

SKILLS, Several Keys In Learning to Learn Skills

ANALYSIS OF THE PORTFOLIO AND
TASK-BASED TEACHING AND LEARNING
METHODOLOGY



SKILLS

PROGRAMA EUROPEO
DE FORMACIÓN PARA EL APRENDIZAJE
DE ADULTOS



SKILLS

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ANALYSIS OF THE PORTFOLIO AND TASK-BASED TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This document compiles the development of the study entitled **Analysis of the Portfolio and task-based teaching and learning methodology**, which is part of the research tasks tackled in the Multilateral Grundtvig Project **SKILLS**, Several Keys in Learning to Learn Skills, co-funded by the European Commission.

Its main objectives are

- To serve as a guideline for the development of the outputs by the partners
- To present and reach a consensus about the methodological options.
- To guide adult education professionals with regards to suitable methodologies for evaluation and competence development.

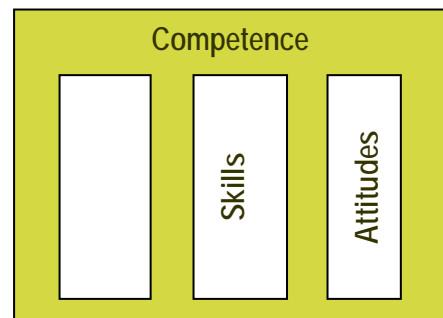
The competence approach

The EU has set as a goal that all citizens of the Union are, by the XXI century, equipped with the necessary skills to live and work in a society determined by globalisation and technological changes.

Therefore, taking into account that continuous progress and rapid changes make it impossible for citizens to cover the multitude of knowledge, which are part of the working, personal, social... worlds, it has concluded that learning must develop in terms of competences and has develop programmes and initiatives to establish, define and promote them in every educational field and level.

The Lisbon European Council (2000) developed the work programme «Education and Training 2010», which presses to act in order to “improve the command of basic competences”; its goal is to determine the basic skills and the way they can be integrated in the educational systems, learned and kept lifelong, and promote its validation, so as to drive forward training and employment.

Among the different approaches to the concept of competence, OECD’s project DeSeCo, Definition and Selection of Competencies and the EC’s Working groups for the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 programme, have defined competences as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes adapted to any given context. The project also identified 8 key competences as those every person requires for their personal fulfilment and development, for active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.



1. Communication in the mother tongue	5. Learning to learn
2. Communication in foreign languages	6. Social and civic competences
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology	7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
4. Digital competence	8. Cultural awareness and expression

Identification and implementation of competences are fundamental for the following reasons: planning and educational development, and evaluation.

Competence planning and educational development

A competence based educational approach places the importance on the essential learnings in each field of application: compulsory basic education, adult basic education, vocational training, ongoing training in the work place (in-house training)...

Making it easier for a person to integrate the different modes of learning

- formal (formal education, with official recognition)
- non-formal (planned actions without official recognition)
- informal (resulting from readings, experience ...)

relating them to various types of content

using them effectively when necessary, in different situations and contexts.

From the public administrations point of view, it focuses on the teaching, identifying the content and evaluation criteria, which are indispensable for inspiring decisions about the teaching and learning process.

The concept of competence is based on the know and the know-how, on mobilization and application of knowledge, thus highlighting the functional importance of learning: to have or to acquire knowledge, to be able to remember them, or even to be able to utilise them in a significant way, is not enough; it is necessary to know how to use them when the situation so requires.

A competence approach puts the emphasis on ...

performance **indicators**, rather than content.

tasks as axis of curriculum.

performance **evidences** at specific situations.

timing, personal pace of learning: individual capabilities and needs.

evaluation as a process of collection of evidence of performance, with the aim of finding out the level of competence according to the standard benchmark, and identifying the areas that require strengthening.

role of participants: agents of the process.

process: planned and coordinated.

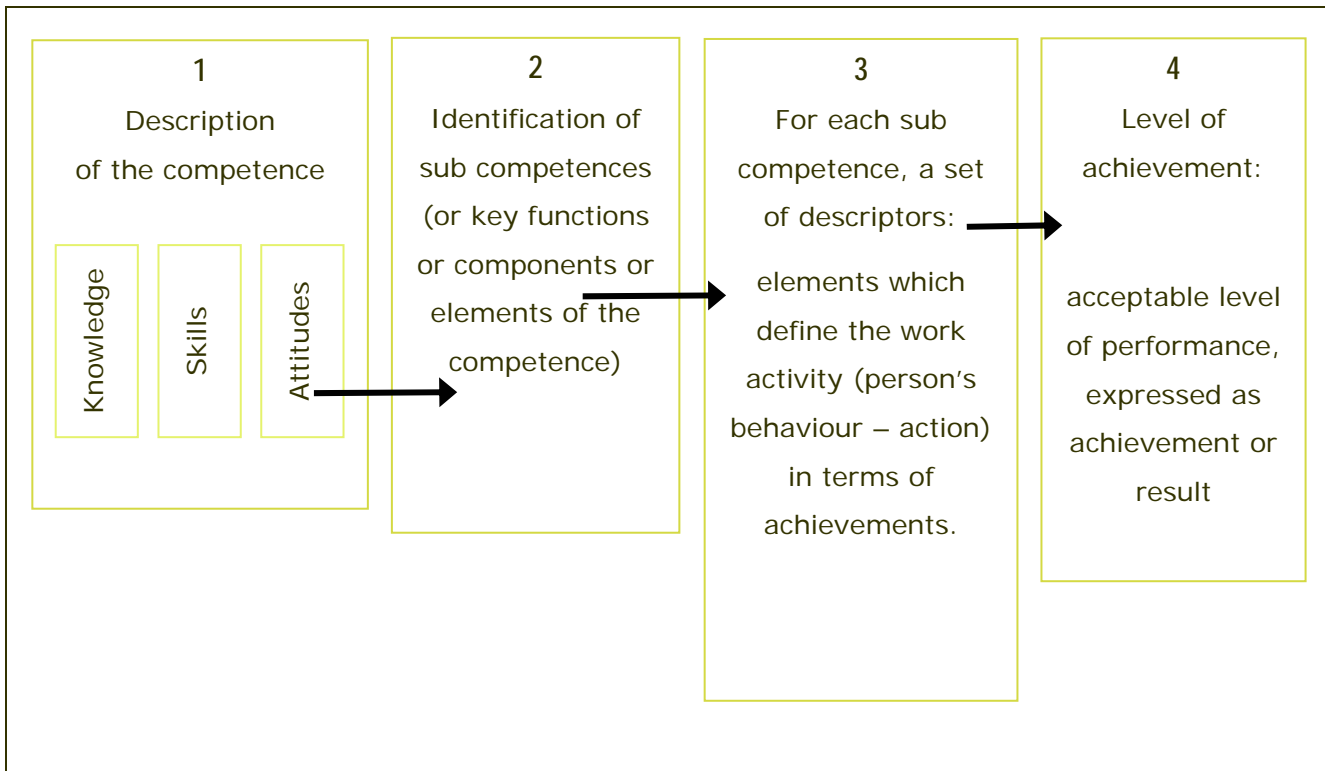
training and evaluation **methodologies:** globalizing, integrating, cooperative.

A competences-based curriculum is based on the principle that the process of teaching is guided by competence. Whereas content must be mobilized, that is, the most suitable ones must be determined and selected for each context of application and purpose. It puts an emphasis on putting contents into practice and considers that no knowledge belongs to an exclusive competence, since they can all be mobilized by other competences and a great amount of knowledge can be used in numerous contexts and with different intentions.

As well as describing the educational approach, in order to create competence it is also necessary to put it into practice by means of didactic methodologies, training tools and evaluation; although there is not an only method, there is a series of requirements that must be present in any methodology:

- It must consider **formal, non-formal and informal**, especially those acquired through **experience**.
- It must allow analysing objectively both **competences** and **incompetences, conscious** as well as **unconscious**.
- It must allow identifying and developing **skills** and, above all, their **application**.

Steps to implement competences



Defining portfolio

Portfolios have been utilized for a long time in various educational and professional fields. In the working life served as a portrait of the person, on his/her skills, abilities, interests and potential. Portfolios have aroused interest particularly in occupations requiring creativity, originality and individuality, and in which expertise is acquired through diverse education and work experiences. In such occupations professional competence is varied, as well, and calls for various kinds of knowledge, being typically hard to demonstrate by means of mere education or certificates. (Linnakylä 1994; Hartnell-Young & Morris 1999; Kankaanranta 2002.)

In many cases portfolios are built over a long period and include items of personal study periods and working life contexts. In an educational context, the use of portfolios has proven to be a promising form of authentic assessment. It is essential that information is collected from multiple sources using methods and many points of view. Shaklee, Barbour, Ambrose & Hansford (1997) describe portfolio assessment as a practical strategy for organizing data. It is generally acknowledged that authenticity reflects relationships and is applicable to real life context and activities both in working life and education.

The definition of portfolio is always dependent on the purpose and uses of a portfolio and the perspective of its assessment. So far, portfolios have most often been constructed in paper form, as folders and briefcases. However, the development of information and communication technologies has brought digital portfolios and other digital alternatives to demonstrate competence.

The construction of a portfolio should be seen as a process (Danielson & Abrutyn 1997; Linnakylä 2001). Essential phases in the portfolio process are:

- Documentation or collection
- Selection
- Reflective self-assessment
- Projection and progress
- Presentation and evaluation

Developments of self-assessment skills will strengthen the person's awareness of learning and commitment to continuous critical assessment of learning.

Evaluation of competences in portfolio

Among the most widely used evaluation tools in the competence approaches¹ the most important are tests, questionnaires, inventories, interviews, life stories, analysis of experience, groups tests, competence assessment, portfolio, DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) techniques...

In any case, the **objective** of any evaluation system must be **training** and not vice versa, for which reason the **educational impact** of the **tool** itself must be a priority.

Evaluation OF learning	Evaluation FOR learning
To check what has been learned, what is already known.	To check competence and learning to decide what will be done next.
Summative What has been learned so far? (from past to present)	Formative what are the future learning needs?
It is designed for the precise contents dealt with during a given teaching and learning process.	It is designed as a personal guide, and to help tutors, teachers, supervisors ...
It is presented and done only in formal ways: exams, reports.	It is used in conversations about learning and/or professional improvement.
Information is collected in the form of figures, points, levels.	It is a descriptive summary, detailed, precise, it provides nuances, reasoning, relations.
Learning is compared to that of other students or to the standard/average level.	It is focused on improving and making progress: previous competences with subsequent ones, previous knowledge with progress achieved.
The learner needs not be involved.	It involves the learner being central to the process and makes them more capable of improvement.
Examination normally takes places at the end of the programme, course ... at a limited period of time.	It is a tool regularly updated at anytime.
It requires extrinsic motivation.	It promotes intrinsic motivation.

¹ CEDEFOP *The learning continuity: European inventory on validating non-formal and informal learning*. Panorama series 117, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2005.

The objective of the portfolio is to identify what one knows and can do by means of a selection of work samples or evidences of personal, educational or professional objectives achievement which, ordered and presented in a given manner, promote reflection about each of the practices (educational, professional or citizenship-related). An evaluation system integrated in the teaching and learning and/or professional improvement process.

Although there exist several definitions and models, all agree in the fact that a portfolio is an evaluation tool, very flexible, that leads to feedback between what a person does and what is capable of doing, it encourages critical thinking, has a great educational impact that helps identify new objectives, it favours self-learning and professional development.

The range of portfolio typologies is very broad

Depending on which sector it is developed:

- **Teaching institutions** of any kind: learning monitoring and evaluation,
- **Business:** compilation of the most outstanding works of a professional or a work team
- A person's **life story** or recovery of collective memory

Depending on its objective:

- **Formative** Portfolio: the most important task is the identification of the areas where learning has already taken place and the areas where it still has not.
- **Evaluative** Portfolio, the process ends in certification (or re-certification)

Depending on its design:

- **Structured** Portfolio, with the help of a map, the competence or competence to tackle are defined, as well as the descriptors or indicators and the kind of tasks, evidences and documents to collect.
- **Free** Portfolio, the person decides what to do and what documents to present to prove competence.
- **Semi structured** Portfolio, depending on the competence; the portfolio is defined and designed alternating the previous options.

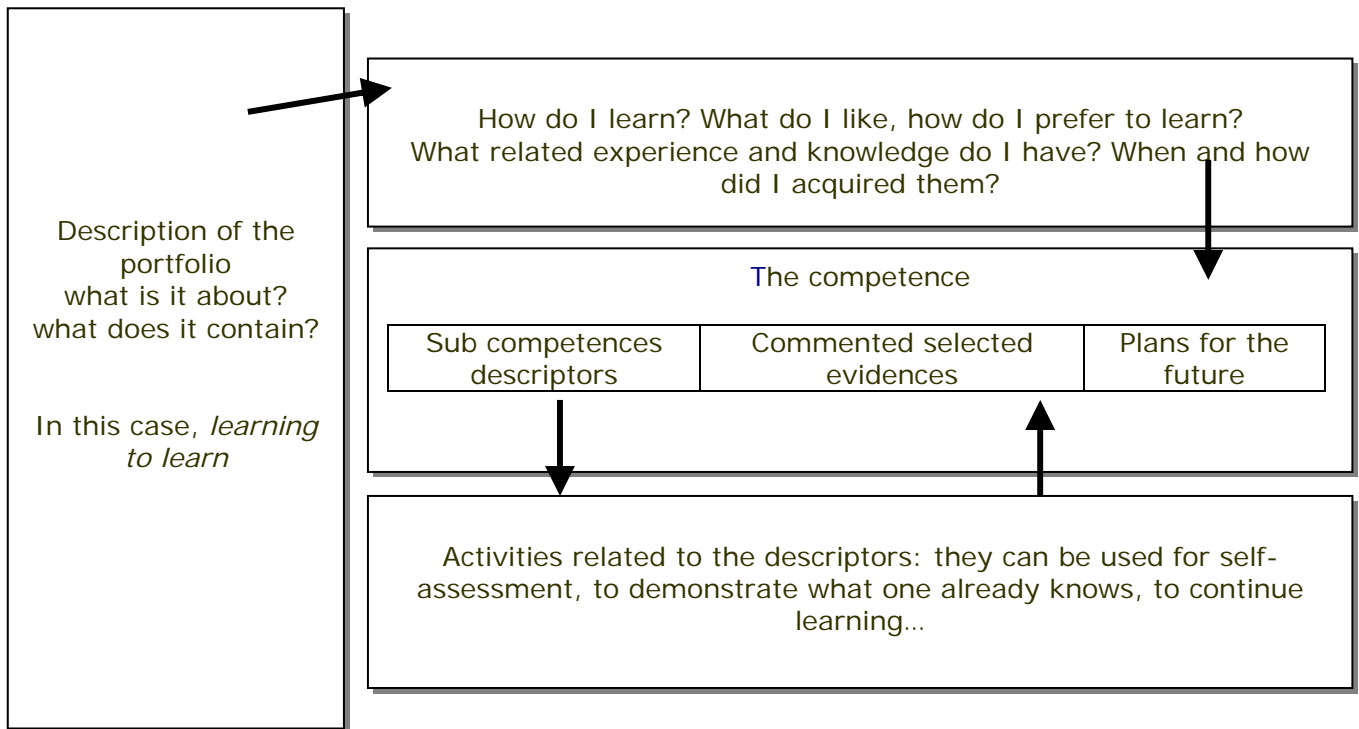
Depending on the **format**:

- **Paper**, folder with evidences and comments.
- **electronic:** e-Portfolio, either Web-based (Web, Web 2.0) or not Web-based

Evidences (certificates, academic activities, notes, reports, interviews, reflections, projects, planning, commented experiences, professional actions...) provide proof of what one knows and what one can do, what one is learning and, at the same time, they enable

monitoring of progress. This is because they include justification and reflection, which together show the relation between evidence, competence and learning.

In the SKILLS project, we have decided to use a paper-based, formative, semi structured Portfolio with the following contents:



Methodologies for training by competences: task-based approach

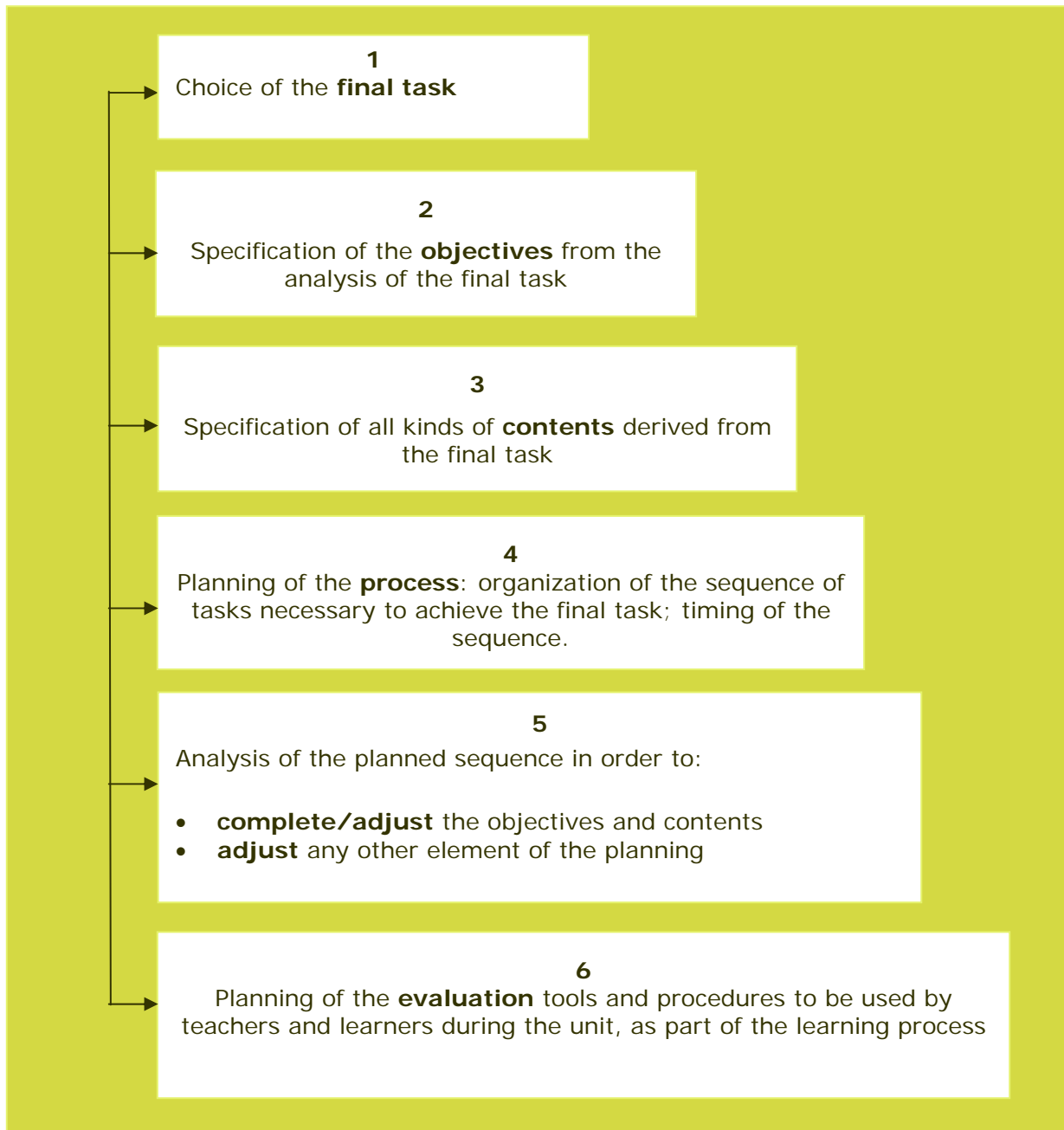
The task-based approach is aimed at the building of competence in the learner in all possible dimensions; it is focused on action, on the development of the ability to do things. Tasks work as organizational blocks for learning, and determine the content that need be worked on.

To understand this approach implies understanding the difference between a curriculum of processes and a curriculum of contents. It also implies understanding the processes of development of a competence and to go into a constructivist conception of learning.

This approach was born in the field of second or foreign language teaching: until its birth, the curriculum of a Foreign Language course traditionally started from a list of linguistic content that must be learned: grammatical structures in a structural approach, functions and notions in a notiofunctional communicative approach. The language, its knowledge, regulated the process. But in the 80s it was noticed that these directions were not effective; a reflection about how a learner acquires knowledge was needed prior to the reflection about how to teach it. A different organization of teaching was needed: tasks, as units on which to articulate the curriculum, were presented as an alternative to linguistic inventories.

Tasks are defined as those activities for which we use language in our everyday life: we make plans for the weekend with our friends or family, we discuss current issues, we read information about a city or monument we visit, we write a note to leave at home before we go out, we listen to a debate on the radio or television, we buy fruit at the greengrocer's next door.

From this point of view, an analysis of any given day of our everyday life would produce a list of tasks, most of which have a beginning, an aim, an objective and very often follow a series of procedures more or less established for each kind of task.

STEPS²

² ESTAIRE, S. (2007): *La enseñanza de lenguas mediante tareas: principios y planificación de unidades didácticas*. CD Tareas EPA, FAEA-Departamento de Educación Gobierno de Aragón.

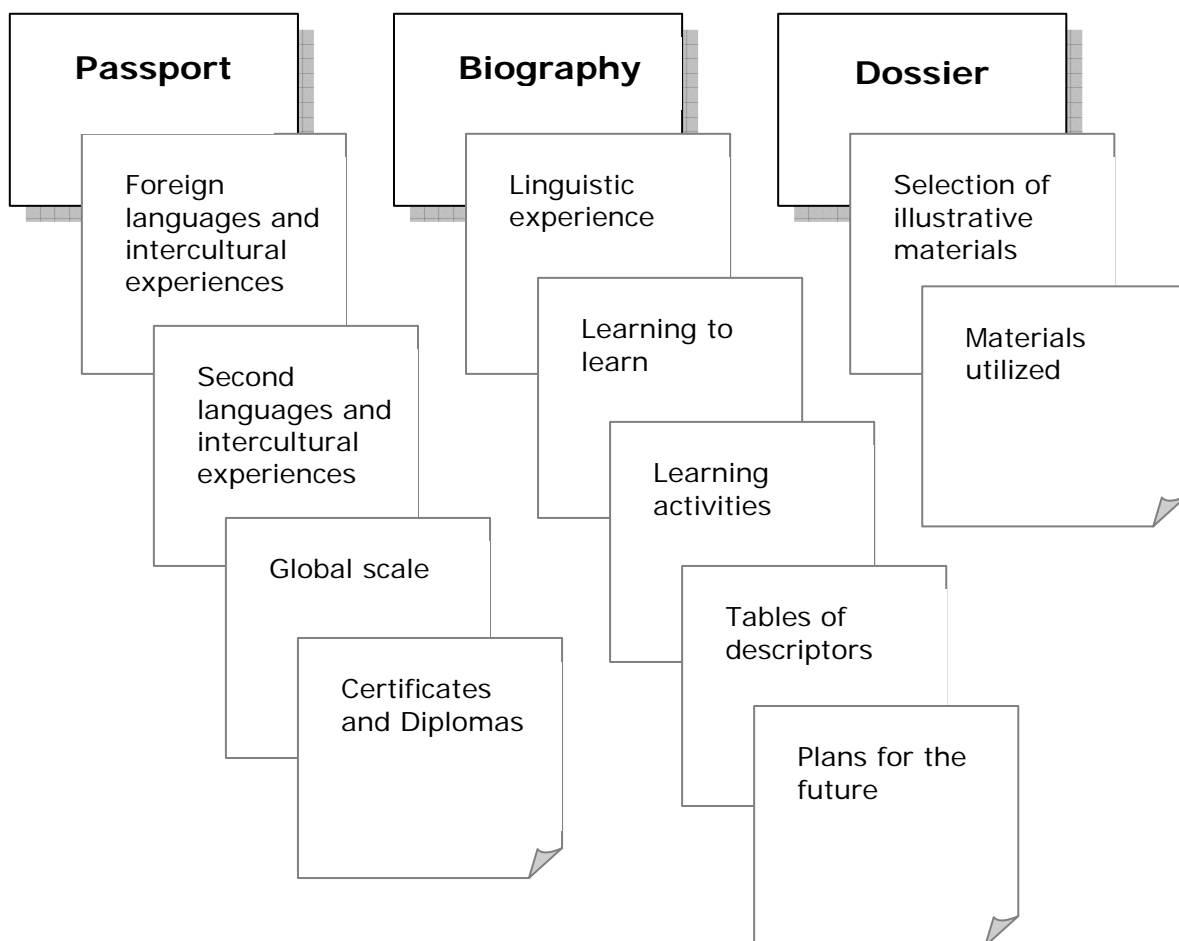
European Language Portfolio as referent³

The European Language Portfolio is a personal document where its owner can record everything they know about all the languages they have, use or are in the process of learning. It is useful for those who are learning and for those who are teaching languages.

Its aim and purpose is to reflect on teaching and learning, clarify learning objectives, describe the person's competences, encourage self-assessment, promote responsibility, enhance motivation towards language learning, boost tolerance for diversity, increase transparency and consistency in teaching, facilitate common methodological strategies, provide identified and acknowledged linguistic competences and communication tools for teachers, acknowledge acquired knowledge, encourage plurilingual experience, create an international supporting document, incite labour and school mobility.

It is designed to guide in assessing, planning, programming, teaching and learning.

It has three parts, which contents are structured as follows:



³ Council of Europe http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/portfolio/default.asp?l=e&m=/main_pages/welcome.html

Portfolio in Finnish adult education

Finnish adult education is guided by the law on vocational adult education and the decree on providing personalized ways for completing vocational qualifications. Every student participating in adult education has an individual study plan which takes into account the student's previously acquired competence (professional skills, work experience, studies). This is the starting point in deciding how the student will complete the vocational qualification. Professional competence will be shown and evaluated when performing genuine tasks in actual working conditions. This process is described in evaluation data which includes a description of the student's professional competence, the evaluation of skills and knowledge and the student's own assessment on his/her greatest professional challenges.

Individual study plans are based on the fact that when planning the studies previously acquired competence and individual professional needs are taken into account. This helps adults to study more flexibly and it's also a good way for people in working life to renew and expand their professional competence. Finnish vocational qualifications have been broken into vocational skills requirements, which makes it easier to assess the competence required for each qualification. Vocational skills requirements, in turn, have been defined as professional tasks together with representatives from working life. The vocational skills requirements are monitored by qualification committees appointed by the National Board of Education.

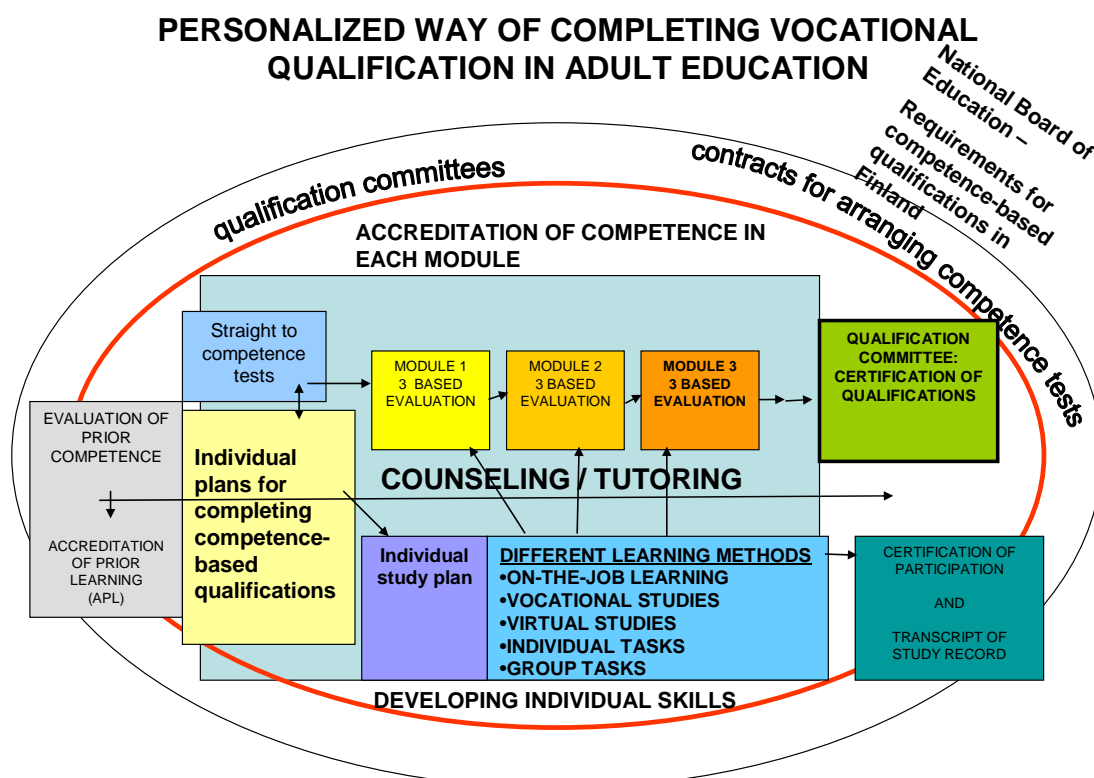
The student's competence is compared to the vocational skills requirements in the field and keeping the requirements of lifelong learning in mind. Depending on the qualification the student's competence is evaluated by using different methods such as electronic questionnaires (www.osaan.fi, www.alvar.fi) or by using different kinds of competence reviews that may contain evaluation methods such as simulations, written tests or small group tasks, peer evaluation, employer evaluation in genuine work environments etc.

When a person begins to complete a professional qualification, (s)he draws up an individual study plan with the education provider. When the plan is being made, the student's prior education, work history and competence acquired by other means (such as voluntary work, free time activities, self-motivated education) are looked at. In addition there's a discussion with the student where the education provider tries to find out what kind of skills the student has to complete the qualification in question (possible



language and cultural needs and reading or writing difficulties are taken into account). In addition possible support measures are discussed.

On the basis of the student's competence and skills an individual study plan is made which will guide the student on his/her path to acquiring the required competence to complete the qualification. Depending on the qualification and the student's individual study plan, acquiring the required competence includes taking part in different kinds of learning situations such as learning in genuine working life situations, contact lessons, small group studies, e-learning, self study etc. If the student already has enough professional competence to complete a vocational qualification or any module in the qualification, (s)he may show his/her mastering of the vocational skill requirements directly in genuine working life tasks, in so called competence-based exams. The competence is evaluated three dimensionally by representatives of employers, employees and teachers. An important part of the evaluation is also the student's self evaluation. All this produces material for the student's portfolio which demonstrates his/her professional competence, greatest professional challenges and learning skills. The students may choose individually how to document the material in the portfolio.



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