

Biographical Transitions and Lifelong Learning: Preliminary Findings

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Summary

In this study, we investigate the relationship between common biographical transitions – changes in work, civil status, health, residence – and lifelong learning factors as well as the subjective meaning individuals attribute to both formal and informal learning experiences associated with major life shifts.

This preliminary report shows that, particularly for professional and socio-geographic transition, and because of new capacity for action required, biographical transitions tend to be more intensive moments of formal adult learning, even among non-traditional adult learners. The presence of a biographical transition reveals less of an effect on informal learning activity. Only individuals at lower initial education levels represent their professional and socio-geographical transition as a more intensive period of informal learning when compared to their transition-free educational peer group. If participation in formal education and training often forms part of a combined effort of professional mobility, informal learning tends to be linked to further active integration in the new workplace or workpost and to non-work related dimensions of individual experience. The negative experience of formal initial education by people from all school backgrounds often leads them to pursue their educational biography through informal means with minimal recourse to formal practices.

Further analyses are needed to explore how active and passive transitions are associated with different synergies between formal and non formal learning practices as well as with different meanings given to these different lifelong learning profiles.