



## THE CREATIVE ARTISTIC PORTFOLIO AND REPORTING BY ART EDUCATION STUDENTS ON THEIR STUDENT TEACHING

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**Abstract/Povzetek** The study of art education is characterised by the duality of artistic and pedagogical content. The importance of a high-quality intertwining of both segments is emphasised. Various types of portfolios are mentioned. The study focused on how the artistic portfolio and the reports from art teacher trainee students about their student teaching experience can be connected. An innovative model of instruction for the preparation of the student teaching report was prepared. Using qualitative analysis procedures, it was established that the creative-pedagogic (CP) model had positive effects on student motivation and generated in-depth introspection. The students worked with the principles of contemporary art, such as juxtaposition, symbolism, performance art, body art, and self-portrait (selfie).

**Ustvarjalni umetniški portfolijo in poročilo o študentski pedagoški praksi študentov likovne pedagogike** Za študij likovne pedagogike je značilna dvojnost umetniško izraznih in pedagoških vsebin. Poudarjena je pomembnost kakovostnega prepletanje obojega. V raziskavi se osredinjamo na vprašanje, kako je moč povezati ustvarjalni portfolijo in poročilo strnjene pedagoške prakse. Z uporabo kvalitativne metodologije smo ugotovili, da uporabljeni tako imenovani ustvarjalno-pedagoški model (UP) pozitivno vpliva na motivacijo študentov za delo in omogoča globljo introspekcijo. Ugotovili smo tudi, da so se pri delu študenti v veliki meri naslanjali na principe sodobne umetnosti, kot so sopostavljanje, simbolika, performans, telesna umetnost in avtoportret (selfie).

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## Introduction

Art teacher training programmes in different countries vary according to financial support (private, state-supported), orientation (research or teaching), and size. They can be implemented at university or college level, as part of studies at pedagogical faculties or fine art academies (Galbraith & Grauer 2004; Thompson & Hardiman 1991). In Slovenia, art education programmes are implemented at faculties of education in line with the Bologna two-cycle system (300 ECTS). Art education programmes at faculties of education are characterised by the simultaneous implementation of artistic and pedagogical or didactic courses throughout the study period. However, this is not the only possibility. At the Estonian Academy of Arts, the art education programme is offered only as a master's programme (120 ECTS) for graduates holding a bachelor's degree from the field of art. In this case, the didactic and pedagogical courses are implemented successively. The common point of programmes at faculties of education and art academies is that student teaching and "work with students in schools, museums and other institutions, usually take place in the second half of the studies" (Galbraith, 1994, cited by Galbraith & Grauer, 2004). Regardless of where and how it is implemented, the training of art teachers is characterised by the intertwining of the artistic and the pedagogical approach (Zupančič 2015) and by integration of teaching practice into the teacher training curriculum (Herzog, 2015). Contemporary art teachers should be creative artists and competent teachers at the same time. They should be creative subjects, capable of developing genuine interactive relations in the classroom (Herzog, 2015, p. 199). Therefore, contemporary education of fine arts teachers should be on developing students' productive artistic abilities-creative skills and also their receptive abilities (Duh, 2016). Creativity is also required of teachers from the primary and secondary school curricula, which emphasise the importance of artistic outcomes and student creativity (Slovenian Primary School Visual Arts Curriculum 2011, Sabol 2004; Smith 2004; Taggart, Whitby & Sharp 2004). This has been emphasised by Hope (2004, p. 108) "for example, interdisciplinarity is an important goal for education. An individual's ability to integrate the knowledge, skills, modes of thoughts, point of view, and content of two or more disciplines is a tremendous achievement." One possibility for connecting pedagogical and artistic activities lies in a modified approach to art education classes. Work with students can be set up as a conventional pedagogical process, or it can be implemented as an art performance (Zupančič, 2018), art workshop, etc. This study focused on how the

creative artistic portfolio and the student teaching report can be connected in art education.

## **Portfolio**

There has been a growing interest in using different kinds of portfolios in higher education in recent decades (Dysthe & Engelsen 2011, Beishuizen et al. 2006, Klenowski et al. 2006, Baume & Yorke 2002, Burns 1999). Definitions of the term portfolio emphasise that it is a specific collection of materials and documents, with the purpose of documenting a specific range of performance over a period of time (Powell, 2013). Portfolios can also be defined as a collection of documents/evidence that substantiate the achievements, skills, competencies, and learning accomplished by students within a given period of time (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2011). Portfolios are complex educational tools that require full integration into carefully crafted course designs (Love and Cooper 2004). In education, portfolios can be used at various levels and in various fields. They have been found in all fields of professional development and higher education. They have been used for assessment and learning, promotion and appraisal (Klenowski, Askew & Carnell, 2006). In teacher training programmes, the portfolio is used for developing teaching skills and reflective practice from pre-service teaching through to teaching at the postgraduate level. The portfolio is especially useful in art education. The origins of portfolios as instruments for assessing knowledge are found in the arts. In art education, the portfolio is mainly used as an art educational instrument whose basic characteristic is that it is a collection of work accumulated over time (Boughton, 2004). Taggart, Whitby and Sharp (2004) found that the main methods of assessment used by teachers were to ask pupils to produce a performance or artwork in response to a given theme and to consider the student design process, as recorded in their portfolios. de Eça (2005) discusses the importance of the portfolio as an instrument for external art assessment at the end of secondary school and emphasises that the use of the portfolio fosters constructive learning, dialogue, and co-operation between students and teachers. "The impact of portfolios increased students' in-depth study, active and independent learning, awareness of their own learning strategies, motivation and interest in their own achievements and performance." (de Eça, 2005: 216). The portfolio as a selection of representative work is an essential part of external assessment in art education at the end of primary school education in Slovenia. The portfolio as a collection of artworks is also used in college and

university programmes as part of entrance exams for art and art education programmes and as a basis for exams in practical art courses (O'Donoghue, 2011, 2009, Madeja 2004). Professional teaching portfolios have long been used in degree programmes to demonstrate that students meet state-mandated standards for teacher certification (Delacruz and Bales 2010: 33). The portfolio can have many different formats, nomenclatures, and classifications. The portfolio plays an active role in the educational process. It can be a sort of a diary, a collection of ideas, sketches, thoughts, drawings, paintings, schemes, plans, concept maps, thumbnail sketches, rough sketches, and so on (Walker, 1998, Blaikie, Schõnau and Steers, 2004). Blaikie, Schõnau and Steers (2004, p. 303) write: "A major decision relating to the purpose of a portfolio is whether it will contain students' best pieces of work or whether it will be developmental". The contemporary artistic portfolio is seen as an important part of creative processes within art education classes. The developmental portfolio offers insight into the process. "Often it is possible to discover as much about a student by what they choose to include as it is from the quality of the work itself" (Boughton, 2004: 597). "The ability to reveal process is important to understanding the genesis of final art and design products, and therefore reveals much about the student's thinking, work habits, effort and progress, as well as facilitating the student's ability to critically self-assess by reflecting on their work process. Opening up the process of working in art and design is enhanced and buttressed by the inclusion of preparatory research, reflective notes and development of ideas." (Blaikie, Schõnau and Steers 2004: 303). There has also been a significant increase in the use of digital portfolios (Dorn and Sabol 2006; Driscoll 2007), and online portfolios in tertiary, secondary, primary, and professional education in the last fifteen years (Love and Cooper 2004: 66).

### **The creative portfolio in art teaching training programmes**

"A modern society requires a highly educated teacher who educates and prepares children to think critically, encourages creativity and imagination" (Duh, Kljajić, Bratina, 2018, p. 61); therefore, numerous authors are interested in how to use the creative portfolio in the study process. Sanders-Bustle (2008) reports on a project where students used visual and verbal artefact journals as constructs for reflection. As part of the project, the students reacted to the phenomena in their everyday environment. In a different project (Unrath and Nordlund 2009), students were required to respond visually and verbally to experiences surrounding the climate and

curriculum of K-12 schools. In their study, critical but poetic, connections, words, and images were shaped into artworks representative of the pre-service teachers' reflective practices. Hickman (2007) reports about a project designed to help art and design teachers in training use their strengths to report on classroom observation through visual art. He argues that "if the arts can be seen to be a particular way through which we can understand the world, then they can be used as both a pedagogical tool and possibly a vehicle for collecting data and reporting research" (314). Hickman sees art as a valid and valuable form of knowledge and a useful mode of reporting educational phenomena. He finds that "while art is not a language in the formal sense of the word, some aspects of some art works can be seen to be analogous to language, but more importantly, the arts in general offer a way of understanding the world which goes beyond language; the arts, and in particular visual art, can reify the ineffable. It is in this sense that the arts can be seen to be an additional tool in educational research" (315). He is advocating the use of the arts not only as a tool for research within the arts, but for research within the arts, humanities and social sciences in general. Delacruz and Bales (2010) investigated creative possibilities in the context of the pre-service art teacher teaching portfolio in three fields, i.e. pre-service art teachers' production of digital videos and electronic portfolios, productions that were intended by these students to document and showcase their best teaching practices and related creative and cumulative self-referencing forms of expression, including scrapbooks and sketchbooks/journals. They emphasise that sketchbooks served as journals for personal reflection, artistic aspirations, and as a place for exploring inner worlds, including self-doubt (Delacruz and Bales 2010: 36). In connection to art education, they believe that there are important linkages between the human need to preserve and creatively retell one's personal history, and meaningful classroom practices in the art room (:38).

## **The research**

Like other researchers in the field (Delacruz and Bales 2010), we wondered whether the art teacher trainee students' reflective practice would expand beyond typical written journals. We were interested in how students' creative artistic practices could be used when writing their mandatory report on student teaching. We were encouraged by Hickmans' (2007) report about the growing use of methods for conducting and reporting research other than through writing, his epistemological

basis for art as a valid and valuable form of knowledge, and his argument for it to be seen as a useful mode for reporting educational phenomena.

We also see the study as a contribution to the deliberation on connections between and the integration of pedagogy and art, and on the pedagogical turn in contemporary art (May, O'Donoghue and Irwin 2014).

### **Research model**

An innovative model of instructions for the preparation of the student teaching report was developed (Zupančič, 2015). Methodologically, the model was developed considering the theoretical findings combined with systematic observations of educational practice during recent years (analysing students' reports, non-structured interviews with students and their mentors). The basic ideas for the innovative model were presented to and discussed with the students. Then we tried to implement their ideas into the model. The decision to mix creative artistic expression and classic pedagogical reporting was primarily influenced by the duality of artistic and pedagogical content in the teacher training program. The result of this process was a creative-pedagogic (CP) model. The model had not previously been practically tested, but it had been theoretically discussed with several art educators and potential mentors. The instructions were similar for both universities where the project was implemented. The report comprises the required forms, confirmation of presence and fulfilment of obligations, lesson plans for demonstration lessons, and a record of the trainee's own work and impressions. The last and most important part, which was intended to be introspective and individual, often contains clichés (I liked this or that during my student teaching experience) and the repetition of similar ideas (I would like more hours dedicated to arts, students were not interested, I suffered from stage fright, etc.). Our project aimed at designing and using a model report that would not become merely "one more thing to do" for overworked student teachers (Stone, 1998: 105) and may not be treated as interesting and important by students who are already overloaded with assessments and tasks" (Powell, 2013, p. 3). The principles of the innovative model are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Innovative model of the student teaching report for art education students

1. Freedom. The guiding principle in the preparation of the final report was absolute freedom. Students could decide on any format for the portfolio and any type of presentation. Nothing was prescribed and nothing was forbidden, except maybe the classic written form (Zupančič, 2015).

2. Artistic expression. The students were strongly encouraged to use any ideas from their artistic studio practices. The use of varied artistic forms from different artistic fields (even non-artistic fields) was encouraged. Students were asked to express themselves using the technique or method that best suited them.

3. Creativity. Not to get deeper into the problem of creativity, we used the common understanding of the term as the human capacity to make something new (Addison 2010), or as “the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e. original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive concerning task constraints)” (Sternberg and Lubart 1999: 3). The originality of the portfolio at both the individual level (a person’s work is original in relation to their previous work) and the relative level (in relation to their peer group) (NACCCE 1999, cited by Addison 2010) were assessed. Attention was paid to flexibility, the ability to transition from one idea to another, combination ideas from different fields, etc. Before starting with their student training placement, brainstorming, discussion, and sharing of ideas were implemented with the students.

4. Introspection. The instructions specifically emphasised the importance of their honest and actual impressions of and responses to the time spent in the school.

## Research question

The research questions referred to the content-based, motivational, and introspective aspects of writing the student teaching report.

RQ1: Will students choose different work strategies for creating their pedagogical creative portfolios, or will their approaches be similar?

RQ2: Will students depend on contemporary art principles when creating the portfolios and, if so, which ones?

RQ3: Will students' motivation for writing their student teaching reports increase?

RQ4: Will the alternative way of preparing the student teaching report affect introspection and the expression of ideas and feelings?

## Method

Data were collected using qualitative methodology. Student teaching reports, i.e. their creative portfolios, were analysed and compared to their conventional reports. This part was conducted by a team of experts comprising three university art education teachers. During student presentation of the portfolio, the activity was monitored qualitatively, and anecdotes were recorded as well as student opinions. Unstructured interviews with students were also conducted.

## Participants

The model was tested with art education students at the MA level at two European universities during 2014 and 2017. The study included 44 students: 29 from the University of Maribor (Slovenia) and 15 from the Estonian Academy of Arts in Tallinn. The students received instructions before starting their student teaching experience, which lasted three weeks in both countries. After returning to their universities, they prepared their final reports, i.e. portfolios, and presented them at a seminar.



## Results and discussion

As has been established, the main principles for writing the pedagogical creative portfolio were freedom, absence of specific direction, emphasis on individuality and diversity without any rules concerning format and approach. The students did not receive any models or examples of what the portfolio should look like. The presentations of the portfolios were a surprise to all participants. Reviewing the portfolios, it was established that students of both universities used diverse strategies. Their approaches differed to an extent, making it impossible to find common points with regard to format. Each approach was completely different from the others. This answered our first research question (RQ1). It was established that the innovative model of instruction for the student teaching report does facilitate originality, innovativeness, and diversity. The diversity of approaches is shown in more detail in the given analyses of six examples.

### *Example No. 1: Palimpsestic juxtaposition*



Figure 1: (a, b, c): Palimpsestic diary, detail of a student's artwork (with the permission of the author)

The student designed her portfolio as a postmodern palimpsest, with the juxtaposition of two texts simultaneously. Each page of her portfolio comprises two layers. The base is a printed text, over which is laid the second layer, a handwritten text and drawings. The main value of the report is evident from the juxtaposition of the background (text) and the drawings in the foreground. This juxtaposition works

on several levels. The student occasionally used the layers for completion. In this case, the foundation is the typed text from a medical lexicon on gastrointestinal problems, with a drawing of the stomach covering it (Figure 1a). Arrows are used to connect parts of the text with the corresponding parts of the drawing. The student said that she suffered from psychosomatic gastrointestinal problems during her student teaching experience. In the second example, the base is the printed lesson plan, and the top layer is the hand-written analysis of the activity after the end of the lesson (Figure 1b). In parts, the manuscript completely covers the base, while in other parts it appears as a dialogue. In the third and the most well-chosen example, the student used her own essay from primary school when, aged nine, she mentioned for the first time that she wanted to be a teacher (Figure 1c). She illustrated her current view of her role as a teacher in the format of a drawing of a school bag and a signpost (slikar = painter; dober učitelj = good teacher). She again connected certain parts of the text with the drawing. She said that this technique had helped her deliberate on how her life was going and whether she was successfully steering it in line with her desires. The quality of this portfolio is evident from the practical use of postmodern art techniques (palimpsest and juxtaposition), which partially answers research question RQ2. We also found that the open artistic approach helped the student with a more in-depth introspection into her pedagogical activities (RQ4). “The creative process has helped me face my psychosomatic problems and my childhood wishes” (statement by Student 1).

### *Example No 2: Symbolism*

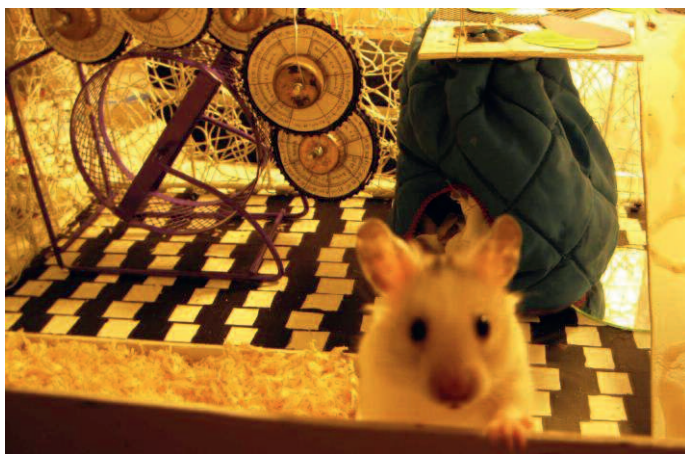


Figure 2: Hamster cage, detail of a student's artwork (with the permission of the author)

The student designed her portfolio as a hamster cage. She followed the criteria on what the animal needs for its safety and well-being and included information on her student teaching in the preparation of the cage. Her work is also multi-layered. The first part is visual in nature. The floor of the cage has the same pattern as the floor in the classroom, and the walls of the cage are lined with parts of documents that she used in her work with the students. “I wanted the cage to become a sort of a classroom” (statement by Student 2). The second part of the equipment in the cage, i.e. the portfolio, is content-based and introspective in nature. The student sewed a soft sleeping bag for the hamster. The sleeping bag symbolises the fatigue that she felt every day during her student teaching experience. This is how the student described her feelings: “I was incredibly tired every day after school. I knew it was going to be strenuous but I did not expect it to be so hard. I could hardly wait to get home, drag myself under the covers and sleep like a hamster. This is how I got the idea to design the portfolio as a hamster cage” (statement by Student 2). The third piece of equipment in the cage carries a symbolic meaning. The student positioned mirrors in the cage. She sought to emphasise that she believed it important for teachers to make constant critical assessment of their work, to analyse and improve it. Student: “I saw how important it was to think about everything I did in class that day and what I could have done differently. It was like critically viewing myself in the mirror” (statement by Student 2). The student also experienced problems adapting to the precisely defined school rhythm, bell, and timetable. She symbolically expressed her feelings about the teacher’s entanglement in daily routine with the hamster wheel (upper left corner in Figure 2). She attached additional wheels to the hamster wheel. Each of these additional wheels represents one week of her student teaching experience, since it contains the days of the week, subjects, and classes according to the timetable and the content that she prepared and implemented during her student teaching. The wheels are interconnected, and when the hamster runs in his wheel, the other wheels turn, symbolising the activity in the school. The use of symbols provides us with a partial answer to research question RQ2. There were numerous symbolic presentations, including in works not included in this detailed presentation. One of the students decided to present her portfolio in the form of various written and visual documents as a performance, which she implemented in almost complete darkness, using only a flashlight. She explained: “Every day at school felt like I was feeling around in the dark. I never knew where the day would take me and what I could expect from it” (Student 7).

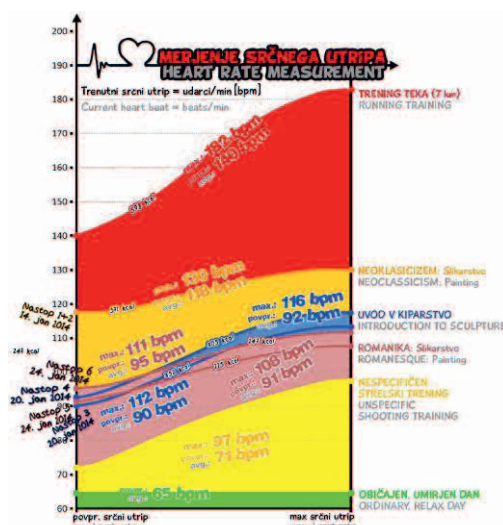
*Example No 3: Heartbeat*

Figure 3: Heart rate measurement, detail of a student's artwork (with the permission of the author)

Student 3 is an avid athlete, runner, and sports marksman. When engaging in sport, he measures his heart rate and the number of calories burned. He scanned the physiology of his body and used it as an idea for creating the student teaching portfolio. He wore a physiological monitoring device during his student teaching experience. He recorded the results and included these in the portfolio in the form of tables. The table in Figure 3 provides information on his heart rate and the number of calories burned during a few of the practice lessons. His statement: “I knew teaching was exhausting and now I have official proof of that. Teaching is more exhausting than my shooting training but less so than the 7 km run. I feel the same about all the topics covered. I think that my values were higher when covering painting at the time of neoclassicism because this was my first demo lesson” (statement by Student 3). The student also measured his heart rate and the number of calories burned during the presentation of the portfolio in front of his colleagues and informed us of the numbers. A similar approach was used by another student (Student 8), whose portfolio included data on the number of cups of coffee that she drank during her student teaching and connecting this information to her obligations on that day. The comparison helped her better understand her attitude towards her work in the school and towards the individual subjects that she had to cover. She found that the amount of coffee consumed was connected to individual classes,

since some were more difficult than others, and the fear of having problems with discipline in the class was reflected in the increased number of cups consumed. The portfolio included a sculpture, cardboard boxes with tables for individual weeks affixed; the boxes were filled with the appropriate quantity of fresh ground coffee. Another student (Student 9) presented her portfolio wearing clothes made of the packaging from the chocolate that she ate during her student teaching experience. All three examples (Heartbeat, Coffeeholic, and Chocolate Eater) provide answers to research question RQ3, which allows us to establish that the motivation for preparing the student teaching report increased in response to the unusual work methods. We can also answer research question RQ4 in the affirmative. In all three examples, students delved deep into their feelings and deliberated on their attitudes towards student teaching and working in a school.

#### *Example No 4: Selfie*

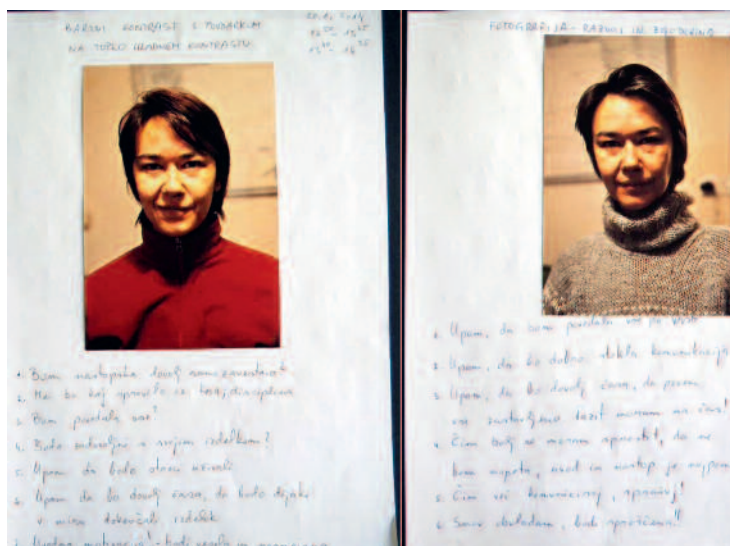


Figure 4: Selfie, detail of a student's artwork (with the permission of the author)

The student designed her portfolio as a conventional report. She collected all the prescribed documents, lesson plans, analyses, reports, and forms. However, she did not include these as final versions but used working drafts, including all her corrections, added information, crossed out text, and similar. Student: "I believe that my additional notes, corrections, and changes offer an insight into the process of



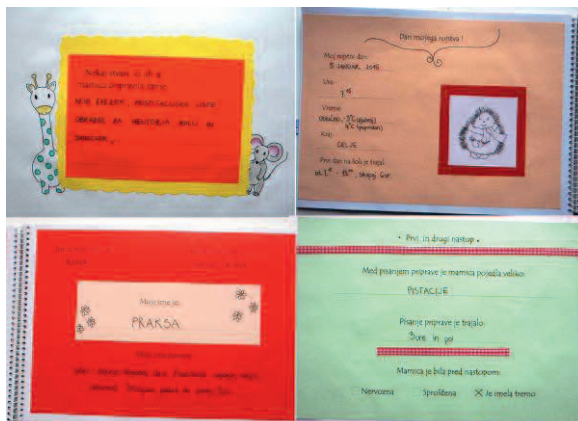
how I prepared for and implemented the hours” (statement by Student 4). When she analysed her portfolio, she saw that some of the activities included numerous additional interventions, while others were almost free of them. She used this as a basis to consider the reasons for this and her attitude towards individual types of content and activities that she implemented during her student teaching. We find the idea interesting, since it enables the student an in-depth, introspective attitude towards individual content units and segments of student teaching (RQ4). Giving preference to working drafts instead of an orderly final document provides an answer to research question RQ2. The student used the contemporary artistic principle that understands art as a work in progress which divulges more than just a polished final product.

The student, who is an avid photographer, included photographic self-portraits in the portfolio, which served as an additional introspective measure. She decided to take her photo every day at the same time, i.e. at the moment before entering the classroom in the morning. In the portfolio, she included photos taken on each of the teaching days. She added data to her selfies, i.e. information on the content covered that day, her dilemmas, questions, and fears. “I hope that I’ll say everything that I’ve prepared. I must mind the time. Communicate and ask questions. You know the subject matter. Be relaxed” (notes + Student 4). She also analysed her appearance in each of the photos. She was interested in her expressions, changes in posture, clothes, and potential connections with the activities planned for the day. Finally, she spread out the photos from the first to the final day and analysed her attitude towards her student teaching experience. The student’s presentation of her portfolio to other students provides an answer to research question RQ4, and we can again establish that the creative portfolio facilitated in-depth introspection by the student. “By analysing my self-portraits, I realised a number of things about myself that I wasn’t even aware of” (statement by Student 4).

### ***Example No 5: Hijacking***

A few of the students used a similar technique and used or hijacked a different form to present their portfolios. The common denominator of these hijackings could only be that they differed completely one from the other. Some of the students ‘hijacked’ the form, others the technique, the third the manner of the presentation, or only the

basic idea. Below are two such examples. In the first example (Figure 5), the student conducted her student teaching during pregnancy.



Picture 5: Baby diary, detail of a student's artwork (with the permission of the author)

She combined these two important events in her life in her portfolio. She prepared her student teaching report as a baby diary. She copied the format of an empty baby diary into the portfolio. The entered information referred to her student teaching experience. “My mom learned that I was on the way the same time the school told her she had to engage in student teaching. A few things that my mom prepared for me: notebook, mentor form, lesson plan, etc. My name is: obligatory student teaching. While writing the lesson plan, my mummy ate a lot of: pistachios” (notes by Student 5). This example was the first in which we noticed a lot of humour, which is one of the criteria for assessing contemporary artwork in the context of the pedagogical process (Zupančič, 2006). During the presentation of her portfolio, we noticed that her enthusiasm for approaching motherhood was greatly reflected in her work in the classroom and even more so in the writing of her final report. Her statement offers an additional answer to the research question on student motivation (RQ3): “Because I was constantly able to think about my baby due to the connections between the baby diary and the composing of the student teaching report, I wrote the report with ease, gladly, and with a lot of interest. I was also looking forward to presenting it” (statement by Student 5).

*Example No 6: Graduation thesis*

In the final example given here (Picture 6), the student hijacked the format of a graduation thesis at the University of Maribor. She had a bound copy of a graduation thesis made, i.e. containing 60 numbered blank sheets of paper.

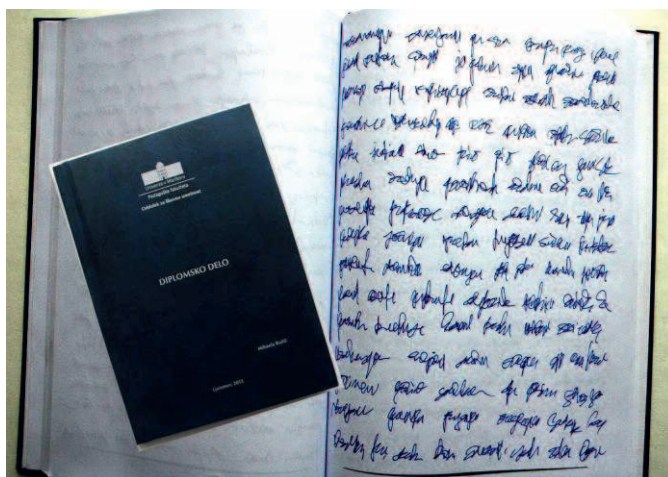


Figure 6: Diploma, detail of a student's artwork (with the permission of the author)

She scribbled incomprehensible and illegible lines all over these sheets of paper. These sixty scribbled pages were her student teaching report. She used the time she would have otherwise spent on writing her report for engaging in a seemingly senseless activity. At the presentation, when the student spoke of her work, it became clear that she had been deliberating on her student teaching experience even while scribbling on the paper. Her apparently meaningless doodles were a form of in-depth introspection. The student created a clear attitude towards the work in school while also using this symbolic creative act to express her fears, desires, and hopes for the future. She thought about what awaited her once she completed her studies and handed in her graduation thesis. Even though it might initially seem that she had avoided preparing the student teaching report by engaging in this senseless activity, the interview with the student clearly showed that she had internalised the activity through the student teaching experience, and certain viewpoints are now clearer to her. We therefore see her work as another example of a successful introspection and provide a positive answer to research question RQ4.



The work of Student 6 also provides an additional answer to research question RQ2. The student said: “The purpose of my ‘writing’ was not to provide information, but to meditate and relax after the stressful days at school” (statement by Student 6). This statement and her actions mean that the student has assumed the basic strategy of artistic expression from the German artist Hanne Darboven. The artist’s projects include drawings on hundreds of sheets of paper containing nonsensical terms, numbers written in words, starting with *one* and ending with *twenty-four thousand* and more. She describes her actions as writing without describing /Schreiben ohne zu Beschreiben/ (Günzel 2015). This concept links this final example with contemporary art practices, which provides the final answer to research question RQ2. In this respect, it has been established that students depend on the principles of contemporary art when preparing their portfolios. They used the following principles: (1) the postmodern principle of the palimpsest, i.e. covering an older document with a new one, whereby the principle of juxtaposition was also used. This principle was used consistently to establish a dialogue between the old and the new. (2) Their use of symbolism allows parallels to be drawn with the work of Joseph Beuys. As in the example in Picture 2, Beuys used animals in his work and equipped his performances with objects with a deep symbolic meaning (metal, sackcloth, felt, fishing vest, etc.). (3) Similar to contemporary artists who use their body for their artistic expression, such as Marina Abramović, the student also used his body in our study (Figure 3). In this segment, the creative portfolio can be associated with performance art and body art. (4) The selfies in Picture 4 show parallels to the work of Cindy Sherman, whose work in large part comprises photographic self-portraits. Finally (5), we want to emphasise the playful nature of contemporary artistic expression, which borrows methods and principles from various fields. Art can be reflected in the format of a baby diary, seemingly nonsensical writing and similar.

## Conclusion

It has been established that while creating their portfolios, the students worked from the principles of contemporary art, which was also our intent. In this respect, the following must be emphasised. In both cases (Slovenia and Estonia), these were students of the fifth and final year of study, which means that throughout their study years, they have learned about the diverse range of contemporary art practices. This has allowed us to make additional connections between both segments of art

education studies, i.e. the artistic and the pedagogical. The study has also provided answers to other research questions.

Research question RQ3 focused on the level of motivation for creating the student teaching portfolio. Boughton (2004) emphasises that one of the benefits offered by portfolios is the motivation it provides to the student. Assessing the project, it was established that motivation for preparing the report did increase, as can be seen from the following: (1) the strategies of the portfolios prepared by the students were diverse, unexpected, and different; (2) the students eagerly followed and actively participated in the discussion accompanying the presentations of their peers; (3) in the interviews conducted at the end of the project, the students unanimously agreed that they preferred this approach to the writing of a conventional report. They said that this artistic form allowed them to express more than they could have expressed in writing, and they were motivated because “in the end, we are also artists and not only teachers and this method of expression suits us much better” (statement by Student 9). The student speaks about “aesthetic behaviour /.../ which is the translation of world to the senses, and establishing sense and meaning, interpreting oneself and the world” (Arbeitsgruppe Kunstpädagogik, 2009, p. B2, cited by: Weinlich, 2018, p. 258). Students’ higher level of motivation also derives from the fact that the students were able to link their student teaching report to their fields of interest (pregnancy, getting a pet, photography as their favourite means of expression, or links to sports activities).

In the final research question (RQ4), we were interested in the level of introspection, which should be one characteristic of a creative portfolio. “An important feature of good portfolios is students’ critical self-reflection” (Wolfe, 1988, cited by Boughton, 2004: 598). Our study found that the use of artistic expression with a higher level of motivation yielded in-depth introspection, which is confirmed by the students’ statements in the final interviews: “It was easier to express my feelings through artistic expression,” and “I learned more about my colleagues than I had in the four years we’ve been together.” “I finally decided to confess through artistic form what I did to relax after the strenuous days at school” (student statements). Critical self-reflection is confirmed by the students’ willingness to deal with “sensitive” subjects in their portfolios, i.e. doubt of whether their studies have any meaning, shame, embarrassment, fear, stage fright, lack of confidence, overeating, relaxing watching soap operas on television, etc. The greater level of introspection is attributed to the

transition made from the cognitively focused written report to artistic and emotionally based expression. Another important aspect was the freedom to choose how to prepare their portfolio as well as freedom in choosing its content. “If students have the freedom to make choices about the content they include in their portfolios, and are also encouraged to explore ideas independently, outside limitations of classroom experiences, then a clear picture of their intellectual footsteps is represented in the contents” (Boughton, 2004: 599).

We saved one more example for the end. One of the more radical examples of in-depth introspection but one also carrying an exceptionally strong artistic message was a portfolio in the form of a box containing all the required documents, photographs, and notes. The box was protected with a lock and chain. The student had thrown away the key, and it was impossible to access the contents of the box. Her statement: “This part of my portfolio contains very personal thoughts, so personal that I cannot share them with anyone, not even my teacher” (statement by Student 10). We respected her wishes, even though this means that we will never know what she wrote and even though some of our fellow teachers at the school believed this to be unacceptable. We support this form of expression. We see it as the use of alternative “non-formal artistic and activities, which have a considerable positive influence on educational communities” (Perez-Martin, 2017). We firmly support the belief that “the arts can be a way of communication that holds meaning because of their ability to communicate understanding that would otherwise be too complicated” (Suominen 2006), and that “the making of art and the appreciating of art offer complementary ways of understanding the world” (Hickman 2007). We maintain that metaphors, artistic gestures, and conceptual statements are a legitimate way of communication, even for student teaching reports. “Visual art forms can capture the ineffable, helping us to gain access to the more elusive aspects of the teaching and learning enterprise and reveal phenomena which would be difficult to perceive and understand through words (and numbers) alone” (Hickman, 2007: 322). Art provides insight into what we miss by looking through conventional forms, and this applies at least partly to the innovative model for creating the student teaching report.

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