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## EVALUATION OF SCHOOL – AGE STUDENTS THROUGH A PORTFOLIO

**Abstract:** The article examines the successful use of student's portfolio as a tool for assessing at all educational stages in school and the benefits for students and teachers. The problem of qualitative assessment of students' achievements is considered, so that it reflects the set goals as much as possible. The emphasis is on the usefulness of applying the portfolio method and self-assessment. Development of critical thinking, related to cooperation and independence, influenced by interests in life situations, which will develop students' competencies and social skills. The formative assessment of the educational process is commented and obligatory – assessment for the purposes of the programme.

**Keywords:** Student's portfolio, Assessment, Formative assessment, Self-assessment

## Introduction

*Evaluation* – is a systematic, critical analysis of data, processes, development, source data. It is a process of characterization and evaluation of various aspects of educational activity. It can also be considered as a professional activity of the pedagogue, which he must perform if he wants his teaching to be accessible and understandable, to meet modern requirements and needs, and the results of the learning process to be the best. In Bulgaria, assessments are prepared by certified assessors in a given field. The assessments must be prepared in accordance with the Law of Independent Assessors and the assessment standards adopted by the Chamber of Assessors in Bulgaria (KNOB). The main aspects of evaluation are: usefulness, probability, relevance, precision, and evaluation must be performed objectively, using a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods.

The definition of quality assessment includes a systematic, detailed and critical analysis of the student, consistent with: the ultimate goals of the program; input data; the processes of teaching, learning, overall learning and assessment; the initial data – built competencies. An important focus is the management of quality control systems and quality assurance systems, and curricula and institutions are evaluated. The main indicators are objectivity and evidence. The goals should be clear, publicly accessible, collectively established by a commission of external assessors, evaluation of the characteristics of the quality of education. It can be emphasized that quality assessments at school age should be as objective as possible and based on evidence. A key part of qualitative assessment involves gathering evidence. It is important to create a portfolio in which everything is kept in chronological order. At the end of the year it should be presented to the students' parents and teachers.

A distinction needs to be made between “quality of training” and “quality of education”. “The quality of training is a direct result of the learning process, depending on the level of qualification of the teaching staff, the teaching and methodological processes, the state of the school environment and technical equipment, the intellectual potential of students. The quality of education further includes requirements for graduates and evaluation from the point of view of the employer. (Madjirova, K., V. Mircheva and team – NIO. Monitoring the activities of the school, GEA 2000, Sofia, 2004)

The dynamic nature of learning and teaching shifts the burden of interaction, communication, dialogue and partnership not only between teacher and student, but also between students themselves. There is also a need for a change in assessment – from the assessment of presented results and knowledge, it becomes an assessment of the general development and achievements of the student, assessment of activities and practical skills. In this way the assessment is accurate and stimulates student's performances. Formative assessment is an ongoing process that allows information to be gathered about the strengths and weaknesses of learning, focusing on what students can do, rather than on their weaknesses and mistakes. This gives students peace of mind and confidence and increases the effectiveness of learning. Students should always be explained “WHY?” they are doing (learning) something. The new nature of assessment requires evidence of cognitive achievement and immediate correction of gaps.

## Method

The most popular approach to performing formative assessment is the portfolio. The educational portfolio is a modern educational technology that is used as a tool for self-assessment and reflection of the author. As an alternative way of formative assessment is a collection of collected and arranged materials and documents aimed at achieving a specific educational goal. The e-portfolio is a working file folder containing information that documents the acquired experience and achievements, a set of individual works on academic subjects or topics. In modern education, the concept of portfolio is becoming very popular in learning environments, as learners are the main actors in the development of different types of portfolios. The main reason is that working with a portfolio makes learners responsible for their own learning and development. Unlike

the traditional methods used in the classroom, which determine the teacher at the center of the educational process, teaching focused on the individual interests of students and determined by them most clearly defines the basic principle of working with the help of a portfolio. The portfolio approach imposes the method as an important tool for the continuous development of the learner's competencies. In the context of the portfolio, documenting the training and its results is much more than collecting documents, products, tests, essays or pictures. From a methodological point of view, through the portfolio it is necessary not only to preserve a set of information, but also to place the object in the appropriate context. This means that each document in it needs to be accompanied by data that includes information about the purpose, purpose, outcome, and most importantly about the real progress of training. The most important process for the portfolio is important during the documentation and this is the development of the "reflection" process. Students are able to reflect on the learning process, to prove their main achievements and discoveries, to make a connection between their knowledge and experience, as well as to change the direction of work depending on the results of previous learning and extracurricular activities.

The views of Petar Petrov, Mika Atanasova, Vessela Gyurova, Vanya Bozhilova, Katya Stoyanova are of special importance for theory and practice. According to them, the portfolio is the modern educational technology that reflects the relationship between theory, scientific knowledge and pedagogical practice. It is expressed in processing, modification, modeling, construction of theories, principles, approaches, methods. Integrates knowledge from different fields of science and practice to optimize the effective achievement of educational goals. (Petrov, Atanasova 2001; Gyurova, Bozhilova 2008; Stoyanova 2017)

According to William Cerbin, the portfolio is more than just gathering evidence for learning – learning tasks, programs, achievements. It includes analyzes and reflections, arguments, case studies, summaries and notes of the student about learning. This is the reason why some authors accept it as a concept and not as a simple documentation folder. The fact that the student will select the information about himself, will support and present it, helps to increase the level of his self-knowledge and helps build his own personality. (Cerbin 1994)

The main purpose of the portfolio is the formative assessment of the educational process and mandatory – assessment for the purposes of the programme. The portfolio method aims to build competencies and skills for self-assessment, as a powerful learning strategy in which students receive answers and discover their own mistakes.

## **Results and Discussion**

The aim of the present study is to explore the possibilities of the portfolio as a tool for objective assessment of students in different educational levels. 180 teachers from all stages of school education from the cities of Sofia, Varna, Blagoevgrad, Pazardzhik and Kyustendil were studied.

The toolkit includes an author's questionnaire for researching the possibilities of the portfolio as a tool for objective assessment of students – 3 questions with questionnaires for respondents gender, teaching experience and educational degree, 7 real questions with closed answer, 2 questions with open answer.

In Figure 1 we present the gender distribution of the pedagogical specialists who participated in the study. As can be seen from the figure, only 19% are male participants.

Regarding the distribution of the surveyed teachers in relation to the pedagogical experience they have (Figure 2), the results are almost uniform, with a slight predominance of 29% occupied by teachers with experience between eleven and twenty years in the education system.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of pedagogical specialists according to the educational level in which they work. The largest share of them are primary school teachers, respectively 30% and 10%, which is due to the fact that the research criteria relate to the use of the portfolio, are teachers in junior high school and high school stage of the respondents.

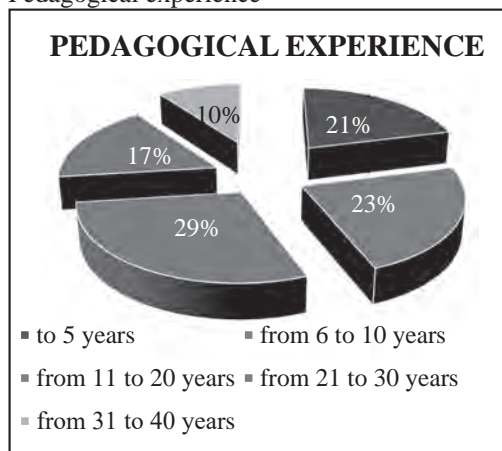
**Figure 1**

Distribution by gender



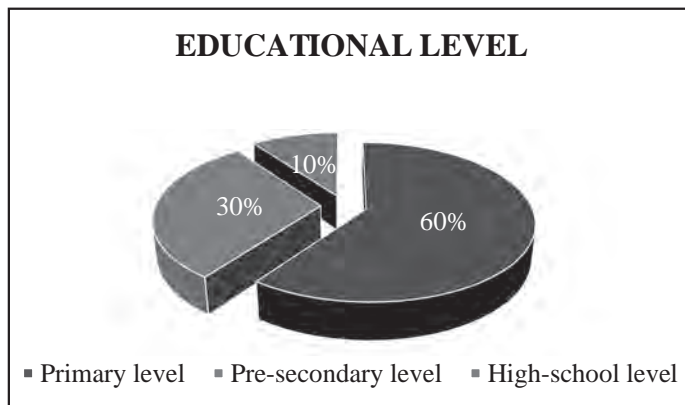
**Figure 2**

Pedagogical experience



**Figure 3**

Educational level



To the question *“Do you know the essence of the portfolio?”* (In terms of educational level) only one third of the surveyed teachers (16-31%) answered positively that they know the approach, and more than half (43-53%) think that they are partially familiar with the essence his, which generally speaks of a high degree of knowledge of the portfolio by teachers. (See Table 1)

**Table 1**

DO YOU KNOW THE ESSENCE OF THE PORTFOLIO  
(in terms of educational degree)

| Teachers at Primary school level |        |     | Teachers at pre-secondary school level |        |     | Teachers at high-school level |        |     |
|----------------------------------|--------|-----|--|--------|-----|-------------------------------|--------|-----|
| yes                              | partly | no  | yes                                    | partly | no  | yes                           | partly | no  |
| 31%                              | 53%    | 16% | 23%                                    | 53%    | 24% | 16%                           | 43%    | 41% |

To the question *“Do you know the essence of the portfolio?”* (In terms of teaching experience) it is impressive that teachers with experience of 5 to 20 years know the essence of the portfolio

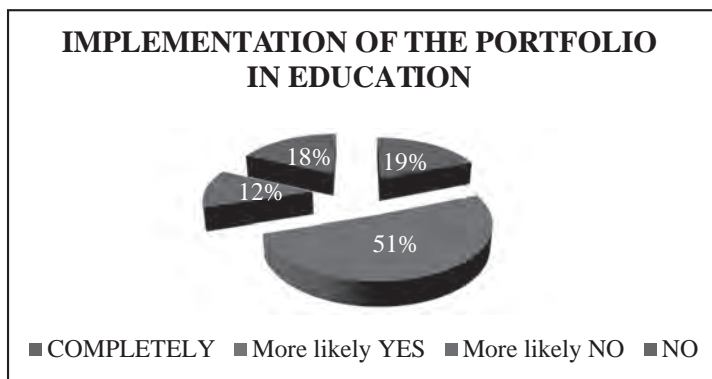
21-29% answered positively that they know the approach, and a small part 10-17% think that they are familiar with its essence, which generally indicates a medium level of knowledge of the portfolio by teachers. (See Table 2)

**Table 2**  
DO YOU KNOW THE ESSENCE OF THE PORTFOLIO  
(in terms of teaching experience)

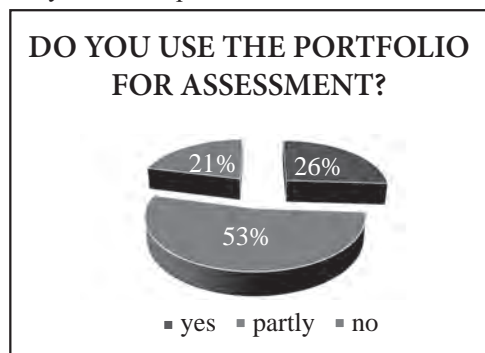
| Pedagogical experience up to 5 years |        |    | Pedagogical experience 6-10 years |        |    | Pedagogical experience 11-20 years |        |    | Pedagogical experience 21-30 years |        |    | Pedagogical experience 31-40 years |        |    |
|--------------------------------------|--------|----|-----------------------------------|--------|----|------------------------------------|--------|----|------------------------------------|--------|----|------------------------------------|--------|----|
| yes                                  | partly | no | yes                               | partly | no | yes                                | partly | no | yes                                | partly | no | yes                                | partly | no |
| 30                                   | 47     | 23 | 32                                | 49     | 29 | 35                                 | 52     | 13 | 23                                 | 42     | 35 | 15                                 | 35     | 50 |
| %                                    | %      | %  | %                                 | %      | %  | %                                  | %      | %  | %                                  | %      | %  | %                                  | %      | %  |

To the question “*Do you use the student portfolio as a tool for assessment in education?*” the results are presented in Fig.4. A good impression is made by the fact that 51% of the surveyed teachers believe that they are rather prepared and only 12% answer that they are definitely not prepared for the application of the approach in the learning process.

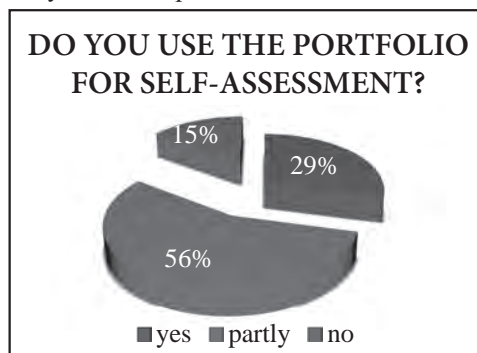
**Figure 4**  
Implementation of the portfolio in education



**Figure 5**  
Do you use the portfolio for assessment?



**Figure 6**  
Do you use the portfolio for self- assessment?



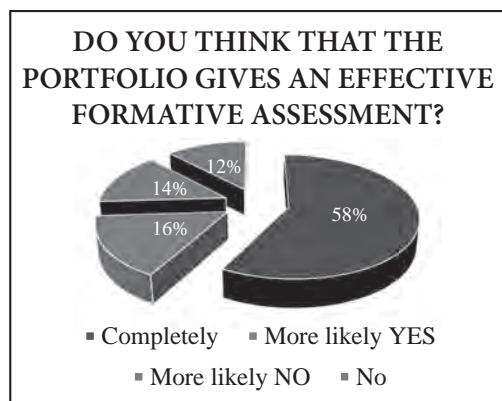
Figures five and six present the results of the questions concerning the constant use and application of the portfolio by the pedagogical specialists. As can be seen from the figures, about a little over 50% of teachers apply it partially in classroom form 26-29% of teachers use it successfully in assessment and self-assessment training, compared to only 15-21% of those who do not fully use the approach for formative assessment.

Figure 7 shows the distribution of results regarding the opinion of teachers on the effectiveness of the use of the portfolio. The highest percentage of pedagogical specialists 58% are fully convinced of the effective assessment that is obtained. 16% of the surveyed teachers need more in-depth and continuous analysis. A small percentage of teachers 12-14% do not think the tool is effective.

Educators see the innovative potential of the portfolio as a pedagogical tool structured in this way: 42% are fully convinced of the portfolio as a tool for assessing the individual progress of each student, 44% give a positive opinion of the tool for improving the effectiveness of assessment and a small part of respondents 6-8% believe that it is not an innovative approach to assessment.

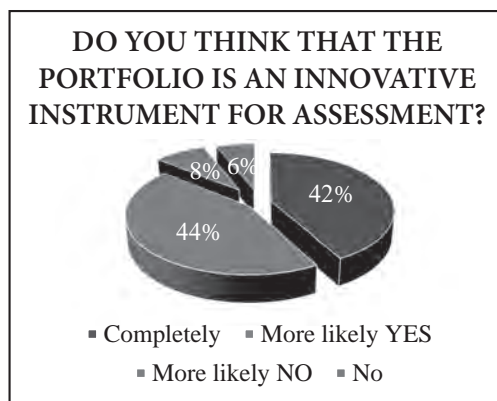
**Figure 7**

Do you think that the portfolio gives an effective formative assessment



**Figure 8**

Do you think that portfolio is an innovative instrument for assessment



There are many participants in the study who have different ideas for improving the quality of student assessment in school. This finding is evidenced by the suggestions made by 47% of teachers. The most common recommendations are the following:

- to create opportunities for practical work, performance of students, teamwork;
- to widely apply the portfolio approach as a tool for formative assessment;
- to provide more and more diverse literature, methodological resources, etc.
- to use the student portfolio in all educational levels;
- to involve parents and the public by working in partnership with them.

## Recommendations

There are still teachers who do not know the nature of the educational portfolio;  
Some of those who claim to know the instrument cannot actually define its essential characteristics;

A very small proportion of respondents are considered fully prepared to apply the classroom approach;

Teachers use the portfolio more often because it is innovative, i.e. different approach to evaluation;

More than half of the respondents have a need and would be confident to participate in organized qualification forms related to the approach, with priority given to short-term training and vocational specializations. There are many who prefer to acquire new knowledge and skills through self-study;

Teachers are convinced that the student portfolio should be implemented at the school level by all teachers in order to have a positive effect on learning outcomes.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that understanding the approach to portfolio assessment in training is extremely important and its application will contribute to the realization of learning objectives and will help improve the quality of the educational process.

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## STUDY HABITS OF STUDENTS IN RELATION TO UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS

**Abstract:** The paper addresses some general questions about study habits: How students acquire knowledge in general education programmes, and what are the expectations of university teachers in this regard in terms of assessment? In their productive focus on the processes of learning, do university teachers neglect the importance and necessity of the transmission and acquisition of historically accumulated knowledge, studying of the literature, without which quality study in the humanities and social sciences is inconceivable?

The questions were answered by interpreting the survey results we conducted with a sample of 429 students from various study programmes at the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana. Students answered questions about their study habits in relation to their exam performance. The hypothesis that when studying for exam requirements, students clearly adhere to their teachers' requirements and expectations, therefore studying just enough to meet these expectations was confirmed. Based on their responses, the conclusion was