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LIFE CHANGE GUIDANCE FOR ADULTS IN BROKEN LIFE SITUATIONS



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How adult education is changing



ADULTS AND ADULT EDUCATION - CLARIFICATIONS

Obviously the terms “adults” and “adult education” are very broad almost abstract terms, covering endless groups of people, activities and scenarios of learning and education.

Therefore it is crucial in this context to clarify who and what we are talking about.

The focus of the following reflections is clearly on adults with less educational background, of all ages and with limited access to social and educational mobility. Adult education within this focus refers to formal and non-formal provisions to up-skill, empower, provide basic competences and empower those adults.

A dentist wishing to learn how to paint is not considered in this context, whereas a 45 year old factory worker losing her job definitely is.

In short we are addressing the millions of European adults in difficult and rapidly changing labour market and social situations and the formal and non-formal provisions offered to tackle those challenges.

The problem we address is the exponentially increasing gap between these adults' competences and resources and the 21st century labour market scenarios: *is what we know as adult education able to respond to this gap?*

THE 21ST CENTURY CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Backed-up by reports and forecast studies from stakeholders such the OECD, the World Bank and UNESCO, the European Commission now clearly states that we need to basically re-think education, and that this calls for no less than a cultural revolution in educational policy and practice.

These dramatic words come from a far from revolutionary body, representing almost all European nations, and we should pay considerable attention to this fact alone: what brings the Commission to repeatedly state such dramatic changes? Not adjusting or further developing education, but *re-thinking* education, including its basic axioms and concepts - and role in society?

It seems that the old classroom and instruction based education paradigms produced by the needs of the industrial society has finally come to be obsolete, outdated as well as increasingly becoming an obstacle to change.

Education has become reactionary not in its content but in its form and it is becoming a conservative force in the society countering change.

The cultural revolution will involve educational policy, the places called “schools” and the professionals called “teachers”. Academic and educational legitimacy will be challenged.

All this already started with re-focusing assessment on learning outcomes: not how many books you read, but what you can do.

Less educated adults will welcome this cultural revolution, as they might finally be valued for what they can do, and not how academic they are.

Re-thinking education might offer new and fresh winds for less educated adults, but only “might”. Policy still needs to meet practice.

Whereas re-thinking education might send chock-waves through the academic world, less educated adults will be less chocked, as traditional education never worked for them anyway. They were always marginalized through traditional education; in fact this is why they became less educated. The traditional education system always drew efficient lines between the academic learners and the other ones, and it is still doing so. This mechanism was and is embedded in the most basic paradigms of education, even though increasingly challenges by educational research and experimentation.

Re-thinking education might therefore, at least in principle, open up new doors to millions of less educated adults in need of 21st competences to manage emerging labour market and social changes.

On the other hand re-thinking education is deeply rooted in the dramatic dilemma between short-term labour market thinking and the long-term real competence needs of the adults, haunting most national and European educational actions.

The labour market needs rapidly changing skills and adult education policy needs to respond to that; also to fight increasing unemployment. This caused adult education to go vocational: in short, give the unemployed or the not up-skilled employed precisely the skills needed to match today's labour market needs.

Such short-term actions are of course driven by labour market needs and reducing public spending.

However justified those short-term actions might be, they do not correspond or respond to the real competence needs of less educated adults. Such competence needs are not skills based, do not respond to specific emerging labour market needs, but respond to the long-term needs of less educated adults to cope with rapidly changing 21st century scenarios.

This dilemma between short-term skilling and long-term competence development haunts most adult education policy and practice, including the European funding programs.

The way this dilemma is managed by policy and practice will determine to what extent re-thinking education will benefit less educated adults.

THE ORIGINAL ADULT EDUCATION PARADIGM

In its early forms adult education was linked to enlightenment, aiming to offer working people in the country and later in the industrial cities access to personal and cultural development.

In this form adult education was always non-formal, based on personal interests and never linked to labour market and social conditions.

In the later labour movement forms active citizenship and employees' rights were added, but basically the concept was the same.

Along the history of the industrial and later on knowledge societies, more provisions were offered to allow for example workers, unemployed and migrants to catch up on school learning or to increase specific skills needed in the changing jobs. A typical example is, of course, computer skills.

All these provisions, however different they might seem, are based on traditional classroom and subject instruction, transferring specific skills and knowledge to the participants, more or less like in schools.

As such adult education was not all that successful, pedagogical research were carried out to develop more specific adult education didactics and pedagogies. It was obvious that less educated adults were not benefitting sufficiently from traditional education, and therefore more learner-sensitive approaches were developed, tested and documented.

Following the initial enlightenment, basic skills and civic participation periods, adult education developed in two major directions (still maintaining at the same time the traditional adult education offers): the empowermental and the up-skilling.

THE EMPOWERMENTAL ADULT EDUCATION PARADIGM

During the last couple of centuries various forms of empowermental adult education emerged, partly based on new migration patterns across Europe, but also based on a critical attitude towards traditional classroom based instruction.

The empowermental approach is not aiming to train certain skills, based on labour market needs, but more focused on long-term personal capacity building, based on the individual's life and work experiences and based on the individuals' talents, wishes and expectations.

Often such empowerment processes ran through long periods, as they often included quite complicated personal change and capacity building. The empowerment processes take into account relevant labour market needs, but are much more life direction oriented than labour market oriented.

Such empowermental didactics represent a big change from traditional or "modern" adult education provisions, and to some extent they have been quite successful, in particular in relation to forced change situations and migration.

However, whereas traditional adult education (including its pedagogic adjustments) remains imprisoned in the industrial instruction parameters, most empowermental adult education seems to remain within socio-psychological mentality processes, normally not confronting the social realities around the mental laboratories.

This might be one of the reasons that such empowermental processes sometimes do not work well for for example long-term unemployed factory or construction workers. After several empowerment courses they simply lose trust in such provisions.

ADULT EDUCATION AS UP-SKILLING

The other direction emerging on top of the more traditional civic participation adult education was the systematic up- and re-skilling of less educated workers. Labour market and social service policy worked together to offer massive local, national or even European up-skilling and re-skilling programs, based on labour market statistics and forecast studies.

In this case adult education is used to adjust the labour force to systematic changes in the labour market, and to direct the masses towards such gaps.

Up-skilling often addressed technology and ICT, whereas re-skilling typically addressed the construction, industrial and healthcare sectors.

However, re-skilling is not an easy enterprise and often the labour market changed before the identified gaps were closed.

It is still an important priority in European funding to bring education and labour markets closer together to prevent skills shortages in the future. Obviously such alert forecasting is becoming increasingly difficult due to rapidly changing labour markets and national and global economies. The education system is not able to keep up with the exponentially changing economies and "skills needs".

The problem in 21st century adult education is precisely whether skills are needed at all - and how empowerment can turn to real change.

Soon many young people will be leaving school with the same problem as less academic learners have been doing for ages: what I learned today didn't help me much in real life.

NEW ADULT "EDUCATION" PARADIGMS

From the historic limitations and deficiencies of these adult education paradigms, new and very different "adult education" is emerging and called for across Europe, questioning the very basic assumptions, approaches and methods in adult education.

In a recent paper I discussed the need to directly deconstruct education to reconstruct or construct learning and creation. Deconstructing is in this context linked to Derrida's deconstruction philosophy in which old structures do not simply disappear, but are deconstructed and disseminated across new paradigms.

Deconstructing education seems necessary to enable us to ask such questions as: *what is learning and how does it take place?*

In fact we even need to question the basic elements in what we call “pedagogy”, as it seems that “pedagogy” in its different forms is closely linked to teachings methodologies in instruction, classroom and school institutions.

Perhaps we need to focus more on innovating what is signified by the term “didactics”, if we understand “didactics” as the ways in which learning is basically organized.

Because what is at stake in re-thinking education is precisely reflecting on “how learning is and can be organized” - to be relevant in the 21st century, changing stability as the norm into constant change as the norm.

Perhaps a bit too philosophically, we need perhaps to make sure that we do not make the mistake of replacing one paradigm (“adult education”) with another simple paradigm, as paradigms are now subject to constant and dynamic changes.

A new approach to adult learning should include such dynamics and include re-defining adult learning as an integrated element in future adult learning constructions.

In short, we experience a movement from classroom pedagogy via empowerment pedagogies to what simplified could be called action and community based learning.

We will try to describe the most important elements in such approaches along this paper; however a very important element in this emerging approach is that learning takes place through interacting with, impacting and changing the realities in which the subject acts, thus working to change the individual from an object of change into a subject of change.

Such changes will precisely send shock waves through the traditional as well as less traditional education system, as it will question the very concept of “school” or “education institution”.

Such changes and experimentation will of course call for brave leadership, lately well described by OECD and Fundació Jaume Bofill Barcelona in the book about *Learning Leadership*.

21ST CENTURY LEARNING

Rapidly changing social and labour market scenarios, communication forms, life orientations and meanings of learning obviously call for a long line of new and dynamic competences, in particular among less educated adults who might precisely not have the resources, the tools or the mentality to manage such change scenarios:

- › Labour market shifts at least 5 times during an active labour market career
- › New work forms in the labour market, including integration of work and social life
- › Managing very different and sometimes unpredictable work situations, including project work, full employment, working from home, considerable periods of learning, unemployment, volunteering and entrepreneurial initiatives
- › Permanent development of new knowledge forms and content
- › The need to manage change and emerging scenarios of learning through personal initiative-taking and joining forces with people in the same situation
- › Social and work scenarios including mobility at national, European and international levels
- › And including managing the many social changes resulting from such scenarios

As can easily be seen, such change scenarios cannot at all be addressed by old respondings, such as enlightenment, up-skilling or even long-term personal capacity building.

Less educated adults, no matter the age, are the hardest hit by such dynamics.

We need not sentimentally regret the loss of the old stabilities, as they really never opened many doors to less educated adults anyway. But!

But - it is only possible to view those new dynamics as positive opportunities, if one has the competences, tools and mentality to do so. If not, changes will be conceived as endless threats.

What do *dynamic competences* mean?

A dynamic competence is a meta-competence, but not an academic meta-competence as learning to learn sometimes can be interpreted as.

It is a competence to create competences in constant interaction with practice, communities and changing scenarios; to create knowledge, action, innovation, and new practice ad hoc, on the flight, when needed and not depending on institutional education and training, and to team up with groups of people in joint ventures, from the neighboring village as well as from Korea or Brazil, as well as in constant changing mix realities of digital and social worlds.

Such dynamic competences are needed in the new combination of personal, social and professional life.

Dynamic competence is based on *intervention*: competences and learning is brought about through intervention in the reality.

The old relative stabilities and “phase based changes” of the industrial and post-industrial society are gone and replaced by an exponentially changing global economic energy so strong that economies can alter local, national and global structures in a few weeks. Local is no longer “local”; a vocational training can be obsolete after a few months.

Education “systems” cannot by definition respond adequately to such changes, and therefore the very idea of an education “system” is to be questioned.

Many educations and governments across Europe are responding defensively to these challenges, resulting in stronger and larger systems, more control and centralization, which is precisely what is not needed to become in flow with 21st century realities.

CREATE YOUR JOB

Not so long ago, an adult worker might lose her job and get another one. Perhaps some up-skilling was needed, but anyway.

For millions of adults across Europe this is no longer the case: if you lose your job, you will not get another one.

Up-skilling, re-skilling and personal empowerment is offered. But such offers are increasingly powerless.

Many then realizes that the new scenarios call for more fundamental changes and reflections, such as to mentality, life expectations, ethics, the meaning of life and work, creating ones missions, etc.

Such “re-thinking” one’s life is dramatic, demanding and complex.

It is not about acquiring a new skill, but about mentality change, and such a mentality change is not easy if you are 55 years old.

“Adult education” does not offer to guide, support and motivate such long-term change processes. Traditional course structure and traditional funding of adult education cannot respond to those needs.

Holistic, complex, personalized and flexible change support is needed to meet the new realities for millions of Europeans.

An important dimension in such change support is entrepreneurship; not in the traditional sense only, in which you establish your own business, but more in the

sense of entrepreneurial mentality: the mentality of *intervention*, of interacting with and changing reality, taking very different forms of initiatives, joining forces, breaking through instead of breaking down, including social innovation, inventing new things and services, greening the community, putting pressure on local governments and private stakeholders.

The hyper-dynamic global economy offers endless economic opportunities, no matter where you live and what education you have.

One might cherish or criticize this hyper-capitalistic global economy, but for the individual citizen it offers endless economic opportunities, and some of those opportunities could even be called “anti-capitalistic” opportunities.

However, to interact in new ways with market, community, policy-makers and private companies, one needs to develop dynamic competence: you need to change, learn, create, challenge yourself, join forces, accept failures and much more to be able to benefit from the dynamic economies. One might even need to change other life structures to do this.

In short, and somewhat simplified, one needs to gamify life.

The point is, now, that all this cannot be taught, instructed, transmitted and learned in the traditional or modern versions of adult education.

Such dynamic competences, including for example entrepreneurial mentality, can only be brought about by long-term open processes composed by taking action in the community and time-out learning when needed, useful and relevant, no matter if language, technology or financing is on the agenda.

MANAGE CHANGE

One of the most important elements in dynamic competence is obviously the capacity to manage change.

In the old times, such as yesterday, change came about in certain periods. We talked about “times of change”. In the globalized economy change *is* the reality, the order of things. Change is not the exception but the rule; change is a key if not the key driver of economy and social life.

Many years ago clever McLuhan said “the medium is the message”, and today we might say “change is the driver (of change)”!

This calls for mentalities of change: mentalities that do not see change as a threat, but as a new opportunity, mentalities that “live change”, are in flow with change, work with change and explore change.

Change is about one’s occupation, how to learn, how to communicate, how to integrate professional, social and personal life.

This means that a dynamic competence to manage change is not about “surviving change” or “getting through change”, but about the capacity and mentality to “be in change”.

How does this look to an unemployed factory worker, losing her job at the age of 55?

Or to a 43 years old construction worker with almost no useful educational background?

Or to the 34 years old migrant fighting to learn the new language?

So, we need adult education courses about change management, right?

No, not right.

We need flexible, entrepreneurial, cross-sector funded community learning centers, able to host and support such long-term competence development in close interaction with the realities of work, innovation, social life and the community at large, allowing adults to learn, network and create economy at the same time, constantly taking action in reality (local as well as global) and basing the work principles on *intervention*: changing oneself and changing reality is a dialectic process, even including political action and active citizenship.

Managing change is not a course, but the result of such open and integrated processes.

EUROPE 2020 AND BEYOND

In times of scarce national funding for such experimentation, one might look towards European funding for such initiatives.

Many important European policies and papers and programs are developed recently, clearly pointing in the same direction as this paper.

Page after page could be filled with quotations and evidence of such 21st century experimentation, and especially in connection with adult education and the millions of unemployed Europeans, and unemployed young Europeans.

However, such adult learning laboratories, replacing the classrooms, are hard to fund within for example the Erasmus+ program.

In fact adult education almost disappeared into vocational training during the design of the new program, but was saved in the last minute.

Adult education is still a strange thing in European funding, living a marginal life and embracing all sorts of activities and ideas, and as always extremely low funded. The Horizon research program offers little support, and the Social Fund will probably be more and more so-called “labour market directed”, meaning up-skilling, re-skilling and other short-term interventions.

Erasmus+ is still very sector oriented and adult education is not a high priority, which contradicts European policy.

It seems as traditional conservatism still haunts the programming of European policy, devaluating the often very progressive and positive policy work: the operationalization of policy into programs seems to reduce innovation.

In short, what millions of less educated European adults need is (still) difficult to fund through European programs.

The attempt to merge adult education into vocational training speaks for itself.

Comparing adult education funding to higher education funding and to Horizon also speaks for itself.

In the dusk of traditional adult education there is a great need for experimentation with 21st century adult learning didactics, be it formal or non-formal - themselves being relics from traditional adult education.

A solid funding of such experimentation at European level is not likely within the Europe2020 framework.

Therefore communities need to join forces to create such experimentation.

JOINING FORCES

Adult education is the weakest sector in European education, and functions as a mishmash of all sorts of activities, not fitting into the other sectors, and with a very low and weak profile; all this mostly due to its history.

In general politics does not take adult learning very seriously.

This is why stakeholders need to join forces and take action, not allowing this important field to be governed by public policy and practice, whether at local or European level.

Open community centers of learning, innovation and entrepreneuring can and should be established in collaboration between private stakeholders, public authorities, social sector players and different forms of NGO's working with young adults, adults or seniors.

The participation of private stakeholders and NGO's will help establish competence development and entrepreneurial mentality in such a center, not falling back to traditional school and classroom structures.

In fact this is what the European Commission calls for: cross-sector initiatives creating hubs, laboratories and working spaces in the heart of the community and addressing all sorts of community needs, interests and innovations while at the same time offering non-academic adults real-life and entrepreneurial practices of learning.

Adult learning and competence development should not be imprisoned by traditional education systems, academic pedagogy or static labour market services (all of which also can be described as power systems, with reference to Foucault), but should be allowed open community based laboratories for learning, experimentation and innovation - interacting closely with private business, creative professionals and drivers of social and societal change.

Such community learning stakeholders might be a bank, a chamber of commerce, a theater, an environmental NGO or a research center.

As a colleague from a learning community in Israel once said: *don't think municipality, think community.*

WHAT LESS EDUCATED ADULTS NEED

Let us briefly sum up *examples of* what less educated adults and young adults need to cope with the 21st century and to find directions:

- › Open community spaces to learn, network, take new initiatives and team up with other adults - with a strong entrepreneurial spirit and open mind-sets
- › Resources to insert learning elements when needed, relevant and useful to the adults' missions
- › Learning as practical interaction with the community, from business to social services and greening the economy
- › Long-term support to follow their interests, talents or aspiration, be it within language, technology, sport or social innovation
- › Strong support structures, inserted in their community interaction, to build capacity to exploit all sort of creative technologies and online business opportunities, but always embedded in the learners' own missions
- › Flexible work and learning structures, including real-life missions, and mixed forms of employment, project based work and small experiments
- › Strong support in the fields of entrepreneuring, funding of ideas and creating economies
- › The opportunity to learn and create at different speed, in different ways and allowing both positive and negative experience to be sources of learning

As can be seen, such environments are not classroom or school based, and competence development is always linked to experimental and experiential practice, intervention and change.

Such centers might be able to transform passive receivers of social benefit into creators of things, situations and services: an unemployed adult is not an underdog begging for a new job, but a citizen missioned to create new opportunities in the community and beyond.

An unemployed 55 year old worker is therefore not a problem, but a resource.

However, this will take a "cultural revolution" in education and beyond, as stated by the European Commission.

*Life change guidance for adults
in broken life situations*



WHY TALK ABOUT LIFE CHANGE?

In all times people have been forced to or decided to make life changes. Someone might lose a job, get divorced or suffer from a severe illness. In such situations, a life change is sometimes needed - or the best way out of the forced change.

All this is not new.

Why are we, then, talking in a different way of life change now? Is it simple becoming more fashionable to make life change? Or is it simply because we need to find new ways of thinking, working and managing our lives?

No, the answer brings forth far more important problems, for the individual and for the community.

THE WORLD IS CHANGING

Life change becomes an important issue because the world is changing. Life change is about the reality, not about individual preferences.

In fact we could say that the reality *produces* life change. Due to developments in markets, economy and technology, labour markets, career routes, social life and personal life has changed dramatically.

It might not always look that way from the point of view of the individual person, who just lost a job because the factory moved to China or Brazil. But it is like this, and it has just started.

We know all this under the name of “globalization”: technology has made it possible for products to be produced almost everywhere in the world, and the same is true for research, education and many other things.

And sometimes workers are cheaper in one country than in another...

These very fundamental changes have considerable impact on for example social and personal life. If your live direction is broken due to for example severe illness or family crisis, and one is forced to leave a job or career, one cannot simple expected to recover and return this job or this career.

Dramatic shifts in the economy have great impact on social and personal life, and on what we might call: life options or life change options.

All this also to say that when many people find themselves in such forced change situations and need life change options, this is not caused by individual failure or weakness; it is about global economy and other macro-economic factors.

Global economy and global reality force its changes upon even the smallest community, if not sooner, then later.

The unemployed, the person suffering from cancer, or the adult education trainer cannot change all this. Not at all. However, they all need to get into the game to find new ways. Because one thing is sure: if you don't play the game, you will never win.

Perhaps many of us will find, after struggling with forced life change for some time, that the new game might just offer us unexpected new opportunities that we did not even think of before the life direction was broken.

In fact, this is what life change is about.

WHAT IS “LIFE CHANGE”?

Life change means that several important things in one's life is changing at the same time, even if triggered by one single event, such as losing the job or getting seriously ill.

Life change comes about when broken life directions happen. In this guide we are not talking about “volunteer life change”, but what we call “forced life change”.

Not that deciding to change your life at some point is not interesting or important. It certainly is, but it is not the focus of this guide.

What we talk about here is *forced* life change. Life change produced by serious or several changes in one's life. The point is that this life change situation is caused by things that are forced upon us; things we did not chose ourselves. This is why we talk about "broken" life directions, "broken" careers, or even "broken lives"...

The deeper meaning of forced life change is, then, that resuming ones normal life after a broken life situation is not an option - or, the option is so problematic that one chooses not to take this direction. In fact experiencing that returning to one's normal life is not an option, often results from longer periods of precisely trying to resume what was one's normal life.

Instinctively we try to recover and resume what is well-known to us, what has been our life direction for years and perhaps even decades.

Obviously, then, life change processes can be very long and include many different phases.

So, forced life change occurs when it is not possible or recommendable to resume or try to resume one's previous life direction.

What is, then "life change"?

In the old days, so to speak, you might lose your job, fall seriously mentally or physically ill, go through complicated family crises, and then, after a period of recovery, resume your life direction the best way possible.

Of course, today this still happens and is still possible.

However, an increasing and still growing number of people, and especially people in mature ages such as 40 to 60, find themselves in broken life situations where resuming one's normal life is not possible.

These people reach a point of no return, so to say. No way back to the well-known, to what you always did.

They reach a point where changing one thing in their lives is not enough. They face precisely what we call a "forced life change situation". They will need to find new directions that might include working life, social life and personal life altogether. They need to find *new directions*.

As can be seen from these words, life change situations can be long and complicated, and this why they can produce "life stories", sometimes taking on the form of a novel or documentary.

Telling the life change experience in the form of stories is a very strong tool when working with your own or your colleagues broken life situation. First of all, because telling the stories offers some very important reflections of one's life, but secondly, because one's life story can be of immense importance to other people in similar situations, looking for "how did the others manage?"

One of the negative and serious consequences of recognising that returned to one's normal life direction is not possible is that one gives up and slowly falls into a state of passivity and even depression.

In our highly individualized culture, this is definitely an option. The role of the partnership between adults in forced life change and teachers and trainers in adult education is to make sure that this does not happen, or find possible ways out.

WHERE CAN WE WORK WITH LIFE CHANGE?

How can adult education teachers or trainers, whether they are engaged in formal or non-formal activities and settings, work with such forced life change? How can they offer assistance, guidance and help find the new directions?

This is a big challenge - for the trainers as well as for the adults in need of support. In fact it is also a big challenge to the institutions and organisations, as described further elsewhere in this paper.

Basically, they cannot!

Let's take it from the beginning.

When adults in mature ages find themselves stuck in forced life change, they might react individually (at least in the beginning), trying to cope with the situation; or, they might decide to join activities in the community, offering guidance and support.

To this end, it is of course of tremendous importance that such activities are extremely visible in the community. If not, how will one get the idea of being able to join such activities?

Adult education in whatever form is not prepared or capable to work with severe life change. They need to *become able* and to *create partnerships with the adults* in need of support and guidance.

Traditionally the roles of adult education and the teachers working in adult education are to deliver and offer... education. We will come back to that in a moment.

First, let us ask a question that many people in forced life change situations might ask: why are we talking about "adult education" in relation to forced life change?

What has "adult education" to do with serious life change, involving many different parts of one's life?

The answer is not so obvious.

Our most fundamental idea is that to avoid forcing adults in life change situations to exclusively react individually and on their own, there must be places, spaces or provisions in the community that can take up and work with life change in a collective and constructive way.

Therefore, when we talk about "adult education" we use this term in the broadest sense possible, in its most "holistic" meaning: provisions in the community that might offer *systematic and qualified* support, guidance and inspiration to adults with broken life directions.

Accordingly, "adult education" does not simply refer to an adult education school, but can refer to any public or private institution, formal or not, offering such services in a *systematic and qualified* way, such as labour market offices, entrepreneurial centers, NGO's, adult education centers, community centers, etc. The important point is not the name of the provision, but the quality and capacity of the provisions offered.

We must remember this when talking about "adult education" in this guide.

As mentioned, the nature of the institution or place is not important; what is important is the words *systematic* and *qualified*.

Systematic means that the provision is able to follow the adults in need of guidance through all the phases of life change and offer what is needed along the different life change phases, and *qualified* means that the provision has the needed staff, tools and capacity to do this in ways that clearly benefits to adults.

THE CHANGING ROLES OF EDUCATION, TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

Let's get back to adult education, then.

We said: *life change processes can be very long and include many different phases*. And we also said that such provisions must be *systematic and qualified*.

To meet these new demands, working with an increasing number of mature adults in critical life change situations, whether caused by unemployment or

other factors in life, adult educations must also go through “life change processes”, just like the adults.

This is not to say that adult education or similar provisions should not continue to offer classes in English or computer technology; it simply means that those institutions must widen the scope of their work and create capacity to deal with more complicated life situations.

In fact, what they should do is to *partner up* with adults in forced life change situation.

What does that mean, “partner up”?

It means that the traditional roles of the “adult learner”, the “teacher” and the “institution” are and must be changing.

Traditionally an institution offers a number of courses to adult learners across the year or the semester, in which interested adults can enrol. The institution offers, the adult choses and teacher teach.

In more recent times, this scenario is supplemented by what we call the empowerment approach.

This approach has been used and is still used especially in connection with especially inclusion of adult migrants, but this direction has also inspired other forms of adult education and learning.

The basic idea in the empowerment approach is that the “learning” is not based on pre-defined content or themes, but on the interests and needs of the participants.

In this case, the teachers become trainers or coaches. Their primary role is not to transmit “knowledge”, but to work flexibly with the interests and needs of the participants, and those needs might go in all sorts of directions.

This also implies that the trainer should be able to guide the adults towards different resources in the community and to network those resources, which was definitely not the role of the traditional teacher.

The changing roles of trainers and coaches in connection with life change are not so much about “more”, but about “differently”.

The changes are more far-reaching than “traditional changes”; for the adults, for the trainers and for the institutions.

Traditionally, the institutions *offer* something to the adults, the teachers *deliver* what is offered and the adult learners *receive* what is offered.

In life change situations this does not work, as nobody actually knows what the problem is and how to solve it, and as the problem is often complex and should work out in longer periods of time.

Therefore, what is needed are *partnerships* between the institutions, the trainers and the people in need of life change guidance; new forms of collaboration, joint ventures so to speak, in which all participating persons offer resources, ideas and take action.

Life changers are not “objects” of teaching, but “subjects” of change.

The second reason for the need to change the “offering” and “receiving” approach is that adults in severe life change situations need to develop capacity to manage their new directions, which will not happen if the institution and trainers “already know what the adult should do and how”, and simply transmit this to the adult. That will leave the adult with some content but no life change capacity.

The provisions must provide time and space for such unpredictable processes, the trainers must be able to listen to, understand and support any direction or action the adults might wish in include in the life change - and the adults in need of guidance must learn to respect and understand that neither the institution not the trainers can offer ready-made answers or solutions to their forced life change situation.

“Tell me what to do” will not help in this situation. First, because the trainers don’t know what you should do, second because you would not create much capacity through receiving such ready-made solutions. And you need this capacity

to manage your future life that might be more complicated than the one you know.

This life change partnership approach is a big challenge to all involved players. Few institutions, few trainers and even fewer adults in life change situations are prepared to work in this way.

The ability to work this way is actually an important part of the life change process itself!

WHAT CAN HAPPEN IN A LIFE CHANGE PROCESS?

But why is such life change processes expected to be so *complicated*?

No matter if the life change is caused by for example unemployment, severe illness or family crisis, at the end of the day, the problem will always be: how can I create an economy and sustain a life in this new situation?

It's a long story; let's make it short:

- Qualifications of jobs are changing at high speed; old qualifications are not enough; of course technology plays an important role here
- There are in general fewer jobs and in particular fewer so-called unskilled jobs available; unemployment is increasing in many countries
- Clever people foresee that from now on people must be prepared to change their professional and even personal directions many times during a lifetime: an ever changing mix of short-term jobs, project based jobs, self-funded jobs, unemployment periods and private initiatives, as the old "lifelong" public and private jobs are systematically disappearing
- More and more production and services are privatized, leading to more complicated and ever changing labour market situations
- More and more work is carried out in different forms of "projects", offering employment dependent on short or long term project funding; still more public and private tasks are "projectized"

Looking at all this, it becomes quite obvious why life change situations are *complicated*, not following the old way: I lost my job, I will upskill myself and now I have a new job; or: the cancer or depression forced me to leave the labour market for 6 months or longer, but now I have recovered and will return to my old job.

Forced life change processes can be complicated and take time. This is what we say.

What does that mean in practice? What happens in forced life change situations?

All forced life change situations are different. All forced life changes include several problems and challenges at the same time.

Simple examples: a severe illness for example a depression leads to loss of job, leading to economic problems, leading to family problems; loss of job leads to economic problems, leading to social problems that lead to a depression and family problems; a divorce leads to mental problems, leading to a depression, leading to loss of job, etc.

This is the vicious circle of forced life change. To a certain extent the circle is unavoidable. However, its consequences are not. The circle must and can be broken, and this is what happens in *directing life change guidance*.

Often it takes a long time to recognize the consequences of the broken life situation. Instinctively we try to avoid what has already happened or try to repair it in whatever way we can. Long periods of struggling can result from this.

After that, and having at last realized the dead-end situation, most people fall into some forms of helplessness, desperation or passivity. This is very understandable and natural. Nobody can be blamed for this.

Then, there are very different directions: you remain stuck in your dead-end situation for a long, or you try to work your way out.

Directing life change guidance is precisely about preventing getting stuck and helping people to work their way out.

Few people, in fact very few people, are able to work their way out alone, and we cannot expect people to be able to do that.

This is why we have the obligation to offer these people collective time and space to fight dead-ends and to find the new directions. From an economic point of view, investing in positive life change directions is a *very good business for society*.

The sooner the life changer joins collective work processes the better. The life changer will clearly benefit from collective reflections and guidance among peers and trainers in the different life change processes, as the collective forum can:

- help understanding the broken situation better, put it in perspective and allow to share with adults in similar situation
- help working through the mental and social consequences of the broken situation, strongly supported by the sharing with other adults, including building up one's self-confidence through offering other adults support
- help recognizing the situation as it is and that the situation calls for life change in one or more respects
- start looking at one's life and slowly creating future scenarios, and share such scenarios with other adults' future scenarios
- start working more focused on one's skills, talents, aspirations, dreams and unrecognized or unexpected resources, including seeing different qualifications or experiences as "resources" in a changed perspective
- help teaming up with other adults, exploring the identified or potential resources, talking to people in the community
- help turning these work processes into increasing confidence in new directions, thus help breaking the vicious circle
- support concrete initiatives giving solidity and credibility to whatever new direction is taken, including cultivating personal talents, job search in new ways, learning activities, creating small business, etc.
- and last, but certainly not least: creating strong and powerful community networking and engagement

In the best cases, the collective forum will be able to follow and support the life changers along their first steps in the new directions.

The life changer will also in any case benefit and grow from offering mentoring support to other adults in broken life situations, offering and sharing concrete and valuable experience.

FROM "INWARDS" TO "OUTWARDS"

The most important single process in such life change work is to go from "inside" to "outside" and trainers and coaches play a big role in this turn.

It is a natural reaction in broken life situations to kind of fall into oneself, and even in some cases to step back from social life, do "disappear".

Working with peers and trainers, in teams and in life change groups is certainly meant to help better manage this process and to make sure that it is still linked to social life and sharing with others.

However, sometimes the "social missions" of such teams can develop into endless processes of emotional support, and in this case the processes meant to guide life change might end up preventing and blocking such change.

As many trainers and coaches are primarily used to work with mental and cognitive processes in-institution and in-class, and not used to take action in the community, they might sometimes sustain such centripetalism, even if they do not intend to do so.

Therefore, and at least to some extent, such trainers need to *take part* in change processes, not simply view and guide such processes.

Unlike in for example mental or emotional therapy, normally exclusively concerned with the inner world and its social effects, life change guidance and life changers must be extremely directed towards economic and social reality. Breaking the vicious circle always includes addressing and interacting with the economic reality to which the life changer, the peer team and the trainers are deeply linked, and to which also any sustainable direction must relate.

One might object to this in the following way: yes, but in the case of a broken marriage or a severe illness, the problem is not necessarily an economic or job-related one.

That is very true, but we must bear in mind that we do not consider such life crisis “forced life change”.

Forced life change occurs when several things break, either at the same time, or as a consequence of each other: illness leading to loss of job, broken marriage leading to social crisis and economic problems, etc.

No matter if new life directions consist in exploiting an artistic talent, working as a volunteer, finding another job, creating a small business or attending further education, the basic problem will in most cases always be to sustain a living from this new direction.

And as sustaining a living is precisely becoming more and more problematic and complex - remember the rapidly changing labour markets and job qualifications from above - most life change processes are forced to include “making a living” directly.

Therefore life change guidance should start addressing and interacting with the social and economic realities as early in the life change process as possible.

The more life changers and trainers get used to working primarily in-house and with mental processes, the more difficult it might be to someday address the surrounding reality.

This might double the dead-end situation instead of bringing life changers out of the dead-ends, and it sometimes results in frustration on the side of the adults as well as on the side of the trainers.

So, with a little hesitation, let's bluntly state: if you wish to change your life, you need to change the world!

This does not mean that you or your peers should accomplish great things in the world. It simply means that working the broken life means working the reality around you.

Turning the processes “outwards” means: talk to people in the community, explore different situations and opportunities in the community, interact and challenge people and organisations in the community, learn from others in the community, team up with other people to find new ways in the community, etc.

The key word? Community.

HOW CAN TRAINERS AND COACHES HELP?

Most mature adults in broken life situations are not used to or perhaps not even motivated to do this; neither are most trainers and coaches, as their job normally ends at the doorstep of the institution.

Such life change processes, addressing the community and its players and resources, can be expected to be very different, always changing and always offering new failures, challenges and opportunities.

A simple but extremely important example: internet technology makes business opportunities possible for everybody every day. Adult education trainers or

similar professionals are not necessarily aware of this, or able to help adults find such directions.

Therefore they need to join forces with the adults and take part in such explorations, side by side with the adults, not from the position of the traditional teacher role.

In short, trainers and coaches need to learn and explore side by side with adults with broken lives; not in a certain period, but permanently; building increasing capacity to guide future adults and constantly collect more experience.

Now, the million dollar question is: but, seriously, how can people in broken life situations and normal trainers with normal backgrounds start to do a lot of contacting, networking and collaboration in the community?

This is, indeed, a good question, as not even professionally trained networkers might be able. Then what?

The key, and a very precious one, is: adult life changers and trainers should, side by side, be able to tap into already existing or at least emerging resources, networks and collaborations in the community.

Qualified resources and support to people with broken lives and to trainers working with these people must be available in the community, or must at least be on the move in the community.

This is about the changing roles of institutions working with adults in broken life situations: adult educations, job centers, NGO's or community centers. It is the obligation of those institutions to help drive such collaborative resources in the community, and to create partnerships with relevant institutions and cultures in the community.

You can read more about institutional change elsewhere in this paper, and this might also be of interest to trainers and life changers.

To re-focus, however, on what the trainers can do to build capacity to assist and support and direct life change, taking into consideration that they are depending on the capacity building of their institutions, some of the most important things are:

- challenge your ideas about your roles as a trainer in life change
- work openly with the adults in need of guidance, work side by side and learn with them
- listen well to adults' needs and interests, and try not to confuse them with your own
- see the community as a game field in which you can find alliances, partners, and collaborators, and in which obstacles must be overcome
- seek support from colleagues and relevant resources as often as possible, and involve them in the missions
- work on your entrepreneurial mind-set: whenever you see something in the community, ask the question: how could this be useful to directing life change and creating new opportunities?
- work on your creative capacity: normally we do not do things in this way, but what if...?
- build up your contacts and networks systematically: they are resources for tomorrow's guidance
- be sure to hand over more and more responsibility to the life changers along the work process; the day they don't need you anymore, your job is done

And remember: do not think municipality, think community: the community is much larger and richer than public institutions.

Directing life change can be a complex mission in our increasingly complex reality. It is important for trainers and adults guided by the trainers that they are well aware that: *trainers need not know, they need to know the way.*

They need not know about business creation, art promotion, banking or social volunteering; but they need to know the way to these resources. Knowing the way is their professionalism.

YOU, THE TEAM, THE TRAINER, THE COMMUNITY...

What if such life change provisions do not exist in your community?

What will you do as a person in broken life situation and in need of a forum to work through all this?

Perhaps you contacted the labour market office, and perhaps they said: sorry, we see your point, but we do not have a thing like that.

In that case you might give yourself a special mission: find other adults in similar situations, bring them together, and then work on any kind of institution in the community that should provide such life change opportunities.

Working on this might just be what you need to find a way out of the dead-end and to mobilize new energy...

No matter what caused your broken life situation and forced you to face dramatic life changes, the problem is yours, but the solution is not.

In almost any community it is possible to find collective ways out. If the ways are not there, they should be created; if they are not good enough, they should be improved; if they do not work well, they should build capacity.

Whatever the situation is, you and your peers can make it part of your mission to help change what does not work well for you. In some cases this is an important element in new life directions.

As we said, the problem is always yours, but the solution is not.

One of the most important keys to break the vicious circle is to work on how you see the solution: not as an individual one, but as a collective one, no matter how guilty you might feel about the broken life.

Guilt, remorse and self-criticism can be transformed into firm community action.

What does collective mean?

Collective means that in most cases you are not able to solve the problem on your own, as the increasingly complex and rapidly changing reality is a hard adversary.

Collective means working through your challenges in close collaboration with peers, a life change team, your trainers and coaches, and... with the community. Being part of such collective resources offers you support, dialogues, ideas, guidance and might even lead directly to new life opportunities, including new economic opportunities.

Starting to see the solution as a collective one is in itself an important accomplishment: it opens up a different way of thinking about your problem and especially about how solutions can be created. In fact, and in the best cases, you might find yourself working in what we can call "a small solution-creating community", in which you work with other adults, trainers and resources mobilized in the community.

This also means that you are not only working on your own solutions; you are at the same time working to create solutions for others and in a mission that is bigger than yourself.

Let us at this point ask another relevant question: what does community mean? Why the constant talk about community and community resources?

The meaning of "community" in our case might seem straightforward: the society at large, such as a part of a city, a city, a region or even a country.

However, in our case, the meaning of community goes somewhat further.

In fact, we believe it is important to invite you, life changers and trainers, to think about "community" in a new way - a more rich and dynamic way than we normally do in everyday life.

In everyday life we think of "community" as a big box of people, institutions and all sorts of things taking place in a "community".

This way is natural, but not very useful, or "productive".

Another way of thinking of “community” relates much more to one’s own situation, needs and interests: how can I work in the “community” to promote my case, to work on my mission, to take actions in favour of my plans?

And more: how can my team, my peers and my collaborators use the “community” to fulfil our missions and make our ideas a reality?

Seeing “community” in this way changes our view from “scanning” to “focusing”. We look for resources, partners, opportunities and problems to address.

Let us, in short, mention what comes out of this changed way of looking at the “community”:

- the community is a dynamic place in which things change, and we might take part in these changes (example: ecology)
- the community might offer resources we can use to create new directions (examples: guidance and counselling, partners, collaborators, investors)
- the community might have interesting needs (examples: children, elderly care)
- the community might have potentials not yet exploited (example: quality tourism)
- the community might be interested in using my and our skills or ideas (examples: after-school activities, greening the city, open sport)
- the community might have organisations that we can join in support of our ideas and missions (example: integration of newcomers or migrants)
- the community includes people and organisations very open to new initiatives in the community (examples: technology, music and dance, mental and physical health)

These are just examples of how we can start seeing the community as a rich space of potentials, possible alliances and new opportunities, including unexpected opportunities.

In other words: at the same time as good old capitalism might be the reason that you lost your job (the factory moved to China), good old capitalism is also what opens up all sorts of new opportunities: you can create whatever you like, as long as the community find it interesting enough for you to sustain a living and find new life directions.

Let’s take a closer look, then, at such new *life directions*.

WAYS FORWARD AND NEW DIRECTIONS?

Working your way through your broken life situation or working with people in such situations, you might meet people who sympathize with your situation in different sentimental ways, deepening perhaps your feeling of being a victim of changes in the society, and you might on the other hand meet people who speaks of life change as the great chance to change of a lifetime, following your dreams or the opportunity to finally do what you always wished to do, but never did.

Neither of these speeches is helpful.

Feeling victimized leads to passivity and helplessness; romanticising forced life change leads to naïve hopes about what you can do.

Broken life situations are not easy to manage, neither for the person involved, nor for the trainer working with this person.

There are no guarantees that even hard work and constant struggle will be successful and rewarding.

On the other hand, what is guaranteed is that staying in and deepening the vicious circle never leads to positive results and to sustained life change.

Positive outcomes of the life change struggle often result from slowly changing *the way you see yourself*, your ability to *work with other people* and resources

and the step by step focus on *interacting with the reality in your community, taking action to create your new directions.*

Which are the typical ways out of the vicious circle, of the broken life situation? As mentioned earlier new directions in life and in creating economy can take on all sorts of forms.

However, such new life directions often happen in steps, and supported by different activities needed to create such sustainable ways out.

Let us mention what is known as the most typical life change directions, bearing in mind that each of them can also serve as steps towards other accomplishments:

Job search

The new direction can include new ways of job search. Life change guidance can help identifying skills and competences from your life that you were not aware of, or you did not consider “skills” of value.

Furthermore the methods used to search for a job can be expanded through direct employer contact, networking, identifying public or company needs, and also include more creative ways of presenting yourself and your resources.

Directing life change can be a great support in this work.

Learning

You might realize that you need to learn more, such as about technology, language, business or linked to whatever plans you might have for future employment.

Such learning needs might range from small informal activities to attending further education, typically adult education.

As it is not easy for mature adults to attend or finance further education or to manage self-directed learning, such learning needs should as far as possible be organized by the institutions offering life change guidance, or by collaborating institutions.

It is, indeed, highly recommendable to combine such learning activities with taking action in the community and to base the learning on real-life projects and initiatives.

Entrepreneurship

There are many ways in which you can build a future and create a sustainable income for you and your family. There are no limits to creating small initiatives or small businesses or projects that generate income for you. However, such initiatives often need to be “driven” by something. This “something” could for example be:

- you have a clear idea to create a shop or a service or the like and wish try out the idea directly
- you have a talent, for example an artistic one, you wish to exploit
- you and your team and trainers have identified clear needs in the community and you wish to create a living from meeting those needs, perhaps even in new ways
- you and your team and trainers foresee that certain products or services will be needed in the near future and you would like to make a living through addressing such upcoming needs
- you wish to exploit your perhaps long professional work experiences to create a small business or an association
- you wish to learn certain things on which you would like to build future income

Social work

You might wish to engage in social work in the community, especially in fields where the community needs new thinking and new solutions.

You might see this as a step towards creating social services that can give you a future income.

Participation

Based on the exploration of your life along the directing life change activities, you might discover that you have strong interests in for example politics, sports or various cultures areas.

Through joining organisations and participating in such activities, you might identify ways to create initiatives and future income.

These typical new directions normally never work well in isolation and this is what might challenge both the life changer and the trainers and institutions considerably.

Often several types of activities are needed in parallel or to supplement each other, and it is important that life changers and trainers work together to create realistic steps, combining different activities into mosaics of what the life changer specifically needs.

What is also strongly needed is precisely, as we have discussed earlier, community resources, collaboration, joining forces and guidance.

The ability to form new directions and work towards them is often created through exploring the community, identifying resources and support and spotting useful and interesting opportunities.

No matter which of these typical directions you might follow, they should always and increasingly be linked to building capacity for you and your collaborators to interact with and exploit community resources.

TO WIN THE GAME I NEED TO PLAY...

Some of the attempts to create a new life direction might fail. What is important is that you and your trainers learn from the many efforts and invest this experience in new initiatives.

In directing life change failure is not regarded a waste of time; on the contrary, failure means that you have acted, taken risks, tried out an idea, learned a lot on the way - and probably are more capable of taking new initiatives thanks to the one that failed.

Most importantly, failure means that you got into the game. You played, but this time you did not win.

The same is true for the trainers and coaches. There will be failures all along directing life change. This is the very nature of the game.

Why use the term "game" here?

Because sometimes it is useful to see life and work and economy as a game, of course a very serious one. Very many things will impact your choices, initiatives and new directions, most of which you do not control.

A combination of experience, skills, hard work, support and luck is always involved.

Games are defined as activities in which you win and lose. In many respects our society and our economy can be characterized as games; games with players that players try to win.

So, in a way your life as well as the trainers' professional guidance is also a game. At some point you lost a game, for different reasons. The idea is to get back into the game and play it again - with all the recourses you can bring, and through making alliances with other people and work in teams.

The ones not joining the game are sure to lose. Only the ones playing can win.

Have you thought about what all the movies are about? Not all of them, but most of them?

Most movies are precisely about getting back into the game after a serious setback, crisis or even breakdown - or learning to find new directions by working through different forms of crisis.

In the beginning of the movie, the hero is ok, doing well.

Then the breakdown or crisis destroys the harmony.
The hero falls into a dead-end situation, a depression, alcohol misuse or other kinds of personal crisis.
Only through hard work, and often several attempts, the hero struggles his way back into the game.

Does all this sound familiar?

Building capacity for life change guidance
For institutions and decision-makers



WHY SHOULD ADULT EDUCATION WORK WITH LIFE CHANGE?

Studies on the future of work show that future career histories may increasingly reveal switches between employment and self-employment, and periods of continuing training and unemployment.

Eickhoff *Entrepreneurial thinking and action - an educational responsibility for Europe*

It is not obvious that adult education should or can work with broken lives and directing life change.

It requires nothing less than a sea change in the approach to education, says the European Commission. Sea changes don't come easy. In fact it requires fundamentally *re-thinking education*, as promoted by the Commission within the Europe 2020 strategies. Re-thinking what education is, for whom, about what and its general role in society.

Adult education has been around for more than 100 years in which it has gone through many changes, from enlightenment to empowerment and recently moving towards vocations training close to labour market needs.

However, it has always been *education*: basically offering classes and subjects, in formal or non-formal contexts, to adults in need of re-newed educational input beyond or in preparation of further education or vocational training. Albeit developing special pedagogical approaches linked to the nature of the adult learners (more experience than theory based), it has remained within the traditional paradigm of education; institution, classes, teachers.

Bearing in mind Eickhoff's word about the increasing complexity and changeability of working lives, social and personal lives, and bearing in mind the massive impact from technology and globalization on jobs, people and communities, all educations and adult education in particular need to re-think their missions and mostly unquestioned axioms.

Why "adult education in particular"?

Because adult educations and similar institutions precisely addresses mature adults with educational and learning needs beyond the formal education system and have developed educational strategies, didactics and pedagogies based on the nature and special characteristics of its adult learners.

Furthermore these institutions are experienced as to include social, cultural and personal matters in the training or empowerment processes, and at least to some extent as to offering flexible ways of working, based on often complicated job and life situations. Adult educations and similar provisions are traditionally more holistic minded than other educations and labour market training provisions.

So, adult education in general is the "natural" environment for re-thinking education and to build capacity to work with more complicated life change situations, also because what we call "adult education" is often working much closer to the wider community than for example vocation training or universities.

In this guide, however, we use the term "adult education" in a very broad sense, including a wide range of institutions, such as adult education schools, open adult education centers, some forms of labour market services, open community centers, etc.

The important thing is not the name of the institution or place, but the fact that the institution is working with mature adults in need of support and guidance in often complex labour market, social and personal situations.

This must be kept in mind along the guide.

Still, it will take nothing less than the Commissions' *sea change* to build capacity in such institutions to address forced life change situations in a qualified way.

LIFE CHANGE AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

It requires nothing less than a sea change in the approach to education, emphasizing active learning and the provision of new experiences for students outside of the classroom.

For many education systems this represents a *fundamental* shift away from traditional approaches.

Commission, *Entrepreneurship Education, 2011*

Our message is that life change calls for institution change.

The traditional “institution”, its infrastructures, its administrative systems, its funding, its teachers and managers, and in general its mindsets, are not fit for working adequately with the complex challenges of life change - based on rigid, formal and highly regulated structures, as they are.

There are heavy historic reasons for what have become the typical structures of an educational institution; however, in the globalized, technological and rapidly changing world, those structures are not working well anymore.

Some people state very bluntly: educational institutions as we know them belong to the industrial society, not to the globalized economy and cultures.

Some educations, such as universities and vocational centers can perhaps “afford” to change slowly, as they are very subject and vocation focused, but adult education and similar provisions cannot afford that.

The rapidly changing labour markets, job situations, the social and personal life of millions of mature adults urgently call for capacity building and dynamic change in adult education.

It is true that some institutions are flexible enough to host activities working with life change in more holistic ways, often initiated and driven by dedicated trainers in the institution.

But it is also true that traditional management and institutional structures prevent such teachers from offering life changers what they really need, and the provisions are often fragile and permanently in danger of disappearing, for example as a result of budget cuts.

Why does life change call for institutional change?

Because directing life change to guide mature adults in broken life situations cannot be structured into tight schedules, classroom lessons, rigid administrative practices or traditional teacher roles.

Broken life situations include serious economic, job-related, social and personal problems, constituting a demanding challenge for the adults themselves as well as for the trainers.

Working with such challenges can be unpredictable, complicated, and time-consuming, and call for the involvement of all sorts of resources not always readily available.

Even if it is true that also such provisions and services must take on some kind of structure and form, as resources are not inexhaustible, it also true that such structures and forms need to be very different from what we are used to in a traditional education institution.

One might ask, and for good reasons, how such resources can be financed in times where all public or semi-public budgets are cut and funding for adult education is scarce.

There is no reason to hide the fact that directing life change is a costly business, at least if it is carried out with sufficient quality.

This is true, and the problem of funding will be addressed below.

However, economic analysis from such credible sources as the OECD and the European Commission conclude that it is even more costly NOT to offer such timely services and support, as the costs of millions of adults locked in dead-end life and job situations are manifold higher than addressing the problem as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Therefore directing life change is highly justifiable, even if the funding problem must be addressed appropriately. But, the funding problem is an integrated element in the institutional changes called for and in the needed capacity building.

WHO ARE THE LIFE CHANGERS?

Who are these life changers that adult educations and similar institution need to work with and provide services to?

Many of them are actually well-known costumers in adult education, but now they have other needs and face very different challenges from when they attended an English course.

People who need guidance and support to work through considerable life changes are mostly adults in mature ages experiencing a severe breakdown in their life, typically caused by the loss of their job, physical or mental illness or family crisis.

Such forced life change is characterized by affecting entire life situations and producing a vicious circle with no visible way out options, no matter the nature of the trigger of the breakdown.

The appearance of the vicious circle and the complexity and scope of the broken life situation is precisely what calls for a fundamental life change, and therefore also calls for support and guidance in the form of directing life change - and consequently calls for re-thinking education and capacity building in adult education and similar institutions to cope with and contain such life change needs and processes.

More specifically, mature adults in such broken life situations need to work with and find new directions as to work, social and family life and often as to their personal life as well.

What is important to recognize is that these adults are in *forced* life change situations. They did not ask for it or expect it, and they are certainly not prepared for it. This often means that these adults are threatened as to their and their families' basic living conditions, especially experiencing serious threats to the capacity to build an economic sustainable future.

A different form of life changers are *volunteer life changers*.

Adults, often seniors, might decide at some point in their life that they need or would like a fundamental shift in their life direction. However legitimate providing support for those adults, this form of life change should not be confused with forced life change, being in all respects very different from volunteer life change.

Also it is far more possible for adult educations and similar provisions to work with such volunteer life change within the traditional institutional frameworks.

People in forced life change situations are often mature adults, losing their job or falling seriously ill for short or longer periods, be that physical illness such as cancer or different forms of mental breakdowns occurring more and more frequently across Europe.

They are in need of qualified support and guidance working their way through many phases such as desperation, giving up, exploring their life, gaining self-confidence, building up hopes, joining supportive teams and hopefully finally taking action in their community to create their new directions.

Obviously, these needs do not fit well into traditional classrooms, social provisions or typical labour market guidance.

These people need adult education or similar provisions having built up capacity to work with such complex life situations.

TEACHERS, INSTRUCTORS, TRAINERS, COACHES, “PARTNERS”?

The emerging shift from an “education” to a “life” perspective dissolves and disperses the traditional teacher role. In many empowermental provisions the adults will not be met by “teachers”, but by “trainers”, “coaches”, “mentors”, “guides” or similar staff.

These new roles are produced by the empowermental development in adult education, and in inclusive adult education in particular.

What should we call staff members in adult education working with life change? For practical reasons we mostly call them “trainers” in our materials, but we could call them many other names. Many third sector workers have assumed such names to build job careers and find new professional opportunities.

So, adults in life change situations will not meet teachers or instructors, but trainers and coaches. Those professionals are increasingly focused on empowermental processes, working in shorter or longer processes to build up self-confidence in adults in situations of breakdown or crisis.

No doubt, those professionals accomplish many positive things in their work, but there are serious deficits in their approaches, which might cause considerable frustration among especially adults in broken life situations. Some of these deficits are:

- most of the efforts are focused on mental processes only, such as learning and empowerment
- the efforts are basically addressing personal change not changing or impacting the surrounding reality
- the processes are still limited by traditional institutional structures, roles and regulations
- the work processes do not normally include community networking and the creation of economies
- the provisions usually do not include qualified training offers, such as in the fields of entrepreneurship, technology or for example social innovation

The key limitations of these empowermental provisions, offered by trainers in adult education and by third sector NGO’s, are that they basically do not link personal and mental change to impacting economic and social realities.

Institutional staff such as the above mentioned are not equipped and trained to work efficiently with economic and social realities or to offer more substantial training in important 21st century fields, when needed.

They are also at the same time still limited by traditional institutional frameworks, including funding and management mechanisms.

This means that despite having come a long way from traditional classroom teaching, the empowermental approaches are not really capable of working efficiently with broken life situations and with directing life change.

The most important shift and capacity building among trainers in this field of work is the ability to link mental and personal change directly to taking action in the economic and social realities, including basing the learning and the life directing on such interaction.

At the end of the day, most forced life change situations include considerable threats to the adult’s capacity to make a living in the future. Not recognizing this fact leads to idealistic empowerment processes, not contributing to a sustainable future for the adults.

Perhaps, then, what adults with broken lives need is a partner, a partner team, a community broker, a live change broker, or the like.

WHAT (FORCED) LIFE CHANGERS NEED

When we say that the adult seeking life change support needs a partner, a partner team or a community broker, what does that mean?

Unlike the more limited empowermental processes, broken life situations do not primarily need professionals working on mental and emotional processes, but professionals who know how to integrate real-life challenges, community action and personal capacity building.

The profile of strong life change professionals is, of course, of great importance to the discussion about how institutions and leadership can support life change activities through providing the appropriate framework for the professionals. Therefore we dwell on this profile, as it offers useful elements in understanding the need for institutional and management change.

The professionals that broken life adults need are characterized by the following unexpected core qualifications (on top of general competences to work with adults and broken lives, preferably developed through experience):

ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSETS

Teachers cannot teach how to be entrepreneurial without themselves being entrepreneurial.

Entrepreneurial competency and skills can be acquired or built only through hands-on, real life learning experiences.

Commission, *Entrepreneurship Education: A Guide for Educators, 2013*

Life change professionals need to have or to develop entrepreneurial mindsets. This does not mean that they should be business experts; it means that they should think creation of new opportunities, be willing to take risks and be interested in exploring community needs and new opportunities offered through for example technology or changes in public service policy.

The more the entrepreneurial mentality is based on practical experience the better, and the professionals should take active part in and follow entrepreneurial initiatives among the adults with broken lives as closely as possible and learn from them.

They also need to have access to entrepreneurial knowledge, when needed.

COMMUNITY BROKERS

Have access to authentic tasks, by creating links to the local community (business, local authorities, third sector) to identify and get access to real life tasks that the teachers can use.

Budapest Agenda *Enabling Teachers for Entrepreneurship Education*

The professionals need to be community brokers. They need to act in the community and be in increasing contact with players and stakeholders from different sectors to identify new opportunities of economy creation, social involvement or cultural engagement, and they need to be able to negotiate such opportunities with key players in the community.

All this to create spaces of opportunity and real-life engagement in directing life change.

NETWORK BUILDERS

Forced life changers also need their trainers to be network builders. Along the life change work the trainer will meet many opportunities to bring people and institutions together, to link community needs to possible project partnerships, to build good relations with public authorities, etc.

This community broking can lead to the creation of shared networks that can be mobilized in favour of initiatives taking in life change processes.

The networks should in time and in developed form include all sorts of private players, cultural institutions and social actors.

It can be of special importance to include technology resources to support the understanding of emerging opportunities in the different fields of technology.

OPPORTUNITY SPOTTERS

One of the qualifications of life change professionals is to be able to develop a strong capacity to spot opportunity, always asking the questions, also in unexpected situations:

- Why doesn't this work well?
- What could be done?
- How could it be done?
- Who could be involved?
- What could come out of it?

Of course, such spotting relates strongly to jobs and economy, but also to social work, cultural work, sport and many other things.

Spotting opportunity does not need to lead directly to economy, but can lead to engagements of different kinds that in time might include making a living.

Once again, such professionals need not *know*; they need to *know the way*; they need to be able to *ask the questions*.

TALENT SCOUTS

Life change professionals should be able to and like to work with all sorts of people and life situations.

One of the most important activity is to spot talent: not because the adult is going to the movies, but because almost all adults, no matter their life history, have been doing many things during their lives, and because life change includes re-viewing and exploring what interests, dreams or talents might be hidden in the life stories; interests or talents that might be brought to life and taken further.

Often this is what adults need when life directions are broken.

Directing life change includes linking such interests or talents to further training, cultivation or economic opportunities, very often in the form of a combination of these.

CUTTING EDGERS

We said that linking interests and talents to for example further training is a part of directing life change.

So it is, but in the case of the broken life of a 55 year old adult, it is not obvious that long-term training or education is an option.

Therefore life change professionals are also cutting edgers. This means that they should work to find the shortest way possible to what the adults need, not the longest and most complicated.

This is why it is recommended, for example by the Commission, to work with real-life challenges and projects in adult education, and especially when it comes about life change needs. Working close to real-life initiatives, partnering up with useful resources, inserting elements of learning when needed and relevant and engaging directly in the missions; all this helps the life changer and the trainer to take the most direct way to a new life, based on practical results and tangible progress.

Such direct ways can furthermore create considerable self-confidence, pride and capacity to act in the adult life changers.

What is interesting in the profile outlined above is that what adults in broken life situations need... is also what their trainers need.

Obviously, then, the new roles of the *institution* is to provide time, space and eco-systems for such professionals, and this leads directly discussing the need for institutional change.

CHALLENGING THE INSTITUTION

Adult educations, labour market services and NGO's are... institutions.

The institution provides the platform or framework for what can happen in the institution, based on funding available, rules and regulations. But, also based on

institutional policy and governance, including leadership and management types and practice.

In general institutions, especially public and non-governmental, change slowly: the gap between the speed of change in the globalized economy and the speed of change in such institutions is constantly growing.

Most institutions working in this field are not able to change according to changed reality, as indicated in the Commission's "sea change".

There are many reasons for this. Let us list the most important:

- most institutions are public or NGO's and governed by strict rules and regulations from local, regional or national governments
- most institutions have little latitude due to centralized decision-making
- they are often based on strict and scarce funding and on sharp control
- managers and managements have rather traditional public or social sector mindsets, and are not trained in what is called learning leadership
- in general these institutions are not frontrunners as to innovation in society
- educational and social staff still define themselves and their professions in terms of education and social education, even if called trainers or coaches

Often more flexible and independent "places for life change", such as community centers or different forms of private initiatives, are more able to meet the needs of life changers, but these "places" are often depending on volunteers and scarce and fragile funding.

Professionalism and efficiency is important when we work with people with broken lives, and therefore institutions and staff need to meet certain quality criteria to work adequately with directing life change.

A retired dentist wishing to learn to paint does not require the same kind of professionalism as a an unemployed bus driver, who's life suddenly is ruined.

Most institutions working in this field are therefore and by definition not able to provide qualified support and guidance to adults in broken life situations, except in special funding or experimentative situations.

Therefore radical change is needed, not small steps allowing the "reality gap" to grow and grow.

Institutions are strongly depending on leadership. Institutions are not likely to change or to expand their activity without direct action and decision-making from the institution's leaders. Most institutions in this field are not flat organisations, allowing considerable freedom for teams and staff.

Institutional change therefore points directly to the problem of leadership and governance, as a breakthrough is only likely to be driven by one of the three following change scenarios, covering in fact most types of institutions in this field, including educations, labour market services and NGO's:

1.

Radical change is initiated at the level of local, regional or national government and implemented across institutions

2.

Institutional leadership initiatives are taken independently and through supportive partnerships

3.

Strong evidence of success is produced in life change processes among one or more professionals in the institution, motivating the management to initiate institutional changes

The first scenario is not likely, as public spending is cut and as authentic adult education is not on the priority list in most countries. The political systems do not invite long-term solutions, including investing in for example life change. Such long-term investment is considered short-run costs only.

The third scenario is likely to happen in special cases, but it is difficult to see it as a sustainable solution.

Therefore we are, not surprisingly, left with the second scenario, which is also the most realistic scenario considering the political systems in most European countries.

CHALLENGING LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Unexpectedly, the European Commission in recent documents encourages rule breaking!

Not illegal activity, of course, but *rule breaking*.

Why is that?

In fact it is strictly linked to what we are talking about here: cutting edge initiatives, cutting through the inertia of institutional practice, bringing about change to meet urgent economic, social and human needs and to install dynamic mechanisms making this possible.

How many leaders and managers are doing that? Very few, for good reasons, but still...

Leaders and managers, as well as managing boards, increasingly need to not only take responsibility for the proper *administration* of the institution, but to take responsibility for *change*.

The static administration practice should be replaced by dynamic leadership, leaving administration to other staff members in the institution, and *re-thinking the institution as a driver of change in the community*.

They would need to challenge governing authorities, to take risks and to think out of the box and in untraditional ways. This is what the Commission says sometimes is needed: rule-breakers with entrepreneurial mindsets daring to take responsibility beyond the administration of the organisation, daring to become *leaders*.

However, such behaviour is not always appreciated and rewarded in our societies. Therefore these leaders need to be brave and to take their chances.

Well, the same is even truer for the adults with broken lives, we might say, and on less favourable conditions, we might add.

On the other hand, if they do well, they can benefit personally as well as professionally from being pioneers and innovators. This will make leadership in these institutions (often public or NGO's) far more interesting and challenging.

So, we end up with an interesting scenario: what is true for adults with broken lives is also true for their trainers - and for the leaders and managers of the institutions.

When the Commission says that teachers need to be entrepreneurial to teach entrepreneurship, we can also say that institutions need to be entrepreneurial to make entrepreneurial practices possible.

And the core element in pioneer leadership in such institutions is precisely: entrepreneurial mentality and practice. Not in the sense that the institution should be turned into a private for-profit company, but in the sense that the institutions should set up creative missions and take action accordingly and in often untraditional ways and in particular foster entrepreneurial mentality among staff and collaborators.

The basic entrepreneurial approach is, as always: what is not there can be brought about.

Pioneer leaders of institutions or provisions wishing to build capacity to work with life change - which might by the way become an expanding business with millions of costumers! - do not need to revolutionize their institution or to change it completely.

They need to build capacity to work with life change on top of what they are already doing, and to take the needed steps to do this with quality and credibility.

They must, in other words, expand the range and scope of activity to include capacity to direct life change. This might in fact have a great and renewing impact on the more traditional activities in the institution, but this is another story.

What capacity is it, then, more specifically that pioneer leaders need to build in the institution?

A single line of action would not work. A combination of interacting actions in different directions is needed: a new *infrastructure* is created in the institution, in addition or in interaction with the traditional infrastructure.

The key elements in building institutional capacity to life change guidance are:

- partnering up with useful community players and stakeholders and with a team of trainers in the institution, and if possible with the nearest governing body, creating a joint venture
- providing time and space for a team to practice quality life change guidance on flexible and experimentative terms
- promoting entrepreneurial mentality in the institution at large
- practicing mixed staff policy, integrating community resources in the staff with different forms of life change guidance experience and without a formal educational or social educational background
- mobilizing the institution and its collaborative partners to create new funding opportunities for life change provisions
- opening up the institution to community players from different sectors, allowing them to bring their experience into the institution
- playing a much more aggressive and pro-active role in the community
- building up real-life collaboration, projects and joint ventures in the community in which trainers and adults could be involved

As can be seen, this list presents a package, a package in which one element is depending on and interacting with another.

The name of such an approach is *strategic change leadership*, and it takes some time to make it work; however some of the things can be achieved stepwise.

Obviously, such strategic change goes far beyond the traditional roles and profiles of an adult education or a labour market service. On the other hand, such approaches are deeply linked to directing life change and foster a sense of “life change culture” throughout the institution and the institution’s networks.

It is also clear that such changes include dedicated and qualified staff, living the culture of these changes and supporting the changes through practical work.

Who are these trainers or life change professionals?

CHALLENGING THE PROFESSION

The profiles of the professionals engaged in guiding life change are obviously somewhat different from the profile of teachers and even empowermental trainers and coaches.

So, where should they be trained, these life change professionals?

They should not!

The educational system is probably not the right place for the training of life change professionals, as it would contradict the very core idea of life change capacity built on experience and partnering with the adult life changers.

The open entrepreneurial mentality needed in directing life change should be created in the course of practical work with life changers and through ongoing capacity building in trainer teams and mixed team of trainers and community resources.

Just like the life changers themselves, life change professional should learn as needed and develop new competences based on the variety of missions they undertake with life changers.

So, the first way to “train” life change professionals is to involve adult educational staff, labour market service staff and NGO staff in practical life change processes, in which they learn side by side with the life changers.

The second way to recruit such professionals is to create mixed teams in the institutions, once again calling for pioneer leadership thinking out of the box and “breaking rules”.

Adult education institutions and similar provisions should increasingly be populated by professionals with non-pedagogical backgrounds, such as entrepreneurs, private sector professionals, sport professionals, artists, or whatever.

The point is not the profession in itself or who you are, but what you can do for life changers.

This means that institutions and managers who wish to build directing life change capacity need to challenge traditional professions linked to education and the social sector in two ways:

- encourage and guide educational staff to put aside their professional profiles and engage in any activity linked to qualified life change guidance
- create mixed life change teams with the participation of various relevant and competent community resources, including “professionals” or “amateurs” with considerable life change experience and life change mindsets

This is in fact in line with the famous shift to learning outcomes, promoted by the Commission some years ago: it’s not about how many books you have been reading, but what you are able to do.

Challenging profession is also challenging traditional academic power systems.

THE INSTITUTION IN THE COMMUNITY

Have access to authentic tasks, by creating links to the local community (business, local authorities, third sector) to identify and get access to real life tasks that the teachers can use.

Budapest Agenda *Enabling Teachers for Entrepreneurship Education*

Careful analysis of a wide range of documents from the European Commission with the Europe 2020 perspective reveals interesting patterns as to education, training and guidance, including adult education and similar provisions, formal or non-formal.

As already mentioned, the Commission (and therefore official European policy!) wishes to promote and advocate no less than a *cultural revolution* in education and training. This is extremely relevant to institutions working with or planning to work with mature adults in broken life situations.

Pioneer leaders and innovative institutions can find all the support they need in this Commission policy. This means that even if they are considered “rule breakers” at local or national levels, they are certainly not at European level. In fact they are simply doing what European policy encourages them to do and what is needed.

What is, then, this “cultural revolution” about?

Let’s summarize a long story into the most relevant points in our context, building capacity to support and guide adults in need of fundamental life change:

Opening up education and training to the wider community

Re-think the role of the institution in the community: build partnership, joint ventures and small eco-systems of collaboration with all sorts of community players and stakeholders, from the kindergarten to the local insurance company

Learn through real-life scenarios, projects and challenges

Re-think the role of curricula, didactics and learning material: use the established eco-systems of collaboration to engage learners and trainers in real-life missions and let them learn through these missions

Integrate strong entrepreneurial, initiative-taking and creative mindsetting in the learning and training processes

Re-think what education and training means: from isolated and theoretical knowledge building and remembrance to learning through impacting the real world

Bring in wider community resources in the education and training provisions

Re-think the traditional educational and social services professions: bring in experts, experiences professionals, pioneers and innovators and the local baker and sport trainer in the learning processes and allow them to team up with the educational staff; they will bring the reality into education and training

Build such organisation infrastructures that flexibly allow for constant change and innovation

Re-think what an educational or social “organisation” means: create more “light” and flexible infrastructures, allow independent working teams and create a mentality and practice of change as the rule and not the exception

It goes without saying that changing adult education and social services organisations in this direction will in itself represent a giant step towards building capacity to direct and guide life change.

For pioneer and brave leaders such changes, or working towards such changes, must of course be strongly linked to new ways of creating economies for the institution.

But this is not an obstacle; on the contrary, it is simply a part of the game, deeply linked promoting and practicing entrepreneurial mentality.

Basically, the radical challenge for adult educations and similar services and provisions, and especially for leaders and managing boards, is to re-think the role of the institution in the community.

The traditional role of an adult education or a social service, within the paradigms of the specialized and instrumental industrial society, was and still is to organize and deliver highly defined and detailed services broken down to time and place, curricula, information and formal guidance and subject-matter knowledge; all this guaranteed by professionals with very specific formal educational background, such as teachers and social workers.

Thus such institutions carried out highly specified tasks in the society and delivered the results to other specialized organisations.

The nature of such institutional action was and still is to perform in independent and isolated sectors and sub-sectors. The institutional *action* is not defined as *inter-action*.

These paradigms might be historically justified, but they don't work well in constantly changing communities defined by globalized economies and technology innovations taking place several times a week, heavily impacting jobs, labour markets, educations and social life.

And, such institutions do not work well for mature adults going through dramatic and unpredictable life change processes and in need of flexible and dynamic support and guidance - nor for their trainers, by the way.

This is why the Commission and other high-level strategic “thinkers” promote a cultural revolution: adult education and social services, no matter the specific form and structure of such institutions, should work to assume an active role in the community, link their activities to all sorts of relevant partners and

collaborators and invite the adults to benefit from working with real-life and learn and build new capacity through impacting the surrounding realities.

Taking into consideration the needs and interests of mature adults with broken lives, it is obvious that such changes at institutional level would allow for dramatically different guidance and support services compared to what traditional institutions can deliver at the moment.

Unfortunately local and national policy is not following this European policy, sometimes on the contrary, and this is why adult education and life change provisions need visionary leaders, rule breakers and managing boards encouraging initiatives and experimentation.

In short: leaders and managers that *think community* and long-term benefits, not just the administrative survival of the institution.

LIFE CHANGE, INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE - NEW OPPORTUNITIES?

Education institutions should be encouraged to become more entrepreneurial in their wider approach, to ensure that they develop and live a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation through their missions, leadership, stakeholder engagement, curricula and learning outcomes.

Commission, *Entrepreneurship 2020 Action plan*

We said: what is true for the life changer is also true for the institution offering life change guidance.

In fact the interaction between the life changer, the life change trainer and the institution offering such guidance is like an eco-system in which all the elements are inter-dependent and in which a change in one element produces a change in the others.

The life changer will need to go through complicated processes populated with serious challenges, and there is no guarantee that the journey will be successful. The same is true, albeit at another level, for the institution providing such services. The needed changes in the institution - and especially between the institution and the wider community - is not about replacing one solid system with another and taking the time to get used to the new one, which was the nature of yesterday's change.

Just like the life changer: they cannot expect a solid life direction replaced by another solid life direction.

That was the change paradigm in the old society, but these days are over.

Obviously and for good reasons the life changer will experience such changes as *threats*. So will the institution: the well-known stabilities will slowly disappear and be replaced by more dynamic but also less solid and less stable structures, definitely presenting a threat to institutions, managers and trainers used to seek firm structures and long-term stability.

However, the very same threats of change and breakdown are at the same time opportunities of change and new directions.

This is definitely true for the life changer - if not the whole life change mission would make little sense.

But it is, at another level, also true for the institution wishing to build directing life change capacity.

Traditional adult educations and social services, including those outsourced to the third sector, have for a long time been under pressure. In most countries the pressure is increasing.

The pressures are for samples:

- considerable cuts in public spending
- increasing control and delivery demands
- requests for direct labour market impact

- putting pressure on staff working conditions
- applying vocational training criteria and values
- privatization in full or partly, resulting in new funding pressure on the institution

In this state of affairs it is understandable that leaders and managing boards assume defensive positions. In many cases, however, such defensive positions, lead directly into a negative circle.

This circle needs to be broken through new institutional directions, similar to the new directions of the life changers themselves.

This leads to a very important statement, the meaning of which is paramount to institutional innovation:

The struggle of an institution to break the vicious circle and find new directions is precisely what builds capacity to provide qualified life change services to adults with broken lives.

This is what the Commission means when saying: the institutions must *live* entrepreneurship, not simply teach it.

There is a direct interaction and interplay between the “life change” of the institution, the “life change” of the trainers and the life change of the adults, as such interacting “life change” at different levels precisely generates the needed mentality and capacity in the institutional eco-system.

Just like the life changer fundamentally needs to find new ways to a sustained economy, the same is true for the institution.

Traditionally institutions offering or wishing to offer life change services are funded through the following income sources:

- public money
- course and other services fees
- funding from wider society, often in the form of “charity”, and from special funding sources through for example annual applications
- occasionally: income from offering other services that the institution’s core services

Even if such funding can still to some extent be maintained, it is less likely that these funding sources are able or willing to finance expanded activities, such as directing life change.

How, then, create new life change guidance economies?

The key is that threats, breakdowns or radical change can also be expressed in positive terms, such as opening doors to new opportunities, including new economy generating opportunities.

Again, this is true at the level of the life changer as well as at the level of institutional change.

There is an interesting *user-driven* approach to this that should at least be mentioned in our context: the institution can team up with adult life changers and life change guides in the quest for solid financing of the life change activities.

This approach, not often practiced yet, represents a different joint venture than the one representing the institution’s collaboration with the wider community: in this case it is a joint venture between the users, the intermediaries and the institutional framework.

The obvious benefit of this approach is, of course, that it offers all involved players a common mission to build life change capacity at all levels and through taking full responsibility for this mission.

In general, though, the institution should work to break the vicious resource circle through re-formulating the discussed “cultural revolution” in financial terms.

This re-formulation might result in various *new resource generating directions*, such as for example:

- joining forces with adults and trainers as described above
- advocating investing in life change guidance towards decision-makers, based on evidence of sound long-term economic benefits, such as for example recommended by the Commission
- partnering up with wider community to address and solve the oceans of known and emerging needs in the community
- identifying new opportunities in the community to which the institution, its professionals and adult life changers can contribute; or could be even driven by these resources, including fostering the understanding of *creating needs*
- identifying skills and talents in the institution to provide new forms of services in the community, linking institutional resources to community needs
- defining and describing needs and interests in companies, cultural and public organisations that could be addressed by the institution and its partners
- investing in new initiatives to which life changers could contribute considerably, again including fostering the understanding of *creating needs*

Just to mention some obvious new directions.

What does it take to work with such opportunities?

It will include many and various steps and actions, but most importantly such actions should be governed by and based on the following 4 work methods:

Develop and encourage a new way of seeing the institution and its possible roles in the community, especially among institutional decision-makers

Take initiatives relevant to trainers and adult life changers, offering them direct involvement

Address policy-makers constantly to explain the wider community value of the initiatives

Build up eco-systems of collaboration around the institution and its initiatives in the wider community, and innovatively include all sorts of community players and stakeholders

Who knows - perhaps good initiatives will jointly benefit the institution as well as the adult life changers!

Anyway, if no new directions are created, both will lose...

*Lessons learned from
directing life change*



INTRODUCTION

The specific role of the short-paper *Lessons learned from directing life change* is to summarize in clear and useful form lessons learned from directing life change for mature adults in broken life situations in the UK, Spain, Finland, Hungary, Israel and Italy from 2012-14.

The lessons learned are considered valid as they emerge from very different groups of adults in very different countries and cultures, but all point in the same directions.

It must be taken into consideration that the life change guidance in the DLC project was very much linked to adult education environments, however we consider the lessons learned relevant and valid also for directing life change in other contexts, such as labour market provisions, NGO's and similar guidance resources.

Some of the elements in this short-paper can be re-found in other DLC papers, such as *Building capacity for life change - for institutions* and *Considering Life Change - for adults and trainers*.

However, in these papers a more narrative and descriptive approach is applied, whereas in this short-paper we try to summarize in condensed and systematic form what was learned through practice - in particular to allow the short-paper to serve as reference for future European adult education policy, including funding programming.

Consequently this short-paper primarily addresses decision-makers in the field of adult education policy and adult education managements, but the short-paper is also highly relevant to decision-makers in similar educational, social or labour market related fields.

More generally, the short-paper wishes to serve as a reference for future European policy and funding initiatives by the European Commission, especially addressing the increasingly complicated work and life situations for millions of Europeans as a result of globalized economy and dramatic cuts in public spending.

More specifically, the recommendations and conclusions will serve as reference for new European initiatives, building on the DLC experience: the *Gamification for hard-to-reach adults* project 2014-16 and the *Break down or break out* project 2014-16.

The content of the short-paper is very much inspired by partner reflections and evaluations along the DLC project, and the short-paper therefore also represents what can be called a summary of partner reflections along the DLC project.

To serve as useful reference the short-paper will offer short and clear sentences and statements, not taking into account that minor details and variations are left aside, which is in line with the nature of the SWOT approach.

It has been decided to point to the 5 most important elements in each SWOT section to force the project to focus on what is really important and to get the messages across.

More descriptive details can be found in the papers mentioned above.

Obviously, each of the 20 SWOT elements can be equipped with details and further explanations along with practical examples and scenarios.

DIRECTING LIFE CHANGE FOR MATURE ADULTS IN BROKEN LIFE SITUATIONS

Let's summarize the key mission of directing life change to offer a platform of understanding of the SWOT:

Life change means that several important things in one's life is changing at the same time, even if triggered by one single event, such as losing the job or getting seriously ill.

Life change comes about when broken life directions happen. In this guide we are not talking about "volunteer life change", but what we call "forced life change". Not that deciding to change your life at some point is not interesting or important. It certainly is, but it is not the focus of this guide.

What we talk about here is forced life change. Life change produced by serious or several changes in one's life. The point is that this life change situation is caused by things that are forced upon us; things we did not chose ourselves.

This is why we talk about "broken" life directions, "broken" careers, or even "broken lives"...

The deeper meaning of forced life change is, then, that resuming ones normal life after a broken life situation is not an option - or, the option is so problematic that one chooses not to take this direction. In fact experiencing that resuming ones normal life is not an option, often results from longer periods of precisely trying to resume what was ones normal life.

Instinctively we try to recover and resume what is well-known to us, what has been our life direction for years and perhaps even decades.

Obviously, then, life change processes can be very long and include many different phases.

So, forced life change occurs when it is not possible or recommendable to resume or try to resume one's previous life direction.

What is, then "life change"?

In the old days, so to speak, you might lose your job, fall seriously mentally or physically ill, go through complicated family crises, and then, after a period of recovery, resume your life direction the best way possible.

Of course, today this still happens and is still possible.

However, an increasing and still growing number of people, and especially people in mature ages such as 40 to 60, find themselves in broken life situations where resuming one's normal life is not possible.

These people reach a point of no return, so to say. No way back to the well-known, to what you always did.

They reach a point where changing one thing in their lives is not enough. They face precisely what we call a "forced life change situation". They will need to find new directions that might include working life, social life and personal life altogether. They need to find *new directions*.

As can be seen from these words, life change situations can be long and complicated, and this why they can produce "life stories", sometimes taking on the form of a novel or documentary.

Telling the life change experience in the form of stories is a very strong tool when working with your own or your colleagues broken life situation. First of all, because telling the stories offers some very important reflections of one's life, but secondly, because one's life story can be of immense importance to other people in similar situations, looking for "how did the others manage?"

In our website you will find many such life stories, in video and text, and we are convinced that you can benefit from working with those stories.

One of the negative and serious consequences of recognising that returned to one's normal life direction is not possible is that one gives up and slowly falls into a state of passivity and even depression.

In our highly individualized culture, this is definitely an option. The role of the partnership between adults in forced life change and teachers and trainers in adult education is to make sure that this does not happen, or find possible ways out.

Directing life change guidance is precisely about preventing getting stuck and helping people to work their way out.

Few people, in fact very few people, are able to work their way out alone, and we cannot expect people to be able to do that.

This is why we have the obligation to offer these people collective time and space to fight dead-ends and to find the new directions. From an economic point of view, investing in positive life change directions is a *very good business for society*.

The sooner the life changer joins collective work processes the better. The life changer will clearly benefit from collective reflections and guidance among peers and trainers in the different life change processes, as the collective forum can:

- help understanding the broken situation better, put it in perspective and share with adults in similar situation
- help working through the mental and social consequences of the broken situation, strongly supported by the sharing with other adults, including building up one's self-confidence through offering other adults support
- help recognizing the situation as it is and that the situation calls for life change in one or more respects
- start looking at one's life and slowly creating future scenarios, and share such scenarios with other adults' future scenarios
- start working more focused on one's skills, talents, aspirations, dreams and unrecognized or unexpected resources, including seeing different actions or experiences as "resources" in a changed perspective
- help teaming up with other adults, exploring the identified or potential resources, talking to people in the community
- help turning these work processes into increasing confidence in new directions, thus help breaking the vicious circle
- support concrete initiatives giving solidity and credibility to whatever new direction is taken, including cultivating personal talents, job search in new ways, learning activities, creating small business, etc.
- and last, but certainly not least: creating strong and powerful community networking and engagement

In the best cases, the collective forum will be able to follow and support the life changers through their initial new direction steps.

The life changer will also in any case benefit and grow from offering mentoring support to other adults in broken life situations, offering and sharing concrete and valuable experience.

It is of great importance to acknowledge that the SWOT is carried out in relation to *forced* life change, not to different forms of *volunteer* life change. Volunteer life change is a totally different matter.

DIRECTING LIFE CHANGE SWOT

STRENGTHS

[Present]

The practical directing life change activities and the accompanying partner evaluations point to the following key strengths in the DLC approach:

1.

Holistic approach

Directing life change linked to adult education provision and mentality can offer the life changers a holistic approach to their change processes, including professional, social and personal aspects.

This follows from the empowermental directions in adult education, developed in recent years and taking into account the need to go through long complicated processes, also involving change of mentality, psychological and emotional

aspects of deep change. This is precisely what is indicated through the term “life change”.

Holistic life change processes are often seen to directly involve the family and to create real change also for the family.

Policy and funding measures should take this into account.

2.

Collective reflection

Directing life change linked to adult education provision and mentality avoids the increasing individualization of problems in our European culture. It offers the life changer a collective forum for reflection, debate, support and mutual mentoring. Combined with the epic dimension it allows collective reflection and support along often long change processes, building even sometime communities of change among the life changers and their trainers.

Collectivizing change processes can help transform guilt and depression reactions into constructive empowermental directions, offering the life changer real change.

The collective reflection and approach offers far more resources for taking action in the community than individual initiatives.

Policy and funding measures should take this into account.

3.

The epic dimension

The epic dimension in life change represents a sort of third dimension on top of time and space.

The epic dimension can be described as the life changer’s opportunity to immerse into a life journey of various and interacting changes, allowing the life changers to experience the life change as something that embraces the entire life process, not only certain aspects of life such as the job situation.

The epic dimension furthermore allows and invites the life changer to tell life stories: it offers a narrative dimension to life change contributing tremendously to life change itself and offering useful support to other life changers.

The epic dimension cannot be brought about, if considerable time, space and reflection are not provided for.

Policy and funding measures should take this into account.

4.

Developing new mind-sets

Traditional and vocation oriented change approaches are mostly linked to pseudo-efficiency, skills training and short-term labour market directed objectives and intentions and are not able to produce mentality change and new mind-sets.

However, taking into account 21st labour market and social life forecasts from the OECD and the European Commission, this is a very narrow, short-term and in fact inefficient approach to life change, and even to job change.

Therefore life change processes should include developing new mind-sets to cope with rapidly changing present and future challenges both as to work life and to social and personal life.

Directing life change linked to adult education provision and mentality is able to develop such changed mind-sets and thus to equip the life changers with a strong and highly valuable 21st century mentality.

Policy and funding measures should take this into account.

5.

Linking to real change and community

Increasingly vocation oriented and also centripetal empowerment oriented change provisions are typical not linked to taking action and do not usually include real-life change in the training processes.

This favors narrow skills training or never-ending introspection and leaves valuable competence development aside, the competence to act in the community and to learn through linking to real-life situations, needs and innovative opportunities.

The starting and ending point of efficient life change processes should be reality and community, and directing life change linked to adult education provision and mentality has proven to have the potential to offer such interaction, well managed and if governed by a strong entrepreneurial orientation. Policy and funding measures should take this into account.

WEAKNESSES

[Present]

The practical directing life change activities and the accompanying partner evaluations point to the following key weaknesses in the DLC approach:

1.

The limitations of empowerment

“Traditional” empowerment approaches focus generally on the personal, social, psychological and emotional work processes aiming to make the individual life changer stronger. This approach is sometimes supplemented by skills development, such as technology or communication skills.

However valuable this approach might be in many adult education or adult mentoring activities, the approach demonstrates clear limitations as to directing life change in the full meaning of life change.

The entire and dynamic aspect of interaction with reality and community is often lost in this approach. This is in most cases a serious deficit when it comes about creating new life directions, building up sustainable economy and learning to act in 21st century communities.

Future life change provisions should take this into account.

2.

The centripetal spiral

Empowerment work processes often produce a centripetal spiral, caused by the lack of direct interaction with reality and community.

Mentoring, dialogues and collective reflection processes can in some cases lead to endless introspection, to endless psychological and social “therapy” and increasingly block interaction with real life situations and community.

The more the collective work process remains captured in such mental empowerment, the more difficult it can be to break the circle and address real life.

Apart from blocking positive social and economic opportunities for the life changer, the lack of interaction with reality also prevents the life changer from developing highly valuable 21st century competences, such as entrepreneurship, networking and taking initiative.

Future life change provisions should take this into account.

3.

Guiding, not providing

A very straightforward possible weakness in directing forced life change is the simple fact that directing life change is precisely about directing and not providing.

“Providing” is used here in the sense of “providing needed resources along the life change process”, such as training, technology skills, entrepreneurial competences, language skills or whatever might have been identified in the life change process as needed by the life changer to pursue new missions.

This “deficit” is a natural consequence of the nature of *directing* and *guiding*.

However if the life change provisions do not have strong and resourceful networks at its disposal, the further taking action processes can be seriously blocked.

It can therefore be considered an inherent weakness to life change provisions that they will need to build up and offer considerable networks of competence and skills development resources.

Future life change provisions should take this into account.

4.

Time and space

A serious weakness in directing life change is that it requires considerable resources, such as time, space, human resources and flexibility.

Few life change provisions are able to live up to the criteria for full and qualified life change provision.

The lack of resources, fundamentally caused by lack of sufficient funding, is a constant weakness in directing life change. The lack of such resources can severely damage life change processes and cause many frustrations among life changers, their trainers and the institutions, some frustrations even leading to dropping out of the life change processes.

Life change provisions need to counter such weaknesses by developing strong funding skills, but more importantly they need to develop strong capacity to use available resources efficiently, including at trainer and management levels.

At the same time such provisions might start to work more systematically with what is called user-driven approaches, involving life changers directly in funding activities, based on their own interests and resulting in valuable life change competences.

Future life change provisions should take this into account.

5.

Community mentality

A general weakness in directing life change is, of course, that authentic life change processes are deeply depending on the community.

21st century networking and joining forces mentality cannot be expected in most communities, and therefore life change provisions are challenged with considerable tasks as to work on community mentality and to encourage community players to take a serious interest in supporting life changers and directing life change processes.

Community mentality will change very slowly and the resources needed to work on this are normally not available to life change provisions, nor are the competences to do so.

Once again, life change provisions will need to include life changers themselves in such missions, seeing life changers not as a problem but as a potential resource. Working on community mentality and readiness will develop strong 21st century competences among the life changers as well.

Future life change provisions should take this into account.

OPPORTUNITIES

[Future]

The practical directing life change activities and the accompanying partner evaluations point to the following key opportunities in the DLC approach:

1.

Eco-systems

Directing life change linked to adult education provision and mentality offers great future opportunities to support and foster the creation of eco-systems of collaboration, change and innovation in the communities, between communities and increasing through virtual platforms.

Eco-systems of collaboration, change and innovation are defined as different from isolated and stand-alone initiatives which are extremely resource demanding, inefficient and less sustainable.

The great opportunity is to support such eco-systems to allow life changers and their trainers to directly tap into existing infrastructures of community initiatives and collaboration, offering life changers much more efficient opportunities to create new work and life directions.

Life changers with sufficient resources can be directly involved in establishing and sustaining such eco-systems, from which they will benefit considerably themselves.

Policy and funding measures should take this into account.

2.

21st century mind-sets

Directing life change linked to adult education provision and mentality offers great future opportunities to help foster 21st century mind-sets in the community, as an integrated approach to developing such mind-sets among the life changers themselves.

Most community stakeholders and players, private as well as public and social sector actors, will benefit heavily from developing such mind-sets, as it will bring about a more substantial interest in change and innovation in the institutions as well as in the community.

Life changers and life change trainers and their institutions could be relevant and very valuable drivers of such mind-sets, as well as benefit themselves from the development of such mind-sets in the community.

Changes in mind-sets often must be driven by people in need of change.

Policy and funding measures should take this into account.

3.

Integrated solutions: one-stop-shop

Directing life change linked to adult education provision and mentality offers great future opportunities to support integrated solutions for life changers, unemployed, NEET youth and other people threatened by dead-end situations.

Integrated solutions might mean that proper infrastructures are in place in the community to offer different forms of resources to these people, ranging from entrepreneurial support to technology training and social innovation hubs.

Such integrated solutions should, obviously, include labour market services and social services linked to the needs of these people.

In most communities such resources are scattered across the community, across sectors and even across departments, making efficient provisions very difficult.

A famous example is the Kafka universe of starting a small business.

Directing life change provisions are highly relevant drivers of such integrated solutions, as such solutions would respond directly to the needs of life changers.

Policy and funding measures should take this into account.

4.

User-driven innovation

Directing life change linked to adult education provision and mentality offers great future opportunities to start working with new innovative approaches increasingly dominating small as well as big economies.

In short, new economic and therefore social opportunities are increasing driven by users, ordinary citizens and people with new ideas; and companies and public organisations are increasingly creating new opportunities through the direct involvement of users and citizens.

Thus citizens, such as life changers, can increasingly be involved in taking new initiatives that lead to the creation of economies and new life perspectives, through social innovation and through addressing public and private needs, etc.

Obviously life changers have a direct and very strong interest in such new ways of creating economy.

Policy and funding measures should take this into account.

5.

From problem to resource

Directing life change linked to adult education provision and mentality offers great future opportunities to *combine* real-life competence development and the creation of economy among life changers.

The simple change of perspective from seeing a life changer as a “problem”, or at least as a person requiring and consuming resources, to seeing the life changer as a “resource” opens up tremendous and not yet unfolded opportunities for the life changer, for the life change provisions as well as for the community.

Most life changers are by definition out of work for different reasons or in some way and to various extents decoupled from the labour markets, and after periods of stabilization, recovery and collective capacity building many of them would be

able to act as great resources for building eco-systems of collaboration, change and innovation in the community and beyond.

The brilliant and extremely productive potential in such engagement is that it can be combined with the further capacity building and life change of the life changers, as such engagement will no doubt generate highly valuable real-life competences among the life changers, even taken into consideration that such engagement must take place stepwise.

Policy and funding measures should take this into account.

THREATS

[Future]

The practical directing life change activities and the accompanying partner evaluations point to the following key threats in the DLC approach:

1.

Lack of sustainability

A very important future threat to directing life change is the lack of sustainability.

Precisely because life change processes often need to take on epic forms, thus requiring considerable time, space and resources, life change processes are highly sensitive to lack of sustainability.

Broken lives can be accompanied or even deepened by broken life change direction.

As life change is a complicated process it involves a wider spectrum of processes, activities and resources, and if one or more of these elements fail, it might complicate the life change process considerably.

Life change provisions can be unsustainable for many reasons, of which lack of funding, change of leadership or staff, loss of interest from the community are among the most typical.

It must be considered a threat that the more complex (and thus more qualified) the provisions, the more sensitive the entire process.

Future life change provisions should take this into account.

2.

Funding

Lack of funding and in particular sustainable funding is a threat to all innovative adult education provisions in the future.

At all levels of policy and economy such provisions are under attack, and the pressures of globalized economy seem to be translated directly into a lack of interest in long-term and efficient adult education, life change and empowermental provisions.

This fact directly contradicts the great future opportunities of life change processes for millions of Europeans.

Life change provisions, no matter the nature and institutional frameworks of such provisions, need to develop very strong capacity to counter this future tendency to short-term responding to economic change.

Future life change provisions should take this into account.

3.

Vocational orientation

A serious threat to full life change processes and provisions is closely linked to the pressures of globalized economy and competition: actions taken by policy is increasingly focusing on short-term labour market solutions and needs, based on what is now called skills shortages, offering all sorts of unemployed people including life changers very vocational oriented and short-term labour market training.

This tendency is highly long-term inefficient and directly contradicts the need to develop 21st century change management among an increasing number of citizens.

Future life change provisions should take this into account.

4.

Short-sighted investment policy

Local and national policy and decision-making is increasingly haunted by the need to react on short terms and shortsightedly to economic change.

Funding of a wide range of activities within the fields of adult learning and for example life change is still conceived as costs and not investments.

The results are that life change provisions or potential life change provisions can look forward to increasing difficulties as to financing their provisions, even if such policy to a considerable extent contradicts Commission policy and recommendations based on long-term forecasting.

It is of little comfort to such provisions that such policy can be considered effects of policy makers and systems still a long way from understanding the dynamic economics of the 21st century, and still haunted by industrial society paradigms and its “social responsibility” paradigms.

Such increasing threats will need to be countered by alternative thinking among adult education and similar institutions’ leaders and managements, going through severe change processes and finding new directions, based on community collaboration and interaction and joining forces initiatives less dependent on national policy making.

Future life change provisions should take this into account.

5.

Poverty

A special and very important threat to the potential of directing life change emerges from increasing poverty across Europe.

Many life changers are expected to be among the groups of citizens experiencing downright poverty problems, affecting their entire life situation, and - which is worse - affecting their capacity to build new life directions.

In severe poverty situations adults will be drained by their basic life problems to such an extent that they are unable to engage in constructive life change.

This opens up dramatic and highly problematic European scenarios: the adults mostly in need of life change support might end up being unable to engage in such life change processes, even if available.

This threat cannot be countered by directing life change provisions, but must be countered by national policy ensuring basic life needs and conditions, no matter what critical situations the citizens’ fall into.

Future life change provisions should take this into account.

IN CONCLUSION

A tremendous gap between opportunities and possible threats of directing life change can be identified, perhaps even an increasing gap.

Systematic, dynamic and adequate life change provisions will be increasingly needed in Europe, caused by a rapid and accelerating dissolution of traditional labour markets, social services and life patterns.

Life change support and guidance will be highly needed in Europe and should be scaled to meet increasing demands and challenges among more and more European adults.

European policy advocates and promotes change management, entrepreneurial mentality, technology literacy, risk-taking and engaging in innovation at all levels. And all of this not for experts but for... all.

What European policy does not offer is an answer to the million dollar question: *how and where this will take place.*

Directing life change provisions might very well offer models for *how* and *where*. When it comes about deep and fundamental changes in people’s lives, and this is what 21st century challenges are about, upskilling, traditional labour market services, adult education and personal empowerment is not working.

Based on lessons learned and based on the above presented SWOT we can conclude that *directing and guiding forced life change* will be increasingly needed and that life change policy should be based on the following 10 key principles:

1.
Life change provisions and experimentation should be subject to strategic funding at European and national levels, also through the European Social Fund
2.
Life changers should not be regarded costs, but sound economic and social investments, potentially adding considerably to economic and social innovation: life changers are an opportunity for society
3.
Decision-makers and institutions offering life change provisions should increasingly be independent of short-term local and national funding and build up capacity to create joining forces initiatives offering substantial and shared funding responsibility
4.
Life change provisions should drive and actively contribute to the development of eco-systems of change, innovation and collaboration, from which they will receive the resources for quality life change guidance
5.
Life changers should be helped build capacity to contribute to those resource creations, for example through eco-systems, from which they will benefit themselves, and this activity should be regarded a key life change competence
6.
Any life change provision should interact closely with wider community, including public, private and third sector institutions to offer real-life capacity building scenarios and to contribute to the building of collaborative eco-systems
7.
The didactics of life change processes should be based on learning and capacity building through real-life challenges and creating new real-life initiatives whenever possible
8.
Life change provisions should be based on entrepreneurial practice and mentality, applying the key entrepreneurial formula covering all societal fields of activity: innovation do not simply meet needs, it creates them
9.
Life change institutions, life change trainers, life change seniors and life changers should participate in joined learning and capacity building processes, based on mutual interests and mutual benefits
10.
Policy-making and research should engage in evidencing a parallel to “the wider benefits of learning” to generate and promote “the wider benefits of life change”, based on documenting the sound long-term investment perspectives of providing efficient and quality life change guidance

For further dialogues, guidance or collaboration you are invited to contact Senior European Project Manager Jan Gejel on jan.gejel@skolekom.dk or jangejel@gmail.com