# BOOKLET OF ABSTRACTS

# LEARNING CAREERS, HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKPLACES

## Supporting transitions in times of complexity

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# Communications summary

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## Les universités face au déploiement de la formation continue. Quelles stratégies de mise en relation des savoirs académiques et des attentes sociétales ?

La formation continue constitue un des leviers par lequel les universités peuvent répondre au « nouvel ordre éducatif » (Field, 2006 ; Alheit, Dausien, 2005) qui demande de renforcer les liens entre les lieux d'apprentissage et la société. Dans la lignée des orientations politiques définies par la Commission européenne, la formation continue est désormais reconnue comme l'une des missions officielles des établissements d'enseignement supérieur, au côté de la formation initiale et de la recherche (Davies, 2007). Pour autant, le déploiement de cette mission dépend directement de la capacité des universités à se positionner sur un marché. Alors que le financement de la formation continue constitue un défi largement partagé, ce travail de mise en marché de l'offre de formation reste encore peu étudié dans la littérature. Cet article s'intéresse aux « compromis opératoires » (Manifet, 2012) effectués par les universités pour construire la valeur de la formation continue universitaire auprès des acteurs externes (marché) comme des acteurs internes (reconnaissance académique).

L'article présente une analyse qualitative menée auprès de 8 universités publiques en Europe et au Québec. Les établissements sélectionnés couvrent une diversité de situations en termes de taille d'établissement et de domaine d'expertise ainsi qu'une diversité de configurations stratégiques en matière de développement des services de formation continue (rayonnement international ; création de filiale dédiée ; professionnalisation des services…). L'analyse se fonde sur une série d'entretiens semi-directifs, menés auprès de responsables de formation continue et directeurs de faculté impliqués dans cette mission. Deux axes principaux sont explorés : les modalités de co-création des programmes d'apprentissage avec les partenaires externes (1), les leviers incitatifs mobilisés pour encourager l'engagement des enseignants-chercheurs dans la formation des professionnels (2).

Trois résultats principaux sont discutés. D'une part, l'approche internationale retenue permet de mettre en exergue la similarité des discours et des problématiques rencontrées par les acteurs en charge de la formation continue dans leurs établissements, indépendamment des contextes locaux et nationaux. D'autre part, l'étude identifie 4 modèles idéal-types de développement qui illustrent les différents choix stratégiques adoptés par les établissements en matière de co- construction des programmes et d'articulation des différentes missions (recherche, formation initiale, formation tout au long de la vie). Enfin, l'article interroge l'impact de ces différents modèles sur l'évolution des modes d'apprentissage et la transformation du système de valeur académique (rôle des enseignants-chercheurs, etc.).

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## The nomadic student: embodying the transitions between university and educational work during internship.

This article explores the topic of transitions in relation to the future of educational professions, with a focus on internship and the central yet vulnerable role of students in knowledge construction processes.

Several studies (Cillo, 2017) analyse the factors that contribute to delineating the highly precarious condition of students in Italy, including the expansion of university education, the deregulation of the rental market, the lack of public policies, and the gentrification of historical centres. Indeed, those who work in academic institutions have empirical evidence of the unsustainability of the academic pathway for a large proportion of students. According to Barnett (2022), however, it is important to focus on how students' condition of "homelessness" is also characterised by specific symbolic aspects, intimately connected with being in education: higher education is – all too often – a site of student homelessness. (...) In modular or interdisciplinary programmes, the students around one change, the tasks and the frameworks change, the mode of being required by the various disciplines – within the student's programme of studies – alters, the teachers change and the character of the assignments change. Moreover, as stated, we are wanting students to step outside of themselves, and to find some distance between their taken-for-granted understandings of the world and enter a new form of understanding, where all is recognised as being contingent. We are wanting students, in short, to make themselves homeless, to leave their earlier homes and throw away the key. We are asking our students to be pedagogical nomads**. (Barnett, 2022, p.3-4)

Barnett proposes the condition of homelessness no longer just as a collateral  consequence of, for example, the lack of public investment in education, but as an inescapable and desirable phase of becoming a subject in research. To be pedagogically nomadic means to be capable of making transitions: juggling different approaches to knowledge, becoming familiar with a plurality of codes and languages, inhabiting interdisciplinarity and, above all, learning to learn in a qualitative variety of contexts are to be recognised as constituent components of the university course.

Transitions characterise the spatial dimension of the learning experience in the lifewide dimension of educational nomadism: students simultaneously attend a multiplicity of contexts, often very different, which can be considered as places of learning, alongside which the university can find its place as an educational institution.

As a connective system linking the academic world, the network of services and the social fabric, the internship represents an experience of educational nomadism and plays a crucial role particularly in the transition to the world of work. Akkerman and Bruining developed a framework for analysing learning and research processes that cross several thresholds simultaneously. They identified three levels in particular: the institutional, interpersonal and intrapersonal one. In this paper, the third declination of boundary crossing will be foregrounded in particular, since it allows the notion of transition to be  more precisely combined with embodiment.  In fact, intrapersonal refers to situations in which 'people simultaneously participate in intersecting practices and literally come to embody the boundary' (Akkerman, Bruining, 2016, p. 248).  During the internship, embodying the boundary requires the ability to enter into relationships with the actors of various practices and contexts, but also to establish a bodily and inner dialogue between the different perspectives one is subjectively able to assume.

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# Interplay between HE policies, welfare mechanisms, and work market structures in today's time: the Italian case.

While employability rhetoric promotes the acquisition of skills and competencies to facilitate entry into the work market, it simultaneously foregrounds an individualistic responsibility for success in an increasingly competitive and uncertain professional landscape (Tomlinson, 2012). The transition into HE is often transformative for adult students, affecting their learning trajectories and identities. However, it can also destabilize existing social and professional relationships (Balzano, 2017).Despite obtaining HE qualifications, non-traditional students frequently encounter extended transition periods and employment outcomes below graduate level, highlighting a persistent mismatch between educational attainment and work market demands (Burke, 2014). HEIs are thus situated at the intersection of two competing imperatives: widening participation to foster social justice and promoting employability to align with market needs.

The Italian context presents challenges within this framework, as its job policies and welfare system struggle to address the evolving demands of the knowledge economy. While HEIs are increasingly expected to prepare students for employability, Italy's segmented work market, characterized by precarious employment and regional disparities, exacerbates inequalities for graduates (Barbieri & Scherer, 2009). Additionally, policies such as the "Reddito di Cittadinanza" (Citizens' Income) have been implemented to provide social protection, but their effectiveness in supporting long-term career development remains contested (Sacchi, 2018). The interplay between HE, welfare systems, and working policies thus reveals deep tensions: while universities are tasked with enhancing employability, systemic barriers related to job stability, skill recognition, and professional mobility persist, particularly for non-traditional students. While employability frameworks often draw upon human capital theory (Becker, 1964), portraying skills as commodities to be accumulated and exchanged in the work market (Han, 2004), this perspective risks reducing the complex interplay of education, identity, and work to an individualistic investment strategy (Holmes, 2023). Critics argue that such representations obscure the systemic factors that structure access to opportunities, reinforcing inequalities along the lines of class, gender, and ethnicity (Bourdieu, 1986; Merrill et al., 2020).

The increasing marketisation of HE and the prioritization of employability discourses create inherent tensions between social justice-oriented community development and human capital-driven work market preparation. The Italian case illustrates how these tensions are further complicated by the interplay between HE policies, welfare mechanisms, and work market structures. While HEIs are positioned as key actors in facilitating transitions into and out of education, their role in reinforcing or challenging structural inequalities remains contested. Future research should further explore the implications of these tensions, particularly in relation to non-traditional students and the evolving nature of career trajectories in the contemporary work market.

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# Interplay between HE policies, welfare mechanisms, and work market structures in today's time: the Italian case.

When considering the relationship between education, skills and the creative industries, the notion of a pipeline is often discussed, where in the UK it is conceptualised as broken (Jones et al, 2015; Carey et al., 2019; Broadhead et al., 2022). In spite of renewed policy focus on the creative industries the pipeline, it seems, continues to be broken. Giles et al. (2025) point out, the UK's creative industries are now part of the government's Industrial Strategy as a priority sector. But it can be seen that the education and skills system has not been able to keep pace. There is now a widening gap between the skills the workforce have and what employers say they need.

The 'pipeline' metaphor evokes the idea that people, usually young people, go through the education system, passing through various stages where they learn the right skills to be employable within industry. At the end of the pipeline the graduate or apprentice seamlessly enters the world of work ready to become a productive worker. Education is of service to the employer and also the wider economy. However, is a contradiction that the metaphor of a pipeline with its linear and industrial connotations is used in relation to employability, when the nature of work is becoming more complex and fluid (National Centre for Universities & Business, 2024).

This study considers employability skills from a different perspective, it asks what are the employability skills adult learners returning to arts education come with? How are these skills that are acquired in previous employment useful for learning (for the individual and the cohort). This inquiry informs a much larger project that aims to promote sustainable and inclusive growth in the creative industries and is part of the Yorkshire and Humber Policy Invocation Partnership led by Professor Gary Dymski.

The Learning Returns arts-based project (Broadhead & Hooper, 2024) collected narratives from 16 participants about their experiences of returning to education in order to study a creative subject. As part of this project the participants reflected on how previous experiences and job roles had benefited their return to learning.

In an attempt to pinpoint the skills that are often valued by educators and employers a range of recent reports related to employability were reviewed (National Centre for Universities and Business, 2024; Kingston University and YouGov, 2024; Wicklow & Gamble, 2024; British Academy, 2022; 2020; 2017) along with three frameworks that identify employability skills, two of these focus on the creative arts (Prospects, 2024; University of the Arts, London, 2024; Leeds Conservatoire, 2024). Core and transferable skills were identified and combined from all these sources to establish a comprehensive set of employability skills/aptitudes. The three aptitudes that were most often represented in the reports were creativity, adaptability and communication. This corresponds with the OCED (2021) report *Future of Education and Skills 2030* that argues that the more social, emotional and imaginative skills will be needed by employers as operational tasks become automated.

The stories about returning to arts education were analysed by referring to the comprehensive set of employability skills that had been identified from the literature. Explicit and implicit references to these skills were identified in the participants' stories.

The findings show how adult learning journeys in the creative arts are not necessarily linear but can be circuitous and iterative. They also suggest that education is not only a service for prospective employers but can prepare people for more imaginative and multifaceted careers that may or may not include partial retirement. For example, participants may have portfolio careers, that include part-time work similar to their previous job roles, alongside more fulfilling but precarious freelance work.

**Context for skills and the creative arts in the UK**

For many reasons the cultural and creative industries have been deemed to be in crisis during the previous ten-fifteen years. Firstly, the impact of the English baccalaureate certificate (EBacc) on the uptake of arts subjects in schools has led to less people undertaking arts at A- level and subsequently to progressing to a creative arts degree. The introduction in 2011 of the EBacc has been detrimental to the arts because they are not seen as core subjects (Thomson et al. 2020; Bath et al., 2020; Fautley, 2019; Johnes, 2017; Neumann et al., 2016). Secondly, the impact of the pandemic led to a decline in arts and cultural activities which in turn led to a loss of skills through people leaving the creative industries. Easton (2020) argued that the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the creative industries and the pipeline of talent entering those industries. Thirdly, the Conservative government appeared to be hostile to the creative arts, suggesting that certain degree courses were of low value and threatening to limit the student numbers on these courses (Fazackerley, 2021). Generally, there has been a growing and pervasive lack of understanding about the significance of culture and arts to the economy, local communities and to the well-being of individuals.

Hopefully the recent changes in the UK government policy can give hope to those working in the cultural and creative industries.

Those who argue for the importance of creative education come from two schools of thought. Many believe that creative education is important in its own right and should provide the skills so that people can go and work in the arts and culture sector. Cole et al. (2024) discuss the potential for investing in arts and culture as a means of addressing many of Labour's policy goals. In particular they call for investment in skills for the heritage sector and the creative industries.

A second perspective is that a creative education can nurture important skills that can lead to employability in other sectors. Taylor et al. (2022) argue that the essential employment skills expected to be most in demand in the future labour market are those associated with creativity and sociability including analytical/creative; interpersonal; self-management; and emotional intelligence. Preparations that are needed in education and training, and within the working population, to meet this demand. Therefore, the value of creative education also can lie in those transferable skills needed across all careers.

The Labour government elected in 2024 announced a £270 million funding boost for arts and culture. Along with the announcement it is noted that regional growth is to be boosted by £67 million for culture projects, these interventions are designed to support the *Government's Plan for Change* . The aim is to develop local engagement with culture and increase opportunities to gain creative skills, acknowledging the important role

the creative industries have in the UK economy (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2025a). The Rt Hon Lisa Nandy MP (Culture Secretary) stated that,

> Everyone across the country should be able to access arts and culture in the place they call home. This support will empower our cultural organisations to continue playing an essential role in developing skills, talent and high-quality careers in every corner of the UK. (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2025b).

Creative skills can be learned from informal and formal learning opportunities. During recent times there have been many reports that argue for the importance of employability skills from graduate study. Many reports written by creative arts education providers seek to demonstrate how creative courses teach employability skills (University of the, London, 2024; Leeds Conservatoire, 2024). However, education is often represented as a machine where the output is a series of employability skills. Whilst an education in the creative arts seems well placed to provide the skills that can be applied to job roles, in both the creative industries and in other sectors, such an education is much more than a service to supply the 'pipeline' into the job market. Also, the discourse is often about 'young people'. Nandy argues that,

> Arts and culture help us understand the world we live in, they shape and define society and are enjoyed by people in every part of our country. They are the building blocks of our world-leading creative industries and make a huge contribution towards boosting growth and breaking down barriers to opportunities for young people to learn the creative skills they need to succeed. (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2025a).

Where does this place those returning to education who are in their 40s, 50s, 60s and so on, who study creative subjects for many reasons? The barriers to studying the arts are compounded for adult learners, but for many, creativity is part of self-identity (Butcher & Clarke 2022). To what extent do these people return to education already with these employability skills and do these skills actually help them learn? So, this inquiry asks if it is possible to disrupt or reverse the thinking about the relationship between skills, education and employability in the case of adult learners.


**Research approach**

Learning returns is an arts-based research project that has been developing over the previous five years since 2020. People who had returned to education to study the arts were asked to tell their stories and share their insights through a series of short films. These films were posted on a YouTube channel named Learning Returns. Rolling (2010) wrote that arts-based methods can show how experience and meaning is complex and multidimensional. McKay and Sappa (2020) pointed out that the arts can enable research communication to adopt multiple languages other than speech or writing, communicating in a multi-sensorial fashion. Words, images and sounds captured by film can convey meanings that are not limited to cognition but can also evoke feelings. Ways of knowing can include emotional, aesthetic and intellectual responses to the world and can heighten a researcher's grasp of human experiences.

Arts-based research is an approach that can delve into adult learning because it is 'research that uses the arts, in the broadest sense, to explore, understand, represent and even challenge human action and experience'

(Savin-Baden and Wimpenny, 2014: 1). McNiff (2008) argued that arts-based methods are an important means for researchers and participants to observe and reflect on their lived-experiences.

When considering the quality of arts-based research, Sinner et al. (2019) stressed that validity, significance, reproducibility, reliability and exportable generalisations can often be meaningless when evaluating outcomes. Leavy (2015) identified a range of tenets that could act as quality indicators for arts-based research, such as authenticity, truthfulness, political consciousness-raising and emancipation.

*Recruitment*

The University Alumni office contacted former adult learners who had returned to education later in life to study the arts asking if they wanted to be part of the Learning Return's project. At first, four people responded and gave informed consent. These participants had studied sculpture, calligraphy, socially-engaged art and fine art. After the original four had contributed to the project they helped recruit a wider range of people. 'Snowball' is a method of recruitment where participants are asked to suggest possible contributors from their networks (Heckathorn, 1997). The four participants asked their contacts to email the researchers if they wished to be part of the project. Snowballing as a method of recruitment does have some issues as it is reliant on the social capital of the participants. Consequently, this could inadvertently exclude possible candidates from the research investigation.

Conversely, Sadler et al. (2010) consider that snowball recruitment is effective in contacting 'hard to reach' populations that researchers do not have access to.

The snowball recruitment approach was successful as from the original four, the number of participants increased to 16. In addition to this, the types of art subjects studied by the participants widened to include creative writing, printmaking, drawing and textiles.

*Method*

Researchers organised with participants a time which was convenient to all parties when they could film content for a Learning Returns video [film and video are used as meaning the same thing for the purposes of this account]. Filming took place in various arts studios and classrooms at the University, and where a suitable backdrop could be installed and the sound levels from the surrounding environment could be controlled. Participants were asked to talk about their experiences of arts education as adult learners and how they had continued their arts practices outside of formal education. Approaches to lighting, seating and backgrounds were designed to frame the contributors as they spoke to the camera and to give a visual continuity to the films. The participants were reassured that if they were not happy with their performance at any time, then this could be edited out. They were encouraged to speak freely. The researchers aimed to keep the filming sessions relaxed and informal.

The subsequent footage was edited to approximately two minutes and the final versions were sent to the participants and research team for their approval. The editing process was iterative and the editor kept in mind the need to capture the authentic stories of the participants, avoiding what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) termed narrative smoothing where the authenticity of an account is compromised by the desire to 'tell a good story'.

*Ethics*

The safety and well-being of the participants were the first priorities of the project. The researchers shared with the participants the ethical risks of the films being hosted on YouTube and being visible to a world-wide audience. They were given an information sheet and consent form that explained the aims of the project, the reasons why the research was being undertaken, what participation entailed and the right to withdraw at any time. The channel was monitored to ensure there were no hostile comments posted, which would be removed (none have occurred so far). Participants can request the removal of their film at any time from the YouTube Learning Returns channel . Before filming began it was reiterated that the participant should think carefully about the public nature of YouTube before consenting. To mediate against any ethical risks only the first names of the participants were used and any professional information about their arts practices was only included at the participant's request. The project gained ethical approval from the University's Ethics Sub-Committee.

**Analysis**

A range of recent reports were reviewed to identify key employability skills (National Centre for Universities and Business, 2024; Kingston University and YouGov, 2024; Wicklow & Gamble, 2024; British Academy, 2022; 2020; 2017). Three additional frameworks were also drawn upon. They identified employability skills, two of these focus on the creative arts (Prospects, 2024; University of the Arts, London, 2024; Leeds Conservatoire, 2024). Core and transferable skills were identified and combined from all these sources to establish a comprehensive set of employability skills/aptitudes (see Table 1). The three aptitudes that were most often represented in the reports were creativity, adaptability and communication. This corresponds with the OCED (2021) report Future of Education and Skills 2030 that argues that the more social, emotional and imaginative skills will be needed by employers as operational tasks become automated.

| Prospects | National Centre for Universities and Business (NCUB) 2024. | The Kingston approach | Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts for People and the Economy (SHAPE) | Creative Attributes Framework (CAF) | Leeds Conservatoire skills matrix | Combined skill set |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reliability | | | | | | Reliability |
| Commercial awareness | | | | Enterprise | | Enterprise |
| Self-Discipline | | | | | | Self-discipline |
| Creativity | Creativity | Creativity | Creativity | [Creativity implied] | Creativity | Creativity |
| | Imagination | | | | | Imagination |
| Originality | | | | | | Originality |

| Critical Thinking | Mental flexibility | Critical Thinking | | | | Critical thinking |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Analysis | | Analytical skills | Analysing | | | Analysis |
| Reasoning | Decision-making /judgement | | Decision-making | Self-efficacy | | Decision-making |
| Problem Solving | | Problem solving/ process skills | Problem-solving | | | Problem-solving |
| Resilience | | Resilience | | Resilience | | Resilience |
| Adaptability | Adaptability /flexible mindset | Adaptability | Adaptability | Agility | Adaptability | Adaptability |
| Communication | | Communication skills | Communication | Communication/story telling | Written and verbal communication | Communication |
| | | | | | Listening skills | Listening skills |
| Planning | | | | | Organisation | Organisation |
| Research | | | Designing research and collating evidence | Curiosity | | Curiosity |
| Leadership | Ability to act | Initiative | | Pro-activity | Leadership | Initiative |
| Management | | | | | | Management |
| | Emotional and social skills | Building relationships | Working with others | Connectivity | Team work | Collaboration |
| | Digital skills | Digital skills | | | IT skills | Digital skills |
| | | | Independence | | | Independence |
| | | | | | Numeracy | Numeracy |
| | Continual learning and development | | | | Personal development | Personal development |

Table 1: Collation of employability skills

A set of employability skills has been identified that is a combination from those mentioned in the reports. The list comprises: Reliability, Enterprise, Self-discipline, Creativity, Imagination, Originality, Critical thinking, Analysis, Decision-making, Problem-solving , Resilience, Adaptability, Communication, Listening skills, Organisation, Curiosity, Initiative, Management, Collaboration, Digital skills, Independence, Numeracy, Personal development. It is of note that many of the skills can be associated with creativity, emotional intelligence and communication and this is in line with other findings (OCED, 2021; Taylor et al., 2022).

These skills were employed as codes with which to analyse the Learning Returns videos. Two researchers watched the films independently, then met to agree with their findings. When a participant explicitly mentioned a skill in their account their comments were transcribed into a spread sheet.

Butler-Kisber (2010) discusses how the research process can appear to be linear and occur in clear stages, for example, collecting data, analysing/interpreting the data and then writing up the findings. But often within arts-based research the process is often more iterative and/or cyclic. It could be argued that all the stages of the project involve some levels of analysis through reflection on the work-in-progess. In practice the analysis of the films was iterative, developed through a de-contextualising and re-contextualising cycle (Duckworth and Smith 2018).

**Findings**

*Explicit skills mention by participants*

All the skills on the list were mentioned by at least one of the participants in their film. However, the most referenced skills were, organisation, communication/listening skills and enterprise skills. The discussion of findings will focus on the three most referenced explicit skills mentioned by the participants. The discussion will then go on to consider those participants' skills which are implicit in the films or can be inferred from their stories even thought they are not explicitly mentioned. Finally, it will be argued that there are skills which did not come up as employability skills in the frameworks, however, they were demonstrated by the participants and were seen to be helpful in their learning, these were having confidence; being reflective and being caring.

Organisation

The management of time when returning to learning is something that is important for all students but especially so when that student has other commitments. Ensuring that tasks are done on time and deadlines are met was seen by the participants as an important skill they brought to education from their work and life experience. Ann commented that, "I'd been a manager, so I was used to organising people and organising my time…"

Frances saw a continuum with her past skills from her previous career being integral to her future aspirations. Within her account she shows how different skills are interrelated.

> I haven't decided - but probably to continue doing the project management, but in a more creative field. Rather than - I was doing digital and telephony delivery, so it was all very technical. If I do project management again I'd want it to be creative, so putting things on and organising things and being involved in that more creative environment.

Frances demonstrates creativity and enterprise and planning what she wants to do after she has finished learning. She also is confident in her organisational skills and mentions digital and technical skills. She appears

to have all these different competencies, but returning to education has allowed her to aspire to practice these in a creative context.

Communication/listening skills

John thought about what skills he had brought with him that made his learning experience run smoother, "[from work life] getting along with people and knowing how to communicate with people." In art and design education there are a lot of learning tasks that involve team work and collaboration, so having good communication and social skills would be an asset. As Hafifa said, "we'd sit and work together and talk about things that we liked. We'd have crit groups where we'd talk about and critique each other's work. And that really helped, having other students critique your work."

Ingrid's comment again showed how communication skills sit with other capabilities,

> Listening and being able to offer advice were a main part of my role, but also being
> able to get anywhere on time and finishing things. Being able to stand up and teach
> as well, and prepare and make preparation for lessons and stuff like that.

Ingrid makes the point that effective communication can also involve good time management, organisation and preparing what and how to speak to a particular group. Returning to learning with some experience of teaching could not only give insight into the structures and processes of learning but could also mean the student has empathy for the teacher, understanding the pressures and challenges from their perspective.

Enterprise

If enterprise is about identifying opportunities and using them to ones' advantage it can be seen that many of the participants had used their enterprise skills to get back into education. However, many had gained this from their previous work life and were applying them to their educational journeys. Anna showed her tenacity in building her career through recognising opportunities, "I'd started my career in marketing - I'd done chartered institute of marketing exams and worked my way up through various companies and ad agencies."

Gemma also talked about how she was building her connections. Like Anna, she is aware that sometimes building a business or freelance career takes time and involves being engaged in a a diverse range of activities.

> I've got some work now through light festivals. I have continued to build my networks
> and use those networks, and I have been able to work in festivals, exhibitions, and
> group exhibitions for the last few years.

Ingrid had made enterprise the foundation of her previous job, she remembers that

> I worked as a career consultant at a local university. I spent a lot of time advising
> people about their future careers and starting businesses.

She was able to apply that knowledge and experience in her own learning journey.

By listening to the participants talk about their pervious experiences and the skills they had gained from their employment it was clear that these were also useful skills for learning. The films showed that it might be better to think of a suite of skills that operate together, rather than breaking them down into individual competencies as is the approach taken by many reports on employability.

*Table 3: Implicit references to skills*

Within the films there were implicit references to skills in the stories told by the participants. As people who had returned to education, it was clear they were all engaged with decision- making. Going back to study as an adult learner means making complex and sometimes difficult decisions. They were also clearly interested in

self-development, often to pursue their dream to be a creative practitioner. The participants clearly had good communication skills as they could tell their stories in an engaging manner. They were also able to target their messages to an imagined audience, who may be interested in returning to education later in life. Many of the participants talked about being creative before they returned to education. These implicit skills helped these students thrive and succeed in their chosen courses of study.

*Skills not referred to in the employability list*

When analysing the films, it became apparent that there were skills mentioned or enacted by the participants that had not been identified in the various frameworks as contributing towards employability. The first skill was confidence (something that can improve with practice), some of the participants thought they had the confidence to approach tutors and technicians with questions, of admitting they did not know something in comparison with their younger counterparts who were not always comfortable in doing that. Anna, reflected on the confidence she had when starting her writing course, "So just having the confidence to shout up and send an email in to your tutor or your peers and instigate those conversations."

Secondly, many of the participants were reflective thinkers, they reflected on their experiences, their work, there course and themselves. John reflects that, ""I felt that there were lots of people on that course like myself who were going through changes. Different ages, different stages in life. But we were all trying something to try and progress forward in the creative world." This was close to but not quite the same as critical thinking. In the arts reflecting on ones' own practice is an important activity that leads to improving the work.

The stories that the participants tell where they reflect on their lives and identity their own strengths and weaknesses involve continuous reflection.

Thirdly, one participant talks about coming to education with a wish to care for people, another mentioned that they wanted to guide others. For example, Hafifa talks about setting up an art group to help people, "It's through National Health Charities where elderly Asian women, mainly from a South Asian background, are at home and they're isolated. This is a way of bringing them together through art." Sally said she always had a caring disposition and it was this that motivated her to go into art therapy. Those caring, nurturing skills are not mentioned as employability skills, yet they are important when working with other people.

**Conclusion**

Due to the crisis in the cultural and creative industries many commentators and researchers have sought to protect the arts' subjects in schools, colleges and universities by demonstrating the employability skills that can be gained by studying a creative subject.

Also, an argument is made that graduates with the correct skills are needed to fix the broken pipeline in to the creative industries.

Adult learners problematise the notion of a pipeline of skills serving the creative industries. Firstly, they are returning to education with many of the employability skills already. Their learning journeys allow them to capitalise on their capabilities while they are learning but also outside of education when they practice those skills in a new context and with a new focus. Some adult returners may work in the creative and cultural sectors, however, very often they are looking at enriching their lives as a whole. When looking towards retirement they may be seeking different modes of work that could be more flexible and part-time. They maybe more interested

in setting up their own creative business, rather than serving an employer, where all their learning, life and work experiences can be drawn upon. They may mix paid and unpaid work together. The skills the adult learners have acquired throughout their lives are used to enable a better life for themselves and their families.

The participants' stories also show how creativity can be a suite of skills. To create something new in the world there needs to be organisation, reflection, critical thinking, problem-solving and curiosity. It is also interesting that some skills are high-lighted more than others. Confidence, reflection and caring skills are those which are valued by the participants, but do not seem to be recognised as those contributing to employability. The outcome of a list of skills springing from a course of study loses the contextual significance of practices that are much more than part of a creative machine. Adult learners bring with them skills that need to be understood in their complexity and how they contribute towards a good life.

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## The essential skills for shaping an existential trajectory[1].

In an era of unprecedented global challenges, from climate change to the imperative of social justice, educational systems, models, and practices must evolve to fully enhance the potential of humanity. The life project of each individual, particularly adults, is called to orient itself towards a personal and professional commitment in which lifelong learning can be experienced as a transformative force, not only for professional growth but also for the improvement of individual conditions and for rethinking and transforming the environments in which we live and work (Jarvis, 2019; Biesta, 2019).

Rather than considering training as a mere technical springboard towards exclusively professional ambitions, this contribution proposes an educational and training system and project capable of accompanying adult individuals—women and men—in the cultivation or rediscovery of intellectual traits, attitudes, and ethical and critical thinking dispositions (Brookfield, 2021; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

The era in which academic qualifications were sufficient as the sole and unique instruments for social mobility is now over; in our contemporary time, it is necessary to integrate the principles of lifelong learning into educational institutions and in-service training: those underpinned by a technical, instrumental/professionalizing logic for adaptation to external socio-professional demands (Illeris, 2011); and those concerned with taking charge of the internal resources and experiences necessary for critical adaptation. This operation—an indispensable one, in our view— prepares educational systems and training models to support individuals and communities in facing critical social challenges and consequently to develop technical competencies and meta- competencies or consciously transversal skills.

From this perspective, it seems necessary to reframe the somewhat overused notion of competence and the consequent way of understanding the development or enhancement of competencies that are usually required to face transitions in adult life, both professional and non-professional (Formeti, Castiglioni; Galimberti, Greggio, 2024).

In our contemporary time, in fact, the central and crucial competence that must be learned as adult subjects is the ability to "reconfigure external objective demands" through a self-reflective positioning towards experience, oneself, and oneself in relation to experience.

This posture, from a methodological and procedural standpoint, could be translated into self- learning derived from one's personal autobiographical dimension in its interweaving of the personal and professional.

Thus, the device of adult training comes to be configured as a space-time for the self-raising of the question rather than the search, solely and always, for the answer.

We present some questions aimed at stimulating this type of self-directed and generative learning:

"*How did I become who I am*?";

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[1] This contribution was written in collaboration between the authors, and the entire text is the result of the joint work of both Micaela Castiglioni and Paola Rigoni.

*"What aspects of myself, my knowledge, my skills, and my being can I involve in my work?"*;

*"How can I reuse strategies, resources, and competencies*?"*;

*"What meaning do I attribute to my work*?"*;

*"What am I willing to give up when I work?"*.

This contribution therefore explores how educational and training systems can overcome conventional models, promoting holistic human development based on an adult learning approach that is both "adaptive" and "emancipative," capable of strengthening in today's women and men the fundamental competence of making responsible and meaningful decisions "from within," not solely and always hetero-directed and hetero-signified (hooks, 2010).

Reflecting on these key points, principles, and practices, concrete strategies are proposed here to integrate lifelong learning within an overall educational/training framework that is not merely competitive, does not limit itself to the mere marketability of academic degrees, but rather links them to the individual's life project.

Ultimately, this vision requires an educational and training system that goes beyond mere professional preparation and the development of professional competencies, forming individuals capable of facing the urgent challenges of our time with purpose, compassion, and determination.

These are the reasons why a critical rethinking of the methods and content of the training experience is increasingly urgent, and why an openness towards learning that is both adaptive and emancipative represents a proposal capable of responding to a complexity that is rapidly growing without interruption.

Emancipative learning is configured as a process aimed at generating new forms of language and knowledge, capable of deconstructing disciplinary barriers and redefining the boundaries of human agency, opposing internalized mechanisms of power. In this framework, adult education is shaped as an intentional, self-directed, and transformative path, enabling learners to acquire decision- making autonomy and critical awareness, not merely responding to external directives.

From this perspective, lifelong learning establishes itself as an essential strategy for connecting education to individual life projects, overcoming the problematic issue of directing knowledge towards practical-professional purposes and promoting active and conscious citizenship.

An approach to education that aims to overcome the rigidity of rote learning and foster the integral growth of the subject must necessarily be based on adaptive learning methodologies. The latter is distinguished by its ability to shape itself according to the cognitive and motivational characteristics of the learner, outlining personalized training paths.

The contemporary context, characterized by the spread of advanced digital tools and the use of machine learning algorithms to monitor progress and adapt teaching strategies in real-time, represents both a challenge and an opportunity that requires not only the ethical commitment to addressing literacy but also effectively embracing these tools in a knowledge and meta-knowledge sharing process that can truly comprehend learning styles.

Those technologies that allow an increasingly refined personalization of learning and facilitate the identification of prior competencies and the emergence of cognitive styles and individual motivations (Rincon-Flores et al., 2024) cannot be met with indifference or intellectual skepticism. It is well known from historical research on the Aptitude-Treatment Interaction that educational pathways are more effective when tailored to the specific characteristics of learners (Snow, 1989).

This principle, further developed through the model of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993), highlights the tendency of the traditional educational system to privilege certain competencies at the expense of others.

In this framework, emancipation emerges as a critical alternative to the dominant educational system, which is often oriented towards the reproduction of hegemonic cultural models and pays little attention to (Giroux, 2018; McLaren, 2020):

the learner's prior knowledge;

the learner's ability to interpret reality;

the potential for the co-construction of knowledge;

the interconnection between knowledge and emotions;

human growth in a consciously chosen direction.

Emancipation is thus realized through the deconstruction of hegemonic narratives, made possible through dialogue and critical reflection, thereby fostering the intellectual autonomy of learners.

One of the most effective tools for pursuing this objective is emancipatory dialogue (hooks, 1994), which allows participants to recognize and value different epistemological and social positions, promoting the construction of human solidarity and overcoming the rigidities of academic knowledge.

Adulthood, characterized by greater decision-making autonomy and the ability to integrate and rework the knowledge acquired in previous educational cycles, finds in dialectical confrontation a privileged tool for deepening one's motivation for learning and managing one's educational path in a self-determined manner.

This process responds both to practical needs and to deeper needs for self-realization and personal growth.

The ability to identify and structure one's educational path requires careful planning, constant monitoring, and a predisposition to change. Only through a critical awareness of one's journey is it possible to develop adaptive abilities and resilience in the face of contemporary socio-economic challenges.

To respond to these needs, the design of laboratory-based learning paths represents an effective improving strategy for fostering transformative learning.

A laboratory on self-reflection and critical awareness, for example, could guide participants through reflective writing exercises, case analysis, and guided discussions, encouraging them to question their own biases and develop a critical perspective on their learning.

An additional laboratory dedicated to emancipatory dialogue could focus on simulations and ethical debates, providing adults with tools to critically and constructively address socially relevant issues. Adaptive learning and the personalization of the educational path could be explored in another laboratory, where participants would be introduced to the use of digital Adaptive Learning platforms, experimenting with how data analysis can foster more effective and tailored learning.

Another area of exploration could concern ethical leadership, responsible decision-making, democratic dialogue through case studies, collaborative problem-solving, and ethical discussions, providing useful tools for addressing moral dilemmas in professional and personal contexts.

Finally, storytelling and creative writing as tools for empowerment could be explored in a laboratory focused on identity construction and resistance to dominant narratives, through the creation of personal and collective

storytelling, autobiographical writing, and text analysis, with the aim of reworking one's own experiences and giving voice to them.

The integration of emancipative and adaptive approaches in adult education not only represents an essential strategy for the formation of critical and responsible citizens but also constitutes an indispensable step in redefining the very concept of learning in the 21st century. Far from being merely a tool for professional advancement, an educational model oriented towards self-direction and critical reflection enables individuals to confront contemporary challenges with greater awareness and adaptability. Continuous education, in this sense, is not limited to providing operational tools but becomes a process of cultural and social growth that values both individual and collective experience. Only through an education capable of addressing the specific needs of individuals while simultaneously fostering critical reflection on the socio-political context will it be possible to build a more equitable, participatory, and inclusive society.

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## Imagining a shift in supervision paradigm to help PhD candidates access employability beyond academia.

This paper presents the results of our dissertation on PhD supervision. According to Debono (2023), MA students benefit from guidance to access employability. However, this is not the case for PhD students. In addition, when guidance is provided in Humanities programs, focus is mainly on academia careers.

Extensive research tackle supervision (Madan, 2021; Hockey, 1996), challenges of doctoral studies (Roos, Löfström, Remmik, 2021; Pyhältö, Toom, Stubb, Lonka, 2012), success and perseverance (Durknen, 2019; Bourdages, 2011), careers opportunities after degree completion (McAlpine & Austin , 2018; Main, Prenovitz & Ehrenberg, 2019; Leclercq, 2008) while other studies reveal that embarking in a PhD is a high-risk project (Powell & Green, 2007). Also, few studies focus on the academic path of non-traditional PhD adults from different professional paths pursuing a PhD in mid-career as well as their career trajectories and aspirations after degree completion in France.

This paper explores how PhD supervision is practised in France in Educational and training Sciences. The research questions are : 1) To what extent do supervisors adapt their practice to the needs and career perspective of the PhD student? ; 2) How do supervisors provide guidance to careers beyond academia? ; 3) What are the profiles of mid-career adults embarking on a PhD program? ; 4) What are the career perspectives of professional adults pursuing a PhD?

We have adopted a mixed-method research design. We have conducted semi- structured interviews with 15 supervisors specialized in Educational and training Sciences in 3 doctoral schools in France and made a survey questionnaire to PhD students (N=128). Our aim is to explore in-depth how PhD students are supervised. More specifically, the intention was to come up with different supervisors' actual practice of supervision and to analyze their supervisory perception. The quantitative approach consisted of a questionnaire. We sent the link of the online questionnaire to PhD students via the 3 doctoral schools to gather data related to : 1) what are the objectives of embarking in a PhD ; 2) what are the career perspectives; 3) how they are supervised.

The qualitative and quantitative data was later compared to compare both points of view.

The findings revealed that : 1) supervisors adopt the same supervision strategy on the basis of their own PhD experience ; 2) the main focus during supervision is to help supervisee access academia.

Higher education institutions should go beyond traditional doctorate to further meet the needs of PhD students in terms of career perspective. Training PhD students could be a part of their research and an opportunity to embark in the workplace to be familiarized with the norms and values of the career. Understanding the job market, hiring practices, cultural norms/values of the career and being trained during PhD help the students change their representations as regards becoming a professor in academia and enhance the value of the degree.

## Keywords:

Supervision, supervisors, PhD students, adapt, career trajectories.

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# Exploring the role of liminal spaces in shaping employability in higher education: cultivating critical and imaginative thinking

Introduction and purpose

As employability becomes an increasingly dominant discourse in higher education institutions (HEIs), students and staff face the challenge of balancing professional readiness with the cultivation of critical and imaginative capacities. Liminality is a polysemic concept which illustrates a stage of 'in-betweenness', involving uncertainty and ambiguity as people leave one social context and reintegrate into a new one (Tomlinson, 2023). According to Turner (1969), liminality has three characteristics: a transformation of state; a changing of status, oscillation between old and new understandings.  Surprisingly little research has explored both students (French et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2024) and staff experiences of liminality during role and career transitions in HEIs' settings (Benvenuti, 2022 ; Rantatalo, et al., 2018).

In a recent report, the European University Association (EUA) provides some insight on the measures to enhance flexibility in learning for students and support transition for the employability of future graduates (Gaebel et al., 2024, p. 50). However, few information is provided on the specific processes and transitional spaces which foster adaptable, innovative, and critically engaged graduates. Drawing on the concept of liminality, this paper examines how HEIs and students and staff navigate this "imperative of employability" within a liminal space - where professional pressures  and intellectual exploration intersect.

Methodology

The methodology used is a review of existing literature dealing with the polysemic concept of liminality. Drawing on conceptual frameworks and studies focusing on liminality, our aim is to discuss how liminal spaces in higher education serve as transformative arenas where employability concerns coexist with critical reflection  and creativity.

1). The first part will be devoted to inveiling the various definitions of the concept liminality; 2) The second part will shed light on studies focusing on the impact of liminal spaces on the students' as well as staff experiences in HE. This will help explore liminality as a conceptual lens to better understand transitional learning spaces and the process through which critical and imaginative attitudes and agency can be cultivated in HE (Gray et al., 2023 ; Cook-Sather et al., 2011).

Findings

The imperative of employability poses both challenges and opportunities for higher education. By recognizing liminality as a space for transformation, HEIs can cultivate environments where students develop not only marketable skills but also the critical and imaginative capacities needed to navigate an uncertain future. Therefore, further studies using a liminality-focused perspective are needed to better examine this pivotal phase in both staff careers and student experiences.

## Keywords

Workforce Readiness, Institutional Strategies, Student Agency

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## Micro-Credentials, transition, and post-secondary futures

In North America (particularly Canada) micro-credentials are an emerging element of post- secondary education (PSE) landscapes (MacDonald, 2022; Wheelan & Moodie, 2021). Even though they have been present in Canadian PSE for well over a decade, micro-credentials particularly exploded in popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic (MacDonald 2022; Aschaiek, 2021). This explosion saw both governments and institutions invest hundreds of millions of dollars in micro- credential programs (Government of Alberta, 2024a; Government of Ontario, 2021). The University of Alberta, my home institution and the primary site for this case study, has fully embraced micro-credentials in PSE, without much evidence to justify the tremendous investment. Post-secondary education in Alberta is driven by the defining policy of "*Alberta 2030: Skills for Jobs*", an initiative by the Government of Alberta to increase availability, funding, and acceptance of micro-credentials and short-term education programs for "emerging industries" to allow for the province to remain economically competitive not only in Canada, but around the globe (Government of Alberta, 2024a). Institutions in these provinces have now been recognized nationally as case studies for how to implement neoliberal policies in post-secondary education (Adkin, 2023; Verhoeven & Eltham, 2023; Sayle, 2023). For many institutions, micro-credentials have been lauded as the answer to the multifaceted crises that PSIs are facing, given limited parameters for revenue generation (Pirkkalainen, 2023).

In addition to other outlets such as increased tuition for students, and by extension, increasing enrollment, both of which have limits imposed by governments, micro-credentials are, a way for PSIs to take revenue generation into their own hands to address the current crises they are facing (Stoddard, Ruda, Trieckel, & Gallagher, 2023; Flanagan, 2021). This study asks these key questions: What has led institutions such as the University of Alberta to embrace micro-credentials with such confidence? What are the considerations and constraints that institutions such as the University of Alberta use to help guide decision making regarding microcredential creation and delivery? And what and how do institutions such as the University of Alberta consider and measure "success" when it comes to micro-credentials? Important to addressing this research's question(s), will be to understand further the flexibility offered by micro-credentials, and how that is connected to better outcomes for those who are consuming these programs. This research seeks to explore the "why" and the "how" of micro-credentials, for students, administrators, instructors, and post-secondary staff to better understand why we are where we are in terms of the institutional demand for investment into micro-credentials.

This conference paper offers a critical analysis of existing literature that argues for the need for this study on microcredentials and the credentialization of post-secondary education in Canada. Micro-credentials are representative of a transformational moment in the future of postsecondary education and adult education. How adults learn, and consume formal education is important to dissect to understand the current economic, social and political factors resulting in the increasing expansion, globalisation and marketisation of universities influencing such pushes for micro- credentials. Furthermore, this paper proposes to interrogate the assumptions about such programs within the current literature including where the literature is currently situated, where the gaps are, what still needs to be investigated, and what story about these programs does the literature currently tell us.

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## Academic-focused-communication among parents, teachers and pupils as a causal factor in achevements of pupils in epe local government area of lagos state

Effective communication among parents, teachers and pupils plays a pivotal role in shaping academic outcomes especially when such communication is focused on motivating middle basic pupils at the middle level of basic education. This study investigates the relationship between such communication dynamics and academic performances, employing a qausi-experimental approach. The study aims to explore how variations in communication frequencies, quality and feedbacks affect pupils' academic achievement. Utilizing a sample of 400 primary five pupils from eight (8) schools in Epe Local Government Area, the study employs a quantitative data gathering method using the pre and post-test experimental approach with a structured questionnaire serving as an anecdotal record validated through pilot testing (N=50, r=0.76), administers to the pupils to assess the frequencies, quality and feedbacks of communication among parents, teachers and pupils. The two (2) research hypotheses raised were analyzed descriptively using frequency counts and Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance. The findings showed that Academic Focused Communication ($F_{(2,63)}$ = 6.62, $p<0.05$) has a statistical significant effect on the academic achievement of pupils in the middle basic class. These findings underscore the importance of fostering open and collaborative communication channels within the educational system to support the academic success pupils in middle level of basic education. The study thus recommends that government should make necessary adjustments and arrangements on the in-service training of teachers towards inculcating the practice of motivation focused communication among parents, teachers and pupils.

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## Universities in the digital age: Innovation and inclusion for the future of work

The current age of complexity is marked by a period of unprecedented technological, economic, and social changes, leading to a constant redefinition of labour market dynamics and of the educational institutions role. This scenario and analysis of university education highlight the opportunities and challenges that universities encounter in guiding and preparing their students for an increasingly uncertain and constantly changing work environment. The purpose of this contribution is to offer a critical reflection on university education that, thanks to the support of digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI), can now optimize educational processes, ensuring flexible and personalised learning paths, resulting in alignment between academic training and employment requirements while respecting the individual specificities of each student. The analysis specifically aims to highlight the authentic assessment approach and the self-assessment process of higher education students. By using advanced data analysis and machine learning systems, it is possible to collect detailed information on student performance, which makes it possible to monitor the teaching-learning process continuously and efficiently. Furthermore, it promotes a change of perspective by promoting self-assessment practices by students who become active protagonists with consequent positive effects on self-esteem, self-efficacy and the development of critical thinking. According to a McKinsey & Company report (2022), the adoption of artificial intelligence in educational processes has the potential to increase training effectiveness by 20-30%, also optimizing equity in evaluation. At the same time, online collaborative platforms are transforming student interaction by encouraging positive interdependency and improving acquisition of essential skills such as problem solving, communication and leadership. These approaches reflect the needs of today's labour market, where "teamwork 4.0" - a synergy between traditional and digital teamwork - is now considered an indispensable skill. The World Economic Forum (2023) highlights that adaptability to collaborative technologies is one of the most demanded soft skills in the post-pandemic era. The study of university inclusion in Italy is particularly important, with a focus on the experimental project CA.SP.I. (Special Career for Inclusion), promoted by the

Educational Research Laboratory of the University of Cassino in Southern Lazio, aimed at students with disabilities who have not completed the secondary school diploma and that are engaged in inclusive and innovative academic journeys that can enhance interpersonal relationships within the university context. The implications of this study suggest the need to support educational policies that promote equity and inclusion, valuing the unique contribution of people with disabilities in an increasingly diverse and complex labour market.

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# A critical look at employability and how it affects transitions to work

In this communication we intend to have a theoretical discussion on the theme with two different phases. Firstly, we will present and critically discuss the dominant discourses of employability. Secondly, we will present some of the consequences of the wide acceptance of dominant meaning of employability, looking particularly at the transitions of graduates to work.

The concept of employability was introduced into EU policy at the end of the 1980s and became one of the four pillars of the European Employment Strategy (Moreau and Leathwood, 2006). Since then, and although there are many different notions of employability, we can distinguish, in analytical terms, two major dominant trends associated with its meanings:

The first trend states that employability is based on the individual skill sets of students and graduates that would best prepare them to enter the labour market.

Hillage and Pollard's (1998) definition, for example, includes the ability to access the first job, the ability to keep it and also the ability to get a new job. Employability would thus be defined as the worker's self-sustaining ability to move around the labour market, realising their potential through the idea of (self-)sustainable employment.

A second type of dominant view of employability is based on human capital and the traditional functions of higher education. The political message that has been conveyed states that for the success of a global economy, it is crucial to invest in human capital and that the basis for such success lies in lifelong learning (Thompson, 2004). It is also considered that a mass higher education system is the main mechanism through which highly qualified knowledge workers are created to meet the needs of highly qualified jobs. Such training is supposed to promote demand for better jobs, generate economic prosperity and therefore stimulate employability (Keep & Mayhew, 1999). Such an approach also implies that higher education is no longer a public service but has become a learning market in which commodification and marketization (two educational principles of neoliberalism) are central and, to a certain extent, instrumental. We will try to present critical arguments to de-construct and problematise these views of employability.

In the second part of our communication, we will present some of the consequences of these assumptions, which, in our view, are particularly detrimental to graduates in their transitions to the labour market. If, as we will try to show, graduates are the losers in this employability game, who are the winners?

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## Formation en alternance des ingénieurs et professionnalité des enseignants

Les dispositifs de formation en alternance sont une réalité relativement récente dans le paysage de l'enseignement supérieur Tunisien (Décret gouvernemental n° 2018- 929 du 9 novembre 2018). La pratique d'alternance a été nouvellement instaurée et les enseignants ont été récemment amenés à évoluer dans le cadre de ce dispositif. Si, de manière générale, ces dispositifs ont fait l'objet de nombreux travaux, publications, colloques et congrès scientifiques en France et ailleurs (Clenet, 1998 ; Chaix, 1996 ; Hardy & Ménard, 2008 ; Maubant, 1997 ; Malglaive, 1992 ; Zaouani- Denoux, 2011, etc.), ils ont, d'une part, peu été envisagés dans le contexte tunisien et, d'autre part, mettent rarement l'accent sur les enseignants et leur professionnalité (Béduwé, 2019 ; Bourdoncle & Mathey-Pierre, 1995 ; Maubant et al, 2011 ; Weiss, 2001 ; Wittorski, 2008). Et pourtant, ces professionnels jouent un rôle très important dans la formation et la professionnalisation des apprenants. Pour combler ce vide concernant la connaissance de ces professionnels exerçant au sein des écoles d'ingénieur dans des parcours de formation en alternance, cette contribution s'inscrit dans le thème « Le rôle du capital culturel et social et de l'habitus dans les transitions et l'employabilité ».

Plusieurs recherches (Perrenoud, 1994 ; Willem, 2004 ; Wittorski, 2014, etc.) soulignent le rôle de l'élargissement de la professionnalité des enseignants sur la qualité des apprentissages en formation en alternance. Selon Michael (2006), les apprenants en formation en alternance ne développent pas automatiquement des compétences. Cela requiert des conditions favorable mises en œuvre par l'enseignant qui est lui-même engagé dans l'apprentissage d'un nouveau rôle. De la même manière, Cros (1997) souligne que le profil des enseignants se modifie avec l'introduction de ce type d'innovation, et tend vers des missions de médiation entre les apprenants et leur construction « cette conception cesse de mettre l'enseignant seul comme source du savoir supposé su et le place dans une configuration collective » (Cros 1997, p148) où les savoirs se co-construisent, et où les identités de chacun sont engagées.

Dans le contexte spécifique des enseignants de l'enseignement supérieur, l'adaptation aux nouvelles réalités professionnelles a fait l'objet de nombreuses réflexions, notamment avec les travaux de Perrenoud (2001), qui a analysé les tensions entre les compétences académiques et les exigences pratiques du monde du travail. En fait, les situations professionnelles que vivent en particulier les enseignants, exerçant au sein des parcours de formation en alternance, sont caractérisées par un niveau de complexité élevé au sens où elles s'inscrivent dans des dimensions multiples (académiques, formatives, économiques, techniques, sociales, etc.). Ainsi dans les formations en alternance des ingénieurs, l'enseignant n'est plus perçu comme un « sachant » qui au mieux initie à des connaissances nouvelles et aide à prendre de la distance par rapport à la vie en entreprise. Bouvy et al. (2010, p371) expriment clairement que « le changement de paradigme [...] implique de nouveaux rôles et de nouvelles compétences pour les enseignants ». Altet (2003, p. 29) le précise comme « le passage du métier artisanal où l'on applique des techniques et des règles vers la profession où l'on construit ses stratégies en s'appuyant sur des savoirs rationnels et en développant son expertise de l'action en situation professionnelle ainsi que son

autonomie ». A ce niveau, Wittorski (2008) défend un paradigme d'analyse des pratiques à travers la professionnalité enseignante nécessitant l'exercice de la pensée sur les actes pour développer des compétences intellectualisées et transférables dans des situations nouvelles. Ce cadre de transition des compétences prend appui sur des savoirs pratiques ou d'expérience selon les propres habitus professionnels des enseignants (Perrenaud, 1994). C'est dans ce cadre que nous souhaitons identifier les effets de l'alternance sur la professionnalité des enseignants qui y sont impliqués et saisir les changements à l'œuvre dans les pratiques enseignantes (Altet, 2008 ; Bru, Altet & Blanchard-Laville, 2004 ; Clanet, 2010 ; Etc.).

Notre approche se situe dans une perspective d'identification, description et compréhension des pratiques enseignantes mises en œuvre au niveau du parcours d'alternance. Une recherche-intervention du développement professionnel des enseignants a fait l'objet d'une exploration dans le cadre des entretiens semi-directifs réalisés avec deux groupes d'enseignants assurant des cours au sein du parcours de formation en alternance. Le premier groupe d'enseignants sont impliqués dans l'enseignement du premier parcours d'alternance et le second a été intégré au niveau du dernier parcours mis en place au sein de l'école. Des enseignants appartenant aux deux groupes ont été également sélectionnés. Les enseignants sont choisis parmi différents domaines d'enseignement (économie, sciences sociales, ingénierie, etc.) afin d'obtenir un échantillon représentatif au niveau du même parcours.

Pour appréhender les effets du dispositif d'alternance sur leur développement professionnel, les enseignants ont été invités à se positionner par rapport à leurs pratiques et leur engagement dans la pédagogie comme discipline scientifique ainsi que la collaboration avec des collègues en matière d'enseignement. Les entretiens ont porté sur l'identification des conditions et contraintes dans lesquels évoluent les enseignants, les situations vécus, les transformations des pratiques opérées, les collaborations et interactions au sein des équipes. En croisant les données issues des entretiens et des observations, il a été possible de dégager différentes typologies de parcours professionnels des enseignants. L'analyse des données permet de dégager deux axes, d'engagement et de changement des pratiques, reflétant les expériences et perceptions des enseignants. Chaque variable a été intégrée dans une analyse de l'effet du parcours tout en générant les différences significatives de pratiques. L'analyse des situations pédagogiques dans le cadre de la professionnalisation des enseignants ne peut se limiter à l'étude des résultats au seul niveau des connaissances immédiates, elle doit être menée de façon continue aux différents niveaux et phases de l'étude. Il est essentiel de prendre en compte les différents aspects cognitifs, culturels et économiques impliqués dans la recherche.

## Mots clés

Professionnalité enseignante, Analyse des pratiques enseignantes, Dispositif d'alternance des ingénieurs

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# Multiliteracies and learning carers: Fostering critical and creative educational pathways for adult learners

Career pathways have become ever more complex in a world characterized by globalization and massive migration (Alfred, 2015; Guo, 2015; Kloubert & Hoggan, 2020; Shan & Fejes, 2015). In Canada, and in other countries with high levels of migration and learners coming from different cultural sectors, educators working in adult and higher education contexts are challenged to create meaningful and engaging educational opportunities for learners who come from diverse backgrounds, with varying language capabilities and levels of preparation for their studies, as well as disparate career aspirations. Non-traditional learners, many of whom come from marginalized backgrounds (Merrill et al., 2020), are expected to navigate a global job market to forge successful learning careers, and educators need to prepare and support them on this journey. This paper explores how a multiliteracies framework can address the tensions in bridging between higher education and the workforce through creative and critical pedagogical approaches. Kalantzis et al. (2016) explores multiliteracies through "drivers" that conceptualize future workforce characteristics in relation to developing adult learners with dispositions and skills for employability that still maintain social justice perspectives.

Thomsen et. al. (2022) argue that career development must be understood from an interdisciplinary approach, and that critical theory can offer insights into how the complexities of decision-making and opportunities are shaped by power within society. As Fleming (2018) states, 'neoliberalism does not aim to increase well-being but drives for a more competitive society and economy' (p. 2). Neoliberalism is characterized by a focus on the marketplace, competition, and individualism (Gouthro & Holloway, 2023). Adult educators, however, are often motivated to work towards a more just society, by being attentive to inequities and creating learning spaces designed to benefit and support learners striving for success.

Multiliteracies, like New Literacy Studies, is a framework for learning that has at its heart a commitment to social justice (Crowther & Tett, 2012; Garcia et. al, 2018). In addition, multiliteracies supports learning that incorporates pedagogical strategies that incorporate learners coming from diverse and multilingual backgrounds and strives to bridge the digital divide by incorporating technologies that are carefully selected by educators to support richer learning experiences. A multiliteracies approach fosters creativity through learning that incorporate different modalities such as oral, spatial, gestural, and tactile opportunities for learning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015).

Drawing upon examples from a nationally funded study on multiliteracies using interviews, observations, document analysis, and original film footage of classrooms and learning spaces, we examine how multiliteracies can inform critical and creative approaches to teaching adult learners through its emphasis on social justice, the use of multimodalities and digital technologies, and support for learners with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This more holistic approach to teaching resonates with the work of critical and feminist educators who draw upon arts-based strategies for teaching and research (Butterwick & Roy, 2018) and who raise critical questions about digital literacies for adults (Smythe, 2018). A multiliteracies approach may help to address some of the complexities adult educators face in supporting learners as they develop their unique learning careers.

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## Learning space, development Space: how do beneficiaries of employment-oriented programs navigate their professional transitions?

More than ever, adult learning has become a necessity in the face of rapid societal transformations. Learning "throughout and across life" (Carré, 2020) is essential for individuals to facilitate transitions from one activity to another, from one work environment to another, and from one profession to another.

In France, various programs are available to support and secure these transitions, as individuals are increasingly made responsible for managing their own professional trajectories, particularly since the enactment of Law No. 2018-771 of September 5, 2018, which promotes the freedom to choose one's professional future.

Professional Development Consulting (abbreviated by CEP) supports individuals in constructing their professional projects; Accreditation of Prior Learning (abbreviated by VAE) enables the recognition of skills developed in the workplace to enhance employability; and training programs aim at developing skills necessary for employment.

While the "idéel"[2] objectives (Albero, 2011) of each of these programs may appear distinct in theory, in practice, their functions often overlap. For instance, the VAE process not only validates experience but also contributes to professional project development and skill enhancement. This observation leads us to distinguish between the intended purposes of these programs and the ways individuals instrumentalize them for their own benefit. Our research in education and training sciences has focused on these three programs (Author 1, 2024; Author 2, 2020; Author 3, 2022). We propose to examine the tensions between individual and societal stakes that shape them.  To do so, we employ the notion of space, conceptualized through three dimensions: instrumental, intimate, and social. These dimensions reveal two underlying dynamics throughout the guidance process: an epistemic dynamic, involving the construction of knowledge through processes of problematization, conceptualization, and formalization; a developmental dynamic, shaped by processes of normalization, awareness, and emancipation (Author 1, 2024).

Through these dynamics, the notion of space highlights the interplay between the structured space designed for beneficiaries and the self-constructed space that individuals develop as they navigate their transitions. This perspective underscores the learning and developmental processes that emerge from these constructions.

Analyzing transitions, spaces, and learning within employment-oriented programs allows for a deeper understanding of their challenges and limitations. As mechanisms for adapting to transformations in the labor market, these programs shape both professional and academic pathways. Furthermore, by engaging with beneficiaries' lived experiences, they create opportunities for individuals to appropriate both the program and their own professional journey.

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[2] *Idéel* "includes the ideal (in the sense of a guiding value) of the designers, as well as their ideas, principles, and, more generally, the objectives that drive them" (Albero, 2010).

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## Uncapped and uncharted: tertiary education and twenty-five years of school to work transitions in Australia

This paper examines school-to-work transitions in Australia over the past twenty-five years to explore changes in tertiary education participation and to critique policy initiatives. The research uses longitudinal data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey. The HILDA survey is a nationally representative longitudinal study involving about 13,000 people that collects data annually on various aspects of Australian life, including education, employment, income, and family dynamics.

Using sequence and cluster analysis, this research maps diverse pathways young Australians take from education to employment (Gabadinho et al., 2011). This methodological approach allows for the identification of distinct transition patterns, including variations in educational attainment, engagement with vocational or higher education, employment attainment, and periods of unemployment or inactivity.

A key focus of this paper is how these transitions have been influenced by changing policy initiatives, particularly the introduction of demand driven funding in Australia. This policy, introduced in 2012, 'uncapped' higher education places, causing an increase in participation. The research highlights the different outcomes, such as labour market attainment, that have occurred before and after the introduction of the policy. It examines how changes have manifested across different societal divides, such as socioeconomic status, urban and regional, and gender.

Finally, this research contributes to the rich literature on conceptual frameworks used to understand tertiary education systems. Different lenses, such as credentialism (Collins, 1979; Brown, 2001), positional goods (Hirsch, 1976), and human capital theory (Becker, 1964) are applied to the results to understand how they can explain changes in school to work transitions in an Australian context. The findings help identify the significant shifts in school-to-work trajectories over time and offer critical insights into the role of education systems.

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# Supporting non-traditional learners in career transitions: the role of post-migration support mechanisms for skilled immigrants' employability and professional integration

This paper explores how post-migration support mechanisms could help skilled immigrants—representing a unique group of non-traditional learners— overcome employment barriers by building social and cultural capital. Using Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital, social capital, and habitus (Bourdieu, 1986), the study examines how initiatives like mentorship, networking, and culturally adaptive training enable skilled immigrants to navigate new professional environments and access critical employability networks.

Skilled immigrants often encounter challenges due to differences in professional norms and values between their home and host countries.

Bourdieu's theory on habitus suggests that these mismatches can limit employability by creating misalignment with local labor market expectations (Reay, 2003). This paper highlights how post-migration support programs could address these misalignments, enhancing immigrants' understanding of professional landscapes and their connections within the industry.

However, challenges in accessibility, cost, and cultural relevance persist, limiting the reach of these support mechanisms. Some programs lack the flexibility needed to cater to the diverse needs of immigrant backgrounds, risking cultural mismatches that may impede rather than aid integration. This paper concludes with policy recommendations aimed at improving access to tailored support programs, urging collaboration between educational institutions, community groups, and industry stakeholders to ensure sustained integration and employability.

## Keywords

Post-Migration Support, Social and Cultural Capital, Employability, Career Transitions, Skilled Immigrants

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# State higher vocational schools as regional centres for the promotion of lifelong learning

State Higher Vocational Schools (hereinafter referred to as SHVS) were established in Poland as a response to the administrative transformations of the 1990s. Two primary objectives were established for them: one, to enhance regions, particularly former voivodeship cities, by establishing more than 30 regional vocational universities, and two, to furnish employees in accordance with the requirements of local labour markets. Over the past quarter-century, we've examined their operation from the perspective of continuous learning — an idea that shapes our thinking about education and higher learning institutions. Our paper will be based on research and analysis we have conducted over the last 10 years, and we will present selected data in the perspective of Poland's 20th anniversary in the EU.

In the initial section of the paper, we shall introduce the notion of the existence of SHVS in Poland, delineate the rationale behind their establishment, and examine their presumed role in fostering regional development. Subsequently, we shall examine the presumed and actual function of these tertiary institutions in the region and assess their efficacy in fulfilling their aforementioned third objective.

In the second part, we will present data on the offer that universities make to local communities. We shall consider it from two distinct perspectives. The first perspective is that of formal education, which includes first- and second-cycle studies and postgraduate studies. We will identify which faculties are common, taught at all or most of the 33 state vocational universities in Poland, and which are unique, taught at one or a few SHVS. In this context, we will consider the local labour markets and the needs to which SHVS corresponds. The second perspective considers activities aimed at a 'wide audience,' i.e. elements of their offer apart from studies. We will explain what SHVS offer them, whether LLL-supporting solutions like validation of learning outcomes, short-cycle education or micro-credentials are available, and how they support their communities in LLL. Furthermore, we will examine their identity, who they target, and how they position themselves within the Polish higher education landscape.

The third section of the paper will focus on the actual function of SHVS in the regions. We will analyse their cooperation with local employers to see if they contribute to the employability of their graduates. The second element of the regional context is the issue of the SHVS accommodation base, which has been significantly improved recently, upgraded, and adapted to the needs of different groups, thanks to EU funding. We shall consider how this can facilitate the functioning of the region.

In the concluding section, we shall engage in a contemplation regarding the correlation between the noble concepts that gave rise to these colleges and the implementation of their operations. We will examine their role in their regions and examine their potential to support adult retraining and career change. Ultimately, we will address the topic of lifelong learning and attempt to determine whether state vocational universities are or can be regional centres for facilitating LLL.

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## The Role of Cooperative Education Programs in Improving Employability Skills: A Before-and-After Comparison

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of cooperative education (co-op) programs on students' employability skills by comparing students' self-assessments at the beginning and end of their internships in Thailand. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to reduce the items to latent factors and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to test the construct validity of the scale. Paired sample t-test was used to examine the responses of 309 engineering, science, technology, and social science students. 39.48% of the participants were female, while 60.52% were male. Most of the participants were between the ages of 22 and 25. The findings provided substantial proof that co-op markedly improves several employability abilities. The paired t-test results revealed statistically significant improvements in 14 facets of employability. The greatest improvement was in students' ability to respond to mentor instructions (mean difference = 0.547, $p < 0.001$), followed by improvements in job-specific knowledge and skills (mean difference = 0.479, $p < 0.001$), communication abilities (mean difference = 0.476, $p < 0.001$), discipline and alignment with organizational culture (mean difference = 0.463, $p < 0.001$), and interpersonal skills (mean difference = 0.450, $p < 0.001$). Whereas morality and operational expertise showed less improvement (mean difference = 0.359, $p < 0.001$ and 0.288, $p < 0.001$). These findings demonstrate the program's effectiveness in the development of job readiness, both technical and soft skills, and emphasize the essential function of co-op in bridging the gap between academic learning and work readiness. Furthermore, further study might investigate the long-term impacts of co-op programs and their effectiveness in other cultural contexts.

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# Educational biographies of tertiary education students in the Gorno-Badakhshan region of Tajikistan: International mindedness at the service of special educational needs

Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province (GBAO), located in the East of Tajikistan, is a challenging environment in terms of both human and physical geography.

Among the difficulties that affect the region: impervious mountain areas, low incomes, reduced professional opportunities, and simmering conflicts (Kłyszcz, 2023). The above features make GBAO a very specific setting for the study of how Higher Education (HE) impacts the lives of current students and alumni, with results that might contribute to the betterment of policies aimed at the human development of the region. Hence, this paper presents the case of how educational biographies (see Brown, 2022) intertwine with the context of GBAO and it does so by focusing on two individuals with special needs who pursued HE in Khorog, the regional capital of GBAO. Biographical information constitutes the partial result of a broader post- graduate project inspired by Rasouli's (2023) work on neighboring Afghanistan, which tackles the connections between professional development and access to tertiary education in remote areas. Despite limitations due to the reduced sample, in a context where social research is ordinarily understood as being extremely sensitive (Kreutzmann, 2022), the ethnographic findings of this study show how specific skillsets could be nurtured in tertiary students by mitigating issues resulting from the intersections of special educational needs, the belonging to ethnic minorities (Varsik & Gorochovskij, 2023), and the delivery of internationally oriented HE programs. This sets the stage for a better understanding of how international mindedness could be integrated into HE not to suppress local needs, but to amplify and address them through the lenses of community education (Marcelli & Salerno, 2022) and those of career adaptability (Savickas, 2021).

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## Metodologie per la conduzione dei tirocini nell'area pedagogica: lezione simulata, role-playing e Consulenza di Processo.

Gli studenti frequentanti i tirocini obbligatori di Scienze Pedagogiche e della Specializzazione per il Sostegno pedagogico nell'Università Italiana sono adulti, molto spesso lavoratori, che tornano in accademia per necessità di raggiungere titoli necessari o per la scelta di un percorso.

La necessità e la complessità di integrare lavoro e studi con gestioni organizzative ed epistemologiche complesse richiede al docente conduttore del tirocinio indiretto la capacità di accogliere istanze di studenti "non tradizionali", spesso inespresse.

La valorizzazione delle esperienze sul campo e la necessità di fornire strumenti non tanto che ne garantiscano l'occupabilità ma spendibili rendendo più efficaci gli interventi richiedono una connessione teoria-pratica complessa.

Nella presente ricerca saranno analizzati tre approcci strategici utili nella gestione delle lezioni e interventi di tirocinio diretto e indiretto, secondo l'esperienza di conduzione di Tirocini Scienze Pedagogiche e della Specializzazione per il Sostegno pedagogico della ricercatrice.

La lezione simulata (Lampugnani, 2022) coinvolge completamente gli studenti, a livello cognitivo, emozionale e cognitivo, attivando un'alta motivazione, generando uno spiazzamento e consentendo più facilmente di mettere tra parentesi il pregiudizio e l'esperienza considerata come valida.

Il role-playing richiede un coinvolgimento altrettanto completo ma richiedendo agli studenti di agire "come se", mettendo quindi in pratica quanto appreso, ma anche personalizzando e comprendendo la complessità del reale; fondamentale la riflessione "a posteriori" e le possibili modificazioni all'azione.

Inscrivere tali approcci e la conduzione all'interno del più ampio approccio della consulenza di processo (Schein, 2016) consente di accogliere e guidare la costruzione di competenze in un percorso strettamente "connesso al campo", senza fornire risposte, ma restituendo il problema (il percorso) allo studente abituandolo a porsi domande, guidare processi senza rispondere e sostituirsi, ma offrendo e co-costruendo le specificità necessarie all'interpretazione del reale in chiave professionale e i necessari approfondimenti teorici.

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## From university to the workplace: Essential skills that make a difference

In an era of rapid technological advancements and shifting labour markets, higher education institutions play a pivotal role in preparing students not only with technical expertise but also with non-academic competencies. While traditional training often focuses on job-specific skills, outstanding professionals distinguish themselves through their ability to navigate the complex interpersonal landscape essential to the client experience. Furthermore, as the industry continues to evolve, employers across various sectors increasingly recognize the need to cultivate a workforce equiped with strong CORE (Competence in Organizational and Relational Effectiveness) competencies (Parlamis and Monnot, 2019) —such as effective communication, interpersonal proficiency, problem-solving aptitude, critical thinking, and empathy.

Problem statement and purpose : According to EUA report (2021), university degrees are no longer sufficient to ensure employability. In fact, some university programmes are not fostering skills that are crucial for professional collaboration. Furthermore, recent studies show that new hires are lacking in CORE skills (Ormond, 2023). Therefore, universities are expected to bridge disciplinary boundaries and adopt differentiated approaches to help students develop critical and imaginative attitudes to adapt to their different employability contexts. However, a review of literature shows that while there is general acceptance on the role (Higher Education Institutions) HEIs should play in enhancing these attitudes and necessity of critical thinking (Golden, 2023), there is no consensus on defining employability (Cheng et al., 2021 ; Bhola et al., 2013, Tymon, 2013), critical (Altun et al., 2023) and imaginative skills (Wilson et al., 2017). The purpose of this paper is to tackle the following questions : How can higher education institutions foster these skills ? What are the existing approaches, strategies or spaces which cultivate crititical and imaginative skills in HEIs ?

Methodology: The methodology used is a review of existing literature dealing with

the concepts and the studies identified to address the above-stated questions. The outline of this paper is as follows :

1). The first part will be devoted to inveiling the various definitions of employability; 2) The second part will shed light on the students' perceptions of non-academic skills ;

3) The third part will help show employers' viewpoints as regards the importance of critical and imaginative skills to get hired ; 4) The fourth part presents a review of existing approaches and spaces to enhance critical and imaginative skills in HEIs.

Practical implications –The paper suggests that employers look for interpersonal skills and problem-solving skills before making hiring decisions. Even though some HEIs have adopted strategies to cultivate critical and imaginative skills, they are not yet widespread. Therefore, HEIs need to change teaching approaches and make a paradigm shift. However, this paradigm shift entails enhancing both teachers' and students' agency and engaging them in the whole change process.

## Keywords

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## Navigating life's transitions: The role of cultural and social capital in women's employability and caregiving in an aging society

As populations age and societies evolve, women often find themselves at the intersection of complex social dynamics, balancing formal and informal caregiving roles alongside professional expectations. In Italy, the longevity of life brings particular challenges, as women are expected to navigate the dual burdens of family care and labor market participation over extended lifetimes. This paper explores the impact of cultural capital, social capital, and habitus on women's life transitions, particularly as they relate to employability and caregiving responsibilities.

The research uses Carol Gilligan's Listening Guide methodology to analyze the personal narratives of older Italian women, focusing on how emotional, psychological, and social complexities shape their experiences. Gilligan's approach offers a distinctive lens through which to examine the ethic of care, which contrasts with the traditionally male-associated ethic of justice, arguing that morality cannot be reduced to a single, one-dimensional perspective. By allowing for the exploration of multiple, and often contradictory, voices within each story, the Listening. Guide method reveals the power dynamics—both familial and social—that influence women's actions and decisions.

Gilligan's critical framework, which emphasizes the importance of hearing the voices of women whose experiences are often marginalized or overlooked in traditional psychological or ethical theories, is applied here to shed light on the challenges women face in balancing caregiving duties with their own personal and professional growth. The paper underscores the crucial role that cultural and social capital play in shaping women's access to opportunities, empowerment, and overall well-being throughout their lives.

By exploring the intersection of longevity, caregiving, and employability through this feminist lens, the research offers valuable insights into how adult and elderly education programs can better support women's diverse needs in an ever-changing society. It advocates for more inclusive, responsive educational frameworks that recognize the complexities of women's lives and promote greater participation in the labor market and society at large.

### Keywords

Ethic of care, ethic of justice, Listening Guide, life transitions, employability, women's roles, caregiving, longevity, Italy.

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# From human capital to sustainability: reimagining the purpose of education

In *The Theory of Half-Education* (1951), Theodor Adorno examines the influence of what he calls the "extra-pedagogical reality" on education, emphasizing how economic logics in- filtrate educational systems and educators' professional experiences. A primary mecha- nism for this influence is the nexus between education systems and production systems, mediated by the labor market, where qualifications are exchanged for remuneration. This relationship depends on aligning professional qualifications with corresponding curricula. A professional profile, reflecting organizational qualifications, is intrinsically tied to a curricu- lum designed to address the requisite knowledge and skills for associated tasks (EU, 2016; OECD, 2024).

Another economic influence stems from accountability frameworks, which evaluate educa- tional productivity in measurable terms. Schools are expected to produce defined out- comes, such as skills and abilities acquired by students (Hooley *et al*., 2015). Authorities assess schools, teachers, and students based on these benchmarks, framing education as a tool for technical and economic development (Meyer *et al*., 2014). Within this para- digm, HE is seen as a tool to enhance human capital and, consequently, national economic competitiveness (Sin *et al*., 2019). A critical challenge arises from the frequent misalign- ment between professional profiles and educational curricula. This mismatch results in skills shortages that hinder productivity. This issue underpins the EU's strategic focus on employability in education (Ioannou, 2023).

However, prioritizing labor market needs risks reducing education to an instrument of eco- nomic utility (Prokou, 2008), undermining its transformative and emancipatory role (Tarozzi, 2023). As the climate crisis and socio-economic inequalities intensify, the limita- tions of the employability narrative become straightforward. UNESCO (2021) underscores the urgency of redefining education's purpose, asserting that for humanity's survival, we must learn to live sustainably and transform education to foster a peaceful and sustainable world. The focus on employability must therefore be critically examined and complemented by a broader vision of education as a tool for social transformation. Concepts like innova- tion, adaptability, and competence – along with concepts such as human capital and life- long learning – are not neutral or absolute. Their significance depends on the explicit ob- jectives they aim to achieve and the context in which they are applied. Without a critical in- terrogation, these frameworks risk perpetuating systemic inequalities and neglecting the need for collective responses to global challenges (Moir & Crowther, 2014).

Given these realities, HE, that has the mandate to tailor teacher education programmes a face a pivotal question: should they conform to market demands, or adopt a forward- looking vision emphasizing social justice and sustainability? Should they merge them or take a stronger position, value-oriented? EU policy emphasizes the need for "quality teachers" (CoEU, 2020), prompting deeper inquiries. What defines "quality"? How should classrooms evolve? And how can educational effectiveness address the urgent needs of a rapidly changing world?

We propose a vision of teacher education rooted in critical thinking and transformative practices. Inspired by Giroux's concept of teachers as transformative intellectuals (2018), this approach transcends technical skills to cultivate critical engagement with socio- economic and environmental challenges. It involves equipping educators to critique domi- nant narratives and reassess pedagogical norms. Finally, we argue that higher education should lead a transformative shift in the conception of teachers' roles, placing social jus- tice, sustainability, and

interdependence at the core of teaching. This redefined role would emphasize equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare stu- dents for the challenges of tomorrow.

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## Near to far transitions: Proposing a sustainable framework to investigate students' transitions into work

Near and far transfer is a classic theory of learning transfer developed from Thorndike and Woodworth's (1901) theory of identical elements. As a theory of transfer, it proposes that the possibility of transfer is connected to the level of similarity between the moment of learning and the moment of application, connected through their perceived common features (Thorndike and Woodworth, 1901). In this framework, near transfer occurs when there is similarity between the two contexts and far transfer occurs when the two contexts differ significantly (Barnett and Ceci, 2002; Nokes-Malack and Mestre, 2013). Research on near and far transfer highlights that near transfer is more frequent (Sala et al., 2019), and that both are the ultimate aim of education. Unfortunately, research on transfer has equally highlighted that it does not occur often (Petersa and Ogilvieb, 2020), possibly due to issues around its conceptualization, operationalisation and measurement (Oliveira, 2017). Still, as a theory of transfer, it offers useful elements to consider the application of knowledge across space, time and the transformation of knowledge itself in this process.

Building on these affordances, the presentation will reconceptualise near and far as a transition theory. In this new conceptual framing, near to far transitions are presented as a personally-noticed and experienced continuum of similarity and change, which offers a more sustainable way of investigating the transition into work. It allows for the reconsideration of what are successful transitions, explore how they are mediated in practice, and promote the development of reflective skills in the students in transition. Methodologically, this new theory is developed within the context of a qualitative research project on undergraduate students' experiences of a short-term work-placement and supported by reflective and creative data produced by the students while on placement. The students from a Post-92 University in the UK come from diverse backgrounds and are often the first in their family to attend university. The placement experience is thus seen not just as an opportunity to gain practical experience, but to reflect on the demands of graduate jobs within education. The data presented will therefore be used to illustrate the applicability of near to far transitions to investigate the transition into work in a more sustainable manner, and to support students in understanding this experience.

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# Supporting career transitions through self-efficacy development in Higher Education

Transitions from higher education (HE) to the labour market are increasingly nonlinear and multifaceted, shaped by a complex interplay of socio-demographic, cultural, and economic factors. In this context, employability is often conceptualised through a lens of possessive individualism (Holmes, 2023), which emphasises individual responsibility while neglecting systemic barriers. As Knowles (1980) argues, addressing these barriers requires learner- centred educational practices that empower adults to navigate their transitions effectively. Drawing on frameworks from adult education (Brookfield, 1995; Knowles, 1980; Mezirow, 1991) and career development (Lent et al., 2016; Savickas, 2021), this study explores how self-efficacy influences career management perceptions, which, in turn, prompts reflection on how it may support employability in diverse and dynamic contexts. Our study aimed to analyse (1) perceptions of self-efficacy in career exploration and decision-making and (2) how individual and contextual variables (e.g., age, gender, socioeconomic status, extracurricular participation, and work experience) influence these perceptions. Participants were undergraduate finalists from a public Portuguese HE institution using a socio- demographic questionnaire and the Career Exploration and Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (CEDSE; Lent et al., 2016), validated for this context (Taveira et al., 2019). The results revealed significant positive correlations between career management self-efficacy and variables such as age, extracurricular participation, employment status, and prior work experience. Older participants, those employed, and those with more diverse professional and extracurricular experiences reported higher levels of self-efficacy in career exploration and decision-making. Conversely, gender disparities were observed, with female participants showing higher levels of unemployment and less prior work experience compared to male participants. Additionally, foreign students reported higher socioeconomic status than their Portuguese peers, suggesting potential structural inequalities affecting access to resources and opportunities. Negative associations between socioeconomic status and factors such as employment and work experience suggest that participants with lower socioeconomic status face higher levels of labour market precariousness, potentially hindering the construction of continuous professional trajectories. Moreover, the analysis highlighted that internship experiences and extracurricular activities are positively associated with higher levels of self- efficacy, emphasising the central role of these elements in preparing students for career transitions. These findings underscore the importance of HE institutions promoting targeted initiatives, such as counselling programmes, internships, and extracurricular engagement, to strengthen students' self-efficacy and facilitate their transitions to the labour market. Such strategies are critical to mitigating systemic barriers and aligning educational experiences with contemporary employability demands, particularly in scenarios of nonlinear transition.

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# Student veterans' transition into Danish education: A thematic analysis

This presentation examines the worldview gap that student veterans encounter in higher education. An increasing number of military veterans have transitioned into a nontraditional student role in higher education during the decades after 9/11. A politically prioritized minority of these student veterans face severe sociocultural struggles in their transition into education, which impacts their interactions with teachers and peers, resulting in alienation, loneliness, and dropout. Such situations strain their equality of opportunity in education, and subsequently their career developments. International studies relate these struggles to a need for supporting veterans' adaptation to civilian norms. Offering an alternative approach, my project focuses on the differences in worldviews and social practices that lead to social frictions between student veterans and their peers and teachers in higher education. The contributions of the presentation include: (1) A Braun & Clarke's thematic analysis of focus group data (6 groups with a total of 23 student veterans) that examines the underlying meaning in veterans' non-affirmative approaches to higher education and efforts to help them adapt. Preliminary results offer insights into (a) veterans' initial experiences of transition and related support recommendations, (b) strengths and challenges related to veterans' tendency to view the military institution as an exemplar for higher educational institutions, (c) common themes that lead to social frictions between student veterans and their classmates, particularly in study groups, and finally (d) veterans' goal-oriented approach to teamwork. (2) A subsequent discussion, where I draw on Biesta's socialization-critical notion of Bildung to suggest that support strategies for veterans' transition into higher education, and subsequently into the labor market, should consider what lies beyond the norms of socialization that veterans describe are imposed onto them. First, this may lead to a more inclusive higher education and labour market, as it gives space to critical attitudes. Secondly, the labour market may benefit from exposing civilian students to veterans' goal-driven approach to teamwork.

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## Transitions to higher education and the labor market: an analysis of the experiences of students from migrant backgrounds in Italy.

This contribution explores the phenomenon of transition to higher education among students from migrant backgrounds in Italy, a growing group representing 6.9% of the total student population in the 2023/2024 academic year, with a 5% increase compared to the previous academic year (IDOS, 2024). Despite the expanding access to universities, young female students from migrant backgrounds show lower employability rates compared to their male peers and are more likely to be in NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) conditions, highlighting the persistence of gender inequalities in the labor market (Ongini, 2019; ISTAT, 2024). The analysis draws on the concept of superdiversity, which interprets academic and professional choices as the result of a dynamic interaction among a plurality of variables situated in specific contexts and biographical moments (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; McCall, 2005; Valentine, 2007; Vertovec, 2007). In this framework, educational institutions—from schools to universities—play a crucial role in promoting social and economic equity, serving as potential tools to reduce structural inequalities and facilitate successful academic and professional trajectories (MIUR, 2014). This contribution particularly focuses on the role of career guidance (Guichard, 2005; 2009; Savickas, 2005; 2010; Domenici, 2009; Biagioli, 2023) in supporting students from migrant backgrounds and ensuring them equal opportunities. Innovative strategies and formative practices aimed at strengthening the connections between compulsory education, higher education, and career pathways will be examined, with the objective of promoting more equitable and meaningful transitions in a context marked by the complexity and transformations of the labor market.The overarching aim is to analyze how institutions can contribute to building transition practices that account for the complexity of individual trajectories while fostering social and cultural inclusion.

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## Trajectoire interrompue de transition professionnelle Étude de cas des tensions identitaires vécues par une aide-soignante engagée en formation infirmière

La reconversion professionnelle dans les métiers de la santé représente une opportunité d'évolution personnelle et sociale, mais elle peut également engendrer des tensions identitaires importantes. Ce public en formation s'apparente aux définitions des étudiants dits non traditionnels (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Jeffreys, 2007; Tinto, 1975) plus à risque d'échec ou abandon. Si de nombreuses recherches dans l'enseignement supérieur se sont centrées sur les questions du processus d'abandon puis plus récemment sur celui de persévérance peu d'entre elles portent spécifiquement sur les multiples défis identitaires à relever lorsqu'une aide-soignante s'engage dans une formation infirmière.

L'étude de cas proposée illustre les défis rencontrés par les adultes en reprise d'études en explorant les mécanismes par lesquels ces tensions émergent et influencent le processus de socialisation en tant qu'expérience sociale (Dubet, 1994). Elle s'appuie sur les théories de Dubar (1998, 2010) concernant la socialisation et celles de Boutinet (2012) sur le projet.

A partir d'un récit de Céline 44 ans, mère de trois enfants, aide-soignante ayant quitté la formation infirmière, ce poster propose d'identifier les différentes tensions identitaires et socialisatrices à l'œuvre dans une trajectoire de vie en utilisant des méthodes de recherche biographique (Bertaux, 2016; Kaufmann & Singly, 2016). Les données recueillies ont été analysées de manière thématique pour mettre en évidence les tensions identitaires, les désillusions et les stratégies d'adaptation rencontrées dans sa trajectoire.

L'analyse montre que le projet de formation repose sur des aspirations fortes de progression sociale et de reconnaissance professionnelle, soutenues par un socle expérientiel professionnel. Cependant, les conflits identitaires liés aux rôles multiples, notamment celui de mère, d'étudiante et de professionnelle exacerbent la surcharge mentale et le sentiment de décalage entre les attentes initiales et les réalités de la formation, perçue comme trop théorique et mal encadrée en stage. Si les stratégies d'auto-motivation et de soutien social viennent accompagner positivement ces transitions multiples et complexes, elles ne soutiennent pas suffisamment le processus de persévérance aux études. L'interruption de formation intervient comme une rupture dans une trajectoire attendue comme linéaire. Pour autant, cette interruption prend également une dimension protectrice de l'identité pour soi dans un processus complexe de reconfiguration identitaire.

Ce cas met en lumière les limites des dispositifs actuels de formation infirmière pour répondre aux besoins spécifiques des adultes en reconversion. Cette analyse souligne la nécessité d'adapter ces dispositifs en proposant des parcours plus individualisés qui valorisent l'expérience professionnelle antérieure, les multiples configurations individuelles, en renforçant le soutien social (Greer & Kirk, 2022) et pratique, notamment pendant les stages, et en créant des environnements capacitants (Fernagu & Vidal-Gomel, 2022). Ces ajustements permettraient de prévenir les désillusions, d'atténuer les tensions identitaires et de réduire les abandons, tout en favorisant l'intégration des apprenants dans les métiers de la santé.

### Mots-clés

Reconversion professionnelle, tensions identitaires, formation infirmière, socialisation professionnelle, désillusion, résilience.

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## Emancipation and the practice of the commons in adult education

This proposal for a communication extends two exploratory studies on the analysis of the commons and the process of emancipation in adult education. Based on theories in the theories of learning from the workplace (Pastré, 2011; Sannino and Engeström, 2018), the first study (Sanojca and Briand, 2022) identified learning conditions in which communities of workers co- produce knowledge that relates to the commons (Ostrom, 1990). In this case, the affirmation of this form of value may reflect an awareness of a co-relation between the appreciation of professional activities (the meaning people attribute to them) and societal issues deemed critical (environmental, economic, social, etc.). The second study in progress (Sanojca and Eneau 2024) examines the links between open cooperation (including the production of commons) and the emancipation process. Drawing on previous work (Arendt, 1961/1994, Eneau, 2012, 2016; Eneau and Langar, 2022, Boyadjieva, and Ilieva-Trichkova, 2023, Rancière and Wald Lasowski, 2023), it is proposing a theoretical framework highlighting two axes of analysis: (1) *temporal*, encompassing 'before' (what awareness of what hinders freedom of action?), 'during' (what action has been taken to free oneself?) and 'after' (what is the horizon for action: freeing oneself to do what?) ; (2) a 'dimensional' axis linking the four levels of awareness and action (individual, collective, social, political).

Our contribution will put this theoretical framework under study in two fields of investigation. The first is the 'Riposte Créative Territoriale' (RCT) learning collective set up by a local authority training body in response to the Covid 19 health crisis. The second group is formed by professionals active in a regional public innovation laboratory, TyLab, which has been in activity since 2017. The analysis will be based on 23 comprehensive interviews (Kaufmann, 2011), conducted with persons selected on a involvement criteria (the most active in each project). These data will be enriched by textual data from the productions of the groups engaged in this dynamic (around 200 web pages), with the support of lexical analysis 'IRaMuTeQ: Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires'.

In terms of results, two objectives are targeted. At the minimum, the aim is to use complementary empirical data to verify the validity of the indicators of the emancipation process mentioned above. We also propose to contribute to a better understanding of what the production of commons introduces as a new perspective on the functioning of learning collectives in the workplace and on the emancipatory potential of these practices. In so doing, we would like to verify Pharo's (2022) thesis that a desire to re-establish a share of the common in social life is equivalent to a renewed form of emancipation.

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# Roles of higher education in the context of migration, and integration: Cases of internationally trained engineers in Canada

Higher education in Canada has undergone drastic changes over the last decade: continuous decline in public investment, constant tuition hikes, and a heavy reliance on a volatile international student market. On the bright side, higher education institutions have become more open and diversified in terms of student demographics. Many institutions have tried to increase the number of students from groups historically under-represented in (higher) education and made ways for non-traditional students, including first-generation students, students with disabilities, visible minorities, and mature students.

Research has started addressing how higher institutions have served the interests and needs of non-traditional students (e.g., Schuetze & Slowey, 2002; Taylor et al., 2019). Researchers have called for institutions to not only attract non-traditional students but also provide them with appropriate services and learning environments (e.g., Michalski et al., 2017). Missing in the literature are the perspectives of adult immigrants who seek to transition to the host labour markets through higher education. This paper starts addressing this void in the literature.

Specifically, it explores the experiences of internationally trained engineering graduates (ITEGs) in higher education in Canada. Empirically, it draws on the cases of 17 ITEGs who enrolled in graduate programs in Canada either as landed immigrants or as international students before they applied for immigration. Analytically, the paper is informed by practice theories (e.g., Bourdieu, P., 1986), which focus on the social affordance/production of individual learning, knowing, doing and being.

12 of the respondents came to Canada as international students and 5 attended higher education as landed immigrants. They sought higher education in Canada for a mix of reasons: fulfilling educational aspirations, changing career direction, enhancing professional opportunities, meeting licensure requirements, and seeking immigration to Canada. Through their programs, the respondents reported that they expanded their professional knowledge and (research) skills. To varying degrees, respondents reported transformative changes as a person and professional. Some developed entrepreneurial businesses. Some also contributed to the production of models, patents and research papers, and transformations of teaching practices in higher education. Most importantly, all respondents who completed the programs at the time of the study located employment in engineering.

If higher education helped with the career transition of the respondents in Canada, multiple features of the programs facilitated such a transition. Among others, respondents spoke of the role of supervisors in inducting them into disciplinary knowledge and practices and sometimes connecting them to communities and employers in the industries. Many appreciated opportunities to be involved in co-op programs, capstone projects, research projects, industrial placements, and internships, which helped them develop hands-on knowledge and skills needed in practice and grow professional networks. Some also pinpointed that workshops, social events, and other programs offered through universities were important for them to make unexpected connections and maximize their professional and entrepreneurial opportunities. It is clear that higher institutions play a role in mitigating the labour market disadvantage immigrants often experience. Not only do they expand immigrants' cultural and social capitals, but, to some extent, they also modulate their habitus as professionals.

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# Training and career paths of higher education students - the influence of social and cultural capital

In recent decades, higher education has expanded in terms of the number of students attending it. However, along with this massification, there has been an increase in unemployment among this same population. Training and career paths are the result of a series of factors that go beyond the completion of a higher education course (Costa, Lopes & Caetano, 2014). These factors include individual decisions, social and economic conditions, family environment, expectations and opportunities, among others. Throughout their career and the combination of these factors, individuals build up their capital- key resources that confer benefits and competitive advantages (Tomlinson, 2017). But how is this capital acquired in all its different forms (social, cultural, identity)? What influence does it have on employability and the transition to the job market? This is the starting question for the scientific research carried out and described here. To answer these questions, the research used a qualitative-methodology, based on the theoretical-methodological device proposed by Lahire (2002, 2003) - the construction of sociological portraits with three higher education students. The primary objective was to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of certain contextual factors on the educational and training paths of young graduates, focusing the study on social capital - social and interpersonal relationships created and mobilized by students - and cultural capital - the formation of culturally valued knowledge, dispositions and behaviours (Bourdieu, 1986). To this end, in-depth interviews were conducted with three young people at different stages and in different fields of study. Tracing their journeys from an early age to the present day, their development as professionals has undoubtedly been marked by motivations, contexts, leisure activities, people and even crisis situations, which have dictated the way they view their lives and careers. It is a fact that higher education institutions play a significant role in the development of these young people, their employability and prospects in the job market. However, social and cultural capital, especially that acquired in the family and other socialization contexts, has determined the opportunities and the ability of young people to take full advantage of them, shaping and molding their life paths unevenly.

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## Rethinking lifelong learning through a philosophical lens on identity: From individual professional growth to interrelational existential formation

This paper critically examines how the dominant discourse in lifelong learning (LLL) shapes identity formation, arguing that it presents a narrow and fragmentary view of identity, even reductionist in comparison to the philosophical tradition. By integrating Paul Verhaeghe's psychoanalytic critique of neoliberal identity with insights from the phenomenological tradition, particularly the work of Husserl (Verhaeghe, 2012; Zahavi, 2018; Carr, 2021), the paper highlights the limitations of a focus on professional identity and individual employability, at the expense of broader existential and (inter)relational dimensions of identity formation.

The current LLL discourse even seems to reveal a paradox regarding identity: while encouraging individuals to adapt to external trends - such as technological innovations and shifting job markets - it also stimulates individualized learning. This raises the question of whether truly personalized learning paths are genuinely promoted, or whether they are ultimately subordinated to market-driven adaptability.

Drawing on practical insights from PUC – KU Leuven Continue, the largest KU Leuven LLL hub, this paper explores the tension between the push for flexibilization and individualization - evident in trends like *microcredentials* and *personalized edtech*

and the need for shared, holistic approaches to learning (Bagnall & Hodge, 2022; Kušić et al., 2022). It concludes by advocating for framing identity formation within a broader, interrelational context and proposes a shift towards a philosophically grounded LLL paradigm that balances economic utility with existential and societal values.

The originality of this contribution lies in its innovative integration of philosophical and practical perspectives, offering a critical yet constructive lens to rethink LLL's role in shaping identity. This aligns closely with the conference's focus on navigating identity dynamics in increasingly fragmented educational and professional contexts.

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# Empowerment illuminante: educazione degli adulti per le donne analfabete nel panorama neoliberista dell!India

With the emergence of New Educational Policy 2020, A paradigm shift towards the skill based learning in India has taken place, The impetus for this transformation originated from the government's reaction to alarming levels of low literacy among the adult population, This shift was marked by a commitment to enhance national skill development in the country to boost individual empowerment economic productivity, and societal progress. The article delves into the intricate connections between the rising significance of lifelong learning (LLL) and the concurrent decline in the recognition of adult education within India's national educational policies, plans, and programs. This article examines how neoliberal influences have reshaped the educational landscape, impacting the accessibility and quality of adult education, particularly for illiterate women. Through a critical analysis of these transformations, the article sheds light on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for adult education in India, with a focus on fostering empowerment and inclusion for marginalized groups.

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## A psychosocial interaction study on identity construction of university undergraduates in Lagos state university of education, Noforija, EPE

This study was informed by the increasing disruptive and diminishing values, norms and beliefs from unstable family structure and socio-environmental factors that have adversely hindered students' identity construction. Given the negative impact of this construct, the study investigated the influence of psychosocial factors on identity construction of undergraduates in Lagos State University of Education, Epe campus. Four research questions were raised and answered in the study and three hypotheses were tested. Mixed method exploratory sequential design was employed. Simple random sampling techniques were used for this study. The sample size for the study was 435 participants. Questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion were used for data sourcing. The research questions were analysed using simple percentages, mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The fit index values obtained from the analysis were observed to be 1.502 and CFI=.90, which were at an acceptable level. The study revealed that the psychosocial environment of students directly impacted the exploration process of their identity. The findings thus suggest the need to engage in intervention and advocacy content to enhance the understanding of the ways in which psychosocial factors affect students' identity construction. Based on these findings, the study recommended community intervention-based programmes for parents, students, stakeholders and counselors as a guide for nurturing an ideal home environment needed for positive identity construction.

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## Educators, Where are you ?

In the field of educator training, there is an ongoing collaboration between the University of Turin and the province of Cuneo, which has recently started a process to renew the educational services in the area. During this process, a shared reflection on the role of educators (Field, 2006) has brought to light a common concern: educators seem to be increasingly unavailable in this current historical moment.

This professional exodus appears to align with broader societal trends, reflecting a changing relationship between individuals and work, often referred to in literature as the 'Great Resignations' (Coin, 2023; Cohen, 2021). While this trend may be systemic, its impact on educational professions raises significant concerns for the stability of educational services and social policies. Additionally, internal factors within the profession, such as economic (salary), organizational, and socio-cultural aspects, contribute to a general disaffection towards the role of educators.

To explore the current state and future of the profession, a Future Lab cycle was initiated in early 2024, involving twenty educators from the province of Cuneo with varying years of experience across different services. The use of the Future Lab qualitative methodology was chosen for its heuristic value in exploring the category of 'future', which is relevant for pedagogical theory and social design practices (Pellegrino, 2019; 2020).

The Future Lab methodology, developed by Robert Jungk and Norbert Müllert, consists of three phases conducted over three meetings of three hours each. The first phase, dystopia, prompts participants to reflect on the potential consequences if current challenges persist. In the second phase, utopia, participants envision the ideal conditions they would wish for in the future. The third phase, transition, focuses on identifying present elements that can facilitate the realization of utopian visions through action plans (Jungk & Müllert, 1987).

The research findings highlight the importance of addressing social and economic recognition for educators to combat mental fatigue and motivational challenges (Pandolfi, 2023). Additionally, the study reveals the impact of professional loneliness and performance pressures on educators, leading to resource depletion and a lack of support from colleagues.

A significant difference in future outlook was observed between experienced and younger educators, with younger educators expressing a greater sense of professional isolation and uncertainty about their future in the field. Both groups emphasized the need for intergenerational dialogue and collaboration as essential for sustaining educational work.

The Future Labs provided a platform for critical reflection and shared learning, particularly benefiting younger educators by fostering a sense of community and participation in a community of practice (Lave, Wenger, 1990; Wenger, 1998).

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