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– 6 –

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Researches in Adult Learning and Education: The European Dimension

edited by
Simona Sava
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RESEARCHING ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION: INTRODUCTION

Simona Sava

The field of adult learning and education (ALE) is a very diverse, heterogeneous and complex one, as it covers all the issues related to the learning of adults, from a lifelong learning (LLL) perspective, both for personal and professional development. Researching the field therefore requires different and specialized approaches, according to the respective sector of adult education being studied. For instance, in the field of vocational adult education quantitative research approaches are more relevant, partly because the politicians are more interested in hard data. In civic adult education one encounters more qualitative, biographical, ethnographic or even action research. Journals may be dedicated to different sectors thus researchers in ALE can belong to different scientific communities or research traditions.

A large body of knowledge and data exists to be used while researching in adult education. The researchers can use more and more statistical data collected at macro level, with the associated statistical analysis. For instance, the «Rolling Review» covers the following three collections in the area of education statistics: UNESCO Institute of Statistics/OECD/Eurostat (UOE) data collection on education systems, Continuous Vocational Training Survey (CVTS) and Adult Education Survey (AES). «The three collections constitute the main instruments for data collection relating to the EU (and sometimes Candidate and EFTA countries) Lifelong Learning statistics [...] The UOE comprises administrative data collected yearly, and cover enrolments, new entrants, graduates, educational personnel and educational expenditure» (EC 2011).

The systematic data gathering in recent years, both by European Commission (see the yearly published *Monitor on Education and Training*, or the data on Eurydice), and by OECD (*Education at a Glance* with its different editions, OECD 2015), allows researchers to use and reflect on official data which gives a longitudinal view. This big body of data is a starting point for researchers in the attempt to redress the balance against the dominance of qualitative research in recent years. Using the facilities the new technologies offer also leads to a debate based on positivism, and big data (Cope 2015). It is true that the data is linked more to policy priori-

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ties and targets to be met, and this is also a trend which has a big influence on research priorities in adult education, as the money governments put into research very much connected with their policy priorities. Therefore, in the last few years much research was devoted to the development of skills and competence, to improving basic skills, to recognizing them, to workplace learning, and pathways to the labour market, work and employment, and improved transition from education to work etc.

Independent research, driven by the research interests of the researchers, is usually on a small scale, and more qualitative than quantitative. This situation can be explained on one hand by the specificity of adult education, with it being very nationally oriented and reliant on the cultural and historic traditions of the countries, but, on the other hand, by the difficulty of collecting large scale empirical data, without the required resources.

The studies undertaken reflect different *theoretical perspectives*. The most influential ones proved to be the critical social theory (mainly concerned with social movement, the neo-liberal influence in educational policy for adults, social inequalities, community learning etc.), and the socio-cultural and situational perspectives on learning. Other important influences are: the post-structuralism theory, the theory of transformative learning and ideas associated with personal perspectives on learning, the empowerment perspective, and the actor-network theory. This latter theory influences biographical research and narrative or auto-biographical writing (Fejes, Nicoll 2013), and is used to a larger extent in ALE research than in other fields of educational sciences. It takes into account the wide life experience of adults, but also gives the discipline of adult education an epistemological status. All the afore mentioned theoretical perspectives and trends in researching the adult learning and education can be noticed while surveying the activity of the research networks set up within the European Society of Research in the Education of Adults (ESREA).

Another consideration is the effect the dominance of the English language has. Although it serves to build a wider research community internationally, it severely limits access to research data due to publishing policies of dedicated scientific journals. Furthermore, the language competencies of the researchers and their ability to make use of scientific literature in different languages may limit the possibilities for comparative research. A possible solution therefore is that doctoral students from different countries, for instance, might have the same topic to research and would then discuss and compare the data gathered.

Such an idea can be implemented within the European Doctoral School set up in the ESRALE project (*European Studies and Research in Adult Learning and Education*, an Erasmus project, run between 2013-2016, under the coordination of University of Kaiserslautern, Germany). This book is produced in the frame of ESRALE and complements two

books developed in that project, *Empirical Research Methodology in Adult Learning and Education. Authors and Texts* (editors V. Boffo, P. Federighi, E. Nuissl), and C*omparative Adult and Continuing Education: Authors and Texts* (edited by M. Slowey). Whereas the first two books aim to map, as compendiums, the main methodological aspects while doing empirical and comparative research in ALE, this third book aims to offer an illustration of possible research being, or to be carried out.

The authors of this book give illustrations from topics approached in their own research: the mapping of research carried out on a chosen topic, highlighting the state of the discussion, and the controversial issues still to be researched. The book is, like the other two, a 'manual' addressed to students of ALE, at both Master- and Doctorate level. The contributors to the book, who represent the partners in the project, were asked to overcome the limit of the native English dominance and to 'Europeanise' the discussion on the different subject areas within ALE, chosen as the topic of their contribution. So, even though they are not in a perfect English, the contributions to this book are clear enough to understand and are meant to offer a mainly European state of discussion (but also sometimes reflect an international perspective).

The contributors are outstanding specialists in the topic they present and are well known at national level and at a European level as well. Three contributions by doctoral students have also been included: from Florence, Kaunas and Brno. Thus, doctoral students in ALE, European-wide, can have an illustration of the way their doctoral thesis can be disseminated.

These three books aim to provide a guide for young researchers in the field of ALE, both from the methodological and the content point of view. They map the main scientific literature and developments. A more specific body of data and of research that has been disseminated can be found in specialized journals or studies and research reports, listed in references.

Dedicated journals on adult learning and education are an important source of inspiration and reflection on the state of, and trends in, research in ALE. Examples of these journals include: «Adult Education Quarterly», «Adult Learning» (UK), «European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults» (RELA – the journal of ESREA – European Society of Researchers into Education of Adults), «Andragogical Studies» (edited by the oldest Department of Adult Education in Europe, at the University of Belgrade), «Journal for Adult Educational Research/Report» (Germany), «International Journal for Lifelong Education», «Studies in Continuing Education» (Australia), «Studies in the Education of Adults» (UK), «International Journal of Continuing Education & Lifelong Learning» (Hong Kong), «Canadian Journal for Studying in Adult Education», or thematic numbers of different journals (i.e.

«European Journal of Education» – [51/2016 – Adult learning, Adult Skills and Innovation], International Review of Education – edited by the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning, with a global coverage). Some of the journals reflect, to a certain extent, their geographical coverage, both in terms of contributors, and in terms of the subjects of the articles (i.e. more articles about the transformative theory of learning in the American space, Fejes 2013). Other journals are more concerned with balanced coverage of different fields in ALE, with a number of thematic editions on different important issues in ALE (basic skills, community education, professionalization in ALE etc.) (Fejes Nicoll, 2013, Fejes, Nylander 2014 e 2015). As mentioned at the beginning, it should be noted that some areas of study are becoming very specialized, like workplace learning, and have their own dedicated journals («Journal of workplace learning»). Also, research is included in journals with a wider organizational and human resource development focus (Rubenson, Elfert 2015). The same applies to other fields in ALE. Interesting research can be found in journals of sociological or cultural studies, although the research is not labeled or recognized as being about ALE.

As concerning data collection, *monitoring, and impact studies* done by specialized bodies at the international level, adult participation in life-long learning appears as a distinct topic. It is included, for instance, in all four editions of the European *Education and Training Monitor* (published annually since 2012), which is meant to measure the progress toward reaching the ET2020 goals. Other topics which also fit into the field of adult education appear in this work (i.e. «Matching educational outcomes and labor market needs», «Acquiring skills needed for the future», «Facilitating transition from education to work», «Upgrading skills», «Investing in skills and qualification», «Policy levers for inclusiveness, quality and relevance", «Opening up education and training through new technologies», «Facilitating lifelong learning after initial education», «Introducing new pedagogies and technologies in education and training», «Strengthening the teaching profession» etc.).

All these reports not only contain a large body of data presented in a comparative perspective for all EU member states and associated countries, but they also have distinctive country sheets and recommendations on aspects to be improved for each of these countries.

The European Commission is monitoring the impact of the different policy measures meant to support improved education and training European-wide. One of the measures is to provide funding support to research projects. An analysis of the outcomes of the Framework Program (FP) advance research projects has been undertaken (Federighi 2013), pointing out the actions necessary to secure growth in skills. The Horizon 2020 is the main research program financed by the European Union, carrying out advanced large scale research.

Furthermore, the specialized research center of the European Commission, Centre for Research on Education and Lifelong Learning (CRELL), has tackled research areas such as learning mobility, EU2020 support, adult skills and adult lifelong learning, active citizenship, teaching and learning practices, educational investment, etc. It has also launched research studies on the data collected (Dinis de Costa *et al.* 2014; Flisi *et al.* 2015), or technical studies, explaining the indicators used in the monitoring process (Badescu, Garrouste, Loi 2011; Flisi, Goglio, Meroni 2014; Goglio, Meroni 2014). For evidence based policy making specialized research institutes have received financing from the EU for collecting the necessary data. The issues covered range from new technologies and innovations based on them to the field of social support and global security. The specialized centers of the European Union, CEDEFOP and ETF (European Training Foundation), also publish periodically their synthesis studies with Pan-European coverage. These studies are mainly in the fields of vocational education and training, skills anticipation, policy developments etc. Such data provided at European level is often complemented by short comparisons with the state of development in the main developed countries: from America, Asia and Australia. However, more in depth analysis from an international perspective can be found in studies of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation of OECD, or of UNESCO: the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, the International Institute for Educational Planning, the International Bureau of Education, and the Institute for Information Technologies in Education.A broader analysis of the work of these institutions and the focus of their research has been provided in the second book of this series, on *Comparative Adult and Continuing Education: Authors and Texts*.

Most of the topics listed as the main focus of research and trends in shaping the field of ALE are reflected by the contributions to this book, which aims to highlight actual developments, research findings andissues which are open for future research. The selected contributions are far from covering the whole field of ALE, but they do map some of the most important topics, as illustration, source of documentation, and of reflection for researchers, students and practitioners.

The contributions to the book have been grouped into two different parts, meant to reflect in a balanced way the paradigmatic shift from adult/lifelong education, to adult/lifelong learning, but still offering both perspectives: of institutions, services and organized contexts, as well as the different contexts in which adults learn (mainly through informal learning, in social media or in the community) and acquire new competencies which can be documented and recognized.

In the first part, the main trends and perspectives on ALE are mapped by Simona Sava, Ekkehard Nuissl and Anca Luştrea, in line with the topics already listed by EC/OECD/UNESCO. Some of the highlighted trends

are on (key/basic) competences and their recognition, on labor market orientation and instrumentalization, on outreach activities and counseling for an increased participation and inclusion in ALE; community learning, learning cities, learning through/with new technologies, and open educational resources, concern for increased quality and effectiveness, for monitoring and evidence based policy-making etc. The different factors influencing policy priorities, which govern the way educational policies are formed, determine which areas of interest dominate and they are discussed and analyzed by Balasz Nemeth. If the neo-liberal policy focus favors mainly labor market oriented competences. It is seen therefore to be important to provide a smooth transition from formal education to workplace (see Vanna Boffo and Gaia Gioli), with counseling services playing a determining role (Aleksandra Pejatovic and Dubravka Mihajlovic). Also, institutional contexts cannot be discussed without reference to the main activity happening in the educational institutions, namely teaching and learning (see Rolf Arnold), which is heavily dependent on the competent professionals meant to carry it out (see Susanne Lattke). The effectiveness of organized educational activity for adults, irrespective of whether it happens in a formal context (i.e. universities), or a non-formal one (i.e. workplaces), is analyzed in relation to its effects on the learning of adults.

In the second part of the book there is discussion on adults learning through a variety of complementary contexts.

The neo-liberal orientation in ALE also influenced research into the liberal adult education. There was a trend of decreasing concern towards research on the aspects of emancipation, empowering and cultural perspectives. The colleagues from the CREA – University of Barcelona revisit the problematic of active citizenship thereby, highlighting recent developments and future needs. Their reflections are complemented by concrete illustrations of the positive influence on adults' life trajectories of voluntary activity and informal learning (see Ondřej Bárta and Zuzana Šmideková). Informal learning happening even in formal settings is analyzed by Carlo Terzaroli and Nicoletta Tomei. They illustrate how learning can happen in different learning contexts which can be linked by guided reflection, ensured through validation of prior and experiential learning (Ruud Duvekot), articulating of the way the competencies were developed, fostered and evaluated (see Genutė Gedvilienė, Giedrė Tamoliūnė). One of the continually expanding layers of learning of adults in the digital society is analyzed by Gabriela Grosseck and Laura Malita. They illustrate, at the end of the book, how social media can articulate all contexts of learning, and definitely influence both the educational provision and the adults' learning. The expansion of new technologies for communication and information are placing all of us in the era of big data (Cope, Kalantzis 2015b) to be handled, both for

learning and development. It is also necessary to master the way the data can be stored, analyzed and used, for research purposes, and more. The big data that exists in the wide ALE field was, thus, synthesized in this manual, with the aim of providing a guide for young researchers approaching the huge body of data.

As an end note, it should be mentioned that the papers of Fejes (2010, 2013, 2014, 2015), Larsson (2010) and Rubenson (2015) with overviews on different research possibilities, have deliberately been included among the references of this introduction as analyses and synthesis of different research orientations in ALE. The authors draw together their reflections on the emerging trends in the field of ALE based not only on bibliometric analysis of the research articles in some of the most widely known scientific journals of adult education (with their methodology, content and approach – as examples and illustrations of different research), but also on theoretic reflections on future evolution in the field. The listed aspects in the mentioned articles deserve a more in depth examination, along with historic and fundamental types of research, which we did not manage to include in the book, due to the space restrictions.

However, students and researchers in the early stages of their career are provided with an articulated overview on the developments in research in ALE, as well as with useful tools and hints to further develop reflexivity in the field.

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PART I

CONTEXTS FOR/OF ADULT EDUCATION

ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION: CURRENT EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES

Simona Sava, Ekkehard Nuissl, Anca Lustrea

Abstract: International perspectives in adult learning and education (ALE) in the last five years have been closely related to important social concerns: the increasing number of migrants and refugees, the amount of (youth) unemployment, the problem of illiterate people and the labor market's needs for upskilling or the occupational mismatch. ALE is supposed to bring solutions, both at national and European level, raising participation in lifelong learning and improving the appropriateness of offers. ALE is asked to highlight the benefits of learning, to identify and validate them. It is asked to contribute to the building up learning communities and learning regions for sustainable learning. This paper briefly synthesises these current trends, mapping recent studies and research carried out, as well as possible further aspects still to be researched.

Keywords: trends in adult learning and education (ALE), terminology, policy in ALE, disciplinary field, innovation, research

1. Introduction

The main supranational institutions shaping international perspectives of adult learning and education are the European Commission, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UNESCO-UIL) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation (OECD). They have launched their strategic documents on future perspectives of ALE. Last November, the UNESCO-UIL published its *Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education* with the aim of «supporting the Education 2030 Framework for Action, and reflecting global trends, and guiding the transformation and expansion of equitable learning opportunities for youth and adults» (UNESCO 2015). The European Commission and the European Council published their vision according to the main directions in education and training. They would like to ensure that by 2020 a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe will be achieved. Their work is presented in three main documents: the renewed *European Agenda for Adult Learning* (2011/2014), *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes* (2012) and *A New Skills Agenda for Europe – Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness* (2016). The OECD formulated the *OECD Skills Strategy* (2011). Furthermore the main supranational institutions reflected together on the long term trends desired in education and lifelong learning with the aim of supporting a sustainable development of an inclusive society (UN 2015). In line with such vision, the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) launched its *Manifesto on adult learning* (2016).

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In a Delphi study (Zawacki-Richter *et al.* 2014), 28 clusters were differentiated for research in adult and continuing education. They looked at the macro level (i.e. access, equity and social justice; society, community and environment; policies; theory and models; economics of ACE; globalization and internationalization; history, etc.), meso level (i.e. management and organisation of ACE: delivery modes, professional development, quality assurance, funding, innovation and change, support servicies etc.) and micro level (i.e. teaching and learning in ACE: learner caracteristics and profile, literacy and competence development, workplace education, culture and inclusion, instructional design, validation of prior learning etc.).

The main messages of these documents are presented in the following paragraphs. We do not cover all concerns, research and policy efforts here, and we do not present all in a detailed way, as further contributions in this book analyze some of them more in depth. Our view in this article is focused on the macro and meso levels, reflecting mostly on policy orientations. We do not discuss thoroughly methodological questions (e.g. comparative designs) nor theoretical questions, since there is not enough space in a short article, but we do make some comments whenever these questions are touched. We try to describe the main lines of debate and developments and to give ideas for necessary further research.

2. Adult education and lifelong learning: terms and definitions

A large number of basic research studies and theoretical reflections have been carried out in the attempt to clarify the different understandings and meanings of ALE in different contexts. The different terms used in the field of adult education/learning and lifelong education/learning have emerged and developed in a big international variety (Blossfeld *et al.* 2014; Barros 2012). Thus, clarification was needed. On the one hand because of an overlapping of terms, and on the other hand because of the juxtaposing of terms, there has been some confusion and even contradictions or contradicting developments from an international political perspective.

Generally, the term 'lifelong learning' (LLL) has been created by specialists in adult education (ca. 1994 ff.) with the intention of placing adult education and learning (ALE) as an equal part in the large spectrum and continuum of education and learning during the whole life span (Gaio Alves *et al.* 2010; Barros 2012; Mohorčič-Špolar, Holford 2014). This fact has meant that at the beginning the emphasis within the LLL concept was on education and learning in adulthood. Therefore the practitioners, the policy makers, the education specialists have largely given this meaning to the term. Later on, it was proved (Rasmussen *et al.* 2015)

that the LLL term had been 'confiscated' by policy makers who again put the focus on the initial stages of lifelong learning rather than on the wider concept of education and learning across a whole life-span (Sandlin *et al.* 2011). Even the leading institutions dealing with adult education contributed to this change such as the UNESCO Institute of Education in Hamburg (formerly UIE), which has changed its name to UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (UIL) (Tores 2011).

This shift of paradigm has been closely analyzed and reflected on in research studies. They have higlighted the implications for the development and structure in the fields of both lifelong education/learning and of adult education/learning (Sandlin *et al.* 2011; Barros 2012). Also the different emphasis put on education/learning have been carefully analyzed, with all their implications for support offered to adults for their learning. In the rethoric of different policy papers implications for all stakeholders have been pointed out. Usually adults have been seen as central but are deprived of sufficient support by the state (Formenti, Castiglioni 2014; Zarifis, Gravani 2014; Rubenson 2011; Bélanger 2016).

Nowadays, however, the different policy documents as well as research studies, books and papers start by defining the basic terms, and how they will be used (EC 2011; UNESCO 2015). Also, different glossaries and dictionaries, in multiple editions, have been produced in an attempt towards necessary clarification, at European level (CEDEFOP 2008) and internationally (English 2010; Rubenson 2011). A content analysis of these definitions over the years would show interesting aspects of the development of the field over time, and would also show the evolution of meanings from an international perspective.

The difficulty of getting an agreed terminology is explained, on the one hand by the culturally based adult education understanding or expectations (Holford *et al.* 2014), depending on level of development, traditions, aims and meanings attributed to adult education in different cultural contexts (Nuissl *et al.* 2010), and, on the other hand, on the level of development of scientific knowledge in the field. A more convincing epistemological enquiry would be beneficial. It should cover large scale fundamental and comparative research, but also particular analysis. (Zawacki-Richter *et al.* 2014).

Let's take, for instance, the definition of adult learning and education, as stipulated at the opening of the UNESCO Recommendation (UNESCO 2015):

> Adult learning and education is a core component of lifelong learning. It comprises all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work. It denotes the entire body of learning processes, formal, non-formal and informal, whereby those regarded as adults by the society in which they live, de-

> velop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, both in their own interests and those of their communities, organizations and societies. Adult learning and education involves sustained activities and processes of acquiring, recognizing, exchanging, and adapting capabilities. Given that the boundaries of youth and adulthood are shifting in most cultures, in this text the term 'adult' denotes all those who engage in adult learning and education, even if they have not reached the legal age of maturity.

A content analysis raises several questions such as: Can we see a distinct change in the meaning of adult education and adult learning if we compare these terms with others used by UNESCO or other international institutions over the years? In what way? Why is adult learning and education (ALE) used together? What are the meanings, purposes, coverage of these terms? What philosophy and what values are encountered? Are all the terms used properly defined? In connection with adult learning and education, what is implied by the words «even if they have not reached the age of maturity»? What vision for ALE is given? What perpsectives of ALE are underlined? Different research questions can be derived, as exemplified, analyzing both the individual and societal perspectives (Field 2015; Belanger 2016) through different lenses (sociologic, philosophic, educationalist etc).

Beyond the different understandings of terms /terminology the aspect of the integration of different educational stages and (learning) contexts remains (Nuissl, Lattke, Patzold 2013). Therefore, future research work in this regard should answer mainly the question of how the educational system can be structured in such a way that the individual learner can cross the borders between different educational institutions and can build up different pathways of education. Another challenge/problem/issue still to be solved – practically and scientifically – is to find a solution for linking performances in informal learning with the ones in formal and non-formal learning.

3. Research on policy making and policy commitments

European policy making in adult education and lifelong learning can be researched from different perspectives, following either the policy circle or policy focus and activities, or policy measures and their impact. Also policy making can be related to ALE as a whole, or to different sectors of ALE, or to different target groups or other elements of ALE.

There are dedicated European and international networks of researchers to analyze the impact of educational policy making on different aspects of ALE. They produce either research papers and reports (see, for

instance, the work of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission), or methodologic tools (see, for instance, the book edited by two of the convenors of the ESREA network on policy analysis, M. Milana and J. Holford in 2014, on *Adult Education Policy and the European Union. Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives,* or UNESCO 2011; ETF 2015). There are European and international journals where research findings are presented («Educational Policy», «Journal of Education Policy», «Adult education quarterly» *etc.*), or thematic numbers (i.e. of the «European Educational Research Journal»).

An important focus in the research is on governance and implementation of policy measures, as there seems to be an important gap (Barros 2012), related to the political will towards different stages of the policy making process (formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation). Through this research focus a new kind of public management developed in educational policy, oriented towards output indicators and accountability aspects. This type of public management requires more evidence on investments and impacts: in consequence, a lot of research is ordered by public authorities to justify and legitimize their decisions, or in order to modernise approaches to educational governance and reform (Rasmussen *et al.* 2015; Grek 2010).

Different research methodologies are used to carry out different levels of analysis: from the overall influences of globalization on European policy making (Milana 2012; Holford *et al.* 2014; Rasmussen *et al.* 2015), to sectoral analysis of different fields of ALE, like that of counselling (Bengtsson 2011). From the content analysis of the different policy documents (Sava 2014, for instance, on the topic of professionalization in adult education) to in-depth analysis of policy making (EC 2015), from bi-level analysis (Panitsides, Anastasiadou 2015) to secondary data analysis of different surveys (Cincinnato *et al.* 2016). All kinds of different research approaches can be seen.

Different comparative research approaches, such as that of the international (PIAAC) and european (AES) surveys had a very important impact on international and national policy making (Volante, Ritzen 2016), as they pointed out problems of policy making. Their findings are even influencing the priorities in the policy agenda. The policy makers need reliable data to argue for their so-called 'evidence based policy'. Therefore, a lot of effort has been put into improving data collection and benchmarking, on relevant indicators and standards for a more significant comparison among member states, and not only member states (EC 2015).

The yearly monitoring activity done in all member states, under the coordination of Eurostat, has shown, however, the rather limited capacity all this has for improving in a significant way the participation rate of adult learners in lifelong learning. Evidently, an innovation in policy making is needed (Møller 2010) for greater effectiveness in reaching

underprivileged adults, in reducing illiteracy or the unemployment rate (mainly amongst youths). Supporting such innovation by more research is therefore on the agenda (Møller 2010).

Looking at concrete activities for ALE in the European Union (e.g. Communication on upgrading and developing «New skills» in June 2016) a bias on employability and vocational training can be seen even more clearly: basic skills, literacy, personal development and citizenship are put in the second or third place. There seems to be a political gap: market, employability and vocational training oriented measures are part of public funding and support, whereas the areas of 'soft skills' and basic skills are more the responsibility of the individuals.

Other different policy tools have been implemented at European level, from the European Qualification Framework and different ways of recognising the training certificates, to the financial support within the Education and training programs, with the main aim of widening access to ALE (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2015). Their impact has been partly analyzed (see, for instance, the work of the European Joint Research Centre).

In the last ten years a focus on publicity in different areas of ALE is noticeable: public statements, press releases, conferences – 'ECsoft' support (see the OMC approach – Open Method of Coordination), country recommendations, guidelines and memorandums. In addition, we can find pan-european studies, surveys and guidelines for successful action. After about 15 years of data collection, there is a large amount of data from the Member states and from different pan-european studies (EC 2015). However, there is a need for a better structuring and communicating of all this data to the different stakeholders, so each of them can clearly see his or her role and responsibility. They can then identify the actions that are necessary for the overall targets to be reached.

Future research should find out how the climate of learning can be improved, how the population can be stimulated to take more advantage of the different parts of the educational system, and how the political institutions and the policy makers/stakeholders can be more committed to the development of adult education. Also, a more forward-looking and anticipatory system of policy making is needed (Chisholm 2013).

4. Labor market orientation, vocational and workplace learning

In activities oriented towards the labor market, policy makers mainly stress the following aspects: methods for upgrading skills and growth in skills (Federighi 2013), closing the mismatch of qualifcations (CEDEFOP 2015a), fostering the transparency and comparability of qualifications and certification (qualification frameworks – see CEDEFOP work), policy

measures to stimulate employers to support learning on the job. Thus, working places are seen more and more as one of the biggest educational providers. In addition, the pay-offs and added values of educational attainement (see the research carried out by OECD) and transitions from education to the labor market have been researched (CEDEFOP work, Weeks, Rutherford, Boles, Loe 2014). Also there has been research on the labor market (Brown, Bimrose 2014) and on the national qualification frameworks and their relation to the labour market (CEDEFOP work) etc.

At European level, the work of CEDEFOP and of the European Training Foundation (ETF) should be mentioned. At a first glance, it can be seen that a lot of pan-european studies are carried out with the production of research papers, statistics and databases, both among member states (CEDEFOP) and candidate countries (ETF). The different complex issues of vocational education and training (VET) systems are covered, with country specific data, but also in relation to labor market trends (CEDEFOP 2016b). Needs for skills are also covered in these pan-european studies (sector specific, or as overall skill mismatch, or skills forecasting, together with periodic updating of skills panorama). Employment and educational policies are analysed as well. A large body of data can also be found on key competencies in VET, on innovation in VET, on validation of prior learning (VPL) practices, and on apprenticeship. There is a lot of material on early leaving/dropout rates, statistical overviews on VET, and on understanding qualifications and learning outcomes. Furthermore, there is information on transitions from school/traning to work, ensuring quality in VET, labour market information and guidance (CEDEFOP 2016a) etc. For further research not only the data collected from all member states are useful, but also the dedicated research carried out is very helpful as reference or background material.

An important body of research covers the issue of work-related learning (Kyndt, Baert 2013), and of workplace learning. The research has tried to identify its impact, and ways of doing or improving it. Also the involvement of employees, their attitude towards learning, and factors facilitating their learning within working place/learning at work have been considered (Kyndt, Baert 2013; Kyndt, Raes, Dochy, Janssens 2012). The influences of organizational culture or cultural context on learning at work have also been explored (Kim, McLean 2014), as well as the different types of learning on the job, both (non)formal or informal, structured or not (Billett 2014). The number of years of experience and the influence of this on workplace learning were also examined, as well as different forms of learning (mentoring, coaching etc. – see O'Neil, Marsick 2014, experiential or transformative – see Wilhelmson, Mostrom Aberg, Backstrom, Koping Olsson 2015). Other topics related to work include whether the learning was mediated through new technologies or not, and differences connected with different types of employees –

from the low qualified ones to top managers. Different types of research were used: quantitative or qualitative (mainly interview-based), action research, structured observations and experimental designs. Narrative interviews are used in a broader way not only to enable reflection about learning experiences and learning outcomes in the workplace, but also to identify «learning for career and labor market transitions» (Brown, Bimrose, 2014), or learning and career paths.

Another large body of research has been carried out for evaluating the impact of job-related training or for identifying the role of professional communities in practices for professional development etc. The research issues, or the research approaches are very diverse, as researching this cluster of topics is of high importance both for governments and employers with regards to paying for such training. Also evaluating such training is important both for identyfying the level of competences of human resources and for the competitiveness of the organizations.

The main questions in this field currently open to research are the ones on the mismatch of skills and qualifications and on the future transparency of qualifications and their role in practice. Other important research topics rest on the relation between job-specific versus transversal competencies, on the extension with which liberal adult education related aspects can be incorporated into the work-related learning, as the trend embraced even by EC seems to be.

5. Focus on competences

'Competences' of the people are becoming more and more an overall concept of education, replacing the topic of 'qualifications'. Competences are more focused on the performances of knowledge and skills, less on the way they were acquired. New ways of measuring competences are needed – and developed – see for example the PIAAC test developed by OECD.

Together with the increasing importance of competences arose the comparison of competences amongst the developed countries. Already in former times there were surveys on basic skills in literacy and mathematics (TIMMS, IALS, PIRLS), but since more than 15 years there is nowadays a continued practice of comparative surveys for pupils (PISA) and adults (PIAAC). The results initiated in several countries activities of reform, mainly in the school system. PISA is iterated all three years with different focus, PIAAC has just been used for the first time (Volante, Ritzen 2016; Grek 2010). Researches have been carried out for identifying the impact of such tests at the national/European levels, and on the measures adopted, pointing out the implications for the occupational mismatch (Vera-Toscano, Meroni 2016), or for the employment

chances (Flisi *et al.* 2015), or the social outcomes (Dinis da Costa *et al.* 2014). Also, a large amount of articles, books and studies reflected on the validity of such tests for different national contexts, on the technical and methodologic aspects, or on the transferability of data for different contexts of action and further work (Volante, Ritzen, 2016, Grek 2010; Cincinnato *et al.* 2016; Dinis da Costa *et al.* 2014; Flisi *et al.* 2015; Vera-Toscano, Meroni 2016).

There are analyzed not only the competences as a whole, but different key competences, from cognitive or social point of view. In addition, not only the competences per se, but their implications for career development and transitions are also investigated (Akkermans *et al.* 2012). Akkermans and his colleagues (2012) distinguish between «reflective, communicative, and behavioral career competencies», discerning between: «reflection on motivation, reflection on qualities, networking, self-profiling, work exploration, and career control». Other investigations were made for identifying and validating units of competences of different occupational profiles, and professions, or for predicting the needed skills and competences in the future, for different occupations (by using the Delphi method, for instance), in the green economy.

One of the most important emphasis at the European level is put nowadays on upgrading skills and competences of adults, as well as for ensuring one step up, mainly for the adults with low level of competences – therefore the «New skills agenda for Europe», launched in 2016. Large efforts are spent for securing the basic competences to all adults, as still about 80 million of adults do not posess them at an acceptable level. Thus, from studies for identifying innovative pedagogies while addressing low skilled adults (Dunne *et al.* 2014), till the narratives for identifying the learners' strateiges for overcoming their literacy problems, or study cases on good practices to empower the voulnerable adults to tackle the labour market (CEDEFOP 2013), a variety of researchers have been carried out, both by specialized instutions of the EC (i.e. CEDEFOP), or by researchers themselves (see the work of the European Basic Skills Network). Also, each of the basic competences was analyzed from the point of view of state of the art of mastering it by adults across Europe, and also with regard to how it can be developed, or overcomed the literacy problem, irrespective we are takling about ICT, language, entrepreneurial, cultural awareness, financial, media or family literacy etc. (see the dedicated studies carried out for the European Commission). Giving the importance of human capital and its level of competences for the competitiveness of Europe, the reflections of the set up High level group of experts in literacy were shared in 2012 by the EC.

An important part of competences is the acknowledgement of learning outcomes without certificates. Thus, a big emphasis nowadays is put on the identification, evaluation and recognition of the competences

acquired in all life and work contexts (VPL), and European Commission recommends that all member states should develop till 2018 a coherent system of acknowledgement of prior and experiential learning. The work of CEDEFOP is mainly to be mentioned for this issue, as inventories with the state of the art of developing and running such systems, together with study cases and guidelines for improving such practices are regulary carried out. The researches are carried out for improving the practices of VPL, their credibility (see Ruud Duvekot's contribution in the book), but also on adults themselves, with narrative inverviews.

The issue of competency was, however addressed and investigated not only at the societal or individual level, but at the organizational level as well, as each company, or learning organization is concerned about the level of competences of its employees. Thus, from developing competency-based training needs assessment models (Priyadarshini, Dave 2013), till developing different methods, tools, models for competency-based sustainable and innovative companies (Mukhopadhyay *et al.* 2011), different action researches or experimental designs have been run and validated. However, there are also studies raising the awareness on the danger of focussing too much on labor related competences, loosing the humanistic view, such trend being identifyed even in the policy discourse (Popovic 2014).

The development of labor market and new technology, the scientific developments will require ongoingly new sets of competences, thus urgent research questions to be answered are related to the development of competences of today and tomorrow in different countries, sectors and regions on the one hand, and on the other the ways to come to a reliable system of acknowledgement of learning outcomes. The adults need to be empowered for addressing the challenges of the rapid developments, and also to be supported to document, and make visible their competences.

6. Participation and Support

Participation in adult education, identifying the ways to increase it, mainly for the hard to reach adults is one of the biggest concern at European and member states level. Therefore, efforts for constant monitoring of the participation rate are spent: both yearly (see the data collected for the Education and Training Monitor, published every year since 2012, but also before, based on the participation to AE in the last four weeks before the survey), or triannual (starting with 2007 there is implemented in the EU the Adult Education Survey – AES, counting the participation rate in the last twelve months). In the AES survey the measures are grouped in three categories: vocational training in enterprises, individual

vocational training and general education. Technical studies were carried out to identify the differences of data between the two surveys, but big differences could not be identified (Goglio, Meroni 2014).

Beside constant monitoring of the participation rate, research efforts are dedicated to identifying ways in which this rate can be increased, mainly for the low skilled adults, more in need for further education. However, giving the data over the years, it seems that too efficient solutions were not found, as significant progress cannot be noticed, further research being needed.

A lot of research has been carried out to identify the adults' journey through learning, their motivations, barriers, interests, perceived benefits of learning (Manniene *et al.* 2014; Feinstein 2008), within ESREA being set up dedicated research networks, with respective publications on biographic research, life-span interviews (West *et al.* 2007). Studies cover both participation, and nonparticipation in adult education (Porras-Hernández, Salinas-Amescua 2012), the barriers to participation to LLL of different groups of adults being investigated. An important number of researches tried to identify the profile of adult learner, his/her motivations (Rothes et.al. 2016) and learning biographies, or social background (Cincinnato *et al.* 2016), his/her barriers to participation.

Efforts are spent to reduce the structural, dispozitional, financial, informational barriers to participation in LLL, mainly from providers' side, on widdening participation to ALE (EC/Eurydice 2015), and on developing outreach strategies (EU 2012). Thus, a better matching and transparency between the demand and supply of ALE provisions is ensured through the EPALE Platform, launched in 2011. In EPALE the information is not so well structured, and it is to be researched the extension to which this tool is used by beneficiary, the adult learners themselves, for which kind of information.

Several other, partly earlier activities are existent, some of them more stressed than in the past, like, f. e. the counselling services and activities. There are carried out a lot of researches on how the counselling services can be improved, and on what impact they have on supporting adults to bridge between different learning pathways and parts of the educational system (see, for instance, the work of the European Lifelong Policy Guidance Network, or of Euroguidance Network, or of CEDEFOP, or the research articles presented in the dedicated journals – f.e. Journal of Career Development). However, in spite of increased importance affirmed for the counselling services in the policy documents in the last more than 15 years, their potential is far from being fully exploited, researches being useful for identifying the reasons for a limited extension of such services. Not only the support services like guidance and counselling are meant to foster an increased participation rate, but also the lobbying activitites (like the one of EAEA for instance), or the informa-

tion and awareness rising campaigns. Researching their added value and impact is still a terrain of more exploration.

Most important here are the research activities on raising the participation of lower skilled people (in some countries) and on raising the participation rate as such (in some other coun In activities oriented towards the labor market, policy makers mainly stress the following aspects: methods for upgrading skills and growth in skills (Federighi 2013), closing the mismatch of qualifcations (CEDEFOP 2015a), fostering the transparency and comparability of qualifications and certification (qualification frameworks – see CEDEFOP work), policy measures to stimulate employers to support learning on the job. Thus working places are seen more and more as one of the biggest educational providers. In addition, the pay-offs and added values of educational attainement (see the research carried out by OECD) and transitions from education to the labor market have been researched (CEDEFOP work; Weeks et.al. 2014). Also there has been research on the labor market (Brown, Bimrose 2014) and on the national qualification frameworks and their relation to the labour market (CEDEFOP work) etc.

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have been considered (Kyndt, Baert 2013; Kyndt *et al.* 2012). The influences of organizational culture or cultural context on learning at work have also been explored (Kim, McLean 2014), as well as the different types of learning on the job, both (non)formal or informal, structured or not (Billett 2014). The number of years of experience and the influence of this on workplace learning were also examined, as well as different forms of learning (mentoring, coaching etc. – see O'Neil, Marsick 2014, experiential or transformative – see Wilhelmson *et al.* 2015). Other topics related to work-related /workplace learning include whether the learning was mediated through new technologies or not, and differences connected with different types of employees – from the low qualified ones, to top managers. Different types of research were used: quantitative or qualitative (mainly interview-based), action research, structured observations and experimental designs. Narrative interviews are used in a broader way not only to enable reflection about learning experiences and learning outcomes in the workplace, but also to identify «learning for career and labor market transitions» (Brown, Bimrose 2014), or learning and career paths.

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The main questions in this field currently open to research are the ones on the mismatch of skills and qualifications and on the future transparency of qualifications and their role in practice. Other important research topics rest on the relation between job-specific versus transversal competencies, on the extension with which liberal adult education related aspects can be incorporated into the work-related learning, as the trend embraced even by EC seems to be.

7. Learning Communities (learning city, region, society)

An emergent conceptulization and topic of research is the one of building up learning networks. This is understood as a network between the different stakeholders of LLL to set up a functional infrastructure, a public awareness, and an intrinsic attitude towards adopting, fostering and making learning happen everywhere, in all life contexts. Special attention is given to mechanisms, partnerships, services and links in these learning networks at community, regional and societal level.

In spite of this conceptualization existing thirty years ago, it has recently been reafirmed as an important one, with a stipulation in the UNESCO Recommendation on ALE (2015): «Adult learning and education constitutes a major building block of a learning society, and for the creation of learning communities, cities and regions as they foster a culture of learning throughout life and revitalize learning in families, communities and other learning spaces/contexts, and in the workplace». Therefore, particularly through the dedicated effort of UNESCO, the learning city/learning society movement is continuously increasing and activities and awareness raising at global level is put as a flagship issue. Global forums, declarations, global learning city networks, guidelines for building up learning cities, and dedicated study cases (Valdes-Cotera *et al*. 2015; Yang 2012) have all been seen in recent years. Also the work of the Pascal Observatory is a leading one in the learning city movement, particularly in the European context. At their annual conferences on learning cities the titles used give a vision of such cities by 2040: «connected, sustainable, healthy and resilient». Action research results, reflections and models, case studies and narratives are presented at each of the conferences.

However, for the European space/context, the learning region (see the R3L program of European Commission launched in 2002)/learning city/learning society movement (see the *Towards European Learning Society* – TELS, launched in 1998) did not prove to have the expected impact, as pointed out by Jordan, Longworth and Osborne (2014). In spite of the benefits of such learning communities and irrespective their coverage for constucting a collaborative learning enviroment (Brown, Lambert 2013), the mechanisms for networking and governance did not work efficiently. Obviuosly there is a need to do more research on social capital, involvement and participation, individual empowerment and social cohesion, and social mobilization, learning collectively and transformation. Why the R3L movement doesn´t work well has to be found out. Then lessons can be learnt on how to sustain a culture of lifelong learning within a partly fragile eco-system climate. Some reflections and experiences have been collected in the book edited by two of the prominent names linked with the terms 'conceptualization of the learning region/learning city', N. Longworth and M. Osborne (*Perspectives on Learning Cities and Regions: Policy, Practice and Participation,* 2010). They group together hints about the resource aspects of LLL: economic, social and community, and networking intelligence.

More and more, the learning city concept overlaps with the smart city concept. The increasing role of new technologies and social media in connecting people is reafirmed this way (Caragliu, Del Bo 2015). Interconnectedness, interdependency and interaction are seen as core to the future of cities (Jordan et.al. 2014). The best way of fostering these characteristics is to be further investigated.

The trend is towards a neoliberal society with emaphsis on skills, competences and labor oriented adult learning, on rather individualistic and competitive skills/learning/adult learners. Thus, there is a need to find out to what extent the learning city movement can balance such a trend, so reinforcing social capital and social inclusion. Here, research on educational networks in different environments is important. Similarly, study on how to build them up and how to make them effective, so they become vibrant learning communities in regions and cities. Also, through research a set of indicators and standards for a learning society can be formulated. This is a needed step forward towards integrative policies and action.

7. Quality and effectiveness

The issue of quality and effectiveness in adult education can be addressed from different points of view, depending on the lens of analysis: from the accountability aspects, using input and output indicators, to the way it is ensured in a whole quality management system. A perceived added value for the adult learners in educational provision is always important. Research has been carried out for identifying aspects of quality and quality assurance in adult education in all its dimensions, as all stakeholders in adult education are concerned about quality: from the state oriented towards new public management, to educational providers acting in a competitive market, or the beneficiaries themselves paying for a qualitative commodity. Laurie *et al.* (2016: 229) give 7 dimensions of quality education which are listed below. They are mainly related to the new focus on education for sustainable development:

> 1. Effectiveness: the extent to which stated educational aims are met; 2. Efficiency: economic considerations, such as ratio of outputs to inputs, to maximize the use of resources. 3. Equity: issues of access to education for all people regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, etc. 4. Responsiveness: meeting the needs of the individual learners in classroom interactions by taking into consideration the uniqueness of the learner's abilities. 5. Relevance: the usefulness of education to the life of the learner immediately; when the learner comes of age; and to more distant future later in the learner's life. 6. Reflexivity: the ability to adjust to change, especially rapid change, which is important to engaging with an uncertain future. 7. Sustainability: 'focuses on behaviour change and acceptance of responsibilities...in a process of goal-setting, decision-making, and evaluation' (Nikel, Lowe 2010: 599). This dimension attends to 'the longer-term future over the present and to the global as much as the local'.

We have listed all these dimensions, as ensuring quality in education and training is an overal objective mentioned in almost all policy documents, and not always clearly defined what aspects of quality are considered. It is also a desiderata at institutional level, or even at the micro level of each educational provision. Quality is a complex term, which needs to be defined each time. In research work the quality criteria are defined and how they were derived, and from what theoretical perspective, is set out. Then, how they are included in the quality management system is identified, and also the impact of quality management is evaluated (Nuissl 2013).

Even among the 28 research clusters mentioned previously (Zawacki-Richter *et al.* 2014), the quality issue is placed at meso level, so at all levels of education and training research studies on the quality of education are performed. At macro level, pan-european studies with their accountability focus, identify the ways in which the different dimensions of quality are met. There are studies available proving the value of money spent on education, and the equity of participation in education and training. The extent to which the aims set for E2020 are met is identified. Also, the mechanisms for quality assurance, both external and internal, or for ensuring the relevance of certification are given (CEDEFOP 2015b).

At a meso level, the quality of services provided for adults, capacity building, and the professionalization of staff delivering education and training are relevant. For each of the issues a wide range of research has been carried out (see, for instance, on the topic of professionalization of staff in ALE, the contribution of Susanne Lattke later in this book). There are differences between publically and privately delivered adult education linked to different aspects of/differences in accreditation of the provision and in ensuring quality.

At the micro level all research aimed at improved didactic interaction and learning satisfaction, and at improving learning outcomes etc. can be considered as efforts to increase quality and effectiveness. Another large body of research identifying the relevance of education and training for improved quality of life (e.g. Pejatovic 2013) or community development can be taken into consideration.

Plenty of diagnostic studies, study cases, tracer studies, qualitative research studies can be enumerated as aiming to identify the different dimensions of quality in education, from the level of individual learning up to the educational system. Nevertheless, further research work should be done here on the advantages of different quality systems for pedagogical institutions, and on the impact of quality development for the learners. New work should also provide evidence, explanations and solutions for improvement, with arguments that go beyond the retoric: 'poor quality in adult learning' and 'not-trusting quality of provision', which still can be heard in political contexts.

9. OER, learning with new technologies

More extented use of the open educational resources (OER) is recommended as one of the important layers while rethinking education for 2020 at European level. The rapid explosion of OERs, collaborative ways of creating them, their easy and very accessible use, without limits of time and space, reshape the way education and learning can be provided and happen, as a pan-european study on *Adult education and open educational resources*, carried out in 2015 (EU 2015), has pointed out. The benefits highlighted were cost-saving and the facilitation of access to learning resources, both user-generated or organizationally produced. A more extended use of OERs by different stakeholders was recommended. Combined with this, is the potential of shortening the links between non-formal, formal and informal learning. Extending ways ofVPL for informal learning are also possible. An inventory of more than 150 OER initiatives has been made available by the Joint Research Centre (JRC). In a similar study reviewing the quality issues of OERs, findings were in line with those of JRC (Camilleri *et al.* 2014). Media literacy is necessary for both teachers and students to be able to select, use and produce qualitative OERs (Terras *et al.* 2013).

More extended consideration on the use of MOOCs for education and learning as well as of Creative Common Licences is made by L. Malita and G. Grosseck in the last chapter of this book. However, although these resources are expanding rapidly and have great potential, they are a comparativley new phenomenon, and explantions and theoretic conceptulizations are needed (Panke, Seufert 2013). Explorations have also been made on the efficiency of develping such tools to give a personalized integrated learning system (Reigeluth *et al.* 2015), but also on how personalized, flexible, individualized and deep learning can be fostered in a more extended way (Pogorskiy 2015) while co-generating content (Panke, Seufert 2013). The negative side was also explored, to find out more about the dangers of aggressive behaviour, resistance to OERs, and on avoiding the use of irrelevant content.

Research should be carried out for a better understandig of how we learn using OERs, and on the best way of facilitating this learning, or to truly personalize it. Other important research questions include: what are the best ways of developing critical media literacy and collaborative learning in technology-mediated interaction, and how may social-media tools help maximise participation in learning? Also work is needed to find out more about barriers and resistance to using OERs, or participating in co-generating educational content (Terras *et al.* 2013). There still needs to be reflection on the danger of a «digital gap» (Sargant 2003).

As an end note, we would like to underline once more that the mapping in a 'nutshell' of the main trends and perspectives in European adult education is aimed towards providing an overview and some critical hints

for the users of this manual, mainly (future) PhD students. It is expected that they are familiar with these topics by now, and this reference material is meant more as a self-check compendium, which at the same time can give inspiration for future research work.

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CHANGES IN THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION POLICIES IN EUROPE IN THE LAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

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Abstract: This paper is to analyse and reflect to some major changes in the roles and functions of adult learning and education policies in Europe from 1990 to 2016. Also, the author will underline some important factors which influence the policy perspectives and choices for adult learning and education.

Keywords: policy and politics in adult learning and education (ALE), international institutions of ALE, historic background.

1. Historical Background. Foundations of modern adult education policy

The birth of modern adult education can be clearly connected to enlightened thinking and to the emergence of the modern state which emphasized education and schooling throughout the nineteenth century. In this respect, adult education followed public and higher education and, therefore, formed its institutions and organisations from the middle of the same century and reached for a political realisation that it would be a remarkable tool to make individual adults and their communities become fit for social, economic changes. This process was highly supported by the birth of welfare policy orientations which tried to balance in between socially driven and market-based interests. For example, the history of modern British adult education reflects the way in which adult education could reach up for a policy role both in strengthening democratic society with active and critically thinking adults and, in preparing adult workers for better performance in labour as a response to economic claims (Fieldhouse 2000).

It also turned out, that civil laws would be not enough to defend the rights of adults, democracy and democratisation would also be needed in order to spread out and defend the right of access to and participation in adult education for adult learners (UN 1948). It became a difficult and complex scenario for democratised states, after 1945-48, to incorporate adult education into state-run institutionalised educational systems so as to provide a second chance schooling for adults with the lack of primary, secondary, or tertiary school certificate. This was the beginning of the spread of a policy orientations having been influenced by social democratic, socio-liberal and christian/protestant socially driven philosophies and values to develop an open and sensitive society which could establish its principles through the vision of lifelong education/'education

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permanente'. This vision was clearly reflected by the mission and goals of UNESCO and its world conferences in adult education in and after 1960 (UNESCO 1960).

Unfortunately, the defeat of far right political extremes, like that of Fascism and Nazism was just one end, the spread of communist ideology helped the creation of a block of counties where adult education could only develop through state interventions and relative welfare reforms, but it was mainly considered as a simple mean of hegemonic policy-formation and control mechanisms to avoid pluralistic structures and freedom to form independent, alternative organisations and institutions. It is not a surprise that researchers focusing on the history of adult education underlined the changing nature of states in supporting adult education. Even liberal democracies reflected that there has been a rise and fall in considering adult education as an essential component of educational structures and, consequently, of educational policies (Zdarzill 1990).

One must recognise that adult education from 1945 to 1973-75 was mainly considered as a policy tool to strengthen democratic societal values and structures, to improve skills of adults wanting to enter the labour market, be employed by state-run factories and firms in the 'Eastern-block' countries, (Opelt 2005) and to provide a specific set of social policy in order to realise welfare structures in health, culture, community through educational formations both in formal and non-formal grounds. In this respect, it is not at all surprising that relevant policy orientations of this period concentrated to raise participation of adults in learning and education, to democratize and to develop employment and social stability. However, the economic vision of this era was obvious, it praised linear economic development through industry, agriculture and growing services supported by technological advancements (Roberts 1989).

2. From adult education towards adult vocational and labour-market trainings

The late nineteen-sixties had to face relative slow-down of economic development and employment to face a severe crisis and structural challenges especially in heavy industries for the lack of energy supply and changing demands in world markets. This change finally hit adult education by shifting interests in policies from school-based/formal adult education to non-formal structures with more flexible forms of trainings having to serve labour market demands with different skills orientations and new forms of vocations. Adult education policies reflected this structural change by using new labels and orientations as further education, distance education, vocational education and training, continuing education and recurrent education. It was the OECD, amongst other international organisations, that signalled a particular interest in giving

a new role to education supporting growth, employability and skills developments by providing accessible learning by using new technologies and methodologies in the making of a new society with new economies (UNESCO 1972; OECD 1973).

The UNESCO identified adult education with complex policy roles to help strengthening societies by providing education for all a wider spectrum so as to reach for understanding, stability, growth, better health, cultural identity and national sovereignity with democratisation. It also underlined a necessity for enhancing integrative educational policies to use adult education in order to raise participation in learning through programmes dedicated to eliminating illiteracy and poor basic skills amongst adults in semi- and underdeveloped regions worldwide. UNESCO's 1976 Recommendations was a cornerstone document which was dedicated to summarise the importance of the introduction of joint actions in education and training and insisted upon adult schools to be a necessary element of raising quality skills and competencies of adult learners (UNESCO 1976).

In the same era, the European Economic Community started to turn its interest towards new training incentives and formulated its Educational Council of Ministers in 1973 to formulate its first set of programmes with a specific one on adult training, called FORCE in 1976. Although the original emphasis was to keep together policy approaches on education and training together, economic forces made non-formal structures to receive more attention and growing funds through the establishment of new regional labour-market training systems be introduced from Canada, Ireland, Denmark and the United Kingdom.

In the 1970s, adult education was very much affected by emerging issues of social policy actions and tools, access, emancipation, literacy and mobility and employment. Such themes were strong and challenging to adult education on their own, but they were also somewhat difficult to be developed side by side, therefore, it has been very challenging to balance economically driven scenarios with more socially oriented ones within institutionalised adult education and training. It became also obvious that apart from the relatively successful welfare goals in most European countries growing economic changes through global markets made welfare achievements rather fragile and expensive for communities living in open economic environments and, moreover, pushed adult education to loose second chance focus and transfer most of its attention to non-formal training. This shift caused serious critical voices to raise in throughout the decade from Illich to Freire, or from Gelpi to Pöggeler and others. Hake, for this reason, recently revisited this period and concluded that late modernity did not make it easy and simple to promote and develop a learning society through the expansion of lifelong education and learning (Hake 2006) since an individualised world margin-

alised community-based actions, traditions and values around learning and education in risk-societies. Moreover, changes in the 1970s started to undermine the traditional social policy function of adult education, namely, to provide a second chance through specific schools for adults. The decay of a rather young result of welfare orientation clearly reflected the weakness of socially driven democracies and, consequently, diverted adult education towards employment policy functions.

The bipolar world allowed the Communist Block to get isolated from market economic challenges for some decades, but they were also hit by the same waves of global markets which faded away traditional welfare structures from education to housing, from healthcare to culture, all which became more and more remote to growing communities of marginalised groups, like unemployed, poor, migrants, women, elderly, etc. or people with social and mental/or physical difficulties.

The 1980s provided a rather helping climate with relatively peaceful political arena having been supported by the US-Russia negotiations and, also, by balanced economic circumstances, therefore, educational and training policies could return back to the realisation of visions from the early 1970s based on the claims for combined education and training policies. This approach was taken on board and represented by the forming European Community to take education into the forefront of its policies by the expansion of its programmes into Erasmus and Comenius with Lingua and other exchange of students and members of teaching staff in public and higher education.

3. An European Policy Focus on Adult Education: A return of a balanced policies in the lifelong learning scheme

This momentum was grabbed by the newly formed European Association for the Education of Adults in order to connect, at European multinational level, adult education with the rise of new European policy orientations and programmes to be extended to adult education. The process was accelerated and got a serious political support when, in 1993, education and training became explained as part of European policies, namely, under the flagship of social policy. Two years later, adult education was integrated into the so-called Socrates Programme financing system of the newly formed European Union's budged to provide support, amongst other educational sectors, for adult learning programmes in the member states.

At this point, we have to stress that in most European countries adult education and training were considered to have a double policy impact. On the one hand, it had to provide basic and further education possibilities in the school sector and, on the other, to help raising employ-

ability. Educational and economic policies did respected the traditional social role of adult education with a rather community orientation, but the making of the European Union signalled the slow, but real shift in this view towards an individual oriented approach based more on learning than education and soon leaved behind the traditional vision to give way to a learner centred scope in order to respond to challenging issues like mobility, creativity, skills and social inclusion. This change moved indicated that European policy development in education and training would balance the economic with social. This perspective was in line with the policy impact of the growing roles of the European Commission led by its leader, Mr. Delors, who emphasized that Europe could only realise its political, social and economic ambitions by improving its educational and training systems in the member states into open and flexible structures to effectively collaborate and make these systems be compatible and responsive to social and economic needs. Delors set the Commission's vision in the famous *White Paper on Education* in 1995 to resemble the role of adult education in the dimension of fighting back social exclusion through adult schooling and youth work (EC 1995).

The accelerated activities of the European Commission, together with the move of an alliance of member states, turned the European Union into the direction of lifelong learning with an unique combination of employability and active citizenship in the period of 1995 and 2000 by preparing for the first European adult learning programme, labelled as Grundtvig in 1999 to be used in two further educational programmes of the EU called Socrates II and lifelong learning.

The impact of international organisations also influenced the policy picture and not only the European Union, but also its member states and the countries in accession had to face an era which demonstrated learning as a key factor determining economic growth and social integration. UNESCO's famous *Delors Report*, CONFINTEA V and its *1996 Hamburg Declaration with Agenda for the Future* signalled a multifocal and integrated policy vision that education and training must emphasize skills development with social responsibilities and mobility. (Delors et al. 1996) We consider that the most important policy change of the 1990s to get adult education in Europe to try integrating sectors of formal, non-formal and informal learning, while integrating all relevant policies into the discourse on and the formation of education and training.

Education started to lose a serious impact and force in policy terms, although education in member and accession countries received a significant amount of funds to change structures, methodology, infrastructure and curricula in order to prepare for upcoming social and economic changes. Structures of open and non-formal trainings, especially in vocational structures gained momentum and expanded roles and influence, especially driven by economic and employment policies represented by

international economic organisations like the World Bank, IMF and the OECD. Even the European Commission could hardly defend a balanced approach in its lifelong learning vision declared in its famous Memorandum (EC 2000) and had to slowly adapt its policies in education and training to the growth claims of member states and having to react to indicators and benchmarks signalling difficulties in social and economic terms soon after the Millennium.

It is rather paradox that the Lisbon period still made an attempt to continue a balanced policy orientation. This attempt lasted for a decade to radically change before 2010 when the European Council finalised its policy orientations for the following fiscal period of 2013-2020. What started in Lisbon in the year of 2000 was an obvious try for integrating social and economic policies to help formulating education and training with flexible structures and methodologies. Governments of this period become, however, impatient upon how to provide growth, social stability and employment with effective responses and visions for younger generations. It is no wonder that not only UNESCO, but also OECD was determined that successes in education and training would need definite engagement towards policy reforms and attention towards collaborative formations based on partnerships with local and regional stakeholders. Field, therefore, explained lifelong learning in a policy perspective as a new educational order to respond to the needs of the *learning economy* with clear messages upon the followings:

- rethinking the role of schooling in a learning society;
- widening participation in adult learning;
- developing the workplace as a site of learning;
- building active citizenship by investing in social capital;
- pursuing the search for meaning (Field 2006).

One has to recognise that a new dimension of policy orientation in adult learning and education became very important throughout the Lisbon Decade, and this is the local and regional dimension to result in the incorporation of regional policies, urban and rural developments and environmental dimension. This resulted in the European Commission to declare the importance of developing learning regions (EC 2002). The learning city-region approach enabled, for example, researchers and development agencies, universities, etc. to turn their focus on adult learning and education be integrated to successful models for skills and community development programmes, models so as to demonstrate new, innovative forms of social engagement and responsibilities of educational and training providers to meet their provision to the claims of learners, employers and other social actors.

Those aspects and their impacts on adult education were also stressed by UIL and explained for us by Hinzen (Hinzen 2013).

4. The role of EAEA and UNESCO in recent policy formation in ALE in Europe

Still in 2006, it was the European Association for the Education of Adults to claim for an integrated policy drive so as to develop adult education in Europe. Several EU member states recognised the goals of EAEA, having been declared in the famous *Adult Education Trends and Issues* that it would need a complex development to be able to meet current needs of adult learners, educational and training institutions and organisations, employment stakeholders, social partners and cultural and civil organisations, NGOs, etc. (EAEA 2006.) The organisation came to the realisation that adult learning was an essential fourth pillar of the support system for lifelong learning. Likewise, schooling, VET, higher and adult education each has a significant contribution to make to the global competitiveness of the European Social Model.

The five recommended policy goals of EAEA for the development of adult education were the followings:

1. A holistic – total, integrated, systemic and all-embracing grasp and policy perspective on adult learning and the resulting provision. This implies that a common European adult learning framework should be developed to strengthen adult learning within Europe, based on its diverse national traditions. This would allow European partners to help, compare and learn from one another more effectively, enhancing the quality and utility of adult learning. A culture of adult lifelong learning must permeate all public, private and third sector thinking and activity. Learning opportunities should be available and accessible to adults throughout life in all settings.
2. Core public funding especially for the disadvantaged, with a stable and sustainable locally based infrastructure. Public authorities and governments should attend in particular to the less advantaged, including specific age groups. Adult learning must be easily and flexibly accessible, on all levels, and in all learning sites throughout life. Strong local participation in identifying and meeting needs would be essential. More attention should be paid to the trends of an ageing population and the related adult learning rather job-oriented learning. Social cohesion, civic participation and economic growth demand a huge process of intercultural learning provision for native Europeans as well as the new population.
3. High quality of provision and quality of the personnel involved. High quality in support of adult learning relies increasingly on networks and collaboration with public authorities, social movements, NGOs and enterprises exercising corporate social responsibility. High quality adult education personnel are needed to manage new roles and demands. Their professional development, support and mobility demand serious attention.

4. Recognition and credit for non-formal and informal alongside formal adult education and learning. It should be made more publicly known that the extension of validation is not just in the interest of the labour market and it does not just mean the degrading of the authority of formal institutions and the quality of education and training, but it was in the interest of all actors, especially the adult majority of the learning society. The recognition of the institutionalisation of non-formal learning was seen as a key tool in increasing motivation, access, participation and learning output.
5. Simple key indicators, together with support for and use of good research and statistics.

The efficiency and equity of the European Social Model (ESM) could only be realised, just like the great differences within the EU can only be reduced if there was no limitation on adult learning's contribution to ESM's success. This not only required the inclusive approach to all forms of adult learning, but the creation of measurements and monitoring systems that would enable the planning of adult learning's development, transparent decision-making and quality assessment in an inclusive way.

The key messages came as conclusions from the work reported in the first two parts of the study. They closely corresponded with the key messages of the Communication on Adult Learning of the European Commission (EC 2006). The roles of the EU in the development of adult and lifelong learning was analysed by Tóth who underlined the impacts of limitation of the EU and its Commission in policy aspects (Tóth 2009). Also Ioannidou emphasized that the special process and formation of education and training policy in the EU was the consequence of structures in European Law and the decision-making processes if the European institutions, moreover, the language and focus of national lifelong learning strategies dominantly followed the policy narrative of the EU and that of the OECD (Ionnaidou 2014).

European policy orientations have strongly been hit by impacts of globalisation which was first described by Pöggeler with retrospective approaches to bridge early modern struggles with late modern realities constraining participation and performance, deforming critical thinking in adult learning and education (Pöggeler 2002). Therefore, it is not at all surprising that analysts of policy dimensions of adult learning and education, like Torres, English and Mayo, also pointed out both positive and negative trends and issues of globalisations affecting adult learning and education. Torres has recently stressed the impact of global issues like environmental degradation, equal opportunities, quality of education, immigration, tolerance in civil societies, building democracy, human rights and global citizenship referring to the political sociology of adult education (Torres 2013). Likewise, English and Mayo have indicated the changing nature of the state, especially of neoliberal orientations

and focuses with signals of dangers and social conflicts because of leaving behind welfare orientations, social contracts and, consequently, obeying to market interests and global economic orders (English, Mayo 2012).

Educational policies have been severely hit by UNESCO orientations and goals. More precisely, UNESCO international conferences on adult education (CONFINTEA series) have signalled major issues be responded to or demonstrated by adult education in order to develop democratic, accessible and quality systems of education for adults. Although this paper already indicated the impact of UNESCO in policy contexts, the organisation kept continuing its orientations to adult education under the flagships of *Education for All* (EFA) as part of the basic policy steps taken after the 1997 CONFINTEA V in preparation and joining the *UN Millennium Development Goals* for the 2000-2015 period. This process is also known by those investigating the policy contexts as the *Dakar Framework for Action*. (UNESCO 2000) to continue and strengthen those goals having been stated in the *Agenda for the Future* in 1997.

In 2000, UNESCO's policy lines were to indicate that even though the world may talk about lifelong learning, learning cannot be successful without education. This realisation was somehow logical impact of the 1970s when several governments of the developed world started to move money from education towards the emerging sector of vocational education and training to leave education in bad conditions for the following quarter of a century. Therefore, UNESCO warned policy makers to try avoiding a similar crisis. Today we know that such narrow policy routes may be repeated. The EFA goals joined the policy discourse on adult education and got attention from several UN member states. The EU also reflected to the EFA discourse in the context of its educational policy dimensions referring to equal opportunities and partnership based actions be embedded into national strategies, actions and particular projects of the Grundtvig Programme. But also, the citizenship orientation was also connected with matter of reflective societies, local and regional development contexts, mobility, migrations etc. The EU, through its Commission, started to move further with its programmes and integrated policy visions of EAEA into its famous two *Communications on Adult Learning* (EC 2006, 2007) to reflect to challenges and quality learning and education, mobility, migration and ageing, promoting learning for a higher degree, the proper use of indicators and benchmarks and the monitoring of national systems of adult educations. A key issue of comparative analysis of national reforms in adult education was also advocated, but all those issues slowed down and got marginalised with the wind of financial and economic crisis in 2007 and 2008. The whole proves within the Commission was influenced by the UNESCO and its preparing for *CONFINTEA VI* in Belem, Brasil. The end of the decade provided a rather difficult climate for open and accessible adult education to grow and to receive more funds. The *Belem*

Framework for Action clearly indicated the difficulties of and challenges to adult learning, moreover, it called for more solidarity and action amongst continents to fight back illiteracy, poverty, under-education, xenophobia and violence with accessible education, quality learning with social inclusion and environmental sensitivity (UNESCO 2009).

This period helped EAEA and other civil non-governmental groups in adult education to fight for more attention and support for bottom-up activities and collaborative actions supporting adult learners. Although the EU decided to stop its Grundtvig programme, the 2011 *Agenda for Adult Learning* indicated the continuation of policy orientations on adult learning and education be promoted by the European institutions, especially he European Commission (Council of the European Union 2011).

Related topics were to provide a certain follow-up work after the Grundtvig-period and keep the policy discourse open around some specific themes as lifelong learning and mobility, development of quality and effectiveness of education and training, promotion of equity, social cohesion and active citizenship through adult learning, development of adults' creative and innovative skills together with their learning environments and, finally, expansion of knowledge-base on adult learning education and the ongoing monitoring of the adult learning sector.

One must not forget that the issue of the development of adult learning professionals and quality research in adult learning and education became an important topic be connected to new social and economic roles and responsibilities for higher education. Universities recently started to position themselves as advocated and collaborative partners in adult education. As a consequence, several higher education platforms put more emphasis on working on research issues arounds adult and lifelong learning in the context of employment, social engagement like EUCEN, PASCAL Observatory, GUNI, etc.

The UNESCO and its Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) indicated that learning cities would have an important role in effectively using local and regional capacities, social capital in order to reach for a social stability and growth (UN MDG goals, 2002-2015) and later to turn achievements into environmental considerations with sustainable development goals. (UN SDG 2015) UNESCO's role in joining the United Nations' *Sustainable Development Goals* and especially some distinguished aspects, like that of *Quality Education*.

5. Which way forward? Skills matching and the reconfiguration of policies on adult learning and education in Europe

In trying to understand policy implications of adult learning and education, one has to realise that Europe lost momentum in the second half

the Lisbon Decade and instead of reducing funds in education and turning most attention to vocational trainings, it should have continued and even expanded its integrative approach in the lifelong learning policy frame for education and training. We have to stay obvious when pointing to this aspect even if the programme budget of the European Lifelong Learning Programme and the succeeding Erasmus + Programme have reflected a rise in the level if financing. The European Council finally decided in 2010 not to continue with the very popular Grundtvig Programme after 2013 and to turn policy attention towards vocational education and training (VET).

The initiative of the OECD to launch its Programme for International Assessment of Adults' Competencies (PIAAC) accelerated further governmental moves to connect development programmes in employment with that improvement of skills of adult learners (OECD 2009).

Also, this is a peculiar momentum to underline that VET and especially continuing vocational education and training (cVET) plays an important part and role in adult learning and education and it must also be recognised that related areas and activities in non-formal and informal learning have a strong impact on participation in adult and lifelong learning and on educational innovations (Federighi 2013). Public policy orientations are essential in this respect to secure growth in skills in order to match the needs of the labour market.

This is why CEDEFOP initiated, in and after 2012, several comparative studies on reasons and on potential development responses to skills mismatches in the labour market (CEDEFOP 2014). The vocational orientation and a dominant focus on employment policies resulted in the shifting adult learning policy, within the European Commission, from Directorate General (DG) Education, Culture and Sports to DG Employment right after the 2014 European Parliamentary elections. The election results influenced the European leaders, together with new Commission President Mr. Juncker, to modify the structure and policy layout of each DGs in order to respond to the challenges of how to achieve sustainable growth.

In recent years, policy orientations in and through adult education is still lay in between education and employment policies, however, other policy areas like environment, health, social inclusion and citizenship, urban development have all been connected to adult learning and its quality development.

The latest UN *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDG) called for the reasonable use of quality improvements in education to reach out for a better society and environment to live in (UN SDG 2015). In accordance with UN principles and goals, UNESCO's *New Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education* emphasized that «Member States should develop comprehensive, inclusive and integrated policies for adult learning and

education in its various forms» (UNESCO 2015) so as to respond to learning in several dimensions and to learning needs of adults by the expansion of equitable access and valuable strategies. Those policies ought to be integrated into disciplinary areas, scientific and technological developments, moreover, to other educational and training strategies. The Recommendation called for more dialogue and the platforms to discuss how to develop adult and lifelong learning in local regional orientations by involving stakeholders, NGOs and other civil society groups. Finally, the Recommendation was prepared and accepted by UNESCO General Assembly in Spring of 2016 so as to raise awareness amongst Member States, to strengthen the right to learn in opening new grounds of learning with lifelong guidance and better motivations, good examples of learning communities and community development.

Another recent example of a humanistic approach to adult learning in the policy context is the *Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century* by EAEA. This call is a strict and straightforward combination of individual and community goals referring to adult learning in the context of the power and the joy of learning to promote active citizenship, democracy and participation, likewise, the development of life skills, social cohesion, equity and equality, a focus towards employment and digitalisation with migration and demographic change. The Manifesto is ended with a signal to Sustainability both in social and in ecological terms and has got adult learning policies to take all responsibilities in the above issues and to continue the principles of the *2006 Trends and Issues* document (EAEA 2015).

At the end of this short elaboration, one must recognise that adult learning and education is playing a significant role in the formation of several policies, especially in social, education - training, economic - employment, health, cultural, urban and environmental dimensions. We have to make every effort not to lose ground and strengthen our field with quality teaching and learning supported with innovative research, development of the field to reach for social inclusion, raising skills of adults and preparing them for better employment.

For sure, one of most important efforts lasts on doing proper research that is to accompany all the policy circle, from grounding decisions, till evaluating the impact of the policy measures and their implementation.

Some of possible further questions for future research papers and thesis might be:

- What trends can be identified as major drivers of traditional welfare oriented policies in the emergence of modern European adult education?
- What has been the impact of Vocational Education and Training (VET) on the formation of policies on adult learning and education?
- What has been the role of UNESCO and of EAEA in the formation of policies on adult learning and education? (reference: UNESCO

GRALE3 and 2015 Recommendations on ALE; EAEA Manifesto on Adult Learning).
- What were the reason for the formation of lifelong learning policy of the EU? What influences this European lifelong learning policy scheme has provided to promote performance and participation of adult learners in Europe through programmes and initiatives, and policy perspectives (e.g. Grundtvig programme, European Commission and Council documents, communications, Agenda, etc.)
- What are the impacts of the Skills-development orientations of the EU on policy agendas in adult learning and education?

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LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ADULT EDUCATION

Rolf Arnold

ABSTRACT: The article combines three trends of the author's long years of research activity (Arnold 2011): innovative teaching methods based on the principles of self-determination and self-control of the learner, the concept of 'pedagogic leadership', and finally the approach of 'emotional competence'. These three pillars form the fundamental basis for 'Assisted Learning' as a future-oriented concept of adult education that places the learner at the center point.

KEYWORDS: teaching culture, learning culture, assisted learning, pedagogic leadership, systemic of emotions.

1. Assisted Learning – From Teaching culture to learning culture

'Assisted Learning' (enabling didactics) characterizes a teaching-learning process, which shifts the angle of vision away from teaching to learning. In class, as in other learning situations there is no direct and causal production of learning. Learning takes place exclusively through independent acquisition of the learner. As a result, what is taught is not what is learnt. Rather, under this perspective the focus shifts away from the mediation of learning content by the teacher to an active appropriation by the learner. The teacher must prepare the learning content methodically in such a way that the activity of learning is transferred to the learner.

This finding is mirrored in the systemic-constructivist theory. Systemic-constructivist learning theories assume that cognitive systems are closed autopoietic (self-organized) systems, which are self-referenced and autonomous. Learning cannot be understood as a process in which information can be transported «from outside to the inside», it is seen much more «as a process of restructuring within a closed system» (Luhmann 1987: 60).

Teaching can therefore not create stores of knowledge in others or develop skills, it can only initiate and enable restructuring or acquisition processes. In this sense, H. Siebert stated:

> It cannot be externally controlled or determined, but only initiated and 'perturbed' (disturbed). Even the audience of a lecture cannot reproduce what has been heard – like a tape recorder – rather, the lecture initiates individual thoughts, associations, emotions, and considerations that are only loosely connected with the lecture (Siebert 2001: 195).

The systemic-constructivist learning theories are the expression of a changing trend in the psychology of learning:

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> Learning is no longer seen as an individual information acquisition and behavior change, but is involved in the complex relationships between biological factors, socio-cultural involvement and emotional and motivational processes. Under such a multi-perspective view, it presents itself more and more as 'knowledge construction': learning refers more to the development of knowledge and skills based on 'biological readiness', individual experiences, and existing knowledge structures, which are useful and usable in real situations. New information is linked with previous knowledge, interpreted based on the background of one's own experience and networked, which empowers action in specific situations (Siebert 2001: 195).

Thus, there is a departure from the so-called «generation or instruction teaching», which assumes that learning and the mediation of certain selected learning content could be feasible, if only the targets are accurately predetermined and the learning process is planned with one's own methods and materials. The teacher can only encourage the students to learn, he can accompany them and 'arrange' learning processes. Teaching from the viewpoint of 'Assisted Learning' means creating learning-stimulating conditions and generating learning spaces.

Concepts have been introduced under the label 'learning culture change' into adult, vocational, and school pedagogic debates since the mid-90s. This is an all-embracing approach to the relationship between teaching and learning. At the same time, implicit assumptions, which have traditionally been characteristic of the basic structures and practices of our education system, are falling out of favor – at least in stages – as their importance in the context of a competency-based education is yet to be proved. These assumptions relate primarily to the revision of the concept of content and a redefinition of content's relationship to method.

2. Teaching methods based on the principles of self-determination and self-control

A transformation of learning culture must – according to the outline here – go hand in hand with a revision of the concept of content in the sense of an enhanced understanding of knowledge. In this case, valuable suggestions are obtained from the knowledge sciences and job psychology regarding the differentiation proposals, since they consider knowledge as the core of expertise a central theme of discussion in its implicit, active and subjective aspects. In doing so, new dimensions come into focus which can lead to contents for processes of competency development. These dimensions can constitute an extended approach for the didactical analysis, which is able to provide orientation for curriculum debates, especially, in times of escalating rates of antiquated knowledge. It would be a question of expanding Klafki's didactic analysis of the possible con-

tent in terms of structural relevance («position in the system of science») and the current and future importance («in the life of the learner»). There are additional questions having to do with managing the content of the learning skills to be developed. Such issues include:

- Which personal «exploring» skills can learners contribute to the construction of this content?
- How can they learn to cooperate and to share knowledge and develop di- vision of labor?
- What methods of self-mastery of the world and problem-solving can be learned and practiced in the process?
- How can they learn to recognize basic assumptions and claims and analyze them in an ideology-critical manner?
- What do the learners learn about themselves in the process, i.e., about their preferred manner of seeing the world and «enduring» it?

These questions point to an expanded notion of the term knowledge, which not only brings the factual know-how as a content to be learned into focus, but also highlights the forms of a reflexive «knowing-how-to-know» and furthermore, takes into consideration the fact that things are (could be) quite different. We create and unmask our own reality. In the process, knowledge changes its role as a «possession» expanding more than ever before to include the function of constructively organizing the knowledge. This is probably the first time in the didactic philosophy debate that knowledge and learning are really considered as something that can only be created by the learners themselves. Only the acknowledgement of this fact will allow it to become permanently ingrained in the cognitive and emotional systemics, as the results of recent brain research show.

These pointers illustrate what changing learning cultures is all about: 'knowledge' in the sense of an inventory of cultural achievements and explanations managed and edited in terms of didactics loses much of its finality when the knowledge carriers themselves (have to) experience more and more as incomplete. The preparation for the handling of knowledge must therefore also include the preparation for handling ignorance. However, ignorance must also be structured and most especially, tolerated. But ignorance creates uncertainty, and uncertainty can trigger anxiety and fear, which is why dealing with fear and uncertainty (and identity development) is central to developing a learning culture. Where there is neither knowledge nor the ability of adults to give stability and security, the security must be promoted and developed in the learning subject. The subjects alone must develop stable routines for dealing with uncertainty and for self-orientation in the complex worlds of knowledge in order to constantly rediscover themselves and the world. This content dimension continues right up to the soul of the learner and has funda-

mental implications for the topics of method culture and method implementation in the changing learning cultures.

There is every indication, especially in the light of the new possibilities for removing the boundaries of learning (e.g., distance learning, e-learning, self-directed learning), that we are witnessing the start of the transformation to a methods orientation of education in schools as well as in vocational and adult education. The notion of 'removing boundaries' refers to the fact that learning in modern societies is increasingly – or is at least increasingly recognized as such – taking place outside the «walls» of educational institutions, in everyday life, in the work life, or in people's own homes. At the same time, informal learning is gaining in importance, i.e., learning in day-to-day living, in which people only fall back on those learning strategies and learning experiences they (might) possess. These remain, considering what we know about that, a muddling-through-learning, since the way for developing the skills for self-study has not yet been deliberately and systematically paved.

The removal of boundaries – or more precisely: the (partial) delimitation or removal of boundaries to learning also suggests a new definition of the notion of pedagogical method. This comes from the didactic discussion and it is seen even today as one of the decisive factors available to teachers: they plan and decide what way (Methodos = Greek: 'the way') to lead the learners to the content or, which ways they want to reveal to them. For this reason, educators and teachers are being trained in the use and handling of various creative methods and are being asked – not the learner – to accept a «method change» or «a didactical imaginative use of method». The question of method ownership is basically regulated to a single dimension, and the pioneering words «the learner needs method!» (Hugo Gaudig) are not «entirely» anchored in the philosophical worldview of pedagogy.

The necessary developments have only begun in recent years to be featured in educational awareness in connection with the conceptions of self-directed learning and debates on «self-study skills» as well as the need for greater metacognitive skills. Today, there is a greater effort to achieve a development in learning culture which attributes more importance to the method ownership of learners. This is easier said than done, even though it addresses a significant dimension of concern about the ability of life-long learning: For adults to be in a position to use the increasing availability of borderless learning in their lives for real skills development, they must become the didacticians of their own learning. Finally, didactics has arrived where it belongs, i.e., the place where learning actually takes place; there where a teacher ultimately – in defiance of all didactic illusions – hardly ever really has access to. However, the question of which self-study skills an adult' needs for their self-directed learning, and how this can be initiated without simultaneously going

against the acquisition logic that supports them, is yet to be resolved by convincing models.

Methods can be differentiated according to their proximity to the two poles: mediation/distribution on the one hand and acquisition/self-study on the other hand. This distinction indicates that the scholarly debate focusing more strongly on the methodology issues is coming from the mediation/distribution wing while, on the other hand, it is recognized how little we know what to say about methods in a learning culture when the teaching-learning process proceeds more from the acquisition/self-study wing.

According to the proximity of the two poles, three kinds of methods can be distinguished:

1) Methods based on the above outlined traditional distribution of roles between teachers and learners: The teacher is the one who «possesses» the method, decides on the methods used, and plans any change of methods. This includes virtually all known methods, starting from lecture and, class discussion, right up to the staged forms of nonverbal work or partner and group work. All these methods are planned and treated as «ways to content» and the participant activity can only be carried out within the framework of the limits set by the method, to the extent permitted by the process.

2) Methods which already initiate and support self-directed learning: Here, the learner acquires both essential prerequisites for planning and staging his learning more independently and, for dealing with mediation offers (e.g., lessons) and distribution forms (e.g., books) in a learning promoting manner. A large part of the approaches under the heading «Introduction to scientific work» refer to such survival strategies in learning cultures with mediated and distributed learning, and provide essential prerequisites for self-directed dealings with the learning suggestions of the society and the job world.

3) Methods which enable the learner to adopt a reflexive position towards his own learning: These are methods that deal with self-affirmation and change methods. Learners «experience» that it is ultimately their own learning that is at stake, and initially, the identification of their own habitual forms of learning and their own learning projects (sensu Holzkamp 1993) must take priority. This step is not an easy one given the pre-socialization learning culture of learners, and often it initially only succeeds after great individual effort to strengthen their self-awareness and realize the fact that they are the ones with the power to explain their questions, expectations and objectives for the learning process. To provide support is the task of an adult pedagogic learning advisor that sees his role in a new and different light – namely, 'reflexively', as an accompaniment to the subjective learning plan. That means that the learners are in possession of the methods or extrapolation strategies. The process

coordinator accompanies the consultation process in constant relation to the issues defined by the learners themselves, which as a sort of self-contract and becomes included in a binding «curriculum». In this way, the «teacher» (a term that no longer holds true for what it should express) is confronted with just as many learning projects as there are learners or participants in a thematic context; rarely do the learning issues lend themselves to «bundling» into groups or pair-learning projects.

The concept of «accompanied self-study» is one of fundamental importance. Sustainable learning, according to the results of recent teaching-learning research, exists only if the student has the opportunity for active-constructive, self-directed, and relevant learning. Teaching must not only follow an instruction design, rather it is necessary to enable the active self-development of knowledge, skills, and competencies as well as the cooperative learning experience through appropriate arrangements (based on complex task settings).

That means that educators are faced with the task of critically questioning their best practices with regard to success and opening themselves to new and unfamiliar concepts. At the same time, they have to «un-learn» previous experience. This is associated with uncertainty, fear, and also resistance. For this reason, transformational processes in organizations need a professional guide to help the players learn how «to deal with the fear of change» (Schein 1995: 8).

3. Pedagogic Leadership as impowerment to self-leadership

Fischer and Schratz (1993) argue for a new understanding of leadership in schools and educational organizations, characterized by a more holistic thinking and action. They see «self-organization» as the «driving force»:

> If we get to the core of the difference between traditional school reform and self-organization, we find that school reform is imposed from above and always oriented towards a predetermined goal. Once this is achieved, the reform is complete and peace returns once again to the school. Self-organization is a process of self-renewal and can be understood as a continuous development in which the initiative emanates from the individual school and the objectives and driving force are an autonomous responsibility (Fischer, Schratz 1993: 108).

This is why it is assumed today that a truly sustainable school development can only succeed if the 'affected parties' are involved and can be lead to self-leadership, i.e., to coach them through their own problem-solving processes. The question may be asked: «What will become of the leaders, if everyone leads himself?» A general answer to this question cannot be given, since behind this shift to a learning

culture of self-leadership, is a largely different requirements profile, especially, for the «leaders» and those responsible for coordination and goal achievement.

Wise leaders know that people have their own thoughts and, fortunately, will «do their own thing». Good leaders also know that people want to and can engage themselves and contribute to solving problems in situations of change. The enabling orientation and the focus on potentials are therefore characteristics of the empowerment to self-leadership.

What does enabling orientation mean exactly? The concept first refers to the idea that cooperative success cannot be 'manufactured' or 'generated' through leadership. The quality and professionalism of today's executives is more directly measured based on whether and to what extent they have freed themselves from the creative illusion of the engineer and mechanic image of leadership. The creative concept of leadership is based on simple input-output considerations, and begins with the basic hypothesis that the output of a social system, i.e., of a team or working group, is dependent on the input that the executive provides. Theoretically, the input can be increased or varied if the social system does not produce the desired effect. Entire libraries could be filled with the available literature dealing with what the executive has to consider separately and what motivation and incentive strategies are already available. Although many of these concepts operate with the ideas of systems theory, they all have a generative orientation: Leadership is presented primarily as the activity of the individual executive and it is, more or less blatantly, claimed that – if just 'done' cleverly enough – there are ultimately possibilities of bringing a social system to do what one wants done. In the meantime, the possibility is even promised that one could make a social system 'want to do' what it 'should do'.

The enabling oriented concept of leadership is quite different. It does not start with the question of how a social system is to be controlled, but rather tries to understand how a social system controls itself. It therefore does not even attempt to develop a sophisticated strategy for motivating employees, but rather assumes that it first has to deal with «discovering» the motivation of these people. Similarly, the functions to be fulfilled by the executive are defined differently. It is not about setting goals, but about the clarification of objectives. This wording clearly illustrates that although there are practical constraints, the goals to be achieved by the company or organization cannot be ultimately determined solely from above, without giving the employees the opportunity to participate in determining and specifying these goals as well as to correct the target planning and link their own targets to the plan. Only if the executive manages to «organize» this clarification of aims via a participatory dialog will it be possible to create a structure

in which the inherent forces of the system serve the accomplishment of the goals. If all input comes from outside and people are considered as mere recipients of plans and instructions, it should not come as a surprise that over time, they will limit themselves to doing only what is most necessary. The executive has the major task of communicating the practical constraints in such a way that it is compatible with the expectations and experiences of the employees. In doing this, it cannot be – as so often is the case – simply a matter of 'winning over' or 'persuading' the staff, rather it is more important that a number of feedback cycles are used to permit a comparison between one's own viewpoints and the organization's viewpoints.

However, this is easier said than done. Such a process, in order to actually succeed, needs to include a consideration of the anxieties, objective arguments, and suggestions from employees before the actual target specification and, in the process, to integrate these in the target specification at the management level. Here, decisions always start with a search-and-collection phase. What is collected are views, opinions, and suggestions. These bottom-up activities essentially precede the development of the first top-down decision proposal.

Enabling orientation, however, requires a certain level of credibility in the leadership actions. An element of this credibility involves a demonstrated conviction that even those active «on site» can make important suggestions and participate in the decision as to the feasibility or non-feasibility of planned activities and projects. Finally, the entire cooperation climate must be transformed into an enabling culture. The decision processes are more participation-oriented. Decisions to be taken and goal agreement are seen from the outset as opportunities to be developed in a cooperative manner through open dialog. To the extent this bottom-up decision-making structure can become established as part of a cooperative culture. Executives who lead with a subsidiary style, visibly and credibly experience a cooperation where employees can make decisions and contribute as much as possible and as fully as possible.

This new understanding of leadership has the consequence that executives need to acquire new and different skills. It is emotional competence that needs to be developed. Executives learn to assume a reflexive observer position. Everyone has a worldview and is not immune to repeatedly fall back on it, but everyone can also learn to deal more flexibly with it. This ability is ultimately also a prerequisite for dealing with one's own destructive emotions in a constructive manner. This can only happen through a self-reflective learning process. This requires that knowing how our perception works and being willing to critically question our habitual patterns of behavior. The aim is to act and lead in a more conscious or mindful manner.

4. The Systemic of Emotions

It is not the pressing circumstances alone that rob us of our strengths and leave us immobilized rather, it is our 'vision' of things, as the ancient philosopher Eptiket already knew. In practice this means that we should not only reflect on the outer constellations which shape our lives, but rather try to also 'fathom' and explain the inner images we use to perceive them, for ourselves and for others. These inner images are emotional in origin. They are composed of the spontaneous moods, impressions, and feelings that are always within us. These are activated in certain situations and under certain circumstances that seem to be similar to what we have experienced before. System and cognitive theories speak in this context of emergence, of a spontaneous process of order formation. A particular constellation triggers one of the feeling and interpretation programs we have learned and engaged at some earlier time, and creates order for us, which we – if we observe ourselves closely – already 'know'.

This cognition theory can reveal to us new access to the understanding of our own situations. It is in fact precisely these insights into the workings of our cognitive-emotional perception that gives us a new and different understanding of the 'banality of ego states'. In understanding how we understand, i.e., the way we routinely lay out our world, a different and more effective way of dealing with what bothers us, can be revealed to us. Accordingly, the description of our distress is initially an expression of feelings and attempts that take place within us to interpret certain situations, and at the same time, these emotions serve as the 'lenses' through which we view life situations and subsequently, only see what we are able to see through these lenses.

The core of a systemic-constructionist view of the world is addressed directly to human thinking, feeling, and doing. By focusing on the patterns and ways of expression of our constructions of reality, it opens – unnoticed at first – perspectives for a different way of dealing with the mechanisms with which we create our reality. In the process, the fundamental question concerns the interaction of thoughts and emotions in the materialization of our interpretation of certain situations, and the reactions to which we feel driven. When we comprehend how our pictures of our counterparts or the interpretation of certain situations are developed on the basis of our experience, we can increasingly apply a quasi-experimental clarity towards that which moves us. This is the prerequisite for us becoming capable of also accepting other interpretations and feelings. It is also the prerequisite for us being able to recognize our familiar paths through our emotional states and gives us the opportunity to avoid them.

This means that we must continuously exert ourselves to ensure the suitability of the interpretation and organization of the situation. We

must, so to speak, face the inevitability of primary constructive meddling in our experiencing of certainty and learn to mistrust our perception. The first impression of a situation or a person is a rather false one. We are constantly in danger of acting wrongly towards our counterparts - our partners, students, or employees, because of the unjust impression that drives us – from within ourselves – and nothing whatsoever to do with the current situation.

There appear to be two stages involved in casting off this primary emotional construction of reality:

- the mental work and
- the emotional work.

In both stages, we find ourselves in a reflexive observer position towards the impressions, opinions, and emotional states springing out at us. We insert, to an extent, a Stop & Think loop between the interfaces, where emotion and cognition mutually influence and define each other.

Mental Work

Thoughts can trigger emotions. Even the smallest clues are sufficient to remind us of earlier situations and we call up the emotional interpretations again, which served so well at that time, although perhaps not appropriate for the present time. When we do this, we hardly take the current situation into account. It is different, but we make it possible – due to our schematic emotional reaction – to feel it in the same way we felt that previous time, and maybe, if we are really «successful», we can even reawaken the suffering of the past in this way. We feel as we have always felt and many times, it is precisely these feelings that we have tried so hard to avoid that now reoccur. The emotional construction of reality seems to have something inevitable about it: If we do nothing, then we will have the thoughts that we have and, usually, we do not even notice that these are the thoughts and interpretations which we create in our internal reality.

However, it is possible to break the vicious circle through other thoughts. To accomplish this, it is helpful to enact internal dialogs with oneself, in which you remember the familiar tendencies of perception and bring yourself, to some extent, to «get your mind on other things». This can gradually lead to the perception of another reality:

What are the spontaneous thoughts that come over me?
– What remains for me, if I do not think so?
What assessment trends follow them?
– Can I observe the situation without evaluation?
When did I last have similar thoughts?
– Can I observe without tendency prophecy?
What were the consequences?

– Can I consciously think of something positive?
Of what use are these thoughts to me?
– Can I observe what changes in the process?

Emotional Work

Emotions color our impressions. However, they do not only arise through thoughts. Thoughts can give rise to them, and trigger DGPs («thought-emoting programs») (Arnold 2008), but emotions also arise spontaneously as the expression of complex physical processes. However, most are external experiences, which can affect us emotionally, or more precisely, which we allow to touch us emotionally. Before we know it, familiar feelings rage («old acquaintances») within us and can then lead us to strongly tainted emotional reactions, which in turn surprise the other party and cause his own DGPs to be triggered. The result is an emotion-induced escalation in which the current relationship experience is characterized by a coloring or cloudiness that is defining for our true potential.

Only on the basis of a self-reflexive work can something new really be created. By recognizing our preferred DGPs, we confirm the emotional lenses through which we view time and time again our surrounding social reality. Through self-inclusive learning our emotional being becomes more familiar to us and we can learn to deal with it like an older and perhaps a little cranky acquaintance, tenderly but still in a confident manner. This is the first step in reflexive emotional work and with it, one enters new territory. This terrain is full of pitfalls and temptation, with the risk of sliding back again into the old familiar emotional pattern - as well as indulging the trusted responses. This mechanism inherently holds a certain tragedy: Internally we fall back and re-constellate in ourselves the things we really wanted to avoid and in the process, not infrequently, outwardly as well. This emergence (spontaneous creation) of feelings is what makes the emotional so unpredictable and difficult for us to handle. Emotions spontaneously illuminate our life. It presents itself to us in dark or bright colors, relatively independent (at least in the average daily life – not in existential experiences such as death, birth, love, separation, or threat) of the actual lightness or gravity of the situations around us.

The second step to avoid the vicious circle of thought and emotion involves the spontaneous or even routine arising of emotional states: We carefully monitor the emotions generated within us and label them first in a practiced inner dialog (see Arnold 2008). This naming serves on one hand to achieve emotional literacy, but it also helps to view one's own inner happenings from a distance. If I can identify the feelings, though I am not yet able to dominate them, then they lose something of their aura of inevitability. Depending on the urgency or the pressing nature of

the feeling, various different ways of dealing with the burgeoning emotional state present themselves. The basis for this development process of emotional competence is first to develop a detached attitude towards one's emotional ego.

This insight puts us at a distance to our self-evident and 'comprehensible' certainties, no matter what type, and it is solely the experiencing of this distance that gradually leads us to adopt a different attitude toward our perceptions and our own emotional view of the world. By mistrusting our perceptions, we free ourselves from them and in return receive – at least theoretically – the ability to think, feel, and act from a reflexive observer position. At the same time, we open up the possibility for the other party to appear to us more in the way he himself actually intends.

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THE YOUTH TRANSITION FROM HIGHER EDUCATION TO THE WORKPLACE

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Abstract: The current generation of young graduates is still suffering the effects of the global economic crisis of 2008 and feel disoriented about what tomorrow will bring them, especially regarding their professional life. Indeed, work is seen today as a primary activity of human life and together with learning, inculturation and education represents an educational process that guarantee the survival of individuals. For this reason, it is very important to reflect and talk about work and transition from a pedagogical point of view paying attention to the stories of young adults and the meaning they attach to this phase of deep transformation connected with the conclusion of the study path. This essay presents the results of the first twoyears' research work undertaken by the University of Florence within the PRIN EMP&Co. Project, an empirical research that adopts a qualitative approach in order to offer a possible solution for the urgent issue of employability and lack of coherent work for students and graduates. The intention of this paper is to reflect on the terms of 'transition' and 'employability' from a theoretical point of view and to offer some suggestions on what Academia can do to help the transition to work of young people. Indeed, a lot of information can be grasped from the deep listening of the dialogues about the professional paths of students that can help Academia to learn how to conceive and plan its future. The article concludes with an outline of the impact that research in the field of Adult Education can have on the didactics of the European Universities.

Keywords: Higher education, youth transitions, employability, work pedagogy, learning and teaching.

1. Introduction: among Pedagogy of Work, Process of Formation and Labour market

In the current historical-social context, following one of the most intense economic crises of the present day, the debate on youth work is one of the most topical, necessary and urgent issues for the improvement of the social, cultural and professional conditions of generations of young people (Istat 2016). The problem of work not only concerns the development of a country, in this case Italy, but also the day-to-day life of people looking to the world with hope and energy.

To reflect on youth work is also to reflect on the sense that a country wants to give to its own policies, the way the government wants to show to its citizens (Pastore 2015). From various perspectives, the topic has sociological characteristics, it is tackled by economists and certainly

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profoundly concerns those who deal with the economic well-being of a nation, it has political roots and, therefore, the measures that politics supports or invents are determining in wiping out or increasing youth unemployment (Federighi 2013). The topic of youth work affects every person and every citizen, even those who already have a job, and those who are about to leave work thanks to reaching the age limit.

And this very problem, on which the statistics are giving us pitiless graphs and equally as painstaking redraftings, is closely associated with the transitions that are put into practice to look for work on one hand, and the employability path which fully affects the construction of the formative process on the other.

It is only upon looking at the newspaper columns that we become fully aware of how dramatic the issue of youth work is for Italy. According to Eurostat data, in 2014 only 52.9% of young Italian graduates were in work three years after graduation, against an average of 80.5% for the EU28. We are the European country with the lowest number of graduates in employment, compared to the countries at the top of the rankings, such as Germany (90%), Great Britain (83.2%) and France (75.2%) (Eurostat 2015a).

> In particular, between 2008 and 2014, the average of young people in employment three years after graduation in the European Union fell by eight points, from 82% to 76% while in Italy it collapsed by over twenty points from 65.2% to 45%. In the same period in Germany, the percentage grew from 86.5% to 90% while in France it went from 83.1% to 75.2%. In the United Kingdom, the percentage remained stable, going from 83.6% to 83.2% (Eurostat 2015b).

Pedagogy, which historically has given little attention to work-related topics, can engage in reflection on transitions and employability. Therefore, in the light of new topics/problems (Cambi 2000: 157-188), pedagogy, education and the formative process can well be the framework, the categories within which reflection can be made on young people's growth, as well as being used to activate critical action both on the formative processes and the paths of university students. Indeed, the formative process of the people who will lead the country in the near future cannot and must not be thought of within the enclosure of higher education's teaching plans/curricula. Instead, it is necessary to survey the formal, informal and non-formal learning environments in the everyday life of young adults in higher education.

In university contexts, the topics of the transition to work arouse more attention in the places of sociological, economic and statistical research, which is why it is important to bring interest in implicit, hidden formative pathways to the centre of attention since educational research (Mortari 2007; Baldacci, Frabboni 2013) and pedagogical reflection (Federighi 2013) can have a lot to say about them.

Not many projects have been developed in Europe in order to study the transitions of young graduates to the world of work with a keen eye on the

efforts of universities, and in particular on the impact that changes in the curricula can have on students. At a European level researches focused mainly on youth unemployment (NEUJOBS project), the importance of lifelong learning for the development of the human capital (LLLight'in'Europe project), the perception of the importance of reflexivity in young people for the acquisition of an entrepreneurial mindset (REFLEX project) and the construction of employability for non traditional students (EMPLOY project).

Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is twice as interesting for the science which deals with studying formative processes, first of all in terms of topic contents, and second, at the methodological level. While the contents pertain to the pedagogy of work, at the methodological level the appeal to educational research enables the discourse to be shifted to the level of interpretative hypotheses in light of qualitative data anchored to surveys based on comparative empirical evidence. The thesis that is developed concerns the importance of analysing transitions with – empirical – methodologies that highlight how the transition itself is always prepared by a process of formation rooted in the family setting, but also in educational programmes and personal enterprise.

The educational actions that dot the educational process direct the subjects in their choices, and in turn build their pathways. Transition is prepared by employability, which is a characteristic of the subject, but it is built through appropriate learning pathways consisting of different teaching methodologies involving different educational actions and different learning.

The results of the research work that is presented here are twofold: on one hand, we are beginning to outline the transitions of groups of graduates from the University of Florence master's course in Adult Education, Continuing Training and Pedagogical Science, and on the other hand we are developing evidence-based toolspertaining to empirical research in education which, at present, are beginning to make headway in the panorama of pedagogical research. In ultimate analysis, the aim of the reflection proposed is to head in the direction of services that accompany graduates in the transition to their 'first' job in order to try to understand what role these services can have, from the training/educational point of observation, in accompanying young graduates towards full job placement.

From the pedagogical viewpoint, it is a rich and dense subject, even though we certainly still need to work on defining a field of investigation which remains to be broken down, concerning adult education, but also pedagogy of work and care for professionalism.

2. Transition and employability: from education to work

Indicating what a 'transition' is or what is meant by 'transition' can be a complex and intricate quest. In spite of the broad and multi-faceted in-

ternational literature, we know that in the pedagogical sphere we do not have any work on 'transitions' apart from that which deals with young people leaving school. We know that we have left behind an unambiguous and compact view of the transition process from study to work as a linear and «almost» given passage. Rachel Brooks writes:

> The concept of a 'transition' from full-time education to full-time work is one with a long history in youth studies, sociology, psychology and education. However, along with other transitions typically associated with the period of 'youth' (i.e. from the parental home into independent housing and from the 'family of destination' to the 'family of origin'), it has been subjected to considerable critical scrutiny over recent years' (Brooks 2009: 1).

Transition is a time but also a place for the passage, it is not just *the* passage.

If we consider it as a time of life, the youth transition from education to work extends over a wide time span, in general. We can say that the transition spans much more than the passage from the degree to the first job. We are confronted with at least two topics/problems: the first concerns the concept of transition and the moment from which the transition can be made to start; the second the meaning of 'first job'.

Time is not an uninfluential factor in the concept of transition. In a certain sense, we could suppose that we are all, always in transition. We know that young people are more so than other categories. Transitions are key moments in human life, those moments when self-esteem, self-respect, self-awareness and sense of the future become the hinges on which the most important choices, the most awaited decisions, the most desired goals are played out.

No in-depth attention is given to whatever the relationship is between the individual formative process and transition phases, and research in the pedagogical sphere is innovative. The extent to which and how transitions form young adults are questions that need wider-reaching answers. At the same time, we could ask what prepares for transition, so the topic of employability is directly connected to it.

Employability is the capacity to know how to be in work contexts, it does not only concern knowing how to look for work, but relates to the possibility of being able to consider one's competences, knowing how to orientate them, being able to anticipate what is developing in the social and economic world. A good definition of employability has been given by Yorke and Knight, who have studied it at length above all in the contexts of university teaching (Yorke, Knight 2006). They describe employability

> as a set of achievements which constitute a necessary but not sufficient condition for the gaining of employment (which is dependent, inter alia, on the contemporary state of the economy). Employability is, […],

> considerably more complex than some proponents of 'core', 'key' and 'transferable' skills have suggested, and is strongly aligned with the academic valuing of good learning (Yorke 2006: 2).

Yorke connects the topic of employability to the learning process, but we could assert more specifically that the central topic is instead the relationship between formation and employability. How much a subject's formation influences their ability to be in the world of work is precisely that which the aptitude of employability expresses.

The position to be assumed is that

> Employability goes well beyond the simplistic notion of key skills, and is evidenced in the application of a mix of personal qualities and beliefs, understandings, skilful practices and the ability to reflect productively on experience. Notice that the commonly used terms «knowledge» and «skills» are not used [in the definition or explanation]. They have been replaced by «understandings» and «skilful practices» respectively, in order to signal the importance of a rich appreciation of the relevant field(s) and of the ability to operate in situations of complexity and ambiguity (York 2006: 13).

Therefore, the virtuous relationship between the subject's process of formation, transition pathway and development of employability touches on multiple situations which involve education and pedagogy as border disciplines that have a lot to say on topics notoriously investigated by sociologists and economists. On the contrary, if we want to speak of human subjectivity, of changes – epoch-making and non – we increasingly have to make reference to the inter – and intradisciplinary dimensions, to the border areas and the 'middle earths'.

The learning pathway that touches on the formal, informal and non-formal spheres is only part of that process of the subject's form-ation that sees the transition to work as a crucial aspect for well-being in life. Having the capacity to exercise technical competences or soft skills still depends on the single person. In particular, in Italy, however, higher education institutions are starting to understand that the problem does not only lie in the informal and non-formal contexts, but is concentrated above all in the formal ones where employability could be taught, theorized, planned and diffused.

3. The research methodology and the empirical dimension

To deeply understand the meaning of employability and thus the dynamics that lie behind a successful transition from higher education to the first decent job (ILO 1999), the University of Florence developed a qualitative research involving the graduates aged between 23 and 30 over two years.

The epistemological context is the naturalistic one (Bateson 1972) where the researchers are involved in the natural context, i.e. the place where graduates work to build their future professional life. Moreover, the investigation is led with a critical and phenomenological approach since it follows an empirical approach based on a qualitative method.

The research strategy is that of the case study that was activated in order to «acquire a broad understanding of a phenomenon seen in its singularity and originality» (Mortari 2007: 203) in order to study the phenomenon of transition in a deep and broad manner, without any generalization issue. Indeed, the case study can be considered «an intensive analysis of a limited system» (Mortari 2007: 203). Moreover, the case study strategy has been adopted because it allows us to study the phenomenon of transition in its natural context, i.e. with a «connection to the place where it takes place [...] that fixes the meaning» (Mortari 2007: 61).

The research has been carried out within the Master Degree Course in Adult Education, Lifelong Learning and Pedagogical Sciences at the University of Florence where from July 2014 have been organized 9 focus groups and 99 longitudinal semi-structured interviews with 47 graduates.

The research follows the Grounded theory (Glaser 1978) in order to create an appropriate and flexible context, based on the construction of analytical categories from data collection and not from preconceived hypothesis logically created. Obviously as any other research, even this one finds its roots in some initial hypothesis yet they are not fixed but are open to any modifications needed, as indicated by the Grounded theory. This means that the research is defined during the investigation where all the actors involved contribute to its process by transforming the path of the research and transforming themselves.

The research tools (focus groups and individual interviews) followed two questionnaires that were in constant adjustment, thought organized in 4 main sections in order to collect comparable data.

The focus group aims at offering students the possibility to start reflecting on their transition. The interviews follow the focus group and are regularly repeated every six months (longitudinal research) according to the code of conduct that is observed rigorously by each interviewer.

The interview aims at understanding young people's transition to work and to identify the meaning underlying the first transition after the graduation. Moreover, the choice of the interview as research technique is developed in order to offer a guidance and orientation service to graduates that could transform themselves and be led to a formative exchange with interviewer.

As a consequence, the areas of interest that are investigated during the interviews are the pattern and models that lead the graduates to the world of work, with a keen eye for:

1. The desires of the interviewed with reference to the professional path and the profile that the interviewed recognize as their own.
2. The soft skills already acquired and to be acquired by the interviewed.
3. The strategies to be activated in order to enter into the world of work.
4. The future expectations of the interviewed.

After the collection of data, the analysis of the interviews is held consisting in:

- the transcription of the interviews,
- the description of the transitions,
- the identification of recurrent concepts,
- the identification of meaningful labels,
- the construction of categories to be used to interpret the transition and create a model.

We know that over the years transitions have been studied deeply by sociologists and economists, but we are conscious that only a pedagogical approach based on a multi-inter-transdisciplinary style (Morin 2001) can help the research to highlight that the transition to the world of work assumes a specific and meaningful interpretation at an individual level: is not necessarily linked with the entry in the very first job, but rather with a personal evaluation of the transitions in life in order to find a job (not a mere employment contract). Hence, these results of the research can provide some inputs for the political activities at a macro level to the Italian Government and at a meso level to the institutions. For example, keeping in mind the evidence from the interviews, it is clear that the transition is influenced by the didactical methods adopted during the lectures at University. In this sense the perspectives of the investigation can offer a strategic approach to the formation of the students as human beings and future workers.

4. Preparing transitions: building employability

The study of transitions cannot be developed without considering the concept of employability. Indeed, the success of the transition from higher education to the world of work is linked with the various contexts where graduates live: family, networks, leisure time, university. Each of these contexts is to be considered as a place of formal, non-formal and informal learning, a place of Bildung, where the individuals transform themselves and their lives according to the experience and the consequences of the reflection on the experience.

In this way the entrance in the world of work is not only a passage, a bridge, a «Übergang» as defined by Schmid (2002) but it is the result of

a long-term process that has its final sequence in the change connected with the transition.

Higher education plays a role in preparing the professional identity and the inclination of the students to be active in the search for a job. Finding work – especially work that is coherent with the study – is not only an urgency that students feel at the end of the academic pathway but has to be cultivated over time. Universities have to prepare students to the transition long before they leave, through, on one side, the topics that have been covered in lectures and courses, and, on the other, the didactics. Both can help the development of transferable competences that are core for the students' entrance in the world of work and that the labour market seek.

As announced by Pegg regarding the didactical approach that can develop employability:

> Evidence suggests that successful pedagogical approaches include experiential learning – an emphasis on exploration, learning by doing and reaction in authentic contexts – ideally mixed with rather than simply replacing existing approaches. Existing assessment methodologies should, where necessary, be challenged and new approaches explored that reward successful practice in developing employability, giving them parity of esteem with technical skills and academic knowledge (Pegg *et al.* 2012: 45).

The hypothesis is focused on the idea that the preparation of the transition has a cogent link with the study pathway that represents the device that creates a shortcut from employability to the search for a job through transferable competences and knowledge. It is precisely complex learning and the continuous reflection on it that offers students the full consciousness of their strength, the tools they possess and channels they can activate to guide them towards work.

Employability does not reflect only on employment, but on the capability to be employed in the long term. As a journey begins before the travelers depart, so does the employability find its roots as students seek information about their academic path and about what to expect along the way, as they question what the degree course leads to and what tools they can acquire to traverse the obstacles that lie between higher education and the world of work.

The didactical approach is very important from this point of view. Indeed, the relationship between professors and students can help the construction of a professional identity and foster the acquisition of a deep knowledge of the economic field where graduates can be employed. In a class professor can facilitate the creation of a learning community that is open to what is external to the academic context and is aware that the study is not the aim but the tool to acquire specific knowledge and capabilities.

In academic year 2013/14 some students of the University of Florence enrolled in the master degree course in *Adult Education, lifelong learning and Pedagogical Science* were asked to materially perform some interviews to entrepreneurs of the third sector while attending the lectures of the *Foundations of Adult Education* held by Prof. Paolo Federighi and the *Research Methodology: Basic and Applied to Education and Training* held by Prof. Vanna Boffo.

It happens that in the following years some of these students involved in the field research discussed their final dissertation and thus were invited to participate in the PRIN EMP&Co. Project.

Although the most important aim of the interviews was to identify the labour market needs and the mismatch between them and young graduates' competences (Boffo, Federighi, Torlone 2015), the impression is that the interviews produced a deep transformation in the students since they allowed them to deepen the knowledge of the Tuscan labour market and its needs with reference to the educational and care professions.

> During the master degree I was asked to interview some training agencies and cooperatives […] I decided to interview the owner of the consortia Pegaso so that I could attract attention […] indeed I already tried to contact them during the bachelor degree unsuccessfully. After the interview I started checking the web site of Pegaso and when I realized that it had a job vacancy I applied. When I sent them my CV they already knew me because I had already 2 or 3 occasions to talk to them […] so I was not a stranger to them. And so It was much easier for me to be invited to a job interview.
>
> We were enthusiastic about having the possibility to do a field research and interview workers and entrepreneurs that work in the economical sector where we could work (third sector) […] the lecture was really useful because it could offer the chance to get and keep the contacts with the labour market and ask very precise questions with the aim of keeping the contact with them. It was a fine occasion for us because we were in the position to make ourselves known to employers we interviewed.
>
> Regarding the dimension of self-reflexivity, the master degree courses really helped me to improve this competence […] especially the degree thesis on soft skills and employability that obliged me to rethink and reflect on my previous experiences.

Examples may go further but what we would like to highlight is the impact that the linkage between research and didactics and the labour market can have on the students. Everyone during the lectures offered his/her personal contribution according to his/her capabilities and competences; students were able to share information on employers that led to a common awareness and knowledge of the third sector giving everyone more than he/she got: an added value created from the connection

with the labour market that was shared and reflected during the lectures providing students the key to understand their future transition to the world of work.

Florence University broke down the ivory tower image and engaged in partnerships with employers and local organizations in order to create interrelationships with the society in general (Barnett 2003: 27).

As a consequence, the study courses offer students the possibility to develop a personal experience that can benefit them during all the transitions they could come across in life. Hence university becomes a learning context that allows individuals to develop capabilities that transform themselves.

The above implies the cogent connection between higher education and the labour market/entrepreneurs. Indeed, employability is necessary for gaining a positive transition, and University is responsible for the care of the individuals when involved in the development of their ability and capability of finding employment. In this sense it should be recommended that university takes into consideration the labour market, its needs and transformation when building the curricula for the formation of the future professionals of education, trainers and educators. To avoid any concern amongst employers that «many graduates lack the appropriate skills, attitudes and dispositions» (Cumming 2010), Universities need to equip graduates with 'deep' intellectual capabilities and a set of practical skills which make them ready for work (Archer, Davison 2008).

The challenge of the future for the learning providers, especially universities, will be indeed to create profiles that are in line and suitable for the labour market, to train individuals that will be able to perform the role required by the labour market in the best possible way, i.e. through the activation of all those competences and knowledge acquired and experienced in the university curricula.

As a consequence, university should rethink, in close collaboration with the labour market, its own curricula from the point of view of the didactics, the contents, internships and services in order to fulfill its aims: to take care of the future of its own graduates for the construction of the future civil society though the development of an «employability for life» in individuals (Merrill 2009). Only in this way university will be a place where Bildung and employability are applied in a lifecycle approach.

5. Conclusions: the university's role in graduates' transition to work

Today we know that Italian Universities, and perhaps not only Universities, need to rethink the relationship between training of the subjects, individuals, students, graduates and doctoral candidates and the

study courses. The evidence that comes from the internal labour market and abroad tells us that the road travelled so far is not enough to prepare the professionals of the future.

How many times the dialogue with companies is directed on the graduates' ability to acquire the real life skills, soft skills and capabilities that Italian Universities don't deliver in a strong form?

The research conducted at the University of Florence highlights the decisive role of the change in strategies to accompany entry into the labor market. But it is not only this. This is to deliver to our graduates and PhDs, the ability to stay in the world with the necessary skills and abilities. Therefore, the University has a role of higher education in the real sense of the word.

As research professionals and academics we need to be aware of the goals not yet achieved in the teaching-education system. But it is not only the teaching, teaching methods, the choice of/and competence/ to spread and communicate. It is to act on the culture system, also and above all on the organizational structure.

This clearly explain the teaching system used in classes and during classes, it is of major importance to the educational system focusing on the training of young people, just like Socrates more than two thousand three hundred years ago had explained masterfully and precisely why he had to die.

This is rethinking disciplines, CFU, curricular alchemy, but it is mainly to reflect on whether and how we wish to prepare students who, with commitment and dedication, rely on professors, choose a course of study rather than another and in doing so add new courses to their lives, hopes and desires.

Some final information will help us to make a synthesis of the results of research and to transfer the results, although partial, in a skills matrix.

The training covers the human being in its complete subjectivity. In this sense, knowledge is not enough to equip men and women of the future who wish to live with a full sense of responsibility. Knowledge must be linked, educationally and didactically, to concrete and practical skills.

Graduates and researchers must be able to transfer the theoretical materials in tracks of empirical work. To do it we need to make our teaching active on the didactic and empirical level based on the transfer of disciplinary, educational, relational, organizational practices (Nussbaum 2011).

The education program, but above all the learning and teaching methodology, must change the pace. We have found that the coherent transition moves back in time and sinks its roots in the way of living, in the structure of the contexts. We need to teach life skills and not only theories. The capacities represent just the awareness of the relationship between knowledge and life.

Knowledge goes hand and hand with life, and life, in turn, must be fed on more and more advanced knowledge. We must say it clearly and not be afraid to spread an idea which is not only apparently granted (Morin 2001).

The Curricula Reform should be organized to make way for transversal skills; the Curriculum should ferry capabilities that are formal and informal tools, skills for life and for the profession and it must do so in a reasoned and shared union, in synergy between theory and practice declined according to the approach to reflexivity.

Transversal skills or life skills? Not only language skills, mathematics, cultural, but skills on man and his life. These aspects are neglected in university courses. Who are those responsible for teaching coexistence, relationship, communication, empathy, teamwork, or the potential of correct human relations in the workplace? Who are those responsible for the value of sharing, the respect of human solidarity?

To expand and enrich learning awareness and skills, it is necessary and important to create a new culture of internships, work practices, new ecology of learning that emerge from the balance between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Training paths seldom reflect on education actions and those involved in education reflect seldom on the function of action and doing. The theme is very old, born in classical Greece and through the millennia has come down to our times almost intact in its problematic nature (Arendt 1958).

Greatest certainty is expressed by the empirical research and in educational and training contexts (Kolb 1984). Higher education in Italy is being changed by the rules of the establishment, organization and management ofstudy courses (ANVUR 2013). We hope that the new wind will continue to blow and make us grow and universities assume the role of cultural guide. Where there is knowledge, there will also be the full awareness of citizenship and future for our world.

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COUNSELLING/GUIDING ADULTS THROUGH LIFE TRANSITIONS

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Abstract: Counselling and/or guiding adults through some of professional life transition periods are discussed in this paper starting from the concept of a modern career, the concept which today dominates European and world literature. The change in understanding a career leaves a mark on adult career guiding and counselling interventions, thus changing the role of adult education in those activities. In the context of approaches to career transitions, some specific characteristics of the three selected transition groups are considered: schooltoworktransition, mid-career and work to retirement transition. It is in particular pointed to possible directions of career guiding and counselling interventions. Finally, concluding remarks give recommendations for research, practice and policy of career guidance and counselling at the European level.

Keywords: career, transitions, guidance, counselling, adult education.

1. Introduction – Change of career, career guidance and counselling in changing times

By looking at perceptions of a career in an international context, it seems to us that they have gone from equalising a career with one job to equalising a career with (almost the whole) life. The previous sentence illustrates what might be called narrow and broad understanding of a career. If these two concepts are set as a start and an end point of a way, by looking at this area in European contexts it seems to us today that career definitions are closer to the second point, that is, the broader understanding of a career. In this concept a career is no longer equalised with a job or success at work. In other words, not only an equal sign cannot be placed between a job and a career, but also «a job for life model can be replaced by a career at several positions, development periods or family duties» (ELPGN 2014: 7). This understanding of a career is extremely complex and education gets a qualitatively different role within it. Learning and education are increasingly recognised in career definitions and the bond which is created in this way can be observed threefold:

1) Learning and education are seen as an element, integral part of one's career;
2) Learning and education are seen as assistance, a tool in development of career management skills;
3) Learning and education are agents of interventions within career guidance and counselling.

Other elements that make a career are also visible in the generally accepted definition of a career as an interaction of work roles and other

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life roles over a person's lifespan including both paid and unpaid work in an individual's life. People create career patterns as they make decisions about education, work, family and other life roles (2002: 5).

This definition goes a step further by pointingin part to the importance of decision-making on education, work, family life, as well as tasks related to other roles. Similar understanding of a career is present in various documents relevant to adult education (OECD 2001, 2003; CEDEFOP 2008). Another definition, from the point of view of an organisation, sees careers as «a series of positions, roles, activities and experiences related to employment a person may encounter» (Arnold 2005: 520). On the basis of these definitions it can be concluded that today careers are characterised by a series of changes and frequent assuming new roles, positions, jobs. In this sense, adult career development is increasingly marked by numerous changes, or more precisely, transitional periods. The definition of career guidance and counselling which in detail describes its wider scope is given by OECD.

> Career guidance refers to services intended to assist people, of any age and at any point throughout their lives to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers […] It helps them to understand the labour market and education systems, and to relate this to what they know about themselves (OECD 2004: 19).

What would be the basic characteristics of career guidance seen in this way? To begin with, the need of the individual to be active in terms of his/her career is emphasised. Also, an equally important need has been recognised to take into account different components users bring in the guidance and counselling process. Furthermore, the entire definition is painted by terms of learning, informing, training and the like. Also, it is visible that it expands on groups to be taken into account when certain activities are designed. The importance of respect for choices which go beyond the initial occupation choice is emphasised. In the network of different roles the individual takes and the need to provide individuals with comprehensive support, individuals bringing in a variety of different characteristics are more often approached, as seen in European contexts, by lifelong guidance which seems to be an increasingly important concept.

> Lifelong guidance is gaining more attention, both at European and national levels. It is considered to be a key dimension of lifelong learning which promotes social and economic goals, in particular increasing efficiency and effectiveness of education, training and labour market through contribution to a decrease in education drop-out, prevention of occurrence of labour market skills mismatch and increasing productivity, and then access to social equity and social inclusion (ELPGN 2014: 9).

Again, it seems to us that education has never been so firmly tied to guidance activities before. In this context, care for career or lifelong guidance becomes part of care for education and viceversa, as seen in scientific, research, practice and policy contexts.

In the research study of career guidance and counselling in the European documents (Mihajlović, Popović 2012) it was concluded that the need was emphasised to make career guidance and counselling open to all, as well as that this is still not the case, i.e, that it does not take into account needs of very different target groups. Interventions coming as support to adult career development are inextricably linked to the contribution of various career development theories which provide a framework for design, observation and development of different career guidance and counselling activities intended for different adult target groups.

2. Career development theories – Towards transition approach

Looking at the development of career choice and development theories, we can say that they have gone a long way, from emphasising importance of profession choice, emphasising personality traits (e.g. Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities) through monitoring of career developmentwhich takes place in a series of phases,usually bounded by years, carrying along some important career tasks (e.g. Self-concept Theory of Career Development, formulated by Super), to those talking about a series of periods through which we can go several times in life, etc (e.g. Okun's Integrative model for individual, family and career development of adults). A summary of the way career development theories have goneis given to us by Hayes, stating that «in the early 1900s, psychologist began developing theories that focused on specific traits of individuals, such as intelligence and abilities, personality and interests» (Hayes 2000: 7). These theories certainly paid greater attention to how career choice is made anddescribed to a lesser extent a further course of career development. As the above mentioned author further states the next wave of theories beginning in the 1950s, took a more interdisciplinary approach. They identified stages of career maturity and saw them as related to environmental factors, educational level, emotional factors, and personal values. (Hayes 2000: 7-8).

Finally, as stated by Sonnenfeld & Kotter «we have the life cycle theorists, who believe the process involves all the factors identified by earlier theorists and continue to evolve throughout adult life» (as cited in Hayes 2000: 8). We agree with the fact that most of the current theories give a great contribution to career guidance and counselling practice. The approach which largely begins to paint interventions of adult career guidance and counselling is the approach from the context of transitions. One

definition sees transition generally as «any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles» (Goodman, Schlossberg, Anderson 2006: 33). The authors Aslanian and Brickell (as cited in Goodman, Schlossberg, Anderson 2006: 61) define transition as «a change in status […] that makes learning necessary. The adult needs to become competent at something that he or she could not do before in order to succeed in the new status». This definition is important since it emphases the need for learning and acquiring competences in a new role in which we are or to which we go. What is interesting in definitions of transition is the word change. In this sense, and while going back to adult career development, numerous major or minor changes in career patterns, roles, positions…, often result in the need for learning or the need for certain interventions, as they can be at the same time seen as a result of prior learning and meeting educational needs. These interrelationships will make the focus of our discussions in the sections that follow. Out of many points or periods of transition for the purpose of this paper we have decided to pay attention to the following transitions which, as it seems to us, dominate in scientific and research circles: 1) School to work transition; 2) Mid career transition; and 3) Work to retirement transition.

3. School to work transition

This type of transition belongs to a wider category of transition from the world of education to the world of work. Within it we can talk about several sub-types, depending on the level of education we take into account. The author Kristina Pekeč points to dual understanding of definitions of this type of transition – the first perceives education to work transition very narrowly, only as a transition from formal (secondary or tertiary) education to the first employment, while the second group of definitions perceives transition from education to the world of work more broadly and sees it as a life-long activity comprised of numerous transitions which take place between work and education (Pekeč 2014: 194). In this part of the paper we are going to deal with some elements of transition from higher education to the world of work.

In order to further explain some elements of this type of transitions we conducteda mini survey with the group that is currently preparing for this type of transition or has been experiencing it. The group surveyed consisted of young adults, 66 students of final years at several faculties at University of Belgrade (Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Pharmacy and Faculty of Philosophy – Pedagogy and Andragogy students). The data were collected from March to May 2016. The students were asked to finish the following sentence: «A career is». Their responses largely illustrate

a series of changes in the perception of careers and complexity of some elements of a career, as well as transition periods which can be expected in career development. The sample of responses is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Category of respondents' responses to the question «A career is?».

Career as a job (jobs)	Career as success and promotion	Career as (professional) development, learning	Career as a path (metaphor)
Business life – course and progress in performing job.	Success, satisfaction, promotion at work (job) we do.	Professional, overall development, workaholism, long-term process.	A path to self-actualisation in the desired profession.
Long-term commitment to one job.	Having a job which provides an opportunity to get promoted.	Conscientious and active preparation and development in business.	A path of ups and downs in business aspirations.
All jobs a person does during his/her lifetime, i.e., the period when the person has a business capacity.	Success, continuous promotion at work and/or success in all spheres of life (family, job, social life).	A set of all activities a person needs to develop professionally while at the same time his/her engagement is personal and socially useful.	Someone's business path, as well as planning next business steps. A winding path from the bottom to the top.
A job you do with a smile and strive for the top. A job that makes you happy.	Successful performance of the job we have chosen and its continuous improvement.	Overall development of myself and my skills in a professional context. Constant self-improvement.	A path to potential achievement of business goals, a path of our work.
A set of different jobs we do during our lives.	Long-standing success in doing a job, promotion, going up the career ladder.	A lifelong process of learning about oneself and areas we deal with.	A path one walks in his/her business commitment.

The students' responses can be classified into several categories. The first among the classified categories contains responses by the respondents who see a career as a job, that is, as a set of jobs an individual does during his/her life. By placing this view in the context of transition career model, each job change can be seen as a transition period. There are more and more careers where these types of transitions occur. However, as can be seen from their responses, a career is not just any job, but often a job with certain qualities. It is usually a job which gives us satisfaction or happiness. Nevertheless, we can say that putting the equal sign between one job, occupation and career is somewhat obsolete today. Also, a career often exceeds the professional, work aspect of human life. It is increasingly pointed to a complex relationship between the professional

role and other roles individuals have in their lives. This view of careers implies that transition periods do not occur only in the sphere of working life, but that transitions in other spheres are treated as part of career transitions.

The second category includes the responses which see a career as a synonym to success and promotion at work. In this sense, this category of responses is mostly comprised of words such as success, being successful and promotion. Traditional views which see a career in this way (as progress towards pre-defined specific, known rules) are close to this category of responses. This career is often determined by one organisation and a series of better positions (stair model). There were fewer transition periods in these careers.

The third category includes the responses with the common features of development, learning, personal development and the like. This category points to the recognised need for activity during one's own career development. In this sense, this category of responses comprised the words such as: actively, conscientiously, engagement, problem solving, management, etc. A dimension of work on one's own career and on personal development is noticeable among the responses. Thus learning is often recognised as an important 'tool' on that way. These observations are close to the concept of career education which can be a preventive tool in dealing with transition periods.

The next category includes responses which see a career as a path. These responses are categorised in this way with the intention to draw attention to something that is emphasised today when it comes to understanding careers. The metaphor of a path, of individual paths, has often been used to explain the meaning of a career today. Thus, careers are no longer clearly bounded by a series of stages which take turns in a stable environment of a nothing less stable individual. They are more and more individual paths developed throughout years, where one goes off the track and often does not rise. Alternation of periods of ups and downs, that is, employment periods, unemployment periods, long-term unemployment, education with/at work, are features of reality of an increasing number of people. An illustration of different elements of a career, then of transition periods that are there, is visible in the international survey of graduate students, which was implemented under CONGRAD Tempus project which included 14 higher education institutions and was intended to collect data on this type of transition. When it comes to career patterns, the survey results showed 4 types of career patterns of young experts: 1) careers without periods of unemployment; 2) careers with periods of unemployment; 3) the unemployed without working experience who are active job seekers; and 4) inactive (with no job, but actively seeking for it) (CONGRAD 2014: 27). Based on these data, we can talk about a series of transitions (transition from employment to unemployment and

vice versa; transition from the world of education to the world of employability and employment and the like).

The most common career guidance and counselling interventions intended for this group belong to career education and preparation for independent career management. These programmes take place through several modalities, and an example of one such modality is a course on Career Management Skills, which in a certain way accelerates transition from education to the work, and the provider of this course is the Centre for Career Development and Counselling of students at University of Belgrade. Also, the multiphase model of career support for students (Pejatović *et al.* 2014) is an example of one modality of providing support to career development of this target group (in particular students of Andragogy in Serbia). By looking at the group of young adults, or more precisely students, in the European context it seems to us that there is a need to exchange and network good practice. However, generally speaking, the most common tasks of career guidance and counselling related to this group are: career information, employablity skills development, prevention of prolonged waiting for the first job, preparation for the world of work, increase in uptake of user numbers, importance of diversity of delivery modes of certain services of career guidance and counselling.

4. Mid-career transitions

The second selected group of transitions is mid-career transitions. Within it there is a broader range of sub-types of transitions typical of middle and old ages. Relying on theory, different situations the members of this group can be in are linked to career tasks proposed by Barbara Okan. This stage of career development, middle adulthood, includes several categories and sub-categories of tasks:

> Mid-career reassesment: Reassess your career: self-assessment regarding on-the-job functioning skills, needs, interests, aptitudes; aspiration-achievement gaps; recognition on career anchors; values reassessment; occupation assessment; world of work assessment; Finalise commitment to career or prepare for midcareer change; Reassess personal/family and career boundaries (as cited in Hayes 2000: 9-10).

Typical of this theory is reassessment and assessment of one's own status in a certain career stage or point. What is almost always a subject of assessment are skills, knowledge, that is, competences we have and those we need to fulfill certain tasks. Also, another assessment is related to the gap between desires, goals and what has actually been achieved at this career point. The assessment and then the observed gap may result in

initiating certain transitions. Finally, what is more complex at this career stage is the issue of setting a balance between work and other aspects of life. Even in this fragment it can be noticed how many complex questions users can bring in the career guidance and counselling process. The important issue to be considered refers to possibilities for implementation of the comprehensive model of adult career guidance and counseling. This issue can be subsumed under the most general fact that these services are more developed for young people, along with that «many career guidance and counselling activities and services cannot be applied in the form/model set for young people needs» (Mihajlović 2014: 133). In addition, implementation methods for these activities, as well as the need for better system solutions in the implementation, are another challenge to the European policy and practice of career guidance and counselling.

The second stage the above-mentioned author refers to is maintenance, so within it we can talk about the following tasks:

> Implement your midcareer reassessment decision: reality assessment, power and responsibility acceptance, stress management; Become your own person in world of work; Continue education and training; Rebalance personal resources and energies; Accept changing influences and challenges (as cited in Hayes 2000: 9-10).

In this group of tasks the importance of coping with the changeable context of the world of work is further emphasised, while certain tasks, such as stress management, are specified. Looking at these career tasks, education and learning appear again as extremely important to their mastery. The importance of education and learning in today's careers is shown in the results of the recently conducted survey aimed at research into the relationship between adult education and career development (Pekeč *et al.* 2015). The survey included 40 respondents from Serbia. The largest number of respondents were older than 45, of different employment statuses and educational levels. The respondents were asked to present their careers and education graphically ('life line method'). By the analysis of the graphs the authors observed three modalities of the relationship between career development and education. The first modality, which is at the same time the most common, has characteristics of dynamic careers constantly followed by education. The second had two varieties: the modality of career stand-by and independent course of education, that is, the modality of education stand-by and independent course of career. Within the third modality the education line continually grows. As the authors point out, «education is often not related to professional development but to personal development and the need for education, […] but when appropriate it will be in the function of career development» (Pekeč *et al.* 2015: 147).

In the same survey, the respondents pointed to the importance of education in different situations related to their careers: to constant promotion to better positions/in career, as a key instrument forkeeping the job, in flexicurity concept implementation, as support to transition periods in the career, for acquisition of career management skills (Pekeč *et al*. 2015: 148).

While the results of this survey point to the recognised need for education as support to career development, we, nevertheless, think that what colours the European context is the fact that career guidance and counselling services (and education within them) of this group in particular are often 'restricted' to the work status adult users hold at that moment. Iftheyareunemployed, they can receive certain services from the employment services (which are usually focussed only on assistance in job search). The survey conducted in 2013 in five cities in Serbia on a sample of 387 unemployedrespondentsaged 50 years and over (Pejatović, Orlović Lovren 2014) indicated that effects and active labour market measures, and within them those educational by nature, need to be seriously considered. Numerous relationships were discovered between the repondents' education and career development, such as, for example: formal education can keep people from unemployment but it can also lead them direct to long-term unemployment; the long-term unemployed respondents used educational and other services of the National Employment Service to a small extent, a small number of them was engaged in educational activities organised by other providers, they rarely undertook independent learning projects; they do not perceive education as an important factor which may lead them to employment; they show a low level of readiness to get engaged in some form of education in the future. The analyses conducted within the survey raised the issue of efficiency of training for the unemployed at the international level. It is just this summarised set of the selected findings that indicates how much space is wide open for educational work in the context of career counselling and guidance with the category of long-term unemployed people of middle and older ages.

When it comes to the employed, their organisation is the most common provider of (insufficiently surveyed) services of career guidance and counselling. Those services do not often mirror the desires of the employed regarding the design of certain interventions. At best they can be a compromise between the organisational and employees' goals. Also, by this approach other concerns users bring into the career guidance and counselling process, which go beyond the issues narrowly related to the work aspect of life, become largely neglected. Inthissense, we think that finding system solutions to the issue of availability of comprehensive career guidance and counselling to this group is extremely significant.

5. Work to retirement transition

The third category of transitions, work to retirement transition, has recently been attracting great attention of researchers in this field. Taking into account the demographic changes that have been the reality of Europe for some time, it seems to us that there are increased efforts towards regulating the support system to older working population. The overview of the current situation in the European context can be illustrated by the following words:

> In most European countries the topic of ageing and work is already receiving considerable attention in research and, in addition, practitioners are increasingly involved in counselling individuals and organisations on age-related issues in the work situation. Trying to prevent problems of older workers by implementing long-term organisational strategies that take into account both changes in the employment relationship/psychological contract as well as in the development of employees over time with age, is an activity in which career researchers can play an important role (Heijden *et al.* 2008: 88).

However, in addition to the tendency of greater appreciation and consideration of different needs of this group, the story about the need for research related to the category of older workers can be summarised as follows:

> Given the fact that older workers are the fastest growing demographic category, and because they are at the same time a very diverse group, empirical research is needed to cover factors that contribute to or hinder successful ageing throughout the career. (Heijden et al. 2008: 86).

This time again the model by Barbara Okan will be important to us regarding some issues which can trigger different career guidance and counselling interventions. The following stages with their tasks from her model are important to us: late adulthood (retire; reformulate identity; make financial plans: current budget, projected budget; plan and arrange for health care; plan lifestyle: leisure; volunteerism; alternative career; lifelong learning; family; restructure energy, time, resources) and the late career stage: (decelerate: find alternative ways of determining self-identity; find new sources of satisfaction; transfer competencies; gradually distance work priorities; and make preriterement plans: appraise the meaning of retirement; plan your budget; consider all options (as cited in Hayes 2000: 10).

Here we see raising some new issues (for example, finance planning, adjusting to the loss of work role and/or identity of members of the profession, social inclusion, health care issues), which draw attention to spe-

cific educational needs of people at the «work to retirement transition» stage. However, although some more sensitive issues of abandoning old and taking new roles are important here, it seems that abandonment and decline are not the terms which uniquely colour these tasks. The emphasis is on the need for identification of new activities and sometimes even a new career.

What we see as an important research potential is a comparison of retirement programmes both in a historical perspective and by a comparison between different European countries. Important issues which should be considered are the issues related to potential new elements, that is, programme contents and retirement measures, in particular the role of education within them, roles and the attitude of companies to these issues. It is particularly important to analyse the needs of this category in terms of adequate modes of implementation of different career guidance and counselling services, as well as the current offer of these activities. Finally, such research would be a good indicator of what is needed in order to make the story of lifelong guidance a reality.

6. Conclusion

By looking at the field of career guidance and counselling in the European contexts, and at the same time by taking into consideration a new understanding of the career, the altered courses of adult career development, the qualitatively different influence of education, it is noticed that a full set of complex requirements is placed in front of career guidance and counselling. It should be present throughout life, available to different target groups, composed of activities of a variety of purpose, content, mode of implementation, guided by goals which exceed providing support in professional development. Seen as something that, in the broadest sense, supports and encourages development, it seems to us that there is a set of questions to be asked, that is, a set of guidelines to be offered with the aim to improve career guidance and counselling quality. The guidelines can be classified into three directions: theory and research, policy and practice.

When we talk about theory and research, along with the more than a solid network of knowledge of/in this field, it is not possible to systematically list all important issues which should be considered and researched. In this sense, we will look only at some issues which arose while writing this paper. Comparative research into models of career guidance and counselling and interventions provided within them are an important step towards improvement. Also, each of the target groups we have considered has a series of characteristics which are important when it comes to creating and improving different elements of career guidance

and counselling. These characteristics can be reached by joint research efforts. These research studies range from examining needs of these target groups for different career guidance and counselling interventions to examining efficiency and effectiveness of different interventions.

The important issue is how to convey research, or more precisely research results, to practitioners and ensure comprehension of what requirements research results set to practitioners in this field and whether and how they empower them in terms of providing the existing interventions and creating new ones. Practitioners in this field increasingly occur as those who should contribute to the achievement of educational goals of career guidance and counselling, so we think that the issue of their initial education and additional professional development has become an important link in the chain of quality improvement of this field.

Finally, the important issue of policy is, in fact, the issue of career guidance and counselling system building. It implies solving the issue of availability and funding, as well as the issue of coordination of different organisations dealing in one way or the other with providing career guidance and counselling services.

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RESEARCH ON PROFESSIONALISATION OF ADULT EDUCATORS

Susanne Lattke

Abstract: Professionalisation in the field of adult education is a widely debated and researched topic in Europe. The chapter outlines the policy context in which this research is taking place and points out different dimensions of professionalisation research. Examples of European as well as national studies will be presented with the aim of outlining the state of the art but also of identifying less covered areas.

Keywords: professionalisation, adult educators, research, European dimension.

1. Introduction

During the last 10-15 years, attention to the issues of professionalisation[1] in adult education has considerably grown at the international level both among policy makers and researchers. One indication for this can be seen in the fact that in 2008/09 even two dedicated international research networks on the topic came into being. Within the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA), a network dedicated to «Adult Educators, Trainers and their Professional Development» (ReNAdET) was founded, which held its inaugural conference in the following year in Thessaloniki (Papastamatis et al. 2009). At the same time, the Lifelong Learning Research Hub of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) launched a Research Network on «Professionalisation of Adult Teachers and Educators in ASEM countries», which also held its first conference in 2009 in Germany (Egetenmeyer, Nuissl 2010). Since then several further events and edited volumes dedicated to professionalisation have been promoted on the initiative of these and other actors (e.g. Medic *et al.* 2010; Jütte *et al.* 2011; Egetenmeyer, Schüßler 2012; Sgier, Lattke 2012; Lattke, Jütte 2014).

This growing research activity goes in parallel with – and is partly pushed by – an increasing policy interest in professionalisation. At EU

[1] In the literature, various views on professionalisation are widely discussed. This includes differentiating between sociological and pedagogical approaches and distinguishing professionalisation from related concepts such as professionalism, professional development, competence development etc. (for an overview see Egetenmeyer/Käpplinger 2011). In this paper, for practical reasons 'professionalisation' is used as an umbrella term to include all these possible readings and to refer to all aspects relating to adult education as a field of work as well as to those working in this field. With this no specific theoretical perspective is implied.

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level, adult education has gained visibility as a policy field in its own right but fairly late, starting with the Communication of the Commission and the subsequent Action Plan on Adult Learning in 2006/07 (European Commission 2006; 2007). These as well as subsequent policy documents have since then continued to highlight the role of adult education staff for providing high quality lifelong learning opportunities to the European citizens and to urge EU member states to take action for improving their professionalisation. The EU itself has taken action by promoting a number of projects and studies on this topic as well as by including mobility opportunities for adult education staff in their own educational programmes. Also online platforms have been set up recently at EU as well at national levels to support the sharing of content and community building among adult learning professionals, e.g. the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) or the German platform 'wb-web'.

Professionalisation is a multifaceted concept and can be addressed at various levels and from various perspectives. Policy makers' interest in researching professionalisation is mostly an instrumental one. Professionalisation is foremost seen as a means to reach overarching strategic policy aims. For the European Union, four such strategic objectives were laid down in the 'ET 2020' strategy, the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (Council 2009). The objective to which professionalisation is most directly related is objective 2 *Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training*. In this context, research questions in which policy makers are mainly interested include in particular:

- What competences are needed by adult education staff to perform well in their work and how can suitable training offers be designed in order to develop these conferences?
- How can policies be designed at system level which promote the professionalisation of the field and through this the quality of the training provision?

Scholars and academic researchers, by contrast, envisage professionalisation issues from a somewhat different angle. Academic researchers' interests include the above mentioned questions as well, but at the same time embrace a broader and more diversified spectrum of aspects. Thus, for example, a substantial part of research on adult educators adopts a biographical perspective in studying how adult educators develop professionally, what are there self-concepts as adult educators, what are there conceptions of the field etc. Such research work primarily aims to contribute to obtaining a deeper understanding of phenomena related to professionalisation, but it may not necessarily contribute directly to any policy goal.

Also the notions of professionalisation, professionalism, professional development etc. themselves are subject to intense theoretical debates.

In this regard, some conflicts between a «policy view» and an «academic view» on professionalisation can be observed. Policy-based publications and research studies often tend to propose as the essence of professionalism detailed but nevertheless simply structured lists of skills, attitudes and knowledge, which adult educators are expected to possess (e.g. Research voor Beleid 2010). Some scholars criticize this approach as too narrow and instrumental (c. Egetenmeyer, Käpplinger 2011). Scholars and researches in their turn, tend to favour more complex concepts of professionalism and focus their studies on how these conceptualisations of professionalism materialize in reality and how they are influenced by various factors.

What remains a challenge to any research into the professionalisation of adult educators is the diversity and patchiness of the field. Compared to other education sectors, the adult education field has no clear boundaries and structures nor clear-cut occupational profiles. The object of study in researching 'adult educators' is therefore anything but well-defined. Research studies on adult educators therefore either have to focus on just one particular sub-group staff (e.g. language teachers in community adult education centres) or they may try and gather a sample of many different types of adult educators in order to be able to make some generalizations. The lack of reliable knowledge about the field as a whole, including in particular representative data of the staff, remains however a problem. Only in recent years a few attempts have been made to address this issue (see below).

These are some broad outlines of the context in which research on the professionalisation of adult educators is currently taking place in Europe. In the following sections, an overview of relevant research topics will be given and selected examples of research will be presented with the aim of outlining the state of the art but also of identifying less covered areas. Where possible, European cross-country studies have been selected as examples, but also a number national research studies is included for a more complete picture.

2. Researching professionalisation: a broad field

Professionalisation phenomena and processes can be addressed at various levels, from the mega/macro levels of adult education systems and policies down to the micro level of the actual teaching process and teacher-learner interaction. Also, the aspects which can be studied in regard to professionalisation are manifold, ranging from a focus on competences, competence development and quality of the professional performance of adult educators on the one hand to social status issues and collective structures for adult educators as a professional group on the other hand.

Furthermore, studies on professionalisation may pursue different aims, among which the following can be highlighted as particularly prominent:

- description/mapping of a given situation, possibly also including the identification of types;
- creation of conceptual foundations and theoretical models around the notion of 'professionalisation';
- gaining a greater in-depth understanding of one particular issue related to professionalisation, often with the intention to identify needs and success factors and formulate recommendations for further action;
- evaluating or assessing the actual impact of a given policy, didactical approach etc. on enhancing professionalisation.

The research designs and methods which are applied are obviously chosen in accordance with the aims of the study in question. Large-scale or panel studies are so far mostly absent in this field. The same applies to (quasi-)experimental studies, of which only few can be found. Very common, on the other hand, are descriptive case studies, including studies which involve international comparison. A large part of the existing research, in particular case and evaluation studies, use a multi-method design involving a combination of document analysis, interviews and questionnaire surveys, sometimes also including participatory methods such as focus groups or stakeholder workshops. By contrast, tests, e.g. to measure teachers' competences, are applied only in rare cases.

In the following, for each of the four research aims identified above selected examples will be presented and a selection of research questions for future studies, notably with a European dimension, will be proposed.

2.1 Research for mapping the field

The diversity of the field makes it difficult to study adult education in its entirety. Consequently, only little data are available for the whole field and for the entirety of adult educators working in it. As policy attention towards adult education started to grow at EU level, this issue was tackled with support from the European Commission. The project *Qualifying the Actors* (Q-Act) in 2008 was a first exploratory attempt to collect basic information and practice examples and identify issues and trends concerning the professionalisation of adult educators (Nuissl, Lattke 2008). Around the same time, the European Commission commissioned two parallel studies to extensively map the situation throughout Europe concerning: work contexts, employment conditions and professional roles of adult educators, their educational and career pathways, and the policy and governance context. These two studies provided a first comprehensive European overview on the situation of adult educators (Research voor Beleid, Plato 2008a e 2008b). They largely confirmed the diversity

of the field and the absence of shared standards and reliable comprehensive data in most European countries.

Given the difficulty to address such a diverse object of study it is hardly surprising that not many other attempts in this direction have been made at the national levels. One such example can however be found in Germany, where in 2004/05 a cross-sectional study on the socio-economic situation of teaching staff in adult education was commissioned by the education ministry (WSF 2005). This study, focused on teaching staff only but had the ambition to provide for this particular group representative statistical covering the whole spectrum of adult education contexts. The study showed amongst other things that most teachers were highly qualified (at higher education level), but did not necessarily have a specialised qualification for teaching adults. One quarter even had had no pedagogical training whatsoever. Also the precarious working conditions of large parts of the teaching staff were highlighted by this study. Currently, attempts are underway to conduct a follow up study, «wb-personalmonitor» (Martin. Lencer, Schrader 2016), which will allow to make the developments visible which have since then occurred. The wider aim is furthermore to build up a permanent reporting system on the situation of adult education staff which will be able to produce data that are relevant for future policies and for a permanent monitoring of the sector.

Examples of questions for further research in this area include:

- Who is working in the field of adult education? What is their educational/biographical background? What are their job profiles, employment conditions and career prospects?
- What education and training opportunities exist for adult educators? Who are the providers? What is the level/the content/the format of the training? To what extent are the training opportunities used and by whom?
- What is the labour market for adult educators? Who is requesting and paying for services of adult educators? Who is employing them? What types of services are in demand and what new trends concerning the future demand can be projected?
- Comparing the situation in two (or more) different countries: What are the similarities and differences? How can the differences be explained?

2.2 Research for creating conceptual foundations

A considerable number of research is aimed at creating theoretical models of key concepts such as professionalism, professional cultures, or professional knowledge for the field of adult education. Based on document and literature analysis as well as on interrogations of experts, these studies aim to provide a theoretical framework which may inform further empirical research. Marx, Goeze, Schrader (2014), for example, de-

veloped a conceptualisation of pedagogical-psychological knowledge of adult education teachers, which will serve in a following step as a basis for constructing a test to assess the teachers' knowledge (for other examples see Ludwig 2014, Steiner 2014, Zarifis, Papadimitriou 2015).

Similar research has also been carried out on a European level recently. The project *Qualified to teach* (QF2TEACH) conducted a Delphi survey in eight countries to set up a model of the core competences, which teachers in adult education need for their work. Based on the research of the project also proposed a model for a qualifications framework for this particular professional group, which is linked to the overarching European Qualifications Framework (EQF) (Bernhardsson, Lattke 2011). The research thus also intended to serve policy related purposes.

The same is true for another study commissioned by the European Commission with the objective of creating a framework of key competences for adult learning professionals (Research voor Beleid 2010). The resulting model is intended to cover all types of professional groups and providers in adult education. To that end, it describes seven generic and 12 specific competencies, which are needed throughout the field of adult education, although not every single competence is equally relevant for each particular professional role. The set represents a generic reference framework, which policy makers and stakeholders may use in various ways for their individual purposes. It supports the EU's policy intention to improve adult learning practices by introducing standards and making existing practices more comparable and assessable.

Examples of questions for further research in this area include:

- What competencies (skills, knowledge, attitudes etc.) are needed by various professional figures in the field of adult education? How can these competencies be defined? How can they be measured/assessed in a valid and reliable way?
- To what extent and in what way can the field of adult education be described as a profession? What alternative concepts could be used/developed to describe the professional group of adult educators? What perspectives for developing and strengthening this group can be identified?
- Are there any differences between various countries concerning these conceptual issues? If yes, what are they? How can they be explained?

2.3 Research for gaining in-depth understanding

Studies focusing on one particular issue related to professionalisation with a view to developing a better understanding of this issue are rather widespread. In a more general way, such studies are interested in analysing how and why certain phenomena have developed the way they have. Often these studies also intend to contribute to more practical aims by

providing at least some indicative answers to questions such as: What needs to be done to (further) improve a given situation? How could this task possibly be addressed? What evidence of success (or failure) is available concerning particular possible approaches in this regard?

Studies of this kind may be found for any level of action in adult education (system, institutional, individual level) although it seems that the policy-system level as well as the individual level has received far more attention so far than the institutional level. Some examples of studies include the following:

On the system level, Murphy (2014) analyses for the Irish case the role of different actors in recent policy developments and structural changes (e.g. introduction of qualification standards), which shape the development of professionalisation in adult education. In Serbia, the role of social control mechanisms such as professional standards, evaluations, sanctions etc. has been analysed with regard to adult educators' perceptions and professional practice (Ovesni 2010).

A study conducted a few years ago in Romania (Lupou *et al.* 2010) focused on the implementation of a national validation system and researched how this system was accepted by adult educators. Adult educators were supposed to benefit from this system by having the opportunity to have their own informally acquired professional competences accredited. The study used a case-study approach involving a series of stakeholder interviews and showed however that validation was less accepted than the traditional formal training path, both by the trainers themselves and by the labour market. This little acceptance was attributed to a lack of awareness on its existence on the one hand, and to the missing quality assurance criteria and indicators on the other hand

On the institutional level, Goeze and Schneider (2014) research recruiting practices in adult education institutions. Their research interest consists in learning more about individual as well as organisational factors which influence recruiting practices and processes and ultimately decide on who is (not) going to be selected as a trainer in a given context. A multi-method design is used which combines semi-structured problem-centred and focused interviews to generate hypotheses on the one hand with an online survey for testing these hypotheses on the other hand.

On the individual level, several research studies examine adult educators (professional) biographies and their subjective conceptions. In Germany, Maier-Gutheil and Hof (2011) used longitudinal qualitative data (narrative interviews) to learn more about howadult educators develop their professionalism during their life course and how they organise their own professional learning within and outside pedagogical settings. In Estonia, Karu and Jögi (2014) researched through reflective writings, thematic essays and narrative interviews the self-concepts of experienced adult-educators undertaking higher education studies in adult educa-

tion as part of their professional development. In Portugal, Paulos (2015) studies one particular working context for adult educators – the national centres for the recognition, validation and certification of competences. Through biographical interviews the study aims to get in-depth knowledge of the staff's professional activity in these centres as well as of their career and training pathways.

A similar issue was also addressed in a comparative perspective by the European project «Becoming Adult Educators in the European Area» (BAEA) (Milana 2010). This project investigated for four countries (Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Sweden) how prospective adult educators were building up their initial competences and qualification and how they were constructing a professional identity. One specific aim of the project was further to analyse how these processes were affected by different social and cultural factors as well as adult education policies in the four countries. To examine this interaction between individual perspectives on the one hand and structural conditions and socio-cultural context on the other hand a combination of document analysis (research literature and policy papers) and narrative interviews was applied.

Examples of questions for further research in this area include:

- System level: How can policy change with regard to professionalisation be explained? What is the role of European/international influences in promoting such change (e.g. the introduction of standards/legislation in a given country)?
- Institutional level: How can adult education providers contribute to the professional development of their staff? What are the success factor for a given approach (e.g. introduction of mentoring schemes)? (How) do these success factors differ in different types of provider or countries? What obstacles can emerge and how can they be addressed?
- Individual level: How developed is a European awareness in adult educators? Do adult educators see themselves as being part of a European (professional) community? How is their attitude towards European issues? What influences have contributed to its development? What differences between different groups of adult educators and/or countries can be observed? How can they be explained?

2.4 Impact evaluations

Studies which aim to establish the impact of a precise programme or intervention represent another type in researching professionalisation-related issues.

For larger policy programmes, evaluation studies are usually commissioned by those having launched the programme. The European Commission, one major actor in the field of (adult) education policy in Europe, commissioned such a study for evaluating the impact of In-Ser-

vice Training Activities funded between 2001 and 2010 within the EU-Grundtvig programme (Woscop 2011). The study used quantitative and qualitative approaches to gather information on both training providers and training beneficiaries. Amongst other things, the study analysed the extent to which the target group had been reached, the satisfaction among programme participants, and the benefits which participant perceived to have gained from the programme. The study found that participants in these short-term trainings had become more motivated for their work, had improved their intercultural awareness, were using new knowledge in their work and had become aware of different education systems in Europe (Woscop 2011: 114s). It also found that mainly high-qualified adult educators (having at least a Master's degree) had taken advantage of these training opportunities (Woscop 2011: 80s) thus raising questions about the possible selectivity of the programme. Since no representative European data on the qualification levels of adult educators are available, one can only assume from the results of other studies (e.g. Research voor Beleid 2008) that such selectivity exists, but further research is necessary as confirmation and to explore in greater depth the factors and mechanism which lead to this selectivity.

Except for broader programme evaluations, in-depth research on the impact of single interventions is largely missing for the field of professionalisation on EU level. European project funding in programmes such as Grundtvig usually supports the development of practical tools but does not cover accompanying research, apart from very small-scale activities in the context of project evaluation and quality assurance. European tools developed with EU-funding to support the professionalisation of adult educators have therefore hardly been made the object of extensive or intensive research, so far. This applies for example to the portfolio instruments Validpack (Sava, Lupou 2008) and the Flexi-path toolkit (Godding, Kreft, Read 2010) which can be used to assess adult educator's psycho-pedagogical competences and their high-level competences relating to management tasks, respectively.

On the national level, some example of in-depth research to study the impact of single approaches may however be found. In Germany, the effects of video case-based learning on teachers and trainers were studied using a pre-post-follow-up-intervention-design in a quasi-experimental field study (Goeze *et al.* 2010). The study showed that video-case based learning, which enabled the availability of conceptual knowledge as well as of multiple perspectives, could actually improve the ability to diagnose pedagogical situations - an ability considered to be an essential component of a teachers' professional competence. Also, impact evaluations relating to specific training programmes may be found most of which are based on students' self-assessment. One example is the evaluation of the Andragogy-Study Programme at Belgrade university which maps the

knowledge and skills which students think to have acquired against the programme's stated objectives (Pejatovic 2010).

Examples of questions for further research in this area include:

- What has been the impact of a given European product aimed at supporting the professionalisation of adult educators (e.g. the Flexi-path toolkit)? To what degree is it a) known, b) accepted, c) actually used by adult educators? Has it led to (positive) changes, e.g. in terms of self-esteem or career prospects? To what degree?
- How does transnational project work impact on the individual professional development of adult educators (e.g. in terms of professional knowledge and skills, personal competence, network building etc.)?

3. Conclusion and outlook: Perspectives for researching professionalisation with a European dimension

The overview has shown that professionalisation related topics addressed by research are many and varied and that quite a part of issues is also addressed with a European or international dimension. There are at least two broad perspectives in which a European or international dimension becomes relevant for researching professionalisation in adult education: a content-related and a methodological perspective.

From a content perspective, the international dimension presents some interest in the light of wider societal and policy developments. Although adult education is considered to be very closely linked to the national context and its particularities, the field is also increasingly affected by phenomena of internationalisation. European policies and programmes which promote cooperation and exchange in the field, and global migration developments making societies more intercultural and international are just two indicators of this trend which also affects the work of adult educators. Two major questions for research in this context are therefore: What kind of international competence is needed by adult education staff? How can these international competences best be developed? Apart from the Grundtvig In-Service-Training evaluation (Woscop 2011) and some studies focusing on the role of international competence specifically in the field of academic professionalisation (Egetenmeyer 2012), this issue has been rarely addressed so far and would require further attention.

From a methodological perspective, international (comparative) research is of interest because of the possible added value for research on professionalisation as well as for other research fields: international-comparative research enables through comparison a deeper understanding of the particularities of each single (national) case and of how the national structural context is shaping phenomena at various levels. Regarding professionalisation, international comparative research may therefore be

particularly helpful for illuminating the impact of the broader socio-cultural and political context on professionalisation processes on other (institutional, individual) levels (cf. the BAEA project mentioned above).

Collecting and analysing information from other countries may also provide inspiration for action in one's own country and even result in some form of policy transfer. To mention one current example: the German project *GRETA* represents a joint cooperative effort of national adult education stakeholders to establish the foundations for a national certification systems for teachers and trainers in adult education[2] in Germany. The GRETA initiative is very much inspired by earlier successful models of that kind from Austria and Switzerland. Such policy transfer can, in turn, be made the object of further implementation research in order to identify factors of success or failure for a given approach in different national contexts.

Conducting research on an international level may also contribute to the development of shared understandings on a given issue which eventually may even result in a higher level of standardisation and homogenisation, e.g. in the case of European qualification and competence standards (cf. the Key competence study of Research voor Beleid 2010). This latter aspect represents a policy aim rather than an aim for research. However, researchers may also gain added value from finding common conceptual ground on the basis of which further in-depth comparison and differentiations may be developed.

The further development of international (comparative) research related to professionalisation therefore represents an area which deserves increased attention. Efforts in this regard are underway in the context of international networks such as ESREA or ASEM. Other important initiatives target the education of young researchers by setting up European study curricula or modules aimed at developing students' competence for international research. The Summer Schools organised by the ESRALE network and the Winter School organised by the ESRALE member university of Wuerzburg represent examples of this approach. Results of comparative research undertaken in the context of the Wuerzburg Winter School can be found in the volume edited by the organisers (Egetenmeyer 2016). Each paper in this volume is the collective work of authors from two, three or more countries. Each author brings in his or her knowledge of their respective national context and, in a collective attempt, the authors produce an analytical comparison of the findings concerning the selected issue. Professionalisation issues are addressed by

[2] GRETA stands for „Grundlagen zur Entwicklung eines trägerübergreifenden Anerkennungsverfahrens für die Kompetenzen Lehrender in der Erwachsenen-/Weiterbildung", <http://www.die-bonn.de/institut/forschung/professionalitaet/greta.aspx?> (12/2016).

four papers in this volume including: the role of key actors in the field of academic professionalisation; degree study programmes in adult education as a means of professionalisation, and regulations and working conditions for adult trainers. Initiatives such as the Winter School show thus in an interesting way, how comparative research on professionalisation can concretely be addressed and further promoted in Europe.

It may seem that not all possible research topics may lend themselves equally well to international comparison. While international comparative research is relatively common for policy topics it is much less so for the level of teaching and learning itself. Didactical approaches to further certain professional competences of adult education staff are hardly studied in an international-comparative perspective. However, it may be assumed that the wider socio-cultural context somehow impacts on the effects of a given pedagogical intervention. If and how this is actually the case requires further research. Another largely neglected area, not only from an international perspective but in general, is the institutional level. For instance the issue of how adult education providers can effectively support the professional development of their staff receives little attention. The same applies more or less in general to professional adult educator competences other than the teaching competence. While teaching is certainly the central task in adult education and is justly placed in the centre of attention, other professional competences such as e.g. programme planning (c Käpplinger, Sork 2014) have also an important function in ensuring a high quality learning provision for adults. In a comprehensive research perspective on the professionalisation of adult educators they should therefore also be given an appropriate place.

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PART II

ADULT LEARNING IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

LEARNING AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Rosa Valls, Oriol Rios, M. Angeles Serrano

Abstract: From the T.H. Marshall's classic definition to the current notions of global citizenship or active citizenship, the literature review shows different definitions of the concept of citizenship. Such differences are the result of a changing society which perceives the need to respond to challenges posed by the global effects of cultural, ethnic, and religious plurality. In this sense, international organisms such as UNESCO or the European Union are promoting both research and educational programmes to answer the challenges our society is dealing with. This chapter aims to go into deep in the current and future research on citizenship, emphasizing the impact it should have. Moreover, it also shows how to develop a research in citizenship from a communicative approach.

Keywords: citizenship, citizenship education, research, communicative methodology.

1. Introduction

T.H Marshall's classic concept of citizenship (1950) is based on three main elements: civil, political and social. The civil element is defined by the necessary rights for individual freedom, i.e., liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith; the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice (Marshall 1950). On the other hand, the political element is understood as the right to participate in the exercise of political power, both as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such body (Marshall 1950). Finally, the social element comprises a wide spectrum from the right to have a minimum of economic welfare and security to the right to participate of the social heritage as well as to live as a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society (Marshall 1950).

As anticipated by T.H. Marshall (1950), the social element of the citizenship concept corrected the injustices derived from the capitalist market (Soysal 2012). At this regard, the welfare state would guarantee entitlements and protections to prevent the social and economic exclusions that civil and political rights simply could not do on their own. Consequently, such entitlements and protections would ensure both the social cohesion and solidarityas a productive economy and market (Soysal 2012). European welfare states successfully maintained this model from the post-World War II period and till the seventies, where the economic, political and social adjustments as a consequence of the globalization ended with the autonomy of the state to design its own economic policies and social protection systems and causing the current welfare state

S. Sava, P. Novotny (a cura di), *Researches in Adult Learning and Education: the European Dimension*,
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crisis in the developed societies (Gómez Bahillo 1998; Gómez Bahillo, Marcuello Servos 1997; Soysal 2012).

The transformations of social, cultural and economic as a consequence of such globalization processes correspond to a complexity and multidimensionality of the concept of citizenship (Marshall 2009; Sicurello 2016). Today the term citizenship does not longer refer exclusively to participation in public life and membership in a nation-state as mentioned by T. H. Marshall (Tawil 2013) but rather integrates questions linked to identity and collective rights. Citizenship doesn't mean anymore belonging to a nation but cultural and ethical reasons broaden that concept to include the universal human rights (Marshall 2009; Sicurello 2016). Besides, some authors state that is when incorporating collective rights claims that the concept of social citizenship could present a greater challenge to neoliberalism in the present welfare debates (Revi 2014; Sicurello 2016). Finally, there is even some voices that declare the need of enlarge the concept of citizenship to its 'global dimension' in order to answer the high interconnectedness and interdependence of collectives (human beigns and groups) across the world as well as the emergence of new forms of transnational civic engagement (Tawil 2013).

The debate on the concept of social citizenship are necessary linked to the concept on education in active citizenship, which envisions participatory individuals who are ready to contribute and participate actively at regional, national or even international level in a growing context of globalized societies (Espejo, Bendek 2011; Lawson 2001; Soysal 2012). As a consequence, it has reapeared the debate on the need of including citizenship education as part of the educational curriculum (Marshall 2009; Lawson 2001). Even those whose position defends the idea of a global citizenship also state the need of a 'global-citizenship education' that «enables pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and values needed for securing a just and sustainable world in which all may fulfil their potential» (Oxfam 2006: 1).

On the other hand, social citizenship is also addressed through the educational policies of the European Union concerning the acquisition of knowledge and skills for both personal and professional purposesalong the entire life of any individual, also known as lifelong learning. As such, lifelong learning promotes as important elements not only competitiveness and employability, but also social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development (Bozorgmanesh *et al.* 2012; Sedlak *et al.* 2011).

The concept of citizenship is, then, related to broaden contexts of research from the classic ones such as welfare state, nation state, democracy, political participation or empowerment to the new ones, such as globalization, global citizenship, collective rights claims or identity. All of them have to take into account the dimensions of interconnectedness, interdependence and transnationalism characteristic of our present global

societies. On the other hand, research has also to be aware of the policies determined by international and European bodies such as UNESCO or the European Commission, which establish the policies priorities for the future scientific research.

At this regard, the present chapter aims to give theoretical and methodological orientation to guide a future research in active citizenship. To do it, this chapter starts going into deep in the current research on citizenship that are being promoted by international organisms. We will take into consideration not only the educational policies but also the research programmes that determine and articulate the national policies in the member countries of the European Union. Hereafter, it is going to dedicate a section to methodological issues, introducing the communicative methodology as a valid approach to orientate the methodology of a future research. Thereupon a research from the European Union research programme which has been developed using the communicative methodology will serve to illustrate future research in citizenship. Finally, we will explore on new avenues for present and future research on the field, emphasizing the impact it should have.

2. The Current Research on Citizenship

2.1 UNESCO: The debate on Global Citizenship

Going into deep in the present debate of citizenship, there is an extensive discussion to enlarge the term in order to include its global dimension (Marshall 2007, 2009; Oxfam 2006; Tawil 2013): «Citizenship needs to be recast, set apart from the nation-state, and newly theorized in terms of emerging transnational and perhaps global political structures, as well as in the public spheres of civil society» (Smith 2007: 33).

Promotors of a global citizenship base their defence of the term into two main interrelated arguments. On the one hand, to recognise that the world is becoming increasingly interdependent as a result of transformations in the economy, the development of information and communication technologies, and mass migration that are progressively transforming the traditional conceptions and practices of citizenship (Law 2004; Marshall 2009; Sassen 2002; Tawil 2013). Expressions of this transformation can be found in the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals and groups across the world which are causing both the emergence of new forms of transnational engagement as well as the consolidation of the international human rights regime (Tawil 2013). On the other hand, and to overcome the exclusionary nature of citizenship that some authors have identified (Delanty 2000, 2007), it has been aimed for a global citizenship where no one is excluded or, as Urry (1998: 9)

states: «whether a sense of global citizenship is a historically unique notion which is not in fact based on the contestation between global citizens and others». This statement supports the idea that citizens may develop a sense of belonging to a global political community through their identification with the humanistic values that inspire such principles, i.e, respect for human dignity, equality of rights, social justice, and international solidarity; and which are, in turn, the ethos of international normative frameworks (Tawil 2013). Although it is important to remember what Sassen (2002) remarks: «despite these global transformations, it is important to stress that the State remains the most important location for citizenship, both as a formal legal status and a normative project», for some authors (Tawil 2013) even if global citizens are not legally recognized, they do exist in practice.

Linked to the idea of global citizenship, it is also identified the existence of a global-citizenship education (Oxfam 1997, 2006; Tawil 2013). Global-citizenship education is understood as: «An area of teaching and learning, both formal and non-formal, for children, youth, and adults, which is centred on the social, civic and political education that is considered to be an essential part of the formation of citizenship in any given context» (Tawil 2013: 3).

The definition provided by UNESCO (Tawil 2013) hasits pedagogical translation, which also emphasizes this idea of a post-national and globalised citizenship, as follows:

> Education for Global Citizenship gives children and young people the opportunity to develop critical thinking about complex global issues in the safe space of the classroom. […] Far from promoting one set of answers, Education for Global Citizenship encourages children and young people to explore, develop and express their own values and opinions, whilst listening to and respecting other people's points of view (Oxfam 2006: 2).

Calls for a global citizenship education also came from a perceived need to respond globally to trends derived of the human intervention such as poverty, climate change or bio-diversity loss, as well as to face the challenges posed by the global effects of a cultural, ethnic, and religious plurality (Marshall 2009; Tawil 2013). An international comparison on citizenship education conducted by Kerr in the late 1990s (1999) indicated a number of global trends perceived to be impacting citizenship and presenting all sixteen countries surveyed. Moreover, this study established a common set of challenges along the surveyed countries, as listed: an increasing global population accompanied by rapid movement of people within and across national boundaries; the creation of new forms of community; a changing role of women in society; a growing recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities; a revolu-

tion in information and communications technologies; a collapse of political structures and the birth of new ones; and an impact of the global economy and changing patterns of work (Kerr 1999; Tawil 2013).

Education for global citizenship is then a framing concept which is trying to include the issues and challenges derived of more and more global societies and of its subsequent global civic culture into formal or non-formal educational programmes. Based on these global trends envisaged, UNESCO (Tawil 2013) proposes four broad areas educational programmes on global citizenship which may be clustered into:

1. Human rights issues (human rights education, humanitarian education): which comprises fundamental human rights and responsibilities; child's rights; cultural rights; gender equality; freedom of expression, etc.
2. Environmental issues (environmental education, education for sustainable development): understood as climate change; sustainable management of natural resources; biodiversity; impact of patterns of production and consumption; etc.
3. Issues of social and economic justice (global education, development education): which includes poverty; inequality, health education, rural transformation, migration, patterns of discrimination and exclusion, etc.
4. Intercultural issues: defined as intercultural/international understanding and comprises identity, cultural diversity, learning to live together, peace education, conflict resolution, but also world heritage, arts, languages, world history, indigenous knowledge systems, etc.

In short, global citizenship educationis directly related to the civic, social and political socialisation function of education, contributing to prepare children and young people to deal with the challenges of today's societies (Tawil 2013). Moreover, it tries to provide citizens with the relevant knowledge, skills and values to allow their participation and contribution to their changing communities andincreasingly interconnected and interdependent world.

2.2 Horizon 2020: Analysis of the EU Research Priorities on Citizenship

While UNESCO stresses in incorporating the global dimension and the collective rights dimension to the present active citizenship concept; and redefines, as a consequence, the issues and areas to engage with in the educative programmes of a global citizenship education, the European Union, through the Horizon 2020 programme, defines the future research lines which have to reflect the policy priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy (European Commission 2010b). In the next section, the

role given to the active citizenship in the current European policy priorities is analysed as well as their concreteness in research lines within the present research programme Horizon 2020.

In a Europe whohas not stillovercome the economic downturn which has led to unemployment rates of 12% in general and 20% among the youth; where 80 million people are at risk of poverty and 14 million young people are not in education, employment or training, the challenges in reducing inequality and social exclusion must be faced. In this crucial social context, the engagement of citizens is seen not only as an opportunity but also as a great potential to be fostered as a way to face the economic recovery and inclusive and sustainable long-term growth (European Commission 2015).

The promotion of active citizenship is, then and still, a key element linked to the decrease of inequality and social exclusion for the present European society. On the other hand, the concept of active citizenship is closely related to a long-term question faced by the European Union on the construction of a common European identity in the present changing era.

As a consequence, its treatment becomes a challenge to be included under the research programme of the European Union: Horizon2020[1]. Horizon 2020 is a challenge-based approach to bring together resources and knowledge across different fields, technologies and disciplines, including social sciences and the humanities, covering activities from research to market with a new focus on innovation-related activities. To articulate it, Horizon 2020 is organised in ten programme sections, being one of them *Societal Challenges*. Societal Challenges comprises, in turn, seven challenges[2], being one of them *Europe in a changing world*, where the question of active citizenship is addressed the most.

Particularly, and going into deep in the present work programme 2016-2017, there are up to three calls that address the question of citizenship engagement in order to face the societal changes the European Union is working with. They are *Intra-EU mobility and its impacts for so-*

[1] Horizon 2020 is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever with nearly €80 billion of funding available over 7 years (2014 to 2020). To know more about the program, please consult: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/what-horizon-2020>.

[2] The seven Societal Challenges are: (1) health, demographic change and wellbeing; (2) food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research, and the bioeconomy; (3) secure, clean and efficient energy; (4) smart, green and integrated transport; (5) climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials; (6) secure societies – protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens and (7) Europe in a changing world – inclusive, innovative and reflective societies. To know more about them, please consult: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/societal-challenges> (12/2016).

cial and economic systems (REV-INEQUAL-04-2016), *Inequalities in the EU and their consequences for democracy, social cohesion and inclusion* (REV-INEQUAL-05-2016) and *Tackling inequalities at their roots: new policies for fairness in education from early age* (REV-INEQUAL-06-2016) (European Commission 2015).

The first one, *Intra-EU mobility and its impacts for social and economic systems*, tackles the question of the social and economic impact of free movement and intra-EU migration policies, whether being of EU citizens or third country nationals (TCNs). At this regard, the research is not only mapping the paths of their geographical mobility to devise comparative cross-country indicators of mobility but also investigating the causes of mobility and addressing the legal, economic, social and cultural factors that influence patterns and routes of mobility of male and female EU citizens and TCNs. On the other hand, it is also being investigated the scale and impact of migrants on the social and economic systems of the receiving countries, especially in questions such as employment, welfare benefits, language barriers and multilingualism or legislation. Among the impacts there is also being investigated the question of the reverse migration, that is, the socio-economic impact on those EU-countries whose citizens are moving: remittances, loss of human capital, impact of migration on family life (separations, impact on children and the elderly) and local communities, gender, equality, demographic trends as well as the impact on the tax base and labour market. Finally, there is tackle the perceptions on and politicisation of intra-EU mobility as well as its representation in the media. Of particular interest is the analysis of the role of the media, including social media, and of political parties and other groups in opinion formation. In this sense, EU is assessing the connections with the development of xenophobia in Europe, and, on the opposite part, the role of education systems in Europe to awareness and knowledge of the historical and current realities of migration that can face and undermine this xenophobia.

The second one, *Inequalities in the EU and their consequences for democracy, social cohesion and inclusion*, addresses the question of how rising inequalities impact upon democracy and social and political inclusion, emphasizing particularly the question of how such inequalities constrains or empowers individuals' and groups' political capacities and their effects in the social cohesion. In a context of 'decline of the middle class', de-politicisation, and decrement of political participation, EU is promoting the research in the different forms of participation: civil society, civic culture and social participation. At this regard is promoted research not only in traditional democratic participation but also in the digital forms of participation, alternative or non-institutionalised forms of participation. Besides, the inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable groups and the role of education in the engagement of political

participation are also taken into account. Particular attention is set on the political participation of young people and the need of a different policy approach that answer to their particular and diversity reality. On the same line, the research is also being focus on the new ways of political engagement and interaction, which counters the de-politicisation of socially excluded young people.

The third one, *Tackling inequalities at their roots: new policies for fairness in education from early age*, faces the question of reducing inequality and discrimination in European education systems as a way to cater for considerable diversity and enable all citizens to succeed and develop their full potential, irrespective of their background and according to their specific learning needs. Education is, again, a key issue to address and overcome social inequalities and improve the quality of citizens' life. At this regard, one of the fields in which research is being facilitated to reduce educational disparity and disadvantage from an early age is the promotion of citizenship and enhancing of democratic values.

To sum up, the analysis of the calls within the Horizon 2020 programme reveals three broad lines of research related to the question of active citizenship the European Commission is fostering investigation on because they are among the policy priorities of the European Union:

1. The EU citizens and TCNs mobility (migration and reverse migration) and their socio-economic impact, especially in questions such as employment, welfare benefits, legislation, multilingualism, or social awareness of migration.
2. The promotion of the different forms of political participation (civil society, civic culture and social participation), especially among marginalized and vulnerable groups as well as young people, to engage citizens in the current society and generate an effect on the social cohesion.
3. The promotion of citizenship and enhancing of democratic values in European education systems as a way to reduce inequality and discrimination.

These three broad research lines of the European Union have much to do with the global trends impacting in the current citizenship definition according to UNESCO guidelines or the research conducted by Kerr (1999). At this regard, the first research line on migration and the subsequent socio-economic impact was also mention by Kerr's research when emphasizes the importance of analyse the rapid movement of people within and across national boundaries and the impact of the global economy and changing patterns of work. On the other hand, the second research line on political participation is closely related to the collapse of political structures and the birth of new ones. Finally, both European Union and UNESCO emphasise the importance of include

(global) citizenship education within the education systems as a way to provide citizens with the knowledge, skills, and values to deal with the challenges of today's world and to reduce inequality and discrimination.

3. How to Design Methodologically a Research on Citizenship

Once reviewed the present theoretical debate on citizenship and the subsequent common research lines on this question fixed by international organisms such as UNESCO or the EU research programme Horizon 2020, the next section focuses on the methodological issues to take into account in the design of a research on citizenship. At this regard, this section gives general methodological guidelines and introduces the communicative methodology (Gómez, Puigvert, Flecha 2011) as a valid approach to orientate any future research on citizenship. To illustrate it, a research from the European Union research programme which has been developed using the communicative methodology will be described.

Any research on social sciences and humanities has to contemplate compulsory elements such as the definition of the research question or problem, the review of the literature to obtain the state of the art or theoretical framework on the research topic, the establishment of the objectives and/or hypothesis of research as well as the definition of how the information and data will be collected and analysed (Gómez *et al.* 2006). This is the same as saying that any research has to specify what and how to study, to verify the attainment (or not) of the previously established objectives and/or hypotheses, to describe the results achieved and, finally, to contribute with the corresponding conclusions.

However, and although there are common elements, the definition of the question or problem and especially, of the methods and data collection and analysis in any research have to be coherent with a methodological approach previously described and use as a research framework. There exist different research approaches (positivist, constructivist, socio-critic) and research methods (grounded theory, narrative inquired, phenomenological inquiry) in humanities and social sciences.

In the present chapter and to exemplify the design of a research on citizenship, the communicative methodology is being used. The communicative methodology focuses in the overcoming of social inequalities from critical reflection and intersubjectivity (Gómez *et al.* 2006):

> […] an approach that in the methodological level aims not only in describing, explaining, understanding and interpreting reality, but also studying to transform it, stressing how significances are constructed communicatively through the interaction between people; in this way,

> it only can construct the research study from the interpretations, reflections and theories of people taking part in the social reality wanted to transform (2006: 32-33).

According to this definition, the communicative methodology answers to a double objective. On the one hand, it analyses and validates an explanation of the phenomena, situations and interactions that take part in society, with special attention to the elements that causes social exclusion and that transform. On the other hand, this analysis is always done linked to the social utility of the research, that is, with the objective of obtaining social transformation.

Communicative methodology has been developed by the Community of Research o Excellence for All (CREA) at the University of Barcelona from contributions of authors and theories of reference in the social sciences (Gómez, Puigvert & Flecha 2011; Gómez *et al.* 2006). Communicative methodology has been used in European researches of the highest scientific level addressed to transform social exclusion[3] and its scientific, political and social impact has been recognised by the international scientific community: «As a summary, research in education and training needs to contribute to policy making. Critical communicative research perspective has shown to have a significant social and political impact on the European educational and social systems» (European Commission 2010a)[4].

4. The Definition of the Research Question

Any research begins with the identification, delimitation and evaluation of a research problem or topic that worries to researchers. In this sense, and once the research topic is selected, it is the turn for its definition, verifying its appropriateness and relevance as well as its transforming impact. In the case of the communicative methodology the impact is a relevant question, because one of the criteria followed for the selection of a research topic is the objective of overcoming social inequalities (Gómez *et al.* 2006).

Once identified, delimited and evaluated the research topic, it is the time to fix it in research question or questions. The research question or

[3] For instance, the integrated project of the 6th Framework Programme *INCLUD-ED: Strategies for Inclusion and Social Cohesion in Europe from Education* (2006-2011) or the RTD project of the 5th Framework Programme *WORKALÓ: The creation of new occupational patterns for cultural minorities: the gypsy case* (2001-2004).

[4] Conclusions from the conference *Science against Poverty* (European Commission 2010a) organized by the European Commission and the Ministry of Science and Innovation in the frame of the Spanish Presidency of the European Union of 2010.

questions have to specify the object and dimension of the topic because, on the one hand, delimit the problem to be addressed and, on the other hand, become the basis from which research objectives and/or hypothesis will be established.

5. Literature Review

Literature review involves examining the theoretical and practical background and reviewing the researches and theories elaborated related to the research topic. It answers to questions such as: what it has been found related to the topic? Does it exist prior works? What kind of information is needed to find an answer to the topic? Where and how can the information be found?

A key function of the literature review is contributing with the basic information to elaborate the theoretical framework of the research question or topic. In this sense, the literature review does not have to know only the present situation of the topic but also to enlarge the knowledge on it. This is why; it would take into account not only the prior researches but also the debate which is taking place inside the international scientific community. With this objective, it is necessary to consult all the available sources (theoretical texts, reports, studies, data, etc.) both written as obtained thank to the use of data basis such as Web of Science, Scopus, Sociofile, ERIC, etc. filtered by relevance and/or most cited.

6. Formulation of Objectives and/or Hypothesis

The formulation of the objectives and/or hypothesis defines the approach of the research. Hypotheses are statements to be verified through the field work and the data collection and analysis. Objectives refer to the attainments to be achieved in the research (Gómez *et al.* 2006).

Hypotheses are formulated from one or more testable assertions presented as a possible solution to the problem formulated. In turn, it can be defined general and/or specific objectives. In any case, hypotheses and objectives have to be formulated in a precise way. Moreover, they have to be formulated on the basis of the research question or questions previously established, have to be coherent with the theoretical framework and literature review as well as have to sustain the opinion of the research team, the interpretation of the target group and take into account the social impact of the results.

In the case of communicative methodology, its postulates and organization of the research favours a situation of intersubjective dialogue

to establish hypotheses and define objectives (Gómez, Puigvert, Flecha 2011; Gómez *et al.* 2006).

7. Data Collection and Data Analysis Techniques

A fundamental step in the design of a research is the definition and selection of the target group as well as the methodology for the data collection, which can be both quantitative as qualitative.

The quantitative methodology selects a representative sample from the techniques that guarantee its representation and generalize the findings. The qualitative methodology does not look for generalizing results but obtaining qualitative information about the research question. This is why it is prioritised purposive or target-point samples, that is, the selection of subjects who are representatives of specific collectives or who can contribute to research with privileged information.

Communicative methodology uses both quantitative as qualitative methodology. The main difference is that the representatives of the target group take part in the design and developing of the research (Gómez *et al.* 2006).

Related to data collection, quantitative methodology use tools such as tests, objective evidences, scales, close questionnaires and systematic observation. On the other hand, qualitative methodology uses strategies such as interviews, focus groups, participating observation, life stories and literature review.

Finally, and in relation with the data analysis techniques, it can be used software such as SPSS in the case of the quantitative data or MAXQDA or Atlas/ti in the case of qualitative data. That software is the most commonly used in educational research, but not the only ones. There is a myriad of software packages for research purposes (NVivo, R Statistical Computing, TamsAnalyzer, etc.). In any case, the importance of the analysis is not in the software but in the data categorization, which consists in the selection of common topics or conceptual grouping to facilitate obtaining evidences to validate hypotheses and/or objectives. In the case of the communicative methodology, the categorization of information is organised in exclusionary and transformative dimensions, once it has been transcribed, codified and grouped (Gómez, Puigvert, Flecha 2011; Gómez *et al.* 2006).

8. Results and Conclusions

Findings resulting from the data collection and analysis are exposed and systematised in the results section. In this sense, it is necessary to

compile all the evidences as well as data that allows the verification or refute the hypotheses and objectives previously established. In this sense, findings can be presented according to the same categorization used in the data analysis.

The final conclusions have to compile the main findings of the research carried out, especially those related to the objectives and hypotheses formulated. On the other hand, hypotheses and/or objectives have to be validated or refuted. Finally, it could be of interest to include a prospective on future lines of research on the topic.

8.1 Exemplifying the Research on Citizenship

Thereupon a research from the European Union research programme which has been developed using the communicative methodology will serve to illustrate future research in citizenship. This research has been selected in a twofold reason: firstly, it answers to the research lines established by UNESCO and the European Union related to citizenship and, secondly, it has been carried out on the basis of the communicative methodology.

8.2 The INCLUD-ED Project: Promoting Family Participation

The present example analyses the types of family participation in European schools, emphasising specially those types that generates a higher democratization of educational spaces, includes the participation of vulnerable collectives and, as a consequence, causes more educational achievement as well as educational and social cohesion.

This example is in close relation with the third research line of the EU-Horizon 2020 research programme, that is, the promotion of citizenship and the enhancement of democratic values within schools as key elements to face the question of reducing inequality and discrimination in European education systems.

Particularly, this example introduces the main findings of the sixth project of the integrated project *INCLUD-ED – Strategies for Inclusion and Social Cohesion in Europe from Education* (2006-2011)[5] related to the

[5] INCLUD-ED aimed to analyse educational strategies that contribute to social cohesion and educational strategies that lead to social exclusion, in the context of the European knowledge based society, providing key elements and action lines to improve educational and social policy. Coordinated by the research centre CREA-UB and within the 6th European Research Framework Programme, INCLUD-ED was the integrated Project about school education provided with the highest amount of resources and scientific range of all FP of the European Commission until then. To have more information about the INCLUDE-Ed project, please consult: http://creaub.info/included/. Furthermore, INCLUD-ED is the only Social Sciences and Humanities

promotion of active family and community participation in schools as a transformative strategy to enhance students' achievement.

The sixth project, *Local projects for social cohesion*, had as a general aim to study communities involved in learning projects that have developed the integration of social and educational interventions that contribute to reduce inequalities and marginalization, and to foster social inclusion and empowerment. Concerning family participation, the objective was twofold: on the one hand, to analyse the role played by education and participation of social agents in promoting school success. This objective was based on the premise/hypothesis that student learning and performance are considerably influenced by the interactions students have with all the social agents involved in their education: teachers, families, community members and peers. On the other hand, to identify family and community participation in schools, pointing out which of them can better contribute to increase students' achievement.

All research work conducted within this project was based on the communicative methodology. It used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, as follows: a literature review of research on successful educational actions that reduce school failure and social exclusion; an analysis of twenty-six EU Member States educational systems and recent reforms and an examination of the data on educational outcomes provided by international datasets (e.g. PISA, TIMMS, and PIRLS) (INCLUD-ED Consortium 2009). Moreover, it was carried out a four year longitudinal study in 4 successful schools located in low SES contexts, which contain students from cultural minorities and strong community involvement. This four-year longitudinal study to schools applied quantitative, qualitative and communicative data collection and analysis techniques[6].

The use of the communicative methodology led to hold assemblies in which the research results were presented to the educational community and discussed with them. As a consequence, a collection of the demands and concerns of the various educational actors involved was possible, which were later brought into dialogue together with the findings related to successful educational actions. The fact that everyone knew the project and that the results of the project were improving the educational practices of their children and, consequently, their academic results, turned the involvement of the whole community in the research into a key element (INCLUD-ED Consortium 2009).

project of the 10 success stories from the Framework programmes for research selected by the European Commission due to its impact: <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-11-520_en.htm> (12/2016).

[6] Reports on the results of the four year longitudinal study can be obtained from: <http://creaub.info/included/results/> (12/2016).

INCLUD-ED has identified five educational community participation ways: informative participation, consultative, decisive, evaluative and educational (INCLUD-ED Consortium 2009). The characteristics of each model are hereby summarised:

Table 1 – Families' participation types in the educational centres. [Source: INCLUD-ED Consortium 2009: 54]

Informative participation	Parents are informed about the school activities, school functioning, and the decisions which have already been made.	Fewer probabilities to achieve school success and the participation of families.
	Parents do not take part in those school decisions.	
	Parents' meetings consist of informing families about these decisions.	
Consultative participation	Parents have a limited impact on decision making.	
	Participation is based on consultation with families.	
	They participate through the school's statutory bodies.	
Decision making participation	Community members participate in decision-making processes by becoming representatives in decision-making bodies.	Greater possibilities of achieving school success and the participation of families
	Family and community members monitor the school's accountability in relation to its educational results.	
Evaluative participation	Family and community members participate in students' learning processes through helping evaluate children's school progress.	
	Family and community members participate in the general school evaluation.	
Educational participation	Family and community members participate in students' learning activities, both during regular school hours and after school.	
	Family and community members participate in educational programs which respond to their needs.	

Out of these types of participation, decisive, evaluative and educational participation are the ones with potential impact in schooling success. First of all, and since people learn in diverse spaces and through several interactions, the pupils have far more chances to learn, since they can resort to

several interactions and discourses. On the other hand, the participation of families makes coordination of discourses easier amongst families, the school and other educational agents in the neighbourhood. The participation of families and the community in the organisation of the centre and in the educational processes as such, improves the relation amongst relatives, the school and the neighbourhood. Solidarity, complicity and friendship relations are strengthened, thus benefiting the student body, families and the community as a whole. This allows the prevention and solving conflicts in a more efficient manner, since student body, faculty and families interact to give response to cohabitation problems or of any other kind (INCLUD-ED Consortium 2009).

As sum up, family and community participation improves coordination between home and the school, and increases the resources available in the school. It is particularly beneficial for the academic achievement of minority students and students with disabilities (INCLUD-ED Consortium, 2009). It meets, thus, one of the three broad research lines of the European Union, because shows how to promote democratic values and democratize schools to lead the participation of vulnerable groups, as key elements on reducing inequality and discrimination in European education systems.

8.3 Conclusions

From the T.H. Marshall's classic definition to the present *global citizenship* or *active citizenship* notions, the literature review shows extensive and quite diverse definitions of the nowadays concept of citizenship. Such differences and diversification of the concept is the result of a changing society and a perceived need to answer to global trends such as poverty, climate change or bio-diversity loss, and to face the challenges posed by the global effects of cultural, ethnic, and religious plurality.

In this sense, international organisms such as UNESCO or the European Union are promoting both research and educational programmes to answer the challenges our present society is dealing with. Then, in the one side and related to education, both UNESCO and the European Union emphasise the importance of include (global) citizenship education within the education systems as a way to provide citizens with the knowledge, skills, and values to deal with the challenges of today's world.

On the other hand, and related to research, the review of the EU Horizon2020 Research Programme includes three broad research lines related to citizenship in the current work programme: (1) the question of EU migration and their socio-economic impact (employment, welfare benefits, legislation, multilingualism, or social awareness of migration), (2) the promotion of the different forms of political participation to engage citizens in the current society and (3) the promotion of citizenship

and enhancing of democratic values in European education systems as a way to reduce inequality and discrimination. These research lines have much to do with the global trends also mentioned by UNESCO and related to the importance of analysing the rapid movement of people within and across national boundaries and its impact in the global economy, on the one hand, and the collapse of political structures and the birth of new ones, on the other.

Related to these research lines, this chapter has shown how to develop a research in citizenship from a communicative approach. At this regard, it has been reviewed its main phases and it has been exemplified with a real research from the 6th European Framework Programme, *INCLUD-ED – Strategies for Inclusion and Social Cohesion in Europe from Education* (2006-2011). Particularly, the example refers to the sixth project, related to the promotion of active family and community participation in schools as a transformative strategy to enhance students' achievement. This research is in line with the third research line of the European Union, because it shows how to promote democratic values and democratize schools to lead the participation of vulnerable groups as key elements on reducing inequality and discrimination in European education systems.

However, researches have not to forget that international organisms are also concern by the scientific, political and social impact of the research at the present. By scientific impact is understood the communication, evaluation and use of the research results by the scientific community. On the other hand, the political impact is the use of research results by policy makers, companies, NGOs or citizens to plan and carry out their interventions. Finally, by social impact is understood the social improvements achieved as a consequence of implementing the results of a particular research project or study (*IMPACT-EV*, 2014-2017).

To this end, European research projects as *IMPACT-EV: Evaluating the impact and outcomes of EU SSH research* (2014-2017) are developing a permanent system of selection, monitoring and evaluation of the various impacts of Social Sciences and the Humanities research. *IMPACT-EV* will not only develop indicators and standards for evaluating scientific impact of SSH research but especially, for evaluating their policy and social impact. *IMPACT-EV* has launched *SIOR, Social Impact Open Repository*[7], an open access repository to display, cite and store the social impact of research results that can be used by researchers in order to make more visible and clear to citizenry the social utility of their work.

[7] <http://sior.ub.edu/jspui/> (12/2016).

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CONCEPTUALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ADULTS' KEY COMPETENCES

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Abstract: This chapter provides theoretical insights on the concept of key competences through different theories and categories as well it presents the map of conceptualization of key competences. Conceptualisation of key competences is based on different theories and approaches. Finally, case study and research results conducted in Lithuania are presented briefly. Results of this national research have revealed the growing importance of key competences' development for adults employment, workplace maintenance, career, civic life and personal development.

Keywords: Key competences, conceptualisation, adult learners, case study, adult employment, career.

1. Introduction

Current economic development and societal changes, increasing requirements for citizens', organizational agriculture sector and countries' competitiveness, require changing approach towards education and traditional education systems. When ideas of lifelong learning are applied and developed in educational practices, the issue of what is the optimal ratio between the development of specific professional competences needed for implementation of exact activities and key competencies that can be applied in different professional activities, social and personal life situations, arises.

Adults who want to participate in society's life successfully, need to gain and develop key competences that are a requisite for lifelong learning. Management of these competences and ability to apply them in the world of work are determined by many factors.

That is why increased accessibility to the development of key competences is an important task that needs to be analyzed, discussed and developed by all social partners and countries. Besides this, key competences that undertake lifelong learning idea are especially significant as they allow people to gain new knowledge competences needed for creation and implementation of innovations (European Commission 2010).

2. Theoretical foundation

The development of the concept of Key competences was mainly influenced by political, social, cultural and economic changes. The rapid development of technologies and ongoing processes obliged adult society

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(learners and workers) from different life and industry sectors to take more responsibilities, become more independent and in this way increase their effectiveness. That is why there is a number of different definitions and classifications of key competences that are found in the scientific literature. Some of these competences are more abstract, especially those closely related with adults' personal characteristics, behavior or their mental activities. The need for key competences and their importance mainly depend on changes and processes happening, development of ICT and increasing professionalism in a professional life (Buiskool *et al.* 2010). These key competences are closely related with personal, professional and societal needs (European Commission 2010). Nevertheless, while researching the concept of key competences and its' application, it is important to note that they are closely related to the scientific context of education, psychology, political economy and ergonomics as theoretical insights and models from the mentioned scientific fields provide different approaches towards key competences, its' functions as well as importance for an individual and society.

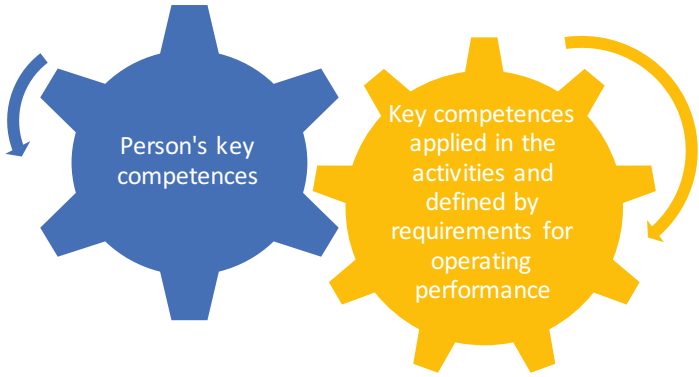
Theoretical insights of economic and political economy sciences, related with key competences, are developing rapidly in the international scientific discourse. Green (2013) provides three main characteristics describing skills and abilities that identify competences:

- Application of skills and abilities that create added value in generating activities.
- Acquirement of abilities and skills through learning processes.
- Determination of social abilities and skills (Green 2013).

According to the field of appliance and its context, abilities and skills can be divided into general (the ones applied in various fields of work) and special (professional) that can be applied in a very specific fields of work activities. According to the complexity of activities where skills and abilities are applied they can be divided into basic (required for common and repetitive activities) and upper abilities (compulsory for the implementation of complicated and unpredictably changing work objectives). According to the nature of activities' objectives, abilities and skills can be grouped into routine (applied automatically and invariable) and non-routine (applied according to the changing operational performance) (Green 2013).

Green (2013) emphasizes one of the key contradictions related to adults' skills and abilities – whether (and how much) skills and abilities are characteristics of an individual person, or (and how much) they can be approached as operational characteristics (Fig. 1)? What are the interfaces between requirements for operating performance for skills and abilities and their acquisition and expression in activities? (Green 2013). This question is relevant when analyzing key competences as the researcher must identify clearly his own approach on how he defines the concept of key competences.

Figure 1 – The expression fields of key competences. [Source: Green 2013, modified by authors]



The contradiction mentioned above raises many problems when conducting researches in the fields of abilities and skills, based on research participants' self-evaluation of their abilities. Is this self-evaluation valid and can it provide the objective information about abilities and their adequacy for operational performance? Can this kind of researches be objective indicators of persons' abilities and skills that he has gained and applied?

Simplistic understanding of key abilities, when there is only universality and transference of these abilities accentuated, can mislead and create an illusion that the content of these abilities is universal, common and even isolated from external context effects. But this illusion ignores the fact that key abilities form in a various and differently developing social systems, where the content and structure determine various social, economic and socio-professional factors. That is why the content of the same type key competences that are formed in different context, can never be the same (Fig. 2).

Figure 2 – Factors determining the diversity and uniqueness of key competences' content and their formation processes. [prepared by authors]

The formation of key competences and uniqueness of its content must be considered in scientific researches, especially in comparative researches where the aim is to compare how different groups or societies acquire, apply or develop their key competences. Since the end of 20th century, key competences became a significant research object and relevant topic for expert discussion and so different theories and approaches towards key competences were distinguished.

- Human capital theory (Becker 1964; Schulz 1972) accentuates that needs for key competences in the labor market are determined by the fact that labor market is distinct not just because of their specific features, but as well, because of key competences that allow person to create a bigger added value.
- Skill formation political economy theory (Busemeyer, Trampush 2011) describes key competences as ones' capacities needed for economic activities. These activities are formed between two elements: social economic system and institutions acting in these processes.
- Theory of variety of capitalism concentrates on the idea that the need for key competences refers to the «articulation between the regimes of social welfare and employment from the one side and protection of employment and wages ensured by the industrial relations and social dialogue from the other side» (Tūtlys *et al.* 2015: 12). Representatives of this theory Estevez-Abe, Iversen, Soskice (2001) point out three types of skills that are applied in the economic activities: sector specific, enterprise specific and general skills (Estevez-Abe, Iversen, Soskice 2001). The distribution of these skills in society and preferences of their development are influenced and formed by the mentioned articulation between social economic system and institutions acting in these processes, as well as protection of employment and salaries ensured by the social dialogue and industrial relations.
- Theory of learning organizations explains that attention towards the development of organization personnel' key competences is one of the most typical feature of learning organizations. Fuller, Unwin, Felstead and Jewson (2007) distinguish that expansive learning surroundings in the organization are more beneficial for the development of key competences, while restrictive learning environments – for the development of specific competences.

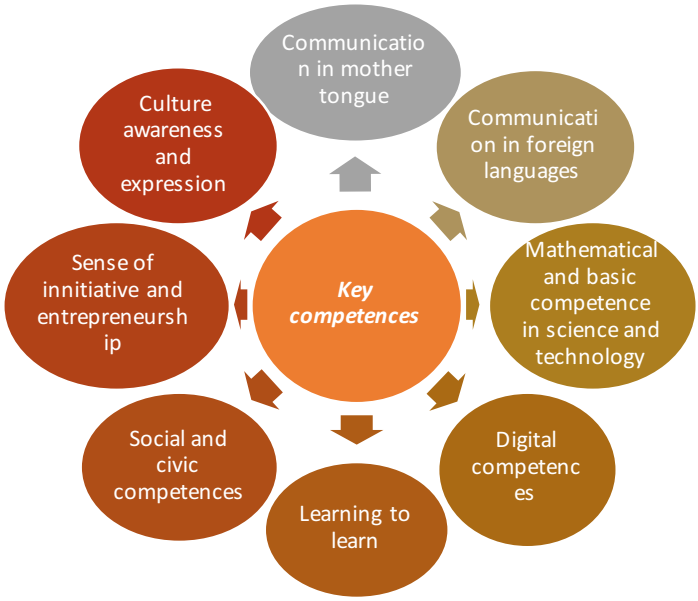
Besides different approaches through various theories, key competence framework is analyzed by many scientists (Young, Chapman 2010; Blomeke *et al.* 2013; Spottl, Ruth 2011; Winterton 2009) as well. In west countries the research object of key competences is related to vocational training but later evolved in education and learning systems that am at preparing workers able to adapt quickly to the changes of global market.

The analysis on the need for the key competences in European Union was implemented in 2001 when the national expert work group was established by the European Commission. The aim of this work group was to collect information and data on the concept of key competences in various countries. The results of this research revealed that all of the countries that have participated in research confirmed the need for the development of these key competences. Different countries have distinguished different competences and United Kingdom was the only one who has integrated the development of key competences into curriculum by separating it from other subject competences (Eurydice 2002). Globalization, increasing adults' mobility, work and study mobility and migration are the mostly analyzed and discussed factors that influence the need for various competences. These processes determined the development of universal and adjustable to different contents competencies. Nevertheless, other factors could be found in scientific literature, such as personal development, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment. Young and Chapman (2010) expanded the list of these competences by accentuating the application of these competences to various situations and different work specifics, and supplemented the list of key competences by adding communication, problem and conflict solving. Some authors state that key competences enhance the competency, effectiveness and productivity in labor market (Young, Chapman 2010).

Apart from this the newest agenda of European Commission for the development of new skills for Europe (2016) initiates the idea of urgent need for increasing development of adults' key competences as well as strategies for overcoming mismatch between the professional and personal knowledge and skills. This agenda distinguishes the need for digital, basic, literacy, numeracy skills

In the Communication of European Commission *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes* (2012) it is stated that only 8.9% of EU adults participate in lifelong learning programmes and in seven countries the average is lower than 5%. These numbers reveal that Lifelong learning programmes are implemented slowly from the point of view of number of participants. This EC Communication aims to set the goals and encourage active citizenship, personal development and welfare by developing skills allowing to employ easier. In the context of World's and Europe's slow economic growth and youth unemployment, development of universal and basic competences is relevant task that all countries are committed to solve. A European Reference Framework (2007) sets out an eight key competences that every young adult must acquire before the graduation of school (Fig. 3).

Figure 3 – Key competences. [Source: EC 2006]



These 8 competences have been described broadly in documents regulating adult education as well as lifelong learning of VET processes and strategies and they mainly describe:

- Communication in mother tongue – ability to use vocabulary properly and correctly when expressing one's ideas, participating in discussions or making oral public speeches or presentations, as well as, knowing main rules of written grammar.
- Communication in foreign languages – ability to demonstrate proficient knowledge of foreign language in intercultural dialogues or other forms of intercultural communication. Level of proficiency might be different when considering separately abilities of speaking, reading, listening and writing.
- Mathematical competence and basic competence in science and technology – ability to count, make basic mathematical operations and actions, adapt measurement units that are needed in the everyday life.
- Digital competence – ability to use and actively participate in the social life through information technologies, various social networks, as well as make basic operations that are needed for everyday financial control.
- Learning to learn competence – ability to analyze and control learning situations as well as create strategies and scenarios for one's learning

through self-reflection and identification of strengths and weaknesses of this process.
- Civil and social competence – ability to participate actively in social life by expressing tolerance, honesty, respect for other ideas and opinions. This competence demonstrates one's input into creation and cooperation in the process of creation of democratic and justice-based environment.
- Competence of sense of initiative and entrepreneurship – ability to lead yourself to find a work in a competitive job market, know strategies on how to keep work, create a new work place, start business, i.e. to be creative and thrusting for new possibilities and ways to become financially independent and ensure personal financial stability.
- Competence of culture awareness and expression – ability to demonstrate world-view and world-picture of cultural knowledge in different situations, to be culturally aware not just about main cultural aspects of one's nation but as well as of worldwide culture.

This classification of key competences is internationally accepted by nevertheless, many activities, researches and discussion are orientated towards development of different key competences' classification regarding different aspects. For example, TUNING project, aimed to structure and generate subject curriculum according to the study degree as well as correlate it with learning outcome (Gibbs, Kennedy, Vickers 2012). According to this, experts classified key competences into 3 fields: instrumental competences, intrapersonal competences and systemic competences. Comparing these 3 fields with classification offered by A European Reference Framework, TUNING managed to generalize abilities by assigning them to 3 competence groups. Linguistic, cognitive, methodological and technical abilities. Communication in native or foreign language are a part of instrumental competences, while intrapersonal competences cover personal characteristics presenting ability to express ideas and feelings, and social skills. Finally, systemic competences encompass knowing, understanding and abilities needed for comparing and joining knowledge with activities into one unit.

Lithuanian Qualifications Framework (2010) identifies 7 key competences, such as problem solving and decision making competence, information reception and transfer competence, adaptation to external (work, environment) changes competence, activity planning and organizing competence, independent learning and teaching competence, having motivation for development and improvement competence, and creativity and proactivity competence.

The largest scale survey on adults' skills and competencies is conducted by OECD who organize The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) in order to measure adults'

knowledge in key competences and gather information and data on how these skills are applied in home, work and social environments. The latest PIAAC survey revealed the need for skill development in order to improve social inclusion and cohesion (OECD 2016).

3. Conceptualization process of key competences in lifelong learning context

The fact of aging society, economic globalization and increasing need for bigger labor force, demands to develop new strategies allowing longer stay in the labor market for adults at the same time, encouraging them to develop their competences constantly in order to adapt to the changes happening. The importance of development of general abilities and mobilization becomes a challenge and task for all 3 parts: citizens, enterprises and the State. A combined set of 8 key competences have been accentuated by the European key competences for lifelong learning abilities, that allow citizens to fully and actively participate in public and civic life, fulfill their personal needs, integrate and stay in labor market and be socially included. Every citizen is expected to develop these competences, as at the end of the day, they may play a crucial role when adapting and adjusting in knowledge society

As it was mentioned in previous section, these competencies are directly linked with each other, overlap and complement one another (European Reference Framework 2007). Close and intensive interaction among general abilities as well as constant demand for general competencies and their development, induced the need for conceptualization of these competences. The map of adults' significant key competences represents conceptualization of the previously mentioned 8 key competences (Fig. 4). All 5 conceptualized competences are important when thinking of adults' empowerment to participate in active social life, be aware of constant changes in work environment and be able to adjust to these changes and be active in labor market for as long as possible. Nevertheless, development of these essential competencies may become important in career design and guidance activities, especially when adults want to change their career trajectories or stay in work place for a longer time. In this case, these specific competencies may help to reduce the gap between business and science. All the aspects mentioned above prove the need for the research that is presented in this study.

As it can be seen from the conceptualised map (Tūtlys *et al.* 2015), eight key competences proposed by European Commission were connected into five groups representing the following competencies:

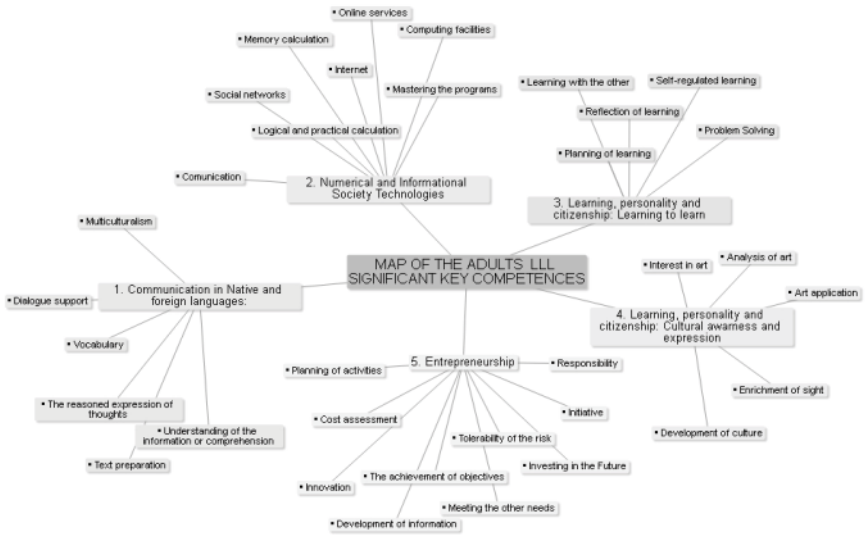
- communication in the native and foreign languages;
- numerical and information society technologies;
- learning to learn;

- personality and citizenship development;
- entrepreneurship.

This kind of conceptualization process and distinguished 5 competences allow researchers in a more simplistic way to analyse and research how these competences are applied and developed in adult education and lifelong learning processes. Besides, authors of the map proposed more conceptualised and less detailed description of each competence, by summarizing main characteristics of each competence.

It is important to note, that authors of this chapter follow the proposed classification into 5 categories and see them as inevitable for every person to participate in nowadays knowledge society.

Figure 4 – Map of the adults LLL significant key competences. [Source: Tūtlys *et al.* 2015]



3. Emerging need for key competence development: Lithuanian case study

Aging society and increasing need for working power require searching ways how to help adults to stay longer in job market. In the context of continuous technological, organizational and cultural changes key competences became especially relevant factor of social inclusion that determines adults' possibilities to participate in the creation of state citizens' welfare by developing personal career trajectories. These processes and economic globalization intensifies competitiveness for job places and require continuous adaptation to social changes.

Development and mobilization of key competences is very significant issue task for society, business and state. But scientific fields are still lacking of scientific researches proved with information about situation of key competence development and challenges in Lithuania. To solve this issue, a group of experts from Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania), Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania), Kaunas University of Applied Engineering Sciences (Lithuania), University of Strasbourg (France) and University of Bremen (Germany) implemented a project that aimed to conduct comparative research on analysis of key competence development and training situations in Lithuania, Germany and France (Tūtlys *et al.* 2015). Results of the researched were used for providing strategic recommendations for development of key competences as well as prepare 4 modules, conceptualizing 8 key competences based on EQF.

Research methodology.

Comparative analysis was implemented in 2 stages. Firstly, analysis of political and strategic documents in Lithuania, France, Germany and EU was implemented that was important for key competences' training and development and key competence methodology was prepared. Based on this methodology, 6 questionnaires were developed. These questionnaires covered 6 key competences that distinguished the content of the specific competence, revealed what competences adults have and how they use it in personal, social and professional activities. As well, the data on the importance of application of these competences, factors impeding and precluding the development of key competences, and other relevant aspects was gathered.

The survey was implemented in two stages and total number of researcher participants was 8096 (the pilot study – 1104 answered questionnaires, the main survey – 6992 answered questionnaires) representing all regions in Lithuania. The convenience sample was applied to reach three target groups: employed, unemployed and senior adults, in order to collect as much filled-in online or paper questionnaires as possible. It is important to note, that regarding the length of surveys, participants were asked to fill-in answers on biographical questions and one of the 6 questionnaires on specific competences.

Research implementation and result analysis and adaptation is based on the principle of policy learning, where experiences of all countries are analyzed critically and the specific principles and its mechanisms are analyzed and discussed in perspective of Lithuanian context. Based on the results, 4 modules were developed and installed on project website as an open education resource (OER) and learning platform, allowing adults to develop their skills and key competences.

Results of the research revealed, that development of key competences is regarded by adults as very significant and important factor in

reaching for employment, career and active participation in civil society. Next to this, findings disclosed quite important contradictions between the interests of adults related to development of key competences and existing institutional, economic and social opportunities to acquire these competences.

Analysis of the factors influencing the development specific key competences, have revealed some interesting results (Table 1). For example, the survey indicated quite high level of information society skills of the research participants, in particular the skills related to the use of internet and mobile technologies and communication in their professional, social and everyday activities. Nevertheless, research participants have expressed the increased interest for further development of these skills and competencies.

Table 1 – Factors for the development of key competences.

Enhancing factor	Very important	Important	Not very important	Unimportant	Number of answers
Needs of everyday work	40.4%	51.0%	6.1%	2.5%	3181
Search of the new job	32.1%	42.1%	14.8%	11.0%	3140
Career planning	37.3%	37.9%	16.4%	8.4%	3156
Wish of advancement	50.5%	41.3%	6.0%	2.1%	3200
Striving of self-realization	48.1%	42.1%	7.6%	2.1%	3183
Support of society and friends	30.3%	50.7%	16.0%	3.1%	3164
Wish to be useful for the family	48.4%	43.2%	6.5%	1.9%	3177
Wish to be useful for the others	31.5%	51.5%	14.0%	3.0%	3168
Support of family members	50.8%	39.4%	7.8%	2.0%	3162
Hobbies	27.1%	51.1%	18.4%	3.4%	3123
Other	29.4%	44.2%	19.8%	6.6%	197

As it is seen, the most important factors that enhance development of key competences are needs of everyday work, wish of self-development and self-realization, as well as the wish to be useful for the family and support of family members. These factors are considered as important

by 90% of respondents. Interesting, that such factors as search of new job are considered as important motivators by less respondents.

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The data concerning obstacles met in key competence development are provided in table 2.

The most important obstacles are the lack of resources and too expensive training and learning services – more than half of respondents indicated that these obstacles were often faced. Many respondents also indicated the lack of time and shortage of support from employer as often faced obstacles.

Apart from this, research results demonstrated that there is an increase in the usage of ICT at workplace for work duties, career design or development of personal business ideas. Analysis of communication in the native and foreign languages has revealed the difference between semi-skilled and higher-skilled respondents. Semi-skilled respondents indicated the development of communication in native language more important for employment, while respondents with higher skills have distinguished the significance of communication in foreign languages for their professional work and career possibilities.

Based on the results that were achieved after this research, researchers have prepared 5 online modules with and open access that allow adults to organise and plan their autonomous learning and develop key competences. Discussions with the experts in adult education proved the need and importance of this kind of modules allowing adults to plan their personal learning, develop their expertise and adapt to changing knowledge society.

In conclusion there can be stated, that key competences are important for the majority of people and they understand the importance of key competences. From the list of provided key competences there has not be identified any key competence, that would be considered by the majority of respondents as less important or unimportant. Individualised ways of competence development are applied more frequently than collective ways. Competence development is mostly enhanced by the personal needs (work, wish of development and self-realization) and support of the family. Most frequently mentioned abstacles for development of key competences are the lack of financial resources and too expensive training services.

The factor analysis discloses that survey questions inside of each part of questionnaire are loosely interrelated. There can be distinguished

one or two easily interpretable factors in the parts of questionnaire. The factors are logically not controversial according to their correlations. The factors are related to the demographic variables, especially to the age and education. With the increase of age, the importance of key competences and their development tends to decrease. Higher level of education is related with bigger importance of key competences and their development.

Table 2 – Obstacles for the development of key comeptences.

Obstacles for key competence development	Often	Sometimes	Very seldom	Never	Number of answers
Lack of resources	53.0%	36.7%	7.4%	2.9%	3246
Lack of time	36.2%	47.7%	12.6%	3.5%	3231
Expensive training services	56.5%	30.5%	8.9%	4.1%	3213
Shortage of support of employer	29.9%	34.2%	17.6%	18.3%	3160
Shortage of suport of family	9.9%	31.7%	28.6%	29.8%	3184
No place for learning	11.1%	26.9%	30.2%	31.7%	3151
Lack of knowledge and information about learning possibilities	11.9%	25.0%	27.7%	35.5%	3131
Absence of wish to learn	12.8%	29.9%	27.0%	30.3%	3143
Absence of sense to learn	11.4%	24.7%	22.8%	41.1%	3128
Personal features (lazyness, lack of self-organisation)	10.0%	31.5%	28.4%	30.2%	3120
Other reasons	22.4%	20.1%	15.0%	42.5%	254

4. Conclusions and implications for future research

Development of key competences (knowledge, skills and abilities) is significant for the modern and transformative knowledge-based society as they help to adjust to the changing needs of labor market, provide added value for social inclusion, encourage active citizenship and become more motivated, satisfied and adaptive for every individuals' performance. Therefore, awareness of the need for continuous key competence development can help to plan the career and gain new specific skills and knowledge ad hoc.

Key competences have essential features and characteristics as they are flexible enought to adapt and transform according to the changes happening, they can be applied in different context of personal, professional and social life and at the same time, they create possibilities for the development of human resources and adaptation to the needs of work environment. The fields and possibilities for adjustment of key competences are determined by business sector and strategies that organisations are applying for human resource management and development, as well as institutional models of vocational training, labor market, policy of economic development educational and vocational training, and finally, the overall attitude of society and citizens towards different ways for professional and personal development. Key competences play a crucial role in the field of vocational and geographical mobility of workers and learners.

Different theoretical approaches may determine diverse aspects of key competences. At the same time different typologies of key competences can be presented based on the aim of classification and theoretical approach applied. Aim for the conceptualization of key compteneces and provision of new typology can depend on the goal of scientific study or research or on the decision made by experts confirming the need for the provision of key competences for, e.g., development of qualification frameworks, comparative analysis, etc.

Participants of adult education play important role in the context of lifelong learning. Scientists and practitioners of adult education field help learners to develop and deepen their knowledge, skills and attitudes needed and required through the whole life. Results of the researches representing European level reveal, that adult education sector covers variety of topics and fields that can be seen through different target groups, learning subjects, learning activities and courses for adult education. Vocational development and quality assurance in adult education is acknowledged priority in Europe. Nevertheless, it is important to note that conception of competence need to be more clarified and analyzed under the approach of professional aims and targets in adult learning. This might happen because of the variety and multi-contextual factors of adult education in the description of concepts, definitions and practices.

Further research might attempt to bring possible answers to questions like:

1. Are there specific competences that may occur as more or less important for a specific stage of age?
2. How does the need of specific key competence change based on individuals'professional life stage, i.e. while searching for a job, working, seeking for a career, changing work, retiring?
3. How do adults perceive the need for career design and planning competence?
4. What is the need for adults' career design and planning competence?

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NON-FORMAL LEARNING WITHIN LEARNING MOBILITY AREA: ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

Ondřej Bárta, Zuzana Šmideková

Abstract: Text shows the links between the adult learning and education research area and non-formal learning of young adults in the European context. After briefly describing the theoretical and practical intersections of the above-mentioned areas, the text summarizes the research approach towards the key European non-formal learning funding scheme: the current Erasmus+: Youth in Action, and the former Youth in Action programmes. Even though the impacts of the non-formal learning in the European perspective on young adults is over and over again proven in different spheres of life, the adult learning and education research does not pay significant attention to this phenomenon. Future avenues of research from the adult learning and education perspective are therefore suggested.

Keywords: Non-formal learning; young adults; European youth programmes; impact.

1. Introduction

European Union has been introducing learning mobility schemes for young people for almost 30 years[1], spending currently more than € 200 million per year on funding of projects under the current Erasmus+: Youth in Action learning mobility scheme (EC 2016a).

The text argues the theoretical links between the adult learning and education and non-formal learning; and shows the connection between the non-formal learning relevant for the area of adult learning and education and learning mobility schemes, specifically targeting the EU learning mobility schemes for young adults.

Reviewing the contemporary body of research into the area, the text points out the insufficient interest of the adult learning and education as a discipline in the learning mobility schemes. While demonstrating the impacts of the learning mobility on young adults, future research perspectives from the adult learning and education viewpoint are outlined.

2. Adult Learning and Education as a Fraction of Lifelong Learning

Adult learning and education is very often spoken of by adult educators as if it were a discretely separate and unconnected domain, hav-

[1] The first youth learning mobility scheme was introduced in 1989: Youth for Europe I (EC 2013b).

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ing little linkage to learning in childhood or adolescence. Despite wide range of theories which explains and tries to precisely define what the adult learning is, we are still very far from a universal understanding of this concept.

The first question considered as a main question in the early adult learning and education research was whether or not adults could even learn. The answer was brought from a behavioural psychological perspective by Thorndike, Bregman, Tilton, and Woodyard's publication *Adult Learning* from 1928 (as cited in Merriam 2001: 3). At that time, it was believed that adults can learn but being younger meant being a better learner. In 1944 Lorge come up with the explanation considering that not the age but the previous education and skills influenced the outcomes when the results of learning from the young and older learners are being compared.

Later on during the 1960s (Knowles 1980: 43) adult educators began to consider whether adult learning could be distinguished from learning in childhood. A new inquiry drove this effort. The question of whether adults could learn was put to rest, and the new focus of what was different about adult learning via andragogy and self-direct learning emerged.

As Jarvis (2006: 133) maintains when considering the adult learning that life is about being and human being is about learning, we see very clear linkage towards lifelong learning concept adopted already in 1972, when Faure *et al.* under the UNESCO's International Commission on the Development of Education commission issued the document 'Learning to be', which contained a number of recommendations for adult education. One of the basic ideas was that «[e]very individual must be in a position to keep learning throughout his life. The idea of lifelong education is the keystone of the learning society». The society therefore moved from adult learning and education concept towards more broad lifelong learning and we need to look at a whole person learning in life-wide contexts.

The European Lifelong Learning Initiative defines lifelong learning as

> […] a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment, in all roles circumstances, and environments […] (Watson 2003: 3).

We distinguish between three types of lifelong learning depending on the settings where it occurs (UNESCO 1997), formal learning (education), informal learning and non-formal learning. According to the International Standard Classification of Education (UNESCO 1997) formal learning is always organised and structured, takes place in a learning

institution and has learning objectives. Formal learning leads to officially recognised degrees, credits or diplomas granted by the responsible ministry (Eurostat 2007). Typical examples are learning that takes place within the initial education and training system or workplace training organised by the employer. One can also speak about formal education and/or training or, more accurately, about education and/or training in a formal setting.

On the other hand, informal learning is never organised, has no set objectives in terms of learning outcomes, is not covered by any type of certification and is never intentional from the learner's standpoint. Often it is referred to as learning by experience or just as experience. Rogers (2004) described informal learning as the natural accumulation of knowledge and skills in daily life, often unorganized and incidental. The idea is that the simple fact of existing constantly exposes the individual to learning situations, at work, at home or during leisure time.

Mid-way between the first two, non-formal learning is the concept on which there is the least consensus and as McGivney (1999: 1) says, it is even difficult to make a clear distinction between formal and informal learning as there is often a crossover between the two, but for the majority of authors, it seems clear that non-formal learning is rather organised and can have learning objectives. The advantage of the intermediate concept lies in the fact that such learning may occur at the initiative of the individual but also happens as a by-product of more organised activities, whether or not the activities themselves have learning objectives. In some countries, the entire sector of adult learning falls under non-formal learning; in others, most adult learning is formal. Non-formal learning therefore gives some flexibility between formal and informal learning, and it is the type of lifelong learning, which has the most to do with youth learning mobility.

3. Non-formal Learning as a Part of Lifelong Learning

Formal education and training is the most visible and recognised form of learning in society, non-formal learning on the other hand is far more difficult to detect and appreciate. Around 1970, the non-formal learning started to be seen by some as a solution to the weaknesses of the mainstream school system (Illich 1973); a viewpoint still valid today. However, especially the issue of appreciation, validation, and recognition of the non-formal learning is a pressing one. Generally speaking, non-formal learning takes place in institutionalised contexts, but does not lead to officially recognised degrees, credits or diplomas granted by the responsible ministry (Eurostat 2007). Although some non-formal learning institutions provide their own credit, for example

Youthpass, it is neither consistently state certified, nor it has an official status. Nevertheless, as concluded by Boeren (2011), it can be valued by employers or taken into account by granting exemptions if an individual wants to continue a course in the formal education system. Yet, non-formal education and training is increasingly acknowledged as an essential part of the lifelong learning process of any person. Based on a Eurostat report (2006: 13), non-formal learning covers a wide range of educational programmes: adult literacy, basic education for out of school children, life-skills, work-skills, and general culture. It may take place both within and outside of the educational institutions and cater to people of all ages.

Non-formal learning and training takes mainly place in the context of youth work, which according to the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth (2007: 20) refers to «activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature». In addition, «youth work increasingly deals with unemployment, educational failure, marginalisation and social exclusion».

The activities or courses that take place may be staffed by professional learning facilitators (such as youth trainers) or by volunteers (such as youth leaders) and as Chisholm (2005) suggest, they are planned, but are seldom structured by conventional rhythms or curriculum subjects. They usually address specific target groups, but rarely document or assess learning outcomes or achievements in conventionally visible ways.

Youth work plays a fundamental role in supporting young people in their personal education and fulfilment and in consolidating their identity among their peers and within society, as they are encouraged to take an active part in any field of interest to them. Youth work activities also sometimes target young people who are especially at risk of social marginalisation and poverty. A study on youth work as carried out in some countries (Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth 2007: 20) showed that such activities are offered to a broad age range encompassing childhood and early adolescence (seven and eleven years old respectively in Estonia and Austria) as well as mature adulthood (36 years is the ceiling age in Italy). However, in all countries the young people most intensively involved appear to be aged between 15 and 29. Finally, while in general they mainly take part in extracurricular youth education and recreational activities, many other types of services are on offer. The latter may be internationally oriented or may focus on the local community; they may promote active civic and democratic participation of young people, or the prevention of social exclusion; or they may be concerned with youth information and counselling on matters such as school problems and career guidance.

4. EU Youth Programmes

EU youth programmes are focusing on mobility and non-formal learning of young people, who do not have to be necessarily students, aiming to create opportunities for cross-border mobility and support competence development, democratic values, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion, and solidarity. The current Erasmus+ Programme can be divided according to the Erasmus+ framework (2013) and European Parliament 2013 into Youth Exchanges, European Voluntary Service, Large-scale European Voluntary Service and Mobility for Youth Workers. Given the wide range of activities covered by these strands, we are offering a brief description of these in the text below, to give the reader a better idea of learning opportunities these strands encompass.

Youth Exchanges are taking place outside the school environment and enable groups of young people to undertake a structured programme of activities in another country, within or outside the European Union. Young people from different countries meet and live together to jointly carry out a work programme designed and prepared by them before the exchange. This could be a mix of workshops, exercises, debates, role-plays, simulations and outdoor activities. They allow young people to develop competences; discover new cultures, habits and life-styles through peer-learning; and strengthen values like solidarity, democracy and friendship (Erasmus+ 2016). Youth Exchanges according to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide (EC 2016b) are open to all young people aged 13-30 years and last 5-21 days.

European Voluntary Service (EVS) was established in 1996[2] and offers an ideal opportunity for young people to volunteer abroad and to develop skills by contributing to the daily work of organisations in areas such as social care, the environment, non-formal education programmes, ICT, culture, heritage, sports and leisure activities and many others. It is an opportunity for participants to grow in self-confidence, feel more actively engaged as citizens and experience another way of life. A volunteering activity can last up to one year and an EVS project involves a triangular partnership: a volunteer, a sending organisation, and a hosting organisation. A mobility project can include between 1 and 30 volunteers who can do their voluntary service either individually or in a group. Shorter periods and extra financial support are available for

[2] From the historical perspective, the EVS was not always part of the EU youth programmes. The first year of the EVS, so called Pilot Phase, was followed by two Action Programmes until 2000 when it was first consolidated under the Youth Programme until 2006. This consolidation of the EVS and the youth programmes continues on even between 2007 and 2013 under the Youth in Action Programme as well as within the current Erasmus+ Programme (EC 2015).

example for those who are disabled or unemployed. Volunteers receive free board and lodging, insurance coverage and pocket money for the duration of the project and in some cases even language courses before the EVS stay commences; they may also receive a contribution towards travel costs. EVS is currently open to young people aged 17–30 and lasts between 2 and 12 months.

Large-scale European Voluntary Service (EVS) events aim to support vast volunteering projects, involving at least 30 EVS volunteers. Projects involve European or worldwide events in the fields of youth, culture and sport (for example World Youth Summits; European Capitals of Culture; European Youth Capitals; European sport championships; etc.). In addition to the EVS activities, a large-scale EVS event may also include complementary activities, such as conferences, seminars, meetings and workshops. Large-scale EVS events projects last 3–12 months (European Union Programmes Agency 2016).

Mobility for Youth Workers is an activity supporting the professional development of youth workers through the implementation of youth workers' training activities (such as participation to seminars, training courses, contact-making events, or study visits) and youth workers' networking (such as job shadowing/observation period abroad in an organisation active in the youth field; Eurodesk 2016). International opportunities allow youth workers to learn about cultural diversity and different practices in youth work in other countries. This experience helps youth workers to acquire new skills and to enhance their professional development. The organisations involved are developing new learning methods, as well as long-term cooperation with their counterparts abroad. Opportunities are available for youth workers involved in the personal, educational and social development of young people and the mobility activities last from 2 days to 2 months.

All of the aforementioned activities will be further referred to as 'learning', bearing in mind both the strong non-formal learning aspect as shown above, and the international dimension of these activities, which set them into a specific position within the non-formal learning opportunities nowadays.

5. Research on EU Youth Programmes

There has been a considerable research interest in exploring the field of so called learning mobility: activities taking place abroad in which young people are subjected to either formal or non-formal learning programs, the latter also including the volunteering activities. Even though we can find research publications focusing on various aspects of the learning mobility in general worldwide, such as international learning bridges

(Collins 2008); language use during the learning mobility (Borghetti, Beaven 2015); global citizenship (Caruana 2014); learning continuum research (Nilsson, Durkin 2014); learning through change (Greenwood 2014); and very many more; the research endeavours in this area are largely focusing on the learning mobility within the formal education setting. Even in the European context, the studies are more often than not being conducted with regard to the formal education learning mobility opportunities, such as the former Erasmus study program, or the current Erasmus+ scheme on the university level. Gonzáles, Mesanza, and Mariel (2011) aim at exploring the overall student flow patterns within the European area; the overall effects of the Erasmus sojourn abroad are explored, amongst many others, by Unlu (2015), Bárta (2011), Gonzales, Ruiz, and Gutierrez (2016); Selickaite and Reklaitiene (2015) seek to unravel the impacts of the Erasmus exchange students on their country; motivation of students to participate in the Erasmus study period remains the focus of the paper by Deakin (2013); cultural competence development within the Erasmus Programme is described by Milne and Cowie (2013); and Zhelyazkova (2013) looks into linguistic barriers during the Erasmus study period.

Even though we have clearly shown the links between the adult learning and the EU youth programmes as a specific non-formal learning opportunity, by far less attention has been, in research literature, paid to the youth learning mobility outside of the formal education context. This has been viewed mostly through (a) the optics of the youth migration (Maunaye 2013, Frandberg 2014) or (b) has been treated as part of the overall body of research focusing on non-formal learning as such (Boeren 2011); and even in this body of literature, the international non-formal learning opportunities are a rather marginal topic. Research endeavours aiming explicitly at youth mobility schemes as a learning opportunity for young adults are quite scarce (Pantea 2013; Bárta 2016), as pointed out by Dubiski (as cited in Friesenhahn, Schild, Wicke, and Balogh 2013).

There are, however, specific institutions in Europe which take interest in learning mobility of youth and also contribute to producing research evidence on the topic. Both the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Commission (EC) have their own bodies focused on youth as such, with a special interest in cross-border mobility of youth, and they also build inter-institutional links in the form of EU-CoE partnership in the field of youth (Youth Partnership).

On the level of the EU, the youth issues at large are tackled by the Directorate General Education and Culture (DG EAC 2016a) which, among other agenda, overlooks implementation of the European Youth Strategy (DG EAC 2016b), part of which are also the mobility programmes funded by the EU budget (currently the Erasmus+ Programme which also contains the specific youth chapter). The implementing instruments

of the current EU Youth Strategy also provide the basis for research endeavours into the area, specifically the following pillars: (1) knowledge building and evidence-based policymaking; (3) progress-reporting; and (5) monitoring of the process[3] (DG EAC 2016c). These mechanisms provide various publications (DG EAC 2016f) on continuous as well as ad hoc basis: regular EU Youth Reports (DG EAC 2009, 2013, 2015), or specific studies on the youth participation and volunteering (EC 2011a), learning mobility and entrepreneurship (EC 2011b), participation in democratic life (EC 2013a), and other. Special attention should also be brought to the evaluation activities conducted by the DG EAC, in course of which one can find various reports on different aspects of the EU Youth Strategy, with mobility of young people being its integral part (DG EAC 2016d). Indicators and general statistics are being collected by DG EAC on the area of youth and youth mobility as well (DG EAC 2016e).

On the level of the CoE, various publications on youth and youth mobility are being produced on a regular basis with youth work in the limelight (CoE 2016). Important work in this area is also done by the Youth Partnership between the EU and CoE, in terms of which various conferences, public debates, and publications are organized and produced (Youth Partnership 2016a), including research into the area (Youth Partnership 2016b). Last but not least, the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP 2016) and the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR 2016) are other bodies which, on an international European level, contribute to the knowledge and research accumulation. There are also single research initiatives, such as the MOVE project focusing on mapping of the youth mobility and its impacts (MOVE 2016).

Apart from the aforementioned bodies who usually take a broader approach towards the learning mobility of young people, currently, there is a large European research network which focuses explicitly and directly on youth mobility research in the context of the EU youth programmes (former Youth in Action Programme, and the contemporary Erasmus+ Programme): the RAY Network (2016). This network was established in 2008 and currently consists of research partners from 29 European countries[4], conducting research on youth mobility impacts from differ-

[3] Information interesting for the research into the area can also be found with connection to the pillar 4 "dissemination of results". This tool provides a library of existent sources, not only from the research, but also from the data point of view (project descriptions, examples of good practice, and other research-relevant data).

[4] Austria, Belgium (Flemish-speaking community), Belgium (French-speaking community), Belgium (German-speaking community), Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

ent standpoints: large scale and long-term surveys of the impacts of the learning mobility on young people and project leaders (trainers, tutors, pedagogical staff in general); study on learning within the learning mobility projects funded by the EU; and currently also two different studies on (a) the capacity development of the youth work sector within the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme, and (b) the effects of learning mobility on active participation and citizenship of the young people. Given the large amount of very specific scientific evidence accumulated by the RAY Network, we will shortly present the main outcomes of these inquiries, to demonstrate the potential of the learning mobility for both the young people and adult education research.

6. RAY Network Studies

RAY Network has conducted several studies based on various methodological approaches from 2008 till present. We will summarize the main findings and briefly outline the methodology used for the reader´s convenience.

First and foremost, the general surveys aiming at exploration of the overall impacts the learning mobility has on both the participants and the project leaders[5] have been conducted. These online multilingual surveys took place since 2009, and their target group were all of the project leaders and participants who took part in Youth in Action (or, lately, Erasmus+: Youth in Action) funded projects in a given period. Countries involved in these surveys have varied, there are some which have always taken part, such as Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, or Poland, and there are countries which have only joined recently, such as Malta or Portugal. Respondents received an email survey invitation, and were able to fill in the survey online in the language of their country, or in the language of any other country involved in the RAY Network at the time. Rather large data were collected during the period 2009-2013 (Youth in Action Programme; annual data collection) and the data collection has been going on even under the Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme (biannual data collection). There are two transnational reports (Fennes et al. 2011, 2012) as well as several national reports (RAY Network 2016b) available at the moment. The results of the transnational analysis of the 2009-2011 data suggest that

[5] Project leaders in this context indicates people responsible for the pedagogical role in the project, i.e. members of the project teams who were directly involved with the implementation of the project in terms of conducting various activities with young people (participants).

> [t]he involvement in YiA[6] projects contributes to the development of citizenship competences in a broad sense, including the interpersonal, social, intercultural and foreign language competences of both participants and project leaders. […] Furthermore, the participation in YiA projects contributes to the development of all key competences for lifelong learning. […] At the same time, the results of the surveys indicate that the involvement in YiA projects stimulated both participants and project leaders to consider or actually plan further educational activities and their professional development: together with the competence development outlined above, this reflects an effect on the professional development of the actors involved in the YiA Programme beyond the youth field and civil society, especially in view of their involvement in the work domain (Fennes *et al.* 2011: 6; Fennes *et al.* 2012: 13–17).

National reports analysing the whole 2009–2013 data available for the former Youth in Action Programme have also been produced in the Czech Republic. The results show that there is a rather vital difference between the separate activities within the larger scheme, e.g. between the youth exchanges and the European Voluntary Service (Bárta 2016) with more profound results found in EVS participants, especially in the area of values development, but also in the area of key competences. These results suggest that a more in-depth and detailed study into the impacts of different project activities, such as volunteering, youth exchanges, and other, should take place in order to precise the current findings.

Secondly, a study into labour-market related competences was conducted in 2012 by the RAY Network (Taru 2013) using an experimental design: competence levels were measured in participants (test group) and non-participants (control group) of the Youth in Action projects (Taru 2013: 7) in respondents from 6 European countries[7] using an online multilingual survey.

> There were positive differences between project participants and non-participants but most of the differences were not statistically significant. When comparing mean values within the self-assessment scale, the differences were up to approximately 10% within the scale. […] The results of the regression analysis ruled out the possibility that both participation in a project and the differences in the levels of competences could have resulted completely from a third, pre-existing variable (Taru 2013: 19).

These findings suggest that participation in the Youth in Action funded projects does have a positive effect on the labour-market related com-

[6] Youth in Action Programme.

[7] Belgium-Flanders, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, and Sweden (Taru 2013: 10–13).

petences in young people, further offering the opportunity to conduct more in-depth investigation into this area.

Lastly, a study focusing on learning processes within the Youth in Action funded projects took place in 2012, using mixed method approach: original online multilingual questionnaires were used in combination with qualitative interviews to shed some light on the learning processes behind the impacts which were reported in course of the aforementioned studies by the participants and project leaders themselves. This study revealed that the YiA projects work as «a laboratory for training/teaching and learning for both participants and project leaders» (Fennes *et al.* 2013: 8). It also shows that there is «a broad spectrum of learning opportunities between more formal education activities on one end and more informal learning situations on the other, thus covering the full learning continuum» (Fennes *et al.* 2013: 9). Both of these aspects together with the fact that the project leaders used a very wide variety of methods within the projects themselves, leads to the maximisation of the learning opportunities for both the participants and the project leaders. Not only we can see a very unique learning environment within the Youth in Action learning mobility projects, but we can also see an environment which contributes actively to the learning processes on both the participant and the project leader ends.

All in all, the RAY Network international studies have shown the Youth in Action learning mobility projects as rich in learning outcomes for both the participants and project leaders, with strong impacts in the areas of skills, values and attitudes, with an interlink between the learning outcomes and the labour market needs, and with a clearly unique learning setting.

7. Future perspectives

Learning mobility of young people should undisputedly be in the limelight of the adult learning and education both in terms of research and in terms of practice and theory building. As we have shown above, the learning mobility of young people represented by the EU youth programmes includes a strong non-formal learning aspect, its target group is consistent with the one adult learning and education research is interested in, and it generates impacts in areas of skills, values, and attitudes, which are, again, fully compatible with the research interests of the adult learning and education. Moreover, the aforementioned EU learning mobility schemes are large international massively funded long-term functioning structures affecting vast numbers of young people in the European area and potentially creating immense learning opportunities.

Even though we have clearly presented all of the above, we have also shown that the interest in the EU learning mobility schemes from the

perspective of adult learning and education is negligible to say the least. Research endeavours in the area are at the moment fully in the domain of youth research, of sociology, and in a wider sense of educational sciences; and even in these cases, specificities of the EU learning mobility schemes are often not taken into account with only certain aspects being underlined. In order to utilize the vast potential of the learning mobility, and especially of the learning mobility within the EU schemes, it is necessary to devote research endeavours also to this area. To facilitate this process, we offer some avenues the prospective adult learning and education research might find useful.

First and foremost, the adult learning and education research should focus more in-depth on different strands within the learning mobility of young people as such. There are short-term as well as long-term projects, there are volunteering schemes, and there are schemes focusing profoundly on certain learning objectives (such as Structured Dialogue, etc.). All of these, as current research suggests, have their own peculiarities, and there is apparently a potential for adult learning and education to discover specific conditions and processes contributing to successful learning of young adults. Moreover, there is one area which should be of more interest to the adult learning and education research than any other: mobility of youth workers. This area is explicitly focusing on shaping the new adult educators in the youth sector – tutors, youth leaders, coaches. Adult learning and education should take particular interest in unravelling the processes of learning the aforementioned adult educators engage in, as well as the processes of utilizing the new skills, knowledge, and attitudes in practice when working with the young adults themselves. Needless to say that this area is so far, in terms of research, a largely unexplored territory. The same is, of course, valid also for the different age groups within the learning mobility projects, especially with regard to frequently age-mixed projects. Research into learning of different age groups and the impact of mixed age groups environment within the learning mobility could be highly valuable for the adult educators.

Secondly, there is space to follow specific theoretical concepts within the learning mobility environment. An example of such could be pursuing research into organizational learning and communities of practice development within the learning mobility projects. These are particularly viable for the volunteering projects, where learning within the organizations (both the hosting and the sending) with respect to the volunteers themselves, but also with respect to the staff of the organizations as such, is highly relevant. Nevertheless, even other forms of youth learning mobility might be relevant in this respect, since the current research also suggests that there are impacts on the implementing organizations in terms of learning.

Thirdly, it is evident that the strength of the youth learning mobility does not lie only in the impacts on skills development, but also in the impacts on values and attitudes of the individual. This might prove highly important especially nowadays when the adult learning and education itself also begins to see the importance of other than only labour-market oriented learning. Enhancing democracy, European values of freedom and rule of law, but eventually also attitudes useful in connection to the everyday life, such as willingness to help others, can all become rather useful to young adults; and adult learning and education research should seize every opportunity to gain new insights into the learning processes behind these outcomes. We have shown the brief history of the research focus of the adult learning and education; and we strongly believe the time is ripe to start focusing on more than skills and knowledge acquisition in young adults. Current developments show beyond doubt that democracy as a system is far from self-maintaining, and it seems necessary to be able to share the values and attitudes supporting the democratic way of life in Europe.

Fourth point is self-evident, but necessary to stress as well: learning mobility of young adults provides an opportunity to look into all of the aforementioned issues and trends in the international perspective. In the contemporary ever-so-connected world, this simple aspect might again prove priceless to certain areas of adult learning and education. It is also necessary to underline that these international perspectives provide an excellent comparison opportunity to the national initiatives, processes, and impacts.

We have pointed out several important and promising areas which might become a valuable source of new findings on adult learning and education in the context of learning mobility of young people. All of them point in a similar direction: to explore the processes leading to the positive learning outcomes displayed by the learning mobility schemes in order to strengthen the learning mobility practice for young adults and to apply relevant research findings in other contexts of adult learning and education as well. In pursuing these goals, adult learning and education area should build upon findings of, and collaborate closely with other relevant research areas, primarily with youth research area.

8. Concluding remarks

The text shows the link between the adult learning and education, non-formal learning, and learning mobility of young adults in the European context. It also briefly summarizes some main findings in the area to date and critically reflects the current state of adult learning and education research into the learning mobility area. Apart from briefly showing the research ap-

proaches and outcomes of other disciplines, namely the youth research, the text suggests directions in which the future research into the learning mobility from the perspective of the adult learning and education might lead.

Strengthening of the research into learning mobility from the perspective of the adult learning and education does not only provide basis for specific knowledge and theory accumulation, but also brings in the potential of enriching other areas of adult learning and education practice with processes and environments valuable to adult learning in general. Research is thus seen as a vital first step in utilizing the learning potential of the learning mobility in other areas of adult learning and education, on both theoretical and practical level.

Moreover, the EU youth mobility schemes are implemented in seven year cycles. There is much to be learned from the current situation, and there is much to be developed in the future cycles. If adult learning and education is to have a say in shaping the future of these programmes, and therefore also the future of a rather vast learning opportunity for young people Europe-wide, it is essential to have research evidence at hand.

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ENHANCING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION[1]

Carlo Terzaroli, Nicoletta Tomei

Abstract:This paper deals with some experiences put together at the University of Florence to enhance experiential learning in higher education. It reconstructs the conceptualization of David Kolb's theory while presenting its relationship with Dewey's 'theory of the experience'. It links the career service model implemented at the University of Florence with the category of employability. The results of this linkage speak of an educational process which fits into the Kolbian model and seems to address the learning challenges which can affect increasingly heterogeneous cohorts of students and increasingly complex learning institutions such as universities. The interpretation of this process as an example of how to embed employability in higher education allows us to attribute it the status of a case study that shows career servicesto be a relevant and specific learning space. The key contribution of the paper consists of the fact that it opens an interesting perspective on how experiential learning could be a fruitful model for the modernization of higher education.

Keywords: experiential learning, higher education, career services, employment.

1. Conceptualizing experiential learning

One of the most widespread definitions of human learning in the field of adult education claims learning to be:

> the combination of processes whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) - experiences a social situation, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the person's individual biography resulting in a changed (or more experienced) person (Jarvis 2006: 13).

This broad definition points out the relationship between learners and social environment. It refers to the concept of experience in order to explain the cognitive, emotional and behavioural changes that occur in the whole person when he or she learns something.

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In the context of higher education, this concept has often been used to accompany the process to modernize tertiary education institutions. Indeed, in recent decades the expansion of this sector has been notable, resulting in what Schuetze and Slowey have identified as general trends which consist of 1. the greater access of non-traditional students to higher education courses; 2. the diversification of courses on offer and institution types and 3. the introduction of new modes of delivering a differentiated learning programme (Schuetze, Slowey 2002). As a consequence of these trends, the assessment of prior learning practices, competence-based curricula and credits systems have been more widely implemented, transforming practices and the conceptualization of higher education itself and putting the ability to use learner experience to enhance learning processes at the basis of students' success.

In this perspective, Kolb and Kolb remind that even if «recent efforts to improve higher education have focused on improving learning processes in education through the application of research» (2005: 193), current researches which are focused on the concept of experiential learning are often misunderstood. The reason of this misunderstanding lies on fact that experiential learning is sometimes considered «as a set of tools and techniques to provide learners with experiences from which they can learn» (2005: 193), instead of a philosophy of education rooted in deweyan «theory of experience» (Dewey 1997: 24). This theory argues that new approaches to education need a sound reflection on the concept of experience in order to replace traditional education whose practices are determined by tradition.

The concept of experience began to emerge as significant in education at the beginning of the past century, during which the new schools' movement developed an educational approach based on these three assumptions:

1. personal involvement in learning experience is the best strategies to ensures learning,
2. knowledge can affect individuals' behaviour and to be meaningful to someone, only if it is actively discovered,
3. freedom to set its own learning objectives and to actively pursue them within a given framework is the only way to secure people's commitment to learning (Smith 1980: 16).

Upon this basis, Dewey's theory focuses on two principles, known as the principle of continuity and the principle of interaction. The continuity principle says that each experience will influence the next one. The interaction principle says that one's present experience depend also from the interaction between past experiences and the present situation. In other words, from the interplay of these principles, experiences arise as a dynamic process resulting from a transaction. «An experience is always

what it is because of a transaction taking place between the individual and, what at the time, constitutes the environment» (Dewey 1997: 43).

According to this transactional perspective, the connection with the environment is not unilateral. The person having the experience is modified by his or her environment while the environment is modified by the person having the experience, in a constant reciprocal situational influence. Dewey further elaborates this situational influence of one's experience by suggesting that it involves 'trying' and 'undergoing' activities. Trying activity refers to the expression of someone willing in concrete actions while undergoing refers to the consequences of the experience on the individual.

> When we experience something we act upon it, we do something; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to things and then it does something in return: such is the particular combination. The connection of these two phases of experience measures the fruitfulness of experience. Mere activity does not constitute experience (Dewey 2007: 104).

In this sense, the experience identified by Dewey is not stored in the past, nor does it belong to the immediacy of the experienced present. It is not mere acceptance of the environment's impact, but it is a dynamic continuum from past through present to future. In Dewey's perspective, in fact, his experience theory leads to the understanding not only that, for better or worse, every past experience affects the quality of further experiences by setting our attitudes, but also that, as «we always live the time we live in and not some other time», it is only «by extracting the full meaning of each present experience» that we prepare ourselves to make it easier or harder to act for one or another end (Dewey 1997: 33).

With the idea of «preparation», an organic connection is established between education and experience because, even if on some regards all the experiences do something to prepare a person for later ones, experiences that strive to be educative should be devoted to ascertain «how acquaintance with the past may be translated into a potent instrumentality for dealing effectively with the future» (Dewey 1997: 10).

> The belief that a genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are miseducative. Any experience is miseducative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience (Dewey 1997: 25).

Consequently, education maybe defined as the emancipation and enlargement of experience, carried on through an active and reflective

process which strives for the «reconstruction or reorganisation of experience which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases the ability to direct the course of subsequent experience» (Dewey 2007: 59).

The formulation of such a philosophy of education provided the theoretical grounding for several learning theories that enjoyed both credibility and longevity in trying to answer the following question: how is it possible to lead the meaning embedded in present experience towards a wider horizon of future «experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality»? (Dewey 1997: 28).

Many authors, who share Dewey's perspective, according to which «the heart of all learning lies in the way we process experience» (Fisher Turesky 2005: 58), concentrate on two main aspects, namely active participation and critical reflection. Among the authors who best portray speculation on active participation as a viable route to process experience, we can find Lave and Wenger who developed the situated learning theory at the beginning of the 1990s. This interesting learning theory claims that learning is not something that happens in the individual's brain but something which lies in the process of co-participation in the concrete activities of a community (Lave, Wenger 1991: 10). According to this theory, the co-participation process identifies a structure which allows people's experiences to be interpreted as a process of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave, Wenger 1991: 19). Legitimate peripheral participation is an analytic perspective which enables researchers to reconstruct and reorganize learning experiences on the basis of situational influences and activities carried out by the learner.

Beside this kind of speculation, a large amount of contributions can be found which foster the possibility of understanding the enlargement of experience through the lens of reflection. The most important author in this regard is, without any doubt, Donald Schön. While studying the learning process of professionals, he draws up the reflective learning theory which claims that experiences lead to the development of two kinds of knowledge: knowledge based on 'reflection on action' and knowledge based on «reflection in action». The first identifies an explicit wealth of knowledge elaborated after experiencing a situation. The second identifies a sort of implicit knowledge which is elaborated while people are still experiencing a situation (Schön 1983: 77). By helping us to explain how experience can be transformed into knowledge, these two modes of reflection seem to contribute to explaining why present experience influences the manner in which the learner deals with future situations.

Even though both of these theories grasp important elements of Dewey's theorization of experiential learning, several considerations support the idea that neither of them can completely describe the transactional aspect of experience. Indeed, on one hand, the first theory clearly recognizes the importance of the environment's influence, while fail-

ing to explain how previous experiences can influence future ones; on the other hand, by emphasizing reflective moments of the experiential learning process, the second theory seems to fail to reproduce the specific sequence proposed by Dewey in order to explain the transactional aspect of experience.

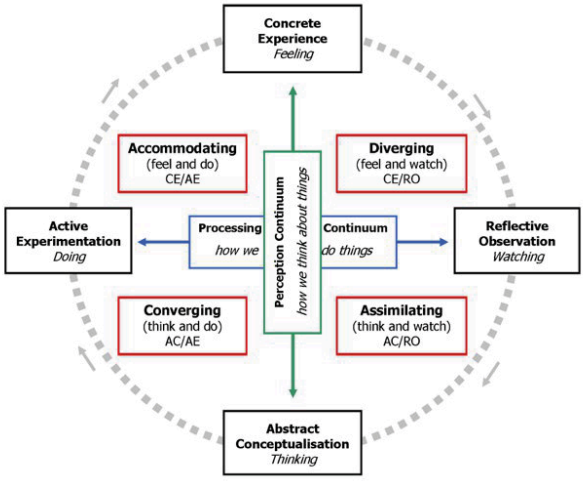
> Upon examination, each instance reveals, more or less clearly, five logically distinct steps: 1-a felt difficulty; 2-its location and definition; 3.-suggesting a possible solution; 4-development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestion; 5-further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection; that is, the conclusion of belief of disbelief (Dewey 1991: 72).

Since Dewey's instrumentalism would have some perplexities about a separation of thought/reflection and action/participation, which are considered unified by experience and utilized simultaneously, the experiential learning theory by David Kolb seems «to develop a holistic model of the human learning process and a multilinear model of adult development» (Kolb, Kolb 2005: 194) which fits better with Dewey's theorization. In Kolb's theory in fact, learning is understood as «the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience» (Kolb 1984: 41).

As Atkinson and Murrel made clear, «at the heart of Kolb's model is a description of how experience is translated into concepts that can be used to guide the choice of new experiences» (1988: 375). Since, Kolbian learning process is often described as «a four-step cycle based on the orthogonal relationship of two continuums of cognitive growth and learning: the concrete-abstract continuum and the reflective-active continuum» (1988: 375), these authors identified the first continuum, with the representation of how individuals gather information from theenvironment. Moreover, they clearly underline that this gathering process, following different paths which range from «involvement in particular and palpable events to preference for detached analysis», can also be identified as the perception continuum (1988: 375). On the contrary, the reflective-active continuum presented by Kolb, represents the processing continuum in reason of the fact that it seems to refer to how individuals process the information they gather and how active they are in this process as learners. As everybody can «take a more observational role» or «prefer active participation» as well as use more or less concrete strategies to think about things, «individuals must continually choose, along the respective continuums, how they will gather and process information to resolve the problems and conflicts presented by any learning situation» (1988: 375).

Put into words, Figure 1 illustrates that Kolb's experiential learning theory «is a process of constructing knowledge that involves a creative tension between four learning modes: concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, reflective observation andactive experimentation» (Kolb, Kolb 2005:194). Concrete experience represents the process through which learners become involved in situations grasping information through the immediate and unbiased events. Reflective observation represents the process through which learners realize an understanding carefully observing and considering reality. Abstract conceptualization relies on the learner's ability to analyse ideas and concepts logically in order to view things from different perspective, generate hypotheses, and make plans. Active experimentation represents the process through which learners engage themselves in actively influencing people and events, «triggering a recursive process that is responsive both to the learning situation and to what is learned» (Kolb 1984: 30). Actively testing a hypothesis serves, in fact, as a guide in creating new experiences.

Figure 1 – Kolb's learning cycle. [Chapman at www.businessall.com based on Kolb 1984]



According to Kolb's experiential learning model, individuals seem to develop themselves in four primary ways. The different learning modes in fact, contributing to the process of constructing knowledge, develop simultaneously affective, perceptual, symbolic and behavioural attitudes. Through concrete experiences, learners can develop affectively. From opportunities to observe reflectively, they can develop increasingly complex and sophisticated perceptual skills. Thinking abstractly, learners can develop their symbolic skills. Through active experimentation, they can develop behaviourally.

> On this basis, it is possible to say that the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)implies that an effective learner needs different abilities or that the learners must be able to get fully, openly and unbiasedly involvedin new experiences; to reflect on and interpret these experiences from different perspectives; to create concepts that integrate these observations in logically sound theories; and to use these theories to make decisions and solve problems leading to new experiences' (Sims 1983: 503).

Since these generic abilities encompass specific skills which can be more or less developed by each individual, ELT seems to describe individual differences in learning on the basis of particular preferences for the use of one learning mode rather than others[2].

In order to be able to boost comprehension of the way in which experience results in learning, Kolb's theory of experiential learning has been used in different fields and training contextsas a model. The theory has proved to be «particularly applicable in instances in which attention to the process is at least as important as attention to the product» (Atkinson, Murrel 1988: 375). In this perspective, higher education career services can be considered an excellent example of such an instance, due totheir understanding of employability.

2. Enhancing experiential learning in higher education

The category of employability appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century in the wake of the employable/unemployable dichotomy (Gazier 1998), paying specific attention to individual needs for help: this approach, in some ways, was based on considering the relationship between abilities and willingness, so it aimed to support people on the edges of society. Afterwards, the category was assumed in the economic field «to achieve full employment through government measures designed to facilitate access to the labour market» (Guilbert, Bernaud, Gouvernet, Rossier 2016: 71); however, the approach maintains a strong accent on political and economical aims, which could sometimes leave aside the value of the person as a rights holder. This is whyin recent decades the work of Gazier introduced the notion of «interactive employability» which «maintains the focus on individual adaptation, but introduces a collective/interactive priority» (Gazier 1998: 300).

[2] As Kolb and Kolb remind the original four learning styles- assimilating, converging, accommodating and diverging- has been expanded to include nine distinct styles by recent theoretical and empirical works. In 1985, Abby, Hunt and Weiser identified four additional learning styles 'emphasizing the impact of the style's weakest learning mode on the learner's learning process', while a 'balancing' learning style was identified by Mainemelis, Boyatzis and Kolb in 2002 (2005: 197).

The reason for this shift concerns institutions taking it upon themselves to develop employability: not only individuals but also public actors are directly concerned in the implementation of opportunities for effective transitions to the labour market. European institutions have also adopted this trend within various policy programmes (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2014: 61): as a matter of fact, many strategies, such as *Europe 2020* and *Education and Training 2020*, stress the central role of employability in European Commission actions. The aims of these actions concern the enhancement of graduates' employability and support for their transition to the labour market (Boffo 2015). The focus on expected outcomes and graduates' success in employment, social cohesion and citizenship leads to an 'output and outcome awareness' within higher education institutions (Teichler 2011: 29) at international policy level.

Parallel to this, at the pedagogical and educational level, in the higher education context, the concept of employability has been developed in the work of Mantz Yorke and Peter Knight, within the The Higher Education Academyresearch programmes[3]. Yorke defines employability as «a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to secure and be successful in their chosen occupation(s) to the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy» (Yorke, 2006: 21).

Yorke's work starts from the analysis of the interrelation between higher education and recent economic developments to come up with a concept that could support students' transition from university to work (Yorke 2006: 3). Moreover, fostering employability could represent a way to support social inclusion and citizenship: many studies, in fact, reveal the direct link between the transition to work and the effective development of autonomy and self-realization in adulthood (Furlong 2009; Eurofound 2014). In this sense, the approach focuses on the person's development and it is not merely related to an economic and occupational point of view. As Lee Harvey states,

> employability is not just about getting a job. Conversely, just because a student is on a vocational course does not mean that somehow employability is automatic. Employability is more than about developing attributes, techniques or experience just to enable a student to get a job, or to progress within a current career. It is about learning and the emphasis

[3] «The Higher Education Academy (HEA) is the national body which champions teaching quality. We provide value to the HE sector by focusing on the contribution of teaching as part of the wider student learning experience. […] The HEA's areas of current focus are informed by our consultation with the sector, by funding council priorities, government policy, sector data, intelligence and reports amongst others. These are: Employability; Retention and Attainment; Assessment and Feedback», <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/about-us> (06/2016).

> is less on 'employ' and more on 'ability'. In essence, the emphasis is on developing critical, reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing the learner (Harvey 2003).

According to the category of employability, universities and study courses have implemented different ways of embedding (Yorke, Knight 2006) the process in higher education pathways. Analysis of the framework and measures carried out reveals two concepts: the development of employability in the curriculum, through teaching and learning methods focusing on work experience (Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac, Lawton 2012); and the enhancement of employability skills through extra-curricular activities such as career services (Watts 1997). In this paper, we concentrate on the second typology of actions, since it represents a direct connection between experience and learning, following Kolb's experiential learning model (Kolb 1984).

Attention to career services in higher education as a tool for the education of adults and young adults came into being at the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States to help immigrants find a job and in the 1940s and 1960s to support war veterans through job placement centres (Dey, Cruzvergara 2014). Only in the 1970s and 1980s did development of the self through career counselling emerge as a primary tool for work transitions. Then, in the 1990s and 2000sICT society and the spread of social media produced a revolution that directly impacted career services: they «transformed career centers into dynamic networking hubs that engaged hiring organizations in campus recruiting and facilitated networking between students and recruiters» (Dey, Cruzvergara 2014: 5). As shown in Figure 2, the evolution of career service models in higher education strictly follows economy and society trends and tendencies.

According to the work of Farouk Dey[4] and Christine Y. Cruzvergara[5], the new model ofcareer servicesarising in higher education reflects the needs emerging from the economic downturn of 2008. In this perspective, many universities at international level started moving

> from the traditional transactional model of career services toward a customized connection model that promises specialized career development support to students and meaningful connections to internship and employment opportunities as well as mentoring and experiential learning (Dey, Cruzvergara 2014: 8).

[4] Farouk Dey is the associate vice provost of Student Affairs and dean of Career Education at Stanford University, United States.

[5] Christine Y. Cruzvergara is the director of University Career Services at George Mason University, United States.

Figure 2 – Evolution of career services in higher education. [Cruzvergara, Dey 2014]

As a result of the relations between universities and the labour market, the development of employability is becoming a significant part of the student experience during the whole process of higher education rather than an isolated aspect considered as students approach graduation. That is why the role of career services, also at European level (Genz 2014), is increasingly becoming a continuing part of the formative process in and alongside the curriculum: in this direction, different activities have been implemented to foster the enhancement of employability skills in higher education pathways (Rota 2014) through tailored activities that fit specific needs.

The learning model, which constitutes the employability development process, and the connection between university and work can be linked to the abovementioned experiential learning model by David Kolb. The cycle, presented in Figure 1, shows the phases of Kolb's learning process. In detail, a cyclical process is formed that could fit in well with the experience structured into the most common career service models. As a matter of fact, the four steps in the model constitute a process that produces the transformation in personal attitudes and skills of the subject involved. Specifically, experiential learning theory proceeds from the assumption that «ideas are not fixed and immutable elements of thought but are formed and re-formed through experience» (Kolb 1984: 26) and the relationship with the environment (Kolb 1984: 133). Looking at the elements of the cycle, we can highlight some specific aspects. First of all, learning is a process continuously grounded in experience (Kolb 1984: 28) which allows us to avail of or modify ideas depending on the situation: in this sense, «it implies that all learning is *re*learning» (Kolb 1984: 28). Secondly, it is not about a «molecular educational concept» (Kolb 1984: 31), but it concerns «the central process of human adaptation to the social and physical environment» (Kolb 1984: 31): it consists of a way of creating a relationship with the social environment and being part of it.

To conclude, a direct link can be evidenced between career service work experience, employability development and Kolb's model. Indeed,

the learning process or the concrete experiences gained in the career service represents a way to foster employability skills, through the four phases, in view of supporting young adults facing the transition from higher education to the labour market. In this sense, the next paragraph shows the relationship between activities and learning theory, while describing some specific educational activities implemented within the University of Florence Career Service. As a matter of fact, the specific part on *Educational and Formative Activities for Employability* reflects the implicit and explicit experiential learning gained through the extra-curricular activities carried out by that service.

3. Career services as a source of experiential learning in higher education: the case of the University of Florence

Over the last two decades, the role of career services in the Italian higher education system has grown as a priority. The emergence of the university's third mission has fostered the activation of internal structures aimed at supporting students facing the transition to the labour market. Indeed, the third mission is intended as a way to make the most of research through knowledge transfer into productive contexts: in this sense, the transformation could concern both research products (as new inventions or innovations) and people with knowledge gained at university level. The aim of this evolution is to create a better link between research and society, and to support social and economic growth and development (European Commission 2011).

In this connection, many Italian universities have started developing job placement offices to invest in the third mission, with a specific focus on guidance and employability. The evolution of the national system reflects, in some ways, the trend identified by Cruzvergara and Dey (Cruzvergara, Dey 2014) for career services at international level. In the Italian context, the specific situation reflects a skills development approach to the increase of employability: as a matter of fact, many institutions have set up services and activities to support skills and capabilities for the transition to the labour market and to find their way around it in different circumstances. This is also the case of the University of Florence, which that came up with a new career service model in 2016[6]. The structure of the career service intends to sustain students, graduates, doctoral stu-

[6] The University of Florence career service model was planned and implemented by Prof. Vanna Boffo, Rector's Delegate for Job Placement, in cooperation with the career service coordinators for the specific areas.

dents and doctoral graduates so that they can cultivate the capability to live their lives and careers better.

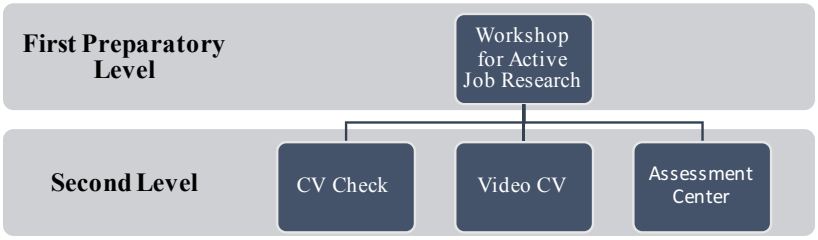
In this perspective, the model shown in Figure 3 concentrates on four different sectors: career counselling, educational and formative activities for employability, meetings with employers, and intrapreneurship development. The area of career counselling aims to set value by individual resources in order top in point the students' desires and values for their personal and professional pathways, in collaboration with professional psychologists. Moreover, the sector of educational and formative activities for employability offers a set of activities to foster the development of capabilities and skills that support the transition to work and, more in general, transitions throughout career pathway. The area of meetings with employers provides opportunities to match supply and demand and to help give students an insight into the labour market and recruitment activities, through the direct perspective of employers. Finally, the area of intrapreneurship development aims to foster intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship through workshops, networking and innovative projects. The whole model is always supported by important research activities that integrate different disciplinary fields; this research involves engineering, adult education, economic management, psychological studies, law, communication, monitoring and evaluation, and it could really be the most innovative element in career services in higher education in Italy and at the international level.

Figure 3 – The University of Florence Career Service Model. [Boffo 2016]

In this section we make an in-depth analysis of one of the four areas, to highlight the direct link of the approach with Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kolb 1984). In fact, the «Educational and Formative Activities for Employability» area refersdirectly to the quoted theory through a set of workshops that aim to support student employability (Yorke, Knight 2006). It presents four different types of activities to help students develop skills and understand tools to ease transition from university to work. Specifically, the services offered are organized into two steps: the first preparatory level that provides an overview of effective tools for the transition and the recruitment process; a second step that aims to improve the possession of specific tools and support the development of soft skills (Yorke, Knight 2006). In order to participate in the second-level services, it is mandatory to participate in the first.

The first level is represented by the Workshop for Active Job Research[7]: it consists of a workgroup, based on two-day sessions, to help students draw up job applications, CV sand cover letters and to deal better with job interviews. The learning process includes simulations, concrete experiences and reflective role-playing to understand personal and professional experiences in a career perspective. This triggers an individual learning process that reinforces the skills and capabilities needed during the recruitment phase. Indeed, after participation in the Workshop for Active Job Research, most people go on to experiment with job applications and job interviews to test their achievements and improve their way of approaching employers.

Figure 4 – Overview of the University of Florence Career Service' Educational and Formative Activities for Employability' area. [own source, from Boffo 2016]



After this first preparatory level, the University of Florence Career Service offers three more services for improving students' employability: the CV Check, which consists of an individual review of students' *curriculum vitae* with a mentor, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses; the Video CV, which is a workshop to make a video presentation to up-

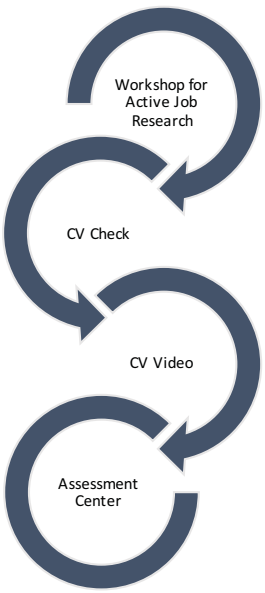
[7] The Workshop for *Active Job Research* is organized in cooperation with a professional psychologist who has a great deal of experience in the field of recruitment.

load on social networks or websites; and the Assessment Centre, which is a simulation of the recruitment tool in order to gain familiarity with it so they can face the recruitment process better.

An overview of the services and activities implemented in the 'Educational and Formative Activities for Employability' area of the Career Service shows a link with Kolb's model of experiential learning (Kolb 1984). As a matter of fact, it is seen that the participants are involved in a cyclical learning process both in the single services and the whole set of activities: that is why we can talk about a recursive process that gives the learning area a helix structure.

Figure 5 schematically illustrates how the cycles intersect and aims to point out the strict link between this area of the Career Service and the experiential learning approach. All the activities are based on integrating concrete experience, often linked with the recruitment process, with reflection and conceptualization of the experience in line with professional careers and personal pathways. What is important from the participants' point of view is to actively experiment job application tools and approaches to job interviews: in fact, it often happens that students come back to the Career Service after attending a recruitment process in order to improve their skills and reflect on their strengths and weaknesses so that they can perform better in successive interviews, as part of a continuous learning process.

Figure 5 – Intersection between career service activities conceived as single learning cycles. [own source, from Boffo 2016]



4. Conclusions

The relevance of young adults' transitions to work has increasingly become a matter for higher education institutions' attention. Owing to the evolution of life pathways in a direction of more fragmentation universities have to prepare students and graduates for the different challenges they will face during their lives. Consequentially, universities have started implementing learning processes in order to foster young adults' employability for their whole career path. Career service activities have been changing from simply providing counselling and guidance to developing employability skills for personal and professional lives: as a result, the direct link between higher education pathways and individual growth demands new learning approaches aimed at supporting skills and capabilities. Especially for adult learning and education studies, supporting people facing the transition from higher education to labour market represents a strong challenge for the future. The development of universities' services raises many questions for our research field. The presence of an international debate on the topic of employability in Career Service (Rota 2014; Genz 2014) stimulates a broad new perspective for the pedagogical research. In fact, what is the role of learning and its link with personal and work experience in respect to the transition towards the labour market? How could didactics and curriculum foster the development of employability through pathways tailored on young adults' needs? These questions could really represent unexplored paths for new research in and on adult learning and education in relation with international trends and trasformation of higher education (Sihil, Pramanik 2011).

From this point of view, career services could provide an effective way of integrating Kolb's experiential learning theory in the university context. The combination of formative activities, direct experiences of recruitment processes and reflective observation of situations and behaviours in different levels of activities results in a new learning model: it aims to accompany students during their transition to work through experience and reflection on skills, personal tools and recruitment methods; moreover, the multilevel organization of the educational and formative services displays a cyclical method to boost employability in a lifelong perspective. That is why we can highlight a direct link between career services and experiential learning theory, which is implicitly embedded into the model described in this paper. As a matter of fact, experience represents the core of the whole learning and educational process for the effective transition of young adults into work: the recursive learning cycle, in this sense, is an opportunity to accompany, at different times and through multiple steps, the transition process from university to work through career service activities based on an experiential learning approach.

From a more general point of view, promoting higher education learning activities which fit into the Kolbian model seems to address the learning challenges which can affect increasingly heterogeneous cohorts of students and increasingly complex learning institutions such as universities. Providing targeted and organized processes to assist information gathering and skill development processes and addressing individual differences- especially those related to the way in which students prefer to learn- and suggesting methods to explore experiences that can be replicated in the future with particular reference to career development challenges - are in fact the first steps towards the implementation of a holistic programme of institutional development that includes curriculum development, faculty development, and student, administrative, staff and resource development in view of modernizing higher education.

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FROM DIPLOMA TO PORTFOLIO. VALIDATION OF PRIOR LEARNING IN 'THE LEARNING SOCIETY'

Ruud Duvekot

Abstract: A 'learning society' is one where learning throughout life is important for everyone, whether individuals, organisations, schools or institutions. Linking education (or, to be more precise, learning) to the job market, and the changes in prevailing attitudes on learning, are important themes in modern society. I characterise this transition as the transition from diploma to portfolio. In this, I emphasise that the importance of learning of, by and for the individual is paramount, while at the same time the distribution of roles and responsibilities between the learning system, social system and individual is changing. The diploma represents the more traditional, top-down hierarchical approach to learning, while the portfolio represents a more bottom-up approach, partly because the learning process is steered personally by the individual learner. This contribution focuses on the question how to utilize the systematics of Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) as an effective instrument for the sake of personalizing learning in 'the learning society'?

Keywords: competences, formal learning, informal learning, non-formal learning, learning outcomes, personalised learning, valuing learning, Validation of Prior Learning (VPL).

1. Introduction

In modern society the systems of training and education need to be adjusted and innovated in the light of the changing socio-economic and socio-cultural landscape. A qualification used to be enough to get access to a structural job on the labour market. But this certainty more and more no longer holds. Nowadays the need is growing for everybody to focus on flexible, continuous and more adaptive learning to keep oneself employable. This goes for all social partners involved: individuals, trade unions, schools, universities, employers, legislative and regulatory bodies. These individuals, organisations and stakeholders are all tied together in the social and economic structure. These ties have always been present, but never before in history the individual was part of reaching out to a solution for the flexibilising learning and working grounds in modern society (Delors 1996; Hargreaves 2004; Duvekot 2006). Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) offers this 'opportunity' to the individual since it focuses especially on someone's personal learning results so far for the sake of showing someone how to stay tuned-in to social and economic opportunities.

The main driver for VPL is embedding itself in learning and working processes that the individual was and can be engaged in, so embed-

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ded in someone's learning and working history and future. VPL is in this perspective the instrumentation for recognizing and valuing what people have learned so far and linking these learning experiences to further development steps for someone in her[1] own context. In this perspective, VPL is not designed to highlight the lack of competences but precisely the opposite – to take stock of existing competences; in other words, rather than being half empty, VPL takes the view that 'someone's glass is already half filled' (Wg EVC 2000). The main question for this contribution therefore is how to utilize the systematics of Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) as an effective instrument for the sake of personalizing learning in 'the learning society'?

VPL covers the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders and actors in the lifelong learning-arena. It links the learning needs of the individual, the facilities from the learning system and the demand for competent people in society. In this arena learning is supposed to be established in an open dialogue between the main actors in lifelong learning: teachers, employers and learners. These three actors represent symbolically the main dialogues on learning that are needed in order to create and uphold the benefits of lifelong learning for all. The steering role of the learner herself is the new feature in this process because it gives a voice to the learner. Never before in history this voice was facilitated in a way that learner's ownership of her own learning could be grounded in learning strategies! With VPL the situation Paolo Freire already wrote about in the 1970s is finally established in which learning as a personal and social process makes sense «because women and men learn that through learning they can make and remake themselves, because women and men are able to take responsibility for themselves as beings capable of knowing – of knowing that they know and knowing that they don't» (Freire 2004: 15).

2. The learning society

The concept of 'the learning society' originated in the period of economic growth of the 1960/70s. In this era there was a growing need for skilled labour. This led to more attention in national policies on the role of education in managing the rise in «social and economic wealth». Education was equated with lifelong learning and a significant and relevant means of transforming social and political life for this purpose (Gelpi 1985; Hobsbawm 1994). This called for a learning society built on the notions that learning is important and valuable and that all people need to invest continuously in their potential. The added value of VPL in this

[1] Whenever there is mentioning of 'she' or 'her', this also means 'he', 'his' or him'.

was that it enables the learners to (1) take into account their prior learning achievements and (2) create a personalised lifelong learning strategy when reflecting on these prior learning outcomes. This focus on learning – in those days one spoke in general about education when actually addressing all forms of learning inside and outside of the formal education system - was articulated by the UNESCO in 1972 as follows:

> The aim of education is to enable man to be himself, to become himself. And the aim of education in relation to employment and economic progress should be not so much to prepare young people and adults for a specific, lifetime vocation, as to 'optimise' mobility among the professions and afford permanent stimulus to the desire to learn and to train oneself. […] If learning involves all of one's life, in the sense of both time-span and diversity, and all of society, including its social and economic as well as its educational resources, then we must go even further than the necessary overhaul of 'educational systems' until we reach the stage of a learning society. For these are the true proportions of the challenge education will be facing in the future (Faure *et al.* 1972: XXXIII).

This statement led to a debate on the challenges facing the modern learning society to us all and led to a set of principles showing the ground floor of the learning society (Schon 1973; Husén 1974; Delors 1996; Edwards 1997; Jarvis 2008):

1. there's more to learning than just education,
2. lifelong learning is a necessity since an initial qualification isn't a structural guarantee for a career,
3. acquiring competences isn't restricted to formal learning but also entails informal learning and non-formal learning; all these forms of learning have to be considered as valuable learning
4. society can be seen as a social and economic structure in which learners all have a learning attitude, implicitly and/or explicitly, and in which learners have to take up their responsibility in this too, lifelong.

In this society VPL acts as an important building block for creating and facilitating lifelong learning. VPL operationalizes bottom-up steered learning-processes by individual learners in their own context. Therewith VPL opens up actual learner-steered learning perspectives. VPL steers people's empowerment with its focus on the expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one's life. This implies control over resources and decisions and focuses on the voice of the people when they start participating and negotiating with the other actors in the learning arena on the why, how and what of further learning (Narayan 2005).

Such empowerment challenges the existing education system and demands the design of learning-made-to-measure in different settings and for different purposes. This is the kind of empowered or personalised

learning that Giddens and Beck described as being reflexive learning (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992). With «reflexive» they meant the requirement placed upon individuals and institutions to reflect upon what they know in order to make their choices about who they are and how they behave. Giddens linked this to a concept of «reflexive modernity», reasoning that over time, society becomes increasingly more self-aware, reflective, and hence reflexive with lifelong learning as a key characteristic of modernity that grounds meaning and identity in «the self» (the individual) as the primary change agent in society. In this concept of reflexivity, VPL supports the positioning of «the self» as co-designer of learning process.

These thoughts build strongly on Paolo Freire's ideas on learning as a developmental and dialogical process of action-reflection-praxis of and by people –especially teachers and learners (Freire 1970). It is also the kind of learning that fits well into societal development as one of the so-called instrumental freedoms that contribute, directly or indirectly, to the overall freedom that people have to be able to live the way they would like to live (Sen 1999). «Social opportunities» refer in this sphere to facilities in society like education, health care and so on which influence the individual's freedom to live a better life. These facilities are not only for the sake of private lives but also of great value to participation in social, economic and political activities. Learning affects people's private as well their public lives. Therefore, it is vital for people to have access to all forms and phases of learning in order to shape their own destiny also on their own (or to a certain level). It's in such a dynamic society where the potential of VPL can help assist creating learning opportunities for all in an open dialogue between all actors involved and on equal footing.

3. VPL and the three learning modes

The development of VPL is best understood as a shift from an institutionalised learning system with uniform learning paths to a flexible system characterized by blended and more personal steered learning (Duvekot *et al.* 2007). This can also be referred to as «personalised learning» or the tailoring of pedagogy, curriculum and learning support to meet the needs and aspirations of individual learners (Hargreaves 2004-2006). The same development can be seen on the labour market where the functioning of workers is focused more on facilitating their further learning on their own demand (bottom-up steered) instead of traditional controlling and instructing the labour force top-down. In this sense VPL is more supportive of democratising learning and working and enhancing the reflexive character of learning.

The main drivers of VPL are firstly the acknowledgement that initial training for a career no longer suffices. Secondly it is important to accept that competences (knowledge, skills, attitude, aspirations) are constantly developed. Thirdly one needs to recognize that everybody always and everywhere – consciously and unconsciously – learns by means of:

- formal learning, which occurs in an organised and structured context (in a school/training centre or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to qualification or certification.
- Non-formal learning, which is learning embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) but with an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically does not lead to certification.
- Informal learning, which results from daily work-related, family or leisure activities. It is not organised or structured (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification (Cedefop 2009).

4. Goals and objectives

Lifelong learning is about valuing learning. This entails the dual perspective of valuing the learning constantly taking place on the one hand and learning the valuing on the other hand for stimulating and developing learning processes. VPL is in this respect not just strengthening learning strategies but also a tool for designing these strategies. Evidence of this duality comes from various research projects all over the world (OECD 2012; EU 2014; Singh 2015; ILO 2015). The many cases and good practices found in many global contexts supported the notion that Validation of Prior Learning is as much an organising principle of learning as a learning process in itself. Society changes into a world in which the learner gets a say in designing her own learning strategy. The main features of this transition can be reflected on different spheres with each their own rationale (Table 1).

Valuing learning reflects a major change in the organisation of learning processes in which the individual learner can take more responsibilities for her personal learning process. This means the individual learner changes the existing «balance of power» in learning processes because he/she will be steering lifelong learning too with building up a personal portfolio containing documentation and reflection on the learning

outcomes achieved so far in formal, informal and non-formal learning environments. In such a portfolio, learning outcomes are documented together with relevant evidence. Such portfolios create a new balance in society's learning system and - above all - show a different road-map for personal development than schools, universities, organisations, etc. were accustomed to.

Tabel 1 – Levels and rationale for the transition to 'the learning society'. [Duvekot, Schuur, Paulusse 2005]

	Sphere	*Rationale*
1	Economical	Getting and/or keeping a job (employability)
2	Social	Aiming at motivation, reintegration, self-management of competences and personal development (empowerment).
3	Educational	Aiming at qualification, updating, upgrading or portfolio-enrichment by means of creating output-oriented standards focusing on learning outcomes and learning made to measure.
4	Participation	The civil society, aiming at social activation, voluntary activities, societal awareness & reintegration and citizenship (activating citizenship).
5	Political	On the macro-level, authorities and social partners are responsible for organising the match between these levels by means of legislation, regulations, labour agreements, fiscal policy, training funds, etc.

When linking personal learning objectives to the objectives of other actors and stakeholders in society one can see a diversity in the ways learning gives meaning to the role of an actor in the learning arena. This is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Actors and their learning objectives. [Duvekot *et al.* 2007]

Individual	Stimulating self-investment in learning; showing learning outcomes; building up a learning biography or portfolio.
Organisation	Building up competence management and facilitating employees' self-investment and articulation of competences; designing lifelong learning strategies in Human Resource Management.
VET/HE	Matching learning to real learning needs; offering learning-made-to-measure; focus on learning outcomes; facilitating lifelong learning strategies.
Civil Society	Activating citizenship; transparency of learning outcomes in the civil society; linkages with other perspectives (qualification, careers).
Macro-level	Concerns policies of governments and social partners and their responsibilities for creating favourable conditions for lifelong learning through laws and regulations.

Preconditions for utilising VPL for the benfit of all actors involved are:

1. A transparent, flexible and output-oriented learning infrastructure.
2. A quality-system based on trust by (a) the judgement of the existing assessment processes used in education and (b) professional trained assessors and guides for assisting in VPL-processes.
3. A focus on learning outcomes that allows mobility and validation of prior learning outcomes, both intra- as well as inter-sector.
4. Interchangeable procedures and reports on the assessment of portfolios.
5. Creating possibilities for developing and executing blended learning solutions.
6. Public and private funding for personalised learning plans.
7. Raising awareness on the potential value of one's prior learning outcomes by telling about 'good practices'.
8. An individual right on portfolio-assessment and career-advice.

5. Competence and approaches

Competence is a crucial concept in VPL because it addressed and fills in the kind of learning outcomes that are assessable in a VPL-procedure. Competence entails having adequate knowledge of how to act in a particular situation. Whether or not someone is competent becomes apparent based on how she acts (Lyotard 1988). In other words, a competence is the sum of knowledge and skill: knowledge is «the knowing» and skill is «the acting». A competence, then, encompasses knowledge and skill as well as the personal methods used in applying that skill. It is essentially based on personal attitudes and ambitions. This conceptualisation is captured accurately by Cedefop's definition, stating that a competence is an ability that extends beyond the possession of knowledge and skills. It includes: 1) cognitive competence; 2) functional competence; 3) personal competence; and 4) ethical competence (www.cedefop.gr). The 'personal competence' is valuable in that it colours the generic description of a competence.

With this competence-concept in mind, VPL facilitates someone in making an inventory of her competences, identifying them and validating them first of all personally and secondly using them to link in to a vocational or occupational standard. This linking-step is also known as a summative VPL approach. However, when VPL also stimulates further learning, this is called formative VPL. These are the two main approaches of VPL. Preconditional for both approaches is that they both best be based on personal reflection on the potential value of one's learning outcomes. This self-evaluation precedes a VPL-process that aims at linking someone's learning outcomes to any kind of social, economic or educational standard. To summarise these approaches:

1. Reflective VPL is preconditional for any VPL-approach as it takes one's entire learning biography as the focus for building up a portfolio and a personal action plan. It is not obligatory to pursue but if this precondition is met, the individual can make an accountable choice on taking specific actions: which standard to link to, which actors to address, which learning goal, etc. A high level of (social) reflexivity can be defined by an individual shaping his/her own norms, desires and objectives. It refers to the notion of the autonomy of the individual (Sen 1999). Personal reflection on someone's prior learning experiences is like a learning process; it is assessment as learning.
2. Summative VPL is about building up a portfolio against a pre-set qualification or occupational standard, with a one-dimensional goal: looking for access to a qualification/occupation and exemptions on the basis of a retrospective analyses of the value of one's prior learning outcomes. Its main objective is the assessment of learning.
3. Formative VPL: meeting up with a portfolio to a qualification or occupational standard for deciding on what/where/how to learn further. The outcome is geared at designing a tailor-made learning programme for someone's desire to focus on one or more rationales of the learning society. Its main objective is the assessment for learning.

6. From portfolio to portfolio-loop

The portfolio is an important requirement for utilising VPL. A portfolio is used to plan, organize and document all kinds of personal learning outcomes, formally, informally and non-formally acquired. People can use a portfolio to link their prior learning outcomes to qualifications, occupational standard, social standards, redress, inclusion, to get a job or a higher salary, show transferable skills, track personal development or more holistically, answer the question who one is and what one's ambitions are in life.

There are three main forms:

1. A dossier portfolio documents proof for getting exemptions in a qualification programme. Evidence of learning can be constituted on the basis of professional products and behaviour results. This is a portfolio that acts as a showcase for summative impact. It is only filled with the necessary proof and is hardly steered by the candidate.
2. A development-portfolio focuses on broad, personal reflection. Its nature is reflective. It is filled with relevant, life wide proof of the one's learning achievements. Its nature is diagnostic for especially formative development purposes. It is strongly steered and managed by the individual (Tillema 2001).

3. A personal portfolio also aims at documenting any kind of personal learning results. It can be used for any VPL-procedure and is highly (self-) reflective. The individual first fills in the portfolio with descriptions of all activities and achievements so far. It contains for each learning result a description of the personal competences that were necessary in the activity. This self-reflection can be strengthened by reflection from «third parties». The outcome of this process is a personal portfolio providing answers to personal questions like 'what are my strengths and weaknesses? what are my core-competences?, what can my ambition be in life?, etc. Based on this self-reflection a personal action plan can be drawn and a decision made for a specific developmental goal. Such a personal portfolio has a holistic character since it covers a person's life wide experiences regardless of external standards.

In any form, a portfolio can be taken as a starting point for addressing learning issues. The validation process always begins and ends with the portfolio since new learning results will be added to the original portfolio. This enriched portfolio might at the same time be the basis for new development steps and the start of a new VPL process. This is called a «portfolio-loop» (Duvekot 2006, 2016).

7. The VPL-process

The process of Validation of Prior Learning manages the principle of «Valuing Learning». Building further on this principle, VPL strengthens the role of the individual in shaping his or her lifelong learning. It can demonstrate the benefits of one's learning in terms of profit (status, money), efficiency (time, customisation), and enjoyment. The learning-programme-independent nature of the assessment enhances the effects that VPL can create for personal objectives in terms of qualifications, career development and personal meaning.

VPL is in most cases a process of five consecutive phase (Duvekot 2016):

1. Engagement focuses on being aware that someone has already acquired many formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences that might be valuable. A person can exploit these competences through self-management. A wide range of aspirations may be achievable thanks to a person's experience, and can therefore be deployed to determine an individual learning objective. Such learning objectives range from activation in the person's private life, empowerment, personal development and career development in education and occupation to creating flexibility and mobility in order to access or move up the job market.

2. Recognition and documentation are focused on identifying and organising actual individual learning experience and translating these into personal competences. The description of these competences is then recorded in a portfolio. In addition to this description of the competences acquired through paid and voluntary work, qualifications, leisure activities, etc., the portfolio is supplemented with evidence backing this up, such as certificates, job reviews, references, documents, videos or pictures which substantiate the claim of possessing certain competences.
3. Under assessment, the contents of the portfolio are assessed and evaluated. Assessors compare the competences of an individual with a selected yardstick that is used as a reference for the intended learning objective. Depending on the yardstick used, this comparison is used to draw up an advisory opinion on possible validation at personal, organisational, sector or national level in the form of certification, career advice or personal valuation. The advice is based on the output or learning benefits to be validated, and presented by the individual at the assessment. This output is used as a basis for drawing up advice on how somebody can cash in on his or her development, and subsequent steps.
4. The results of VPL are focused on validating the assessment advice in terms of cashing in (direct results), possibly in combination with designing specific learning packages and/or work packages (indirect results). In the context of «learning», a benefit could be the formal acquisition of exemptions or an entire qualification. In the context of «work», it might involve being allocated a particular job, a promotion or a horizontal (same job level) or vertical (another job level) move. Finally, the benefit may also be something more personal, such as creating a personal profile, self-empowerment, or a vision on personal development. Benefits may create direct or indirect effects. The difference can be described as a cashing-in effect or development-orientated effect.
5. The last phase of the VPL process is anchoring VPL, or structural implementation, of VPL in all areas of the individual's life. The results of an VPL approach may have a structural effect on the personal and social organisation and orientation of all actors. At an individual level, the anchoring of VPL is strongly related to the relevant context. Anchoring is also possible at an organisational level, especially if the organisation wants to be able to use VPL structurally for specific purposes in the context of human resources and learning strategies.

This VPL-process offers an outlook to personal learning strategies in which the organisation-context and learning services are crucial for keeping up with the speed of individual competence-development. The five abovementioned phases take in total ten process steps as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – the process of 'Validation of Prior Learning' Source. [Duvekot 2016]

Phase	Step + question	Action individual
I. Engagement	*1. Awareness* Where and how did I learn so far? Which necessity is there for self-*investment?*	Open mind to lifelong learning. Inventory of personal learning wishes. Start self-management of competences.
	2. Setting targets Which learning targets are relevant?	Self-assessment. Personal SWOT-analysis. Formulate learning targets.
II. Recognition & documentation	*3. Setting a personal profile* How to determine the need for competences?	Writing a personal profile. Choosing a portfolio-format.
	4. Retrospection How to describe and document learning outcomes/prior learning?	Filling in a portfolio. If needed, portfolio-guidance.
III. Assessment	*5. Standard setting* What is the relevant standard related to the targets?	Choosing a standard to refer to. Re-arranging the personal portfolio. Self-assessment. Inventory of career-opportunities.
	6. Valuation How to get valuated?	Valuation of the portfolio. Getting advice on certification- and career opportunities.
	7. Validation How to get validated?	Turning the advice into proper certification and career-evaluation.
IV. Results	8. Prospection How to set up a personal development plan (PDP)?	Turning validation into a PDP for reasons of certification, employability, empowerment. Arranging learning-made-to-measure.
	9. Implementing a PDP Working on learning targets.	Executing the PDP.
V. Anchoring VPL	*10. Structural implementation & empowerment* How did it go? If ok, how to embed VPL structurally in a personal lifelong learning strategy?	Evaluation of the process. Maintaining portfolio-documentation.

In the figure a few elements are crucial:

1. Raising awareness of the potential of personal learning results for individuals is the heart of the process of validating prior learning outcomes. Without this, any further learning strategy cannot effectively be based on individual talents nor will its tart because it will lack personal ambition.

2. The portfolio is the red thread in the process. When the portfolio is designed and built-up, its content can be assessed and an advice added on possible qualification- and/or career-steps; it is subsequently enriched by tailor-made or blended learning options and finally when new learning results were achieved, updated. Therewith, the portfolio is both the starting as well as the end point of individual learning processes. Any end point however may again be the starting point of a new learning process. This is called a *portfolio-loop*.
3. Self-assessment is a vital step because this strengthens her ownership of the learning results acquired so far and will stimulate her 'drive' towards co-designing her new personal development steps. There are various methods available for self-assessment, such as the Swiss *CH-Q* instrument (Schuur *et al*. 2003). This is an structured training scheme building up a portfolio, (self-) assessment, career- & action-planning, quality-control and articulation of specific learning needs.
4. Reliable assessment is about bridge building between a portfolio and the specific development steps. In any given context, assessment has three main functions: (1) raising levels of achievement, (2) measuring this achievement reliably and (3) organising the assessment cost-effectively.

Assessment in this context is the judgement of evidence submitted for a specific purpose. It requires input - proof of learning outcomes by the individual - and a standard scale for the expected output of the assessment (Ecclestone 1994). Proof is provided with the portfolio of the candidate. The standard depends on the specific learning objective. The assessor has to be independent and flexible with regard to the individual input and the learning objectives in order to be able to provide a personalised learning advice as the outcome of the assessment. Moreover, the assessor needs to be an expert in the field(s) of learning where the individual needs or wants to be assessed in.

5. To guarantee 'quality' of the assessor on the one hand and prevent a quality control-bureaucracy on the other hand, it is recommended to formulate a quality-proof validation-process by securing the quality of the assessor(s). This entails:

- An assessor should fill in a personal portfolio herself as well.
- A professional register for assessors should guarantee their expertise and competences.
- Every year an assessor needs to be re-accredited by means of refresher and updating courses and at least performing ten times a year as an assessor. This new accreditation could be carried out by an official national agency.

- The quality of assessors implies being able to refer to a standard for assessors: this standard needs accreditation and linked to a national qualification framework.

6. Regarding the development-steps VPL calls for a clear responsibility of not only qualification-systems but also from human resource systems.
7. Proper evaluation and feedback is necessary to structurally embed the process into personal behaviour and therewith linking outcomes of VPL processes to lifelong learning strategies that matter to all actors in the process: the learner, the organisation where the learner is active and the school/university where the learner can learn further and/or be upskilled, upgraded and developed.

8. VPL and personalised learning

VPL is a system which, independent of the type of learning programme, focuses on recognising, valuing, validating and developing the competences that someone has previously learned in any type of learning environment. Personalised learning can be defined as a dynamic learning concept focused on the individual learner, which can (help) initiate and establish tailored individual learning programmes in a learning culture based on self-driven, flexible, formative lifelong learning.

While VPL identifies the potential value of a person's learning, personalised learning presupposes that VPL can support somebody's contribution to the dialogue with other actors – teacher/trainer and manager/leader - in the learning arena on the meaning, form and content of learning. As a result, an important distinction between the two phenomena arises from the management of learning and the links that can be made between actors when engaging in actual lifelong learning:

- VPL mainly functions as a context-driven process, and is geared to connecting actors during learning (acquisition), and formulating the contributions of the actors involved in this process (participation). Acquisition in participation is key to VPL.
- Personalised learning can be viewed as a process driven by an individual. It focuses on making a personal contribution to achieve development goals. Participating in acquisition is key to personalised learning.

Therewith, VPL and personalised learning are closely linked. Both concern learning processes which allow individual learners to allocate themselves an active role within the 'learning society' when it comes to achieving personal, civil and/or social effects. Civil effect means achieving a learning outcome in the context of a particular qualification standard

within the education system. Social effect is focused on results which are relevant to job profiles, targets, participation goals, or assignments. Personal impact may mean achieving empowerment, career and study orientation or personal development.

9. The cornerstones of personalised learning

Personalised learning provides flexibility for personal learning experiences, expertise, responsibilities and autonomy, and provides the individual learner with enriching and durable management and support of his or her individual developing power in a situation of control or joint control and ownership in dialogue with other actors. Below, I distinguish five pillars on which personalised learning is based (Duvekot 2016). These pillars are the outcome of an analysis of current theorising on the challenge to personalise learning (Billett 2002a, 2002b; Bray, McClaskey 2013, 2015; Rickabaugh 2012):

1 Agency is about the way people communicate and negotiate with each other when learning. Agency concerns the engagement of the student in terms of awareness of 'personal power' and the motivation to learn. Agency covers the aspects of awareness and personal meaning of personalised learning within the given context.
2 Affordance means affording or allowing learning processes of individuals by an organisation and/or school, as well as facilitating these processes. Affordance is focused on creating a stimulating learning environment, organising the partnership in learning, facilitating the individual learner by offering assistance and advice in the learning process, creating an innovative approach to learning within the organisation, and financing personalised learning. Through affordance, organisations can both recognise the importance of learning to their organisation, and facilitate the learning of «their people».
3 Assessment, in the context of personalised learning, deals with different forms of assessment which all focus on the personal assessment of a person's learning experiences, whether acquired informally, formally, or non-formally. In all forms of assessment, the personal norm of valuation is always leading, while the social norms of valuation from qualification systems and job systems may possibly be used as frames of reference. Such an assessment firstly includes all types of self-assessment, such as self-examination and self-valuation.

The next priority is linking what has been learned personally to the normative framework of an organisation or qualification, or a personally set objective. Assessment then acquires the significance of assessment of, for or as learning: there is either a direct effect (cashing in on the out-

come of the assessment) or a prospective effect, or continuity of learning through development and further development of a person in terms of set learning objectives.

4 Ownership refers to the autonomy of the individual learner and his/her personal sense of owning his/her own learning process. This includes both the preparation and implementation of this learning process, as well as achieving milestones in this process: these might be summative (qualifications, partial qualifications, formal validation of informal work, etc.), formative (shaping learning and career opportunities, etc.) or reflective (empowerment, shaping identity and becoming aware of personal values).
5 Co-design is the theme that defines the true nature of personalised learning. Without an element of co-design, an individual can neither be a 'partner in learning', nor can there be any personalised learning. This is because unless the individual can participate in shaping and implementing the learning process, learning cannot be partially tailored to the input and learning needs of the individual learner concerned. In this sense, co-design is the activating agent in personalised learning. Moreover, where ownership principally focuses on creating a sense of ownership of personal values and learning experiences, co-design creates a 'learning action plan' from these values and learning experiences, allowing the overall design to be made in close consultation with the other partners involved in the selected learning process.

9. Linking VPL with personalised learning

In a qualitative study with a multiple case design, the impact of VPL on personalising learning was examined in Dutch practice (Duvekot 2016). This study yielded detailed information on the linkage between the two phenomena of VPL and personalised learning. In summary, the analysis showed:

- In every imaginable situation and context, VPL resulted in a particular perspective for a lifelong learning-strategy for the actors involved, i.e. the learning individual in his/her dialogue on the design and implementation of learning strategies with employer(s) and/or teacher(s)[2].

[2] Employers and teachers are a metaphor for representing the actors on the labour market and in the learning system when it comes to activating learning opportunities. In this study (Duvekot 2016) the emphasis is on the dialogue of these two actors with learning individual, being the third actor in the lifelong learning arena.

- In all case studies, under-utilisation of individual potential occurred due to the failure of either the learning system or the HRD-system to fully implement the VPL-process, or allowed it to be personalised.
- The various cases showed that individual learners who took time to reflect on their own learning experiences strengthened their position in the dialogue about the design of their learning process. These dialogues, in accordance with Paolo Freire's humanising vision, operated as a «gap-closer» between the learners and teachers/trainers; in this way the learners managed to build a bridge to a personalised follow-up programme in one or more areas of learning.
- The characteristics of policy development not only showed the slowness of implementation of policies in practice, but also that open dialogue in particular is conducive to the activation of the individual learner.
- Competences filled and coloured the dialogues on learning strategies.
- The portfolio was the carrier of the entire VPL process, especially if the process of linking learning objectives, learning requirements and learning opportunities was based on the validation of personal learning outcomes, and used as the starting point for organising a learning cycle based on the portfolio-loop.
- The various dialogues between the actors in the learning triangle were essential for both VPL and personalised learning. This is particularly true in case of an open dialogue, based on a reflective as well as a summative/formative approach of VPL.
- Assessment helped to connect the actors in the learning triangle. This effect occurred in all the three forms of assessment that were analysed in this study: of, for and as learning, particularly in the formative mode and the reflective preconditional mode of VPL.

This analysis shows that the VPL process comes into its own and enables personalised learning if there is an open dialogue on learning strategies and individual ownership of learning is permitted. In all case studies, in various degrees, VPL had its impact on the design and implementation of lifelong learning and, moreover, a genuine impact on personalising the learning taking place after the VPL process. After all, individual ownership of learning was enhanced by VPL through (1) raising the awareness of the value of prior personal learning experiences and (2) grounding further (lifelong) learning on personal design and meaning.

Least of all, this analysis gives credits to Paolo Freire's statement in the 1970s that learning needs to be addressed as a developmental and dialogical process of 'action-reflection-praxis' of and by people (i.e. teachers and learners). It should be an anti-depositary process, contrasting the traditional «banking-system» (Freire 1972). With «banking» he meant a process in which knowledge is directly transferred to students with the

teacher as the sole distributor of knowledge and the student as the passive receiver of this knowledge. Instead of 'banking' the ground floor for learning can better be 'portfolio-ing', in which learning is based on prior learning experiences of the individual and the self-management of recurring future learning. Moreover, the role of the teacher can also be filled in by a manager or team leader on the work floor. In this way VPL adds value by making the learning process the object of learning, with the learner and teacher (or manager) as partners in learning, openly debating the design and implementation of the learning needed or desired.

9. To conclude

The main question for this contribution was how to utilize the systematics of Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) as an effective instrument for the sake of personalizing learning in 'the learning society'? For answering this question, I aimed at showing the potential of VPL as a matchmaker between the main actors and the critical success factors for developing and implementing VPL. In all contexts the VPL-process follows more or less the same phases and steps. This can help in demonstrating how and where to set up interventions for the sake of creating time- and money-effective and efficient lifelong learning-strategies with a variety of learning objectives and on a win-win-win-basis for the learner, organisations on the labour market and learning providers, let alone the benefits that they together will generate for society as a whole.

More visibility and insight into the use of VPL for personalised learning can enhance and widen the dialogue(s) on activating learning because it is in any case clear that VPL offers challenges and opportunities for all actors involved. The linkage between VPL and personalised learning is principally based on experiences in practice. After all, as Paolo Freire wrote (1970): «Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other». It is this knowledge on which the acceptance and practical application of VPL for personalised learning rests. It is the human being who learns, not the organisation, 'school', or system, driven by the concept of building further learning on prior learning. That is exactly what VPL is meant for, and why personalised learning suits VPL.

In order to reach out to actually creating such learning situations in society, further research into the approach, methodology and effects of VPL and personalised learning is necessary in order to be able to use both phenomena in the context of lifelong learning strategies. Next to these more methodological and instrumental investigation, research is also needed into the 'ins and outs' of VPL and personalized learning in

«their» practice with respect to the actual process steps, the ways of working, the impact, the role of policy and advocacy, the need for funding, etc.

Last but not least, research on the practice of VPL and personalised learning shouldn't only take into account which material impact is generated but also the tangible or immaterial impact. After all, learning isn't a matter of social or economic rationale alone but is even more importantly steered by a learning cultural that is tuned in to the enjoyability of learning!

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LEARNING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract: In this era of fundamental changes in education brought by virtual worlds and augmented reality, dominated by mobile devices and applications, in order for learning 2.0 to occur, it is necessary to rethink the academic work environments based on Web 2.0, in accordance with the (pedagogical) learning needs of students. In this context the authors discuss some of the challenges which occur in the preparation and teaching courses based on social media, and the ways to respond to them via pedagogical approaches that help learners transform the social media universe in reflexive practice. Thus, we propose to follow a reading timeline that starts with the Social Web challenge for adult education institutions and ends with the changing role of learners and trainers in AE.

Keywords: learning, social media, OER, MOOC, adult education.

1. Introduction

Social Media is a generic term covering a large range of online platforms and applications which allow users to communicate, collaborate, interact and share data (Solis 2010). Thus, social media encompasses easily-accessible web instruments that individuals can use in order to talk about, participate in, create, recommend and take advantage of information, in addition to providing online reactions to everything that is happening around them.

There are many definitions of Social Media – most of them are evolving in time. Thus, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) the confusion of the meaning is bigger among academia members. Even we're not sure what is anymore we consider social media as today's most transparent, engaging and interactive shift in education (Hart 2011), «a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content» (Kaplan, Haenlein 2010). Thus, social media is about transforming monologue into dialogue, about free access to all types of information, about transforming internet users from mere readers to creators of content, about interacting in the online world so as to form new personal or business relationships.

We encounter social media on many different forms, including internet forums, blogs, microblogs, social networks, media sharing sites, social bookmarking, wikis, social aggregation, virtual worlds, social games and so many other (social) online artefacts. Nevertheless, social media remain the communication and collaboration media that have registered the most important growth during the last decade.

S. Sava, P. Novotny (a cura di), *Researches in Adult Learning and Education: the European Dimension*,
ISBN (online) 978-88-6453-425-1, ISBN (print) 978-88-6453-424-4,

Social media has been evolving in a strong interconnection with the Web2.0 technologies, a term defined first by O'Reilly (2005). In adult education, the uses of Web 2.0 technologies marked a shift that implies:

- informal/social learning is integrated in formal learning;
- a learning community is built which includes not only learners and facilitators, but also peers from worldwide;
- learners build their ownPersonal Learning Environments (PLEs);
- use of Open Educational Resources (OER), collaborative content and interactions on Web2.0 platforms/applications.

2. OERs and MOOCS – Implications for Adult Education

Over the recent years one can notice a continuous attention directed towards new innovations in adult education. The growing ubiquity of social media, the emerging mobile technologies, the augmented reality become more deeply integrated into the teaching-learning process and also create new opportunities of reinventing the way in which educational actors both perceive and access learning. Two major challenges that involve tremendous development and innovation are OER-based learning and MOOC. In this respect we recommend the POERUP project as a good practice for adults learning in a digital environment with OERs[1].

The term OERs was adopted at the UNESCO Forum in 2002 and officially renamed in April 2011 as *Freely/Openly Enabled Resources Supporting Training, Education, and Research*. According to Downes (2011) «open educational resources are materials used to support education that may be freely accessed, reused, modified and shared by anyone».

The Open Educational Resources include:

- digital assets as materials (content) for teaching and learning: open courseware and open content projects, free courses, learning objects directories, educational magazines, educational resources created and distributed as social media;
- open source software/open applications - for the development, use, reuse, research, organization and access to the resources; these also include virtual environments, learning communities, Web2.0 technologies/applications/tools;
- intellectual property licenses promoting the open publication of the materials, design principles and good practices, the localization of the content.

[1] EC Final report, 2015, *Adults Learning in Digital Learning Environments* (EAC-2013-0563), <http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/adult-learners-in-digital-learning-environments-pbKE0415181/> (05/2016).

The use of open educational resources demands for new models in adult education, new strategies to increase the reach and impact of OERs.

Although the «Open/Free» culture is in full development, it has become extremely attractive for educational institutions to exploit as well. Nevertheless, the education space is facing the following dilemma: «to open»/to share or «to close»/not to share access to information and ideas? (Andersen 2010). Should we facilitate and encourage access to resources or should we limit this access so as to protect legitimate interests, property rights, patents, the right to intimacy, the intellectual property? Thus, an increasing number of educational actors are embracing the idea of Open Education, which allows access to all course materials under a Creative Commons Attribution, Non-commercial, Share alike license.

According to Falconer *et al.* (2013) there are several OERs for adult learning activities types based on content publishing, technical infrastructure, skills and competences, research and understanding and community building for OERs uses. In order to facilitate a good OERs based learning for adults, Camilleri, Ehlers and Pawlowski (2014) proposed the following recommendations: apply research into OERs and OEPs quality; address the fragmentation of quality learning resources; help adult learning institutions nurture OERs and OEPs; support quality recognitions of Open Learning; create methods to track reuse and repurposing; strengthen processes of peer-assistance. However, there are some questions and some answers to be made. In the research study for CULT Committee (2015), *Adult Education And Open Educational Resources*[2] there are described a range of actions to be taken regarding the use of these resources in Adult Education, such as: increasing the quality and accreditation, recognition of prior learning, adopting standards for Creative Commons licences and so on.

The term MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) was coined by Downes and Siemens, who facilitated the first such online course with hundreds of participants distributed geographically, while the content, communication and collaboration were hosted by a large typology of social media platforms. The central topic of the course was «Connectivism and Connective Knowledge».

In 2012, which can be considered the year of MOOC, this trend has evolved at an unprecedented pace, accelerated by high profile entrants like top ranked universities and open platforms. Some leading providers are Coursera (Stanford University), Udacity, edX (M.I.T., Harvard; University of California at Berkeley and the University of Texas, non-

[2] Report available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/563397/IPOL_STU(2015)563397_EN.pdf> (06/2016).

profit) and FutureLearn (Gaebel 2013) supported by Open University, BBC and other UK universities.

According to Thompson (2011), MOOC brings a new «model for delivering learning content online to virtually any person - and as many of them - who wants to take the course» having as central characteristics the learner-centered, open access and scalability approach. Thus, intheonline space, the global appetite for global learning becomes a powerful force, with a growing number of universities that try to redefine the idea of education through MOOC McAuley *et al.* (2010) and Gaebel (2013).

The main reason for supporting MOOCs by academic community lies precisely inproviding access to a high class educationat which only a limited number of individuals have had access until now. Even though the courses are not equivalent with those offered by universities, they are similarly taught by experienced teachers from the best universities in the world and the exams are in front of the computer. However, MOOC is not «an educational panacea» (Agarwal 2013), it is a supplement for traditional courses/a recipe for educational reform which «has the potential to become a global higher education game changer» (Bruff et al. 2013).

Central to this vision is an awareness of the need to answer to some questions (Allen, Rosenbaum, Shachaf 2007; Hartman, Dziuban, Brophy-Ellison 2007; Malita 2008; Liu et al. 2009; Freire, Brunet 2010; Lee, McLoughlin 2011), as the following:

- Is social media a world full of opportunities to learn, experiment, explore ever-changing knowledge and attitudes? Are we dealing with a trend or a necessity?
- To what extent the new technologies and apps represent a new stage in educational process?
- How important do teachers consider these new instruments to be?
- What are the educational features of interest to us?
- How can we identity the most suitable social media educational applications?
- How can adult educational trainers/tutors use social media in their activities?
- In what ways can the impact of social media be quantified and how relevant is such quantification? (learning analytics, big data etc.)
- It is necessary for AE institutions/organisations to experiment in this realm?
- And, finally, do social media really help adults' education? Do social media really bring new ways for learning?

Although social media redefines the relation between technology and education, using it in training courses does not represent an easy learning method. It implies a sum of efforts, and especially knowledge of these technologies, with both advantages and limits.

3. Open Education Research as main challenge for AE sector

We are witnessing an opening up of educational resources and activities that significantly change the way we in which we do research.

There are numerous definitions of what Open Research represents (often the term is coined as Research 2.0). We consider Iorns (2013) to be most suitable: «Just as they have transformed many societal domains, digital tools are having a profound impact on the scientific process». She anticipates «a change in the research landscape as the technology that connects and empowers scientists improves and as research institutions more fully embrace these digital advances». According to Koltay, Špiranec & Karvalics (2015), Open Research «refers to new approaches in research that promote collaborative knowledge construction, rely on providing online access to raw results, theories and ideas, and focus on the opening up of the research process». Moreover, research in the open education era revolves around people and communities to a greater extent than before, since researchers are now able to rely on their peers, communities and networks.

According to Sakraida, Spotanski & Skiba (2010) Research 2.0 can accelerate the diffusion of knowledge, «improve practices and increase participation and collaboration». The connection of researchers in order to nurture collaboration and developing digital competencies is one of the key goals of the Research 2.0 concept. To support this goal, we integrated MOOCs, OERs and social networking approaches used on commercial Web 2.0 platforms for research purposes.

According to Duval *et al.* (2010) there are four challenges to be taken into consideration: availability of data (and as a consequence data management, data curation, Big Data), (sustainable) practices, impact for research results (in terms of authority, quality and trust), openness (Open Data, Open Access, Open Science) or privacy (ethical considerations confidentiality).

Despite the positive aspects such as openness, accessibility, visibility, collaboration, Koltay, Špiranec & Karvalics (2015) identify two other major factors that have prevented researchers from adopting it wholeheartedly in AE: recognition and trust. Thus, in their opinion, Research 2.0 is still an «unstable environment […] not acceptable in science». Another potential «trust» issue was signalled by Parra, Duval (2010) as being «the problem of keeping and sharing with others several electronic identities» (researcher's digital footprints) in cyberspace.

Paradoxically, in our work we noticed that, despite the fact that learners use all kinds of devices and apps on a daily basis, they still lack digital literacy (knowledge, skills, and behaviours used in a broad range of digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktop PCs, all of which are seen as network rather than computing devices). Moreo-

ver, there exists confusion between digital literacy and basic ICT competencies (technical abilities to use a computer/other devices, different platforms for learning, etc.). Therefore, our biggest challenge was to prepare our learners to take the step from using these digital tools with ease to using them well.

4. Good practices in open learning

Ideally, we should try to explore a number of different training methodologies, but every alternative will have its own advantages and disadvantages, both from an economic and pedagogical point of view:

- Learning from events. The classical «conferencing» is still the most commonly-used method in most AE institutions and it is potentially beneficial, as it is associated with the social interaction between learners and between tutors and learners (Grosseck, Holotescu 2010).
- Collaborative learning by-doing. Already used in higher education (Schaffert, Ebner 2010), cooperative learning with social software is now benefitting from major applications as a method that is more effective and efficient than traditional forms of training. This methodology is used when learners are intended to work together in small groups for significant stages of their learning process.
- Peer-learning and Peer-mentoring. Activities based on individual work – research notebooks, projects – essays (with peer-review), reviewing specialized literature can also actively engage the learners in the lectures based on the social issues of computerization.
- Practical projectsrequire contact with the trainer/tutor and his/her support. Several examples can be set as:
  - Individual projects: the theme discussed can be the same for all participants or learners can choose their own topic from a list suggested at the beginning of the course.
  - Team projects: in this case, there can be situations in which only one learner does the work but the project is presented as being a collaborative effort, although tasks are allocated separately to each member of the group.
  - Continuous projects, which are developed systematically over the entire course, or final projects, which are presented at the end of the course. Students can employ all types of audio and visual materials - but they most often opt for creating PLE/PLN, e-portfolios or digital storytelling and mindmapping applications – for which they subsequently obtain feedback via poll or quiz-type applications, using mobile devices in particular.
  - Life Story Hunter. Students can learn best about social media from their personal experience, as well the experiences of others.

  - Training courses to find, create and use OERs and to implement OEPs in daily work. We recommend the OERup! project (Open Educational Resources Uptake in Adult Education, <http://www.oerup.eu/>) in which the authors developed the training module «OER-OEP as part of a strategy in adult education».
- Integration of MOOCs in blended courses (Holotescu *et al.* 2014). Recent studies appreciate that MOOCs is part of the wider context of open education, online learning, globalisation of education and constrained budgets (Yuan, Powell 2013). According to Thompson (2011), MOOC brings a new «model for delivering learning content online to virtually any person – and as many of them – who wants to take the course» having as central characteristics the learner-centered, open access and scalability approach. The integration of MOOCs exposes students to high quality materials created with top educational technologies. Such courses enable collaboration in global learning communities and offer a broader range of experiences than those to which they might otherwise have access. MOOCs provide challenging opportunities for improving their knowledge in their own area of expertise as well as enhance competencies and skills for adopting new models of open educational practices.

Irrespective of the method employed, the method that is most suited to a social media based learning process will be the one that meets the learners' expectations. Moreover, the trainer/tutor must know how to use the virtual environment. As the key element is interaction, both learner and trainer must be committed in order for learning to take place. In reality, the trainer/tutor's task is that of turning social media into an ecosystem that provides learners with fast and efficient social learning, with a 'healthy' educational environment that determines, at the same time, their personal and professional development.

5. Instead of conclusions

In spite of the predominantly positive perceptions of open education among organisations, the use of social media, OERs and MOOCs is still at the level of experimentation, as it is trying to find its place in the digital environments. Thus, a vast majority of educational institutions state that:

- they cannot prove the impact of open education on their own institutions;
- the available opportunities of social media tools and resources are not fully exploited;
- it is difficult to reach certain target groups, such as policy makers, via these channels (although there are several European major projects that deals with such issues);

- staffs must be dedicated in order to secure the construction of the organisation's brand;
- identifying the sector of the public that proves to be critical for institutional development it's not an easy task;
- in an environment that is as dynamic as social media, it is important to control the communication in which we play the leading role.

Perhaps the most significant approach of using social media in adult education is the fact that it is more a socio-cultural phenomenon, rather than a technical one, an attitude rather than a sum of technologies, the fact that it has become more personal to the learners of all ages, emphasizing the development of communities of learning and practice and the strength of something done together.

For the time being, only a few AE institutions in Romania have adopted coherent strategies for the pedagogical integration of OERs and the development of the best methods for teaching and learning based on these strategies (see the project OER!up). Thus, we believe it is necessary that a social media education to be accompanied by a social media in education and moreover by an open education.

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