an important relationship, the relationship between personal development and identities.” (1 port -EU).

Writing the portfolio has led to deep reflections on the past but also on the future, and those passages, when reread, help perceive change; an evolution in the way of thinking and acting as future professional educators.

“To conclude, I have to say that I found it productive because it has provided me with interesting strategies from which I can benefit in my future teaching role, and, at the same time, I’ve known more aspects of this profession that, as she says, is the best in the world.” (15 port -AM).

Discussion

We agree with Bozu & Imbernón (2012) that the portfolio is a strategy that allows teachers to know, through an analysis of their own teaching practice, which are their strengths and which are the weak points that need to be improved in the short term with regard to the contents seen in the

classroom, the methodology used, the didactic resources, and so on. Therefore, we can affirm that the portfolio, like other reflective instruments, leads to the development of professional teaching competence (Brockbank & McGill, 2002; Postman & Weingartner, 1973; Rekalde, 2009) as it comprises the elements that students include in the portfolios as significant and key for their educational process in order to promote reflection and the improvement of the teaching practice (Biggs, 2005), as well as the growth of the teaching team (Arbizu et al., 2012; López Ruiz, 2009). For example, a significant part of this experience was, the need to be careful with the transitions in between periods throughout the module, and the coordination that entails being part of a teaching team, symptoms of the interdisciplinary collaborative work that must be done (Zabalza, 2003; Zárata, 2007).

Moreover, this experience does not aim to improve individual teaching practices only, but also those of the teaching team as a whole, the human component of the program's modular structure. This allows for a more practical, active, participative and collaborative approach to teaching (Rekalde et al., 2012) and for its permanent assessment (Martínez and Viander, 2008; Rekalde et al., 2011). This is reflected in the portfolios when the students express the close relationship with the teaching team, the organization of activities, the climate generated in class... Because, as the literature states, institutions that operate with a modular structure need a more detailed monitoring of the teaching-learning process (Terhart, 2006) and the development of competencies (Sánchez Pozo, 2008) which, according to the results, is facilitated by the portfolio.

The reason why the teaching team uses the portfolio is to give prominence to the students (CRUE, 2010; EUA, 2005); to promote and value the development of reflective practices and attitudes, and self-evaluation of the students (Rodríguez, 2011); and to self-assess their own practices as a teaching team (Arandia & Rekalde, 2014; Bolívar et al., 2013; Rekalde et al., 2011). The activity carried out by the students demonstrates the impact that the formative process experienced in the *Minorkult* has had on them when they reflect on the pathway taken throughout the program and the formative itinerary developed during the

module. Therefore, all this has helped students become aware of their progress (Palomares, 2011), assume greater responsibility in their learning process (Martínez de Miguel, 2007), and reflect systematically over time (Hernández, 2008). But, in addition, following Biggs (2005), students have been able to express through their portfolios their views on how reality should be (in this experience, regarding the practice of interculturality) accompanied by feelings generated through the confrontation and reconstruction of reflective action (Smyth, 1991).

By opting for the portfolio, the teaching team has strengthened the voice and visibility of the students (Barrett, 2005; Palomares, 2011), as well as their autonomy in the learning process (Armengol et al., 2009) as evidenced by the results. Nevertheless, the teaching team, through the students' use of the portfolio, has also contributed to the development of a resource for their own lives or for the future, along the lines pointed out by Klenowski (2004) and Agra et al. (2003), by reflecting on the keys to their future careers as infant and elementary school teachers.

Conclusions

We can conclude that:

- The portfolio within a modular structure provokes in university students:
 - Paused reflection on conflicts arising in the classroom, as well as their handling and resolution.
 - Harmony between the theoretical principles of action in educational matters (in our experience of interculturality), and their reflection in class.
 - The motivation to learn and satisfaction with regard to the instrument, a unique and personal product, built as a reflective story regarding learning.
 - The reflection of the students' experience with the coordination of the teaching team in other areas of their lives.
 - The evoked transformation of their views that is reflected in their action.
 - The feelings of pessimism and impoten-

ce generated by reflective confrontation, as well as of optimism and power aroused by the reconstruction with respect to what students are capable of doing and promote actions now that they are aware of their situation.

- The retrospection to assess from a formative perspective.
- The portfolio offers the module teaching team learning lessons to improve their teaching practices as they:
 - Have to pay attention to the work pace, class climate, relations of closeness and trust... throughout the phases of the *Minorcult*.
 - Continue with highly significant activities that make living and experiencing interculturality in our society a reality.
 - Are aware of the feelings that reflective writing (confrontation and reconstruction) provokes in the students.

This research has contributed to the analysis of the teaching team performance in order to set an interesting path for further research in the future and improve teaching practices using the student portfolio as a tool for reflection and dialogue. Furthermore, this study has helped envisage changes in teaching practices in the short term, either with the students or with the faculty, and although we do not see the results immediately, the virtue of the study that has started lies not only in the study itself but in its potential to generate systematic reflective processes within the teaching team of the intercultural module with the aim of improving the work of university professionals.

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