



Lifelong Learning: State of the Art and the European Challenge

Joe Cullen,
Arcola Research, London



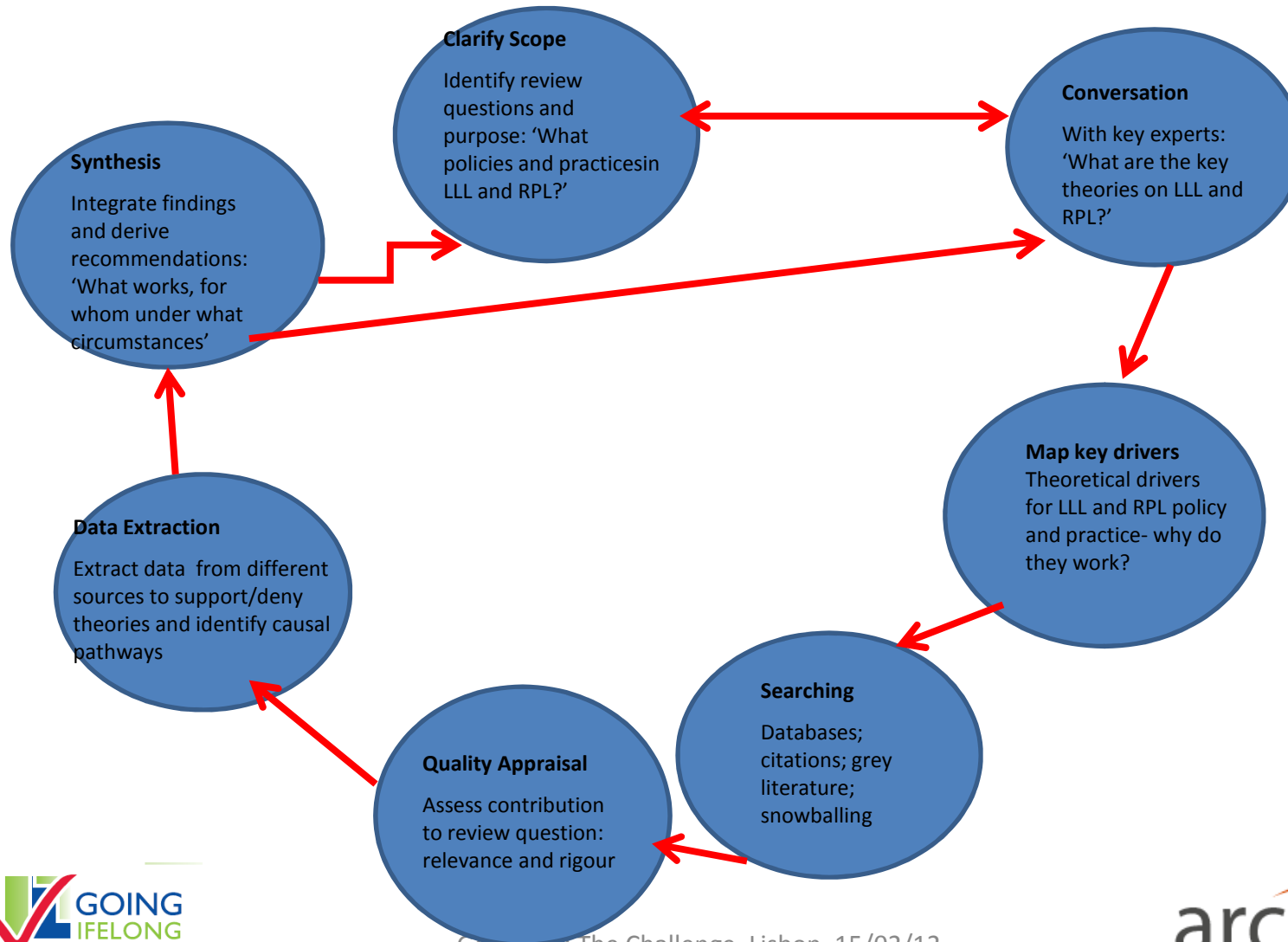
Going LLL: The Challenge, Lisbon, 15/02/12



Three Questions

- How can experiential learning (APL and RPL) be recognised, accredited and certified?
- How can Informal Learning be valued and bridged with formal education paths?
- How to establish community and local based - institutions ('New Opportunities Centres') for coaching, mentoring, personalised guiding and counselling to adults in search of further learning opportunities?

Methodology



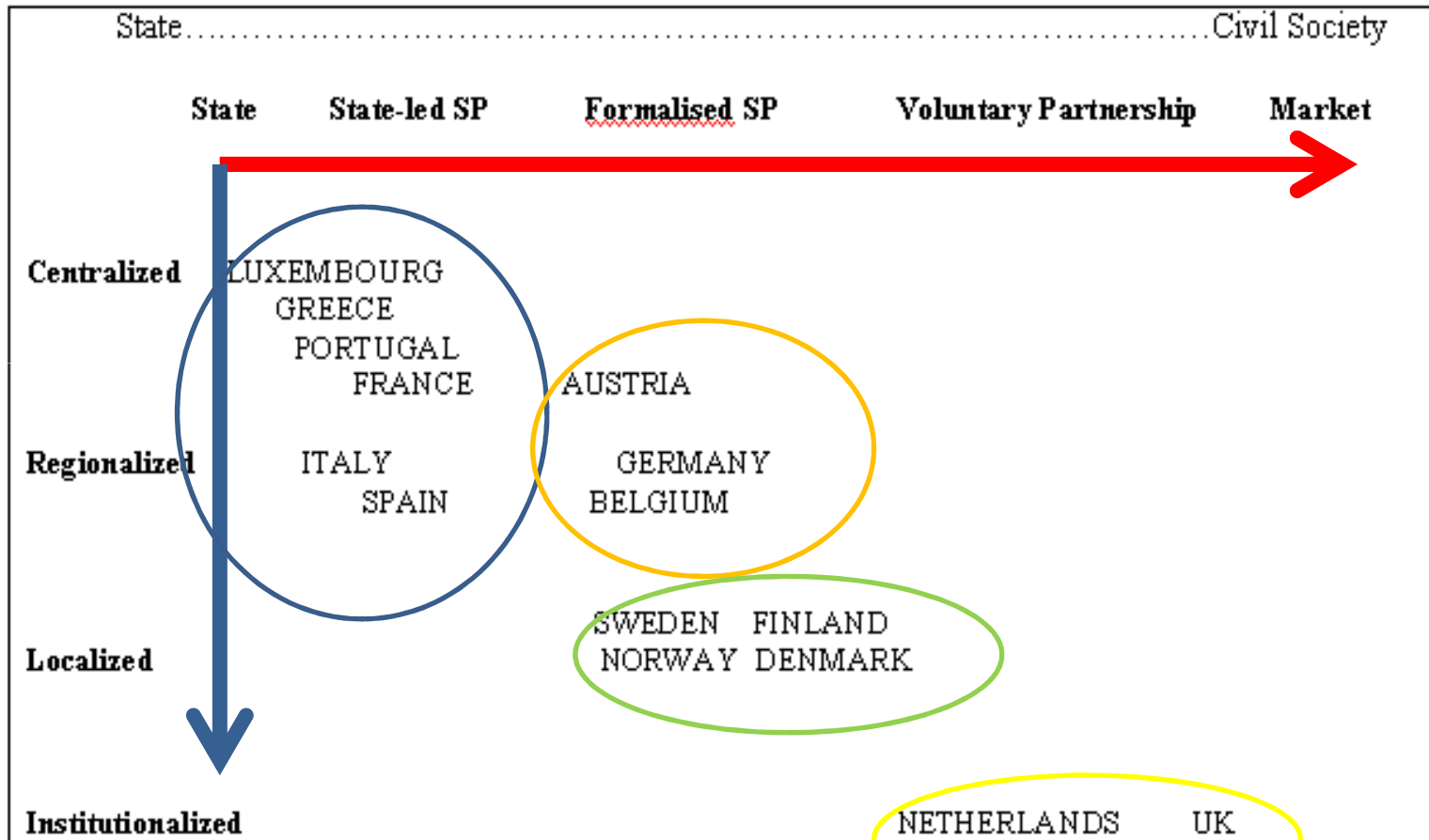
What dynamics are driving LLL?



What kinds of LLL systems are emerging?

Sector	Higher Ed	Adult	WBL and CPD	Informal
Main influencing theories	Strong cognitivist/'black box' tradition Now constructivist influences	Andragogy Constructivism Activity theory Conscientisation	Human Capital theory Activity theory	Andragogy Constructivism Conscientisation
Current pedagogic approaches and practices	Managed Learning Student-centred learning	Active Learning Experiential Scaffolding Vemacular pedagogy	Apprenticeships Connective Experiential Key skills Problem based learning Transformative learning Communities of practice	Social movements Social capital approaches Experiential Communities of practice Active learning
Drivers	'Performativity' 'De-centred' knowledge TQM and QA Transferable skills	Scarcity of Funding Transferable skills	'Just in time' demand Soft skills demands Customer-focused learning	Learning entrepreneurs Popular culture Lifelong learning agenda

EU LLL systems: macro level



Green, 2005

LLL systems: evidence from the ground

- Large number and diversity of interventions
- Example: EU LLP programme - €7 billion over the 2007 - 2013, with over 400 projects funded in 2010
- “An excessive number of objectives set for the Programme has translated in a host of specific actions, some of which lack the critical mass to have a long lasting impact. Progress towards a lifelong learning approach as opposed to one based on educational sectors is still quite limited.”

LLL – What works?

- LLP results:
 - Raising awareness of the benefits of adult learning to combat social exclusion
 - Valuing non-vocational adult education
 - Developing personalised learning programmes
 - New learning partnerships to combat social exclusion
 - Information, guidance and counselling
- OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation :
 - Diagnosis of learning needs
 - Strong relationships within the classroom,
 - The use of assessment to provide information on learning, and for feedback
 - Building learner autonomy
 - Tracking learner progress

What's happening in RPL/APEL

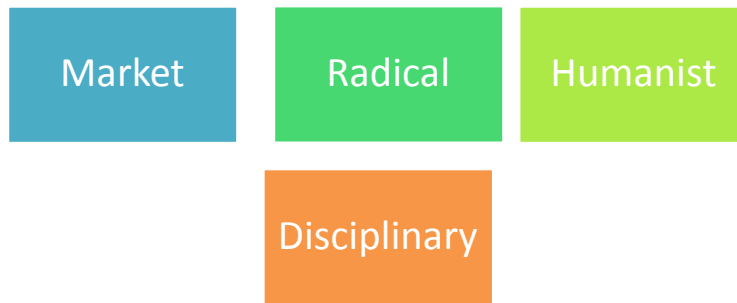
- Characterised by its diversity (countries; cultures; sectors and settings)
- Common issue: 'how to assess what has been learned from experience and not experience itself'
- But high contextualisation
- USA – focus on getting lower-qualified into HE
- Scotland; Australia – workforce development
- South Africa – post apartheid up-skilling
- France – more radical evolution 'La Validation des Acquis'

Global Typology of RPL (OECD - Werkin, 2010)

Model	Features	Countries
System	Inclusive policy; vision and culture of RNFIL and global system; legal framework, financing, quality assurance, all levels and sectors, significant participation	None
Quasi-system	Inclusive policy; vision and global system; legal framework, financing, quality assurance, all levels and sectors,	Ireland, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway
Consistent practices	Vision. Many practices; some financing, not all levels and sectors	Australia, Canada, S Africa, UK, Belgium
Fragmented practices	Clear objectives; some practices; target groups, some financing, few levels and sectors	Germany, Spain, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Iceland, Switzerland
Some practices	Some attempts in certain fields	Austria, Chile, Slovenia
Initial stage	Some interest and attempts in narrow fields	Hungary, Greece, Czech Republic
Nothing	No policy or practice	None

Models of RPL

LLL System Model



Lifelong Learning Model



Implementation Model



System change-adaptation model



Some country comparisons

Country	LLL Systems	LLL Model	Implementation	Change-Adaptation
South Africa	Centralised	Social Justice	Radical	Trojan Horse
UK	Voluntarist	Competitiveness	Credit Exchange (NVQ's)/ portfolio	Procrustean
Finland	Social partnerships	Social Change	Learner development (Portfolios)	Procrustean

5 Principles of RPL Good Practice

- 1: The 'vision' and objectives of a particular RPL approach need to align with the vision and philosophy of the underlying 'lifelong learning system'
- 2: RPL programmes work more effectively when they are supported by legislation
- 3: RPL needs buy-in from stakeholders in order to reflect and align their different needs
- 4: RPL programmes work best when they are user-friendly
- 5: Successful RPL systems encourage and support autonomy for providers but also for candidates to collaboratively develop their own system according to target group, needs and resources

Principle 1: Align RPL 'vision' and objectives with vision and philosophy of the underlying 'lifelong learning system'.

Example: Ireland: Fast-tracking of apprentices

High demand for access/entry to education and training and for certification of skills.

Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) responses devised to respond to the needs of industries experiencing organisational change.

Faite Ireland (the tourism development authority) has APL procedures available for workers in the tourism, catering and hotel industry who have acquired experience in the workplace and who have no formal recognition.

Candidates are appointed a mentor and prepare a portfolio of evidence. Submitted to Faite Ireland.

They are then interviewed by an APL committee and awarded a certificate if they achieve the standards.

Principle 2: RPL programmes work more effectively when supported by legislation

Example: Etablissement de l'Enseignement Supérieur Agronomique de Dijon (ENESAD)

2002 'Loi de modernisation sociale' law requires a candidate to present a portfolio (Dossier VAE) supporting their accreditation request

A jury interviews the candidate, and awards full, partial or no accreditation.

For VPL candidates, the construction of a portfolio is a new and daunting process.

So the legislation provides for a mentoring function (accompagnement).

Mentors help candidates to identify their experiential learning in order to select the relevant degree. They help candidates draft their portfolios.

Mentoring sessions (an average of four per candidate) are individual.

They provide analysis of experience, work and personal situations.

That allows setting a relationship between the action-knowledge developed in work situations and the academic knowledge included in the diploma requirements.

Portfolio instructions encourage candidates to adopt "a self-reflective position"

The law therefore supports creating a zone of proximal development

Principle 3: RPL needs buy-in from stakeholders in order to reflect and align their different needs

Example: The Continuing Education Programme at Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona

In 1993, a Foundation was set up to develop a CE programme based at the University, because legislation did not allow Universities to get involved in private enterprises. The Foundation – IDEC -brings together a diverse group of stakeholders, covering academia, business, social partners. The composition of the Foundation ensures on the one hand that the study programmes are developed and marketed to reflect a wide spectrum of stakeholder needs, including employers and, on the other, that the assessment procedures used to establish 'credits' for prior learning are subject to the quality controls of the University.

Principle 4: RPL programmes work best when they are user-friendly

Example: Using Web 2.0 to deliver RPL

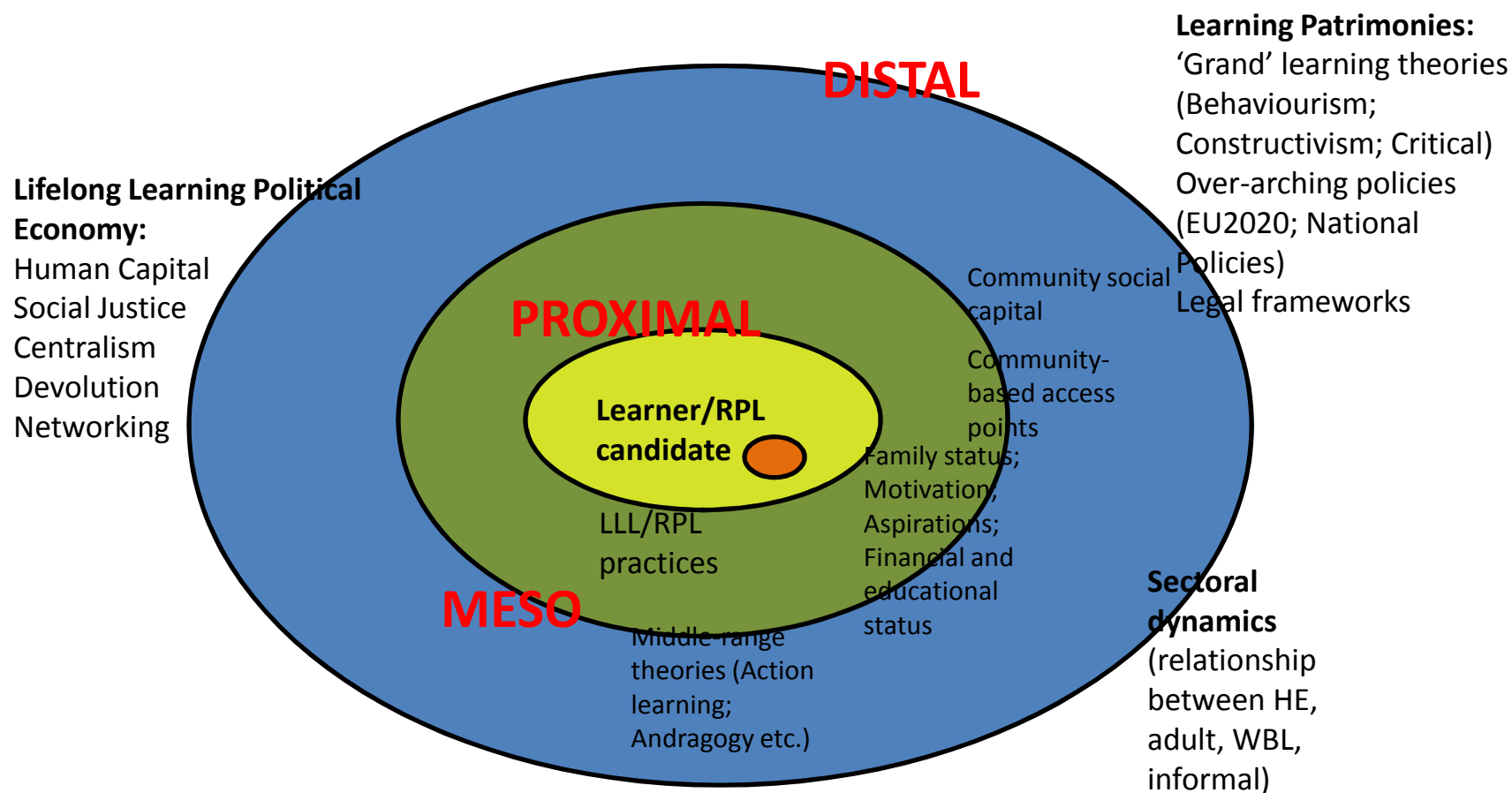
There has been an increasing interest from policy-makers, accreditation agencies and practitioners in using ICTs – particularly social networking tools – to engage with a wider audience; to publicise RPL ‘offers’ more widely, and to develop and use on-line tools to make the recognition and accreditation process more user-friendly. In Finland, preliminary competence testing is partly done using ‘e-tools’, and subsequent validation is also supported through e-tools. In Australia, there has been a growing use of e-portfolios, with experiments in incorporating ‘media-rich assets’, like photographs and video, within portfolios. Other examples involve using Moodle and Blackboard to develop portfolios, especially with ‘hard to reach’ target groups, for example rural women.

Principle 5: Successful RPL systems encourage and support autonomy for providers and candidates to collaboratively develop their own system according to target group, needs and resources

Example: The resumption of studies at the University of Bretagne Occidentale University of Brest

At the University of Bretagne Occidentale, individuals who are interested in RPL can attend a workshop which is held every Tuesday evening. Here they can talk individually about their learning needs and their aspirations with advisors. They can also approach tutor for expert advice. Then working with an RPL advisor they agree an individual contract which outlines what they need to do. They are given clear advice on finance, funding and costs. As well as having access to special study modules, for example in research techniques, they have access to RPL advisors throughout the year who can help with individual questions.

Critical Factors for Lifelong Learning Centres



How can experiential learning (APL and RPL) be recognised, accredited and certified?

- Addressing the low level of uptake of RPL
- Establishing and retaining ‘credibility’.
- Funding and costs. The ‘business case’ for RPL needs to be more effectively made.
- Addressing issues around quality in assessment. At present ‘quality’ is associated with ‘rigorous testing’.
- Developing a ‘mix’ of approaches, models and tools (both summative and developmental)

How can Informal Learning be valued and bridged with formal education paths?

- Raising awareness of the benefits of adult learning, through targeted campaigns
- Developing personalised learning programmes to address complex needs
- Developing a system of credit and encouraging part-timers, to make learning more flexible and accessible with funding matched to it
- Linking learning provision to pedagogy and practices that focus on improving the quality of work and life rather than focusing on increasing the volume of skills
- Creating a common framework of learning opportunities and accreditation practices that are contextualised to local situations
- Bridging learning needs to learning supply and then to recognition and accreditation of outcomes (Scaffolding)

How can we build Lifelong Learning Centres?

- Address the needs of the diverse user base with flexible packaging of services
- Build in reflexivity and make LLC's 'learning organisations'
- Get 'buy-in' from a diverse spectrum of stakeholders, and make sure they are represented on governance structures
- Ensure quality control, performance monitoring and evaluation
- Use innovative ICTs
- Focus on social responsibility, transparency and responsiveness.
- Capitalize on the community's assets, rather than adopt a 'neutral' or antagonistic position (encourage volunteers; fund-raising; use of social capital)
- Provide customised one-to-one counselling for clients to guide them into further learning and employment opportunities
- Mak full use of 'intermediaries' and 'multipliers'