The Development of a Graduate Student Academic Portfolio *

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Preparation Faculty (PFF) programs, designed for graduate students aspiring to become faculty members, have been started with the objective of helping students acquire practical teaching knowledge and skills in Japan. In order to provide graduate students with additional opportunities to reflect on the comprehensive activities associated with their teaching, research, and career paths, this study develops a Graduate Student Academic Portfolio (GSAP). The GSAP contains a document that summarizes a student’s activities, accomplishments, and future goals, together with any necessary support materials, in a manner that is easily understood by third parties. Further, in a workshop designed to help students create a GSAP, seven graduate students participated and created their own portfolios. Following the workshop, questionnaires were distributed to the participants, who commented on and evaluated the workshop and GSAP creation process very positively. These responses suggest that the GSAP can serve as an effective tool for reflection in PFF programs.

Key words: Academic Portfolio, Preparing Future Faculty Program, Reflection, Career Path

1. INTRODUCTION

In response to recent demands for quality assurance in higher education, Faculty Development (FD) was made compulsory by law in 2007 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) 2007); as a result, FD programs, including lectures, workshops, seminars, and mutual class observation between teachers, have been held at a number of universities (MEXT 2013). Additionally, Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) programs (Hayashi et al. 2013), designed for graduate students aspiring to become faculty members, were initiated to provide them with opportunities to practice microteaching, design coursework, learn assessment principles, and improve practical teaching skills (Center for the Advancement of Higher Education, Tohoku University 2012; Kawachi 2012; Kurita et al. 2014; Taguchi et al. 2013). Earlier, FD and PFF programs focused on the improvement of practical teaching skills along with the acquisition of new knowledge and learning of novel techniques. In contrast, attention is now being focused on portfolios and their use of reflection as a self-improvement tool. For example, related to the improvement of teaching activities, Teaching Portfolios (TPs) (Seldin 2004) are becoming more common in Japan (Kurita 2013).

A TP is a document that summarizes previous teaching activities, with supporting materials. It is presented in a manner that is easily understood by third parties. Since this document covers the teaching activities of faculty members, the TP is often used for multifaceted performance evaluation. In Europe, North America, and Australia, the TP is already the most commonly used document for teaching performance evaluation, for both hiring and promotion purposes (Centra 1994; Murphy et al. 2009). In Japan, a 2008 report introduced the TP as one of the methods used in multifaceted performance evaluations (MEXT 2008).

Additionally, when a portfolio covers not only faculty members’ teaching activities but also their research activities, contributions to society, and other administrative/departamental activities, it is called an Academic Portfolio (AP) (Seldin and Miller 2009). An AP is a document that can be used by faculty members as a tool for self-reflection and their performance evaluation. In Japan, some institutions have already implemented APs (Kaneda et al. 2013; Matsumoto 2013).

As previously discussed, one significant aspect
of creating these portfolios is that reflection during the process promotes self-improvement (Hurst et al. 1998). Specifically, through reflection, activities are examined and organized, personal philosophies are clarified, and future goals are set. In addition, because a deeper level of reflection is achieved with the help of a mentor than by working alone during the TP creation process (Zubizarreta 1994), it is recommended that TPs should be created in a workshop rather than by oneself.

Typically, TP workshops, which are currently conducted by Seldin and others in the United States, take three-and-a-half days. However, in Japan, because it is considered a heavy burden for faculty members to be kept away from their work for the entire three-and-a-half days, the duration of TP workshops was shortened to two-and-a-half days by giving preliminary assignments and improving the timetable (Kurita 2013). Further, AP workshops, which are currently conducted by Seldin and others in the United States, take four-and-a-half days because they cover a broader range of each faculty member’s activities. However, in Japan, the duration of AP workshops had to be shortened due to the same reason as that for TP workshops. One solution was that in order to participate in AP workshops, the completion of TPs was required. By applying the content of the TP to the teaching section of the AP, it was possible to shorten the workshop to two-and-a-half days because they cover a broader range of each faculty member’s activities.

Currently, the TP and AP programs described above target faculty members. On the other hand, currently, PFF programs, which target graduate students, do not provide portfolio creation programs, and no support system is in place for portfolio creation. It is considered that the use of reflection in the creation process of a portfolio plays an important role in determining how students examine and organize their current activities and plot their career paths. However, since the quantity and quality of experiences of students differ from those of faculty members, it is necessary to consider a portfolio creation support system that suits the current stage of their careers.

When considering the career paths of graduate students, portfolios that broadly encompass their activities, both research and extracurricular, are better than ones that only cover the students’ teaching aspects. Although APs are suitable for this type of portfolio creation for faculty members, two significant issues arise when the current format of APs is applied to graduate students. One is the time required to create an AP. According to the current design of AP workshops, it is necessary to create a TP by attending a TP workshop of two-and-a-half days beforehand, as described previously. Subsequently, an AP can be created during an AP workshop spanning two-and-a-half days. The creation of an AP requires five to six days in total because both the TP and AP workshops require a time commitment of two-and-a-half days separately. Therefore, although the creation of an AP is very important for graduate students, it involves significant cost in terms of the amount of time required. The second issue is that the content required differs between graduate students’ and faculty members’ portfolios due to the difference in their objectives. Compared to graduate students’ portfolios, greater importance is placed on organizing previous activities when creating portfolios for faculty members because they have a broader range of experience. In contrast, in addition to organizing past activities, it is important for graduate students to clarify future pursuits when creating their portfolios because they have less experience, in general. Due to these two issues, it is assumed that the content of graduate students’ portfolios differs from that of APs for faculty members and, as a result, the method of creating portfolios for graduate students should be different from that for faculty members.

By providing a clear structure for portfolio content, since the structure will clarify what needs to be included in the portfolio and shorten the creation time, the issues listed above can be resolved. In this study, a Graduate Student Academic Portfolio (GSAP), which holds this clearly defined structure of portfolio content, was developed for graduate students as a tool for reflection and a document to be used for the evaluation of performance and accomplishments. In addition, in order to assist the GSAP creation process, a GSAP workshop was designed and implemented and its effectiveness was reviewed.

2. GRADUATE STUDENT ACADEMIC PORTFOLIO

A GSAP is a 10- to 20-page document that describes comprehensively a student’s academic
activities and accomplishments and future goals with necessary supporting materials. The document is written using simple expressions so that third parties can easily understand it. The process of creating a GSAP guides reflection of the creators and leads them to organize and structure their past activities. In addition, by extracting the fundamentals of their own actions and beliefs during the process, the creators can compare their past self with their image of a future self, making it possible for them to plan their future actions clearly. Furthermore, since the portfolio details the creators’ previous teaching and research activities in a thorough and carefully selected manner, it is expected to serve as a comprehensive document that can be used for the evaluation of the creators’ performance and accomplishments, similar to TPs and APs.

Further, in order to make the reflection process straightforward, a basic framework for the GSAP was also designed. Originally, the content of a GSAP was developed based on the activities of faculty members, that is, teaching, research, and service. However, because graduate students usually perform only few service-related activities, the GSAP includes extracurricular activities instead of service activities. Therefore, a portfolio’s basic structure comprises “Preface,” “Teaching,” “Research,” “Extracurricular Activities,” “Goals,” and “Conclusion” chapters, under which there are different sections. This structure is presented as a recommendation, not an obligation, and can be modified without any restriction. Figure 1 illustrates simplified contents, excluding the Preface and Conclusion, along with some lists of simplified section names. In the figure, bold text indicates chapters, while the remaining text indicates sections. Sections 2.1. to 2.7. explain the GSAP contents in detail.

2.1. Preface
In the Preface chapter, an explanation of how and why the GSAP was created is given, together with the clarification of the portfolio’s significance to the creators. This chapter is designed to both reconfirm with the creators the significance of creating the GSAP and serve as an introduction to the readers of the portfolio.

2.2. Teaching
In the Teaching chapter, an explanation of the teaching philosophy of the creators and how it has been, or will be, realized is given. Additionally, the creator’s accomplishments are organized and presented as evidence of record, and their plan of improving their teaching skills is explained while structuring their overall teaching activities.

This chapter helps the creators of GSAPs organize their teaching activities in an evidence–based form and find consistencies in their approach and manner. They distill their teaching philosophy and compare it against their own actions for consistency. Through this reflection, they can realize the factors that should be improved in their teaching.

The Teaching chapter, which covers the above structure, consists of the following sections: “Teaching Philosophy,” “Teaching Methods,” “Teaching Experiences,” and “Efforts to Improve Teaching Skills.” Sections 2.2.1. to 2.2.4. explain the Teaching chapter sections.

2.2.1. Teaching Philosophy
In the Teaching Philosophy section, the creators describe their teaching philosophy and reflect on how they are as educators. In order to refine the philosophy, it is recommended that they should remember the strengths of the educators they admire, motive that led them to “learn” in a proactive manner, and type of relationship that they value with their students. The Teaching Philosophy section was designed to provide a detailed account of the creators’ teaching activities in a consistent manner and clarify the course of their future activities by discovering their teaching philosophy.

2.2.2. Teaching Methods
In the Teaching Methods section, the creators describe how their stated teaching philosophy has been, or will be, incarnated by giving evidence of specific approaches and methodologies employed
by them. For example, by considering the methods and personal approach that have been used by them in teaching classes or thinking of the methods or research instructions that are employed by other instructors whom they would like to emulate, the creators clarify the methodology that they use, or would like to use. This section is designed to help the creators understand that these methods are a series of actions that form the embodiment of their teaching philosophy.

2.2.3. Teaching Experiences

The Teaching Experiences section is used to provide concrete examples of their teaching experience, as related to the creators’ teaching philosophy and methodology. For example, this section may include the experience of teaching assistants, part-time lecturers, and research instructors. This section is designed to help the creators visualize their past teaching activities.

2.2.4. Efforts to Improve Teaching Skills

In the Efforts to Improve Teaching Skills section, the creators showcase several examples of the efforts made by them on a daily basis to improve their teaching skills, for example, participation in PFF programs, teaching–related study groups, and workshops. This section is optional; however, it is designed to help the creators organize and visualize activities that, although do not fall within the scope of teaching experiences, were pursued by them to improve teaching skills.

2.3. Research

In the Research chapter, a brief and clear explanation is given regarding the significance and objectives of the creators’ research, which accounts for a significant portion of their activities. The structure of this chapter and intention of its design are the same as those of the Teaching chapter. The Research Accomplishments section within Research matches the format of the Teaching Experiences section within the Teaching chapter. However, in this chapter, instead of simply listing the research accomplishments, the creators describe up to three significant research projects that have been undertaken by them. Therefore, the Research chapter consists of the following sections: “Research Philosophy,” “Research Methods,” “Research Accomplishments,” and “Efforts to Improve Research Skills.” Section 2.3.1. to 2.3.4. explain the Research chapter sections.

2.3.1. Research Philosophy

In the Research Philosophy section, the creators of GSAPs describe the objectives and significance of the research that they are currently conducting, or they plan to conduct, along with a description of their research philosophy. They describe the significance of their research theme to their field of study, or the society, in general, in a manner that is understood by even those who are not specialists. This section is designed to make the creators aware of their view of the research and facilitate the creation of a plan for future research and career path.

2.3.2. Research Methods

In the Research Methods section, the creators describe how they make plans and establish methodology for conducting both current and future research in order to realize their research philosophy. This section is designed to help the creators organize the methodology applied by them in conducting research.

2.3.3. Research Accomplishments

In the Research Accomplishments section, the creators list three main research accomplishments that they consider to be of the highest value from among their published works, which include research papers and conference presentations, and briefly describes the content and significance of each accomplishment. When determining the accomplishment “of the greatest value,” the choice should be based on how much the research contributed to advancing the creators’ field of study, rather than on it being published in a prominent journal. In addition, the creators should include fellowship grants, if any, because they demonstrate an objective third–party assessment of the quality of the research. This section is designed to provide a clear and brief presentation of the creators’ ability to conduct research projects.

2.3.4. Efforts to Improve Research Skills

In the Efforts to Improve Research Skills section, the creators showcase examples of the efforts made by them on a daily basis to improve research skills. This may include developing, conducting, and participating in voluntary study groups, internships at research institutions, and academic conferences. Similar to the Teaching chapter, this section is designed to help the creators organize and visualize activities that, although do not fall within the scope of research accomplishments, are
pursued by them to improve their research skills.

2.4. Extracurricular Activities

In the Extracurricular Activities chapter, activities that have significant influence on their principles although they are not included in teaching or research, are discussed and explained. This chapter can be omitted when there are no such activities. In particular, activities contributing to the formation of the creators' personal philosophy should be listed, for example, volunteer work and participation in nonprofit organizations.

2.5. Integration

In the Integration chapter, activities are reviewed from the perspective of integration, instead of teaching or research independently, and consistencies across the creators’ approach and manner are described. In addition, a description is given regarding how teaching, research, and extracurricular activities positively influence or contribute to each other, as well as their mutual, substantial relationships.

In this chapter, all the creators’ activities that were previously organized into individual categories, such as "Teaching," "Research," and "Extracurricular Activities," are reorganized by understanding how they interrelate, which makes it possible to discover any new significance for these activities. Therefore, this chapter contains the "Strengths" section, which describes consistencies in the creators’ approach, manner, and activities, together with the "Relationship between Teaching and Research" and "Relationship between Extracurricular Activities, Teaching and Research" sections, both of which are used to describe the relationships between these activities. Section 2.5.1. to 2.5.3. explain the Integration chapter sections.

2.5.1. Strengths

In the Strengths section, the creators describe their strengths in conducting teaching, research, and extracurricular activities. Although discovering strengths that are consistent across all these activities is recommended, each activity can be described independently. This section is designed to provide an opportunity for the creators to clarify their behavioral principle.

2.5.2. Relationship between Teaching and Research

In the Relationship between Teaching and Research section, the creators describe the significance of their teaching activities on their research, or vice versa. This section is designed to provide the creators with an opportunity to consider these two activities, usually not viewed as being related to each other, as a single activity and facilitate new discoveries.

2.5.3. Relationship between Extracurricular Activities, Teaching and Research

In the Relationship between Extracurricular Activities, Teaching and Research section, the creators describe the positive impact of their extracurricular activities on their performance in teaching and research. This section can be omitted when the creators have no extracurricular activities to record. This section is designed to help the creators discover any new significant aspects of their extracurricular activities by relating these activities to their teaching and research.

2.6. Goals

In the Goals chapter, the creators’ long-term goals for their future career and short-term objectives, which are considered the steps toward the long-term goals, are explained. It is recommended to set goals for both teaching and research or broader perspective goals that are suited to future career path. As a result of this reflection, the creators can reconsider their teaching and research goals, already stated in previous chapters, and their academic life from a long-term perspective.

2.7. Conclusion

In the Conclusion chapter, the significance of creating the GSAP is explained, and the creators describe how they feel about the GSAP when looking back at the creation process. This chapter is designed to make the creators review the process of creating the GSAP and re-recognize its significance.

3. GSAP WORKSHOP

The nature and quality of the GSAP depends largely on the quality of the creators’ reflection. To improve the quality of reflection, including the distillation of teaching and research philosophies and their comprehensive interpretations, it is advisable that, rather than creating portfolios by themselves, the creators are helped by mentors (Seldin 2004). In TP and AP workshops, mentoring allows the creators (mentees) to perform deep
levels of reflection. A mentor’s support helps the mentees acquire a different perspective of their academic activities in retrospection, which is not possible when working only by themselves, and keeps them motivated while creating their portfolios. Since this support system is beneficial for creating GSAPs, the design of AP and TP workshops was used as a basis for the design of GSAP workshops, as well. The workshop timetable was designed to follow the effective, uninterrupted timetable of TP and AP workshops, and a start-up sheet holding the structure of GSAP content was developed for a preliminary assignment. Sections 3.1. to 3.4. describe the preliminary assignment design, workshop timetable, workshop proceedings, and survey questionnaires.

3.1. Preliminary Assignment (Start-Up Sheet) Design

Prior to participating in the workshop, mentees were required to submit the start-up sheet as a preliminary assignment. The start-up sheet had a question format that followed the structure of the GSAP, such as teaching and research philosophies. This sheet was designed to be the foundation of their GSAPs. Mentors could understand their mentees’ personalities better and, thereby, develop the style of mentoring by reading the sheet before the workshop.

Each question was designed to follow the basic structure of the GSAP’s content. For example, in order to help the mentees describe their teaching philosophies, the Teaching chapter had questions such as “What type of educators do you hope to be when you become a faculty member?” The questions in the Teaching and Research chapters were arranged in the following order: philosophy, methods, accomplishments, and efforts. For the Extracurricular Activities, Integration, and Goals chapters, questions suited to each of the chapters and sections were prepared.

3.2. Workshop Timetable

In order to promote interaction with faculty participants, the GSAP workshop was held at the same time as TP and AP workshops. Additionally, because the schedule of TP and AP workshops is effective and sustainable, the GSAP workshop timetable was organized to match it. The workshop was an intensive three-day course in which there were a supervisor to oversee all the aspects of the event, mentors to help mentees create their portfolios, and mentees who attended to create their GSAPs. In general, a single mentor was in charge of up to two mentees.

Table 1 shows the flow of the workshop. Prior to the workshop, the mentees created and submitted their start-up sheets. Subsequently, the supervisor and mentors reviewed the mentees’ start-up sheets, developed an understanding of their backgrounds and personalities, and planned a mentoring strategy for each mentee.

In the first day of the workshop, which started in the afternoon, participants received an orientation regarding the creation of GSAPs and shared feedback on writing the first draft. Subsequently, the mentees received one-on-one mentor support from their mentors for approximately one hour. During this session, the mentee-mentor pairs coped with various issues: teaching and research philosophies were distilled from past activities, philosophies and methods

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<th>Table 1. The Flow of the Workshop</th>
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<td><strong>Before WS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Mentors</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Mentees</strong></td>
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SV: Supervisor, WS: Workshop, SUS: Start-up sheet
were aligned, a writing plan for Integration and Goals was determined, the whole structure of the GSAP was checked, and the timetable was reviewed. In contrast to TP and AP mentoring, this workshop’s mentoring focused on setting a course of actions to be taken in the future and developing career path. After mentoring, the mentees continued to work on creating their GSAP drafts and were required to complete them within a specified amount of time so that they could be submitted to their mentors and supervisor.

Before and after mentoring sessions, the mentors attended mentor meetings, which were managed by the supervisor. In the meetings, the progress status of each mentoring session was shared and any issues that had arisen, and tactics to address them, were discussed. Mentor meetings were part of the process so that the responsibilities of mentoring were not left solely to the mentors; in addition, they served to ensure mentoring quality assurance. Subsequently, the mentors read the submitted GSAP drafts in preparation for the next day of mentoring.

On the second day, mentoring was conducted throughout the morning, and all workshop participants had lunch together in order to encourage their interaction. After lunch, the mentees continued to work on their GSAP drafts and were required to complete them within a specified amount of time so that they could be submitted to their mentors and supervisor. The supervisor and mentors held a mentor meeting after lunch and read the submitted GSAP drafts in preparation for the next day of mentoring.

The third day followed the same schedule as the second: mentoring, lunch, and mentor meetings. However, unlike the previous day, two programs, a session titled “To be a good mentor” and a presentation session, were held during the afternoon.

The mentees who create GSAPs successfully will be candidates for being mentors in the next workshop because they have experience in creating GSAPs and availing mentoring support. Therefore, all the workshop participants attended the “To be a good mentor” program, in which they discussed the essential elements of being a good mentor. In the program, the knowledge, techniques, and skills required to be a mentor were discussed and shared. In addition, a presentation was held in which each mentee presented to the workshop participants a brief description about the contents of the GSAPs they had created and then answered any questions posed by the audience.

In the next two weeks after the workshop, the mentees completed the final drafts of their GSAPs, based on the mentoring support and comments they had received during their presentation. Subsequently, the GSAPs were submitted to the supervisor and mentors for review before being finalized.

3.3. Workshop Proceedings

The workshop was held at a college of technology from December 26th to 28th, 2013. The participants included seven mentees, three mentors, and one mentor/supervisor.

The mentees were all graduate students, comprising one master's program student and six doctoral program students, who had applied in response to notices on this workshop. The doctoral program students consisted of two first-year, two second-year, and two third-year students. Furthermore, the mentees comprised one student each from philosophy, sociology, peace building, computer science, and biomedical engineering and two students from higher education.

The supervisor and mentors comprised faculty members who had already created APs and had mentoring experience in either a TP or an AP workshop. The mentors comprised two faculty members from educational technology and one member each from higher education and mechatronics.

Subsequently, the supervisor arranged groupings of one mentor with up to two mentees, ensuring that the mentors' disciplines do not overlap with those of their assigned mentees. During lunch and dinner times, interaction between the graduate students and faculty members was facilitated because TP and AP workshops were taking place at the same time as this workshop.

3.4. Survey Questionnaire

In order to obtain feedback about the GSAP and the accompanying GSAP workshop, a follow-up survey was conducted, in which the seven mentees were asked to complete a questionnaire. Table 2 shows a brief overview of the questions. The full details are presented in chapter 4.

4. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

This section describes basic information about
Moreover, all mentees responded that they felt themselves change while going through the process of creating a GSAP. Some examples of their responses are shown in Figure 3. They include descriptions of clearer activity policies, the gaining of confidence, and a ripple effect for their research.

4.2. Evaluation of the GSAP Basic Structure

Six out of seven respondents answered that they faced difficulties in writing the sections/chapters of the GSAP basic structure. In terms of difficulty, five respondents selected the Philosophy section in both the Teaching and Research chapters, one respondent the entire Research chapter, one respondent the Extracurricular Activities chapter, and two respondents the Integration chapter. The mentee who selected the Research chapter was a second-year master’s program student who stated that it was difficult to answer due to having very little research output.

4.3. Start-Up Sheet Evaluation

When asked whether a start-up sheet was helpful, the numbers of responses for “Very helpful,” “Somewhat helpful,” “Neutral,” “Not so helpful,” and “Not at all helpful” were 2, 4, 0, 1, and 0, respectively. The comments resulting from this question included the following: a request for the addition of more questions that would make the mentees think deeply about their philosophies, a request for the inclusion of a more thorough explanation on the start-up sheet, and an opinion that it is challenging for master’s program students to write about teaching and research because they may not have sufficient output.

4.4. Workshop Evaluation

For the question on the merit of creating GSAPs in a workshop, rather than writing them alone, all the seven mentees responded positively. While the seven mentees answered that the merit was creating GSAPs together with other students, two answered that it was mentoring and two that it was the chance to meet faculty members. However, one respondent stated that despite the positive advantages of creating a GSAP with other people, when one compared his or her own progress with that of the other attendees, it created a sense of urgency.

4.5. Mentor-Related Evaluation

In response to the question which asked the
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importance of a mentor in creating a GSAP, responses under “Very important”, “Important”, “Neutral”, “Not important”, and “Not at all important” were 6, 1, 0, 0, and 0 respectively. In addition, in response to the question which asked about the merit of receiving one-on-one mentoring provided by a mentor rather than creating a GSAP alone, six out of seven
respondents answered that the merits were new perspectives and discoveries including strengths identified by the mentor or the integration of experiences they had never considered relevant. One respondent said there was no merits and another respondent, while recognizing the importance of having a mentor, said he or she wanted strategic advice for creating a GSAP. These two respondents were assigned to the same mentor. Additionally, one of these respondents is the one who had provided negative feedback to the evaluation about creating a GSAP. Negative comments about mentors were not received from any other mentees.

When asked whether they would like to be a mentor, the numbers of responses under “Very much,” “Maybe,” “Rather not,” and “Never” were 6, 1, 0, and 0, respectively. The reasons for wanting to be a mentor included an opportunity for personal growth, a wish to help other people, teaching experience, and a wish to contribute to the creation of GSAPs. In addition, two mentees expressed concern whether they would be capable of fulfilling the requirements of a mentor’s role.

4.6. General Impressions

In terms of their general impressions, all seven mentees gave positive feedback about creating GSAPs, describing it as either a valuable or a meaningful experience and that they would like to continue with their GSAP–related activities. In contrast, two respondents gave negative feedback. One of them said, “My honest impression following the workshop was of frustration that, considering the amount of time I had to spend prior to the workshop, I did not get what I had hoped for,” while the other responded, “It was a pity that I could not really see the significance of participating in this workshop.” These two respondents were the ones who wrote negative comments in the mentoring evaluation, as well.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. GSAP Creation Process Evaluation

All mentees responded positively that by creating their GSAPs, they could clarify their teaching philosophies better. Therefore, it can be seen that for graduate students, who generally engage in research at universities and do not involve themselves in teaching activities, creating a GSAP will provide an opportunity for in-depth consideration about teaching and distilling their teaching philosophies through reflection. Moreover, the fact that all the respondents answered positively to the question “Update my GSAP as needed” indicates that their position is such that they would like to continue to reflect on their teaching and research and they will not be satisfied by creating merely a single GSAP. It is expected that for graduate students who aspire to become faculty members, the creation of a GSAP is an opportunity for reflection. In addition, from the short-answer questions regarding their opinions on creating GSAPs (Fig. 2) and changes that the graduate students underwent during the process of GSAP creation (Fig. 3), it is clear that the workshop had a broad range of effects on the participants. These include the acquisition of new perspectives, the clarification of activity policies, confidence building, and the discovery of research themes that would never have been possible otherwise. Additionally, since the majority responded positively to the questions evaluating the creation of GSAPs and all the participants responded positively to the question “In general, valued GSAP creation,” it is concluded that a GSAP is as an extremely effective tool for graduate students aspiring to become faculty members who are tasked with teaching and research at universities.

Furthermore, because the graduate students who participated in this workshop varied broadly in terms of their academic years of study and disciplines, it can be said that a GSAP holds great versatility and is helpful to a graduate student regardless of academic year or discipline. However, the response from the master’s program student indicated that writing the Research chapter was a challenge due to having very little research output. Because, in general, master’s program students have fewer research accomplishments compared to doctoral students, it is essential to have clear guidelines stating that the research philosophy descriptions for master’s program students must focus on the type of research that they hope to conduct in the future, rather than listing research accomplishments.

In addition, the results of the evaluation of creating a GSAPs showed that one respondent had negative feelings stemming from the difference between his or her expectation of a GSAP and the actual result. While this problem is discussed in detail in the Mentor–Related Evaluation section of this study, creating a GSAP can still be considered valuable since all the mentees, including the above respondent, gave the scale’s highest rating in response to the question “In
5.2. GSAP Basic Structure and Start-Up Sheet

While creating a GSAP received highly positive evaluations, five out of six respondents described the Philosophy section to be difficult to write. However, all the respondents provided positive feedback to the question “My personal teaching philosophy was further clarified,” while six out of seven respondents answered positively to the research philosophy question. Therefore, these sections do not need to be removed from the basic structure.

Therefore, it is necessary to devise an approach that makes writing philosophy descriptions easier; a key element for incorporating this approach is the start-up sheet, which is the foundation of a GSAP. Regarding the comment on the start-up sheet requesting the addition of more questions related to philosophy, if the start-up framework requires the creators to review their teaching activities and clarify their philosophies progressively, instead of asking them to write their philosophies from the beginning (as the current start-up sheet does), it is expected that writing the philosophy will become easier. Further, in terms of the types of questions related to the creators’ philosophies, specific, easy-to-answer questions (e.g., “How would you want to communicate with your students?” and “What kind of things do you want your students to learn?”) can be substituted for abstract questions, such as “What type of educators do you hope to become?”

5.3. Workshop Evaluation

In comments on the workshop, all mentees indicated that having other people create GSAPs, as well, increased their motivation and gave them new ideas for writing. This result suggests that creating a GSAP in a group is more effective than creating it by oneself. Therefore, a system in which a workshop is held where graduate students gather as a group to create their GSAPs is considered effective. Although an intensive approach of a three-day workshop was employed for this workshop, another approach that could be considered is to hold the workshop over three separate days. A merit of the intensive approach is that the GSAP is created in a short time with no interruptions, while a demerit is that this approach excludes graduate students who cannot afford three consecutive days away from their research experiments or fieldworks. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the substantive feasibility of holding the workshop across several different days, as this may provide more opportunity for graduate students to participate.

In addition, because this workshop was held at the same time as a TP workshop and an AP workshop, interaction between not only students but also students and faculty members took place. Based on the comments that described the value of this interaction, it can be said that the effectiveness of a GSAP workshop is greater if it is held concurrently with TP and AP workshops than if it is held alone.

5.4. Mentor-Related Evaluation

Six out of seven mentees responded that they gained new perspectives through mentoring, and all the mentees agreed that mentoring was very important. Therefore, it can be said that mentoring is a crucial component of the GSAP creation process. With respect to mentor-related evaluation, one mentee said that there was no merit in receiving one-on-one mentoring from a mentor compared to creating a GSAP alone, and another commented negatively while still recognizing the merit of a mentor. Both these mentees were assigned to the same mentor. Additionally, while recognizing the value of creating a GSAP, these two mentees wrote negative comments regarding their general impressions of the workshop and one of them mentioned negatively on the GSAP. From these results, it is inferred that there is a strong correlation between the levels of satisfaction regarding mentoring and creation of a GSAP; although mentoring is very important in the GSAP creation process, the workshop did not facilitate effective mentoring. It suggests that the previous mentor meetings were inadequate to ensure the quality assurance of mentoring, and the incorporation of additional processes, such as continuous mentoring evaluation by the mentees, is desirable.

In this workshop, the mentors were faculty members. However, in order to hold GSAP workshops more extensively and sustainably, it is desirable that graduate students who have created their own GSAPs begin working as mentors. The fact that all the mentees expressed wishes to be mentors in the future suggests that the ongoing operation of GSAP workshops is possible with the mentees of this workshop becoming mentors in subsequent workshops. In addition, because two mentees expressed concern about becoming
mentors, the implementation of mentor training programs or the utilization of mentor guidelines to address this concern is vital to the sustainability of workshops.

5.5. Overview and Future Prospects of This Study

With respect to teaching and research, which are the primary responsibilities of faculty members, a GSAP was found to be very helpful for in-depth reflection. Furthermore, creating a GSAP was shown to be beneficial regardless of a student’s academic year or discipline, although careful explanation related to research descriptions may be needed for master’s program students. Based on these points, it is expected that a GSAP is capable of being a PFF program tool. Moreover, in the GSAP workshop, reflection was facilitated through mentoring, the participants’ motivation to create a GSAP was increased, and the interaction between students and faculty members was fostered. In contrast to an AP, which requires six days to create, it was found that a GSAP could be created in three days, due to its clearly defined structure. These points suggest that participating in the workshop provides efficient support in the creation of a GSAP.

It is necessary to incorporate the GSAP into existing PFF programs and analyze its value. Moreover, further studies are required to determine whether results similar to those of this study, which is based on seven graduate students, can be obtained when the number of participants is increased. Additionally, while this study evaluates the short-term effects of creating a GSAP, an evaluation of the long-term effects, several years after creating the GSAP, needs to be conducted, as well.

6. CONCLUSION

In order to create a tool that can be used by graduate students for reflecting on and organizing their activities and accomplishments in a comprehensive manner, the GSAP was developed. In addition, a workshop to help students create their GSAPs was designed and implemented. Seven graduate students participated in this workshop and created their portfolios. As a result, various effects were observed, such as the enhancement of in-depth reflection on teaching and research, organization of past activities, clarification of future activity policies, and gaining of new perspectives. Additionally, the overall ratings were high. These results suggest that a GSAP can be expected to serve as an effective tool for the reflection process, which is currently not addressed by existing PFF programs. Moreover, in creating a more effective GSAP, both redesigning the preliminary assignment, which is the foundation of a GSAP, and ensuring the quality assurance of mentoring were found to be important.

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