EPORTFOLIO AND STORYTELLING IN THE CONTEXT OF WEB 2.0

Abstract: This paper deals with an evaluation research approach of adults’ use of an ePortfolio organizer that fits Web 2.0 pedagogies e.g., the social networking site Eduspaces and You Tube as well as Google Pages for the purpose of accreditation of prior learning but also to maintain learner motivation for Lifelong Learning. The assessment includes the development of reflection, self-regulation, collaboration, motivation and ICT skills. As the paper is a report on work in process, we describe the mechanisms of the reflection on the “story of learning” of our adults and the first results of our research are presented and evaluated.

Keywords: ePortfolio, validation des aquis, web 2.0

Background

In a knowledge-driven world Lifelong Learning has become a major challenge to education systems and individuals. Internet and especially the emerging wave of Web 2.0 have expanded access to information. In accordance to Tim Berners-Lee vision with “Read-Write-Web”, we are now able to aggregate and remix data, to customize our learning. The new set of tools enables and encourages also participation through open services where according to Wenger people with the same interests interact and learn together.

These increasing sources of knowledge – non formal contexts - compete now with formal education and concepts like the Personal Learning Environments (PLE) are going to mature. Individuals will be able to manage both content and process of learning but this (r)evolution implies undertaking a framework of key competences for Lifelong Learning to cope with the “technology-embedded” [Carneiro, 2007] society and the uncertain future.

In what concerns Portugal “improvements are needed to narrow the significant human capital gap with over OECD countries… Adults, especially the least educated, do not participate enough in Lifelong Learning and training programs” [Guichard, Larre 2006, p. 2].

Most ongoing efforts of the Portuguese authorities are under the program Novas Oportunidades that targets both school-age students and adults. One of the government aim is to have one million people certified through adult education over the next five years and the development of the system of recognition, validation and certification of non formal experience is one the main mechanisms.

The reflexive portfolio is the milestone of the system of recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC) but in what concerns the use of ePortfolio, there’s no public initiative [Oliveira, 2006].

Research objectives

The main goal of this study is to examine the impact of the ePortfolio organizer [Ravet, 2007], in particular, the online learning landscape Eduspaces and Web 2.0 tools such as You Tube for the digital storytelling and Google Pages for the presentation of the ePortfolio in developing reflection, self-regulation, collaboration, motivation and ICT skills. It seeks to increase our understanding of the use of social networking in enhancing individual access to learning and thereby “enhancing Portugal’s human capital”.

Research questions

- How can digital knowledge artifacts and Eduspaces tools help in competency management and validation issues?
- What is the added value of peer group interaction tools to the outcomes?
- Which features of the ePortfolio organizer enhance engagement and motivation for learning?
- How does the ePortfolio organizer support the development of ICT competences?

**Research method**

The project has been designed around a blend qualitative and in a smaller scale quantitative research technique. Sixteen non-selected case study individuals are being observed in detail since mid October 2007 over approximately an eight months period to examine the construction of their ePortfolio and their evaluation of the strategies and tools.

Qualitative evaluation takes place at the various stages of the process. Mixed methods are used, including document analysis, questionnaires, interviews and regular blog reflections.

**Implementation of RVCC strategy**

The theoretical frame of the project is based on constructivism and connectivism. In a blended learning context supported by Eduspaces and a variable number of face-to-face sessions lasting approximately two hours, the aim is to encourage and motivate two small group of eight adults to identify and gather evidence of the competences they have acquired throughout their lives in different contexts (family, social life, school, work training) and respond to their own learning needs.

In general terms our RVCC candidates, 11 male and 5 female, are experienced in a certain job but don’t have any certificate. The average age is 40 years old. They have already attended secondary school.

In an environment of reflection and collaboration they are asked to organize their evidences in reference to key benchmark competences e.g., 88 competences /credits in three areas: 16 in CLC (Culture, Language and Communication), 16 in STC (Society, Technology and Science), 14 in CE (Citizenship and Employability).

The artifacts that can be found in the ePortfolio can consist of diplomas and certificates but it can also be pictures of projects, testimonials from employers, description and reflection of lived experiences, all in fluid and multimodal formats [Barbas, 2006].

Adults are central in the process and this has implications on the methodologies. The staff/team (one professional for each group and two trainers for each area) has not only “to motivate and involve the adults in the process of reflection, self analysis, self recognition and self assessment” [Cavaco 2007, p. 27] but also to stimulate the exploration of multimedia tools to organize the story of adult’s learning story which has a past, a present and a future [Barrett, 2004]. The assessment is done on their evidences and reflection [Tosh et al., 2005]. The timescale for this process in total is over an eight month period from October 2007 until May 2007.

In schedule the procedure for the adults looks as follows:

**Stage 1 – Welcoming**
- Clarification of the process, registration in the SIGO platform
- Interview/ Collection of data on the adult

**Stage 2 - Recognition of the adult’s competences**
- Collection of expectations
- Presentation of key benchmark competences
- Presentation/Exploration of Eduspaces
- Outlining life experiences
- Presentation/Exploration of Movie Maker and You Tube
- Creation of a digital life story

**Stage 3 - Validation of the adult’s competences**
- Comparison of evidences with the key benchmark competences
- Self-assessment
- Team assessment/accreditation
Definition/negotiation of goals and strategies to get at least 44 credits over 88 of the key benchmark.

**Stage 4 - Complementary training** to develop competences (if needed)
- Solving problems

**Stage 5 - Certification of competences** (Formal session)
- Presentation/Exploration of Google Pages
- Presentation of the ePortfolio

**Tools**

As our project is motivated by the need to stimulate lifelong learning, adult's ePortfolio is an open system and follows the philosophy behind social networking [Tosh, Werdmuller, 2004] so each group of RVCC candidates has its own community in Eduspaces that integrates various blended learning tools including electronic archive, opportunities for feedback and support, peer, collaboration (blogs, forum). This is “the landscape for the content management process with reflection on learning” [Barrett 2004, p. 13].

For the construction of digital life story we chose Movie Maker as adults have it in their computer and it’s easy to use and You Tube for the publication. The access restriction of You Tube and of Eduspaces archives and blog posts are very important features because of individual privacy.

For the final presentation of the ePortfolio we have Google PagesCreator a free page builder on the www, easy to create hyperlinked pages. But as the ePortfolio is adult-centered, the door is open to negotiate with the team and choose another tool for the digital storytelling and the presentation of the ePortfolio.

**Summary of results**

**Impact on reflection and self-regulation**

At the time of authoring this paper adults are in the third stage of the process e.g., the recognition of their competences and they have all the same understanding of the project as an empowering strategy of self analysis and self evaluation although they need more help to be more rigorous in their reflection and self assessment.

Perhaps even more importantly, some adults demonstrate the ability to learn intentionally. One of them says for instance that he has always written a lot but he never paid attention to the organisation of his writing and now he has to do it and he is very proud of his progress and wants to go on. Another one says: “At this stage, I feel more competent to learn”.

**Impact on collaboration**

In their blog reflections and artefacts adults say that they really appreciated the sessions when they could share their opinions, their work and that they regularly read what the others write but we can see that unfortunately, they rarely commented the team entries and never those of the fellow adults. Most of them never introduced other topics than the reflective entries in their blog, just two of them did it. Someone says “I didn’t take profit of all the tools”, another one says” People should collaborate more with each other”.

The strength of the community belonging was evident with the imminent closure of Eduspaces. The debate opened and one of the adults sent an email with a suggestion for a new solution: Google tools and the team decided to integrate Google Pages in the process and he was asked to share his knowledge with his colleagues in a group session.

**Impact on motivation**

The quantity and the quality of the content as well as the “look and feel” of the ePortfolios in general suggest that they are motivated. A common comment is the lack of time to explore the new tools, do better and respect timing.

“Begin by the end!” is one sign of enthusiasm of one of the adults. Another one says “I feel more and more interested in developing my competences” and another “All the tasks are interesting”.

**Impact on ICT skills**

The impact on adults’ and team technology proficiency is assessed by a survey carried out using an anonymous questionnaire in order to map and identifying existing practices. The same questionnaire will be administered at the end of the process but from the work they have already done we can see that adults have raised positive standards of achievement. Very soon adults edited their profile, created their own blog, organized their archives, uploaded files and used Eduspaces message system, keeping in touch with each other. For most of the adults and the trainers it was the first time the students experienced something like that: an e-community. An adult says “Now it’s easier to upload documents and to update my blog”, another one says “It’s an opportunity to use tools such as blogs that I’ve never tried before”.

**Conclusions**

On the basis of the evidence developed in this research, we do believe that the construction of the ePortfolio has already enabled adults to develop meaningful experiences and the importance of the challenge is clearly perceived by all those involved in the process: Assessment for Learning [Stiggins, 2002], and new technologies, especially Web 2.0 tools can help to organize learning landscapes.

The only drawback, besides the problem of certain unfamiliarity with the technology in both trainers and adults and the amount of time it takes to learn how to use the tools was the Eduspaces service closure announcement that hopefully will not happen anymore and the sudden technical problems. Adults are very tolerant but we wonder what impact this will have in their future learning journey and on trainer’s willingness to take risk with social web.

More extensive systematic study of the impact of the project will be made at the end of the year. It’s a very recent initiative and we certainly need to consolidate our methodology and instruments of mediation.

**References**


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