

LIFELONG LEARNING & LIFELONG GUIDANCE

Stepping stones and stumbling blocks
NOS-HS Career Guidance Systems Workshop
Lillehammer 2023



DANISH SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

AARHUS UNIVERSITY

20 MARCH 2023

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A LITTLE BIT ABOUT MYSELF



Associate professor at Aarhus University

PhD in European Vocational education and training policy (The Copenhagen Process)

Research interest in the interplay between education policy and practice

Exploring individual narratives within the larger societal narratives

Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance as ‘grand narratives’ anchored in transnational organisations with quite different aims ([Larson & Cort \(2022\) Qualification, socialisation and/or subjectification – three international organisations’ prioritisation of the purposes of adult education and learning from the 1970s to the 2010s in International Journal of Lifelong Education vol. 41](#))



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European Council Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies (2008)

Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance as 'stepping stones' to democratic citizenship, employability, and/or individual empowerment (cf Biesta's domains of educational purpose).



BACKGROUND PROJECTS ON LABOUR MARKET 'TRANSITIONS'

- Two CEDEFOP projects
- Focus on skilled and low-skilled people's labour market transitions
- A political and a research interest in:
 - Lifelong learning as a support structure in a 'volatile' labour market:
 - Transitions between jobs and in and out of the labour market are likely to become more frequent
 - Lifelong guidance as a support structure easing transitions in and out of jobs
 - Labour market transitions and how LLL/LLG can support people in handling these
- Narrative method (Tell me your working life story)
 - 18 narrative interviews with lowskilled and 21 narrative interviews with skilled (DK)



RESEARCH PAPER
No 42

Navigating difficult waters: learning for career and labour market transitions



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SUPPORT STRUCTURES

[...] institutional frameworks shape the ways in which adults engage in learning in order to prepare themselves for learning and work transitions. Their considerations depend on the nature of the education and training system, access to welfare supply for career reorientation and retraining and access to career guidance (Cedefop, 2014)

Adult career guidance may in other words be an important support structure in regard to labour market transitions. However, the studies showed that people in transitions in the Danish labour market either do not take advantage of available support structures due to lack of information, that the support structures work to the detriment of successful transitions or that access is limited to specific groups within the adult population (Cort et al., 2015, p. 292)



THREE ARTICLES ON LLL AND LLG IN THE DANISH CONTEXT



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LEFT TO YOUR OWN DEVICES: THE POTENTIAL OF LIFELONG GUIDANCE

- Theoretical perspective on labour market transitions on the basis of Holzkamp's concept 'disruption of the cyclicity of everyday life': a communicative category between agency and structure
- Argument: A potential for lifelong guidance during transitions in a working life – both **visible transitions** (unemployment, illness, maternity leave) and **invisible transitions** (changing job position, annual staff development dialogue, engaging in competence development, meaningfulness)
- Identifying stages in a work life where lifelong guidance could play an important role as a 'stepping stone' to career change
 - Adult career guidance in Denmark – a patchy system: job centres, adult education centres, e-guidance and a private market for coaching and career guidance
 - Unemployment -> employment policies in DK have shifted from offers of adult education and training to job activation and rapid reintegration into the labour market:
 - **Individuals would welcome career guidance when they see themselves in transition rather than when they are defined as such by the system** (Bimrose & Brown, 2014, p. 217)



There is a greater focus on how citizens should meet the system's requirements than how the system could meet the citizens' needs [...] In a way, the system leaves little room for its citizens to act in an agentic way: through its bureaucratic procedures it narrows down the space of possibility rather than widening it. (Cort et al., 2015, p. 302)



IN REALITY I MOTIVATE MYSELF: MOTIVATION AS CORE POLITICAL CONCERN

The problem of **motivation** for lifelong learning in research and policy documents

- Decentre the concept of 'motivation' and increase understanding of the complexity of motivation through
 - [Self-Determination Theory](#) as theoretical lens to understand the role of lifelong learning and guidance in the working life of three low-skilled men
- Argument: Low-skilled workers learn through their working life and are motivated to engage with learning but not necessarily formal learning or learning leading to a qualification
- Different forms of motivation at stake for the individual – in employment policies and LLL policies however the tendency is to external motivation -> 'policing' rather than 'supporting' thus establishing an external locus of control (loss of autonomy)
- Changes in unemployment regimes from the 1980s to the 2000s from right to duty, from welfare to workfare reflected in the individual narratives of the low-skilled



” Motivation is a concept which has been integrated in the societal narrative of job and education. Ahl notes that motivational theories have privileged ‘self-actualization through work’ and that ‘adults have motivation problems’ when it comes to participation in adult education (Ahl, 2006, p. 11, 13). This was also the point of departure for the Cedefop research project on which this article is based: it is necessary to identify the barriers for low-skilled workers’ participation in adult education with the underlying assumptions that they are not motivated and need to be(come) motivated for education and work. These societal narratives of having an inherent motivation for your job and/or for education are reflected in the narratives [...] (Mariager-Anderson et al., 2016)



BUSTING THE MYTH OF LOWSKILLED WORKERS LLL/LLG AS DIVIDING PRACTICES – LOW-SKILLED VS HIGH-SKILLED WORKERS

The problematisation of being low-skilled in EU LLL policies

Deconstruction of policy through discourse analysis (What's the Problem Represented to Be) and narrative inquiry

- Argument: EU LLL policy is solely focusing on the supply of labour, leading to a deficit perspective on (especially) low-skilled. The demand side is made invisible i.e. salaries and working conditions for low-skilled positions (rather than workers)
- People in low-skilled positions are often skilled
- The Danish vocational training system pushes apprentices out
- Aspirational career wishes lead to low-skilled jobs (e.g. journalism)



” [...] being in a low-skilled position does not equal *being* low-skilled and it is not necessarily a ‘condition’ caused by socio-psychological barriers or resistance to learning. People are sometimes pushed into low-skilled jobs by the education system or by the labour market. Some people chose to work in a low-skilled job due to care obligations; others simply because they do not consider work as important as other aspects of their lives and others because there are no other jobs available. (Cort et

al., 2017)

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LLL AND LIFELONG GUIDANCE STEPPING STONES TURNED INTO STUMBLING BLOCKS?

- from welfare to workfare
- from right to duty
- motivation through stick and carrot (external motivation)
- standardisation of support structures (control and categorisation rather than support)
- inequality of access to LLL and Lifelong Guidance

(Still) a need to resist neoliberalism in education:

The result is that efficiency and monetised values are prioritised over other pedagogical and social values such as diversity, equity, well-being and care. Under neoliberalism education systems have been mandated to develop efficient, creative and problem-solving learners and workers for a globally competitive economy leading to the neglect of its social and developmental responsibilities (Olssen, 2009 in [Tett & Hamilton, 2019](#)).



AN EPILOGUE CORK LIFELONG LEARNING CITY

Lifelong guidance beyond the formal support structures:

- learning neighbourhoods
- the value of communities
- informal learning hubs
- > non-formal/informal learning and guidance



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Self-Determination Theory

