

Using Portfolios as a Motivation Tool in Adult Education

An autobiographical approach

O2 Module Developed by Inspira Plus

Objectives of the Module

Portfolios are an instrument from arts, aiming at displaying an array of evidence to show the artist's best work and skills and to assess artistic intelligences. Mostly since the 90's its use has been studied and introduced as an innovative tool to register and assess learning in different grades, from pre-school to university, with various objectives and forms, but always providing autonomy and context to the learning process. Nowadays, portfolios can be built in different formats: material (paper, file, etc.), digital (allowing for media contents to be introduced and others) or both.

We propose analysing and structuring portfolios in adult education as a tool to motivate learners, to value their competences and skills, considering all the learnings acquired throughout their lives in formal, non-formal and informal situations and to boost their self-esteem and self-awareness.

Learning Objectives

- Understanding the concept and use of portfolios
- Be able to structure and build a portfolio according to needs and aims
- Assessing adult learning and competences using portfolios

Module Description

In class - session	Topics Covered
1.	An introduction to portfolios
2.	The structure of portfolios in adult education
3.	Building a portfolio
4.	Assessing a portfolio

Step-by-step implementation

1. *Explore the concept of a portfolio. Brainstorm*

The concept and use of portfolios usually is originally associated to arts and artistic professions, as a collection of the work and evidence of the moments (drawings, sketches, photos, etc.) that best portrays the person competences and skills.

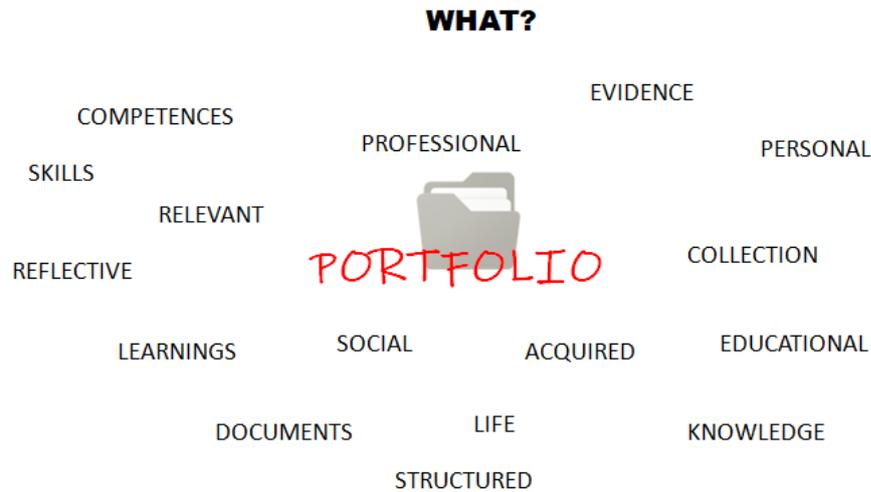
- *Professionally, portfolios are mainly used as an improved or enriched CV to provide a more thorough representation of skills and competences required to perform a certain job.*
- *In education, portfolios have been used as a collection of the student's work within a course to record progress and performance.*

Task 1

- 1 Brainstorm the concept of a portfolio eliciting words related to it. You can provide a preview on the subject if necessary.
- 2 Cooperatively build a definition or definitions of a portfolio using the words provided.

Example

1.



2.

A portfolio is a **personal** record of the **knowledge acquired** throughout one's **life**.
 It is a **structured collection** of **relevant documents** that provide **evidence** of the **learnings, competences and skills**.
 It can be used for **educational, social** or **professional** purposes.
 A portfolio should always be **reflective**.

2. Structuring a portfolio: an autobiographical approach.

According to the purpose it is going to be used for, it is vital to provide a previous framework for the portfolio: the overall and specific aims and standards, the contents or topics and its organisation, the assessment criteria.

Using an autobiographical approach, the portfolio should be layered, growing from a personal context and moving towards a more global context. Its contents or topics should be organized in small chunks and used in a step-by-step approach.

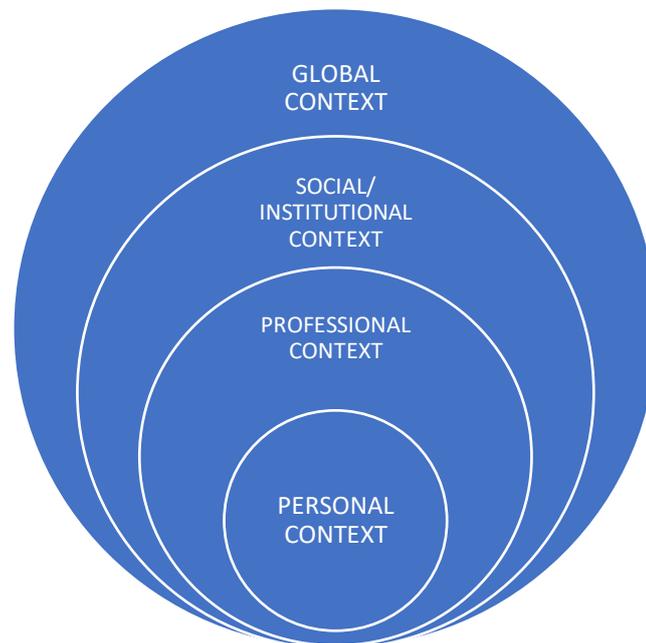
Where can we use portfolios?

- Regular school (from pre-school to 12th grade)
- Formal education and training courses
- Vocational courses
- Higher education
- Academic studies
- Professional assessment
- Informal and non-formal learnings processes (e.g.: recognition, validation and certification of competences)

Task 2

- Analyse and compare the different examples(4 examples) of portfolios provided. Find similarities and differences.
- Design a structure of a portfolio adapted to your needs and decide on the aims, contents and evidence to structure a portfolio. It can be for ...
 - a formal training workshop/course;
 - a social intervention and tutoring with a disrupted family;
 - a non-formal course with troubled young adults;
 - any other context...

Example1



Topic	Aims	Contents	Evidence Guiding questions	
Democratic freedom and responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledges the responsibility inherent to individual freedom and democracy. Assumes labour rights and duties as an active citizen. Identifies the fundamental rights within a democratic modern state. Participates, consciously and sustainably, in the global community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The concept of freedom. The features of active responsible citizenship Civil and Labour rights The active citizen's role in a democratic community 	A written story (autobiographical) A video presentation.	Identify and explore situations of shared responsibility and autonomy throughout your life, considering family and friends

Example 2¹

- My photography** (features and character; family tree)
- My life should be a book** (childhood memories; adolescence; adulthood; present time)

¹Adapted from HANDLE, Erasmus Project, Grundtvig programme, "Having a New Dynamic of Life Through Employment", 2008/2010

- **The others and me** (my personal social network and relationship with peers/colleagues)
- **My achievements** (assessment of acquired skills and competences, informal, non-formal and formal learnings)
- **My projects** (personal future projects)

Example3

Watch the video in https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_HWawLeGFk (*How to build a student's portfolio*)

Example4

Read the instructions on <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Portfolio> (*How to make a portfolio*)

3. Building a portfolio. A shared work

Building a portfolio should be an ongoing process shared both by the teacher and the learner to achieve its aims:

- Both teachers and learners can decide what documents should be used in the portfolio. Remember that relevance and evidence are important criteria. Its organisation should show progress and acquired competences.
- Teacher should inspire and boost the interaction and production of materials to use in the portfolio with creative and relevant activities.
- Always include reflection upon the progress made. Decide what, when and where (in each part or for a period of time; most important and least important learnings and competences acquired; self-assessment and assessment of the teacher's work, etc.)
- A portfolio should always allow the possibility of constant ...

A portfolio can be an open management tool that the adult learner can build and rebuild throughout his/her life, ready for any important moment.

Task 1- Time box

1 Give each learner a box (*Note: decide the size of the box; a shoebox is a good size*). Explain this is a box that is going to be sent into space. Elicit learners to decide what each one would choose to fill the box with (objects, documents, etc.) that best portrays them as individuals or the society they live in.

2 Each learner presents his/her choice and explains the decision upon each item used.

Alternative - "My backpack"²: each learner imagines him/herself as a refugee and has to decide what to take on his/her average size backpack. Discuss about the essential things for survival and come with a general list agreed by all.

Follow-up – countless activities can be adapted to each part or contents required by the structure of the portfolio. Always make sure they are creative, inspiring and relevant and should always lead to reflect upon the topics.

² Inspired by a worldwide campaign to raise awareness towards the refugees' crisis. A lesson plan by UNICEF [here](#)

4. Assessing a portfolio

The portfolio is an assessment tool alternative to traditional evaluation methods (e.g.: written/oral exams). Evaluation should always focus on the process and contents, not the grades.

Example 1

Topic	Aims	Contents	Evidence	Assessment
Democratic freedom and responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledges the responsibility inherent to individual freedom and democracy. Assumes labour rights and duties as an active citizen. Identifies the fundamental rights within a democratic modern state. Participates, consciously and sustainably, in the global community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The concept of freedom. The features of active responsible citizenship Civil and Labour rights The active citizen's role in a democratic community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A written story (autobiographical) A video presentation A review on a music, an image. A description of violation of rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I can identify my rights and duties as a citizen and a worker.</i> <i>I can understand my rights and duties as a citizen and a worker.</i> <i>I can act using my rights and complying with my duties as a citizen and a worker.</i>

Note: Rather than using grades *Assessment* is considered into three levels of complexity: identification – understanding – action/intervention

Example 2

GENERAL			ORGANISATION		CONTEÚDOS			GLOBAL ASSESSMENT
Presentation	Criativity Originality	Autonomy Responsibility	Structure	Sequenciality	Quality of reflections	Self-assessment	Relevance (info+docs)	

Task 1

- 1 Brainstorm the concept of evaluation eliciting words related to it. You can provide a preview on the subject if necessary.
- 2 Cooperatively build a definition or definitions of evaluation or assessment using the words provided.
- 3 Negotiate and decide the criteria going to be used for assessing the portfolio.

A possible definition of evaluation

“Evaluation is a comprehensive process of human life, which implies critical thinking over a given practice, in order to apprehend its progress, its resistance, its obstacles and to make decisions to overcome those difficulties”³

³ VASCONCELOS, Celso dos Santos. Avaliação: concepção didática libertadora do processo de avaliação escolar. São Paulo: Libertad, 1994 (free translation)

Due to the specificity of each module, the materials will be adjusted to enhance interactive individual and team-based work and presentations. The format of the materials and the teaching method might be in a form of: games, icebreakers, case studies, video materials, individual and team-based assignments, discussions, readings and role playing.

Debriefing/Evaluation

Upon the completion of the training each attendee will be able to assess the following areas:

1. Teaching method
2. Tools and materials used in the training
3. Assessment of anticipated and gained know-how
4. Recommendations for improvement