

EDUCATION

Lifelong Learning Portfolio launched

THE Parents' Lifelong Learning Portfolio, a tool for adults seeking an active role in their children's lives and in the development of their own educational journey, was launched last week by the Foundation for Educational Services (FES).

Defined by Minister Louis Galea as "a key tool in the strategy to help parents realise their full potential," the portfolio also provides a guide for parents to monitor and participate in their children's educational development, as well as on how to pursue their own lifelong learning journey, such as re-entering the world of work.

The portfolio was tested with 100 parents by 10 parent mentors. These mentors followed the Parents' Lifelong Learning Portfolio course organised by FES. The portfolio was developed by FES senior executive Sandro Spiteri, and Victor Galea, head of the Parents-in-Education Programme within the FES.

The result is a unique informative tool outlining the parent's growth and development in the pivotal

Stephanie Psaila

roles of both a parent and a lifelong learner. It is also an ongoing project where the parent can update or modify sections as he or she gains more experience. This innovative tool guides the adult to draw upon this experience, which in turn helps him or her develop and grow. Furthermore, it acts as a tool for cooperation with other parents and teachers and showcases the parent's lifelong learning progress.

During the launch, FES CEO Nora Macelli explained how the final portfolio was the result of extensive feedback received from both mentors and parents who agreed to be mentored. The process formed part of the Community-based Lifelong Centres project, led by FES and partly financed by the EU through the Structural Funds Programme (European Social Fund).

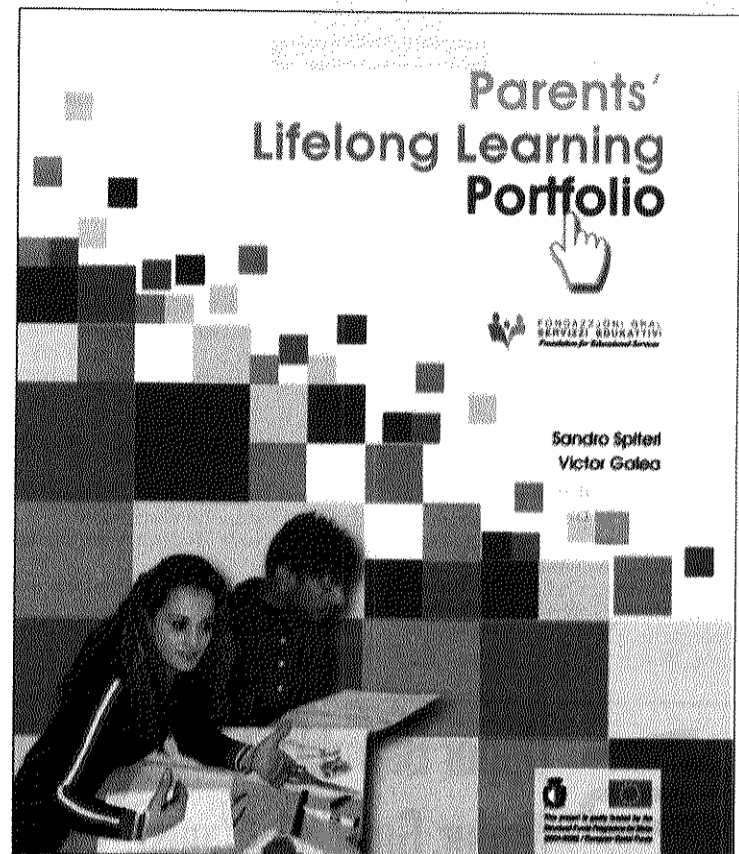
Through this project over 2,000 adults from seven localities participated in over 200 short non-formal adult

education courses. The choice for these localities was based on the enthusiastic expression of interest and offers of cooperation received from local councils, schools and NGOs to become project partners.

The aim of these lifelong learning centres was to stimulate a culture that embraces lifelong learning among adults distant from mainstream learning opportunities, to foster an environment which encourages them to re-enter the world of training and the labour market, and to make lifelong learning accessible to them at community level.

Ms Macelli explained that from this project, 215 courses were made available to 2,038 adults. Some of the courses focused on ICT, language competency, self-esteem and communication skills, leadership in schools and running a small business. More than three fourths of the participants were housewives.

During last week's launch, Mr Spiteri presented certificates to the 10 portfolio mentors, while Mr Galea discussed with four of the



parent mentors who developed their portfolio, their experience of being both a parent and an adult learner.

The parents, who had also been trained to become lifelong learning mentors to other parents, spoke about their experience, talked to parents and helped them realise the importance of building a personal portfolio. Two of the

parents even explained how they landed a job mainly because of their impressive and extensive portfolio.

So far, the Parent Lifelong Learning Portfolio has been distributed to the ETC, the Malta Qualifications Council, the Department of Further Studies and Adult Education within the Education Division, and the Ministry of Education.

**KNOW
FASTER**

**TIMESOF
MALTA.COM
BREAKING
NEWS**

You still have a chance!

At St Martin's Institute of IT, the student's commitment is the most important requirement to follow a diploma/degree programme.

Applications are now being accepted for enrolment in FULL TIME courses for the Diploma in Economics and the Diploma in Computing and Information Systems leading to a number of BSc (Honours) Degrees in Commerce and Information Technology conferred by the University of London.

One can join any of these programmes with a minimum of four subjects at Ordinary Level including Maths and English. Applicants under the myPotential scheme (for IT qualifications) will obtain a partial refund of all costs.

Students who complete the diploma will be eligible for the Malta Government Scholarship Scheme for Undergraduate Courses.

**So you have no excuses
if you really want to...**
Call now on 21235451 or e-mail on
infodesk@stmartins.edu
for more information



Parents share their portfolio experience

FES trained several parents to help other parents develop their Parents' Lifelong Learning Portfolio (PLLLP). Following are some of the experiences shared by four parents.

Pauline Agius said that the PLLLP helped her realise the difference between 'living' and 'existing', both as an adult and a parent. The PLLLP helped her reflect on experiences she had gone through during the FES programmes.

• Ms Agius became involved with FES to work with other parents who wanted to train as child-minders during non-formal adult education courses. She then trained as a parent leader, became actively involved in curricular matters at her own school community at Mtarfa primary school, co-worked with teachers on the design and delivery of parent-to-parent courses, and now assists FES staff in teacher training events dealing with parental involvement in education.

The development of her own portfolio led her to realise how much communication within her family had developed, how actively she listens to her children, and how supportive her husband is of all her self- and family development endeavours.

Ms Agius is now chairperson of the Parent Leaders Forum established in October 2006. The Parent Leaders Forum is an independent and autonomous organisation which aims to share good practices of parental involvement and participation in schools, among others. She highlighted the important role of the portfolio as a self-esteem boost for women who dedicate their life to the growth of their family while minimising their own skills and inner resources.

• Parent-leader Veronica Farrugia started her active involvement at her child's school in St Paul's Bay through the FES family literacy programme *Klabb Hilti*. Following her participation, her self-confidence improved so much that she continued her training as a parent-helper, co-working with FES teachers in the organisation of educational events and courses for other parents from her school community. The PLLLP helped her reflect on her wish to become a self-empowered person. Life circumstances did not enable her to become a teacher. However, she currently works as a supply teacher and plans to be able to join a university degree programme.

• Dounia Borg of Zebbug and her husband worked together on their separate lifelong learning portfolio. The reflective part of the portfolio led Ms Borg to join an ETC course on starting a small business. She trained as a mentor to help other parents from her locality in filling in the portfolio. She talked about working with a parent who, after using the portfolio as a self-reflective tool, started to acknowledge her self-worth and skills and subsequently became very actively involved in a very interesting parish venture.

Ms Borg intends to work closely with FES to translate the portfolio into Arabic.

• Ramona Sargent said the PLLLP helped her focus on her own educational strengths and needs. It also helped her acknowledge her responsibilities towards her school community. Today, she is a very active parent at the St Paul's Bay primary school and has also been elected a parent representative on the school council.