

# The relevance of university adult education for labour market policies

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*Abstract: Lifelong learning now plays a key role labour market policies within the EU. Against a background of increasing rates of highly educated people and changes in graduate labour markets, universities have started to become involved in adult learning and active labour market policies. The article presents the results of 21 non-representative case studies of university adult learning programmes from seven EU-countries with particular focus on people in mid-life, who are becoming more and more socially vulnerable. One of the main features of the case studies was the social effectiveness of university adult learning programmes in terms of access to jobs and quality of work/life. The results of the case studies together with a review of the results of other European lifelong learning projects made it possible to draw up a scheme of the core dimensions of socially effective university adult learning.*

*Keywords: Lifelong Learning, Adult Education, Universities, Higher Education, Transitional Labour Market, Capabilities, Human Capital, Cultural Capital, Social Capital.*

*Resumen: La formación permanente desempeña un papel fundamental en las políticas del mercado de trabajo en la UE. En el contexto de la creciente tasa de personas con estudios superiores y de cambios en los mercados de trabajo cualificados, las universidades han empezado a involucrarse en la educación para adultos y en las políticas activas del mercado de trabajo. El artículo presenta los resultados de estudios de casos no representativos de programas universitarios de educación para adultos realizados en siete países europeos con especial atención a las personas de mediana edad, quienes son cada vez más vulnerables socialmente. Uno de los rasgos más destacados de los estudios de casos fue la eficacia social de los programas universitarios de educación para adultos desde el punto de vista del acceso a empleos y de la calidad de trabajo/vida. Los resultados de los estudios de casos junto con el análisis de los resultados de otros proyectos europeos de formación permanente permitieron elaborar un esquema de las dimensiones esenciales de las universidades de educación para adultos socialmente eficaces.*

*Palabras clave: formación permanente, educación para adultos, universidades, educación superior, mercados laborales de transición, aptitudes, capital humano, capital cultural, capital social.*

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, societal transformations in the EU have produced substantial changes in the conception of education and training and its interrelation with other socio-economic policies. The continuous participation of the citizen in education and training is seen as key to the quality of life and work, and has become part of active labour market policies aiming to transform the European social model into an activating model that prevents cases of social need by proactive social investments (Palier 2004 and 2006; Pfau-Effinger 2006). This strategy advocates “a market-oriented approach to social welfare” (Gilbert 1999: 21), reinforcing the link between social rights and social obligations, and fostering social inclusion through active participation in the labour market. At the end of the 1990s, the Transitional Labour Market approach (TLM) emerged as an alternative to activation policies (Schmid, 1995; Schmid & Auer, 1997). This approach links social risk management in transitional work periods with concepts of social equity dating back to Rawls (1971) and has been further developed by Sen (1999 and 2010) and Nussbaum (2007). TLM stresses the role of public institutions in managing situations of social risk, promoting proactive flexible

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public actions to avoid individual social risk, and reinforcing the qualitative dimension of labour market policies as compared to the orientation to mere quantitative results. The TLM thus provides a framework to identify specific social risk situations (transitions) and ways to provide appropriate measures aimed to mitigate the negative impacts of life changes.

This suggests that in involuntary transitional periods, citizens should be able to count on institutional support devised in different forms (for instance through direct financial support or the funding and organising of Lifelong Learning [LLL] activities). However, in this respect, only institutionally-supported formal LLL activities with a clear labour market orientation are considered part of transitional labour markets. In this regard, university programmes for adult learners have a considerable potential as institutional support to manage life and labour market transitions. The TLM approach, thus, can be seen as an effective ‘social bridge’ that prevents individuals from being trapped in exclusionary transitions and a means to increasing the probability that, for example, non-standard jobs become ‘stepping stones’ to sustainable job careers (Räisänen & Schmid, 2008).

In the THEMP Project (Tertiary Higher Education for People in Mid-life), we distinguish between social danger, social risks and individual risks. The difference between risk and danger is a) the degree of knowledge that individuals have about the possibility that certain events may occur<sup>2</sup> and b) an individual’s capacity to act. The latter can also be called ‘social vulnerability as a measure of an individual responsiveness’ – in short it distinguishes between the capacity to act preventively in responsive mode and the capacity to react in advance of the risk situation. In other words, citizens’ vulnerability is assumed to increase as a function of the limits of their action capacity. Without denying the self-responsibility of citizens, bounded knowledge of social-economic developments limits citizens’ capacity to prevent future labour market situations. Further limited action capacity restricts their ability to prevent (or stimulate) undesired (or desired) labour situations, to act proactively or to react in advance of potential negative events.

As a reference for measuring the effectiveness of Tertiary Lifelong Learning (TLLL) programmes beyond the labour market, and from a life-wide perspective, TLM suggests a link to theories of social justice. Such theories have recently been expanded and developed under the heading of the capability approach. This perspective, especially as articulated by Sen, enables the quality of social

<sup>2</sup> One example is a company that steps into a critical situation because of risky management decisions that have not been communicated to the employees. The managers were aware of the possibility that these decisions could have a negative impact on the company’s economic situation: for them it is a risk situation. However, the workers are only aware of the company’s high productivity and do not have complete knowledge about the situation: they are exposed to social danger.

insurance programmes to be measured by taking into account not only the rates of active participation or employment but also the quality of work and life. It is based on the idea that each individual has a set of capabilities (individual agency) and objectives regarding their quality of life (functionings), which should be considered in the design of concrete measures. Resources are not aims per se, but a means to achieve a (subjectively defined) better quality of life.<sup>3</sup>

One main area where resources can be obtained is the labour market, but position in the labour market depends on the outcomes of various formal, informal and non-formal learning processes. TLLL aims to improve the qualifications of learners, by providing them with new knowledge, to support intellectual development and to facilitate new social relations. However, seen through a labour market lens, learning outcomes must be converted into resources. This means that they must be recognised as having a value in appropriate labour market segments: learning outcomes must be converted into human, cultural and social capital.<sup>4</sup> This is a complex process of social bargaining in specific labour market fields. Such a TLLL-acquired capital opens or restricts the opportunities for developing professionally, for facing critical life transitions in an age of TLMs and for achieving new levels of well-being (or *functionings in Sen's terms*).

THEMP focuses on tertiary lifelong learning as a means of managing social vulnerability. Participating in informal learning programmes is – from the learners' perspective – a social investment of money and time that is expected to give some return in terms of human, cultural and social capital, allowing the participants to enter the labour market, or to maintain or improve their labour market position and thus achieve their desired quality of life. Therefore, we shall use the well-known notion of 'capital' to measure the social effectiveness of TLLL for learners in mid-life, under the overall analytical framework provided by TLM theory. Each labour market segment is conceived as a social field that determines which learning results are convertible to capital and how much the capital stock of each individual is worth, thus defining their positions in the labour market and

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3 Sen criticised that the resource-based approach because it confuses resources with the aims of social and employment policies. But resources can only be used to achieve other goals or, in the terminology of this approach, functionings.

4 As well as physical and financial capital, we refer to three capital types that occupy prominent places in social science debates: i) Human capital (Becker, 1964); ii) Cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1983 and 2005). It is difficult to make a clear distinction between human and cultural capital. Both approaches are quite different in theoretical orientation, but both refer to the acquisition and use of knowledge, skills, competence and aptitudes throughout the life course putting specific interest in the early accumulation stage. Hereinafter, we will use the notion of human capital for the type of cultural-human capital that has obvious labour market relevance in the economic system. The third type iii) social capital is defined by Bourdieu as individual investment in social relation or networks. This is also part of the definitions by Putnam and Coleman, who also include such other elements as trust and norms. We considered these elements to be part of the social fields (Bourdieu 1979 and 1988) in which human action is embedded (Granovetter 1985).

their occupational opportunities. The labour market position of the citizens and their occupational opportunities depend on their capital stock and its valuation in the labour market segments. There is a complex interrelation between capital accumulation, capability development, learning outcome and quality of life in a given socio-economic context.

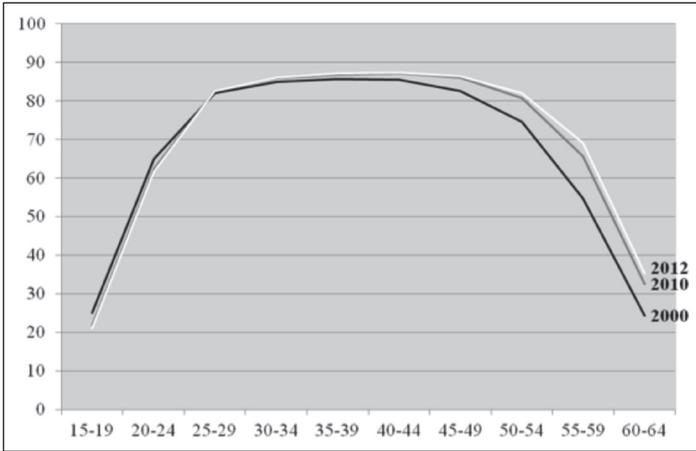
If the social efficiency of HEIs and the positive contribution they make to social risk management are to be measured, those that are committed to LLL must be evaluated in terms of (i) the design of appropriate lifelong learning programmes, (ii) the institutional and financial support provided to socially vulnerable people in life and work transitions and (iii) their capacity to adapt internal structures and procedures to new requirements of the adult population and to changed labour market conditions. When university adult education (UAE) programmes focus on the labour market – and many do have this orientation – it is important to evaluate the social efficiency of the programme in terms of employability and quality of work. This evaluation leads to constant revision of the programmes and constant reflection, and must take into account external conversion factors. For example, a university adult programme will not have the same impact in Germany as in Spain, Portugal or Greece, where the financial and economic crisis has had a devastating impact on the labour market.

Our empirical work was centred on two perspectives: on the one hand, the organisation & institution and teaching & learning; and, on the other hand, the impact on quality of life, measured in terms of employability and quality of work. We asked in which ways institutional structures and the design of learning and teaching allow learners to acquire human, cultural and social capital that is relevant to the labour market and which permits them to achieve or maintain a desired quality of work. In other words, the project attempted to determine the conditions of institutional structure and the design of the learning and teaching process that would be socially effective in terms of employability and quality of work.

## **2. Social vulnerability of highly educated people in mid-life**

The strategies of the EU-member states for reforming their national welfare regimes has produced substantial changes in the labour market structure that affect people in mid-life. This is especially the case with pension reforms that seek to delay the age of retirement and the active working life of working people in mid-life (45-65 years old) between the year 2000 and 2012 has now been increased.

Figure 1. Activity rates by age cohorts of the EU-27

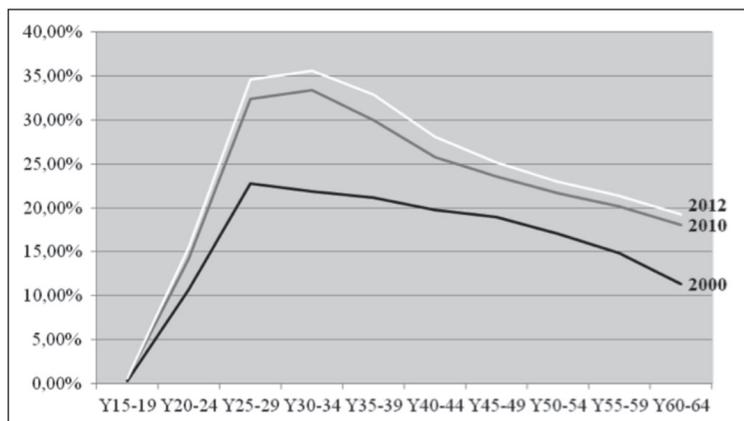


Source: Eurostat LFS.

Whilst people between 30 and 44 years are still the core age groups in the labour market the 45–49 year olds now have similar rates of activity and can be considered to be part of the core group. This also means that these age groups are more exposed to the labour market crisis and, therefore, that there is a need to provide them with lifelong learning activities or measures of continuous vocational education and training.

One of the main targets of “Europe 2020” is to increase the share of population aged 30-34 that has completed tertiary education to at least 40%. If they achieve this objective, the EU-member states will have managed to generalise higher education. Nowadays it is generally accepted that higher education offers people a better chance of finding a job, of having a higher income than other education groups and of having better living conditions. For instance, the Eurydice report (2012: 115) on the Bologna Process stated that they were not only more likely to find a job, but also that they would not take as long to find it and they would earn more. Overall the human capital theory provides a wide range of studies that confirm this. Also OECD studies on the social benefits of education show that it has a positive effect on the quality of life. For instance, Desjardins & Schuller (2006) confirmed what the population has perceived for decades. In a study about the expansion of universities from 1870 to 1985 in Germany, Italy, France, the United States and Japan, Windolf (1992: 3) showed that the number of students enrolled in higher education has grown constantly. In other words, the population perceives the socio-economic benefits of higher education.

Figure 2. Rate of highly educated people by age cohorts of the EU-27



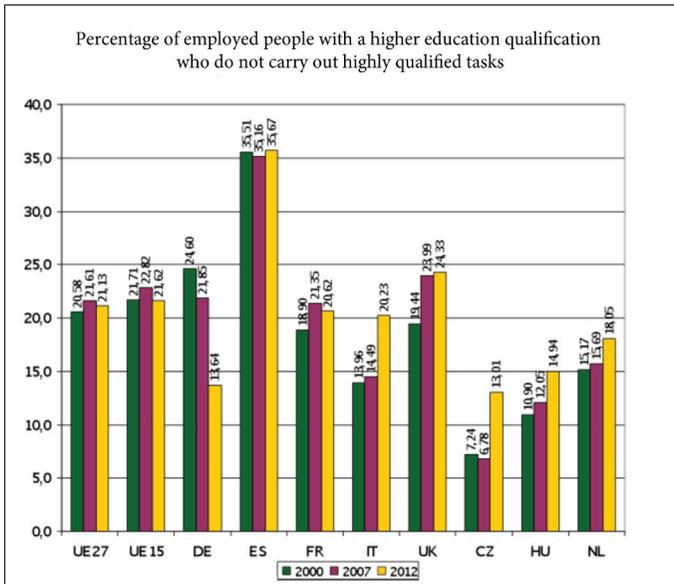
Source: Eurostat LFS.

Achieving high rates of highly educated workers means that it is necessary to take a closer look at how these groups are internally differentiated in terms of access to employment, conditions of work and quality of life. The impact of the financial and economic crisis on the most affected EU-member states – Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain – shows that highly educated people have more chance of staying in the labour market, but also that they are vulnerable to labour market risks. In these countries, the unemployment rate has significantly increased between 2000 to 2012, but it is still lower than in other educational groups: in Greece between 8.3% and 19.4%; in Spain between 10.0% and 15.0%; in Portugal between 2.9 and 11.8%; and in Ireland between 1.6 and 7.1%. This is also the case in other EU-member states. The unemployment rate has increased in this period in Hungary from 1.3% to 4.2%, in Slovenia from 2.6% to 6.3% and even in Sweden from 2.3% to 4.3%.

The impact of the increasing rate of highly educated people on the quality of 'knowledge work' is discussed by Brown *et alii* (2011). They found that the increasing international competition for knowledge jobs is exerting pressure to lower the quality of working conditions. Boes & Kämpf (2011: 13) draw a similar conclusion and find that highly qualified workers must compete with workers with similar qualifications from countries with low salary levels. Also the literature on off-shoring work has shown a trend towards geographically distributed knowledge work (see Manning *et alii* 2012 and Slepnió *et alii* 2013). If the European strategy 'Europe 2020' achieves the objective of generalising higher education, it can be assumed that the competition between graduates for good jobs will increase. In itself this trend could downgrade the conditions of knowledge work.

The growing literature on the mismatch between higher education and the skills required at work places calls attention to another problem (see Nieto & Ramos 2013; Fehse & Kerst 2007; Liviano & Nuñez 2012; and Scarpetta & Sonnet 2012). Parellada (2013: 4) discusses the mismatch between people’s jobs and their educational level in the EU countries. For the countries under scrutiny in this project, we observe that Spain has the highest rate, but also in the United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Hungary and the Netherlands, the inadequacy rate increased between 2007 and 2012.

Figure 3. Mismatch between higher education and the labour market



Source: Eurostat – Labour Force Survey consulted 01/08/2013.

Spain is a prominent example of this mismatch. A considerable share of highly educated people cannot find a job appropriate to their qualification, and they are obliged to work in jobs that require lower skills. This means that they earn less than other similarly qualified people working in appropriate jobs, but more than people with lower qualifications working in similar jobs (see Nieto & Ramos 2013).

Increasing competition among high-educated people for good jobs and mismatching has led to a need for a more differentiated analysis of the labour situation of graduates and post-graduates. And it probably means the end of the link between higher education and better jobs for a considerable number of highly educated people.

### 3. Case studies<sup>5</sup>

The mapping of the TLLL landscape in the seven EU member states under scrutiny is highly heterogeneous and complex in the EU and the member states. In this context, three case studies at universities in member states (see [www.themp.eu](http://www.themp.eu)) are only illustrative examples and not representative of the whole system.

Our case studies and discussions with experts and those responsible for ULLL at two mutual learning seminars and one conference have allowed us to draw some conclusions about the measurement of social effectiveness (and to design socially effective adult education programmes).

**Table 1. Programmes at 21 European universities**

<i>Czech Republic</i>			<i>Germany</i>		
Programme for School Consultants	PERFEKT	Traffic Psychology	Change Management	Business Computer Science	Interdisciplinary Distance Learning for Experimental Science
<i>Hungary</i>			<i>Italy</i>		
Farmers' Training Programme	Quality Management Engineering Studies	Coach Postgraduate Programme	Educational Campus	Business Leadership	Environmental Design
<i>Netherlands</i>			<i>Spain</i>		
Course Public Affairs	Learning Network Management of Innovation	Master of Criminal Investigation	Human Resource Management	Management of Non-Profit organisations	a) Photovoltaic energy; b) Car design c) European Financial Advisor
<i>United Kingdom</i>					
BA Community Development	Health and Social Care, Business and IT	Health and Social Care, Community education			

These programmes are designed and implemented in different institutional frameworks. Several organizational units are outsourced mainly for regulative and financial reasons in order to offer training programmes to groups of

<sup>5</sup> The following chapter is based on the THEMP reports about social inclusion (Öz & Hamburg 2013) and teaching and learning (Osborne & Huston 2013)

population other than traditional degree students. This makes it possible for programme managers to overcome some regulative and staff-related constraints, and to achieve some autonomy regarding in the design and implementation of the programmes. Some of the programmes in our case studies take the usual organizational form. Especially, programmes which require accreditation and certification are organized by universities.

Most programmes require participants to already have an undergraduate degree. However there are several programmes – for instance, two in the United Kingdom, one in Italy and one in Hungary – which do not require academic degrees to access. Also in four of the five Spanish cases, people without a degree can provide other specific certificates.

Another barrier to adults seeking to access ULLL could be the fee. “There is considerable diversity in the range of costs of the case programmes varying from free, through hundreds of euros to the most expensive costing over €7500. It should be noted though that a number of courses which are classified as continuous professional development often attract some form of employer support” (Osborne & Houston 2013: 48).

The courses analysed are taught in a variety of ways: face-to-face in most cases, blended learning in some and distance learning in very few. The length of the course also varies considerably: in some cases, participants are required to attend on one or two days over a set period of time. The majority, however, require more intensive participation and some require a commitment over a considerable period of time (1–3 years).

In nearly all of the programmes some participants are trying to prepare labour transitions. Examples of transition to other work places in the same enterprise are the programmes of school consultant, management of non-profit organisations, and master’s degree in Criminal Investigation. To some extent, courses on public affairs are also examples of this. Other courses aim to update knowledge, competences and the ability to adapt to changes in jobs (for instance, the farmers’ training programme, photovoltaic energy, European financial advisor, learning network management of innovation, and environmental design). Some focus on preparing for the transition to other work places (for instance, the three UK programmes, change management, car design) or to new labour market segments (the traffic psychologist programme). The Italian programme ‘Educational campus’ is a special case because it is the only one to focus on the transition from unemployment to employment. Through capacity building and upgrading skills and competencies, participants have better chances in the labour market.

However, labour market transition is not generally the main issue in programme design. The programmes are based on an intuitive analysis of training needs, which is later confirmed by the success of the programmes in the number of students attending and completing.<sup>6</sup>

It is no surprise that very few programmes directly address the over 40s, but almost all programmes have participants in this age group. They are treated like other age groups and their participation is rather random and not the result of specific programme objectives. It is not the age but the work experience of the participants and their concrete objectives that distinguish these programmes from traditional higher education programmes.

Our case studies confirmed that working in ULLL is not the same as working in 'traditional programmes'. For instance, one person responsible for a programme mentioned that working as a lecturer in the adult programme is a mutual learning process not only between students but also between lecturers and students, which provides the programme with more practical knowledge.

And the focus on people with professional experience gives the course a more practical orientation combining scientific with practical contents in order to achieve a good learning process. "In general, programmes addressed to people with an academic background focus combining scientific knowledge with the professional needs of the participants. Since many participants are working part time or full time and have, hence, professional experience, this leads to the incorporation of practical experiences into program contents" (Fikret 2013: 25). But there is little evidence to show that the programmes developed special teaching and learning approaches to accommodate adults with long professional experience.

A further consideration in relation to teaching is the recruitment and selection of lecturing staff. In many cases, there is a considerable mix of academic and professional reinforcement so "It is not surprising that in a number of cases teaching is shared between those with an academic background and employed directly by the institution on academic contracts; and those with a professional or practice background or specific relevant expertise" (Osborne & Houston 2013: 41). This cooperation with professionals can take such different forms as contracted lecturers, guest lecturers, seminars, and workshops leaders. "Moreover, in at least a couple of cases, external staff were responsible for at least 50% if not more of teaching input" (Ibid).

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<sup>6</sup> The Spanish cases are examples of success stories, but the universities have provided no account of the failed programmes.

But little effort is made to provide specific training on teaching and learning for lecturers. “Only a small number of the cases noted specific training in teaching and learning for university lecturers and in very few cases did this have an emphasis on adult education” (Ibid 43). On the other hand, the role of the lecturers is not limited to teaching; they also act as mentors, tutors and supervisors of professional practices.

## 4. Analysing the complexity of university adult education

The complexity of university adult education prevents substantial generalisations or recommendations from being made. Any work carried out into social effectiveness must take this complexity into account. Our analysis provides a way of reducing such complexity. On the basis of our empirical work, we propose a scheme for analysing different dimensions of the social effectiveness of adult education at universities. We use four main dimensions with 16 sub-dimensions.

This indicates how the core conditions of the social effectiveness of ULLL can be defined in terms of employability and quality of work considering not only the specific profile of programmes and organizing institutions, but also the specific political and socio-economic environment. A detailed discussion of all these dimensions is beyond the scope of this article so we shall concentrate on those that we consider most relevant to social effectiveness.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2. Analytical dimensions of the social effectiveness of ULLL**

<i>Learners</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>Mechanisms to cope with risk</i>
Labour transitions	Institutional integration	Type of certificates	Assessment and consultancy services
Requirements for access to UAE	Organisational structure	Access to programmes	Funding of the programme
Learners' expectations	Distribution of tasks	Recognition of prior learning	Evaluation procedure
	Integration in networks	Teaching staff	
	Networking intensity	Learning methods	

<sup>7</sup> In the annex, we present a scheme that summarises the different dimensions of the analysis of socially effective ULLL, which can be used also as a model to design programmes.

## A) Learner

To achieve social effectiveness, the labour market situations of the learners must be considered. Using the TLM approach, we conceptualize different types of labour market transition by distinguishing the transitions within an enterprise (internal labour market) and outside it (external labour market).

Labour transitions, studied from the individual point of view, allow us to evaluate and assess the extent to which the programmes have successfully helped individuals to carry out a transition or to avoid negative impacts of (involuntary) transitions.

The particular labour market transition can influence learners' possibilities of putting into practice what they are learning in the programme. Learners who are preparing a transition within a company may have the chance to test at work what they have been learning. But people who are unemployed have fewer chances to test learning achievement. However, this can be compensated for by making placement opportunities available as part of the programme – although in these cases quality must be controlled – or by integrating practical orientation into the programmes (for instance, through problem based learning).

Another issue that is just as important as transitions is learners' expectation and awareness regarding the acquisition of capitals. Our project assumed that learning programmes are oriented to the transmission of knowledge, competences and abilities that can be converted into human, cultural and social capital that is relevant to the labour market. This approach makes a more precise analysis of the interrelation between universities and labour markets, and also of the impact of lifelong learning on labour.

**Table 3. Type of labour market transitions**

<p><i>Internal Labour Market</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptation to changes at the individual workplace</li> <li>• Personal development</li> <li>• Vertical professional development: upward professional career</li> <li>• Horizontal professional development: from one workplace to another at the same hierarchical level</li> </ul>
<p><i>External Labour Market</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From unemployment to employment</li> <li>• From one employment to another employment</li> <li>• From one employment status to another</li> </ul>

Those who are aware of the capital they need in the labour market can make better decisions about which learning activities they want to carry out and how

particular learning programmes respond to their expectations. It is important for learners to know more about the labour market and learning opportunities, so that they can make informed decisions. We will come back to this issue later.

One of the EU's main concerns about higher education and lifelong learning is to make it easier for adults to access learning opportunities by providing flexible learning schemes that advocate conciliation between learning, work and family. Learners' personal characteristics must be taken into account: for example, the time at their disposal, which is conditioned for instance by their working conditions, their family situation, social commitments and distance from work or home to the learning place.

## **B) Structural Analysis: Integration in Networks and Networking Intensity**

The LLL-project MASON (2013) underpins the importance of the regional engagement of lifelong learning policies. National and regional diversity must be taken into account to ensure that lifelong learning has a positive impact on social and economic development. Regionally anchored lifelong learning policies “promote better LLL policy coordination on the ground, increased commitment by those who are implementing LLL strategies at local level, more efficient use of resources, and sharing of ownership and responsibility. Furthermore, place-based approaches can enhance LLL policy comprehensiveness because they allow for a more flexible and localised identification of LLL needs and priorities and a better mobilisation of a wide range of LLL stakeholders at local level.” Ensuring the positive impact of lifelong learning on social and economic development “requires going beyond ‘one-size-fits-all’ policies towards integrated, place-based, approaches to the design and implementation of LLL policies that meet regional and local needs in partnership with regional and local authorities, economic actors, social partners and the civil society” (Mason 2013).

In the measurement of the social effectiveness of ULLL in terms of employability, quality of work and quality of life, the degree of the orientation of ULLL to the labour market and social policies is of particular importance. The coordination of education policies and, even more so, the coordination between labour market and education policies is a complex issue. Networks beyond the institutional boundaries illustrate the diversity and complexity of the field; cooperating with other training entities and social actors as political authorities, entrepreneur associations, companies, trade unions, professional organisations is important. “The more diversified and specific learning needs and provisions

become, the more pressing also becomes the need for integration of the diverse experiences and approaches. To form and participate in interorganisational and personal networks seems to be one answer to overcoming the fragmentation of the lifelong learning landscape” (Bienzle *et alii* 2007: 19).

Taking up a distinction introduced by Bienzle *et alii* (2007), we identify three types of networks:

- Dissemination networks oriented to the interchange of (good) experiences acquired in programmes, initiatives and research projects and the diffusion of innovations in the field.
- Resource networks oriented to share resources, including staff, for the development of lifelong learning programmes and initiatives. This also involves analysing the usefulness of the resources regarding the specific programmes.
- Policy development networks focus on influencing policy (including legislation) and public initiatives in the field of ULLL at local, regional, national or European level.

Belonging to these networks helps organizations to structure the frequency and intensity of work, the degree of formalisation of arrangements, the creation of joint decision structures and the geopolitical level of networking (local, regional, national or international) (Bienzle *et alii* 2007: 14).

## **C) Teaching and learning aspects: Certificates and teaching staff**

The formal learning outcome of the programmes – the symbolic capital – is a central issue: will the learners obtain a certificate at the end of the programme? And what formal status will the certificate have? The formal status of the certificates can be measured in two systemic dimensions: its relevance a) for the education system and b) for the labour market.

The first dimension is the relation of the ULLL programme to the Bologna cycles: for instance, if the adult learning programme provides the successful learner with

- an official higher education certificate (bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, etc.),
- credits recognised within the Bologna cycles,
- professional certificates, allowing the holder to enter specific labour markets,

- ✦ a certificate issued by a particular university but which is not official recognised by the education systems; or
- ✦ no certificate.

**Table 4. Distribution of tasks among ULLL lecturers by type of lecturer**

TASKS	Academic teachers	Academic teachers with professional background	Professional with academic background	Professional
Learning needs assessment				
Preparation of courses				
Facilitation of learning				
Monitoring and evaluation				
Counselling and guidance				
Programme development				
Financial management				
Human resource management				
Overall management				
Marketing and PR				
Administrative support				
ICT-support				
Overarching activities				

Source: Based on the task classification by Buiskol *et alii* (2010).

The second dimension is the relevance of the programme to the labour market. One of the questions to be asked in this case is whether the programme provides the successful learner with an official professional certificate that is indispensable for access to particular labour market positions or a labour market segment. An alternative question is whether the programme provides the successful learner with a certificate that enjoys high prestige in the business world and facilitates access to certain work positions.

Another important aspect of teaching and learning is the recruitment and selection of lecturing staff. In a number of our case studies, teaching is shared by staff with an academic background and directly employed by the institution on academic contracts; and those with a professional or practical background or specific relevant expertise. In some cases the role of external professionals is limited to seminars or workshops; in other cases the external professional staff play a major role in the delivery of the programme.

However, Buiskool *et alii* (2010: 3) point out that the tasks of the lecturers are not limited to teaching, but can include programme design and administration.

Using the list of tasks mentioned by Buiskool *et alii* the distribution of roles between academic staff, academic staff with a professional background, professionals with an academic background and professionals can be analysed in greater detail. Another important issue that needs to be borne in mind is that both academic and non-academic staff need to be specially prepared for university adult education.

## D) Mechanisms to cope with risks

If UAE is regarded as a mechanism for reducing social vulnerability in the labour market because it prepares learners for transitions in labour markets and in-company labour markets, then learning programmes must be framed as services to support the learners' decision. THEMP regards action capacity and knowledge of social risk to be crucial to defining the social vulnerability of an individual. Providing adults who are preparing labour market transitions with information about labour markets and learning trajectories increases the chance that they will take appropriate decisions. This capacity for decision is further improved if barriers to access in terms of costs and conciliation of work, family and learning demands are reduced. We consider here three dimensions of vulnerability management: assessment, funding and flexibility of learning arrangements. A fourth category related to the self-reflexivity of the university should be added: the availability of instruments to measure the social effectiveness of programmes in terms of employability and quality of work.

It is of vital importance that adult learners can access tools and instruments that inform them of their chances of successfully making labour market transitions. This implies two questions:

- a) Does the university have tools and instruments to undertake or access labour market analysis?
- b) Does the university have a consultancy service to inform students of their options in the labour market and to recommend learning trajectories?

The mechanisms for informing learners about opportunities and risks can be managed by the university itself or by such external providers as public employment agencies. Whatever the means, before they decide on their learning trajectory it is important that adult learners have access to information about learning and working opportunities so that they can take informed decisions. This includes information about funding opportunities. In other words, learner access to pre-course guidance could be a means of reducing the risks

involved in social investment in learning. Our case studies, however, show that guidance mechanisms are generally underdeveloped.

It is obvious that the funding of the participation of learners in a programme has a key role. In some countries, the fees that learners pay for a programme are so high that they prevent participation. So it is important to know who covers the cost of the programmes. In those cases in which the learners have to pay fees, it is important to know whether there are mechanisms for reducing this individual contribution (for example, fees subsidised by private business or public or semi-public funding

This could also be an indicator of the involvement of people and entities from outside the university in programme design, application and evaluation. If participation in the programme is paid for by a company, a branch association, trade union or a public authority the possibility that they are involved in curriculum design is high. For instance, it can be supposed that in tailor-made programmes for a company, a group of companies or a branch, the implication of the stakeholders will be high. In such cases, the purchaser may not be the learner.

From the perspective of social vulnerability management, it is important to know if these mechanisms are available, and if the university provides information about possibilities and facilitates access. However, funding mechanisms are not limited to fees: they can also include monetary encouragement to take part in university adult education as often happens in the schemes for the unemployed.

Social vulnerability management must take into account return on investment. The learners and/or their funders are investing money and time in adult learning measures under the expectation that they will obtain benefits. Like all types of investment, this also involves a risk of losing financial, cultural or social capital. In our scheme, the investment in the first stage is related to a) money and b) time:

- a) Participating in ULLL programmes involves the risk of losing financial capital because the learners invest money for their participation. This not only takes the form of fees, but also losses in income and pension contributions or travel costs. The return on this investment is not predictable but it can be estimated.
- b) Investing time in training and learning involves reducing other activities and can lead to a temporary loss in social capital (for instance, less time for family relationships and friendships) and cultural capital (for instance, less time attending cultural events).

As far as monetary risk is concerned, the main issue is whether the learner has to pay to participate in the programme and if the university provides a mechanism to (co-) fund the participation. Also important is whether the

university facilitates information (consultancy) about public or private (co-) funding mechanisms so that the individual risk of losing capital will be reduced.

On the other side of the balance are the benefits in terms of monetary, human, cultural and social capital that adult learners obtain from the programme. Adult learners are able to appreciate the extent to which what they have learned can be converted into labour market-relevant capital. At least, they can perceive the extent to which the acquired capital has had a positive influence on their labour market transitions in terms of quality of work. We propose to measure the satisfaction with the changes in the quality of work in the following dimensions: economic security, knowledge & intellectual development, social relations, political rights & participation, balance of time, health, work environment and social mobility (the possibility of changing jobs).<sup>8</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

The EU's Europe 2020 strategy aims for 40% of the people between 30 and 34 years to undergo higher education and has helped higher education to become universal. This could change the labour market for highly educated people. Studies of skill mismatch and off-shoring of knowledge work provides some indication of substantial changes in the sense of the internal segmentation of this specific labour market. It seems that the supposed link between good jobs and higher education is no longer valid for all highly educated people and that some of them are becoming more vulnerable to labour market risks. Although the demand for highly qualified workers can reinforce the labour market position of mature highly educated people, there is an increasingly greater demand for tertiary lifelong learning.

Advocating the transitional labour market approach, THEMP investigated a) the role of ULLL in the labour market transitions of learners in mid-life and b) the potential of ULLL to be a means to support such transitions institutionally. Because formal higher education and the labour market operate with different logics, and are therefore difficult to coordinate, THEMP focused on university adult education as a more flexible means of providing tertiary education to people in mid-life that is relevant to the labour market. We advocate strengthening the

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<sup>8</sup> Satisfaction with changes does not only mean that the acquired capital improves the situation in the different categories; the new capital may also be an impediment or lead to impoverishment. For instance, economic security means the certainty of keeping a job or the security of having an income from work. In such European member states as Spain, Portugal and Ireland the employment perspectives of highly educated people have become impoverished and wages are being reduced. The question is how acquired capital can prevent greater deterioration of an individual's socio-economic situation.

role of the universities, but we do not advocate a particular institutional model. The case studies showed that the institutional options were highly heterogeneous and ranged from the integration of ULLL in the university's own structure to networking structures, where the universities cooperate with other actors without taking the lead. However, all the structural configurations require more intensive networking with such social actors as the public administration, entrepreneur associations, enterprises, trade unions, professional associations etc.

Desk research, mutual learning seminars, and conference and case studies carried out in the course of the project have shown that ULLL can help learners prepare labour transitions but generally is not a part of labour market or social policies. And the universities do not evaluate the social effectiveness of programmes. Following the logic of the education system, these programmes are also designed more with education and training in mind than labour market needs. However, successful programmes also respond intrinsically to labour market needs.

The analysis of successful programmes allows us to classify the social effectiveness of ULLL and its potential for social vulnerability management. In the article we advocate that learners should be the centre of ULLL strategies that minimize the risks of their social investment in learning programmes. In this context, social risk is defined in two dimensions: knowledge of the labour market situation and the ability to take decisions to invest time and money in (informal) learning.

As far as the first dimension is concerned, we argue that there should be mechanisms for improving the knowledge of potential learners about the labour market and training opportunities, so that they can take informed decisions. This requires intensifying the relationships with external actors so that this information can be disseminated and guidance services provided for learners. Universities must cooperate in dissemination, and resource and policy networks with the aim of a) providing learners with the best possible information and b) facilitating learners' decisions about their options.

When decision capacity is limited, people are more vulnerable. We have discussed under the categories of monetary and time investment and we have argued in favour of a) the TLM approach to facilitate learners' access to funding mechanisms and b) a flexible arrangement to reduce the time investment of adult learners so that they can conciliate learning, work and family.

And it is important that ULLL is evaluated for its social effectiveness defined here in terms of a) the acquisition of human, cultural and social capital that is relevant to the labour market; and b) employability and the quality of work. The

proposed evaluation scheme provides universities with a means to reflect about their own programmes.

To finish, one final comment: the project team is very aware of the difficulties of making lifelong learning a priority within the university agenda. Our case studies confirmed that university lifelong learning is still not generally a priority on the political agenda of governments or universities. But the trend to the universalisation of higher education, a priority of the EU strategy Europe 2020, will increase the demand for tertiary adult education and training. And it is still an open question as to what role the universities will play in this field.

# 6. Annex: Modelling Social Business for ULLL

Modelling Social Business for University Lifelong Learning activities					
Learners' motivation	Key partners (Networking)	Key activities	Value proposition	Disposable resources	Funding mechanisms:
<p><i>Transition:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Company internal:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adaptation to new challenges</li> <li>new work tasks</li> </ul> </li> <li>Company external                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>new company same professional field</li> <li>new professional field</li> <li>re-entry labour market</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><i>Internal partners</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University administration</li> <li>Faculties</li> <li>Departments</li> <li>Academics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme idea</li> <li>Programme development</li> <li>Establishing academic norms</li> <li>Proposing budgets</li> <li>Approval of training activities (incl. budget)</li> <li>Approval of criteria of remuneration</li> <li>Assuming economic risks</li> <li>Commercialisation</li> <li>Budget management</li> <li>Performance evaluation</li> <li>Accreditation</li> <li>others</li> </ul>	<p><i>Orientation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training &amp; Education</li> <li>Labour Market</li> </ul>	<p><i>Teaching resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human resources</li> <li>Infrastructures</li> <li>Material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enterprises</li> <li>Entrepreneur ass.</li> <li>Branch associations</li> <li>Trade unions</li> <li>Public authorities</li> <li>Citizens</li> </ul>
<p><i>Intrinsic motivation</i></p>	<p><i>External partners</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enterprises</li> <li>Entrepreneur association.</li> <li>Branch associations</li> <li>Trade unions</li> <li>Public authorities</li> </ul> <p><i>Status of the university</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>project leader</li> <li>co-operator</li> <li>provider</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget management</li> <li>Performance evaluation</li> <li>Accreditation</li> <li>others</li> </ul>	<p>Focused on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human capital:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Divers technical Comp.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Cultural capital                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social competence</li> <li>Communication competence</li> <li>Networking competence</li> </ul> </li> <li>Social capital                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional network</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><i>T &amp; L approach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>blended</li> <li>online</li> <li>face-to-face</li> <li>problem based</li> <li>project based</li> <li>self-directed</li> <li>others</li> </ul>	

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