

From Teaching Experience to Reflective Practice: The Role of Teaching Portfolios in Faculty Development in Medical Education

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Keywords	Abstract
teaching portfolio; reflective practice; faculty development; medical education; professional identity	Medical educators are expected to demonstrate pedagogical competence alongside clinical expertise. Teaching portfolios have been proposed to promote reflective practice and continuous professional development, but their educational role has not been comprehensively synthesised. Objective: This narrative review synthesised current evidence on the role of teaching portfolios in supporting reflective practice and faculty development in medical education. Methods: A literature search was conducted in Google Scholar, PubMed, and ERIC for articles published between 2015 and 2025 . Relevant articles were identified through title and abstract screening, followed by full-text review. A total of 32 eligible studies were included and analysed using a thematic synthesis approach. Studies were included if they discussed teaching portfolios in medical education contexts in relation to reflective practice, faculty development, or feedback. Articles focusing solely on student learning portfolios, opinion pieces without empirical evidence, and studies not relevant to medical educators were excluded. Results: Teaching portfolios were consistently identified as tools that encourage structured reflection rather than simply documenting teaching activities. Their educational value is strengthened when combined with multisource feedback and mentoring, supporting continuous professional learning and the development of educators' professional identity. However, successful implementation depends on institutional support, a constructive feedback culture, and longitudinal faculty development. Conclusion: Teaching portfolios are most effective when embedded within supportive faculty development programmes that promote reflection, feedback, and continuous learning, enabling educators to transform teaching experience into meaningful professional growth.

INTRODUCTION

As expectations for teaching quality continue to increase in medical education, medical educators are expected to fulfil multiple educational roles that require not only clinical expertise but also well-developed pedagogical competence. Beyond serving as information providers, they are expected to facilitate learning, assess competence, mentor learners, and support self-directed learning (Hathur & Kulkarni, 2024; Prihatiningsih et al., 2021). However, medical educators continue to be recruited and recognised primarily for their clinical expertise (Sudhakar, 2024). Although clinical competence is fundamental to medical practice, it does not automatically translate into effective teaching. Nevertheless, teaching is often perceived as an intuitive skill acquired through clinical experience, leading many clinician-teachers to rely on personal experience or traditional apprenticeship models rather than evidence-informed educational practice (Srinivasan et al., 2011). This highlights the need to strengthen

pedagogical competence as an essential component of medical educators' professional development.

Developing pedagogical competence requires more than acquiring educational knowledge or attending faculty development programmes. It also requires educators to critically examine their own teaching, learn from experience, and continuously refine their practice through reflective learning. Reflective practice enables educators to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching, make sense of feedback, and identify opportunities for improvement, supporting lifelong learning and continuous professional development (Hathur & Kulkarni, 2024; Srinivasan et al., 2011). However, sustaining reflective practice is often challenging. Heavy clinical workloads, competing academic responsibilities, hierarchical institutional cultures, and resistance to educational change may limit opportunities for meaningful reflection and constructive feedback (Ambarsarie et al., 2019; Prihatiningsih et al., 2021; Riskiyana et al., 2022; Srinivasan et al., 2011; Sudhakar, 2024). Consequently, years of teaching experience alone do not necessarily lead to improvements in teaching practice or the development of a stronger educator identity.

One approach that has gained increasing attention in faculty development is the use of teaching portfolios. Rather than functioning solely as repositories of teaching achievements, teaching portfolios have been proposed as structured tools that encourage educators to document teaching experiences, integrate evidence from multiple sources, and reflect on their professional growth over time (Aspandi & Muttaqin, 2025; Srinivasan et al., 2011). By creating opportunities for systematic reflection, teaching portfolios may help clinician-teachers move beyond teaching based primarily on experience towards a more reflective and evidence-informed educational practice (Hathur & Kulkarni, 2024; Srinivasan et al., 2011).

Despite the theoretical support for teaching portfolios, a significant gap persists between their potential and their practical implementation. The literature reveals considerable dissonance in the content, structure, and assessment of portfolios, challenging their validity and widespread adoption. A study by Mohamed (2026) highlights that while MEPs are accepted as credible instruments for evaluation and promotion in many medical schools, their effectiveness is highly dependent on contextual factors, including institutional support and the educators' personal engagement. Furthermore, research suggests that the mere existence of a portfolio does not guarantee reflective practice; without a supportive culture and proper mentorship, portfolios risk becoming administrative checklists rather than meaningful tools for professional growth. This fragmentation in understanding how portfolios function in diverse educational settings, particularly in bridging the gap between teaching experience and reflective practice, represents a critical knowledge gap.

The urgency to address this gap is underscored by the increasing demand for accountability and quality improvement in medical education. As accrediting bodies and institutions place greater emphasis on teaching effectiveness, the need for reliable and valid methods to document and foster educator development has never been more pressing. Moreover, a growing body of evidence suggests that structured reflective practice, facilitated by tools like portfolios, can enhance not only teaching performance but also professional identity formation and resilience among educators. The failure to effectively integrate such tools could result in missed opportunities for faculty development, potentially perpetuating a culture where teaching excellence remains undervalued and underdeveloped. Therefore, a

comprehensive synthesis of current evidence is urgently required to guide the effective implementation and integration of teaching portfolios within faculty development programs.

Although reflective practice has been widely recognised as an essential component of faculty development, the role of teaching portfolios in promoting reflection, integrating feedback, and supporting the professional development of medical educators has not been comprehensively synthesised. This review therefore aims to synthesise the current evidence on the role of teaching portfolios in faculty development in medical education, with particular attention to how they encourage reflective practice, support the use of feedback, and contribute to the development of medical educators.

METHOD

This study employed a narrative review approach to synthesise the current evidence on the role of teaching portfolios in faculty development within medical education. A literature search was conducted using several electronic databases, including Google Scholar, PubMed, and ERIC, to identify relevant articles published in English and Bahasa Indonesia. The search strategy combined keywords related to teaching portfolio, medical educator portfolio, faculty development, reflective practice, and medical education.

Retrieved records were screened based on their titles and abstracts to identify articles relevant to the review objective. Full-text articles were subsequently reviewed to determine their eligibility for inclusion. Studies were included if they discussed the use of teaching portfolios in medical education, particularly in relation to reflective practice, faculty development, or feedback. Articles that focused solely on student learning portfolios or were not relevant to medical educators were excluded. The included literature was analysed using a thematic synthesis approach. Findings from individual studies were compared and integrated to identify recurring concepts and overarching themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Rather than presenting teaching portfolios as standalone educational tools, the reviewed literature consistently describes them as part of a broader process of professional learning. Across the studies, teaching portfolios were associated with reflection, dialogue, professional identity development, and institutional support, suggesting that their educational value lies in the learning processes they encourage rather than in the portfolios themselves. The following sections synthesise these findings into four interrelated themes.

Teaching Portfolios as a Tool for Reflective Practice

Teaching portfolios, or Medical Educator Portfolios (MEPs), are widely recognised as more than a collection of teaching documents or evidence of academic achievement. Unlike a traditional curriculum vitae, which primarily records accomplishments, a teaching portfolio encourages educators to examine their teaching experiences critically and document how their practice develops over time (Dalton et al., 2018; Mohamed, 2026). Across the literature, its educational value lies not in the accumulated evidence itself, but in the reflective process of selecting, interpreting, and learning from those experiences (Dalton et al., 2018; Sidhu, 2015). By revisiting their teaching over time, educators gain a clearer understanding of their strengths, challenges, and evolving educational practice (Hong et al., 2021).

Reflection within teaching portfolios extends across the entire teaching process, including planning (reflection-for-action), adapting during teaching (reflection-in-action), and evaluating practice afterwards (reflection-on-action) (Boris & Ekiugbo, 2021; Sidhu, 2015). These reflective activities align closely with the principles of deliberate practice, where professional growth depends not simply on accumulated experience but on continuously identifying learning needs, seeking feedback, and making purposeful improvements (Dalton et al., 2018; Irby, 2014; Trainor & Richards, 2021). Within the framework of Continuous Professional Development (CPD), portfolios further encourage educators to translate reflection into specific learning goals, such as SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound) objectives, making professional development more intentional and measurable (Hong et al., 2021; Mohamed, 2026; Zahid & Khanam, 2019).

Taken together, the literature suggests that teaching portfolios help transform routine teaching experiences into continuous professional learning. Their value lies not in documenting what educators have done, but in encouraging them to regularly question, refine, and improve their teaching practice. However, meaningful reflection rarely develops through self-reflection alone. The literature increasingly points to the importance of feedback and mentoring in deepening reflection and translating it into meaningful professional growth.

Feedback and Mentoring: Making Reflection Meaningful

Reflection is a central component of professional development, but the literature consistently suggests that self-reflection alone is often insufficient. Individuals tend to overestimate or underestimate their own performance, making self-assessment vulnerable to personal bias (Dalton et al., 2018; Irby, 2014). Consequently, teaching portfolios become more meaningful when they integrate feedback from multiple sources, allowing educators to compare their own reflections with the perspectives of learners, peers, and mentors. Student feedback provides insight into the learning experience, while peer observation offers a more objective view of teaching practices and identifies areas that may otherwise go unnoticed (Cavaleiro & de Carvalho Filho, 2024; Sidhu, 2015; Trainor & Richards, 2021).

Beyond collecting feedback, the literature highlights mentoring as an essential element that helps educators interpret and respond to it. Portfolio discussions with mentors provide a safe space to explore challenges, particularly when feedback is critical or conflicts with existing beliefs about one's teaching (Cavaleiro & de Carvalho Filho, 2024; Dalton et al., 2018). Through reflective dialogue, mentors help educators identify learning priorities, translate feedback into realistic improvement plans, and maintain motivation for ongoing development (Hong et al., 2021). Without this process, portfolios risk becoming collections of feedback rather than tools for professional learning (Dalton et al., 2018; Sidhu, 2015).

These findings suggest that the value of a teaching portfolio lies not only in promoting reflection but also in encouraging meaningful conversations about teaching. Reflection becomes more credible and actionable when informed by external perspectives, highlighting that professional growth is shaped through continuous dialogue rather than self-reflection alone.

Teaching Portfolios and Professional Identity Development

Beyond supporting reflective practice, teaching portfolios also contribute to how educators see themselves in their professional roles. Several studies describe portfolios as a means of helping clinicians move from simply teaching as part of their clinical responsibilities

to recognising teaching as a distinct area of professional practice (Dalton et al., 2018; Dong et al., 2021; Hong et al., 2021). Developing a teaching philosophy, documenting educational activities, and reflecting on teaching experiences encourage educators to make their educational values and approaches more explicit, providing a stronger sense of purpose and direction in their teaching.

The literature also suggests that portfolios give greater visibility to educational work that is often overlooked in academic environments where research productivity and clinical service remain the dominant measures of success. By documenting teaching innovations, learner evaluations, curriculum development, and educational scholarship, portfolios help recognise teaching as a meaningful academic contribution rather than an additional responsibility (Mayersak et al., 2021). Several studies further report that educators who actively maintain teaching portfolios demonstrate greater confidence and self-awareness in their educational roles (Hong et al., 2021; Mohamed, 2026). However, these benefits appear to develop gradually through ongoing reflection and engagement with the portfolio, rather than from portfolio completion alone (Brouwer et al., 2025; Mohamed, 2026).

Teaching portfolios do more than document teaching achievements—they encourage educators to recognise and develop their identity as medical educators. By connecting personal values, educational practice, and evidence of professional growth, portfolios help shift teaching from an additional task to an integral part of academic identity. This also highlights that the value of a portfolio depends not only on individual engagement but also on institutional recognition of teaching as a core academic responsibility.

Implementing Teaching Portfolios: Challenges and Implications for Faculty Development

Despite their educational benefits, implementing teaching portfolios remains challenging across different educational contexts. The literature consistently identifies limited time and competing clinical responsibilities as major barriers, often leaving educators with little opportunity to engage in meaningful reflection (Brouwer et al., 2025; McCullough et al., 2015). Reflection itself may also be emotionally demanding, particularly when educators receive critical feedback or are required to openly examine their teaching practices (Cavaleiro & de Carvalho Filho, 2024; Dalton et al., 2018). At the institutional level, another challenge is finding the right balance between standardised portfolio requirements and educators' individual approaches to teaching. When portfolios focus too heavily on documentation, they risk becoming administrative exercises rather than meaningful opportunities for reflection and learning (Dalton et al., 2018; Hong et al., 2021; Sidhu, 2015).

The literature further suggests that successful implementation depends heavily on institutional context. In many high-income countries, teaching portfolios are integrated into faculty development, promotion, and accreditation systems. In contrast, studies from developing settings describe limited institutional support, insufficient training, and a weaker culture of reflective practice as persistent barriers to implementation (Boris & Ekiugbo, 2021; Hong et al., 2021; Zahid & Khanam, 2019). Hierarchical academic cultures may also discourage open feedback between learners and teachers or between junior and senior faculty members, reducing opportunities for honest reflection and professional growth (Cavaleiro & de Carvalho Filho, 2024; Trainor & Richards, 2021).

These findings suggest that introducing teaching portfolios alone is unlikely to improve faculty development. Their success depends on a supportive educational environment that values reflection, encourages constructive feedback, and provides mentoring. Rather than being implemented as an isolated assessment tool, teaching portfolios should be embedded within longitudinal faculty development programmes that promote continuous learning and recognise teaching as a core component of academic practice (Hong et al., 2021; Sandars et al., 2024; Steinert et al., 2016; Trainor & Richards, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The value of teaching portfolios lies not in documenting teaching activities, but in creating opportunities for reflection, dialogue, and continuous professional learning. Their educational impact depends not on portfolio completion itself, but on how portfolios are integrated into faculty development through meaningful feedback, mentoring, and institutional support. Ultimately, teaching portfolios do not change teaching practices because educators complete them; they change teaching practices because they encourage educators to continuously make sense of their experiences, question their assumptions, and learn from feedback.

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