PROSPECTS FOR THE PORTFOLIO IN THE RUSSIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ ПОРТФОЛИО В РУССКОЙ ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОЙ СИСТЕМЕ

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Область научных интересов: современные технологии в преподавании иностранных языков, межкультурная коммуникация, теория и методика профессионального иноязычного образования.

The article gives the historical background of portfolio, its historical route to the educational system. We consider the arguments for the use of portfolio, on the one hand, and arguments against this technology, on the other. Different materials on the subject are studied. The author comes to the conclusion that portfolio is a promising method in the Russian educational system, being a mechanism for making students successful in their studying activities as well as in a professional career.

Рассматривается история возникновения портфолио и его путь в образовательную систему. Рассматриваются аргументы за и против применения данной технологии в образовании. Проанализированы различные материалы по теме исследования. Автором делается вывод, что портфолио является перспективным механизмом в российской образовательной системе, способствующим как образовательным достижениям студентов, так и их профессиональной карьере.

Key words:
Portfolio technology, achievements, education, self-directed, success, career.

Ключевые слова:
Портфолио, достижения, образование, самостоятельный, успех, карьера.

Opinion

The present-day situation in the Russian educational system is characterized by two main tendencies. The first one emphasizes the importance of continuous competitive education; self-education; self-actualization; integration of the person into national and world culture; highlights a growing role of the knowledge of foreign languages, the second pays attention to the increasing responsibility of educators in developing students' skills for self-educating. This requirement is a result of a social demand for specialists who are ready not only for practical activities but are apt to be adaptable in the conditions of the market economy, are ready for multi-proficiency, are able to raise questions, face challenges and solve problems without assistance, on their own, through self-education.

Up to the last decade of the twentieth century the workforce or employees relied on companies to manage their careers, which had been determined long ago and almost did not change in a professional field. Those careers were considered to be successful if there was some upward progression, within the same organisation, or within the same career path. In the modern world, a present-day career is not stable; it is woven; while climbing the career ladder employees often step sideways, or downwards. In this situation those whose goal is to be promoted should focus on their personal growth and advancement, in other words, self-direction is the key to realizing success within the present-day job market. In this way, employees should think of themselves as a commodity to be traded within the

job market and realise that the secret of career satisfaction is in understanding of who you are, what you want and how you can achieve this [1].

However, the practical research of the problem among the graduating students shows the lack of abilities in planning and realizing their own personal and career path. At the present time the Russian system of higher education pays little attention to the questions connected with career planning and promotion track. At the same time, the market economy needs in movable, flexible, self-directed specialists. It means that higher education together with practice under the guidance of a professional should help future specialists to be successful in performing their functions and in their promotion. This contradiction is possible to be settled through the development and maintenance of a career passport or, more usual, career portfolio.

Example 1

As a term, portfolio is known from the Renaissance. In that epoch it was habitual for artists and architects to demonstrate their works in a form of a folder when they aspired to a place in the Academy of Arts. Collected data enabled the jury to gain an impression of the quality of those works. What is more, they reflected the career route of the aspirant. In the modern world, portfolio is used in the same meaning among artists, designers, photographers, models, etc.

The sphere of the use of portfolio was widened in the XVIII–XIX centuries. Private teachers, tutors, governesses usually were to have letters of introduction, some kinds of character references, recommendations. Those documents demonstrated their achievements and showed their way to success, provided employers with the information of the labour activity of the applicants. Thereat, they might be considered as a prototype of portfolio. Later portfolio became widespread in the spheres of politics, finance and business. In the 80s of the XX c. the system of education adopted this term. Firstly, portfolio as an alternative system of assessment was used in the USA, very quickly portfolio technology appeared in Canada, Great Britain, Australia, Japan and in many European countries. In Russia it started its development from the end of the 1990s.

Some of the researchers believe that school of the XXI c. is a school of portfolio. Despite the fact, that great number of publications is dedicated to the phenomenon of portfolio, there is no clear definition of the term in the pedagogical literature.

Portfolio is considered to be «a new approach to the training, a new method of work expressing the modern understanding of the teaching process and learning, new culture of learning, […] in which the essence of interaction between the teacher and the student varies essentially, and there appear new objectives and new ways of achieving the old objectives of training» [2].

Portfolio is «a tool of the self-estimation of the student's own cognitive, creative activity, reflection of its own activity. It is a set of documents, the students' unassisted works» [3].

Portfolio is «a form of authentic assessment of educational results of the product created by students during educational, creative, social and other kinds of activities» [4].

Portfolio «is an object-orientated collection of pupils' works, which demonstrate their efforts, their development and achievements in one or several educational areas» [5].

Portfolio is «a well-planned selection of individual achievements» [6].

Portfolio is «a purposeful collection of student work describing the student efforts, progress, or achievement in a given area(s). This collection must include student participation in selection of portfolio content, the guidelines foe selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-reflection» [7].

There are many other definitions. The common features of all of them are in the following key words: *collection, evidence, achievements, self-estimation, authentic assessment, self-education*. Thereby, portfolio is used as a method of authentic assessment of students' achievements, and the main goal in the use of this technology is the desire to achieve progress in learning. Hence, it is possible to speak about the educational philosophy of portfolio, that plays the main role in the educational process of teaching and learning, and this process consists of the following ideas: pointing out the things that the student does not know and is not able to do is replaced by pointing out his/her concrete achievements; the integration of quantitative and qualitative marks; the prevalence of the student's self-estimation over the teacher's evaluation. Portfolio allows students to show what they are able to

do and, at the same time, makes them responsible for their own education. That means that portfolio comprises powerful incentives that ensure individual growth and promote students' successful self-realization.

The concept of portfolio has been introduced into the Russian educational system since July 2003. Round table talks «Portfolio as pupil's achievements within the transmission to profile school» took place in July 2004 in the Federation of the Internet Education, where advocates and opponents of portfolio technology discussed the results of the experiment that was carried out in 10 regions of Russia.

Despite the fact that portfolio helps to solve some pedagogical problems like supporting and stimulating the educational motivation of pupils/students; encouraging their activity, independence; expanding their opportunities of training and self-training; developing the skills of reflective and esti-mated (self-estimated) activity of pupils; forming the skill to study – to define the goals, to plan and organize its own educational activity; reinforcing the process of individualization of education; gener-ating the conditions and opportunities for successful socialization; facilitating the promotion track of future specialists [8], there was a concern that the use of portfolio might transform one more directive.

The actual experience with portfolio at school is demonstrated in the articles of Galsko-va N.D., Ivanova N.V., Isaeva D.A., Kreyasheva E.N., Labazina L.N., Novikova T.G., Ogan-esyants N.A., Phyedotova E.E., Pinskaya M.A., Polat E.S., Prutchyenkov A.S., Skachkova G.A., Zagvozdkin V.K. and others. The questions connected with the use of portfolio in higher education are examined in the researches of Andyusyev B.A., Balykina E.N., Galaktionova T.G., Lyakhova N.V., Pogodina A.A., Polilova T.A., Stepanova T.N. and others. A careful study of the articles of the Rus-sian researchers on the problem allows analyzing positive and negative aspects of the use of portfolio. The results of the analysis are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Positive and negative aspects of the use of portfolio in the education

	«for»	«against»
1	supports and encourages the student learning motivation	reevaluates student educational activities, assesses activi-ties which are already assessed
2	renders assistance in individualization of the educational process	leads to deprivation of individualization (not all students strive for competition; students with high results in sub-ject(s) but without documentary evidence are infringed upon their rights)
3	develops student self-evaluating and reflex-ive skills in educational activities	results in undue responsibility
4	forms the skills for learning – provides stu-dents with the skills to define the goals, to plan, to organize their own educational ac-tivities	may convert the principle of voluntariness into obligation
5	stimulates their diligence, independence and self-dependence, widens the opportunities for self-education	causes doubts in the correctness of the chosen profile on basis of presented documents
6	provides for necessary prerequisites for suc-cessful socialization, supports future special-ists in their promotion track	causes doubts in individualization and self-dependence of demonstrated works

The data from table 1 show that the number of arguments is the same. In any case, the use of portfolio won't be resultant, if it is only the instruction. Effectiveness of any technology depends on performers. What is more, portfolio exists in the modern world irrespective of our desire to use or not to use it.

Example 2

The decision to implement portfolio technology in the Russian educational system is provoked by the world experience in the use of portfolio. The best evidence that portfolio is not a one-off action in American, Canadian, Australian practices in this area. The implementation of portfolio technology was a result of teachers' initiative, as they were looking for the alternative ways of assessing, and of

state policies. Portfolio samples, evaluation criteria and forms are standardized, the use of portfolio in schools, colleges and universities is well organized and arranged. Department of Education and skills in Great Britain is responsible for the use of portfolio. Despite the fact that individual universities or schools in the USA can be developers of portfolio, the process of implementation and monitoring is in charge of the State Departments of Education.

Another example of well-organized practical activities is European Language Portfolio which was developed and piloted by the Modern Language Division of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, from 1998 until 2000. It was launched on a pan-European level during the European Year of Languages 2001 as a tool to support the development of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is supposed to be: a means of celebrating language-learning and intercultural experiences; an open-ended record of children's achievements in languages; addressed to and is the property of the learner; a valuable source of information to aid transfer to the next class or school.

The attitude towards portfolio technology is penetrating. Portfolio is usually started at school where the schoolchildren are given opportunity «to take the education into their own hands». Classroom teachers, being dissatisfied with the traditional assessment measures and being critical of the standardized test, began to work together with educational administrators, parents and other advocates on the problem of improving assessment. As a result of the educational reform in the USA, the use of portfolio was implemented widely as a contrast to standardized tests. The point is that portfolios «provide an opportunity for richer, more authentic, and more valid assessment of student achievement» [9]. While maintaining portfolios at their work students «learn to assess their own progress as learners, and teachers gain new views of their accomplishments in teaching» [10]. The traditional methods of assessing monitor factual knowledge, while «teaching goals are broader than the fact-based test». Teachers are interested in measuring thinking skills. Moreover, it is important «to assess attitudes, growth, reflective understanding, or integrative thought» in order «to reflect what students actually do in the classroom over an extended period of time» [11] and to show the individual development path in education of every student.

Cumulative record of progress presented in portfolio stimulates reflective thinking. Thus, portfolios can be used for assessment, advertisement and eventual placement. At the same time, portfolios favour not only the development of education but foster to rear a successful individual who will be able to be promoted in their future professional tracks. The range of the use of portfolios is increasing nowadays. Trying to keep pace with the ever-changing needs of market educators in the USA, UK, Canada, Australia and in many European countries are utilizing portfolios as a self-directional guide to lead individuals on their career path. With the help of portfolios it is possible to foster self-direction and reflection and form the basis for professional development.

The present-day situation shows a new tendency in the use of portfolios. Electronic portfolios are becoming wide-spread in different areas. They are useful for those who are on the way of achieving educational and career objectives. Although they are similar to hard copy portfolios, they have some advantages of the paper versions. E-portfolios are versatile and are created in a virtual environment. In this way it is not necessary to sort through boxes and files for finding best samples, as they are in e-portfolio. It is easier to upload documents, pictures, graphics, audio and video files, to upgrade materials, to access at any time from anywhere to change or add content.

In general, there are three main user groups of portfolio: students, educators and others considering a job or career change. The objectives of each group are to demonstrate their individual strengths. The aim of the students is to showcase their educational accomplishments, employment, volunteer experience and interests. The educators highlight their professional development through publications, presentations and other educational and career development materials which they include into their e-portfolios. Career group includes individuals applying for employment, those who are planning to change their workplace, or those who are interested in being promoted. They present their career history, skills and other experience to prospective employers by directing them their electronic portfolio. Thus, educational aims of portfolios are also becoming broader – documentation, process, assessment, development, reflective, showcase, proficiency, career portfolio and career passport, etc.

The present situation in the Russian education shows a growing tendency in the use of portfolio at different stages. Portfolios are being implemented in kindergartens, at schools, at universities. At the same time, portfolio technology is not widely spread in the Russian educational system, as it is in

the USA and Europe. The analysis of the articles on the problem discloses the main problems which prevent the educators from being successful with portfolio introduction. In contrast to the American and European practices, there is no state control in the implementation of portfolio. There is no special body responsible for the implementation of portfolio technology. As a consequence, there is no system in the use of this technology, features and characteristics are not unified. The diversities in assessment, in the types of collected data and types of portfolios cause various difficulties, especially if students change schools or move to another city. The work on portfolio is often organized by volunteers. As a result, it often happens that students, who conduct portfolio at one of the stages, do not continue this work at other stages. In default of continuity in the use of portfolio teachers face to a problem of lowering of motivation.

The results of the questionnaire, that was carried out in 5 secondary schools among teachers, students and parents, and in the Institute of Economics, Governing and Nature Management (IEGNM) among the students, show that the majority of respondents are interested in working with portfolio. Schoolchildren from primary school up to the 10 formers clearly understand the advantages of portfolio technology. Their attitude to the use of portfolio is mainly positive. Interesting materials, various data about different achievements, documents and certificates gathered in their portfolios provide teachers, parents and persons concerned with valid information about the bearer. They are deeply motivated in presenting their best works and demonstrating their best results in different spheres, especially students of 7–8 forms, because they compete for the exact profile in high school. They must prove that they deserve to continue their studies in this or that profile. The students of 9–10 forms usually keep on working on portfolio. They hope that their documents, certificates, achievements in Olympiads will be taken into account when they enter the universities or colleges and institutes. Eleventh-formers lose both their hopes and motivation in the use of portfolio because they realize that there is intermittence in the demand of portfolio.

273 participants took part in the survey: 30 parents, 167 schoolchildren (27 – primary schoolchildren, 58 – pupils of secondary schools, 82 – pupils of high school), 31 teachers, 45 students. Schoolchildren together with parents and teachers of 2 gymnasiums, 2 lyceums and 1 comprehensive school answered the questions of the questionnaire. Students, participants of the survey, are from the 1st and 2nd courses of the faculty of economics and international economics of the Institute of Economics, Governing and Nature Management (IEGNM). The inquiry forms give the detailed information of the questions and given answers of respondents (see the appendix). The results of the gathered data based on the inquiry form were processed and presented in table 2.

It is interesting that schoolchildren know about portfolio technology and work on portfolio mainly in gymnasiums and lyceums.

The question of considering portfolio as an alternative assessment of student achievements that add more information to university entrant is still discussing. There are round table talks in the media and the Internet forums. It is evident that portfolio is helping to solve problems connected with vocational training in high schools and its documentary part can become an additional document to the certificate of secondary education. Alexander Adamsky, a member of the Russian Federation Public Chamber, the rector of the Institute on Problems of Educational Policy in different interviews and forums paid attention to the importance of portfolios as additional way of assessing that includes achievements in different areas. He thinks that both students and universities can gain benefits from the use of portfolio. On the assumption of growing competitiveness in entering a higher education institution, portfolio can influence considerably the rating of the future students, and will be helpful in disputable situations.

Table 2. Relevance of the use of portfolio in education

Groups of respondents	Pupils			Students of SFU, IE-GNM, age 18–20	Teachers	Parents
	primary schools, age 9–11	secondary schools, age 14–16	high schools, age 16–18			
Experience in the use of portfolio	37 %	96 %	96 %	73 %	92 %	89 %
Positive attitude to the work on portfolio	100 %	70 %	22 %	82 %	23 %	58 %
Confidence of prospects and increasing opportunities	100 %	84 %	30 %	78 %	69 %	84 %
Main influence of portfolio	leads to achievements – 88 %; reflects the individual progress – 73 %; develops creative abilities – 72 %	reflects the individual progress – 57 %; helps to evaluate one's own possibilities – 39 %	reflects the individual progress – 40 %; leads to achievements- 32 %; develops creative abilities – 20 %	facilitates the promotion track – 92 %; leads to achievements – 78 %; develops creative abilities – 72 %; reflects the individual progress – 63 %; helps to evaluate one's own possibilities – 62 %	increases the level of independence – 72 %; helps to evaluate one's own possibilities – 61 %; expands the opportunities of training and self-training – 61 %; forms the skills to study – 22 %: facilitates the promotion track – 22 %	helps to evaluate one's own possibilities – 42 %; disciplines – 25 %; helps in organizing the time better – 25 %; stimulates the educational motivation – 16 %
Problems that arise with the use of portfolio	the lack of self-discipline – 66 %	the lack of desire of adults in assisting to collect the data – 72 %	the deficit of time – 77 %	the lack of self-discipline – 84 %	the deficit of time – 97 %	too little information and documents about the use of portfolio – 58 %

Andrey Fursenko, the former Minister of Education and Science, highlighted the importance of portfolio in his interviews and noted that there should be opportunities of entering higher educational institutions with the help of it. The practice of entering the universities without exams has been existed for a long period of time. The winners of regional, state and international Olympiads and scientific conferences are admitted to universities owing to their achievements. It is necessary to notice that the idea of portfolio is much wider. It contains not only the documentary results in different competitions, but shows the individual growth of a person, and demonstrates their various features where educational achievements are only one of the components. A. Fursenko mentioned that portfolio would be a valid tool in verifying the real achievements of school leavers [12]. Ex-president of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev commissioned to decide a creation of a mechanism of considering school portfolios in entering higher schools up to 01.02. 2012. The aim was to ensure continuity of education at different stages. As it turned out this request was forgotten. Thus, taking into account the

ideas mentioned above, one should pay attention that there is still a problem, as talk are talks, and there is no state decision on this very important issue.

Conclusion

Ambitious, purposeful students of higher educational institutions aimed at success, start or continue their work on portfolio, collecting their best works, documents, certificates, awards, resumes, reviews and responses into the folder. This work is done individually or under the guidance of certain volunteers. The students mention the lack of the interest in the tenth and eleventh forms, as they perceive that their achievements are not demanded at universities. However, very quickly they realize that being successful in the market conditions implies the abilities to present themselves as a commodity. Here comes portfolio, as the means of presenting various achievements and positive aspects in the educational process as well in the learner's personality. Thus, students are sure that portfolios are necessary if they want to achieve success.

As it was mentioned, in order to prevent the decrease or even the lack of motivation, it is necessary to guarantee the succession in the use of portfolio in different educational organizations at different stages of education. The problem can be solved on the State level.

It is obvious that portfolio is being used today not only at school. The use of portfolio is possible after school, in higher education. The situation in the labour market shows that employers are interested in qualified specialists with the knowledge of information technologies and foreign languages. Moreover, the use of portfolio in the institutes of higher education will allow the future specialists to plan their careers.

Portfolio, a folder of individual documents, reflects the development, progress of a separate student and focuses on an individual. Systematic fixation of their achievements, reflection on successes and failures, presentation of materials for audience help to realize their destination in life, for schoolchildren of profile classes it helps to identify themselves with the future profession. Portfolio allows joining educational stages – from school to universities, from universities to labour market, where specialists manage their careers themselves [13].

In conclusion, it is possible to say that the portfolio promotes the organization of the system of independent work and authentic monitoring of successful activities of school and university students. The skill to study all life is especially important today as it promotes the professional growth, social and professional mobility. The portfolio is a universal means, a perspective technology as it leads to success both in education and in a professional career.

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Inquiry Form
Dear Student!

We offer you an inquiry form about the usage of portfolio in schools and universities. Please, share your ideas. If you don't know the answer, you may miss the question. Your opinion is very important for us. Thank you.

What is your sex?

1. male   2. female

What is a portfolio? Choose the best suitable answer.

1. collection of articles   6. art collection
2. a set of exercises   7. a set of pictures
3. efficiency exhibition   8. a pack of documents
4. constructor set   9. a folder of sketches
5. treasure trove   10. digest

Write your definition of portfolio.
_____
_____

In what spheres can portfolio be called for?
_____
_____

What for do we need portfolio? What is the use of portfolio?
_____
_____

Did you work on portfolio?

1. Yes   2. No

In what form did you start to work on portfolio?

1. 2–4
2. 5–9
3. 10–11

At what age is it better to start the work on portfolio?

1. 2–4 forms
2. 5–9 forms
3. 10–11 forms

4. at the university
5. when you apply for job
6. somewhere else *(what exactly?)*

_____

In what way can portfolio influence your studies?
1. disciplines
2. helps in organizing the time better
3. leads to achievement
4. develops creative abilities
5. reflects the individual progress
6. helps to evaluate your own possibilities
7. demands to much time
8. leads to piles of unnecessary papers
9. leads to rivalry, i.e. the race in collecting different documents
10. something else

_____

What is the best way to work on portfolio?
1. unassisted
2. together with classmates
3. together with parents
4. together with
5. something else

_____

How can portfolio influence your school activities? (how exactly?)
1. positively

_____

2. negatively

_____

3. does not influence
4. it is difficult to answer

Did you have any problems working on portfolio? (what problems?)
1. too little information and documents about portfolio
2. too much time is demanded for performing portfolio
3. the lack of self-discipline
4. the lack of desire of adults in assisting
5. something else (what exactly*?)*

_____

Is portfolio necessary nowadays?
1. Yes   2. No   3. It is difficult to say   4. I don't know

What is your attitude to portfolio?
1. positive
2. it is better to say positive than negative
3. it is better to say negative than positive
4. negative
5. there's no difference for me

Thank you for your help!