LLinE is a trans-European journal dedicated to the advancement of adult education, lifelong learning, intercultural collaboration and best practice research.

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The mission of LLinE is to bring adult education academics and practitioners together to share their work and best practices. To complement the printed forum of the journal, LLinE has a long tradition of organizing international conferences on lifelong learning themes. The 12th international LLinE Conference on the theme of wellbeing was held on the 27th to 29th of January, in Tuusula, Finland. This issue of the journal is a selection of the conference papers and presentations. Hence, the central question we ask in this issue is: how does learning influence wellbeing in different settings? This issue’s contributions form together a holistic picture of wellbeing. The articles cover topics from wellbeing at work to mental health, from 3rd age wellbeing to national education policy.

David Watson
LEARNING THROUGH LIFE: IN AND BEYOND THE UK

The Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning was set up in the United Kingdom in 2007 to identify a consensus for the future of lifelong learning in the UK. Learning Through Life is the main report from the Inquiry. In this article, Professor Sir David Watson, chairman of the Inquiry, presents the findings of this report with the reasoning behind it, drawing conclusions for both the UK and Europe.

Irma Kunnari and Lasse Lipponen
BUILDING TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS FOR WELLBEING

What do best practices in student guidance in the Finnish context look like? This study describes the ways teachers construct practices conducive to sociopsychological wellbeing of their students in building feelings of relatedness, competence and autonomy. This seemed to have an impact on the teachers’ own wellbeing as well. Threats to wellbeing in an educational community are also discussed in this article.

Sofia Boutsiouki
IN SEARCH OF WELLBEING - ASPIRATIONAL AND FUNCTIONAL PURPOSES OF LEARNING OF GREEK POSTGRADUATES

This paper draws data from an empirical survey carried out on Greek postgraduate students, exploring their perceptions and attitudes regarding lifelong learning in relation to wellbeing. The article finds –perhaps contrary to expectations in the postgraduate context—that lifelong learning is valued as much as a way to personal development as a vehicle for professional advancement.

Eeva Anttila and Teija Löytönen
SENSUOUS UNDERSTANDING - EMBODIED MODE OF REFLECTION ENHANCING WELLBEING AT WORK

Anttila and Löytönen - dance pedagogues and researchers - approach wellbeing at work from a radical perspective. Reflecting upon one’s work plays a key role in work wellbeing. Western body-mind-duality, however, makes us see this reflection solely as a cognitive process. The body is excluded from knowing. This article argues that bodily experiences are significant in human learning and suggests that a bodily mode of reflection would enhance wellbeing at work and in society as a whole. The article also discusses how this might be achieved in practice.

Katarina Popovic
HEALTH AND THE POWER OF INFORMAL LEARNING

In this contribution we focus on learning about (physical) health through adult education. The author finds that the existing adult education provision in Europe in general and in South Eastern Europe in particular is not enough to satisfy the demand for health knowledge. Informal learning on the other hand is very important in bridging this gap.

James Ogunleye and Marja Kaunonen
LIFELONG LEARNING AND MENTAL HEALTH

How does lifelong learning empower those suffering from long-term mental illness? This paper documents the results of the trans-European EMILIA project’s qualitative research involving mentally ill people in a lifelong learning training intervention. The results indicate mainly positive experiences, for example in terms of the participants’ employment and meaningful activities. While the mental health problems of the participants have not disappeared, these have diminished, and the participants’ ability to expand their social networks, training and work prospects has improved.

Brian Groombridge

The arts are crucial in maintaining and developing the mental and physical wellbeing of older people, as practitioners or as audiences. In his article Brian Groombridge urges governments –in his native UK as well as abroad –to invest in learning for and about the arts to improve quality of life for senior citizens. Society also benefits as the cost of care homes and medical treatments is reduced.

ADULT EDUCATION IN BELGIUM

Stéphanie Peters, Céline Mahieu, Arnaud Salmon, Cédric Danse, Françoise de Viron and Daniel Faulx
VALIDATION OF LEARNING IN FRENCH-SPEAKING BELGIUM - DISCOURSE AND PRACTICES

Belgium holds the EU Presidency from July to December 2010. Our article series of presenting national adult education systems continues with a look at the validation of formal and informal learning in French-speaking Belgium.
We can hardly deny the fact that there is probably not a more important goal in human life than the wellbeing and happiness of every individual and society. Although wellbeing and joy for life have been longstanding and appreciated goals in many communities, it is only recently these values have started to fuse or even overcome a measurement of success that is merely based on material wealth.

The wider quality of our lives has also lately received more attention among educational policy makers and researchers. There is an increased interest in unpacking what counts as ‘quality life’ in today’s world and in how education and learning practices can support individuals to realize their aspirations for quality live(s). 

Recent research on wellbeing shows that individuals derive enjoyment and satisfaction in their lives from different sources. A unifying feature is, however, the fact that a fulfilling life is often shaped by other factors than just income or other material features. For many, it is their health, social connections and agency in society that matter a great deal and, thus, these elements mediate their conceptions of wellbeing and happiness.

Lifelong learning policies and practices have traditionally directed people’s attention to the economic benefits of learning, focusing on competence building and employability. The promotion of wellbeing has clearly been a neglected area of concern. Yet, as research strongly indicates, education has a lot to offer for the wellbeing of everyone. Wellbeing, on the other hand, promotes individuals’ orientation and motivation to learning, including coping in dynamically changing and stressful conditions.

If we want to take wellbeing seriously, it is important that it is also recognized in the evaluation of learning as well as in different measures of success. Measures of wellbeing should acknowledge the agency of individuals in their right to make their own choices and to live a life that they want to pursue. Every learner should have the capacity for independent social action during which they intentionally transform and re-fine their social and material worlds and take control of their lives. This includes being recognised as an accountable author who is given adequate support in developing their own and each other’s competences and whole lives.

More and more dissatisfaction is being expressed towards societal measures in terms of their capability to describe nations’ social growth, not to mention their ability to illuminate the level of wellbeing of individuals and cultural groups that make up the society. In recognising the limitations of current measures characterising our society, it seems reasonable to suggest that existing assessments be supplemented by new elements that are able to indicate the level of wellbeing and happiness of individuals and cultural groups as pivotal elements of lifelong learning.

As educators and as experts of lifelong learning, we have a lot to contribute to these emerging concerns and developmental efforts. In addition to more societal and global efforts, we can start to look critically at our present educational practices and evaluation systems for lifelong learning. Do they acknowledge wellbeing and happiness as pivotal learning goals and as achievements that every learner is entitled to?

The present issue of LLinE is based on our annual ‘Lifelong Learning in Europe’ conference held in Tuusula, Finland at the beginning of this year 2010. In this conference, we explored the relationship between lifelong learning and wellbeing. The conference brought together lifelong learning researchers, educational practitioners and policy makers who together generated rich and vivid discussions as well as complementary perspectives on the role of lifelong learning policies and practices in promoting wellbeing and joy among individuals and collectives. I hope this conference volume of LLinE will contribute to the ongoing work on the pivotal role of education in advancing learning and wellbeing across the life span.

KRISTIINA KUMPULAIHEN
Editor-in-Chief of LLinE
Director, Information and evaluation services
Finnish National Board of Education
Project Picks

This issue of LLinE features articles presented at our January namesake LLinE Conference, Lifelong Learning and Wellbeing. In keeping with the best practice-oriented mission of LLinE Conferences, the January event provided a forum not only for top academic articles but also for a variety of trans-European projects and partnerships.

Below are some picks of the projects and undertakings presented and discussed at the LLinE Conference. More information about these projects can be found on the internet.

SLIC—SUSTAINABLE LEARNING IN THE COMMUNITY
SLIC was a European Commission-funded international project aiming to engage senior citizens in learning and to promote their activity in their communities. For this objective SLIC developed innovative interactive workshops and prior learning evaluation tools. http://slic-project.eu/

SHARING AWARENESS
Initiated by the Swedish Development Cooperation Organization MKFC, Sharing Awareness is a project operating in Africa, Asia and Arabic countries. A large part of the project’s activity has to do with teacher training in developing countries via ICT methods. http://sharingawareness.org/

ENCOUNTERS IN MULTISENSORY SPACE
Encounters in multisensory space is a Finnish project designed to increase intercultural understanding. Its method is to create actual multisensory spaces, with sounds, objects and landscapes that help immigrants recreate aspects of their homelands and to share their culture with second generation immigrants and majority groups. http://markkinointi.laurea.fi/hankemateriaalit/encounters_in_multisensory_space.pdf

MENTAL CAPITAL AND WELLBEING
The UK government commissioned this project to shed light on learning and mental health in the context of changing demographics and globalization. The study defines mental capital as a person’s cognitive and emotional resources; how good they are at learning and their ‘emotional intelligence’ such as their social skills and resilience in the face of stress. The findings inform UK policymaking and represent one of the most comprehensive views of the science of mental functioning ever undertaken. www.foresight.gov.uk/OurWork

MINDWELLNESS
Mindwellness is a 2-year international project with 11 project partners in 9 countries. Project objectives include developing innovative training material aimed at older people (working or retired) to help them retain mental flexibility. Concrete outcomes include online training material with exercises on brain training and a handbook on brain training for older people, providing a theoretical basis for use by trainers and experts. http://www.mindwellness.eu/

How sustainable is European wellbeing?

Despite its upbeat name, the Happy Planet Index (HPI) is not aiming to seek out the most content nation on the globe. The index, launched in 2006 by the UK think tank the new economics foundation, uses a country’s ecological footprint and data on the self-perceived life satisfaction of its inhabitants to determine the nation’s ranking. Hence, the index measures a country’s capability of producing wellbeing for its citizens in an ecologically sustainable way.

LLinE first reported about the HPI in its 1/2009 issue. Since then, the index has been updated and a Happy Planet Charter has been launched to complement the index. The Charter urges developing nations to aim for HPI scores of 89 by 2050 to ensure sustainability.

The index challenges the dogma of continuous growth and claims to offer an alternative for the leading, growth-based economic index, the GDP. The HPI itself has been criticized for its use of life satisfaction survey data, which by definition is highly subjective and culture-specific.

The updated rankings reveal that nine of the top ten HPI nations globally are Latin American countries, with Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica occupying the three top positions. It would seem that middle-income countries such as those mentioned perform well in the index.

Here is the HPI index just for Europe, with volcanism-fueled Iceland leading and Estonia — combining high income inequality with heavy fossil fuel use — at the bottom.

The European Happy Planet Index

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Learning through life: in and beyond the UK

The Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning was set up in the United Kingdom in 2007 as an independent Inquiry sponsored by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE). During the Inquiry, experts from government, business, academia, trade unions, public services providers, the third sector, and learners have come together with the Inquiry’s ten expert Commissioners to identify a consensus for the future of lifelong learning in the UK, informed by over 250 evidence submissions.

Learning Through Life is the main report from the Inquiry. In this article, Professor Sir David Watson, chairman of the Inquiry, presents the findings of this report with the reasoning behind it, drawing conclusions for both the UK and beyond.

David Watson
INTRODUCTION

This paper is about ‘Learning Through Life’, as we understand it in the United Kingdom and what might be the significance of that analysis more widely. The independent Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning completed its formal deliberations after almost two years of work in September 2009. On 17th of September we published our report in book form, as Learning Through Life, by Tom Schuller (our director) and myself (Schuller and Watson, 2009: all page numbers below refer to this).

Between September 2007 and September 2009 the ten commissioners of the Inquiry were engaged in listening, talking, researching, thinking and writing in collaboration with a wide range of interested parties and in a variety of formal and informal settings. The charge to the Commission was to ‘offer an authoritative and coherent strategic framework for lifelong learning in the UK,’ in particular by: ‘articulating a broad rationale for public and private investment; reappraising the social and cultural value attached to it by policymakers; and developing new perspectives on policy and practice.’

THE COMPLEXITY OF LEARNING

In response, we went back to first principles. We were very conscious that ‘learning’ is a complex and often paradoxical proposition.

- Some of learning takes place in institutional settings: in schools of all levels and types; in colleges and universities; in places of worship; as well as in clubs and societies. A lot of it does not; for example, the workplace is both a significant site for learning, and a platform for learning elsewhere.
- Sometimes learning has to be collective; sometimes it is profoundly individual. One of the mantras in compulsory education at the moment is around ‘personalisation’ (framing the educational experience so that it is just right and just in time for the individual learner). Of course this can work well, but there is a danger in suppressing the shared understanding that comes from learning together.
- Some learning requires formal recognition (as in accreditation) before it is of value; other learning will remain not only personal but also private.
- Often learning is joyful; sometimes it requires pain, and especially endurance. You sometimes have to frighten yourself into learning what it is you have to learn.
- Above all learning is about an attitude of mind, a propensity, or a curiosity. Learning isn’t just about subject knowledge, nor is it just about practical skills. It is also about developing the judgement needed to put these two together. Many people refer to this as ‘learning how to learn.’
- A final paradox: some learning is instrumental or routine; other learning is liberating or transformative. We learn to earn, but we also learn to live. To quote the sociologist A.H. Halsey: ‘the primary purpose of education should not be the living that students will earn, but the life they will lead.’

CHANGING CONTEXT

Of course, a lot changed during the course of our work programme, both inside and outside the world of education and training. The national and international economies have gone into a free-fall, which may or may not have been arrested. In the UK, at the time of writing, the party-political temperature has risen to pre-election levels. In the United States an emphatically different type of administration has taken office, and in the wider world significant international tensions seem to have increased while very few have lessened.

More parochially, in the UK 2008 was a year of educational reviews: on childhood (led by Richard Layard on behalf of the Children’s Society), on primary education (twice, by Robin Alexander and Jim Rose), on Education of ages 14–19 (by Richard Pring and Geoff Hayward supported by the Nuffield Foundation), on informal adult education (leading to the government paper on The Learning Revolution), on higher education (by the Department for Innovation Science and Universities, and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills leading to a new ‘framework’ paper, Higher Ambitions) and on ‘access to the professions’ (by a panel led by Alan Milburn MP). Legislation was placed before Parliament confirming the arrangements for the dismantling of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the split into two of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The Qualification and Skills (QSF) framework was being published, and the debate about Level 2 and Level 3 diplomas continued to rage.

So what could the IFL say that could be helpful and distinctive, as it jostled for space amongst all these?

CENTRAL IDEAS AND QUESTIONS

We set ourselves quite a difficult task. In my life as a historian of ideas I spent nearly a decade working on the papers of Hannah Arendt. One of her most famous (and least satisfactory) books is The Origins of Totalitarianism (1951) for which the working title was ‘the Burden of Our Times.’ In the introduction she writes about people’s views oscillating widely between ‘desperate
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hope’ (the utopian search for a universal fix) and ‘desperate fear’ (a sense of powerlessness). I don’t think it is an exaggeration to say that that is where much contemporary discourse about educational policy and practice in the UK resides.

We wanted to raise our eyes a little more towards the horizon. The central idea was that ‘the right to learn throughout life is a human right’ and the vision of ‘a society in which learning plays its full role in personal growth, prosperity, solidarity and local and global responsibility’ (pp. 8–9).

What are the problems that we have to work together to solve in order to have a genuinely learning society; in which learning is natural as well as functional; is a source of personal and collective satisfaction as well as of productivity and prosperity; and is self-motivated and voluntary rather than simply prescribed or even punitive?

Weaknesses of the UK System
In the UK, we do not have a broken system, but it does have serious weaknesses.

• Initial education does not serve as a secure foundation for lifelong learning.
• There is a significant demographic challenge: the balance of opportunity and support for learning across the life course is wrong.
• The system does not recognise the increasingly diverse transitions into and from employment.
• Educational inequalities accumulate over the life course to an unacceptable extent.
• For all the rhetoric, a high-skilled economy is not what we have in prospect at present.
• Finding a way through the system is complex, opaque and de-motivating for many.

• The governance of the system is over-centralised (especially in England), insufficiently stable, and does not trust its professionals enough.
• Much of the infrastructure is inadequate: buildings, technologies and services are not well integrated
• Our ‘system’ is not sufficiently intelligent, i.e. it does not create and use information as well as it might.

Most seriously, putting all of this together confirms the validity of what social scientists (following Marx) would call an iron law about the connection between education and socio-economic life-chances. In particular we face the wicked question of how to advantage the disadvantaged without further advantaging the advantaged.

Agenda for the Next Quarter-Century
As a group the Commission began from the premise that the right to learn is a human right, connected with personal growth and emancipation, prosperity, group and community solidarity, as well as global responsibility. What we have not done is to propose a rigid blueprint. Our instincts were against compulsion and fixed formulae. Above all we do not want learning to be used as a weapon to impose uniformity, or a narrow view of individual, social or economic development. In so far as our Report sets out a framework, it is a framework of opportunity, structured around investment, incentives and capabilities. Our goal is to set an agenda for lifelong learning that will make sense for the next quarter-century. Overall, we are struck by how much of the current dialogue and interventions in learning are dominated by analysis of deficit and its remediation. One priority is to move much of the language of the debate beyond dismissal and condensation. A related goal is to assist our society in moving past fixing things (often with unintended consequences) to realising the genuine personal, social and economic benefits of lifelong learning.

We believe we have offered some radical ideas and revived some traditional ones in order to achieve this. These ideas are about how to conceptualise and organise the learning life-course; about how to bring together personal, employer and state investment in learning; about how to restore control of learning goals and achievements to individuals and communities; about how to create the best infrastructure for learning in current and possible future circumstances. We have compiled new evidence about how learning is funded and accessed, and about how it links to both individual and group life-chances. The ambiguity in our title – Learning Through Life is deliberate: we believe in both learning through life experience and throughout the life-course.

Learning Through Life
In summary, Learning Through Life asserts that access to learning throughout life that enriches and strengthens individuals and societies is a human right. To secure this right, it makes proposals on ten major fronts.

1. The first is to base lifelong learning policy on a new model of the educational life course, with four key age stages (up to 25, 25–50, 50–75, 75+).

Our approach to lifelong learning should deal far more positively with two major trends: an ageing society and changing patterns of paid and unpaid activity.

Let’s look at these revised stages in turn:
• our first perception is that the transition through and beyond compulsory
education and into young adulthood is taking longer. There used to be an assumption that this occurred around 16, then 18. Now it’s not until around 25 that directions appear to be set. In the UK in 2006 58% of men and 39% of women aged 20–24 were living with their parents. Young people are growing up both faster and more slowly: cultural independence is juxtaposed with economic dependence.

• then there is the heartland experience of work, family and other responsibility, and (it seems) temporarily declining satisfaction (these are the ‘time pressure’ years) (figure 1).

• thirdly, the assumption that the phase described above continues until we simply fall into official ‘retirement’ at 60 or 65 seems to be receding. We found evidence of an increased negotiation of types of work and responsibility from the mid-50s onwards (figure 2);

• and why should that be the end (figure 3)? We drew on the substantial evidence that continued learning can reduce dependency.
In response, we propose rebalancing resources fairly and sensibly across the different life stages. Public and private resources invested in lifelong learning amount to over £55 billion (about 3.9% of GDP – and going up to something like £93 billion, if we add in opportunity costs); their distribution should reflect a coherent view of our changing economic and social context.

- That substantial pie (which does not look quite so large after the funds we have invested in rescuing banks) is made up of some complex slices (figure 4).

- Figure 5 sets out how we currently invest it across the life course.

- And figure 6 shows how we propose that it is modestly re-distributed by 2020 – the ratio moves from 86:11:2.5:0.5 to 80:15:4:1.
3. Thirdly, we should build a set of learning entitlements.

A clear framework of entitlements, or rights, to learning will be a key factor in strengthening choice and motivation to learn.

- We have picked up on some clever ideas that are already in the field (not always successfully) and looked at how they may be revived. These include ‘learning accounts’, a ‘My-Futures Folder’, and ‘staging posts’. Some of these are around funding, others about recording progress and yet others about recognising key life changes.

- Structurally, we feel that some entitlements should be universal, including basic skills at all ages and a ‘threshold’ or ‘platform’ to step off into lifelong learning, from the equivalent of high school graduation and university matriculation, as well as access to IT. Above all lifelong learning should foster not a crude selective meritocracy (as in Michael Young’s satire) but recurrent opportunity.

- Other entitlements should relate to working life. ‘Learning Leave’ is a strong notion here, possible to be funded by redeploying the £3.7b of corporation tax relief now granted for training.

- Yet others could support voluntary and involuntary transitions (such as a ‘welcome entitlement for those crossing boundaries, or leaving institutions such as prisons or care’).

4. At the same time we need to engineer flexibility: a system of credit and encouraging part-timers.

Much faster progress is needed to implement a credit-based system, making learning more flexible and accessible with funding matched to it.

- We have had some agonies in the UK about accreditation, credit accumulation and transfer.Crudely, we have the systems, but we are very reluctant to use them.

- We feel that adopting approaches to funding that are agnostic as to mode, across the whole array of post-compulsory education is vital to unlock this potential.

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**Figure 7**

- Projected % change in population in each life stage between 2008 and 2020.
- % change in proposed expenditure on each life stage between 2008 and 2020.
5. Above all, we have to use learning to improve the quality of work. The debate on skills has been too dominated by an emphasis on increasing the volume of skills. There should be a stronger focus on how skills are actually used.

As we say in the report, there’s currently ‘a naïve belief that upgrading qualifications for the population as a whole will produce all of the benefits which are only accrued by the subset of people who currently have those qualifications’ (p. 31).

- Going back to the life-stages, we need to understand what is happening not just in the middle, but across all three of the latter stages. Our suggestion is that economic activity should be recognised up to 75 (and not 60–65 as at present).

6. In terms of content, we propose constructing a curriculum framework for citizens’ capabilities.

A common framework should be created of learning opportunities, which should be available in any given area, giving people control over their own lives.

By capabilities, we mean the concept developed by Amartya Sen of ‘the capacity to achieve well-being.’ There should be a common core of provision: of content (initially around digital, health, financial and civic capabilities - the downsides of lacking these are all too clear), of local and contextual customisation, of quality assurance, and of support for teachers and other key ‘intermediaries’ (examples are Citizens’ Advice Bureau advisers, probation officers and health visitors).

7. This leads on to broadening and strengthening the capacity of the lifelong learning workforce.

- We need more of elements such as accreditation, and notably of what have been identified by Lorna Unwin and others as ‘expansive’ rather than ‘restricted’ environments.
- And there is an equity issue here too, as set out in figure 8. Access to training diminishes down the status ladder.

8. The next two points flow together: first, revive local responsibility....

The current system in England has become over-centralised, and insufficiently linked to local and regional needs. We should restore life and power to local levels.
This could be achieved by:
• stronger local strategy-making, by local authorities;
• greater autonomy for Further Education colleges, as institutional backbone of local lifelong learning;
• stronger local employer networks;
• a major role for cultural institutions; and
• local Learning Exchanges: for connecting up teachers and learners, providing a single information point, social learning spaces, and an entitlement ‘bank.’

All of these propositions (especially those related to the responsibilities of local authorities and Further Education Colleges) are with the grain of what Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours call ‘local learning ecologies’. We are also suggesting a level of specification of national initiatives to be determined locally at about 20% of the related funding.

9. …within national frameworks.
There should be effective machinery for creating a coherent lifelong learning strategy across the UK, and within the UK’s four nations. We need to have a single department with lead authority, and another body to check on progress.

10. And finally, we have to make the system intelligent.
The system will only flourish with consistent information and evaluation, and open debate about the implications. It is in this context that we have proposed a triennial ‘State of Learning’ report.

INTERNATIONAL RESONANCE
I began by reflecting on some peculiar stresses and strains in the UK system. Some of these are clearly ‘exceptional’ and culturally specific, others not so. I would like to finish by raising some ‘universal’ challenges. These seem to apply across the three basic international ‘models’ of social policy – the Anglo-Saxon neo-liberal, the Continental European social market, and the Nordic welfare regimes – and to cohere especially around demography, citizenship, and organisation.

We need to be thinking about the evolving shape of society in modern developed economies, including what this means for relationships between the generations.

We need also to be thinking about how these societies relate to each other in a world of almost instantaneous communication. In our view this means that citizenship should not be a defensive and exclusionary concept. It needs to be genuinely cosmopolitan and closer to ‘soft’ than to ‘hard’ power.

And finally we need to cover a number of practical, ‘nuts and bolts’ questions. Who should be responsible for what in a contemporary system of lifelong learning?

All of this raises generic (or universal) questions about what constitutes an ‘intelligent’ system. The analysis in Learning Through Life suggests that any other national system embarking on a similar exercise would need to focus on the following:
• research, in the sense of self-knowledge (as in the suggestion in the report about a ‘State of Learning’ Report),
• resources (in particularly how they are garnered and applied, as well as redeployed), and
• responsibility, at all levels from the individual up to Departments of State.

This is with a view to delivering not only flexibility, but also fairness, and a sense that the participants are able to use learning to achieve greater personal and collective agency. If we were to sum up the goals of lifelong learning in a single phrase, it would be that it should enable people to take control of their lives (p.6). This is probably our most fundamental objective.

Note: our website contains all of the significant papers and reports, and will continue to be updated for at least a year (see: www.lifelonglearninginquiry.org.uk).

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DAVID WATSON

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Building teacher – student relationships for wellbeing

In this study we describe the pedagogical practices of fifteen experienced teachers in student guidance aimed at supporting interrelated learning and wellbeing in a University of Applied Science in Finland. We focus on optimal practices in building relationships for socio-psychological wellbeing, including subjective wellbeing and full functioning. Our study shows how the teachers consciously constructed socio-psychological wellbeing of their students in building feelings of relatedness, competence and autonomy. This was done in interaction with the students, and it seemed to have an impact on the teachers’ own wellbeing as well. Threats to wellbeing at an educational community are also discussed.

Irma Kunnari and Lasse Lipponen
INTRODUCTION

Creating socio-psychological wellbeing for members of the university community can be understood as a learning process that enhances relatedness, competence and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001; Hakkarakinen, Palonen, Paavola, & Lehtinen, 2004; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). These basic psychological needs are determinative with regard to optimal experience and wellbeing in daily life, also in an educational environment. It is essential to specify the conditions that tend to support people’s natural activity and the conditions that elicit and exploit their vulnerability. The satisfaction of needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness predict performance and wellbeing in different life settings across the life span (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The need for relatedness pertains to the feeling that one is close and connected to significant others, the need for competence is fulfilled by the experience that one can effectively bring about desired effects and outcomes, and the need for autonomy involves perceiving that one’s activities are endorsed by or congruent with the self (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe & Ryan, 2000).

The institutions providing professional, vocational higher education in Finland (Universities of Applied Sciences, UAS) try to build optimal learning environments for diverse students with various life circumstances. At the same time they try to meet the needs of the rapidly changing working life, which increases the challenges to build relationships where the feelings of relatedness, competence and autonomy can be sensed. Guidance of a student, a central pedagogical practice in educational environments, can play an important role in this. Guidance is a practice, where the central aim is to promote the learning of a student in general. In an UAS, teachers perform the guidance work in various formal and informal situations, in personal and group level. Recently, in the Finnish UAS system guidance practices have been developed in relation to every member’s work in the university environment, creating time and space for students and acting according to their needs. In this way it differs from the system, which exists in many other European countries, where guidance and counseling are provided as a separate service. Even if the work in guidance is distributed to different agents in the Finnish UAS, the teachers’ role is central. There might be a need to consider how the guidance situations can promote students’ and teachers’ socio-psychological wellbeing, including subjective wellbeing and full functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2000) in the educational environment of an UAS.

The concept of wellbeing

Ryan and Deci (2001) present two main approaches to the concept of wellbeing, which focus on different aspects and ask different questions. The hedonic approach highlights the subjective wellbeing in terms of happiness and life satisfaction. It is not just a positive affect and negative affect index but also involves a cognitive evaluation of the conditions of one’s life (Deci & Ryan, 2008). The eudaimonic perspective (Waterman, 1993) is concerned with living well or actualizing one’s human potential. Wellbeing is not so much an outcome or end state as it is a process of fulfilling one’s virtuous potentials and living as one was inherently intended to live. Thus, the eudaimonic perspective refers to fully functioning and human flourishing, and seeks to understand the conditions that facilitate versus diminish it (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Therefore, the eudaimonic viewpoint is closely related to individual learning in an UAS. In spite of a different focus, these approaches have some overlaps and are both related to experienced wellbeing in guidance practices.

Although individual guidance, guidance systems and guidance in general have been evaluated (Moitus & Vuo-rinen, 2003) and developed strongly at the Finnish UAS in recent years, a survey of students (Markkula, 2006, 71) indicates that almost 70% consider there to be room for improvement in their teachers’ guidance skills. There is a necessity to examine what teachers actually do in guidance of a student and to discuss what implications this could have for the socio-psychological wellbeing in educational settings in the UAS.

In this study we try to capture optimal practices of teachers facilitating socio-psychological wellbeing, in terms of building relatedness, feeling of competence and autonomy. Learning for socio-psychological wellbeing within an UAS can be seen as an active, collaborative and situated process in which the relationship between individuals and their environment is constantly constructed and modified (Pyhältö, Soini & Pietarin, 2010). It can be seen as an ongoing, interactive process of sense making and development in which motives and emotions play an important part (e.g. Pyhältö et al., 2010; Paavola & Hakkarainen, 2005; Stubb, Pyhältö & Lonka, submitted; Wenger, 1998). We are interested in how teachers are building relationships in these interactive processes for relatedness, competence and autonomy. The focus is on teachers’ work in guidance of a student. Research on the experiences about the practices in educational environments—such as this study—can contribute to the design of social environ-
ments that optimize people’s development, performance and well-being.

**STUDY DESIGN**

**Context of the study**

The present study was part of the continuing pedagogical development work in one UAS. This multidisciplinary institution of professional higher education provides education for bachelor- and master-level degrees and operates in several different locations. The development work was implemented using the participatory action research approach (Whyte, 1991), where the study participants themselves were involved in determining the goals for development. The idea of the pedagogical development work was to connect teachers’ and other staff’s individual continuous learning in pedagogical issues to improving the learning environment in the whole university. There were around 50 teachers and other staff members participating in collaborative seminars and workshops during 2007-2008, where the aim was to promote student learning and wellbeing by improving guidance practices of a student. The organizational goal was to strengthen a caring and supportive atmosphere, to create shared guidelines and artifacts for guidance practices, and to create a network of guidance staff in order to facilitate every student’s wellbeing in learning. The wellbeing of teachers themselves - key actors as they are in pedagogical practices - was also discussed.

The concept of guidance is complex and equivocal, and the work in guidance is divided into different stakeholder’s work (Edwards & Usher, 2000; Gladding, 2004; Rivis, 1996). In this study we use the concept of guidance to describe the pedagogical practice of a teacher, where the central aim is to promote learning of a student in general. In an UAS, teachers do the guidance work in various formal and informal situations, in personal and group level. Formal situations include guidance embedded to teaching, guidance of professional growth in development discussions, guidance of thesis work, project learning and practical training etc. Informal guidance happens in various situations where students and teachers encounter each other between the formal situations in the environment of the UAS.

**Data collection and analyses**

During this previously described development and training all the 50 study participants from different units of the UAS were personally interviewed. In these thematic interviews, they were asked to describe their guidance work, goals, practices and skills needed in that work. They were also asked to evaluate guidance practices as a whole in their working environment. The thematic interviews were informal in nature. The interviewer was the first author of this article and one of the contributors of the development work in the UAS. Thus the researcher’s own expertise on the field was consciously utilized (Herr & Anderson, 2005, 9-10). The interviews lasted around one hour and were recorded and transcribed.

The transcripts were qualitatively analyzed in several phases. The first phase of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) aimed to define the most experienced teachers in guidance practices by using case analysis of each participant’s descriptions of key events promoting student learning (Patton, 1990, 376–377). The approach of the study was to concentrate on optimal experiences (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and best practices. Thus, based on this first phase of content analysis interviews of 15 (9 female, 6 male) experienced and advanced teachers were selected into this study in order to examine what is good and what is already working in guidance of a student.

These selected teachers all had pedagogical teacher education and also worked as teacher tutors or study counselors, in which role they had a broader responsibility in guidance of adult and young students. Their working experience in the UAS varied from 3-20 years. They represented different domains of education: technology, natural resources, business, natural sciences, social services, health and tourism. One shared characteristic of these 15 teachers was an interest and a motivation expressed in their own learning and developing guidance practices as a whole. They were voluntarily participating in the development work. These teachers worked in different locations and study programs in the UAS. The organization of the duties and the roles in guidance varied between the different communities they represented.

The following phases of qualitative content analyses of these 15 interviews were carried further using a cross-case approach (Patton, 1990, 376–377), in which the critical incidents from different participants’ descriptions were grouped together into themes. Themes were organized adopting a material-based approach with a theory-guided analysis in order to describe teachers’ practices in guidance and discuss their implications in creating relationships for wellbeing in terms of relatedness, competence and autonomy.

**Findings**

As has been stated earlier, socio-psychological wellbeing refers to full functioning and experienced wellbeing, where the needs of relatedness, compe-
tence and autonomy are satisfied (Ryan & Deci, 2001, 2008). Ryan and Deci (2001) suggest one would expect a strong, universal association between the quality of relationships and wellbeing outcomes. In the descriptions of these 15 experienced teachers we can see aspirations to create relationships with the students, where relatedness, competence and autonomy are sensed.

Creating relatedness and positive emotions with the students

The teachers portrayed their manifold actions in guidance in order to create relatedness and connectedness with the students. Some theorists have defined relatedness as a basic human need that is essential for wellbeing (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 1991), and others have suggested that having stable, satisfying relationships is a general resilience factor across the lifespan (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998).

To care and to respect

In every interviewed teacher’s descriptions there were aspirations to make a relaxed, supportive and caring atmosphere for the student. Accordingly, the fundamental importance of warm, trusting, and supportive interpersonal relationships for wellbeing have been increasingly appreciated within psychology (Ryan & Deci 2001, 154). The teachers mentioned they attempted to build a caring atmosphere by speaking and acting in a friendly way, being approachable. They also illustrated their attempts to create situations where a student can feel relaxed, as seen in the next quotation:

I try to build a comfortable guidance situation so that the student gets on well and feels that I am really present in the situation, and what they do in their studies is important... relaxation is a key to revelation... when you are relaxed, ideas and new thoughts will come up.

The teachers also highlighted the importance of students feeling respected and free to ask questions and teachers having the time and place for them. They described their overall behaviour in the educational environment where they approached students, asked questions and, most important of all, listened to the students. They seemed to be conscious of minor actions and small incidents to have impact on students.

When a student feels to be taken seriously and as a person of his/her own, it is the most meaningful factor for motivation in his/her learning and proceeding.

One teacher related that:

Showing respect to students means reacting quickly, so the students’ time wouldn’t be wasted.

The teachers seemed to describe practices illustrating conscious psychological and physical presence and mindfulness, where intention, attention and attitude are interwoven aspects (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin & Freedman, 2006).

Connecting and interpreting in a positive way

The teachers described how knowing their students well and having connectedness will enhance the options to function in a successful way. Sometimes it took time to find out what the actual issues bothering and diminishing optimal functioning in the studies were. The teachers said it depended on the interpretation of the situation and the relatedness created in it, whether a student could reveal his/her true feelings and thoughts.

Also, the teachers described their intentions to approach the student in a positive way in order to build a constructive relationship and to avoid negative emotions.

I always try to go about things in a positive way, not focusing on what hasn’t been done or accomplished: then there is always a kind of avoidance from the student. With an approving, sympathetic behaviour you can truly proceed with students... not with making them feel guilty.

The role of positive emotions in the formation of social bonds (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and in the creation of important skills and resources (Fredrickson, 2001; Sheldon & King, 2001) has been widely noticed. Where positive emotions arose, the teachers said it seemed to contribute to the students’ ability to proceed.

(...) after an open discussion, when the student has talked about his problems, there is a kind of relief with the student... then we can proceed, we both know now.

Especially in desiring better accomplishments, according to the teachers, you must know the student well and have a connection. This can be associated with Ryan and Deci’s (2000) argument that relatedness (belongingness, connectedness), especially to significant others, is crucial for making the goals stated in one’s curriculum feel as the student’s own goals, not just aims dictated from the outside.

Showing interest consciously

Showing interest was a commonly mentioned issue by the teachers related to building a connection with students. Adult students seek affiliation and support in their learning, they need to know somebody is taking care of them, so that they can feel somebody is interested in them (…).

The interviewed teachers said they showed interest by asking and listening, and by monitoring the studies. They seemed to be conscious of their behaviour:
I make sure my interest is recognizable, I have eye contact and my body language shows interest.

The interviewed teachers highlighted that showing interest can play an important role in activating students’ own interest. Accordingly, motivation is considered considerably to rely on the maintenance and development of interest, rather than about some already existent or nonexistent characteristic (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Laksov, Nikkola & Lonka, 2008).

For students to become self-regulated, lifelong learners, they need to be able to activate themselves as learners (ten Cate, Snell, Mann & Vermunt, 2004). Teachers play an important role in this process (e.g. Laksov, Nikkola & Lonka, 2008). One teacher illustrated the effect of his action:

(...)

It was just a question asked in passing: how is your thesis work?

We started to discuss the task and he was able to start the process and continue. It was just a question in passing ... It takes so little but it is something I have to be able to do in practice.

The research on wellbeing suggests that best predictors of satisfaction of the relatedness need are meaningful talk and feeling understood and appreciated by interaction partners (Reis et al., 2000). But also, according to the material in this study, it seemed that relatedness makes it possible to create meaningful interactions for feeling respected and understood.

Relatedness between students

The teachers also felt it essential to create relatedness between the students. This actualized in guiding the group processes and in the guidance methods used in learning situations in order to increase participation and cooperation in the study groups. One teacher described in the following way her methods to be able to get students involved:

I use different kinds of group work methods, all kinds of ‘lighter methods’ for improving group processes and group formation (...). Students tell these make a good atmosphere, when you get to know each other, it is easier to study (...)

Thus, an essential part of the pedagogical practices of these teachers was an attempt to make students feel close to each other and to have positive feelings within the study group.

Teachers’ own well-being

The descriptions of the teachers illustrated that relatedness seemed to be a resource of wellbeing for both teachers and students. The teachers illustrated how the relatedness created in guidance situations opened up the blocks and helped students to proceed. They described they could see an instant relief in the student. The teachers also mentioned that relatedness with the students prompted their own positive feelings:

It's such the nicest thing.

It is nice to feel students are close, when they feel they are in the right place.

(...)

I enjoy being able to help the group.

In this ‘helping’ work teachers told they felt satisfied, competent and relating with the students. Relatedness appeared to amplify positive feedback to the teacher. Besides this, relatedness seemed to increase teachers’ ability to help the students better, which, in turn, increased their own sense of competence (see Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Creating a sense of competence and autonomy

According to the teachers, students are not always able to interpret what is expected and what is possible in the educational environment. They mentioned that students need support to recognize their own competences, to define their goals and to find their own autonomous paths for learning. Teachers told also they had noticed previous school experiences of students to restrain the interpretations of affordances (action possibilities within an environment or the ways in which the environment allows one to interact with it). Also Boud (1988) highlights teachers’ guidance to be necessary since learners cannot automatically adopt successful roles for their learning in a traditional formal educational context. One teacher described that sometimes students are ‘in the state of no options’. From the teachers’ point of view, in these cases, students seemed to feel incompetent and non-autonomous, feeling unable to act.

Realizing strengths for a starting point

The teachers presented their attempt to strengthen a sense of competence of a student, especially in creating the interpretation of the students’ starting point, i.e. the prior learning at the beginning of study, together. They highlighted the need to use student-centered, self-evaluative, participatory, collaborative and ‘playful’ methods in order to help the students realize their strengths and competences already acquired and what professional interests they might have. The teachers described it was easier for students to engage in ongoing learning when they had realized their personal strengths for a starting point.
After this kind of an awareness, it is easier to continue.

However, Ryan and Deci (2000) suggest that in creating wellbeing, perceived competence is not enough, it must be related to a feeling of autonomy.

Nurturing autonomy

According to Reeve and Jang (2006), autonomy support revolves around finding ways to nurture, support and increase students’ inner endorsement of their learning activity. The common practice teachers mentioned was to engage students in planning their own learning. During this planning, students and teachers interpreted the curriculum’s predetermined, common goals together, and then the student created his/her own goals. The relative autonomy of personal goals has been shown repeatedly to be predictive of wellbeing outcomes controlling for goal efficacy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). As an example, one teacher described:

I ask students to draw ‘a treasure map’ of their competences, in which they also will draft a picture, where they would like to see themselves working in the future.

The teachers pointed out the need to create optimistic ideas of the future, which has been proved to affect wellbeing (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Autonomy includes also a feeling of having choices (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The lack of this feeling turns out to be deeply upsetting when choices are taken away from us (Rock, 2009). The teachers emphasized the importance of creating various choices with students to help them proceed:

When a student arrives, he/she is in a certain point, my purpose is to help the students in their way along the studies to achieve their own goals.

Every one of the interviewed teachers described reciprocal actions in how they created alternative learning trajectories like individual timetables, different types of assignments adopted into individual situations (e.g. to be able to work and study at the same time, to create learning assignments into one’s workplace) and multiple ways to accomplish study tasks. One teacher mentioned:

I have a certain kind of tree of options for the student, we negotiate and choose the best one.

The teachers described various situations in which students have experienced not having choices and how they had helped students by creating one together.

Attuning and supporting

The common characteristic in previously described practices was teachers’ attunement to the starting point, or prior learning, of many students in various situations. One teacher stated:

It goes according to what students bring forth, so it is like students lead the situation.

For example, the teachers described how their own actions were regulated according to students’ capacity of self-regulation (Vermunt & Verloop, 1999):

Some students need more direct answers and strict timetables, some just support and interest, and some need moderation of overly demanding goals they set for themselves.

In this way, the teachers experienced they could help students feel more competent and autonomous to take the next possible step forward in their learning path.

According to Reeve and Jang (2006), the interrelationships between teachers’ autonomy support and teachers’ attunement and supportiveness shows that teachers cannot directly give students a sense of autonomy. Instead, like illustrated in this study, teachers can provide students with high-quality interpersonal relationships—relationships rich in attunement and supportiveness—and out of that relationship context, students can experience and begin to exercise their own sense of autonomy.

PRECONDITIONS FOR BUILDING WELLBEING

Building a successful relationship for wellbeing in terms of feeling related, competent and autonomous seemed to necessitate some common preconditions from the teachers. Their practices, like previously discussed, illustrated relational agency of a teacher (Edwards 2006, 169), which means a capacity to align one’s thoughts and actions with those of others in order to interpret problems of practice and to respond to those interpretations. The teachers’ consciousness of their actions was prominent. Besides this, there were some other shared characteristic of these teachers which seemed to affect their capacity to act successfully.

The interviewed teachers emphasized the importance of knowing existing curricula and guidelines well as a whole to be able to create potential learning paths together with students. The actions of the people depend on socially constructed infrastructure and its artifacts like written guidelines, common ways of working, curricula and its implementation plan. In turn, through one’s own actions one continuously reshapes these artifacts (Wenger, 1998). Almost all of the teachers (14) in this study considered they can create flexibility for students by their own actions and with collaborative interpretations, when there was a chance to support the autonomy and competence of a student. Thus, the capacity to create...
conditions for wellbeing of students seemed to depend on the teachers own feelings of competence and autonomy related to the educational environment.

The other common characteristic was that the interviewed teachers described their practices in learning-centered and student-focused ways. They seemed to consider students to be unique individuals, with their particular strengths and needs. Students' life situations were taken into account holistically and learning facilitation focused on the whole learning process.

The teachers described guidance as an embedded practice in their work in the UAS. A significant amount of guidance took place in informal, non-planned situations, in the corridors and cafés, between the formal learning occasions.

Guidance is always present in my work.

The teachers’ overall role in guidance required also interaction and communication in the working environment.

It is not just advising the students, but also teachers and other personnel, so the target group in guidance is the other person also.

Thus, besides guiding the students, a considerable amount of the guidance work was done on the working community level. According to the teachers, the feeling of companionship is needed, to know there is someone to ask for help and to share one’s work in student-learning focused practices. Thus, the relational agency (Edwards, 2006) also in the community level seemed to be important for these holistically oriented teachers.

To conclude, in creating feelings of relatedness, competence and autonomy, a holistic approach to work and working community, to students and to the learning environment as a whole seemed to be highly relevant.

THREATS TO WELLBEING

The focus in this study was to describe optimal practices of teachers. However, the teachers reported also some possible threats for wellbeing and fully functioning on the community level. Ten of the interviewed teachers mentioned:

It [guidance] depends on the person if it actually happens or not and what is actually done in practice.

As a contrast to the holistic approach in guidance, displayed by the interviewed teachers, these ten reported many teachers in their working community to have an opposite approach. They reported these ‘others’ to be ignorant of the curriculum as a whole and not interested in students as individuals with specific needs. Besides that, they were considered to perceive guidance as a separate action, not belonging to their teaching work:

Some of the teachers just take care of the teaching and after that are not available.’

What they say reveals … that they don’t want to get involved, so they just want to run the lessons.

Consequently, they thought that some students do not have the opportunity to discuss, to ask, to get support and encouragement in their learning. Furthermore, according to teachers, the guidance work was accumulated to teachers who were available and willing to support the students, which in turn, was reported to cause a threat for the wellbeing of these teachers because of overaccumulation of guidance work.

CONCLUSIONS

Wellbeing and learning are intertwined in any educational environment. Previous research (Ryan & Deci, 2000) has shown that especially acquiring a sense of relatedness, competence and autonomy are critical elements in creating students’ socio-psychological wellbeing.

Thus, teachers and their pedagogical practices and guidance have a critical role in building relationships that maintain and support students’ wellbeing.

In this paper we have discussed how UAS teachers describe and experience their pedagogical practices and guidance for supporting students’ learning and wellbeing (Pyhältö et al., 2010). The study revealed that practices such as building caring and respecting connections, creating positive interpretations and affordances together, and adopting practices according to the perceived needs of the students have an impact on relationships that fostered senses of relatedness, competence and autonomy. These relationships appeared to play an important role in creating successful social conditions for learning and wellbeing. Moreover, creating these kinds of relationships with students appears to have an impact on teachers’ own well-being as well. This can be seen as an interpersonal flourishing, which is a core feature of quality living across cultures and across time (Ryff & Singer, 2000).

Drawing from the findings of our study, we suggest that daily encounters between the members of the educational environment should be recognized crucial when optimizing people’s development, performance and wellbeing. Wellbeing is created together, and in this reciprocal learning process the relational agency is needed (Edwards, 2006). However, wellbeing should not be understood as an unintended by-product of a learning environment but as a shared and conscious aim of ongoing pedagogical practices, which can proactively create and sustain conditions for fully functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Thus, teachers’ holistic practices in guidance are needed in the creation of meaningful and engaging learning environments that extend be-
Beyond traditional contexts and practices, for supporting the development and implementation of wellbeing. We suggest that new ways of collaboration need to be facilitated between the members of an educational community to create holistic practices.

In this study, we have described UAS teachers’ illustrations of their pedagogical practices for building students’ wellbeing. However, further studies are needed in order to analyze the connections between teachers’ pedagogical practices and students’ sense of wellbeing. In future studies, it is also important to examine the guidance practices in the whole educational community to answer questions like: how the reification of shared practices by creating common artifacts (guidelines, curriculums etc.) could reinforce practices facilitating wellbeing, how different stakeholders in guidance can identify themselves as a part of these practices (Wenger, 1998) and how can we facilitate learning of teachers who do not realize their role in building learning and wellbeing?

The educational environment of an UAS tries to fulfill the requirements of diverse students and those of the rapidly changing working life. New pedagogical practices and ways of working are constantly created in order to meet these requirements. Simultaneously, it is vital to recognize that fully functioning educational organizations need fully functioning students and teachers, who are feeling satisfied in relationships in the educational environment. Teachers’ practices in the educational environment affect the conditions where relationships are constructed. These practices need to be developed in the whole community in a way that as a consequence every member of the educational environment can feel related, competent and autonomous.

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In search of wellbeing – aspirational and functional purposes of learning of Greek postgraduates

The purpose of this article is to contribute to the discussion concerning the role of lifelong learning in the development of the individual and social wellbeing. The paper draws data from an empirical survey carried out on Greek postgraduate students. It explores their perceptions and attitudes regarding lifelong learning as they attempt to attain wellbeing. The respondents also evaluate the functional, i.e. short-term, purposes of lifelong learning, which focus on the immediate necessities of work-related issues, as well as its aspirational, i.e. long-term, purposes, which focus on more indirect outcomes of learning. The findings show that, although lifelong learning continues to be highly appreciated as an important factor for professional advancement, individuals connect lifelong learning with the formation of an integrated personality and a regenerated society.

Sofia Boutsiouki
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to a gradually expanding discussion concerning the role of lifelong learning on wellbeing. First, a brief overview of the relevant debate is presented, followed by a description of the research design, the basic research questions and the methodology. Finally, the findings, presented in both a descriptive and a tabular form, are thoroughly examined in order to draw useful conclusions.

THE DEBATE ON LIFELONG LEARNING AND WELLBEING

The European Union (Tissot, 2004, 102) defines lifelong learning as:

...every learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.

During the last few decades knowledge has become a key element for the economic and social development of individuals, societies and states. The constant need for up-to-date human capital has increased and has led to the responsibility of everyone to make proper strategic planning and to apply the best learning options (Brown & Lauter, 1992; Hake, 1998). These conditions have resulted in redefining the learning—for some knowledge—society.

Lifelong learning has developed into a new, broader concept, in terms of both functional purposes, which are related to people’s everyday life, and aspirational ones, which are related to politics and ideology (Hughes & Tight, 1995; Griffin, 1998; Wain, 2000; Aspin & Chapman, 2007). Therefore, the term now conveys an inclusive essence and combines—with no exclusions—knowledge, employment and spare time activities as elements of a creative and interactive way of living (Jarvis, 1998; Edwards & Usher, 2001).

For a long time lifelong learning had been confined to employment oriented aims and competitiveness purposes or has been viewed as a means to social change (Tight, 1998; Coffield, 1999, 1–12; Harman & Brelade, 2000, 29–30, 62–67, 69–71). Today it has become less ‘collectivist’, leads participants to a self-development focus and can definitely be described as a high-individualized form of the learning process, which is guided by changes in individual values, social interaction and new ways of life (Field, 2006, 55, 77). It constitutes a cultural capital, which defines the views, beliefs and perceptions of people about themselves, about others and about the environment where they live and function. This process is continuous and leads to the redefinition, reassessment and evolution of ourselves (Bourdieu, 1986). For this reason, learning must be carefully approached as an element of ‘life-politics’ towards human self-actualization and studied within a wider context of profound individual and socio-economic transformations (Giddens, 1991, 214).

The notion of wellbeing is quite controversial. It can generally be defined as the degree to which someone judges the quality of his or her life as favourable. Although the term wellbeing is usually related to health, it has gradually acquired a broader meaning referring to the dynamic state in which the individuals are fully functioning and able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others and contribute to their community. It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfill his or her personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society. In other words, it describes what is ultimately good for a person and what makes life good for the individual living that life. Therefore, it can be argued that wellbeing refers to the positive and sustainable characteristics, which enable individuals (and on a broader sense, organizations) to thrive and flourish (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Dewe & Kompier, 2008, 7). Many fields of human activity are imbued with the search for wellbeing: personal or working life and social engagement. The construction of a framework combining the hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of wellbeing, in other words of how someone feels and functions, would greatly contribute to the better understanding of human activities and interrelations. The study of wellbeing mainly focuses on individuals, but there is evidence that interpersonal and social interactions play an important role in wellbeing attainment, too.

Moreover, the study of wellbeing is important in order to understand how people experience the quality of their lives and, furthermore, to define the proper interventions so that it can be attained, maintained and maximized.

Wellbeing has theoretical and practical implications: it affects individual and communal aspirations, human choices, decisions, common activities and relationships, political planning and practices. The general aim implicit in the concept is to change human lives for the better, on the condition that we have already envisioned and defined ‘what the better is’. The present paper argues that both personal and social implications of a person’s ‘full functioning’ are significant. Thus, it attempts to approach the relationship between lifelong learning purposes and wellbeing under the eudaimonic approach from two points of view: on the one hand, we try to interpret the relation between the lifelong learning concept and the students’ choice to participate in it. On the other hand, we explore which lifelong learning purposes
influence wellbeing on a personal, social and professional level – and to what extent.

**LIFELONG LEARNING AND WELLBEING: REALIZING A EUROPEAN UNION VISION**

European Union strategies largely base the construction of a vivid socio-economic formation on knowledge. Other supranational organizations show the same interest and enhance the relevant strategic planning on a global and national state dimension (OECD, 2007; UNESCO, 2008). Although for decades the attention of European policies have had an exclusively economic orientation and aimed at ‘integration, deepening, enlargement’, the rapid transformation of global conditions has given great emphasis to the relation between lifelong learning and crucial socio-economic issues (Hantrais, 2000, 5). The EU focus on ‘knowledge society’ and investment in human capital and potential reveals the significance of ensuring individual and collective wellbeing (European Commission, 1995; 2002; Jacquemin & Pench, 1997; Green, Wolf & Leney, 1999; Kleinman, 2002, 86–87). Long-term solutions to confronting unemployment and social exclusion require the establishment of a new development model, which has to be operational and interactive with socio-economic activities and individual functioning as a whole (European Commission, 1993). Within this framework lifelong learning serves as an instrument ‘for the promotion of social cohesion, of the active exercise of citizenship, of personal and professional integration, of adaptability and employability’; it also contributes to more welfare, tolerance, democratic values and social inclusion for European citizens (European Commission, 2001, 9; European Council, 2002).

The study of wellbeing in terms of feelings and functions in connection with individual and inter-personal characteristics is useful. It reveals how a person is related to others and to society and facilitates a positive functioning expressed through mental health, happiness, fulfillment and well-balanced social relationships (Commission of the European Communities, 2005; Huppert et al., 2006).

**PREVIOUS RESEARCH LITERATURE**

There is an abundance of examples of research focusing on a wide range of issues and concepts related to the influence of lifelong learning on human wellbeing.

Jauhiainen (2007) analyzed the attitudes and experiences that Finnish ageing people attach to education and learning. Although individuals with a higher educational background showed a more positive and optimistic attitude towards learning, they implicitly doubted its effectiveness in human lives in the case of solving social and employment problems.

Peiró (2006) examined the relationship between socio-economic conditions and happiness or satisfaction of individuals in 15 countries. He found that happiness and satisfaction are two distinct spheres of wellbeing, which are strongly associated with factors like age, health and marital status. On the contrary, unemployment does not appear to be associated with happiness, although it is clearly associated with satisfaction; income is also strongly associated with satisfaction, but its association with happiness is weaker.

By exploring the relationship between social capital and lifelong learning, Field (2005) showed a clear association between positive attitudes towards lifelong learning and positive attitudes towards a range of different forms of civic engagement. There is also a mutually beneficial association between social capital and lifelong learning with interesting implications for individual and social wellbeing.

A survey on the learning preferences of Europeans (Cedefop, 2003) showed they recognize the benefits of lifelong learning for personal, social and economic purposes, such as coping with change and labour market demands and having an independent and satisfactory life. They were willing to undertake learning costs, too, if they judged them beneficial.

An OECD survey (2001) on the factors of economic competitiveness revealed a relation between human and social capital, which contributes to the wellbeing of individuals and nations significantly.

Ryan & Deci (2000) explored the factors which enhance intrinsic motivation, self regulation and wellbeing. They found that three innate psychological needs – competence, autonomy and relatedness – play an important role; if these are satisfied, they enhance self-motivation, mental health and finally wellbeing. If these are thwarted, they diminish human motivation and undermine wellbeing. Kunnari and Lipponen elaborate on this research in their article ‘Building teacher-student relationships for wellbeing’ in this issue of LLInE.

Tamkin and Hillage (1997) found a general belief in the positive benefits of individual commitment to lifelong learning: this affects an investment trend aiming at personal development, although the results are uncertain.

Ryan and Keyes (1995) used survey data to confirm a theoretical model of psychological wellbeing, which projected 6 distinct dimensions of wellbeing (autonomy, environment mastery, personal growth, positive relations with...
others, purpose of life and self-acceptance). They also found that the concept of life satisfaction – often used as an indicator – neglects key aspects of positive functioning, which appear in theories of health and wellbeing.

THE SURVEY
The sample and the questionnaire of the survey
This paper presents findings of a survey addressed to a population of postgraduate students (N=147) at the University of Macedonia, located in Thessaloniki, Greece. The survey was conducted in April and May 2009 with a structured questionnaire, which was completed and returned by 108 persons (sample of the survey). The percentage of participation to the survey was 73.5% and is considered quite satisfactory. The questionnaires were distributed personally by the author during course time and were gathered a few days later in the same way, in order to secure a careful and credible completion.

Key research questions
Postgraduate studies constitute a part of the lifelong learning process. The exploration of the students’ views and experiences regarding lifelong learning reveals important aspects of their cognitive motivation, as well as their attitudes and values related to their social and economic functioning, to self-determination and to formation of human self-identity, all aspects of wellbeing. This paper draws data from the survey in order to explore basic research questions:

• What motivates the respondents to lifelong learning attendance?
• How can this assessment be associated with the concept of wellbeing and affect the respondents’ wellbeing?

The questionnaire of the survey
The structured questionnaire that was used as a research tool consisted of two parts. The first one referred to the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second one explored their perceptions of the socio-economic role of lifelong learning. First of all, they evaluated their reasoning on experiencing lifelong learning through a Likert scale that was ranging from 1=no significance to 5=very high significance. Then, they assessed their agreement to a number of statements referring to the role of lifelong learning, so as to reveal their attitudes regarding lifelong learning in connection to personal, social or economic wellbeing. The statements were put in random order, so that any prejudice and grouping of the answers would be avoided. The levels of preference—set again by the Likert scale—varied from 1=totally agree to 5=totally disagree.

Statistical analysis methodology
The description of the qualitative variables was done with frequency tables and bar graphs, while the chi-square test was used to assess the homogeneity of the distributions that arose. The correlation of the qualitative variables was done with the use of connection tables (crosstabulation). The chi-square test was used to check the independence between the pairs of the variables under examination. The statistical adjusted residual was used in order to locate the statistically significant results of the test (values that are greater than 2 indicate a statistically significant relation among the corresponding categories), while the test validity was checked with the multitude of the cells with the expected frequency smaller than 5 (<20%). Moreover, Friedman testing was used in the groups of variables aiming at checking the hypothesis that all statements shown in tables get the same score in average (Mean Rank). The whole statistical analysis was realized with the use of SPSS 15.0 and the statistical significance level was set for \( P<0.05 \). (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001; Green, Salkind & Akey, 1997).
FINDINGS

Demographic data of the sample

The sample consists of more women (58.3%) than men (41.7%) from various educational backgrounds with different content of studies and professional prospects, orientation or reality. Almost half of the respondents were over 30 years of age, married and had graduated at least six years ago. Their participation by postgraduate program is shown above in Table 1.

One third of fathers and mothers in the sample (30.8% and 28% respectively) are tertiary education graduates; an additional 6.5% and 3.7% respectively hold a postgraduate or doctoral degree. A 23.4% of fathers and 32.7% of mothers are high school (Lykeion) graduates, while 27.1% and 26.2% of them respectively graduated from primary school. One out of four fathers (23.1%) and mothers (24.1%) are public servants, while another 24.1% of fathers and much fewer mothers (10.2%) exercise an independent non-scientific profession. Fathers outnumber the mothers in independent scientific professions as well (9.3% and 6.5% respectively). On the contrary, the percentages for fathers and mothers who are private sector employees (12% and 13% respectively) are similar, but obviously dramatically decreased, while one out of three mothers (28.7%) is a housewife; very few respondents’ parents are workers. Respondents originating from a well educated family with a higher professional status tend to pursue learning with much more ease and determination, because the family environment offers them effective guidance and support to succeed in their tasks. Individuals originating from families with lower educational levels seem to be subconsciously instigated by their parents’ aspirations for higher educational attainments and corroboration of their social and employment status. Family educational and professional status seems to influence the respondents’ attitude and choice regarding lifelong learning for functional or aspirational reasons; therefore, it correlates with their future wellbeing potential.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents were employed at the time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postgraduate Studies Program</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>Men (%)</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Studies and Diplomacy*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Studies and International Politics*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Youth Studies*</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBA executive</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBA for young graduates</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Quality Public Management</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The first three programs are represented by a smaller group of respondents due to the smaller number of students who attend these programs compared to the other three programs.

Table 1: Distribution of the sample by postgraduate program
of the survey (Table 2a) and more than half of them had been working for more than five years. This enabled them to have better knowledge of the labour market and, at the same time, they were expected to have already formulated an accurate opinion and a specific attitude towards lifelong learning. Most of them seem to be oriented mainly towards dependent employment, which offers job security and stability. Those who are employed are mainly salaried employees (equally in the public and private sector), while very few (7.1%) are entrepreneurs (either with or without personnel) (Table 2b).

Although data is limited, it can be argued that Greek entrepreneurs still lack the mentality of participating in lifelong learning themselves so that they broaden their knowledge and skills and reinforce their professional efficiency. Ascending educational and professional mobility compared to the parents is clearly visible for both genders. Nevertheless, fewer women than men exercise independent professions or hold job positions with greater responsibility (Table 3).

### Table 2: Present professional status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>Men (%)</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student (exclusively)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>Men (%)</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed with personnel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed without personnel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaried (monthly or daily)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>89.2</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid in the family business</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: Professional position of responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional position of responsibility</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>Men (%)</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director / Assistant Director</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office responsible</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Participation in postgraduate programs and in lifelong learning activities

By giving information about their previous lifelong learning attendance, the respondents reveal their deeper motivation, which defines their learning interests and decisions. Almost one third of them had previously attended lifelong learning in various areas of professional interest. These programs were organized either by universities or by – private or public – Vocational Training Centers. Tuition fees were subsidized by employers or EU resources and in very few cases were paid by the participants.
The respondents’ motivation to participate in postgraduate studies reveals their expectations of them and their aspirations of establishing wellbeing. The same issue was approached from a different point of view, by asking them to determine the reasons for which they would undertake the cost of participation in a lifelong learning program. This reasoning reveals not only the dynamism and the potential of the respondents to pursue lifelong learning activities in the future, but also their evaluation regarding lifelong learning contribution to the achievement of certain aims. A comparison between both groups of reasoning shows that it is quite similar in both cases (Table 4). The mentality is mainly orientated towards professional parameters and their influence on the individuals’ entry and development in the labour market. So, lifelong learning mainly serves functional and prompt purposes, which appear to be the basis for wellbeing attainment.

Apart from personal interest, which expresses belief in aspirational purposes of lifelong learning, the rest of the statements clarify the sample’s stronger preference to employment-oriented – functional – options rather than social – aspirational – ones. They attribute great value to the connection of lifelong learning to special vocational knowledge, professional development, higher earnings, job security and broader acknowledgement in the labour market. Nevertheless, the motivational potential of work is gradually moving away from the issues of income and job security and there is a shift towards demanding an interesting and meaningful work. Their decisions also seem to be affected positively by the possibility to receive financial aid by EU and Greek state resources or by their employers. We must emphasize, though, the respondents’ reluctance towards entrepreneurship: they do not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for postgraduate program participation</th>
<th>Reason for lifelong learning participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Rank</td>
<td>Mean Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personal interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Better professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Securing special knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Good reputation of the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Increased chances of finding a job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>High demand in labour market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Securing high financial income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Connection of the program to the labour market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>High social acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Accessible tuition fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Having free time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The company that employs me pays the tuition fees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The answers of the respondents were set in a Likert scale ranging from 1= no significance to 5=very high significance; then Friedman Test was applied to the findings and the results show the evaluation of the statements in a descending order. The bigger the value, the greater the importance of the motivating factor.
evaluate the (functional) purpose of lifelong learning to offer ‘know-how’ for entrepreneurial activities as important and clearly favour ‘safer’ options (that is permanent and salaried jobs), which are expected to ensure wellbeing.

**Lifelong learning purposes: balancing controversial parameters**

Lifelong learning serves certain purposes of socio-economic nature. The respondents were asked to express their opinion in reference to statements that often appear in lifelong learning rhetoric and are related to the accomplishment of these objectives. In order to facilitate the presentation of the findings, these statements are organized in three groups with focus on social, professional and personal parameters, which constitute a large part of wellbeing.

- **Social parameters**
  
  The evaluation of the influence that lifelong learning has on human and social welfare and wellbeing is rather difficult, because of the abstract character of social issues (Table 5).

  This influence projects an aspirational role in two dimensions: on the one hand the individuals express their aspirations of the improvement of the conditions in the society and on the other hand they focus on the treatment of social phenomena arguing that lifelong learning will contribute to this process effectively.

  Almost all respondents (93.4%) agree that offering more lifelong learning opportunities to individuals would succeed in ensuring social justice and equality, two of the most important elements of human interaction. This finding implies that learning opportunities clearly affect a person’s life opportunities and therefore his chances to seek for and achieve wellbeing. On the other hand, they acknowledge (92.5%) that it is every person’s social responsibility to participate in lifelong learning.

  Only one third of them (31.1%) strongly believe existing social problems are likely to decrease if participation in lifelong learning increases, while half of them express a hope for it, answering ‘maybe agree’. They implicitly admit that social problems are rather complex and influenced by parameters not necessarily connected to the average person’s actions. They also argue (80.4%) that a person’s usefulness to society is clearly correlated to educational level, because an educated individual has the appropriate knowledge and skills to contribute to social evolution and wellbeing attainment. Although lifelong learning is generally considered a useful ‘weapon’ in social struggle, more than one third of the respondents (36.8%) were reluctant to admit that participation in it is the only way to confront the challenges of the future. The rest expressed almost equally either a positive (34%) or a negative opinion (29.3%) throwing justified doubt upon the effectiveness of participation.

  Almost half of the interviewees (46.2%) argue with certainty that lifelong learning participation actually enables people to achieve a higher social status. Another 41.5% projects a weak

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**Table 5: Lifelong learning purposes. Social parameters.**

(% on total sample)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social parameters</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
<th>Probably agree</th>
<th>Maybe agree</th>
<th>Probably disagree</th>
<th>Totally disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offering more lifelong learning opportunities increases social justice and equality</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in lifelong learning for self-improvement is every person’s social responsibility</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater participation of individuals in lifelong learning will contribute to the decrease of many social problems</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The more educated a person is, the more useful he is to society</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in lifelong learning is the only way to confront the challenges of the future</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who participate in lifelong learning activities achieve a higher social status</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
agreement, thus showing reluctance to connect social stratification to knowledge capital and, consequently, to learning activities.

- Professional parameters

Most of the respondents had already experienced the labour market complexity, which experience they projected through their opinion on the functional role of lifelong learning (Table 6). Despite the great importance of professional development for them, the level of certainty regarding the positive effects of lifelong learning on professional development is not as high as expected.

The respondents connect lifelong learning to their aspirations for bigger earnings and a higher economic status (87.8%), which are related to greater life satisfaction and a stronger sense of wellbeing. Investment on human capital through lifelong learning is very important for both employers and employees, because it facilitates their transition to new organizational or functional practices in the working environment and enhances job security. For this reason, it promotes the dedication and the commitment to a job for the majority of the respondents (85.9%).

The respondents’ working experience and the general demand for multidimensional professionals affects their belief that a person’s social and professional advancement is promoted more by social skills cultivation than by formal education knowledge (80.6%).

Only few (15.9%) strongly believe in the positive effect of learning on professional evolution: more than half of them (57.9%) challenge the claim that conquering higher professional positions results from intensive lifelong learning participation, obviously relating professional progress to other factors.

Although lifelong learning often appears in the political and social debates as one of the most prominent cures for unemployment, its successful role in this has not yet been confirmed. Almost one third of the respondents (27.3%) contest lifelong learning’s effectiveness against unemployment. Another 40.6% express a weak agreement with the proposition that learning enhances employment, while 32% of them are certain of it. Finally, the exclusive relation of lifelong learning to work is strongly doubted by three quarters of the respondents (76.7%). They attribute to it a broader role than that of a means to improve employability: they consider it as a way to extend knowledge and develop skills which serve self-oriented, non-professional and more abstract aims, such as interest, pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, fulfilling and offering to society, all elements of wellbeing.

- Personal parameters

The significance of lifelong learning for human wellbeing is clearly shown when personality or emotion variables are inserted into the questionnaire (Table 7). Personal parameters focus especially on the aspira-

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Table 6: Lifelong learning purposes. Professional parameters. (% on total sample)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional parameters</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
<th>Probably agree</th>
<th>Maybe agree</th>
<th>Probably disagree</th>
<th>Totally disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People with greater participation in lifelong learning activities earn more than those less</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering lifelong learning chances is a motive to stay in a job</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring social skills helps the social and professional evolution of individuals more than knowledge acquired through formal education</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons who participate more in lifelong learning activities achieve higher professional positions than those who don’t</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong learning is an effective way to confront unemployment</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong learning is useful only when it exclusively refers to work</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
tional purposes of lifelong learning. Under this perspective there is a major expectation (99%) that lifelong learning is capable of forming human personalities with broader horizons and notable tolerance. These characteristics are expected to facilitate social interrelations, to blunt differences and ensure the appropriate conditions for individual interaction and social evolution.

The respondents express a strong agreement (97.2%) that lifelong learning effectiveness correlates to pleasure positively. Learning processes become more attractive, when they satisfy the individual need for pleasure according to the existing background and future expectations; similarly, the ability to take advantage of learning outcomes also depends on human talent and diligence (94.4%).

There is a strong belief (83.9%) in the potential of lifelong learning to help people confront difficult circumstances in life. They seem, however, less certain of this (74.5%) when the statement directly compares lifelong learning potential to that of formal education. This is due to the fact that formal education is considered more effective than lifelong learning in determining an individual’s professional development, earnings and social status. Thus, it is expected to significantly influence social stratification and people’s ability to face life adversities.

For the majority of the respondents (79.3%) lifelong learning participation offers a better quality of life and consequently increases human wellbeing. This participation is much easier for younger individuals (78.3%), as people of different ages do not have the same learning ability and potential (74.5%). Younger individuals have more free time, are closer to previous formal learning processes, have stronger aspires.

Table 7: Lifelong learning purposes. Personal parameters. (% on total sample)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal parameters</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
<th>Probably agree</th>
<th>Maybe agree</th>
<th>Probably disagree</th>
<th>Totally disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong learning contributes to the formation of individuals with broader horizons and tolerance</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong learning is more effective when it pleases the individual</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking advantage of the knowledge and skills acquired through lifelong learning depends on a person’s talent and diligence</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People can deal with the difficulties of life with lifelong learning</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who participate in lifelong learning activities have a better quality of life</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The younger a person is, the easier he can correspond to lifelong learning activities</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong learning helps people confront adverse circumstances in life more than knowledge acquired in formal education</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong learning must aim at someone’s self-improvement and not collectivism</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s ability to learn is the same during all ages</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The higher educational level someone has, the less need for lifelong learning he has</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
rations and less pressing family or professional obligations. Therefore, they can dedicate themselves and adapt to new learning activities with much more ease and determination.

Although lifelong learning seems to be a strictly personal choice based on individual needs and argumentation, very few (25.7%) argue that it must aim only at someone’s self-improvement and not collectivism. Human effort for wellbeing functions better, when it is connected to social activity: for this reason learning cannot be limited to self-improvement, but it must include a collective parameter as well.

Finally, people of every age need lifelong learning in order to improve their lives. Higher educational achievements do not in any way decrease this necessity (78.3%). Hence, the intensity of the search for wellbeing is definitely not affected by the educational level someone has.

CONCLUSIONS

During the last decades, lifelong learning has evolved rapidly and is considered to exercise a significant influence on the personal, professional and social lives of individuals as well as on the socioeconomic trends and practices of the global context. Any investment on lifelong learning is expected to play an important role in the development of wellbeing. The basic aims of this paper were to describe the role of lifelong learning in the lives of postgraduate students and to define the connection between learning activities and wellbeing. It also attempted to identify the level of students’ esteem regarding lifelong learning and their perceptions of its influence on their financial and life satisfaction and happiness. Purposes related to work are more concrete and are considered more realizable, therefore functional, for individuals pursuing wellbeing, whatever meaning they give to it. Purposes connected to social or personal life are rather abstract, their achievement is dubious and for this reason they project a vague, therefore aspirational, character. Although the findings acknowledge a great collective esteem for lifelong learning, they indicate that certain dimensions of its relation to wellbeing are worth to be further explored and compared in different contexts. First of all, similar research in other European countries as well as comparisons between national regions would reveal deeper differences among local cultures or levels of development and would indicate interesting analogies or differentiations among wellbeing experiences. Similarly, research in different – in terms of social, educational or professional status – groups of people would show variations in their sense of wellbeing and in the emphasis they lay on the role of lifelong learning for its attainment. These findings would greatly help other researchers, lifelong learning planners and policy makers to consider new strategies and form proper guidelines, flexible planning and realistic methods of implementation with focus on people’s wellbeing.

Both European Union and national policy planners should emphasize the ability of lifelong learning to foster citizenship that goes beyond strict individualism and professionalism and acts collectively towards common aims. For many years the interest in lifelong learning was instigated by its positive effects on the professional development of individuals and the economies and, consequently, all efforts were mainly guided to this direction. This interest should not cease, but lifelong learning focus should be broadened and diversified. The transformation of the socioeconomic conditions has led to the need for investment in its social and personal dimensions. Such an investment should aim at promoting strong values, combating social inequality, fighting adverse circumstances and enhancing social cohesion and solidarity, especially in times of unfavourable conditions and prospects. A new approach would enable people’s better and full functioning in the modern socio-economic environment and would deploy lifelong learning for the attainment of wellbeing and happiness in the same spirit as Albert Camus quoted:

‘But what is happiness except the simple harmony between a man and the life he leads?’

ENDNOTES

1. The eudaimonic approach refers to the psychological wellbeing, focusing on meaning and self-realization and defining wellbeing in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning and achieving his full potential. On the contrary, the hedonic approach refers to the subjective wellbeing, focusing on happiness and defines wellbeing in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance.

2. Some of the key aspects of positive functioning are human physiology and health, emotional support and wellbeing (i.e. security, affirmation, intimacy and affection versus anger and shame) and the evaluation of the quality of life in relation to social criteria.

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Sensuous understanding—embodied mode of reflection enhancing wellbeing at work

Self-reflective practices play an important role in wellbeing at work. Western body-mind-duality, however, makes us see this reflection solely as a cognitive process. The body is excluded from knowing. This article argues that bodily experiences are significant in human learning and suggests that a bodily, or embodied, mode of reflection would enhance wellbeing at work and in the society at large.

Eeva Anttila and Teija Löytönen
INTRODUCTION

Within the complex and rapidly changing circumstances of working life, reflective practices and shared contemplation of everyday phenomena are important tools for professional development and wellbeing at work. These reflective practices are vital in gaining understanding of the personal and the cultural underpinnings of professional working life. However, reflection has often been referred to only as a written or linguistic mode of understanding. This article discusses embodied modes of reflection as ways of enhancing wellbeing at work and focuses on the importance of being sensitive to the multiple ways of knowing and multiple forms of knowledge in learning practices in different work contexts. The article is based on two research projects: one in the context of a public school and the other in the context of three dance schools. In both projects the question of wellbeing is being approached from an embodied or holistic viewpoint. These projects are based on a view that embodied experiences are significant in human learning and development, and that in many professional fields, an embodied mode of reflection may enhance learning and wellbeing of persons and communities.

WELLBEING AT WORK – THE CASE OF TEACHERS

Wellbeing at work is of growing interest in different fields of research. This is due to the complex and rapidly changing circumstances of working life, both nationally and internationally. These changes include globalization and with it the growing uncertainty in working life, the ageing of population and the threat of scarcity of employees. Also, the growth of knowledge intensive work has increased the importance of wellbeing at work: the lack of this wellbeing increases costs through sick leaves and decreased capability to work. (Julkunen, 2008; Manka, Kaikkonen, Nuutinen, 2007; Sennet 2007)

The concept of wellbeing at work has often been understood as physical or mental health of an individual. Thus wellbeing at work has been enhanced through different forms of medical or ergonomic support. Through growing research in wellbeing at work the concept has been lately understood in a more detailed way. This broader view on wellbeing at work understands it as consisting of many different elements in working life: the individual and her or his interpretations of working life, the possibilities of influencing one’s work, the mode of leadership, the atmosphere of the work community, and the overall mode of practice in an organization. (Hakanen, 2005; Manka, Kaikkonen & Nuutinen, 2007; Luomala, Manka & Nuutinen, 2008)

The above-mentioned views are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they complement each other and create knowledge on enhancing wellbeing at work from the different perspectives of both the individual and the organization.

During recent years the wellbeing of teachers - mostly in primary and secondary education - has been widely discussed in public media as well as within academic research. Within these discussions the different modes of learning practices in the profession and the shared contemplation of everyday phenomena have proved to be important tools for teachers’ professional development. At the same time, these different kinds of reflective approaches have enhanced wellbeing at work as well as a positive learning and teaching culture. (Asunta, Husso & Korpipää, 2003; Estola & Syrjälä, 2002; Estola, Kaunisto, Keski-Filppula, Syrjälä & Uitto, 2006; Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Heikkinen & Nikki, 1999; Karjalainen, Heikkinen, Huttunen & Saarnivaara, 2006; Tynjälä, 2006, 2004)

Reflective practices are thus vital in gaining an understanding of the personal and cultural underpinnings of professional working life. In this way reflective practices have transformative effects as they can increase both self-awareness and mutual understanding. Thus teachers can better orient themselves in the changing circumstances of working life. However, reflection has often been referred to only as a written or linguistic mode of understanding. Indeed, within the recent decade reflection has become the buzzword of adult education. Reflection has been seen as an essential element in the development of expertise; it has been claimed to be a prerequisite of quality teaching; it has been argued to be at the core of adult learning, transformation, autonomy and empowerment. (see e.g. Brookfield, 2000; Kolb, 1984; Luoma, 2008; Mezirow, 1991, 1998, 2000; Schön, 1983)

While the promises attached to the concept within different contexts are multi-faceted and profound, the concept, however, seems to have been thinned down in practical use (Luoma, 2008). The different ways of reflection suggested by e.g. Stephen Brookfield and Jack Mezirow often have an emphasis only on the cognitive mode of reflection. As described by Elizabeth Kinsella (2007), this kind of reflection relies mostly on conceptual and linguistic ways of knowing, the epistemology of ‘knowing-that’ in Gilbert Ryle’s (1949) terminology.

According to the dance scholar Sherry Shapiro (1999), a renewed attention to the body is central to the critique of Western epistemology. As a result of Cartesian duality, the human body has been excluded from the process of knowing. The desire to control nature and the quest for universal reason and knowledge that transcends time and place has led to negating the body as a source of knowledge. A turn to the body is part of a broader epistemological and political shift towards the spe-
cific and the local, a shift towards temporality, particularity and ineffability. Seeing the body as a subject, as a vehicle for understanding brings about a shift from disembodied knowing towards embodied knowing. She writes, ‘In fact there is no escape from human presence and position in the world. From this perspective there is no escape from the body’ (1999, 146).

This article looks at wellbeing at work from the perspectives of the individual and the work community, and explores how the embodied mode of reflection may enhance learning and wellbeing of persons and communities. It is based on two research projects: one in the context of three dance schools and the other in the context of a public school. Embodied modes of reflection have come to the fore in both projects, and with dance teachers, embodied reflection seems to offer a very special way to explore experiences and understand the socially shared culture of dance teaching. The next section will focus on the research project in the dance schools and illustrates in depth what the concept of embodied knowledge actually means.

**INQUIRY INTO THE CULTURE OF DANCE TEACHING – COLLECTIVE REFLECTION ON EXPERIENCE**

A three-year research project on identifying and transforming the culture of dance teaching in Finland started in March 2008 when 18 participants from three different dance schools in southern Finland gathered together to form a collaborative group to inquire into the culture of dance teaching. The background of the project is broad, consisting of changes in the legislation of basic art education in Finland and accordingly extensive changes in the nature and demands of dance teachers’ work.

The new Act on Basic Art Education in Finland has meant a considerable change in the culture of dance teaching with its new, national requirements for the dance curricula as well as for the dance teachers’ educational background. Also the increasing number and broadening spectrum of dance education has challenged the cultural conventions of teaching dance art. Questions such as what is dance art, for whom it is taught and for what purpose, are being brought forth. As this author found in her former study on the everyday life of dance institutions, some dance teachers have experienced the new challenges even as a threat to their identity, while to others the changes have meant a professional challenge of growth (Löytönen, 2004, 2008; see also Niemi, 2003). Indeed, in this extensive reformation both the dance schools and the dance teachers have quite often been left without any adequate support.

With the above-described changes and challenges in mind, this research project was initiated to enhance and explore collaboration within the dance teachers’ community. The purpose of the project is twofold: first to pursue practical co-operation and support among the dance teachers and secondly, to bring forth some core but unarticulated undercurrents within the present-day dance teaching. Thus the study aims to enhance self-understanding as well as to provide some means for self-reflexivity within the complex and rapidly changing circumstances of dance education in Finland.

The collaborative inquiry at the core of the project is thus a process by which colleagues gather in groups to pursue, over time, the issues that the group members identify as interesting or important in relation to their professional practice of dance teaching (Bray, Lee, Smith & Yorks, 2000; Weinbaum et al., 2004). This means that the participating dance teachers are allowed the time and place to collaboratively explore some aspects of their professional practice. The idea is not to foster any changes through specific interventions and predictable outcomes. Instead the aim is to enable dialogue among the dance teachers for meaning-making and knowledge creation.

This article partly uses ethnographic data collected during 18 months of collaboration with and among the dance teachers. During this time the initiator of and researcher in this project had the opportunity to take part in joint seminars as well as in several meetings of the five inquiry groups that the participants formed.

The question of reflection came to the fore in one of the joint seminars with the dance teachers. After listening to the presentations of the inquiry groups on different themes one dance teacher asked whether it would be possible to reflect on dance teaching in the studio. By this she referred to some modes of reflection that would derive from the practices of dance. The researcher was thrilled about her idea and encouraged her and her inquiry group to elaborate on the idea. During the next seminar they presented their inquiry issues through moving reflection into which they invited other participants to join. This incident regarding reflection on dance teaching raises important questions about the epistemology and theoretical basis of reflective practices.

The dance teachers’ explorations on different forms of reflection revealed the importance of recognizing multiple ways and forms of knowing. Their moving or embodied reflection was a way through which they could bodily explore different aspects of dance teaching and of being a dance teacher. The embodied mode of reflection is understood as a form of bodily knowledge along the lines of phenomenologist Jaana Parviainen (2002, 2006) who has pondered on the issue extensively within dance art. Following Michel Polanyi, Parviainen understands bodily knowledge to be a form of tacit
knowledge, but in a way that is sensitive to the intertwinement of tacit and focal knowledge. Understanding the concept of tacit knowledge starts from the assumption that ‘we can know more than we can tell’ (Polanyi 1967, 4). So most of this form of knowledge cannot be put into words. Focal knowledge, on the other hand, is explicit and one is able to talk about what one knows. Parviainen is of the opinion that focal knowledge and tacit knowledge are two dimensions of the same knowledge. The latter is comprehension achieved by indwelling, i.e. by participating and residing in different practices, and all knowledge is embedded in such acts of comprehension. Appreciating the tacit dimension that is revealed in behaviour means being attuned to an embodied understanding of different activities, such as dance teaching. (Parviainen, 2006, 81–98; 2002, 17–18.) Thus, bodily knowledge does not involve a mere technique or the production of a skill. Instead bodily knowledge forms the basis in which all knowledge is embedded. Parviainen (2002, 12) continues:

Since all knowers are situated – historically, culturally, socially, spatially, temporally, kinaesthetically – all the dimensions of situation become part of the epistemological context. Each being has its own life history and perception, its own pattern of structurally coupled interaction with the world. This implies that knowledge is always self-referential and reveals something about the knower. In other words, knowledge bears the marks of its producer. And because knowing has bodily roots, it is also to some extent unique.

What Parviainen is saying is that all knowledge emerges from the personal and direct contact that each person has with the world, from immediate observation and participation in the flow of activities. Knowledge is, thus, not general or uniform, which is why knowledge is always the knowledge of some-body at a certain socio-historical time and place.

Rouhiainen (2008) goes on to argue that retrieving perceptive or precise focal knowledge about different undertakings requires lived participation in these undertakings on the part of the knower, for example in artistic undertakings on the part of the artist. Drawing on the explorations of the dance teachers, attuning to the embodied understanding is the foundation also for the collective cultural meaning-making on dance teaching. Through spontaneously simulating and demonstrating incidents from their everyday life the dance teachers kinaesthetically explored their experiences in dance teaching: their relation to dance students and colleagues, their understandings of dance as bodily practice, their notions on the institutional context of dance teaching, their wellbeing at work, for example. The dance teachers’ embodied knowledge on being a dance teacher was brought forth through moving, perceiving, sensing, observing, feeling and thinking together. This empathetic and holistic sensitivity to others brought to light facets of dance teaching that are otherwise hard to grasp. Thus it formed an intersubjective context for the dance teachers’ to discuss and create precise focal knowledge on the cultural elements of dance teaching, such as the different possibilities of encountering student resistance, the specificity of teaching adolescents or the importance of encouraging colleagues. This kind of meaning-making relies then both on the nonverbal and the verbal levels of communication. (see also Löytönen, 2009)

The dance teachers’ explorations on different modes of reflection revealed the importance of recognizing multiple ways and forms of knowing in reflective practices. Their moving or embodied mode of reflection was a way through which they explored – in a bodily way – different aspects of being a dance teacher. It could be understood as a kind of knowing that arises through the bodily experience and is revealed in and through the body in action. (Kinsella, 2007, 396)

Although the embodied mode of reflection can be seen as natural within the field of dance, the authors argue that bodily practices could be applied in other fields as well. This is because embodiment is the basis of both self-understanding and the understanding of others. Indeed, the theoretical basis of embodiment and its relation to bodily and social consciousness seems relevant for developing ways to enhance the wellbeing of persons and communities. This theoretical basis is the subject of the next chapter.

**BODILY CONSCIOUSNESS**

The notion of bodily consciousness implies overcoming the body-mind split. The philosopher Evan Thompson (2007, 236–237) proposes that scholars interested in understanding consciousness focus on investigating the relationship between the living body and the lived body, or ‘the body–body problem’, instead of the body–mind problem. According to him, the ontological gap between the living body (organic, biological) and the lived body (phenomenological, subjective) is neither absolute nor radical.

Bodily consciousness includes bodily presence, that is, being attuned to our current bodily sensations and states as they become present to our consciousness. Bodily consciousness also entails historically and culturally constructed bodily knowledge. Bodily sensations are largely mediated by the proprioceptive system. The proprioceptive system, situated in the living body, relays messages that we can interpret as personal meanings, the substance of the lived body. It works together with the external senses (vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste) in guiding us in our daily actions and interactions with the environ-
ment. In our everyday lives we do not necessarily have to pay attention to these internal messages. They work for us without our conscious efforts, and most of the information these senses provide goes unnoticed. It is usually only when we encounter problematic or novel situations, or when our internal sensations become painful or distracting to us that we pay attention to our bodily sensations or states. (Cohen, 1993, 115; Klemola, 2005, 85–86; Todd, 1937, 26–27)

It is, however, possible to direct our attention consciously to these internal messages and to develop our sensitivity to them. A wealth of practices, often called somatic practices, has been developed for facilitating awareness of our bodies, or body-mind integrity. (Klemola, 2005, 85; Rouhiainen, 2006, 13–16) However, being internally aware does not require any specific discipline. It can simply be conceived as listening to our bodies (see Anttila, 2007).

The extent to which it is possible to become aware of some processes that we usually do not attend to in everyday life, and the meanings that our reflective, or bodily, experiences generate when attended to, are relevant for developing embodied modes of reflection and wellbeing at work. Understanding and facilitating the interplay between these qualitatively different modes of consciousness is one possibility to conceive embodied reflection, and it is a possible way towards greater self-understanding.

According to the philosopher and psychiatrist Lauri Rauhala our experiences differ in the level of clarity, that is, they can be more or less conscious. The process of clarifying experiences is simultaneously a process of meaning-making and understanding. Human beings construct their identity and worldview through making sense of their experiences, and thus, the ability to access and examine unclear experiences is highly valuable. (Rauhala, 2005, 37–38)

**Western body-mind duality excludes the body from the concept of reflection and knowing.**

### FROM BODILY CONSCIOUSNESS TOWARDS SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The desire to understand human consciousness does not seem to always coincide with efforts to articulate the notion of social consciousness. According to Klemola (2005), by practicing conscious movement it is possible to learn to understand ourselves and our place in the world, and to comprehend the ethical and aesthetical dimensions of human existence. The authors’ common interest here is to understand the relationship between bodily consciousness, that is, awareness or sense of self grounded in bodily experiences, and social consciousness. In other words, how could we transform awareness of our own bodies and selves to awareness about others and the larger world? If our abstract mental processes are grounded in our physical encounters in the world, could our ethical thinking be also constructed in physical encounters with other people?

Our willingness to enter into a dialogical relationship with others creates a stream of bodily communication. Following Martin Buber (1947), dialogue can be conceived as a basic movement of turning towards the other that includes both an inner movement and bodily action. Turning towards the other can be reflected in a released bodily state, dissolving of excess control and tension, and also a softer quality of voice when entering verbal communication. This released quality in relating to others signifies recognition and acceptance and invites them to take part in dialogue. It carries across a message of openness, interest, caring and trust (Anttila, 2006).

Max van Manen speaks about thoughtful action and describes it as being ‘thinkingly attentive to what it does without reflectively distancing itself from the situation’ (1991, 109). This sensitive responsiveness allows a person to perceive and read the other person’s actions and presence. It is a practical, improvisational ability to instantly act in a way that promotes the good of the other, or ‘an active intentional consciousness of thoughtful human interaction’ (van Manen 1995, 44). Interestingly, these ideas can be substantiated by latest findings in the study of mirror neurons that has shed understanding on how social cognition develops through attending to others’ bodily gestures and movements, and how embodied interaction is the basis for complex mental operations (Gallagher, 2005; Hari, 2007).

To sum up, developing bodily consciousness can enhance self-understanding, identity and agency. Thus embodied consciousness is a way to enhance individual wellbeing. Bodily sensitivity coupled with thoughtfulness makes space for encountering oneself and others simultaneously. This kind of embodied approach may support our efforts to understand others, and this leads to the possibilities for enhancing communal wellbeing at work.

Next, the second research project will be introduced shortly to show what embodied modes of reflection might mean in practice in an educational setting. In this collaborative action research project, the idea is to involve the entire school community in embodied practices, especially dance. Embodiment is seen as a mode of student learning and as part of teachers’ everyday work. In this project, a wider concep-
tion of learning is being introduced to the entire school community. This means, for example, acknowledging that learning takes place in the entire body, not only in the brain. It involves movement and concrete action in the physical and social world. Teachers are encouraged to apply the notion of embodied learning in their work, and also, to pay attention to their own bodily sensations and holistic well-being. The next section of the article contains a brief introduction of this project.

“THE ENTIRE SCHOOL DANCES” – CASE STUDY

This study is conducted in a public school in Vantaa, Finland, where dance is integrated in the general curriculum for each student (grades 1-9). The purpose of the study is to investigate the kinds of experiences and learning that dance generates. The research question is: what kinds of learning and knowing can dance elicit? More broadly, the study seeks understanding about complex, multisensory learning processes in the context of dance and education and aims at articulating a view on learning that takes embodied knowing into account.

Embodied learning entails that learning processes originate in the moving, sensing and feeling body. Bodily experiences generate rich reflections and meanings that comprise of complex relations to others and the world. The notion of embodied knowledge refers to multisensory, experiential, reflective, practical and tacit knowledge. This kind of knowledge is intertwined with embodied practice and bodily skills. (Anttila, 2009; Bresler, 2004; Kinsella, 2007; Pakes, 2003; Parviainen, 2002) The study theoretically articulates the significance of embodied knowledge in human learning processes by leaning on recent findings in cognitive science and neuroscience, as well as connecting these findings to phenomenological philosophy and ne-

rophenomenology. (Maitland, 1995; Merleau-Ponty, 1995/1962; Varela 1996)

The study is a collaborative action research project and is based on the participation of the entire school community (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). It also extends beyond the school in collaborating with the artistic and cultural community of the municipality where the school is located at. Dance events, visiting artists and visits to, e.g., dance performances, are important elements of the project. Furthermore, other teachers of the school collaborate in integrating dance and creative movement activities in their own classrooms. They also have an opportunity for their own weekly dance class and in-service professional development sessions on dance education and embodied learning throughout the project. All these activities may foster a dynamic learning environment, or an ‘ecology’ where the entire school community may become transformed.

The methodology of this study is based on the notion of social construction of knowledge, as well as collective expertise and democratic production of knowledge (Richardson, 1994; Roman & Apple, 1990; Wasser & Bresler, 1996; Gergen, 1999; Parviainen, 2006). Knowledge is produced with and for the community. The analysis focuses on the entire school community and attempts to discern if and how the ‘social choreography’ of the everyday life at school becomes transformed throughout the first year of the project.

The study investigates how embodied knowledge is at play in generating meaningful learning and wellbeing in a formal educational environment. The everyday practices of the school may become affected by modes of informal learning that take place in artistic environments. Dance becomes a metaphor for interaction, learning, and research, where ‘the constellations are loose enough to actually reach a state of excitement or play without falling apart. A system . . . can be dancing’ (Klien & Valk, 2007, 215). Thus, dance can be seen as a metaphor of a place where interplay between and within individuals, thoughts and modes of knowing is enhanced. This interplay may generate new kinds of learning and pedagogy, as well as wellbeing of persons and communities.

ENCHANCING INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITAL WELLBEING AT WORK

The main emphasis of this article has been to take a closer look at embodied modes of reflection as ways of enhancing wellbeing at work. The authors believe that the practice of bodily consciousness gives us access to our pre-reflective experiences and support personal meaning-making processes. These processes include also understanding our emotional life, since emotions are also largely bodily processes. According to Damasio (1999) emotions reflect changes in bodily states. He explains that ‘we only know that we feel an emotion when we sense that emotion is sensed as happening in our organism (1999, 279)’. Reflective work based on bodily experiences, that is, embodied modes of reflection create a ‘missing block’, a bridge between the body and the (disembodied) mind. Once we become more familiar with our bodily sensations, we may have more readiness for concrete interaction with others and the world. It is important to note, however, that this process does not necessarily take place without a conscious attention and focus on reflection. Bodily experiences, mental processes and social life seem to be closely intertwined, but this connection needs facilitation. Listening to bodily experiences and sensations, expressing them for example in words or pictures, and jointly discussing these processes requires understanding about these processes and practical knowledge on various methods of embodied reflection.
Thus the authors argue that this kind of expertise should be an integral element in the practices of enhancing wellbeing at work. Whether or not employers understand the significance of this kind of expertise depends on where and how results of recent research in this area become disseminated. The authors hope to encourage public discussion about holistic wellbeing and the role of embodiment in workplaces through this article and their work as scholars, consultants and educators.

It is possible to strengthen the relationship between pre-reflective and reflective consciousness, bodily and mental consciousness, and individual and social consciousness. This strengthening is a process of meaning-making and learning. It is a kind of sensuous understanding of oneself, others and one’s world and acting upon it. Sensuous attending to others’ bodily gestures and movements may enhance empathetic understanding and thus wellbeing of work communities. The important question is how to provide the time and place for joint embodied reflection within the complex and hectic working life. However difficult the question is, the authors believe that only by understanding the significance of embodiment in wellbeing can a long lasting care of both persons and communities be enhanced.

**ENDNOTES**

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Informal learning is becoming more important in the contemporary, fast changing world. There are areas where it contributes distinctively to wellbeing, such as health. In the regions where the formal education does not manage to satisfy the growing needs for the knowledge about health issues among ‘non-medical’ citizens, informal learning is becoming very important. This article focuses on the demand and relevance of learning about health in various groups of adults, showing that existing adult education provision is not enough to satisfy the needs, and demonstrates the prevalence of informal learning in this area.
INTRODUCTION

Health is one of the most important correlates of human wellbeing and one that has growing importance during the life course. For centuries it was the object of interest – knowledge of how to preserve and improve health was either highly appreciated and ‘possessed’ by the influential members of the society (priests, shamans, doctors...), or by those who were prohibited and banned by the authorities (alchemist, witches, magicians...). Study of medicine is one of the oldest in the world, but it does not correspond directly with the wide spreading of knowledge on medical issues among the general population. On the contrary – the gap seems to be big, and the development of medical research and science has historically not been going hand in hand with raising awareness and health culture of the broad population. Does this have to do with the myths of ‘sacred knowledge’, since health issues are related to life and death, being thus too worthy to be available to common people? Or is it the authority of the ‘white coat’? Anyway, there are reasons to believe that adult learning in the field of health is nowadays still an area where this gap can be detected. Informal learning is, however, overcoming this gap in a way that can be analysed through several traditional categories of adult education approach, such as content, needs and demands, target groups, provision, formal, nonformal and informal learning, challenges, quality, etc.

The categories of formal, non-formal and informal learning will be approached in a simple way in this article: formal education and learning will be understood in the context of traditional educational institutions, or educational forms leading to diplomas or certificates, organized by recognized providers or within the recognized institutions or with the recognized outcomes. Sometimes formal education of adults is understood as professional / vocational education – an approach omitting the basic general education of adults, which is a good framework for the basic health education of adults.

Non-formal education will refer to the ways of learning that might be also intentional, organized, and structured, in some way connected with the providers or its staff (institutions, organizations, and teachers). It is less structured than formal education, more flexible in time and with more focused goals (Titmus, 1989). The health education definition of WHO – World Health Organization refers indirectly to nonformal learning:

Health education comprises consciously constructed opportunities for learning involving some form of communication designed to improve health literacy, including improving knowledge, and developing life skills which are conducive to individual and community health (WHO, 1998, 4).

Similarly - the definition of the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) points out the content and competencies and not the organizational context:

Health education is the process by which individuals and groups of people learn to behave in a manner conducive to the promotion, maintenance or restoration of health. Education for health begins with people as they are, with whatever interests they may have in improving their living conditions. Its aim is to develop in them a sense of responsibility for health conditions, as individuals and as members of families and communities. In communicable disease control, health education commonly includes an appraisal of what is known by a population about a disease, an assessment of habits and attitudes of the people as they relate to spread and frequency of the disease, and the presentation of specific means to remedy observed deficiencies (DOH, n.d.).

Informal learning will apply to mainly self-directed or self-organized learning, in flexible, open forms and ways, outside the traditional education institutions and organizations, sometimes even without any clear idea that the process is about learning. This learning could be both intentional and non-intentional and is characterized by life-wide learning, learning from various sources and in diverse, not highly structured settings. It includes learning from experience which ‘happens in everyday contexts as part of day-to-day life, although it is rarely recognized as such’ (Miller, 2000, 73).

The additional distinctions might be also made by the criteria of stressing either knowledge, attitudes or skills:

‘By ‘formal education’ is meant the deliberated and systematic transmission of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (with the stress on knowledge) within an explicit, defined, and structured format for space, time, and material, with set qualifications for teacher and learner, such as is typified in the technology of schooling. Informal education’ is the incidental transmission of attitudes, knowledge, and skills (with the stress on attitudes) with highly diverse and culturally relative patterns for the organization of time, space, and material, and also for personal roles and relationships, such as are implicit in varying configurations of the family, household, and community. ‘Non-formal education’ is like formal education in the deliberate and systematic transmission of knowledge, attitudes, and skills, but there the stress is on skills’ (Colleta, 1996, 22).

In health education all three aspects play an important role, since it should encompass knowledge, but also attitudes and reflective thinking, with the clear orientation towards responsible decision making.

LEARNING ABOUT HEALTH – CENTRAL TOPICS

The relevance of the content – growing needs: It is impossible to overestimate the need for learning about health issues, since the awareness about topics
around health was never as immense as it is nowadays. People know that they can influence and control their body and mind to a larger extent than they have believed. Even the simple need to understand the processes going on ‘inside us’ is growing. The problems and challenges of modern living make this need even bigger – it is not just about healing, but also about prevention, nutrition as a form of prevention, about new, ‘modern’ diseases, about the growing world of pharmacology, dangers lurking from known and unknown sources, new relationships with our physical surroundings and nature, new reproductive technologies and potentials of genetic researches.

The number of important issues is growing and even medical science and research have problems in coping with these emerging issues. The everyday medical practice that we have to rely on can hardly give us satisfying answers to all of our questions and worries. And it is not just about exceptions and rare cases - the growing demands are obvious in the fact that, for example, we all face the questions of vaccination (old or recently created ones), witness more and more discussions about alternative healing methods and approaches and face the risks of side effects of medicines and pharmaceutical products.

On the other hand, it is shocking how low the demand for knowledge and competencies in this area are. ‘Soft’ skills have managed to ‘sneak’ into the traditional vocational and professional competencies and many new areas entered the traditional field of knowledge. But health is still not widely recognized as important in the formal settings. A single person can, for instance, work and function for a longer period of life without any formal demands, limits or barriers related to the knowledge of health issues, unless it is the demand of a certain job. Although health is recognized as an important field, this is not a part of standard sets of competencies, basic skills, minimum knowledge or required behaviour. The exception is behaviour that can jeopardize the others, such as smoking, transmission of HIV and similar.

**Target group:** There is hardly any area of learning where the target group is as large as in health issues, almost unlimited. There is no life stage and age without some health related issue as important - being it constant physiological changes of our body, care and feeding our new born babies, taking care of sick family members, risks of sexually transmitted diseases (STD), drugs, smoking, growing stress in working life, aging process, etc. Almost every person is sometimes affected by these problems and needs to know more about them – although there is not always full awareness of this learning need. Having almost the whole population as a target group, we can doubt the capacities of even very highly developed and accessible systems of adult formal education to address and match their needs. As in every other area of adult learning, there are ‘learning-resistant’ groups – those who are difficult to reach and who do not participate enough. In case of learning about health they can not be left “outside”, because usually they are those who need some kind of ‘enlightenment’ and educational support more than the others – youngsters exposed to temptation of drugs, STD, early pregnancy, groups shocked by poverty and bad living conditions (such as Roma), or ‘yuppies’ exposed to stress due to a big workload, burning out, speed communication and information overload.

**The provision / supply within the formal education system:** Institutions and organizations of formal education have to cope with the growing demands from the changing world of work, dynamic society and speeding amount of knowledge and information. At present, health issues are part of the curriculum only to a very limited extent. In Europe there are some differences between developed countries that do pay attention to health education and the countries in transition and in the EU-pre-accession process, where the formal education system does not cover health issues (or do so very narrowly). In these latter countries public health is seldom targeted by the educational provision (if yes, then it is mainly nonformal learning), and even medical staff is not prepared or educated enough to provide educational services and to offer counselling. There is even the lack of awareness about this role of medical staff. Some initiatives, projects and programmes usually target the young population, or the oldest ones. Health is usually not a part of formal education (if it is not for medical professions) or even in the non-formal education the provision is often poor in forms, methods, and not really updated. This is the case in less developed European countries, for example in South Eastern Europe, where the shift from the traditional, state run public health system to the new one (mixture of public and private providers and services) led to a questionable quality of services and to the decrease of interest for the public health. But almost in the whole of Europe adult education provision does not succeed in meeting the growing needs. For example, The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) was ‘unfavourably known as the Cinderella committee by MEPs, due to its low importance’ during the 1990s (Wikipedia, 2009).

Returning back to discussing the general reasons why health education supply is poor within formal education as a whole, some of the reasons might be:

- The traditional gap between professionals and ‘amateurs’ in this area. Caporael-Katz and Levin point out that ‘historically, self-care has al-
ways competed with professional care’ (according to: Marsick, Smedley, 1989, 503);
- The traditional status of medical knowledge connected with myths, secrets and sacred knowledge;
- The legacy of the era of enlightenment: though the enlightenment made an educational issue out of health, it kept the level of knowledge required for the masses rather low;
- The conservative character of the educational system, resistant to fast changes and slowly adaptable to the need of target groups;
- Overall education systems in some countries lagging behind;
- Economic problems affecting public health care and services, which are therefore not on the needed level;
- The existing provision of health education lacks an individualized and idiosyncratic approach;
- The existing provision of health education lacks an integral and holistic approach;
- The existing provision of health education is not flexible enough;
- Contemporary health education still has somewhat of a conservative character;
- The transfer of new knowledge and medical research results is very slow;
- The interest of pharmaceutical companies, medical centres and growing (or prevailing) private provision of medical services are often not in accordance with the interest of the groups and individuals involved in the learning process.

Especially the ‘critics of the health establishment suggest [that]… the answers do not reside solely in technology and because physicians often have the crippling hold on changes in health delivery and a vested interest in the maintenance of their power’ (Marsick & Smedley, 1989, 503).

The non-formal and informal learning provision: As in many other areas, non-formal learning is compensating a lot for what is missed by the formal education system. It might be the non-formal provision by the education and medical institutions, institutions of health and social care, but also the provision of civil society organizations, European or international projects, programmes, organizations, association agencies, etc. Much has been done in order to reduce the costs for patient consumer health education. Furthermore, courses, seminars and lectures are becoming the dominant, popular and widespread form of health education for adults. In South Eastern Europe, for instance, teaching adults about disease prevention, basic health knowledge and healthy lifestyles is usually the task of national or international projects, either related to a certain target group (girl and women, Roma, etc.) or as a part of larger projects for basic education, sometimes even with a tendency to flow into the mainstreaming of formal education.¹

But even non-formal education cannot satisfy the new arising and growing needs for health education. As in many other areas, the amount and complexity of new information, results of researches, and abundance of knowledge is multiplying at a growing speed. There are hardly any organized forms of adult education that can follow this development. An additional reason for this is the increasing number of controversies related to health. There is no area of such personal importance and, consequently, no area of such commercial potential such as health. Series of current issues increase the individual and social importance of acquiring valid information and knowledge: these issues include the use and misuse of medicines (including harmful side-effects of widely prescribed pharmaceuticals and questionable impact and value of new ones), value and risks of frequently performed surgical procedures and of obligatory vaccination (against swine flu or even traditional vaccines that come under criticism, such as polio vaccine), use and misuse of the medical profession (including fraud doctors, magic healers, questionable curing methods), new and ‘old-new’ cures (such as homeopathy), new approaches to cancer, constantly changing information about correlation of different foods with health, use of nutrition supplements, relationship between the body and mind, ways that the changing climate and jeopardized nature are influencing our health, and so forth.

These above-mentioned new challenges have caused the big variety in informal learning approaches, methods and forms. Traditionally, but today more than ever, health issues are being studied and discussed through informal exchange and contacts (family, relatives, friends, colleagues). People learn more and more through experiential learning, reflecting their own experiences, observing, comparing, concluding – sometimes even through simple trial-and-error, sometimes combining different approaches, but more independently, self-directed and self-organized. In addition, modern media are offering a huge range of different possibilities such as the internet, with the spectrum of education and information offer ranging from the web-sites of hospitals and clinics, to the blogs and Facebook-groups where experiences and information are being exchanged. Journals, books and magazines spring up like mushrooms, and TV programmes around health topics are more popular than ever. In many countries there are also ‘consumer resource centres, lectures and home demonstrations, courses in alternative therapies, self-groups, and health collectives… Health education is available over the telephone, on television, and in nutrition and exercise centres’ (Marsick & Smedley, 1989, 505).

Informal learning is a growing phenomenon in many areas, but health
seems to be the one which is really expanding. This is valid especially in the cases if a person is confronted with a rare disease, specific or unique reactions, physiological characteristics and needs, needs for alternative healing or some pressure from the public health system (such as the case of swine flu). This might even be a question of survival.⁴ For many individuals who, fighting for their own life or health or life of a family member, hit the boundaries of traditional medicine, informal learning has on many occasions turned out to be the only way of helping them to cope with this biggest challenge in their life. Even in less dramatic cases, an individual is pushed to the realm of informal learning if he or she is curious about the knowledge beyond the limits of traditional medicine, if he or she is critical towards it or towards the mainstream generally. The less a country is developed, the more this the case.

The recent decades brought about a high level of awareness of importance about health and disease prevention issues, many initiatives and activities, but in the area of public health and health education these are limited to a rather low level, such as hand washing, vaccination programs and distribution of condoms for the purpose of AIDS prevention (for example: EUPHICS, 2009).

However, according to Epp, ‘people must be helped to take more control over their health habits’ (Marsick & Smedley, 1989, 502). Even more, they need to learn to master their life and health:

‘The tendency to master is central to emerging new concept of health prevention and promotion... because it is concerned with autonomy, independence, and personal control over conditions in one’s life. The tendency to be mastered is reflected in a traditional dependence on the medical model’(Marsick & Smedley, 1989, 503).

CONCLUSIONS: ENSURE QUALITY AND ENGAGE!

What challenges and perspectives does this above-described development bring to adult education and learning? The answer is about key issues in all contemporary adult education: accessibility, participation and quality. In order to enable an increase in these aspects, it is necessary to:

- Enable the education forms that support paradigm changes in health education – from the traditional, dependent, biomedical model focused on giving information, to an empowering, supportive education aiming at more self-control, more informed choices and decisions, and more self-organized and tailor-made learning;

- A shift should be made from a passive to more active involvement of patients and groups interested or affected in any way. This should be valid for both government-sponsored programmes and for civil society initiatives. Even the component of political actions should (for example in promoting prevention, critical awareness raising towards the measures of medical authorities, etc.) be a part of health education;

- Establish closer connection between formal, non-formal and informal learning, not just in the traditional area of knowledge and competencies, but also in health, and not just in the sense of assessment of acquired competencies, but more in the sense of an organic, functional linking of these three fields;

- Make the means of informal learning more available, especially for the disadvantaged groups. The marginalized groups should have better access to non-formal and informal learning and health education. This applies for example to the web pages of international and European organizations in the health area, which depend on the infrastructure and availability of ICT technologies;

- Special efforts should be made to overcome barriers for those who are difficult to reach and are less willing to participate and to learn – for any reason why this might be;

- Increase the competencies needed for informal learning, such as English language for non-native speakers, so they can use the broader range of available resources (from pamphlets and brochures to more internet and on-line based education);

- Make more awareness-raising among different social groups about the positive effects of health education and learning (benefits for both individual and for society) – decision makers, media, medical staff, potential beneficiaries;

- Develop more critical thinking among existing and potential beneficiaries (for example towards media, for evaluation of medical practices, in various novelties...). Almost none of the other areas of learning demands so much life-important competencies in analysing, combining, comparing, synthesizing and evaluating information, decision making, problem solving, reflection and reasoning and taking responsibility;

- Develop motivation and competencies for lifelong and life-wide learning and combine health education with other development strategies and education measures.

‘Societal changes, legal and public policy issues, changes in the health care system, changes in the attitudes of providers and consumers of health care... have all contributed to an expanded marketplace for health education.. Traditional models of health education are being critically examined and new models are being carefully evaluated and modified to incorporate the sweeping changes and the impact of society upon health status’ (Marsick & Smedley,
The growing needs for new approaches to health education in both EU countries and in other European countries make continuous efforts in adult education and learning a necessity.

ENDNOTES

1. See for example the key competencies of the European Commission, where health is mentioned just once: ‘Knowledge of how to maintain good health, hygiene and nutrition for oneself and one’s family’ (EC, 2004, 16).

2. Such as: Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Protection of the European Commission; The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), an independent agency of the EU; The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), a committee of the European Parliament; European Medicines Agency.

3. See for example the curriculum for the basic education of adult Roma (Medic, Popovic, Despotovic, Milanovic, 2009).

4. See for example ‘Lorenzo’s oil’ - a 1992 drama film directed by George Miller. It is a true story about a battle for the life of a boy suffering from a disease so rare that nobody is working on a cure. The parents decide to tackle the problem themselves, by learning all about the disease, studying, reading, researching, exchanging information with other parents and organising a “private” symposium with experts.

REFERENCES


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Katarina Popovic is Professor at the Department for Adult Education, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia since 1989 and has conducted research in the area of adult education and lifelong learning for the past 15 years. She has also been visiting professor for adult education in several European universities. Dr Popovic has wide experience in project application and project management, especially in projects related to: promotion and lobbying for adult education and LLL, working with marginalized groups (minorities, Roma, unemployed), civic, peace and intercultural education and education for key competences and life skills. Her special area is professionalisation of adult education and preparation of staff. Dr Popovic is serving on the Editorial Board of LLI&EnE journal since 2009.

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This article reviews the European Union’s conceptions of lifelong learning and related national strategies for lifelong learning with specific reference to the results of EMILIA project’s qualitative research. This research involved people with long-term mental illness in a lifelong learning training intervention at baseline and at 10-month follow-up period across eight European countries. The results indicate mainly positive experiences, for example in terms of the participants’ employment and ‘meaningful’ activities. While the mental health problems have not disappeared, these have diminished in terms of impact on the participants’ ability to expand their social network, training and work.
CONTEXT OF STUDY – THE EMILIA PROJECT

Emilia is an abbreviation for ‘Empowerment of mental illness service users: lifelong learning, integration and empowerment’. It is a framework 6 (the EU’s sixth framework programme for research funding) research and intervention project, funded at €3.4 million over a four and a half year period, from September 2005 to February 2010. The Emilia project is one of a number of European development programmes funded by the European Union, part of a wider effort to address the problem of exclusion of multiple disadvantaged groups such as unemployed people with long-term mental health illness. Emilia is the European Union’s largest ever funded research and intervention project on lifelong learning and mental health/social inclusion. The project has 16 partners in 13 European countries: two of these countries – Norway and Bosnia and Herzegovina – are outside the European Union region.

A major goal of Emilia is to explore the use of lifelong learning, through Emilia intervention activity or lifelong learning training, as a means of achieving improved social inclusion of people with severe long-term mental health illness. The Emilia training programmes are currently running across eight demonstration sites or pilot centres in eight European countries – namely the United Kingdom, France, Norway, Greece, Spain, Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Denmark. These countries were selected for a number of reasons. First, the eight EMILIA project demonstration sites or pilot centres are all located in these countries. Second, the project draws its research sample from these countries. The research sample comprised of mental health practitioners and mental health service users. Third, the eight countries represent a balance of lifelong learning national characteristics and contexts.

AIMS OF STUDY

1. To review the European Union’s conceptions of lifelong learning and related national strategies for lifelong learning as applied to people with long-term mental health problems (henceforth referred to as mental health service users).

2. To describe the experiences of a group of mental health service users following their participation in a lifelong learning training intervention.

EU CONCEPTIONS OF LIFELONG LEARNING AND NATIONAL STRATEGIES

Lifelong learning is considered as an important part of the European Union Lisbon strategy, according to which the European Union should become, by 2010, the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economic area in the world, as well as a more cohesive and inclusive society. Acquiring and continuously updating and upgrading skills and competences is considered a prerequisite for the personal development of all citizens and for participation in all aspects of society (Eurostat, 2009).

The above quote is taken from the 2009 Adult Education Survey recently published for the European Commission by the Eurostat. It underlines the timelessness and ‘evergreen nature’ of the lifelong learning agenda especially since the European Union’s 1996 proclamation of the European Year of Lifelong Learning. Lifelong learning has many definitions – depending on the contexts in which it is defined or, in some cases, the concept/s that is used to explain it. However, in its simplest form, lifelong learning can be defined as all learning activity undertaken throughout life. The emphasis in this definition is learning which can be undertaken for personal/leisure reasons or professional/employment reasons, or both. This learning can take different forms and can take place in a varied range of settings or contexts – be it formal, informal or non-formal settings. The European Union’s definition of lifelong learning is purposely broad but no less definitive. According to the European Commission policy document Making the European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality (European Commision, 2001), lifelong learning is defined as:

... all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.

The Commission’s definition intensely focused on the Lisbon policy strategy which was meant to highlight priority action areas for national governments in the Member States of the European Union. Although the linchpins of the European Commission’s definition of lifelong learning are economic growth and jobs – including knowledge and skills development and competences – there is, equally, a genuine underlying focus on the social dimension of the Lisbon strategy. The elements of this social dimension include community cohesion and integration, citizenship, and cultural renewal. These elements are often referred to by their collective term of social inclusion. The European Commission (European Commission, 2003) relates the social inclusion approach to education and training as follows:

a social-inclusion approach [to education and training] which mainly targets those whose initial experience of education and training has been unsatisfactory or inadequate, certainly in relation to the modern world, and which seeks to re-engage them with a learning experience which may, especially at the initial stages, focus on personal develop-
ment and bringing them up to a level of personal and basic skills which ... (European Commission, 2003).

Social inclusion has become wedded to the European social policy agenda, an agenda that places an emphasis on tackling exclusion especially of people from multiple disadvantaged groups, including those experiencing severe long-term mental illness. Lifelong learning is considered not only a tool for achieving Europe’s vision for a high-skills, full knowledge economy, but it is also, at the same time, considered a tool for achieving the social inclusion of people from the disadvantaged groups. It is this dual-role that makes lifelong learning the bedrock of the Lisbon policy agenda.

The alignment of member states’ national strategies for lifelong learning with the European Union’s lifelong learning policy has been well documented (see, for example, Holford, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Stenfors-Hayes et al., 2008; Ogunleye, 2007, 2009a, 2009b). The aligning of lifelong learning policies at both national and European level notwithstanding, there are national differences in policies, practice and guidelines which are attributable to differences in learning culture/tradition and in the constructions of the meaning of lifelong learning. According to a study for the European Commission (European Commission, 2003), differences are also attributable to ‘issues like the degree of development of adult education systems, integration of education and vocational training or the degree of centralisation or decentralisation of systems’. The following paragraphs examine varied national lifelong learning characteristics with particular reference to the eight EMILIA case study countries – France, Greece, Norway, Denmark, Spain, United Kingdom, Poland and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

NATIONAL VARIETY

France

In the case of France lifelong learning is conceptually understood to include but not exclude ‘learning at all levels’. Here there is a significant emphasis on the labour market which either intentionally or unintentionally favours those who are in work. The French laws give every French resident/citizen legal rights to lifelong learning training but those rights apply more to people in employment which raises an issue of exclusion of unemployed people in particular socially vulnerable groups, including people with mental illness. However, in the past few years, France has implemented lifelong learning through a number of articles (texts) and laws – most notably the law on the social modernisation (January 17th 2002), the law on lifelong vocational training and social dialogue (May 4th 2004), the law on local freedoms and responsibilities (13 August 2003) and article 133 on validation of ‘acquired experience’ (see Tulip, 2008). These laws and policy texts emphasised continuing education and lifelong vocational training albeit this new orientation places an emphasis on employment as opposed to social and cultural reasons for lifelong learning. Gramain et al. (2006) points out that the French ‘social assistance renewal’ policy embraces the spirit of the European Union social policy agenda, and is widely recognised as a major policy tool for promoting social cohesion and for engaging socially disadvantaged groups such as mental health service users.

Greece

In Greece lifelong learning strategy continues to aim at enhancing ‘the quality of education provision, improving employability, flexible re-skilling, and the social inclusion and citizenship’ (Greece National Report on Lifelong Learning, 2007).

The Greek conception of lifelong learning relates to the European Union policy as set out in the Lisbon Strategy and in the subsequent European Union policy documents, as noted in the preceding paragraphs. The influence of the European Union lifelong learning policy has been profound in Greece in the last decade. One major factor is that Greece does not have a long history of adult learning – for example, Greece has a comparatively low lifelong learning participation rate among people aged 25–64. According to the Eurostat Labour Force Survey (2007), participation rate of people aged 25–64 in Greece was 1.8 per cent compared to the EU-25 average 10.8%. Another factor is the comparatively less developed or poor learning culture. Furthermore, there is a significant proportion of financing for lifelong learning and social inclusion actions that continues to come from the European Social Fund. Also, the country’s effort to reflect or embed the European Union lifelong learning policy in its national strategy only began in the last two years despite the fact that the legal instruments such as the Law on Systemisation of Lifelong Learning 3369/2005, was enacted two years earlier. The Law on Systemisation of Lifelong Learning set out, for the first time, both the strategy and the instruments for integrating lifelong learning nationally and the recognition of the role of non-governmental institutions including the establishment of the operational structures for social partners (Manoudi, 2007; Greece National Report on Lifelong Learning, 2007; Panitsidou and Papastamatis, 2009). This integrated policy framework addresses a number of issues including the co-ordination, funding, certification of qualifications, the ‘distinction’ between lifelong education and lifelong training, and the linking of lifelong learning with the National System for Linking Vocational Education and Training with Employment.
In terms of validation and recognition of learning, there are systems in place – e.g. the accreditation provided by Vocational Training Centres around the country – to validate formal learning and competence gained in non-formal and informal settings due to ‘a lack of co-operation’ between the government and the professions. These factors have resulted in an unintended situation where a large proportion of the adult population has been kept away from engaging in lifelong learning.

Norway

The Norwegian conception of lifelong learning aligns broadly with the standard EU definition of lifelong learning. Norway situates lifelong learning in the existing system of continuing education and training, conceptualising lifelong learning as a continuum with a perspective on ‘cradle to grave’ (Tikkanen, 2007; Ure, 2007). This cradle-to-grave learning continuum was demonstrated recently by the relocation of the Norwegian preschool education flagship, Early Childhood Education and Care to the Ministry of Education and Research as the ‘society’s first institution to support children’s lifelong learning’ (Norwegian National Report, 2007, p.2). Besides its all-embracing ‘learning from cradle to grave’ definition, Norway, in the last two years, has offered a more specific definition of lifelong learning ‘as learning which provides opportunity for citizens to acquire new knowledge and skills throughout life, so that they are able to function well in society and keep up with the constantly changing demands of working life’ (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2007).

This new Norwegian conception of lifelong learning has three clusters, which are:
- the provision of education and training during the whole life span;
- education and training from cradle to grave, and
- lifewide learning (Ure, 2007, p.7).

The reference to lifewide learning is worth explaining: it means there is an emphasis on learning that takes place outside formal education systems – informal and non-formal learning acquired in the work place as well as in the community settings can be evaluated, recognised and validated although questions are being raised about the ‘insufficient’ or poor development of the system of documentation for validating learning and a lack of standardisation or uniformity in practice, which in turn raises questions about the rigour of quality assurance in the informal education system. However, lifewide learning provides an important mechanism for tackling social exclusion and for promoting the social inclusion of multiple disadvantaged groups such as people with mental illness. There is also an individual statutory right to training leave especially for those individuals in work as well as individual statutory rights to free elementary and secondary education and training including ‘adults who have not had such an opportunity earlier’ (Norwegian National Report, 2007). A government White paper (no. 16 2006–07), Early Intervention for Lifelong Learning, published in 2007 commits the Government to the goal of achieving equity and to promoting inclusion in the education systems covering formal, informal and non-formal education. However, there was no specific reference to the particular needs of mental health service users beyond the generic aims, which are ‘to diminish class differences, reduce economic inequity and combat poverty and other forms of marginalisation’ (Eurydice, 2009, p.6).

Denmark

Lifelong learning has stepped up to become a national policy strategy in Denmark in the last two years following an earlier policy strategy set out immediately after the Lisbon Summit. The new strategy for lifelong learning was published by the Danish Ministry of Education in 2007 as part of a response to the challenges of globalisation and as part of Denmark’s contribution to the Lisbon strategy, which has an overarching goal of making the European Union the most competitive economic block in the world (see also Ogunleye, 2007).

Denmark’s conception of lifelong learning, therefore, accords with the European Union’s standard definition in that it takes account of the whole spectrum of learning – be it formal, non-formal and informal learning – from early childhood (pre-school) learning to higher education and adult education as well as continuing training.

The strategic aim of lifelong learning is to ‘support and promote individual personal development, employment, active citizenship and participation in society’ (Danish Ministry of Education, 2007a). Lifelong learning ‘should be promoted for all and within all areas where human knowledge, skills and competences are developed and applied’ (Danish Report to the European Commission, 2007, paragraph 1.2.1).

Although lifelong learning emphasises social cohesion and individual development, it is clear from Denmark’s strategy for lifelong learning (Danish Ministry of Education, 2007a) that the policy trends have moved to economic/global competitiveness and skills upgrading ‘for all.’ This policy shift to the employment and labour market dimensions of lifelong learning in the past two years has, invariably, raised the question of the state’s commitments to tackling social exclusion of the socially vulnerable groups, such as mental health service users, through lifelong
learning. However, adults with very little or no education or disadvantaged groups including people with mental illness are being brought into lifelong learning through a system of formal vocational education – e.g. through a framework for assessing, evaluating and validating skills. This means that knowledge or competences or learning gained or acquired in both informal and non-formal settings may be assessed, evaluated and validated.

**Spain**

The Spanish conception of lifelong learning also follows the standard EU definition. More recently, lifelong learning is being promoted through changes in the legislation that has now conferred a legal status on adult education. According to Eurydice (2009), ‘It (the new legal status) also offers all adults an opportunity to upgrade their basic skills to a level equivalent to a high school diploma.’

Lifelong learning is defined in a national report on the debate on lifelong learning Informe nacional sobre el debate acerca del aprendizaje permanente en España, as ‘the act of useful learning carried out continuously with the aim of improving qualifications, expanding knowledge and aptitudes’ (cited in Eve et al. 2007, p. 394).

Spain has firmed up its strategy for lifelong learning in the last two years. The lifelong learning strategy has been ‘clarified’ by two new laws on educational provision: the first law is the Organic Law of Education (2/2006) which sees lifelong learning as a continuum. The new law regulates the systems of education from pre-school to vocational training and adult education’ (Ministry of Education and Science, 2007, para.1.1.1). Another important feature of the new law is that the right of the individual to lifelong learning education and training ‘inside and outside the education system’ was explicitly stated (see also National Report, 2007; Nelissen, 2007). The second new law, the Organic Law Modifying the Organic Law on Universities (4/2007) formally brings higher education into the national lifelong learning agenda, an agenda that now emphasises the cradle-to-grave perspective of lifelong learning thereby linking education systems from pre-school through to compulsory primary and secondary education phase and to higher education, adult and continuing vocational education and training.

Individuals in formal learning or education settings are the main beneficiaries of the reform of lifelong learning in Spain: this explains perhaps why participation in lifelong learning is comparatively low by the European standard (see Eurostat, 2009). One reason for the low participation is that a large segment of the population is disproportionately underrepresented in lifelong learning due to a near absence of national mechanisms – procedures, etc. – for the evaluation and certification of (professional) skills, knowledge and experience gained or acquired in informal and non-formal education or learning settings. In addressing the current situation, the new law on higher education (4/2007) now places a duty upon the higher education sector including universities to not only engage in the lifelong learning agenda, but to also set out positive measures admitting mature adult learners with no formal academic qualifications.

**United Kingdom**

Lifelong learning remains a major policy focus in the United Kingdom, and the country continues to integrate its lifelong learning policy with the European Union policy agenda. Sir David Watson’s article in this issue of LLinE delves deeper into the status quo of lifelong learning in Britain. The Government Green Paper The Learning Age: a Renaissance for a New Britain (DfEE, 1998) remains the guiding policy document of the UK Government. The document sets out a government commitment to improve the work skills of the UK workforce through lifelong learning, which is defined as ‘the continuous development of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are essential for today’s job and personal fulfilment’ (DfEE, 1998, p.11).

Like other Member States of the European Union, the UK predicates lifelong learning on economic, cultural and social factors. Central to these factors are the acquisition of skills to meet the ever-changing needs of the job market, the development of a culture of learning to help create personal independence and the encouragement of people’s ‘creativity and innovation’ (DfEE, 1998, p.10). Since 2006, lifelong learning has continued to develop and the policy framework/strategy is more coherent. For example, the cradle to grave conception of lifelong learning continues to be emphasised, according to a Government White Paper A Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners: Maintaining the Excellent Progress published by the Department of Education and Skills (DfES, 2006). Since 2006, the ‘early years professional status’ was established by the Children’s Workforce Development Council to improve the quality of pre-school education and care in the UK. It will be noted that the ‘early year status’ is a graduate-level qualification. Another recent development is the continuing implementation of the UK government national learning targets to further its widening participation agenda: for example, one government target is that 50 per cent of 18-30 year olds should have ‘experience’ of higher education by 2010 (see Walker and Ogunleye, 2008). There are similar targets for adult literacy, work-based learning, adult learning and community-based learning. The UK national strategy for lifelong learning relates to mental health service users, and they have a
history of participation especially at local and community-based adult/lifelong education.

Poland

Poland, like other member states, endorses the European Union policy agenda on lifelong learning as set out in the Lisbon strategy, but it has yet to develop a national strategy for lifelong learning due to the ‘dominant position of formal education, well established before the political changes in 1989 and maintained until the present day’ (Polish Ministry of National Education, 2007, paragraph 1.1).

The country’s approach to lifelong learning, by tradition, focuses on adult continuing education, which is defined as ‘education in schools for adults as well as the development of general knowledge, vocational skills formation and ability development in out-of-school forms by persons who have graduated from compulsory education’ (Eurydice, 2008, p.51). Lifelong learning is defined as ‘a process of continued improvement, upgrading or changing the attained educational level, skills and qualifications, and thus adaptation to the changing environment’ (Polish Ministry of Economy and Labour, 2005, p.125).

It is also worth pointing out that the education system in Poland disproportionately focuses on formal education: for example, the adult education system allows ‘adults to continue their school education after it has been interrupted or when they are already in employment’ (Drozd, 2007, p.5). The system is embedded in the regular school-based – or formal vocational education – system. This latter factor explains why formal learning in Poland is considered well developed (because formal education is traditionally highly valued and non-formal and informal are considered a poor relation). Non-formal and informal learning are not recognised and neither is a system or framework for the general recognition and evaluation of prior learning, skills and competences acquired, or experience gained outside formal education/learning settings (see also Drozd, 2007). It will be noted that Poland has a comparatively low participation rate in education and training amongst 24-64 year old adults in the European Union, according to Eurostat (2007) – 5.6 per cent in 2006 compared to the 9.6 per cent EU-27 average. There was an expectation that a comprehensive and coherent national strategy for lifelong learning will be established in the rolling National Reform Programme 2005-2008. However, as at the time of writing, a national strategy for lifelong learning is yet to be actualised. The implication of an absence of a strategy for lifelong learning is that a large swath of the population are not engaged in lifelong learning and, by extension, run the risk of being socially excluded.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a signatory to the European Union Memorandum for lifelong learning. To that extent it endorses the standard European Union’s definition of lifelong learning. However, Bosnia and Herzegovina has yet to develop a coherent national strategy for lifelong learning. Currently, lifelong learning is implicitly situated in both adult education and vocational education and training, which are not joined up.

According to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s educational development plan for 2008–2015, the government aims to link adult education to lifelong learning because of the recognition that ‘the adult education and training, in the context of lifelong learning, contributes to the socioeconomic revitalization, better employment opportunities and competitiveness in the knowledge market, as well as to the increased mobility and professional flexibility of individuals; a systemic approach to its development is a necessity’ (Pitkanen, 2008, p.38).

Vocational education and training is linked to the formal school system with 60 per cent of secondary school students enrolled in vocational education and training. The ‘normal’ destination for students on vocational and technical education programmes is employment. A study for the International Labour Office and Council of Europe by Rosas et al. (2009, p.35) found that the reform of vocational education and training is patchy and ‘low.’ What is also important to point out is that the participation of Bosnian adults in education and training is low which is compounded by the fragmentation of what is already an inadequate number of organisations/providers offering lifelong learning programmes. Also, because of the absence of a coherence strategy for lifelong learning, there is no current framework or tools for recognising, validating or evaluating informal and non-formal learning – which means the likely routes or pathways through which disadvantaged groups such as mental health service users could access lifelong learning are not available. However, equity and open access are emphasised within adult education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which are key to social inclusion of the vulnerable groups.

From the foregoing, it is clear that, at the policy level, every one of the eight countries examined has a legal framework for lifelong learning, which accords broadly with the Lisbon agenda of the European Union. However, there are differences between countries in the implementation of lifelong learning policy – differences that have a lot to do with the individual country’s lifelong learning tradition/culture, resources, and so forth, and also to do with the constructions of the meaning of lifelong learning. Although the particular needs of mental health service users might not have been uniformly and, in
a number of cases, expressly addressed in the national strategies for lifelong learning, there is a common - perhaps shared universal – acknowledgement across the eight countries examined that lifelong learning is a useful tool for addressing the particular needs of socially vulnerable people including people with mental health service users.

**EMILIA TRAINING**

The EMILIA project’s aim was to use the lifelong learning process to facilitate the social inclusion of mental health service users. This was implemented by the means of training packages developed in the project. The EMILIA Training is made up of 13 individual packages or programmes each of which aims to increase social inclusion and empowerment of mental health service users. These individual programmes – Dual Diagnose, Personal Development, Social Network, Strengths Approach to Recovery, Empowering in Recovery, Powerful Voices, Suicide Intervention, Family/Network Support, Social Competences, User Research Skills – form the basis of what is known as the ‘EMILIA Education’ where the students gain both life and work skills. Each training package ran for an average duration of 18.6 hours or mean length of 3.8 weeks, and an average of 10.4 participants per session. The trainers were both mental health professionals and service users in all but three training packages. The trainers were offered a manual, in which the general and specific goals of the training were described. The training packages are available at www.entermentalhealth.net.

**DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

The data for this study is part of the EMILIA research that comprised a qualitative and quantitative follow-up study of mental health service users and mental health practitioners from the above-presented eight European countries where EMILIA has demonstration sites or pilot centres. This paper reports data that were collected using a self-report tool at baseline (n=165), and at 10 months follow-up (n=120). The study participants have participated in the EMILIA project’s training for mental health service users, as described above. The study participants were age 18 or over, without paid job and were having a serious and enduring mental illness, such as psychosis (e.g. schizophrenia F20 or bi-polar affective disorder F31), and had at least 3 years contact with mental health services. Mental health service users who had dementia or learning disability were excluded from the study. The data were analysed by the means of the qualitative content analysis, which is generally accepted as a ‘flexible method for analysing text data’ (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1277; Cavanagh, 1997; see also Elo and Kyngäs, 2008; Granheim and Lundman, 2004; Sandelowski, 2004).

The data were coded, transcribed and analysed to identify key themes. The study findings are data based, or composed of what researchers conclude, infer, or interpret from the data they have collected in a survey at 10 month follow-up. The emphasis was on identifying themes and patterns in the data. The underlying meanings were linked together in categories by creating themes. During interpretation the researcher made interpretations of what was going on. The initial analysis was conducted by the EMILIA researcher in the demonstration site’s own language, then summarised and translated into English before sending the summary to the qualitative team for the final analysis.

**RESULTS OF THE FOLLOW-UP STUDY**

The analysis of the mental health service user training participants’ self-report tool was categorised into three main themes – namely participants’ views on Training Experience, Social Inclusion and Wellbeing/quality of life.

In terms of the participants’ views on their training experience, there were positive attitudes and motivation at the beginning of the training intervention, and the same motivation, if not even greater, continued at 10 month follow-up. The participants’ expectations concerning pre-training intervention were high and equally matched with their learning experience. The participants reported that the training intervention motivated them not only to learn more, but also to share their new knowledge and skills with other people. The training participants also said they felt empowered to train others by reaffirming their own skills, by stimulating their mental activity and by being positive about themselves.

At baseline, the participants considered being in work as an essential part of life, which improves mental health. Being employed was one of the participants’ main expectations at baseline, and this remained so at 10 month follow-up. The results showed a slight increase in the number of participants who entered competitive employment as well as an increase in the number of those undertaking unpaid voluntary work. On the other hand, the training intervention did not change the situation for some participants who, at baseline, were experiencing financial difficulty due to unemployment. Therefore, for this latter group of participants, the pressure to get a job remained at 10 month follow-up.

In terms of social inclusion, training participants reported improved social life within the network established through the EMILIA project (the network was set up as a mediated service for the training participants). The participants said the training intervention was relevant and responsive to their
needs and as well aided their social integration. Despite a reported ‘noticeable’ improvement in the participants’ social life – e.g. new social contacts, continuous opportunity to meet other people, and so on – difficulties in social relationships remained; such difficulties include a lack of self-confidence. Also, there were problems with ‘family relationship’ even after 10 month follow-up.

At the beginning of the training intervention, mental health service user participants described their quality of life as ‘bad’, ‘average’ or ‘satisfactory.’ However, at 10 months, the participants rated their quality of life ‘good’ or ‘improved’. Factors associated with ‘good’ or ‘improved’ quality of life include financial security, having meaningful activities and employment. The participants also reported a greater self-confidence and motivation for further learning. However, the participants recognized that their mental illness lead to a deterioration in the quality of life: it distracted concentration and, in some cases, impeded participation in training.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Social inclusion and empowerment of people from particularly disadvantaged groups such as those recovering from severe mental illness and mental health service users in general remain a priority in the European social policy agenda. There is a justifiable choice of lifelong learning as a means for achieving the social inclusion and empowerment of service users in all the eight case study countries examined in this study. This study finds that EMILIA lifelong learning training intervention provided a change in the life of mental health service users such as an increase in employment among the training participants. Our results support previous studies (e.g. Jackson, 2006) which found that lifelong learning can serve to redefine an individual student’s relationship with learning so that they see it as a positive tool and as an important part of their lives. Participants in this study see learning as a meaningful activity which ‘helps ignite the forces that fuel [mental health] recovery processes and [which] provides opportunities for developing necessary competencies’ (Green, 2004, p. 302). While the mental health problems have not disappeared, these have diminished in terms of impact on the mental health service users’ ability to expand their social network, training and work. As one of the study participants concluded: ‘the most important thing is to get people out from their homes, away from musing their illness, shame … to get them to learn something new, to hear something new...’.

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Many of the finest artists are in their seventies and older. Different kinds of organisations - official, public and voluntary - are developing arts learning opportunities for senior citizens. As a result, arts of all kinds are maintaining and developing the mental and physical wellbeing of older people, as practitioners or as audiences. This fact has significant implications for government policies. In the UK policies have been too narrowly vocational. There is widespread support for a contrary view: arts improve life’s quality, and money spent on learning for and about the arts would for example reduce the cost of care homes and medical treatments. A recent election has produced a new government, so that aspect of the future is unknown.
'Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.'

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 27, (1948).

INTRODUCTION: THE DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT AND THE KEY TERMS

It is only two generations or so ago that older people, once they retired, were routinely described as ‘past it’. That negative stereotype about ageing persists to some extent (sometimes made worse by sexism). The biggest difference in current times is the demographic transformation throughout Europe and internationally. In the UK for example, this dramatic shift means that there are now more people of retirement age than schoolchildren; by 2071 there could be nearly 21.3 million people over 65 in the UK, double the present number. It is no longer unusual to be 80 and over. By 2071, there could be 9.5 million in that age group.

The less obvious good news is that older people are not just more numerous. They are becoming more and more creative. Indeed, neuroscientists such as Prof. John Gruzelier (UK) and the American psychiatrist, the late Gene D. Cohen, now confirm that the human brain’s capacity for creativity actually increases with age (see Gruzelier and Cohen, 2005). Creativity may express itself in various ways such as active citizenship, inventiveness, and relishing the arts.

This article focuses on older people and the arts, recognising that the term ‘Capacity’ refers to potential, and it reviews the factors facilitating or inhibiting that potential’s release. As well as Capacity and Creativity, the other key terms in this article are Opportunity, Learning, and Wellbeing. The potential of age and experience is already very evident among professional artists, in almost all media, art forms and genres. There were of course great artists in the past who were creative in old age (Haydn and Verdi come to mind), but there are many more of them now: staying with music evokes such names as the American Elliott Carter, (b. 1908) still composing highly original music, or the Italian modernist Luciano Berio (1925 - 2003) who composed to the end of his life or, say, the active orchestral conductor Sir Charles Mackerras (born 1925).

Here is another example, this time from drama: in 2009, the BBC started transmitting performances at the National Theatre in London last year to many locations round the world. They showed the NT’s production of Racine’s play Phedre, in a new translation. Phedre herself was well played by the celebrated Helen Mirren (born 1945), but the most impressive performance was by Margaret Tyzack in a more complex role - the conspiratorial nurse, Oenone. Tyzack was 78 (born 1931).

I now turn to the prospects for older people in general, not professionals earning a living as artists. An increasing number of older people are interested in the arts, wanting to take part in them, and learn more about them - either they are or want to be artists or they like going to theatres, concerts and art galleries, or reading novels. As well as the obvious arts - music, visual arts, poetry, pottery, fiction, memoirs, other forms of literature, photography and cinema, video games, architecture - ‘art’ also includes many other crafts (e. g. quilting) and raising everyday activities to a new level such as cookery or making a garden more beautiful.

Older people’s arts, and the kinds of benefit they produce, will be reviewed in a range of different situations. The article then notes the ambiguous position of recent UK governments, reports relevant academic research, both published and in progress, and concludes by welcoming more international cooperation on this positive theme.

RESCUED FOR ART THROUGH OPPORTUNITY

The groups of elderly performers introduced in this chapter demonstrate in an exceptionally dramatic way how important opportunity can be: these groups are The Zimmers (UK), Young@Heart (USA) and K - 70 (Finland).

The Zimmers were seniors who had led harrowing and boring lives, badly treated in care homes, feeling isolated and trapped at the top of a tower block of flats, going regularly to a Bingo parlour - which then closed down. They had been sought out and rescued from such negative environments by an imaginative television producer Tim Samuels. Supported by a committed production team who, like him, had elderly relatives, Samuels took this group of senior citizens on what he called ‘a rock ‘n’ roll journey that would challenge all our preconceptions of OAPs (old age pensioners) and give them a great time’. Their provocative name comes from the Zimmer frame which helps frail elderly to walk. They sang together and were then good and lively enough to record a cover version of The Who’s My Generation, and even to do so in the same Abbey Road studios used by the Beatles. The lead singer, 90-year-old Alf Carretta, said: ‘For me to have recorded a song in the same studio as the Beatles is just so exciting... I feel like the whole experience has brought me back to life. I was stuck in a rut and now I feel alive again’. Another member, Winifred Warburton (a centenarian) reckoned that day in 2007 was ‘The best day in my life’. 
The Zimmers’ story was told in a BBC television series, Power To The People (BBC 2, 2007), after which the group went on to make best-selling discs (the profits going to relevant charities). Millions of people across the world now know about this 40 - 50-strong band and chorus. The Zimmers were unlikely to have become creative or interested in the arts if that extraordinary opportunity had not come their way.

The American group Young@Heart is a rock chorus with an average age of over 80. They were originally residents in an elderly housing project in Northampton, Massachusetts (their website tells the story and announces their current engagements). When Young@Heart came to the UK a few years ago, they astonished London theatre audiences, especially when 93-year-old Eileen Hall stepped up to the microphone and yelled out the opening lyrics to ‘Should I Stay Or Should I Go?’ by The Clash. Summing up his review Michael Billington, a respected theatre critic, wrote: ‘The heartening thing about this show is that it takes age out of the twilight zone and puts it back centre stage’.

K - 70² is an award-winning rock group made famous (notorious?) by two Finnish musicians working with a dozen or more men and women over 70. They appeared on the television channel MTV3, singing songs by composers as different as the Carpenters, Jimi Hendrix, and many others.

It is important to remember the Zimmers’ earlier lives - a reminder of the negative effects of bad living conditions. It might not even have occurred to the group members that they have such creative and learning potential.

Lifelong learning enthusiasts may sometimes forget the damage done by poor environments, though it was seen many years ago by the pioneering French adult educationist, Paul Lengrand. He devised the concept of Lifelong Education (LLE) for UNESCO, but he did not assume that LLE was for all, just like that. Circumstances could be adverse:

Undeniably, the basic conditions of life, a lack of sufficient income and inadequate or unhealthy housing are often insurmountable obstacles to the growth of the individual… It is essential to realise this...to see the limits of educational action and to place it in the framework of other efforts to improve the human condition...

Providing such physical and financial difficulties were resolved, Lengrand was an enthusiast for everyone’s creative potential:

The proper function of education is to enable each person (so far as the conditions and circumstances of life permit) not to live by delegation - for instance by leaving ‘poetic’ activities to the poet, by letting the thinker think for him and the politician judge and decide for him. It is about enabling people to make the world their own, not to be strangers in it. This is one of the fundamental goals of lifelong education.

Lifelong Learning is the term now preferred to Lifelong Education, recognising that individuals and groups can learn together and to a greater or lesser extent, teach each other, and learn in other ways.

I shall continue in the positive spirit of the lively Zimmers, but then refer to the minority for whom Zimmer frames would be no joke.

Those key terms Capacity, Creativity, Opportunity, Learning and Wellbeing underlie the whole case argued in this article.

ARTS ACTIVITIES FLOURISHING

Providing adult learning opportunities for the arts (and much else) is, of course, a major responsibility for the statutory public education system, but in the UK this has been a policy area of considerable difficulty and controversy. I shall return to this issue, but start now with illustrations of how older people benefit from the arts, and the arts themselves benefit from older people, with credit to numerous organisations dedicated to this cause, locally, regionally, nationally and on-line.

In the UK, the University of the Third Age (the U3A) is one of the best known examples of this kind of creative self-help. They were originally inspired by the French Université du Troisieme Age, the model which also inspired the U3As in 35 Czech Universities.

British universities, unlike the French, had already been active in adult education for over a century, so after much discussion it was decided to make the U3As mutual aid groups. They study and practice a very wide range of subjects.

A lively history of the U3A, 500 Beacons: the U3A story, published in 2004, was written by a co-founder, Eric Midwinter. That was a rash title - the movement is so lively and thriving that the number was soon out of date. By January 2010, the ‘beacons’ had increased in number to 742. They were all proud of their independence, but they co-operated in many ways and had a national organisation, the Third Age Trust, to support their interests.

This British model has also been adopted in other parts of the world, and the two styles co-operate constructively through the International Association of Universities of the Third Age (Association International des Universites du Troisieme Age).

The U3As’ national movement gives members opportunities to help each other at summer schools and other col-
lective events. Three times a year, the Trust produces Sources, an educational bulletin, enabling separate groups and individuals to learn from each other, improving their standards as it does so. Issue 31 (June 2007) for example, is about music - of all kinds. It opens with a quotation from the provocative playwright George Bernard Shaw: ‘Music is the brandy of the damned’, followed by varied 24 items, such as Singing and Music Making, Musical Composition, French Song, Vintage Brass, Passion for Opera, and All That Jazz.

U3As in the UK vary in size considerably, but they all promote learning about the arts, for participation and appreciation. The rapidly expanding U3A in Richmond upon Thames, for example, lists 60 separate activities for its 673 members, at least 22 of them to do with the arts (the others deal with languages, philosophy, science and mathematics, plus social and historical topics). Computer art, Listening to Music and others are run by members who happen also to be professionals, but that is not typical.

The companionable atmosphere helps many members to start, in a phrase borrowed from a British (professional) playwright, to ‘discover their voice’ for the first time ever. One Richmond member (Edna Ansdel), for example, took up photography when she was over 70 and her husband died. She says this new interest ‘ticked all the boxes for her’ in terms of health, interest, skills acquired - including computer literacy - and social life. For three years running she was a finalist in a national Over 60s Art competition, exhibited in the central London Bankside Gallery.

There are many other organisations with similar values. Take ‘The 3LLLs’ for example, based on the Wirral in Northwest England. The name stands for ‘Learning in Later Life’, but its members say it really means ‘Leisure - Laughter - Learning for the over 50s’. It has 11,000 members and is mostly run by volunteers. As well as courses at different levels on English literature, oil/acrylic painting, creative writing and other familiar arts, there are less predictable opportunities, e.g. to learn or get better at calligraphy, line dancing, or patchwork and quilting. Social outings for the end of 2007 included going to (third ager, former Beatle) Paul McCartney’s Liverpool Oratorio in Liverpool Cathedral and a visit to the Tutankhamen Exhibition in London. Even though not everyone on the Wirral is aware yet of the 3LLLs, its director is right to claim it is ‘a tremendous asset to our local population’.

Amateur-run arts initiatives

So far the organisations mentioned are involved in several arts, but there are also many flourishing organisations run by and for amateurs interested in specific arts. Their members (usually adults of all ages) are learning all the time, more obviously in some arts than others - drama and music groups for example, and there are many organisations providing support for them.

The scale of activity became clearer recently (2008) when the UK Government’s Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the state-funded Arts Council England published a significant report, ‘Our Creative Talent: the voluntary and amateur arts in England’. It showed that the largest age group out of nearly 6 million individuals is aged 45–64; the next largest (65–74) has 1,129,000 young-old members and there are 364,000 aged 75 and over.

Another table shows how many of those older people are involved in specific arts. Take music, for example. Out of 1,642,000 members, 452,000 are aged 65 and over (27%). Two chapters in the report deal with learning opportunities and their availability.

The research and this report were largely prompted by the Voluntary Arts Network, which lobbied successfully for it. VAN regularly publishes online newsletters with information of value to voluntary groups in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland (Northern and the Republic) wanting or needing to know what is happening of interest in their field - information on festivals, government policies, learning and training opportunities, and specific events. It uses the term ‘voluntary’ in its title because ‘amateur’ - non-professional, not financially rewarded - is easily confused with ‘amateurish’ - clumsy, poor quality.

Our Creative Talent (OCT) was not launched in a conventional manner, e.g. on stage for a couple of hours: the launch lasted two whole days. It brought VAN members together with staff of the Arts Council England to confer face-to-face with Cabinet ministers from several government departments, in a programme enlivened by voluntary artists of all ages. Primary school children played rhythmically complex riffs on African Djembe drums, a senior citizen improvised a story for our entertainment, eight young women sang madrigals with flair and delicacy, a trombonist, whose ‘day job’ was a voluntary arts champion, performed with real stage presence, and a tableful of academic experts foresaw possible futures, especially a militant, demographically-aware, adult education professor (John Benyon, University of Leicester) who pushed hard for humane reforms to policy and practice.

Professional and commercial arts initiatives

Professional and some commercial arts organisations are themselves providing learning opportunities for the public, including some cases especially for older people. London is famous for its
summer season of BBC’s Promenade Concerts in the Royal Albert Hall. For an hour or so before a concert begins, members of the audience of any age can attend a lecture about the programme at the nearby Royal College of Arts, run by a performer or other acknowledged expert.

A member of this author’s LLinE conference workshop, Pirjo Halla (District Principal responsible for a group of adult education centres in east Helsinki), described another orchestral project. It was initiated by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra in 2000, the year when Helsinki celebrated its 450th anniversary. The HPO decided to ‘adopt’ all the babies born in the city that year! They were sent a CD called Nallekarhu konsertissa (Teddybear goes to concert). These ‘godchildren’ and their mothers were invited to many special concerts of the orchestra. A representative of the orchestra has since told me more about the results which were astonishing. About 5% of the Helsinki population normally attend classical music concerts regularly, and yet members of 4,500 families (75% of Helsinki families with a new-born baby in 2000) had accepted the invitation; many people who had never been to a classical music concert before began to attend. The project lasted until the children were of school age (7 years old in Finland). The opening work in the series was Opus Number Zoo by Luciano Berio and the last was the exuberant March from Sibelius’s Karelia Suite. Had any grandparents had been involved? The answer was that a good many had enjoyed doing so. There is an early account of this venture in LLinE 2/2003.

As well as being intergenerational, this orchestral project is an example of audience development, the kind of learning promoted in the UK by Audiences London.

Audiences London (AL) is an organisation for museums, theatres, galleries and other arts venues, with staff whose job is to develop audiences (going beyond ordinary marketing). AL saw that as the population was ageing they needed to consider whether more could or should be done for and with older people in particular. The result: the professionals were themselves learning so that they could enable older people to learn in new ways.

On October 1, 2009 (International Older People’s Day), Audiences London ran a symposium: Bolder and Wiser - Older People and Culture. The hall was packed with administrators from all over the country keen to learn about this development from some of the London arts promoters with experience. To give one example from several: a speaker from Sadler’s Wells, a theatre famous for its ballet productions described a new strand in its work, with non-professional older people performing (most of them never having done so before) in ballets specially choreographed for older people to perform well in public, despite having lost much or most of their physical flexibility.

There were workshops providing other specific insights. Two of the invited experts were from the U3A, both experienced organisers of Shared Learning Projects, seen to be a scheme that could be adapted with Audiences London’s aims in mind. These projects encourage a team of older learners to study for example specific objects in a museum gallery, and then sharing what each of them has learned. This has led to opportunities for hard-pressed curators to give some older people enough background information to provide better and updated labelling for the exhibits, or even undertake original research.

To learn in old age how to follow a choreographer and producer to perform a ballet well in public, requires a certain level of fitness. There are many older people not in such a fortunate position.

INTERGENERATIONAL WORK

The two-day OCT event and the Helsinki Orchestra’s anniversary project were both notable because they involved people of different ages. Intergenerational activity even recently prompted the Educational Centres Association to change its constitution: it can now promote developments with very different generations together, especially the oldest and youngest. (The ECA is a publicly funded adult learning organisation in Britain which - though less comprehensively than the U3A - involves students in the democratic management of its member centres.)

The ECA was one of the enterprising organisations which ran an international ‘Teddy Bear’ project (sharing the name with the Helsinki orchestra was an understandable coincidence) bringing older people together with children, sometimes to enjoy arts and crafts together. The project went so well that it was selected as one of the best at the Grundtvig programme’s tenth anniversary celebrations in Brussels (January 2010).

Three of the Teddy Bear’s prime movers, Fabio Della Pietra from Italy, Bernhard Godding and Paul Olver from the UK, contributed an article to LLinE 4/2009, ‘Grundtvig supports Teddy Bears - transforming an ageing society’. They report what happened in Britain, Italy and Finland and how the project gradually involved wider and wider groups from the community belonging to different age groups. I personally saw it in action by joining in the project at the Sastamala College in Southwest Finland (with students aged 4–98).

Teddy Bear activities continue; the initiators are no longer leading it, but
they are still joining in. The LLinE article makes this point in the final paragraph:

‘For the elderly people involved it was significant to acknowledge their own value as persons and citizens who are active in the community, still having the chance to demonstrate their capacities and personal contributions to be offered with dignity and competence.’

**ARTS, HEALTH AND ILL-HEALTH**

‘Keep the doctor away… Join the U3A!’

The U3A couplet is not shallow optimism: there is increasing medical evidence that being involved in the arts is, directly or indirectly, good for health and wellbeing. I take an everyday example from singing (an art that is more physical and breathing-centred than most): many of us know that you can go to choir practice exhausted at the end of a busy day, and leave feeling fit and alert.

Singing can even help people who are seriously handicapped by dementia. BBC television recently featured a choir whose members belonged to an organisation in Bristol, a choir called Singing for the Brain. The Alzheimer’s Society has set up about 30 local Singing for the Brain branches, bringing dementia patients together with their carers - often their spouses whom they love being with, even though they cannot remember who they are. They enjoy themselves, using that part of the brain which gives us our musical memory.

The freelance voice coach involved in the Bristol project is impressed by the chance to demonstrate their capacities and personal contributions to be offered with dignity and competence.

A groundbreaking University of London PhD thesis by the late Sidney Jones, (a professional further education administrator who also became a pioneer of the U3A), ‘Learning and Meta-Learning with Special Reference to Education for the Elders’, related what was then an extraordinary story of a woman, aged 102, suffering from ‘dementia proper’. She was encouraged to start doing ‘music and movement’. After eight weeks she was able to wash her hands and face; but she was still incontinent of urine. By week 19, she was continent. These changes were not due solely to the music and movement, but they were the main cause (Jones, 1982).

Whereas many hospitals are austere and functional in their architecture, there are some which show that art can also have a kind of therapeutic effect when it is used to decorate their public spaces. The West Middlesex Hospital for example welcomes everybody into a space with murals for everyone, 3D objects to please children, and a mobile sculpture hanging from the ceiling of the religious centre. Further on from the reception area the walls, for example, have paintings by David Hockney, one of Britain’s most talented elderly artists. Another wall has informative wall hangings by local third age quilters.

**UK GOVERNMENT, ARTS AND LEARNING**

As I write, there has just been a general election in the UK unlike any other since 1945. Only a few EU states have an electoral system like the UK’s, but most are having to solve financial problems, affecting most policies. So the UK story should be worth telling.

All parties were aware of the urgency of Britain’s economic crisis, but it was the Conservative Party which won more seats and votes than any other. However, it only won a minority of seats in Parliament. They formed a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. It cannot be clear yet how policies relating to the arts and to older people will develop, but it is possible to indicate which policies of the three previous Labour governments would be worth maintaining and which need to be reformed.

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education’s prime concern is with funding for the provision of adult learning opportunities through publicly funded educational bodies. NIACE immediately published a statement, ‘Lifelong learning crucial to sustained recovery’, by its Chief Executive, Alan Tuckett. ‘Welcoming the new coalition Government’ he acknowledges that ‘the new government faces big challenges in steering Britain through to a sustained recovery from recession while promoting social justice and active citizenship.

‘Lifelong learning has an under-exploited part to play in this - and
NIACE looks forward to assisting, not only the new ministerial team, but also the parliamentarians of all parties who scrutinise the government’s work. Public spending on education and training must be used to best effect, to widen participation to those adults who benefited least from their initial education as well as raising productivity’.

‘Underexploited’ indeed. In recent years resources have only been readily available for vocational education (narrowly defined) or on first steps provision for specific disadvantaged groups; steadily reducing funds have been available for other essentials, to the protesting dismay of colleges, adult education bodies as well as the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education itself.

Several successive Secretaries of State have been responsible for this area of education. The worst of them said it was more important to train plumbers than promote Pilates (in practice, it became evident that - using that same alliterative rhetoric - courses in poetry, philosophy, physics and political theory also suffered and the numbers and proportions of older students fell alarmingly).

Not all the senior ministers were so philistine; they made genuine efforts in prolonged consultation with representatives of the field to develop enlightened policies - but they remained unimplemented. One of these more thoughtful education ministers appreciated that learning was also the responsibility of other government departments such as the armed forces, even prisons. However, the problems of interdepartmental funding became an excuse for cutting provision by pointing out that some other department should provide the money.

Under the new regime, it is still highly relevant to point out, as NIACE has done consistently in recent years, that the price of just one week of residential care for an older person can easily cover the costs of teaching a widowed husband to cook. ‘That could keep him out of residential care for years’. It has certainly not yet been accepted in practice that money spent, say, on arts for older people would on balance actually save much larger sums spent on their health and care.

This serious failure of the statutory system is one cause (but by no means the main one) of the continuous growth of organisations such as the U3A and the 3LLLs, reported above. To be fair, some state or local authority organisations did manage to find ways of providing a wide range of courses; and though locally available university extra-mural courses have vanished, many universities offer part-time opportunities to study the arts for diplomas and degrees and older people are encouraged to sign on. Even some local adult education centres still provide such courses, although fees were raised beyond the reach of many people, including many older enthusiasts. The main story was bad however: over 1.4 million places were lost over the last three years, severely reducing the number of older people in the statutory public system.

NIACE also saw that it was time to publish a study on adult education which examined its fundamental importance to society. The result was Learning Through Life, the major study by Tom Schuller and David Watson, featured by Prof. Watson in the opening plenary of the LLinE conference and in this issue (Schuller and Watson, 2009).

UK GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT: RESEARCH

It is important - in the interest of fairness and objectivity, but also with an eye on future government policies - to acknowledge that there are other matters relevant to the arts and older people which have benefited, directly and indirectly, from enlightened support from the very same government which perversely starved adult learning courses.

Here are two important examples:

(1) The ambitious UK Government FORESIGHT research project, Mental Capital and Wellbeing, and (2) the directly relevant New Dynamics of Ageing research programme, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council et al.

(1) FORESIGHT research is commissioned by the UK government and undertaken by independent scholars who do not concern themselves directly with the detail of governance. Mental Capital and Wellbeing is its most ambitious project yet (previous FORESIGHT reports focus on specifics such as obesity or floods). MCW is a many-sided examination of aspects of the whole life cycle. As many as four hundred scientists in several countries were consulted (MCW, 2008).

The MCW report provides a (somewhat ungrammatical but) useful definition of Wellbeing:

‘Mental wellbeing… is a dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to their community. It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society [my italics]’.

MCW deals with the whole lifespan, but soon after that definition there are key references to older people, concerned with conditions such as dementia, but also, on the other hand, expressing a positive interest in the capacity of older people to make their own lives better and to benefit society:
‘Many important factors will affect the country over the next 20 years and beyond. Some will make demands on our mental capital, requiring new skills and expertise. Some will create substantial threats to our mental health and wellbeing. And some will offer new opportunities for people to develop and flourish’.

It is already clear that, as MCW observes, ‘our concept of what constitutes ‘old age’ will change, and notions of ‘career’ and ‘retirement’ will shift in response to longer working lives’.

These shifts make it very important for governments to address the massive under-utilisation of the mental capital of older adults, and think how to reverse the continued negative stereotyping of older age. ‘Achieving these would benefit everyone: older people themselves, business, and the rest of society. However, failure could result in a spiral of poor wellbeing, mental ill health and exclusion; and disenchantment in this large and growing sector of the population’.

MCW recognises that ‘Dementia will be a major problem [with] a substantial and increasing impact on individuals, carers and families. Over the next 30 years in the UK, the number of people affected could double to 1.4 million, and the annual cost to the economy could treble to over £50 billion’.

In principle, a humane philosophy could reinforce governmental concern with costs. Hence, MCW’s approach underlies the specific theme of older people, the arts, learning and wellbeing.

(2) Senior citizens and the arts is a main theme of the latest instalment of the New Dynamics of Ageing programme (NDA). Five of the 12 most recently grant-aided multidisciplinary projects are dealing with older people’s involvement in specific arts: theatre, music, visual arts and fiction. They should make a major - and overdue - contribution to our understanding, especially welcome as all the scholars involved make it clear that they want their work to have practical consequences as well as contribute to the literature (they have authorised the use of their email addresses in the references below so that they can be contacted).

These investigations are outlined on the NDA website. Here are their titles with a brief indication of their expected outcomes:

- Ages and Stages: The Place of Theatre in Representations and Recollections of Ageing, based on the experience of a community-minded theatre in the Midlands. In the final year, there is to be an international conference on the theme.
- Promoting Social Engagement and Well-Being in Older People through Community Supported Participation in Musical Activities, with case studies of an arts centre, a ‘Silver Programme’ for older people (including steel pans and African drumming) at a major advanced London School of Music & Drama, and a Westminster Adult Education Centre, with a special Music Department.
- Contemporary Visual Art and Identity Construction – Wellbeing Among Older People. The expected outcomes include improved understanding of older people’s needs by policy makers and art gallery/museum/heritage practitioners.
- Fiction and Cultural Mediation of Ageing. Practical outcomes are meant to include improved ways of bringing together reading group members with writers and policymakers in a series of public events. The national Third Age Trust, and seven U3A volunteer reading groups will be involved, with professionals such as the novelist David Lodge, author of the recent Deaf Sentence.
- Representing Self – Representing Ageing, partly inspired by the Second World Assembly on Ageing (2003) which ‘recognised a need to challenge stereotyped images of ageing and later life, particularly those related to older women’. This project will work with so-called ‘ordinary’ women to react to stereotyping images and create some images of their own on ageing and old age. It is hoped that these papers will be of interest in other countries and encourage more research and co-operative activities with the organisations and participants who share the same interests.

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN AN ESPECIALLY GOOD CAUSE

In the spirit of the LLInE conference, there is much to be gained through such research internationally and through mutual learning. There are formal agreements about the wellbeing of older people which may still need to be invoked in the UK, and probably other countries as well, where governments do not always sufficiently implement their visions for lifelong learning. Political persuasion is increasingly needed as the proportion of older people increases so dramatically. Fortunately, in Britain they tend to be more conscientious about voting in elections.

Apart from maintaining formal pressure and dialogue on these matters in all our countries, it is to be hoped that activists and others across Europe and beyond may learn from each other through such channels as the EU, the Council of Europe, and UNESCO; the International Association of U3As, and such voluntary organisations as EAEA (the European Association for the Edu-
cation of Adults), and AGE (the European Older People’s Platform).

Just as the increasing numbers of older people will play their part in protecting the environment and making society work more effectively, many whose lives are comparatively near completion will be particularly keen to benefit themselves and others through an often unexpected relish and capacity for creativity.

It is incredible that many public and professional people, as well as senior citizens themselves, still expect old age to be a time of withering, not of growth. The evidence-based alternative message must be proclaimed loud and clear!

ENDNOTES
1. See www.ib-cr.com/zimmers
2. See http://www.youngatheartchorus.com/
3. See www.mtv3.fi/k70

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The validation of formal and informal learning has been practiced in French-speaking Belgium for several years, via the mechanisms known as Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (RNF-IFL) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL). These credits contribute in the fullest way possible to the political project for the development of society based on knowledge and lifelong learning. Actors involved in the validation process must deal with a more and more fragmented knowledge. Further, the abovementioned mechanisms of validation are related to many questions, involving identity, methodology, and strategic and sociopolitical matters, all of which are touched upon in the present article.
INTRODUCTION
The notion of lifelong learning is at the center of the discussion on education ongoing in many international organizations (UNESCO, OECD, EU, etc.). This notion replaced other concepts, such as that of permanent or continuing education, which raised hopes during the 1970s. The overarching message of lifelong learning bears upon a social project based on the harmonization of the social, economic and personal development of individuals through access to knowledge. The idea is that this development of individuals will lead to economic progress for the entire society. The declaration of the Lisbon Summit, stating that a competitive European economy must be knowledge-based, shares the same objective. In addition, synergy between businesses and the world of job training is strongly encouraged by this political project (Merle, 2006; Olry & Parage, 2008). The societal responsibility of businesses must contribute to this objective by encouraging best practices in the area of continuing education, the organization of work, the equality of opportunity, social inclusion, and sustainable development.

More concretely, the social project of lifelong learning has two objectives: (1) to give some people a second chance, by validating formal and informal learning outside the conventional school system; (2) to encourage people to refresh and update their knowledge of various matters in a fast-changing world, especially by making access to training easier.

This very positive message and the values of social development and progress upon which it touches are sure to be approved by everyone. Nonetheless, beneath every social project, the process of implementation and the practices to which the project gives rise may reveal certain ambiguities. Over and above the discourse, it is important to observe the application of a new concept of educational and training systems, according to which access to and recognition of knowledge and learning must be set free from constraints that are linked to the age of learners or the context of their acquisition of particular knowledge (see especially Mahieu and Moens, 2003). Especially Verdier (2008) emphasizes that European policy in the area of education and lifelong learning/training is not to reach a convergence of national models, but rather an effort toward a normative framework that provides a lot of space for interpretation on the part of national, sectoral and regional actors.

The year 2010 is a well-established target date for seeing the first concrete effects of the implementation of European policy in the area of employment and training. We shall see to what extent the experience of French-speaking Belgium can contribute to this goal. In this article a quick review of institutional frameworks is necessary first so that readers can understand the role of various levels of authority that share responsibility for the implementation of policy regarding education and training in Belgium. Then the experience of French-speaking Belgium with regard to the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning will be presented. In the light of this experience, the discussion will point out ambiguities in the social project that is at stake in the concept of lifelong learning. Note that this paper will focus on the validation of life experience only, as it is the cornerstone of lifelong learning policy. Indeed, in order to move from one learning context to another, people need to see their previous learning credited by the successive training operators. Also, the validation of life experience contributes to make access to training easier, which is the other major lifelong learning issue.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK
Belgium is a federal state. Various reforms of the state that have been carried out in the last 40 years have gradually redistributed political responsibility over various levels of authority, giving lower levels more autonomy. In Belgium today there are five levels of governance: federal, regional (Walloon, Brussels-Capital and Flemish Regions), linguistic community (French-speaking, Flemish-speaking, and German-speaking communities), provincial and communal. The notion of lifelong learning can thus be implemented through policies supported at the federal level (which has retained some nation-wide power over employment policy), but especially at the regional level (regions exercise authority with regard to employment and training) and the level of communities (communities have powers for all issues based on the language and personal matters. So they have power to regulate the systems of instruction). Provinces and communes that -in addition to their own areas of authority- have set up the organization of part of the systems of instruction and training in their own territories, may have the ability, in some cases, to implement lifelong learning policies.
Many European countries participate actively in the implementation of the European framework for certifications, through greater use of learning acquired in life experience in the definition and description of certifications, and through the validation of non-formal and informal learning (Commission, 2009). In the field of LLL in Belgium, we focus on Recognition and Validation of Non-formal and Informal learning in this article as Belgium is one of the European countries where experience recognition or validation is a reality for individuals (Cedefop, 2008). This is because the Belgian legal and administrative framework is operational and open to everybody, even though the practice is not widely well known (CDVC, 2009).

There are two principal structures that allow recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning in French-speaking Belgium: Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (RNF-IFL) (in French, Valorisation des Acquis de l’Expérience - VAE) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) (in French, Validation des compétences professionnelles - VC)

Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (RNF-IFL)

RNF-IFL gives adults the opportunity to undertake university studies by crediting knowledge gained through their life experiences. Any adult who does not have a Bachelor diploma (level 6 within European Qualification Framework) but who has at least 5 years of professional and personal experience in an area that is deemed useful (valuable) can be admitted to a Master program (level 7). RNF-IFL also allows these adults to obtain exemptions from various courses in the Bachelor and Master cycle programs. The life experience claimed by an individual is evaluated by a jury whose members belong to the program to which the adult wishes to apply. The jury decides if the individual’s experience is indeed ‘useful’ in terms of program requirements and if the knowledge so gained is really sufficient for the individual to succeed in the program applied to (de Viron & Salmon, 2008).

Chronologically, the first administrative appearance of the RNF-IFL in the universities of the French-speaking community occurs in a Decree from 1994. This Decree authorized the recognition of life experience as the basis for exemption from or admission to about 15 programs. Prior to that, two faculties had already arranged their admission process to recognize experience in conjunction with an entrance exam (de Viron, 2008). A Decree of March 31, 2004 made the RNF-IFL a generalized practice for all university-level diplomas – subject to the limitations just described above, as well as for certificate programs and programs awarding ECTS credits – but excluding programs that granted diplomas that conferred certification in the sense of a legal/professional title (diplomas conferring so-called ‘effets de droit’).

Thus the RNF-IFL is intended for people who want to return to school to study subjects that they have already partly mastered through their experience. Individuals can take advantage of the mechanism in two ways: by being granted admission to Master programs on the basis of experience, or by being granted exemption from requirements in first or second-cycle programs on the same basis. However, the Decree that administratively established the RNF-IFL in French-speaking Belgium is vague regarding the elements of experience that can be credited and their evaluation (Berlemont, Gabric & Thiry, 2005), leaving the establishment of an appropriate method for evaluation to the responsibility of universities. Program juries have full authority in the matter of RNF-IFL, something that presents certain advantages. We would mention for example equality of treatment and uniformity in criteria of evaluation, since it is the same jury that evaluates ‘traditional’ students (and their normal sequences of course) as well as the life experiences of non-traditional students through RNF-IFL – and this process induces juries to act responsibly (since they are involved in every step, from the admission procedure to the final evaluation). In addition, universities implement RNF-IFL independently, without consultation with other organisms (de Viron, 2008), which distinguishes Belgium from other countries such as France, where more actors are involved in the process.

In order to harmonize the process, universities established an inter-university platform for RNF-IFL in 2008. This platform had the objective of informing the public about the RNF-IFL procedure, making sure that candidates were all treated equally by the way of an harmonization of procedures, promoting exchanges regarding practices between universities, playing the role of interface between the academic world and external organisms, constructing an observatory for RNF-IFL and coordinating the progress of this new way of going to university (de Viron & Salmon, 2008). Eleven RNF-IFL counselors, three project managers and one coordinator were put to work running the platform. Universities could use the platform to develop a common discourse and to have access to better adapted tools for attaining their objectives with regard to RNF-IFL. It should be emphasized that this initiative was not only original within Belgium, but in Europe itself (de Viron, 2009).

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

In 2003, a joint Decree of the Walloon Region and the French-speaking com-
munity established a so-called Consortium de Validation des Compétences bringing together five training agencies: the Forem (public training in Wallonia), its equivalent in the Brussels Region (Bruxelles-formation), the Espace formation PME - Brussels (EFPME – job training for small and medium sized businesses), the Institut Wallon de Formation en Alternance et des Intépédants et des PME (IFAPME – same function) and the Social Promotion Education.

APEL must allow individuals not only to receive exemptions in the framework of later training (non-university type instruction) but also must facilitate official recognition of skills for persons who have some professional/occupational experience (gained through training or on the job). From this point, public employment agencies and their social partners are involved in the effort along with the five training agencies: they help determine the occupations for which experiential validation is to be set up in terms of priorities, and help define points of reference for skill assessment and the testing that may correspond to it. At the conclusion of testing, a candidate who has successfully demonstrated skills in a given occupation is recognized by being awarded one or more Titres de compétences (certification of skill). A Titre de compétences does not confer rights or privileges in the manner of a diploma, as discussed above, but is awarded in terms of the following principle:

…it is characterized by an effect of publicity, to the extent that it has been endorsed by socio-economic actors with regard to negotiated effects, and to the extent that social partners can use it as a reference in the framework of negotiations that are part of the Collective Labor Agreements (CESRW, 2002, p. 6).

ARE THE VALIDATION SYSTEMS WORKING?

After several years of operation of these validation systems, a number of observations can be made. In practice, the Titres de compétences have still not been made part of the Collective Labor Agreements, which means that they do not confer any collective-based advantage in the working place nor in employment policy. Up to the present their effects are results of individual agreements only. Also, the Consortium de Validation des Compétences is carrying on negotiations with certain collective actors that could help it reach greater effectiveness on a collective basis and ensure equity in the treatment of people with the same Titres de compétences. On the contrary, in training issues the recognition of the Titres de compétences and the exemptions they provide in training programs has become more homogeneous, and more institutionally-based.

We have observed as well that most candidates for APEL are job-seekers (CDVC, 2009), although the intent of the law establishing the program was focused on a wider public (workers and job-seekers). Following this, a strategic memorandum was circulated noting that the number of requests for APEL was still too small (1402 tests administered between 2005 and 2008, including more than 840 during 2007–2008) and far below targets. At the same time, the memorandum observes that the number of programs for which APEL is available is also under target. Thus, at the end of 2008 the Consortium offered certification in 37 mainly technical occupations in which a shortage of available workers had been identified. These were grouped into 11 categories: administrative work (accounting assistant, administrative aide, etc.), food service (worker for confectioner or baker, meat cutting and counter help for butcher shop), automotive (maintenance technician, mechanic), chemical industry (production line in plastics making), construction (laying flooring, making molds and forms, masonry work), culture (assistant backstage technician), non-commercial work (maid service), green jobs (climber, tree trimmer), technical work (repair of automatic machines, sheet metal worker) and personal service (hair stylist).

BEYOND DEFINITIONS: PRACTICES AND ISSUES

Over and above the weight of European definitions based on a central notion - that of lifelong learning - this separation into two different systems in French-speaking Belgium illustrates the fact that the development of policy with regard to education and training remains even today dependent upon structures and dynamics that are territorially-based. Thus the creation of a Consortium de validation des compétences which involves the main public agencies on one hand and a platform for the validation of life experience involving the nine universities in the French-speaking Community on the other is not just the result of a division between actors acting at different levels of qualification. In fact, RNF-IFL and APEL are different in several ways, especially as concerns methodologies, objects, and the issues involved. As the structures supporting their functioning are independent, they are perfectly working in parallel. We will describe those differences hereafter.

(1) Different methodologies
RNF-IFL involves a narrative or explanation from a candidate regarding his or her acquired knowledge, along with a presentation of proof of the latter. The procedure varies from one program to another, but may consist of the presentation of a dossier or portfolio, the oral defense of the same before a jury, or taking a test. This has to do with intellectual occupations, for the most part, and a successful presenta-
tion leads to admission to university-level instruction.

APEL is based on passing a test that is usually set up as a typical exercise. The candidate is asked to prove his or her skill or ability in a given occupation in a situation that is typical for the given occupation, in an approved training center. This validation exercise has to do mainly with technical occupations; it constitutes a partial qualification, and allows the successful candidate to practice a particular occupation.

(2) Different objects

This double structure also reflects the distinction – important in French-speaking Belgium at the beginning of the century and still largely influential today – between training schools based on learners who master the skills necessary for a particular job, and a system of instruction that protects students from the immediate demands of the workplace by relying upon theoretical knowledge and instruction regarding global citizenship.

Even if it cannot lead to the awarding of a diploma, the RNF-IFL process carried out by juries within universities works in the area of certification, which constitutes a form of recognition of learning that is more institutionalized than occupational validation. During the debates that led up to the creation of the Consortium de validation des compétences, the instructional actors were in fact opposed to giving the Titres de compétence (i.e. the certifications of a skill) the same properties as diplomas. In an opinion issued by the Conseil de l'éducation et de la formation (Council for education and training) in 1997, certification and validation were to be differentiated based on the criterion of their ‘social value’ (‘effets de droit’ for the first and ‘effects’ that were yet to be defined based on an increased ‘visibility’ of skills for the second), on the type of skills concerned (a significant group of skills in various cultural domains to be mastered on the theoretical and practical level for the first, and individual skills described in a reference definition for the second) and on the mode of evaluation (overall specific test for the first, validation of a limited number of skills for the second).

(3) Involved issues

APEL is not only concerned with recognition of an individual by a qualifying organization. In order to define tests for validation that would be accepted as legitimate by all partners – a necessary condition for the effectiveness of the Titres de compétences – the various actors involved in the process (the five occupational training agencies, social partners, public employment services) must in fact construct among themselves agreements that make validation a matter of inter-organizational recognition between different spaces of qualification (Mahieu, 2010). Now, the fields of training, social negotiations and job market are going through competing logics, which makes it sometimes hard to credit a common value to the recognition of the life experience.

RNF-IFL in French-speaking Belgium is also at the intersection of multiple logics that define a number of issues (de Ketele, 2008):

• the right to RNF-IFL: the Decree of March 31, 2004 defines this right, which stems from the European desire to construct a European knowledge economy that is the most competitive and dynamic in the world;
• the personal logic of a candidate, who can increase his or her self-esteem through RNF-IFL;
• the economic logic: the working world benefits from additional skills acquired by candidates;
• the change and development in universities: the role of teachers is changing. In addition to their traditional tasks, they are now asked to evaluate, measure, and give credit for skills that have been acquired (knowledge, practical knowledge, behaviors) by candidates in their personal and occupational experiences – that is, outside academic circles of the transmission of knowledge.

With regard to the social logic (democratization of education) of society as a whole and the personal logic of the candidate, the university must create stronger partnerships with organizations of socio-professional placement in order to lead job-seekers toward RNF-IFL to see if it can help them. At present the inter-university platform for RNF-IFL and the universities are developing partnerships, especially with the Forem⁴ and the Consortium de validation des compétences. The point is to follow the policy of democratization begun several years ago by the French-speaking Community of Belgium.

Some changes implied by the RNF-IFL are even more radical. Those changes have already emerged, but their degree of formalization differs according to the universities. The RNF-IFL is a revolution for the university (de Viron, 2009), both inside and out (in its external relations). Internally the university must change in order to organize in an adequate manner the acceptance and monitoring of progress for adults who want to take up university studies or other forms of learning at a non-traditional age. Externally the RNF-IFL leads the university to recognize learning acquired outside its gates, in many different places (businesses, non-governmental organizations, etc.), to appreciate the quality of skills gained in this manner, to accept the sometimes fragmentary character of this acquired knowledge, and to help people improve their knowledge based on such fragments (Davies, 2009).

What the university already did in certain advanced technological areas,
through technology transfers or joint research, will now be extended to all areas of human endeavor. The university is led on one hand to understand occupational or personal contexts on the part of candidates, and on the other hand to position itself in relation to other areas of knowledge or learning. This is therefore a clear redefinition of the university space, or the space of instruction and training, something that was at issue.

ELEMENTS OF DISCUSSION WITH REGARD TO RNF-IFL AND APEL

The discourse on lifelong learning puts individuals at the center of a political project that makes each one an actor in the matter of his or her own social and economic development and citizenship. This implies that every act of training as well as every act of validation of skills, formal and informal, is assumed to form part of a project that looks toward the future (both professional and personal). Thus the concept of lifelong learning is significant in terms of its reference to responsibility, autonomy, and adaptability. According to Barbier (2002), one may speak of ‘activation’ when there is an explicit connection between social protection and policies concerning jobs and the job market, when a systematic preference on the part of public authorities as regards social protection is given to the involvement of beneficiaries in the job market (Barbier, 2002). The right to unemployment benefits is no longer universal but is linked to individual responsibility of the beneficiaries. In this model the role of the state is to maximize and equalize the opportunities for access to socially useful activities (job market for salaried positions, independent sector, public sector, associative sector, sector of intimacy) (Matagne, 2001).

In Belgium, the occupational training sector presents itself more and more as a market structured by the action of public authorities according to a triple logic: accent on targeted segments of the public, on critical functions, and on development of the readability of training programs (opportunities to pass from one agency to another, implementation of reference points for occupations, etc.) in order to assist individual progress and increase interest on the part of businesses (Mahieu, 2010). The State promises in fact to invest in training and in improving the quality and transparency of businesses that take workers, and the state gets in return increased monitoring of those who receive unemployment payments, something that has been available since 2004 under the name of ‘Plan for Assistance and Monitoring for Unemployed Workers’.

The mission of the Consortium de validation des compétences is explicitly linked to the ‘activation’ policy, as it aims at bringing people far away from active life back to training or working life, through a better recognition of their competencies. This is why the Consortium de Validation des Compétences brings together not only training agencies, but also public employment agencies. In other words, lifelong learning is not only a personal project for people who want to undertake new studies or trainings; it is also a leitmotiv for public policies in order to transform their relationship with job-seekers. Public authorities invest in APEL (the process is free of charge for the applicants), on one hand, and job-seekers have to update their competencies (through training and/or the validation of prior learning experiences) on the other hand.

However, the implementation of active employment policies appears to have limited effect according to the segments of the public involved. An exploratory study of people under 30 in 2007 (that is, during the startup phase of the abovementioned Plan) by Cockx, Dejémeppe and Van der Linden (2007) showed that the extra effort in job searching mandated by the Plan was not significantly effective ‘except for unemployed persons whose profiles were more favorable to being hired, that is, those who had more schooling or who had had more recent work experience, as with women, whose potential for increased effort in looking for work is probably greater’ (p. 9). ‘For the other groups of unemployed persons (little schooling or fewer diplomas, no recent work experience, residents of sub-regions where unemployment is high, men and heads of households), the effects of the Plan were weak and often approaching zero’ (p. 7). Also, the major risk carried out by this kind of public policy directed towards ‘weaker citizens’ (in order that they undertake new trainings, for example), is precisely to miss their target or, worse, to stigmatize people in a weaker situation even more.

There is also an implicit selection candidates for the RNF-IFL, but it follows another logic. An adult who studies throughout life, a ‘lifelong learner’, is someone who is publicly involved in an active life, filling one or more social roles and having relation to persons who have expectations with regard to those roles (Caspar, 2004). Those activities may be of different orders: professional, social, militant, family, parental, etc. These activities and responsibilities make a certain kind of people into ‘lifelong learners’, as regards both their need for instruction and their expectations in relation to it. On the basis of the results of a longitudinal study of the motivation for adults who returned to university study (Vertongen, 2009) – including people who got admitted through RNF-IFL – the key element in their decisions was the intrinsic interest of the content of the instruction chosen and consequently a better understanding of the world. In other words epistemic motives weighed more heavily than occupational and identity-related motives. The study also indicated the
importance of recognizing the investment made by the adult student: recognition on the part of employers and by people around the students, and recognition on the part of the institutions that offer the training (in the case of universities, this means producing and awarding diplomas, certificates and/or attestations of work accomplished). These results appear to show that we deal mainly with individual actions here, carried out by people who are relatively good at evaluating themselves and at anticipating their own needs for intellectual development. European statistical evidence (EUROSTAT, 2005) relative to lifelong learning – still quite rudimentary in nature – also points at this tendency: those with most prior schooling (the most diplomas) are the ones who are most interested in continuing education.

Also, the point of the monitoring proposed by universities for RNF-IFL candidates is intended to reduce the gap between candidates who have reflective ability and those who do not. The assistance provided allows everyone to make a reasonable judgment concerning his or her own capabilities and the knowledge required to enter a Masters program, for example. From this point, the project for lifelong learning places the learner at the center of the process, but he or she must not remain at the level of mere individuals, on pain of becoming elitists. The life-long learning project must be, and must be thought of as an individual and a societal accomplishment at the same time (de Viron, 2009).

CONCLUSION

RNF-IFL marks a revolution and profound change for the university that succeeds in identifying and measuring learning that is accomplished outside its boundaries. Universities have seen their role change, as a witness to the emergence of many new places and times for learning. Universities are no longer the only locus for learning (work-based learning is happening in many places), nor the only places where knowledge and know-how are capitalized on. Their role is new, but reaffirmed as regards its primary function of learning how to learn (de Viron & Salmon, 2008). Faced with all of these changes, how will the university keep its specific character – conceptual and objective approach, reflexivity, critical distanciation, far from the urgency of the professional world, but connected to professional realities? In the long term, it is a matter of constructing a university that offers the keys to understanding and to the structure of knowledge based on fragmented knowledge, but also methods of learning: how to learn in a large number of situations throughout life. Teachers are led to become facilitators of learning and organizers of fragmented knowledge (de Viron, 2009).

We can see that the validation of formal and informal learning requires the implementation of new types of collaboration with people who work to validate knowledge, in new locations for learning. This validation must deal with knowledge that is more and more fragmented. Although French-speaking Belgium has advanced boldly over this ground, with RNF-IFL and APEL, elements about strategy, identity-related issues and sociopolitical considerations that we have examined here remain to be questioned.

To summarize the argument in this article, at the center of this discussion is the social value of the recognition of life experience. The RNF-IFL process leads to an institutionalized recognition of this experience and provides equivalence of diplomas and/or admission to a Master program, as well as exemptions from courses in Bachelor or Master Programs. APEL awards so-called Titres de compétences that should lead to collective-based advantages negotiated by social partners in the framework of Collective Labor Agreements. But it is not the case yet, probably because of the competing logic of the different actors involved in the process makes it difficult to legitimize the properties of those Titres de compétences. Indeed, APEL process brings together five training agencies in a Consortium de Validation des Compétences, as well as public employment agencies and social partners. There is also a competing logic between the instructional actors dealing with RNF-IFL and the actors of APEL, as the first ones are opposed to consider the Titres de compétences as diplomas. Identity questions are also raised inside the RNF-IFL process: the role of the university and their teachers is changing as they have to credit skills that have been experiences outside academic circles.

Finally, as the sociopolitical project of lifelong learning policies is to make each one responsible for his or her social and economic development, one can wonder about the latent selection of the candidates operating in APEL as well as RNF-IFL. Indeed, APEL concerns mostly job-seekers, whilst it is now known that active employment policies are beneficial for unemployed people with some favorable profile (e.g., recent work experience, higher diplomas). Also people involved in RNF-IFL are the ones who are able to anticipate by themselves their need for development; it concerns more particularly people with the most diplomas. Not everybody can be a good lifelong learner. We touch here upon a paradox of the current sociopolitical project: as lifelong learning policies make individuals responsible for their own professional, personal and social development, there is a risk of some individuals being excluded. This paradox results in a tension between lifelong learning as a right (a more democratic access to training) or as a duty (to train in order to stay ‘employable’ and/or
benefit from unemployment fees). To avoid such a social discrimination, the current sociopolitical project has to develop control and monitoring processes and support the organisations in charge of VNF-IL or APEL in the development of such organisational and social frameworks.

**Endnotes**

1. Actually, there is no satisfying translation for Valorisation des Acquis de l’Expérience - VAE or for Validation des Compétences - VC. The following are some English-language formulas for cognate concepts: Valuation of Prior Learning (VPL), Accreditation/Assessment of prior and educational learning (APEL), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), VNF-IFL (Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning).

2. These were faculties of the Catholic University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve: the Fopes (Faculté Ouverte de Politique Economique et Sociale), recognizing experience since 1974 and the Fopa (Institut de formation en sciences de l’éducation pour adultes), which had followed the practice since 1981.

3. The conferral of certification, as creating a legal entitlement, is reserved for education (teaching). According to the definition given by the so-called Conseil de l’éducation et de la formation (CEF, 1997), the entitlement associated with a diploma allows individuals to enter a regulated profession or accede to a subsidized job; equivalence with other diplomas may be authorized or taken into account in the setting of benchmarks with regard to public sector employment.

4. Approval of a training center as a center for APEL is based on fairly strict observance of quality standards by the social partners involved.

5. Public agency for job training in Wallonia

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