
USING EPORTFOLIO DURING A PHD COURSE IN ORDER TO CERTIFICATE COMPETENCES/SKILLS AND IMPROVE RESEARCHERS MOBILITY AND EMPLOYABILITY – ABSTRACT

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Pedagogical underpinnings and goals

- Constructivism: the learner builds his/her own knowledge;
- To promote the active learning;
- Awareness of learning: each PhD must have good learning strategies and ability in order to reflect on his/her own learning;
- Life long and life wide learning: learning as a process that each PhD student must lead.

Background

The necessity to learn along all the life appears essential in a complex, mobile, "liquid" context in constant change [Baumann, 2003]. It is necessary to obtain continuously new abilities and skills in order to answer as better as possible to the complexity of the society and to avoid risks of illiteracy return.

Each person participates actively to the construction of his/her own learning [Duffy, Lowyck, Jonassen 1993] and this is characterized like situated and carries out through particular shapes of collaboration and social negotiation [Doise, Mugny 1982].

In this context the metacognition, the self formative ability and the sense of self efficacy seem very important [Albanese 1998; Cornoldi 1995; Bandura 1996; Zimmermann 2000].

The metacognitive ability turns out fundamental as a reflection about the learned competences and to learn.

These considerations are fundamental in particular for PhD students and researchers that are called to contribute to the objective of Lisbona strategy: making Europe the more competitive and dynamics economy based on knowledge, realizing a sustainable economic increase with new and better workplaces and a greater social cohesion.

In order to achieve this aim it is necessary to form, to withhold and to attract the more competent researchers, to increase their mobility, to improve and give them a better continuous formation. It is also important give them skills and competences in order to progress both in the academic career and in the job market.

PhD students and researchers training to job market is a true challenge: currently, in the greater part of the European universities or institutions, the PhD students are training near only for an academic perspective. But PhD students and researchers would be also formed for a more wide job market. However, this kind of training needs a radical change of the usual habits.

Research Hypothesis

Research objectives are:

- using and managing eportfolio we could point out the academic, working and personal growth;
- we could promote a reflective and self-led learning;

- we could create a digital identity that might improve personal mobility, interchanges and employment;
- we could make eportfolio as a tool that a PhD student and researchers can also use in his/her working life.

The Research Project Plan

The research will be developed in three years (at the moment, this is the second year). It is a pilot project which involves a group of PhD students and researchers at Free University of Bozen- Bolzano.

They will use an eportfolio could be an electronic tool capable of supporting personal development planning (PDP). That tool wants to show their learning goals, to develop aims based on the acquisition of competences and skills, and to give the opportunity to personalize PhD courses.

Eportfolio includes PDP and personal blog and offers opportunities for interactive learning, feedback and support from peers, supervisor, colleagues and from the larger widespread public community. This is a digital, open, interactive community. All the community gives and receives feedback and support.

Research Objectives

- discover personal competences and make SWOT analysis of them;
- define a plan in order to improve the weakness and to develop the competences and skills;
- delineate an annual report that underline the achieve progress. The report will be the base for the plan of the following year;
- analyze the opportunity of using eportfolio in a Phd course;
- identify the skills and competences that, pedagogically, are useful for PhD student and researchers both in their academic career and in the job market.

Expected impact

- to make the eportfolio user able to reflect on his/her learning, developing metacognition ability;
- to increase a self led learning, in a lifelong and lifewide learning framework;
- to give input and suggestions to Free University of Bozen- Bolzano in order develop an eportfolio model, based on the know-how achieved in the pilot project;
- to export eportfolio in a working context.

Keywords: eportfolio, lifelong learning, metacognition, knowledge, skills and competences.

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