

Portfolios: a powerful tool to promote reflective thinking and human development

Idália Sá-Chaves^{1*}

¹ — Department of Education
& CIDTFF, University of Aveiro
* (Line research coordinator, in
collaboration with research teams
from master, doctoral and post-
doctoral levels)

The importance of cognitive sciences associated with the processes of thinking and feeling in identities' development, both personal and professional, on the variability of their circumstances and matrix cultures has been, throughout the ages and internationally, a constant object of research, lying on the insatiable quest for knowledge and meaning to the human condition itself. It is in this context that *portfolio movement* happens, focusing research on learning and construction of (self) knowledge in its multiple conditions, emergencies, potentialities and limits.

In Portugal, and under the scientific leadership of Idália Sá-Chaves, it is worth mentioning the pioneering role of the University of Aveiro/CIDTFF that, over the past three decades, focused an educational research line on systematic and persistent development of *portfolios* and reflective thinking used as a privileged strategy of supervision and *coaching* at all levels and areas of training. It means a strong concentration of experience, evolving itself in time, taking into account the epistemological characteristics of empirical experience fields: education and health. As time goes by, a long term theoretical line production is emerging and perceived through multiple indicators and publications, as being a partner in the international debate about the issues that cross the processes of human development.

The grounded theoretical research developed enables to highlight the importance of the portfolio's strategy as a powerful tool to: improve reflexivity, critical and creative thinking, decision making and dialogic communication on an ecological vision that encompasses universal values and personal/local strategies for action; promote the global perception of personal and professional development growth as a continuum, comprehensive and non-fragmentary perspective

based on a systemic and complex approach; value narratives and life-stories to re-elaborate personal and institutional identities; encourage human awareness and its values, namely democratic relations, collaboration and solidarity, knowledge sharing and experience, that allows portfolios authors to perform, at the same time, as individuals and as partners in a plural, creative and transformative way.

At the end of 2013, the coordination of the "European Network of ePortfolio Experts & Practitioners" by recognizing this research production as a national and pioneer reference, invited the University of Aveiro/CIDTFF to integrate this Network/Project as a national representative on that scientific area.