

## CMA ATELIER 1

### INDIVIDUALISATION, LEARNING TIME AND TRANSITIONS

#### CONTRIBUTION BY TOM SCHULLER

My presentation draws on experience in three different contexts:

- As Head of OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation
- As director of a national inquiry into the future of lifelong learning, sponsored by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education in the UK, see <http://shop.niace.org.uk/ifill-learningthroughlife.html>
- As co-director of a research centre on the Wider Benefits of Learning (WBL), funded by the UK Department for Education and Skills.

This background leads me to:

- Value a focus on the *outcomes* of learning as well as the process
- Argue for a broad approach to measuring the outcomes, as a way of developing both policy and practice.

I structure my presentation around three questions.

#### Question 1

##### **What are the possibilities for a new relationship between the individual and the public authorities in relation to lifelong learning?**

Proponents of lifelong learning put much stress on how much learning can empower individuals. This is quite correct, philosophically and empirically. However we now see a definite tension emerging, as individualisation leads to what is sometimes called 'responsibilisation'. This means that individuals are given increasing responsibility for looking after their own affairs, and better learning opportunities enable the state to withdraw. The classic example is in health: as adults learn more about how to look after themselves, so the state can leave it to them to secure their own health. This is of course a gross simplification, but it points to a real issue.

The issue is all the more significant in the face of mounting inequalities in many countries. The unequal distribution of learning opportunities becomes all the more significant in this context.

#### Question 2

### **What are the options for a new 'time balance' between working time and learning time, in a lifelong context?**

We are experiencing a considerable fragmentation of employment. Not just increasing unemployment, but a growth in part-time working, in 'zero hours' contracts and flexible working across a 24/7 schedule. Allied to this has been the continuous increase in female employment over the last two decades. And increasingly we will see a prolongation of working lives; as people live longer, they both wish to and are obliged to work longer.

This means looking again at how we mix worktime and learning time (including learning at work). People – both men and women – will have far more variety in their time patterns: not just changing careers but moving from full-time to part-time and back again (and varying greatly in what 'part-time' signifies). Older people are increasingly present in training.

This presents major challenges for policies and practice, to ensure that learning opportunities are available appropriately. Obviously new technologies will help greatly here. But we need to pay particular attention to the coherence of schemes for recognising competences, whether these have been formally or informally acquired.

### **Question 3**

#### **What contribution can and should lifelong learning make to important life transitions?**

It is a reasonable hypothesis that lifelong learning makes a particularly significant contributions when it enables people to manage major transitions in life. An obvious example is the transition from paid employment to retirement, which affects almost everyone; a more specific example is the transition made by a prisoner when he or she leaves prison, often vulnerable to returning to their previous habits and milieu, and without skills.

Identifying key transitions in a changing demographic and economic context, and designing learning opportunities appropriate to these, is a major challenge.