

EXAMINING GREEK TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH E-PORTFOLIOS

Anastasia P. Samaras and Rebecca K. Fox
George Mason University
USA

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine Greek teachers' cross-cultural experiences about schooling, learning, and teaching as documented in their e-portfolios. The e-portfolio was aligned with professional teaching standards, and implementation included systematically scaffolded development of critical reflective practice during academic course and fieldwork. Participants were 19 Fulbright teachers from Greece who came to the USA for a two-month technology-enhanced professional development project. Data sources included e-portfolio contents, prompted pre- and post-seminar reflections, semi-structured interviews, and researcher memos. Findings show the influence of the portfolio process on teachers' learning related to cross-cultural ideas about schooling, student-centered teaching practices, intercultural mindedness, systematic and critical reflective practice, and ongoing professional development with critical friends.

Introduction

As we close the first decade of the 21st century, there is an increasingly urgent call for educators to prepare students to be world citizens, individuals who are not only capable of working and living in a rapidly changing and globalized world but who also possess intercultural competence and international mindedness. Preparing a citizenry that can meet rapid global changes calls for opportunities in teacher professional learning should include building intercultural knowledge and cross-cultural capacity so that these new global skills and concepts might be actively incorporated in schools and classrooms around the world.

This qualitative study was conducted as part of a larger teacher professional development project that brought 19 Fulbright teachers of the humanities from schools across Greece to the USA for a two-month technology-enhanced professional development project, including electronic portfolios aligned with professional standards and designed to capture participants' salient learning. The Greek Teacher Professional Development Project (GTPDP) was designed for early career Greek teachers and included field experience in diverse USA secondary schools, cultural exchanges, and trips with the goal of providing Greek

educators with a vast array of ideas, tools, technologies, and new perspectives for introducing and sustaining innovative and educational practices upon their return to their home country. Because of the project's targeted emphasis on technology, development of digital portfolios and cultural stories made it possible to disseminate information with colleagues and students in Greece, both in terms of educational practice and cultural understanding. With the goal of also fostering inter-cultural understanding, the program also provided USA teachers and students in the field placement schools the opportunity to gain global perspectives and to expand their professional network to an international level.

As part of the Professional Development for International Educators Model (Kitsantas, Sprague, & Shaklee, 2011), a major goal of the academic component of the program was developing professionals who are reflective of their teaching practiced and who take an inquiry approach to their teaching through systematic research of their practice. To that end, seminars during the project included: Teacher Research, Reflective Practice, Differentiation of Instruction and Assessment Approaches, Intensive Technology Application, and Multicultural Education. The teachers' work included the development of e-portfolios which were aligned with USA national standards for professional teachers and designed to provide a compilation of their learning and an application for their growing technological knowledge. This study examines the e-portfolios teachers created during the project as a medium to support, extend, and make visible their articulation of practice to themselves, colleagues, and to the wider teaching community and includes teacher reflection and intended action plans implemented in Greece upon their return from the US component of the program. The study also explored aspects of teachers' international mindedness and cross-cultural learning experiences about schooling, learning, and teaching as made visible in their e-portfolios.

Conceptual Framework

Since the early 1990s, portfolios have gained steady prominence in teacher education to capture teachers' knowledge and skills and critical reflections on their educational practice (Anderson & DeMeulle, 1998; Fox, 1999; Zeichner & Wray, 2001). Researchers assert that portfolio contents must be robust and supported through the process of self-evaluation or reflection (Fox, 1999; Fox & White, 2010; Lyons, 1998). As reflection has been identified as one of the key ways to help teachers broaden and strengthen their professional development experiences (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Schön, 1987), we believe that it is essential for teachers to have explicit opportunities to document their reflections and make their thinking public. E-portfolios have emerged as an important medium to make visible these reflections "encouraging deeper learning through the use of multi-media artifacts as richer forms of literacy to express understanding" (Lambert, DePaepe, Lambert, & Anderson, 2007, p. 76). E-

portfolios are living and ongoing professional statements that are accessible to a full professional learning community.

With the increasing use of portfolios, and particularly e-portfolios in teacher education that provide evidence of knowledge development, the portfolio has been identified as a vehicle to provide data about teacher learning *during* teachers' professional development. In addition, professional literature has addressed various purposes for portfolio implementation with both pre- and in-service teachers. For example, during professional development, portfolios have been successfully used as a forum for documentation of directed reflection (Fox, White, Kidd, & Ritchie, 2008; Hammadou, 1998; Lyons, 2006; Wade & Yarborough, 1996; White, Fox, Muccio, & Bergeron, 2009). We support the belief that reflective writing should be a key component of teachers' portfolios; this is an area for which the need for additional research has been identified (Lyons, 1998, 2006). Reflection, according to Shulman and Shulman (2004), facilitates teachers' ability to learn from experience, initiate purposeful change, and become more conscious of their own understandings, classroom interactions, and dispositions. Building on the work of Brookfield (1995), Cochran-Smith (2001), Darling-Hammond (2006), and Lunenberg, Korthagen, and Swennen (2007) on the importance and development of critical reflection, reflection has been incorporated as an essential component of the e-portfolio for this project. The inclusion of such reflective writings provides a window into teachers' thinking (Fox, Kidd, Painter, & Ritchie, 2007).

We believe that, to be effective, professional development for teachers should be intentional, meaningful, and shared within a learning community of critical friends (Samaras et al., 2008, 2011). Accordingly, as part of our co-teaching of two project seminars, we designed and facilitated teachers' construction and sharing of e-portfolios that were shared via a community electronic Blackboard page. As participants embarked with strong commitment to further develop their teaching each created an e-portfolio designed to capture the salient components of his/her experiences in schools and seminars. We asked ourselves what aspects of their international learning experience were made visible in teachers' e-portfolios? In particular, we examined what puzzlements/understandings and reframed understandings did teachers report in their portfolios related to aspects of schooling and teaching in the USA and in Greece? We also explored the question of what did teachers discover and learn about themselves as professionals and about their Fulbright and USA colleagues during the process of developing their portfolios?

Dialogue and collaboration are two important components used in the professional development of teachers. As one looks at his or her own practice through reflection, one can begin to delve below the surface to confront some of the deep puzzlements encountered in teaching (Lunenberg & Samaras, 2011; Lunenberg & Willemse, 2006). Engaging in critical reflection can help make practice more explicit for change. Being able to construct and develop mutual

knowledge with colleagues can also help avoid misconceptions and stereotypes often associated with topics of culture and diversity, as well as present opportunities to learn from others and other cultures (Munro, 2007). There is a sense of empowerment being a part of a group examining similar questions. Collaborative reflection brings teachers out of isolation and offers them support when engaging in difficult or unknown content. These dialogues can take place within the faculty within a school, across schools, or even across broader international contexts. In the latter, we believe that critical dialogue and reflection among educators can even support the growth of inter-cultural communication.

Whether local or more international in scope, teachers benefit from critical conversations and professional learning, particularly given the rapidly changing worldscape in which we live. Around the world, many teachers are finding themselves in classrooms that are increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse and benefit from employing narrative as a tool for building teachers' thinking (Ball, 2009; Golombek & Johnson, 2004). Teachers need to reflect and use critical thinking skills and pose problems based in their educational settings while they explore new pedagogies, such as the development of technological content knowledge (Kitsantas, Sprague, & Shaklee, 2011). We also believe that the process of questioning and reflection is vital to developing a strong teacher identity examined through personal history self-study (Samaras, 2011; Samaras, Hicks, & Garvey Berger, 2004).

Method

Participants

The participants are in-service secondary education teachers of the humanities recruited from Greece through the Fulbright Foundation Office in Athens, Greece and were fully funded by the US Department of State. Participants are all Greek citizens whose primary language is Greek. There are 12 women and 7 men with a mean age of 32.3 and an age range between 27–40 years. Participants are teachers from a diversity of schools in terms of populations, locations, and school missions. At the time of the program participants had at least a bachelor's degree. Participants' highest earned degrees were 15.7% bachelor's, 78.9% master's, and 5.2% doctorate.

Context

The portfolio in this project was created as a performance-based document (Fox, 2010) to provide evidence of teachers' professional learning while at George Mason University (GMU) in the Fall 2010 and the follow-on work in Greece during the Spring–Summer 2011. This portfolio is designed to link the Greek project experiences with sets of national professional standards, including those articulated by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (www.nbpts.org). Its aim is also to promote the growth of critical reflective practice. The Portfolio provides program participants the opportunity to

synthesize and reflect upon their own teaching practices as they make important connections between program experiences and daily encounters with student learning in the context of school-based experiences.

Qualitative Measures

Multiple and varied data sources were used in this study. As we were particularly interested in the aspects of teachers' cross-cultural learning educational experiences documented in their e-portfolios, the e-portfolios were the primary source of data and included the following: 1.) completed assignments and reflections for each seminar, including an action research plan for enactment on their return to their classroom in Greece; 2.) a digital story of their U.S. experience; 3.) a personal blog; and 4.) videos and photos of their experiences in USA schools and communities. Secondary data included: 1.) pre- and post-seminar reflections completed in the two seminars we co-taught; 2.) semi-structured individual interviews; 3.) final exit essays; and 4.) instructor reflections and researcher memos.

Analysis

Data were analyzed qualitatively using the constant comparison method with categories identified (Creswell, 2007) through open, axial, and selective coding (Patton, 2002) and independently by each researcher. More specifically, we individually read and reread each teacher's portfolio contents using initial code identification with line-by-line coding, tag codes noted in margins, and with memoing of repeated statements. Preliminary categories were noted by each researcher independently. Preliminary categories which did not indicate saturation were not included in the major categories identified and overall trends were collapsed and re-titled accordingly. Secondary data analysis also entailed using the constant comparison method in examining participant pre- and post-seminar reflections, interviews, final exit essays, and instructor reflections and researcher memos for purposes of triangulating the data. As Maxwell and Miller (2008) recommend, instead of leaving the data segmented as categories, which may be concerned more with the structure of the text, the data were analyzed on a second level with meaning drawn from the text in a holistic fashion by examining for the connections and relationships between the categories across the full data set. This was particularly useful in trying to understand and capture a narrative of participants' experiences. Results are noted below.

Results

Five major themes emerged from the e-portfolios and across supporting data sources: 1.) cross-cultural ideas about schooling; 2.) student-centered teaching practices; 3.) growing intercultural mindedness; 4.) systematic and critical reflective practice; and 5.) ongoing professional development through critical friends groups and action research. Supporting the development of these themes, several topics also received targeted focus during critical friend discussion, such

as new technologies, communities of practice, ongoing development as reflective practitioners, and ways to make connections between theory and new practices. Electronic sharing of action research plans in whole group, as well as sharing of their digital photo stories, provided additional insights into teachers' plans for further development as classroom researchers upon return to Greece.

Cross-cultural Ideas about Schooling

Travelling to another country and being in another school system allowed participants to hold a mirror to the ways schooling and teaching were different and alike in the USA and Greece. Participants noted those differences and similarities soon after their arrival to the USA. The field experiences in schools was repeatedly mentioned as a major highlight of the program, as they were afforded extended time to embrace aspects of cross- and inter-cultural ideas and notions about schooling practices. They talked about and documented their cross-cultural observations of classrooms and school events, first noting differences and later remarking on similarities about learners and learning across cultures:

We experienced the differences in student life, had the chance to watch a football game, we were present during the "back to school night," something that was totally new to us, when parents come to school during the evening to follow an abbreviated version of their children's daily schedule.

Participants' reflections addressed their previously held stereotypes and differences in the university systems. This was evident in their reflections during seminars at the university, as well as in the school-based field experiences. They noted there was an adjustment period moving from one system to the other, and their observations moved from a more superficial level focusing on differences to a deeper level as they progressed through the program and school experiences. One participant reported it to be "very common for colleagues in the US to exchange views and ideas, observe each other's practice and, what was the most overwhelming, was that they openly comment on them and discuss them." Schooling is not only different in its structure but in its practices as this participant wrote in his blog:

Walking around schools last week I got to see things I could never have imagined . . . Are there schools where the bathroom walls are covered by the periodic table of elements in graffiti form, made by the students themselves? Are there schools where English, Biology and Technology classes are successfully integrated in one collaborative interdisciplinary project? Are there schools where 13-year-old High School assignments are published in *Nature* magazine or even *Scientific American*? If you say no it's better not to bet your money on it!

The Greek teachers appreciated that although the education systems are different they came to realize that teachers share common concerns and goals for students.

The openness and willingness to share and interact with the Greek teachers was recognizably different from Greek schools. One participant described this experience “as a reality I breathed in, asked questions, acted and interacted with American colleagues.” A general expectation from participants prior to arrival was that they would not be greeted with warmth and hospitality, something they had been led to believe before arriving in the USA. This stereotype was overwhelmingly discounted through their participation with project faculty, school-based faculty and Americans in general. As one participant wrote: “This contact showed us that stereotyping people is the biggest mistake one can make.”

Munby, Russell, and Martin (2001) note that the development of teachers’ knowledge is multifaceted and involves far more than teaching skills or content knowledge. For teachers’ learning to be meaningful, it must be situated in their classrooms with learners. In teachers’ final essays, they asked for more ‘hands on’ opportunity in field experience classrooms with more explicit connections in each of the seminars to field work. In future programs, we would add more opportunities for critical reflection about those school field experiences and provide time for more two-way discussions between the USA and Greek teachers regarding situational learning.

Teaching as Student-centered

Teachers wrote and reflected on the different pedagogies, and in particular, they focused on student-centered approaches. One captured this well: “We saw the implementations of new approaches to teaching . . .” and commented on what this really meant pedagogically and discussed in their critical friends groups ways that they might come to implement this upon return home. Participants’ understanding of diversity and its relationship to teaching and learning provided them with another opportunity to critically view their teaching and implement student-centered instruction. One commented that she will “try to take my students’ cultural background into consideration [while teaching] and never missing the opportunity to discuss social issues with them.” The seminars in differentiation and multicultural education were of particular interest to them because considering diversity was a relatively new area for study in some parts of their country. A participant made sense of student-centeredness through her own learning and university experiences:

In Greece, and I might say in Europe in general, University professors are viewed as the ultimate authorities, not only by their students, but also by society. Working in University is considered to be the highest point of academic and professional achievement. Consequently, they are expected to be remote, distant and difficult to approach, at least directly. . . . The US system does not operate on the professor being the authority but instead requires active student involvement.

Another participant posts her insight about this new concept: “Starting from the US primary school to high school, students are not message or information

recipients. They are expected to interact with their teachers-professors and with each other.” They realized that this concept was difficult to grasp at first but “eventually interaction became a daily activity and participation in class discussion and activities developed in a smooth and unobstructed manner after a while.”

Participants were asked to capture their perceptions in narrative and visual form about their role as refining their reflective capacity which some chose to scan into their portfolios. Along with his visual Venn diagram a participant wrote: “I [now] view myself as a facilitator whose role is to establish a learning environment where students learn, interact, and negotiate their knowledge free of biases, prejudices, and stereotypes.”

International Mindedness

All of the reflections addressed participants’ perspectives concerning international mindedness: “Global citizenship is something that Greeks must use their imagination about” wrote one participant. At GMU, while some teachers reported that the diversity of the population and region were seen as a striking contrast to what they see in modern Greece, a combination of lived experience in the USA along with seminar discussion and assignments helped to bring the idea of diversity to the surface for discussion. One participant blogged that these discussions “helped me understand a lot about myself and where I stand as a teacher in my practice towards minority students.” Ways of knowing teaching and the world became evident to participants. Another wrote “What I definitely learned about myself as a professional is that I only carry one perspective of the world around me; my decisions and actions as a teacher should be more carefully researched, assessed, and re-planned, after being informed of the different perspectives.” Participants grappled with the idea of a changing world that they recognized in the USA and now increasingly in Greece:

Up to some years ago, ethnic diversity was non-existent in Greek schools. The overwhelming majority of students were Greek in origin, either by both or one of the parents, and Christian Orthodox in religion. Nowadays, though, one can find students from a variety of countries, Albania, countries previously part of the USSR, Pakistan, India and several African countries, to name but a few. Consequently, any teacher can find himself/herself in situations that require integrating skills and flexibility.

These ideas and concepts were experienced, discussed, and examined within the critical friends groups, and then later applied to their portfolio reflections which we will address in the next theme.

Systematic and Critical Reflective Practice ~ “Anastoxastikos Ekpaideytikos”

When describing the role reflection played in their practice, participants described in their pre-seminar reflection that although they thought reflection was of “great importance, a key procedure and a main tool, reflection was not recorded or done in a very systematic and structured way.” There was repeated mention of an appreciation for learning how to systematically reflect, and this was evidenced most particularly as they developed their action research studies. One wrote:

I believe that we are aware of reflective practice in Greece through scholars’ writings (I think the term we use for it is “*anastoxastikos ekpaideytikos*”) but I personally had never been assisted through the procedure itself.

The e-portfolio provided a place for them to enter their reflections and engage in the process more systematically through blogs and online discussions about questions and issues they wanted to discuss or that the readings may have prompted, e.g., “reflective practices were truly amazing in that they helped us walk a path of self awareness as teachers, and critical friends have become a new part of my teaching practice.” Participants often held their discussions and reflections in Greek because this enabled them to delve more deeply into topics and not hold language and writing in English as a barrier. We supported this because we knew that language plays a role in participants’ thinking and articulation of practice and the unique ways it connects to their own teaching practice. Some even wrote their reflections in Greek on their blogs and in their e-portfolios.

Participants planned to multiply their learning in Greece, an idea captured well by this participant: “I would like to ‘push’ and inspire my colleagues and students to apply the self-reflection of practice because it’s the best way to self-knowledge and development.” An appreciation for the act of reflection was vivid in another participant’s post seminar reflection: “Before the course, I reflected a lot on my teaching practices but from now on, I will not only reflect but also act,” while another wrote about “keeping a systematic record of my reflections and having a writing routine.” The willingness to be vulnerable and embrace the need for honesty and uncertainty of their puzzlements was evident in this participant’s post-seminar reflection:

I will take back the certainty that you can find your way through a problem provided that you are willing to get yourself in the uncomfortable position to come face-to-face with your sometimes wrong teaching practices, get exposed to your critical friends, and put time and effort in planning for change . . . critically observe others and yourself is the first step to transform and progress.

Ongoing Professional Development through Critical Friend Work

Participants worked in “critical friends” groups (Hole & McEntee, 1999) and became trusted colleagues who sought peer support and validation of their research to gain alternative perspectives about their reframing of practice (Samaras, 2011). A participant stated that she “learned that in a teacher’s job, lots of issues shouldn’t be viewed as a problem versus solution or readymade and offered by our peers, but more like an incident occurring during a line of events . . . that the teacher should always be on the move as a life-long learner.” We found repeated statements that students appreciated how positive critical friend work was both modeled and taught: e.g., “. . . you’ve been an example of great cooperation and team work; observing the way you co-taught has set an excellent example for me as to how I could go with teaching my class collaboratively with another teacher.” Thus, the idea of critical friends can extend to a co-teacher model which could promote the idea of interpersonal reflection. As the teachers grappled with new thoughts and made sense of how they would apply pedagogies in their home country’s context, the e-portfolio served as a means to help them and us understand the process and complexities of their applications. Teachers had examined cross-cultural ideas about schooling with critical friends and considered more closely their ideas about how to prepare their own students for a changing world. Teachers are now continuing to document in their e-portfolios the challenges they face to integrate their understandings about student-centered instruction and interactive and experiential learning. Some express the complexity of returning to enact those changes alone and in schools where such notions are new.

The salient long-term effects of their proposed action plans and critical friends groups on professional development continue to be analyzed. The teachers are still reflecting, implementing and experimenting in their classrooms and schools with follow-on to occur in summer 2011. Nonetheless, the results indicate that the participants’ e-portfolios and the reflective process that accompanies the creation of these living documents to date had a positive impact on the teachers’ knowledge and thinking. The results will continue to provide ongoing evidence of the process and types of reflection in which the teachers are engaged as they continue with their research and stay connected with their critical friends across the regions of Greece and with us. For example, “The [critical friend] discussions could act as a dress rehearsal for a more coordinated attempt to build a group of critical friends in Greece.” Another stated, “Upon my return from Greece, I hope that I will have the chance to use the same critical friend protocol in my school, by finding a new critical friend team but also by staying in touch with critical friend team I created in the US.”

The e-portfolio provides evidence that this practice has remained salient in their ongoing work, e.g., “I would like, now to be able to have more sessions with my colleagues, regarding collaborations and possible ways to improve ourselves, our students learning abilities, both as a whole and as different persons.” Prior to leaving the USA, he had already initiated talks with the computer science

professor “to set up small online environments (e.g., blogs), where our students will be able to store information, share it with each other online, exchange opinions and see this as a learning game, that will bring them closer, both with each other, and with the learning process.” The following quote documents a participant’s view on the sustainability of their collaboration:

One of the most valuable experiences that I acquired was the chance to talk to people, share ideas in an informal, most of the times, way, regarding pedagogical matters, teaching procedures. To this aim, the notion of *critical friends*, although something, practically, not unknown, pointed out the value of having people that you trust and let them influence your work, improve and facilitate your personal attempt to improve yourself . . . I will try to transfer this procedure in my own field in my small school in Greece.

Discussion

The e-portfolios served as a forum for application of teachers’ learning and reflection during their time in the USA and provided a place to extend their work upon return to Greece. While the e-portfolio itself, the reflective process, and the technology to support the creation of an e-portfolio were new to participants, they embraced and engaged in this new learning forum. The e-portfolio provided a cognitive space for participants and program faculty to archive reflections and document their experiences over time and in an ongoing manner. Participants shared their experiences orally and through written reflection. They recorded new experiences and shared digital archives that captured experiences in US schools and their interpretations of these experiences. By having the opportunity to read others’ reflective writings and impressions, view colleagues’ digital photo stories, and videos made during school-based activities, the e-portfolios encouraged participants to compare and contrast, to think deeply and to use multi-media to express their reframed understandings (Lambert, DePaepe, Lambert, & Anderson, 2007) about schools in the U.S. These experiences were captured for sharing and have been updated upon their return to Greece.

As an international project, the Greek Teacher Professional Development Program has also enabled us to better understand and study our pedagogical practices with teachers outside the USA, as well as in our work with practicing teachers in the USA. Even though these contacts have continued over the months since the group returned and their work is ongoing, in many ways we feel as if we have only begun to understand the extent to which various experiences have influenced their teaching practice or ours. The e-portfolios in this project have created a space where all of us — both participants and researchers — can continue to understand and refine our understandings about the results of these professional learning experiences as they are applied in teachers’ classrooms (Fenstermacher, 1994). Both participants and instructors became more globally

mindful about the challenges that schools and teachers increasingly face in today's classrooms. As a result, we as instructors were able to engage with participants more responsively during class and now after the USA component. This sharing was essential to our growing awareness and thinking of inter-cultural learning (Lunenberg & Willemse, 2006). Several recommendations emerge as a result of this study.

Recommendations

- 1.) As the notion of critical reflective practice and critical friends groups was new to international teachers, adequate pre-program orientation and time within each seminar should be allotted to introduction, discussion, development and ongoing work in critical collaborative inquiry so that this important professional skill might develop and become part of teachers' ongoing professional practice which they can continue with colleagues.
- 2.) The professional portfolio provided an electronic forum for teachers to capture their experiences, reflections, action plans, and growth. The contents of the portfolio should clearly align with the goals and objectives of the program in order for program faculty and participants to be able to examine the results of their experiences and consider these in the context of the desired learning outcomes.
- 3.) The portfolio captured the results of the academic component of the program and provided project faculty to examine the results of their work. In the future, faculty should specifically design prompted reflections that capture participants' growth and change over the course of the project and including the fieldwork component. A blog or other online journal might also capture the nature and content of this growth and change over time, and upon return to participants' home country.
- 4.) When feasible, it would be beneficial for USA teachers involved in the project to have additional opportunities for follow-on work with their international partners. Funding for such aspects of international work is not always available, but nonetheless, while some of the Greek and USA teacher partners have remained in contact, knowing more about the development of intercultural understanding for U.S. educators and their K-12 students would be an important addition to promote deeper international understandings.

Future Directions

In closing, we share a participant's reflection and an instructor's reaction:

Participant: I view life as a collection of instances, moments, photographs. This is all we are left with and all we remember after time passes. The people we meet and the moments we get to spend with them.

(Instructor e-mail response to participant): Your comment reminds me of what my dear mother learned from her father who was from Limnos: *Olo teen zoe eenai matia*. All of life is what we see with our eyes and our experiences with others (as opposed to what we collect and possess).

We realized that we also embrace this belief in our teaching and living practices. Our experiences with the Greek teachers provided us not only a rich co-teaching experience where we were challenged to learn through new eyes but also further developed our capacity for deeper understanding about ways to engage in and promote inter-cultural competence with teachers in the USA and abroad. Because of the e-portfolio, we along with the participants, continue this research journey in multiple dimensions to seek deeper understandings what the teachers learned, what remained salient in their thinking, and how these practices are being applied upon their return to Greece.

Face-to-face time proved to be invaluable as it formed a strong relationship among participants, including ourselves. Nonetheless, it is the power of sustaining critical communication across countries through technology that is supporting ongoing research to understand the scope and nature of learning further. We look forward to discussions this summer and strongly believe that the e-portfolio, with a carefully developed set of objectives and standards, including systematic reflective writings, has supported participants' learning and served to make visible the ongoing nature of this project and its participants' learning. It has created a cognitive space allowing us to continue to understand more about the impact of our work and invite inter-cultural conversations about teaching and learning.

Notes

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