NSI 08: The Education-Training-Work Continuums: Pathways to socio-professional inclusion for youth and adults > Call for Contributions

Background

Discontinuities between the fields of education, (E), training (T) and work (W) create many problems for learners of any age. These sectors operate on the assumption that an individual progresses on a straight and linear path from basic education to professional training, and on to work - hopefully to decent work. And that each of these steps takes place in a dedicated sphere. Unfortunately, existing discontinuities between the three fields have often impacted underprivileged people who do not have the resources to face the dire consequences these have on their lives (such as inequalities and exclusion.

A Continuum is "a continuous sequence in which adjacent elements are not perceptibly different from each other, but the extremes are quite distinct" (Oxford languages), that is, without discontinuities.

Taking a continuum perspective to E, T and W allows us to respond to the increasing fracturing and discontinuities in what is no longer a continuum. In this Special Issue, therefore, we propose to explore the possibilities of challenging and undermining these discontinuities by implementing different types of ETW Continuums (ETWCs). This is an open-ended perspective, where discontinuities are not only considered as a mere fact, but as contextualized phenomena observed by ETW stakeholders through various lenses. Addressing the range of disruptive discontinuities between or within each of the three sectors is assumed to be less costly, than remaining in silos, both for ETW stakeholders and the youth/adults they purport to serve.

This would lead to different scenarios – taking a theory, policy and action-oriented lens – as a basis for compromise-based creative proposals and actions. Those currently excluded from E/T/W could then "travel" between any of the three components of a Continuum at any time and in any order. The prerequisite for that "journey" – and its recognition – is that multiple entries, transitions and bridges exist between the fields of education and training and decent work. If this condition is fulfilled, an ETWC is the way to facilitate the (re)- inclusion of excluded youth and adults in contributing to their socio-economic environment.

The blending of E, T and W sectors or parts thereof into subsystem fields underlines the permeability and fluidity that characterize any continuum. Nevertheless, this flexibility has some logical limits as the three fields have their own specificities and are not fully overlapping. Hence the importance of contextualized governance arrangements, especially when ETWCs aim to overcome the negative disruptive impacts of E-T-W discontinuities for the sake of the underprivileged.

There are important complementarities between a Continuum perspective and the Lifelong learning (LLL) one: the first deals with the institutional and organizational dimensions of learning, and the second with the individual one. In other words, LLL is anchored in a demand-driven approach from individuals and different types of organizations, including enterprises. An ETWC (considered as a system) takes more an institutional supply driven perspective - even though the two paths are compatible.

The ongoing reflections on the futures of education and work (by UNESCO, ILO and in SDGs 4 and 8) open the debate on the consequences of E-T-W discontinuities. The UNESCO Future of Education report "Reimagining our future together: a new social contract for education" (2021) proposes that "teaching needs move from being considered an individual practice to becoming further professionalized as a collaborative endeavor", and that we should "move from thinking of education as mostly occurring in schools and at certain ages, and instead welcome and expand educational opportunities everywhere for everyone".

These proposals are coherent with the permeability between E, T and W fields of a Continuum perspective. Yet the word continuum appears only 5 times in the UNESCO report. The ILO Future of Work report "Work for a brighter future" (2019) argues in a similar vein and develops the concept of "future of work transitions" throughout life, encompassing lifelong learning and seamless pathways between the three fields of ETW – under the purview of "investing in people's capabilities". The institutional dimension is captured by calling on "investments in the institutions of work" – which the ETWC notion would expand into the "institutions of education".

Themes

This Call for Contributions for a NORRAG Special Issue proposes to curate the diversity of work that is needed to unpack the challenges that have emerged in the past decades, bring new lenses, imaginaries and insights to them, and shine a stronger and more transgressive light on the way forward. To this end, we propose six sections or themes (see below). Authors should indicate which theme or themes they are addressing, with reference to the outline below. We encourage collaborative authorship to strengthen multiple perspectives and engagement across contexts,

In the above context, this NORRAG Special Issue will look at the historical, political and organizational rationale of the emergence of the notion of ETWC from theoretical, policy and programmatic lenses organized around six themes. We invite authors to draw on the practical experiences of researcher-educators and on diverse scholarly traditions that illuminate the challenges of "de-siloing" E-T-W sectors and reconstructing via transitional ad hoc E-T-W continuities in a systemic perspective. This approach would allow exploring the negative impacts of these discontinuities on underprivileged people as well as to proceed towards the conceptualization of ETWC and proposing ways forward.

1. ETWCs in historical perspective: from "traditional" apprenticeship to integrated multinationals in the South

Contributions are welcome that reflect, North and South, the different transformations of the interactions between E, T and W in the period spanning from the "good old days" (referring to "traditional" apprenticeship, to family and intergenerational literacy and learning as well as to community training) that lasted up to the middle of the 20th century.
Today, can we consider these past interactions as proto ETWCs, for example, when considering numerous small crafts/informal economy units in the South, as well as in international integrated private firms (North and South) providing their employees with literacy, basic education, vocational training, early childhood development activities, further education services for production, and more? Do we see this increasing today due to poor performance in the fields of E, T and youth employment)? What lessons can be drawn from this "proto" perspective when considering the relevance of the notion of ETWCs for the transformations of the informal as well as multinational economies?

2. Innovations and experiments in the 80s and 90s that could be considered antecedents of ETWCs

Authors are invited to revisit different policies, programmes, projects, PPPs and both public and private innovations and experiments that drew lessons from the World Educational Crisis: A Systems Analysis (Coombs, 1969). These initiatives were focused on the transition issues stemming from discontinuities between any two of the three components (E, T, W). Interestingly, the notion of education continuum was proposed soon after by UNESCO (Adiseshia, 1970).
Were lessons drawn later from the implementation of, for example, post-basic E, diversification / vocationalisation of post-basic E, productive/work school, non- formal/out of school E, linkages/articulations FE-NFE, functional literacy, co-operative E, adult (basic) E, continuous E, competence-based E, outcome-based T, W-based learning, career guidance etc.? Did such initiatives successfully address insertion (French), integration, inclusion, and employability? Can these limited scale lessons be (partly?) recycled today in an ETWC perspective, while the very nature of E, T and W are entangled in a disruptive/innovative global transformation process?

3. Emergence in the E, T and W fields of a hybridization process between state-run regulatory procedures and ad hoc private governance arrangements

Contributions are welcome that focus on the broadening of usually state-run governing procedures of E and T to the participation of non-state stakeholders in new governance arrangements, as proposed by the 2000 World Forum on Education and already developing in the non-formal/informal education and training fields.

What were the main features of the progressive "renovation" of "traditional" apprenticeships in countries of the "South"? What are the relevance, impact and sustainability of the interactions between informal economy units and public and private E, T and W organizations via the recognition (assessment/validation) of prior learning and skills/competencies for access to formal education/ work in the context of qualification systems? What was the role of training provided by crafts to create learning and career pathways, as well as to stimulate the emergence of representative organisations?

4. NEETs and ETWCs : Building interactions between "targets" and systems

Contributions are welcome that address the notion of NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) that appeared a decade ago in the international education glossary. Actions such as Active Labour Market Programs (ALMPs) are today designed to activate NEETs, stimulate employment and job creation, and improve transitions from E and T to W, through a combination of hiring subsidies, skills training, career guidance, and the promotion of enterprise creation. Is this notion no more than a revamping of the terms that were used in the 80's and 90's, as presented in Theme 2 above? Is this a useful way of addressing individual inequalities and exclusions that the Continuum perspective aims to tackle in a systemic way? Why is this notion only used in relation to youth? Is it a heterogeneous category that is applicable to longstanding vulnerability situations as well as transition periods? Can this notion be applied to precarious work in the informal economy? Is "NEETs" a neat notion? What lessons can be drawn for the North from the implementation of activities addressing the NEETs challenges in the South?

5. ETWCs in the context of global crises and changes, with a focus on technology-based solutions

Contributions are welcome that address the multiplication of global crises – with some to possibly end and others to remain and develop further – such as climate change, conflicts, energy transitions, health/food crisis, population mobility/migration/displacement, growing intra/international inequalities.
Have these changes further consequences (positive or negative) on the already existing discontinuities within and between the E-T-W fields in many socio-economic sectors? Have they aggravated the difficulties that underprivileged people already face? Have they created unexpected positive opportunities? Is the attention paid to this situation by IOs, IGOs, foundations, business justified or not? If so, why? What are the consequences on the development of the ETWC notion? What are the signs and implications of digital services being framed as the new catch-all solutions in the fields of E, T and W?

6. ETWCs in a forward-looking perspective and challenging current narratives about the future of education and work

The "World we want" proposed at the beginning of the 2010's and reflected in the recent Reports on the futures of education (UNESCO, 2021) and work (ILO, 2019) as well as by SDGs 4 and 8 (2015), are not fully in line with the key word of the Continuum perspective - i.e., discontinuities -and are not enough forward- looking. The future of education is mainly envisaged within the school sector. The future of work (including training) is mostly focused on the formalization of these activities, via transition processes. SDG4 (which includes TVET) is largely disconnected from SDG8 (work and employment).
What about revisiting the society without schools - as proposed by Y. Illich in the 70's and by the OECD in a scenario on the Future of Education and Skills (2018) -, with virtual supports and home/nomad /crowd work? What is the future of the right to education (including vocational training) and of the right to decent work - with an ever-stronger influence of non-state actors? Which types of ETWCs could then be developed? For example, could a Nexus - "A connection or series of connections linking two or more things "(Oxford languages) - be put in place to engage creative dynamic change (The notion of nexus is already used in the humanitarian world to secure basic coordination between aid, peace and development)? Is a Nexus not a minimalist and open-ended "de-siloing" instrument calling to mind the situation we named "traditional «under "theme 1 above?

Submissions

We especially encourage contributions that cut across all the themes above, consider the historical and present contexts, challenges and perspectives offered by the ETWCs in transforming education and training systems. As such we invite critical reflections on the concrete experiments and scenarios that are underway, to avoid seeing ETWCs becoming one more buzz word in the international education glossary. We will prioritize a diverse range of contributors across different regions and welcome experience-based contributions from education and skills practitioners in the field, as well as policy specialists and academics.

The contributions are expected to be short written articles (typically around 1200-1500 words) or multimedia material that can speak to a wider audience of policymakers, academics, researchers, civil society

organizations, and other actors working in education. Articles should be submitted in English or French, but if you wish to send one in any of the other UN languages please let us know.

As a first step, please indicate your interest by sending us a short abstract by 27 June 2022 of no more than 250 words. This will help us ensure a good balance of articles from diverse contributors in different regions. We will advise contributors by the beginning of July and would expect to receive the first draft of the selected articles themselves by 15 August 2022. Papers will be peer reviewed and returned with feedback by early September. Authors will then revise and resubmit their articles by early October, with a view to publishing the Special Issue on the Education-Training-Work Continuums at the beginning of December 2022.

Guest Editors: Michel Carton, *Senior Advisor at NORRAG and Professor Emeritus, Graduate Institute, Geneva and **Christine Hofmann**, Team Lead, Skills for Social Inclusion, ILO*

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 27 June 2022
Deadline for first draft of full articles: 15 August 2022

Submission of Abstracts and Articles:
Michel Carton: michel.carton@graduateinstitute.ch
Christine Hofmann: hofmann@ilo.org

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