



*American University of Armenia*

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**An Evaluation of the Implementation of the English Language  
Teacher's Professional Portfolio in Armenian EFL settings**

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts  
in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

by

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2007

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## **Abstract**

The main purpose of this research is to evaluate the implementation of a language teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (CTEFL) program at American University of Armenia (AUA) and to investigate its later contribution in a student's career as a teacher in Armenia. In light of this, the study aims to investigate the extent to which the process of implementing the requirement of a teacher's professional portfolio in the CTEFL program at AUA has affected the overall efficiency of the educational process. More specifically, this study tries to explore to what extent the CTEFL students' awareness of the fact that their current academic work (e.g., lesson plans, projects, research papers, etc., marked by the faculty and fulfilled according to the requirements of different courses), which are later to be included into their Professional Portfolios, affect their motivation and perceptions of autonomy while following the prescribed program of studies at AUA. The study has been conducted at AUA and the data has been collected mainly by means of questionnaires distributed to the CTEFL graduate students of the previous two academic years: 2005-2006 and 2006-2007. The data for the study has also included the professional portfolios submitted by the students. The audio-taped interviews with the potential employers were aimed at revealing the potential employers' attitudes towards recognizing teacher's professional portfolios as an assessment measure to consider while hiring a teacher in Armenia.

As the results of the study indicate, the accruing insights and information support the researcher's belief in the efficacy of using professional portfolios in all the tertiary level institutions in Armenia, which are devoted to language teacher education. Recommendations and suggestions are also provided for the successful implementation of professional portfolios in Armenian EFL teacher training settings.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	iii
Abstract	iv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1. Evaluation/Assessment/Testing	6
2.1.1. Traditional versus Alternative Assessment	7
2.2. Language Portfolio	9
2.3. Learner Autonomy	11
2.4. Motivation in Language Learning	13
2.5. Language Teacher's Professional Portfolio	15
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	17
3.1. Research Design	17
3.2. The Selection of the Participants	18
3.3. Data Collection Instruments	19
3.3.1. Questionnaires	20
3.3.2. Semi-structured Interviews	21
3.3.3. Examination of the Student-teachers' Professional Portfolios	22
3.4. Data Analysis	23
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA	24
4.1. The Content of the Professional Portfolio	24
4.2. Professional Portfolio Effect on Motivation	29
4.3. Professional Portfolios' Role in Career Advancement	32

<b>4.4. Age and Teaching Experience of the CTEFL Students</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>4.5. Autonomy Development</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>4.6. The Efficacy of the Professional Portfolios on the Educational Process</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>5.1. Summary of the Findings</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>5.2. Limitations of the Research</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>5.3. Suggestions for Further Research</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>5. 4. Significance of the Study</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>5.5. Suggestions and Recommendations for the Implementation of Professional Portfolio</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1: CTEFL Professional Portfolio Evaluation Form</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2: Student Questionnaire</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3: Informed Consent Form</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>APPENDIX 4: Interview Questions for Potential Employers</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>APPENDIX 5: Transcript of the Audio-taped Interview 1</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>APPENDIX 6: Transcript of the Audio-taped Interview 2</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>APPENDIX 7: Transcript of the Audio-taped Interview 3</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>APPENDIX 8: Transcript of the Audio-taped Interview 4</b>	<b>87</b>

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The Language Teacher's Portfolio is widely used around the world and serves as a guide for representing professional development of both pre-service and in-service teachers. The concept of a professional portfolio has come into the teaching field mainly from artists' practice of compiling their best works of art into a portfolio. Like other professionals, teachers need evidence of their growth and achievement over a period of time as well and the professional portfolio is a vehicle for collecting and presenting that evidence. Teachers encourage their students to select examples of their work over time to demonstrate how much they have learned, and professional portfolios allow teachers to do something similar, i.e., to show their professional growth over a period of time, and to reflect on their teaching process. They also allow teachers to document the practices they would like to perpetuate and even pass on to others. (<http://content.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=4148>).

A professional teaching portfolio is a careful record of specific accomplishments attained over an extended period of time starting from the pre-teaching years of studying at graduate or undergraduate programs as well. It provides the reader with the background information on the teacher and his/her teaching context, his/her educational philosophy and teaching goals. It contains teaching artifacts and reflections documenting an extended teaching activity, samples of actual lesson plans, a videotape of teaching, examples of student work and their evaluations of student work along with reflective commentaries by the teacher, as well as letters of recommendation, formal evaluations, research papers, different projects, and so on (<http://www.qesnrecit.qc.ca/Portfolio/eng/teacher.html>).

The concept of a portfolio as an alternative means of assessment and the concept of a professional language teacher's portfolio are relatively new to the Armenian teaching/learning context. The development of the professional teacher's portfolio was introduced into the curriculum of the Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (CTEFL) program at AUA in the 2005-2006 academic year and the students (in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the certificate) were assigned to develop and hand in their professional portfolios at the end of the academic year. These portfolios are meant to demonstrate the students' progress while studying in the program and have the potential of later serving as a career advancement tool for them.

However, AUA is the only institution in Armenia that has implemented this valuable practice into its curriculum and most, if not all employers in Armenia, are not at all familiar with this concept. In spite of the fact that the use of professional portfolios in occupations related to the arts has already become common practice in Armenia for the past decade, it is completely unknown in the language teaching field.

Taking all the above-mentioned facts into account, I have undertaken this study with the initial aim of informing all the institutions and employers in Armenia regarding the existence and effectiveness of professional portfolios in the field of language teaching. Thus, it became necessary for me first to evaluate the process of implementing the professional portfolios in the CTEFL program at AUA from the perspective of the students directly engaged in the compilation of the portfolios. My second aim is to reveal the potential employers' attitudes towards recognition of the professional portfolios as an assessment measure to consider while hiring teachers in Armenia. It is assumed that all this information will help me to suggest implementing the practice of compiling professional portfolios in all the institutions devoted to teacher education in Armenia.



Furthermore, it is also hoped that it will become a necessary required hiring tool in the recruitment of language teachers in Armenia as the information provided by the professional portfolios will give thorough and objective background information about the applicant. This will help to regulate the recruitment system in Armenia, which, in its turn, will increase the faith of the applicants in the objectivity of the potential employers' hiring decisions.

When students believe in the potential value of the professional portfolios, they will become more motivated to do their best while studying with the aim of later contributing to their careers. As a result of the chain reaction, this awareness will have positive effects on the overall efficiency of the educational process, as the students will consider each work as a part of their 'investment' into the success of their later careers.

In my research I will also discuss the issue of flexibility in putting together the professional portfolios. There can be a distinction between the Professional Portfolios that Department of English Programs (DEP) at AUA wants for **educational assessment** and the ones that a prospective employer wants to judge the **applicant's quality for hiring**. At AUA the faculty wants to see the student's progress and growth in their language development and acquisition of professional skills, as well as reflections on these processes. However, the professional portfolio the AUA graduates present to a prospective employer will probably be somewhat different from the one they present to AUA. For this second '*job-application*' type of professional portfolios I will try to find out the prospective employer's priority list of work to be carefully considered by the students while changing the content of their professional portfolios after graduating from the institution.

In this regard, the current study seems to have similarities with mini-market research in terms of getting information on the attitudes of the potential employers - 'customers of the product' - towards professional portfolios 'the product', the 'producers' of which are students. It is commonly accepted that the 'producers' should be aware of their 'customers'' demands concerning the quality of 'the product'. With this aim, I will also try to reveal what kind of information the employers would prefer to see in the professional portfolios of their applicants. This information may contribute to the students' and instructors' efforts as when "you advise students about creating employability portfolios, you'll have to decide which specific categories and samples best reflect your local labor market conditions." Thus, "you may want to seek input from local employment experts" (Kimeldorf, 1994, p.42).

The values and beliefs that I have discussed so far need to be further explored on a well-informed basis. This makes it necessary for me to pose the following research questions:

- Can the use of a Teacher's Professional Portfolio in the CTEFL program at AUA affect the students' motivation and their perceptions of autonomy?
- What are the student-teachers' perceptions of the potential value of the Teacher's Professional Portfolio as a tool for their later career advancement?
- How do potential employers evaluate the Teacher's Professional Portfolio as an assessment measure while hiring a teacher?

It is hoped that the issues and insights that I am going to address in the scheme of the study can help me answer the aforementioned questions that I have posed above.

The structure followed throughout the study is the following: literature review, methodology, presentation and discussion of data, and conclusion. Chapter Two with its

*Literature Review* will present the background information on the theoretical concepts related to the topic under investigation. The *Methodology* (Chapter Three) will provide information on the instruments used while collecting the relevant data for the study, and the methods adopted for analyzing the data obtained, as well as providing justification for the selection of the participants. Chapter Four titled as *Presentation and Discussion of Data* will report on the data obtained along with a detailed discussion of it. The summary of the overall findings and the limitations of the study, as well as suggestions and recommendations for further implementation of professional portfolios in Armenian EFL settings will be presented in the *Conclusion* (Chapter Five).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The present chapter will visit the theoretical issues/insights that underpin the current study by examining the relevant literature related to its main contributing concepts. In order to understand the pedagogical implications of the process of implementing English language teachers' professional portfolios in the curriculum of the CTEFL program at AUA and its contributive role in promoting students' perceptions of motivation and autonomy and to the overall efficiency of their studies, we need to define the issues at hand. This demands that we first visit the conceptual terrain of evaluation/assessment/testing.

#### **2.1. Evaluation/Assessment/Testing**

The terms 'evaluation' and 'assessment' are often used interchangeably depending on the context. Nunan (2004) defines 'evaluation' as "a broad, general set of procedures involving the collection and interpretation of information for curricular decision-making" (p.138). This information is usually meant to find out students' 'strengths' and 'weaknesses' in learning a language; a set of procedures for gathering this information is referred to as 'assessment'. 'Testing' is meant to provide more formal information on learner performance and serves as one form of assessment. Thus, we can conclude that "assessment subsumes testing and is, in turn, subsumed by evaluation" (Nunan, 2004, p.138).

A portfolio is believed to assume particular relevance and substance when the need for alternative/non-traditional forms of assessment becomes important

(Sivasubramaniam, 2007, personal communication). However, before investigating the concept of alternative assessment, it was necessary for me to clarify what is considered to be traditional assessment, and its closely related issues such as evaluation and testing. The information provided in the previous section can serve as a basis to discuss the contrasting views to be presented in the next section.

### **2.1.1. Traditional versus Alternative Assessment**

Testing is usually referred to as a traditional form of assessment, which is contrasted to non-traditional forms of assessment, also referred to as ‘alternative assessment’. Huerta-Macias (2002) discussing some disadvantages of traditional assessment states that the testing situation in itself is threatening to students, and the students’ feelings may influence their performance during the test. As a result, these tests do not always show the students’ real knowledge of the language and their ability to use it. As stated by Heaton (1990, cited in Bailey, 1998), “every test score is surrounded by an area of uncertainty” (p.204) because of different negative reasons. For example, a student may not be in the best condition while taking an exam, or “the questions in the test may favour certain students but not others” (p.204). Moreover, Heaton (1990, cited in Bailey, 1998) mentions an important factor of slight or ‘chance’ differences in test scores of the students that may affect the students’ failing or passing certain tests. Heaton (1990, cited in Bailey, 1998) also states that “it is advisable to treat all test scores with caution” and justifies his statement by claiming that “there is no such thing as a perfect test” (p.7-8).

Different people have different attitudes to test results. Some people accept them uncritically, whereas the others support the idea that “all testing is invidious” (Bailey,

1998, p.204). This view of Bailey (1998) appears to tally with Heaton (1990), who says that important decisions should not rely only on test scores. “Tests are simple measurement tools: it is the use to which we put their results that can be appropriate or inappropriate” (Bailey, 1998, p.204). Thus, according to Heaton (1990), the importance of considering different factors while assessing a student’s abilities in English stresses the “importance of continuous assessment” (p.7-8, cited in Bailey, 1998).

In light of this discussion, Pete Rogan’s (1996, cited in Bailey, 1998) chart of contrasting ideas about traditional and alternative assessment can help us to get a clearer picture of differences between these two types of assessment. As pointed out by him “an understanding of ‘alternative’ assessment must be based on a background in the traditional assessment concepts, which are laid down as a contrast to the alternatives” (Rogan, 1996, cited in Bailey, 1998).

**Contrasting Traditional and “Alternative” Assessment**

One-shot tests .....	Continuous, longitudinal assessment
Indirect tests .....	Direct tests
Inauthentic tests .....	Authentic assessment
Individual projects .....	Group projects
No feedback provided to learners .....	Feedback provided to learners
Speeded exams .....	Untimed exams
Decontextualized test tasks .....	Contextualized test tasks
Norm-referenced score interpretation .....	Criterion-referenced score interpretation
Standardized tests .....	Classroom-based tests

(Rogan, 1996, cited in Bailey, 1998, p.207)

Rogan is aware of the fact that “there may be many increments between these poles, and that shades of grey are possible” (Bailey, 1998, p.207).

A growing awareness of the disadvantages of traditional forms of assessment, appears to have promoted some alternative forms of assessment. They involve various procedures, such as interviews, observations of students’ work, portfolios, journal entries, dialog journals, personal conferences and so on. Penaflorida (2002) describes the foregoing alternative ways of assessment as non-threatening or non-stressful, interactive and student-centered.

Having been acquainted with the advantages of alternative assessment over traditional assessment procedures, we are in a better position to clarify what a professional portfolio is and why we need it. However, before we do that, we should understand what a simple language portfolio is.

## **2.2. Language Portfolio**

As mentioned earlier, a portfolio is a form of alternative assessment. Genesee and Upshur (1996) define a portfolio as “a purposeful collection of students’ work that demonstrates to students and others their efforts, progress, and achievements in given areas” (p.99). Portfolios allow students to see their progress over time and serve as an ongoing tool for a teacher to assess student achievement. Portfolios allow students to become actively involved in the process of their assessment and learning as they provide opportunities for students to negotiate the contents of their portfolios in personal conferences with their teachers. According to Genesee and Upshur (1996), “portfolios and conferences involve learners as active collaborators in documenting and monitoring

their own progress and in identifying learning goals”, which is contrasted with other forms of assessment “in which the learner is [just] the object of evaluation” (p.99).

A language portfolio, according to Mary Schafer (1993, cited in Bailey, 1998) is equally precious for the three main ‘interested parties’: the student, the teacher and the parent. A portfolio serves as an evidence of a student’s progress during the course, thus increasing his/her self-confidence and fostering later development. The same portfolio helps a parent to find out the abilities, skills, the extent of language development of his/her child, in other words, it gives a parent a full picture of the learning process of a child, in many cases, giving a parent the cause for pride. According to Schafer (1993, cited in Bailey, 1998), “a language portfolio is extremely valuable to teachers, both ESL and content-area teachers” (p.216). A portfolio not only serves as a guide for a teacher to assess his/her student’s performance/progress but also provides valuable insights into what constitutes the ‘individual being’ of his/her student.

The list provided by Kemp and Toperoff (1998, cited in Nunan, 2004) can help sum up the advantages of a portfolio:

- ◆ Has clear goals: these are decided on at the beginning of instruction and are clear to teacher and students alike.
- ◆ Gives a profile of learner abilities.
- ◆ Depth: [the portfolio] enables students to show quality work, which is done without pressure and time constraints, and with the help of resources, reference materials and collaboration with others.
- ◆ Breadth: a wide range of skills can be demonstrated.
- ◆ Growth: it shows efforts to improve and develop, and demonstrates progress over time.
- ◆ Assesses a variety of skills: written as well as oral and graphic products can easily be included.
- ◆ Develops awareness of one’s own learning: students have to reflect on their progress and the quality of their work in relation to known goals.
- ◆ Caters to individual differences and enhances independent learning [that is, autonomy]: since it is open-ended, students can show work on their own level.



Since there is a choice, it caters to different learning styles and allows expression of different strengths.

- ◆ Develops social skills: students are also assessed on work done together, in pairs or groups, on projects and assignments.
- ◆ Develops independent and active learners: students must select and justify portfolio choices; monitor progress and set learning goals (p.160).

The above list serves to suggest that motivation and autonomy are the two *instructional* reasons for doing portfolios. Thus, my research aims to find out to what extent the process of compiling a professional portfolio can raise the students' motivation and perceptions of autonomy. Despite the fact that the positive qualities inherent to motivation and autonomy in learning have been mentioned in the foregoing list of advantages, we need to continue our conceptual 'journey' to examine the notions of autonomy and motivation in depth in order to understand how they relate to learning and, particularly, to portfolio compiling process. The following sections are meant to do that.

### **2.3. Learner Autonomy**

Alternative ways of assessment, according to Penaflorida (2002), allow students to reflect on their work, and that, in turn, makes them feel more responsible for their learning. Penaflorida (2002) states that assessment is no longer only the teacher's responsibility; nontraditional ways of assessment allow students to self-assess their works and experience ownership towards their own work. This leads to learner autonomy which, according to Penaflorida (2002), "is a process that enables learners to recognize and assess their own needs, to choose and apply their own learning strategies or styles eventually leading to the effective management of learning" (p.346).

In this respect, portfolios can help students to accomplish some of the harder goals set for them:

- ✓ developing critical thinking and self-reflection skills
- ✓ becoming aware of their own thinking
- ✓ managing and evaluating their own learning. (Arter, 1992, cited in Kimeldorf, 1994)

The following views of Tierney (1991, cited in Kimeldorf, 1994) can offer additional support:

By encouraging students to engage in self and peer evaluation, teachers empower students to take control of their own learning. When students help determine the criteria for assessment, they can make reasonable decisions about the quality of their own work. By engaging students in self-assessments, students learn they are ultimately responsible for their own learning. It is in this area that portfolios are so powerful (p.1).

In general, there is much evidence that autonomy increases motivation or vice versa and this consequently increases learning effectiveness. According to Knowles (1995), "there is convincing evidence that people who take the initiative in learning (proactive learners) learn things and learn better than do people who sit at the feet of teachers, passively waiting to be taught (reactive learners). They enter into learning more purposefully and with great motivation" (p. 35). Wang and Peverly (1986), for example, review findings of strategy research (in subjects other than language learning) and conclude that independent or autonomous learners are those who have the capacity for being active and independent in the learning process; they can identify goals, formulate their own learning strategies, and monitor their own learning. An autonomous learner, in other words, is a self-motivated learner who learns without a push from his/her teacher, parents or peers. Therefore, teachers should foster motivation, which in turn will foster autonomy or vice versa. Let us continue our 'journey' and examine how motivation is defined in the literature.

## 2.4. Motivation in Language Learning

Genesee and Upshur (1996) state that, portfolios and conferences, when used interactively, besides giving “students a sense of involvement in, control over [learning]”, also fosters their “enthusiasm for learning”(p.116); in other words, this enhances students’ motivation to learn and do their best to succeed in their learning.

Motivation, as referred to learning, is defined by Groccia (1992) as:

Motivation in a general sense is that which influences the arousal, selection, direction and maintenance of all human behavior. ...Students require some form of stimulus to activate, provide direction for, and encourage persistence in their study and learning efforts. Motivation is this energy to study, to learn and achieve and to maintain these positive behaviors over time. Motivation is what stimulates students to acquire, transform and use knowledge (p. 62).

Gardner (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) proposed the idea that motivation is influenced by two orientations to language learning. An integrative orientation is typical of someone who identifies with and values the target language and community, and who approaches language study with the intention of entering that community. Such an individual is thought to have an internal, more enduring motivation for language study. Instrumentally motivated learners, on the other hand, are more likely to see language learning as enabling them to do other useful things, but as having no special significance in itself. Such learners will be motivated if they see language learning as having beneficial *career prospects* or something that will enable them to use transactional language with speakers of the foreign language. Gardner and Lambert (1972) suggested that an individual with an integrative orientation usually demonstrates greater motivational effect in learning L2, and, thus, achieve greater L2 competence. This integrative and instrumental orientation is very famous in the field of motivation, but Ely

(1986) argues that it is not always easy to distinguish between integrative and instrumental motivation.

A second problem, he argues, is whether the integrative/instrumental conceptualization captures the full spectrum of student motivation.

According to Grotzer (1992), “people study and learn because the consequences of such behavior satisfy certain internal and/or external motives” (p.62). Thus, along with the explanations provided by Gardner, Deci and Ryan (1985) proposed the intrinsic/extrinsic motivations which will help us understand how these two motivations relate to two different types of behaviour. They claim that learners who are interested in learning tasks and outcomes for their own sake (intrinsic) rather than for rewards (extrinsic) are likely to become more effective learners. More specifically, according to them, intrinsic motivation refers to motivation which stimulates learners to engage in an activity because that activity is enjoyable and satisfying for them to do. Extrinsically motivated behaviors are those actions carried out to achieve some instrumental end, such as earning a reward or avoiding a punishment. This type of motivation does not necessarily imply a lack of self-determination in the behaviors performed. According to Koestner and McClelland (1990), research on intrinsic motivation has led to the conclusion that intrinsic motivation will be greater if feelings of challenge, competence, and self-determination are fostered. They also claim that if external events enhance feelings of competence, as when someone is told he or she has done a task very well, intrinsic motivation is likely to increase. By contrast, events that lead to feelings of incompetence are likely to undermine intrinsic motivation.

Therefore, one of the key points is to motivate students intrinsically, and this can foster learners’ autonomy as well. Interesting findings were obtained from Noels,

Pelletier, Clement, and Vallerand's study (2000) on students registered in an English psychology class at a French-English bilingual university. The study showed that for fostering sustained learning, it may not be sufficient to convince students that language learning is interesting and enjoyable; they may need to be persuaded that it is also personally important for them. If you are an adult learner, interesting and enjoyable learning is not enough. They need to feel the importance of learning as well, and then they can envision themselves in terms of future prospects or job-related salaries and so forth.

According to Arter (1992, cited in Kimeldorf, 1994), “portfolios are a tool for learning and motivation to the extent that students determine what should go in the portfolio, why it should go in, what story the contents tell, and how they should be organized and displayed” (p.1). In this way, portfolios motivate students by helping them “discover who they are as learners, and boost their self-concept” (Arter, 1992, cited in Kimeldorf, 1994, p.1).

In light of the characteristics provided for different types of motivation, the students compiling their professional portfolios are mainly extrinsically motivated or guided by instrumental motivation having the main aim of demonstrating to employers that they have the skills and attitudes necessary to be successful.

## **2.5. Language Teacher’s Professional Portfolio**

Portfolios are widely used by people in different settings with different purposes. The concept of the portfolio has been inspired mainly by artists, such as “photographers and architects as a means of keeping a record of their accomplishments to show to others” (Genesee and Upshur, 1996, p.99). These types of portfolios are professional ones

which are widely used in all spheres of work nowadays. They came into use also in language teaching and in this context are defined as:

...a purposeful collection of documents concerning a teacher's performance (e.g., testimonials, student learning outcome reports, samples of students' work) and of products produced by the teacher (e.g., a lesson plan, a critique of a textbook chapter, a videotape of a lesson, a teacher-made unit test). The types of documents to be included may be specified, or the teacher may be free to choose what types of documents to include. (Glossary Overview, <http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/ess/glossary/glos-m-r.htm>)

As stated by Petty (n.d.), “many times job applicants seeking a teaching position begin to sound and look alike”, and this is where “professional portfolios allow educators to display their best work in a way that sets them apart from the crowd” since a portfolio can serve as one of the best ways “to show [their] individuality and creativity”. (<http://www.pampetty.com/profportfolio.htm>)

In this chapter, I have discussed the key conceptual issues that relate to my study and I believe that this will provide the necessary stimulus for discussing many other related issues in the subsequent chapters.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter aims at describing the procedure of the conducted study, particularly the methods that have been employed to collect the relevant data on the process of implementation of an English Language Teacher's Professional Portfolio in Armenian EFL teacher education settings. The chapter will also provide justification for the selection of the participants and the instruments that have been used for collecting the data.

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This research is meant to be a qualitative study as the main instruments to be used in it are to be analyzed and interpreted qualitatively. In light of this, I believe that the use of research instruments such as interviews, questionnaires and portfolio samples will facilitate an informed understanding of the dynamics of the phenomenon under focus.

As my study entails a focus on how people perform in a given setting in order to translate that performance into some sort of progress, I believe that my study is well-suited to provide a rich account of the contextual setting and the phenomenon to be investigated occurring in it. In this respect, my study is meant to draw on some aspects of an ethnographic description (Sivasubramaniam, 2004).

My research is also considered to be descriptive as it aims at making explicit the significant effects within the context itself. Descriptive research, according to McDonough and McDonough (1997), attempts to provide a rich account of the whole situation rather than minimizing it. Individual effects which can be isolated rarely work

alone: therefore the pattern of context in which they are embedded is all important.

### **3.2. The Selection of the Participants**

As AUA is the only institution where a language teacher's professional portfolio was implemented as a mandatory requirement for completing the CTEFL course, the study has been conducted mainly at AUA. Participants of the study are Armenian graduate students from two groups of the CTEFL program; 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 academic year graduates. The overall number of the students studying in the program during these two academic years was 24, however four of them have not participated in the study because of different personal reasons. Thus, the overall number of the study participants is twenty. Nine out of the twenty participants are the graduates of 2005-2006 academic year, and the remaining eleven are the graduates of 2006-2007.

The participants belong to different age groups ranging from 21-45-year-old pre- and in-service student-teachers. The reason for choosing these two particular academic year students is due to the fact that professional portfolios were implemented in the curriculum of the CTEFL program only in the 2005-2006 academic year. Thus, my study has been conducted with the pioneers of the implementation year program and the following academic year students.

The other participants of the research have been the potential employers of the CTEFL program student-teachers. These are the stakeholders who will be the most important examiners of the portfolios. As was mentioned in Chapter One, metaphorically speaking, the employers will be the 'customers' of the 'product' and thus their opinions are valuable for 'the product designers', that is, for the professional portfolio designers. Seven heads of the English departments from different linguistic institutions have been



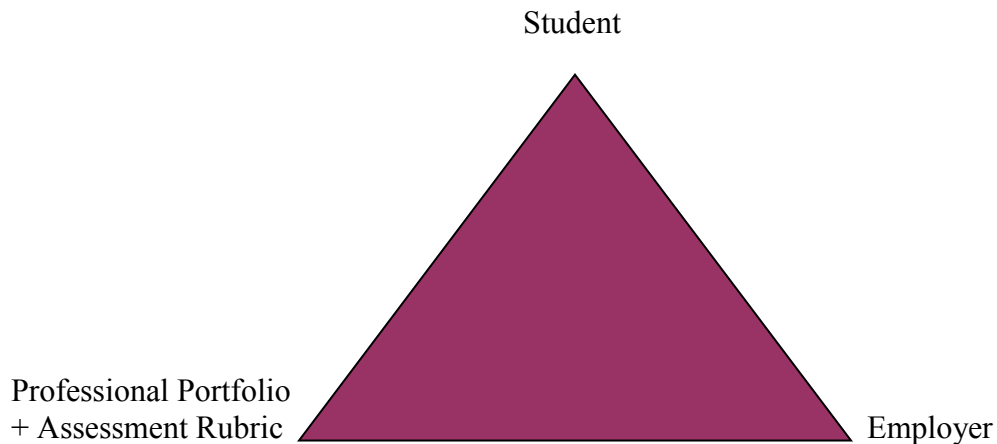
interviewed. Three of the interviewees are representatives of state educational institutions, the other four are representatives of private educational settings. The institutions have been chosen to have linguistic or pedagogical departments because the aim of my study is the suggestion for implementing the practice of compiling professional portfolios at all linguistic or pedagogical institutions in Armenia. Thus, I was interested in the opinions of the department heads from these institutions concerning the suggestion, as well as the recognition of the professional portfolio as an admission measure while hiring a teacher.

### **3.3. Data Collection Instruments**

According to Patton (1987, cited in Huerta-Macias, 2002) “reliability, or consistency, in qualitative research is often ensured through yet another means, *triangulation*. In qualitative research, triangulation refers to the combination of methodologies to strengthen a study design” (p.341). In light of this, “triangulation refers to the collection of data or information from three different sources or perspectives” (Huerta-Macias, 2002, p.341). Thus, it became necessary for me to investigate professional portfolios from different perspectives and to use three different sources while collecting the data for the study (see Figure 1, p.20). As a result, three main instruments have been used to collect the relevant data, they are:

1. student questionnaires
2. face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with potential employers
3. examination of the CTEFL student-teachers’ professional portfolios and the rubric currently being used by the faculty to evaluate the portfolios

**Figure 1: Triangulation of Data**



### **3.3.1. Questionnaires**

The data from the students has been collected by means of questionnaires distributed to the CTEFL graduate students of the academic year 2005-2006 (who compiled their portfolios by July 31, in 2006) and to the CTEFL graduate students of the academic year of 2006-2007 (who compiled their portfolios by July 31, 2007). The student questionnaires (see Appendix 2) were developed by me and consist of 12 open-ended questions in English that are aimed at revealing the students' overall attitude towards the content of the portfolios and the role that professional portfolios have played in their educational process or will play in their future careers. The questionnaires are also meant to reveal the students' opinions concerning the effect of the process of developing professional portfolios on their motivation and perceptions of autonomy while studying, as well as the impact that the professional portfolios have had on the overall efficiency of their studies. One of the questions was designed to ask the students to write any comments or suggestions that will help to improve the process of compiling professional portfolios in the CTEFL program at AUA. The last question asked the

students to evaluate the overall effect of compiling a professional portfolio on the efficiency of their studies at AUA by circling the appropriate number within the range from 1 to 10, i.e., from ‘not efficient’ to ‘highly efficient’.

Due to the fact that a year has passed since the 2005-2006 CTEFL students submitted their portfolios and graduated from the University, I have added an extra question in the student questionnaires distributed to this particular group of students to discover whether or not the professional portfolios have already assisted in their careers, that is, whether the portfolios have helped them to find a job in Armenia.

### **3.3.2. Semi-structured Interviews**

The semi-structured interviews have been conducted with the potential employers, the heads of the English departments at seven institutions, in other words, with the people who are responsible for the employment of the faculty in their institutions. The semi-structured format of an interview was chosen because it is open-ended and does not limit the responses to the borders of fixed statements. Semi-structured interviews provided the employers with the opportunity to express their ideas/attitudes concerning professional portfolios in a more detailed manner.

First, the employers had to read and sign the informed consent form (see Appendix 3), which acquainted them with the aim of the conducted research and clarified the contributing purpose of their participation. The informed consent form provided the participants with the option of remaining anonymous; however, all the participants did not wish to remain anonymous. By signing the informed consent form, the participants have also given their permission to me to record their responses with the aim of transcribing them. All the participants agreed to be recorded except for two. Another

interview was conducted on the phone. This is the reason that I can only provide the transcripts of the interviews with the four employers recorded; the data analysis of the other three respondents is based on the notes I made during the interview.

After having been exposed to some samples of professional portfolios, the prospective employers were asked to express their attitudes towards recognizing a teacher's professional portfolio as an additional measure when hiring a teacher. The study through interviews has also tried to find out potential employers' suggestions concerning the content of the professional portfolios. The list of the prepared questions had been given to the participants in advance in order to acquaint them with the up-coming interview (see Appendix 4). I have provided a list of options with the possible materials that could help the employers to express their wishes concerning the work they would like to see included in a professional portfolio by ticking in the appropriate boxes and justifying their choices by simultaneously commenting on their chosen options.

The potential employers being the heads of the English departments at linguistic or pedagogical institutions in Armenia, and people who also serve as the curriculum designers at their institutions, have been also asked to express their attitudes towards the researcher's suggestion for implementation of the professional portfolio into the curriculum of all the linguistic and pedagogical institutions in Armenia.

### **3.3.3. Examination of the Student-teachers' Professional Portfolios**

The data for the study have also included the professional portfolios submitted by the CTEFL students. The researcher has mainly been interested in the content of the portfolios in terms of the chosen works, as well as the attitudes and opinions expressed in the reflection essays that go with each section.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

The data will be analyzed qualitatively to explore the impact of professional portfolios on the students' motivation and perceptions of autonomy while studying at AUA. In addition, the transcripts of the recorded interviews (see Appendices 5, 6, 7, 8) and detailed notes will also be analyzed to reveal the recognition of the potential value of professional portfolios as an additional measure while hiring a teacher in Armenia. The reports on the data obtained will be accompanied by a simultaneous discussion of the data in the following chapter. The last chapter will also provide information on the implications and recommendations for further implementation of professional portfolios in Armenian EFL settings. The recommendations will mainly relate to my suggestion to implement the practice of compiling professional portfolios in all the linguistic or pedagogical institutions in Armenia that offer language teacher education.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

The current chapter will present the findings of the study in order to evaluate the process of implementation of the professional portfolio in the curriculum of the CTEFL program at AUA as one of the mandatory requirements for graduation. The analysis will be based on the data that was obtained through the questionnaires, interviews, and analysis of the students' professional portfolios. The data analysis will mainly try to reveal to what extent the process of compiling the professional portfolios has contributed to the development of the perceptions of autonomy and increased motivation of the CTEFL students. The presentation of the findings will be followed by a discussion of the data, which will help uncover the key issues related to the study.

#### 4.1. The Content of the Professional Portfolio

The investigation of the content of the professional portfolios submitted by the CTEFL students has revealed that it corresponds to the requirements presented in the CTEFL Professional Portfolio Evaluation Rubric (see Appendix 1) and consists mainly of 4 sections. It starts with the *reflective essay*, which tries to present what a professional portfolio is for the writer, explaining the choices of work included and the process of creating the portfolio. The second main requirement is a *CV* in English and Armenian. The next three sections titled as *Language Section*, *Theory & Practice*, and *Practical Application* are accompanied by opening summaries with justification of the chosen samples that provide information on language improvement, on the student's ability to transfer theory into practice, and to show more practical materials. Among the most

popular works included are: summaries, reaction/reflection/critique papers, tests, projects, lesson plans, student work examples, final achievements, problem-solving teaching tasks, individual/group lesson plans.

The third question in the student questionnaire (see Appendix 2, Q.3) was designed to reveal the information on what kind of writings the students of the CTEFL program have included into their portfolios, that is, whether they have included only their best works or not. All of the students have responded that they were supposed to document the progress and improvement which they achieved while studying in the CTEFL program at AUA, which is why, along with their best work, they have also included some of their less successful work as well. They added that in order to see their language improvement while studying at AUA they had to include the relatively weak work and the best ones to display that the process of development achieved the expected results, or for showing a change in teaching experience and philosophy, and how the courses at AUA have influenced an improvement in their language abilities. However, one of the students mentioned that she did not consider the work to be best based only on the instructor's grade; she has her own opinion concerning the works she considers successful. One of the students has mentioned that first she included her worst work, then the better samples, and finally those that can be considered to be the best ones. With the aim of showing progress, along with some of the work, the drafts of the papers have also been included.

The CTEFL students were supposed to include in their portfolios the work that they have done while studying in the CTEFL program, however usually the contents of professional portfolios do not restrict themselves to the work that is done only during the course. Thus, I have provided the students with the options from which they were

supposed to tick the ones that they would like to have been included in their professional portfolios that were not a part of the CTEFL course requirements (see Appendix 2, Q.2). The results are reported in Table 1, where we can see that the student-teachers have considered the following to be the most important materials to be included in the professional portfolio: recommendation letters, certificates and awards or other forms of recognition, evaluations from employers/instructors/cooperating teachers/students, evidence of extra-curricular involvement and videotapes of classroom teaching. For more detailed results you can see Table 1 which presents the options provided by the researcher and corresponding number of students who chose that particular option.

**Table 1: The results of the students' responses to Question 2.**

<b><u>The provided options by the researcher</u></b>	<b>N of Ss =20 YES</b>
Recommendation letters	10
Certificates, Awards or other recognitions	10
Evaluations from Employers/Instructors/Cooperating Teachers/ Students	10
Evidence of Extra-Curricular Involvement	10
Videotapes of classroom teaching	10
Computer disks with information relevant to your teaching	9
Student work examples	8
Academic Transcripts	7
Classroom Management Philosophy	7
Conferences/Workshops attended	7



Conference Presentations, given workshops	7
Outline of a presentation	7
Memberships in professional teaching organizations	7
Photos of Teaching Experiences	6
Evidence of Successful Teamwork	6
List and description of courses taught	5
Grant-funded projects in which you have been involved	5
Evidence that You Are a Life-Long Learner	5
Documentation of leadership experience	4
Evidence of Community Involvement	4
Campus Involvement	4

The same options, plus the papers that the CTEFL students were required to include in their portfolios have been introduced by me to the potential employers during the interviews so as we could know what the potential employers would like to see in the job applicants' portfolios. The potential employers' opinions are highly valued as they are the actual 'customers' of the 'product', that is, the examiners of the professional portfolios. The students were just required to fill in the questionnaire, and did not provide any additional comments that would justify their choice; whereas the potential employers were asked to comment simultaneously while choosing from the provided options (see Appendices 5, 6, 7, 8). Table 2 (p.28) points out the results of the interviews of potential employers and this can help us understand the differences between the students' and employers' preferences, by comparing them with the results of Table 1.

**Table 2: The results of the potential employers' responses to Question 2.**

<b><u>The provided options by the researcher</u></b>	N of Employers = 7 YES
CV/Resume	7
Lesson Plans/Teaching Activities/Tasks	7
Certificates, Awards or other recognitions	7
Recommendation letters	6
List and description of courses taught	6
Evaluations from Employers/Instructors/ <u>Cooperating Teachers/ Students</u>	6
Evidence of Extra-Curricular Involvement	6
Classroom Management Philosophy	6
Documentation of leadership experience	6
Memberships in professional teaching organizations	6
Conferences/Workshops attended	5
Grant-funded projects in which you have been involved	5
Evidence that You Are a Life-Long Learner	5
Research Papers/ Thesis	4
Academic Transcripts	4
Evidence of Successful Teamwork	4
Summaries	4
Reaction/Reflection/Critique Papers	3
Outline of a presentation	3
Videotapes of classroom teaching	3

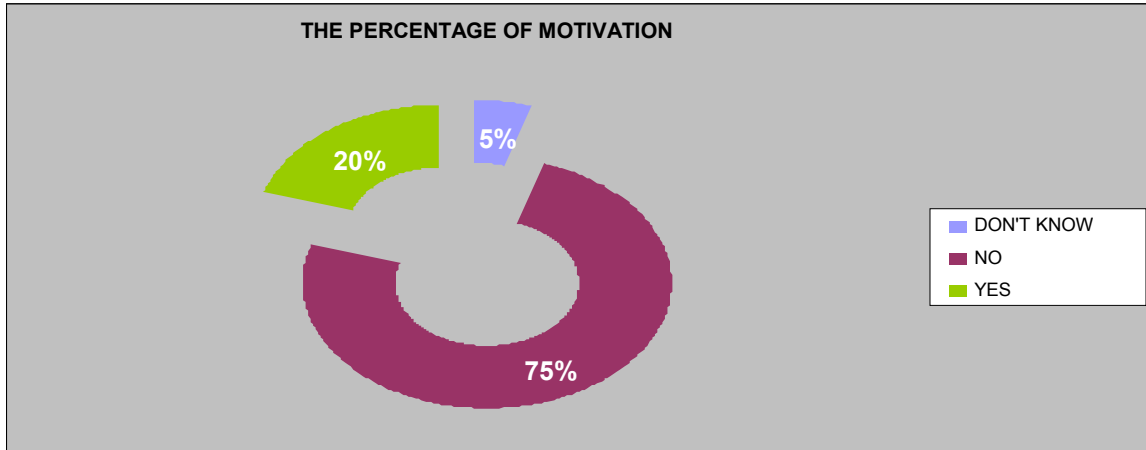
Student work examples	3
Conference Presentations, given workshops	2
Evidence of Community Involvement	2
Campus Involvement	2
Copies of the taken tests	1
Computer disks with information relevant to your teaching	1
Photos of Teaching Experiences	1

This kind of information can be very helpful for the implementers of professional portfolios in Armenian EFL settings. As was mentioned in Chapter One, I have done a mini market-research to find out what kind of information and materials are highly valued by the potential employers to take them into consideration while designing a portfolio implementation process.

#### **4.2. Professional Portfolio Effect on Motivation**

One of the questions in the student questionnaire (see Appendix 2, Q. 6) tried to reveal whether the process of compiling a professional portfolio motivated students while studying, particularly whether the awareness of the fact that some of the students' current academic writings would later be included in their professional portfolios motivated them to do their best while studying. There appeared to be a mismatch between the results obtained and my expectations; as Figure 1 (p.30) indicates, 15 (75%) out of 20 (100%) students have stated that the fact that they were required to compile the professional portfolio at the end of the academic year did not motivate them at all.

**Figure 1: Percentage of the students motivated by the professional portfolios**



The students provided different justifications for their responses, for example, that they do not learn for grades or for showing something to others, and that they learn for themselves, which, according to the explanations provided in Chapter 2, means that they are intrinsically motivated. They seem to be sure that if a person is not under the stress to show something to somebody, to compete for grades, then he/she will succeed in his/her learning process, because in that case he will work for himself/herself. The others stated that they always try to do their best in spite of anything, their inner curiosity towards the sphere under investigation; their desire to gain knowledge and to be excellent students served as an inner motive for them. The others were motivated just by the fact of graduating from the University with a high GPA and that the portfolio never consciously motivated them, some of them treated the portfolio as just another requirement for the course. There were some students who did not even know that they were required to create a portfolio at the end of the academic year, they state that they were informed too late to concentrate on the idea that their writings would later be included in their portfolios. They had no idea what a professional portfolio was and should look like, because they were the pioneers of this implementation process. This fact should caution

the implementers of this practice to remind students from time to time by giving sufficient information on what a professional portfolio is and how it can contribute to their careers later. I think this can be one of the reasons for the students to start valuing their professional portfolios. This suggestion of informing the students thoroughly on the real value of these portfolios in advance was supported by the all interviewed potential employers and they do hope that the implementation of the process in Armenian institutions will motivate the students to do their best while studying.

Almost all of the students state that there were other factors that motivated them to study; I think it was mainly the merit scholarships that students got for a high GPA. As a student at AUA, I can state that this is the most motivating factors for most students at AUA. And in this situation, if the portfolio is graded as PASS or FAIL it does not play a big role in motivating the students. However, the situation is going to change this coming year (starting from 2007), there will be no merit scholarships based on grades. Maybe in this case, professional portfolios will become greater motivating factors for the students.

Only a minority of the students, that is four (20%) students out of twenty (see Figure1, p. 30), stated that the process motivated them, and the idea of including their current writings in their portfolio was very motivating and encouraged them to do their best and one of them stated that she evaluated every piece of writing as potential material for the portfolio. It also helped her to read and evaluate every product critically and think about the possible audience for every assignment. Another interesting ‘motivating comment’ was made by one of the students who admitted that the awareness that they were going to compile a portfolio made her keep her assignments instead of throwing them away.

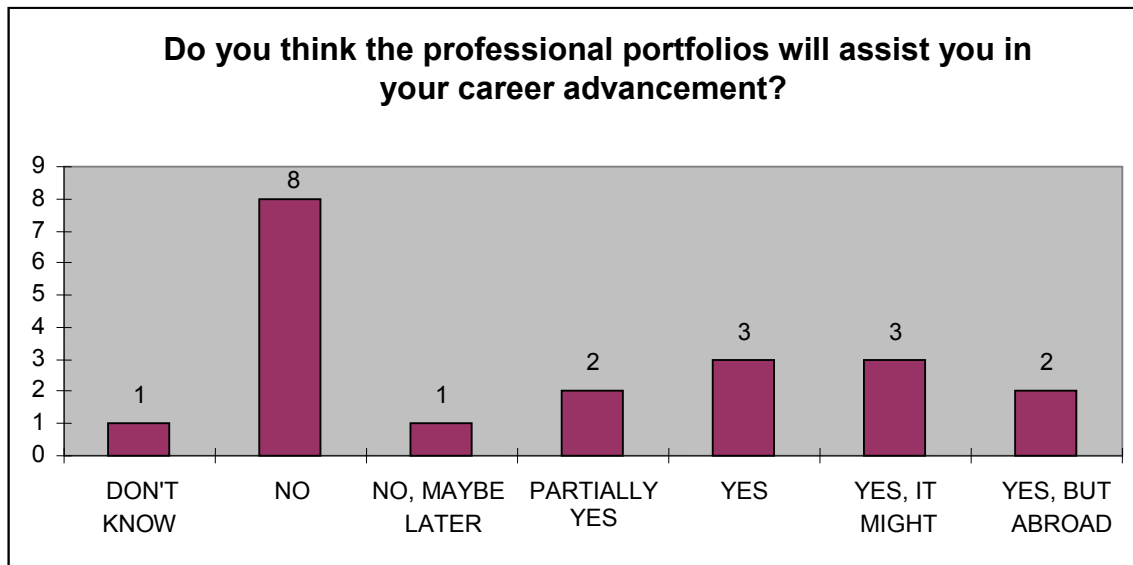
### **4.3. Professional Portfolios' Role in Career Advancement**

In spite of all the reasons provided by the students, I think the main reason for the students' not being motivated by the process of compiling professional portfolios is given in their responses to Question 8 (see Appendix 2, Q.8). The question was aimed at finding out the real value of the professional portfolio for students, that is, to what extent they believe professional portfolios can assist in their career development. Thus, the question asked the students if they thought the professional portfolios would assist them in their career advancement, that is, whether it would help them to find a job or in case they are employed, to find a better job.

As you can see in Figure 2 (p.33), most of the students, that is eight (40%) out of twenty (100%), do not believe that the professional portfolios can help them later in their career. In spite of the wide range of responses, they all sound similar and full of doubts. Only three out of twenty students firmly believed in the power of professional portfolios. The other responses were full of doubt, and even the answer YES was accompanied by the phrases like YES, IT MIGHT or YES, BUT ABROAD, or PARTIALLY YES.

All the students justify their responses by saying that the idea of the professional portfolio is new in our society, in Armenia, and very few institutions are aware of what a portfolio is and are not able to assess its contents and its philosophy, and it is not considered by the employers while hiring a teacher. Moreover, one of the students expressed the opinion that the portfolio would be viewed as a showcase. However, students hope that in a few years it might help them, when more people would be aware of the concept of a portfolio in the field of teaching language.

**Figure 2: Assistance in career advancement**



Even the people who believe that it can help them to find a job state that it really depends on an employer and his/her requirements, and some of them think that the employer would be more interested to see the teaching abilities in practice not on paper, besides it depends on other factors as well. One of the main concerns expressed by one of the students was that ‘if employment in Armenia was based on people’s professional abilities and not their relations and friends, the professional portfolio could of course be very important for our professional advancement’. However, in the present situation, she does not believe that it will be of much help to her. The other student states that people in Armenia are not introduced to correct ways of using the portfolios, while abroad the professional portfolio is one of the most important requirements; however, most of the students believe that the situation will change in the future.

I believe that this can be the main **demotivating** factor for the students for not taking their professional portfolios seriously and for not believing in its value while applying for a job. This was the main reason for my decision to collect information from

the potential employers. I have decided not to wait for ‘the future to come’, but ‘go towards it’. Instead of sitting and guessing about the potential value of these portfolios, I felt it was better to take some examples and go and ask prospective employers. Most of the students stated that in many institutions people are even not familiar with the concept of the professional portfolios; however, I believe that our task should be to inform them. That’s why I have decided to make a contribution to our Armenian EFL settings by informing the employers about the existence and value of professional portfolios, and suggest implementing this practice in other institutions as well.

After exposing the interviewed employers to some samples of the professional portfolios submitted by the CTEFL students, I wanted to know whether they were familiar with the concept of the professional portfolio (see Appendix 4, Q.3). Three out of seven employers confessed that this was the first time they had seen one and they had just got acquainted with the idea. However, it seemed very interesting to them and they felt that they should take more time and have a detailed look at the portfolios. One of the employers stated that she had become acquainted with the idea in 2000 because she was lucky to have her internship abroad; however, she has not used it in practice. The other employers stated that they had been familiar with the concept, and that they have that kind of information on their teachers kept in folders but not on an official level. After informing them of the fact that two years ago the American University of Armenia implemented the practice of compilation of English language teacher’s professional portfolios in the curriculum of the CTEFL program as one of the mandatory requirements for graduation, I wanted to know their opinion concerning this course requirement and whether they liked it or not (see Appendix 4, Q.4). All of the interviewed potential employers liked the idea very much by stating that it is an excellent idea as this type of



portfolio reveals the whole process of professional and creative work the students have done while studying. In response to my next question whether there is such a requirement at their institutions (see Appendix 4, Q. 10), (as it was mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, all the interviewed potential employers are also the heads of the English departments at different institutions) stated that there is not.

Furthermore, after informing the employers that in my research I want to suggest implementing the practice of compiling a teachers' professional portfolio as one of the mandatory graduation requirements in all the linguistic and pedagogical institutions in Armenia as well, and I want my research to contribute to this process, I asked for their opinions and attitudes concerning my suggestion (see Appendix 4, Q. 11). All the employers gave their approval to my suggestion by stating that it would be an advantage for the students to have such a folder, and it would be a very good practice for the students to be able to show all their achievements to the employers, and would contribute to their self-organization. I also wanted to gather the potential employers' opinions whether the implementation of the process would motivate the students, that is, whether the awareness of the fact that the students' current academic writings would later be included into their professional portfolios would motivate them to do their best while studying (see Appendix 4, Q.12). In addition, I also asked them whether the process of creating professional portfolios would contribute to the development of the students' perceptions of autonomy, in other words, whether the process of the portfolio writing would help them to become more autonomous students (see Appendix 4, Q. 13). All the heads of the English departments appeared to be sure that it would contribute both to the rise of motivation and to perceptions of autonomy. However, some of them mentioned that it is very hard to predict something if you deal with different people, but they think

that from the logical point of view, it should assist. However, the employers are sure that students will become more aware of what they are doing and why, which is part of the autonomy, and if they would feel responsible for the kind of works that they are doing, this would affect and raise their perceptions of autonomy. A portfolio is one of the steps that can contribute to the whole process. The employers also agreed with my assumption that the process of the implementation of a teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the linguistic and pedagogical institutions in Armenia would have a positive effect on the overall efficiency of the educational process.

After talking to the prospective employers, I came to the conclusion that we first need to inform people about the existence of something rather than simply say that it is not an accepted practice in our country. Also, it should be the mission of any student who comes to a job interview with a portfolio to be able to inform a prospective employer what the purpose of the portfolio is.

From now on, I will try to report the results of the students' responses to the questionnaires by comparing them with the results of the responses obtained while interviewing the potential employers. This can help us see 'the picture' more convincingly by presenting the points of views from both sides (as it was mentioned in Chapter One), that is, from the perspective of 'the producers of the product' called professional portfolios – students, and the 'potential customers' of the product – employers.

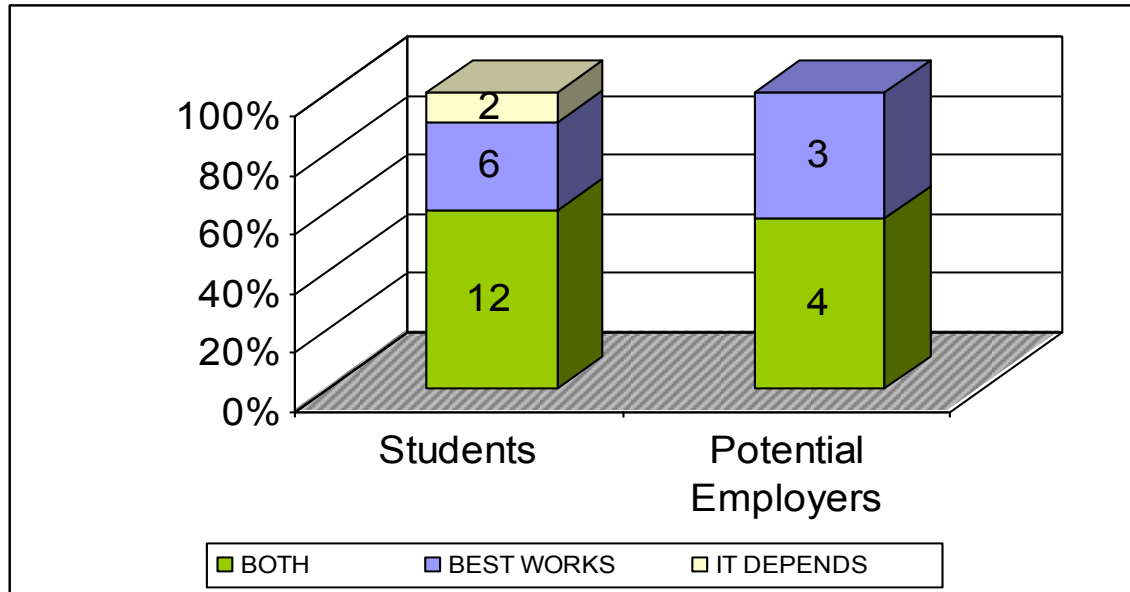
According to the requirements of the CTEFL program, students are supposed to show their progress; that is why they had to include their less successful work as well as their most successful ones, in some cases including even the drafts of their work. However, after graduation student-teachers are free to change the content of their

portfolios. Thus, my next question was meant to find out whether the students would include only their best work in their portfolios before showing them to potential employers or if they would include their less successful works as well (see Appendix 2, Q.4). I asked the same kind of question of the employers to find out what kind of work they would prefer to see in the job applicants' portfolios (see Appendix 4, Q.8). The results of the obtained data are presented in Figure 3 (p.38), which shows that the great majority of the students, 12 (60%) out of 20 (100%) students, stated that they would include both the best and the less successful works as well before showing their portfolios to their potential employers, and most of the potential employers, four out of seven, preferred seeing both kinds of work as well.

The six students out of twenty, who stated that they will include only the best works in their portfolios justify their answers by saying that potential employers are more interested in seeing 'who the person is as a professional now, rather than who she/he was before, or how she/he has changed'. One other student expressed the opinion that the potential employer will not be interested in the progress during the study period, especially in the Armenian reality where many people do not value progress in process; the employer would more be interested in the 'final' result; whether the person is competent or proficient in the field or not, and whether he/she has the required skills to do the work successfully.

The justification of the majority of the students who stated that they would include both kinds of work, is that they want their employers to see the progress they made in their language and professional abilities. One of the students expressed an interesting idea: she wants to show the progress with the aim of proving to her potential employers that she is able to learn whatever is required of her in a short period of time.

**Figure 3: Preference of the best or less successful works**



The same justification was given by another student who agreed that, based on her own 12-year experience; she has come to believe that every employer, first of all, is interested in the ability of the worker to progress and to gain additional skills in a possibly short period of time. According to the opinion expressed by one of the students, the employer should see her flexibility and willingness to seek better ways of teaching.

Only two (10%) students out of twenty (100%), reported that it depends on the employer and his/her requirements. If the employer needs to see only the professionalism and skillfulness of the applicant, she would demonstrate only her best work, but if some indication of training is required in order to meet the demands of the employer, she would show her less successful work as well to prove that she would proceed through the training successfully and would definitely make progress.

The results of the responses given not only by the students but also by the potential employers to this question did not correspond to my expectations, because I strongly believed that everybody would state that the employers are interested only in

seeing the best work. However, most of the employers themselves, four out of seven, confirmed that they would like to see both kinds of work. In spite of the fact that one of the employers cautioned that nobody includes the unsuccessful work in the portfolio, she would be interested in seeing both kinds of work because she needs to know not only the strong points of the employee but also the weak ones, and the employers want to know if the person is able to move forward or not. One of the employers supporting the opposite point of view, that is, one of the three out of four employers who are not interested in seeing the relatively weak work, expressed the opinion that taking into consideration the fact that a person isn't born with the knowledge of a language and if you know something then you have learnt it, she wouldn't be interested in the less successful works of the job applicant.

#### 4.4. Age and Teaching Experience of the CTEFL Students

The twenty students participating in the study represent the population of the CTEFL students, and based on the personal information provided by the questionnaires, we can conclude that the age and teaching experience of the students studying in the CTEFL program at AUA is quite varied (see Table 3), ranging from 0 to 19 years, that is, from the experienced teachers to the teachers with no teaching experience at all, and with an age range from 22 – 45 years.

**TABLE 3: Age and Teaching experience of the CTEFL students**

Age of the students in years				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
AGE	20	22	45	28.70
Valid N (listwise)	20			

**Teaching Experience in Years**

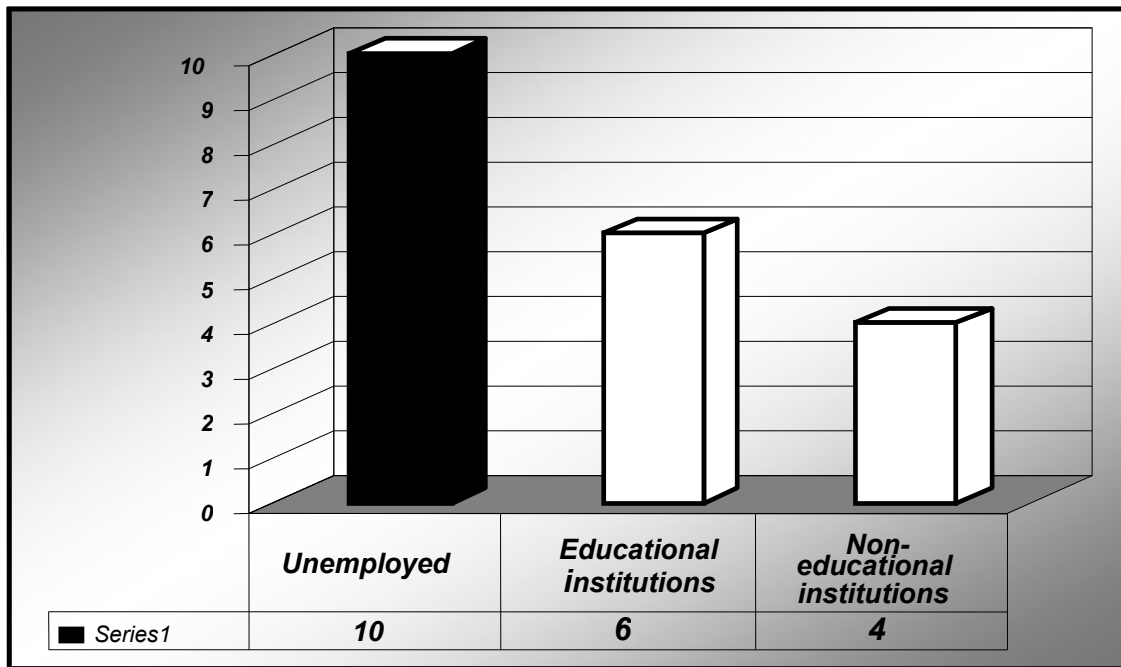
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
TEACHEXP	20	0	19	3.80
Valid N (listwise)	20			

Additionally, Figure 4 (p.41) reports on the fact that the majority of the students, 10 out of 20 students, are unemployed. Four of them work in non-educational institutions and only six teach the English language. Thus, we can conclude that potential employers' opinions may be quite interesting and valuable for their later career, and should motivate them if it did not do it before.

To my question asking whether the employers think that the portfolios are especially important while hiring beginning / pre-service teachers, or that they are equally important for experienced / in-service teachers, the majority of them stated that it is equally important for both groups since pre-service teachers can show the abilities they have, while the experienced teacher shows the work she has done throughout the years. However, some of the employers think that it is more valuable for the pre-service teachers, as there is no other way of getting information about a beginner teacher such as from previous employers.

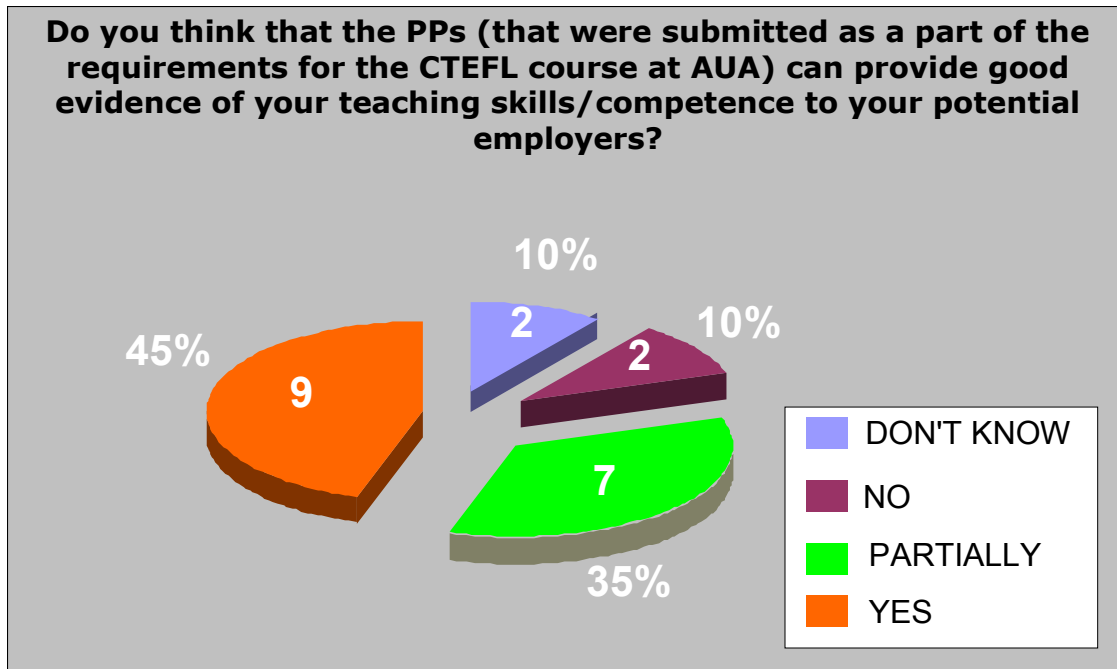
I used the other question to explain the students' attitudes towards their portfolios by asking them whether they think the professional portfolios that were submitted as a part of the requirements for the CTEFL course at AUA can provide good evidence of their teaching skills/competence to potential employers (see Appendix 2, Q. 5).

**Figure 4: The Employment of the CTEFL students**



The results of the responses are reported in Figure 5 (p.42), which illustrates that nine out of twenty students believe in the value of their portfolios as being representatives of their teaching abilities, while seven out of twenty students stated that they believe in them partially and two students had difficulties deciding and only two of them did not believe in their portfolios' value. The potential employers stated that the CTEFL portfolio will give them the needed information on the applicant; however, they will not base their final decision only on the contents of the portfolio. All of the employers' value interviews as the main source of getting information about the applicant, but the applicant will benefit if she/he has a presentable portfolio, which in their opinion can provide them with topics for discussion during the interview.

**Figure 5:**

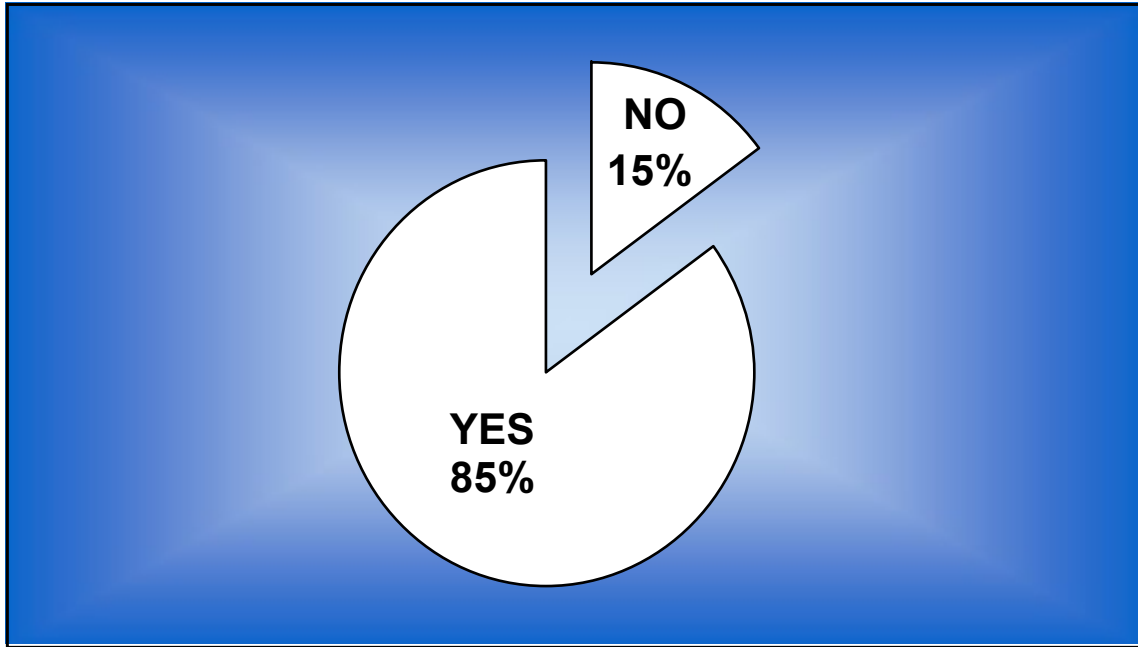


#### **4.5. Autonomy Development**

Question 7 (see Appendix 2, Q.7) was meant to find out students' opinions on whether the process of creating the portfolio has contributed to the development of their perceptions of autonomy; in other words, whether the process of compiling the portfolio has helped them to become more autonomous students. The results are reported in Figure 6 (p.43), where you can see that 17 out of 20 students, reported that the portfolio compilation process has really contributed to their perceptions of autonomy, because they were the people responsible for presenting all the work they have done during the course, and they had to decide what kind of work to include that will best present their abilities and progress in language teaching.

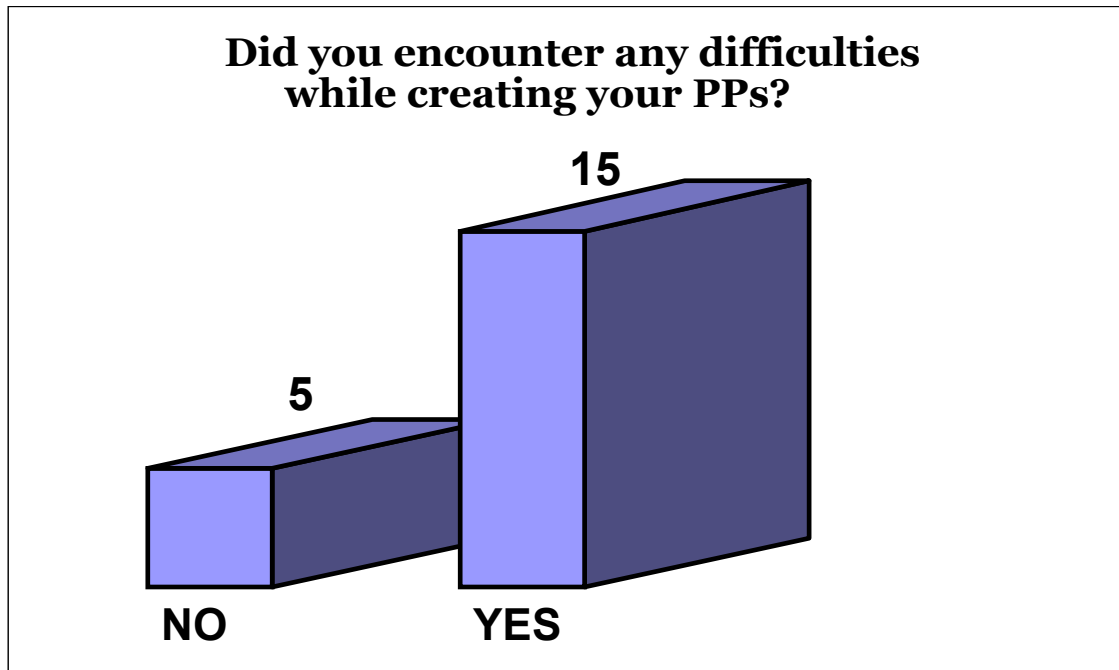
**Figure 6: Contribution to Autonomy**





Question 9 (see Appendix 2, Q.9) is meant to reveal whether the students encountered any difficulties while compiling their portfolios, and the results in Figure 7 (p.44) shows that 15 out of 20 students had encountered difficulties, but as it is explained in the questionnaires, the main difficulty was in the selection of the materials for the proper sections, however they managed to overcome this difficulty by consulting with their instructors.

**Figure 7: Difficulties Encountered**



#### **4.6. The Efficacy of the Professional Portfolios on the Educational Process**

At the end of the questionnaire I asked the students to evaluate the overall effect of compiling a professional portfolio on the efficiency of their studies at AUA by circling the appropriate number within the range from 1 to 10, i.e., from ‘not efficient’ to ‘highly efficient’. The results are reported in Table 4 (p.45), where you can see that the minimum grade was 3, the maximum 10, with the mean of 7.95 which is very close to 8. I believe that this figure speaks for itself, especially if we take into consideration the fact that all of the students gave a positive response to the question asking whether they would advise other institutions to implement the practice of developing professional portfolios as one of the mandatory graduation requirements in language education programs.

**Table 4: The efficacy of PP on the educational process**

**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
QUEST12	20	3	10	7.95
Valid N (listwise)	20			

Despite the fact that results indicate that professional portfolios did not motivate the CTEFL students, it has definitely contributed to the development of the students' perceptions of autonomy. The positive feedback from the employers have made me think that professional portfolios will gain much popularity in the near future; as a result, they will be considered as one of the main valuable tools in the recruitment process. The summary of the overall findings will be presented in the following chapter, along with recommendations and implications for the successful implementation of professional portfolios in educational institutions.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1. Summary of the Findings**

As stated throughout the study starting from Chapter One, this research was designed to evaluate the efficacy of implementing teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the CTEFL program at AUA and to investigate its later contributive role to a student's career as an English teacher in Armenia. The main focus of the study was to reveal whether or not the professional portfolios motivated the students and to what extent they have contributed to the development of the students' perceptions of autonomy while studying at AUA.

The results presented in Chapter 4 make me think that the process of the implementation of the professional portfolios in the CTEFL program at AUA has given positive results to the educational efficacy of the study program and contributed to the development of the students' perceptions of autonomy. In spite of the fact that it did not raise the motivation of the students while studying mainly because of the disbelief of the students that the portfolios would contribute to their career advancement, the potential employers' opinions made me believe that it would soon be recognized as a highly-valued assessment factor by most of them, which will lead to the implementation of the practice in all the institutions devoted to teacher education in Armenia.

#### **5.2. Limitations of the Research**

A number of limitations have emerged while conducting the current research.

- One of the limitations is the number of the students participating in the study.

Despite the fact that AUA is the only institution where this practice was implemented and only two groups of students have compiled the professional portfolios, there should have been 24 students, but only 20 of them participated in the study. This makes us assume that the results might be somewhat different if all the students from both groups had participated in the research. However, this is a pilot project and the number of participants does not allow generalization to be made in relation to all the tertiary institutions in Armenia.

- The small number of the potential employers interviewed (7) also does not reflect the attitudes/opinions of all the potential employers in Armenia. Besides, 3 out of 4 employers did not agree to be recorded and this fact might also affect the quality of the feedback obtained.
- The scope and time of the work did not allow me to analyze the data obtained in reference to many other questions that could have been raised in further research.
- The Professional Portfolio is a completely new concept in the Armenian EFL setting, and no previous research had been conducted in this area before. Thus, the findings of the study might also be affected by the novelty of the phenomenon.
- The students have not been interviewed; they have only been asked to fill in the questionnaires. The instructors who were supervising or teaching the students were not included in the list of the participants, which means that we have no feedback from them. However, had they been included this might have raised other interesting issues.

### **5.3. Suggestions for Further Research**

My first suggestion for further research would be to set up a new study on this topic in a few years and over a longer period of the professional portfolio's use in practice. This will help the researcher to get more information from different institutions where this practice will hopefully be implemented in the near future, and as a result more students and teachers will be able to participate in the research. A longer period of time will give more information on the evaluation of the overall effect of the professional portfolios on the efficiency of teacher education programs. By that time professional portfolios will hopefully be recognized by employers, and the next stage of research will investigate to what extent the employers are able to evaluate the contents of the portfolios while coming to hiring decisions, and to what extent this fact will motivate the student-teachers. The information provided in the study concerning the mini-market research relating to what kind of materials the employers are most interested in can also be extended and the information from the transcripts may also be used as a source for data for further research.

The CTEFL program is a graduate program, where students are more mature; it might also be advisable to carry out another research project with students at the undergraduate level with a wider implementation of professional portfolios across other educational levels.

### **5. 4. Significance of the Study**

The study shows the effectiveness of the implementation of the professional language teacher's portfolio into the Armenian teaching/learning context. The

implementation of the development of a language teacher's professional portfolio as a mandatory requirement for the completion of studies in the CTEFL course at AUA will hopefully serve as a model for other pre-service teacher education institutions to incorporate this practice into their curriculum as well. This study may also serve as a guide for prospective employers to be introduced to and encouraged to recognize language teachers' professional portfolios as an assessment measure, which, in its turn, will motivate students and teachers to develop their own professional portfolios.

### **5.5. Suggestions and Recommendations for the Implementation of Professional Portfolio**

While giving the approval for the suggestion of implementing the practice of the compilation of the professional portfolios in all the linguistic and pedagogical institutions in Armenia, the employers have expressed some doubts about whether the compilation of the professional portfolios should be included as a mandatory requirement in the curriculum as they think that it should be left up to the applicant to compile it or not. One of the employers thinks that if it becomes a mandatory practice then special places or offices will appear in Armenia that will specialize in the compilation of the professional portfolios as it happens with many research and diploma papers. According to her, these offices will specialize in the compilation, organization and design of the papers in such a way that would be interesting and attractive for the employer to see the actual preparation of the applicant. I am opposed to this point of view and want to mention that even if such offices appear, first of all, 1) potential employers should not be interested only in the design of the portfolio, and 2) if the person has done so much work, it would not be such a difficult task for him/her to compile and organize it in the proper way.

The only difficulty for the students (according to one of the employers and the results of the study provided in Chapter 4) might lie in the selection of the materials, which requires information about the job market, that is, a marketing study which will provide the information on what the employers want to see in the portfolios, which I have tried to do to some extent (at least within the limited scope of my work). As it relates to the content in terms of being plagiarized or false, the employer can uncover the truth while interviewing the applicant; the interview can be on the topics of the presented work and it would help the employers to know whether the job applicant is aware of the content of the papers included and to what extent. By the way, some of the potential employers valued the professional portfolios also in terms of the topics that they provide them for interviewing the applicants.

While asking for the suggestions concerning the implementation process, the employers expressed the opinion that different training courses should first be organized for the teachers. Then, the idea and value of the professional portfolios should be presented to the students by way of organizing presentations, training sessions where they would be exposed to different kinds of samples. These sessions will help to teach the students the necessary skills for organizing their papers, as well as designing them in impressive and attractive ways. We should also be aware of and provide our students with the information on what kinds of work are required by the employers and on what skills and abilities employers are most interested in. All the employers stated that they are open to training sessions, as they would agree to implement the practice in their institutions. The employers, who are the heads or the chairs in different institutions, agreed with my recommendation that our students should be prepared while graduating to enter the job market with some valuable presentable material in hand to be able to present



themselves. This practice is valuable for any profession, thus it can be implemented in all the curricula of different departments at different institutions. However, the employers stated that the process should start at a higher level, at the ministry level, because first of all this should be accepted as a mandatory requirement at the ministry level and should be included in the curriculum. Some of the employers think that maybe in the beginning it will be hard to implement this practice, as whatever is new is really hard to start. However, as soon as we have started it, then it would turn into an easier process. They seem to be sure that if we sustain the notion of the professional portfolio, it will become something indispensable in the organization of institutional life in the near future.

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**APPENDIX 1**

**American University of Armenia**

**CTEFL PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO EVALUATION FORM**

**Professional Portfolio Check List:**

1. Title Page + (Photo: Optional)
2. Reflective Essay
3. 2 CVs: Armenian & English
4. Language Improvements Summary with Evidence
5. Theory & Practice Application Summary with Evidence
6. Practical Application Summary with Evidence

	5	4	3	2	1
<p><b><u>2. Reflective Essay</u></b>                      The Essay should be a reflection of what the portfolio represents to you, explaining the choices of work included and the process of creating the portfolio and its entries. (2 pages, 1.5 spaced)</p> <p>The essay will be assessed based on your ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self evaluate</li> <li>• identify your strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>• discuss improvements made</li> </ul>					
<p><b><u>3. Curriculum Vitae (CV) or Resume</u></b>                      Armenian CV                      English CV</p>			Pass	Fail	
<p><b><u>4. Language Section</u></b>                      Opening summary (½ page) with explanation of choices: Choose materials that illustrate language improvement, include entries from beginning to the end of course with multiple drafts when applicable.</p>			Pass	Fail	
<p><b><u>5. Theory &amp; Practice</u></b>                      Opening summary (½ page) with explanation of choices: Explain how appreciation of theoretical concepts has helped during practicum and in your teaching, giving examples of how you have transferred the theory into practice.</p>			Pass	Fail	
<p><b><u>6. Practical Application</u></b>                      Opening summary (½ page) with explanation of choices: Include and discuss your materials chosen and outcomes as well as the different ways of organizing and learning.</p>			Pass	Fail	
<p><b><u>Overall Professional Portfolio Assessment</u></b></p>			Pass	Fail	

Reader 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Reader 2 \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 2

### STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear CTEFL students, I would really appreciate it if you could find some time to fill in this questionnaire. Your detailed responses will be very valuable for my MA research study as its main purpose is to give an overall evaluation of the implementation of a teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the CTEFL program at AUA, as well as its later contribution to a pre-service or in-service teacher's career in Armenia.

Thanks in advance for cooperation!

*In case the provided space is not enough, use the back of the paper by indicating the number of the question.*

#### **Personal Information**

Name: (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

First

Last

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Years (months) of teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_

The institution you currently work in: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. What does your teacher's professional portfolio that was submitted as a part of the requirements for the CTEFL course at AUA consist of?**

**2. What other work would you like to have included into your professional portfolio that was not a part of the CTEFL course requirements? Tick the items you would find reasonable to include. You can provide your own options as well.**

- Recommendation Letters
- Certificates & Awards or other recognitions
- Academic Transcripts
- Documentation of Leadership Experience

- Outline of a Presentation
- Computer Disks with the information relevant to your teaching
- Evaluations from Employers/ Instructors/ Cooperating Teachers/Students
- Evidence of Extra-Curricular Involvement
- Photos of Teaching Experiences
- Videotapes of classroom teaching
- Student work examples
- Classroom Management Philosophy
- Conferences/Workshops attended
- Conference Presentations, given workshops
- List and description of courses taught
- Grant-funded projects in which you have been involved
- Memberships in professional teaching organizations
- Evidence of Community Involvement
- Evidence of Successful Teamwork
- Evidence that You Are a Life-Long Learner
- Campus Involvement

**3. Have you included only your best works in your professional portfolio? If Yes, why? If No, why not?**

**4. Will you include only your best works in your professional portfolio before showing it to your potential employers? or Will you include your less successful works as well to show your progress? Give reasons.**

--

**5. Do you think that professional portfolios that were submitted as a part of the requirements for the CTEFL course at AUA can provide good evidence of your teaching skills/competence to your potential employers? Justify your answer.**

--

**6. Did the awareness of the fact that your current academic writings would later be included in your professional portfolio motivate you to do your best while studying at AUA? Give reasons for your answer.**

--

**7. Has the process of creating the portfolio contributed to the development of your perceptions of autonomy? Has the process of the portfolio writing helped you to become a more autonomous student? If YES, how? If No, why not?**

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**8. Do you think the professional portfolios will assist you in your career advancement? Will it help you to find a job or in case you are employed, to find a better job? If NO, why not?**

--

**9. Did you encounter any difficulties while creating your professional portfolio? If YES, what was it and how have you managed to overcome it?**

--

**10. Would you advise other institutions to implement the practice of developing professional portfolios as one of the mandatory graduation requirements? If YES, what would you mention as the main advantages of creating a professional portfolio?**

--

**11. What changes would you suggest be made for the improvement of the process of developing professional portfolios at the CTEFL program at AUA?**

**12. How will you evaluate the overall effect of compiling a professional portfolio on the efficiency of your studies at AUA? Circle the appropriate one within the range from 1 to 10, i.e. , from ‘not efficient’ to ‘highly efficient’.**

<b>Not efficient</b>											<b>Highly efficient</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	

**Add further comments if you want.**

# Informed Consent

American University of Armenia  
Department of English Programs



## Information for People Who Take Part in Research Studies

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The following information is being presented to help you decide whether or not you want to take part in a minimal risk research study. Please read this carefully. If you do not understand anything, ask the person in charge of the study.

### General Information about the Research Study

The main purpose of this research study is to give an overall evaluation of the implementation of an English language teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the CTEFL program at AUA, as well as, of its later contribution role to a pre-service or in-service teacher's career in Armenia.

You are being asked to participate because the study also tries to find out potential employers' attitudes towards recognizing a teacher's professional portfolio as an admission measure while hiring a language teacher. The researcher is also interested in your ideas/attitudes concerning the suggestion for implementing the practice of compiling a language teacher's professional portfolio into the curriculum of all the linguistic or pedagogical institutions in Armenia.

### Confidentiality of Your Records

The results of this study may be published. However, your privacy and research records will be kept confidential at your option.

- I wish to remain anonymous
- I do not wish to remain anonymous

### Consent to Take Part in This Research Study

By signing this form I certify that:

- I have fully read the informed consent form describing this research project.
- I have had the opportunity to question the person in charge of this research and have received satisfactory answers.
- I agree to participate in this research by giving permission to the researcher to audiotape and use my responses in the research project outlined in this form, under the conditions indicated in it.
- I have been given a copy of this informed consent form.

The name of the educational institution: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

If willing, please provide your e-mail address and telephone number:

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### Contacts:

If you have any questions about this research study later, please feel free to contact the researcher:

**Liana Grigoryan.** Telephone numbers: home: (010) 239206, mobile: (091) 358549.

## APPENDIX 4

### Interview Questions for Potential Employers

1. What are the main criteria that you take into consideration while hiring a teacher?
  2. What can serve as the best proof for the teacher's teaching abilities?  
What can provide you with the 'full professional portrait' of a language teacher?
  3. Are you familiar with the concept of a Language Teacher's Professional Portfolio?
  4. Two years ago the American University of Armenia has implemented the English language teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the CTEFL program as one of the mandatory requirements for graduation. Here are some samples of the CTEFL students' professional portfolios. What do you think about this course requirement? Do you like this idea or not?
  5. Do you think that professional portfolios that were submitted as a part of the requirements for the CTEFL course at AUA can provide good evidence of the teacher's teaching skills/competence to you and/or other potential employers?
  6. Will you hire a teacher based only on the content of a teacher's professional portfolio? Can a professional portfolio serve as the only basis for your final decision while hiring a teacher?
  7. What would you like teachers to include into their professional portfolios?  
Tick the ones you would find desirable. You can provide your own options as well.
- Recommendation Letters
  - CV/Resume
  - Certificates & Awards or other recognitions
  - Academic Transcripts
  - Summaries
  - Research Papers/Thesis
  - Reaction/Reflection/Critique Papers
  - Lesson Plans/ Teaching Activities/Tasks
  - Copies of the taken tests
  - Documentation of Leadership Experience
  - Outline of a Presentation
  - Computer Disks with the information relevant to your teaching
  - Evaluations from Employers/ Instructors/ Cooperating Teachers/Students
  - Evidence of Extra-Curricular Involvement
  - Photos of Teaching Experiences
  - Videotapes of classroom teaching
  - Student work examples
  - Classroom Management Philosophy

- Conferences/Workshops attended**
  - Conference Presentations, given workshops**
  - List and description of courses taught**
  - Grant-funded projects in which you have been involved**
  - Memberships in professional teaching organizations**
  - Evidence of Community Involvement**
  - Evidence of Successful Teamwork**
  - Evidence that You Are a Life-Long Learner**
  - Campus Involvement**
- 8. Being a potential employer, would you prefer seeing only the best work in a teacher's professional portfolio or you would prefer seeing the less successful work as well to see the progress and achievements of the applicant over time?**
  - 9. Do you think PP-s are especially important while hiring beginning/pre-service teachers, or are they equally important for experienced/in-service teachers as well?**
  - 10. Is there such a requirement for the students of linguistic or pedagogical departments at your institution?**
  - 11. In my research, I want to suggest implementing the practice of compiling a teachers' professional portfolio as one of the mandatory graduation requirements in other linguistic and pedagogical institutions in Armenia as well. What is your opinion/attitude concerning my suggestion?**
  - 12. In your opinion, would the awareness of the fact that the students' current academic writings would later be included into their professional portfolios motivate them to do their best while studying?**
  - 13. Would the process of creating professional portfolios contribute to the development of the students' perceptions of autonomy? Would the process of the portfolio writing help them to become more autonomous students? If YES, how? If No, why not?**
  - 14. Would the process of the implementation of a teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the linguistic and pedagogical institutions in Armenia have positive effects on the overall efficiency of the educational process?**
  - 15. What else would you like to mention as the main advantages or disadvantages of creating a professional portfolio while still being a student?**
  - 16. Do you have any suggestions concerning the implementation of this process?**

## APPENDIX 5

### Transcript of Interview 1

**Institution: Yerevan State University**

**Interviewee: Seda Gasparyan**

Note: The following transcript of the interview is a faithful reproduction of the dialog transactions featured in my interview. In order to protect the authenticity of the interviewees' responses, I have presented them without any revision/modification.

#### **1. What are the main criteria that you take into consideration while hiring a teacher?**

Interviewee: I must confess that this is not a very easy question to answer still from time to time I have this opportunity of hiring a teacher for university teaching and probably so far I have been guided by my professional intuition and when you talk to the person who is applying for the course in this talk if you have experience more or less you can understand the level of language skills, the level of speaking skills which in my case when it is a matter of teaching in an English department is very important if you can't freely, fluently speak English then you can't teach in the English department.

#### **2. What can serve as the best proof for the teacher's teaching abilities? What kind of documentation or ...?**

Interviewee: I don't think documentation matters, because teaching abilities are comprised of so many different aspects, you know, I mean, it is just not one thing you discover in your applicants and you decide that he or she is very good and you suppose that he/she will be very successful in teaching.

Researcher: So you base your decision mainly on the interview?

Interviewee: Yes.

Researcher: And you don't require any kind of documentation?

Interviewee: Of course, you look into the marks or whatever you call them, an academic transcript, you look into that but sometimes it doesn't give you the objective picture so you have to talk to the person, to discuss certain things with him, discuss questions connected with the procedure of a lesson, or maybe try to scratch the surface of his or her understanding of the students' psychology, to what extent is he able to deal with a younger generation. This is important, some of them may be very very good at, I mean, the language competence will... it's not an easy task to deal with people, especially with the younger generation.

**3. Are you familiar with the concept of a Language Teacher's Professional Portfolio?**

Interviewee: I just got acquainted.

**4. Two years ago American University of Armenia has implemented English language teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the CTEFL program as one of the mandatory requirements for graduation. Here are some samples of the CTEFL students' professional portfolios. What do you think about this course requirement? Do you like this idea or not?**

Interviewee: It's not a bad idea.

**5. Do you think that professional portfolios that were submitted as a part of the requirements for the CTEFL course at AUA can provide much evidence of the teacher's teaching skills/competence to you and/or other potential employers?**

Interviewee: You know, I think this will to a certain extent facilitate this process, help the employer to learn more about the person if it's objective, I can't keep repeating this, it is objective, first of all I think the person who is compiling something like this portfolio must be able to behave objectively, must be able to estimate his or her skills, competence, abilities, etc. more or less objectively. I am not speaking about absolute objectivity because this is impossible, because wherever a human being were, together with objective, possible objective, he is subjective as well, so I think this is a good thing and I think it will give a good chance to learn more about the applicant.

Researcher: For example, sometimes when you announce that there is a vacancy for a teacher, many people come to you and you don't have time to interview all of them, so they can submit their professional portfolios which will give you much information and you can choose a short limited number of people to interview. Do you think it can help you in this way?

Interviewee: Yes, I think it will, though I don't think this is 100% reliable, I don't think it will be 100%

Researcher: However, it can serve as a contributing factor?

Interviewee: Yes, it will make things much easier.

**6. Will you hire a teacher based only on the content of a teacher's professional portfolio? Can a professional portfolio serve as the only basis for your final decision while hiring a teacher?**

Interviewee: No, I think eye contact explains a lot, you look into the applicant's eyes, you follow the reaction, you listen to his judgment, follow his judgment and this is important plus the information.

Of course, if he can make a summary of a piece of writing, scientific writing or any subjects that's a very good thing, because especially in the sphere of higher education, this becomes an important component of your...

Researcher: You should know if the teacher has the skills to teach the students, if you don't know, if the teacher doesn't have these skills, how can he teach then? Shall the people or the applicant benefit more if he has a professional portfolio than the one who doesn't have that one?

Interviewee: I think he will, he will.

**7. What would you like teachers to include into their professional portfolios? Tick the ones you would find desirable to be seen and comment simultaneously while ticking. You can provide your own options as well.**

**Recommendation Letters** – that's not bad, after all you will learn what other people think of this person, how, in what way, to what extent they evaluate this person

Researcher: So you are interested in their opinions?

Interviewee: Yes

**CV/Resume** – this is also very good because in a summarized way it will give you the picture of the work this person has had before going into details

**Certificates & Awards or other recognitions** – yeah, I'll tick it, it's not bad

**Academic Transcripts** – shall I be frank? No, I shan't be very much interested because in order to consider the academic transcript reliable, you must be sure that everything in this world is objective

Researcher: By the way, this professional portfolio can give you much information whether the grades have been objective or not.

Interviewee: Yes, ok.

**Summaries** – are not bad

**Research Papers/Thesis** – are very good, especially as I mentioned in the sphere of higher education or in general, by the way, it is never an extra thing even for a school teacher, because if you are able to carry out a research, let it be small, but you are able to analyze things in your mind, then it means that you will be able to analyze whatever goes on with your classroom and with your pupils and... in many ways

Researcher: ...to reflect on any process.

**Reaction/Reflection/Critique Papers** – Yes, of course.

**Lesson Plans/ Teaching Activities/Tasks** - this is a good thing to show in what way the person understands the procedure or what kind of lessons he has designed.



- ☑ **Copies of the taken tests** – all right
- ☑ **Documentation of Leadership Experience** – it's not extra
- ☑ **Outline of a Presentation** – yes, although I must tell you that if we speak about the oral presentation then we have to look into a video to see how he has presented, because if it is just something written on a sheet of paper....  
Researcher: ...but it can give you the information on what kind of topic he/she was interested in.  
Interviewee: OK.
- ☑ **Computer Disks with the information relevant to your teaching**  
Researcher: Maybe here you can see the actual recorded presentation, or the activities the teacher is using with his/ students  
Interviewee: That's right
- ☑ **Evaluations from Employers/ Instructors/ Cooperating Teachers/Students** – yes
- ☑ **Evidence of Extra-Curricular Involvement** – this is important to know what else can the person do, what else he is interested in, this also explains a lot...  
Researcher: ...or to what extent he is interested in his profession, if someone is doing some extra-curricular work it means that she/he is really involved in...  
Interviewee: ...that she/he is a real teacher, and he really likes this young generation whatever age they may be.
- ☑ **Photos of Teaching Experiences** – very good, I like photos
- ☑ **Videotapes of classroom teaching** – of course, that's good
- ☑ **Student work examples** – I don't mind.... but you know instead of this once we had this by the way, I could just invite the person into a probing class, probation class, to one class period even if the class is not known to him and see how he/she behaves, why not?  
Researcher: ..but what if it affects on this teacher's performance because this will be the first time maybe you should give some extra time as well, to give some time to...  
Interviewee: You know you need time to prepare, but you don't need time to show what you have inside, if you are born a teacher then you will show it in one way or another, it doesn't matter whether you discuss a specific material or whatever you can just talk, you can just communicate and this will show a lot.
- ☑ **Classroom Management Philosophy**
- ☑ **Conferences/Workshops attended** - good information
- ☑ **Conference Presentations, given workshops** – good information
- ☑ **List and description of courses taught** – of course
- ☑ **Grant-funded projects in which you have been involved**

- ☑ **Memberships in professional teaching organizations** – this is additional information, but it can't be considered to be irrelevant
- ☑ **Evidence of Community Involvement**
- ☑ **Evidence of Successful Teamwork**
- ☑ **Evidence that You Are a Life-Long Learner** – yes, this is the most important thing
- ☑ **Campus Involvement**

**8. Being a potential employer, would you prefer seeing only the best works in a teacher's professional portfolio or you would prefer seeing the less successful works as well to see the progress and achievements of the applicant over time?**

Interviewee: I think it doesn't matter what I would like to see, it all depends on the person who prepares his/her portfolio...

Researcher: I am doing a market research on what kind of works potential employers are interested in, because we are producing the 'products', and you are the people who are interested in this product, that's why we want to find out what kind of products our 'customers' are interested in.

Interviewee: In any... of course, you have to get acquainted with the person, his personality, his work, his philosophy, his skills, his competence, everything of course, of course you would like to see not only the successful works, not only good results, but any results.

Researcher: I am asking because one of the requirements while compiling a portfolio at AUA is to show the process, the students were supposed to include in their portfolios not only the best works but also the less successful works so as the people could see how this person has progressed while studying in the CTEFL program, but I wonder if you will be interested in the drafts of the papers because you could have already seen that some students have included even the drafts of some papers.

Interviewee: Of course, I shall, in this way I shall find out whether this person is able to move forward, of course...

Researcher: ... and in a short period of time.

**9. Do you think PP-s are especially important while hiring beginning/pre-service teachers, or are they equally important for experienced/in-service teachers as well?**

Interviewee: Not for the experienced, probably for beginners, it's very important for the beginners, first of all this is a way, a very good way, a very good means of self-organization, that's important, and this is something which is *especially* important for a young specialist, for a young professional.

Researcher: But what about the experienced teachers, maybe they want to show you what kind of works they have done while teaching, what kind of tasks, activities they have used...

Interviewee: If it is an experienced teacher, especially in Armenia, I am sure to know him.

Researcher: Ok, but imagine that you don't know this person.

Interviewee: Of course, in that case you would like to know all about her.

Researcher: So can we say that it is important for both of them or not?

Interviewee: In an Armenian setting, it is not, because Armenia is what it is...

Researcher: ... a place where everybody knows each other.

Interviewee: ...especially in the professional sphere, you know. I don't mean that I know everybody personally but the professional circle, the circle that works, that is active, that does their best to contribute to the development of the professional sphere, it's impossible, we know each other very well.

**10. Is there such a requirement for the students of linguistic or pedagogical departments at your institution?**

Interviewee: So far we haven't given thought to it, but I learnt that you are working on this and I liked the idea.

**11. In my research, I want to suggest implementing the practice of compiling a teachers' professional portfolio as one of the mandatory graduation requirements in other linguistic and pedagogical institutions in Armenia as well. What is your opinion/attitude concerning my suggestion?**

Interviewee: I think this portfolio can be relevant for any professional. I think it's a good idea.

Researcher: So you would give your approval and you would like it to be implemented in your institution.

I think so, why not. First of all, I say, not only, of course, because we spoke a lot about its value, but first of all it will be a means of self-organization for a student, for a young teacher, and this is useful.

Researcher: I also want our students while graduating to be prepared to enter the job market with some valuable presentable material in hand to be able to present themselves.

Interviewee: I do agree.

**12. In your opinion, if it were implemented: would the awareness of the fact that the students' current academic writings would later be included into their professional portfolios motivate them to do their best while studying?**

Interviewee: I hope, yes, I hope so.

Researcher: Because in many cases, the students are not interested in the works that they are doing, they are just doing the works for the teacher, maybe if they know that the works that they are doing now while studying can contribute later to their career advancement, I think they will be more motivated right?

Interviewee: Let us hope so.

**13. Would the process of creating professional portfolios contribute to the development of the students' perceptions of autonomy? Would the process of the portfolio writing help them to become more autonomous students? If YES, how? If No, why not?**

Interviewee: I am sure that they will become more aware of what they are doing and why. And this is part of the autonomy. If they would feel responsible for the kind of works that they are doing, this will affect and raise their perceptions of autonomy.

**14. Would the process of the implementation of a teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the linguistic and pedagogical institutions in Armenia have positive effects on the overall efficiency of the educational process?**

Interviewee: It must.

**15. What else would you like to mention as the main advantages or disadvantages of creating a professional portfolio while still being a student?**

Interviewee: You have included almost every aspect, you have been very scrupulous about this, which is good and so I really can't think of anything else to add.

**16. Being a representative of one of the major linguistic institutions in Armenia, do you have any suggestions concerning the implementation of this process in the institutions in Armenia?**

Interviewee: Well, we have to meet students, we have to explain this concept, only one or two talks won't suffice, probably several meetings, discussions. By the way, it would have been a very good idea to make a presentation at the conference which is rather a large one, it's an international conference and I hope many students also will be present; it would be a very good idea.

Researcher: You would like me to present this concept of the professional portfolio?

Interviewee: Yes, why not? If you are ready to do that? It will be from 16-19 in October.

Researcher: Oh, thank you, sure I will. My thesis will be ready by that time. I have to present it first at AUA at the end of September or at the beginning of October.

Interviewee: But could you...?

Researcher: ...provide you with some information?

Interviewee: Yes, an abstract from your thesis.

Researcher: Yes, it is with me. You can have a look at it.

Interviewee: Ok, let's do it. Though everything is closed already long ago, but it doesn't matter, it's me to decide and you just mail your abstract by the following e-mail address. You will have to mail because I am leaving tomorrow and we shall talk about it in detail when I return at the end of August.

Researcher: Ok. I will, thank you very much.

## APPENDIX 6

### Transcript of Interview 2

**Institution: Yerevan State College of Humanities**

**Interviewee: Gohar Harutyunyan**

Note: The following transcript of the interview is a faithful reproduction of the dialog transactions featured in my interview. In order to protect the authenticity of the interviewees' responses, I have presented them without any revision/modification.

#### **1. What are the main criteria that you take into consideration while hiring a teacher?**

Interviewee: The main criteria I take into consideration are first of all language proficiency, the first thing, the most important thing is language proficiency, then the person's desire to work as a teacher so which I find out during the interview, so I think that's it.

#### **2. What can serve as the best proof for the teacher's teaching abilities?**

Interviewee: The best proof is the oral and written testing which we undertake here

Researcher: So the interviews help you a lot and the testing.

Interviewee: Sure, yes. The moment the person opens his/her mouth, everything is clear within 5 minutes, maybe not so soon but we try to find out at the moment of the interview.

#### **3. Are you familiar with the concept of a Language Teacher's Professional Portfolio?**

Interviewee: Yes, I am. Actually our teachers have their professional portfolios; they create those portfolios within the period of their work here.

**4. Two years ago American University of Armenia has implemented English language teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the CTEFL program as one of the mandatory requirements for graduation. Here are some samples of the CTEFL students' professional portfolios. What do you think about this course requirement? Do you like this idea or not?**

Interviewee: Sure, the idea of this type of portfolios is great because these portfolios reveal the whole process of professional creative work the student has done.

**5. Do you think that the professional portfolios that were submitted as a part of the requirements for the CTEFL course at AUA can provide much evidence of the teacher's teaching skills/competence to you and/or other potential employers?**

Interviewee: I shouldn't say much but to some extent, partially.

**6. Will you hire a teacher based only on the content of a teacher's professional portfolio? Can a professional portfolio serve as the only basis for your final decision while hiring a teacher?**

Interviewee: No, never, just together with the interview. It can be a contributing factor.

**7. What would you like teachers to include into their professional portfolios? Tick the ones you would find desirable to be seen and comment simultaneously while ticking. You can provide your own options as well.**

**Recommendation Letters** – I think they are quite important, but I don't quite believe in these recommendation letters, because these recommendation letters may be based on somebody's just subjective attitude to that person. First, I thought yes, but now I say No. I won't tick it, No.

Researcher: Does it deal with the cultural specific issues? –Yes, it does. - Because it's a common practice abroad.

Interviewee: I understand, I know, but I think so are mentality that doesn't let us take these recommendation letters for granted.

**CV/Resume** – Why not, a CV, because, well, a CV reflects... keeps some information about the person in general, that's it, again it's a common practice, and they are presented in an easy way, but again there can be some exaggerations in the CV, but anyway.

**Certificates & Awards or other recognitions** – by all means, because they can't be false, I think.

**Academic Transcripts** – sure

**Summaries** – so it will take some time to look through the portfolios, to read the summaries, ok that's rather important and interesting, ok yes, why not

**Research Papers/Thesis** – yes, sure, it's creative work of the student

**Reaction/Reflection/Critique Papers** – that's rather creative then, I'll check it as well

**Lesson Plans/Teaching Activities/Tasks** – again unless they are implemented you can't know whether they are successful or not, well, I'll check it but then I need to see them in practice

**Copies of the taken tests**

**Documentation of Leadership Experience** – this one is very important for the person to be able to manage the classroom, because very often they have the knowledge, but they can't manage the classroom, this one is very important

- Outline of a Presentation** – you know, actually, when you look through all the points everything is very important, you know what? it has something to do of course with the teaching process because....  
Researcher: Actually, T is a presenter of some information...  
Interviewee: Actually, yes, it should be considered important then, ok, yeah, I tick it as well
- Computer Disks with the information relevant to your teaching**
- Evaluations from Employers/ Instructors/ Cooperating Teachers/Students** – I should say that the evaluations from the students are more important for me than from employers, because students are rather objective, but sometimes they are subjective as well, but mostly objective, I think.
- Evidence of Extra-Curricular Involvement** – I should say that this point is very important for our establishment, yes, we are carrying out lots of extra-curricular activities, we have an English theatre and an English club so it is very very important for us, for the person to be able to involve, to be able to include students into that work, that kind of activity, and be able to organize it on a high level.
- Photos of Teaching Experiences**
- Videotapes of classroom teaching** – rather interesting, why not? if they are available
- Student work examples**
- Classroom Management Philosophy** – now this classroom management philosophy is rather different with different people abroad and here but we are taking new attitudes. Classroom management philosophy must be discussed thoroughly.
- Conferences/Workshops attended**
- Conference Presentations, given workshops** – you know conferences, presentations and things like that are very important, of course, but a person can be a good presenter at a conference but she may not be able to manage the classroom to give a good lesson.  
Researcher: But if you are a good presenter, you should attract your audience, and this audience can be considered as students as well, right?  
Interviewee: You are right, but to give a good presentation using Power Point and things and to be able to make your students understand everything thoroughly, I think it's not quite the same, No.
- List and description of courses taught** – that's very important because it speaks of your experience and an experienced teacher can't fail in the classroom I think.
- Grant-funded projects in which you have been involved**



- Memberships in professional teaching organizations** – is important as well because mixing with professionals you get experience, you get some modern up-to-date information about things going.
- Evidence of Community Involvement**
- Evidence of Successful Teamwork** – I should say that successful teamwork is important as well because we work in a team and so everybody here are individuals but they work in a team and you need to see if the person is able to work, because these are also the skills.
- Evidence that You Are a Life-Long Learner** – is very important as well because you should never stop learning.
- Campus Involvement**

**8. Being a potential employer, would you prefer seeing only the best works in a teacher's professional portfolio or you would prefer seeing the less successful works as well to see the progress and achievements of the applicant over time?**

Interviewee: It is not done usually of course, but why not? Just it's unusual because nobody includes the unsuccessful things in the portfolio but why not?

Researcher: You know one of the requirements for these portfolios that were submitted by the CTEFL students was to show the progress, that is to what extent they have progressed in a year, because it's quite a short time for progress but you can see 'miracles'.

**9. Do you think PP-s are especially important while hiring beginning/pre-service teachers, or are they equally important for experienced/in-service teachers as well?**

Interviewee: They are important for both categories because a pre-service teacher shows the ability she has, I say she, because mostly teachers are women, but the experienced teacher shows the work she has done and the portfolios can be an example for a young teacher to follow why not? to learn something.

Researcher: So it's equally important for both of them. – Yes.

**10. Is there such a requirement for the students of linguistic or pedagogical departments at your institution?**

Interviewee: We have just started the students' portfolios and we have our professional portfolios at our chair, our teachers already have and we are to think over the students' portfolios once again, I think, and add some new points to it.

Researcher: ...and to lead it more to a professional one?

Interviewee: Sure, for students themselves to understand why it is necessary. This year we tried to explain to them, they agreed and they said yes ok, that's interesting and when I was gathering, collecting my students' portfolios I looked through them and some of them did a very good job on them, the others just inserted the papers into the files, it wasn't very interesting to look through them, the others did a good job on them, so they were more creative.

**11. In my research, I want to suggest implementing the practice of compiling a teachers' professional portfolio as one of the mandatory graduation requirements in other linguistic and pedagogical institutions in Armenia as well. What is your opinion/attitude concerning my suggestion?**

Interviewee: I think your suggestion is very creative and I think that little by little all the establishments must or should carry out this activity because I think sooner or later it will give its results.

Researcher: because I want our students to be ready to enter the job market with some information to present to their potential employers, because in most cases the students when they graduate, they do not even have the skills of writing a CV, let alone compiling a professional portfolio. These are the skills that should be taught, I think so, at an institution where they study.

Interviewee: I wish our employers would take them into consideration when employing people.

**12. In your opinion, if it were implemented would the awareness of the fact that the students' current academic writings would later be included into their professional portfolios motivate them to do their best while studying?**

Interviewee: It least 50%, yes.

**13. Would the process of creating professional portfolios contribute to the development of the students' perceptions of autonomy? Would the process of the portfolio writing help them to become more autonomous students? If YES, how? If No, why not?**

Interviewee: Yes, in general this portfolio making process is good, so that's why it will contribute to lots of positive things.

**14. Would the process of the implementation of a teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the linguistic and pedagogical institutions in Armenia have positive effects on the overall efficiency of the educational process?**

Interviewee: I should say, Yes.

**15. What else would you like to mention as the main advantages or disadvantages of creating a professional portfolio while still being a student?**

Researcher: Maybe there are disadvantages as well? so far we have been talking only about the advantages.

Interviewee: One should think twice about the disadvantages, I don't know what kind of disadvantages there are or there may be, I can't say on the spot. The advantages are obvious we have spoken about them already. We have spoken all about it very thoroughly.

**16. Do you have any suggestions concerning the implementation of this process in institutions?**

Interviewee: I think some questionnaires should be sent to all the institutions, to the English departments of the institutions, and after the questioning some meetings must be held somewhere maybe in the institutions themselves or on a neutral territory and this process and this suggestion must be discussed thoroughly.

Researcher: That's why I am going to different institutions to find out different peoples' and mostly the heads of the English departments' opinions so I am interested in their opinions to present in my research paper.

Interviewee: You are doing a good job.

Researcher: Thank you

Interviewee: Thank you, too.

## APPENDIX 7

### Transcript of Interview 3

**Institution: “HAYBUSAK” Yerevan Institute**

**Interviewee: Anahit Harutyunyan**

Note: The following transcript of the interview is a faithful reproduction of the dialog transactions featured in my interview. In order to protect the authenticity of the interviewees’ responses, I have presented them without any revision/modification.

**1. What are the main criteria that you take into consideration while hiring a teacher?**

**2. What can serve as the best proof for the teacher’s teaching abilities?**

Interviewee: Maybe it would be fair to say that you can never check the teachers’ teaching abilities if you haven’t seen the teacher actually teach and maybe, not maybe but definitely also the result of the teacher profile, the results of the students’ and the students’ opinion, I personally value it greatly, I think that the students’ opinions are very important, the students are aware of the problems the teacher has in teaching, and also the advantages and disadvantages of this or that teacher

Researcher: ....more than the head of the department...

definitely not the department or the dean, I mean they all do their best , then that means if the students don’t show the results you have expected to no matter how well-bred or well-educated and pleasant the teacher is, if he/she doesn’t please you, his or her..

Researcher: ...or the needs of the students

Interviewee: ...or just support the needs of the students we have to say farewell to this person but if you have not employed this person yet, if you don’t know actually, if you don’t have the opportunity to see his or her, get appointed with her job, you have got normally the criteria you mean, references can be oral or written, both are fine, and personal contact of course, normally we hire a teacher and we say if you can teach, if you show good results this term, then we’ll keep you

Researcher:...so you give probation period to this teacher...

Interviewee: Yes, exactly, and during the probation period we have a lot of work to do of course our teachers, our faculty staff, of course, we talk to the faculty dean, express their opinions and we work with that teacher individually and because we normally employ our graduates, we believe in our graduates and we think that if they have done well, then we should give them a chance first, so while employing our graduates as a teacher, that’s why we always, ok of course there are people who fail....

**3. Are you familiar with the concept of a Language Teacher's Professional Portfolio?**

Interviewee: Frankly speaking, this is the first time I have seen one, the idea seems very interesting I think I should take more time and I should have a detailed look at this portfolio.

**4. Two years ago the American University of Armenia has implemented English language teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the CTEFL program as one of the mandatory requirements for graduation. What do you think about this course requirement? Should it be a mandatory requirement for the graduating students?**

Interviewee: Well I think this is basically an issue about the AUA administration should address you know I mean...

Researcher: Do you like this idea?

Interviewee: It's a great idea, I am fine with it but I don't feel I should say ok yes, this must be mandatory ...

**5. Do you think that the professional portfolios that were submitted as a part of the requirements for the CTEFL course at AUA can provide much evidence of the teacher's teaching skills/competence to you and/or other potential employers?**

Interviewee: I am sure they can to someone who teaches actually the language someone who knows English or someone who is aware of the strategies of teaching ..... they could have taken all those documents from another source, if not, of course, if you believe in that applicant's sincerity, you can say that it gives you a lot of professional information, maybe well it's much more extended than a simple CV, but still I think it's necessary to have an oral interview with the applicant however big the professional portfolio might be, I think....

**6. So you will not base your final decision only on the content of this portfolio?**

Interviewee: Probably, maybe in the institutions where there is a board or a committee, or a whole bunch of people who take those decisions, maybe it will be important to have a written document and not to base themselves only on the oral interview, but in the circumstances when one or two persons make the actual decision, I think it is more reliable to base your opinion on only an oral interview, although this document, this portfolio will be very helpful of course.

Researcher: Will it be a supporting measure for you?

Interviewee: Yes, it will be... I would like just to add that maybe a portfolio will be very helpful also while conducting the oral interview because you will have topics about which you can talk with you potential employees and another maybe question or comment I don't know I am just wondering

if it will be useful to include the list of the skills of the applicants because you know not in a secondary school but in high school we normally have disciplines and we do not teach just English or not only just English, you know there are lots of theoretical or practical courses which it might be useful to include in the portfolio..

Researcher: but if it's an English language teacher's portfolio, should they include other works?...

Interviewee: Do they specialize in phonetics, in grammar or a writing course or an oral course?

Researcher: they take different courses right? during their studying process, but if you are interested in the teaching skills, I think you will be more interested in looking for the information concerning the teachers' teaching skills of the applicant, right?

**7. What would you like teachers to include into their professional portfolios? Tick the ones you would find desirable to be seen and comment simultaneously while ticking. You can provide your own options as well.**

**Recommendation Letters**

**CV/Resume**

**Certificates & Awards or other recognitions**

**Academic Transcripts**

**Summaries**

**Research Papers/Thesis** - Presenting information on research papers and thesis, I don't think it makes sense to present the whole research paper or the whole thesis that maybe the set of the thesis would be useful for the set of the committee or an abstract might even be desirable or preferable because they could read the abstract and be able to ask the applicant questions and see if this is really work conducted by the applicant and see if the applicant is really apt to do such work

**Reaction/Reflection/Critique Papers** - I don't think they are very common in Armenia,

Researcher: really? because we usually do such kind of works at AUA..

Interviewee: Personally I would be interested in that kind of material but only on personal level because that wouldn't mean if I don't like the reaction or a critique paper that wouldn't mean that I won't employ that person because the very existence of such a paper is already an advantage but not necessary, I don't think it is necessary and I will be interested in it like on a personal level not on an official level

**Lesson Plans/ Teaching Activities/Tasks**

**Copies of the taken tests** - I don't think that the copies of the taken tests matter a lot

- Documentation of Leadership Experience** - but the documentation of the leadership experience would be great, but it is not very common in Armenia either
- Outline of a Presentation** – It doesn't make a lot of sense because almost everybody can do that or must everybody, I mean if they are....
- Computer Disks with the information relevant to your teaching** - would not be appropriate, I don't think that the administration has to be fully aware of the content of the teaching, I don't think we have to follow every step of our teachers, give them this exercise or that exercise should be eliminated from the course, you know what I mean

Researcher: No, I don't think that we should advise this or that person, we can see if there are interesting activities...

Interviewee: if they have interesting activities it wouldn't be efficient to tell me that they have got an interesting idea, I don't need to see it, you know what I mean, because otherwise it would be just too much work for everybody, it would be just a mess because a teacher has her own way of teaching, you shouldn't always interfere if the results are good, if the results are not good then you must interfere, if the teacher is providing good results you should not try to change anything in the program, or say that if they haven't got a computer disk with some information then it doesn't mean that they are not good teachers,

Researcher: I don't mean that, I am just wondering if you will be interested in seeing this kind of stuff.

Interviewee: Not really, it would provide them if they said that they've got some material relevant to the teaching.

- Evaluations from Employers/ Instructors/ Cooperating Teachers/Students**
- Evidence of Extra-Curricular Involvement**
- Photos of Teaching Experiences** - would not very important for me
- Videotapes of classroom teaching** – either, because I know how you can fabricate this data, because I know how we can rehearse very carefully during a whole term, then in class and then videotape that
- Student work examples** – I won't be interested in seeing the student work examples because they are very individual
- Classroom Management Philosophy** – if it does not occupy no more than half of the page
- Conferences/Workshops attended** – should be included in the CV
- Conference Presentations, given workshops** – I would like to have only the information on the presentations not the real presentations
- List and description of courses taught** – yes this is very important

- Grant-funded projects in which you have been involved** – that is important too
- Memberships in professional teaching organizations** – is very important
- Evidence of Community Involvement** – it's desirable but not decisive
- Evidence of Successful Teamwork** - is also desirable but not decisive
- Evidence that You Are a Life-Long Learner** – is extremely important
- Campus Involvement** - is also desirable but not compulsory

**8. Being a potential employer, would you prefer seeing only the best works in a teacher's professional portfolio or you would prefer seeing the less successful works as well to see the progress and achievements of the applicant over time?**

Interviewee: My opinion is that a person isn't born with the knowledge of a language and taking into consideration that if you know something then you have learnt that, I wouldn't be interested in the less successful works of the applicant.

**9. Do you think PP-s are especially important while hiring beginning/pre-service teachers, or are they equally important for experienced/in-service teachers as well?**

Interviewee: Well, you know, of course they are more important for someone who is getting their first job because that evidence that you can provide of being a professional while if you have worked somewhere else you can bring references and show your achievements in all other way, and on the other hand for someone who had a long teaching experience it would a burden to create such a huge professional portfolio with all the activities they have ever done and...

Researcher: But it is not that important to include all the activities right?

Interviewee: Of course it is not important then they would begin to look like more a portfolio of a beginner, you know what I mean, if they do not differ in size if they have the same structure it is hard to show how much more professional you are

Researcher: But you know abroad it is a common practice for teachers, in-service teachers to collect, create their portfolios and show in case maybe they lose their jobs...

Interviewee: That's fine, it is fine to have all that information but not to sort of collect them in one folder and put them on the table of the potential employers, because they may just not be interested in all the work you have done throughout your life.

Researcher: I think you can choose the most successful ones...

Interviewee: Exactly.

Researcher: So you don't want the portfolio to be that thick..



Interviewee: Definitely not, because it won't show .... you everything you want to know, you need personal contact with that person in order to learn more information about them.

**10. Is there such a requirement for the students of linguistic or pedagogical departments at your institution?**

Interviewee: There is no such a formal requirement, however if people would come with their professional portfolios will be very welcome.

**11. In my research, I want to suggest implementing the practice of compiling a teachers' professional portfolio as one of the mandatory graduation requirements in other linguistic and pedagogical institutions in Armenia as well. What is your opinion/attitude concerning my suggestion?**

Interviewee: I cannot imagine how young and active persons thought their professional carry with such professional portfolios, can you imagine for someone who has been teaching English for 40 years trying to compile their teaching portfolios, it would be unfair to those people

Researcher: I would like our students to prepare some material to enter the job market, to be ready to enter the job market because in many cases they do not even have CV writing skills, so it would be a good practice for them.

Interviewee: This will be a very good practice for them anyway this is a very good idea, it is an advantage to have a professional portfolio, the applicant must know which part would be more interesting to this or that employer, but it's very good advantage to have such a folder and to be able to present all your achievements in one folder, I think it .. I don't know if it will work if it is compulsory .. the offices will appear who will prepare professional portfolios for some amount of money because it is a common practice in Armenia. I personally don't think that it is very bad, if you have got your material and you have got someone who can do that for you, I mean not quietly your thesis, your research papers, but organize things your achievements in such a way that it would be interesting for the potential employer to see the actual preparation or face of this person.

Researcher: Do you think, if the person has done so many works would it be that difficult for him to compile all these works or to organize them in the proper way.

Interviewee: The difficulty might lie in the selection of the materials, I think this subject requires a marketing service, a marketing study, we need to know what the employer wants to see actually.

Researcher: That's why I collect the information from the potential employers; I am doing a market research for them.

Interviewee: That would be sort of what I would like to see in a portfolio is a difficult question for me because this is the first time I have seen one, maybe if I go home and think it over in a couple of days...

Researcher: You can call me later.

Interviewee: Definitely if some idea occurs to me I will call you definitely, because I think it's definitely really important because that's the face that you are presenting that must be impressive, I mean sometimes a simple CV might be more interesting than the whole pile of documents but later

**12. In your opinion, would the awareness of the fact that the students' current academic writings would later be included into their professional portfolios motivate them to do their best while studying?**

Interviewee: I am sure it will, but the paradox I have just been participating in entrance interviews that our students have to take about every single student whom I asked "Why do they want to enter our university?" they state that they wanted to become a translator, but they grew up and they decided that they want to be a teacher my concern is that they don't know during their study time they don't know what they want to become so if maybe they are born with the dream of becoming a teacher it won't affect them, if they are not born with this idea they may want to become an office manager..

Researcher: You mean they can change their minds while studying?

Interviewee: Exactly, they do, they normally do...

Researcher: You know at AUA this practice is conducted at a higher, graduate level where people have already decided themselves, have already chosen the profession, so would you find it more reasonable this practice to be implemented at a graduate level...?

Interviewee: Well, yes, if they are free to choose the works that they want to include in their professional portfolio, you can always choose the best ones, not necessarily.

Researcher: No, I mean this practice is compulsory at CTEFL program, I wanted to suggest implementing this practice even at a Bachelor's level as the last requirement for the courses, but you think it will be more reasonable to implement this practice at a graduate or at an undergraduate level?

Interviewee: Are we speaking only about the English Language department?

Researcher: Yes.

Interviewee: All right, then in the undergraduate level is all right? Yes, I think, undergraduate level would be ok.

Researcher: So you don't think that it's early to start?

Interviewee: I wouldn't say it's early. If you are organizing your professional career, well if they can do that, if they are provided with the necessary skills, the necessary knowledge for that, well why not?

**13. Would the process of creating professional portfolios contribute to the development of the students' perceptions of autonomy? Would the process of the portfolio writing help them to become more autonomous students? If YES, how? If No, why not?**

Interviewee: Definitely, yes. Sometimes it happens that...well you normally have to make students think about different issues and when a student begins to think about such an issue as their future profession and what they have to do I think it's a very important contribution to the student to become more autonomous, to be independent learner.

**14. Would the process of the implementation of a teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the linguistic and pedagogical institutions in Armenia have positive effects on the overall efficiency of the educational process?**

Interviewee: Definitely they do, but do we have specialists who might teach this. I would like to know if we have specialists who could teach..

Researcher: I think we can organize some trainings or I don't think that it's that difficult to teach the students to organize their works in the proper way.

Interviewee: I think it's very important to teach them to do so ...

Researcher: So we can organize some trainings...

**15. What else would you like to mention as the main advantages or disadvantages of creating a professional portfolio while still being a student?**

Interviewee: The first observation I would like to make is that these professional portfolios are very interesting but they are very long. You know, normally, the employer is not a professional, the employer is not going to look through all these pages and normally they will delegate this assignment to someone else for example to the head of the chair, and the head of the chair will not be very content with having to look through piles, and piles of documents however interesting they might be. And there is another danger that a not very scrupulous examiner or observer or the head of the chair would thought of stealing ideas from these portfolios and use them and then just turn down the candidate. Maybe I am just becoming sort of paranoid? I think we have to sort of support and help our employees.

Researcher: ...and protect our employees' rights.

Interviewee: I know that, all right, this is my business and I can assess those people and I can look through the portfolios and will try to be objective and not get into the temptation of stealing their ideas, but if it is another person who is just a hired person, someone who is tired, someone who has got a lot of things to do and when you tell them to look through those piles of pages and say if this is all right or not, they will either do it sort of neglectingly or they will say all right that is a good idea, I can use that one and turn down the candidate. In addition, the general fact in Armenia, and I am not afraid to say so, is employing people that you know, employing people that you already, or employing people who are for this or that reason the fact of the country's economy, I would emphasize that it is not the case with our university for we are constantly changing and trying to improve our teaching staff..

Researcher: but however we should accept the fact that ..

Interviewee: Yes, our graduates have undergone such situation when people who are less professional than they are have got the job thought they have not been perfect, anyway that's the problem of the organizations that do so, because they won't be able to work much more, they won't be able to function correctly if they follow this strategy, so I think for the institutions or organization or a company that have a healthy philosophy and a healthy strategy of the work professional portfolios will be very helpful although it would still be necessary to have a personal contact with the applicant to conduct a personal oral interview

Researcher: You will not base your decision only on the content however it can contribute while hiring a person?

Interviewee: I think so.

#### **16. Do you have any suggestions concerning the implementation of this process?**

Interviewee: Maybe, not yet, but if something occurs to me, I will call you, By the way, we are very open for collaboration, if you decide to conduct any experimental group for our students, I think we might organize that.

Researcher: Thank you very much.

Interviewee: Thank you.

Researcher: So give your approval to my suggestion?

Interviewee: Yes, absolutely, maybe not making mandatory for the institution, but if we have specialists that would be great.

Researcher: I got your point.

## **APPENDIX 8**

### **Transcript of Interview 4**

**Institution: Vanadzor State Teachers' Training Institute**

**Interviewee: Marina Kharatyan**

Note: The following transcript of the interview is a faithful reproduction of the dialog transactions featured in my interview. In order to protect the authenticity of the interviewees' responses, I have presented them without any revision/modification.

- 1. What are the main criteria that you take into consideration while hiring a teacher? and**
- 2. What can serve as the best proof for the teacher's teaching abilities?**

Interviewee: I am not an administrator and I never hire a teacher or specialists of English, but authorities sometimes ask for a piece of advice to take this person or not, so certainly if I know the person I can recommend the person, I can give that very person overall recommendation, so I know everything about her academic transcript, everything about her resume, and so on and so forth. But certainly, if I don't know the person, first of all I have to take her academic transcript and resume and look it through and see what kind of educational background the person has and maybe the second thing only will be to talk to the person, because if you talk to the person, you will be able to find out the educational background, the intellectual background, and most of all certainly how motivated the person is, because for me the positive attitude, and positive motivation is very very important. The second thing whether the person would be able to work with the audience, with the students because this is very important; people come to that I work at the institute and I am talking on behalf of university teachers I am not talking not behalf of school teachers. The person enters the classroom for the first time in her life and it's very very important to have a so-called, I don't even know how to put it, but the behaviour of the teacher should remind you of the behaviour of a teacher, because when you enter the classroom, the students see you and they have to respect you. How can they respect you if you don't know how to behave in the classroom? So these are the ABC for hiring a teacher.

Researcher: So you manage to find out this information while interviewing a teacher?

Interviewee: I manage to find this information while teaching at the institute because you know when you hire a teacher, first of all you take into consideration your way, what is the way you have passed and you try to understand the very person, the very young person who first have to enter the classroom, you put yourself in his or her shoes, this is the thing, that's why, first of all we shouldn't be too strict to the new teacher because we know that there should be minuses and pluses, but if you

see improvement, if you see motivation, if you see hard work, if you see intelligence, certainly sometimes you don't even see the minuses, because you see more pluses than minuses.

Researcher: What about the experienced teachers? When they apply for a job at your institution, what kind of information you are looking for?

Interviewee: Well, frankly speaking, I haven't got this kind of experience when experienced teachers come to our institute and we have to judge them or we have to give some kind of marks to them, no, I haven't got that kind of information, but as far as I have been working in AELTA, now I am not talking about hiring a teacher, if an experienced teacher is presenting or conducting a workshop, for example, and then we have to evaluate it, we try to be objective, first of all, on the one hand, but on the other hand if my teacher is conducting a presentation, certainly I am a little bit on alert, I am not so brave to criticize her, but at the same time I am not coward so much not to see the minuses in her presentation. Maybe, I can say that, maybe some kind of ... something that can be implemented or improved in the presentation or suggestions.

### **3. Are you familiar with the concept of a Language Teacher's Professional Portfolio?**

Interviewee: Frankly speaking, a little bit, I'll tell you why, because when in 2000 I was in America, and when I was having my internship at Boston University I was lucky to get to know what portfolio is and I was lucky even to have a book about professional portfolio, I have given this book to one of my colleagues, it's a big one, it's a very interesting one, so I got acquainted with this idea in 2000.

Researcher: I think this book would be very helpful for my research.

Interviewee: I have given the book to one of my colleagues who was also working at assessment, she has been doing something at assessment. I haven't seen my book even for 5 or 6 years. In case I have it, in case I am lucky to take it back, I'll let you know.

### **4. Two years ago American University of Armenia has implemented English language teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the CTEFL program as one of the mandatory requirements for graduation. Here are some samples of the CTEFL students' professional portfolios. What do you think about this course requirement? Do you like this idea or not?**

Interviewee: I like it tremendously; I think that this kind of requirement, even mandatory requirement not an optional one can raise the awareness of the students, of the professional work and the experience they are going to get afterwards, after they graduate from the institute. So just from the very beginning they will be aware that they are really doing something important that will

help them and improve them in the future. That's why I totally agree to the idea, I know that it's going to be very hard to implement this program or project in Armenia because in order to do something we have to change the mentality and the culture and so on and so forth, but as one of the medium-aged English teachers, because I know that I don't belong to the young generation, and don't belong to the old generation either, something in the middle, I totally agree to the idea that we can implement it and people will take up the idea. I mean people who are not conservative, who appreciate the past but at the same time can see the advantages of the present reality, who are open to new ideas, they will always take up the idea and they will always greet the idea.

**5. Do you think that professional portfolios that were submitted as a part of the requirements for the CTEFL course at AUA can provide much evidence of the teacher's teaching skills/competence to you and/or other potential employers?**

Interviewee: Sure, it will, you know why? First of all, because I can see the improvement in your work, I can see how your work has been improved during the year of studying at your institution, one year makes up 12 months, so first of all I can see the corrections of your teacher and I can see how your work has been improved and how your work has been encouraged by your teacher and how your work has been estimated and evaluated by your teacher.

Researcher: So you would like to see the graded works in the portfolio?

Interviewee: I would like to see the graded works because to my mind it is more objective for me and it is more real for me to see, because if you bring the corrected works, the redone works, if I don't see how the works have been graded, No, I would prefer to have the works which are ... evaluated works, the works with marks and with remarks of your teachers.

**6. Will you hire a teacher based only on the content of a teacher's professional portfolio? Can a professional portfolio serve as the only basis for your final decision while hiring a teacher?**

Interviewee: Well, you know maybe again in our experience and in our culture we should have another requirement, maybe we should give probation period to the teachers together with the portfolio, so I know a lot of organizations that organize probation periods for 3 months or 2 months, maybe we should do the same.

Researcher: But before giving some chances to the teachers, especially when you have a great number of teachers who came to apply at your institution, you have to choose some of them even for giving probation period to these people. So in this case will you base your decision on the content of this portfolio?

Interviewee: I am not saying that I am right, but my judgment certainly will rely on the portfolio as well, but my judgment will rely also on the present, I should see how the person works whether the portfolio and the experience coincide with each other, because you might write so many things in your portfolio that do not exist in reality,

Researcher: You mean that you cannot implement them?

Interviewee: Yes, you might write some... but if you can see how you can implement these things in practice, whether the theory and practice go together or not, you can write something on a piece of paper, but afterwards it will certainly be hard to implement it. But it will, it can be and it should be just a very very deciding fact for the administrator and for the authorities.

**7. What would you like teachers to include into their professional portfolios? Tick the ones you would find desirable to be seen and comment simultaneously while ticking. You can provide your own options as well.**

- Recommendation Letters** – I think, it's a necessary thing
- CV/Resume**
- Certificates & Awards or other recognitions** – well, it might be, it might not, but again necessary thing
- Academic Transcripts**
- Summaries**
- Research Papers/Thesis** – maybe for me it would be interesting, but it is also subjective because as a person who supervises course papers or diplomas because I myself I supervise, for me it would be even curious to see how the person has worked
- Reaction/Reflection/Critique Papers** – these are more important than summaries, because to my mind it's much more difficult to write a reflection paper than a summary, I want to see how cohesively and coherently a person is able to write, how logically he or she can put down her ideas
- Lesson Plans/Teaching Activities/Tasks** – yes
- Copies of the taken tests** – no, you know why? because the person might feel a little bit awkward, it depends on the grades, that's why, I don't think it should be a requirement
- Documentation of Leadership Experience** – now, leadership experience is one of the most popular things, wherever you go, what kind of paper you fill in your leadership skills, that's why maybe as a contemporary person, I would rather agree to leadership experience because we are people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and we need this leadership experience and we can't lose the pace of time, that's why we should take our pace of time



- Outline of a Presentation** – can be included in the computer disk
- Computer Disks with the information relevant to your teaching**
- Evaluations from Employers/ Instructors/ Cooperating Teachers/Students** – students might not be objective, I really like my students and I know that the percentage of my evaluation has always been high, but students are not always objective  
Researcher: I think it really depends on the age of the students, because in our institution there are mainly the graduate programs so they take into consideration our evaluations, so the administration is very interested in our opinions, so they think that the students are very objective, But it really depends on the age of the students, because you should come to this stage of consciousness to be able to evaluate the teacher.  
Interviewee: I have always been one of those luckiest people who have always been evaluated highly, I am not boasting I am just telling you and I am not offended by the students but I know that sometimes even my students can be very subjective.
- Evidence of Extra-Curricular Involvement** - is important for me, because it's important for me not only what you do in a classroom but also out of a classroom
- Photos of Teaching Experiences**
- Videotapes of classroom teaching**
- Student work examples**
- Classroom Management Philosophy** - No, because you will show your philosophy while teaching, I would rather give you a chance to show it in practice, your philosophy will be reflected in your classes.
- Conferences/Workshops attended**
- Conference Presentations, given workshops**
- List and description of courses taught** – this is important, because it gives much information on the flexibility in choosing the consequent courses for the new teacher, I have been teaching phonetics so I should present these courses taught
- Grant-funded projects in which you have been involved** – certainly, yes, if they relate to teaching
- Memberships in professional teaching organizations** – for me this is important
- Evidence of Community Involvement**
- Evidence of Successful Teamwork**
- Evidence that You Are a Life-Long Learner** – my attitude will show that I am a life-long learner
- Campus Involvement**

**8. Being a potential employer, would you prefer seeing only the best works in a teacher's professional portfolio or you would prefer seeing the less successful works as well to see the progress and achievements of the applicant over time?**

Interviewee: Let's leave it on the person who is applying for the job, let's leave it on that very person, but I would like to see the improvement.

Researcher: In that case I think you would like to see the less successful works as well for seeing the progress.

Interviewee: Willy-nilly, even if the person doesn't want to show the less successful works, but if the requirement is that the works that were done in September should be shown as well, as I understand that the work that was done in September would be less successful than the work that was done later, though it's not necessary, there might be vice versa, some of the works might be worse in the beginning, some of the works might be worse at the end of the semester, so it depends.

Researcher: But the student after graduating from the institution is free to change the content of the portfolio right? So he can exclude, take out the works that were done in September for example and he can include only the best works.

Interviewee: No, I wouldn't agree, no, because I want to see the improvement, how can this person improve at our institute as well. You know as an English teacher I have come to a conclusion that my experienced has already proved it that we learn every day, and teaching experience is 50/50, so you give 50% but if you don't take 50 % then you are discouraged, you are not encouraged, that's why this process is mutual. It's a life-long process and it's a mutual process, because if you don't see the improvements in your students you won't improve either. I mean students are the main source of inspiration and imagination and hard work, because if I enter the classroom, I want to see eyes waiting for me if I don't see the eyes waiting for me I am discouraged. But why should I wait for the eyes waiting for me if I haven't done anything, if I haven't laid any grounds for it. First of all, it depends on me, but after it depends on the students as well.

**9. Do you think PP-s are especially important while hiring beginning/pre-service teachers, or are they equally important for experienced/in-service teachers as well?**

Interviewee: They might be important for experienced teachers as well, even you know in English departments teachers, in-service teachers can make up their portfolios.

Researcher: The process has already started; they do it in some institutions.

Interviewee: It's a good thing to do, because you can see just how you work, what you start with, what you go on with and what you will finish with at the end of the year.

Researcher: ...or in case you lose your job, you can show your portfolio to other employers.

Interviewee: You can keep all your tests, requirements you have given to your students because sometimes you lose your papers, but if it's in an organized way, this will organize the teacher as well.

Researcher: ...and later you will have some material to choose from.

Interviewee: This is a good thing for both of them, I mean even for all the occupations, and it's some kind of psychological thing as well, it organizes the person, the mentality, the consciousness, it organizes you, and it can raise your self-esteem maybe.

**10. Is there such a requirement for the students of linguistic or pedagogical departments at your institution?**

Interviewee: No, unfortunately, we are not doing it.

**11. In my research, I want to suggest implementing the practice of compiling a teachers' professional portfolio as one of the mandatory graduation requirements in other linguistic and pedagogical institutions in Armenia as well. What is your opinion/attitude concerning my suggestion?**

Interviewee: My opinion is totally positive, I have already told you, but I have already told you that it should be done first of all at a higher level, at the ministry level, because at the ministry level this should be mandatory requirement, or this should be something that should be included in the syllabus and we have talked about it already that maybe courses should be organized, and there should be people who would organize these courses, specialists would attend these courses, who would learn something from it and then they can come to their institute and implement it at their institute. So this is one of the ways to organize at a higher level just the institutional work.

**12. In your opinion, would the awareness of the fact that the students' current academic writings would later be included into their professional portfolios motivate them to do their best while studying?**

Interviewee: Certainly, it depends on the student, but if we do it on a regular basis, if it becomes a habitual thing to do, a mandatory thing to do, and if the student comes to the institute and knows that he or she is required to do it, certainly it will raise the motivation, it will raise the motivation not because of the fact that the student is made to do it, No, but because the experience of a student will show that his abilities are improving with the course of the time, and the portfolio will certainly show it and reflect it. Maybe it will be hard in the beginning to implement, whatever is new is really

hard to start but as soon as we have started it, then it's going to be easy. Maybe the dean office, or the English chair should explain to the students just from the very beginning, maybe there should be one or two extra classes to teach what a portfolio is. If we keep the sustainability, it will become something indispensable in the organization of institutional life

**13. Would the process of creating professional portfolios contribute to the development of the students' perceptions of autonomy? Would the process of the portfolio writing help them to become more autonomous students? If YES, how? If No, why not?**

Interviewee: Sure, but we should raise the awareness of the students, we won't be able to organize autonomous learning unless we raise the awareness of the students, and portfolio is one of the steps to do it that can contribute to the whole process.

**14. Would the process of the implementation of a teacher's professional portfolio in the curriculum of the linguistic and pedagogical institutions in Armenia have positive effects on the overall efficiency of the educational process?**

Interviewee: I hope it will, because it's really hard to pre-tell, but my anticipation and my expectation and my positive thinking about it just pre-tells that it will really raise the efficiency at linguistic or pedagogical universities. I mean I am positive, I am not negative.

**15. What else would you like to mention as the main advantages or disadvantages of creating professional portfolio while still being a student?**

Interviewee: I just encourage your work, I encourage the work that you have started, I am really glad that young teachers in Armenia, I know that there are a lot of young teachers like you, and I greet you and I encourage you and never stop doing it, go on and venture the things in spite of the obstacles because obstacles make the life more beautiful and more meaningful.

**16. Do you have any suggestions concerning the implementation of this process?**

Interviewee: I just wish you luck, and I wish more people could understand you.