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Factors Facilitating the Implementation of the EFL Student's Portfolio

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Abstract

The study examines the factors that facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio as viewed by EFL students and teachers. Gender differences in the factors were also investigated. To collect the data needed for answering the research questions, two instruments were developed, validated, and checked for reliability. The study sample included 953 students and 258 teachers. The main findings rregarding factors that facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio, both teachers and students agreed on the list of the given factors in the research instrument. Teachers considered the availability of materials and resources as the most important factor for better implementation of the student's portfolio. Students viewed teachers' support as the most important factor that would lead for better implementation of the student's portfolio. Moreover, gender differences were reported with regard to the factors for both teachers and students.

Keywords

portfolio, factors, implementation, EFL

1. Introduction

In the last few decades, there has been a shift in education from the behaviourist approach that considers learners as receivers and acceptors of knowledge to the constructivist approach that believes in learners who are going to develop new knowledge based on their previous knowledge (Weegar & Pacis, 2012). Being passive learners by depending mostly on teachers in gaining knowledge is not widely accepted nowadays. Depending heavily on teachers does not generate students who can learn outside the school environment (Dorestani, 2005). Learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current or prior knowledge. Learners select and transform information and make decisions relying on their prior knowledge. In addition, learners would create their own knowledge through personal experience (Rummel, 2008). Students had to utilize different sources from

their surroundings to learn and develop learning strategies that would enable them to be lifelong learners (Dorestani, 2005).

The behaviourist approach follows traditional instruction in teaching and assessment. Proponents of this approach focus mainly on drills and practice in teaching. In assessment, the focus is on testing basic knowledge; therefore, true- false, multiple choice and matching questions would be used to have a proof of the change in students' behaviours. This way of assessment leads to having students who focus mainly on memorizing rules rather than conceptual understanding (Dochy, 2001). This information does not provide sufficient evidence of students' learning because it measures only knowledge. Consequently, it is not suitable to assess higher order cognitive skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking and reasoning (Fisher, 2011).

On the other hand, constructivism focuses more on students' prior learning and experiences. The focus is not only on memorizing basic knowledge, but there is a focus on students' problem solving skills and their collaborative learning. Therefore, multiple choice tests are not the most suitable assessment tools to assess students in a short period of time. As a result, there is a need to utilize other tools to assess students' skills such as problem solving, reasoning and analysing (Shepard, 2000).

One of the assessment tools used in assessing students' skills is the portfolio. Portfolio assessment in language is considered as an alternative form of assessment and perceived as another tool to enable teachers to evaluate students instead of focusing only on standardized testing (Wolf, 1989). Many researchers emphasized the importance of using portfolios in education (Chen, 2006; Berimani & Mohammadi, 2013; Nezakatgoo, 2011; Roohani & Taheri, 2015; Singh, Samad, Hussin, & Sulaiman, 2015). These researchers considered portfolios as effective tools to gather reliable data about students. These data help teachers and parents to get a better idea of their students' performance. In addition, students benefit from portfolios in their learning. Portfolios help them to be more autonomous learners by reflecting upon their learning to figure out their weaknesses and areas which need improvement.

1.1 Context of the Study

The educational system in the Sultanate of Oman has witnessed several changes during the last three decades. All the curriculum documents focus on the idea of learner centered methodology and state that clearly. Students are expected to be active participants in making decisions about what and how they learn so they can take responsibility of their learning. Students are encouraged to work collaboratively with their classmates and teachers to gain knowledge and develop their skills (Ministry of Education, 2010a). Students' class books and skills books are full of examples and tasks that are designed to achieve these aims. In addition, there are many tips for students on how to learn the language by utilizing different learning strategies and select the best strategies that may suit them in learning the language efficiently (Ministry of Education, 2013a).

Assessment is another area that has been affected by the winds of change. Assessment has been designed to accommodate the aims of the basic education that started in 1998. Instead of depending solely on school-leaving end of year exams, the Ministry of Education has introduced the continuous assessment.

This system helps to make a link between teaching, learning and assessment (Al-Kharusi, Al-Dhafri, Al-Nabhani, & Al-Kalbani, 2014). Therefore, teachers are requested to use a variety of tools such as daily observations, written work, independent reading, projects, and portfolios. These instruments are considered as teaching methods that enable teachers to assess their students' progress and identify strengths and weaknesses throughout the school year. By applying this system, teachers gather sufficient data that enables them to improve or modify their teaching strategies to enhance their students' learning (Ministry of Education, 2013b).

The situation in Oman is that the Ministry of Education embraces the implementation of the students' portfolios from grade five upwards. It is stated clearly in both assessment and curriculum documents that the portfolio is implemented to develop students' independent learning skills. It is also considered as a valuable learning, assessment and teaching tool (Ministry of Education, 2013a; Ministry of Education, 2013b).

Students are required to include a wide range of their work which includes presents both work in progress and finished work. Students' portfolios may include writing assignments (including drafts), projects, quizzes and reading reports. Peers' and parents' comments are recommended to be included in the portfolio (Ministry of education, 2013b).

Teachers are provided with some tips and strategies to guide them to implement the students' portfolios. Teachers should prepare students to implement the portfolio by discussing reasons for using the portfolio. They can show them samples of previous portfolios to clarify the process of creating a portfolio. Teachers should discuss and arrange with their students when their portfolios will be used, how the students will select materials for their portfolios, and how their portfolios will be stored. Teachers should establish a regular checking system to encourage students to create their portfolios properly (Ministry of Education, 2010b).

In both class books and skills books in grade 5, there is a character called Portfolio Pete to guide students in selecting that task or activity and place it in their portfolios to make the selection of the portfolio content purposefully (Ministry of Education, 2010b).

To the researcher' knowledge, there is no Omani study that focused on investigating the factors influencing the implementation of students portfolios in EFL teaching in Oman. Therefore, in the present study, factors that facilitate the application of the student's portfolio will be investigated from teachers' and students' views.

1.2 The purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the factors that facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio as viewed by EFL students and teachers.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions are going to be explored in this study.

a) What are the factors that facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio as viewed by EFL teachers and students?

b) Do the factors that facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio vary according to gender?

2. Literature Review

A Plethora of studies have attempted to examine the factors that influence the implementation of students portfolios. Fernsten (2005) (as cited in Singh, Samad, Hussin, & Sulaiman, 2015) stated that there has to be a model for teachers and learners to follow in order to implement the portfolios successfully. The essential steps and the rationale for implementing the student's portfolio have to be stated clearly and the model has to provide explicit criteria for evaluating the portfolio. Similarly, Burksaitiene (2011) insisted on the importance of having a clearly structured portfolio with a clear stated rationale for implementing the portfolio.

Another important factor is the teachers' support. Teachers have to motivate their students to compile their portfolios effectively by using different reinforcement strategies. Teachers should play their roles in preparing their students to implement their portfolios to make students more comfortable and less frustrated (Mok, 2012).

Curriculum is considered as another factor that can affected the implementation of the student's portfolio. The curriculum designers have to develop the curriculum in a way that facilitates the implementation of the student's portfolio. That can be achieved by designing a curriculum that integrates and includes some portfolio activities. That might save teachers' and students' time by depending on some of these activities instead of designing all the activities by themselves. In addition, there had to be stated guidelines and tips for both teachers and students to guide them in implementing the portfolio (Maeroff, 1991; Robbins, Brandt, Goering, Nassif, &Wascha, 1994).

Teacher training is another factor that affected the process of implementation. Al-Muslimi (2015) recommended that teachers have to be well-trained in how to implement the student's portfolio and how to guide students during the portfolio process stage. Sodoma and Else (2009) reported that training teachers helped them develop feelings of comfort that helped them deal with the new challenges of the new experience effectively.

Students have to be trained and be aware of the different steps of the portfolio process. They have to be aware of the rationale behind implementing the student's portfolio and the outcomes that they have to achieve at the end of the process of implementing the portfolio. The content and how to select the materials have to be clarified for students during the training period (Mok, 2012).

Parental involvement plays an active role in achieving students' academic success. Children and teachers can benefit more when parents become involved in the learning process. Children will become more motivated and supported by their parents. Teachers and parents cooperate with each other towards the success of implementing the student's portfolio. It can be done by working together to solve any problems or challenges that children may face when implementing the student's portfolio. Some parents may bring other effective resources that suit their children' needs and enrich the educational

process (Swap, 1987).

2.1 The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Student's Portfolio in Different Educational Areas

The student's portfolio has many advantages. These advantages are going to be classified into three areas. First, the advantages of the student's portfolio in different educational areas would be discussed. Then, the advantages for both teachers and learners would be reviewed.

The available literature provided evidence for the advantages/effectiveness of implementing portfolios in different academic contexts. For example, in health sciences, Kuisma (2007) investigated the effectiveness of introducing the student's portfolio as an assessment tool in the physiotherapy programme. In that programme, students worked in groups and completed the required tasks. At the end of that program, students were evaluated on a written report submitted by the whole group and the same mark was awarded to all students in that group. However, by conducting that kind of assessment, teachers could not measure the individual progress and efforts in that programme. Therefore, the researcher implemented the portfolio. The results revealed that students became more involved in reflecting and evaluating their own work which enabled teachers to evaluate individual learners' learning in a work that was submitted in a group.

Another experimental study was conducted in another educational area by Samkin and Francis (2008). The researchers implemented the student's portfolio as an assessment and a learning tool in a third year financial course at a university in New Zealand. The researchers found out that the students benefitted from the portfolio as a tool that developed their critical and creative thinking. Similarly, the teachers benefited from the student's portfolio as a tool that enabled them to figure out their students' shortcomings.

In addition to using the student's portfolio in academic contexts, Burksaitiene (2011) conducted a study to bridge the gap between the labour market and the university by implementing portfolios as a kind of non-academic learning. Thirty five adults participated voluntarily in the study. Findings revealed the importance of using the student's portfolio as a tool that improved participants' personal qualities, skills and knowledge. The portfolio was used as a tool to document adult learning gained outside academic context.

2.2 The Advantages of the Student's Portfolio for Learners

Students benefit from keeping portfolios. One of these benefits is the support and guidance from their teachers, peers and any faculty members through the process of the implementation of the portfolio. In addition, they have a chance to share ideas with their peers which would help them improve their communication skills (Dutt-Doner & Gilman, 1998; Georgi & Crowe, 1998).

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of implementing the student's portfolio in developing different language skills. Some of these studies focused on the effectiveness of the student's portfolio in improving EFL learners' writing skill. One of these studies was conducted by Obeiah and Bataineh (2015). The researchers conducted a quasi-experimental study to investigate the impact of implementing the student's portfolio on EFL grade ten students. The findings revealed that

EFL students who implemented the student's portfolio outperformed the students in the control group in writing. The findings also showed that the students in the experimental group benefited from implementing the student's portfolio in developing their writing sub skills such as organization, word choice, focus, development and conventions. Similar results were seen in Tabatabaie and Assefi's study (2012). Tabatabaie and Assefi explored the effectiveness of implementing the student's portfolio on EFL learners. The results revealed that the students who compiled their portfolios improved in their writing performance.

Another quasi-experimental study was conducted in an EFL Iranian context by Barootchi and Keshavaraz (2002) who investigated the effect of the student's portfolio on students' writing performance. The researchers had an experimental group and a control group. The groups were being taught by following the same methods. The only difference was in implementing the student's portfolio in the experimental group. The results showed that the students in the experimental group outperformed the students in the control group in writing performance. The findings revealed that the students in the experimental group benefited from the teachers' comments and feedback on their portfolios. Similarly, Nezakatgoo (2011) stressed on the effectiveness of implementing portfolio assessment approach on developing creative writing. The researcher suggested investigating the effectiveness of that approach on other language skills.

In addition to writing, Hosseini and Ghabanchi (2014) conducted a quasi-experimental study to investigate the effectiveness of implementing the student's portfolio on EFL Iranian learners' reading comprehension and motivation. The findings revealed that the students in the experimental group outperformed the students in the control group in reading comprehension. The results also showed that the experimental group's motivation to learn was promoted after implementing the student's portfolio. Similarly, Charvade, Jahandar and Khodabandehlou (2012) conducted another quasi-experimental study to explore the impact of the student's portfolio on EFL learners' reading performance. The findings revealed that the students who worked on compiling their portfolios showed improvement in their reading performance.

Learning vocabulary is another area that can be improved by implementing the student's portfolio. Berimani and Mohammadi (2013) conducted an experimental study in an Iranian EFL context and the results revealed that the experimental group who implemented the student's portfolio outperformed the control group in vocabulary. Similarly, Nassirdoost and Mall-Amiri (2015) carried out a quasi-experimental study to research the impact of the student's portfolio on EFL students' vocabulary achievement. It was found that the students who got the chance to implement the student's portfolio showed a significant effect on their vocabulary achievement.

Husseinali (2012) stated that students could learn new words and retain previously learned words easily by doing portfolio activities. Students could improve their listening, reading and writing skills by reflecting on their performance and suggesting other ways and learning strategies that may enable them to perform better in their learning.

In addition to improving language skills, Husseinali (2012) indicated that by keeping the student's portfolio, the students developed more self-confidence in their learning. They developed a sense of responsibility for their learning inside and outside the classroom which would promote learner autonomy. Sagitova (2015) stated that with the use of the language portfolio, students became more responsible and reflective. The portfolios helped them to develop their skills in identifying their needs and goals, planning for their learning by making decisions in using the best methods that matched with their personal aims. Therefore, Sagitova considered language portfolios as a "powerful pedagogical" tool to enhance lifelong learning (p. 112).

Similarly, many researchers conducted studies to investigate the effectiveness of implementing portfolios to promote learning autonomy (Banfi, 2003; Chen, 2006; Husseinali, 2012; Karababa & Suzer, 2010; Lo, 2010; Yang, 2003). Learning autonomy could be achieved by engaging students actively in the process of self-reflection which is considered as an important part of the student's portfolio (Tezci & Dikici, 2006). In addition, students would be aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Students would be able to identify their language problems and work towards making some improvements to these problems. Consequently, they can become more autonomous and self-directed learners (Chen, 2006). Moreover, students would improve their organizational skills (Dutt-Doner & Gilman, 1998; Georgi & Crowe, 1998).

2.3 The Advantages of the Student's Portfolio for Teachers and Parents

The student's portfolio does not benefit only students; it also benefits the teachers. It is a tool that provides teachers with a clear portrait of their students' weaknesses and strengths (Zhang, 2009). The student's portfolio shows students' needs and interests. This would help teachers modify their teaching style to fit with their students' learning style and motivate teachers to work more on their professional development to learn more about effective teaching strategies that suit their students (Karababa & Suzer, 2010). Teachers would have clear evidence of their achievements in teaching (Wolf, 1989).

The student's portfolio is considered as a vehicle that facilitates communication between parents, students and teachers (Zhang, 2009). By compiling portfolios, parents get a chance to know about their children's level and progress over a period of time. Students' work shows the parents their children's strengths and areas that need improvement. Accordingly, parents may utilize their children's portfolios as a tool to communicate with teachers and discuss with them ways to develop and improve their children' learning skills (Karababa & Suzer, 2010).

2.4 The Challenges of Implementing the Student's Portfolio

Both teachers and students may face certain challenges when implementing the student's portfolio.

2.5 Challenges That Teachers May Face When Implementing the Student's Portfolio

Despite the advantages mentioned in the literature on implementing the student's portfolio, some challenges might arise when applying this tool. Phye (1997) mentioned that some teachers might become reluctant to implement the student's portfolio due to the need for extra budget. Phye claimed that compiling the student's portfolio requires teachers to provide a large amount of paper and materials

to enable students compile their portfolios. When teachers do not have these materials available at their schools, it may affect their implementation of the portfolio negatively.

Another constraint might be related to time that is needed for preparing and assessing students during the process of implementing the student's portfolio. In order to implement the student's portfolio successfully, teachers need to specify orientation lessons for training students to implement the student's portfolio. They have to assess students' portfolios and follow up their progress during the process of implementation (Berne, 2009; Hounsell, 2008; Yang, 2003). Therefore, the training lessons and the assessment sessions require additional time from teachers. Teachers are overloaded with many teaching, assessment and administrative duties that might not allow them the needed time to focus on the portfolios (Al-Kharusi et al., 2014).

2.6 Challenges That Students May Face When Implementing the Student's Portfolio

Caner (2010) reported one of the challenges that might hinder students from implementing the student's portfolio properly which is to have a clear rationale for implementing the student's portfolio. Caner claimed that if the students were not aware of the rationale and benefits of implementing the portfolio that would affect their attitudes towards the student's portfolio negatively. Consequently, they might not compile their portfolios in a desirable way. Moreover, Caner found that not training students to implement the portfolio would be another obstacle that students would suffer from during the process of implementing the portfolios. Therefore, many researchers stressed on the importance of training students and clarifying the purpose, content and benefits of the portfolio for students (Mok, 2012; Zhang, 2009).

Limited time at home and at school is another difficulty that students may face. In order to implement the student's portfolio, students are required to work on the portfolio activities and projects. They have to share work with their peers in school to do the peer assessment and to learn from each other (Caner, 2010). Moreover, Martinez-Lirola and Rubio (2009) added to the time constraint that students considered working on the portfolios as a burden because it required more work and effort on their part.

2.7 Definition of Terms

Cycle two teachers: Teachers who teach any grade from five to ten.

A student's portfolio: It is a purposeful collection of a student's work that shows the student's efforts and progress over a period of time. It should be considered as a tool that link between learning, teaching and assessment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This is a descriptive study that collects data about the factors facilitating the implementation of student's portfolio in Omani EFL public education setting. A teachers' questionnaire and a students' questionnaire were developed by the researcher to gather the needed data to answer the research questions.

3.2 Sample

The sample of the study was drawn from EFL cycle two basic education students and teachers. Questionnaires were distributed randomly to 300 basic education teachers. The returned questionnaires were 265 questionnaires. Seven out of the 265 were discarded for being incomplete. Thus, 258 questionnaires were used for analysis in this study the 258 teachers, 130 were males and 128 were females. With regard to the students' sample, questionnaires were distributed randomly to 1200 students. The returned questionnaires were 1013 questionnaires. Sixty out of 1013 were discarded for being incomplete and invalid for analysis. Thus, the questionnaires used for analysis in the present study were 953. Out of the 953 students, 477 were males and 476 were females.

3.3 Research Instruments

To answer the research questions, two survey questionnaires developed for teachers and students. As for the teachers' questionnaire, there were nine factors that might facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio. Teachers had to respond to a five point Likert scale to evaluate the factors that facilitate the process of implementing the portfolio. With regard to the students' questionnaire, There were seven factors that might facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio. Students had to respond to a five point Likert scale to evaluate the factors that facilitated the process of implementing the portfolio. The last part of the questionnaire was to gather teachers' ideas and suggestions for better implementation of the student's portfolio.

3.4 Validity and Reliability of the Research Instruments

The instruments were validated by a panel of practitioners and area specialists prior to implementation. Also, the reliability of the instruments was properly established. As for the reliability of the teachers' questionnaire the Cronbach Alpha was .88 for the 16 items in the teachers' roles section which was considered as a high level of reliability. For the remaining nine items in the factors section, the Cronbach Alpha was .89 which also indicates a high level of reliability. With regard to the students' questionnaire, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) was 0.89 for the 10 items in the current purposes section which represented a high level of reliability. The Cronbach Alpha was .85 for the 16 items in the students' roles section which was considered as a high level of reliability. For the remaining seven items in the factors section, the Cronbach Alpha was .92 which was a high level of reliability.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 The First Research Question: Factors That Facilitate the Implementation of the Student's Portfolio

To answer this research question, the factors that facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio were investigated from cycle two teachers' and grade ten students' point of view. Means and standard deviations were used to analyze the participants' responses.

4.2 Factors that Facilitate the Implementation of the Student's Portfolio as Viewed by Teachers

Section four in the teachers' questionnaire was used to collect data for the third question. A five point

Likert scale was used to investigate teachers' views on the factors that facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio. The mean scores were categorized for interpreting the results as follows.

Very high	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
4.5-5	3.5-4.4	2.5-3.4	1.5-2.4	1-1.4

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviation of the factors that facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio as viewed by teachers.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Factors That Facilitate the Implementation of the Student's Portfolio as Viewed by Teachers

Statements	Mean	SD
1. Availability of materials and resources that help teachers and students implement the student's portfolio	4.42	.82
2. Sufficient time to check students' portfolios and give them feedback	4.41	.72
3. Students' positive attitude towards implementing the portfolio	4.37	.78
4. Clear written guidelines that direct me in implementing the portfolio in an effective way.	4.34	.84
5. Administrative support	4.29	.91
6. Parents cooperation	4.26	.95
7. Clear rationale for implementing the portfolio	4.25	.79
8. Sufficient training that my students receive to implement the portfolio effectively	4.21	.88
9. Sufficient training that enables me to implement the portfolio successfully	4.14	.96
Overall	4.3	.62

It appears clearly from Table 1 above that cycle two teachers agreed to all the factors given in the questionnaire as facilitators of implementing the student's portfolio. All the above mentioned factors were considered as highly important factors that facilitated the implementation since their means ranged between 4.1 and 4.4 (overall mean, 4.3). According to these results, teachers reported that the availability of materials and resources (mean, 4.42) followed by having sufficient time to check students' portfolios and give them feedback (4.41) are the most important factors to facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio. The least important factor was getting sufficient training (mean, 4.14) which still was considered as a highly important factor.

The results discussed above were in line with finding of Caner (2010) who recommended training students to implement the portfolio to achieve the desirable aims. Similarly, Erdogan and Yurdabakan (2011) stressed on training students by introducing the portfolio components and clarifying the purpose and the evaluation criteria that is going to be used in assessing the students' portfolios. Zhang (2009) focused on clarifying the rationale of the student's portfolio during the students' training period.

In addition to training students, Karababa and Suzer (2010) mentioned two factors which facilitated the implementation of the student's portfolio. They stressed on providing in-service training courses for

teachers and providing them with the materials needed for better implementation. Similarly, Al-Muslimi (2015) and Sodoma and Else (2009) focused on training teachers as they found that this factor would lead to better implementation and would help teachers deal with the difficulties and the challenges in the right way. Parental support was another factor that Swap (1987) mentioned in his study. He recommended focusing on engaging parents in the process of implementing the portfolio. He claimed that parents were more aware of their children's needs and they might provide teachers with materials and resources that suited their children's needs.

4.3 Factors That Facilitate the Implementation of the Student's Portfolio as Viewed by Students

To investigate factors that facilitated the implementation of the student's portfolio from students' point of view, grade ten students were asked to respond to a five point scale in section four in the students' questionnaire. A 5-point scale was used to determine the degree of importance of the factors listed in this section. The mean was considered to be very high if it ranged between 4.5 and 5, high if it ranged between 3.5 and 4.4, moderate if it ranged between 2.5 and 3.4, low if it ranged between 1.5 and 2.4 and very low if it ranged between 1 and 1.4. Table 2 presents the factors that facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio as viewed by students.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Factors That Facilitate the Implementation of the Student's Portfolio as Viewed by Students

Statements	Mean	SD
1. Teacher's support	4.35	.76
2. Parent's support	4.30	.78
3. Having enough time to implement the portfolio at home	4.25	.82
4. Getting the necessary training to implement the portfolio	4.21	.82
5. Clear written guidelines in my class book and skills book	4.06	.82
6. Having sufficient time to implement the portfolio inside my school	3.91	.86
7. School administrators' support	3.88	.88
Overall	4.14	.49

The results presented in Table 2 above reveal that students considered all the given factors as highly important factors since their means ranged between 3.88 and 4.35 (overall mean, 4.14). Teachers' support (mean, 4.35) directly followed by parents' support (mean, 4.30) were viewed by students as the most important factors that facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio. The least important factor was school administrative support, but still had a mean of 3.88; meaning that grade ten students considered this factor as a highly important factor but less than the other factors- but was still seen as a factor that facilitates the implementation of the portfolio.

The results discussed above are in line with the findings of Mok (2012) who stated that training students to implement the student's portfolio was essential for effective implementation. Similarly,

Zhang (2009) stressed on the importance of training students to implement the portfolio. By training them, the purpose, advantages and requirements would be clear for students.

In addition to training students for better implementation, Mok (2012) suggested that teachers provide their students with different kinds of reinforcement and support. By providing them with psychological, methodological and technical support, students would be more comfortable, and leading to better implementation of the portfolios.

Swap (1987) considered parents' support as an effective factor to be considered when implementing the student's portfolio. He claimed that parents were more aware of their children's needs and they might cooperate with their children's teachers in providing resources that suited their children's needs.

Curriculum was another factor that Maeroff (1991) and Robbins et al. (1994) shed light on. They reported that students get clear guidelines and tips to guide them in the process of implementing the portfolios.

4.4 The Second Research Question: Gender Differences in the Factors That Facilitate the Implementation of the Student's Portfolio

This question was answered by comparing male and female teachers' views regarding factors that facilitated the implementation of the student's portfolio. Male and female students' views regarding the facilitating factors were also compared.

4.5 The Differences between Male and Female Teachers Regarding Factors That Facilitate the Implementation of the Student's Portfolio

To find out the differences between male and female teachers regarding factors that facilitated the implementation of the student's portfolio, Table 3 displays independent sample t-tests for the differences between male and female teachers.

Table 3. Independent Sample T-Tests for Differences between Male and Female Teachers in Factors That Facilitate the Implementation of the Student's Portfolio

Statements	Gender	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig
1. Administrative support	Male	130	4.5	.72	3.89	256	.000**
	Female	128	4.07	1.03			
2. Parents cooperation	Male	130	4.22	1.04	-.56	256	.577
	Female	128	4.29	.85			
3. Sufficient time to check the student's portfolio	Male	130	4.5	.57	1.93	256	.055
	Female	128	4.32	.83			
4. Sufficient training that enables me to implement the portfolio	Male	130	4.32	.77	3.22	256	.001*
	Female	128	3.95	1.09			
5. Clear written guidelines	Male	130	4.48	.69	2.81	256	.005*
	Female	128	4.19	.94			
6. Clear rationale for the portfolio	Male	130	4.35	.66	2.19	256	.030*

	Female	128	4.14	.89			
7. Sufficient training that my students receive to implement the portfolio effectively.	Male	130	4.32	.74	2.04	256	.042*
	Female	128	4.1	.99			
8. Students' positive attitude towards implementing the portfolio	Male	130	4.48	.67	2.34	256	.020*
	Female	128	4.26	.87			
9. Availability of materials and resources	Male	130	4.56	.65	2.75	256	.006*
	Female	128	4.28	.95			
Overall	Male	130	4.42	.46	3.118	256	.002*
	Female	128	4.18	.74			

* The mean difference is significant at .05. You can refer to full statements in Appendix A.

The results in Table 3 reveal that there were significant gender differences in the means of male and female teachers in favor of male teachers regarding factors that facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio. There was a significant gender difference between male and female teachers regarding administrative support as a facilitator of the implementation of the student's portfolio with a t-value of (3.89) and a significant level of .000 ($p<.05$). This difference was in favor of males (Mean, 4.5). In other words cycle two male teachers considered administrative support as a more important facilitator than female cycle two teachers.

There was another significant gender difference between male and female teachers regarding getting sufficient training for better implementation of the student's portfolio with a t-value of (3.22) and a significant level of .001 ($p<.05$). This difference is in favor of males (Mean, 4.32). In other words cycle two male teachers viewed receiving sufficient training as a more important facilitator than female cycle two teachers.

A clear written guideline was another factor that showed a significant gender difference with a t-value of (2.81) and a significant level of .005 ($p<.05$). This difference was also in favor of males (Mean, 4.48). Cycle two male teachers considered having clear written guidelines as a more important facilitator than female teachers.

Another significant gender difference was seen in the factor no.6 which is to have clear rationale for implementing the portfolio with a t-value of (2.19) and a significant level of .030 ($p<.05$). This difference was in favor in males (Mean, 4.35). Male teachers viewed having clear rationale for implementing the portfolio as highly important as females did.

Factor no. 7 which was related to students receiving sufficient training in implementing the portfolio had a significant gender difference with a t-value of (2.04) and a significant level of .042 ($p<.05$). This difference was in favor of male teachers (Mean, 4.31) who considered this factor more relevant than females did.

Students' positive attitude towards implementing the portfolio showed a significant gender difference with a t-value of (2.34) and a significant level of .020 ($p<.05$). This difference was in favor of males

(Mean, 4.48). Male teachers considered this factor as more highly relevant than females did.

The last gender difference that is seen in Table 4 was in the factor no. 9 which is related to the availability of materials and resources with a t-value of (2.75) and a significant level of .006 (p<.05). This difference was also in favor of males (Mean, 4.56).

Previous studies in the field of the student's portfolio didn't compare between male and female teachers in their views of the factors that facilitated the implementation of portfolios. They focused mainly on investigating the facilitators in general without considering gender difference.

4.6 The Differences between Male and Female Students Regarding Factors That Facilitate the Implementation of the Student's Portfolio

To answer the fourth research question from the students' point of view, Table 16 presents the differences between grade ten male and female students regarding their views of the factors that facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio.

Table 4. Independent Sample T-Tests for Differences between Male and Female Students in Factors That Facilitate the Implementation of the Student's Portfolio

Statements	Gender	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig
1. Teachers' support	male	477	4.29	.76	-2.2	951	.028*
	female	476	4.4	.74			
2. Parent's support	male	477	4.28	.79	-.55	951	.582
	female	476	4.31	.77			
3. School administrators' support	male	477	3.89	.85	.78	951	.435
	female	476	3.85	.9			
4. Having sufficient time to implement the portfolio inside my school	male	477	3.89	.88	-.56	951	.574
	female	476	3.92	.84			
5. Having enough time to implement the portfolio at home	male	477	4.18	.83	-2.4	951	.015*
	female	476	4.31	.81			
6. Clear written guidelines in my class book and skills book	male	477	4.03	.81	-.83	951	.408
	female	476	4.08	.84			
7. Getting the necessary training to implement the portfolio	male	477	4.20	.84	.03	951	.975
	female	476	4.20	.8			
Overall	male	477	4.12	.52	1.3	951	.193

* The mean difference is significant at .05 level.

Table 4 reveals a significant gender difference in teachers' support with a t-value of (-2.2) and a significant level of .028 (p<.05). This difference was in favour of females (Mean, 4.4). In other words, grade ten female students considered teachers' support as more important factor than grade ten male students.

Having enough time to implement the portfolio at home was another factor that showed a significant gender difference with a t-value of (-2.4) and a significant level of .015 ($p<.05$). This difference was in favour of female students (Mean, 4.31). In other words, grade ten female students viewed having sufficient time to work on their portfolios at home as more important factor than grade ten male students.

By reviewing previous studies in the field of the student's portfolio, it was found that the differences between male and female students in their views of the factors that facilitated the implementation of the portfolio were not investigated. They focused mainly on investigating the facilitators in general without considering gender difference.

5. Conclusions

Both teachers and students agreed to the given list of factors that facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio in a high level of frequency. According to teachers, availability of materials and sufficient time were considered as the most important factors that facilitated the implementation of the portfolio. Teachers' and parents' support were considered as the most important factors to facilitate the implementation of the student's portfolio as viewed by students. Some gender differences among teachers and students regarding the facilitators were found. In conclusion, lack of training and preparation for teachers and students, time constraint and workload may be considered as factors that contributed to the inaccurate implementation of the student's portfolio. In addition, as he present study investigated the gender factors among teachers. Other studies may investigate if the number of years of teachers' experience affects the implementation of the student's portfolio.

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Appendix A

Part One: General Personal Data

Name	
School	
Gender	male female

Part Two: Factors That Facilitate the Implementation of the Student's Portfolio

Please tick the option that most accurately reflects your current practice (Strongly agree=5, Agree=4, Not certain=3, Disagree=2, Strongly disagree=1).

Statement	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Not certain**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
Factors that facilitate the implementation of student's portfolio for me are:					
1. Teacher's support					
2. Parent's support					
3. School administrators' support					
4. Having sufficient time to implement the portfolio inside my school					
5. Having enough time to implement the portfolio at home					
6. Clear written guidelines in my class book and skills book					
7. Getting the necessary training to implement the portfolio					

Based on your experiences of implementing the student's portfolio, what are your suggestions for better implementations?