CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Navigating difficult waters: learning for career and labour market transitions

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Foreword

Over recent years of rapid structural changes and economic downturn, Europeans have faced the challenge to react to the needs of the labour market and civil society. This challenge is compounded by the increased instability and the high unemployment rates brought about by the recent financial crisis, which have contributed to the erosion of job security and large increases in unemployment.

Europe 2020, the European Union (EU) growth strategy for smart and sustainable growth, has stressed the importance of continuous skill formation. The sustained investment in skills in a lifelong perspective plays a pivotal role in the EU growth strategy. Better skills also provide an effective way for individuals to respond to the present challenges of high unemployment. Perceived insecurity about social and economic stability poses a threat to individuals and requires coping strategies to navigate one's life course successfully.

Work by Cedefop has shown that participation in training has a positive effect on the probability of finding a job, and that vocational education and training brings about desirable labour market outcomes. This study adds to such results by showing that learning can support labour market transitions of adult workers by increasing their adaptability to a changing environment.

Workers in this study live and work in different contexts and countries. They work in workplaces with different attitudes towards learning, face different life situations, come from different social groups and so have access to different learning opportunities. Given this high level of heterogeneity, there are many ways in which learning can support labour market transitions, from upskilling or reskilling to searching for a new career orientation. For other workers learning also serves to enhance self-esteem and self-worth and so it will support their careers indirectly, through an entrepreneurial attitude towards work and through maintaining a healthy psychological state.

This study offers a colourful mosaic of life and career patterns, and shows that there is ample room for policy intervention in support of adults in successfully managing career changes. Career guidance and counselling policies can be very effective in supporting transitions when they succeed in activating workers. Workers are then more receptive to training and other type of support provided.

This report intends to increase awareness of the importance of the various policies – guidance, counselling, and participation in education and training – that can effectively support adults in making better career decisions.

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Acknowledgements

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Executive summary

The study carried out on behalf of Cedefop investigated how learning can support workers' transitions on the labour market. It sought to generate a deeper understanding of multiple individual approaches to learning.

The report draws on a literature review and an original collection of narratives from biographical interviews in five EU Member States. Analysis of the interviews focused on the identification of patterns of individuals' engagement in different forms of learning and the ways in which learning contributed to their career and labour market transitions. Scrutiny of changes across the life-course for a range of individuals operating in very different national, industrial and life contexts provided insights into the interrelationship between agency (a concept measuring the degree of control over our personal life), structural constraints (the constraints on the degree of control over personal choices deriving from being part of social groups) and opportunity structures (the range of opportunities available to individuals).

The findings are structured around four themes, the first of which focuses on the development of occupational identity as individuals move through the labour market. The second theme situates individual progression within the labour market in the broader frame of lifelong learning. The third highlights the role of educational institution support in mid-career development or changes in career direction. The fourth and final theme considers career development. These themes are reflected in the data analysis of the biographies and informed the conclusions.

To keep the report to manageable size, additional information can be found in the background material:

(a) *Data analysis* (Cedefop, 2014a) contains the iconic cases, i.e. the cases that have informed most of the analysis, and provides country-specific analyses;

(b) *Methodology* (Cedefop, 2014b) contains the methodological approach used to analyse the biographies;

(c) *Description of country data* (Cedefop, 2014c) contains additional interviews organised in country reports.

Methodology

The project was based on biographical interviews taking place in five Member States: Denmark, Germany, Spain, France and Italy. Each country partner identified a sample of about 25 people, mainly aged between 35 and 45, for

biographical interviewing. Each participant had a first interview, mainly between February 2012 and August 2012. About 60 were interviewed again, mainly between October 2012 and February 2013. The first interview enabled participants to reflect on their learning experiences, recent career transition and aspirations for the future. The second allowed them to identify the changes (if any) that learning and a career transition had on the self, working life and private life.

The collection of narratives focused on individuals' learning and career biographies, with respondents recounting how their occupational identities develop and change over time and how they were impacted by transition processes associated with changes in work roles. The interviews drew on a number of different elements of occupational identity development; in this, individuals prioritised certain episodes from their varied experiences and from strategic career stories. The interviews were based on a semi-structured guideline to ensure that the following broad themes were covered: how skills, knowledge and understanding for a current job were acquired; significant work and learning transitions; significant learning experiences; nature of support for career transitions; learning from previous changes; and future development plans.

The sample was drawn to represent as many different possible types of career and learning pathways engaged by people in their mid-career and with middle level qualifications in each country. It comprises men and women, individuals working in small, medium and large companies in both the private and public sectors who are in a range of work positions but not management. The labour market areas chosen by each country team reflect the different nature of the labour markets, patterns of work organisation and career and learning pathways.

Institutional factors and individual behaviours supporting career transitions

Having successfully mastered a disciplinary, vocational or specialist knowledge base (associated an apprenticeship, vocational training, graduate or postgraduate training, or some combination of these) can provide a platform for subsequent learning for labour market transitions. Initial studies or training were often seen as relevant to current jobs, even when individuals were working in a different occupational area from that for which they had originally studied or trained. This was because individuals had learned particular ways of thinking and practising that put them in good stead for the rest of their career. The actual

knowledge base, however, often required considerable updating, which was achieved partly through reflection on experiences at work and partly through career development activities away from work. Learning and development at work depends on whether the workplace is an expansive or restrictive learning environment. Supportive employers may encourage learning ([1]) while lack of support in the workplace can result in the inability to follow desired career pathways ([2]). The way initial and continuing vocational education and training are organised can aid transitions but often their focus on progression within a sector can turn into a structural barrier for people who want to undergo career change in adult life. For example, for employed adults it is difficult to change occupation when access to the desired occupation is conditional on having obtained a suitable educational qualification foreseeing a period of mandatory job placement: the time demands of the mandatory job placement could be incompatible with those of the current job ([3]). The occupational structure is another important factor, as can be seen from the importance in Germany of recognised occupations, reflecting the power of the concept of *Beruf*.

Participating in formal education mid-career is demanding in terms of time and energy; workers, especially those with family responsibility, might not be able to command these resources. Part-time work may aid career transitions by freeing up time to engage in education and training while also providing income to support the domestic sphere, such as primary care for young children. But time away from the job to engage in learning is often subject to obtaining support from gatekeepers (supervisors or employers). If they are supportive, learning can usually be accommodated; if not, it can become almost impossible. The financial means to pay for courses and fees are usually available; however, an extended period without income can be a strong barrier to participation in formal education. Families and parents sometimes provide financial help to adults who are going through extended transitions or want to return to education. These patterns were found to apply to men and women alike, especially in Denmark and Spain.

Activation programmes embedded in active labour market policies can be useful in helping people find jobs. However, they sometimes fail to achieve their mission: activate and engage people. This can have the unfortunate consequence of alienating them, as illustrated by some of the cases in Denmark (Anne, Erik and Mette) and the learning that takes place is only limited. However,

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([1])   As in the case of Adèle in France and Saray in Spain (Cedefop, 2014a, Sections 3.1 and 5.2).

([2])   As in the case of Mads in Denmark (Cedefop, 2014a, Section 1.1).

([3])   Sabine (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany).

when they do succeed in activating people, active labour market policies can sustain learning in many ways. They may give access to formal education and training opportunities or work experience which opens the door for the sought-after labour market transition.

The extent to which individuals engage in learning activities will depend on opportunity structures (availability of training providers, access to active labour market policies and eligibility for support measures), which will sustain (or not) the individual drive during career transition. Whether the immediate focus of learning is on the development of psychological resilience, flexible expertise, more flexible occupational identities or mastery of high-level vocational practice, a complementary goal is always helping individuals to become more adaptable in developing their own careers. Four key dimensions of this emerged, relating to the characteristics of learning in developing career adaptability, thereby also supporting labour market transitions: learning through challenging work (including mastering the practical, cognitive and communicative demands linked with particular work roles and work processes); updating a substantive knowledge base (or mastering a new additional substantive knowledge base); learning through interactions at work; and being self-directed and self-reflexive. Challenging work can help individuals adapt across their career through the iterative interaction between work and personal development; mastering challenging work can help build a platform from which to adapt to work in other fields. Opportunities for 'learning by interacting' are often seen as a key component of learning-rich jobs, where you can learn from interacting with patients, colleagues, customers, clients, etc. Participation in, and learning through, interacting within communities and networks is a vehicle to develop expertise, including how to communicate effectively in different contexts. The interactions may be formalised, but more informal personal networks and relationships are also in place for learning.

Being self-directed at work helps in taking advantage of learning opportunities and aids individual development. One special aspect of being self-directed relates to being self-reflexive, i.e. being able to identify a current skill set and how this might be improved and extended. Those who make successful transitions are often self-directed in either or both their learning and development and their career more generally.

There is also a psychological dimension to being self-directed and successful in making a major transition: it reinforces your confidence that you would be able to do this again in future. Those individuals who see that their skills can be transferred to other contexts have significant advantages in changing career direction over those who define themselves almost exclusively by their occupational and organisational attachments. This advantage stems from the

former having a dynamic sense of themselves as being able to navigate their own route through the labour market, while the latter are dependent upon the pathways linked to a particular organisation or occupation.

One final aspect of being self-directed is that people can learn from their lives through the stories they tell about them. Many interviewees recounted powerful narratives of where they had been, where they were, and where they might be going. They were in charge of their own stories and such a perspective is an important component of adaptability.

Model of learning for career and labour market transitions

There are many forms, contexts and contents of learning associated with successful labour market transitions; the precise configuration of key learning processes varies with the individual and context. Analysis of the strategic learning and career biographies of interviewees in the five countries led us to propose a model of learning for career and labour market transitions which can help researchers, practitioners and policy-makers understand how to support people making career and labour market transitions. The model emerged as a way to rationalise the patterns identified from the analyses of the narratives. It comprises three interrelated representations and individuals experiencing successful transitions were able to advance in all of them.

The first representation views learning as a process of identity development resulting from the career and learning biographies of individuals: learning as becoming. Key determinants in this representation are: the personal characteristics underpinning learning and development: learning through self-understanding; development of personal qualities: sense of personal agency; personality; motivation (determination); resilience; self-efficacy (self-belief; efficacy belief); commitment to own learning and professional development; career orientation (career decision-making style); and career adaptability.

The second representation focuses on learning and skills development. It spans four domains: relational development; cognitive development; practical development; and emotional development. Learning may involve development in one or more domains, with development in each domain achieved in a number of different ways:

(a) relational development can be achieved through interactions at work, learning with and from others (in multiple contexts) and learning by participating in communities of practice (and communities of interest). Socialisation at work, peer learning and identity work all contribute to

relational development. Many processes of relational development occur alongside other activities but more complex relationships, requiring the use of influencing skills, engaging people for particular purposes, supporting the learning of others and exercising supervision, management or (team) leadership responsibilities, may benefit from support through explicit education, training or development activities;

(b) cognitive development involves learning through mastery of an appropriate knowledge base and any subsequent technical updating. This form of development makes use of learning by acquisition and highlights the importance of subject or disciplinary knowledge and/or craft and technical knowledge; it is concerned with developing particular cognitive abilities, such as critical thinking, evaluating, and synthesising.

(c) practical development is often linked to learning on the job, particularly through challenging work. Learning a practice is also about relationships, identity and cognitive development but practical development can encompass the importance of critical inquiry, innovation, new ideas, changing ways of working and (critical) reflection on practice. It may be aided by learning through experience, project work and/or by use of particular approaches to practice, such as planning and preparation, implementation (including problem-solving) and evaluation. The ultimate goal may be vocational mastery, with progressive inculcation into particular ways of thinking and practising, including acceptance of appropriate standards, ethics and values, and the development of particular skill sets and capabilities associated with developing expertise;

(d) emotional development is achieved through engagement, reflexivity that leads to greater self-understanding, and the development of particular personal qualities. Much emotional development may occur outside work, but the search for meaning in work, developing particular mindsets and mindfulness, may be components of an individual's emotional development. Particular avenues of development include understanding the perspectives of others, respect for the views of others, empathy, anticipating the impact of your own words and actions, and a general reflexivity, which includes exploring feelings. Career transitions may also be influenced by changing ideas individuals have about their own well-being and changing definitions of career success (about five cases in each country).

The third and final representation acknowledges that learning takes place in the context of opportunity structures within which individuals operate. These structures include: employment/unemployment rates; employer recruitment practices, including openness of job offers; IVET, occupational pathways (varying

degrees of breadth and specificity); continuing vocational training (CVT) system; progression to and permeability with higher education from VET; affordances for learning and interaction at work; occupational structure (such as concept of *Beruf*); transition regimes; recognition of prior learning; support structures (such as family, personal networks, public employment services); career guidance; support for reflection; opportunities to address skills mismatch (including addressing issues of underemployment); and extent of opportunities for learning for personal development.

Analysis of the narratives showed that the key to understanding learning for career and labour market transitions is the ability to switch back and forth between representations. For example, those wishing to support learning may start by helping an individual with the process of identity development, reflecting on career story, developing a sense of career direction and a commitment to their learning, professional development and career adaptability. The next phase of support examines what types of learning and development were required across the four learning and skills development domains for individuals to achieve their goals. Both these processes may need to be revisited in the context of particular opportunity structures within which decisions are being made.

In practice, the support offered to learning for career transitions may start with any of the three representations. The crucial aspect is that, wherever the starting point, they have to engage with processes to develop across all three representations; skills development requires identity formation and development within and across the four learning and skills development domains. Further, the particular ways in which individuals engage with these processes are sensitive to the particular opportunity structures within which learning takes place.

Those interviewees who had made a series of successful transitions in the labour market, either explicitly or implicitly switched between the three representations. This shift between representations is what implicitly or explicitly underpins many forms of initial vocational preparation, such as apprenticeship, dual forms of learning in higher education, and employment. It also underpins the development of T-shaped skills profiles: specialist expertise coupled with broad general or soft skills. Many institutions already do this, but it should be more prevalent in all forms of VET. A narrow focus on immediate employability can act to lock people into low-skilled employment, while a focus on adaptability and substantive expertise in a discipline, occupation or technical field offers immediate prospects and provides a foundation for continuing learning.

Supporting mid-career upskilling and reskilling and the role of guidance

Upskilling means developing a skill set where the major source of expertise remains unchanged, while reskilling involves constructing a skill set around a new disciplinary, occupational or technical pole. The interviewees showcased the various ways in which upskilling can offer career support. It can take place through work that comprises a series of highly challenging work activities ([4]) or through involvement in 'normal' work activities, together with formal training, when the work organisation is undergoing a process of change. Upskilling may be associated with career progression within one company or through development of a strategic career (switching companies, sectors and occupations) ([5]). However, it is also possible to develop work-related learning, careers and identities through education-based upskilling, whether in VET, higher education or a combination of both. The value of substantive mid-career learning is often demonstrated in a positive way in terms of career development, but even where it does not lead to progression, it can protect against possible downward career drift associated with individuals who have not engaged in substantive updating since their initial training. Substantive upskilling has not always been necessary to maintain a career, but the absence of engagement in any substantive learning or development leaves individuals doubly vulnerable to any change in their career prospects, in that both getting a new job or reskilling can be much more difficult. To enable individuals to continue their formal learning in support of mid-career upskilling it is desirable that there is complementarity between IVET and CVET.

The interviews also showed the importance of reskilling, which in our sample included self-directed learning, formal retraining or a return to education. In the last of these, individuals sometimes had to switch to part-time working or become self-employed as a means to generate sufficient time and space for reskilling. Programmes and support structures exist, but there is probably underestimation of demand and lack of recognition of the economic benefits in aiding reskilling, with individuals then staying longer in the labour market.

Interviews revealed other measures for promoting mid-career reskilling:

(a) offer individuals (a voucher for) (few sessions of) independent careers guidance;

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[4] Mercuzio and Lucia in Italy (Cedefop, 2014a, Sections 2.1 and 2.2). Achille and Émile in France (Cedefop, 2014b, Sections 3.4.2.3 and 3.4.2.7).

[5] As in the case of Didier in France (Cedefop, 2014a, Section 3.6).

(b) identify appropriate learning strategies and pedagogic practices (accounting for individuals preferences for work-based learning) that will assist the development and maintenance of mid-career workers' capacities for working, learning, development and transitions;

(c) offer workers the possibility of a 'career break' to reassess their situation;

(d) support continuous training as preparation for mid-career change (as was the case with the right to train in Denmark and currently is the case in France).

However, analysis of the biographies showed that learning supports best labour market transitions when workers have a (clear) sense of direction in their career. This sense of direction is the result of self-reflexivity (learning about becoming), which is essential in all three representations. All are needed to navigate career changes successfully and guidance would support individuals in developing self-reflexivity.

Adult participation in (formal) education and training is complicated because it may conflict with other activities such as work and family obligations; adults need increased flexibility of education delivery. Recognition of prior learning (or validation of experiences) can increase the effectiveness of participation in education and training for adults in transition (Émile in Cedefop, 2014b, France).

The variation in the willingness to engage in self-reflexivity is added to by the need to help not very reflexive individuals to be more actively reflective and reflexive; to activate them so that they can mobilise all their resources to sustain their learning through transitions. Career guidance has the potential to support the process of self-reflexivity, provided it is responsive to individuals' particular requirements in their mid-career. It follows that measuring the impact of guidance needs to take account of 'distance travelled' by clients (reflexive workers and workers with a clear sense of direction are easier to support than less reflexive workers), in a way that focuses on the process of effective guidance as well as its quantifiable outcomes.

Guidance helps people who choose upskilling or reskilling to manage career transitions by maintaining a positive self-image, even when transitions are not working out. The issue of how guidance and learning services are interrelated is an important policy concern.

Analysis of the narrative accounts showed that the ability to shift between the three representations of the model (the process of identity development, skills development and learning to navigate the opportunity structures) is key to their success in career changes. The ability to develop in all three representations is supported by a process of self-reflexivity.

As it is always the case with investments in education and training, investment in career skills should take place as early as possible. Young men and women should be exposed to career skills in school, helping them reflect on what they like, what they are good at, and their strong and weak points, considering preferred careers but also alternatives. The development of career adaptability skills will help new generations to navigate the more uncertain labour market they are confronted with. Inducing individuals to consider career changes early on might actually extend people's working lives.

CHAPTER 1.
Introduction

The increased instability characterising modern labour markets has eroded the long-held paradigm of lifelong employment with one employer. While the recent economic crisis has aggravated the situation, the factors that have contributed to the demise of secure employment – increase in the use of temporary contracts, and the changing economic, cultural and social conditions that accompany structural change – stem from long-term processes. Therefore, they are likely to continue to play an important role in workers' lives in the future. Perceived insecurity about social and economic stability poses a threat to individuals and requires coping strategies to navigate one's life course successfully.

The resulting changing work and life conditions have been accompanied by increased responsibility for workers to manage their labour market transitions. This change has been aligned to the concept of 'employability', which clearly underlines an individual's responsibility in maintaining employment potential on the labour market, including by lifelong learning. The use of 'employability' as a driver of change does not square well with current very high levels of unemployment across much of Europe; employability seeks to align the skill sets, attitudes and values of individuals with opportunities in the labour market. Employability is not the issue when youth unemployment (rates reaching 40% or more in some parts of Europe) is to be ascribed to structural problems such as ailing labour demand. The use of 'career adaptability' may be a more promising way forward, where it is defined as 'the capability of an individual to make a series of successful transitions where the labour market, organisation of work and underlying occupational and organisational knowledge bases may all be subject to considerable change' (Bimrose et al., 2011). With this emphasis, crucially, an individual can still be seeking to develop personal adaptability even where employment is not an immediate prospect. The focus is then much more on how they can continue to develop their skills in their current context, to be able to make successful transitions between education, training, employment and other contexts in the future. One's employability can decline through no fault of one's own, but adaptability can always be developed, including adapting to lack of opportunities for permanent employment. Individual learning and career development can be organised around the challenges individuals face in using learning to support career and labour market transitions. First, there is the need to address the issue of the increasing complexity of work identities. Many employees are developing multidimensional (individual and collective)

occupational identities to cope with socioeconomic and technological change (Kirpal, 2004). A commitment to learning and continuing vocational training (CVT) in the development of individual and collective skills, knowledge, competences and active career development can support workers in this new work environment. The shift in skills requirements is underpinned by the increased importance of communication, a willingness to learn and reflexivity, with reflection on experience over time particularly significant in the build-up of implicit or tacit knowledge as well as explicit knowledge (Eraut, 1994).

A further challenge in supporting role change and labour market transitions is the problems faced in the deployment of knowledge. Individuals may need to recontextualise what they have learned and think about what constitutes effective performance in a changing context (Evans and Guile, 2012). The value of individual reflection on experience at work has long been established (e.g. Schön, 1983), but collaborative reflection is also common and can play a role in helping people engage in finding common meanings in making sense of their collective work (Høyrup, 2004). In collaborative reflection individuals can learn from each other and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding from shared experiences.

The interaction between learning and labour market transitions differs across economic systems. Institutional factors, such as the nature of vocational education and training (VET) systems, the permeability of the education system and access to guidance and counselling, will influence the ways adult learning supports career transitions. Systemic factors, such as the degree of reliance on occupational labour markets or presence of different skill formation regimes, can also be influential ([6]).

While transitions may bring opportunities, they can also expose individuals to a risk of deskilling, unemployment and social exclusion. To avoid such undesirable outcomes, individuals may draw on the resources available to them: established networks for social support, learning, and various other policy measures (such as guidance, active labour market policies, and welfare measures). Learning, in particular, may be a very important resource.

Workers live and work in different contexts, have been socialised in various ways, will work in workplaces with different attitudes towards learning, will face

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([6]) Skill formation regimes describe the interaction between labour market institutions, welfare state institutions and institutions in charge of skills formation (e.g. tripartite support agencies). For this study, the five countries chosen can be classified according to the varieties of capitalism taxonomy of skills formation regimes (Hall and Soskice, 2001): Germany (social consensus), Denmark (flexicurity), France (State governance), Spain and Italy (school-based system).

different life-course situations, and so will have access to different learning opportunities. Given this high level of heterogeneity it can be expected that there will be many ways in which learning supports labour market transitions. For some workers, learning will remedy a skill deficit (or make it possible to pursue a given career); for others learning will protect existing skills from obsolescence (or depreciation when the skill is not applied during an unemployment spell). For yet other workers, learning will enhance self-esteem and self-worth and so support their careers indirectly, through an entrepreneurial attitude to work and through maintaining a healthy psychological condition. This disposition would enable workers to mobilise and make the best use of the resources at their disposal, permitting flexible response to new demands and challenges at the workplace.

Transitions can present many challenges for individuals but we have relatively few studies which look at how individuals have been responding to these challenges across the course of their lives. This project seeks to fill this gap. Individuals navigate transition processes; learning for and from transitions equips them with the capability to cope with future transitions. Such learning may also protect employee skills from depreciation, help individuals in sustaining a positive image of self, and help them choose a learning environment in which they feel at ease. Individuals differ in the learning resources they prefer to use and in the way they use them. For learning to be supportive of labour market transitions it needs to be meaningful, recognised as relevant to the current transition, and be adequate to the personal goals and the challenges presented by the transition. It is crucial to explore how and under which circumstances learning is considered as a resource in support of labour market transitions. This has been done by investigating how learning can support worker transitions on the labour market, based primarily on 125 biographical interviews conducted in five EU Member States (Denmark, Germany, Spain, France and Italy). Adults (with relevant labour market experience) who have occupied intermediate level positions reflected on their past experiences with career transitions and the role that lifelong learning played in these. They also have been asked to assess how these experiences may inform their future career plans. The biographies draw on individuals' reflections on their experiences with career and labour market transitions. In the analysis of the interviews, particular attention was paid to the identification of patterns of engagement of the interviewees in different forms of learning and the ways in which learning contributed to their career and labour market transitions. The scrutiny of changes across the life-course taking place for individuals operating in very different national, industrial and life contexts shed light on the interrelationship between personal agency (a concept measuring the degree of control over our personal lives), structural constraints (the constraints on the degree of control over personal choices deriving from being part of social

groups) and opportunity structures (the range of opportunities available to individuals). The narrative approach brought to the surface the heterogeneity of individual experiences in regard to the nexus between learning and labour market transitions. The report itself mainly presents overarching findings. All additional, country-specific, information can be found in the background material:

(a) *Data analysis* (Cedefop, 2014a) contains the iconic cases, that have informed most of the analysis, and provides country-specific themes;

(b) *Methodology* (Cedefop, 2014b) contains the methodological approach to the analysis of the biographies;

(c) *Description of country data* (Cedefop, 2014c) contains the analysis of additional interviews organised by country.

CHAPTER 2.
Setting the scene

This chapter looks at literature on learning for career and labour market transitions and positions the project by linking recent developments in the literature to key themes arising from the data analysis. This process was conducted iteratively, with data analysis throughout the lifetime of the project. Scrutiny of changes across the life-course for a range of individuals operating in very different national, industrial and life contexts enabled analysis of how the interrelationship between personal factors, structural constraints and opportunity structures played out in a variety of societal contexts.

The focus on recent trends is warranted by the existence of a recent thorough review of the literature carried out within earlier work for the European Commission by Brown et al. (2010), *Changing patterns of working, learning and career development across Europe*.

The study concluded with some 'key messages for the organisation and development of CVT for highly skilled workers', including:
(a) the role played by different forms of learning in enhancing skill development at work;
(b) principles for enhancing skill development at work;
(c) value of a developmental view of expertise in a knowledge-based society;
(d) job mobility and the importance of career guidance;
(e) richness and diversity of workplace learning: recognition, validation and consolidation of learning.

Because the focus of that study was the role of workplace learning and CVT in individual career development, these issues, albeit important, will receive comparatively less attention in the current analysis.

The study is contextualised with respect to four themes important for learning and career development. The first has an individual focus on the role of occupational identity development as individuals move through the labour market. The second theme takes individual progression within the labour market and situates it within the broader frame of lifelong learning. The third theme takes an institutional focus and highlights the role of educational institutional support, including permeability and gaining access to higher education, in aiding mid-career development or changes in career direction. The fourth concerns career development (and career decision-making).

2.1.   Labour market and occupational identity development

Individuals accumulate experience as they move through the labour market while their work-related identities evolve. One strand of literature concerns the key processes associated with occupational identity development. Identities are the various meanings attached to an individual by the self and others, and are displayed in attitudes, behaviour and the stories we tell about ourselves to ourselves and others. Occupational identities are based on social identities, and those associated with work roles, while personal identities are based on personal characteristics, attitudes and behaviour an individual displays or which others attribute to him or her (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010, p. 137).

2.1.1.   Occupational identity development

The first element for an occupational identity to emerge is self-awareness: an individual needs a reflexive awareness that s/he has an occupation (or career or vocation or is able to reflect on the meaning of their work more generally) and what this means to him or her. S/he needs to be able to monitor what it means to engage with the particular ways of thinking, practising and being associated with the occupation. Often allied to this is a sense of personal agency (a second element), whereby an individual is conscious of making and acting upon a choice (with some sense of possible alternatives), particularly as the process of occupational choice has become more extended and complex (Roberts, 1997). The third element of occupational identity development concerns the need for recognition by others, as identities are socially constructed; this line of argument can be traced back to Goffman (1959).

The next pair of elements of relevance for occupational identity development are continuity and change. There is continuity in the sense that an individual may have a sense of connection to an occupational identity which extends beyond a particular role and exists over time: for example, I may perform a variety of different work tasks, change jobs or switch between companies but still consider myself as belonging to my original occupation. On the other hand, as occupations change, occupational identities shift and even within a relatively stable occupation there can still be a clear sense of a role adapting over time, as occupational identity moves through different stages even without a formal change of role.

However, people often have to deal with major discontinuities both in their education and work transitions (Heinz and Krüger, 2001) and within their working lives (Ashforth et al., 2008). The way in which individuals negotiate such transitions can prove a stimulus to the meaning-making aspect of their career

biographies (Alheit, 2009). As individuals seek to make sense of their evolving careers, they (re)interpret their past experiences and anticipate possible futures as a guide for their current actions and so the meaning they attach to their occupational identities evolves. Occupational identities have multiple facets, evolve and are influenced by interactions with others (Goffman, 1959), but are also underscored by the pressures within a self to integrate diverse experiences into a meaningful unity (Markus and Wurf, 1987).

While meaning-making is a key component of occupational identity development, there is, however, also variation in the degree of investment of self in an occupational identity. While, for some individuals, work can be a central life interest, occupational identities vary in their importance to individuals, whether they are based on an achieved status or a desired future role, and the extent to which they are considered to be enduring or provisional (Stryker and Serpe, 1982). In most circumstances a strong attachment to work brings considerable benefits, including a sense of career stability and having a career 'anchor'. Dewey (1916) saw an occupation as giving direction to life activities and as a concrete representation of continuity: a 'home' with clear psychological, social and ideological 'anchors'. Where the labour market is particularly challenging, with high levels of unemployment, high levels of participation in education and training and extended transitions, individuals who have completed their vocational training may identify with the desired occupation and take on aspects of their new identity, including self-definition, even when they cannot get a job in that field at present. Such people have an 'occupational identity in waiting', rather like actors and musicians 'resting' between jobs while working in, for example, bars or restaurants. Now, the set of occupations for which people may be 'in waiting' has increased dramatically (Brown and Bimrose, 2012).

The processes of development of self-awareness, self-monitoring, exercise of choice and consideration of alternative possibilities involved in their personal agency mean that individuals play an important part in the creation of their own occupational identities. This leads to another core element of occupational identity development in that identities are discursively produced, as individuals draw on social norms and discourses in how they present and represent themselves to others. Individual agency and social norms interact in a dynamic and iterative way in the discursive production of occupational identities (Brown, 1997).

Another element of occupational identity development acknowledges the structural dimension to choosing an occupation, as a response to a societal offer. Erikson (1968) saw identity as intrinsically psychosocial, located in the core of the individual and in the core of communal culture (p. 22). Hence an occupational identity can be individual but also embedded in patterns of organisation within

particular organisations and cultures. However, establishing a clear sense of occupational identity may or may not mesh well with other aspects of identity development related to gender, ethnicity, politics, religion or socio-cultural issues.

In addition to the occupational offers a society makes, other structural elements impinge upon occupational identity development. Individual choice takes place within opportunity structures, which vary within and between sectors and countries (Roberts, 2009). Opportunity structures are formed primarily by the interrelationships between family backgrounds, education, labour market processes and employers' recruitment practices. People of the same age, when faced with making choices about work, may have very different opportunities and expectations depending on their family and educational backgrounds. Similarly, seeking permanent employment when possessing intermediate skills is very different in Spain or Italy from Germany, due to the differences in unemployment rates, occupational pathways and employers' recruitment practices. Individuals' likelihood of realising their aspirations, and the set of choices available to them, are framed by the structure of opportunities confronting them. Individuals may use career self-management to position themselves when career choice is constrained (King, 2004, p. 121).

According to Warr (1987) there are five aspects of work which are associated with a positive attitude to oneself and a positive work-related identity: emotional/affective well-being (absence of anxiety); competence (able to deal effectively with work tasks); autonomy (degree of control over significant aspects of work); aspirations (in line with broader work goals and desire for improvement); and integrated functioning (coherence between different elements of identity). Each of the first four aspects require consonance between the personal and social realms. For example, Eraut and Hirsh (2007) report on how the learning and confidence of newly qualified nurses depended in part on the extent of feedback, support and trust they experienced in their wards (p. 31) and there were huge differences in the learning climate between wards in the same hospital, which might be attributed to their ward managers (p. 61). This illustrates the importance of the interaction of personal and social factors for identity development, while Warr's (1987) fifth aspect expressly mentions the need for integrated functioning and the importance of coherence between different elements of identity. The social and personal realms need alignment here, too.

This examination has helped understand the development of occupational identities being facilitated by an individual's self-awareness, sense of personal agency and active career management, and that some aspects of occupational identities remain fairly constant over time, while others change radically. These identities and how they change help individuals make sense of their lives as they are influenced by social norms and through interactions with others. Occupational

identities are also social and the occupational and educational structure, patterns of work organisation, nature and buoyancy of the labour market and employer recruitment practices can act to frame occupational choices and whether choices and identities are realised or reformed. Occupational identity development is an important driver of learning for career and labour market transitions. A 10-country European study found that, even where highly skilled individuals were overqualified for their current jobs, their interest in learning was often driven by the desire for personal development rather than career progression (Brown and Bimrose, 2012).

However, to make some sense of the career story as a whole – as many individuals seek to make sense of what has happened to them in the past, where they are now and where they might go in the future – individuals often wish/try to present a coherent career narrative. It is time, therefore, for our review to take a narrative turn.

2.1.2. Navigating transitions and changing occupational identities – sense-making through narratives

Savickas (2011) proposes that vocational identity ([7]) is one's vocational 'thesis', which impacts on our experiences as we construct our identities. The 'thesis' is the pattern we impose on our everyday realities to guide us in various social contexts. This approach is focused on supporting career counselling practice and involves working with individuals to identify the meaningful life themes to the biographical development of their careers. It recognises that the construction of an identity requires reflection on experience in a process of engaging others in the joint construction of a vocational identity, which can be represented as a project or a story. Joint construction of identity highlights the importance of significant others at different times during one's life, including during key development periods, to validate aspects of a developing identity and in sharing evolving identity stories (Savickas, 2011).

Within narrative career counselling, the aim is to elicit career stories which have a meaning in the current context and can be used in the construction of a range of possible futures. Story-telling is then seen as helping individuals develop their reflexivity. This process is typically used to help people during major life transitions. It seeks to help clients 'articulate their intentions', clarify the current

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([7]) Savickas uses 'vocational identity' partly because the American tradition uses 'vocational' in cases where English usage is more likely to be 'career' or 'occupational'. However, the distinction has been retained here because search for a vocational 'thesis' implies something more fundamental across the life-course than attachment to a particular occupation.

choices to be made in light of the prevailing opportunity structures and cultural context in which they make their choices, and increases their ability to make career decisions (Savickas, 2011, p. 131). Career counsellors, skilled at helping individuals to construct their identities, have a role to play.

Narrative theories of identity emphasise how building a sense of ourselves, which others may share, relies largely on the narratives we construct. In developing and transforming occupational identities we prioritise certain episodes from our varied experiences and give these a special significance by incorporating them in our strategic career stories. Any significant changes in work roles, relationships and environment may lead to a transitional phase which poses challenges for how we and others perceive our occupational identities. Individuals may respond by constructing new narratives, adapting and/or discarding aspects of older ones which seem less relevant to the changed context. This process, involving 'the decomposition of existing identities into their constituent components and their recombination into a new identity' (Carruthers and Uzzi, 2000, p. 486), also has an explicit social dimension, as the recognition and validation of an emergent new narrative by others is important to one's own major role transitions. These actions and interactions involve what Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) label as 'narrative identity work' as they involve 'social efforts to craft self-narratives that meet a person's identity aims' (p. 137).

Major work transitions driven by personal agency mean people take on new roles and reshape aspects of their occupational identity, but transitions as a result of structural change also impact on the identities of individuals. Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) illustrate how self-narratives, stories that make a point about the narrator, can help people revise and reshape work identities during major role transitions. There is a particular challenge for people to 'story' unusual role transitions, which result in individuals claiming work identities that are seemingly discontinuous or 'otherwise deviate from socially scripted or highly institutionalised trajectories' (Ashforth, 2001 cited in Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010, p. 136). This process differs only by degree as everyone, whenever they take on a new work role actively, engages in identity work (Pratt et al., 2006).

Identity work has rational and affective dimensions, driven by thinking as well as feeling and intuition. Identities and narratives are never complete, they are always emergent, capable of being transformed in a dynamic and interactive way within the contexts in which they are developed (Brown, 1997). Personality too may shape our interactions with others and their willingness to validate our stories, with employers again sometimes looking to select employees with particular personal characteristics (Warhurst and Nickson, 2001).

2.1.3. Key players in developing career and learning biographies

Occupational identities do not develop in a vacuum: employers and workplaces play a role in their development. The relationship between employers' and employees' attempts to shape employee work identities are represented as follows. Employers, while themselves constrained by competition, interdependence, uncertainty of demand, and complexity of their product or service, use various means to attempt to shape work identities through the work they expect people to do: organisational structure; vertical and horizontal mobility; flexibility; learning and development; organisation of work; and power and control. Employers are also constrained by societal influences: 'offers' and expectations coming from education and training; the occupational structure; and the labour market. The nature of work identities, however, is also affected by processes internal to the individual in terms of their self-reflection and appraisal of their current situation, as well as through their interaction with work, learning and relationships and interactions with others.

The process of acquiring an occupational identity takes place within particular (work) communities where socialisation, interaction and learning are key elements. Individuals take on aspects of existing identities and roles, while actively reshaping other aspects in a dynamic way. The formation, maintenance and change of occupational identities are always influenced by the nature of the relationships around which they are constructed. These interactions may lead to modifications and reshaping of these same structures, the communities of practice and the individual's work identity (Brown, 1997).

At individual level, emerging new demands and uncertainties (tasks but also superiors and colleagues and organisational change in general), with their implications for shifting skill needs, generate potential for conflict with existing work orientations, values and norms, as work-related identities were becoming increasingly unstable and disrupted (Carruthers and Uzzi, 2000). The performance of work tasks also involves learning and adjustment between individual dispositions and structural conditions of the work context. Such identity work influences an individual's concept of work and relationship to his or her job, the work environment, the employing organisation, and the work processes with which the individual engages and which affect their sense of belonging to particular groups (Garrick, 1998). Other sources of identification and non-work commitments also influence identification with work and work-related commitment (Bimrose and Barnes, 2007). Even within work, sources of identification vary and include not just the organisation or occupation, but relate to a specific work group (Baruch and Winkelmann-Gleed, 2002), a particular work environment, a set of work activities, and relations with others; all of these may change over time, as may the significance individuals ascribe to them (Brown,

1997; Ibarra, 2003). There is a general trend towards employees needing to develop multidimensional (individual and collective) occupational identities to help individuals cope with the changes they face (Kirpal, 2004; FAME Consortium, 2007).

Sennett (1998) argues that greater flexibility and mobility potentially result in looser employee commitment to the workplace, the occupation, the company or the community of practice. However, even where highly skilled workers were committed to their work, lack of support from employers for their learning and development could mean employees were overchallenged to respond to changes at work, which undermined their sense of professional identity (Kirpal and Brown, 2007). For this reason, and because of the significance of learning in the development of work identities (Billett, 2007), it was felt useful for this research to identify career and learning development as separate, but interlinked strands, of identity development.

Eraut (1994; 2009) highlighted how issues of knowledge development, improving performance at work, and learning associated with work activities are interrelated. Interviewers were primed to look out for examples of knowledge development as well as learning and development associated with improving performance. Knowledge development includes knowledge acquired through education and training; experience; practice with feedback; work process knowledge (Boreham et al., 2002); and learning to apply knowledge in different and/or more challenging contexts (Evans and Guile, 2012). While learning and development associated with improving performance involves helping individuals improve their performance of particular tasks, roles, or in teams, development could focus on individuals' situational or contextual awareness and understanding, problem-solving, and/or judgement (Eraut, 2009).

2.2. Work transitions in a lifelong learning context

The previous section examined how individuals accumulate experience and how their occupational identities and organisational attachments change as they make transitions in their working lives. However, as individuals make these work transitions, their attitudes to, and experiences of, learning change too, so this section focuses explicitly on the role of learning and how learning identities change over the life-course. Individual progression through labour market transitions needs to be situated within the broader frame of lifelong learning; learning for work transitions needs to be linked to wider considerations of adult learning, development, biographies and transitions across the life-course. One theme arising from consideration of the relationship between structure, agency

and biography is the extent to which individuals engaged in labour market transitions are left to cope largely on their own. The theme of increased individualisation is expanded as part of setting the context in the analysis of the Italian and Spanish data.

2.2.1. Transitions, adult learning and lifelong learning

As working careers are changing and a job is often no longer for life, individuals have to update, increase or change their skills levels so that continuing training and skilling becomes a constant need (Alheit and Dausien, 2002). Work transitions, either within the organisation, in a different one, or in a new sector, are being experienced by an increasing number of people in the workforce and within a range of learning contexts such as workplace learning, adult, further and higher education.

Adults in employment who do not engage in substantive upskilling or reskilling for five or more years, increasingly run the risk of being locked into particular ways of working (Brown et al., 2010). They become vulnerable in the labour market, especially if their circumstances change. However, learning which results in significant changes in values, attitudes, or behaviour for individuals tends to be episodic across the life-course (Brown et al., 2010). In emphasising significant learning, it is necessary to distinguish it as learning which entails substantial personal development or transformation; this is quite different from other learning which involves adaptation to minor changes in context, organisation, practices and processes of work, where basic values, attitudes and behaviour remain largely unchanged. Significant learning, which is episodic, fits with a more general pattern of increasing engagement by people in lifelong learning (Field, 2000).

2.2.2. Identities, agency, structure and participation in learning activities

The identities of adult learners have been shaped by their past experiences of learning at school, in the family and the workplace. What they seek to achieve may influence the form of their learning, with some relying primarily on learning in the workplace, while others may wish to engage in more formal education and training. Engaging with more formal education and training as an adult is viewed by some as about completing their education. Education is also viewed as a means of developing a new identity and transforming the self. The educational journey, however, entails coping with multiple identities of being not only a learner, but also possibly a wife/husband/partner, parent, worker and carer (Reay et al., 2009; Kasworm, 2010).

Identity links structure (the constraints on the degree of control over personal choices deriving from being part of social groups) and agency (a concept

measuring the degree of control over our personal life as it is 'a function of both external (social) and internal (agentic) factors' (Côté and Levine 2002, p. 9). At particular points in people's lives structural influences may be more dominant; at other times personal agency appears to be more decisive. Using biographies enables us to understand more fully the process of, and interaction between, structure and agency through the lives of individuals engaged in processes of career and labour market transitions. Biesta and Tedder (2007) examine the role of learning in the life-course, whereby agency is seen 'as the ability to exert control over and give direction to one's life' (p. 13).

The interaction between structure and agency is evident in the stories told by adult learners in a number of studies, as they strive to use their agency in engaging in learning while also sometimes struggling against constraining structural factors (see the work of Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2000, on the learning careers of learners mainly on vocational education courses; Crossan et al., 2003, on research on marginalised adult learners in Scotland). Employees and organisations need to be adaptive and flexible in response to the rapid and frequent economic and skill changes. Working lives are subject to vertical and horizontal transitions, within one organisation or in different organisations. Increasingly, a transition may be into either a new career or periods of unemployment as a job may no longer be for life (Castells, 1996).

Learning, in a variety of forms (formal, non-formal and informal) both inside and outside the workplace has become a mechanism and a process in the transition from one type of job to another. The transitions that an individual experiences may be through choice (agency) or imposed externally (structure). The latter may have implications for the way an individual experiences and copes with the transition and learning and their attitudes towards it. As Glastra et al. argue: 'such transitions will grow both more frequent and more significant for the quality of life in late modernity' (Glastra et al., 2004, p. 303). Learning has come to play a central role in enabling and managing transitions in the workplace. As Field (2000) points out, education in adult life becomes both a resource for individuals seeking to promote their employability and mobility, and, at the same time, a cause of further uncertainty and risk.

The argument here is that learning opens up opportunities, for example for prospective career development, but that these opportunities themselves entail risks, especially where they involve giving up a current job (and possibly affiliation in salient groups). Also, because future career pathways are less clear-cut in terms of progression within occupations or organisations, there is greater emphasis on the individual to find a route forward rather than on society and employers to provide such pathways. The individualising tendencies in society have brought about increasing risks and uncertainties for the individual in all

spheres of life (Beck, 1992). For Bauman 'individualisation' consists of transforming human 'identity' from a 'given' into a 'task' and charging the actors with the responsibility for performing that task and for the consequences (and also side-effects) of their performance' (Bauman, 2000, pp. 31-32). Bauman's argument is that 50 years ago, many more people would take on a whole series of identities from a relatively limited set of choices: whole districts would be principally defined by their major employers and often even leisure pursuits would be shared, as with railway workers and their allotments (Wedderburn, 1965). Identities were treated as 'givens', provided by societies, culture, institutions and localities in a framework of often relatively narrow expectations, and individuals selected from this limited palette. Now choices are multiple: societal, cultural and institutional influences are more muted and, for individuals, finding their place is a major task.

Some aspects of individualisation may be driven by a greater sense of personal agency, but the retreat from the provision of clear but limited choices implies a greater need of the use of agency by the actor in institutional and social life (Beck, 1992). For Giddens (1991) the self, in adjusting to and coping with change, has become 'a reflexive project' constantly constructing and reconstructing self and identity. It is noteworthy, however, that these writers were writing before the economic crisis of 2008; before then, individualisation seemed to be giving agency the upper hand over structure. However, given current unemployment levels in Spain and Italy, and the scale of redundancies there and in Denmark and France, it seems that the pendulum has swung back. In settings with high unemployment and few job openings on the open market, individuals may believe they have limited control over their career development.

Learning may drive transitions but experience of transitions in life may also drive the need for learning (Merriam, 2005). Where learning involves major shifts in identity and prospective career direction, the transition is not always successful, as the experience of some working class students studying in elite universities shows (Reay et al, 2009; Fuller, 2007; Alheit and Merrill, 2004); for others, the experience is transformative and a major transition is accomplished. Learning and transitions have a similar dialectic relationship as structure and agency. In the lives of adults, work transitions can be a major driver of learning, as when a person is promoted or changes jobs and is faced with a whole range of challenging tasks and patterns of interaction, and engages with a range of different forms of learning to improve their performance. On the other hand, learning may precede transition, as when people engage in further education and training prior to applying for a new job or undertaking a role change.

2.2.3. 'Individualisation' processes in the context of Italy and Spain

The themes of the relationship between structure, agency and biography are expanded as part of setting the context for analysis of the Italian and Spanish data (see Cedefop, 2014a). The relatively low incidence of institutional pathways into employment in Italy and Spain, compared to those available in Germany, Denmark and France, has two consequences. First, individuals are largely on their own when it comes to 'making their way' into employment. Second, individuals are anything but alone in that the problems they face, such as very high levels of unemployment and lack of transparency in many company recruitment processes, are largely structural and shared by many of their compatriots. The ways in which learning supports career paths can be understood through the lenses of an agency/structure model, which can be examined in different ways (Giddens, 1991; Archer, 2003; 2007). Giddens (1979) sees agency and structure as in an indissoluble dialectic in which both terms presuppose one another. The capacity of 'acting differently' and of finding individual evolutionary paths through even difficult structural conditions, especially as far as work and employment are concerned, can be considered as the marking sign of our epoch, usually defined in terms of neo-modernity, late modernity, or reflexive modernisation (Beck et al., 1996). The challenge of finding individual evolutionary paths into, and then maintaining, employment through very difficult structural conditions is exactly the landscape facing our interviewees from Italy and Spain.

Individuals facing swiftly changing situations in their own social and private life are experiencing the need for increasingly greater personal responsibilities and choices (Bauman, 2000). Autonomy, subjectivity, responsibility and choice seem to converge in the overarching phenomenon of individualisation, which seemed an appropriate tool to examine how the careers of our interviewees were unfolding in Italy. From this viewpoint they are involved in the paradox of an 'individualising structure' that gives rise to non-linear, open-ended, highly ambivalent and continuous processes requiring 'biographical solutions to systemic contradictions' (Beck and Beck-Gemshein, 2002; Beck, 2013). These processes were visible in Spain too.

During the past decade, the global economic crisis has – especially in south European economies – further intensified such transformation effects. The continued destruction of many jobs, accompanied by the increase of precariousness in most working activities, has extended dangers of marginalisation to groups who were previously relatively secure. Even knowledge workers, new entrants into the labour market holding excellent educational qualifications, and experienced (just over 50) technicians and managers are finding it difficult to make successful labour market transitions (Eichhorst et al.,

2010; European Commission, 2012). Individuals are increasingly alone in facing the consequences of processes, which are only partly within the control of traditional economic and political authorities. However, while individuals may feel alone, their plight is anything but unique, and it is possible to map five main configurations of agency/structure of how individuals are framed against globalising forces in their work and a severe economic crisis. These five configurations are described in greater detail in the Italian context in the *Description of country data* (Cedefop, 2014c).

A similar picture in Spain is also outlined in the *Description of country data*. It has a high incidence of temporary and contract employment agencies that are used mainly by young people, who are, as a result, more likely to have unstable career development paths, with frequent changes of work interspersed with periods of unemployment and/or inactivity. The major expansion of temporary employment (which mainly affects young workers) has resulted in the emergence of dual labour markets (Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale et al., 2012).

There are also significant gender-related differences in access to quality jobs, especially for those completing upper secondary education or vocational education and training (VET); young men are much more likely than young women to get quality jobs in Spain. Parents' education is also associated with greater likelihood of youth employment, a finding consistent with other strong class inequalities around social background and academic performance (Calero Martínez, 2006; Martínez García, 2007). For working class students, vocational training may involve a risk of lower investment due to lower costs, and shorter and clearer employment prospects; students of higher social status are much more likely to get a qualification in (upper) secondary education than students from lower classes (Bernardi and Requena, 2010). There are very high levels of youth unemployment and a low number of the unemployed access permanent employment directly in the following year. Many are still unemployed one year later and a significant proportion of women (just over 24%) become inactive. Insofar as unemployed people find employment positions in Spain, they are likely to involve temporary work.

Similar issues are apparent in Italy, with Addabbo and Favaro (2012) providing a gender perspective on part-time and temporary employment, categories in which women are overrepresented. Temporary work has mushroomed since the early 1990s, following the decision to remove the substantial obstacles against the use of temporary workers, while maintaining regulations that make permanent staff difficult to fire (Barbieri and Sestito, 2012; Picchio, 2012). Between 2000 and 2005, Italy saw a large rise in women's part-time work, probably largely as a result of the Italian enactment of the EU part-time work directive (Burchell, 2012).

The OECD warned of the dangers of high job insecurity in Spain, which has caused, among other risks, a strong increase in the unemployment rate (Navarro Gómez and Caparrós Ruiz, 2006). Obtaining employment through an employment office or agency increased chances that employment would only be temporary and resulted in a return to unemployment; using personal networks or being directly recruited by an employer was more likely to result in more permanent employment. Quintini and Manfredi (2009), in their comparative analysis of transition pathways into employment for young people in the United States and Europe, commented that 'In Spain, school-to-work transitions are characterised by a high incidence of temporary work. Spain has a significantly smaller share of youth belonging to pathways dominated by employment while a larger share of youth appears to enter the labour market on pathways characterised by significant instability' (p. 45). Fouad and Bynner (2008) make the point that the failure to find secure employment has a range of other consequences in that 'failed transitions constitute a serious challenge because of their association with marginalised lifestyles, criminality, and economic disadvantage' (p. 248).

Overall, the literature suggests attention be paid to evidence of more highly 'individualised' attempts at career development and learning for labour market transitions in Spain and Italy than in Germany, Denmark or France, where the opportunity structures offer much higher levels of institutionalised support and clearer progression pathways.

2.3. Education and training in mid-career development or career direction change

The previous sections focused on individuals as they developed their occupational identities and their identities as adult learners as they engaged with learning for and from labour market transitions. This section takes an institutional focus, and highlights the role of educational and training institutional support, including permeability and gaining access to higher education, in aiding mid-career development or changes in career direction.

Before examining the positive role formal education and training can play in helping individuals' upskill and/or reskill in their mid-career, it is perhaps instructive also to consider the legacy of earlier experiences of formal (school) education. These can either be positive, providing a platform for further development, or negative in the sense of representing a barrier to be overcome. Wojecki's study of learner identities in the workplace used a narrative perspective to look at those working in the community and social services sector who were

studying on a two year vocational and educational training programme in a formal learning context. He draws on the metaphor of 'wounded learning practices' for those with negative prior formal learning experiences. He explains: 'the metaphor of wounded learning practices is offered in the externalising of some adult learners' previous experiences of formal learning environments, and the implications these experiences might have for some adult learners and the identities and relationships they construct regarding their participation in formal training programmes. A narrative perspective of identity has been developed, inviting adult educators to appreciate how adult learners' use of stories about learning may affect their current and future renderings of self […] Stories of an individual's experiences of formal learning may shape how an adult learner sees herself as a "learner"'(Wojecki, 2007, p. 179).

Education and training can support mid-career development in a number of ways. First, initial VET (IVET) provides a platform for initial occupational development on which an individual can build their later career development. Second, systems of continuing VET (CVET) can offer a range of opportunities for career progression and development. The effectiveness of these systems is multiplied where there is strong continuity through formalised initial and continuing education and training pathways, where development opportunities fit within a clear framework for career progression. In such cases individual career progression is often linked to formal qualifications. Career pathways, however, are strongly framed by organisational opportunity structures as well as national systems. Third, higher education institutions can play a role in mid-career development, although the degree of permeability between achievements within VET and higher education may be a factor influencing access to such provision. Examples of the significance of these systems will be drawn out for particular countries in this literature review, before also being examined in the context of the lives of our interviewees in later chapters.

2.3.1.   The significance of IVET

The importance of VET is often asserted at European level. For example, the *Helsinki communiqué on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training* of 2006 stressed that VET is an integral part of lifelong learning strategies. 'VET plays a key role in human capital accumulation for the achievement of economic growth, employment and social objectives. VET is an essential tool in providing European citizens with the skills, knowledge and competences needed in the labour market and knowledge-based society'. It stresses that skills, competences and mobility of the labour force should be

promoted and that training opportunities should be provided for those in working life ([8]). By definition, IVET is the base of this structure, but the significance of initial VET is multiplied in countries such as Germany, where occupational labour markets are still very influential. From this perspective it is instructive to look at the role of initial VET in Germany in providing a platform for mid-career development.

The defining image of participation in the dual system of firm-based training and part-time VET in *Berufsschulen*, acting for many participants as almost a guarantee of permanent skilled employment with the possibility of further firm-based career progression, has been increasingly difficult to sustain for some time (Kutscha, 2002). However, even though it is no longer unchallenged, the concept of *Beruf* persists as the dominant organisational principle for German VET and the national labour market (Reuling, 1996). In those systems that closely link skills acquisition with institutionalised training structures and labour markets, formalised vocational training and the socialisation in acquiring an occupational specialisation are essential elements in developing an occupational identity (Heinz, 1995). Complemented and further supported by company-based socialisation, both elements are directly linked to belonging to particular work-based communities through occupationally defined categories with which individuals identify.

The concept of *Beruf* has for centuries structured the German labour market, establishing a close connection between skills formation and occupational labour markets. In this context, the socialising function of apprenticeships (traditionally in crafts and trade) and VET historically played, and still play, a central role in directing individuals' learning and career orientations. As a result, individual work orientations tend to be strongly 'anchored' in the occupational domain for which they train. Combined with highly standardised and stratified educational and occupational routes based on formal qualifications, this keeps employee job flexibility and mobility much lower in Germany than in most other European countries, where making transitions between different jobs and occupational domains is not only easier, but also more supported.

Vocational socialisation and training not only provides individuals with a particular set of vocational skills, qualifications and orientations, but also functions as a means of social integration, both at the level of the company and the labour market in general. Individuals are assigned to a social status based on the particular division of labour derived from vocational profiles with specific career progression routes. Skilled workers (*Facharbeiter*) with institutionalised

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patterns of career progression benefit from high levels of skills protection and social security compared to, for example, unskilled workers. The *Facharbeiter-*career is also associated with full-time, continuous and protected employment and collective workers' participation rights, parameters which constitute the basis of the social security system and benefits such as entitlement to unemployment benefits and pensions. This is relevant for female workers: while female labour participation has increased considerably over the past decades, most of this increase since the 1990s has been in part-time and atypical work (Klammer et al., 2005).

Through the central role of the dual system of education and training for the German economy, the relative position of the vocational track, compared with the academic route, has traditionally been very strong, much stronger than in many other countries. Despite eroding tendencies of the dual system since the 1990s, coupled with decreasing numbers of apprentices, this is reflected in the vocational route still being taken up by almost 60% of a school leaving cohort and the fact that, at least for most male employees of the intermediate skills segment, well-developed vocational skills still tend to ensure a fairly smooth school-to-work transition. Further, the German education system stands out for the relative early stratification between vocational and academic tracks based on the three pillar school system after completion of primary school. This prepares pupils as early as the age of 10 (or 12 in some federal States) to pursue either a vocational track after 10 years of schooling with a school leaving certificate of *Haupt-* or *Realschule*, a higher education or academic track after 12 or 13 years of schooling with a school leaving certificate of the *Gymnasium* and a university entry qualification. Such early tracking significantly restricts future educational and career choices, as changing between the different school types at secondary level is fairly difficult. For both men's and women's career pathways this early stratification can be a major obstacle to realising future career development opportunities.

Apart from Germany standing out for its early division between the vocational and the academic routes, the dual system itself generates gendered professions and career development pathways. Historically, the crafts-based apprenticeship model was introduced for training of skills required for industry and complemented by vocational schools between the last decade of the 19th century and 1920. The aim was not only to supply the newly emerging factories with standardised skills, but also to pacify the growing numbers of working-class youth by getting them into a formalised training system (predominantly in-company training) complemented by school-based vocational education. Almost in parallel, full-time vocational schools were established in work areas, which did not form part of the crafts or industrial training system of skilled labour such as

social work or health care. Conceptualised as a complementary structure to the industry-based dual training system, these schools were targeted to provide a decent vocational education for young girls to prepare them for their role as housewife or governess or other jobs in personal services where they were seeking gainful employment. From this tradition developed a school-based vocational training system that mainly covers skills formation for the major social, educational and medical professions such as child-care, nursing, elderly care, speech therapy and physiotherapy. This route comprises, overall, more than 100 professional domains which remain female-dominated.

While the school-based vocational routes are also dual in nature, with training covering theoretical and (though reduced) practical (work-based) components, they differ from the approximately 350 dual apprenticeship schemes in that they are not equally standardised and nationally regulated by the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsbildungsgesetz*). School-based vocational routes are regulated at federal level and have non-standardised and fairly heterogeneous curricula and training providers, which are difficult to assess, both in terms of their numbers and concepts as well as in terms of the quality of the training they provide. However, what the professions of the school-based vocational route have in common is that they are less regulated (with the exception of health care), they are anchored predominantly in personal services, they provide for restricted career development pathways and lower salaries (as compared to the male-dominated professions of the dual system) and they are female professions with 70% female representation against 41% in the dual system.

With demographic shifts and the diffusion of the service sector and knowledge economy, school-based vocational training has gained relative importance, attracting more trainees compared to the dual system, where apprenticeship numbers have slightly decreased during the past 20 years. Despite attempts to equalise school-based and apprenticeship programmes, school-based training continues to bear several disadvantages: courses often require fees and higher entry-qualifications and prepare for jobs often badly paid and with low chances for professional advancement. The historical polarisation persists and still influences job stratification between men and women in Germany today.

Overall, IVET can set some individuals on occupationally-related career development pathways; others, whose career development does not align with their initial training, may have to follow more individualised paths. Structured pathways are available, but there is still a role of individual agency in transitions (Baethge et al., 1988; Heinz, 1999; Witzel and Kühn, 2000).

Vocational socialisation generally refers to a development process by which an individual obtains the necessary skills, knowledge base and work proficiency to master a particular job. It exceeds the concept of 'qualification' in that it is not just geared towards transferring work-specific skills and knowledge in particular learning settings, but also involves intentional and unintentional learning processes. Working through these, the individual develops a particular work attitude, values and competences by connecting work experiences with personal dispositions and interests (Heinz, 2002; 2005; Witzel and Kühn, 2000).

It is also important to remember that, while IVET still plays an important role in skill formation in Germany, when our interviewees left school this pathway was even more important and was, and continues to be, principally organised around dual systems of firm-based training and part-time vocational education. IVET was not seen as separate from the academic pathway in that large numbers of entrants to IVET had completed their *Abitur*, which gave access to higher education. Recent figures highlight, for example, that one-fifth of all new entrants to IVET within the dual system in 2008 had completed their *Abitur* (BIBB 2010, p. 159). This figure is evidence of the high reputation, acceptance and attractiveness IVET continues to enjoy in Germany, even if it is now faced with greater competition than in the 1980s and 1990s when our interviewees were choosing their education and training pathways.

2.3.2. The significance of CVET

France can be used to examine the role of CVET in supporting learning for labour market transitions. The French VET system is described in greater detail in the *Description of country data* (Cedefop, 2014c), but it is worth noting here that the system plays an important role in increasing the capacity for practical skill development, securing access to and progression within occupations and the means of linking learning paths, making use of a variety of formal, informal and non-formal learning through different instruments. The IVET and CVT (continuing vocational training) systems are interconnected and complementary. The French CVT system comprises three basic components: employer-led CVT (employer-directed CVT, ED-CVT), employee-led (self-directed CVT, SD-CVT) and employee-employer-directed CVT via the individual right to training (DIF, *droit individuel à la formation*)'.

Employer-directed CVT (ED-CVT) is dominant within the French CVT system. It is generally carried out within the framework of the vocational training plan of the organisation (private or public) and includes all kinds of short- and medium-term vocational training. For the enterprise, the training plan is usually financed through the firm's overall mandatory contribution (now a minimum

contribution of 1.6% of its total wage bill) to an accredited vocational training fund (acting at branch and regional levels) (Dif, 2008).

Employee self-directed CVT (SD-CVT) is usually carried out via one or more of the three main formally institutionalised vocational training regimes:

(a) individual training leave (CIF, *congé individuel de formation*): introduced in 1971, it was designed to allow any worker in the private sector to take (over his/her working life) paid leave (under minimum requirements adapted to the nature of work contract) to undertake self-initiated and directed training programmes independent of the organisation's training scheme (Dif, 2008; Gahery, 1996; Guilloux, 1996);

(b) professional training leave (CFP, *congé de formation professionnelle*): the CFP is equivalent to CIF but is for employees in the public sector, accessible after accumulating three years of full-time working experience (or equivalent). Its maximum duration is 12 months (and three years maximum accumulated leave over the whole career of the beneficiary);

(c) validation of acquired experience (VAE, *validation des acquis de l'expérience*): the validation of prior experiential informal and non-formal learning has been progressively extended over decades and now includes, in addition to prior work-based learning, recognition for learning gained through social and cultural activities. The procedure, which guarantees access to a VAE regime, has four basic stages (Dif et al., 2009): provision of information and guidance; establishing the feasibility of the candidature; the candidate's portfolio preparation and accompaniment; and assessment, interviewing and validation.

Anyone active in the labour market who meets the qualifying criteria is also eligible to undertake a competence audit (BC, *bilan de compétences*). Individuals can choose to access personal and professional assessment and guidance to help them cope with work/learning transitions and define a clear professional or training project for future developments. As a 'formative' and 'guidance' instrument, the competence audit does not lead to any formal recognition or certification but it might lead to undertaking a VAE. The assessment process has three individualised stages (Dif, 2008): preliminary information and guidance stage; assessment stage; and concluding guidance stage. This last stage allows the beneficiary, through an interview, to have access to detailed results of the assessment stage, identify favourable and non-favourable factors for the construction of a professional or a training project, and predict/plan the principal steps of its implementation.

Finally, there is the individual right for training (DIF, *droit individuel à la formation*). DIF makes training (CVT) open to any employee on an open-ended

duration contract (at least one working year with the current employer) as well as to any employee on a fixed duration contract (four working months with the current employer during the past 12 months). The right to training is accessed (in both private and public sectors) at the initiative of the employee in consultation and agreement with the employer, is available for 20 hours per year and is cumulative within the limit of 120 hours over six years. These accumulated training hours can be used for taking a leave for the validation of acquired experiential learning (CVAE, *congé VAE*) or a leave for competence audit (CBC, *congé de BC*). Training is usually undertaken outside the enterprise and covered financially by the employer.

Support for CVET of the type offered by the French system can provide a range of opportunities for career progression and development. Germany and Denmark also have formalised CVT support, while provision in Italy and Spain is comparatively underdeveloped. The French system also offers continuity between formalised initial and continuing education and training pathways, so that development opportunities fit within a clear framework for career progression and access to qualifications. The French system, however, differs from the Danish and German systems in that, as well as supporting progression within a sector, there are also resources available to those considering more radical career change through competence audit (BC) and validation of acquired experience (VAE) systems. Whether taking CVT and acquiring formal qualifications actually leads to career progression, however, depends on organisational opportunity structures as well as national systems.

2.3.3. Higher education and mid-career development or career direction change

Higher education institutions can support mid-career development, especially in those sectors such as health or engineering where post-experience higher education qualifications can be used as an indicator of higher level expertise. However, the degree of permeability between achievements within VET and higher education in different countries may influence access to such provision more generally. Higher education can also be used by adults who are looking to change career, but access may be an issue. This section will examine how recent changes in higher education affect individual intentions to upskill or reskill in their mid-career.

Higher education institutions across Europe are increasingly likely to be engaged in partnerships with employers and local communities, as 'institutional boundaries become less tight as interrelationships with the wider society grow' (Barnett, 2003, p. 27). While some systems remain elite the system as a whole has become broad-based (Scott, 2001; Osborne, 2003) opening up opportunities

for widening participation and access for groups who never previously entered higher education, including adults. However, the door to higher education has not been opened as widely for adults in some countries as others. It is a lot harder for an adult to enter university in Germany than it is in Sweden, Ireland and the UK. In countries such as Spain, the number of adults is limited by a quota system and adult students have to pass an entrance exam (LOGSE). Although the European higher education system has become broad-based, there is little evidence that expansion has addressed the social inclusion issue (Eurydice, 2011; Schuetze and Slowey, 2000).

Expansion has been across the higher education sector to include institutions such as further education colleges, technical institutes and polytechnics. The range of programmes offered has also expanded so that adults participate on full or part-time degree programmes, postgraduate programmes (these are often vocationally-related) and, increasingly, short continual professional development courses. The Bologna declaration of 1999 has led to the creation of a European higher education area with the aim of creating a more common system of higher education across Europe while still respecting national and cultural diversity. One consequence of the Bologna declaration was to introduce bachelor and master degrees in systems, which previously operated a single-exit point at *Diplom* level. This posed a particular challenge in Germany where occupational identity development is significant, with traditionally high importance attached to apprenticeship, skilled work and clear occupational pathways based on the concept of *Beruf*. However, attitudes to IVET are changing as there is an 'academic drift in the labour market' which is leading to changes in companies' qualification requirements in ways detrimental to students completing IVET. The new qualification profiles of some three-year bachelor degrees in Germany are explicitly vocational and have been devised to be an attractive alternative for upper secondary school leavers with a general university entrance qualification (*Abitur*). The explicit intention is to recruit school leavers who previously enrolled in IVET (often apprenticeship) programmes (Hippach-Schneider et al., 2013).

The first bachelor programmes were introduced in Germany in 2002. This has led to questions as to the relative standing of the vocationally-oriented degree programmes compared to completion of apprenticeship or other IVET programmes, with the concern that bachelor graduates might displace the latter in the competition for skilled work in the labour market (Briedis et al., 2011). Some companies seemed particularly interested in applicants who had followed pathways where both practical and academic expertise had been developed (Hippach-Schneider et al., 2013). Such expertise can be developed in a number of ways as individuals move through different education, training and

employment contexts, but hybrid qualifications or dual-track pathways were one route. For example, a bachelor degree from a university of applied sciences might have a substantive in-company component, mirroring the dual system of IVET. If the intention is to preserve IVET as an attractive educational pathway for high achievers in Germany, this will necessitate increased permeability into higher education from IVET. Companies valued having people, particularly at the intermediate level, with double qualifications or who had completed hybrid pathways which had both vocational and academic components. Hence, any 'academic drift' for IVET would not have to lead to subsequent traditional fulltime academic disciplinary university-level study, but might lead to forms of higher (tertiary-level) vocational education, combined with work or at least substantive work experience (Hippach-Schneider et al., 2013). In the longer run, and in contexts outside Germany, constraints on the further development of these hybrid pathways, combining a practical and academic orientation over an extended period, could come from insufficiently demanding initial vocational pathways or insufficient numbers of technically demanding jobs, rather than any constraints from higher education in the willingness to offer such programmes.

2.3.4. Flexicurity and the Danish model as support for mid-career development

The Danish model of support for individuals who have lost their jobs (Knudsen and Lind, 2012, p. 9) is partly one regulated primarily via collective agreements (Due et al., 1993, p. 14), and partly a combination of welfare and employment policy, as well as collective agreements. It is labelled 'flexicurity'. According to Bredgaard et al. (2007, p. 10), the special balance between flexibility and security was first set down explicitly in a 1999 publication from the Ministry of Labour. Here, the so-called 'golden triangle', comprising a flexible labour market, generous unemployment insurance and an active labour market policy, is outlined ([9]). The flexicurity model has attracted international interest because the Danish labour market has recently been characterised by a high level of mobility compared to other countries (Voss et al., 2009 p. 13), although it has been under considerable pressure following the aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2008. Unemployment has risen and the active labour market policy has been criticised as too expensive and inefficient, while the unemployment insurance scheme has been regarded as too generous (Bredgaard et al., 2011, p. 44). Employment services were restructured in 2009, with local authorities assuming full responsibility for job activation, while in the following year the funding

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([9]) The model is further described in the *Description of country data* (Cedefop, 2014c).

schemes gave precedence to job-oriented activation and helping the unemployed into mainstream education and training. At the same time, fees for job retraining programmes were increased and conditions for eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits were changed (Madsen, 2011, pp. 14-15). Knudsen and Lind (2012) question whether one can apply the term flexicurity when the security, which was originally at the core of the model, has seemingly been eroded.

Denmark also has a longstanding tradition for publicly provided further and continuing education and training, comprising three categories: programmes offering formal qualifications; programmes not offering formal qualifications; and private courses. Adult and further education and training programmes offering formal qualifications (VEU) include adult vocational training programmes (AMU) with approximately 3 000 different programmes and selected single subject courses from upper secondary level VET programmes (EUD/IVET). The programmes offer self-contained qualifications and are targeted at both skilled and unskilled workers and at both the unemployed and those in work. AMU programmes comprise by far the largest component of adult and further education and training. The social partners greatly influence the content of the programmes via the 11 trade-specific adult education and continuing training committees, which are appointed by the social partners. The AMU system is funded via the so-called labour market contribution: a tax paid by all wage earners despite AMU not being targeted at the entire labour force, only those with the lowest qualification levels.

The Danish flexicurity system worked well in the past through the guarantee of financial support while individuals who became unemployed were helped back into the labour market. This approach eased the stress often associated with enforced labour market transitions but the commitment to security has been scaled back. The CVT system works well for those looking to progress within their current sector, but individuals seeking to make more radical career changes get far less support.

2.4. Career development

So far the focus of this review has been how individuals develop occupational identities and their related learning identities, and how these processes can be framed by national systemic and institutional structures. Attention will now shift to how individuals continue to make labour market transitions within particular opportunity structures as they attempt to progress their careers: the focus is career development across the life-course.

The nature of career development is continuing to change, with careers viewed as 'the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time' (Arthur et al., 1989, p. 8). One key change has been that individuals are expected to be much more self-directed in relation to navigating their way through a more complex labour market, but with an expectation that policy-makers should try to ensure that 'individuals are not expected to assume greater individual responsibility without being offered appropriate support' (Sultana, 2011, p. 183). Ball (1996) recognises that individuals are able to take responsibility for their own career choices and decisions and, for this to be effectively achieved, a person's ability to review and reflect on career transitions needs to be developed. Through a process of self-reflection and evaluation, individuals become more comfortable and confident in their decisions (Gati and Saka, 2001), aware of their particular skills (Boyatzis et al., 2000; Gati and Saka, 2001), and able to identify preferred outcomes and goals (Boyatzis et al., 2000).

However, not all individuals operate in this way. Some take opportunities that present themselves and try to turn them to their advantage. These are regarded as being engaged in opportunistic career decision-making (Bimrose et al., 2008), which can also be critical in shaping careers. Such individuals appear to exploit opportunities rather than make pro-active choices about work (Banks et al., 1992; Bimrose et al., 2008) so their career plans seem vague, undecided and uncertain. This readiness to respond spontaneously rather than plan, resonates with the concept of planned happenstance; this encourages receptiveness to randomly occurring opportunities that are likely to be critical in shaping careers (Mitchell et al., 1999) and the need for career practitioners to place greater importance on the context in which their clients are making their way through the labour market (Bright et al., 2005). Even where individuals wished to adopt a technically rational approach to career choice, they are often faced with the realities of the 'opportunity structures' available at specific times in particular places (Roberts, 2009).

There is policy interest in how these different types of learning interact across the life-course and how they may aid mobility in the labour market, regarded as one of the key challenges identified in *Key competences for a changing world* (European Commission, 2009). Career options and choices are limited by context, but individuals can use career self-management to negotiate their own position within these constraints (King, 2004).

Different labour market conditions and patterns of organisation of work strongly influence the availability of jobs with challenging work and significant opportunities for learning and career development (Fuller and Unwin, 2006). Difficult labour market conditions affect ease of gaining employment but, even if someone is in employment, economic conditions can still be felt. For example,

Eraut et al. (2004) identified how engineering graduates believed their skills and knowledge could start to decay, with negative consequences for their career development if, early in their career, they were put on routine work because of a dearth of more challenging tasks. In contrast, employees working in learning-rich work environments often have a positive disposition towards learning and a proactive approach to career development (Bimrose and Brown, 2010; Brown, 2004).

A strong sense of personal agency and a commitment to learning and development (Seibert et al., 1999; Chiaburu et al., 2006) increase the likelihood of success in the labour market; however, where many others are pursuing similar strategies and structural conditions are very challenging, such strategies may be in vain in terms of their labour market outcomes. In such circumstances it may be helpful to stress the wider benefits of education and training rather than focus more narrowly on instrumental outcomes. Messages can emphasise the immediate benefits of being a learner rather than where it leads, particularly if the opportunity structures available to an individual at that time are limited (Roberts, 1997). Personal agency for those in work is also an important driver of individual work and learning trajectories, with some individuals being reflexive about how their careers are developing and how their choices and possibilities could be expanded or constrained in different ways (Brown et al., 2010).

Brown et al. (2010) also highlighted how formal CVT remains important for many workers, particularly in the context of dynamic and/or uncertain labour markets; it can be used to update existing skills, develop new skills, consolidate and deepen work-related knowledge and understanding and help maintain employability over a longer period. Formal CVT provision could be highly valued as a form of personal development, even without direct career benefit (Biesta, 2008). However, there is also an urgent need to support individuals in navigating their way through increasingly complex work and life contexts and, in particular, help them become more reflexive as individuals through provision of career guidance and counselling as a key component of a lifelong learning strategy (Biesta, 2008).

Formal CVT policy has often been concerned with skill development, especially upskilling. While this is clearly important, complementary emphasis should be given to reskilling: developing new skills and updating existing ones to apply them in new contexts. Policy could reinforce the value of learning through networks and other collaborative forms of knowledge creation and sharing. Also, where individuals have had one or more episodes of substantive learning in mid-career, then they often feel reinvigorated and stay longer in the labour market (Brown et al., 2010). With a focus on, and commitment of, support resources,

reskilling may actually become self-funding if, in consequence, people continue working for longer.

Ideas on how individuals develop their careers are evolving, but there is one area we have not yet examined: how individuals make decisions about their evolving careers. This is an area where research has shown that individuals use a variety of decision-making styles; as this is an issue examined with our interviewees, it is important to map out what previous studies have contributed. An awareness of differences in individual decision-making styles holds out the prospect of being used as a tool to support learning for labour market transitions.

2.4.1. Guidance and career support

Given the importance of the career decision-making process, gaining an understanding of the complexities inherent in this process is particularly important for those offering support to adults attempting to navigate their own career pathways. This requires understanding how and why adults formulate more or less developed career plans; whether and how they seek to enact, adapt or change them; and how the unfolding career decisions of individuals respond to and engage with different sets of opportunities in education, training and employment, as well as the factors that commonly operate as barriers to progression. Without this, there is a danger that those seeking to support adults may become part of the problem, rather than part of a solution.

Harren (1979) showed that career decision-making has rational and intuitive dimensions but can also be influenced by significant others, including friends and family. This research emphasised how some individuals take greater personal responsibility for decision-making, while others share or even project that responsibility onto third parties. Any decisions about career enactment also have to be placed in a particular spatial, labour market and socio-cultural context – individuals are taking decisions within particular 'opportunity structures' and their decisions and aspirations are further framed by their understanding of such structures (Roberts, 2009). Effective careers guidance aims to support individuals at all stages of their career, to reflect on their skills, consider various options and embrace career change. Many people do not make decisions in such a manner and their careers evolve in very different ways, which include being more open to the possibilities of changes in career direction.

A substantial evidence base now exists that indicates the positive impact of careers guidance on the working lives of adults. Reshaping careers, learning and identities is a daunting challenge for everyone and careers guidance can play a major role in helping adults construct new coherent career narratives, so long as it takes account of differences in career decision-making, when considering how learning can help drive these processes.

CHAPTER 3.

Learning for career and labour market transitions: data analysis across the five countries

3.1. Model of learning for career and labour market transitions

Analysis of the narrative accounts showed a huge variety of forms, contexts and content of learning associated with labour market transitions. As a consequence, the precise configuration of key learning processes for career and labour market transitions will vary depending on the individual and context. It is, therefore, essential to know which are the most important factors in particular contexts; a model of this should help those interested in knowing more about the transition process as well as people wanting to decide where to focus their attention.

In practice, the expectation was that some interviewees in this project would cover some of the following aspects in greater depth than others, according to challenge of the work, their reflexivity, and whether they perceive themselves in terms of possession of a skill set which could be applied in a variety of different contexts (Brown et al., 2012):

(a) significant work and learning transitions:

interviewers were expected to ask about interviewees' significant learning and development transitions. This could cover learning as an apprentice, trainee, becoming an experienced skilled worker; role of IVET, CVT, higher and adult education, and learning and development from changing jobs. However, interviewees highlighted how a change in relationships at work, when other factors were essentially the same, had such profound consequences that they regarded it as a significant work transition;

(b) significant learning experiences:

some learning and development explicitly linked to a person's most recent work role might have been covered in one of the above themes. However, interviewers probed for other significant learning experiences linked to previous work roles or experiences in prior education and training. These ranged across formal and informal learning, including how different aspects of learning were developed: cognitive, practical, relational, emotional, and social. Forms of learning which resulted in the interviewees becoming more reflexive or adaptable were important, but interviewers also picked up on

other issues: whether they would return to some form of learning in the future; the impact of learning on self, work, family; the significance of learning while working, as in learning through tackling challenging tasks and roles; participation in group processes; working alongside others; working with clients; problem-solving; and trying things out (Brown et al., 2012);

(c) the nature of support:

one theme to be investigated in learning and development as a whole or in relation to particular work and/or learning transitions was the extent of support they received from others through, for example, coaching, mentoring and guidance. The nature of support included coverage of the different types of support for transitions (practical, financial, emotional) and the institutional structures providing support (such as activation programmes, educational institutions, guidance providers, family, and personal networks) (Brown and Bimrose, 2012):

(d) future development:

investigating possible options for their future (promotion, another job, change of career, more learning or training, and reducing time spent in paid employment) and what their next change or transition, related to working or learning, was likely to be (looking for a new job, actively pursuing promotion in the workplace, leaving the present employer, self-employment, upskilling and reskilling) (Bimrose and Barnes, 2007);

(e) learning from previous changes and transitions and moving forward:

many responses from interviewees focused on particular episodes, so it was important for interviewers to give them opportunities to draw out themes from across their work and learning experiences, such as coping with previous work and learning changes and transitions, and how they might approach future change or transition (strategies and approaches). Earlier work on career decision-making style(s) is useful in this respect (Bimrose and Barnes, 2007; Bimrose et al., 2008);

(f) any further influences:

other influences on the career directions they had taken: earlier work by Bimrose et al. (2008) highlighted how individuals viewed their faith or culture as influential.

The analysis of the strategic learning and career biographies of interviewees in the five countries has led us to propose a model of learning for career and labour market transitions which could help researchers, practitioners and policy-makers understand more about how to support people making career and labour market transitions. The *Data analysis* (Cedefop, 2014a) provides examples of biographical summaries that were particularly informative for this study and

extensively used for data analysis. These iconic cases illustrate patterns and challenges that individuals in particular countries are faced with, while at the same time informing about the wider variety of approaches to learning and career transitions.

Learning for career and labour market transitions can be effectively supported if it is understood that it can be represented as follows: a process of identity development; a process of development in four interrelated learning and skills development domains; and taking place in the context of particular opportunity structures. The model in Figure 1 is used to organise the various patterns that emerged from the analysis of the narrative accounts.

Figure 1.   **Key processes influencing learning for career and labour market transitions**
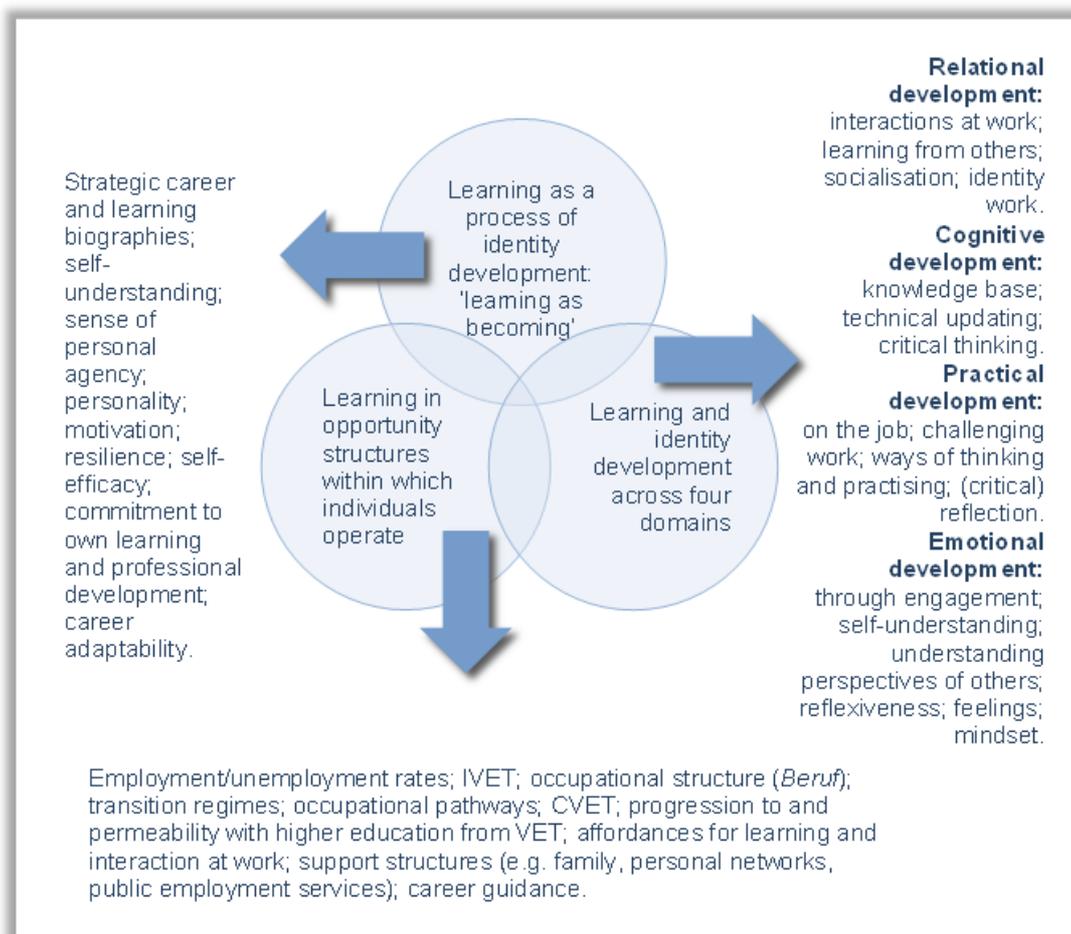
The empirical model derived from the analysis of the narrative accounts draws attention to three representations of learning for career and labour market transitions, which highlight the key factors influencing those transitions. The first

representation views learning as a process of identity development: 'learning as becoming' outlined in the strategic career and learning biographies of individuals. Key influences in this representation of learning are: the personal characteristics underpinning learning and development: learning through self-understanding; development of personal qualities: sense of personal agency; personality; motivation (determination); resilience; self-efficacy (self-belief; efficacy belief); commitment to own learning and professional development; career orientation (career decision-making style); and career adaptability.

The second route, learning for career and labour market transitions, can be represented as occurring across four learning and skills development domains: relational development; cognitive development; practical development; and emotional development. Learning may involve development in one or more domains and development in each domain can be achieved in a number of different ways, but development can be represented thematically, although the extent of development under particular themes varied greatly across individual cases.

A major route for relational development is learning through interactions at work, learning with and from others (in multiple contexts) and learning as participation in communities of practice (and communities of interest) while working with others. Socialisation at work, peer learning and identity work all contribute to relational development. Many processes of relational development occur alongside other activities but more complex relationships requiring the use of influencing skills, engaging people for particular purposes, supporting the learning of others and exercising supervision, management or (team) leadership responsibilities may benefit from support through explicit education, training or development activities.

A major route for cognitive development to prepare those in intermediate labour market positions for labour market transitions involves learning through mastery of an appropriate knowledge base and any subsequent technical updating. This form of development makes use of learning by acquisition and highlights the importance of subject or disciplinary knowledge and/or craft and technical knowledge; it concerns developing particular cognitive abilities, such as critical thinking, evaluating and synthesising.

For practical development the major route is often learning on the job, particularly learning through challenging work. Learning a practice is also about relationships, identity and cognitive development but there is value in drawing attention to this idea, even if conceptually it is a different order to the other forms of development highlighted in this representation of learning for labour market transitions. Practical development can include the importance of critical inquiry, innovation, new ideas, changing ways of working and (critical) reflection on

practice. It may be supported by learning through experience, project work and/or by use of particular approaches to practice, such as planning and preparation, implementation (including problem-solving) and evaluation. The ultimate goal may be vocational mastery, with progressive inculcation into particular ways of thinking and practising, including acceptance of appropriate standards, ethics and values, and the development of particular skill sets and capabilities associated with developing expertise.

The major developmental route for emotional development is learning through engagement that leads to greater self-understanding and the development of particular personal qualities. Much emotional development may occur outside work, but the search for meaning in work, developing particular mindsets, and mindfulness may be components of an individual's emotional development. Particular avenues of development include understanding the perspectives of others, respect for the views of others, empathy, anticipating the impact of your own words and actions, and a general reflexiveness, which includes exploring feelings. Career transitions may also be influenced by changing ideas individuals have about their own well-being and changing definitions of career success.

The third representation of learning for career and labour market transitions acknowledges that learning takes place in the context of opportunity structures within which individuals operate. These structures include: employment/unemployment rates; employer recruitment practices, including openness of job offers; IVET and occupational pathways (varying degrees of breadth and specificity); CVT system; progression to and permeability with higher education from VET; affordances for learning and interaction at work; occupational structure (such as concept of *Beruf*); transition regimes; recognition of prior learning; support structures (such as family, personal networks, public employment services); career guidance; support for reflection; opportunities to address skills mismatch (including addressing issues of underemployment); and extent of opportunities for learning for personal development.

The key to understanding learning for career and labour market transitions is to switch back and forth between representations. So, those wishing to support such learning may start by helping an individual with the process of identity development, reflecting on their career story, developing a sense of career direction and a commitment to their learning, professional development and career adaptability. The next phase of support examines what types of learning and development are required across the four domains for individuals to achieve their goals. Both these processes may need to be revisited in the context of particular opportunity structures within which decisions are being made.

In practice, the support offered for career transitions may start with any of the three representations. The crucial aspect is that, wherever the starting point, the support must address all the representations of the model: it must deal with the processes of identity formation and skills development (across the cognitive, practical, emotional and relational domains) and be sensitive to the particular opportunity structures within learning takes place. Also there is a need to resist the temptation of support with a narrower focus, where, for example, career aspirations develop which are not grounded in any plan to make progress within the opportunity structures operating in the related time and place. Key factors relevant to particular career and labour market transitions are likely to be drawn from different representations. The key factors underlining the model will now be sketched out in more detail and the model used as a representational tool in examining a number of the strategic career and learning biographies outlined by interviewees from the five countries.

3.1.1. Learning as identity development; learning as becoming

Learning and identity development are at the heart of career and labour market development. These forms of development can be represented as 'learning as becoming' (Wenger, 1998) and by strategic career and learning biographies. A set of personal characteristics fundamental to personal identity can underpin all aspects of learning and development. A major development route for identity formation is learning through self-understanding (Biesta and Tedder, 2007, p. 144, call this 'learning about one's life and learning from life') and the development of personal qualities, which aid the processes of occupational identity development and, in some cases, organisational attachment. These personal qualities include: a sense of personal agency; personality; motivation (determination); resilience; self-efficacy (self-belief; efficacy belief); commitment to own learning and professional development; career orientation (career decision-making style); and career adaptability.

A sense of personal agency, which can include learning to change and learning to be more agentic (Billett, 2007), can act as a powerful driver of work-related identity development. For example, occupational choice and initial vocational education and training (IVET) can throw up many challenges but a sense that you are able to change in ways appropriate to the desired occupational identity can itself aid identity formation. The particular sense of personal agency exercised here can be underpinned by more general beliefs, such as self-efficacy and self-belief, with Bandura (2001) emphasising the value of 'efficacy belief', where an individual feels he or she can exercise a degree of control over their activities and environment. If the goal is to support learning for

career and labour market transitions, helping people who have an underdeveloped sense of personal agency can aid those transitions.

Personality plays a fundamental role in occupational identity development. Personality traits such as openness to experience (how curious or cautious an individual typically is) and conscientiousness (how well-organised or easy-going an individual typically is) are likely to inform at some level how people approach their work, learning for their work, and their willingness to change career direction. Other traits such as extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism could also be included, but their very generality means they are not very powerful on their own in explaining actual behaviour, as are lower-level traits, such as anxiety, assertiveness, compliance and deliberation. This paradox poses a challenge in how to support learning for career and labour market transitions. On the one hand, the value of learning for self-understanding means that people can benefit from understanding more about their personality type, particularly if it is used as a starting point for an individual in seeing how certain underdeveloped aspects of one's personality could be strengthened. On the other hand, having someone tell you that you need to change aspects of your personality can be toxic: it can be a major identity threat in itself, because it is very hard to do. Some career counselling approaches use personality type indicators such as Myers-Briggs if people are considering radical changes of career direction. Personality influences how individual career and labour market transitions play out, but how this insight can be used to support learning for career and labour market transitions needs to be handled sensitively.

Motivation is another key: the sheer determination of some interviewees to achieve their career goals was very impressive. There is the case of Henri, the French engineer who was not only driven to achieve his ideal job of production manager, but determined to wait to realise his goal until he had more experience, and, in particular, a deeper understanding of relevant work processes. In other cases motivation was much more half-hearted, as when interviewees followed a course of action to please others, such as their parents, or they did not really commit to the course of action because they did not necessarily believe it was the right course to follow. An example of this was Nicole, who enrolled as a hairdresser to please her parents even though she was highly motivated to train to work in healthcare.

Resilience was readily identifiable in the careers of some of our interviewees in the way in which they were able to overcome a series of setbacks in their career development. Mette, whose career is outlined in the *Methodology* (Cedefop, 2014b, Denmark), is a telling example of ability to bounce back from adversity (she has to quit her education to support her partner with a drinking problem and his family), while maintaining a positive forward-looking disposition.

When Mette was offered an opportunity to work in Greenland at an airbase she first declined, but immediately felt, deep inside, that it was the wrong decision. When she called back the day after, the position was taken. She then called the head office every Friday until a position was open. 'It almost became an obsession because I felt I made the wrong decision when I was offered the job at first' (Mette in Cedefop, 2014b, Denmark).

The importance of developing resilience is already acknowledged in European policy, but the key is how to develop practical measures which will help workers overcome setbacks, engage in continuous learning and, if necessary, adopt new identities, which in some cases almost amounts to individual reinvention (Council of the European Union, 2008; Field, 2010; OECD, 2004). Support for the development of certain coping strategies, including emotional capacities, to overcome structural and/or dispositional barriers (Bimrose et al., 2008; Cardoso and Moreira, 2009; Hearne, 2010) is important in this respect.

Learning as a process of identity development is also clear in those individuals who have a very strong commitment to their own learning and professional development. These individuals exemplify most clearly that people do not have fixed identities but are always in the process of 'becoming.' There were interviewees in each of the five countries who had used learning and development to reshape their careers over time. Lucia, whose career is outlined in the *Data analysis* (Cedefop, 2014a, Italy), was an excellent example of someone whose career evolved and developed in a range of contexts, driven by a very strong commitment to her own learning and professional development: she constantly sought to improve her skills, expertise and effectiveness as a seamstress, fashion designer, entrepreneur and teacher. In her words: 'School can prepare you up to a certain point. The professional world goes much faster, and teachers who do not experience it will very soon lag behind. I am glad I could have lengthy experience and lucky to be able to continue working as a consultant, because this way I feel up-to-date and I am always at ease in the role of a teacher' (Lucia in Cedefop, 2014a, Section 2.2).

Career orientation had a very clear effect on the process of occupational identity development: interviewees had very different career decision-making styles and these influenced both processes of career choice and career development. Bimrose et al. (2004) illustrated how adults who had had career guidance subsequently developed their careers, predominantly through the use of one of four career decision-making styles: evaluative, strategic, aspirational and opportunist. These four styles can be identified as underpinning career development for nearly all the interviewees from the four countries, although some individuals exhibited a mix of styles. Interviewees might use different styles at different times and in different circumstances, and, crucially if they were in

transition, they could with the help of others (professional coaches and family), draw on other career decision-making styles. In this sense, it is not only decision-making typologies but also career guidance methodologies that can support a transition.

Career adaptability can be a powerful way to represent learning processes which underpin changes in occupational identity development: learning to take on different roles across a developing career. Career adaptability is a multidimensional construct that relates to the variable capacity of individuals to negotiate transitions successfully (Savickas, 2008). The concept is used to draw attention to variation in 'individual's readiness and resources for coping with current and anticipated tasks, transitions, traumas in their occupational roles' (Savickas, 2008, pp. 4-5). Looking across the sample as a whole, and within each country, there is great variation in individual readiness and resources to cope with labour market and career transitions. Interviewees who demonstrated career adaptability, in that they displayed 'the capability of an individual to make a series of successful transitions where the labour market, organisation of work and underlying occupational and organisational knowledge bases may all be subject to considerable change' (Bimrose et al., 2011), had the characteristics above: a strong sense of personal agency; resilience; self-efficacy (self-belief; efficacy belief); and a commitment to their own learning and professional development. Lucia and Mette exemplified such characteristics, the former articulating the importance of personal agency and self-efficacy: 'I was not ready at all when I started my first job. I threw myself into the fray. This is my personality: I am very brave and self-confident. I've always looked much younger that I really am, therefore nobody believed that I could actually work […] until I showed them my abilities!' (Lucia in Cedefop, 2014a, Italy).

However, as with resilience, the key challenge is how best to support individuals to invest time and effort in honing their adaptability skills. From earlier work on how career adaptability develops, how it is mediated and how it can be fostered across the life-course (Bimrose et al., 2011; Brown et al., 2010; 2012), four key dimensions emerged, relating to the role of learning in developing career adaptability:

(a) learning through challenging work (including mastering the practical, cognitive and communicative demands linked with particular work roles and work processes);

(b) updating a substantive knowledge base (or mastering a new additional substantive knowledge base);

(c) learning through (and beyond) interactions at work;

(d) being self-directed and self-reflexive.

A number of interviewees commented on how useful outlining their strategic career and learning biographies was for developing their thinking. This is in line with the idea that learning for career and labour market transitions can be effectively supported if it is understood that it can be represented as a process of identity development. However, we have also reached the stage where it is necessary to go beyond this and ask in what ways learning to support transitions can be facilitated. One option is the second representation. Learning and identity development can be represented as occurring across four learning and skills development domains: relational development; cognitive development; practical development; emotional development.

3.1.2. Second representation: skills development

The key processes to support learning for career and labour market transitions can be represented as occurring across four domains: relational development; cognitive development; practical development; and emotional development. Learning may involve development in more than one domain, but can be represented thematically within each domain to give a sense of where individuals might seek to improve their skills, knowledge, behaviour and understanding.

3.1.2.1. *Relational development*

Many interviewees acknowledged that their skills in how well they relate to others had been improved through interactions at work, including learning arising from participation in particular communities associated with work. They may have learned particular ways of thinking and practising linked to their occupational roles: for example, chefs, engineers and nurses all stressed how they learned with and from others in their communities. There was also a sense of relational development accompanying development of their vocational expertise, as they learned how to work with colleagues, clients, customers in multiple and increasingly complex contexts. Much of this learning is associated with socialisation at work, peer learning, participation in communities of practice and different forms of identity work. Occupational socialisation relates not only to work processes, but also to pedagogical practices in more formal learning contexts, contributing to becoming a member of a community of practice. For example, for someone learning to practise an occupation, where, how and what it is deemed appropriate to learn varied enormously depending on whether the process was individualised; this may have been essentially learning on-the-job, as with some of the Italian interviewees, or else part of the formalised dual system of apprenticeship in Germany.

Learning to become a member of a community of practice is not just a passive process, as individuals may also contribute to changing both the practice

and the community. They may also have to deal with identity threats before becoming a full member of a community, as it is quite common for people to have doubts about whether they will succeed in reaching the required standard or whether they will be accepted by others in the community. Working well with others may extend beyond collaboration and collegiality to include supporting others in their work (by sharing your own talent) and creating space for the achievement of others. These attributes were in evidence with some interviewees, such as Lucia the fashion designer (Cedefop, 2014a, Section 2.2), who were very generous in sharing their talents; some were more cautious and aware of the need to further their own career in competition with others, and knowing that organisations have a political dimension. Henri the engineer was firmly focused on achieving his goal of promotion within a hierarchical organisation: 'I've got a big flaw. I need to understand everything. This is also the way you'll get recognition in a company. […] I didn't impose myself through "management" but I imposed myself through knowledge' (Henri in Cedefop, 2014a, France).

In contrast, Masuccio (Cedefop, 2014c, Italy) with his experience in human resources was first promoted and then resigned after finding his work was a non-job in what turned out to be a process of representing the Italian company as forward-looking and then retrenching power into the hands of the controlling family. Masuccio has been confronted more often with this situation; describing previous experience in a firm in which he moved from researcher to assistant to R&D (patenting a new product on the way), he says: 'I'm a dynamic and restless person. I can't spend my time sitting at a desk without a clear project to follow […] I was ready to start a new project, but I realised they had to give my position to one of the entrepreneur's relatives. I was also aiming at the commercial area but the position, in that case, was reserved to the sales director's son [...]. This was one the several episodes of my career in which I struggled, unsuccessfully, with the companies' power logics [...]' (Masuccio in Cedefop, 2014c, Italy).

There were examples of people receiving continuing professional development which explicitly addressed issues associated with working with others (colleagues, clients, patients), influencing skills, supervision, management, or (team) leadership. One way in which interviewees sometimes learned more about themselves and how to work more effectively was when they were involved in supporting the learning of others, whether in a formal coaching relationship (as in the Danish cases of Mette in Cedefop, 2014a; and Tom in Cedefop, 2014c) or more informally because they had a natural facility in helping others. Mette is again an example here: she was made a supervisor precisely because she was naturally supporting her colleagues in her previous non-supervisory role.

3.1.2.2. *Cognitive development*

With most interviewees, the major development route for aspects of cognitive development related to their vocation concerned learning through mastery of an appropriate knowledge base; post-experience technical updating and applying relevant knowledge in a variety of contexts can also drive cognitive development. Many interviewees stressed the importance of the subject, disciplinary, craft or technical knowledge, skills and understanding they developed during their IVET, higher education studies and/or other forms of (work-based) skills formation.

For example, Achille, a chef, (Cedefop, 2014b, France), stressed that although he had varied practical experience from vacation work, he felt he needed the practical grounding plus higher level applied skills, knowledge and understanding provided by his BTS (*brevet de technicien supérieur*), a two-year post-baccalaureate programme, before seeking full-time employment. Even once he started work, he supplemented this with a degree in catering and hospitality management. This programme broadened and extended his skill set as well as deepening his knowledge base, through covering applied management, IT skills, a foreign language, and contextualised knowledge (such as financial analysis of hotel accounts) needed at managerial level in the industry. Achille considered he then had the craft and technical knowledge, skills and understanding such that he could start to think and practise as a French chef, but he still needed to apply his knowledge and understanding in various contexts before he would consider himself, and others would consider him, to be a French chef.

Henri, the engineer, (Cedefop, 2014a, France), also highlighted how rigorous initial training provides a platform for critical inquiry in practice. The same applied to Paul (Cedefop, 2014b, Germany), a carpenter, who even after completing his three and a half year apprenticeship and working for four years, felt he would benefit from further education and training. He enrolled in a special full-time handicraft design school for two years. He was seeking to consolidate, deepen and enhance his expertise, by adding knowledge and understanding of design to his craft knowledge base ([10]).

As well as the knowledge they acquired, the development of particular cognitive abilities such as critical thinking, evaluating, and synthesising can be associated with particular ways of thinking and practising necessary for successful work performance. The knowledge had to be applied as well as learned and, in their vocational practice, interviewees would have to be able to focus more precisely on what knowledge is needed for a particular decision or

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([10]) Paul's case is outlined in greater detail in the *Description of country data* (Cedefop, 2014b, Chapter 4).

action; they then had to interpret and/or transform that knowledge to suit the new situation and context, and integrate the relevant aspects of knowledge prior to or during performance (Eraut, 2009). These types of transformative behaviour and ways of thinking were apparent in the career development of the chef, engineer and carpenter mentioned above. However, Adèle makes it very explicit. As well as having had general and specialist nurse training, she points out that there are cognitive demands in how to transform what you already know to the particular requirements of the specific situation: 'I learnt a new job even if it was still practising as a nurse: the job in the operating room, it's different, thoracic or gynaecological surgical, it's not the same thing. It's not the same kind of interventions. You've got to learn' (Adele in Cedefop, 2014a, France).

Even when you are highly skilled, applying relevant knowledge in various contexts can still drive further cognitive development.

3.1.2.3. *Practical development*

For our interviewees who were engaged in work with a significant practical dimension, whether as carpenters, fashion designers or landscape gardeners, a major development route was always learning on the job. Didier, the French landscape designer (Cedefop, 2014a, France), made clear that such learning is dependent on access to challenging work; he contrasted how limited his experience was when he worked for a company which was performing landscaping on an industrial scale, to the challenge involved when he was involved in all stages of the work as an independent contractor. Learning a practice demonstrates the interrelated nature of learning across the four domains, as it is also about relational and cognitive development. For representational purposes it is useful to draw attention to the need for mastery of the practical aspects of the occupation: chefs Émile and Achille (both in Cedefop, 2014b, France), made this point very clearly. Practical development has also to be dynamic, with, for example, Henri highlighting the importance of practical focus in initial training and how this provides a platform for critical inquiry in practice.

Practical development across the life-course within an occupation has to accommodate innovation, new ideas about practice and changing ways of working. Interviewees highlighted how these processes take place through a mix of informal and more formal means, including critical reflection on practice in, for example, nursing, as well project work and planning and preparation for new approaches to practice. Problem-solving and evaluation are significant drivers of practical development, while a results (achievement) orientation and drive to meet targets (overcome obstacles) potentially lead employee-centred innovation. More generally, a number of interviewees exemplified how their vocational

mastery was itself bound up with a continuing commitment to the development of their practical skills, knowledge and understanding. Their inculcation into particular ways of thinking and practising, including acceptance of appropriate standards, ethics and values, acted as drivers for development of particular skill sets and capabilities associated with developing expertise in their chosen occupation area: fashion designers, engineers and chefs all considered that their continuing vocational mastery of the practical aspects of their occupations was fundamental to how they viewed themselves.

The discussion of practical development has, so far, only been concerned with progression within an occupation. However, there were also cases where individuals sought to make a radical career shift, where one aspect of that shift was to develop their practical skills. Paul (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany) was 27 when he started his apprenticeship as a carpenter, after spending seven years in different temporary jobs, including working at a children's theatre and in a call centre of the regional transportation company. Erik reoriented his career completely in his shift from executive director to a trainee green-keeper, after he was made redundant following a company reorganisation (Cedefop, 2014c, Denmark).

3.1.2.4. *Emotional development*

Learning in the three other domains would be readily identified as integral to learning and development in most occupations. However, interviewees often, when outlining their strategic career and learning biographies, pointed to emotional aspects of their work and whether or not they could cope with these. Perhaps this should not be a surprise as, according to Warr (1987), one of the five aspects of work which is associated with a positive attitude to oneself and a positive work-related identity is emotional or affective well-being, represented at least by an absence of undue anxiety. However, in a number of cases interviewees highlighted how stress and/or being unable to handle the emotional dimensions of work associated with, for example, poor relationships with a superior or colleagues negatively affected their career development.

Anna, for example, had been to a psychologist and had learned a number of ways of dealing with stress, which had helped her, but she was still relatively easily stressed. This affected how her career had developed and influenced how she approached finding work when unemployed (Cedefop, 2014a, Denmark). Hans had undertaken a radical career shift from salesman to classroom assistant in the search for meaning in his life, but he was not prepared for the emotional challenges in working with an autistic boy (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany). He had difficulties handling the shift between being at work or being at home, as he thought a lot about the children while he was at work. He had a break-down due

to stress and he too started seeing a psychologist for support for his emotional wellbeing. Katrine was a third Danish interviewee for whom emotional development was a decisive feature of her career progress as, after being made redundant from her position as Head of IT, she decided to step away from pursuing a hierarchical career to have a less stressful life (Cedefop, 2014c, Denmark).

A similar pattern emerged with other interviewees with a number making career decisions in response to what they perceived as stressful work. Adèle (Cedefop, 2014a, France) changed jobs twice on this basis, and moved to Switzerland, partly because she found the working environment of large hospitals as too stressful. Rainer (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany) finds aspects of his work as a supervisor in a factory very difficult. He feels he acts as the buffer between workers and management, having to bear the complaints and pressures from his team and the work pressures put on staff by the management. He finds himself in between, often mediating and negotiating. This he finds very difficult and associates it with expecting to be being 'burned out' some time in the future.

In contrast, Saray (Spain), a Roma woman, thinks that her attitudes, skills and learning have all helped her not just to cope, but to thrive, with emotionally demanding work in a mortuary and in a hospital. She is now taking a psychology degree as mature student because, according to her, her boss made her understand that she already has the appropriate attitudes for this subject: 'I like to pay attention to the people. I like to talk. I like to help them. I already noticed that I was the kind of friend that if somebody used to come to me, it was because this person was looking for advice. I helped them to overcome their problems. I had this attitude since I was a teenager. Then my boss told me that being such a person, I could go really far just with some training, because that is how I am' (Cedefop, 2014a, Section 5.3.3).

Saray's case illustrates how a major emotional developmental route is learning through engagement. Other drivers for emotional development include a desire for self-understanding and a search for meaning in life. In Denmark, Hans, Tom and Mette were all explicitly seeking greater meaningfulness from their working lives at a time of transition. Hans reported: 'When I stopped as a salesman my daughter said: I've got a new father now, totally different from what I have ever had' (Hans in Cedefop, 2014c, Denmark).

Katrine (Cedefop, 2014c, Denmark) was explicit about the importance of meaning: 'That's something else that this reflection has given me: that I don't want to go back to that. I want a balanced life, and of course I want to work, I enjoy working, but it's not going to take all my time. So there's also that balance. That I want to make an effort, I want to leave my mark like I've said the whole time, but I also want to leave my mark in other areas. While previously, perhaps

even last year, if we use that as the turning point, I would have said I'm going to leave my mark on the job, you know? So that's also the major difference since this redundancy' (Katrine, Denmark).

Emotional development can come from increasing awareness, reflexiveness and engagement at work, as the case of Diana (Cedefop, 2014c, Italy) shows where she developed an approach to credit collection which was based on understanding, empathy and ethics.

'I believe the most important quality to be a successful credit collector is empathy. You need to understand the real situation of the debtor. In many cases, behind an insolvency you will discover a world of social disadvantage and ignorance. In some cases, an attempt to escape one's obligations […] Whatever the problem is, the credit collector needs to grasp it with his/her intelligence and intuition, then guide the debtor towards a wise solution' (Diana, Italy).

Training interventions may be expressly targeted at helping people understand the perspectives of others and show respect for their views. The answer to the question of when and whether to help people show greater empathy is more nuanced. While desirable in many settings, the appropriate role of empathy in our dealings with others at work is highly dependent on the context; many occupations try to steer a course between showing care while remaining professional in not becoming too emotional. Those working in health and social care need to be aware of but not too sensitive to the emotions of others, and need to be able to avoid overinvesting their own emotions, or else their own effectiveness to offer support may be compromised, as in the case of Hans.

Other aspects of emotional development such as anticipating the impact of your own words and actions and developing reflexiveness, including exploring feelings, relate to personality and identity development more generally, although they can be actively promoted within certain workplace cultures, such as in health settings, where reflection on experience is actively encouraged and could be an important component of developing expertise. There were wide differences in how reflexive our interviewees were; some had received explicit training in this area. For example, Katrine had attended a mindfulness course, had coaching support and had been encouraged to reflect on her life narrative and whether work should be such a dominant influence. Katrine's case also illustrates the usability of narrative approaches in guidance and how, particularly in mid-career, individuals may welcome the opportunity to reflect on their (changing) ideas about own well-being and definitions of career success. Many radical career shifts among our interviewees seemed to be driven by (a desire for) changes in their own emotional development and what they valued.

Learning and identity development can be represented as comprising learning in four domains for those occupying or passing through intermediate level positions in the labour market: relational development; cognitive development; practical development; and emotional development. The individual cases show development in these domains can be considered almost universal; in those cases where development in one domain was lacking this almost always represented a serious skill gap which affected performance and/or opportunities for progression ([11]). Most learning will involve elements of one or more, or indeed all, of these domains. The model is simply a device to draw attention to what aspects of development may need to be considered to achieve successful career and labour market transitions.

The first two representations of learning for career and labour market transitions have focused on individual and social aspects of learning and identity development, concerning intra-personal development, identity work and more effective interactions with others (colleagues, clients, and customers). However, what has been missing so far has been any sense of variation in the context within which these processes take place: this is corrected with the third representation of learning, which can help researchers, practitioners and policy-makers understand more about how to support people making career and labour market transitions.

3.2.   Learning in the context of opportunity structures

Learning for career and labour market transitions takes place in the context of opportunity structures within which individuals operate. The five country contexts, outlined in the country chapters in the *Description of country data* (Cedefop, 2014c), offer wide variations: employment/unemployment rates; openness of job offers (that is, whether they are advertised and the nature of the recruitment process); IVET, occupational pathways (varying degrees of breadth and specificity); CVT systems; progression to and permeability with higher education from VET; affordances for learning and interaction at work; occupational structure (e.g. concept of *Beruf*); transition regimes; recognition of prior learning; support structures (family, personal networks, public employment services); career

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([11])- For example, Anna (Annex 1, Denmark) had major skill gaps in relation to her emotional development and the type of mindset to engage fully in work and her own personal development. Her sense of personal agency was low, as was her resilience and 'efficacy belief'. She could always see problems and wanted to settle for security in low-skilled work which was unlikely to be on offer in a changed labour market.

guidance; support for reflection; opportunities to address skills mismatch (addressing issues of underemployment); and extent of opportunities for learning for personal development.

Opportunity structures provide the context within which individuals operate. Recruitment practices are an obvious example and, when job offers are scarce, some may not come on to the open market; the strength of personal networks can be influential in being recommended or even finding out about opportunities. Personal networks were particularly important for career development in some sectors in Italy. In contrast, Brigitte (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany) was working for a local employment agency and had to resign from her post to be eligible to apply for a post elsewhere in the organisation, as recruitment was only open to external applicants. In labour markets where many jobs are initially temporary, the search for permanent or stable employment may last decades for some people rather than being a transitory phenomenon. There were interviewees for whom the search for a sense of job security was a real quest and the trade implicit in 'flexicurity' was breaking down (Cedefop, 2014c, Denmark). People felt the labour market was more flexible, but now the promise of security until one found another job rang hollow for many of the Danish interviewees.

The relationship between IVET and occupational pathways is another critical factor, with the five countries varying in the degrees of breadth and specificity of the learning they require and the balance expected between learning in education, training and employment. National CVT systems influence the opportunities available for skill development through formal training, varying from the fragmented Italian system to the fairly comprehensive Danish system, although the latter was much more supportive of upskilling within a sector than it was of an individual who wanted to change sectors.

Work itself structures the opportunities individuals have for learning and development, because work varies in the affordances it offers for learning and interaction at work (Billett, 2007). While formal support structures exist in the provision of public employment services, transition regimes, recognition of prior learning and career guidance, influencing how individuals perceived the career opportunities available to them, the strength of family and personal networks might also be influential. The extended transitions of some interviewees were dependent on family support, while family responsibilities might also constrain career development.

The overall health of the economy and high unemployment rates in Italy and Spain meant that there are sometimes limited opportunities for individuals to address skills mismatches if their skills were underemployed in the work they were doing, but they see limited opportunities for changing their job. In such circumstances, Sergi (Cedefop, 2014c, Spain), had opted to engage in formal

learning through continuing education for reasons of personal development: he recognised that there was little chance that continuing education and training would transform his future job prospects in Spain, but he wanted to develop his skills for his own benefit. The situation may appear strange, as his response to having his skills underemployed in his current job was to make the mismatch even wider. However, the logic is understandable as he did not wish to give up a permanent post at a time of high unemployment.

CHAPTER 4.

Individual agency: challenges and support when learning for career and labour market transitions

'Learning as becoming' is a theme in all the strategic career and learning biographies, which resulted in a strong attachment to a particular occupational identity underpinned by substantive intermediate skills. Some individuals, particularly in the German sample, embarked on initial training with very clear progression pathways, followed by most of those making that initial choice. In other cases, individuals were faced with considerable difficulties in achieving their chosen occupational goals, due to, as Anna found out in Denmark, a disjunction between being able to get on a course for medical secretaries but not being able to secure an apprenticeship with a company. Other problems flow from the absence of clearly articulated development pathways, as Mercuzio (Cedefop, 2014a Italy) found when he started to learn shoe-making in an Italian town, where all the older skilled workers deliberately obstructed his attempts to gain practical work-based learning when his determination and eagerness to learn the trade became apparent.

However, all individuals who were successful in completing transitions into jobs requiring intermediate level skills and who had managed to perform jobs at that level for a number of years had had to overcome learning challenges on the way. The key is how the model of learning for career and labour market transitions and analysis of the strategic learning and career biographies of interviewees in the five countries can help us understand more about how to support people making career and labour market transitions. Because our samples were drawn to represent individual career biographies, we were interested in the effect of national systems on individual careers, rather than individuals as being representative of their systems. In the following examples, we stay with the individual stories and ask what can they tell us about the challenges of how to support learning for career and labour market transitions?

Many of the examples can be used to exemplify aspects of all three representations, but we will start with a list of examples of how individuals engaged in learning relevant for labour market transitions and then consider the influence of opportunity structures in facilitating or constraining career transitions in the next chapter.

4.1. Workers with stable organisational careers improving to prepare for future transitions

Hanne (Cedefop, 2014c, Denmark), an optometrist, has been working in the same optometrist chain since she completed her education and has held different positions as an optician, shop-manager and project manager at the head office. This represents progression within an organisational labour market, based on a strong attachment, but also with an initial occupational identity which remains relevant to her subsequent career.

Her educational background was in vocational education (EFG at that time) as an optometrist. When the interview took place, Hanne held two full-time positions: she was in charge of the company's education and competence development in Denmark (a one–woman department) and she was managing a new development project. She had also experienced the company being bought by an international optometrist chain. She is proactive, has excellent practical and relational skills, and is good at supporting the learning of others:

'Opportunities were made available to me and I jumped in' (Hanne, Denmark).

When asked whether she also created opportunities for herself (and likes supporting the learning and development of others), she replied:

'When I was shop manager I found out that maybe I would be good at educating other shop managers, so I went to my boss and said: I think that you could use me as an educator of shop managers. Typical me I had nothing except from the internal leader course' (Hanne, Denmark).

She seems to be a personal embodiment of many of the traits and attributes necessary to make successful career transitions, as she has done within her company, and yet she finds it problematic that she has no document as evidence of her competences. It is a general narrative (she repeats it several times during the interview) for her and she refers to the fact that she lacks formal proof of her qualifications. She wants to set that right by completing a vocational bachelor programme in trade. She compares with what she knows companies value, when they hire: 'It is important. On paper I am just an optometrist' (Hanne, Denmark).

She would like to study business psychology but thinks that she will complete her vocational bachelor degree (*akademiuddannelse*) first. Hanne is therefore an exemplar of someone who is positioning herself to be able to cope with future transitions by improving her career adaptability. Hanne is not, however, completely self-sufficient and recognises support she has received from others. For example, Hanne talks to a former boss who is now retired about her thoughts about career and shifts. Then she tells her husband this is what I would like to do. Hanne explains the kind of support she gets from her former boss:

'It is mainly to build my self-confidence. Do you think I can do it? When looking at [a job] advertisement women look at the things they cannot do, men look at the things they can do' (Hanne, Denmark).

Hanne also supports the learning of others and has brought about organisational change. She explains that the company has just tried a new way of recruiting talented employees for training as shop managers. Before, talented employees who were selected for learning opportunities had to be recommended by their shop manager; now, everybody who thinks they are talented can apply. The new way has resulted in a new composition of leaders: before it was only optometrists who were selected out, now a 50/50 mix of optometrists and sales assistants apply for leader training.

Hanne is paying attention to her own adaptability but in her job she also uses formal CVT provision to extend opportunities for her colleagues.

4.2. Learning in different domains across the life-course

Irma (Cedefop, 2014c, Italy), a woman in her forties, had a highly mobile career, even in geographic terms, based on a significant bent for languages and interest in arts and humanities in a broad sense. She defined herself as an agent in the creative artistic field, as well as a project coordinator and cultural mediator (between Asian and eastern culture). She is engaged in both documentary film making and theatre (as an assistant director and executive producer). She is a sinologist and director.

Her studies comprised a degree in Chinese language and literature at university (four years) and, later in her career, further studies in contemporary Chinese theatre and theatrical direction. She was awarded a special grant by the Beijing theatre academy and stayed there for one year. It was a great experience, on which she tried to immediately capitalise: she came back to Italy and established herself in Rome where she practised theatre direction assistance for another year. But she had a hard time there: the work was not paid and she decided to go back to China, and eventually started working with the Canadian Embassy in Beijing, issuing visas. The work was very interesting, giving her the opportunity to get in touch with significant human situations.

'It was so interesting, I had to deal with very important issues like family reunion and anti-fraud detection, regarding false marriages. I discovered the Sherlock Holmes in me, but I was also incredibly happy in reuniting people who seriously loved each other. It was so gratifying at the human level' (Irma, Italy).

The work environment was also very good. Her manager was two years older than her: a man full of interests (also holding a degree in English literature), and very open to innovative forms of management.

'I learnt a lot from him. He was that kind of person who reads lots of books, who loves to improve himself, who really cares about others and values their opinions. The beautiful thing in that office was that they were able to put my creativity into practice. The "ten minute meetings" were not just for subscribing to the boss' decisions, which is almost the rule in many work settings, but for really challenging everybody's abilities in finding solutions. We transformed a previously disorganised office in an organised workflow [...] I really felt myself as part of the game [...] I even felt Canadian [...] I discovered that I was interested in what I was doing, much more than in the amount of my salary [...] I felt as if that was the first real job I had had in my life' (Irma, Italy).

Irma also had the opportunity of doing some theatre in her free-time, directing short pieces with friends and acting within them. Her enlightened managers were among the audience. She spent four years in total in that optimal condition, two of them as visa officer. Then she applied for a vacancy for the same job in the Canadian Embassy in Rome and her life changed again. Her managers' mindsets were very different from those encountered in China. Her interests outside work were deemed as attempts to undermine work commitment. Working practices were dealt with in rather bureaucratic ways.

'I found a very "Italian" way of thinking in a Canadian context. I began to think I had made a mistake in coming there. In the end I made that choice not being really convinced that it was good, but mostly driven by the idea that this could have been the last chance of getting back to my country (as I had in mind several examples of people of my age with no more bridges for getting back) […] There were many things to change in that office and I frequently tried to advocate for the good solutions learnt in my previous experience, but I mainly received frustrating answers. Once a colleague of mine said "Get over it, you're not in Beijing anymore"' (Irma, Italy).

The crisis with the work in Rome worsened and after almost four years she decided to quit that job, which created further problems as it was quite unwise to lose such a sought-after job. Irma had a crisis about her future work direction, and she took sick leave first and then an unpaid leave of absence. During such leave she went back to China and worked as a translator for an Italian television troupe. She recovered and felt that it was time to revamp her artistic penchant, so she left the Embassy.

At this time Irma had excellent relational skills, specialist language skills, was developing expertise in theatre direction, and knew she did not want to work in administration. She then committed to trying to build an artistic career, and a

new working life cycle started over the next six years. A number of experiences followed one another. First was a training experience, on a theatre course in Italy with a well-known Italian-American director: a rewarding experience, although proximity to a 'guru' also brought difficult times for her. This was followed by some interesting activities in documentary-making (on the cultural identity of young second generation immigrants, in Germany, and on discrimination against outcast women, in India, and many others) in which she played a mix of executive producer, assistant director and editing director. Beside her competences of cultural mediation, Irma developed an increased interest in the arts. She collaborated in – and is still involved in – a permanent festival of visual and performing arts based on exhibitions of works and performances of both western and Chinese artists.

At present she is collaborating in a vast art project aimed at collecting photos to form a specialist Chinese collection from the past 100 years. This project, directed by an artist, will show the collection in major museums all over the world. She is also translating a book with annexed video.

To improve the technical side of her activities, in which the audio-visual medium is pivotal, Irma found it useful to undertake a middle-length course (60 hours) in video editing. It was very useful for speeding-up some operations and, more than this, for better understanding editing technique. She is now supported by a collaborator for these kinds of activities, with another helping in the document search. She has to directly pay such collaborators but this is vital to surviving in her busy working life as a film-maker and theatre producer.

What is very clear from Irma's career is how, at different times, learning in different domains featured. Relational development was a driver in coping so well with a number of very different changes in context and, apart from when working in the embassy in Rome, she learned much through her interactions at work and became a successful member of some very different communities associated with work. Cognitive development was evident in her university studies, a number of additional courses and in meeting the challenges associated with some very different work environments. Practical development was strongly in evidence too in mastery of techniques in the cultural field. Emotional development was required in dealing with a number of emotionally demanding career transitions; even her personal crisis was caused because of the conflict between her values and those she was forced to adopt in her work for the embassy in Rome.

Overall, Irma has mastered the practical and technical aspects of film-making; working as a theatre and film producer is par excellence a position which requires exceptional relational, organisational and practical skills and a thorough understanding of the work process; she is working across three or four cultures in an artistic endeavour where she is the key cultural mediator on a project; her

fluency in English and Chinese (as well as Italian) is crucial to the enterprise. She has a T-shaped skills profile, although, as well as broad general soft skills, she has specialist expertise in a number of complementary domains rather than expertise in a single domain.

It is possible to use the four-fold typology of relational, emotional, practical and cognitive development to highlight the different types of challenges faced by Irma in learning in her career and labour market transitions. It is possible to represent her learning in transition in other ways (as below). However, this is a good test to see whether the model has representational value in presenting different types of development at different times across the life-course. An alternative would be to stay with particular competences, traits and attitudes and not attempt to aggregate behaviour into different types of development. Here is a more micro-level interpretation.

Irma has extraordinary linguistic competences which she has accumulated over time, as well as a solid base of knowledge and understanding in cultural production. She has a strong technical background acquired through experience and training, improved with recent training activities. In terms of cognitive competences she is characterised by a sort of 'visual intelligence' (self-defined as such), by a clear ability to put together various kinds of information and to understand the situational variables of intercultural settings. All these contributed to her mobility, in particular concerning her path towards an increasingly more creative activity and professional identity.

She was able to rearrange her professional paths according to a highly situational intelligence and a thorough adaptability to very different contextual variables. All her work transitions were favoured by very good social dispositions and by overall social competences, allowing her to understand the situational variables of intercultural settings and to build appropriate relationships. At the same time, her transitions were positively conditioned by strong emotional competences, allowing her to recognise her inclinations and her will for higher attainment. Her transitions are always motivated by authentic passions and strong ethical commitment.

Although she has developed mostly through experiential learning, Irma never overlooks the importance of formal learning: her university studies constituted a sound basis for developing her expertise (in Chinese and in many other disciplines); her course in theatrical expression helped her in understanding from the inside different aspects of the show business which were subsequently very useful, even for non-directly performing roles; and her course in video-editing added a vital, practical, component to her overall competence in film-making.

There is little doubt that this level of analysis offers a much richer lens to understand the particular learning behaviour of Irma. However, this approach treats Irma as a singular case and the question is whether the four-fold typology offers a way of better understanding the learning for career and labour market transitions of Irma and Hanne (discussed in the previous example). Further, does the model offer a way forward for us to extract some general lessons as to how to support learning for career and labour market transitions from other examples drawn from the five countries?

Diana (Cedefop, 2014c, Italy) approached credit collection based on understanding, empathy and ethics, areas where her relational skills and emotional maturity were readily apparent. However, her cognitive and practical skills were also in evidence in that she had mastered the underpinning occupational knowledge base, which, coupled with relational and emotional effectiveness, meant she had greatly improved the quality of her situational decision-making. She achieved the required results but her approach to credit collection was always adjusted to the particular circumstances rather than following a standard formula. That she possessed deep expertise in this area was recognised by her employer and herself, as was the fact that she used this expertise to construct part of her career as an entrepreneur, training others by modelling the approach she used in supporting the learning of others.

Lucia (Cedefop, 2014a, Section 2.2), the fashion designer, is an excellent example of someone whose career evolved and developed in a range of contexts, and her cognitive, practical, relational and emotional development occurred in iterative and complementary ways over time as the depth of her expertise meant she was equally effective as a seamstress, fashion designer, entrepreneur and teacher. Ali (Cedefop, 2014a, Germany), who worked in a number of different positions in a factory, completed his degree as a mature student while also working and had a career in German regional politics, is another example of someone learning across a range of contexts. It is clear how Ali's cognitive, practical, relational and emotional development occurred in iterative and complementary ways over time.

These three further examples of Diana, Lucia and Ali show the value of using the four-fold typology to illustrate how learning in different domains come to the fore at different times across the life-course. The lesson of this for learning for labour market transitions is to encourage individuals to review their skill set across all four domains, as weaknesses in one area can disadvantage you if there is strong competition for the positions they desire.

4.3.   The importance of dispositions towards learning

Individual personality, attitudes and dispositions have already been highlighted as important aspects of the representation of learning as a process of identity development, but individual attitudes, values and beliefs about learning and the benefits of learning are central to how individuals' careers unfold. Some individuals had very clear ideas of what types of learning they preferred. Hanne excelled at practical learning, Irma and Lucia (in the examples given above) had a full repertoire of approaches to learning which they applied in different contexts. However, there were also a number of individuals who struggled with aspects of learning and development. Michael (see Cedefop, 2014c, Germany) in reflection on his extended transition, which included nine years of study (first architecture and then social pedagogy at the *Fachhochschule*) without completing either programme, and search for a vocation (*Beruf*) in Germany, says that studying did not work for him, because he has difficulties with self-organisation. He needs to rely on clear structures in work settings, and even when redirecting his orientation towards learning a craft or commercial trade he remained indecisive. Without a more positive orientation towards learning it will be difficult for Michael to complete a transition to skilled work. Michael's case is unusual in that his attitude to learning seems part of a more generalised reluctance to cope with the consequences of change and transitions. Parental support meant that his indecisiveness did not have the usual negative consequences: he could remain in a state of 'search for a role.'

More commonly, individuals expressed views on the specific settings in which learning took place or on the type of learning itself. Diana and Aurelia (both in Cedefop, 2014c, Italy) were both strongly inclined towards practical, experiential learning. A number of interviewees who had not done well in their early educational career returned to formal learning later on. Sergi (Cedefop, 2014c, Spain) had learning problems at school and left secondary school as he failed his exams twice in his final year of schooling, including the exams which would have enabled him to obtain VET. However, he still had a positive disposition towards learning and felt he would be able to be successful in his studies at a later date, and so it proved. He felt that he had developed a range of skills in the various jobs he had, including empathy, negotiation skills and the ability to solve problems. He then decided to return to formal study in higher education as an adult student and successfully completed his degree.

While preferences for different types of learning may remain, success in one area could influence attitudes towards learning in other ways too. Success with certain forms of learning, such as learning while working and in vocational training, could change how individuals saw themselves as learners. Overall, a

positive disposition towards learning increases the chance that individuals will be able to make successful labour market transitions. So far, attention has been on examples of individual learning relevant for labour market transitions. However, individuals can also be faced with major transitions at work due to changes in other areas of their life, such as their health or relationships.

4.4. Support for turning points triggered by life-events

Martin (Cedefop, 2014a, Germany) did an apprenticeship as a carpenter after completion of his *Abitur*. He worked for six months in another country as a carpenter before starting studying at university. However, his girlfriend was working in fashion design and Martin started to work with her, so he never completed his studies and finally became a self-made fashion designer. He and his girlfriend ran their own fashion business for 12 years fairly successfully until his partner became seriously ill. She died and since Martin could not run the business alone, as he did not have the necessary formal qualifications, he had to close it down. In this period of crisis he lost his business, his job and his partner. It was through the recommendation of a friend that he undertook a 15-month retraining programme as electronic publisher/web designer (not funded by the government, but privately) and then worked for a computer company for two and a half years. He finally quit because he found the work boring, routine and stressful. Martin was unemployed for about four years, then worked for a friend's company doing some graphical work for about three years, followed by another spell of unemployment lasting three years. He then got severe depression and fell ill for a long time. Recently Martin started to work for a cultural institution under a publicly funded employment programme. From having a clear career path mapped out, Martin faced traumatic turning points which necessitated a major change of career, with career issues interrelated with personal crisis and illness, in which future work directions were uncertain.

There were other cases where divorce or health issues meant our interviewees were suddenly faced with the need to change career direction as well as cope with major challenges in other areas of their lives. In such circumstances, support is clearly desirable to help individuals cope with their subsequent career and labour market transitions, but that support has to be placed in the broader context of how to recover in other ways. Martin had to overcome the emotional state of grief before being ready to move on, and subsequently battle against depression.

In learning for career transitions, it is clear that individuals have to be ready to move on, before work-related issues can be addressed. In some cases, the

shock to be addressed relates to the loss of employment, particularly if a person's identity is strongly bound up with his or her career. Erik (Cedefop, 2014c, Denmark) explicitly felt he needed time, and support to get over the initial shock (having been made redundant), before he felt ready to make decisions about his future career. Without emotional stability, support will be less effective.

4.5. Formal education and income

Financial difficulties can be a significant barrier to undertaking further training, particularly if this involves reskilling. In a few of the cases, the direct cost of training was problematic, but more often it was due to individuals not being able to afford any loss of wages following the decision to undertake training. Policy in this area at the moment is focused mainly on financing the direct cost of training. However, from interviews it is apparent that, in most of the cases, individuals, such as Mette and Mercuzio (Cedefop, 2014a, Denmark and Italy respectively), find the money and pay by themselves for the training if they find it interesting and useful. There were other instances of low-wage workers engaged in substantive formal education and development, such as Saray and Eduard (Cedefop, 2014a, Spain), where they supported themselves through part-time work and/or received support from their family and partners.

Financial support from family was quite common when interviewees were young and single and making their way through IVET or as a higher education student. Such support often continued when transitions into employment were extended. However, when interviewees themselves had families and dependants later in their career, then the situation changed. The major constraint to engaging in substantive mid-career education and training comes from other obligations and the fact that, as an adult learner, you may still be responsible for a family: here it is lack of income while in training that bites. Mads (Cedefop, 2014a, Denmark) could not afford to be in training, with the consequent loss of income, especially as his wife was currently on a course. The loss of income was one of the reasons why the role of his employer was so important and his frustration that a supervisor or manager effectively locked him out of access to employer-supported training.

In such circumstances, one alternative is to continue working and undertake part-time education and training. However, this can put a different type of burden on a family as it involves one family member effectively doubling workload. Lack of career guidance, and sometimes more general lack of support, meant that viable plans were not formalised and that individual career development was opportunistic rather than fully considered.

4.6.   Major career changes and initial education

Some interviewees had major shifts in career for family reasons, change of life focus, and taking on a new professional identity. Anna (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany) switched from tax consultant to nursery teacher in Germany. She quit the Gymnasium and went to a commercial school/college. She then did an apprenticeship as assistant tax accountant and worked, after completion, for one year in the job but mainly to earn the money to do another 2-years training as nursery teacher (one year shorter as some community work Anna had been doing voluntarily was accredited as prior learning). She then worked for five years with a faith-based youth association, followed by four years in a kindergarten and is now with her current employer, a kindergarten for disturbed children and those who are in need of special education (but not disabled). Anna was greatly supported by her parents in the career change from tax consultant to nursery teacher. She made her switch early in her career and then had to deal with having a series of temporary contracts, which are common in the education field. Although with age and work experience Anna has become more confident in getting renewed contracts, this element of insecurity still makes her feel uncomfortable. It may be that, because of this, she may be faced with another change of career direction. The point here is that with Anna, as with many other interviewees, completed training in one field and it was only sustained experience of work in that field that made them reconsider their career direction. For every person who moved there was another who felt they could not move even though they would have liked to. Looking across the sample as a whole, one lesson is that the extensive focus on career progression within a field downplays the extent to which many people would like to undertake more radical shifts of career direction.

4.7.   Career as a search for meaning

Just as it is possible to think of (higher) education in narrowly vocational terms, so missing how, for some individuals, it is primarily about personal development, being exposed to new perspectives, building personal networks and learning to think in ways appropriate to a discipline or area of study, so it is possible to conceive of a career narrowly in terms of work to be undertaken. This perspective overlooks the importance of ideas of 'being', 'becoming', identity and the search for meaning. For some of our interviewees their career actions did not make 'sense' in terms of rationality and progression towards clearly articulated career goals. Several Italian and Danish interviewees had careers which only made

sense if you understood them as examples of a search for meaning and how other life goals impinged upon how their careers developed.

Karin was another example (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany). She left secondary school without a certificate to work with children for 1 year, but then decided to go back to school and complete the *Fachabitur* specialising in textiles. She then entered the *Fachhochschule* trying out different course combinations (education, textiles, sports, German language) and worked in parallel in different jobs. After four years, Karin quit her studies, moved to another town, went into a programme to train as midwife, but quit after three months because she became pregnant. She then stayed home with her children for the following 10 years. To get back into work, Karin visited some vocational orientation programmes and was finally offered work with a restorer in a museum; she stayed here for a year and a half before moving through private contacts to do an internship at the theatre working as prop master. During this time Karin continued to receive unemployment benefit, but then took different temporary jobs in this field until she started to work freelance seven years ago. With prop mastery being registered as a craft, Karin also got a title from the chamber of crafts and permission to work as a freelancer. Two years later she got a part-time (50%) permanent position at the local theatre, where she still works. Her career narrative revolves around being in a search of what to do professionally and trying out different things, not to make a career, but to combine work with self-fulfilment.

4.8.   Agency is part of the story only

These examples act as a strong reminder of the significance of agency. One important application of agency is in maintaining the course during transitions, especially in the first representation of the model as 'learning as becoming'. There is a cost in focusing too narrowly on the importance of skill development and support structures for career development concerned solely with skill development, important though these are. The search for meaning permeates the strategic career and learning efforts in many biographies.

However, individual agency can be expressed within the opportunities allowed by the environment surrounding individuals (the structure confronting workers and the next chapter shifts focus to examples of how workers navigate the opportunity structure confronting them.

CHAPTER 5.
Opportunity structures in career transitions

The most obvious ways in which learning for labour market transitions are facilitated or constrained for individuals in particular contexts are in access to the opportunities associated with different types of employment, training and education. How some of these play out is outlined in the following section. The importance of access to challenging work for skill development, supporting learning for subsequent labour market transitions, appeared in most of the 'iconic cases' outlined in the *Data analysis* (Cedefop, 2014a) and this strand will not be repeated here.

5.1.   Temporary work

The search for a permanent contract was significant in many accounts across all countries. Rainer (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany), a supervisor, expressed a common view in stressing the importance of secure employment, with temporary work seen in a problematic light. However, temporary jobs often play an important career bridging role. Christian (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany) worked as a gardener in a graveyard and as a courier driver while waiting to gain access to his preferred course of study. Engaging in temporary work can be a means to develop useful skills and accumulate experience; it only becomes problematic if an individual stays in such work for too long. Sometimes temporary work is readily accepted as being particularly interesting or challenging (as with Paul's work in set design in theatre support roles). It can be used positively to stave off the prospect of unemployment and/or enrich and extend a skill set to improve adaptability, increasing the chance of successful transitions in future. The experience of temporary work can also be formative, helping in structuring the reflective process and then evolving into a career; this was the case for Didier (Cedefop, 2014a, France) who, while working on a temporary summer job, developed an interest in gardening and finally became a landscape designer.

Temporary work may often constrain career transitions, especially if a permanent contract is desired and remains out of reach, but, in other circumstances, it may aid labour market transitions by helping individuals develop their skill sets.

5.2.   Security and career development

Given that permanent employment was a goal for so many interviewees, for some it either supported career progression, by setting individuals on a genuine career ladder, and for others it constrained an individual because of lack of opportunities to move on. There were cases where people felt they were locked into permanent employment. Sabine (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany) is a paediatric nurse, who had been working with the same employer in a rehabilitation centre all her working life (over 20 years), but in three different positions, for most of that time working 30 hours per week. She tried several times to redirect her career to specialise as a speech therapist, but was not successful due to formal obstacles: the programme required job experience and to be able to meet this requirement Sabine would have had to give up her secure job. A particular issue was the non-accreditation of prior learning. However, she believes that her stable and privileged employment position has been the main reason why she finally never completed other career and learning pathways she started. The narrative here is that structural conditions (secure employment versus insecure job perspectives and restrictions due to formal requirements), combined with lack of support, have been major obstacles to professional development and 'moving on'. Despite encountering dissatisfaction with work, the wish to keep her stable employment has locked her into the current position.

5.3.   Early experience with different types of contexts and career

The German sample included examples of men undertaking activities in their period of civil service, as an alternative to military service, which were sometimes performed in a completely different context to the rest of their career, as with Christian (Cedefop, 2014a, Germany) working in an elder care institution. This has implications for helping people develop their skill sets and improving their adaptability: as learning to perform effectively in very different contexts or performing different types of work activities refines skills and may broaden overall skill sets through exposure to development in different domains. This idea of exposing early career learners to a variety of contexts to broaden and deepen their learning is not new. It was enshrined in the regulations governing apprenticeships in medieval times, as journeymen, on initial qualification, were expected to embark on a 'grand tour' to experience different ways of working and work cultures in different cities, or at least agree to work a set distance away from where they were trained for a year and a day. Several French interviewees in the health field followed a similar path in undertaking voluntary work overseas.

5.4.   Significance of part-time work

Many interviewees voluntarily switched to part-time work at some stage in their career, often, but not always, because of a desire to balance work and family responsibilities. Sandra (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany), a speech therapist, is an example of someone who varied her hours, not only because of child-care responsibilities, but also to retrain and to take on responsibility as the primary bread-winner. Sandra completed secondary education with the *Abitur* and afterwards spent about two years doing different jobs, travelling and also studying at university for a couple of months until starting two-year training as a masseur. She worked as a masseur with different employers for four years knowing that actually she wanted to do something different. For a five-year period, during which she had two children, Sandra stayed at home as a primary care-giver and then decided to pursue another qualification as speech therapist. Around this time Sandra also started a course on alternative medicine, which she never completed. She was fortunate to get into the three-year training programme to qualify as speech therapist, after which she started in her new profession, full-time for a couple of years and then for seven years working part-time (75%).

Sandra's narrative revolves around seeking to establish continuity in her working life, which was partly in parallel with building a family. Starting afresh in a new profession was also a result of her husband's health problems, which made it clear that Sandra would have to become the breadwinner in the longer term. Currently, she is considering building on the courses she did in alternative medicine, because this is something that really interests her. While financial constraints, in terms of prospective loss of income, are an issue if she was to undertake full-time retraining, the amount of learning involved is a major obstacle at the moment if she was to try to do the retraining as well as her current work. Overall, however, it is clear that Sandra was previously able to vary her hours in ways which balanced her current work and family commitments, but also allowed her time to devote to redirecting her career.

While Sandra's case illustrates the flexibility afforded to career development by engaging in part-time work, it is also possible for people to feel trapped in such work to the extent that they feel their careers have stalled. For example, Gabi (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany) has been working with a bank for 20 years, but in different branches in the region. Before having her children she worked full-time, then stayed at home with the children for six years. She then went back to work with the same employer, part-time (50%). Gabi was trained in the former East Germany under the old system as a *Wirtschaftskaufmann DDR*. To keep her job Gabi had to undergo a retraining/reaccreditation course of six to nine

months to get the equivalent West-German certificate as *Sparkassenkauffrau*. With this qualification she finds herself at the lower end of career options in the bank and has remained at the reception/referral desk ever since. She also does not see herself moving up, because there is much competition from younger, more highly qualified colleagues and Gabi herself would neither have the energy nor the resources to undergo further major retraining. However, she would like to work more hours and to be more involved at work, but needs to give priority to her family commitments. The narrative here is the career priorities of the partner and family commitments over own career and work interests, combined with a competitive work environment where Gabi does not see that she can ever improve her current position.

Overall, part-time work may aid career transitions, especially if the switch is made to accommodate other life transitions such as the need to care for young children or to finance participation in adult education (as the examples in the Spanish sample show). However, a person may also become locked into part-time working, where it is difficult to return to full-time work and other career options appear to be unattainable.

5.5.   Work intensification, stress and 'burn-out'

Experiences at work can be a major source of learning and development, but they can also lead to stalling of a career. Rainer (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany) finds aspects of his work as a supervisor in a factory very difficult. Rainer pointed to work intensification, time pressure and shift work, as well as acting as a buffer between workers and management, as aspects that make him feel burned out sometimes. Stress was mentioned as a major barrier to career development in a number of the Danish cases, but it is Anke (Cedefop, 2014a, Germany) who provides the most dramatic example of someone going beyond their ability to cope. It is an instructive example as to why it might be helpful to offer mid-career reviews to everyone rather than waiting till a crisis occurs.

Anke initially wanted to do an apprenticeship in a commercial field but then decided to go straight into automobile manufacturing, assembling parts in Germany where she earned more money. At that time cars were her fairly expensive hobby. She has been working for different suppliers for about 25 years (mainly piecework) in different regions of the country. During this time she undertook different specialist training, mostly employer-directed as the employer recognised that Anke was interested in the field. She also did a distance learning course in electrical engineering. She mostly changed jobs in pursuit of earning more money, finally moving to a main city in the former eastern part of Germany

to work for a company that produced medical hardware. This job was very hard and Anke worked a lot of extra hours, up to 22 hours non-stop, to make more money. Her plan had always been to stop working at the age of 50 to migrate to Canada.

She reflects that she learned to be a workaholic from her parents. She would take over work from colleagues and work extra hours continuously. She neglected her children through overworking and says that the hardest time in her life has been the short periods when she had to stay home when the children were small. About five years ago she was totally burned-out and had to stop working completely; since then she has had to live on the savings she had accrued to go to Canada. Anke was admitted to a psychiatric clinic for nine months, and her children moved to their father with whom they still live. For the last year Anke has been working in a museum/cultural institution in the framework of the activation programme. She has extended this job because she likes it as she learns a lot about herself. She says that she will never be able to go back to technical work but is now doing this more as a hobby.

In terms of our model, it is clear that the problem lies with underdevelopment in the emotional domain: Anke herself points to how she modelled the behaviour of her parents in overcommitting to work and paying insufficient attention to other aspects of her life and engagement with others. If she had received help to develop such self-understanding at an earlier stage of life, she may have been able to put in place modifications of her behaviour so that she learned to avoid rather than repeat the mistakes of her parents. This type of intervention would presumably have required formal counselling support, for as well as needing to develop greater self-understanding, she also needed to understand more about the perspectives of others.

A certain amount of stress can be a driver of performance, and individual responses to stress and the sudden removal of stress can differ. So Erik (see Cedefop, 2014c, Denmark) in some ways felt exhilarated when he reoriented his career completely in his shift from executive director to his new role. If stress at work becomes a major problem, then this has implications for all aspects of life, not just career development. It is also why the emotional domain is an important part of the model; there is a tendency in many workplaces and individual careers to overlook the importance of emotional development.

5.6. The role of IVET

The training with the most significant influence on learning for labour market transitions for many of our interviewees was IVET. The influence extended

beyond the first labour market transition for some individuals, in that it also aided or constrained access to subsequent opportunities in different employment, training and education contexts. For the many of our interviewees their IVET or studies in higher education, particularly if a vocational preparation, either established them on their chosen pathways or gave them an initial platform from which they could secure other education, training or employment. In systems such as in Denmark, Germany and France, IVET typically lasted between two and four years and an apprenticeship or other substantive IVET gave entry into skilled level work, although the proportion of those qualified who were successful in entering such work varied by time and place.

In other cases IVET was more about vocational orientation and choice than occupational preparation. Several interviewees either did not complete their training and switched direction or took a second programme of IVET after completing their first. There was a smaller third group who completed IVET and then entered higher education. IVET does not only have to balance these three partly competing objectives (occupational preparation, helping with processes of vocational orientation and choice, and aiding progression to higher education); ideally it should also support participants in the development of their career adaptability, so that they will be equipped to make successful career and labour market transitions in future.

IVET played a very clear role in developing vocational expertise in apprenticeships and other substantive IVET provision. Interviewees gave many examples of how the range and depth of their learning and development had been extended through participation in activities designed to improve performance on particular tasks, develop their situational or contextual awareness and understanding, and improve their decision-making and problem-solving. Such activities typically comprise a progressive curriculum in apprenticeship training or other IVET. The experience of work within IVET programmes often also gave opportunities for development of capabilities crucial for teamwork and role performance more generally. Exposure to increasingly more complex activities were designed to improve judgement, but interviewees commented how this often developed in the post-qualifying period when more challenging activities were undertaken and judgment was able to be developed cumulatively over time.

Interviewees who followed their expected pathway into skilled employment also highlighted the importance of IVET in helping them develop the knowledge base underpinning their practice. Chefs, carpenters and nurses all gave examples of the subsequent value of the knowledge acquired through education and training. Knowledge development could then be consolidated and expanded through acculturation, experience, social interaction, formal reflection sessions,

as well as through other less formal means of feedback. The experience of work during and after IVET was self-evidently crucial for the development of work process knowledge. The model helps in this respect as it draws attention to the different types of knowledge development; learning to apply knowledge in different and/or more challenging contexts was also an essential component of the development of vocational mastery.

Dual systems of apprenticeship institutionalise the incorporation of learning at and through work in IVET, but even predominantly education-based IVET systems will often make some use of work placements and direct experience of work. The role of learning at work (work practice) in IVET also comes out very strongly in the interviews in relation to how they developed capabilities underlining work performance. This could be through gradual exposure to more challenging work and learning through participation in work practices. The socialisation process was also valuable, as it enabled integration in the work contexts and helped develop relationships with others (members of working groups, managers, peers, subordinates, and clients). Senior trainees can also play a role in supporting the learning of junior trainees; in some cases knowledge of, for example, new techniques, might be picked up in the workplace, as in the exchange of ideas in a kitchen about new ways of preparing particular dishes.

Interviewees who had experienced IVET (including through an apprenticeship) described the ways in which their initial learning and development informed how they used and further developed the knowledge, skills and understanding to perform in their subsequent career. These represent the classic ways IVET is intended to act as both a vocational preparation and the basis for continuing skills and knowledge development.

IVET on its own, however, is rarely sufficient for an individual to reach the 'experienced worker' standard expected of an established skilled worker. There are different performance and task expectations for an experienced worker, at whatever level in an organisation, than for a person who has just joined the organisation after completion of IVET (Eraut et al., 2004). The increasing demands are likely to require individuals to continue to develop through engaging in challenging work activities which extend their skills in a number of respects.

Interviewees also highlight the breadth and depth of forms of learning and development relevant to work with which they subsequently engaged. Where interviewees followed traditional progression pathways related to their IVET (such as an apprenticeship) the value of their IVET was clear. However, people who developed their careers well beyond their initial training still gave examples of what or how they had learned that was relevant to new contexts. IVET is permeated by dialectic between short-term and long-term considerations: preparing for the immediate tasks to be performed and nature of (craft or

technical) work is important but there is also value in equipping people for further progression. Interviewees stressed they did not forget or give up their 'old' ways of thinking just because they move into a new area; rather they seek to adapt it in new ways. The Danish carpenter who progressed to setting up exhibitions, then became a team leader and finally moved into logistics support, still valued his original qualification and training as providing underpinning for his continuing development.

Practical skills can be the basis for strong identities (as with the carpenter) due not necessarily to a sense of continuing vocation (although that is possible too, as with German carpenter who progressed to a specialist theatre set designer), but rather as embodying a particular way of thinking and practising. However, even where this is valued, an individual might still be capable of a major shift, as in the Danish case where a craft worker switched career to become a teaching assistant for special needs; the interviewee found this rewarding in a different way from his previous work. This highlights the point about people following different trajectories for different aspects of their learning and development, depending on whether it is primarily concerned with the cognitive, practical/technical, emotional, or relational, or involves a different mix of the four domains.

5.7.   Using CVET to develop and deepen expertise

Paul, a carpenter, (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany), completed his apprenticeship and then stayed on as a trained carpenter in the same carpenter's shop for another four years. Because he wanted to deepen his expertise, he then went, inspired by the carpenter who did work for the theatre, to a special full-time handicraft design school for two years. The German system makes comprehensive use of progression to *Meister* so that further education and training allows skilled workers to consolidate, deepen and enhance their expertise. There were many examples from all countries of interviewees using CVT to update their skills or broaden their skill set with a view to doing their current job more effectively or supporting subsequent career progression. CVT varies from a few days to a few years and could be a component of a national system, linked to a particular sector, provision supplied by regional or local providers, or part of a company scheme.

5.8. Career progression: licence to practise

Paul's case serves as a different type of example. In Germany there are issues around the extent to which *Meister* and equivalent qualifications operate as a licence to practise as an independent tradesperson. Paul took a further qualification (*ausgebildeter Gestalter im Handwerk*, certified applied craft designer), which was funded by the government (with the *MeisterBafög*). Doing the *Meister* would have been the alternative, but he opted for the school-based qualification. However, he found out that this qualification did not allow him to start his own carpenter's workshop (which to date still requires the *Meister* qualification), so as an alternative he started a business for assembly (*Montagebetrieb*), which, during the past years, transformed into a carpenter's workshop. Subsequently, for almost six years he has now worked as an independent carpenter. A licence-to-practise system institutionalises support for learning for an important career transition, to being able to ply a trade independently. In line with much of the German system, there is emphasis on the importance of training for responsibility. The alternative would be to learn through the exercise of responsibility and then complement learning through undertaking challenging work with other forms of learning and development, possibly including more formal learning and development.

5.9. Influence of CVT provision on formal learning

Hanne (Cedefop, 2014c, Denmark), a manager with responsibility for human resources, does not relate her own shifts to the structure of the labour market. When talking about employees' learning opportunities, however, she very much relates to structures in the adult education system and the associated financial benefits.

Hanne is very experienced with the Danish AMU-system of CVT and uses it when planning learning activities for sales assistants in the shops. The company can obtain wage benefits for employees when they attend courses in the AMU-system, though the system only applies to employees with lower level vocational qualifications. Hanne develops courses intended to be relevant to the shop employees and their managers. Usually the managers are optometrists and, because of their level of qualification, the company cannot receive benefits if they receive training in the AMU-system, so the company do not use the system when planning training activities.

Hanne relates how she has just run a course for all the sales assistants across the country; 165 have now completed this course. However, Hanne thinks that she is not allowed to develop new courses together with the institutions

because of the competence descriptions and learning objectives of the institutions. This comment indicates that the institutions cannot react flexibly to company needs but have to fit the qualification and competence profiles already specified, which contribute to how the institution will be judged. She finds the system good but a bit slow in terms of inventing courses that meet participant needs. She has to be very active in the development of the courses.

Hanne finds the opportunity for the optometrists to get benefits from national support for adult training (SVU) very positive except that the administration of the grant is quite inflexible, making it almost impossible to make good use of the money.

The structure of a CVT system sets the broad parameters of how employees from companies could engage in continuing professional development, but the interests of other stakeholders (such as provider institutions) will influence how the provision is implemented. As well as making use of employment, training, IVET and CVET for skill development and career progression, some interviewees made use of higher education to support their labour market transitions.

5.10. Higher education and intermediate-level jobs

Interviewees who had studied in higher education immediately prior to, or soon after, completing their secondary education (mainly at degree level, although some took other short-cycle subdegree higher education programmes and a few had diploma/master degrees) ([12]) described the ways in which what they had learned during their higher education studies informed how they used and further developed the knowledge, skills and understanding to perform in their subsequent work career.

Henri, the engineer, (Cedefop, 2014a, France), undertook part-time higher education which, coupled with learning while working, enabled him to become a qualified engineer. His five year programme corresponded to a bachelor degree in a school of engineering (*haute école spécialisée*), which was more focused on practical aspects than a similar training path at university. The technical, practically-focused knowledge and understanding was fundamental to his

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([12]) The intention in sampling was to get interviewees who had not had full academic training – equivalent to master level – early in their career. Under Bologna criteria, exit points from higher education should be at bachelor level or below. However, most interviewees who had entered higher education did so before the Bologna reforms. In the German settings this was resolved by including students who mostly did not complete their higher education studies or who studied outside the university system.

identity, a specialist engineer working 'in a company using specialist technology'. He also viewed the practical orientation to his skills, knowledge and understanding developed in the Swiss school of engineering as superior to the more academic orientation of engineering graduates in Swiss and French universities.

One way to encourage the development of more technical, practically-focused vocational higher education programmes is through permeability between VET and higher education. One avenue to promote permeability is through dual study programmes where higher education institutions and industrial partners collaborate in the design and delivery of programmes which make it possible to acquire a skilled worker's qualification and a bachelor degree side by side. Such schemes have become increasingly popular in Germany.

Henri had taken a technological Bac and a BTS (*brevet de technicien supérieur*), so his route into higher education represented an extended post-school transition. Other post-school vocational routes into higher education, at the time Henri was studying, also took longer than following a school-based pathway. Policy-makers were concerned whether vocational routes into higher education taking longer than academic pathways are disadvantageous. Recent developments in French vocational education point to a dilemma in thinking about how best to support learning for career and labour market transitions. The school-based academic route has largely had a single driver, securing the right of entry into higher education, even where not all students were seeking to follow that path. However, school-based vocational education is likely to have multiple goals, securing the right of entry to higher education, acting as vocational preparation for those looking to enter employment directly or to undertake further VET, and, in some cases, offering an alternative, sometimes partly remedial, route for those who might struggle to complete the academic route.

Recent reorganisation of training cycles in secondary vocational education in France have seen a shortening of the time to complete some qualifications. This was to offer equivalence with the academic track in relation to time taken to complete a qualification for gaining entry to higher education. Through this development the systems which allow students following a vocational track in upper secondary education (and/or prior to entry into higher education) to take longer to prepare for entry into higher education (Netherlands, Austria and parts of the UK system in the past) have tended to lead to more successful completions at degree level. It is presumed that, as well as developing practical skills, knowledge and understanding, the students were able to remediate any gaps in their academic skills before entry into higher education programmes. In Germany and Switzerland entrants to higher education sometimes complete an apprenticeship, as well as achieving the academic qualification to enter higher

education. In terms of our model, the skill set of such entrants is likely to be broader than for those following a narrower academic curriculum prior to entry into higher education.

Henri was also a representative of the part-time higher education tradition, where learning while working complements formal study. Some interviewees who undertook part-time higher education later in their career with a view to upskilling also highlighted the complementary breadth and depth of learning and development from learning while working. However, other interviewees enrolled in higher education programmes later in their career with a view to reskilling and personal transformation, as with the Spanish interviewees enrolling in social work, education or psychology programmes. Their new studies were expected to provide an introduction to the knowledge base, and ways of thinking and practising, necessary to underpin their (aspirational) new career. Personal development, building new networks, relational development or adoption of new perspectives are drivers which influenced performance in their subsequent work careers.

5.11. Need for up-to-date labour market information

There are issues around how best to keep people informed about changes to occupation structures. This is particularly the case as some well-known occupational career pathways are effectively closing down as permanent positions for those starting out in their careers vanish. Andreas (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany) started work as a freelancer for a small regional newspaper, then completed a two-year traineeship and finished as editorial journalist (all in a small town in the new federal States). Andreas then searched for a new job as journalist in the West, mainly because he wanted to leave the East. He started working for a small newspaper in the North, changed again to a bigger one and was one of the last in this sector to get a regular, permanent contract. He has now been working for this newspaper for 10 years. The clear pathway of progression through a series of permanent contracts is no longer available as the sourcing of stories for newspapers has been transformed, with much less use made of journalists who are full-time employees with permanent contracts. However, young people with aspirations to become journalists may be unaware of how the new structures operate.

5.12.   The macroeconomic context

The availability of opportunities (or opportunity structures) is influenced both by policy design and the macroeconomic context. General macroeconomic conditions (strong or weak labour demand) varied between countries and over time for our interviewees. Labour market structures (the demand for specific qualifications, the status of occupations, the existence of occupational or internal/organisational labour markets) also helped frame their decisions about career and learning. The availability of, and opportunity to access, learning and training programmes at different times over the life-course are also important (as are any difficulties and barriers encountered in trying to access them). The availability and quality of career guidance received or on offer (if any) is also important, as is the role of learning and training in human resource practices within organisations. The structure and content of job activation programmes for the unemployed vary by place and over time. Taken together, these factors reinforce the notion that, for many individuals, their career decisions are strongly influenced by the context in which their decisions are made. A major challenge of how to support learning for career and labour market transitions is how can support offer constructive ways forward when the opportunity structures appear as constraining as at present in large parts of Spain and Italy. Many interviewees in both countries were experiencing extended transitions, even into employment for which they were fully qualified.

CHAPTER 6.

Support structures during transitions: the case for guidance

Career guidance has the potential to support learning for career and labour market transitions, provided attention is focused on the particular requirements of individuals in their mid-career. In addition to building resilience, Bimrose et al. (2008) highlighted five ways in which clients in the age group (mainly 35-45) had found their guidance useful: giving access to specialist information; reducing confusion; motivating or providing new insights; confirming ideas; and building confidence. Guidance had resulted in direct and positive change: a change in their situation, or thinking, and/or future plans; being pointed in the right direction; being given alternative options/ideas to consider; or having affirmation of their ideas. Guidance had acted as a catalyst for positive change, even where agreed action had not been implemented or advice followed.

Guidance can help people with their learning for upskilling and reskilling and also in managing a range of career transitions and support in trying to maintain a positive self-image, even when transitions were not working out as expected. It follows that measurement of the impact of guidance needs to take account of 'distance travelled' by clients, in a way that focuses on the process of effective guidance as well as its quantifiable outcomes. The implications for learning for career and labour market transitions is that guidance services need to be responsive to the particular requirements of individuals and that how guidance and learning services are interrelated is an important policy issue. Guidance is an essential tool; to be effective it should be geared to individual needs. It should also be made available as early as possible (even in schools) to help self-reflexive processes in young people. Guidance is important because it can provide the space for individuals to reorient and anticipate themes and pathways that might not be available within families. Knowledge of the functioning of the labour market passed on from previous generations (within families) can become obsolete when labour market structure and functioning is changed by societal processes (such as flexibility, globalisation, individualisation, and unemployment). Guidance can help entrants in the labour market to develop perspectives which allow them to think in terms of required skill sets and interests, and to find meaning in learning and career choices.

However, these desirable features are usually not part of activation programmes, so the usefulness of standardised provision of active labour market

policies or a standardised approach to the unemployed by the public employment services has been questioned.

The usefulness of our representations for guidance and labour market services is examined using three cases from the Danish sample: Erik, Mette and Anna. Erik (Cedefop, 2014c) is experiencing a forced transition (redundancy), Mette (Cedefop, 2014a) is always in transition (she is constantly trying something new), while Anna (Cedefop, 2014a) is going through a long spell of unemployment. All three cases have had contact with the public employment services. The focus on the Danish sample is warranted by the fact that this is the country where guidance is most advanced; there is also considerable support for job seekers at all levels and the interviewees know that they will have to be in contact with the services. We begin with the story of Erik, an executive recently made redundant, with six coaching sessions as part of the outplacement package.

The importance of learning as becoming is immediately clear in Erik's reaction to his first coaching session: 'I was offered a scheme with placement and outplacement service and I started, but I couldn't really go on with it. I didn't really know what to do and couldn't find out what I wanted to do and so on. Basically, I had a good time being at home, but the insecurity about what the hell should happen to me afterward, weighed heavily so […] I couldn't really enjoy it as I liked, like you enjoy a holiday for a month knowing that you have something to return to' (Erik in Cedefop, 2014c, Denmark).

The toolkit provided by the coach appears to have worsened Erik's situation. Via these tools Erik was to write down what his mission and objectives were, but emotionally these tasks turned out to be overwhelming. From an analytical perspective, it seems that the consultant has moved too quickly in relation to Erik's needs and pushed the process beyond what he could handle, too far out of his comfort zone: 'I got a briefcase where I had to write what my mission and life goals were, and I had to get back to work again, great, that was awesome. I sat at home, I sat in the living room and looked at the papers, and suddenly I started crying. I just sat there and my eyes filled with tears. My wife sat in the sofa and asked, "What's wrong?" "I don't know. I simply cannot contain it. If I start containing it, I start crying". I couldn't' (Erik, Denmark).

Erik needs to learn how to become, because he has never reflected on his career: 'I have never reflected on where I wanted to go or how far I wanted to go. No, actually I haven't. On the other hand, I have never reflected on whether I was where I wanted to be either. It all happened by chance' (Erik, Denmark).

However, he learns how to learn about himself, and he does so with the support of a friend who has been able to give him the feedback necessary to reflect on his situation and gain new perspectives to work from: 'I have a really,

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really good friend. He's also the one who has provided me with the contacts [to the golf clubs]. He is the most fantastic person to sit down with and have a conversation, so that you find clarity about your situation and what you think. He gives you a friendly kick, so you turn things around' (Erik, Denmark).

Erik emphasised that dialogue is one of the most important factors in taking a radical decision and he continued: 'If you don't have such a friend, then buy a session with a coach, who is good at it' (Erik, Denmark).

This is something which occurs in all the samples: the open dialogue in which somebody actively listens and takes on the role of a critical friend.

After this initial stage, Erik is ready to move on to the second representation and deploys all his relational, cognitive, emotional energies to the task. Then he resumes working with the coaching services: 'I worked with [guidance provider] about this [decision]. To get the greater perspective: what do you want to do with your working-life? I tried to make a journey: I stand before the day of retirement and look back on the past 20 years, which are those that I have to define. When you see those years, what do you see? What has been fantastic? Why have you been happy for those 20 years? What have you done where you thought, wow, this is just fun and great?' (Erik, Denmark).

Erik's narrative points to the fact that counselling/coaching cannot be standardised and delivered as a 'bulk' commodity. It has to be adapted to the individual client and take his/her life situation into account. Contrast Erik's experience with the coaching service with his experience with the unemployment support from the union (which is under the control of the public employment system); the role of dialogue and the need for symmetry between the participants in the dialogue arise. About the intake interview at the union, Erik says: 'When I was fired and applied for unemployment benefit, I needed to go to an interview. At first I thought, "great". As an introduction, a two hour presentation was held about practical stuff and legislation. It was ok. And then we had this interview and I thought, that's great, I look forward to it. I'm going to have a good dialogue with this guy about the future. How I see it and my possibilities. And then I came up to a young guy, who definitely didn't have any management or personal experience. He was standing at a counter. "You have to apply for this and this many jobs!" Well, listen, I'm looking into the possibility of becoming a green keeper and of course it's difficult […] "That's not enough. You have to apply for other jobs". Well, fine, but my goal is to become a green keeper. "But the rules are like this: you have to apply for at least four jobs and then you have to apply for something else". Ok, see you' (Erik, Denmark).

The impression that Erik is left with is that the interview was solely about control and had nothing to do with guiding him in his efforts to change career. The intake dialogue appears a standardised procedure which leaves little space

for personal elements. In the Danish narratives, the role of the PES seems to be concentrated around making people abide by the rules and less on supporting the unemployed. Consider the case of Mette (Cedefop, 2014a, Denmark) and what she says in the interview about her experience with job centres: 'Yes, but I just think that they (PES) are not even taking the time to sit down and really listen to people. And it has lacked every time I've been there. They are more focused on getting people quickly through the system. Out of their office, yes; not out of unemployment, as such, of course. Somehow I can understand them, because the more people they get back to work, the less they get to do. That is, if they have less work to do, so they will also be fewer. They would close themselves down. So I understand, but it's just not good practice. I think it's a shame there are enough good resources; we need to listen to what people want. And many of them, they are geared to do something different than what they're doing. Through an interview you could find out. You don't get anything from answering questions on a piece of paper, because the only thing you have to answer is what computer programmes you know and for how many years have you been doing Excel. It gets you no wiser people […] I didn't know what I wanted to do […] I could not put a title on […] I think the people who sit on the other side of the table should be professional enough to come up with ideas on what it could be. Just like my expectations to the career counsellors in the schools. They should be able to come up with good ideas, well, what do you want to be when you grow up? (Laughs) […] And I think it is a real shame because I really think that they (PES) miss being able to get people out in some amazing jobs that they would love wildly' (Mette, Denmark).

Mette points to the need for career counsellors to support opening up the space for the individual and helping her through the stages of finding out 'what you can do', 'what you want to do', 'how you can do this' and 'what are the possibilities'. She points to the professionalisation of the career counsellors in the job centres and from the narratives, we would point to the need to separate career counselling and the control functions laid down in the legislation on unemployment benefits. The fusion of the two leads to a double role of the career counsellor and adds ambivalence to the relationship between counsellor and counselled.

Anna (Cedefop, 2014a, Denmark) has similar remark about the role of PES. At the time of the interview Anna was in a long spell of unemployment (long-term unemployment), and connected to the regional labour market centre (PES). She feels that the unemployed people were treated in a condescending and humiliating manner. She tells how people who had been in the labour market for 40 years were treated badly. She thinks that support from her unemployment fund is better at supervising unemployed people. At the job centre, individual job

interviews are often mass meetings where a client has to draw a number to get access to individual support. At the time of the first interview Anna is soon to be activated, according to the Law on early activation. She starts in May and the activation ends in June. Her activation activity will be a course that focuses on writing a CV and job application. She has been through similar courses five times and Anna is very critical. She thinks it is a waste of time. It would be more meaningful if she could have a job with wage subsidy. Anna was interviewed again in March 2013. She had been through two activation courses, one in May 2012 and one in January 2013. The activation courses lasted four weeks and took place on weekdays from 8.30 to 14.30. They were in the same place and had similar content. The activation courses were run as part self-study, part exercises and part interviews. Anna compared the two courses and said that the second time it had been more structured and included more exercises, but was still primarily based on self-study: participants were applying for jobs during the course and the teachers were helping them with writing the application and teaching them to answer a telephone. The participants included recipients of unemployment benefits, social security and those eligible for help because they had fallen outside the unemployment system (recent legislation has reduced this period from four to two years). Anna said that many of the participants were not motivated and spent most of the day playing cards. It was up to the individual participant to make use of the offer and ask for interviews with the teachers. The teachers put their network at the disposal of the participants but, for most participants, the course did not lead to employment. However, Anna thinks that the course was helpful in the sense that she had something meaningful to take part in and she enjoyed being part of the group. She found the conversations with the other participants very helpful but, otherwise, the course was focusing narrowly on writing CVs and on job interviews.

It is clear that without personal engagement and ownership on the part of applicants, active labour market policies are far less effective than what they could be if they allowed for a more personalised approach. The people Anne is referring to have not been through the first representation of the model described. Not having negotiated the first phase successfully, they are now having difficulties in deploying the skills necessary to navigate through the four learning and skills development domains of the second model representation.

CHAPTER 7.
Conclusions

The scrutiny of changes across the life-course from various individuals operating in very different national, industrial and life contexts provided material for an in-depth analysis of how the interrelationship between personal agency, structural constraints and opportunity structures played out in various circumstances. The strategic career and learning biographies of individuals occupying or having passed through different labour market transitions provided rich data on the development of their skills, knowledge and competences over their life course. The biographies mapped out how individuals managed their career development. These experiences can be understood using an empirical model that suggests that learning for career and labour market transitions can be represented as a process of identity development, of skills development taking place across in four domains (relational, emotional, cognitive and practical development), and in the context of particular opportunity structures.

Those wishing to support such learning have to engage across all representations: fostering the processes of identity formation and nurturing skills development (across the relational, emotional, cognitive and practical learning and skills development domains) and in ways that are sensitive to the particular opportunity structures within learning takes place. They need to resist the temptation of a narrower focus on one dimension or the other.

One of the most striking aspects of many of the strategic career and learning biographies was the depth of resilience some individuals showed in overcoming significant barriers to their career development.

Those interviewees who had made successful transitions in the labour market were able to develop along all the representations of the empirical model Support structure, active labour market policies or guidance services, should be able to help their clients do the same; they should offer support for identity development, for skills development, and to navigate the opportunity structures. All three representations are important.

The three representations are interrelated and can reinforce each other. The ability to capitalise on the interaction between the developments across the three representations is aided by being self-directed and self-reflexive. This is when learning offers the maximum level of support to labour market transitions: it is important to be able to identify the current skill set and the potential for improvement and expansion. What is required is a sense of ownership in the process of career change which also sustains learning and makes participation in

education and training support the career change. The link between being self-directed in your own learning and development and making successful transitions is transparent: if you can learn to adapt and continue to develop in your current job, even in less than ideal circumstances, this provides a basis for making successful future transitions.

Many of the interviewees who had made a series of successful transitions in the labour market had very powerful narratives of identity development, of 'becoming'. They also sensed ownership of the process, which is why it is important that workers feel they are ready to engage in career change for a successful transition. Their strategic career and learning biographies were based on specific characteristics: a degree of self-understanding; a sense of personal agency; motivation; resilience; self-efficacy; commitment to own learning and professional development; and ability to utilise their own personal resources (linked to personality, attributes, attitudes and values) to pursue their goals ([13]). These narratives all have a sense of ownership of the process of occupational change.

Shifting between the three representations is what underpins many forms of initial vocational preparation, such as apprenticeship and dual forms of learning in higher education and employment. It also underpins the development of T-shaped skills profiles: specialist expertise coupled with broad general or soft skills. Many institutions already do this, but it should be more prevalent in all forms of VET. A narrow focus on immediate employability can act to lock people into low-skilled employment, while a focus on career adaptability, underpinned by learning across the four domains, and substantive expertise in a discipline, occupation or technical field, offers immediate prospects and provides a foundation for continuing learning for future career transitions.

Promoting career 'adaptability' brings in the relationship between structure and agency and shifts the question to how to continue to make progress in relation to personal development even when structural changes make it much harder to find permanent employment. That shift also then links to the second representation of learning as a process of development in four learning and skills development domains. Interviewees drew out how learning within and across the domains varied at different periods of the life-course.

In modern economies, workers are often faced with changes in patterns of employment, transformation of some occupations and changes in the

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([13]) A few interviewees with successful careers had made their way by following pathways which were clearly laid out or by taking advantage of opportunities generated through personal networks or in benign labour markets.

organisation of work. Demands at work may change suddenly after a long period of relative stability, so workers feel they have not engaged in substantive learning for some considerable time. This might happen more often than workers can anticipate through mergers, acquisitions, outsourcing decisions, and changes in management (managers can leave the company on their own initiative or because the company decide to replace them). Macroeconomic crises may also threaten employment stability, as can changes in personal circumstances due to health, family, or redundancy; then, learning new skills can seem challenging. At the same time, the process of personal maturation and family formation will bring about changes autonomously. The realisation that change plays an important role in one's career, and of the need for reflective learning process throughout the working life, becomes an important asset in career management. Individuals facing career transitions may need support in developing this reflexivity to be able to draw on their resources to cope with the effects of change in environment. The recognition of prior learning can be an effective instrument, making explicit what skills are transferable and could be carried across different occupations. This would help in recognising to which jobs/occupations and industries workers are able to move.

Career counsellors using a conventional career narrative approach may help a client to tell a readily understandable career story, where the narrative supplies coherence, structure and links well-chosen episodes. However, while some career counsellors highlight how individuals make choices and take action in developing their careers, this may be partly because there is an expectation that this is what a careers conversation with a counsellor should involve. If the intervention is the construction of a strategic career and learning biography, there may be just as strong a story, but the emphases may be subtly different as the story-teller may consider he or she has a wider range of plots, contexts and 'acceptable' stories on which to draw. Asking about individuals' strategic career and learning biographies was linked to, but also perhaps slightly different from, an individual's existing repertoire of self-narratives. While some reflexive individuals had very clear stories, which they had clearly told previously on a number of occasions to themselves and others, other respondents emphasised how this process was getting them to think about their careers in new ways. There may be advantages in getting individuals to approach their career stories in ways which challenge them to find a story that requires some adaptation from their 'traditional story' that focuses on an explanation of how they arrived in their current job. This approach presents an opportunity to bring out messages and meanings with a fresh slant to their current position.

The key message is that what counts most is the ability to switch back and forth between representations. So, institutions providing support to job seekers

may start by helping an individual with the process of identity development, reflecting on their career story, developing a sense of career direction and a commitment to their learning, professional development and career adaptability. The next phase of support examines what types of learning and development are required across the four domains for individuals to achieve their goals. Both these processes may need to be revisited in the context of particular opportunity structures within which decisions are being made.

7.1. Learning as a process of identity development

Learning can be understood as a process of identity development, with 'learning as becoming' driving strategic career and learning biographies. This representation has an individual focus and emphasises personal qualities and abilities, such as:

(a) proactivity and self-directedness, taking advantage of learning opportunities. This can involve willingness to engage in a wide range of activities: asking questions; getting information; finding key people to support you; listening and observing; learning from mistakes; giving and receiving feedback; trying things out; independent study; and working for a qualification;

(b) ownership of the process of continuing learning and skill development to sustain motivation;

(c) self-reflexivity to understand one's aspirations, ambitions and past mistakes and build on them a plan for the future. Individuals need to understand their behavioural patterns to decide where they have come from, where they are at the moment, and where they want to be in the future;

(d) relational skills to be able to relate to colleagues, peers and superiors from whom to learn;

(e) adaptability to transfer mastery of a knowledge base (including appropriate ways of thinking and practising) or to recontextualise knowledge;

(f) critical analysis, critical reflection, visualisation and organisation and the ability to switch between context and generalisation support reflexive learning;

(g) engagement with work and learning can be an important source of well-being and emotional stability, although overattachment, work intensification and stress may negate otherwise positive effects.

7.2.   Learning across four domains

Learning and identity development can be represented as occurring across four domains: cognitive development; practical development; relational development and emotional development. There are varying degrees of emphasis over the life course. Learning can support transitions across all four domains, for example, through new techniques (practical), knowledge (cognitive), network development (relational) and confidence (affective/emotional).

Cognitive development provides the basis to pursue career transitions. Initial studies or VET were often seen by interviewees as relevant in some way to current jobs, even when the person was working in a different occupational area than originally studied or trained for. This was because these individuals had learned particular ways of thinking and practising that stood them in good stead for the rest of their career.

Going to higher education mid-career could be used for upskilling (such as a master qualification), reskilling (teacher training), or personal development (with some psychological stability and protection against the negative effects of being unemployed even where career prospects were not good, as with some Spanish interviewees).

Updating a substantive knowledge base (or mastering an additional one) often involved the completion of an apprenticeship, other vocational training or graduate study which could be achieved partly through reflection on experiences at work and partly through career development activities away from work

Practical development and learning through challenging work (including mastering practical, cognitive and communicative demands linked with particular work roles and work processes) can involve upskilling, reskilling or perspective transformation. Challenging work can help individuals adapt during their career through the iterative interaction between work and personal development: mastering challenging work in one field can help build a platform from which to adapt to work in other fields.

Relational development aids learning through meaningful interactions at work; it can be a powerful driver of adaptability. Feedback can be important in supporting role change and identity development. Supporting the learning of others is another option. In knowledge-intensive work and settings involving complex team-work, many organisations explicitly use a developmental view of expertise. These organisations pay particular attention to ensuring that their teams include people able to support the learning of others; this and peer learning are considered crucial to more effective forms of learning, and both were in evidence in supporting labour market transitions. There are certain interactions, such as weekly case reviews, mentoring and peer support, which

are expressly concerned with helping people think about learning, development and effective performance by reflecting on their experience.

Emotional development concerns learning through the experience of emotions and is an important driver for career transitions. Individuals need to understand their own emotional worlds to arrive at decisions with which they would feel comfortable. Emotional development is strongly interlinked with relational development, but also with the other domains. Organisations that pay attention to the emotional component of the work, motivate workers, emphasise communication with staff and focus, in their personnel management, on a healthy work-life-balance, strengthen individual self-confidence, increase willingness to adjust to workplace changes, and build foundations for successful management of career transitions.

7.3. Opportunity structures and career transitions

The third representation of learning for labour market and career transitions highlights how learning takes place in the context of opportunity structures within which individuals operate. The general macroeconomic conditions (strong or weak labour demand) and labour market structures (including the demand for specific qualifications, the status of occupations, the existence of occupational or internal/organisational labour markets) help frame individual decisions about career and learning. The availability of, and opportunity to access, learning and training programmes at different times over the life-course are important (as are any difficulties and barriers encountered in trying to access them). Many individuals experience extended transitions, even into employment for which they are fully qualified. A major challenge in supporting learning for career and labour market transitions is how support can offer constructive ways forward when the opportunity structures appear constraining?

The following opportunity structures were identified in the interviews:

(a) IVET has a significant influence on learning for labour market transitions. The influence extended beyond the first labour market transition for some individuals, in that it also facilitated or constrained access to subsequent opportunities in different employment, training and education contexts. The way IVET and CVET are organised can aid transitions but often their focus on progression within a sector can turn into a structural barrier for people who want to undergo career change in adult life;

(b) work structures the opportunities individuals have for learning and development, because work varies in what it offers for learning and interaction at work. Learning and development at work depend partly on the

extent to which work offers an expansive or a restrictive learning environment;

(c) temporary work often constrains career transitions, especially if a permanent contract is desired and remains out of reach, although in other circumstances it may help individuals develop their skill sets. Part-time work may aid career transitions, especially if the switch is made to accommodate other life transitions such as the need to exercise primary care for young children. However, a person may also become locked into part-time working, where it is difficult to return to full-time work and other career options appear unattainable;

(d) participating in formal education mid-career can require extensive time that people might not have, especially if they have a job and a family. Time away from the job to engage in learning is often subject to support from gatekeepers (supervisors or employers). If they are supportive, learning can usually be accommodated; if not it can become almost impossible. Qualifications can take a long time to complete, during which income may be needed to support family and dependants. Some qualifications can sometimes only be obtained with a period of work-based learning. Variation from a traditional (approved) progression pathway can make financial support critical to chances of success. Financial difficulties (whether due to the direct cost of training or not being able to afford any loss of wages consequent upon the decision to undertake training) can be a significant barrier to undertaking further training, particularly if this involves reskilling;

(e) as well as formal support structures through provision of public employment services, the influence of family and peers might shape the way in which individuals perceive the career opportunities available to them. The extended transitions of some interviewees were dependent on family support; sometimes, family responsibilities might constrain career development;

(f) support from public structures for learning for career transitions is very important. Activation programmes embedded in active labour market policies can be useful in helping people find jobs, where they give access to formal education and training opportunities or work experience, which opens the door for the sought after labour market transition. However, they sometimes fail to activate and engage people, having the unfortunate consequence of alienating them, as illustrated by some of the cases in Denmark. Here, the learning that takes place is limited. However, when they do succeed in activating people they can sustain learning in many ways;

(g) guidance counsellors can understand the interplay between external forces and individual dispositions and provide individualised advice. Their work

goes beyond career development planning and can also include counselling in cases of traumatic turning points, for example, when coping with bereavement, divorce or major health issues.

7.4. Final remarks

Navigating careers is not always an easy task. Our samples show the many different ways in which workers face career changes. Some of them are always in motion ([14]); for these individuals career changes come naturally. Other individuals, however, have made initial career choices under the influence of powerful social forces (parents and peers leading to identity foreclosure; Marcia, 1966) and then had to spend time and energy to find themselves again ([15]). The process of personal maturation, which eventually leads to the development of a sense of direction in one's life, can take a considerable amount time. In other cases workers were following a precise career path but transitions happened to be initiated outside the labour market, in the private sphere. This is the case with life events, divorces (especially for women), death of close connections, and illness ([16]). Sometimes, career changes are driven by professional illness (especially stress), injuries, and employer decisions (redundancies, outsourcing, mergers and acquisitions). The often-held sense of security in careers can be treacherous because unforeseeable change may be just beyond the horizon. Career change looms over individual careers; it can happen any time and often catches individuals by surprise. Many individuals, such as Erik (Cedefop, 2014c, Denmark), never think about their career until it is too late. However, the study shows that there are effective ways of supporting adults in their career transitions. Guidance (especially coaching) and active labour market policies, if delivered in a way that accounts for individual needs, can help individuals in finding a new frame of reference for their career. Such support structures are not available everywhere (there is a notable silence on the availability of public support in the Italian and Spanish interviews) and where it is available the service may be delivered in a standardised way.

   The study also shows that few individuals are truly mobile and would move for a job – Mette – while others are highly mobile but in relation to their interest in foreign cultures; others would move following company orders, but this move is

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([14]) Mette in Denmark and Mercuzio in Italy (Cedefop, 2014a).

([15]) Eduard in Spain (Cedefop, 2014a); Marco in Italy; Roland and Anna in Germany (Cedefop, 2014c).

([16]) Diana in Italy; Martin in Germany; Babul in France respectively (Cedefop, 2014c).

not related to job search. It follows that the labour market intelligence needed for effective guidance should be local (general country level information would be less relevant in this context).

Some of the stories revealed factors that helped in promoting mid-career reskilling:

(a) (few sessions of) independent and personalised careers guidance; this may help in attaining a clearer focus on what they want to become and how best achieve their goal;

(b) time out (in terms of unpaid leave) to gain perspective and to aid perspective and reflexivity;

(c) regular time to pursue training according to their personal interests.

Learning about becoming, the development of a clear sense of career direction, also improves participation in education and training to support career decisions. Participation in formal education and training is needed to support career reorientation, in that in structured labour market access to given occupations is only possible for workers with the right qualifications. Before enrolling in such courses, individuals need to be aware of their vocational interests. Without such knowledge directing learning effort, learning might be too dispersive, as in the case of Christian (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany) who spent nine years at university, following two degrees and finishing neither. However, engaging in formal education and training is not straightforward for adults because of the competing claims of their different roles on their limited amount of time. Adults must find time for work, family, and participation in education and training; this can be overwhelming but can be supported by measures increasing the flexibility (and decreasing time pressure) in other area. Workplace support is fundamental to flexibility for workers in linear careers (standard career progression). This is clear in the narratives of Saray (Cedefop, 2014a, Spain), Diana and Émile (Cedefop, 2014c, Italy and France) ([17]). In other cases, career change may also involve a change in employer and so workplace support cannot be expected. Flexibility can be achieved for such workers either by working part-time or on a temporary schedule or by flexible delivery of training (evening courses, weekend classes, as in the case of Henri in Cedefop, 2014a, France or Claudia in Cedefop, 2014c, Germany). In the latter case, family must also contribute by providing the necessary flexibility. The flexibility of the delivery of formal education can also be achieved by means of recognition of prior learning (and work experience). Sabine, a paediatric nurse (Cedefop, 2014c, Germany)

([17]) This theme was not developed further in the current study because it has been recently explored elsewhere (Brown et al., 2010).

attempted to change her career. She followed a university programme to become a speech therapist but did not complete the qualification because the compulsory working experience (as part of the university programme) required full-time presence on the job, which was not possible given that she was already working as nurse.

All the interviews show that there is a considerable amount of learning involved in career transitions. Learning takes place at various levels, including the personal (learning about ourselves). Being able to shift between the various representations of learning (as depicted in the model) is an important skill in itself and provides an incredible amount of support to individuals undergoing labour market transitions. Being able to switch seamlessly between the three representations of learning requires skills and reflexivity. These can be developed and, as is often the cases with investment in education, the earlier they are developed the better. It is advisable to offer career guidance in school and support the development of career development skills (reflecting on what they like, what they are good at, their strong and weak points, considering preferred careers but also alternatives). The development of these career adaptability skills will help the new generations to navigate the more uncertain labour market they are confronted with. Further, to encourage individuals to consider career changes earlier on might actually extend people's working lives.

Abbreviations

AMU	*Arbejdsmarkedsuddannelser* [adult vocational training]
BTS	*brevet de technicien supérieur*
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
CVT	continuing vocational training
EU	European Union
IT	information technologies
IVET	initial vocational education and training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PES	public employment service
SVU	*Statens Voksenuddannelsesstøtte* [national adult support]
VET	vocational education and training

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Navigating difficult waters: learning for career and labour market transitions

This report analyses how learning supports labour market transitions and career changes of adult workers across five countries (Denmark, Germany, Spain, France and Italy). To make the most of career and labour market opportunities, individuals have to rely on their own resources and their agency but also know how to navigate the institutional context. To make successful labour market transitions, individuals need to have a sense of direction, they need to learn about opportunities, and they need to learn skills. Education and training has a special role in supporting adult workers in their careers, providing them with the competences, qualifications and, in some cases, with the self-confidence needed for successful transition. Guidance services tailored to individual needs can help individuals find appropriate career trajectories in their search for suitable job opportunities, and can foster relational, emotional, cognitive and practical learning.

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