

Maurice de Greef¹, Marloes Zijl², Merel Heimens Visser³,
Dominique Verté⁴, Mien Segers⁵

The Impact of Continuing Education on the Increase in Social Inclusion and the Improvement of the Position in the Labour Market of Unemployed, Low-Skilled Adults

Abstract: Although low-skilled individuals face greater challenges in the labour market, continuing education appears to be the most effective form of active labour market policy for those who are remote from the labour market. Learning on the job seems to be a more promising solution to encourage low-skilled adults to engage in continuing education and improve their employment prospects. The question, however, remains whether continuing education focussing on learning for work also has significant impact on low-skilled adult learners. This study, involving 3,027 unemployed participants aged between 15 to 65 who enrolled in continuing education courses, explores the broader impact of continuing education on the social inclusion and labour market position of low-skilled unemployed adults. It also examines how the learning environment influences these outcomes. The findings show that, after participating in education, unemployed learners, particularly those with lower education backgrounds, score higher on various social inclusion criteria. Their position on the labour market improves as well. This latter effect, however, is stronger for individuals with higher educational attainment. Furthermore, the results suggest that the transfer possibilities are one of the essential elements of this learning environment for low-skilled adults.

Keywords: continuing education, transfer of learning (skills and knowledge), learning for work, low-skilled, unemployment

¹ Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6806-9800> (maurice.de.greef@vub.be)

² UWV, The Netherlands

³ Blackbird Impact, The Netherlands

⁴ Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2668-8996>

⁵ Maastricht University, The Netherlands, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6578-8722>

Efekat kontinuiranog obrazovanja na unapređenje socijalne uključenosti i poboljšanje položaja na tržištu rada nezaposlenih, niskokvalifikovanih punoletnih lica

Apstrakt: Premda se niskokvalifikovani pojedinci suočavaju sa većim izazovima na tržištu rada, čini se da kontinuirano obrazovanje predstavlja najefikasniji oblik aktivne politike tržišta rada za one koji su udaljeni od tržišta rada. Učenje na radu deluje kao dobro rešenje koje podstiče niskokvalifikovana punoletna lica da se uključe u kontinuirano obrazovanje i poboljšaju svoje izgleda za zapošljavanje. Ipak, ostaje pitanje da li kontinuirano obrazovanje, usmereno na učenje uz rad, takođe ima značajan efekat na niskokvalifikovane punoletne polaznike. Ova studija obuhvata 3.027 nezaposlenih polaznika kurseva kontinuiranog obrazovanja, uzrasta od 15 do 65 godina. Istražuje širi uticaj kontinuiranog obrazovanja na socijalnu uključenost i položaj niskokvalifikovanih nezaposlenih punoletnih osoba na tržištu rada. Takođe, istražuje kako okruženje za učenje utiče na ove rezultate. Nalazi ukazuju da nezaposleni polaznici, posebno oni na nižim obrazovnim nivoima, postižu bolje rezultate u različitim aspektima socijalne uključenosti nakon pohađanja kurseva. Takođe, poboljšava im se položaj na tržištu rada. Međutim, uticaj obrazovanja na tržište rada je snažniji kod osoba sa višim nivoom obrazovanja. Pored toga, rezultati ukazuju na to da je za niskokvalifikovane punoletne osobe jedan od ključnih faktora za uspeh mogućnost prenosa veština stečenih tokom učenja.

Ključne reči: kontinuirano obrazovanje, prenos naučenog (znanja i veština), učenje uz rad, niskokvalifikovana lica, nezaposlenost

Introduction

Individuals with fewer educational opportunities face greater challenges in the labour market. Consequently, a significant share of the population in Western societies struggles to secure a sustainable place in the labour market. The unemployment rate among low-skilled EU citizens is much higher than that of those with higher educational attainment (13.7% v. 4.5%) (CEDEFOP, 2023). Education appears to be a possible lever for ensuring a sustainable place in the labour market. In several countries, continuing education is an effective tool for

improving one's position in the labour market. According to Card et al. (2015), education is the most effective type of active labour market policy, particularly in the long term, for those who are remote from the labour market. Low-skilled individuals, in particular, experience significant long-term benefits, such as higher salaries and better employment prospects (Vrooman et al., 2016). Peijen et al. (2019) also highlight the long-term positive effects of investment in education and work experience opportunities, which improve the participants' job security and labour market prospects. In their review of the international microeconomic literature on the effects of active labour market policies, De Koning et al. (2005) also find positive short-term effects on the employability of participants from several groups: six out of ten studies show that education increases the likelihood of re-entry into the job market.

On the other hand, previous research has shown that low-skilled unemployed adults face several barriers to participating in education later in life due to the problems they experienced in their initial education, (Barton et al., 2006). 'Learning in practice', which refers to 'learning while doing the job', appears to be a more effective way to ensure that low-skilled adults engage in continuing education and improve their labour market opportunities. Hybrid learning environments combining theoretical instruction and professional practice available after completion of school are more appealing to low-skilled adult job seekers (Brouwer, 2015). Furthermore, learning in practice increases the participants' confidence that their efforts will be successful and their understanding of the importance of what they are learning (Diekhoff & Wiggington, 1989). A good example is the Dutch 'Ambachtsacademie', which creates new opportunities for people in small-scale trades (such as bicycle repairers, tilers, handymen, goldsmiths and silversmiths, furniture makers or piano tuners) who want to start their own business. This form of hybrid education allows the participants to study and work simultaneously (De Greef & Heimens Visser, 2020). Experienced professionals from several companies help design the "practical" studies and mentor the participants attending them. Several studies highlight the importance of 'study-work departments' in establishing effective networks facilitating the participants' access to the labour market (De Zwart et al., 2015). The question, however, remains whether these forms of continuing education focussing on learning for work also have a significant impact on low-skilled adult learners.

Investment in Continuing Education: Opportunities for Low-Skilled Adults to Learn for Work

Employers may facilitate the continuing education of their workers. This is particularly important for low-skilled adults, as it provides them with the ability to continue their learning, receive feedback from coworkers and follow a training or development plan (Künn – Nelen et al., 2018). The Dutch Public Employment Service (UWV) invests in study-work programmes combining working and studying. In most cases, these programmes lead to better positions in the labour market (De Greef & Heimens Visser, 2020). Special study programs are designed for young people, who simultaneously work and learn while working in the care sector; they include, e.g. pharmacy assistants, nurses, social care workers and specialised pedagogical workers.

Cooperation between the public and the private sectors appears to enhance participation in education among low-skilled adults in the Netherlands. This cooperation also seems to be effective in several other European countries. In Bulgaria, intensive two-year cooperation between the Bulgarian employment agency and the Bulgarian-German centre for professional education resulted in the participation of 4,356 job seekers in trainings and education that improved their employment prospects (De Greef & Heimens Visser, 2020). Furthermore, in cooperation with the private sector, the Finnish employment centre has started issuing ‘Social Impact Bonds’ (De Greef & Heimens Visser, 2020). Within this initiative, the private sector invests and assumes risks to provide immigrants with opportunities for sustainable employment. Many immigrants have found or are on their way to finding a job through this initiative. The public employment office cooperates directly with the employers in Slovenia as well. The Slovenian programme called “The Learning Workshops Project” facilitates practical trainings in social entrepreneurship for people facing major barriers to employment. These participants engage in a six-month practice-oriented training in social entrepreneurship (entrepreneurs with a social mission). Employers involved in the programme facilitate this practical training, allowing the participants to work in their companies. This type of intensive cooperation between the public employment office and employers seems to yield positive outcomes for low-skilled adults.

Knowledge transfer opportunities are a very important element of study-work programs. Adults who wish to learn or need to enhance their skills typically join continuing education with similar goals, e.g. to learn digital skills, improve their job performance or assertiveness or find a sustainable job, but the group is

heterogeneous. Adults are provided with a constructive learning process if they are provided with opportunities to apply what they have learned in their everyday lives. More specifically, educational studies show that the good transfer of skills and knowledge during studying improves job prospects. Groenewoud and Slotboom (2009) found that 75% of the job seekers who participated in educational programmes successfully completed their studies and that many of them also found a job, mostly because they were able to quickly apply what they had learned in their new jobs (Groenewoud & Slotboom, 2009). Therefore, the participants had the possibility to apply what they had learned in their personal situations (their new job) as soon as possible.

Focus on combination of basic and professional skills

Increased focus on basic skills appears to be an essential part of this learning process. According to the study by De Greef and Heimens Visser (2020), the Flemish Public Employment and Professional Education Service (VDAB), for example, cooperates closely with the Centres for Basic Education (CBEs), providing low-skilled individuals with education in basic skills. In France, attention to these skills is exemplified by 'E2C94', a 'second chance' school in the Val-de-Marne region (De Greef & Heimens Visser, 2020), which offers an 8- to 10-month study programme specifically designed for young participants who have not obtained formal qualifications. This study programme is organised in cooperation with companies in the region. Similarly, the Serbian FBEA (Functional Basic Education of Adults) programme has targeted Roma men and women who have not completed primary school or obtained professional qualifications. This project focuses on helping them achieve formal qualifications and develop essential general and professional skills to improve their chances in the labour market. Psychological aspects are also addressed within this framework. Another example is "The Road to the Labour Market" project, an intensive Hungarian study programme for job seekers over 25 aimed at increasing their employability. The participants receive one-on-one coaching, including in job search and career orientation and psychological support. They are also provided with group support through community engagement, workshops on job acquisition strategies and mentoring.

In Austria, the Vocational Education and Rehabilitation Centre (BBRZ) has been successfully supporting people re-entering the labour market again after an accident or an illness (De Greef & Heimens Visser, 2020). Almost 80% of the participants re-integrated in the labour market after this intervention. To sum up, in addition to helping participants integrate in the labour market, these

programmes pay additional attention to extending them social support and help in their personal lives to regain control over their lives.

By focusing on basic skills, psychological support and social integration, these study-work programs optimise the transferability of skills for low-skilled adults. This comprehensive approach enhances their ability to obtain qualifications and secure sustainable employment in the labour market.

In various private and work situations, participants need to be able to discern what works for them and what does not, as well as which new skills and knowledge are suitable for their circumstances and what attitudes are best for them. The environment will partially influence how these new skills and knowledge are applied. The application of what the participant learned should come naturally, allowing new habits to form seamlessly and enabling them to perform differently or more effectively in their new role.

Methodology

Research question

This study explores the broader impact of continuing education on low-skilled unemployed adults, going beyond just finding a new job. It investigates whether the transfer of skills and knowledge as part of the learning environment stimulates this impact. Therefore, the research question is: “What is the impact of continuing education and the elements of the learning environment on the social inclusion and labour market position of unemployed low-skilled adults?”

Procedure

The study involved 3,027 unemployed participants aged 15 to 65 who were enrolled in continuing education courses, mostly focussing on improving basic skills. Following written instructions, teachers and volunteers in several adult education centres across The Netherlands asked the adult learners to fill in a questionnaire based on the SIT (Social Inclusion after Transfer, De Greef et al., 2010). The questionnaire was administered as a pre- and post-test, with approximately 15 weeks between the two assessments during the continuing education courses. This approach aimed to measure the participants’ progress in terms of social inclusion and labour market development, in addition to the potential impact of the learning environment on these improvements.

Sample

As shown in Table 1, most of the involved learners were female (75.5%) and more than half of them were between 21 and 40 years old (57%). According to Table 1, a substantial share of the respondents (47.8%) had completed only primary or secondary education and had been involved in initial education for ten years or less (52.2%). Unemployed immigrants accounted for most learners who had completed tertiary education.

Table 1. Socio-demographic background of the involved low-skilled unemployed adults (N = 3027)

<i>Characteristic / category</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	24.5
Female	75.5
<i>Age</i>	
21 – 40	57.0
41 – 60	37.5
61 – 80	5.5
<i>Total years of education</i>	
<5	27.3
6 – 10	24.9
11 – 15	30.7
16 – 20	16.3
> 21	0.9
<i>Highest level of education</i>	
(Special) Primary school	25.5
(Special) Secondary school	22.3
Junior College	12.0
Vocational College	10.0
University	10.9
Other school systems	18.7

Note: Missing values are excluded from percentage calculations.

Instruments

We used de Greef's SIT-instrument (Social Inclusion after Transfer) to measure the impact of continuing education on the learners' social inclusion and labour market position (De Greef et al2010). Table 2 provides an overview of this instrument, including the different variables.

Table 2. Variables used in this study based on the SIT-instrument (De Greef et al., 2012)

<i>Questionnaires</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>No of items</i>	<i>Example of items per scale</i>
<i>Elements of the learning environment</i>	Teacher support	8	Appreciation of learner
	Learning content and activities	4	Practical demonstrations of problem solving
	Immediate surroundings	9	Support of surroundings
<i>Social inclusion</i>	Transfer possibilities	3	Increase in confidence
	National language skills	9	Ability to read
	Digital skills	3	Ability to use the computer
	Foreign language skills	3	Speaking different languages
	Assertiveness	5	Problem-solving ability
	Labour and parenting skills	4	Problem-solving ability
	Voluntary work and neighbourhood skills	3	Working as a volunteer
	Contact skills	7	Respecting others
	Meeting and attempting	4	Meeting people
	Meeting intimate contacts	4	Visiting family
	Attempting associations in neighbourhood	7	Organising activities in the neighbourhood
	Being active in nature and sports	4	Enjoying sport activities
	Involvement in arts and culture	2	Enjoying the arts
	Becoming a member	4	Member of a sports club
Preventing loneliness	11	Example feeling empty	

During the pre-test, the participants were asked to respond to questions about their socio-demographic characteristics, such as gender, nationality, age, educational level and the number of years in education. The following items were also added to measure the improvements in their labour market positions: (1) having a paid job or better performance in a paid job, (2) having a job in volunteering, (3) entering an apprenticeship, (4) searching for a job, (5) having a job combined with coaching or better job performance combined with coaching.

Statistical analyses

Various variables were created using SPSS 29.0 in order to explore the impact of this specific programme of continuing education. The percentage of participants who demonstrated growth was calculated for each variable. Additionally, participants were divided into three groups based on their highest level of education during early life: (1) participants who faced the greatest number of barriers in

accessing the labour market and had completed a special or mainstream primary school, (2) participants who faced an average number of barriers in accessing the labour market and had completed a special or mainstream secondary school; and, (3) participants who faced the fewest barriers in accessing the labour market and had completed mainstream vocational or academic studies. A comparison was then made of these three groups and a non-parametric analysis was conducted using Spearman's correlation.

Furthermore, we examined which elements of the learning environment influence the learning success. We conducted a non-parametric correlation analysis and a logistic regression analysis to explore which elements of the learning environment influence the increase in social inclusion or labour market position.

Ethical measures

In order to ensure compliance with the requisite ethical guidelines, all teachers received standardised written instructions on stratifying different learners. The teachers accordingly guided the learners in filling the questionnaire at the start of the course (pre-test) and after 15 weeks (post-test). The teachers were at the participants' disposal at the time they were filling the questionnaire and extended them support as provided for in the written instructions. The potential impact of the research on the individual participants will be low given that the questionnaire is not a test; rather, it is based on self-measurement scales and will be analysed anonymously. In addition, the consortium ensured that the research methodology does not result in discriminatory practices or unfair treatment by using random stratification of the sample. Each participant was required to review and sign an Informed Consent Form, which was incorporated in the digital data collection system.

Results

Improved social inclusion and labour market position

A large share of the 3,027 unemployed adult participants reported improvements in various areas of their lives after participating in continuing education. As shown in Table 3, many of these participants felt more confident in their practical language skills, perceived themselves to be more assertive (with greater self-confidence and problem-solving abilities) and experienced enhanced skills

for engaging in volunteer work or neighbourhood activities. They also they reported improvements in their work performance and parenting, as well as in connecting to others and enhancing their digital skills, such as using computers and the Internet.

The results in Table 3 indicate that adults with the lowest educational attainment appear to have the highest scores across nearly all variables related to social inclusion (with the exception of voluntary work, neighbourhood skills and membership participation). This suggests that participants, whose highest level of education was (special) primary school, experienced the greatest impact on social inclusion compared to those whose highest level of education was (special) secondary school or higher.

Table 3. Increase in social inclusion of adults aged 16 to 65 after continuing education (N = 3027)

<i>Social inclusion variables</i>	<i>Participants experiencing increase in social inclusion (in %)</i>			
	<i>Total group</i>	<i>Highest level of education (special) primary school</i>	<i>Highest level of education (special) secondary school</i>	<i>Highest level of education (vocational education / Bachelor's or university degree)</i>
National language skills	64.9	66.1	58.7	65.3
Digital skills	55.0	56.8	54.2	54.6
Foreign language skills	49.9	49.8	46.5	46.3
Assertiveness	57.0	62.1	52.4	54.8
Labour and parenting skills	45.8	52.8	40.3	41.3
Voluntary work and neighbourhood skills	40.1	42.6	32.5	42.8
Contact skills	47.4	51.1	40.5	44.7
Meeting and attempting	52.5	54.1	50.5	50.1
Meeting intimate contacts	48.0	50.2	42.1	45.3
Attempting associations in neighbourhood	40.4	45.5	38.8	41.6
Being active in nature and sports	52.3	55.3	48.3	50.4
Involvement in arts and culture	36.5	37.3	36.5	36.0
Getting a membership	32.2	26.8	36.4	37.1
Preventing loneliness	47.6	51.2	42.2	47.9

Table 3 provides more detailed insights, showing that a relatively higher percentage of participants with only (special) primary school reported improved national language skills (66.1%) compared to participants with (special) second-

ary school or higher education (58.7% – 65.3%). This pattern is similar for most variables related to increased social contacts (contact skills: 51.1% v. 40.5% – 44.7%; preventing loneliness: 51.2% v. 42.2% – 47.9%). The results also show a similar trend for variables related to being more active in their immediate surroundings (meeting and attempting: 54.1% v. 50.1% – 50.5%; meeting intimate contacts: 50.2% v. 42.1% – 45.3%; attempting neighbourhood associations: 45.5% v. 38.8% – 41.6%; engaging in nature and sports: 55.3% v. 48.3% – 50.4%; participating in arts and culture: 37.3% v. 36.0% – 36.5%).

Table 4 shows a side effect of the programme – one-third of the participants started actively looking for a job and approximately 20% found paid employment or improved their job performance. Additionally, over a quarter began volunteering and approximately 17% entered an apprenticeship. Finally, around 17% are looking for a job with guidance or receiving coaching to enhance their job performance.

The scores for adults learners with lowest educational attainment in Table 4 are not the lowest across almost all variables related to labour market position. This suggests that this group did not experience the greatest impact in terms of employment outcomes.

Table 4. Improved labour market position of adults aged 16 to 65 after continuing education (N = 3027)

<i>Variables concerning labour market position</i>	<i>Participants experiencing improved labour market position (in %)</i>			
	<i>Total group</i>	<i>Highest level of education (Special) Primary school</i>	<i>Highest level of education (Special) Secondary school</i>	<i>Highest level of education (Vocational education / bachelors or University degree)</i>
Having a paid job or better job performance	19.9	20.8	23.9	20.2
Voluntary work	25.8	24.8	29.5	26.4
Apprenticeship	17.3	18.0	22.6	18.3
Searching for a job	33.1	29.9	35.8	37.1
Better job performance or having a paid job while being coached	16.6	14.2	18.7	18.7

Finally, the comparison of subgroups of learners with different educational backgrounds shows that there appears no significant differences among them in the reported increase in social inclusion. The only exception is the variable related to labour and parenting skills, where a slight albeit significant difference was found among the subgroups ($r = -.061$; $p < .05$).

Impact of the learning environment on the increase in social inclusion

A logistic regression analysis was preceded by non-parametric correlation analyses that showed that only certain social inclusion variables had a statistically significant correlation with elements of the learning environment. For these variables, a non-parametric correlation regression analysis was conducted to explore the influence of different elements of the learning environment on the improvement of social inclusion or labour market position. The results are presented in Table 5. Variables related to social inclusion and labour market position are listed in the left column of the Table.

Table 5. Impact of learning environment elements on variables of the social inclusion and labour market position of adults aged 16 to 65 (N = 3027) after continuing education

<i>Independent variables of the learning environment →</i>	<i>Teacher support</i>	<i>Learning content and activities</i>	<i>Immediate surroundings</i>	<i>Transfer possibilities</i>
<i>Dependent variables of social inclusion ↓</i>				
National language skills	.554	<.001**	--	.033*
Digital skills	.198	.032*	<.001**	.013*
Assertiveness	.167	.037*	--	.157
Labour and parenting skills	--	--	.013*	--
Meeting and attempting	.054	.021*	--	.034*
Being active in nature and sports	.041*	.746	--	.015*
Preventing loneliness	--	.005**	<.001**	--
Voluntary work	.036*	.280	.074	.043*
Apprenticeship	.026*	--	.019*	--
Searching for a job	--	--	<.001**	--
Better job performance or having a paid job while being coached	--	--	.005**	--

*: Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

** : Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

--: no significant correlation based on the non-parametric analysis.

First, it seems that all elements of the learning environment contribute to enhancing social inclusion. Specifically, learning content and activities, as well as transfer opportunities, appear to influence most of the social inclusion variables

(see Table 5). Immediate surroundings and teacher support also appear to affect some of the social inclusion variables.

Second, as per the variables related to the labour market position, immediate surroundings have the greatest impact on improving one's position on the labour market (see Table 5). This may involve support of family, friends or nearby individuals during the study process. Transfer opportunities are also important and teacher support seems to positively influence the perceived improvement of the labour market position (see Table 5). The content of the learning activities and study materials appear to be less important.

Discussion

This study shows that unemployed adults can improve their social position by participating in continuing education. They score higher on various social inclusion criteria after completing these courses. This is especially true for unemployed adults with low education attainments. Their position in the labour market also improves. This latter effect, however, is stronger for individuals with higher education than for those with a low educational background. Previous literature has already highlighted the positive impact of continuing education on employment opportunities. A meta-analysis by Card et al. (2015) found a stronger effect for individuals in unfavourable labour market positions. Our study does not confirm this finding, possibly because practically all the participants on our study are in such a position. Our study, however, indicates that participation in continuing education improves not only the labour market position, but also perceived social inclusion, particularly for those with the lowest educational attainment. Furthermore, the improvements observed at the micro level—in terms of perceived improvements of the social inclusion and labour market position of unemployed adults following their participation in continuing education—indicate a significant macro-level impact. According to CPB (2016), involvement in education contributes to an increase in structural employment and overall productivity at the macro level. Additionally, the poverty rate is expected to decrease as long-term unemployed individuals secure jobs and earn their own income to meet their basic needs.

Moreover, our study suggests that the learning environment can amplify the benefits of participating in continuing education. Learning content and activities and transfer opportunities are important, along with support from the immediate surroundings and teachers, which strengthens the effect on the perceived rate of social inclusion. Immediate surroundings appear to be the most influential

in terms of labour market success. When it comes to success in the labour market, the influence of the immediate environment is particularly significant. This support likely comes from family, friends, and others in the participants' personal networks during their studies. Transfer opportunities, along with teacher support, are also important factors impacting labour market success, whereas the content of the learning activities and study materials seem to play a lesser role.

Furthermore, improvements observed at the micro level, the perceived increase in social inclusion and labour market position among unemployed adults who engaged in continuing education studies, show a significant impact of learning on the macro level. According to CPB (2016), involvement in education ensures an increase in both the level of structural employment and macro level productivity. Also, the poverty rate is expected to decline as long-term unemployed people find jobs and earn their own income to meet their basic needs.

In addition, research by Kok and Scholte (2013) shows that adult study programmes focussing on optimising language skills are effective eventually, due, *inter alia*, to reduced medical care costs, increased labour productivity, and health benefits (Kok & Scholte, 2013). Furthermore, an analysis by Kok et al. (2006) shows a social efficiency rate of 164%. The total benefits of programmes aimed at helping social beneficiaries, the unemployed and sick workers in finding a job are estimated at approximately 1.8 billion a year in this analysis, while programme costs amount to 0.7 billion a year. This results in a net social efficiency of €1.1 billion annually, representing a social efficiency of 164% relative to the costs. These findings reinforce the notion that investment in continuing education positively impacts the social inclusion and labour market position of adult learners, a conclusion that this study has also confirmed at the micro level.

This study is a step forward in demonstrating the impact of continuing education not only for highly educated people, but also for low-skilled unemployed adults. However, the research design of the study has some limitations. Given its quantitative nature, there is apparently a need for greater insight into the meaning of the specific elements of the learning environment. A more qualitative research approach exploring what these elements mean should be undertaken. For example, it would be interesting to gauge the views of adult learners, as well as their teachers, to learn what transfer possibilities mean in educational practices. This could lead to optimising the learning environment of continuing education to increase the success rate. Additionally, it would be interesting to compare results between subgroups e.g. adults with job in addition to these unemployed adults. Such comparisons might provide more insight in e.g. what employers can do to increase the success rate of continuing education they organise at work.

This can help increase the impact of learning not only for low-skilled jobseekers, but also for low-skilled job holders.

The results of this study show that continuing education impacts the lives of low-skilled unemployed adults. Participation in continuing education clearly enhances their social inclusion and improves their labour market position. The learning environment itself serves as one of the levers in the process. The study results suggests that transfer possibilities are one of the essential elements of this learning environment for low-skilled adults.

References

- BARTON, D., APPLEBY, Y., HODGE, R., TUSTING, K., & IVANIČ, R. (2006). *Relating adults' lives and learning: participation and engagement in different settings*. NRDC.
- BROUWER, E. (2015). Student als leergierige 'werknemer'. Retrieved from <https://www.canonberoepsonderwijs.nl/Hybrideleeromgevingindetechniek>.
- CARD, D., KLUVE, J., & WEBER, A. (2015). *What Works? A Meta Analysis of Recent Active Labor Market Program Evaluations*. IZA / Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit / Institute for the Study of Labor.
- CEDEFOP. (2023). Unemployment rate by level of education in EU in 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/skills-intelligence/unemployment-rate?year=2021&country=EU#2>.
- CPB. (2016). *Kansrijk arbeidsmarktbeleid Deel 2*. CPB.
- DE GREEF, M., & HEIMENS VISSER, M. (2020). *Succesfactoren voor post-initiële arbeidsmarktgerichte scholing*. Blackbird Impact.
- DE GREEF, M., SEGERS, M., & VERTÉ, D. (2010). Development of the SIT, an instrument to evaluate the transfer effects of adult education programs for social inclusion, *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 36, 42 – 61. <https://biblio.vub.ac.be/vubirfiles/109301731/22052306.pdf>
- DE GREEF, M., SEGERS, M., & VERTÉ, D. (2012). Understanding the effects of training programs for vulnerable adults on social inclusion as part of continuing education. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 34(3), 357 – 380.
- DE KONING, J., GELDERBLOM, A., ZANDVLIET, K., & VAN DEN BOOM, L. (2005). *Effectiviteit van Re-integratie: De stand van zaken: Literatuuronderzoek*. SEOR, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam.
- DE ZWART, S., OOSTVEEN, A., & BOOIJ, H. M. (2015). *De toegevoegde waarde van de leerwerkloketten*. Berenschot.
- DIEKHOF, G. M., & WIGGINTON, P. K. (1989). Factors of Success in a Volunteer Adult Literacy Program. *Raeding and Writing*, 1(2), 153 – 162.
- GROENEWOUD, M., & SLOTBOOM, S. (2009). *Scholing via UWV: Een onderzoek naar de mate waarin scholingstrajecten tot werk leiden*. Regioplan Beleidsonderzoek.

- KOK, L., HOLLANDERS, D., & HOP, J. P. (2006). *Kosten en baten van reïntegratie*. SEO Economisch onderzoek.
- KOK, L., & SCHOLTE, R. (2013). *Rendement van cursussen voor laaggeletterden*. SEO Economisch Onderzoek.
- KÜNN – NELEN, A., POULISSEN, D., VAN ELDERT, P., FOUARGE, D., & DE GRIP, A. (2018). *Leren onder werkenden met een kwetsbare positie op de arbeidsmarkt*. Researchcentrum voor Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt (ROA).
- PEIJEN, R., WILTHAGEN, T., MUFFELS, R., & DEKKER, R. (2019). Private arbeidsintegratie: evaluatie van het Philips Werkgelegenheidsplan / Private-sector labor market reintegration: evaluating the Philips Work-Experience Program. *Tijdschrift voor Arbeidsvraagstukken*, 35, 189 – 205.
- VROOMAN, C., JOSTEN, E., & VAN ECHELT, P. (2016). *De laagopgeleiden van de toekomst: meer dan een scholingsprobleem*. SCP.