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Alternative Assessment: the Use of 'Portfolios'

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Alternative assessment: the use of portfolios

Many fresh approaches to student language assessment have been recently introduced and have gained widespread acceptance under the movement of the so-called 'movement of alternative assessment' (Alderson and Banerjee, 2001) that has recently made its appearance within the field of language testing and assessment. Perhaps the most noticeable initiative has been the increasing emphasis on language portfolios that have emerged as a vehicle by which students and teachers can organize, manage and analyse life inside and out of school (Gottlieb, 1995).

The present paper will review the major kinds of alternative assessment and will provide an overview of portfolio assessment by making reference to a study conducted in Greek state schools. It will present the rationale behind the use of the Portfolio assessment in this context as well as the advantages of using such an alternative method of assessment for both students and teachers alike. In addition, it will present in detail the case study methodology that was used with the specific group of teachers and their students and the implications of it for further research.

The paper will conclude by making suggestions based on the findings of the study as to the implementation of this innovative method of assessment, its advantages and disadvantages, the benefits on both instruction and learning, the training of teachers and learners in alternative assessment as well as to the suitability of the use of alternative methods of assessment in traditional educational contexts and recommendations for their effective use.

Thematic area: Language Teaching and Learning (& Language Testing and Assessment)

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