Socrates Grundtvig Project

Learning in Higher Education: improving practice for non-traditional students

Literature Review

This literature review was developed as part of the early project development. It was intended to provide key references to support the work of the different partners in the project. It was constructed as a collective project by all of the project team with contributions from each partner country. The final editing was carried out by the UK team.

Section One:
Overview of key discourses: adult learning, teaching and learning in higher education and lifelong learning

1. A brief recap on influential aspects of adult learning theory

1.1 Andragogy

A key influence on adult education discourse has been the concept of andragogy, first developed in the late 60s by Malcolm Knowles (1996) as a 'science of teaching adults', an attempt to establish different ground from (a more child-oriented) pedagogy.

The key assumptions of andragogy are:
* increasing self-directedness and independence as we mature
* adult experience constitutes identity
* readiness to learn is related to 'needs' (which in turn are related to the different developmental tasks, phases and roles of adult life)

The implications drawn from this are:
* a focus on experiential learning as much as teaching/the transmission of knowledge
* the importance of immediate rather than deferred application and meaning
* scope for a problem-centred as much as subject-centred approach

Although both the assumptions and curricular assumptions of andragogy have been much contested (see Hanson 1996), they still have a continuing residual impact on the discourse of adult education and on ideas of adult learning.

1.2 Radical adult education/Paulo Freire

The most influential adult educator/theorist in the radical tradition is probably Paulo Freire (1972) with his unequivocal starting point that *'no education is neutral'*, his distinctive pedagogical approach of *'conscientisation'* or critical consciousness, his important epistemological *distinction between 'banking' and 'problem posing'* models of education and his commitment to a critical *'praxis'* in the interests of social justice, greater social and economic equality and a critical democracy. Following Freire, radical adult educators take an explicitly political position on education for citizenship, it is *'education for liberation'* rather than 'education for domestication'.

A central tenet of a radical adult education position is its epistemology. Radical adult educators reject traditional liberal notions of value-free, non-utilitarian knowledge, highlighting instead *'really useful knowledge'* (Johnson 1988: 21-22) which engages directly with the lived experience of the unequal or oppressed. Much has been made within the radical adult education of the idea of this knowledge from below which challenges the supremacy of 'higher order' knowledge based on a liberal heritage. Freire's contribution to this debate was to offer a new paradigm in distinguishing between the 'banking' concept of education and 'problem-posing education'. In contrast to the former, where "knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing", a problem-posing approach is intended to help people to "…develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation (Freire 1972: 56). More recently this historic epistemological position has been able to take on board the concerns arising from *critical pedagogy* about explicitly accessing and listening to the *'voice'* (or voices) of excluded and different individuals and groups. Key questions here are the processes of recognising, developing and taking account of 'voice', the power of 'really useful knowledge' to transform social relations and the inter-relationship of both with more conventional conceptions of knowledge.

1.3 Other key contributions

Other important and developing influences on adult learning in Europe are the ideas of social learning (Wildemeersch et al 2000), social capital (Field and Schuller 2000), auto/biographical learning (Alheit and Dausein 2000, Bron 2001, Antikainen et al 1996) experiential learning (Boud and Miller 1996), transformative learning (Mezirow), social and dialogical learning (Flecha 2000) and CREAs 'pedagogy of the maximum' (ETGAGE 2001).

Some of these key influences will be explored further in the third section of this literature review.

1.4 Further information: a recent readable overview

A useful and provocative review of adult education traditions and pedagogies is provided by Finger and Asun (2001) in the first half of 'Adult Education at the Crossroads: learning our way out' which has chapters (including critiques) on:

- UNESCO, lifelong education and education permanente
- the pragmatic tradition: Dewy, Lindeman (US), experiential learning (Kolb), reflective practice (Schoen) and perspective transformation (Mezirow)
- the humanistic tradition (Carl Rogers, Knowles, Brookfield)

Marxist adult education (Freire, critical pedagogy, participatory action research)]

2. A brief recap on key influences on Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

An important dynamic for this project is the inter-face of the above approaches to adult education/learning ideas with the mainstream practice of HE, based as it is on disciplinary knowledge and its (banking) top-down transmission from tutors to students.

2.1 Challenges to HE Disciplinary Traditions

These disciplinary traditions are still very powerful, many would say fundamental, although they are currently being challenged within HE by an increasing emphasis on:

- vocationalism (and vocational knowledge) in HE, incorporating a new emphasis on problem-solving, work-based learning, performativity, key skills development, independent/ICT-based learning, partnerships with industry
- policy concerns about the role of HE in widening participation and combatting social exclusion, incorporating a new emphasis on access routes, partnerships beyond HE, APEL
- a growing professional/academic interests in reflective practice, auto/biographical learning, all incorporating elements of experiential knowledge and learning (Barnett 2000).

2.2 Policy Influences (for further information, see Section Two)

The practice of teaching and learning in Higher Education is also influenced by increasing policy emphases on:

- the relationship between research and teaching
- quality assurance systems

2.3 Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (UK literature)

Within the UK there are a number of texts, largely published by the Open University

Press, which focus on the process of teaching and learning in higher education from a practitioner perspective. This literature offers guidelines and suggestions for good practice in relation to, for example, using experience in the curriculum, work-based learning, discussions, group work, problem-solving approaches etc. However, they tend to address the student population as a homogeneous whole and do not differentiate between different categories of students such as younger students and adults. Relevant texts include the following:

Brookfield, S & Preskill, S (1999) Discussion as a way of teaching, OUP Buckingham
Boud, D, Cohen, R & Walker, D, eds. (1993) Using Experience for learning, OUP Buckingham
Lea, M & Stierer, B (2000) Student Writing in Higher Education, OUP Buckingham

3. A brief recap on key developments in Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning has over the last few years become an increasingly important concept in relation both to adult learning and higher education as well as a key European policy goal. As a result a number of books and journal articles have been published discussing the concept of lifelong learning in terms of theoretical, policy and practice issues.

3.1 EU Publications
The EU has published a number of policy documents on lifelong learning. The key ones include 'A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, 2001' and 'Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality, 2001'. The memorandum discusses lifelong learning in relation to the knowledge society and citizenship. It stresses the importance of lifelong learning for developing a knowledge-based economy and society across Europe. It reflects both an economic and social perspective by promoting both active citizenship and employability. The second document, 'Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality', is an outcome of the memorandum containing an analysis of needs and proposals for action (for further details see Section Two below)

3.2. Lifelong Learning in ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) Countries
The final report (2002) identifies the key characteristics of lifelong learning at global, Asian and European levels and key themes in its development. One theme which has particular relevance to this project is that of 'Policies and Incentives to Promote Access to Lifelong Learning' which addresses key issues like access and flexibility, guidance and counselling and the development of inter-culturalism.

3.3. Lifelong Learning Literature (mainly UK-based)
Some of the literature links the idea of lifelong learning to a learning society or learning organisation but it can also be connected to learning and teaching in higher education.

a. Field, J & Leicester, M (2000) Lifelong Learning: education across the lifespan, London, Routledge
This is an edited collection looking at lifelong learning in relation to theoretical perspectives, curriculum, international perspectives and widening participation in a range of educational contexts such as school, community education, higher education, vocational education and popular education. Key chapters for this project include:
Peter Scott – The Death of Mass Higher Education and the Birth of Lifelong Learning
Kathryn Ecclestone – Care or Control? Defining Learners' Needs for Lifelong Learning
Stephen Brookfield – Adult Cognition as a Dimension of Lifelong Learning
Klaus Kuenzel - Europe and Lifelong Learning: investigating the political and educational rationale for expansion
John Field – Learning in the Isles: evolving policies for lifelong learning in the Republic of Ireland and the UK
Alyson Malach - Black and other ethnic minorities communities' learning needs
Rennie Johnston – Community Education and Lifelong learning

b. Field, J (2000) Lifelong Learning and the New Social Order, London, Trentham
John Field examines lifelong learning from a policy perspective, including a discussion on EU policy. It explores why there is a sudden interest by policy makers in lifelong learning, examines patterns of participation, assesses the strategies undertaken to implement lifelong learning and the possibility of achieving a learning society.

c. Richard Edwards (1997) Changing Places? Flexibility, lifelong learning and a learning society, London, Routledge
Richard Edwards writes from a postmodernist perspective. He, therefore, talks about how lifelong learning 'is constructed through a range of discourses of unequal power' (p12). He argues that the

development of lifelong learning has resulted in and reflects changes in the ways and contexts in which adults learn with boundaries becoming 'fuzzy' in the 'moorland' of lifelong learning. Edwards critiques the way in which the economic aspect of lifelong learning as it is strongly promoted by governments, has resulted in a marketisation and individualisation of learning.

d. Oliver P (ed) (1999) Lifelong and Continuing Education, Aldershot, Ashgate
This is an edited collection looking at lifelong learning in a range of adult education settings within the UK following the publication of the UK Government's Green Paper, 'The Learning Age'. One chapter by Barbara Merrill focuses on lifelong learning in universities across Europe (Degrees of Adult Participation: Lifelong learning in European Universities. The book also contains a useful chapter by Ian Martin (Lifelong Learning: Stretching the Discourse) which argues that the discourse of lifelong learning is largely focused on the economic agenda and as a result is now divorced from the social purpose agenda of adult education.

e. Watson D and Taylor R (1998) Lifelong Learning and the University, A post Dearing agenda, London, Taylor & Francis
This book focuses specifically on lifelong learning in the university but within a UK context. It looks at how UK higher education has developed over time, its existing problems and how it can be relate to a lifelong learning agenda and become a meaningful part of a learning society and

f. Rennie Johnston (2003) 'Widening Participation, Higher Education and the Risk Society' in Journal of Access, Policy and Practice, 1.1, Leicester, NIACE
This paper examines access and widening participation initiatives in Higher Education from the perspective of the Risk Society. In the first half it identifies what we mean by a Risk Society and outlines some of the risks involved in Widening Participation: for HE institutions, for students and for society at large. The second half advocates a stronger Lifelong Learning focus as a way of coming to terms with these risks. This entails the development of greater reflexivity on the part of HE institutions in their approach to different types of knowledge: disciplinary, vocational and experiential. This needs to be allied to a greater individual reflexivity on the part of students as they begin to forge new identities and biographies as active and critical learners. The paper concludes by examining the policy implications of these intertwining processes, linking this to the possibilities of a wider role for Higher Education in relation to social exclusion: an enhancement of the civic mission of universities and a re-invention of the idea of an 'educated public' in the interests of national prosperity, equity and a more inclusive society.

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Section Two:
Policies on Lifelong Learning: European and International Organizations

2.1   Introduction

Lifelong Learning policies are becoming increasingly important for Higher Education practice. We now live in a context marked by rapid economic and technological change where people have continuously to update their competences and qualifications, not just to stay in employment but also to consolidate their citizenship and to fully realise their potential at a personal level. In HE this is leading to a massification of higher education, an increasingly heterogeneous student body, a growing emphasis on the quality of education, increasing concerns about the employability and competitiveness of students in the labour market and questions about the contribution HE can make to social cohesion.

Many international organizations have begun signposting the path towards a learning society. Since the publication of *Lifelong Learning for All in* 1996, *OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development),* Education Ministers have declared life long learning as a central policy objective. Since then, this guideline has been the basis for the OECD programme on education and training. In November 2000, the European Commission issued a *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, based on the conclusions of the 1996 *European Year of Lifelong Learning,* which formed the basis for wide consultation in Europe, including the candidate countries. The result of this consultation stressed that cooperation and coordination in this area is essential. Public consultation on this *Memorandum* has emphasised a new breadth of this definition and drawn attention to the full range of formal, non formal and informal learning activity. Thus, LLL may contribute to preparation for the labour market, prepare people to become active citizens in a democratic society, contribute to their personal development and play a significant role in the development and maintenance of an advanced knowledge based society.

LLL is one of the fundamental pillars of the European economic and social strategy adopted at the Lisbon European Council Meeting, in March 2000 [Lisbon European Council…2000]; the aim is to become, by 2010:

> the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.

In October 2003, the Brussels European Council identified the following objectives in relation to LLL [Commission of the European Communities 2003:14-15]:

> 1. Put in place comprehensive, coherent and concerted strategies

> 2. Target efforts at the disadvantaged groups – (one of the challenges) "will be to increase the awareness of the disadvantaged groups of the advantages of education and training and to make the systems more attractive, more accessible and tailored more closely to their needs"

> 3. Apply common European references and principles

2.2   Lifelong Learning and Higher Education

The *Bologna Declaration* [Bologna Declaration 1999] signed by Ministers of Education of 29 European countries, on 19 June 1999 has been identified as a political document introducing a different concept of how to built a Europe of Knowledge and a European Area of Higher Education, based on the intellectual, cultural, social, scientific and technological dimensions and respecting the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and the autonomy of universities.

This document initiated the on-going Bologna process in which Life Long Learning in Higher Education has been seen to encompass developments in Continuing Education (CE), Adult Education (AE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD). This process has begun to address, over time, the demand for and the rise of a political awareness which reflects a profound change in the status of knowledge and skills in society.

One of the outcomes of the 1999 Bologna Declaration was that Ministers agreed to meet periodically to evaluate the progress achieved. Since 1999, there has been a summit in Prague in 2001 (18-19 May) and a more recent one (September 2003) in Berlin.

In the Prague Summit, the participating Ministries reaffirmed their willingness to promote the mobility of students, teachers, researchers and other personnel; at the same time, they also recognised the need for an educational perspective of lifelong learning. As stated in the final *Communiqué of the Prague meeting* [European Ministers 2001:2]:

> Lifelong learning is an essential element of the European Higher Education Area. In the future Europe, built upon a knowledge-based society and economy, lifelong learning strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies and to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life.

In the Berlin Meeting, Lifelong Learning is highlighted among the principles and the priorities agreed. As stated in the Final Communiqué of the Conference [European Ministers 2003:6],

> "Ministers underline the important contribution of higher education in making lifelong learning a reality. Steps should be taken to align the national policies of the different countries in order to accomplish this goal and Higher Education institutions must enhance the possibilities for lifelong learning at higher education level including the recognition of prior learning."

It also recommended that,

> those working on qualifications frameworks for the European Higher Education Area should encompass the wide range of flexible paths opportunities and techniques and make appropriate use of the ECTS credits [*op. cit*., 6].

and highlighted the "need to improve opportunities for all citizens, in accordance with their aspirations and abilities, to follow the lifelong learning paths into and within higher education" [*op. cit.*, 6].

Of particular relevance to the work of this project has been the Bologna process's reference to the social dimension of Higher Education and issues like:

> equitable access, student finance, motivating members of new or under-represented groups to pursue higher education, adapting learning methods and institutional working schedules and certainly a host of other issues [Bergan 2003:14].

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Section Three:
Key Concepts in relation to adults in Higher Education

3.1. Biographical Research in Adult Education

Over the past ten years biographical approaches have become increasingly popular amongst adult educators across Europe. A research network on biographical research co-ordinated by the European Society for Research in the Education of Adults (ESREA) has helped to advance discussion and literature in this field The following people have published extensively on biographical/life history research; Peter Alheit, Pierre Dominicé, Agnieszka Bron and Linden West.

Different approaches to methodology and interpretation (based on Knud Illeris - the Three Dimensions of Learning, Roskilde Press, 2002, pp 204-205)

In biographical research there are various approaches with regard to methodology and interpretations. Thus Kirsten Weber states that her interpretation is related to critical consciousness theory, as developed by Alfred Lorenzer and Thomas Leithaeuser in particular, which uses in-depth hermeneutical interpretations of thematic group discussions as a method.

This contrasts with the biographical approach developed by Fritz Shuetze and Peter Alheit in particular, which emphasises the use of and systematic interpretation of the narrative biographical interview ie an interview in which the interviewee is encouraged to tell his or her life history, with minimal involvement from the interviewer.

A third approach can be found in the work of Ari Antikainen who adopts a two-stage process where in the first interview, interviewees tell their life stories orally with some occasional interventions by the interviewer eg about education, self-definition and areas of knowledge important in his or her life. Interviews are then analysed and significant learning experiences from each life story are identified and then re-presented to the interviewee for approval or revision in a second interview where the wider social context of these learning experiences is explored in greater detail. (for further details on Biographical Research, see Section Four of this report)

3.2 Social Learning Theory

3.2.1 Wildemeersch and Social Learning
Social learning emerges as an attempt to conceptualise the learning process that occurs in an unpredictable and uncertain environment. Wildemeersch's social learning theory can be defined as the combination of "learning and problem solving activities which take place within participatory systems such as groups, social networks, movements and collectivities, operating within "real life" contexts and thereby, raising issues of social responsibility" (1997: 1-2) It combines four issues: learning, problem solving, sociality and responsibility.

<u>Problem solving</u> is the "creation of conditions that may improve the living and /or working situation of the subjects involved" and the <u>learning</u> is the "creative process whereby fragmented experiences, biographies, competencies, habits, perspectives or understandings, become integrated into new, renewed, or more encompassing meanings or frameworks, and as such contribute to the process of problem solving". Individuals, as actors, play different roles in "participatory systems such as groups, networks, communities or organisations aimed at solving problems or coping with challenges. In doing so, they deal with resources, with meanings and with norms, and additionally deploy a variety of competencies such as strategic, interpretive and normative competencies".

Social learning is also related to processes of action, reflection, communication and negotiation: <u>action</u> moves to and between need and competence (the actor interferes with and gives meaning to the context; the context co-determinates the possibilities and limitations of this action), <u>reflection </u>is the

product of the opposition between distance and connection (the actor questions the validity of particular opinions, judgements, actions, emotions, feelings, etc.; it is often framed within the notions of single-loop learning and double-loop learning), communication swings between unilateral and multilateral control (in the unilateral control, actors defend a situation, a task, the others and themselves; they operate with their own hidden agendas and don't bring them out into open. In the multilateral control, the interaction is directed towards collaboration), and finally, negotiation oscillates between conflict and collaboration (negotiations are efforts to reach agreements about the goals to be achieved and the means to be mobilised).

The collective efforts of the partners involved, in terms of action, reflection, communication and negotiation, will 'make the difference' when creative processes along these axes are matched with aspects of power and issues of responsibility. Finally, the whole process of social learning can be enhanced or inhibited by various roles individual actors involved can play: the facilitator, the obstructionist, the core-actor and the go-between.

3. 2.2   *Wenger and Social Learning Theory*

According to Wenger (1999) social learning theory is at the confluence of 4 theories:

- on the vertical axis we have the theory of social structure (gives primacy mostly to institutions, norms and rules and puts emphasis on the cultural systems, discourses and history) and the theory of situated experience (gives primacy to the dynamics of everyday existence, improvisation, coordination and interactional choreography).
- on the horizontal axis one can find the theory of practice (addresses the production and reproduction of specific ways of engaging with the world) and the theory of identity (concerns the social formation of the person, the cultural interpretation of the body, and the creation and use of the markers of membership such as rites of passage and social categories).

Wenger (1999) attempts to develop this theory and adds two more diagonal axes. One diagonal axis "places social collectivities between social structure and practice, and individual subjectivity between identity and situated experience. Connecting the formation of collectivity and experience of subjectivity on the same axis highlights the inseparable duality of the social and the individual" (*op. cit*, p. 14). The other diagonal axis "places power between social structure and identity, and meaning between practice and experience" (*op. cit*, p. 15).
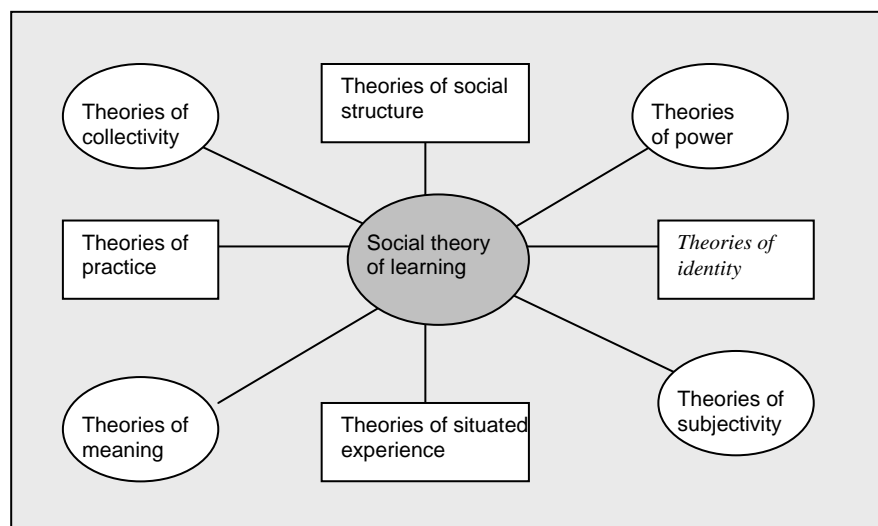
Source: Wenger, 1999: 14

The theory of Wenger (1999) is based on the following premises:
- we are social beings
- knowledge is a matter of competence
- knowing is a matter of participating
- meaning – ability to experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful

Learning occurs in social participation and this participation means "the process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities. (…) Such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do" (Wenger, 1999:4).

A social theory of learning must integrate the components (*op. cit*, p. 5):
- Meaning – way of talking about our ability to experience our life and the world as meaningful.
- Practice - way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action.
- Community – way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence.
- Identity – way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities.

These elements are deeply interconnected and mutually defining.

3. 2.3   Communities of Practice

We all belong to communities of practice, whether at home, school, work hobbies, etc. And the CoP's to which we belong change over the course of our lives.

We cannot separate the act of learning from the other activities we perform. There may be some moments where action of learning is more intensified. However, it does not mean that bringing learning into focus will make people "learn most, or most deeply" (Wenger, 1999:8). "Even failing to learn what is expected in a given situation usually involves learning something else instead" (*op. cit*, p. 8). Learning is also an integral part of our daily lives.

3. Transformative Learning

The theory of *"Transformative Learning"* by Jack Mezirow (1990, 2000) is a theory that describes and illuminate how adults learn transformation. The theory has been developed by Mezirow and his colleagues through research in the field of adult education. By studying women in re-entry programmes in community colleges in USA, they found how the women through education were liberating themselves from social dependency roles. The theory they developed focused on how to facilitate adults to transform their "frame of references", their perspectives, with the purpose to liberate and enlarge their space of conduct. Through instrumental learning, communicative learning, critical reflection as well as critical self-reflection a transformative and emancipatory learning can occur.

4. A Phenomenological Approach

Graham Gibbs, Alistair Morgan and Elisabeth Taylor (1984) have studied students in the Open University in England which have resulted in a theoretical understanding of how non-traditional students think about their studies. In their analysis they also have used Roger Säljö's and the Gothenbourg phenomenography researchers' concepts 'surface learning' and 'deep learning'.Gibbs, Morgan and Taylor make a distinction between students' different orientations in education. The four are; occupationally-oriented, academic, personal and social orientation and they are furthermore divided into inner and outer interest.

Orientation	Interest	Purpose	Urgency
Occupationally-oriented	inner	education	course relevance for future career
	outer	qualification	recognition of value for qualification
Academic	inner	follow up an intellectual interest	occasion to choose stimulating lectures
	outer	progress in the education	certificate, academic merits
Personal	inner	expansion or self-realization	challenge, interesting material
	outer	compensation or prove one's capability	accomplish the course get something back
Social	outer	to have fun	opportunity for sport or social activities

The categories don't describe the students but are ideal types. In reality the students combined different orientations. All the categories were found except for the last one (social orientation) in the group of students at the Open University.

5. Social capital and adult learning

5.1   Background and definitions
Social capital is variously described as 'a society's stock of shared values –trust, honesty, reciprocity, empathy, the keeping of commitments' (Gaffney 2000), "the glue that hold communities and other social networks together " (Preece 2002), "the stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people draw upon to solve their problems and improve their lives" (Heumann 2002).

 Some early definitions go back as far as Hanifan (1920) and, later, to Jane Jacobs' anti-planning book of 1961 "The Death and Life of Great American Cities". However, Putnam's "Bowling Alone" seems to have been the foundation for the force of discussion on the nature and prevalence of social capital in recent times. Putnam defines social capital as the "features of social organisation such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit." Fukyama asserts that the need to form human connections is so strong that "if blocked from expressing itself through legitimate social structures like family or voluntary groups, [it] appears in pathological form like criminal gangs". Coleman and Fukyama reflect Putnam's ideas in defining social capital as "any social arrangement that facilitates *individuals* (writer's italics) to reach their goals. Bourdieu's view, by contrast, sees social capital as aligned with the processes of stratification by which *classes* set themselves apart in order to reproduce and consolidate advantage. Coleman's and Putnam's views allow exploration of social capital as a source for the individual whereas, for Bourdieu it is more applicable to society at large.

5.2   Social capital and education

The concept of social capital has become significant in the education field in recent times. It is used in the analysis of factors which influence participation in formal and informal adult education, educational attainment and the creation of conditions conducive to lifelong learning; it is used, too, in the study of social cohesiveness, social integration and political stability. McClenaghan, however, queries the assumed links between community development and social capital enhancement.

Kalantzis (1998) also issues a caveat in connection with the assumed positive relationship between education and social capital. She refers to the assimilative aspect of education, that is, entering institutionalised education and making over oneself in the process. Success often comes at the expense of leaving behind the community of birth and aligning oneself, instead, with the identities, culture and lifestyle most closely associated with one's new community of education.

Brookfield (2002) echoes this theme and calls the process *cultural suicide.* Cultural suicide is what often happens to adults who are perceived by those around them as betraying the pack, getting above themselves and providing a negative contrast with their former associates by undertaking adult education. The perception of this threat and the experience of its actual happening is commonly reported in students' case studies.   These adult students can often be seen as "subversive troublemakers" who have disturbed the status quo. They become increasingly more marginalised as friends' criticism of them inhibits their reaching out. This is further exacerbated by the genuine lack of time occasioned by study commitments.   For many adult learners the loss of previously acquired social capital is a painful process. For others, the gain from new connections is a positive which cancels out the loss.

6. Communicative Methodology

6.1   Introduction

In the present Knowledge Society people develop practices based on dialogue and communication, which are often converted into tools for change and to overcome social exclusion. In respect to this, from the point of view of research in the Social Sciences, increasingly more work is carried out in order to obtain useful results, and a positive impact on social reality.

It is important for there to be an relationship between theory and practice in the methodology for analysis that is used. Otherwise it is impossible to develop theories that are not supported by practice, and quality practices cannot be presented without a theoretical foundation. For this reason, it is important to keep in mind the theoretical discussions in the international scientific community and the contributions of the most cited authors in the Social Sciences (Habermas, Beck, Giddens, Elster). On the other hand, it is necessary to encourage connections with social movements.

The communicative methodology that comes from this premise is valued for introducing new concepts and permitting new possibilities. It goes further than simply describing reality, by interweaving the aim of the research with a resolution based on the subjects to whom the research is directed.

In respect to this, the main objective is to analyse situations and interactions that appear in the normal everyday lives of the subjects, giving particular emphasis to those aspects that facilitate exclusion, and those that promote social transformation. This focus works from the basis that the search for information is not limited to specifying deficits or needs, but also the search for solutions.

The methodology that is presented in the following is the result of a long process of research by CREA and the most up to date theoretical discussions in the social sciences and the centre. This is presented in the project *Workaló. The creation of new occupational patterns for cultural minorities*[1] (2001-

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[1] See: http://www.neskes.net/workalo

2004), coordinated by CREA, within the RTD Programme (Research and Technical Development), from the DG XII of the European Commission.

Communicative methodology is based on the following directives that are summarised as follows:

- **Universality of linguistic competencies**. We have universal linguistic competencies, in other words, all of us have this capacity available to us and therefore we can interact with others through language. In this way, dialogue is basic and instrumental in this interaction.

- **We are all agents of social transformation.** We can modify social structures through our ability to create knowledge, and through reflection we can make use of this knowledge.

- **Communicative rationality** Communicative rationality, in agreement with its finality and its procedural basis in the terms of communicative action established by Habermas, is distanced from instrumentalisation. Furthermore, the first is more global and includes other types of existing rationalities.

- **Common sense.** Actions of people are based on a subjective sense of reality. This sense is structured starting from the experiences of people and their cultural context.

- **Disappearance of interpretative hierarchy.** The reflections and presumptions of the people being researched are as valuable as those of the researchers, given that they both participate with their own common sense, linked to their context and cultural experience.

- **Objective knowledge.** Validity claims that people make, analysed intersubjectively, are the result of forms of knowledge created intersubjectively. In this way a more objective form of knowledge is generated.

- **Lack of methodological inequality.** People that carry out the research do so by giving up their position of power based on their technical and scientific knowledge and participate in an egalitarian way in conversations. In other words, their position in the dialogue is based on a position of equality. In this dialogue, the person being researched as well as the researcher, have distinct forms of knowledge that are validated by their own trajectory.

In the methodology for communicative counselling, establishing egalitarian relationships are prioritised. In other words, relationships are based on an intersubjective dialogue. The processes which develop this methodology are:

1) *Interaction based on communicative action*. This type of interaction makes it possible to construct a dialogue aimed at understanding, without imposing existing points of view;
2) *Processes of understanding shaped from validity claims*. On the basis of these claims, argumentation permits the subjects to reach agreements;
3) *Realistic attitude of the research team*. The people that carry out research must participate in the communicative process in an egalitarian way;
4) *Implementation of a dialogic process*. This process analyses people's interpretations and those that are produced between people.

Process of analysis

In the communicative methodology, analysis of social reality is carried out starting from the distinction between exclusionary factors **and** transformative factors**.**

Firstly, we must highlight that at CREA we make a distinction between factors and variables. We understand factors as those aspects of everyday life which people internalise and interpret. On the

other hand we consider that variables can be translated into different exclusionary and transformative dimensions.

Exclusionary dimensions

We interpret an *exclusionary dimension* **as the obstacles that a person or group face, that make it difficult for them to enjoy a specific social benefit or practice. The existence of this factor allows for the reproduction of a situation that is exclusionary.**

Transformative dimensions

Transformative dimensions **come from exclusionary factors, and therefore are interpreted as the factor that makes it possible to overcome a barrier which prevents a subject from enjoying a specific benefit or social practice.**

Interpretation carried out by the subject participants in the research can make the meaning of a determined factor vary. For example, an objective variable like access to University can derive from an exclusionary factor or a transformative factor. Therefore, affirmations like: facilitating access to university for collectives `promotes massification and converts the University system into a factory for unemployed, *can be considered as an exclusionary factor. However, on the other hand, the same variable can be interpreted in a transformative way, for example affirming that* promoting access to the University permits people that have not had the opportunity to study for a long time to take up their studies.

Interpretations can be manifested in different ways, as the subjects carry out **spontaneous interpretations, reflexive interpretations***, theories or* **interactions***.*

Spontaneous interpretations are characterised by being immediate and by being emitted without having all the available information. Sometimes interpretations are based on interactions lived by the subject. These **interactions** are moments where a dialogue is established between people. This dialogue can be positive or negative depending on whether the result is an agreement. The **reflexive interpretations** present a wider argument than the previous ones, given that they are already based on the experience of the subjects. A greater elaboration of these interpretations can be translated into **theories**, which tend to be used for making generalisations.

7. European exclusionary and inclusionary tendencies in Adult Education

7.1   The majority of formal education systems and some non-formal educational experiences identified in Adult Education in different European countries are based on a merit-giving and discriminatory system that considers lifelong learning as something competitive and individual. This scholastic model is presented as exclusionary as it does not consider the inclusion of all people in education, or an egalitarian treatment of them. On the other hand, in European society there are experiences that consider the participation of everybody and start from premises that favour social inclusion.

The scholastic model

The scholastic model is characterised by having a curriculum separate from social needs and by not having as one of its objectives, to prepare competent individuals for educational, working and social life. This scholastic model, which is based exclusively on instrumental and academic skills, is identified with the traditional compulsory model of education for various reasons:

Concept of learning space: You only learn in the classroom

An important factor to highlight is the concept of the space in which learning can occur. All pedagogical practices are carried out in the classroom and this is the only considered way of learning. Those skills acquired in prior experiences or that can be learnt at the same time in different contexts, are not taken into account. Therefore, these pedagogical practices come from the perspective of deficit and not from what people have learnt in other contexts and the skills that they have already developed.

Training with groups in situations of social exclusion: adaptation to the context and reproduction of social inequality

Concerning actions directed at vulnerable groups, (people from ethnic minorities, women, people at risk of social exclusion, etc). If and when they exist, an important part of the teaching community lacks the necessary confidence in these actions, to be able to ensure their implementation.

The results get used to reproducing the existing situation of inequality, and therefore, fail. A vicious circle is created which is detrimental to the vulnerable groups that see training actions as compensatory or reproductive actions. Therefore, the individuals from the vulnerable groups have little interest in participating in these programmes, as they already know that they do not assure educational success, and at the same time, the educational agents confront them and accuse them of lacking in motivation.

The role of the teacher and the student: Expert teacher and student dependency. Power relations

The role of the student in this model is not important as his/her critical capacity is not considered and the classes are based on lecture-style teaching and do not establish an egalitarian dialogue between the students and teaching staff. In this way it is difficult to train people who are both active and with a critical capacity, as their participation is seen as limited. In the role of the teacher as the expert, he/she has to "illustrate" to the students, while compensating for their deficits, that he/she does not have high expectations but instead, he/she reduces the curriculum and the students learn "the basics". Therefore the relationship between both parties is based on power.

New currículums: Information Society not for everybody.

The new social reality, characterised partly by the introduction of the new technologies, has provoked changes in curriculum's and has opened new ways of learning for example, e-learning.

However, the way to overcome this situation successfully is being established from the scholastic model with the introduction of computers in the classroom and by the carrying out of some isolated training courses. This model does not take into account important aspects that influence learning, for example the access to New technologies for all individuals. Nor does it consider that knowing how to use New Technologies is not merely another skill, separate from others, but it is transversal dimension in our society, which has to be treated in such a way.

The rigidity of this model, caused partly by bureaucratisation causes people to have to adapt to the needs of this model and not that the system adapts to the real needs of people. In this model, participation is not made possible, and because of the lack of high expectations, educational success is not ensured. In this sense participation is higher in one model than the other.

The social model:

In this model, ways of training as considered by the policies of lifelong learning, have been consolidated and new routes are emerging. Some of these initiatives arise from society and have the common objective of overcoming educational and social inequalities in society. This social model depends on specific social characteristics, which we will deal with further in this report:

Overcoming the limits of the classroom: learning in all contexts through interactions

The social model comes from the recognition of the forms of knowledge that people already have. It is a model that not only includes teaching in formal contexts, but also takes into account informal and non-formal contexts.
It is also necessary to note the flexibility of this model, as concerns the social needs, the work to transform the context of education and to improve education for all people regardless of their ethnicity, age, culture or social class, emphasising the most disadvantaged groups.

This model surpasses the erroneous perspectives of compensatory education. It is carried out with scientific contribution ESREA – European Society for Research on Education of Adults –, UNESCO, and AERC – Adult Education Research Conference from the U.S. and Canada – and with prestigious universities. It is not based on minimum curriculums, as we have seen in the scholastic model, but on a curriculum of maximums in which people feel valued and motivated.

This type of adult education is not only given in adult education centres but also can be given in daily life contexts in which people participate, for example his/her daughter's /son's school or granddaughter's/grandson's school. Non-formal teaching experiences are being given in this way in different countries in Europe. The traditional school, which only has room for children, opens the doors to its classrooms for adults. For example, in Spain, the Learning Communities carry out training for families in languages, new technologies and other subjects. Also, in Belgium, the project CBE Brusselleer in collaboration with VGC (Flemish Community Commision) gives classes to the families of immigrants to improve their communication and social skills.

A route towards social inclusion: transformation of context

One of the important aspects of the social model is education for people who are at risk of social exclusion. For example, it has been observed that in work insertion- through the scholastic model that the process of labour insertion is carried out from a perspective of minimums. The objective is a rapid incorporation, without considering working conditions, competencies that can be developed in the labour market or future promotion prospects. In a model which takes into account the voices of the people that are in situations of social exclusion, better results and better levels of participation are obtained as people feel identified, motivated and with expectations of a future with maximum prospects. For example, Gypsy people from marginalized neighbourhoods are able to access University thanks to an scholastic model that has a curriculum of maximums. In this way, the person's life not only changes, but also his/her social surroundings, where previously, there did not exist the possibility of going to University.

New curriculum: Information society for everybody

The social model keeps in mind the access, selection and process of information as key aspects for social inclusion in our societies. Therefore, it does not only guarantee public access to the tools for New Information and Communication Technologies but also that their social use can transform situations of inequality for the people that use them. In Spain, for example, the Omnia Project promotes Internet access by having extensive timetables, including weekends. It promotes learning skills like basic aspects of selection and processing of relevant information, through the interactions between all people present in the classroom. As another example, in Greece, new technologies are used as tools for basic learning.

The role of the teacher and the student: towards being an active citizen

In this model, the teacher must contribute with his/her knowledge in the class but not as an expert, but by developing an egalitarian dialogue with the students, therefore promoting participation and learning from the inter actions that take place. The students participate in all parts of the learning with a critical attitude, contributing with his/her cultural experience. In this way, an egalitarian relationship is formed where the number of interactions in the classroom increases and improves the quality of education.

A transformative method of learning: dialogical learning

The transformative characteristics of the social model of adult education, is reflected in the model of dialogic learning, a way of focusing on an education to overcome social inequalities and that has the objective of inclusion of all people in the society of Knowledge.

The sectors of society socially, culturally and economically excluded also have basic, communicative competencies. These can be used as a starting point for training processes, although these basic cultural competencies have not been recognised. There are three global types of skills: *academic,* those people that learn in a de-contextualised way, *practices*, those in which people develop in order to resolve a specific situation, and *communicative*, in which learning occurs through a relationship between equals, whose objective is to agree between themselves about something in order to act in their surroundings and to resolve cooperatively a "problematic" situation.

Depending on which type of skills are prioritised in the processes of learning, situations of exclusion or situations opposing social transformation can be caused. The use of communicative skills as a result of dialogic learning is based on the interactions of people using the following premises:

Egalitarian dialogue	Seeking agreement between participants with regard to the validity of arguments and not from positions of power: in egalitarian dialogue both teachers and students learn through providing arguments and critical reflections, a dynamic that neutralises the teacher turning to exercising a corporate principle of authority, which is a generator of abuses against adult participants. Horizontal participation is reinforced without devaluing the contributions and reflections of adults.
Cultural intelligence	We all have cultural intelligence. Communicative skills developed by people in multiple spheres of the *life world* can be transferred to the field of training in Adult Schools that are open to the experience of the people. Adult Education should not be a process of "re-education", but it should consider and integrate their communicative experience. In this sense, the APEL policies of accreditation of prior experience is useful in that they allow people to not renounce, or "split" their lives by establishing a before and an after with regard to access to studies: life experience (skills acquired through work, in relation with other people, in other spheres) is re-evaluated as knowledge.

Transformation	Personal transformation and that of the surroundings is a consequence of the participatory process: personal achievements made by adult participants are also reflected socially, for example, in relation to the family. The changes and achievements initiated bring other new ones, changing the participants' perspective of themselves, but also that of the people of in their surroundings, witnesses of how exclusion constructed on the basis of *deficits* (lack of Secondary degree, illiteracy, inexperience with the new information technologies) can be overcome.
The instrumental dimension	The instrumental dimension of dialogic learning recognises how something is feasible and possible to learn through dialogue, linking the dialogic method to the attainment of noticeable results. It is based on the assurance that people, when factors of inequalities are suppressed, can unfold possibilities. It is an erroneous belief that dialogic learning is an educational experiment that is well intentioned that rejects instrumental knowledge. The dialogic perspective opposes the *technocratic colonisation of instrumental learning*. This is characterised by the operation of corporate interests along with the interests of the majority. Useful learning is that which capacitates and makes possible new training opportunities, allowing us to change with the times, without mechanically adapting to them.
Meaning Creation	Meaning that we give to our lives is amplified with the acquisition of new skills and abilities gained through inter-subjective dialogue: through relating to each other we learn about ourselves. Meaning arises when we learn to decolonise our daily life from external impositions and expand our autonomy.
Solidarity	The break with exclusionary barriers generates a dynamic of solidarity and co-operation between people: the community of people who learn becomes a space of solidarity.
Equality of differences	*Diversity without disregarding the equality of people and different collectives (race, gender or age are at times factors of discrimination that the dialogic experience in Adult Education dissolves through egalitarian treatment, but without resorting to a homogenising reductionism). To educate for the equality of successful educational results respecting different cultures specifically and the diversity in the classroom in general*

In summary, dialogic learning promotes the use of dialogue in all social relations. For this reason, it is a tool of transformation that transcends the pedagogical, addressing society itself. The social extension of this perspective supposes not losing sight of the interests, motivations and aspirations of adults, in the face of the *scholastic model* that advocates for a closed curriculum, with little relation to society. Dialogic learning aspires, once again, to present a viable alternative to that model, which is still present in many of the experiences in Adult Education. To respond to this goal they have fostered experiences that have demonstrated that they work and provide results because they do not only respond to the structural demands that people must adapt to, but also the demands desired by the social actors. The turnout of the participants and the fact that they organise the activities in which they are involved, beyond being mere users of the service, is a factor that significantly activates the feeling that participants themselves have ownership of the activity in which they participate. The

innovation that is built through participation has, in this sense, greater guarantees of reaching its objectives.

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Section Four: Biographical Research in Adult Education, Key Extracts

1. *Using biographies in adult education research* (extract from Biography and Narratives: Adult returners to learning, Barbara Merrill, University of Warwick and Peter Alheit, University of Goettingen)

In recent years biographical methods have returned from obscurity to become a popular approach within the social sciences, including adult education research to such an extent that it is now referred to as the 'biographical turn' (cf Alheit et al. 1995). Thomas and Znaniecki's study of the polish peasant and migration (1958) established life histories as a methodology for understanding the social world from a micro and subjective perspectives, countering the dominant positivistic research approaches. Sociologists at the Chicago School - starting in the 1920s - later employed and developed life history approaches during the 1950s and 1960s but it never became a 'mainstream' method within sociology. Feminist researchers from the 1970s onwards embraced biographical approaches and narratives as a means of giving 'voice' to women who had previously been hidden from history and society. Despite this it continued to remain on the margins of sociological methods until the emergence of postmodernism and its focus on subjectivity and the individual together with the development of theories of individualisation by Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992). In the UK the 'biographical turn' emerged in the 1990s although in France and Germany it occurred earlier. In 1981, for example, Bertaux referred to a 'biographical movement' in a study entitled, 'Biography and Society'.

Within adult education the use of narratives and biographies has become widespread across Europe through the work of adult educators such as Bron, Alheit, Dominicé, and West as a means of understanding motivation, attitudes and experiences of adult learners. Biographical methods in many ways complement the traditions of adult education of placing the learner central to the process and taking into account the subjectivity of the learner. As Denzin reminds us:

 People live lives with meaning. Interpretative biography provides a method which looks at how subjects give subjective meaning to their life experiences (Denzin, 1989: 14).

Interviewees are the narrators of their own story, constructing the past, present and future with the researcher as a guide. Mannheim succinctly defined narrating as 'the description of a context in relation to a particular experiential space' (1980: 231). The life history interview is a social process and a social construction between the researcher and the researched. Biographies reveal the complexities of adult learners' lives as they struggle to combine a life lived in several social spaces. The life course trajectory is no longer linear as illustrated by the decision of adults to return to learn later in life. Life stories are always located within particular contexts that change over time:

> The stories that are selected by the biographer to present her/his life history cannot be regarded as a series of isolated experiences, laid down in chronological order…; individual experiences are always embedded in a coherent, meaningful context, a biographical construct… The present perspective determines what the subject considers biographically relevant, how she or he develops thematic and temporal links between various experiences, and how past, present, or anticipated future realities influence the personal interpretation of the meaning of life (Rosenthal, 1993: 62-63).

A person actively constructs their biography through past experiences. As Alheit et al explain:

> Each biographical experience is reflected in the total biography by the way in which it is processed by the biographical subject. Experiences are not 'social inputs' that determine extraneously the overall shape of a biography. They must be understood more cogently as 'intakes' as external stimuli that do not acquire their significance until the individual imposes her or his own processual structure on them. That structure is determined for its part by a

'gestalt' of biographically layered experience that has already taken shape – a kind of 'experiential code' into which contingent experiences have first to be translated (2003: 5, forthcoming).

Biographies while appearing on the surface to be individual reveal the interaction between agency and structure in people's lives. They are always situated within a historical context. Lives are never lived in a totally individualised way as C. Wright Mills (1959) points out in the 'The Sociological Imagination' sociology illustrates 'the personal troubles of milieu' and 'the public issues of social structure' (p14). For Bertaux 'the biographical project' highlights the 'social, economic, cultural, structural and historical forces that shape, distort and otherwise alter problematic lived experiences' (1981: 4). The life stories told by many adult learners reveal the way in which returning to learn is used as a way of dealing with change and transition in their lives at the personal and societal level. For some this process results in creating new identities:

> The people whose lives we are researching tell stories about a process at once more fundamental and humane: the struggle for meaning at times of change and fragmentation… (Lea and West, 1995: 172).

2. Life Histories of learning (an extract from A. Antikainen's abstract, *Globalization and educational processes,* RC 04 Sociology of Education in Montreal.

Life-as-lived, life-as-experienced and life-as-told has long interested authors and researchers. The biographical method in its various forms has been a part of sociology's history since the Chicago School in the 1920s (Thomas & Znaniecki 1918-20). In the 1980s and 1990s, sociologists and scholars in other disciplines have expressed a renewed interest in the biographical method. As the life experiences of a person are the very foundations of educative processes, it is natural that the biographical method is used also in educational research, especially in adult education. Based on numerous life course studies conducted in different countries, Peter Alheit (1994) argues that "Living a life" has become more problematic and unpredictable. It is "a laboratory for developing skills whose usefulness is uncertain". Still, in the late-modern culture individuals have their everyday competence to organize their biographies, and in the course of our lives we produce meanings related to our social framework and ourselves. From a biographical or life history point of view, we have more opportunities than we can ever put into practice. "Biographicity" - as Alheit (1992) calls biographical knowledge and the qualifications based on this knowledge - contains a huge capacity for learning. We may have a feeling that we can act rather independently over our biographies, and simultaneously we have to recognize the structural limitations imposed by our social and ethnic origins, our gender and the era we are living (Stanley 1993). Thus, Alheit (1994, 288) makes a remark which could have been a methodological principle in our study of the meaning of education and learning in the lives of Finnish people: "The learning processes between structure and subjectivity are manifold, but they can only be understood if we do justice to both poles: the structural framework of conditions governing our lives and the spontaneous dispositions that we adopt towards ourselves."

The Meaning of Education and Learning

The research project "In Search of the Meaning of Education" studies the meaning of education and learning in the lives of Finns (Antikainen 1991; Antikainen et al 1995 and 1996; Antikainen & Huotelin 1996). In addition to formal education, we are interested in adult education and other less formal ways of acquiring knowledge and skills. In fact, we are dealing with life-long learning in the social context of swiftly changing Finnish society. According to our theoretical framework, the meaning of education can be analyzed on three levels, as reflected in the following three questions: 1. How do people use education in constructing their life-courses? 2. What do educational and learning experiences mean in the production and formation of individual and group identity? 3. What sort of significant experiences do Finns have in the different stages of their lives? Do those experiences

originate in school, work, adult study or leisure-time pursuits? What is the substance, form and social context of significant learning experiences? In this kind of study education is considered to be a productive factor - not just a reproductive one - in the individual's life. We do not question the institutionalizing influence of education on life-course and inequality, but we do make a hypothesis that the situation on the biographical level is more complex, and that education has several, also emancipatory meanings (Antikainen 1991). Does it already exist a cultural pattern of lifelong learning in Finnish society? Then I will continue to a educational policy discussion. Are we moving towards a new learning society? What kind of society is it?

Interviews
We collected our data by means of biographical and thematic interviews. In the initial interviews the interviewees related their life-stories orally. As needed, each interviewee was also asked more specific questions about education, self-definition, and areas of knowledge important in his or her life. An interview typically lasted three to four hours. We then picked out a list of significant learning experiences from each life-story and presented it to the interviewee for approval or revision. At the beginning of the second interview we considered each significant learning experience and its social context in greater detail. Assuming that education can also destroy identity, we asked, finally, for the interviewee's most negative education-oriented experience. The second interview usually lasted about as long as the first. In accordance with our purpose, we interviewed many kinds of people: women and men, representatives of different social classes and ethnic groups, and persons of various ages. Most of the 44 interviewees (approximately 3000 pages) were Finnish-speakers (n=28), but the group also included Swedish-speakers, Samis (Lapps), Romanies (Gypsies) and individual members of immigrant and refugee groups. The interviews with members of ethnic minorities were, on average, less complete than those conducted with Finnish-speakers. The interviewees were classified into four age groups or cohorts whose representation we wished to guarantee. In accordance with our grounded-theory approach, we ended the collection of the data when we reached the saturation criterion.

3. *Other sources:*

Life History Project, Roskilde University, Denmark
This is a series of papers looking at different aspects of life history and participation and learning in education. For example:
Paper no. 1 Life History, Gender and Experience, Kirsten Weber, 1998
Paper no. 4 Concepts of Life History and Biography: Understanding Lifelong Learning?, Kirsten Weber, 1999.

Pierre Dominicé, (2000) Learning From Our Lives, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass
The book outlines the use of educational biography as an approach to help adult learners understand what they already know, how and why they have undertaken learning in the past and motivations for future learning. It is aimed at adult education practitioners. The first section looks at theoretical issues and then goes on to outline the process with illustrations from Dominicé's work with adult learners in Geneva.

Linden West (1996) Beyond Fragments, London, Taylor & Francis
West looks at what motivates adults to return to learn in higher education within the context of their lives. The stories of the students are central in this book. There is also a brief but good section on biographical methods and the role of the self/ autobiography of the researcher in the research.

Alheit, P, Bron, A, Brugger, E & Dominicé, P (eds) (1995) The Biographical Approach in European Adult Education, Wien, Verband WienerVolksbildung
This book is a collection of papers from two international conferences on life history and biography in adult education and put together by members of the ESREA Biographical Network. The book is divided into three sections on theory, empirical research and practice. Five chapters are in French. The

following chapters are useful for gaining an understanding of life history and biographical approaches and its relationship to adult education:

Section Five **Key Sources - Learning in Higher Education**

A lot of the literature on non-traditional adult students in HE focuses on exploring the backgrounds of mature/non traditional students and identifying issues of *access, policy and institutional culture* and so is not *directly* relevant to issues and approaches to learning and teaching.

5.1 Targeted Socio-Economic Research Programme Project (1998-2001) SOE2-CT97-2021
Involving Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Sweden, UK, this study set out to assess the effectiveness of access policies and practices for adults in universities and HE institutions across the EU, with particular regard to socially excluded groups and communities and to identify barriers to participation of the excluded. It doe not deal directly with issues of learning and teaching, although it does provide very useful information on access policies and practice, the backgrounds of non traditional students, the factors influencing their return to education, their perceptions of HE and the courses they study. Section Four is probably the most useful for our purposes as it has information on:
• course management
• teaching methods/aids
• preferred course formats/teaching approaches
• preferred assessment methods
• feed-back assessment
• the quality of support services

It also posits four dominant biographical profiles of non trad adults students:
• the patchwork type – with a fragmented learning biography
• the education climber – who often break away from their previous social background
• the integration type – who set out to enrich their social capital
• the emancipation type – who set out to change and liberate their lives

As most of the partners in the LIHE project have been involved in the TSER project, I have not looked in any detail at this project but will try to bring copies of the Executive Report to Lisbon for those not previously involved.

5.2 Hans G Shuetze and Maria Slowey (2002) 'Participation and exclusion: a comparative analysis of non-traditional students and lifelong learners in HE' in Higher Education: an international journal of higer education and educational planning, No 44, Kluwer, Netherlands
This is a good starting point as it takes a comparative international perspective. It looks like it is drawn from a book edited by Shuetze and Slowey (2000). Its basic draft is that HE still needs to address issues of the access and participation of non traditional mature students and it tries to point a way towards a greater HE focus on lifelong learning and issues arising from this. It is a useful comparative summary across 10 countries, including Austria, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, the UK and incorporates a number of useful comparative tables.

It focuses on:
• *who are 'non-traditional' students? (within increasingly diverse HE systems)*
Their categories include adult students with a major break in their learning, those over 25, those entering HE on the basis of mature life experience, those concerned with professional up-dating. They identify three key criteria in defining non-trad students:
- their (mixed) educational biography
- their entry routes eg APEL
- their mode of study
• *institutional factors influencing non-trad participation*
- institutional differentiation: most are in new/non-university programmes
- institutional governance and control: non-trad students helped by institutional flexibility in organisation of studies, curricula, regional policies, targeting strategies

- flexible (open) access: includes special entry routes, APEL
- mode of study: open learning, modular courses, credit transfer, p-t study, inter-active links between ICT/distance/self-learning

- financial assistance and support, incl. childcare, specific age-related/p-t/distance learning support systems, availability of grants/loans
- CE opportunities: short courses leading into mainstream learning programmes

There is a useful table/overview here

- *Comparative perspectives*
- some evidence that universities in *systems which are less vertically diversified* (eg Sweden, Canada) admit more non-traditional students
- *modes of study*: more rigid full-time systems like Austria, Germany do not (in theory) recognise p-t students
- ICT technologies: most developed in US, UK
- CE opportunities/links – largely under-developed in Germany, Austria, Sweden

- *From non-traditional students to lifelong learners: issues*
- HE to adjust to a growing diversity of age participation in HE
- HE to be delivered in a wider range of (non-formal) social settings
- need different innovative procedures for assessment, recognition and certification
- need greater HE flexibility in curriculum, modes of delivery, places of study
- a growing demand for CE/lifelong learning

Comment: This is a good background paper but does not deal in any detail with project themes of learning processes, the learning environment, learner perspectives, learning identities and links with younger students. To some extent it covers the same kind of ground as the TSER Project above

5.3 Barbara Merrill (2001) Learning and Teaching in Universities: perspectives learners and lecturers' in Teaching in Higher Education, vol 6.1, 2001, Taylor and Francis
More directly learning and teaching focused, this paper overlaps a little with source 4 below. It draws on symbolic interactionism, feminist perspectives and biographical studies like Antikainen et al (1996) and is based around 30 interviews with mature students (mostly women, many single parents) on the 2 + 2 courses at Warwick University. It covers:
- *the learning experience: lectures, seminars and assessment*
- key issues about learning to become a (more) independent learner, involving two (consecutive?) processes: learning the ropes (primary adjustment) and manipulating the system to their advantage (secondary adjustment) (Goffman(1959)
- includes student critiques of lectures and seminars and makes the point that seminars provide important social space for mature students to interact with lectures and younger students

- *studying: writing essays and assessment*
- tracks student anxieties about studying in HE , especially about exams and the pace of study. Identifies evolving styles of learning (from the extensive and broadly interested to the selective, focused and strategic - in Goffman's terms 'secondary adjustment))

- *bringing life experiences to education*
- easier to do so in sociology and humanities and in seminars
- identifies some tensions here between mature and younger students

- *lecturers' perspectives*
- traces different attitudes across subjects: Sociology and Law more favourable and supportive than Biology

- largely lecturers enjoy teaching mature students (because of their enthusiasm, willingness to engage verbally, the feed-back they give about teaching
- but few had modified their teaching styles in their interests although some had moved towards more group work and seminars
- identifies dangers of mature students over-dominating discussion
- identifies that using life experience as part of the learning process can be problematical – they often don't have the necessary skills to conceptualise and theorise about life experience

- *lecturers from the student perspective*
- usually held in high esteem, little social distance obvious
- issues of providing feed-back promptly enough and lecturer availability for discussion/support

- *mixing with younger students*
- largely positive but some difficulties in communicating for older students

- *summary*
- mature students needed first to 'learn the ropes' in order to survive in HE
- mainly mature students ended up feeling empowered through their HE experience; they extended their world view, strengthened their voice and broadened 'the field of social identities and roles' (Antikainen et al 1996)
- many became 'institutionalised' (Goffman 1961) by the end of their study
- involving more mature students might 'tilt the pedagogical and epistemological balance towards a dialogical and more integrated learning culture'.

5.4 E. Bourgeois C.Duke, J-L Guyot and B Merrill (1999) The Adult University, Buckingham: SRHE/Open University
A comparative study in predominantly Anglophone and European university settings, covering a range of issues including global influences, standardisation, social exclusion and widening participation, organisational change, higher education and lifelong learning, the adult university in a learning society.

Probably, the most relevant chapter for teaching and learning is chapter 5, 'Staying and Coming to Terms' (pp98-131) which covers:

1. Mature Students' views on:
- first contacts and impressions
- coming to terms with the university
- the learning experience: lectures, seminars and assessment
- studying
- bringing life experiences to learning
- encounters with lecturers and attitudes to them
- moving from college to campus
- final reflections

2. Lecturers'/university views on:
- teaching mature students
- academic perceptions of mature students
- private and public lives
- access policies

This chapter is predominantly based on work at Warwick University, particularly on the 2+2 Social Studies Degree programme - a lot of instructive insights in relation to that particular context but drawing on wider literature. Key issues emerging:

- *how mature students respond to different teaching approaches - how they bring life experiences into their learning*
- *how academics (in different disciplines) perceive these students (mixed, particularly across different disciplines)*
- *the idea of a 'student career' - how mature students change in and through HE, how they juggle/try to balance their different roles (private/public lives), how their learning consciousness develops, how all this is mediated by class, race, gender.*
- *issues of knowledge and the potential of a move towards a dialogical and more integrated learning culture shaped by interactions of structure and agency*

5.5. Penny J Burke (2002) Accessing Education: effectively widening participation,
Trentham, ISBN 1 85856 255 4, 164pp, £15.99 (edited extract from review)
This book is grounded in the experience of 23 mature students on a range of access courses and her collaborative teaching and research engagement with them. It is informed by a range of poststructuralist concepts and adopts an unequivocal feminist stance. It deals initially with policy issues, collaborative research approaches and the role of pedagogy in Widening Participation as well as exploring student perspectives and experiences of returning to study. It also highlights and illustrates some of the tensions involved in developing a radical approach in the face of more conservative and managerial institutional opposition. It concludes with a range of practical ideas for developing and sustaining a radical approach to access education which make a lot of sense and should be required reading for the new cadres of practitioners bent on 'delivering' the UK government's new Widening Participation strategy.

Chapter Two, 'Assessing Education in Context' takes clear and critical aim at UK Government post 16 education policy, dominant ideas of Lifelong Learning and the Third Way and conventional concepts of work, especially 'women's work'. Chapter Three engages with the more micro aspects of research collaboration with students, looking at 'autobiography as method' and raising, if not always resolving, key issues of power and ethics. Chapter Four addresses important but often neglected questions about pedagogy in Widening Participation, drawing on a range of critical and feminist educational theorists and relating these to practice and to student voices. Here Penny Burke takes issue with the *distortions and dangers of current policy obsessions with standards and standardisation, both within and beyond the access movement, highlighting the damage that standardising assessment can do to innovative pedagogy as well as the needs and interests of marginalised groups.*

This first half of the book is followed and supplemented by two chapters which make good *use of student voices in identifying the intimidation felt by mature students returning to study, the different ways that it is possible to reconstruct the self through educational participation and the shifting and contradictory subjectivities that can develop through this process.*

5.6. Jane Thompson Ed. (2000) Stretching the Academy: the politics and practice of widening participation in Higher Education,NIACE, ISBN 1 86201 091 9, 188pp, £15.95 (edited extract from review)
This book throws down a committed and concerted challenge to the mainstream politics and practice of Widening Participation and points to alternative versions of more *reflexive, egalitarian and democratic forms of Higher Education*. It has a strong Celtic and feminist influence and occupies a clear political position. *Its targets are the individualism, economism, instrumentalism and incipient social control of mainstream approaches to Widening Participation and its key themes are a re-emphasis of the social purpose of adult/higher education and the promotion of a distinctive social theory of knowledge.*

In a punchy and personal opening chapter, Janice Malcolm reminds us of the 'Faustian bargains' implicit in engagement with mainstream Widening Participation policies and the consequent dangers of the academic as hustler, 'doing the economic dirty work of the government' while Mary Stuart makes the very useful distinction between Widening Participation for massification, for inclusion and for active citizenship. She draws on bottom–up approaches to community participation originating from the developing world to suggest a broader understanding of widening participation and point up different forms of knowledge and engagements with it. This international perspective is continued by Anne Ryan in her thoughtful exploration of 'peripherality, solidarity and mutual learning' which builds a comprehensive challenge to many of the current orthodoxies within mainstream Widening Participation. Richard Taylor picks up this theme too in critiquing reductionist and individualist conceptions of self-directed learning, advocating instead a socialist HE praxis which strikes an appropriate balance between intellectual rigour and respect for experience. The case studies developed by Whaley and Bamber, Ducklin and Tett put into context the problems and frustrations that exist in trying to integrate more radical forms of widening participation into an inflexible and ultimately conservative HE system.

Perhaps the most positive and consistent contribution that the book makes is its engagement with the critical issues of knowledge and power, where it embraces but moves beyond an assertion of 'really useful', or emancipatory, knowledge over 'merely useful', or adaptive, knowledge. In its examination and contextualisation of social knowledge and its different constructions, the book amplifies its fundamental socialist and feminist stance with ideas and insights drawn from poststructural and postmodern perspectives. Anne B Ryan and Brid Connolly's chapter, drawing on a feminist poststructuralist analysis, is particularly valuable in its considered and critical treatment of the nature of experiential knowledge and its attempts to tease out the complex inter-relationship between experience, social power and resistance. This is also a key focus identified by Lorraine Blaxter and Christina Hughes' in their overdue critique of and response to the 'regulatory discourses' of social capital, and by Jim Crowther, Ian Martin and Mae Shaw as they try to 'turn' the discourse of access and widening participation to take greater account of learning, knowledge and action outside of the academy.

Overall, the book forms an important and appropriately theorised re-assertion of the values, knowledges, contexts and methods of social purpose adult education and their potential inter-face with Higher Education