

Recognition and participation: turns in managing career development

Adult jobseekers' learning process in career counseling and career coaching

This empirical study aims to contribute knowledge about the individual learning process of professional counseling in the form of career counseling and career coaching. The study focuses experiences of support and thus emerges in an arena where individual and social needs are met or collide. This means that career counseling and career coaching, in this sense, operate and manages tensions in sociopolitical reality. That can seem prohibitive or facilitating towards the individual's dreams and desires. In the narrow perspective the individual's subjective view of him- or herself based on experiences, opportunities and requirements can also hinder or facilitate career development.



Based on a qualitative approach this study embraces a closer understanding of the complexity of learning processes (Illeris, 2009). Professionals' and participants' dialogue trying to meet to jointly achieve change, can be considered a form of recognition (Honneth, 2003). In other words, a learning process of recognition where individuals with support of professionals could redesign their life constructions. Narrating founded in emotions, inclusion and recognition is seen as the foundation of the learning process. An interpretive method of reflection is used to analyze how career counseling and career coaching support is experienced and its impact on adults learning in situations of transition. This creates a foundation to spotlight the turns that might pave the way for learning, which are initially compulsory or structural, but can become self-initiated (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997).

Quotes from participants

'I told everything like that and she respected it ... it felt like ... her eyes, she takes me seriously, the body language is telling you much. It is not this sitting in front of the computer and tapping, saying: What do you want then? No, she talked to me, looked in my eyes, understood what I said, I felt so ... understood, what I told her, what I wanted and she just ... she said that it shines in your eyes when I show you this and I just yes, yes this is what I want'

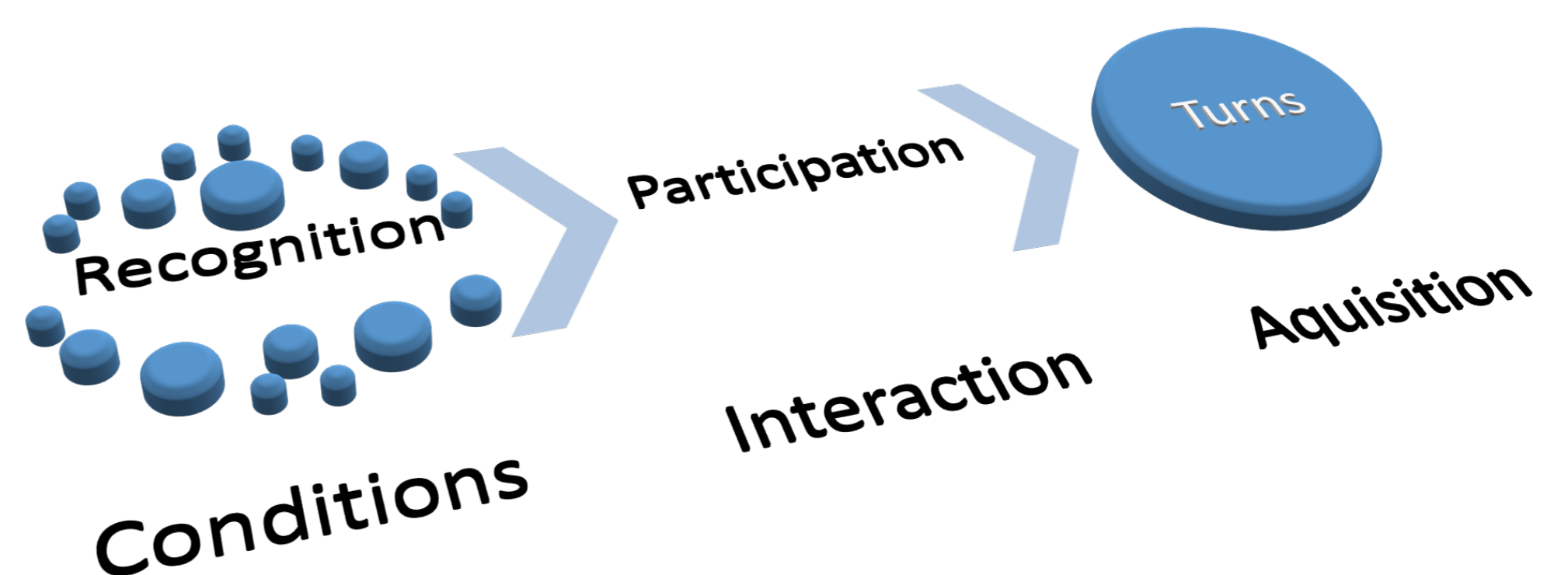
'Previously it has always been in focus that I do not have any rating, because they wanted to get me a job and I understood it as I should be happy if I even could get a job or so. Then it's clear that I was beginning to think so too'

'Stress and frustration is growing every day, every week, every month and it will not be easier ... this affects the entire life when you cannot plan anything ... and you feel useless ... and nobody wants me, although I know I have competence and experience and so but I cannot change my age, cannot change that I have been away from the labor market for a while'

'Above all, they treat me as if I have every opportunity, not as a helpless anyone who should get to the labor market as soon as possible or away from here. Here they see me as an individual, with hopes and dreams who needs help to get there, and it's only temporary as I need income support'

Results

The sixteen individual experiences suggest, in their often difficult and vulnerable situation, to be recognized as a unique and capable individual creates possibilities to recognize the professional. There emerges mutual recognition conditions for participation, and thereby a positive learning process commences.



Career counseling and career coaching for job-seekers can be seen as a step towards interventions that are more adaptable to the needs of job seekers. Several of the stories show that participants started a positive learning process, both in thought, feeling and action. Perhaps the participants begin to reflect their experiences and reorganize these to anchor themselves to future conditions as yet unknown, but therefore not impossible to influence.