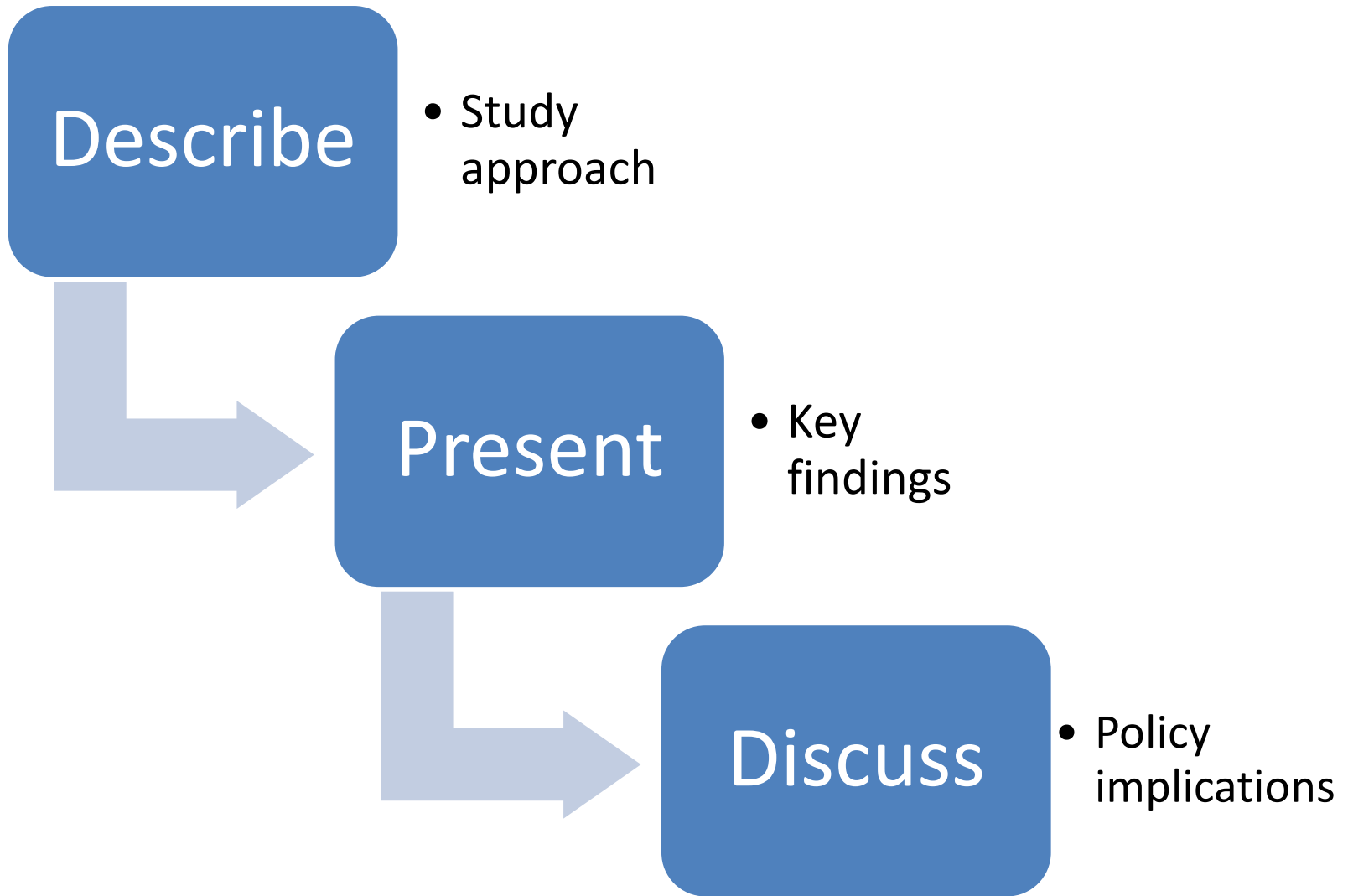


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Career Transitions & Lifelong Learning: Qualitative Perspectives

RESEARCH PAPERS:

Navigating difficult waters: learning for career and labour market transitions

2012 – 2013

Narratives of the career/ labour market related learning of low qualified workers

2013 - 2014



Participating Countries

Study 1

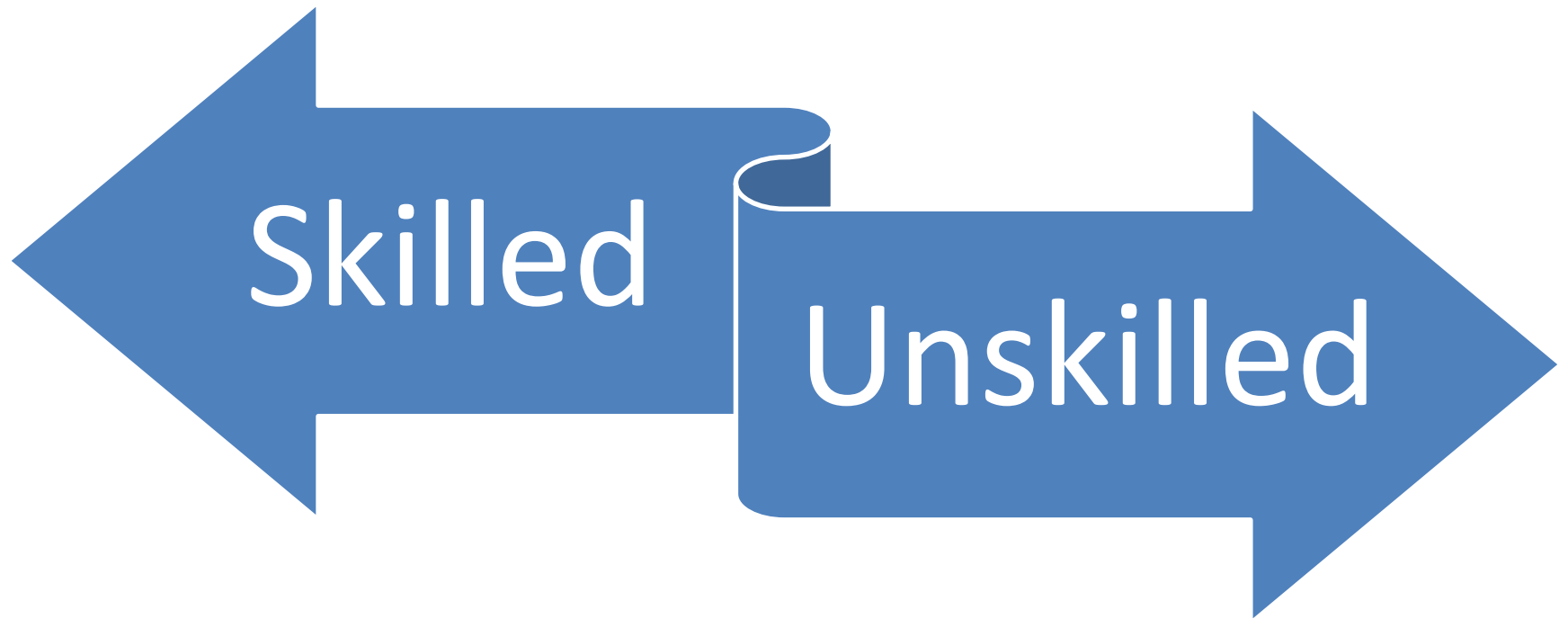
- Denmark
- France
- Italy
- Spain
- Germany

Study 2

- Denmark
- France
- Italy
- Germany
- Poland
- England
- Czech Republic



- Alan Brown, Jenny Bimrose and Barbara Merrill from the University of Warwick (UK);
- Massimo Tomassini from the University of Roma Tre and Silvia Zanazzi from the Faculty of Education Science, University of Roma La Sapienza (Italy);
- Rie Thomsen, Ida Juul and Pia Cort from Aarhus University (Denmark);
- Esther Oliver and Lena de Botton from the University of Barcelona and Itxaso Tellado from University of Vic (Spain);
- M'Hamed Dif from the University of Strasbourg (BETA-Céreq Alsace), Rachel Mulvey from the University of East London and Sophie Perdrix from the University of Lausanne (France);
- Simone Haasler and Barbara Rinken, University of Bremen, Germany
- Professor Jenny Bimrose, Professor Alan Brown, Dr Sally-Anne Barnes and Sally Weir (UK)
- Tomas Splak (Czech Republic)
- Dr Rie Thomsen, Dr Pia Cort, Dr Kristina Mariager-Anderson, Sixten Bang and Professor Bjarne Wahlgren (Denmark)
- Serge Rochet, Professor Rachel Mulvey and Birte Hansen (France)
- Dr Peter Weber, Sylvie Weber-Hauser and Alexander Kochem (Germany)
- Massimo Tomassini and Silvia Zanazzi (Italy)
- Professor Józef Kargul, Dr Joanna Minta and Michal Mielczarek (Poland)



Skills, education & qualifications

❖ *High skilled:*

- full apprenticeship or graduate;
- at least five years in 'challenging work';
- opportunities for further learning and development

Skills, education & qualifications

❖ *Low qualified:*

- often did not complete initial schooling qualification;
- often but not always skill deficits;
- at least five years in work requiring few formal qualifications (typically below EQF level 3)

Sampling

125/105 interviews (+ 60/56 follow ups)

Participants: mainly aged 35 – 45/25 - 40

Contextualised, strategic
career & learning biographies

Skills mis-match

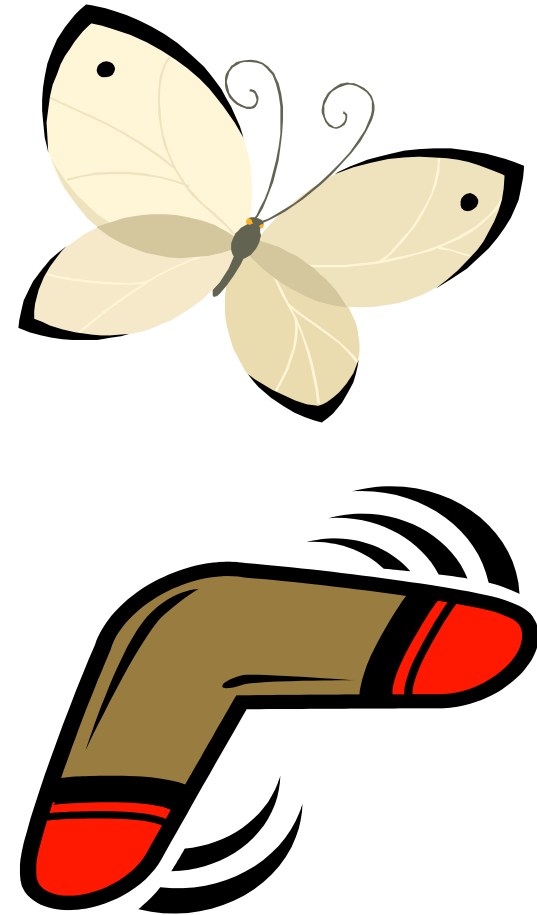
- ILO (2014):
 - ❖ reveals a ‘substantial mismatch’ in 24 European countries
 - ❖ Between 25-45% workers either over or under-qualified
- CEDEFOP (2010):
 - ❖ identifies different types of skills mismatch
 - ❖ highlights LMI & job placement services

Career progression

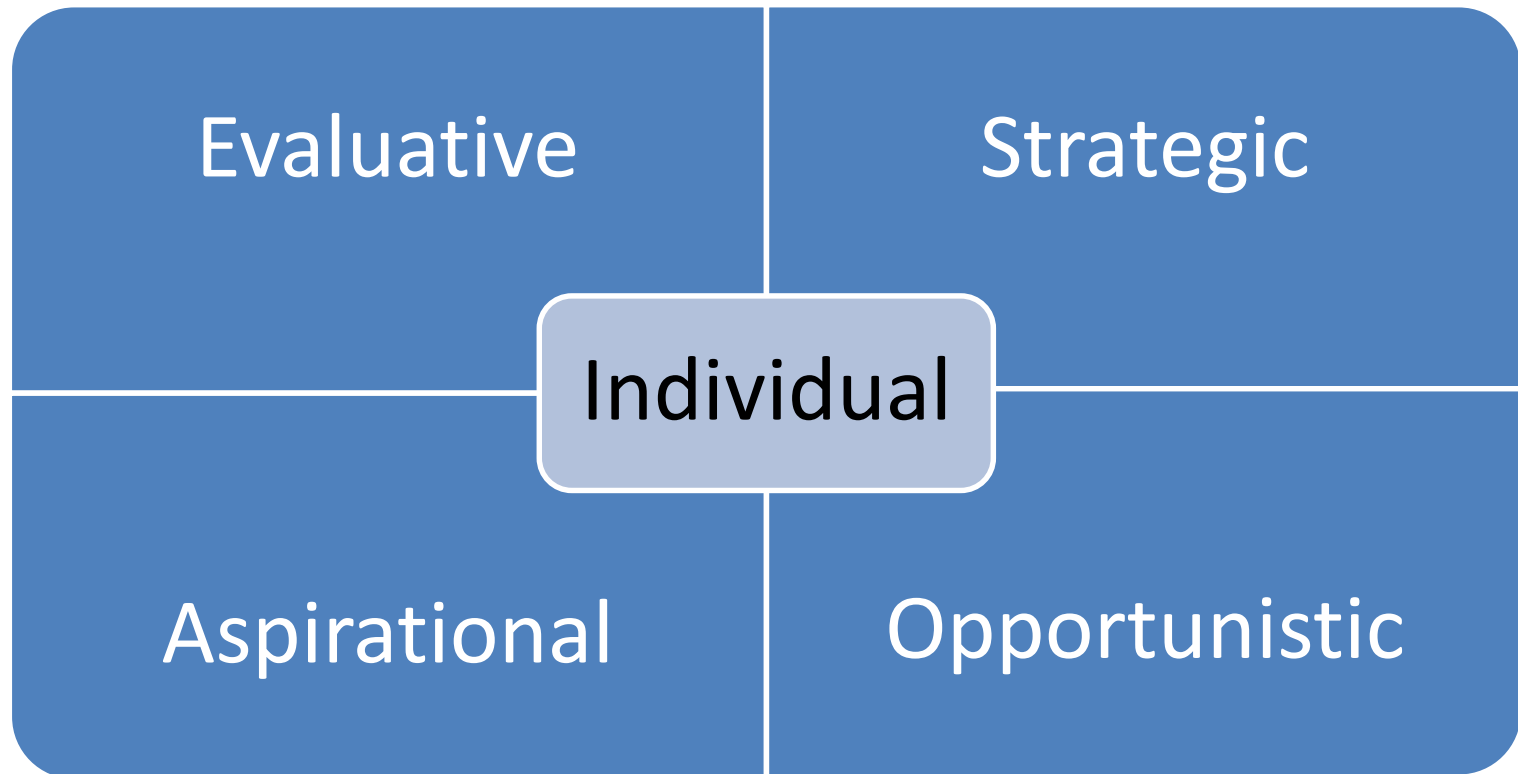
Goes beyond matching:

'Trying to place an evolving person into the changing work environment ... is like trying to hit a butterfly with a boomerang'
(p.263)

Ref: Mitchell, L.K. & Krumboltz, J.D. (1996)
'Krumboltz's learning theory of career choice and counseling', in Brown, D., Brooks, L. & Associates (Eds) *Career Choice and Development* (3rd Ed), San Francisco, California, Jossey Bass.



Transitioning styles



Navigating difficult waters:
learning for career and labour
market transitions
2012 - 2013

Mercuzio (Italy): classic opportunist

‘Until the year 1990, I worked in bars, changing roles and environments. I experienced the morning bar, where I used to prepare breakfasts, but also the evening bars,..... where I served alcoholic beverages. Then, for about three years, until 1993, I worked as a waiter in restaurants.’

Mercuzio: passion for manufacturing

'I had heard so much about the “mythical” figure of my uncle, who had a coffee shop in Naples and was a self-made man [...] My dream was to work on my own [...] so, in order to prepare myself for the “leap”, I became an employee at a big coffee factory in (my town). After a year in the sales department, I asked to be transferred to the mechanical department, where I could learn how to repair coffee makers (I had never used a wrench in my life!).

My request surprised everybody, since the post I was leaving was considered much better than the one I was getting [...] Anyways, they accepted my request and I went to the mechanical department. If you want to make good coffee, you must be able to operate and repair the machines!'

Mercuzio: work process knowledge

'I used to buy the coffee from factories and then sell it on my own in (my town). Unfortunately, I wasn't making a lot of money with this business, so I kept working as a waiter on Saturdays and Sundays, or at weddings. One day, I met a person who introduced me to a new environment: a wine bar. A few months later, I closed the coffee business and was hired as the wine bar manager in this large structure, where they also had a bakery and a food shop.'

Mercuzio: another change of plan

Mercuzio's boss was:

'a rather strange lady' so 'I just decided to change job. At the time, my dream was still the same: create my own business in food service. So I went to work in a restaurant as assistant to the chef. It was not a problem for me to start all over again: I had a long experience, but in a different field, and I needed to learn everything in this new environment.'

Mercuzio: two new projects

‘The disappointment was so bitter that I felt the need to detach myself completely from the food industry.’

I had a grandfather who was a shoemaker. I’ve never met him, but heard so much about his marvellous shoes [...] I decided to attend a course for shoemakers, after all I’ve always had a fascination for manual labour.’

Mercuzio: successful shoe-maker

'I was their designer, and I was also responsible for selling the products [...] The first two seasons went well, but then problems began to arise. First of all, I had not taken into account the fact that, when you sell, you're also supposed to cash in [...] and I hated to do that! I hated to waste time as a credit collector, while I should have been doing my job instead: designing and selling shoes.'

Mercuzio: shoe-maker to project researcher

*‘The other issue was that I used to design **innovative models** ... at the beginning I thought it was a good thing, but then I realize it wasn’t. In fashion, you have to follow trends, you can’t move forward too fast.’*

Mercuzio: more transitions

‘For the whole first year, I used to attend classes during the day and work at the market as a barman at night. My working hours were from 2 am to 9 am, then I would run to class. With this intense rhythm, I took my first six exams, the fundamental ones for my degree.’



Mercuzio: future?

'Sailing in the sea of his mind'

Searching for a new passion

Opportunist

Does commit time and energy to being successful

Learning through challenging work

Enthusiasm: using his mercurial talents!



Henri (French) – iconic strategist

'... This is exactly what I love. Always working, you never get bored. You've got many projects bussing around your head. This is the way I like working...if I'm not stressed, I'm not efficient'

Key transitions

- Ambulance driver (parent's business)
- Works as engineer then
- 5 years training alternating HE & workplace
- Project manager – successful, quickly bored
- Promotion: oversaw outsourcing to India
- Set up business at home, micro parts for client
- Set up optical business for his wife

Self awareness of this strategist:

- *'I've got a big flaw – I need to understand everything... to get recognition in the company. I imposed myself through knowledge'*
- *'I set up a small business.. Parts are manufactured in Malaysia...this is like a toy for me'*
- *'I said: opticians don't want to hire you? You'll see what's gonna happen. I'll set up a shop for you'*
- *'As soon as I get something I wished for very much, I want something else.'*

STRATEGIC LEARNING & CAREER BIOGRAPHIES

Learning and identity development

- Identities develop & change over time
- Engagement: occupation and/or organisation
- Progress in different learning domains (practical; cognitive; affective / relational)

Competencies

- Capabilities, skills, knowledge & understanding required for current job
- Changes in context

Knowledge acquisition

- education & training; acculturation; experience, social interaction; reflection; practice with feedback; knowledge base

Narratives of the career/ labour market related learning of low qualified workers 2013 - 2014

Low qualified

- Experiences of learning;
- drivers of learning;
- attitudes to further learning;
- links to prior experiences;
- attitudes towards learning for the future;
- career development;
- future career prospects.

Critical dimensions

Socio-economic
background

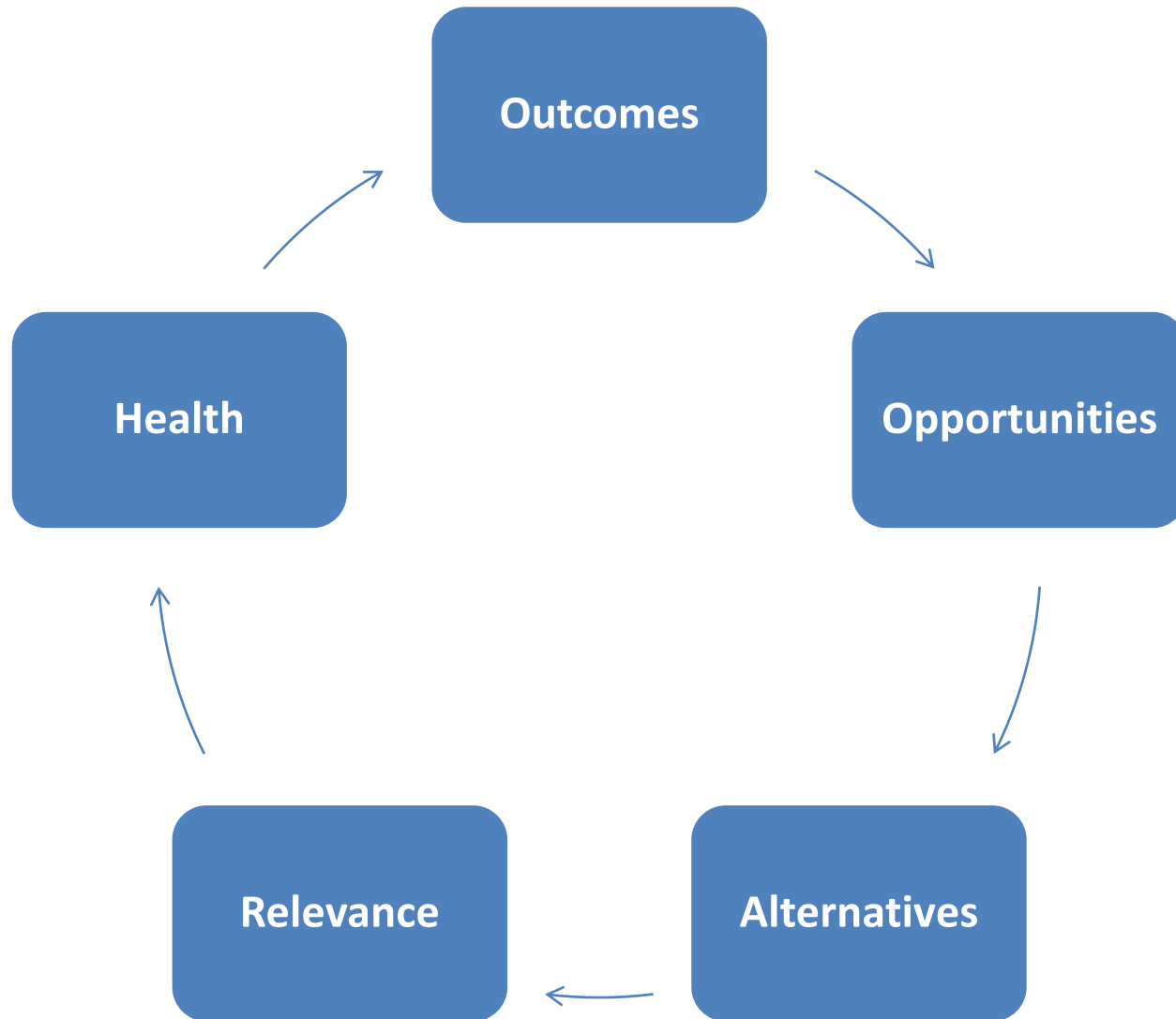
Educational
achievements

Low
qualified

Skills profiles

Attitudes to learning

Barriers to learning



Poor learning outcomes at school

- PL: 'too lazy' at school;
- CZ: 'could not concentrate on one thing for too long';
- FR: 'I was a bit head in the clouds, looking out of the window';
- FR: 'I didn't listen much, that's why I didn't learn a lot at school.'

UK13, male, 28 (dyslexic):

“I wasn’t the brightest. I didn’t do any GCSE [...] I was always putting myself down because I couldn’t do any written work or anything like that [...] I was just sitting there not knowing what to do ‘cos everything was wrong. I wasn’t quick enough, but kept going to school and didn’t clown like other people, but tried my best”

Denmark: Andrea (phobia):

Fear dominated learning since elementary school - able to learn, but in a testing situation, she can’t retrieve the knowledge

Health related issues

UK1, male, 32 (clinically depressed)

“One of the reasons was that I do suffer on and off from depression, clinical depression runs in the family. That affected my choices for the future – you don’t think about the future when you’re suffering from depression. You think about the past.”

Lack of opportunity to learn

UK9, male, 33 years:

“There should be more opportunities for people of all ages to have a second opportunity to get on training courses”

Mirko: Italy, 26 - death of father meant:

‘I screwed up my school. I felt as if I had to avoid it. I couldn't stand it anymore... While if I could get back I would stay there all the life long.’



(DK) Ellinor:

Availability of apprenticeships

“I think it was sad, but after 100 job applications I don’t feel like going after this anymore. I was plodding up and down the streets of Copenhagen and other towns [in order to find an apprenticeship]. And in the end, I didn’t feel for it. If it has to be that tough, you lose heart.”



Perceived relevance

- Learning had to be practical and useful to their job:
 - Gain a new job
 - Maintain employment position
 - Earn money
 - Develop skills
 - Perform better

Alternatives to learning

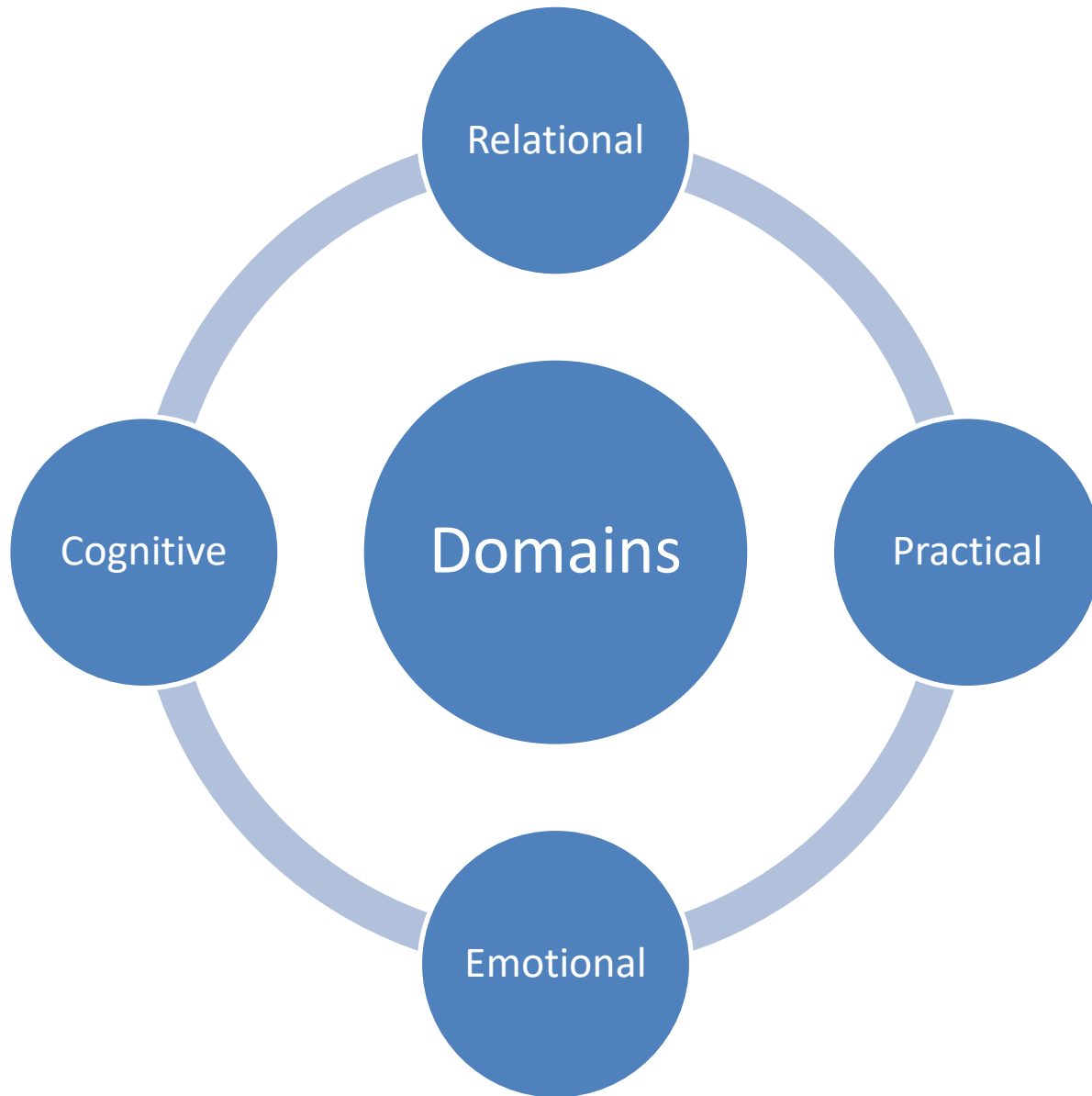
'I enjoyed school – yeah I really liked it....I wasn't the brightest kid, but I wasn't at the bottom....I was really only interested in sport! Anything involving a ball. I loved it! I just loved it! That was really my motivation.... my motivation just isn't there to do book work. It's been over twenty years now since I did anything like that and I'm not going to start now. It stresses me. I can't do it – I just come out in a cold sweat'

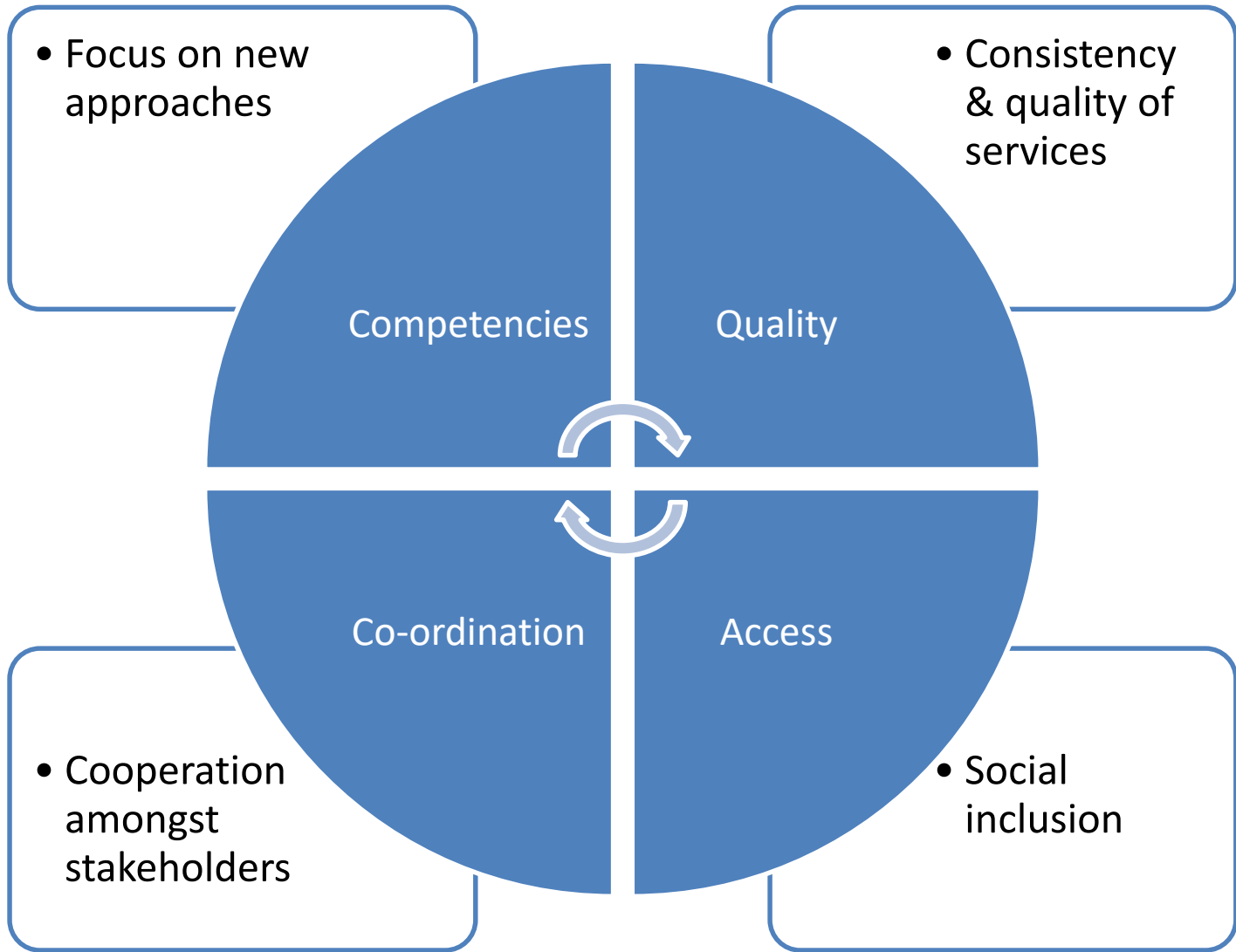
UK4, male aged 41

Resilience and career adaptability

‘When the 2008 recession started, I almost welcomed it. I thought to myself: Well, this is going to be a real test of my ability to steer my business through rough times. If I can survive this, I can survive anything. Obviously, we had to adapt – we had to get rid of people and change our business practices. We went through some really difficult times, but we came through. I thrive on that sort of challenge. Where others may feel downhearted and give up, I just get more and more determined to succeed.’

UK3, female, 34 years





2008 Resolution of the Council of the European Union on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies

Career Guidance Counsellors as gatekeepers?

Karla,
39, CZ

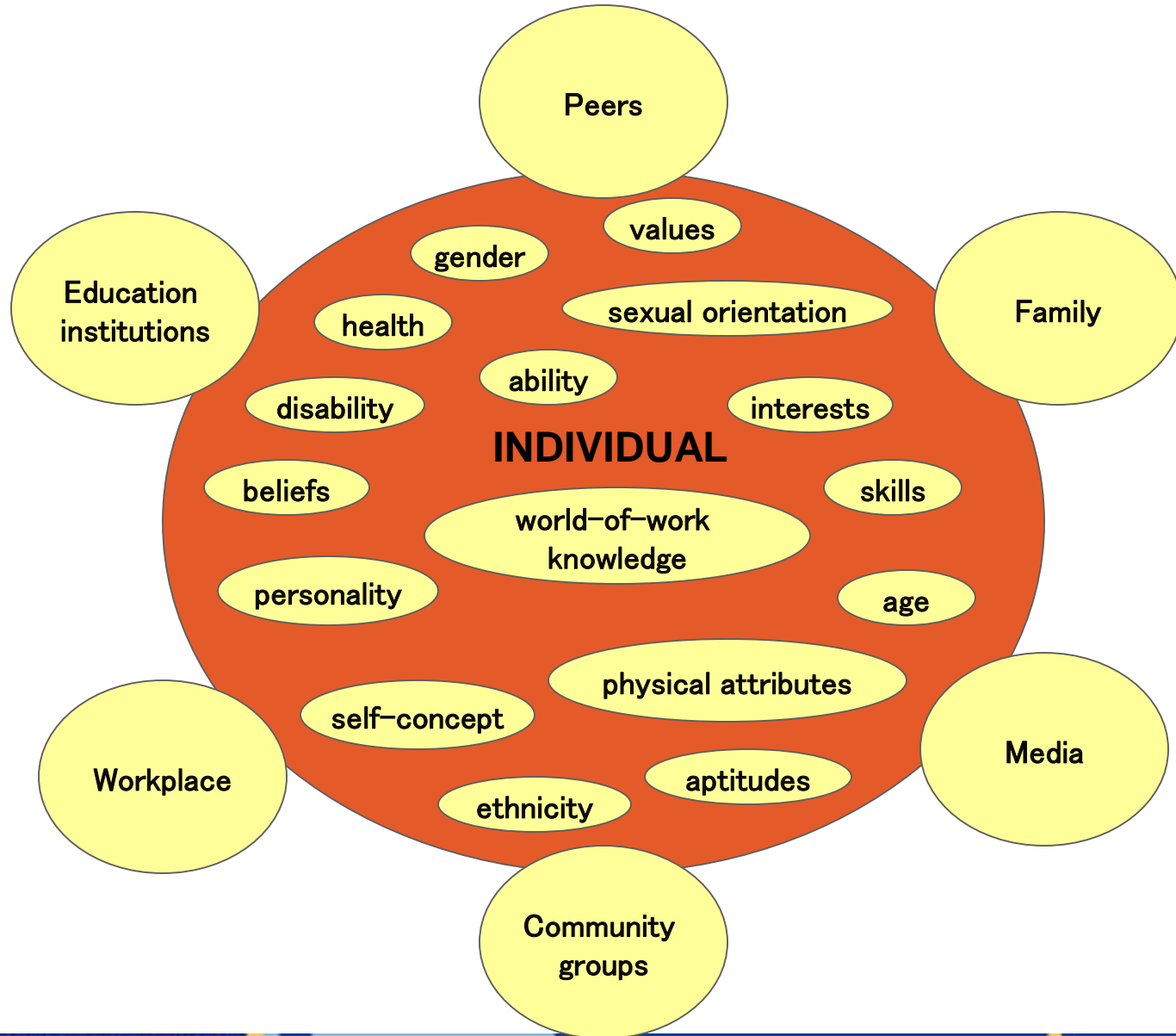
- *“I didn’t know what to do in order to get the certificate, where to find the training materials and it all seemed so difficult, that I gave up several times before passing it. But the moment I understood it was possible, I knew I would be passing more of them [the certificates training].”*

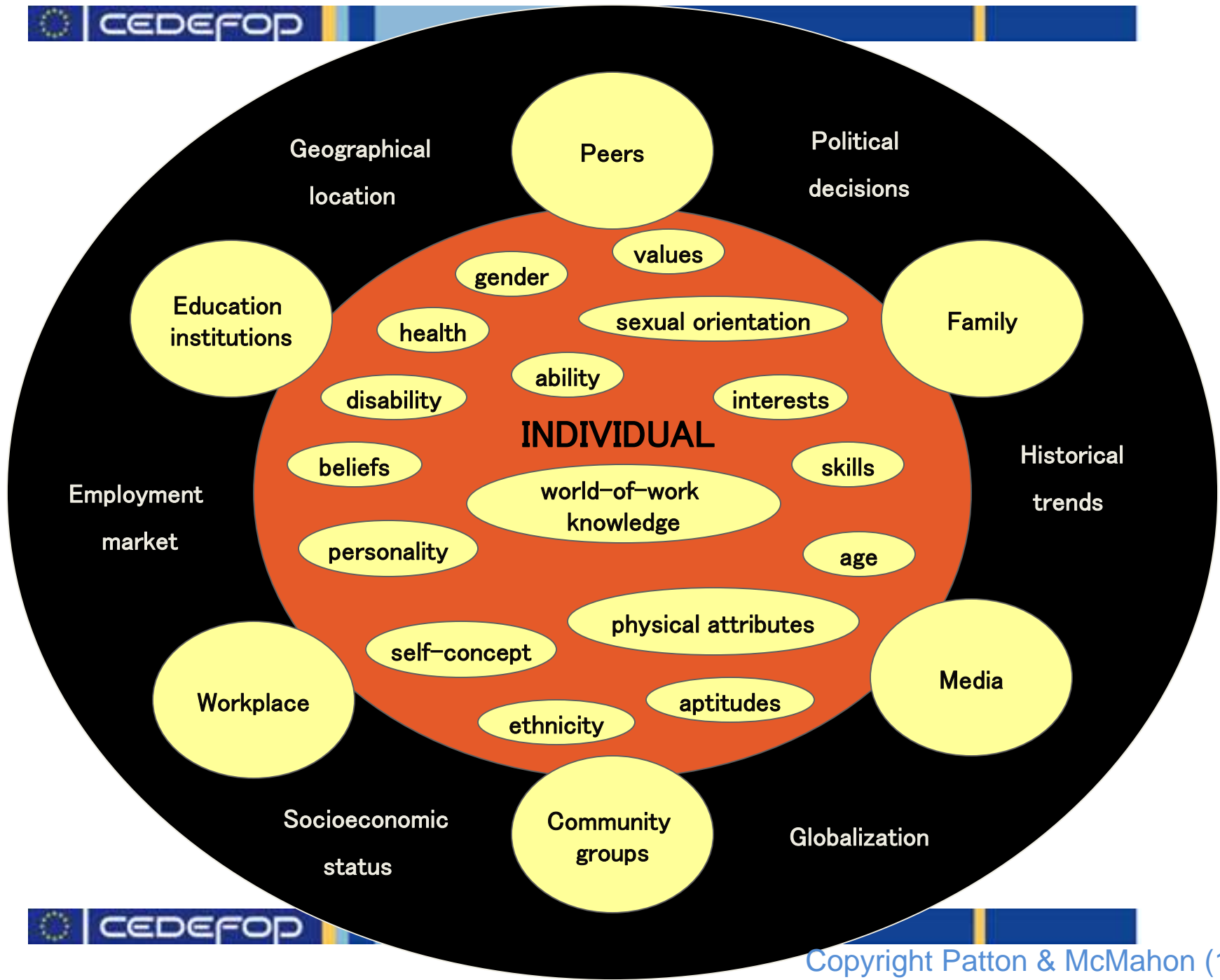
Michael,
38, CZ

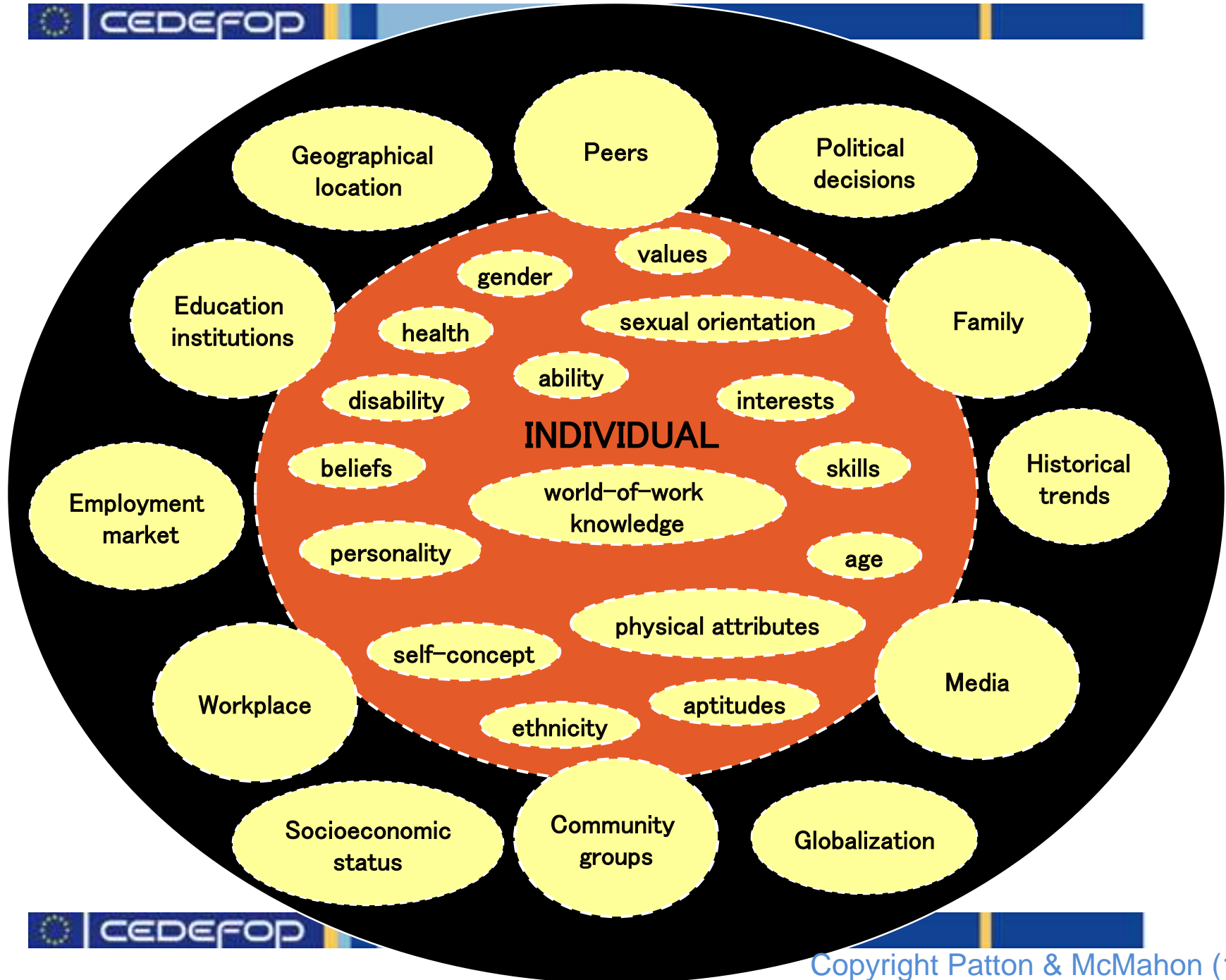
- *“I don’t even know if some continuing training exists in my field of activity.”*

Systems Theory of Careers









INDIVIDUAL



The individual in context

- ***Content Influences***
 - Individual system
 - Social system
 - Environmental-societal system

- ***Process influences***
 - Recursiveness
 - Change over time
 - Chance

Guidance systems across Europe

Descriptions of different country systems can be found at:

- <http://euroguidance.eu/guidance-systems/>

ELGPN:

- <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by-language/english/elgpn-progress-report-2013-2014/>

Policy Messages

- Learning supports transitions
(successful = highly subjective)
- Self-learning is pivotal:
 - knowing WHO you are
 - knowing WHERE you want to go
 - knowing WHAT you need to do
 - knowing HOW you get to there
- Transitions can be risky & costly
(e.g. burn-out, under-employment,
downward mobility)

Policy Messages

- Supporting transitions
- Role of unpaid work
- Role of formal qualifications
- Levers for change



Policy Conclusions

- Activation Programmes
- Different forms of learning in relation to the need for reskilling or upskilling need to be accessible
- Consistency of career guidance support across institutions, schools & employment services
- Individualised career guidance