



Lifelong Learning and Vocational Education and Training: To-wards Understanding the Influence of Societal Ecosystems on Learning across the Lifespan

Impetus presentation

*Natasha Kersh
Karen Evans
UCL Institute of Education*

Vocational Skills Week 2018
*VET Workshop: Vocational education and training across the lifespan
Vienna, 6-8 November*

Setting the context

- Discussion and central question:
 - originates from the 2017 European VET Skills LLL meeting,
 - emerging findings of the ongoing Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship project (EduMAP, Horizon 2020)
- Fresh trends in economic and social development have contributed to the changes in perception of learning through life
- The complex systems of communication between networks, institutions, spaces and individuals have been recognised as an important development influenced by various trends and changes at different levels of society (i.e. macro, meso and micro).
- The position and role of the learner is central to these development

Starting point...

The question that we pose in this presentation originates from the 2017 European VET Skills LLL meeting...

How can concepts of ecosystems be used to better understand learning paths and the potential of institutional cooperation in VET, in order to find out how to make educational services more effective in supporting lifelong learning within business, educational and societal ecosystems?

Ecosystems



- an evolving place-based, comprehensive social formation focused on the connected worlds of working, living and learning (Hodgson and Spours, 2018).
- connecting the worlds of working, living and learning happens through a range of cooperation among networks and may take place at macro, meso or micro levels
- communicative ecologies approach provides a way of thinking about the ways in which information and communication flows between people and through infrastructures and institutions



Macro level

- The influence of wider discourses and ecosystems
- LLL requires a shared philosophy of the purposes and benefits of adult learning (Evans, 2009)
- Learning is rooted in interactions in the social and material environment as well as in the ways in which people connect new experiences to their prior learning
- The consideration of the ways through which institutional and wider societal dynamics might enhance LLL and improve adults' life chances requires a deeper understanding from a socio-ecological standpoint.

Question for discussion: How can the concept of ecosystems facilitate an understanding of these dynamics?

Meso Level

- Institutional communication and cooperation are central to the developmental processes of LLL.
- Communicative practices are highly context-dependent.
- Better collaboration within the same organisation, as well as with external institutions, is one of the key dimensions of a successful programme.
- Communicative ecosystems and networks play a crucial role in this process.

Question for discussion: how can we make cooperation between VET providers and other sectors and stakeholders (e.g. higher education, policy makers) work better

Micro level

- Central place of the learner
- Analysis of individual and collective learning paths is critically important
- Shared understandings of the participants as well as links and learning paths from pre-school to adults and beyond to later life.
- Communication challenges, linked to limited confidence, skills or awareness, are another indication of the struggles faced by some young people
- Match between learner needs, motivations and aspirations with adult education/VET programme content, methods and contexts of delivery. The influence of relevant ecosystems and ecologies needs to be taken into account.
- Recognition of prior skills

Question for discussion: how can we ensure a match between learner needs, motivations and aspirations with adult education/VET programme content, methods and contexts of delivery?

A socio-ecological approach...

- requires the development of more participatory research*
- communication ecologies operate through networks that build these shared understandings and develop them into interventions*
- building shared understandings of the perspectives and capabilities of participants in VET is one of the core elements.*

Questions for discussion:

- How can the concept of ecosystems facilitate an understanding of these dynamics? How are social and economic changes impacting on the conception of VET?
- How can we make cooperation between VET providers and other sectors and stakeholders (e.g. higher education, policy makers) work better?
- How can we ensure a match between learner needs, motivations and aspirations with adult education/VET programme content, methods and contexts of delivery?
- How can recognition of skills and competences be expanded to better recognise multiple forms of expertise in action?