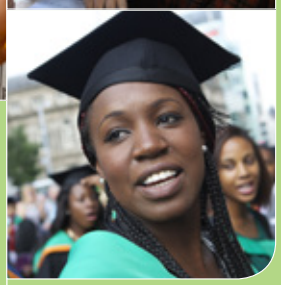

The Role of Higher Education in Promoting Lifelong Learning

Edited by
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United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

UIL Publication Series on
Lifelong Learning Policies and Strategies: No. 3

Jin Yang, Chripa Schneller and Stephen Roche (Eds)

The Role of Higher Education in Promoting Lifelong Learning

Published in 2015 by

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
Feldbrunnenstrasse 58
20148 Hamburg
Germany

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) is a non-profit international institute of UNESCO. The Institute undertakes research, capacity-building, networking and publication on lifelong learning with a focus on adult and continuing education, literacy and non-formal basic education. Its publications are a valuable resource for educational researchers, planners, policymakers and practitioners.

Design & layout: Satz·Zeichen·Buch – Atelier für Buchproduktion
Language editing: Natasha Hogarth
Front cover images: Andrius Petrucenia, World Bank, Nottingham Trent University, Sandra Calligaro / Taimani Films / World Bank, Asian Development Bank
Back cover images: Christopher Connell (www.flickr.com), Zahur Ramji – AKDN (Aga Khan Development Network) – USAID, www.dreamstime.com, Andrius Petrucenia, Rahul Singhi, World Bank

ISBN: 978-92-820-1194-2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3

THE SOCIAL EFFICIENCY OF TERTIARY LIFELONG LEARNING: INITIAL INSIGHTS FROM A EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract

Today's working population is going through a noticeable transition: people are working to a much older age. This is due partly to the acceleration of the ageing process and partly to policies which delay the age of retirement. This shift raises a number of questions about how to engage older people in lifelong learning. This chapter makes some suggestions as to how Tertiary Lifelong Learning (TLLL) can contribute to the well-being of older learners, and how European Union universities might therefore respond to the increasing demands for lifelong learning. We present the project 'Tertiary Higher Education for People in Mid-life' (THEMP), an investigation that analyzed TLLL provided by universities in seven EU member states. Focusing on relevant labour market programmes and on the age of the participants, the project evaluated how these programmes impact on the participants' employability and quality of life.

This chapter further aims to check how viable the THEMP conceptual framework is for analysing the social efficiency of TLLL. The THEMP project found that the integration of universities as providers of lifelong learning for labour markets continues to pose challenges, and that for adult learners, innovation in learning and teaching approaches is a priority. There are indications that an older age group is increasingly interested in TLLL and that universities should therefore consider designing programmes to respond to this demand. We found that adult learners' cost/benefit calculations are strongly oriented to the labour market, and that the exchange of cultural and social capital is becoming more and more important in this respect.

Introduction[1]

Learning has always been recognized as a means to improve personal quality of life (Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, 2008; OECD, 2012), and as one of the most effective tools for fighting social exclusion. Learning is particularly important in order to achieve certain labour market positions: one essential means of achieving well-being. In the globalized knowledge society, work environments are changing quickly, requiring proactive and reactive measures from citizens and enterprises in adapting their knowledge, capacities and competences. In this respect, European Union (EU) Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) play an important role in providing Tertiary LLL (TLLL) opportunities (see for example, Knapper and Cropley, 1985; Knust and Hanft, 2009; Schuetze and Slowey, 2000 and 2012).

This chapter presents the THEMP project, which targeted the TLLL provided by universities in seven EU member states. The project focused on relevant labour market programmes and on the specific cohort of learners aged 40 and above. Rather than limiting its remit to issues of employability and access to the labour market, it considered the wider impact of learning provided by HE on the overall quality of life of the learners.

The THEMP project was aligned with the European Commission's *Action Plan for Adult Education* which argues that member states should 'invest in education and training for older people and migrants, two categories with enormous potential yet who often face disadvantage in the labour market' (EC, 2007). The project asked: How can EU universities respond to increasing demands for LLL, and how does tertiary lifelong learning contribute to the well-being of learners in mid-life?

In this chapter we first discuss the conceptual framework used to analyse the social efficiency of TLLL. We consider TLLL an important tool to prevent, cope with, and mitigate social risks in an ageing knowledge society. We then give some insight into the European TLLL landscape, taking seven EU countries (the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and the UK) as examples. We present an initial case study from each of the countries and provide a summary of the results. This allows us to make a first reflection on how successful our conceptual framework is at measuring the social efficiency of TLLL.

[1] The authors would like to acknowledge financial support from the European Union under the Life Learning Programme (51169-LLP-1–2010–1-ES-KA1-KA1SCR).

Measuring Social Efficiency[2]

In the past few decades, 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 citizens in education and training is seen as key to assuring quality of life and work. As such, it has become part of active labour market policies which aim to transform the European social model, preventing 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, p. 21), reinforcing the link between social rights and social obligations and fostering social inclusion through active participation in the labour market.

More recently, the Transitional Labour Market approach (TLM) emerged as an alternative to activation policies (Schmid, 1995; Schmid and Auer, 1997). This approach links social risk management in transitional work periods with concepts of social equity dating back to Rawls (1971) and further developed by Sen (1999 and 2010) and Nussbaum (2007 and *2007a*). The TLM approach stresses the role of public institutions in managing situations of social risk, promoting proactive flexible public actions to avoid individual social risk, and reinforcing the qualitative rather than merely the quantitative dimension of labour market policies. It thus provides a framework for identifying specific social risk situations (transitions) and offers ways to mitigate the negative impacts of life changes.

During involuntary transitional periods, citizens should be able to count on different forms of institutional support, for instance direct financial support or the funding and organizing of LLL activities. However, in this regard, only institutionally supported formal LLL activities with a clear labour market orientation are considered part of transitional labour markets. Such university programmes for adult learners have considerable potential to help people manage life and labour market transitions. Table 1 provides a classification of labour market transitions based on a distinction between internal and external labour markets.

The TLM approach can therefore be seen as an effective 'social bridge' that prevents individuals from becoming trapped in exclusionary transitions.

[2] This section is a resumé of the conceptual framework exposed in three discussion papers elaborated by Krüger, Duch and Alvarez (available at www.themp.eu).

It increases the probability that, for example, non-standard jobs become 'stepping stones' to sustainable career jobs (Räisänen and Schmid, 2008).

Table 1

SITUATION OF LABOUR MARKET TRANSITIONS

INTERNAL LABOUR MARKET
• Adaptation to changes at the individual workplace • Personal development • Vertical professional development • Horizontal professional development (from one workplace to another at the same level)
EXTERNAL LABOUR MARKET
• From unemployment to employment • From one employment to another • From one employment status to another

In the THEMP project, we distinguish between social danger, social risks and individual risks. The difference between risk and danger is the degree of knowledge that individuals have about the possibility that certain events may occur.[3] Social vulnerability, on the other hand, is a measure of an individual's responsiveness – in short, whether one is limited to *responding* to a risk situation when it occurs, or whether one has the capacity to act *in advance* of the risk situation. In other words, citizens' vulnerability is assumed to grow in relation to the limits of their action capacity. Without denying the self-responsibility of citizens, insufficient knowledge of socio-economic developments limits citizens' capacity to prevent future labour market risk situations. Further limited action capacity restricts citizens' ability to avoid (or stimulate) undesired (or desired) labour situations, to act proactively in advance of potential negative events, or to react.

[3] An example is the situation where an enterprise steps into a critical situation because of risky management decisions which are not communicated to the employees. The managers have knowledge about the possibility that these decisions could have a negative impact on the economic situation of the enterprise; for them it is a risk situation. However, the workers, who know only about the high productivity of the enterprise, do not have complete knowledge of the situation; they are exposed to a situation of social danger.

In order to measure the efficiency of TLLL programmes beyond the labour market and in a life-wide perspective, the TLM approach 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 in Sen's articulation, allows measurement of the quality of social insurance programmes beyond rates of active participation or employment, focusing instead on the quality of work and life. It comes from 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.[4]

One main way to obtain resources is through the labour market, but an individual's position in the labour market depends on the outcomes obtained during the course of diverse formal, informal and non-formal learning processes. TLLL aims to improve learners' qualifications and to provide them with new knowledge, thus supporting intellectual development and facilitating new social relations. However, seen through a labour market lens, achieved learning outcomes must be converted into resources: in other words, into human, cultural and social capital.[5] This involves a complex process of social bargaining in specific labour market fields. Such TLLL-acquired capital (or *capabilities* in Sen's terms) may open or restrict the opportunities for professional development, for facing critical life transitions in an age of TLMs and for achieving new levels of well-being (or *functionings* in Sen's terms).

[4] Sen criticized the resource-based approach on the grounds that it ties resources to the aims of social and employment policies. But the resources can only be used to achieve other goals (or, in Sen's terminology, *functionings*).

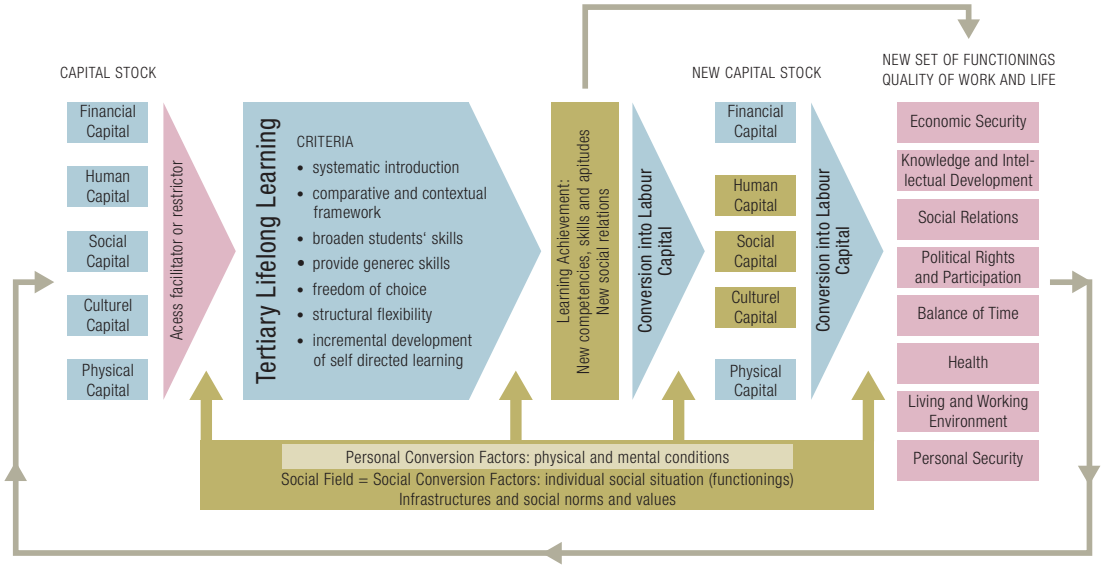
[5] Besides physical and financial capital, we refer to three types of capital that occupy prominent places in the social science debates: i) *Human capital* (Becker, 1964); ii) *Cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1983 and 2005). It seems difficult to make a clear distinction between human and cultural capital. The two approaches are quite different in theoretical orientation, but both refer to the acquisition and use of knowledge, skills, competences and aptitudes during the course of life, with particular emphasis on 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 is iii) *Social capital*, defined by Bourdieu as individual investment in social relations or networks. This is also part of the definitions of Putnam and Coleman, who include additional elements such as trust and norms. We view these elements as forming part of the social fields (Bourdieu, 1979 and 1988) in which human action is embedded (Granovetter, 1985).

We will use the familiar notion of 'capital' to measure the social efficiency of TLLL for learners in mid-life, under the overall analytical framework provided by the TLM theory. Each labour market segment is conceived as a social field determining which learning results are convertible to capital and what is the value of each individual's capital stock. An individual's capital stock and its valuation in labour market segments defines that individual's labour market position and occupational opportunities. Figure 1 shows the complex interrelation between capital accumulation, capability development, learning outcome and quality of life in a given socio-economic context.

It seems clear that, in order to get a measure of their social efficiency or of their positive contribution to social risk management, HEIs committed to LLL must be evaluated in terms of: (i) their capacity to design adequate lifelong learning programmes; (ii) the institutional and financial support they provide to socially vulnerable persons in life and work transitions; and (iii) their capacity to adapt their own internal structures and procedures to new requirements on the part of the adult population and to changed labour market conditions.

Figure 1

TERTIARY LIFELONG LEARNING TO CHANGE
INDIVIDUALS' CAPITAL STOCK AND QUALITY OF WORK AND LIFE



The European landscape

Within the European Social Model (ESM) there are multiple national, political, social and economic realities. For instance, the European labour market is nationally differentiated by labour legislation, systems of collective bargaining and economic structures. These national, regional and sectoral labour markets constitute social fields, which determine access to TLLL and the conversion of learning outcomes into economic, physical, human, social or cultural capital.

Sapir (2005) proposes a classification of EU countries into four categories based on two concepts: efficiency and equity (see Table 2).

Table 2

A TYPOLOGY OF EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODELS

		EFFICIENCY	
		LOW	HIGH
EQUITY	HIGH	Continentals (AT; BE, **CZ**; **DE**; FR, LU)	Nordic (DK, FL, **NL**, S)
	LOW	Mediterranean (**ES, HU**, GR, **IT**, P, PL)	Anglo-Saxon (IRE, **UK**)

Source: Sapir (2005, p. 9)

Note: Bold type indicates the countries under scrutiny by the THEMP project

Without discussing these categories in more depth, this model demonstrates the considerable differences between the EU member states, as well as certain characteristics that some countries share. The sample of the countries under scrutiny by the THEMP project includes at least one country in each of Sapir's categories.

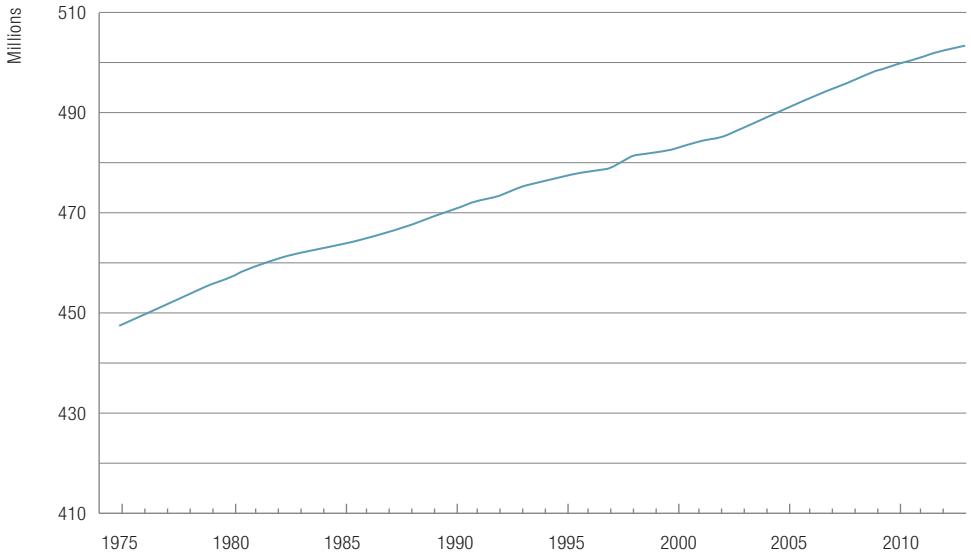
Ageing of the European working population

Demographic trends show that the population of the EU-27 is growing and ageing. A turning point occurred in the early 1990s, when net migration became the main driver of population growth. It has since far outpaced natural change in the population. The impact of demographic ageing within the EU

is likely to be of major significance in the coming decades. Consistently low fertility rates and higher life expectancy are transforming the shape of the EU-27's age pyramid. The most important change is likely to be the transition towards a much older population.

Figure 2

THE EVOLUTION OF THE EU'S POPULATION, 1975–2011



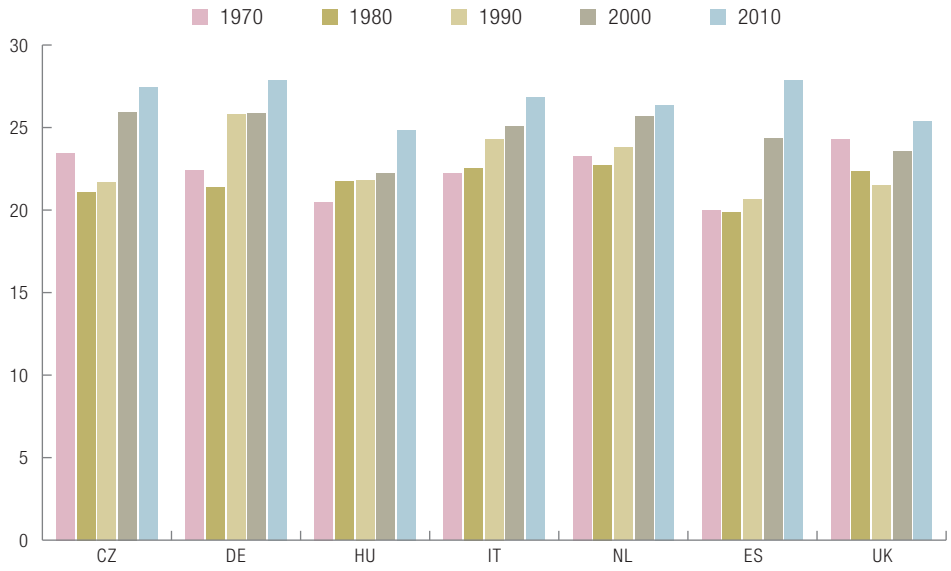
Source: Eurostat

As a result of today's ageing process and of the policies adopted by the EU and its member states to extend the age of retirement, the proportion of working people aged 45–64 will increase significantly in the coming decades (see EC, 2012). This simple fact will have deep consequences for the labour market. 'In OECD countries, less than 60 % of the people aged 50–64 have a job, on average. For prime-age people, between 25 and 49, the share in work is 75 %. If nothing is done, there could be one person employed for every retiree in EU Countries by 2050. As a result, the labour market could shrink by nearly 15 % in the EU-15 over the next five decades.' (Delsa Newsletter, OECD, 2006). It is thus of the utmost importance that EU countries find ways to strengthen the occupational share of the older segment of their workforce, and to change the fact that people above the age of 50 are often the last to be hired and the first to be fired (OECD).

In the THEMP countries, the segment of people in mid-life has risen from an average of 22 % of the total population in 1970 to 27 % in 2010. The growth rate of this group has accelerated since 1990, when the THEMP countries' average was a mere 23 % (Figure 3).

Figure 3

EVOLUTION OF THE SHARE OF POPULATION AGED 45–64 IN THE THEMP COUNTRIES, 1970–2010.



Source: Eurostat

Despite strong differentials, activity rates among THEMP countries have increased, on average, from 2000 to 2010. They are positively affected by education level, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

ACTIVITY RATES OF POPULATION AGED 45–64
BY HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED

	ISCED 0–2*		ISCED 3–4		ISCED 5–6	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
EU-27	50.6	54.2	54.9	62.4	80.6	82.6
CZECH REPUBLIC	48.4	47.6	67.5	67.4	86.0	86.2
GERMANY	48.1	59.9	55.1	73.0	79.3	86.9
SPAIN	50.2	59.1	41.8	55.8	81.6	83.5
ITALY	41.2	45.8	43.3	53.4	80.6	81.8
HUNGARY	30.0	39.1	51.5	54.5	76.6	75.2
NETHERLANDS	47.7	58.2	55.3	64.4	77.3	83.5
UNITED KINGDOM	64.1	57.3	62.1	68.4	84.7	82.5

Source: Eurostat

*ISCED is the International Standard Classification of Education 1997. It established seven educational levels, 0–6, which are often aggregated to three: low, medium and high. 'Low educated' covers levels 0 (pre-primary education), 1 (primary education or first stage of basic education), and 2 (lower secondary education or second stage of basic education). 'Medium educated' covers levels 3 (upper secondary education) and 4 (post-secondary non-tertiary education). 'Highly educated' covers levels 5 (first stage of tertiary education) and 6 (second stage of tertiary education).

Not only does education impact on participation in the labour market; it also serves as a protection against unemployment. Table 4 shows the unemployment rates of people aged 45–64 in the different THEMP countries according to their education level. Once more, we see that more highly educated individuals are better protected against labour market risks and thus have lower unemployment rates.

Table 4

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES OF POPULATION AGED 45–64
BY HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED

	ISCED 0–2		ISCED 3–4		ISCED 5–6	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
EU-27	8.4	10.9	7.0	6.6	3.7	3.5
CZECH REPUBLIC	14.4	18.0	5.5	6.0	2.6	1.9
GERMANY	14.1	13.4	9.9	7.1	5.6	3.3
SPAIN	11.0	20.3	8.1	12.7	3.6	6.7
ITALY	6.5	6.8	2.7	3.4	0.7	1.5
HUNGARY	7.1	18.9	4.5	8.4	1.2	2.2
NETHERLANDS	2.8	4.7	2.2	3.7	2.0	2.9
UNITED KINGDOM	5.1	7.2	4.2	4.9	2.7	3.1

Source: Eurostat

Lower activity rates and higher unemployment rates for people aged 45–64 with lower levels of education imply a greater social risk for this age group. Table 5 shows the change in the share of the population in this age group that faces the risk of poverty or social exclusion by activity status and education level. The data shows a clear disadvantage for the unemployed. On average, the share of middle-aged people in THEMP countries over a five year-period (2005–2010) who face some risk of poverty or social exclusion has increased by 1.4 %, while the share of employed people in this age group has decreased by 1.3 %. At the country level, in four out of the seven THEMP countries the risk of social exclusion is greater in 2010 than it was in 2005. The opposite is true in the case of the employed, where the risk has decreased (with the exception of two countries, Germany and Spain).

Table 5

CHANGE IN POPULATION AGED 50–64 AT RISK OF POVERTY OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION BY EDUCATION LEVEL AND ACTIVITY STATUS, 2005–2010

	Change 2005-2010			
	Employed	Unemployed	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 5-6
EU-27	-4.6	3.6	-8.0	-1.9
CZECH REPUBLIC	-0.7	-7.6	0.6	-1.6
GERMANY	1.3	21.4	8.3	-2.7
SPAIN	2.8	8.3	4.6	1.9
ITALY	-1.0	0.8	-2.1	1.1
HUNGARY	-5.6	6.2	2.1	-1.2
NETHERLANDS	-1.1	-9.1	-4.6	-4.1
UNITED KINGDOM	-1.3	-12.7	-1.4	-0.5

Source: Eurostat

Note: A negative sign represents a decrease in the share of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

A similar picture emerges from education figures. On average, the share of 50 to 64-year-olds in THEMP countries facing some risk of poverty or social exclusion was lower in 2010 than in 2005 for those who have attained education levels equivalent to ISCED 5–6, but higher for those with ISCED 0–2.

In short, ageing and changes in labour market policies pose specific difficulties to people in mid-life, who become a vulnerable population segment. Education proves to be an effective way to mitigate this specific social risk.

The TLLL landscape[6]

TLLL as well as LLL is rooted in a wider European tradition of adult education that can be traced back to the 19*th* century in most countries and even earlier in some (see Osborne and Thomas, 2003). Three main strands can be identified:

- **General Education:** offers a second chance for those who could not follow the traditional pathways to vocational or higher education (e. g. special examinations or courses for adults to access higher education).

- **Socio-cultural education:** offered to adults learning for personal interest in addition to traditional credit-bearing students (e. g. University of the Third Age and Liberal Adult Education).

- **Continuous Vocational Education and Training:** intended to improve the performance of individuals in their workplace and/or raise their position in the labour market (e.g. professional master's courses and other short course provisions).

A clear description of the TLLL and LLL landscape is difficult due to the fact that much of this type of education and training is located in the intersection between the education system and the labour market itself. It must therefore answer to educational as well as to economic requirements. Furthermore, because LLL is conceived as a key element of social policy in the sense of activation, political responsibility for it is often distributed between several ministries. In general, ministries of education are in charge of formal systems of initial education and training, but ministries of labour manage the vocational education and training subsystems which offer courses for the unemployed. Additionally, in some EU member states, responsibility for HE is decentralized (in Germany and Spain, for instance, HE is the responsibility of the individual regions). Neither can we talk about a homogeneous higher education system in the United Kingdom, whose systems are handled by its constituent countries.

[6] For further details see Makó, Csizmadia and Illéssy (2012) and Krüger (2012), but also the national reports available at www.themp.eu.

Focusing only on the vocational stream of TLLL, its development must be analysed in relation to regulated higher vocational education and training. In countries like the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy, higher professional training pathways are provided by non-university HEIs. In Spain, too, higher vocational training is now considered part of HE, but these programmes are delivered at vocational training schools. This means that in these countries we can observe a more or less clear distinction between vocational and academic higher education, which of course takes place at universities.[7] But, as the Spanish case shows, the boundaries are often blurred. This increasing heterogeneity in formal higher education is complemented by an even more diverse and complex system of continuous vocational education and training.

Compared to the formal initial education and training systems, systems of adult education seem more regulated by market mechanisms, allowing them to respond flexibly to labour market demands. In this sense, adult education systems are oriented not only to companies' but also to individuals' needs. They offer a complementary educational package which often aims to improve students' labour market opportunities. Adult education also seems more flexible with respect to financing, since its various systems combine different sources. In general, we can distinguish three different types of (T)LLL funding:

- **Public funding** includes direct funding of public institutions and specific programmes.[8] This also refers to funding of education and training activities by social security through the contributions of workers and enterprises, or other state funds assigned to training measures for unemployed and employed persons.[9] In this category we also include several public fund-

[7] This separation is in fact even more fluid, as is shown by the example of the German *Fachhochschulen* (in English: Universities of Applied Science) which are now claiming the right to award accredited PhD degrees.

[8] For example, the *Workforce Development Programme* of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

[9] For instance in Spain, where these funds are managed by the Ministry of Labour and its institutions. Another example is Italy, where the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies allocates the resources among the Regions and Autonomous Provinces and distributes funds to them. In Germany, the National Employment Agency contributes substantial funds to the training activities of unemployed persons.

ing arrangements managed by private entities (UK), tax credits that employers and individual employees receive when they invest in education and training (Netherlands) or vouchers (Italy). Last but not least, we must mention that the European Social Fund plays an important role in all countries in funding training activities, especially for unemployed people.

- **Semi-public funding** refers to funds managed jointly by public administrations and social actors such as entrepreneur associations and trade unions, or only by the social actors themselves but supervised by governmental agencies. These funds are generally based on contributions from enterprises and workers, with complementary funding by the state.[10]

- **Private funding** refers, for example, to the funding of in-house training programmes by a company or external programmes funded by participation fees. It also covers learners' own financial contributions. In this category we also include the creation of corporate universities, which in some European countries have achieved certain relevance.

Enterprises and TLLL: the Spanish case

Before presenting the case studies in detail, it is worth mentioning an important actor in the field of tertiary lifelong learning: the enterprises. At European level, there is limited research overall concerning the attitude of enterprises towards the learning possibilities offered by universities. For this reason, we refer in what follows only to the Spanish situation. In spite of this limitation to one country, we think that the opinions of managers of Spanish enterprises permit of some general conclusions about the attitudes of enterprises towards university lifelong learning.

[10] The tripartite foundation in Spain (*La Fundación Tripartita para la Formación en el Empleo*) is an example of this category, as are the Joint Inter-professional Funds in Italy and Labour Market Fund in Hungary. In the Netherlands there are collective agreements to finance continuous vocational education and training by Education and Development Funds.

The results of a survey carried out in 2010 (Fundación CYD, 2010) show that in that year, 15 % of Spanish enterprises took advantage of non-customized training courses offered by universities. Only 4 % of enterprises used tailor-made programmes. Amongst those who did not use the general training programmes provided by universities, 38 % did not know that such services existed. Another 23 % knew that universities offered this service but did not consider them as training providers. 23 % mentioned that the third most relevant reason for not taking up provision was that the programmes offered by the universities were not suitable for the enterprise. Table 7 shows figures subdivided into responses relating to general and tailor-made programmes.

REASONS FOR NOT USING THE TLLL PROGRAMMES (% OF ANSWERS) Table 7

REASONS	GENERAL PROGRAMMES	TAILOR-MADE PROGRAMMES
Did not know that the university offers this service	38	43
Knew about this service but not how to access it	1	1
Didn't consider the university as a training provider	23	24
Unsuitable courses or programmes offered	23	16
Inadequate conditions	9	6
Courses too expensive	2	5
Other	3	2
No response	1	3

Source: Fundación CYD (2010)

Another series of question asked the enterprises their opinions on the relevance of different lifelong learning providers. In Table 8 we can see that the university is regarded as one of the least important providers, occupying the penultimate place. The most important providers, according to the managers, are their own human resource departments (HRD) followed by consultants, centres of continuous vocational training and entrepreneur associations. It is perhaps no surprise to observe that HRDs are by far the most used provider.

Table 8

TRAINING PROVIDERS OF SPANISH ENTERPRISES (% OF POSSIBLE ANSWERS)

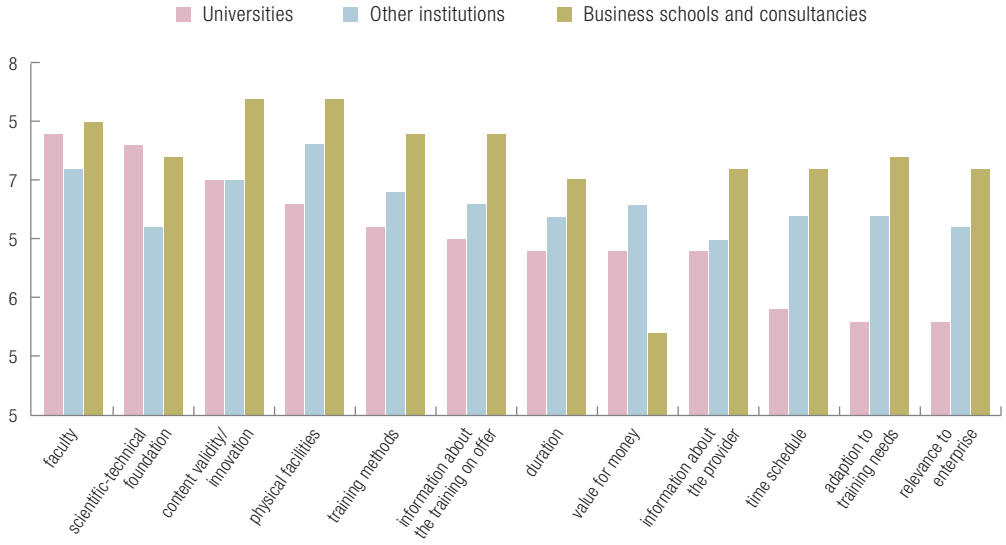
	SELECTION	RECURRENCY
Own department responsible for training	63	64
Business Schools	41	27
Consultancy Enterprises	60	26
University	25	25
Centres of Continuous Vocational Training	46	28
Chambers of Commerce	38	28
Entrepreneur Associations, Professional Associations, etc.	45	32
Trade unions	14	18
Providers of equipment or materials	39	34
Mother company or linked companies	24	39

Source: Fundación CYD (2010)

In a previous study (Parellada and Sanromá, 2001), Spanish enterprises were asked to evaluate several aspects of the continuing training offered by universities in comparison with other providers such as enterprises, training centres and (in particular) business schools and consultancies (see Figure 4). In nine of the twelve dimensions the universities received a worse evaluation than the other providers (especially with respect to adaption to training needs, training hours and relevance to the enterprise). The universities stood out only in terms of the technical-scientific foundation of their courses and faculty.

Figure 4

EVALUATION OF THE QUALITY OF TRAINING OFFERED IN 12 DIMENSIONS



Source: Parellada and Sanromá (2001)

The differences are particularly evident when universities are compared with business schools and consultancies, their direct competitors. Universities score higher than business schools and consultancies in only two dimensions: value for money and the technical-scientific foundation of courses. Even though the survey was carried out eight years ago, it seems that the situation has not changed substantially.

In a nutshell, the surveys from 2010 and similar surveys carried out in 2004 (Fundación CYD, 2005) demonstrate that universities are a long way from being among the most important players in this field. This indicates that Spanish universities still have not found their role in the lifelong learning market, despite being major providers of education and training. It is not clear whether the managers of enterprises in other European countries hold similar opinions to those expressed by the Spanish managers. If the Spanish case is anything to go by, it is safe to conclude that, in spite of official declarations of the importance of their third mission and of lifelong learning, universities have not yet met the needs of the economic and productive structure, nor have they established close relations with the labour market by giving support to the activities of enterprises.

Insights from the first case studies[11]

The aim of this section is to present the distinguishing features the tertiary lifelong learning systems in the THEMP countries. This first sample of programmes shows a wide range of themes, including:

- a four-semester training school for consultants (Czech Republic);
- a tailor made five-module programme for people working in public affairs (Netherlands);
- a three-semester training programme for members of work councils (Germany);
- a university specialized in business affairs offering non-university two-year advanced vocational programmes (Hungary);
- postgraduate programmes for further specialization and master's programmes (Hungary);
- an orientation skills programme for people undergoing labour market transitions (Italy);
- a two-year programme on Human Resource Management (Spain); and
- a three-year full degree programme on Community Work (United Kingdom).

In the creation and promotion of these programmes universities are often cooperating with external actors, including enterprises, professional associations, public administration or trade unions. Obvious examples are the

[11] This is based on the presentations of the first case studies made at the First Mutual Learning Seminar of the Project THEMP. For further details see the proceedings of this seminar (available at www.themp.eu).

Czech, Dutch, German, Spanish and Italian courses, each of which features strong cooperation with external actors.

Although this selection of programmes is not representative, it does provide examples of courses where many of the learners are middle-aged. These programmes were selected to test the previously described methodology for measuring social efficiency. Even if they are not integrated in the HEI's overall strategy, the selected courses and their diversity still give insights into European TLLL programmes. As was expected, most of the courses are not aimed specifically at the 40+ age group. Nevertheless, in the Italian and Dutch cases the majority of learners come from this age cohort, and in all the other cases it represents a considerable proportion of the learners.

We will now outline some of the structural dimensions of TLLL provision, focusing on four issues: institutional integration, labour market orientation, teaching staff and methods, and funding.

Institutional integration

TLLL provision at universities in the THEMP countries tends to cover the whole range of adult education mentioned previously. However, TLLL is not always managed by the same administrative unit that is responsible for labour market oriented courses. We have observed a wide range of possibilities for the integration of TLLL. Some institutions integrate it into their normal university structure, whilst others externalize it. Examples of the integrative approach include:

- The Dutch programme: Focusing on the public sector, this programme is offered by a TLLL centre which is integrated into the university structure and forms part of a faculty.

- The Hungarian university: This university, which specializes in business affairs, has integrated the management of TLLL programmes into their main structure in the form of an Adult and Further Training Centre.

- The Czech university, whose Faculty of Arts has expanded to include a centre of further education which organizes all TLLL-related activities.

- The UK university, which has developed a customized undergraduate degree programme in Community Development to serve the needs of a specific client group. This programme is integrated into the normal provision of the School of Education and managed in the same way as all other programmes.

The main approach in these cases seems to be the constitution of a specific administrative unit which manages courses together with faculty staff. Examples of externalization of TLLL within a university-owned organization include:

- The Spanish university: This university has opted for a foundation to manage technology transfer and a technology park. However, it also has a TLLL programme offering non-official master's courses as well as university specialist programmes for further specialization, extension courses and training on demand for companies.

- The German university. This university owns its own private company which provides academically rigorous, job-oriented continuing education for specialists and managers in companies, local authorities and other public sector organizations.

Examples of externalization based on public-private partnership include:

- The Italian case: This university has a specific institutional configuration: it cooperates with a private company which manages its TLLL programme. This configuration is necessary because the programme focuses on a specific issue (namely, labour market transition) and is aimed expressively at the specific target group of unemployed people.

Labour market orientation

The TLLL programmes we have studied tend to have a strong orientation towards local labour markets at sub-regional level, such as the Metropolitan Region of the Ruhr, the Province of Tarragona and the Province of Bologna. The intention of THEMP was to select programmes with a strong labour market orientation, although only in some cases do we observe a clear orientation towards labour market transitions. These cases include the Italian programme, which focuses specifically on the transition (unemployment) period; the UK programme, which provides professional qualifications to people who are working on a paid or unpaid basis in the field of community development; and the Czech programme, which prepares learners for transition to a new occupation in the same environment.

The remaining programmes address the issue of labour market transitions to some extent. The German programme prepares learners not only for the improvement of their capability in Work Councils, but also for future employment, as most are unlikely to return to their previous position after working in the council. The Spanish course on human resource management touches on the theme of improving labour market position, even though its primary goal is to improve learners' work performance. The Dutch programme prepares highly qualified learners for the next step in their professional career in the area of public policy. Finally, the Hungarian business programme aims at further specialization of employees who hold a degree in various business fields, especially in finance and accounting.

In four cases there is no linkage to official certification as defined by the Bologna Declaration, so participation in these programmes does not confer credit within the European Qualifications Framework or any other national qualifications framework. However, the Czech, Hungarian and UK programmes do culminate in the award of an official, nationally recognized professional qualification. In the other cases which lack official certification, the validity of the qualification awarded depends exclusively on its relevance for and recognition by the labour market.

This relates not only to the quality of the programme but also to institutional engagement with the external environment. The Dutch programme is a good example of the engagement of a specific segment of a specific economic sector: namely, public administration and policymaking. The Spanish

programme provides an example of local engagement focusing on specific economic sectors in the surrounding areas, such as tourism or the food industry. The UK programme recognizes credit from the vocational sector; students may enter with credit from a cognate Higher National Certificate (HNC) taken at a Further Education College near the university.

The Dutch and the German cases are special as they are tailor-made programmes for selected client groups. The Dutch case focuses on public affairs, especially processes of monitoring and influencing policy and decision-making. The course is targeted at those who work in positions close to or in between governmental, non-governmental and private organizations and companies. The German case is aimed at people who work as employee representatives, especially members of enterprises' Work Councils (in some cases also members of the staff council). Admission to the programme presupposes a certain degree of professional education and work experience in the field of employee representation (the admissions process was itself developed in cooperation with members of Work Councils). The other programmes are not tailor-made but they do have a clear orientation to professional profiles (Human Resource Manager and Business) or occupations (school consultants and community workers).

Teaching staff and methods

The strong practical orientation of the programmes studied implies that their teachers do not come exclusively from academic backgrounds. All programmes try to find an appropriate mix of academic teachers and teachers with professional experience in the relevant labour market. The German case features a combination of trainers, professionals and professors with an economic background (macro-economics, human resource management, business mediation). The Dutch programme features teaching by senior practitioners such as politicians, journalists, and managers working in the public and semi-public sectors. In the UK case, whilst the teachers are all employed by the university, they occupy distinct positions as either lecturers (teaching and research), university teachers (teaching only) or placement officers (observing and assessing in the workplace as well as liaising with employers).

The strong emphasis on practice is also reflected in the fact that some programmes opt for participatory or interactive teaching and learning methods (for example in Italy, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Germany and the UK). A number of programmes also feature placements in enterprises and/or workplace- and project-based teaching (Czech Republic, United Kingdom, Germany). This reflects the well-known argument that learning programmes for adults require a more student-centred and participatory approach (see for example Brookfield, 1995; Knowles, 1992 and many others) in which teachers become facilitators of the learning process (Apps, 1991) and take into account the professional experience of the learners.

The programmes analysed focus not only on the acquisition of new professional skills and competences – convertible to human capital – but also on broader skills and competences – convertible to cultural capital.[12] The Italian and Dutch courses focus on the development of broader competences. However, programmes often aim not just to develop learners' competences, but also to help them establish social networks. In the German and Spanish cases, the creation of new social contacts is fostered by social events involving current and older learners and experts. Similarly, in the UK case, the use of placements creates contacts that can be built on to develop new and enhanced employment opportunities for those already in work.

Funding

Fees are payable in the Czech Republic, Spain, the Netherlands and Germany, but are often paid by the enterprise rather than the individual learner. In some countries, such as Spain, individuals' participation can be paid for by a private-public fund (in this case the Tripartit Foundation). In Italy learners do not pay fees, as the programme is either publicly funded or privately funded by enterprises. In the UK access is free for the individual since the programme takes place in Scotland, where there are no undergraduate tuition fees.

[12] The Hungarian case is probably an exception as the programme is focused only on professional skills.

Conclusions

The principal objective of the first research stage of THEMP was to check the viability of our conceptual approach for measuring social efficiency, based on insights into national TLLL systems and the first set of case studies.

As we have seen, a considerable number of TLLL activities organized by or with universities have a strong labour market orientation. However, this does not imply that these activities can be classified as part of the Transitional Labour Market. For this, TLLL must have an explicit intention to avoid, cope with and mitigate labour market risks and dangers. The first case studies contain some examples which could be included in such a category, most notably the Italian programme, which is specifically aimed at people in labour market transitions. To some extent, we can also include the British programme for community workers. In all of the other cases we find an orientation towards labour market transition, but we cannot define the programmes as part of the Transitional Labour Market. The integration of universities in networks as providers of lifelong learning to support labour market policies is therefore still an open issue.

The case studies also indicate a weak connection between lifelong learning and traditional learning programmes. In general, the programmes studied did not offer credit which could be used to obtain official certification at bachelor's or master's level, nor (with the exception of the UK case) was credit offered for prior or experiential learning. Given EU policies that point firmly towards the permeability of traditional higher education and vocational training and towards the recognition of prior learning, the question is how to link these learning strands.[13]

[13] The 1991 Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community called on Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) to support an increasingly knowledge-driven economy and society through widening access to higher qualifications. HEIs were also urged to create opportunities for updating and renewing qualifications, to increase preparatory courses, and to do more to recognize prior learning and experience (EC, 1991). In subsequent decades the Lisbon Strategy (Council of European Union, 2000) and a succession of other documents have emphasised these themes. The Commission Communication, *Adult Learning: It is never too late to learn* (EC, 2006) and its associated Action Plan (EC, 2007) encouraged Member States to increase and consolidate learning opportunities for adults and to make learning accessible to all. Amongst five principle actions of the Action Plan, one was to '*develop systems for the recognition and validation of learning outcomes, based on common principles which enable Member States to measure and value learning*'.

At the beginning of the project, we did not expect to find many programmes with a specific orientation towards workers with significant professional experience. In all courses, however, we found a considerable number of older students; and in two examples – the Dutch and Italian cases – we found a specific orientation towards this age cohort. It is too early to speak about a trend towards the stronger integration of this age cohort in universities. But the evidence does indicate that older people are more interested in TLLL than they may have been in the past, and that universities should therefore consider designing their programmes in response to this demand.

Given the strong labour market orientation of the selected programmes, it is only natural that the development of professional skills and competences stands at their centre. However, the development of non-technical competences may be even more important for TLLL. The Italian programme is a good example, but the more elite Dutch programme also indicates that a broader competence approach can be applied. This is a strong indication that cultural capital is becoming more important in the labour market, making innovation in learning and teaching methods a priority. Adult learners require and demand a greater variety of learning and teaching methods than learners coming directly from school, and their cost/benefit calculations are more directly oriented to the labour market. Our preliminary research confirms that such cost/benefit calculations are not purely financial. Rather, they include economic, human, cultural and social capital.

This broader perspective is also reflected in the fact that TLLL programmes are developing more and more additional services, such as labour market stocks and social events. The German and Spanish cases, which include additional network-building services, testify to the increasing importance of the establishment of social relations through TLLL programmes. A look at the internal master's programmes[14] offered by Spanish universities and business schools, which permit access to closed labour markets, confirms the impression that the exchange of cultural and social capital is becoming more and more important.

[14] These contrast with the state-recognized masters programmes.

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