

# **Assessment for Learning**

## **Portfolio Assessment in English as a Foreign Language in Norway**

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The main research question in my Ph.D. project is *how can portfolio as an assessment tool in English as a foreign language have an impact on pupils' learning?* Self assessment in English was introduced through the newest curriculum in Norway, The Knowledge Promotion, which leads to the next research question: *How can the pupils' self assessment in their portfolios support them in their learning?*

The project will be rooted in sociocultural theories of learning, where assessment is viewed as intertwined with learning. Vygotsky's proximal zone of development says that it is as important to assess the potential level of the pupil as the actual level, which means that the process and the quality should be emphasized, rather than the product and the quantity. Furthermore, research into formative assessment will be crucial in this project. Black and William wrote *Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment* in 1998, which has become a classic within the field of assessment for learning. They put forth comprehensive evidence claiming that formative assessment is essential for pupils' learning. I have chosen portfolio assessment in this project since it is an assessment tool that includes important formative elements, and is often categorized as alternative assessment.

What characterizes the research on portfolio assessment in Norway is that it has a pedagogical point of view and that it is not linked to a particular school subject. Furthermore, the research has focused mostly on higher education, both in Norway and internationally. Thus, my research can contribute with new perspectives and knowledge that are relevant for teacher education and for practitioners.

A lot of research results from the field of education are published in articles and books without contributing to a change of practice. In this project, my aim is therefore to intervene in practice. Portfolio assessment contains several mediating artifacts, for example the language used in the teacher's feedback and the pupil's self assessment notes. One can assert that all research consists of some type of intervention from the time the researcher enters the field of practice. The intervention in my project is the systematic application of research based knowledge about formative assessment / portfolio assessment.

First, I will use descriptive statistics to state 9<sup>th</sup> grade pupils' understanding of and experience with process oriented assessment in English. Then, through discussions with teachers, group interviews with selected pupils, observations in class where assessment is in focus, and pupils' reflection notes, I will analyze and interpret the various ways that such type of assessment supports pupils' learning of English.