

ecology of human development established by Bronfenbrenner (1979). Considering it is necessary to evaluate the features of human, environment and their interaction referring to the process of informal learning and its result.

Qualified valuation of the results of informal education can be carried out by means of the model of valuation.

There should be worked out concrete indicators and tests or other methods for each profession and level of education to evaluate competence got in informal education.

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# Content, criteria and checking of the portfolio for proving professional development

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## Abstract

*A portfolio is a documentary evidence of one's competence. Criteria of making the career portfolio have to comprise the following answers: what is a portfolio, for whom and for what is it, why is it worth for work, what to include, what are forms and appearance of the portfolio. It can contain the documents of knowledge, skills, reflection, achievement and attitude towards work and the main global processes. Artifacts can serve as an important part of the portfolio. Criteria for checking of the portfolio can be validity, authenticity, currency and sufficiency.*

## THE AIM, DEFINITION AND CRITERIA OF MAKING OF THE PORTFOLIO

People who develop their career successfully face new and new demands from the nowadays' society. In the documents of the Council of Europe, UNESCO and researches of various scientists (Commission of the European Communities, 1995; International Commission on Education, 1996; HUTMACHER, 1997) is stressed that people should be skilful according to the following characteristics: flexibility in facing uncertainty and complexity, to adapt to rapid changes e.g. take on responsibilities, persuade, solve conflicts in non-violent manner; ability to find information from different sources and use information; respect to people of other cultures and religions; readiness to life-long education; skillfulness in written and oral communication; ability to express active attitude towards processes in society and understand relations between past and present; co-operation skill including ability to work in a team and manage disagreements and conflicts; ability to listen and consider other views; understand and speak more than one language.

Those features should be reflected in one's portfolio together with specific competencies, e.g. European CV (EUROPASS, 2005) items allow to insert all that kind of information.

It is a typical demand of employers that they need an employee with high professional knowledge and skills and at the same time ability to be flexible, able to work in a team, to be responsible, creative, ready for learning, etc. Higher school graduates should be ready for meeting those demands of employers and therefore the higher schools have to guarantee a possibility to reach the appropriate level of competence. It means that the components of competence and their contents should be defined. As regards employers it is quite usual thing nowadays that they need employees who are versatile and able to act independently no only to follow simple rules. It is worth mentioning PURCELL's (2001) acknowledgement that persons have to do concrete tasks in a given situation but they also should use knowledge and skills in new situations and contexts creatively.

COTTRELL (2001) mentions that since the beginning of the nineties, there has been a dramatic change in the approach to skills' development in higher education. She stresses that personal development planning including improvement of one's own learning, skills development, performance, presenting of evidence, rising of awareness of all students and reflection are important. The accent is on each person's responsibility therefore

focusing on such aspects as planning, evaluation, learning etc. This is a humanistic model of learning in which student centered approach promotes independent individual work and reflective action. Taking it into account students should be trained in learning to learn to guide their study process successfully. It also concurs with the idea of adult and life-long education conception in the Memorandum of Life-long Learning.

In the result of consideration of the above mentioned acknowledgements it is possible to determine the aim and tasks of making a portfolio. So the aim of making of the portfolio is to collect evidence for flexible adaptation to rapidly changing labour market demands and environment, and be aware of ones competence.

The following tasks originate from the aim: to prove competence, to develop one's career and find work, to get a survey on a person's competence development in a concrete period of time therefore showing one's progress and dynamic, to help to keep adequate self assessment.

Competence often is defined as the ability to use knowledge and skills in action, which should be assessed through performance according to the appropriate criteria involving occupational requirements. The other definition of competence can be the following: competence is a totality of knowledge, skills and reflection abilities which is possible to prove documentary and in action in which a person agree to participate actively and with a sense of responsibility.

There is an opinion that competence usually consists of two large parts: professional and social. But in those both parts knowledge, skills and reflection are mutually connected. Will-power and responsible activity refer to the questions when, how, why, where to mobilize skills and experience for demonstration of one's competence.

Considering the above mentioned conclusions about competence we can define a portfolio as a collection of competence evidence for flexible adaptation to rapidly changing labour market demands and environment. City and Guilds in 1994 suggested (REECE & WALKER, 1997) that the portfolio is a folder which contains details of skills, knowledge, understanding, achievement which may arise from observation of employment tasks, products resulting from performance, documentary evidence of completed tasks, written accounts of activities.

## CRITERIA OF MAKING A PORTFOLIO

White stresses the difference between work and career (WHITE J., 1997). Purposeful developing of the career is not the same as looking for various places of work. Clear understanding of career plans promotes making of the portfolio and it can serve as one of the criterion's as well. The portfolio describes our strong sides by presenting our skills and abilities and therefore self-assessment is a necessary step in the portfolio making process (UW Geography Dept Career Resources, 2005).

The criterion for making a portfolio can also be the Standard of Professions, i.e. the requirements determined for each profession (Latvian Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre, 2001). The standards

determine the basic requirements for a qualification as well as the appropriate specific demands, e.g. absolute pitch, what is necessary for carrying out the main duties. The standards should not be rigid and they need to be revised after some period of time. They must not lag behind from dynamic developing of demands for each profession and retard progress. It is now generally acknowledged that true competence is not a simplified performance of one's skills. So it means that the evidences of flexibility and ability of knowledge and skills transfer from one situation to another should be reflected in the portfolio.

Other criterion for collecting evidence and checking it could be core skills or generic competencies (BELL, 2001). They are similar in many countries. BELL (2001) referring to Marsh notes that in Australia, Britain, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland those skills are defined and incorporated into the curriculums. Typical core skills are: communication, particularly language, problem solving, mathematics, self-management, social and co-operative skills, work and study skills, physical skills, cultural understanding.

Portfolios need to be complemented and revised both quantitatively and qualitatively. It means that a person is able to answer whom? what? where? why? when? how? questions. A competent person comprehends the newest demands and scientific achievements in a profession. Therefore he or she is responsible for further education and from here the focus is on life-long learning.

## KINDS OF EVIDENCE

A portfolio should contain a lot of evidence to meet the above mentioned tasks and criteria. There should be the documents proving one's skills, knowledge, understanding and achievement (REECE & WALKER, 1997). The evidence of reflection, achievement and attitudes towards work, environment and global processes also should be included. It can contain the results of observations of assessors, reviews of employers, documents of self-assessment. From the viewpoint of demands for young Europeans it is desirable that a portfolio could contain evidence of qualifications as well as moral, social and spiritual development. Progress and its dynamics, value orientation, motivation are important factors in our work therefore they should be enclosed in a portfolio.

The possible kinds of evidence can be: Curriculum Vitae (CV); documents of formal education (diplomas and certificates); evidence of non-formal and informal education such as records (video, audio), certificates on participation in activities, essays, reports, etc.; reports from assessors describing what has been observed; proofs of candidates performance at work such as records (video, audio), letters, reports, projects; evidence of achievements and work products; evidence from others about the individual candidate's work and abilities: letters, reports, references from employees, colleagues, clients, or others involved in the process of work; sociological data: data of questioning; data of tests.

The documents of one's reflection should be one part of the portfolio. The content of the documents can include reflection and understanding of one's professional skills and achievements. Those documents should be written by the author of the portfolio and he or she needs the skills of evaluation, critical thinking. Therefore students should be encouraged to think critically in their chosen disciplines. Developed evaluation and critical thinking skills prove that they are better prepared for their career and they are able to write a reflective essay on it. In order to develop the reflection skill students should be required to transfer their skills, knowledge and understanding from familiar areas to new areas. Academic staff should work as a team to transfer ideas of content and assessment from separate to integrated courses. It is not possible to become competent without making experiments, analyzing them, thinking about them and correcting them. Such kind of studies also contributes to the development of adequate attitudes towards the future career. The students can polish self-assessment skills writing about events and circumstances, which help or hinder working.

## CRITERIA FOR CHECKING OF THE PORTFOLIO

One of the first criterions for a good portfolio is an easy following of the evidence. It means that the evidence is presented in a way, which is understandable and logical. Each candidate has to think over the best subdivision of the portfolio because several approaches are possible. The portfolio can be subdivided according to scheme of the standard of professions, core and special competencies, ways of activities of the candidate, etc. So it is advisable that the candidate briefly describes the principle of arranging the evidence and in the case of a lot of information also gives a content of the portfolio.

REECE and WALKER (1997) have determined four rules of checking evidence. These are: validity, authenticity, currency and sufficiency. By validity usually is understood the relation of evidence to legally accepted documents (laws, standards, demands in the place of work). Authenticity refers to proving that the evidence is genuine, i.e. "relates to the candidates own abilities" (REECE & WALKER, 1997, p. 306). Currency means that evidence should be up-dated, i.e. to be in the state of general use in a concrete case, e.g. if a person has a diploma of the teacher of mathematics but he hasn't worked as teacher for a longer period of time there is a problem with currency and it is necessary to present other evidence which proves his/her competence in this field. Sufficiency overlap with the demand for a clear structure and content of the portfolio. It means that neither too much nor too little evidence should be presented.

## CONCLUSIONS

The skills of self-managing, updating knowledge, reflecting, planning is of high importance of making of the portfolio because it is a typical example of each person's individual work.

It is necessary to determine the aim and tasks of making a portfolio considering the newest tendencies in a labour market and society in general. So the aim of making of the portfolio is to collect evidence for flexible adaptation to rapidly changing labour market demands and environment, and be aware of one's competence.

A portfolio is a collection of competence evidence for flexible adaptation to rapidly changing labour market demands and environment.

Criteria of making a portfolio can be: necessity to be aware of one's knowledge, skills and abilities; understanding of one's career plans; to comprehend importance of further education in concrete professional fields and in general.

The possible kinds of evidence in the portfolio can be: Curriculum Vitae, documents of formal education, evidence of non-formal and informal education, reports from assessors, proofs of candidates performance at work, evidence from others about the individual candidate's work and abilities sociological data: data of questioning, data of tests.

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