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A TOOL FOR FLEXIBLE PLANNING OF LIFELONG LEARNING

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Resume – the article offers e-portfolio as a tool for flexible planning of lifelong learning. This tool is convenient for both: specialists and educational institutions. Specialists can build their educational route thanks to the visual and analytical potential of e-portfolio and correct the plans reflecting the achievements. Educational institutions can follow the potential students' demands and diversify educational opportunities. Mutual understanding between interested parties allow to create educational programmes in accordance with the requirements of labour market.

Key words: e-portfolio, lifelong learning

Introduction. The demand for life-long learning is based on permanently changing technologies and the necessity to adapt to them. A lot of institutions try to predict the trends of the labour market. Specialists have to time education and self-education, and need to guess what direction they should go. The main aim of an educational institution is to prepare students “for a dynamic, rather than static future” [3] and it leads to dual tasking: be general when giving basic knowledge that can be filled with different skills and be personal when offering the way of obtaining that knowledge. The educational programmes are becoming more practical oriented and university heads create “more flexible, student-centred modes of delivery; improving cooperation with employers” [5]. At the national level they discuss “the importance of personal aspects of students such as their family background, understanding of the meaning of life and preferred future” [4, p.64] and offer courses considering “nurture agility, flexibility and adaptability” [3].

Belarus as a member of the European Higher Education Area is “to develop and expand lifelong learning opportunities in consultation with employers and social partners” [7]. Belarusian experts in higher education speaks about the necessity to change the approaches to education: online education, more practical oriented education, tight links between educational institutions and the employers [1]. The institutions of further education are developing new methodology [2] that is focused on employers' involvement into educational process, is guided by the new educational standards in conformity with the labour market demand.

Main part. Planning lifelong learning has become the major competency that can help a professional to build a career in today's world and can facilitate the work of educational institutions when they offer new educational programs. Planning should take into consideration permanent changes in technologies, extinction of some professions, general volatility in the labour market. The educational institutions are ready to offer lifelong learning programmes (where funding of these programs plays not last role) and are searching the way to communicate with their present and potential students. Specialists have to take responsibility for their career growth and are looking for the way to file achievements, plans, skills. So both sides discover e-portfolio. The authorities of the universities use it to organise the educational process, to assess a student's work. Students visualise their academic and professional achievements.

From a specialist's point of view e-portfolio is convenient for flexible planning of career growth. It is posted on the Internet so it is possible to access to it from any place at any time. Information with permitted access can be seen by any interested person. Updating the information involves data collection and analysis so the author is able to reflect the achievements and to consider “expectations and skill evolution” [6]. Psychologically the plan of self-developing and career growth is not so rigid as some paper documents may be perceived.

From the point of view of educational institutions e-portfolios of their potential or present students are a real-life communication tool that gives the possibility to amend curriculum almost immediately in comparison with long-established practices and to diversify forms of education and training programs. Furthermore, the mission of any educational institution is to train students for their social and professional performance. “Rather than skills training and knowledge transfer, life education is highly focused on self-reflection, values and attitudes. Students are guided to have reflection on the meaning of life, the way of living and to also prepare for their way of life” [4, p.67]. When e-portfolio is thoroughly integrated into educational process, it stimulates the development of the competency of planning.

Conclusion. Planning will be always relevant. However, the changing world requires new approach to planning. Planning in education and for education are heavily dependent on fluctuations in the labour market. The curriculums are becoming more general and more personal simultaneously, as basic knowledge and personal approach are in high demand. The main task is to teach how to learn throughout all life. Flexible planning of education and self-education is an important competency that can be obtained in an educational institution.

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