

The role of learning and qualifications in career development across the life-course

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Context:

Labour market changes: (more?) individual career transitions
Perhaps changing jobs / employers several times

Knowledge of transitions: ways learning and qualifications
support individual development across the life-course

Strategic biographies of over 800 people across Europe
interviewed in a series of studies over the last decade.

- Identification with broad occupational area?
- How do people make sense of how their learning and career evolve?
- Balance between what is learned at work and in education and training?
- Are these different types of experiences and attainments reflected in qualifications?



- For some mid-career qualifications significant role in individual development
- but relationship between learning, qualifications and employment more nuanced than dominant European rhetoric
- Episodic learning: bursts of activity interspersed with 'quiet periods'
- LLL rhetoric of learning all the time unhelpful - sets unrealistic expectations





- focus on qualifications as an end-point unhelpful in facilitating Higher Skills Development (in particular ideas of people having achieved a particular ‘level’ rather than viewing growing expertise as a developmental)
- focus on progression within sectors is often unhelpful in facilitating Higher Skills Development
- the focus on detailed learning outcomes gives a misleading picture – differences in nature of and challenge in work means there is huge variation in what people can do even with the same qualification
- low skilled work not a problem but staying in low skilled work is: need to encourage and support people in seeking more challenging work (most effective form of skill development for low skilled)



Learning at work: factors facilitating skill development

- engagement with challenging work
- interactions at work
- knowledge at work
- self-directed learning at work
- identities at work
- supporting the learning of others
- ability to switch between different contexts (recontextualisation).

At any stage we might need to enhance our skills, knowledge and understanding in the following areas:

- Task Performance
- Role Performance
- Situational Awareness and Understanding
- Teamwork
- Personal and Group Development
- Decision-Making and Problem-Solving
- Academic Knowledge and Skills
- Judgement.

- need to encourage mid-career change if want more older people to remain engaged in the labour market
- people need support to develop coherent career narratives of where they have been; what they are doing now and where they are going.

- aerospace: technical competence, but also ability to support learning of others and change ways of working
- education does not need generic targets 50% level 4 etc.
- needs to deliver breadth and depth of learning across the levels: competence alone will be insufficient
- premium on learning to learn, supporting learning of others and creativity
- Dewey: learning as a process of living not a preparation for life