

Transitional learning in the workplace: current white-collar indulgence or future norm for all workers?

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Abstract

Managing change is an axiomatic reality in contemporary workplaces, as are the pressures to constantly improve organisational performance. Change management is a commonly used term that has its place, but also has shortcomings. This paper argues that, in the context of economic restructuring and significant changes in work and employment, there is a need to broaden the scope of change management from its narrow focus on the economic performance of an organisation to one that embraces the human element associated with change. The concept of 'transitional learning' is used to develop a theme around the human factors associated with change. Transitional learning embraces the psychological, economic and social well-being of the individual during periods of transition, such as redeployment, redundancy and retrenchment. Currently, however, transitional learning is offered primarily to white-collar workers (typically managerial staff), and generally takes the limited form of outplacement programs. Based primarily on a critical review and synthesis of extant research, this paper argues that a new mindset must be developed to accept job change and career transitions as the norm, and with it the need to support all affected workers, particularly those at most risk of retrenchment and unemployment. In future, transitional learning must become embedded in all organisational learning, and available to all workers undergoing critical job and career transitions. Future directions and implications for organisations and adult educators are discussed.

Introduction

Changes in economic structure, employment patterns and work organisation over the past three decades in Australia and most OECD countries have been reconfiguring relationships between work, employment, career, and learning and development. Traditional assumptions about holding a job for life and following a linear career path are being profoundly challenged, if not undermined. As a result of the increasing flexibilisation of work and employment, many people are faced with the prospect of more precarious employment and uncertain futures, and are experiencing a heightened sense of insecurity about their working lives and futures.

In most advanced industrial nations, such as Australia, people are increasingly aware that they are living in a 'risk society' (Beck 1992). Economic reform is seen to have shaken the social foundations of the post-WW2 welfare state in which all citizens were guaranteed a 'living wage', if not full-time employment on an ongoing basis. Such certainties have been eroded as experiences of redundancy, retrenchment, and unemployment have become more widespread in recent decades. As a result, anxiety about the future has risen with generally negative implications for social well-being and the stability of social institutions and supports, such as the family. In effect, risks have been redistributed across the life course, individuals' working lives have become more complex, career trajectories are less predictable, and people feel more vulnerable and less able to plan for future contingencies (Pusey 2003).

Viewed in this context, career transitions are not always as easily embraced as perhaps they once were, nor do they generally offer the same prospects of hope and opportunity for personal exploration and self-development. In particular, those at most risk – workers facing redundancy, retrenchment and unemployment – face an unknown future that can pose challenges that not all individuals are equipped to cope with. Whilst the rise of insecure employment and career disruption has seen the growth of outplacement programs to assist employees affected by organisational change, such programs tend to be reactive, one-off, and primarily directed to senior executives, middle managers and other white-collar employees. Indeed, ‘change management’ is typically a process designed to assist the organisation, rather than its constituent employees, to negotiate and survive the risky transition(s) involved.

Individuals are increasingly expected to manage, and take responsibility for, their own development under the guise of lifelong learning. Anderson (2004) argues that this development is manifested by individuals having to navigate through vocational education and training (VET) and labour markets. While this may be an option for many, it does not always provide a timely and realisable solution to the immediate dilemmas facing the at-risk worker. But does adult learning and development offer alternative means to assist workers to cope with the transition from employment through the vagaries of retrenchment and finally back into employment? Benway (2004) argues that ‘adult education can be used to help people redefine their self-concepts and social concepts, following job loss, and that both of these can lead to positive social change.’ Can it also help before and during critical work transitions?

This paper examines the nature and effects of involuntary job and career changes due to redundancy and retrenchment, and explores the concept of transitional learning and its potential role in assisting affected workers. Factors shaping the future environment for transitional learning are outlined, and the efficacy of existing forms of transitional learning is evaluated. Given the rise of precarious employment, the paper argues the need for organisations and adult educators (including workplace trainers) to establish a solid base and mindset for transitional learning. The paper is based on a review of Australian and international literature. Whilst the paper presents no new empirical data, it draws upon and synthesises extant research from a disparate range of sources to develop a framework for further investigations into a topic of growing significance.

The concept of transitional learning

Although the body of literature on both organisational change and career transitions is substantial, very little attention is devoted respectively to employee needs and experiences, and the predicament and needs of workers facing retrenchment and possible unemployment. Moreover, as the concept of transitional learning is nascent, few attempts have yet been made to theorise, define or research it. Stroobants et al (2001) refer to ‘transitional learning’ as ‘a permanent learning process’ which:

... arises when individuals are faced with unpredictable changes in the dynamics between their life course and the transforming context. And when they are confronted with the necessity to (learn to) anticipate, handle and reorganize these changing aspects in life. This situation triggers a continual process of

constructing meaning, making choices, taking up responsibilities and dealing with the changes in the personal and social context. (p.117)

Profound change in an individual's work situation and life course destabilises his or her identity and self-concept and reconfigures the relationships between all aspects of their life world – work/career, home/family, and community/society. Learning necessarily occurs during such transitions, as individuals must reconstruct their identities and relationships through a reflexive understanding of their changing circumstances 'within the context of a particular field of life (in our case the fields of work, training and education) against the backdrop of dynamic societal developments.' (Stroobants et al 2001, p.117) They argue that transitional learning, as part of the individual learning process, can create a significant correlation between an individual's life and social context through adult education and work.

Although related to this conceptualisation, transitional learning is defined and used somewhat more specifically in this paper to connote the process of individual adjustment to job and career change, in particular critical transitions in employment status as a result of redeployment, redundancy and retrenchment. Such experiences and disruptions in individual careers are generally unanticipated, and require affected employees to adapt to their altered employment state, and to come to terms with, negotiate, and manage associated risks and opportunities. This paper examines whether existing forms of transitional learning provided by organisations are adequate, and if not what other forms may be required to assist individuals to negotiate critical job and career transitions. Bridges (1986, p.26) describes 'transition' as a 'three-phase re-orientation of an old way to a new way of being that organizational leaders usually overlook when they plan changes.' It includes: 'letting go of the old situation and the old identity'; 'moving from the old reality to a new reality that is unclear or uncertain'; and 'making a new beginning that is more than the relatively simple "new start" required of change'. Transitional learning is the process used to facilitate such processes of individual re-orientation and readjustment.

The context and rationale for transitional learning

In determining whether transitional learning is a useful tool in a context of work-related transition, it is necessary to first identify and understand the environments in which it is currently used, what forms it takes and whether it is adequate. As previously mentioned, Beck (1992) provides us with the concept of a 'risk society', which he argues has been initiated in recent years as a result of technological innovation, globalisation, economic restructuring, and demographic change. Shifts in the Australian economy over the past three decades – with manufacturing in steady decline and both service and information-based industries undergoing rapid growth – have altered traditional patterns of employment. Intense economic competition has encouraged staff reductions, intensified work and decreased standard working hours. There has also been a significant shift from full-time employment to a range of more insecure employment relationships, such as part-time, contract and casual work, in addition to consulting, relieving, and home-based work. Australia has one of the highest proportions of part-time and contract workers in the OECD, with only half the workforce employed in permanent full-time positions (Watson et al 2003).

Such changes have produced multiple 'fracture lines' in the career environment, according to Storey (2000), who notes that in the UK, 'Organisational downsizing and delayering of the 1980s and early 1990s increased fears over job security particularly in certain sectors, such as financial services, which had previously had a reputation for safe and secure employment.' (p.31) A study of retrenchments in Australia from 1982-1992 found that the annual number of retrenchments varied from a low of 314,600 in 1986 to a high of 560,500 in 1991. From 1989-1992, the number of retrenched unemployed increased by 205%, with manufacturing and wholesale and retail trade being the two largest sources (Buchanan et al 1992). The report noted that 'retrenchments are an ongoing feature of the Australian labour market', and that: 'Even in periods of employment growth the flow of retrenchments is considerable. There is, therefore, a need for a continuing focus on retrenchment assistance throughout the business cycle, even though the type of assistance required may vary.' (p.2) Recent data show that the retrenchment rate in Australia has declined since the recession of the early 1990s, with 408,600 retrenchments in 1997-98, 384,600 in 1999-2000, 383,200 in 2001-02, and 270,700 in 2003-04 (ABS various years).

Regardless of peaks and troughs, Storey (2000, p.31) suggests that perceptions of job insecurity may have grown as 'many people have either personally experienced redundancy or know someone who has'. The threat of redundancy may also seem greater than in the past. Instead of being used only as an extreme measure in times of economic difficulty, 'redundancies have more recently been used as an immediate cost-cutting measure even when the organisation is relatively healthy, with the likely effect of making "job insecurity a more prominent concern to workers in contemporary workplaces than it was to the majority of their counterparts a generation ago" (Noon and Blyton 1997, p.32).' However, Storey notes that evidence of changes in job security is 'mixed and potentially contradictory' (p.31), as job tenure has not decreased dramatically in the UK – as is also the case in Australia. Even so, 'General statistics may obscure the complete picture by not taking account of increasing balkanisation in the job market' (p.31). Whilst many employees still remain with one employer, 'for others, work has become a much more "precarious affair with insecurity, redundancy, temporary contracts and unemployment contributing to a fragmented ... working life" (Noon and Blyton 1997).' (Storey 2000, p.31)

Real or perceived, job insecurity appears to have increased over the past two decades, including in Australia (Borland 2000), with major consequences. 'Job insecurity impacts on careers by removing the foundations of long-term career planning and shifting the emphasis away from employment to employability and to the need for individuals to take control of their own development.' (Storey 2000, p.32) The psychological effects of job insecurity are exacerbated when job loss occurs:

Because careers are such an important part of people's lives, job loss has serious implications. Unemployed workers are likely to suffer feelings of grief and guilt, loss of self-esteem, loss of identity, and loss of social support ... unemployed workers have been observed to have higher levels of depression, anxiety, and physical illness. (Brewington and Nassar-McMillan 2000, p.4)

They argue that in order 'To protect themselves from the emotional and economic distress of job loss, *workers should, as much as possible, prepare for change before it happens.*' (pp.8-9, emphasis added)

Redeployment and/or redundancy and retrenchment, are among the main methods used by Australian managers to reduce workforces. After ‘lack of demand for product services’, organisational restructuring is the main reason for intentional workforce reductions (Buchanan et al 1992, p.5). A recent survey of more than 600 public and private sector managers in the UK finds that 92% of organisations have experienced change over the past two years, and 35% have downsized. The report argues that because ‘Change and restructuring are often badly managed’, with incidences of stress, harassment and conflict in the workplace are rising as a result, ‘Organisations must learn to manage change more effectively.’ (Anon. 2005, p.11) Notably, 47% of managers also said that the Human Resources (HR) function ‘lacks credibility’ in their organisation, and 53% claimed that HR practitioners are ‘too reactive’.

From outplacement programs to transitional learning

As noted earlier, the main strategy for dealing with the human fallout of organisational change processes, particularly forced redundancies and retrenchments, is outplacement programs. As a form of transitional learning, ‘Outplacement, or career transition, is the process of encouraging and enabling people who are facing redundancy or enforced job change to find a new position. It often takes the form of a package, funded by the employing company or organisation, which usually includes a training workshop for a group of employees, followed by a period of individual counselling.’ (Skinner 2005, p.19) In Australia, Cyngler (2001, p.161) notes that:

Outplacement services were first offered to ... executives about twenty years ago. ... From small beginnings, the size of the industry increased dramatically in the late 1980s and early 1990s when utility, finance and public sector companies underwent large scale restructuring. Numerous clerical and middle-management jobs were no longer needed. The impact of free trade and globalisation created many job losses in the manufacturing sector. Consequently outplacement was offered to middle managers, then to more junior staff ... Originally only large organisations offered such programs. In the last three to five years, small- and medium-sized organisations have also started to provide this service to their retrenched workers. (pp.161-2)

While there are no available data to verify the latter claims, a 1998 survey of 2,000 human resource executives in the UK found that most companies offer outplacement services, but access and provision is distributed unequally among employees (CEB 2002), as reflected in Table 1. Such data suggest that the most at-risk employees (casual and contract) are least likely to be given outplacement assistance.

Table 1: Percentage of companies providing outplacement based on position

	Yes to all	Yes to some	No
Officers	53	29	18
Executives	50	34	16
Exempts	34	41	25
Non-exempts	29	33	38
Temps/contract	11	9	80

As Skinner (2005) observes, outplacement programs tend to be reactive in nature – a *post hoc* attempt to facilitate critical transitions – and poorly resourced, as generally:

... companies choose to operate outplacement systems *in response to a redundancy programme* to help their redundant staff make a smooth transition. However, many businesses are, understandably, reluctant to invest much money in employees who are shortly about to leave; therefore, much outplacement provision is under funded. (p.19, emphasis added)

The development and provision of outplacement programs also tend to occur in less than ideal circumstances. As Curtis and Wright (2001, p.27) note, 'Often programmes will need to be developed at short notice and under considerable pressure to achieve results.' Reducing the risk of litigation is a motivating factor (Cyngler 2001).

Outplacement programs undoubtedly fulfil an important function. However, available evidence suggests that outplacement programs are generally piecemeal, if not deficient, strategies for dealing with the complex human consequences of organisational change processes – particularly in a context of increased job insecurity (real or perceived), precarious employment, and fragmented and discontinuous career trajectories. In this regard, Doyle (2000, p.233) points to the:

... significant shift away from a psychological contract which traditionally embodied the values of mutuality and reciprocity, towards one that represents a more calculative and instrumental relationship between employees and their work organisations. ... Organisations now expect their employees actively to create and manage a form of personalised 'employability' in what is becoming a jobs-for-now structure and culture.

In this new work environment, Doyle argues that traditional career management approaches in organisations are 'struggling to balance and reconcile organisational and individual goals', which themselves are changing in response to external factors beyond their control. He suggests that there is a need to 'move away from highly structured, somewhat mechanistic approaches to career management, towards a more holistic and integrated approach', and one that is 'more responsive and adaptive to change' (p.231). The increasing diversity and 'messiness' of career development and transitions also suggest the need for 'greater diversity and a more contingent, individualised approach to career management in organisations.' (Doyle 2000, p.238)

In a related vein, Garrow (2004, p.10) comments that 'As the psychological contract has changed over the past 20 years, training and development has itself become part of the "new deal" in lieu of job security.' (p.9) Although focusing on the 'survivors' of organisational changes, such as mergers, she argues that training and development are central to effective organisational strategies for managing periods of uncertainty and potential disruption. In her view, 'HR has a particular role to play in managing the human element following a ... major change. Training and development can assist by:

- equipping managers with the skills to proactively manage psychological contracts through transition
- equipping employees with the skills to engage in the mutual reframing of the psychological contract
- offering personal development as currency in the exchange agreement particularly when job security is not an option' (p.9).

She cites the case of Safeway which, during an extended period of potential takeover in 1993, used personal development programs as ‘a vehicle to provide opportunities for people in the absence of long-term job security’ (p.9). One such program was ‘Looking to the future’, which aimed to:

... enable individuals to gain new skills. Realising that people want to look to their future even when it is not clear, the early stages were designed to help everyone manage change and make sense of their experience. They were then encouraged to understand their career anchors and motivation and to prepare for the future. (p.9)

Organisational restructuring can create instability not only for workers, but also managers; instability that transitional learning would help to reduce. This claim is supported by Brocklehurst (2001), who examines a case where management was challenged by the break from a traditional organisational structure, due to the introduction of flexible working relationships. In his example, managers required transitional learning to provide them with exposure to new management styles, skills, and workplace scenarios. This example highlights the benefit of re-skilling management if we are to make transitional learning a viable option for others in the workplace, as also suggested by Garrow (2004) above.

Such research findings confirm the need for transitional learning strategies on an organisation-wide basis. Without systematic readjustment strategies that provide new structure and focus for those undergoing transition, affected individuals are likely to develop a confused mindset at best. However, focus in times of transition can result in individuals adopting a myopic view of the situation or environment. This contention is supported by Beck (1992, p.9), who argues that ‘In times of structural transformation, representativity enters an alliance with the past and blocks our view of the peaks of the future that are intruding onto the horizon on all sides.’ This observation highlights the potential role of transitional learning as a means by which to readjust the focus of individuals disempowered by the loss of employment or significant career disruption. This prompts further questions: What is the most appropriate environment in which to provide transitional learning? Will organisations embrace a concept that, in the case of a retrenched worker, would not provide them with any tangible, financial return?

In the case of redeployment, forms of transitional learning are available in some larger national or global organisations, such as Shell Australia (2005) and National Australia Bank (2005). These internal environments provide a more stable framework for the adult educator in the development of transitional learning sessions, as the ‘level of transition’ for the worker has already been identified. However, ever-increasing pressures on organisations to restructure their workforce to reduce costs, increase flexibility, and improve their ‘bottom line’ so as to remain competitive tends to divert attention away from the consequences for employees facing retrenchment. Although equivalent data are not available for Australia, the CEB (2002) survey findings presented above in Table 1 suggest that in the majority of cases, little is being done to address the human factors required to cope with retrenchment, particularly for employees in precarious employment and therefore at most risk. In these instances, a more comprehensive approach will be required to support workers who no longer have a stable frame-of-reference. This will require adult educators to develop

programs which provide access to broader, life-wide and reflexive forms of learning, guidance and counselling than would be the case for the redeployed worker.

Towards a framework for transitional learning

Transitional learning should be neither a mystery nor hard to come by for employees. Given the increasingly rapid and unpredictable nature of workplace change, there is a need for it to become the norm. As previously noted, however, access to existing versions of transitional learning, such as outplacement programs, is generally the exception rather than the norm for most employees (especially those at most risk), as they are currently only found in limited and inequitable forms: limited in that they are reactive and short term in nature, and inequitable in terms of access and provision. As indicated earlier, the provision of lifelong learning opportunities through VET may help to increase employability, but does not provide a timely solution for employees facing retrenchment. Nor do most VET or outplacement programs address key factors, such as individual ambition, motivation, self-concept and self-management, in the holistic and integrated manner that critical work transitions necessitate. Stroobants et al (2001, p.114) suggest that: ‘People are faced with the task to develop self-reflective and learning biographies to anticipate and cope with ever new circumstances.’ Transitional learning therefore needs to address the subjective dimension of ‘career’, and in a proactive manner, if it is to perform more than just a restricted outplacement function. In doing so, it must empower individuals to make sense of fragmented work experience and disrupted career trajectories. Glastra et al (2004, p.303) argue that, in relation to life-course transitions within and between individuals’ work and life worlds, authentic transitional learning ‘is concentrated on the meanings of such transitions, on the combinations of activities in the life span. It is aimed at “designing futures”, both from an individual and social perspective’.

The research of Stroobants et al (2001) and Patton and McMahon (2001) suggests the need to build a solid base for transitional learning. This will require adult educators to:

- experiment with, and evaluate, different approaches to transitional learning;
- identify the main areas in which transitional learning can be effective;
- identify how more readily accessible and timely transitional learning can be achieved;
- establish the concept of transitional learning as a ‘mainstream’ need for individuals dealing with redeployment, retrenchment and unemployment;
- identify ways to establish the concept of work instability as a reality for future workers by embedding an acceptance and understanding of ‘transitional culture’ in secondary and post-secondary curricula and workplace education; and
- design delivery methods for transitional learning that are robust and flexible enough for adaptation across diverse organisations and situations.

A two-pronged approach to delivery is required in order to address the needs of:

- *redeployed workers within an organisation* – including individuals who require re-skilling to meet the new requirements of the organisation; and managers, who will no longer be able to rely solely on their existing knowledge of processes and procedures to ensure successful business outcomes; leaving the volatility of change to be addressed by participation in change management courses; and

- *retrenched workers* – who are faced with a different reality (a job for life can no longer be taken for granted). While a self-assured and ‘marketable’ worker may view this occurrence as an opportunity to start an exciting new life, for others the prospect of uncertainty, lack of direction and insecurity will be devastating.

Change management courses will continue to focus on issues that are structural, economic, technological, and within the demographic context of the organisation’s needs. The forum in which transitional learning takes place should cater for and consider the human dimension of change, the needs of the individual, which are distinctly different from those of the organisation. While the future will see a differentiation between change management and transitional learning, these two elements will ideally complement each other. To ensure that the human element is addressed, Stroobants et al (2001) suggest that management needs to find a balance between the plans and aspirations of workers on the one hand, and the limits and demands of the organisation and the labour market on the other. They further suggest that management will need to engage in a more interpretive approach, mirroring Schön’s (1983) thoughts on the ‘reflective practitioner’, in which ‘knowledge and reflecting-in-action’ are required learning for managers and professionals to become more effective in dealing with the uniqueness, uncertainty, complexity and unpredictability of the human element in the workplace. They argue that this will require workers and managers to be able to relate their own biographical or life competencies to the situation while also making sense of the transition.

The principle advanced by Patton and McMahon (2001), that career development programs should be an integral part of professional development in organisations, is equally applicable to transitional learning:

Organisations provide an ideal setting for career programs Increasingly workers are employed for short-term contracts, tenure is less certain and individual are being urged to manage their own careers. The provision of career programs as part of the ongoing professional development program offered by organisations reflects responsiveness to the changed world of work. (p.16)

Such invocations may seem somewhat idealistic given the erosion of psychological bonds between employees and their work organisations, and the increasingly ‘calculative and instrumental ideologies (that) permeate the employment relationship’ (Doyle 2000, p.238). Yet research also suggests that holistic and proactive training and development strategies, such as the aforementioned ‘Looking to the future’ program initiated by Safeway, act as ‘valuable currency for the psychological contract’ as they provide employees with ‘skills to engage in the process of maintaining or rebuilding the psychological contract after major change’ (Garrow 2004, pp.9, 10). Moreover, proactive strategies which prepare employees for critical transitions as an integral part of professional development may also obviate much of the need for *post hoc* outplacement programs, which often involve untimely costs.

Undoubtedly, authentic transitional learning will require a fundamental reorientation of organisational culture and strategy. Doyle (2000, p.240) suggests the need for organisations to replace outmoded career management practices with more flexible and employee-centred strategies aimed at ‘addressing those contextual factors and

influences that shape career, for example developing the right cultural orientation for self-ownership and development' (p.240). As Glastra et al (2004) note, the shift to transitional learning (TL) will require dialogue and social experiment by public institutions and private organisations as 'it is open to serious doubt whether they are well prepared to deal with the new employees and citizens who are continuously in the making. Therefore, TL for individuals should be supplemented by the emergence of learning organizations in both the public and private spheres.' (pp.305-6)

For adult educators, it will be important to draw on a wide range of resources to ensure that transitional learning is embedded in all areas of the work environment, and in forms that best promote access and relevance for workers and also the unemployed. Too often when faced with worker-learners undergoing critical transitions, adult educators attempt to adapt existing (and inappropriate) learning frameworks to accommodate transitional learning needs, rather than develop a new approach to enable individuals to come to terms with their circumstances and take greater control of their work futures through the development of reflexive understandings of, and meaningful connections between, their changing life courses and social reality.

Future research on transitional learning

As noted earlier, research into transitional learning is limited and still in its infancy, but as the need to prepare people for critical transitions increases, the relevance of and interest in the topic will grow. The concept of transitional learning requires further theorisation and elaboration of its relationships to work, organisation and career. Beck (1992), in speaking of the 'risk society', argues that we think, live and act with notions that are obsolete, but which continue to govern our thinking. To facilitate a mind shift that accepts transition as the norm, more research will be required on the nature and effects of critical transitions, and the types of learning strategies that could empower people to cope with them. Adult education researchers will need to consult closely with experts in organisational psychology and other relevant fields, such as careers guidance and counselling. Such research should be based on experiential reflection and input from individuals and communities who have undergone critical transitions, not only in a work environment but also through life experience.

In envisioning possibilities for the future development of transitional learning, however, many more areas will need to be investigated before sound and viable models can be devised. Research insights, such as those of Stroobants et al (2001), will assist in ensuring that learning strategies address varying levels of understanding of the human dimensions of critical transitions. However, this scenario begs the question: How can adult educators provide transitional learning that enables individuals to be reflective practitioners, modifying the mind sets of others, while dealing with change that they cannot predict? Where do we look for strategies to move beyond restricted and reactive outplacement programs, and also ensure that transitional learning is more than just a white-collar preserve?

Conclusions

Adult educators face the challenge of ensuring that workers are prepared to undergo transitions so as to remain employable and face new challenges and opportunities for personal growth and career development. Stroobants et al (2001, p.124) argue that:

Adult and continuing education can stimulate the search for work and the creation of meaning of work in relation to self and society. It can help to develop an overview of personal and structural possibilities and limitations to the realization of alternative ways of living and working. It can help to create new opportunities In this sense adult and continuing education can play an important role in stimulating the transitional learning processes of individuals.

In the future, the need for transitional learning is likely to be driven not only by organisational restructuring, redeployment and retrenchment processes, but also by individuals making transitional changes for self interest, family commitments and other personal and social reasons, including those that arise during the life courses of a rapidly ageing population. In consequence, the rationale and role for transitional learning will need to be more widely acknowledged, and become increasingly embedded in the learning strategies of organisations and adult educators.

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