



# English Writing Portfolio: Practice and Effectiveness of Writing Portfolio across Bhutanese Schools

Leki Tshering

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the major overhaul of English curriculum in 2008 in Bhutan, students centered activities became a quintessential part of learning process thereafter. Maintaining an individual writing portfolio is one important part of the new curriculum. This is aimed at catering to different domains of learning such as cognitive abilities, behavioral skills, values and attitudes. (CAPSD,2005). However, over the years of its introduction and implementation, the effectiveness of students' writing portfolio in meeting the curriculum outcomes and expectations has become a subject of debate and discussion amongst the teachers and students across the country. This evidence from the teachers resounds loud and clear when they state that, "Considering the size and number of students in the class and number of periods per week, it is impossible for the teachers to give equal importance to portfolio as well as students' notebook. So teachers fail to give proper follow up for the work done." (CERD, 2009). The problem persisted even as the curriculum has been in use over more than a decade and half.

The real cause of the problem and the degree of its severity has remained largely unknown to any stakeholders due to lack of proper study. This paper is a modest attempt to understand the nature and the extent of the problem that exist in the present practice of maintaining a writing portfolio with close emphasis given to the assessment, quality, level of teachers and parents, and how portfolios are retained for future reference.

In education, assessment and evaluation forms an integral part of a good curriculum and they act as, 'an instruments that measure pupils learning and performance standards', (REC, 2012). Much of the learning and performance standards encompass coherent and correct grammar, development of critical and analytical thinking, following writing process and few others (CERD, 2002). The Silken Knot: Standards for English for Schools in Bhutan,

published by Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) , which serves as the framework documents for English curriculum development deems writing as an important skill and advocates writing portfolio from level 4 onwards (CERD, 2002). Similarly, the new curriculum of 2006 mandates students to maintain a writing portfolio from as early as third standard.

In the educational parlance, writing portfolio is defined as a purposeful collection of students' work that tells the story of a student's effort, progress, or achievement (Arter, 1990, Danielson, and Abrutyn, 1997). It helped students to become actively involved in assessing their needs, progress, achievement, and effort. (Famim and Jalali, 2013). Therefore, it requires diligent effort from all stakeholders including teachers, parents and relatives, and individual students. Evidently, this research would call for information and data from all the stakeholders for the consolidation of its outcomes in order to build a sound base of judgment and justification for the problem stated.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a complex process essential for extending learning, thinking and communicating with others'. (Dunsmuir et al. 2015; Dunsmuir & Clifford, 2003; Williams, 2000). An essential skill allows people to participate fully in today's society and to contribute to the economy (Dunsmuir et al. 2015) and is humankind's most powerful tools. (Walker, 2014) As an art, it demands practice in different forms and this can be achieved through careful and conscious planning of the curriculum (CERD, 2002). Studies infers that writing can be achieved with two approaches, "cognitive," writing as a result of individual conscious effort and "social," a collaborative effort (Barber, 2015) and according to the Cognitive Process Theory of Writing ( Flower and Hayes 1981) cited in (Barber, 2015) it is a goal driven activity. This is the desired



goals and what even the revised English Bhutanese curriculum seeks to achieve. Furthermore, the English Curriculum Frame work of New Normal Curriculum of Bhutan aims to teach the skills of viewing and representing, through which learners can create texts using multimodal sources should be given a place in the revised curriculum

(DCPD,2022). However, as already elucidated from the finding in literature and other sources that it is not in congruent to it.

The loopholes of the flawed writing portfolio practice are to be ascertained through studies. This paper endeavors to figure out the main cause of the problem by studying roles of each stakeholder key partners responsible for making students' writing portfolio at par with the requirement of the curriculum goals. Assessment of student's achievement in all areas of learning is one aspect of a good curriculum.

Theories of learning (n.d.) states that writing is "sine qua non of schooling" and one means by which schools assess progress. However, it is imperative that any learning processes is measured and assessed by using standard and systematic techniques.

Assessment is defined as the purposeful, systematic and ongoing collection of evidence for use in making judgments about students' demonstrations of learning and is an integral part of learning and teaching process (NEF, 2009). A teacher uses various assessment methods and techniques to assess individual student's learning progression in the course of teaching learning process. Education system in Bhutan witnessed many bouts of revision in its curriculum. The last revision of English curriculum took place in 2006 implemented in 2008. It incorporated greater developments in teaching learning methods. The very apparent one and much desired pedagogy of 21st century is the student-centered pedagogy considered as most suited to our young Bhutanese learners (CERD, 2009). It not only brought in major pedagogical shift, but also transformed the assessment practices throughout different levels of schooling. This transformation from traditional exam oriented assessment method to the mix mode of evaluating students' performance brought in an array of assessment systems that include various kinds of formative continuous assessment such as class work, homework, maintaining portfolios and many other forms of evaluation and summative assessment. The assessment of writing is central to the process of effective teaching and learning (Dinsmuir, 2015, Jones, 2002). One way by which writing can be assessed is by maintaining a writing

portfolio. (Murphy, 1999) cited in ( Nezakatgoo, 2011),states that, 'no system of assessment is as perfect as portfolio for writing assessment as it demands students to write as well as give freedom to choose the topic, audience, responses revision strategies,...'. Therefore, the focus of this research is to study the effectiveness of writing portfolio in the acquisition of English as a Second Language (ESL) in Bhutan.

The proposition of the research is substantiated based on the findings from two primary sources. Firstly, Evidences collected from different literary sources, mainly from the findings of Rinpung Experiment conducted by Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD, 2009) titled Teachers' Perception about the New English Curriculum: Reflections and insights from the classroom. Secondly, evidences gathered from students and teachers during occasional informal discussion, which provides valuable information on the effectiveness of students' writing portfolio. By and large, this finding reveals that students and teachers have diverse views regarding the effectiveness of the English writing portfolio. Therefore, it can be concluded that the revised curriculum has not been able to fully meet the expected objectives and requirement of the curriculum. Hence, it calls for an in-depth study.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The major shift in this reformed English curriculum is the huge emphasis placed on the acquisition of language competencies relating to the core domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing by the learners (DCPD, 2022). While judging from different literature and views expressed by the English teachers from the classroom teaching experiences, there is a mixed impression regarding how the writing portfolio is able to achieve this. Many agree that practice of maintaining the portfolio has seemingly diverted away from the expectations of the curriculum goals, thus, the essence and effectiveness has dwindled over time resulting to failure in meeting curriculum objectives.

Assessment and evaluation forms an integral part of a good curriculum in education and they act as, "an instruments that measure pupils learning and performance standards." (REC, 2012). Students' performance and progress in reading, writing, listening and speaking are assessed in several ways. A teacher from Thimphu reveals that the new curriculum of 2006 will assist in improving the four strands namely reading, writing, listening and speaking. Therefore, 'equal focus has been



given to the four strands so that children can improve these skills'. (CERD, 2009). Moreover, 'Education as an important indicator of GNH mandates students to engage in creative learning and expression'. (Daga, 2014). This makes the curriculum holistic and requires metrics that measures all the aspects. It is viewed that the new curriculum and its various modes of assessment will help in addressing these needs.

Whatever the type or the purpose of writing, the writer should be able to put in words that exactly express their thoughts and feelings. This requires skills. Learners need to practice so that they develop their abilities and their skills in the different kinds and purposes of writing. (DCPD, 2022). Maintaining a writing portfolio is one amongst various modes of assessment practices in writing. One quintessential quality of writing portfolio is it is a continuous process and exhibits progress over time. (Hughes, 2003) asserts that, "The best way to test people's writing ability is to get them to write." For this reason, curriculum mandates assessing students writing proficiency and progress by allowing students to write consistently through maintaining a writing portfolio. (Arter, 1990, Danielson, and Abrutyn, 1997) defines it as, "a purposeful collection of students' work that tells the story of a student's effort, progress, or achievement". (DeFina, 1992) believes that, 'students' portfolios easily demonstrate the strength of a curriculum that integrates reading and writing across all content areas.' Furthermore, (Banta, 2003) points out that, "Conspicuous shortcomings in reasoning and interpretation of information in several portfolios may point to the need for revising the curriculum". Therefore, National English curriculum framework declares maintaining a writing portfolio as an important activity and instructs its implementation from as early as the third standard with significant amount of marks allocated for different standards.

A typical writing portfolio contains articles like essays, book reports, short stories, and creative writings of different genres. 'It is a collective input of both students and teachers'. (CAPSD, 2007). It is a product of a well coordinated of partnership between student, teacher and parents and considered as, "metacognitive process." (DeFina, 1992). It should reflect a student's work over a period of time so that growth can be observed, unlike tests, which provide only a glimpse of a student's work at particular time, portfolios allow for a view of a student's work across time, task, subject, and style.

Through portfolio, students are expected to develop four different domains specifically,

cognitive, behavioral skills, attitudes and values. (CAPSD, 2007). After nearly a decade of its introduction, the new English curriculum has given the Bhutanese teachers and learners alike a renewed sense of direction and path for learning English. However, it too is not without its share of flaws and loopholes. A lower secondary school teacher asserts that, 'the weaker group of children cannot put up with the curriculum, which expects every child to be a critical thinker'. (CERD, 2009). This expectation has attributed to several repercussions such as rampant practice of plagiarism, low quality of writing and over emphasis on areas of less importance like making it flashy. Teachers have expressed their concern as they occasionally encountered blatant plagiarism; from this, it is unlikely that the writings are the result of their imagination and critical thinking. Hence, resulted in failing to meet even the primary objectives like coherent communication with correct grammar, using writing as a way of learning, exploring, clarifying on their thoughts, feelings, experiences and relationships (CAPSD, 2007.). This evidently calls for a careful examination and study for solutions. 'Ideally, the portfolio should be passed on from grade level to grade level'. (DeFina, 1992). Even the new curriculum demands that the teacher retains in the class the original or an exemplary portfolio items to be used for future class (CAPSD, 2007). For example, Crow Island School in Winnetka Illinois, Encourage students to gather PF over six years in elementary school to allow them to see evidence of their own learning. (Hebert 2010). However, in Bhutanese situation, let alone retaining the past portfolios, many students don't even get back the portfolio. Even if they do so, it is hardly used in the next level as an evident for gauging the progress of writing. a high school teacher mentions why. "Considering the size and number of students in the class and number of periods per week, it is impossible for the teachers to give equal importance to portfolio as well as students' notebook. So teachers fail to give proper follow up for the work done". (CERD, 2009). There could be many other unknown reasons attributing for this shortcoming that can be studied in the future. 'Portfolio can open the learning process to parents, siblings, and family members'. (Shores and Grace, 1998) Furthermore, (DeFina 1992) states that, "A program that invites parents to become partners in learning is also definitely cause for celebration and unreserved support." Even the mandate of the new curriculum clearly articulates about the writing portfolio as, 'it helps communicate to parents what has been learned'. (CAPSD 2007). This requires teachers and



students to retain the writing portfolio along with the grades as a document that testifies their progress and level of learning.

The Curriculum Assessment and Evaluation guidebook clearly directs the amount of marks to be awarded, but, no specific criteria is given on how to assess students writing portfolio. This has led to teachers awarding marks based on the criteria of their own design; this has thus resulting to an anomaly in awarding marks in different schools across the country. It seems evident when a teacher recalls about the considerable amount of workload, "Note book corrections, portfolio amendment and other works ... Well that's too much for English teachers." (CERD, 2009). Therefore, this study would help in seeking solution for this issue. Writing is an important component of learning process. It reflects the evolving skill of the individual language learner (Langer and Applebee, 2007). For budding writers to acquire and hone this skill, it is important to address to the issues discussed above so that every writing endeavor becomes a fruitful experience.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research requires both qualitative and quantitative data for which triangulation method has been applied as it helps in the fulfillment of broad objectives (Denscombe, 1999) by enabling the analysis of result obtained from students, teachers, and parents. Furthermore, it makes the analysis of result easier by using different variables from the questionnaire. This project is attempted explicitly in line with various research objectives, which revolves around student's level of enjoyment and understanding the purpose of portfolio, the originality of students' work, parents' and teachers' involvement, amount of time spent, assessment practices and student's general attitude towards writing portfolio. All of these have helped in answering various underlying questions that concerns about the quality and practices of a good writing portfolio. Thus helping to gauge the overall efficacy of the writing portfolio in meeting the curriculum goal.

This research is primarily an exploratory research. Cause and effect relationship was used in order to explore and find out how the dependent variable is influenced by different independent variables stated in the theoretical framework. Qualitative and quantitative interviews' using structured questionnaires were conducted for students, teachers, and parents at different locations. Sampling was based on equal representation in

terms of gender, class level, and locations. The response rate from all the respondents was very positive with more than 90 % response rate from students and only few teachers and parents abstained. For result and analysis, the Grounded Theory approach of Glasier and Strauss of 1967 is used to organize qualitative research materials, how to code and make sense of material not leaving it to 'speak for themselves'. (Denscombe, 1999). Results on thematic analysis that covered areas such as level of involvement and partnership, students' creativity, time spent etc., which were obtained from teachers and parents were directly quoted or used on aggregate basis for comparing with the findings from students. Findings from three sources were put together and presented in different forms for cumulative result interpretation and analysis. Towards the end of the research, an array of strategic recommendations based on the findings from the problems is presented. Survey result from all the three groups of respondents reveals that some areas in writing portfolio such as amount of time spent, originality of work, retrieval of students work for future, and assessment practices indicates the need for review and workout for methods to chisel out those undesirable practices so that every effort becomes a meaningful endeavor. This research is by no means comprehensive in any areas of study. Scope for future researchers in different areas has been presented. Challenges faced in this research provides broad view and precautionary measures and solutions to the future researchers for a methodologies to adapt, objectives and hypothesis to use, choice of software packages for data analysis and interpretation that are best suited for the purpose. It is hoped that with these experiences and challenges, future studies would become less demanding and more productive, which would help in making students' writing a step closer to achieving the desired goals.

### IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research seeks to:

- 1) Study the students' understanding of the purpose of maintaining writing portfolio in the acquisition of English as a Second Language (ESL).
- 2) Determine the amount originality/creativity of the articles written by the students in their portfolio collection.
- 3) Study about the extent of parent's involvement and partnership in maintaining portfolio and its influence on student's work
- 4) Find out how grading is done and see if uniformity/ consistency is maintained across schools Bhutan or not. Study about what is being done in



order to maintain the continuity of the students' works by teachers and by individual students

## V. RESEARCH PROBLEM

### 5.1 Research Questions

1. Do the current practices of maintaining writing portfolio fulfill the requirement of the curriculum standards?
2. Are the write-ups in the portfolio authentic and free of plagiarism?
3. Do teachers across the country use standardized assessment criteria to maintain uniformity while assessing students' portfolio?
4. Do students and teachers have the practice of retrieving the portfolios for the future reference?

### 5.2 Hypothesis

H1: A student whose writing portfolio contains creative and original write-ups has strong positive correlation to individual improvement in writing.

H2: Good grading system has strong correlation with student's level of enjoyment in maintaining a writing portfolio

H3: The practice of retaining the writing portfolio for future reference has positive relation with improvement in the writing proficiency

H4: Improvement in writing and improvement in the general academic performance of the students are strongly correlated.

## VI. RESEARCH METHODS:

This study is an exploratory research, since limited attention has been given on the quality and effectiveness of the writing portfolio in Bhutanese schools, It attempts to augment the understanding by exploring students', parents' and teacher's attitude, perspective towards maintaining a writing portfolio by employing both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Triangulation method, a method defined by (Deczin, 1978) cited in (Jick, 1979) as "the combination of methodologies in the study of same phenomenon." of data interpretation, analysis will be used by mixing qualitative, and quantitative information obtained from students, teachers and the parents.

## VII. SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION (PRIMARY DATA)

**7.1 Sampling and Sample size:** For this research, probability sampling has used been for primary data collection, because it is based on the idea that the people or even that are chosen as a sample are chosen because the researcher has some notion of probability that these will be a representative cross-section of people or events in

the whole population studied.(Denscombe, 1999). Since it is a small-scale research, fewer samples covering three different groups of people that include students, teachers and parents. The sample size taken was only 70 respondents. Sample needs to be carefully selected (Denscombe, 1999). This was taken into careful consideration and hence the sample was chosen based on equal representation from both the genders, equal representation of students, teachers and parents from rural, semi-urban. Students were from class VII-XII with equal representations from all the standards.

**7.2 Qualitative Data collection:** (for teachers & parents) this research used both qualitative and quantitative method of data collection. Open-ended questionnaire with 10 questions were distributed to 25 teachers for qualitative data collection. This is done to gather teachers and parents views and deeper insights. As it is opinions which are sought rather than numbers (Dawson, 2002), fewer questionnaires were distributed. Structured questionnaires were used for primary qualitative data collection. This helped in exploring in more depth and provided good balance between richness and replicability. (Data Analysis, Interpretation and Presentation Source, n.d.). Teachers from urban, semi urban and rural schools were given questionnaires containing 10 questions (refer annexure IV & V) about their general perception and practices regarding the writing portfolio. Finding from this questionnaires were then used as anecdotal evidences for the research and some were even used as a means to compare with the findings from the students questionnaire. While choosing parents as respondents of the interviews, following things had to be taken into careful consideration: parents were educated and could read and write, they had at least some idea about what is a writing portfolio and they resided in urban, semi urban and rural areas. 10 samples were taken as parent interviewee. The findings were also used in the form of anecdotal evidence and as comparative tools that helped in further authenticating and strengthening the research.

**7.3 Quantitative Data collection** (for students): For quantitative data collection, questions was set containing 30 questions and tested for 10 schools which includes higher middle and lower secondary school located in a convenient location in rural, semi-urban and urban areas. Two methods were used to deliver the questionnaires. Online distribution in mails and in face book in order to get respondent from variety of locations. And drop and pick for schools located in convenient locations. This is to ensure that required number of respondent



take part in the interview representing from different region.

### VIII. SAMPLE POPULATION

Altogether 70 questionnaires for qualitative data compilation were distributed to 9 schools, however, only 64 students responded the questionnaires, 2 questionnaires were partially filled out without demographic information, and four respondents abstained. The response rate was 91 % for the quantitative questionnaire. For qualitative questionnaire distributed to teachers and parents,

only one teacher did not return the questionnaire and 2 parents abstained the questionnaire altogether, the response rate for qualitative questionnaire was good.

### IX. SCALING QUESTIONS

**9.1** Nominal Scale This scale is used for demographic questions which includes age, gender, school location and class.

**9.2** Ordinal/ Interval Scale Seven pointers Likert Scale from 1-7 was used and each number were translated as:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neutral	moderately agree	agree	Strongly agree

Likert scale was chosen because “it presumes the existence of an underlying (or latent or natural) continuous variable whose value characterizes the respondents’ attitudes and opinions”.(Clason & Dormody, n.d.). Nevertheless, it is also convenient in many ways for both the respondents and the researcher, as it is quicker to administer, quick and easy for respondents to respond, and it is likely that they will answer the entire question (Dawson,2002). As the sample population, comparing to the qualitative questionnaire was large and contained 35 questions including the demographic questions, interval scale questionnaire was found most appropriate for this research.

### X. SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION

Internal secondary data has been acquired from different publications of Department of Curriculum and Research Department (DCRD), Ministry of Education (MoE), Colleges of Education (PCE), RIM and school library. Various educational journals available online in google, googlescholar, and other reliable search engine were also used extensively as a source of secondary data.

### XI. DATA ANALYSIS

Since this is a small-scale research, data analysis part was kept as simple as possible and confined only on the basic aspects and the most important areas of the research. Analysis of the result was conducted using a combination of excel spreadsheet for simple data analysis and statistical package for Social Science (SPSS) which is considered as a versatile software for complex data interpretation. In few instances, data were availed

from SPSS and transformed into pie diagram, histograms, graph and other simpler means of diagrammatic representation in excel spreadsheet. However, it was a difficult task. According to (Denscombe, 1999), ‘the task facing the researcher is to use these facilities to present the data in a way which is clear, precise, and informative’. This overwhelming raw data along with wide range of possibilities for analysis and presenting the data by the package was a daunting task and required careful attention.

### XII. DATA INTERPRETATION & REPRESENTATION

Interpretation is the process of attaching meaning to the data; it demands fare and careful judgments. (Data Analysis, Interpretation and Presentation, n.d). In order to interpret and represent the data, simple tabular analysis and graphs were employed. The choice of different method of interpretation is based on its’ appropriateness and its ability to illustrate the information in best possible manner which would help in addressing the objectives of the research.

**12.1** Quantitative Data representation and interpretation Various methods of qualitative data analysis and interpretation such as simple descriptive analysis mostly for the information derived from the teachers and parents were used. Correlations between different variables were determined and use cross tabulations for different variable were applied as per the need. Triangulation method using different related variables to interpret and pin point the specific issue were also used in many instances.



**12.2** Qualitative data representation and interpretation According to (Lacy & Luff, 2009), qualitative questions are good in answering ‘why’, ‘what’, or ‘how’ questions. It was used to collect data from the teachers and parents to answer to the questions like what do they write in their portfolio, how much time do they spend in writing portfolio and how students view writing portfolio. (Lacy & Luff, 2009) reminds that there are no ‘quick fix’ techniques to qualitative data; it is interpretative and subjective exercise. Use of other electronic data analysis software was beyond the scope for qualitative data. So, it was analyzed manually where by transcript of individual respondents were counted and entered in the excel spreadsheet. Aggregate results were used as the primary means of qualitative data source.

### XIII. RESULTS INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

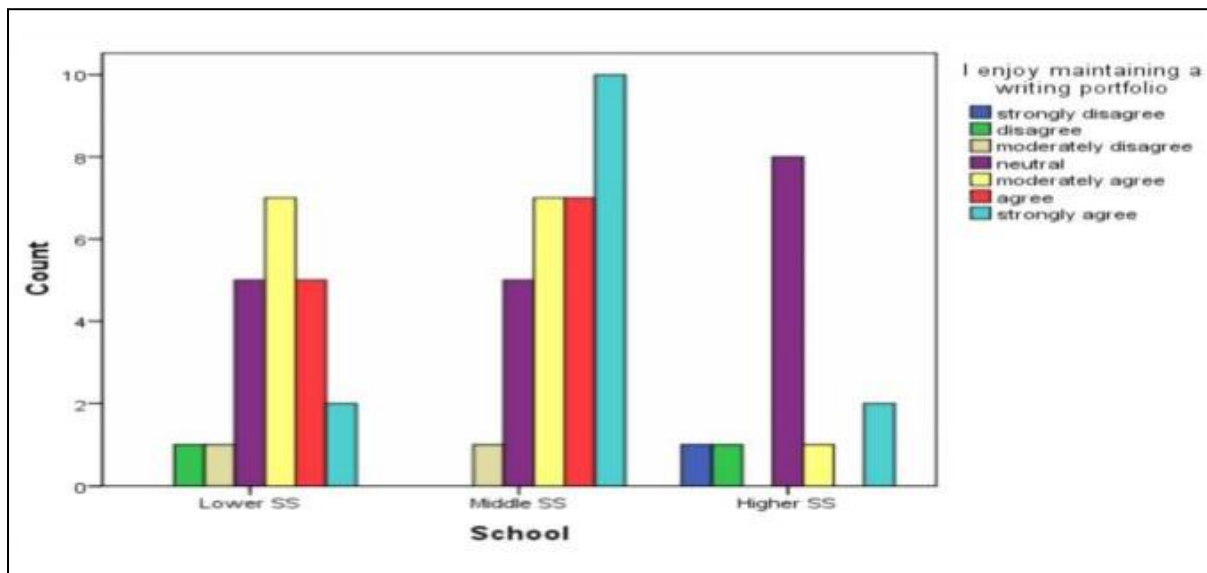
While analyzing the results of the findings, only few important variables were used as a main reference for analysis and interpretation. It includes students’ interest, parents and teachers’ partnership and involvement, assessment procedure and

practices, amount of time spend. These are the indicators that assisted in understanding the level of effectiveness of the writing portfolio the most. Others were used as supplementary information to the important and major areas of the analysis. Therefore, even for interpretation and analysis, triangulation method was used.

#### 13.2. Students’ level of satisfaction in maintaining writing portfolio by school level

The finding reveals that large section of students enjoy maintaining the writing portfolio. Total of 41 students or 64 % of students either moderately agree, agree, or strongly agrees that they enjoy maintaining portfolio. The largest portion of students who likes maintaining writing portfolio is from the middle secondary school followed by the students of lower secondary school. Higher secondary school students scored the least in liking reading portfolio.

This revelation suggests for a need to increase the efforts put by the teachers and students of higher secondary level. This would help them in exhibiting positive attitude towards the practice of maintaining writing portfolio and improve passion in writing.



#### 13.3. Amount of time spent in writing portfolio

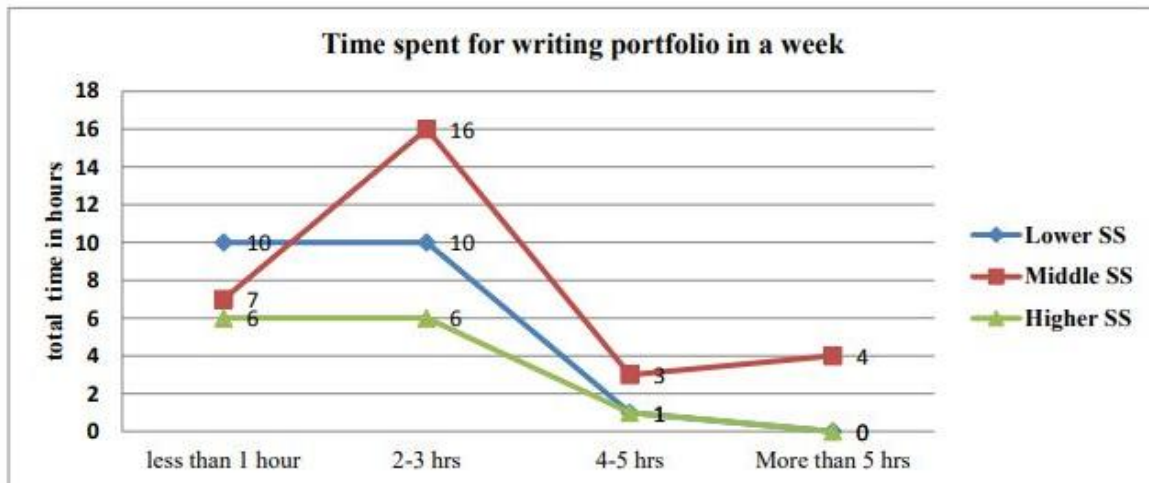
On an average, students of middle secondary school spent more time in maintaining writing portfolio followed by the lower secondary students. Whereas higher secondary school students spent least amount of time in maintaining writing portfolio. The amount of time spent and student’s level of enjoyment at different standard are also closely related. Higher number respondents from

middle secondary schools (10 respondents) highly agrees that they enjoy maintaining writing portfolio, while only 2 respondents from lower secondary schools and higher secondary schools highly agrees that they enjoy maintaining writing portfolio. It is also correlates with less number of high school students agreeing that their teachers have explained about the importance of maintaining a writing portfolio. Only 10 students higher secondary



students agrees, in contrast to 23 middle secondary students agreeing that their teachers have explained about the importance of maintaining writing portfolio. According to the qualitative survey report from teachers, they have diverse view about the amount of time they spend; few teachers have responded that, “it depends on sincerity of students,

sincere students spend more time”, and few said, “Students hardly spend sufficient amount of time as required”. 8 teachers responded that they spend at least one hour in a week. Interestingly, this finding contradicts with students’ response about the amount of time they spend.

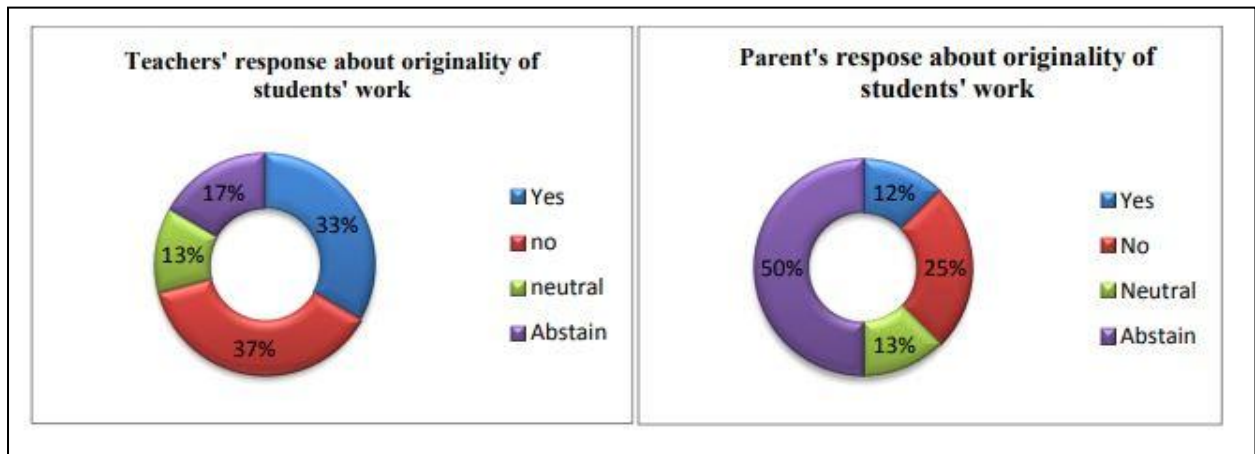


#### 13.4. Originality of students’ work in their writing portfolio

In this area, four variables are put side to side to make a comparison. Because all these variables are related to originality and effort of student’s work. While comparing it was found out that there are high percent of respondents who moderately agree, agree or strongly agree. (11, 10, and 12 respectively) that all the works are the result of their creativity. 17.2 % (11 respondents) of the respondents strongly agree that all the articles written are the result of their creativity; however, there are significant percent (7.8 %) of students who strongly disagree about it. The result is sharply contradicts when compared with 10.9 % of students strongly agreeing that their writing portfolio contains pieces of writings copied from some popular writers. Furthermore, it contradicts when 20.3 % of the respondents reveal that they find most of the students copying articles for their writing portfolio.

These findings are hugely contradicting and subject for further study so that true extend regarding originality and creativity of student’s effort in their writing portfolio can be depicted. Results from the teachers, obtained from the qualitative questionnaire, there is a divided view on the originality of students’ work 33 % agree that it is genuine work of students, while slightly higher percentage (37 %) disagree that it is their original work. Few account of what teacher say about student’s work are worth noting, ‘Many students portfolio are compilation of others writing.’ A teacher states that only few students do it sincerely, while most are “free riders”. This is an indication that there are many students do their work just to fulfill their requirements in obtaining marks. Therefore, proper action should be taken to find solution so that increase in such unscrupulous practices can be reduced.

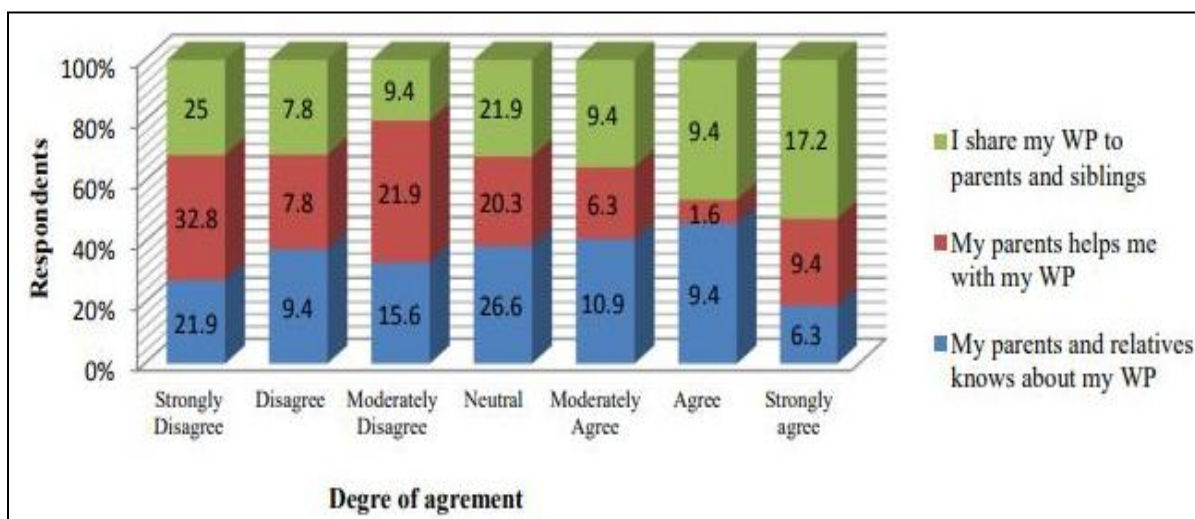




### 13.5. Level of parent's involvement

A portfolio is a tool for family centered curriculum (Shores and Grace, 1998). Therefore, parents' involvement in students writing portfolio is inevitable and essential. To reiterate (DeFina 1992), "A program that invite parents to become partners in learning is also definitely cause for celebration and unreserved support". In order to find out about the level of parents involvement and partnership, several questions were asked to students, teachers and parents. The findings from both the qualitative and quantitative questionnaire disclose the following report. According to the survey, whopping 32 % strongly disagrees that their parents play role in their portfolio, contrary to only 1.6 and 9.4% agrees or strongly agrees that their parents help them.

The result is reassuring form the questions when asked about whether they share and their parents and relatives knows about their writing portfolio or not. This is a proof that students put an effort to involve their parents and relatives whenever they do their writing portfolio. Statistics reveals that 21.9% strongly disagree that their parents and relatives knows about their portfolio, but 10.9%, 9.4 % students agrees, strongly agree that their parents and relatives knows about it. Fairly good percentage of students (17.2%) strongly agrees that they share their writing portfolio to their parents and siblings, although students who strongly disagrees to this is slightly higher, but, this portion is significant enough to indicate that students' at least make an attempt to do something so that their parents and relative knows what they are doing.



### 13.6. Teachers Role and Assessment Practices

Teacher's role and involvement in students writing portfolio is imperative. They play significant

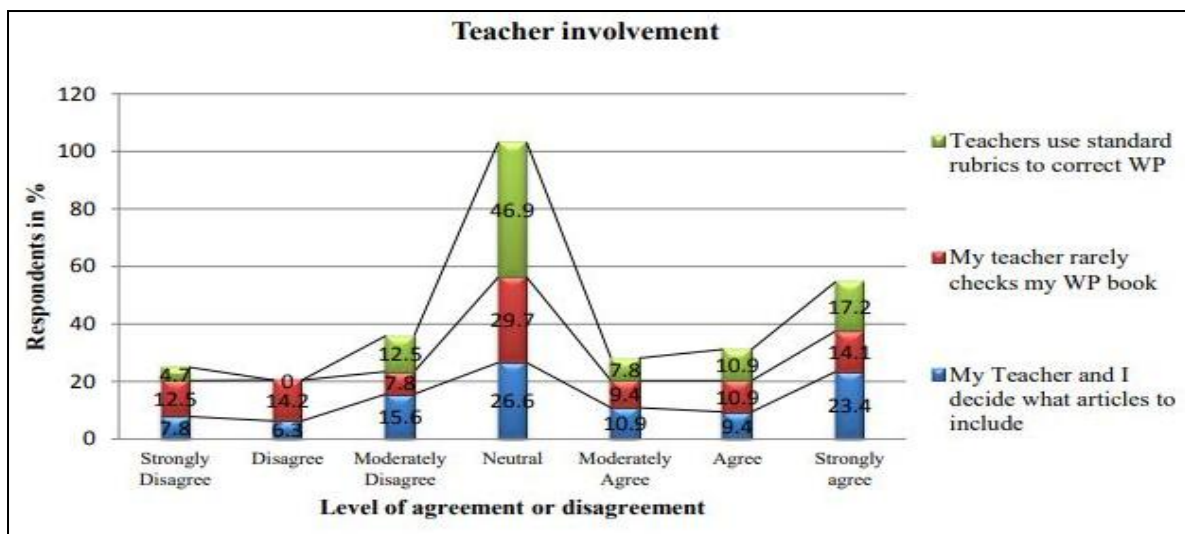
role in building a good writing portfolio. In this research, their role is assessed and measured through numerous questions such as teachers and



students partnership in deciding on what write-up to include, communicating about the importance of writing portfolio, and quality and frequency of assessment. All these questions either directly or indirectly provide information about teacher's role. Different assessment practices are also discussed in this part, because assessment of writing portfolio is another important role of teachers. Frequency and quality of assessment have been discussed along with its influence on children's attitude. For example, students getting satisfied with the marks they score and teachers awarding marks for the effort they put nearly corresponds when 17.2% and 18.8% students strongly agree about it.

The matter of concern is regarding the frequency of assessment whereby 12.5%

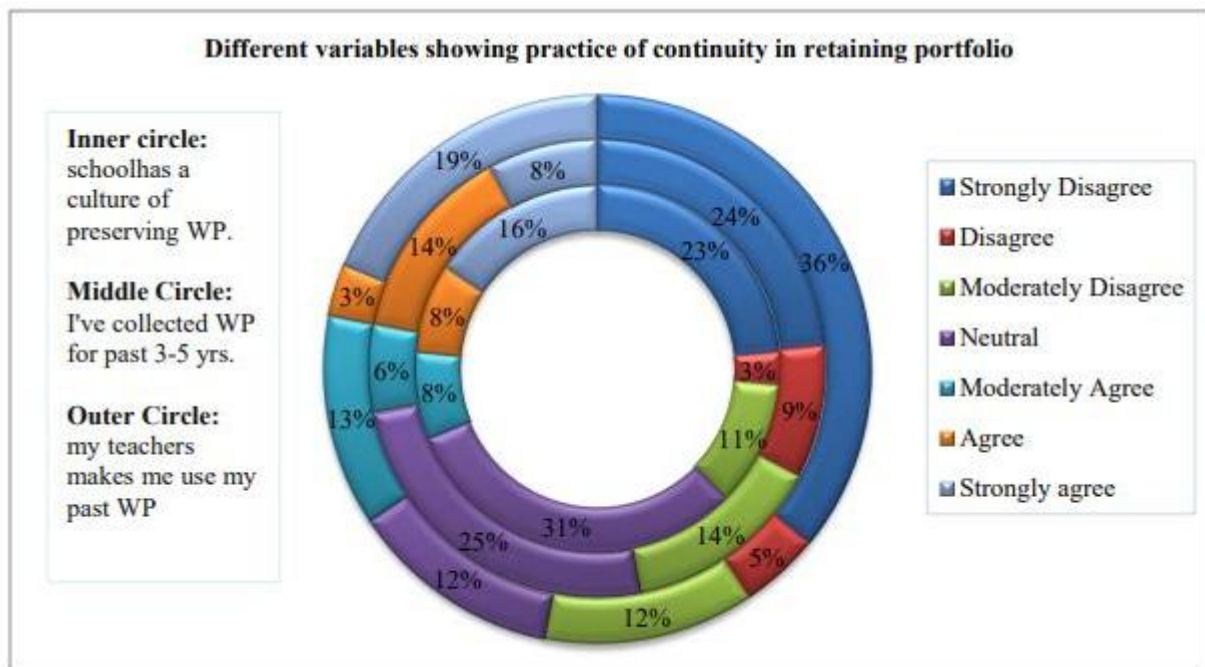
respondents strongly agree that their teacher rarely checks their writing portfolio and just 14.1% strongly disagree about it. The finding tells that a huge portion (23.4%) of students strongly agree that their teachers help in deciding on articles to be included in their writing portfolio. This is an indication that teachers play constant role in the process of writing a portfolio. Survey also reveals that 17.2% students strongly agree that teachers use standard rubrics when they correct the writing portfolio when compared to the other extremes where by meager 4.2% strongly disagree about it. This is a positive indication of teachers using various standard assessment practices.



### 13.7. Continuity of the writing portfolio

There are several ways to determine the continuity of the portfolio is maintained. One way is from number of previous years portfolios that students have collected. This should give clear indication about the practice of maintaining the continuity of the writing portfolios for several years. It is important to see whether the continuity is maintained or not because writing is a goal directed and self-sustained activity requiring skillful management of the writing environment. (Gale group, 2009). Therefore, to assess whether the goal has been achieved or students have made progress in writing, teachers and students should make comparison using the writing works of different years. containing 30 questions that they have their past portfolio collected for last 3 to 5 years. Conversely, only 6 students on average agree that they have collected their past portfolio. Another

variable that agree with this finding is nearly same numbers of students (16 respondents) strongly disagree that their teacher return their portfolio at the end of academic year. This is further supported when a large number of respondents strongly disagree that their school has a culture of retaining the portfolio in separate cabinet and when asked whether teachers makes them use their portfolio in the next academic year, the students disagreeing again is very high. (23.4% and 35.9% respectively) This implies that the practice of retaining past portfolio is not practiced in most instances and has failed to meet one of the important requirement of the curriculum which states that students best work are filed over a given period of time. (CAPSD, 2006). From this point of view, the effectiveness of maintaining a writing portfolio is a matter of concern.



#### 14. Summary of results testing the hypotheses

In order to test the hypothesis, mix of correlation, cross tabulations, and other simpler method using excel spreadsheet have been used for the purpose of variety. However, all four hypotheses were tried out using at least two methods for comparison and it produced nearly a similar result. All the tables are in the annexure.

**14.1. Hypothesis 1:** H1: A student whose writing portfolio contains creative and original write-ups has strong positive correlation to individual improvement in writing. The cross tabulation result indicates that there is strong relation between student's creativity and improvement in the standard of writing. 43.75 % respondents agree that there is relationship between the two variables. Therefore, it moderately supports the degree of relationship hypothesized. So, it proves true that originality and creativity of students works is associated with improvement in students proficiency of writing.

**14.2. Hypothesis 2:** H2: Good grading system has strong correlation with student's level of enjoyment in maintaining a writing portfolio. According to Pearson's correlation, its relation between grading system and student's level of enjoyment is -156. Score below -1 shows negative correlation (Denscombe, 1999). It can be concluded that there is negative relation between the two variables. Therefore, this findings proves completely opposite of what has been assumed

**14.3. Hypothesis 3:** H3: The practice of retaining the writing portfolio for future reference has positive

relation with improvement in the writing proficiency. The results reveal that only 3 respondents disagree that portfolio has improved their writing proficiency. It slowly increases and finally reaches to 38 respondents who strongly agree that maintaining portfolio has helped them improve their writing ability. For variable that shows students have retained their writing portfolio for last 3-5 years. 15 respondents strongly disagree. The number plummets down to merely 5 respondents who strongly agree. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is moderate relation and so the hypothesis proves to be untrue.

**14.4. Hypothesis 4:** H4: Improvement in writing and improvement in the general academic performance of the students are strongly correlated. Improvement in writing proficiency has moderately strong relation to general academic performance of the students with coefficient  $r = .694$ . Thus, the result support the relationship between two variables hypothesized to moderate degree.

#### 15. Recommendations

**15.1. Rigorous assessment methods and practices:** Although the finding shows that teachers follow some kind of systematic assessment, yet there are significant respondents who don't agree on the credibility of the quality of assessment. Therefore, more practical and appropriate assessment techniques is required so that the assessment becomes more credible.

**15.2. Increase parental involvement:** We have seen the importance of family engagement in the



students-centered curriculum. If writing portfolio is expected to bring positive change in students style of writing, all parties including parents should play greater role in assisting children in maintaining a better portfolio.

**15.3. Develop the practice of maintaining the past portfolios:** Finding indicates that although Bhutanese teachers and students know the importance of maintaining writing portfolio, but they fail badly in maintaining the continuity of past portfolios when viewed from different perspectives. Therefore, it is important to develop “rigorous” practice of maintaining the past portfolios using different means, as it is the best document to testify the progression made by each individual student in writing that would help in achieving the broad objectives of the curriculum.

**15.4. Emphasize on amount of time spend:** Time is a single detrimental factor of the quality of students’ writing portfolio. Teacher should explain about expected amount of time that each student should devote in a day or a week. This should be communicated to parents and parents should see that their children spend the time in writing portfolio as directed by teachers. This indirectly helps in increasing the amount of time that parents spend with children in assisting in writing portfolio.

#### 16. Limitations

➤ This research is time bound, (shallow literature review/ secondary data collection, interview, smaller primary data collection samples) that might give incorrect/ skewed information. It may not give true representation of the whole population.

➤ Difficulty in sample selection due to diverse and scattered population

➤ Expensive result analysis software to for small research was not very feasible and economical. Use of simple means of analysis tools such as excels spreadsheet and MS words were sometimes difficult and did not produce desired result. Sample selected may not represent students of lower classes as the samples were taken from class VII• and onwards. If they are to be included, separate questionnaire with simpler language and pictograms needs to be used. This would implicate extra time, resources and effort. Spread of questions in the quantitative questionnaire coverer many unnecessary areas and this lead to• overwhelmingly too many questions, which is not appropriate for small-scale research and results to difficulty during the interpretation and analysis of the result.

#### 17. Future scope of the research

➤ It would help in providing insights to teachers and students regarding the need to strengthen the writing portfolio by understanding the weaknesses and flaws of the current practices. Through this study, it would encourage for individual initiatives and effort for solutions within the confines of the classroom and the capacity so that no major changes nationwide is required which is often too expensive and time consuming.

➤ Assist all the stakeholders (students, teachers, parents and curriculum expertise) to work collaboratively in order to bring a better writing portfolio.

➤ Provide a better prospect to educationist and all related stakeholders (Ministry, curriculum experts, education managers and teachers) to reconsider and rethink of introducing better or improved practices of maintaining a writing portfolio. If not, finding a better alternative that will assist children in learning how to write in better ways if writing portfolio is not appropriate to Bhutanese educational setting with given resources and situations.

➤ This paper act as an eye-opener in its own ways to many people who are directly and indirectly engaged in writing portfolio. It is expected that there will be interested individual to undertake study regarding this issue. Hence, this research should help them in their endeavor of conducting study in this area and contribute in further strengthening the quality of writing portfolio that our students maintain in schools.

➤ All the challenges and problems stated at the end of the paper can be used in order to evade similar issues if further research is to be done in these particular areas. This will help in solving many problems and save of time and resources for better purpose.

#### 18. Summary

Writing as an important learning activity requires diligent and coordinated effort from all the partners. No other records of writing can leave a testimony in detail like a writing portfolio. It reflects the account of an individual writing in greater details. But, not all writing portfolio can be considered as a best report (DeFina, 1992) categorically mentions that, “ so far no conclusive solutions has been forthcoming to suggest that portfolio are an effective means of improving learning or a better alternative for standardized tests”. Notwithstanding this fact, it is worth for every individual to put consistent effort in it because portfolio strives to develop four different domains specifically, cognitive, behavioral skills, attitudes



and values. (CAPSD, 2007). Moreover, it is metacognitive process according to (Defina, 1992). Therefore, effort should be made in areas of time management, assessment, parent's involvement and emphasis on the quality and innovation of the writings. All these effort should help in producing a meaningful writing portfolio.

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