

“Self-reflection through Teaching Portfolios”

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### **Abstract**

The focus of this paper is to establish the need for professional development to be accentuated through self-reflection. The goal is then to determine the various forms of reflective practice available, and how teaching portfolios are the best source for self-reflection. The paper will initially begin with an introduction, followed by an analysis of the distinct approaches available under reflective practice. In turn, the various uses and types of teaching portfolios will be discussed and why they are important for self-reflection. Finally, recommendations will consist of approaches on how to implement teaching portfolios for self-reflection.

## **Introduction**

There has been a “longstanding recognition in the field of language education that teachers must continually reshape their knowledge of teaching and learning” (Farrell, 2008, p. 1). Teachers can further their professional development as language teachers after they have completed their required formal training. The focus on traditional professional development programs makes teachers learn about their own profession through outside experts, instead of studying their own unique experiences (Farrell, 2007). One of the primary issues of traditional professional development for second language teachers is the fact that it has consisted of “district or administration mandated courses and one-stop workshops” that are delivered by outside experts (Farrell, 2007, p. 175). Such a top-down approach is not effective because its real impact is limited as teachers often find the ideas presented are “conceptually and practically far removed from the reality of their particular classrooms” (Farrell, 2007, p. 175). However, a bottom-up approach to professional development is more suitable through reflective practice, which recognizes teachers as legitimate producers of knowledge who are able to reflect on their own teaching practices over a period of time (Farrell, 2007). An emerging type of reflective practice is a teaching portfolio, which is a means for teachers to document and reflect on all aspects of their work (Antonek, McCormick & Donato, 1997). Teaching portfolios as reflective practice allow teachers to self-reflect upon their work and on themselves as they are able to document their practices (Antonek et al., 1997). As a result, it can be seen that teaching portfolios serve as an important route to self-reflection for teachers.

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