



HELLIN Conference 2018

‘Transitions: Lifelong Learning and Higher Education’

Renehan Hall, Maynooth University, Friday 7th December 2018

Keynote:

John Holford, University of Nottingham on

“Wider lives need wider education: lifelong education for 21st century citizens”

Panels:

1. Lifelong learning/Higher Education and CPD – policy and practice
2. Experiences of diverse learners
3. Advice, guidance and information
4. Alternative routes to Higher Education

Plenary panel:

Lifelong learning reimagined – an alternative vision for Higher and Further Education

For information and registration go to : <https://hellin.ie/>



The theme for the HELLIN Conference 2018 is 'Transitions: Lifelong Learning and Higher Education'

Education is a highly personalised yet social phenomenon. Learning spans the lifetime of every individual and yet the contexts in which learning takes place cannot be separated from the influences of political, social and ever more increasingly economic concerns. The largely unquestioned drive for Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects tailored towards expected future skills shortages illustrate how powerful external forces impinge upon the interests of the individual and whatever notion of the 'good life' that has been the goal of many philosophers and theorists of education from Socrates onwards.

The conflation of learning, education, school and college has gone largely unexamined alongside the reductionist idea that 'being educated' is good if for no other reason than the financial benefit to the individual of becoming a 'high earner'. However, and at the same time, we have seen the growing number of employees who are overqualified for the position that they hold within the labour market. Tied to this is a lack of any real critical analysis of the expected trajectory of the 'traditional' leaving certificate student's immediate transition to HE when there is an actual skills shortage in particular areas of industry and the economy necessary for a functioning society to flourish.¹ Again external forces will determine for how long this will continue.

The HELLIN conference in Maynooth University Friday 7 December 2018 will endeavor to ask some difficult questions of the whole landscape of the formal education system and posit an alternative vision through the lens of Lifelong Learning of how things might be better achieved below the surface of mere custom and acceptance of the unreflected assumed norm.

It will ask questions regarding appropriate and meaningful educational interventions at various times along the lifespan continuum. It will consider 'transitions' and how these can best be managed to the benefit of the individual and wider society. The idea of flexibility in terms of the student, the system and the culture of HE is key to managing these 'transitions'.

When we consider that the lifetime career is something that many commentators regard as now unattainable to coming generations we must ask how we prepare people to think about Lifelong Learning in terms of not only upskilling for one's present career, but retraining or indeed redirecting people into a second or even a third career that is more in line with their accumulated lived experience and the wealth of unrecognised knowledge (RPL) that they bring with them as they become older students/learners. How do we accommodate these older learners, or learners with Mental Health or Addiction issues, learners from migrant backgrounds? What kind of advice, guidance and information do people need to make good decisions in relation to their education, career and wellbeing? These are some of the themes that we hope to explore on the day.