

TEAL – Summary of 3rd Knowledge Café



13th December 2013

OLDER LEARNERS DURING TRANSITIONS: IDENTIFYING AND TACKLING BARRIERS AND POSITIVE INTERVENTIONS FOR ENGAGING OLDER LEARNERS - SPANISH PERSPECTIVE



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3rd KNOWLEDGE CAFÉ: positive interventions for engaging older learners – facilitated by Thomas Fischer

The third and last Learning Café centred on ‘Positive Interventions for Engaging Older Learners’. The participants first of all highlighted the fact that interventions encompass not only external measures, but at the same include internal changes within the individual.

Interventions furthermore happen on different levels: as already mentioned at individual level, second at organisational or corporate level and third at state or public level.

Adaptation Mechanisms:

- INDIVIDUALS adapt to WORK (“The Past”)
- WORK adapts to INDIVIDUALS (“The Dream”)
- Hybrid solutions and interactions between INDIVIDUALS and Work (“The Present” or “The Future”)

Learners and experts also agreed that many, often non-job related intermediate variables co-exist, which influence professional (re-)qualification and labour market (re-)integration processes. These individual variables may include feelings of loneliness, helplessness, even anger and shame (of being unemployed), which may result in self-exclusion, stuckness and resistance of (not only elder) persons to accept external support.

UNEMPLOYMENT

→

EMPLOYMENT

Intermediate Variables:

- Not only employment
- Not only entrepreneurship
- **Many are non-job related**
- Also volunteering
- Also personal development
- Also chances, choices and perspectives
- Activate and use social support networks e.g. family, friends, peers etc

→ **Combination of PROFESSIONAL plus EMOTIONAL/AFFECTIVE plus SOCIAL Support**



It is therefore important to activate and motivate those persons through social, cultural, creative, health- and sport-related activities in order to provide them with success stories and increase their self-confidence before planning professional interventions.

Accordingly interventions should not focus merely on continuous professional development, entrepreneurship or employability, but also support personal growth by opening new chances, choices and perspectives.

When looking at concrete interventions for older learners, the following approaches have been emphasised:

- Learning from reference persons, role models, 'idols' or 'champions' e.g. in an Entrepreneurship Centre for Women in Spain serving as a meeting and planning space ('Business Links');
- (Intergenerational) Mentoring e.g. through 'Mentoring Circles' in the United Kingdom providing i) a meeting point for participants with similar experiences/problems/interests; ii) collective and individual problem analyses and goal setting; iii) internal peer support; iv) external specialist support;
- Coaching through peers and experts;
- Psycho-social support for the activation of older long-term unemployed persons e.g. an integrated service in Germany;
- Valorising existing resources e.g. skills, competences of job seekers etc;
- Modifying legal regulations and incentives e.g. reward systems, tax reductions in order to create conditions that the return to the labour market is not only 'financially' attractive;
- Increasing flexible working conditions at the labour market e.g. through flexible time management, part time employment, 'time accounts/banks', tandem of employees etc;
- Using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) at the work place and beyond e.g. tele-working from home, virtual meetings for remote collaborators;
- Mainstreaming Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) e.g. by awarding 'Companies with Visions' in Germany;
- Changing the physical workspace (e.g. ergonomic desks etc) and applying flexible workflow re-organisation;
- In-company offers to increase health and well-being;
- Supporting 'carers' e.g. for employees providing care for an older relative;

The participants also discussed the effects caused by 'unstable' policies: elections often change policy priorities and are often perceived as short-sightedness ("fashion of policies"). As a consequence sustainable funding of measures and programmes are often not guaranteed e.g. the Entrepreneurship Support Programme in Germany receives highly reduced funding by the federal state although it has been evaluated as one of the most successful employment programmes over the last years.

Similarly the programme 'Perspective50 plus' will end in 2014 although the challenges of an ageing society and work force still prevail. Thus policy measures are often perceived as not aligned to or even disconnected from the personal and professional needs of stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Finally two major sectoral tensions have been identified when collecting and analysing interventions to engage older learners: first the trade-off between i) responsibility of the state and ii) responsibility of the individual; and related to the former the trade-off between i) public interventions and ii) volunteerism (third sector).

LINK TO MULTIMEDIA MATERIALS FROM THE WORKSHOP:

http://www.teal-project.eu/teal/?page_id=9 and
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pv8mjf2sglvukb4/bXkO6qrFek>