RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING: VALUING LEARNING THROUGH TRANSITIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE PURPOSES?

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ABSTRACT

Since 1999 a new adult education and training policy (Barros, 2011) has been under development in Portugal. Recognition of prior learning has been the most attended form of provision. Within recognition of prior learning, biography reflects somehow a reflexive project (Giddens, 1992; Field, 2000; Hake, 2006) and constitutes a reflexive/constructive process of adult education and training.

It is assumed that the (transition) biographical itineraries are constituted in the interaction of: (i) the subject (families and social categories) options and strategies; and ii) the institutional opportunities (formed in the education/training and employment systems) and the emerging constraints and resources of the existence conditions (Casal, 2003). Based on a set of empirical research, in this article this perspective enables the questioning of blockages and opportunities that the subjects are confronted with when building their itineraries configured by the involvement in processes of lifelong learning.

1. LEARNING THROUGH TRANSITIONS: THEORETICAL APPROACH

Several authors have maintained that changes have become an essential dimension of contemporary societies, increasingly characterised by risk and marked by de-traditionalization (among others, Giddens, 1992; Beck, 1992). Others have argued that the subjects experience change in several ways: some subjects are the object of registered transformations and, in that sense, they adapt themselves to the changes they endure; others are the authors of change, modifying the way they regard the situations in which there were transformations and/or interfering in the social contexts they belong to. In either case, the change experienced by the social actors is translated in transitions understood as transformation processes experienced by the subjects that, concerning education and learning, are accompanied by the acquisition and/or development of new know-how and skills (Field, 2012). Following this line of thought in the liquid modernity framework (Bauman, 2007), the subjects are increasingly confronted with changes (that involve transitions and) that compel them to make choices. These choices, due to their frequency and contexts with which they are related, result in the responsibility of those who make them. In this case, one can see the individualisation of social relations standing out, as well as the growing societalization of biographical trajectories. Both the choices made and the responsibility for the subjects’ options lead to the acquisition of knowledge and skills conducive to reflexivity. In this context, the subjects use the knowledge that they have in order to adapt, to reflect and
to question the existing social structures, as well as to negotiate ways to transform the social environment they belong to. Thus, (formal and non-formal) education, as well as lifelong learning undergone in very diverse contexts, favour transitions in which the subjects adapt to the new conditions and they themselves transform these conditions. It is in this context that the role of education and learning in the adjustment and promotion of change gains relevance, not only in terms of social, cultural, political and civic contexts but also work contexts. In this context, some trends have pointed to the biographical expression and resolution of system blockages, contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas (Giddens, 1992; Beck, 1992), given that the choices made are not always carried out in a straightforward and peaceful way.

On matters concerning specifically the relations between education and employment as well as the construction of transition itineraries, Casal argues that the transition to employment

(...) is affected by individual decisions that are strongly influenced by social determinants: the social and economic conditions of the family environment, (...) the lifestyles of membership, the person’s social personality, the territorial context and its opportunities, etc. (Casal, 2003, p. 181).

So, the study of these relations comprises two aspects, the biographical and the social one, which are highlighted in this text. Through the biographical dimension it is possible to know and to understand the subjects’ life itineraries\(^1\), namely their social standing within groups and families at a given time. The social dimension favours the identification and the interpretation of the subjects’ (upward or downward) social mobility itineraries, thus referring to social (in)equality and social segmentation indicators. Additionally in this text it is assumed that the biographical itineraries are constituted in the interaction of: (i) the subject (families and social categories) options and strategies; ii) the institutional opportunities (formed in the education/training and employment systems) and (iii) the emerging constraints and resources of the existence conditions (Casal, 2003). Based on a set of empirical research (Antunes, 2004 and Lima & Guimarães, 2012) the theoretical perspective referred before enabled the questioning of blockages and opportunities that the subjects are confronted with when building their itineraries configured by the involvement in processes of lifelong learning. Consequently, biographical learning accounts can be critical tools as they can reveal some connections between individualisation of biographies and learning and de-politicising reflexivity and agency (Biesta & Tedder, 2008, p. 6).

2. METHODOLOGICAL PATH FOLLOWED

After 1999, a new adult education and training policy (Barros, 2011) was developed in Portugal up until 2011 when it was abandoned. Recognition of prior learning (Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências – RVCC in Portuguese) was the most attended form of provision. Within recognition of prior learning, the writing of a portfolio takes biography as a reflexive project (Giddens, 1992; Field, 2000; Hake, 2006) and constitutes a reflexive/constructive process of adult education and training.

This paper follows a qualitative research approach. The empirical data analysed are derived from two semi-structured interviews\(^2\) (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, pp. 342-365) centred on the biography of subjects who have completed recognition of prior learning, as well as, in
the case of one of the subjects surveyed, on a portfolio presented in the course of this process concerning what involved the transitions identified and the learning resulting thereof.

For the purpose of this communication, we selected data concerning two subjects: João (itinerary A) and Olinda (itinerary B). These subjects were selected considering the following criteria: a) they were over-25-year-old adults who had (one of them) completed recognition of prior learning equivalent to the 9th grade of school education and (the other) the recognition of prior learning equivalent to the 12th grade of school education; and b) they were adults who presented biographies in which the transitions associated to life changes and learning processes were evident. Both interviews were analysed based on content analysis. The first procedure consisted of sorting the chronological order of the reported biographical events, followed by a preliminary exploration from an external categories grid derived from the theoretical frame of reference.

Thus, this paper aims to answer the following questions:

- What blockages/constraints and opportunities were the subjects confronted with when building their itineraries?
- How was lifelong learning involved in such process, namely what learning was developed therein and what were the meanings given by the subjects to learning?

3. ITINERARIES ANALYSED: TRANSITIONS AND LEARNING

3.1. DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL AND GETTING BACK TO SCHOOL: WORK COMES FIRST?

João was born in 1974. Concerning his living conditions, João came from a popular social background since his parents were tenant farmers in a semi-urban parish of Cidade Antiqua county in Northern Portugal. He was married, two under-age children, completed recognition of prior learning (equivalent to the 6th grade of school education) in 2012. This individual inserted several institutional opportunities in his biography, through which he was able to develop diversified knowledge from which resulted several transitions. The first institutional opportunity he indicated was the school he attended between the ages of 7 and 13 years old. As a result, he completed the 6th grade in 1987 and then left school at a time when the legislation already determined nine years of mandatory schooling. This interviewee explained his school dropout due to financial constraints: "(...) I was forced to leave school because of my parents’ financial situation" (João P.). And he added that:

I saw my colleagues going into their pockets and getting twenty, thirty Escudos and I had nothing. Zero. I thought I had to find a way out. Since my parents did not have financial means, I started working (João’s I).

Another factor that probably contributed to this dropout was his description of the primary school as being a pleasant place, with which João identified himself, whereas the lower secondary education took place in an institution in Cidade Antiqua that was described in a more dramatic way:
(...) I attended primary school. From this school I went on to the Centre School to attend preparatory education, the 5th and 6th grades. But it was a bit scary because one comes from the village to the city centre, to something completely new. I had two buses to catch by myself. I had to fend for myself and I managed. I completed the 6th grade (João's I).

Concerning professional options, João started working in 1988, when he was 14 years old, in civil construction as an apprentice construction worker. In fact, this seems to have been another case marked by important social determinants of Northern Portugal, namely child labour. Indeed, in the last two decades of the past century, child labour became a common fixture in Cidade Antiqua's region, particularly in the construction sector, in which several companies recruited low educated and low skilled workers (see Sarmento et al., 2000).

The option for working in construction ended up conditioning João's career path. With the exception of a brief incursion into heavy trucking between 1996 and 1998, he has always worked in this economic activity. So, further on, João worked as a second class mason, then he was a construction measurer, which was the professional category he held when he was interviewed for this research.

It was in a professional context, still as an apprentice mason, that João acknowledged having developed some important know-how for his life, specially "the rules of the game" in labour and the rules of a "working culture". In this regard, he said that:

I learned to respect my co-workers, to respect labour timetables and how to talk to your superiors. I understood that I had to adjust my language to the different recipients. My job was to carry mortar and bricks to the most skilled masons (João's P).

This learning led him to establish himself as "a competent worker", respected by his co-workers and by his boss. In this respect, he stressed the responsibility of his job and the importance that "work well done" had in his line of work, particularly for the colleagues that worked with him:

And now, as a construction measurer, what have you learned of significance?

I learned that we have to learn every day. This is a job with many challenges, there is nothing equivalent. Each measurement is a challenge. The responsibility. One mistake in one point is enough to ruin everything. (...) You have to respect what is on the paper. Now, they, in the company, they do it like this: if I make a writing mistake, or if I transcribe something incorrectly on the computer, they cut through that note. If they follow the drawing in the construction and it turns out badly, it is not their fault. It is mine, because I identified things incorrectly. (João's I).

Interestingly, it was work, particularly the growing schooling and skill demands in the access to other jobs linked to civil construction that convinced João of the importance of "going back to school". In this regard, he wrote in his portfolio “Now I want to do training for machine operators (Certificate of Professional Competence) because I need it for professional reasons, for which I need the 9th grade from school” (João's P).

At the same time, some friends talked to him about the importance of "not being frozen in time". In this regard he said:
I was practically pushed into this (the recognition of prior learning) by the Parish Secretaries. They told me that, with my knowledge and the professional life I had, it was good for me to do this (...). I was led into this by others and I have only good things to say about them, because they pushed me into doing a good thing (João's I).

In 2011 João benefited again from an education institutional opportunity attending recognition of prior learning. This opportunity came up as an "individual challenge" as it translated into the "fulfilling of the dream" of obtaining a school degree. However, the recognition of prior learning also had a family feature. Since then, João has been helping his children doing their homework in some subjects, something he had always felt incapable of doing. Additionally, he was helped (and encouraged) by his eldest son in the writing of the portfolio, especially when he faced difficulties using the computer and processing the writing of the biography. It was with these individual and family dimensions that João raised the possibility of being able, in the future, "to give another life" to his family. This possibility was, according to the subject surveyed, deeply associated to the promise (Canário & Alves, 2004) that comes with a diploma, leading João to admit that new professional opportunities could come up because of the certificate he had obtained. Along these lines, recognition of prior learning opened up new (and more promising) perspectives of a professional future (social and personal).

3.2. GIVING UP AND COMING BACK (AND GIVING UP) ON SCHOOL: FAMILY AND WORK FIRST?

Olinda is a 44-year-old small textile entrepreneur who completed recognition of prior learning (equivalent to the 12th grade of school education) in July 2012. She went to school in 1974 and she completed basic education (9th grade) as an adult and the 10th grade (secondary education) in recurrent education (second-chance education – evening classes – directed at adults). Her story can be regarded as a kind of first-hand testimony on education’s (and adult education’s) winding ways in the Portuguese democracy. Her school path as a child was interrupted after completing preparatory school, which was the mandatory schooling in 1980, which is very similar to that of many other parents of the students who attend school nowadays. In 2004, 61% of the Portuguese between 25 and 64 years old had qualifications at the preparatory education level or lower (Santos & Dias, 2007, p. 13); according to more recent data, in 2011, more than half the population (58.03%) in Olinda’s age group (35-44 years old), would have attended school up to the 9th grade(7).

Olinda was born in the late 1960’s (1968), as the youngest of 14 siblings, and her parents had completed the 4th grade. Her mother was a seamstress and her father owned a small factory, then he emigrated and finally he was an administrative clerk in a tannery. In her report, bearing in mind the issues and components proposed by Casal (2003) to analyse the transition biographical itineraries, what stands out are the family’s hard and precarious living conditions, the material and institutional weakness of the right to education and the strength of the options that she took along the way. The living conditions marked her childhood and her route; work, under multiple guises, was a reality that modeled her life as much as she chose it and adapted it. At the age of 12 she completed the 6th grade and decided to quit studying. She did it because continuing at school would entail two things: that her mother would become a “labour slave”, taking care of the whole family alone and that she herself would have to keep enduring the hard effort of going to school on foot and by public transport, coupled with the housework after arriving home from school. This double penalty
led her to give up (temporarily) a successful school path and to go against her sister’s (by then already a teacher) pressure. School left her with generally positive memories, together with the remembrance of the painful effort of walking for half an hour to go to school and another half hour to go back home, followed by the housework duties:

I couldn’t do it and I am almost sure that my brothers could not truly live that school period either because we knew that the time we spent in school was our resting time. We knew that after school we had a long walk to do and when we arrived, we would have lunch and then we would have work ahead of us (...) This made us not to value school much, but even so, it was a terrible chagrin for me to stop studying (Olinda’s I).

When she was 17, after staying home for five years working for the family, she had her first job, working in the office of a construction company, leaving a year later to work in the office of a textile company where one of her brothers worked. At this second job, she highlighted that

It was wonderful to work there with my brother, I learned many things (...) working with all sorts of documents, checks, drafts, drafts renewals, consignment notes, invoices, I learned every kind of office work, so I was busy. This was what I wanted: learning, working, and being busy (Olinda’s I).

She also worked in this company for about a year, until she got a job in another one of the same sector, which she described as follows:

Besides, I was fascinated by cutting, hand work, holding the molds, marking, stretching the mesh and the cutting it with the machine, that really fascinated me. And so it was, I started going to the cutting section in the afternoon and I learned a lot (Olinda’s I).

Again she stayed there for about a year, during which she learned cutting and modeling and established the contacts that enabled her to start thinking of setting up her own business. That is what she did before turning 20, in the late 1980’s (1988). She worked hard and on her own for about a year:

It was hard to start with, because we only worked several times through the night, it was complicated... (...) Yes, alone with a table and a cutting machine. The suppliers would bring me the cloth, the material, the molds I made them myself, so I invented the model and made the mold (Olinda’s I).

Afterwards Olinda hired three workers and, during the 1990’s, she consolidated and expanded the company: there were already 14 workers and almost a quarter of a century and two thirds of her life later, she resumed her studies. She attended recurrent education and completed within a year the lower secondary education (school’s 9th grade) and then, the following year, she completed the 10th grade of secondary education:

Yes, it was a very positive [experience], because my son was starting primary school and I felt the need to go back to school so that I could help him, because many years had gone since I left school (...) I said to myself: “No, I am going to do it, I am going to try” and I did it. (...) After the 10th grade I said to myself: “Now it is enough, I cannot do it anymore”. My children were growing up and demanding more from me, demanding
more attention at school... And I said: “Now, it is all for my children”. And my dream was over. Meanwhile, the opportunity to do the 12th grade came up through recognition of prior learning and off I went to enroll... (Olinda’s I).

Around 2008, a new contract to supply a big retail chain, El Corte Inglés, led her to change the manufacturing process and she attended the Industrial Modeling Course at a textile industry training centre after 20 years of working experience.

I thought about it twice, because my children were still small and I could only take this course in the evening, after work. It was complicated, a 400 hours intensive course, twice a week. I left my children with my brother and my sister in law, because they were too young and my husband would be disoriented; on these two days I would leave them there and set off to Vilar do Castelo(8) to attend the course. It was from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. It was complicated because I worked, I had two small kids, the course and then the housework to do (Olinda’s I).

Later, Olinda decided to implement the automation of the cutting process and she attended the required training to keep on performing the most important work in her company — marks to cut the mesh (marcadas in Portuguese).

In 2009 she started recognition of prior learning equivalent to the 12th grade of school education. She also attended all complementary training sessions required inherent to the process, but she did not organise the Learning Reflexive Portfolio (an essential document within recognition of prior learning to get the school education certificate). When, in the beginning of 2012, an adult educator contacted Olinda to inform her that the Adult Education Centre (where she had already started writing the portfolio) was due to be closed down and that she should draw up the necessary paperwork in order to conclude the recognition of prior learning, she decided to get on with it:

At the time I was actually loaded with work at the company, but I came to the training sessions all the same and I did it enthusiastically. Afterwards I had to focus on the company, I had to change the cutting system and I just had to stop: the priority now is the company (...). Yes, I was contacted in January, but it was only in April that I thought: “Well, if this is finishing in July, I have to get on with it. It’s got to be!”. And that is when I really started. I did the same I had done when I was in the 10th grade: at night I put my children to sleep, went down to the kitchen, where I organise my stuff, and I started working on the computer and writing. April and May were months of hard struggle, because getting to face the jury9 did not depend solely on me anymore, but on whether the trainers would have time to read my portfolio (Olinda’s I).

4. UNDER DISCUSSION: ADULT EDUCATION, TRANSITIONS AND CHANGES IN CONTINUITY - FROM OPTIONS TO REFLEXIVITY

Unlike previous surveys (Antunes, 2011; Vieira, 2012), data discussed in this paper referred to the recent involvement by adults in formal education and learning that was not linked to a vital situation of transition, threat and risk, or to problematic or crisis social contexts (Liz et al., 2009; Lima & Guimarães, 2012). That is to say that in the cases analysed, education and learning were associated with disruptions and transitions in the lives and reports of the
subjects, in contradictory ways. For instance, giving up school was premature for both (by their own decision as they argued) associated to social and family constraints and opened up transition processes from infancy to adulthood with the assumption of adult life dimensions and responsibilities and the adult status – at work in one case, within the family in the other. However, the reports presented allow to try some answers to the questions that have guided this paper: what blockages/constraints and opportunities were the subjects confronted with when building their itineraries? How was lifelong learning involved in such process, namely what learning was developed and what were the meanings given by subjects to learning? The data collected suggest that the biographies of these subjects are part of a particularly relevant time in Portuguese History, a period of transition from a strongly rural society, influenced by the New State’s (the authoritarian regime known as Estado Novo in Portuguese) social and economic policies to a society integrated in the European Union, in which globalisation and economic and social transformation are evident. Actually, Stoor and Araújo published in 1992 a research book with the suggestive title School and Learning to Labour, that seeks to enlighten precisely these Portuguese realities of semi-rural communities within which there coexisted families mono-active in agriculture with multi-active semi-proletariat families, for whom the work of every member in the family unit was fundamental for their survival and whose children could perform several hours of weekly labour besides school (Stoor & Araújo, 1992, pp. 88-96). This true anthology of transition in the 1980s and 1990s in certain regions of Portugal – as the ones where João and Olinda lived and still live – speaks, through the chapters’ titles, of the reality in which these subjects lived and learned in their childhood: Education in the semi-periphery context; Learning to labour in semi-rural Portugal; Human and social basic rights and the democratic school.

On the other hand, João and Olinda spelled out their professional contexts as places and sources of non formal and informal learning, as an existential condition in what referred to the centrality of learning in social relations (Field, 2000); their jobs were also the detonators/motivators of the search for formal and non formal education and professional training felt as a structural need in what concerned learning as a precondition for reflexive participation in social changes (Hake, 2006). The industrial modeling course and the training sessions on industrial cutting were, for Olinda, a necessity resulting from the development of the structural conditions of her professional project that implied changing the production process. However, whilst for João education and learning strongly (but not exclusively) presented themselves as a structural need generated by the social and vital requisites and risks brought about by economic and technological dynamics, for Olinda the involvement in adult education to achieve higher schooling was anchored in a personal fulfilling and development project with strong family roots: “to keep the flame of an old dream of returning to school and now to help” her son too.

For João and Olinda, returning to school was a personal option with precise objectives, without parting with the previous path and integrated in their respective life projects. As had happened in previous moments in their lives these pathways and “educational processes are not only based on individual decisions, but moreover embedded in a socially pre-structured realm of possibilities” suggesting “specific interrelationships between individuality and sociality”(Hof & Fischer, 2010, p. 47). That decision represented, however, not only an important moment, but also the opening up of a new phase in the subjects’ lives. The change and the presence of new elements in their individual lives, both during and after the involvement in formal education and learning processes, are features that the reports revealed. It is possible, however, to formulate a designation of change in continuity for these
paths given that, in either case, their life paths maintained some of the anchors of their meaning and direction, such as the professional activity, the family nucleus and dynamic, or other routine social relations. And this is the continuity component. What changed then? Temporarily, during the education process, these adults experienced new activities that required the reorganisation of daily life:

So, I completed the lower secondary education in one year. During that time I travelled every morning to Cidade Antiqua, so you can imagine how much I had to work at night. Because, it worked this way, the hours that I lost in the morning, lost is just a way of saying. I mean the time I was absent from the company, had to be compensated for later. (…) Everything exactly the same and I had two small children at the time, but concerning them I did everything for them not to realize it. In the company I worked until late … at 5 a.m. I would go to the factory, did what I had to do, came back home, had a shower, prepared the kids for school and then I would set off to Cidade Antiqua: All this for a year, on and on (…). But I crammed, crammed and crammed all night. I did as follows: put my children to sleep early, around 9.30 a.m. I would take them up. I lay down with them, they would fall asleep and I would go on studying (Olinda's I).

In February and March we came here an average of four times a week. It was a bit demanding, other weeks it was three times, or twice, occasionally once. I came around 7.00 p.m. and stayed until 10.00 p.m. (…) Leave the company at 6.00 p.m., go home, have a shower and go out again, sometimes it was hard (João's I).

They went through different experiences in their institutional relationship with school, with knowledge and with the student's previous experience; other power/knowledge social relations were outlined, but also with the institutions, with the access possibilities and the capability to benefit from the relationship with them. In this process, the reports suggested that there could have been re-interpretations of the social relations and the limitations they placed on the subjects' expectations and life projects. In that sense, when the educational system, as a social mechanism allocation (Hake, 2006), favours the adults' access to new schooling levels and appeals to them to focus on this goal, it can, at least for some people, foster discontinuities in the influence of ingrained social control models that drive interpretations of reality that are compatible with each and everyone's adjustment to their probable place in the social structure. It is in this point that the widening range of individual options and the education aspirations may have found sustainability. Reflexivity as a propensity for examining and changing practices in the light of new information generating distinctive interpretations of the world (Giddens, 1992) can thus be reinforced:

I am thinking about finishing the 9th grade; next year, if all goes well, I shall move to the 12th grade and I am going to try to apply for a place on the engineering course (João's I).

Then I thought that in order to help [my son] I had to go back to school. I wanted to help him, I did something I liked and deserved. “After so many years of slave work, I deserve to do something for myself I am going to give myself a present”. And then I understood that what I wanted was to study again, so I decided to complete the lower secondary education. It was a present I offered myself. I said to myself: “No, I am going to do it, I am going to try” and I did it. (…) In the future… my ambition is to attend university (…) No, I have that ambition since I was a kid, the ambition of one day
graduating I would like to fulfill it, although my priority now is my children, whom I am supporting (...). Yes, I have already told my son: "I will end up going to college with you" and he said "Ok mother, I would like that". (...) The goal is to keep on, to keep on studying and when they are more independent I will go on studying... I shall do it gladly as I did the 9th grade and I shall say this: "I work so much I deserve a present". I'd rather give myself the present of continuous studying than to take some holidays (Olinda's l).

Meanwhile, the reports showed the subjects' visions of their paths, in which stood out the feeling of a certain autonomy and control over the direction taken and its consequences. These were biographical reports of education and learning construed with a strong sense of self-responsibility for the options taken in the framework of conditions and constraints clearly spelled out but not questioned and of opportunities also identified and appropriated by the subjects in their own terms and particular conditions.

In that sense, one would say that the reports bore witness, not only to the subjects' individual biographical paths, their particular individual and social circumstances, but also to a view focused on confrontation and interaction, individually considered, with the circumstances and the social contexts, even in the presence of collective omnipresent realities such as family, be it biological or foster, or social-professional contexts. One can then ask in what way does the involvement of these adults in education processes widen their capacity to participate, influence and act on their life contexts and the groups and communities they belonged to. If, for these adults their ability to engage in an individual action, to mobilise resources and to access to and benefit from institutional life opportunities was widened, there does not seem to be any reference concerning involvement in organized and collective actions as members of any of several communities available to them, be they professional, local, or others. Therefore, we must try to understand, following the questioning suggested by Lash (1997), how can one discuss these adults’ involvement in education when we consider the construction of the collective (institutional) and social reflexivity? In other words, what are the structural and biographical conditions that constitute the winners and the losers of reflexivity?

ENDNOTES

(1) By itinerary, Casal means a biographical mode of acquisition of position and of social stratification. For this reason, an itinerary is the outcome of the institutional opportunities accorded the subjects along their lives, of the biographical options made by the individuals themselves on the basis of their frameworks of references, of their interests and problems, as well as the social conditions. Given the complexity of the itineraries’ analysis, Casal argues that these aspects must be taken into account and understood in the interconnection established between them (Casal, 2003, p. 180).
(2) Excerpts from interviews identified by I.
(3) Excerpts from portfolio identified by P.
(4) Fictional names.
(5) Fictional designation.
(6) Outside the school institution, João indicated that, as a child, he attended catechesis and made the First Holy Communion, he did the compulsory military service for four months in 1992 and got his driver’s license in 1995 in a driving school.
Accordingly, less than half, 41.97%, would have completed at least the secondary education (Conselho Nacional de Educação, 2013, p. 33). In fact, in 1991, more than 10 years after Olinda interrupted her studies at the age of 12, more than 20% of children between 10 and 11 years old, did not attend school (Azevedo, 2013, p. 38).

Fictional designation.

The recognition of prior learning process involved (as the last step to get the school certification) the learners’ presentation of their portfolio to a jury including several adult educators.

Those “specific interrelationships” are referred by some researchers through the expression formations of lifelong learning (in German Bildungsgestalten) (Hof & Fischer, 2010, p. 47).

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CONTENTS

Introduction ........................................................................................................... 7
Bernd Kapplinger & Nina Lichte & Erik Haberzeth & Claudia Kulmus

Transitions around and within ESREA .............................................................. 9
Henning Salling Olesen

Welcome Address at the ESREA Triennial Research Conference 2013 in Berlin .......... 11
Bernd Kapplinger

I. Learning of adults ..............................................................................................................

Non-traditional adult students in Higher Education: the development of Plurilingual
Repertoires .................................................................................................................. 14
Susana Ambrósio & Maria Helena Araújo e Sá & Ana Raquel Simões

Voice, interaction and transformation: identifying transformation in the diverse
meanings and contexts of the language of biographical learning interviews .......... 29
Rob Evans

University and lifelong learning. A research on “non traditional stories” and learning
identities. ................................................................................................................... 44
Andrea Galimberti

Graduating at older age - what are the expected, surprising and unwanted outcomes?.... 63
Ulpuukka Isopahkala-Bouret

Learning by volunteer computing, thinking and gaming: What and how are volunteers
learning by participating in Virtual Citizen Science? .............................................. 73
Laure Kloezer & Daniel Schneider & Charlene Jennett & Ioanna Iacovides & Alexandra
Eveleigh & Anna Cox & Margaret Gold

Unskilled Work and Learner Identity – Understanding unskilled work as a certain
condition for perceiving oneself as an educable subject ....................................... 93
Sissel Kondrup

Engaging Universities and Adult Education: The Paulo Freire Chair at the University
of Seville .................................................................................................................... 107
Emilio Lucio-Villegas

Testing as Reflecting? Preliminary findings from a study involving personality testing
in CVET ..................................................................................................................... 119
Henriette Lundgren

Issues of recognition and participation in changing times: the inclusion of refugees in
higher education in the UK ....................................................................................... 135
Linda Marrice

Writing & University internship: an educational path ........................................... 144
Loredana Perla & Viviana Vinci

Agency and future life trajectories in accounts of Access to Higher Education students
in England ............................................................................................................... 156
Anna Pieta & Hugh Busher & Nalita James & Anna-Marie Palmer

Functional Illiterates and their Confidantes: A new Approach to the Question of Non-
Participation in Adult Education .................................................................. 168
Wibke Riekmann & Klaus Buddeberg

Inclusion and exclusion in continuing education for adults: the case of young people
with a low level of education in Spain .............................................................. 183
Francesca Salva-Mut & Elena Quintana-Murci & Danielle Desmarais
II. Knowledge and competences

Recognition of prior learning: valuing learning through transitions for individual and collective purposes? ................................................................. 201
Fatima Antunes & Paula Guimardes

Pedagogy versus Medicinea training and narrative care project in medical-healthcare contexts ............................................................................ 213
Micaela Castigioni

The learning process of health - impacts of the configuration of the workplace health promotion ................................................................. 223
Sylvana Dietel

The role of intrinsic training motivation for self-perceived work ability and working past retirement age ....................................................... 229
Paula Thieme & Michael Brusch & Victoria Büsch

III. Professional action

Quality in continuing education: Which aspects matter from the participant's point of view? ................................................................. 245
Kirsten Aust & Stefanie Hartz & Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha

Adult Education and Transformative Learning ......................................................... 257
Elmira Bancheva & Maria Ivanova & Alexander Pajarliev

Adult Transitions in transitional times: configurations and implications for Adult Education ................................................................. 274
Chiara Biasin

Blended Counselling: Advising Prospective Students with Vocational Qualifications on Their Way to University ............................................. 287
Stefanie Brunner & Stefanie Kretschmer & Olaf Zawacki-Richter

Knowledge Transfer in Career Guidance - Empirical and Theoretical Research Findings ................................................................. 300
Clinton Enoch

Successful outcomes in Vocational Education and Training Courses and Mathematics: How Pedagogy and Expectations Influence Achievement ............................................................................. 307
Bronwyn Ewing & Grace Sara & Tom Cooper & Chris Matthews & Glen Fairfoot

Profession and context: training teachers in a systemic, co-operative and auto/biographic view ................................................................. 328
Laura Formenti

How Internet Based Participatory Culture Can Be Co-opted To Develop Teachers' Technological Skills ......................................................... 343
Filippo Filardi & James Reid

What are the Factors that Affect the Training of Adult Employees in the Universities of Mid-Egypt on ICT ............................................................. 355
Mohamed H. Handy

Workers' training using the e-learning methodology through entrepreneurs confederations in Spain ................................................................................. 370
Rafael M. Hernández-Carrera

New Configurations of Guidance and Counselling – From Support for Individual Decisions to a Governance Tool? ......................................................... 388
Bernd Käpplinger
Reconstructing Professional Identity in Transition of Working Life ............................................. 404
Helena Koskinen

New Challenges for Teaching and Learning in German University Education .......................... 417
Ines Langemeyer & Ines Rohrdantz-Herrmann

Training managers: a case study of a French corporate university ........................................... 437
Simon Mallard & Jerome Eneau

A new professional occupation in adult's education: the RVC Professional ......................... 449
Catarina Paulos

Work motivation and employee motivation methods in managerial work .............................. 460
Anna Pirainen

The peer groups bridging the disciplines and social contexts in higher education ................. 473
Arja Pirainen

From social educators imaginary to social educators training: lessons learned in a grundtvig partnershi project ....................................................... 485
Flavia Virgilio

IV. Institutionalization .................................................................................................................. 496

To Value Adult Education – Organisational learning, Adult Learning, and the Third Sector .......... 497
Henning Pätzold

Sociocultural community development as a strategy for adult education: the conceptions and practices of its practitioners .................................................. 506
Ana Maria Simões

V. System and policies ................................................................................................................. 520

Changing configurations in the governance of adult education in Europe: discussion of some effects of the Lisbon Strategy in Portugal ................................................. 521
Rosanna Barros

Adult education and community development in the city: Critical geography meets critical pedagogy ................................................................. 537
Christine Durant & Behrang Foroughi

Unveiling of new Development Perspectives on Migration Critical research as an approach for discovering latent future possibilities ........................................ 549
Matte Ebner von Eschenbach

Education Decisions of Employed Persons: The Influence of Adult Education Vouchers .............. 564
Erik Haberzelt & Claudia Kulmus

Emancipation instead of discipline ............................................................................................. 572
Anja Heikkinen

We make the road by walking – collective knowledge building and action ............................ 583
Lars Holmstrand & Gunilla Hamsten

Adult Learning through Participation in the Economic (and Political) Environment ..................... 596
Martin Kopocký

Invisible colleges in adult education in Portugal: contribution mapping .................................. 604
Ricardo R. Morginho

The Rise and Fall of Research on the History of Adult Education in Contemporary Hungary: Trends and Issues of Historical Research Work from 1993 to 2013 .............................................................. 617
Balázs Németh
The Limits and Divisions of Adult and Continuing Education in 20th Century Modern Europe. Historical and Political Dimensions and Patterns .............................................. 633
Balázs Németh

Violence Interrogates adult education today. A radical and critical reflection .............................................. 642
Maria Grazia Riva

About the changes and challenges of adult education in Poland in the years 1989-2013 .............................................. 654
Hanna Solarczyk-Szwec & Anna Matusiak & Agata Szwech

Authors .................................................................................................................. 663