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The 'meteoric' [hovering] steps of VET: Towards a Socio-economic 'Meteorology' based on a Critical Developmental Model

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Abstract

This paper sets the parameters delineating the socio-economic context of today characterized by continuous changes and uncertainty. Thus, the traditional approach to VET suggesting specific skills for existing jobs in the labour market is limiting and may be trapping individuals. In the paper emphasis is upon 'Transition' as the most important aim for VET. Transition and its relation to self-esteem is analyzed.

It is supported that transition from school or studies to work will not be a safe passage in the future where the person will be faced with multiple work transitions.

Therefore, the author's position is that instead of supporting the development of narrowly defined skills, what is needed for the present and the future is general education and knowledge which can be transferred, through a variety of skills, in different, changing work situations. This can be implemented based on a Critical Developmental Model the author has developed.

Emphasis is given to the fact that this general knowledge should be particularly needed for VET and Technical Education, agreeing with Antonio Gramsci that:

"Proletarian children should have all possibilities open in front of them. They should be able to develop themselves in the best and, therefore, the most productive way both for the personal and the social good. Technical Schools should not be allowed to become incubators for little monsters who receive a dry training for a single profession, without having general knowledge, general education, no intellectual stimulation, only an unerring eye and a steady hand.

Thus, technical education helps a child flourish and become an adult: as long as it is educational and not just informative, aiming at the simple transmission of manual techniques." (Forgacs, 1988, p.64).

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1. Introduction

Things were all different in the distant past! A leap... of some centuries and from antiquity, where there was a distinction between creative work and slavery, we reached the era of the protestant ethics: *Beruf*, Luther announced drawing from the Bible¹, or *Calling* in English. A Calling to work which is a virtue and an obligation, as Calvin suggested. The working person is selected by God and s/he needs to contribute to the wonderfully created world. This is how things evolved until -with another time leap- we arrive at today's era.

Work is not enough for all and it becomes *employment*. There seems to be no room for narrow specializations in today's chaotic instability, uncertainty, time-space compression caused by changes in technology and by globalization with results as:

- Detraditionalization of politics
- Differentiations of political and financial choices
- Changes and inability for predictions
- Compression of jobs without educational qualifications
- Increase of jobs with certified educational qualifications.

In this context individuals feel unable to understand all the changes and insecure to face uncertainty. In the distant past McLuhan (1964) stated that we live in the «anxiety era»², while Giddens (1994) referred to '*manufactured uncertainty*', analyzed in the context of globalization where new kinds of risk are emerging. The information society seems to be the result of a revolution in the area of information technology (Castells, 1998, pp.340-51). Today things are more difficult with the progress of Artificial Intelligence (AI).



Figure 1. showing some of the main characteristics of our 'new era'

The uncertainty created is more intense in situations which decades ago Giddens (1991, p.112) named *fateful moments*. Decisions related to VET are such *fateful moments*.

The process of decision making is complicated because it is based on **external data**. Developments in the labour market are rapid. Information is multiple and sometimes contradictory, while people do not have the skills required in order to put order in what seems a chaotic information environment.

¹ Weber, 1984.

² In figure one we can see the main characteristics of our 'New Era' considered as the era of information and knowledge, factors followed by our question marks, questioning issues related to these terms, as for example, who produces information, what is considered as 'knowledge, etc.

On the other hand, the **internal ‘data’** of a person do not seem to be synchronized with the external ones although a basic condition for successful career decisions is the ‘synchronization’ (Arthur *et al*, 1989) in the person’s encounter with the environment. In reality there seems to be a ‘detuning’ in this encounter.

No easy solutions exist for the above and the person needs to develop skills related to the critical deconstruction of internal ‘data’, combined with the effort to develop them for her/his more successful functioning. Important skills are related with ‘external’ data as well requiring a person to develop: active seeking and collecting of information, its *critical reading* and its use for developing a strategic action plan for the future.

In this context, out of the four important aims³ of Careers Guidance and VET, **Transition** seems to be of particular significance and any serious programme of education needs to support the person to prepare timely in order to face transitions.

As can be seen in figure 2, the microlevel of the person is influenced and oppressed by surrounding, powerful factors operating at the socio-economic macrolevel. For the person to manage a degree of equilibrium against the surrounding pressures, s/he needs to develop aspects originating from her/his microworld. Such aspects are a high degree of *self awareness* and her/his critical approach to socio-economic phenomena or what we name *as social awareness* (figures 2 and 3), both factors influencing decision making and transition.

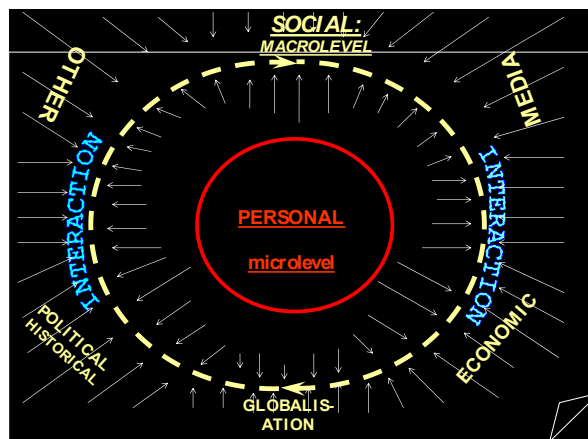


Figure 2. Representation of the macrolevel with its ‘powers’ surrounding & oppressing the microlevel of the person

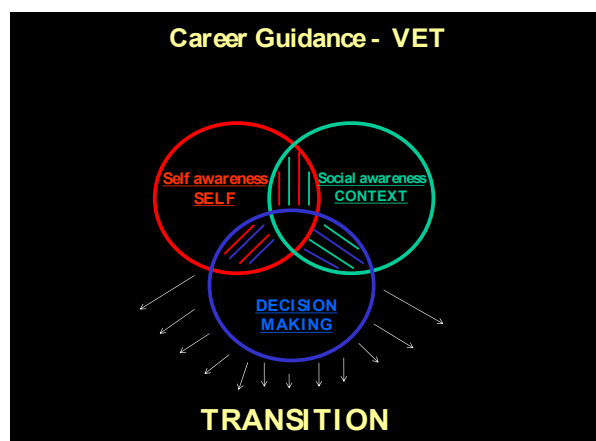


Figure 3. Representing the dialectic relationship between Self and Social awareness, both influencing Decision making and Transition

³ These are Self awareness, Information (which in the Critical Developmental Model is defined as ‘Social awareness’), Decision making and Transition.

Transition and the way we deal with unexpected situations is a complicated process and is related with our self-esteem⁴. When a person needs to face an external change, requiring transitions from known to unknown situations, s/he usually goes through the following stages (figure 4).

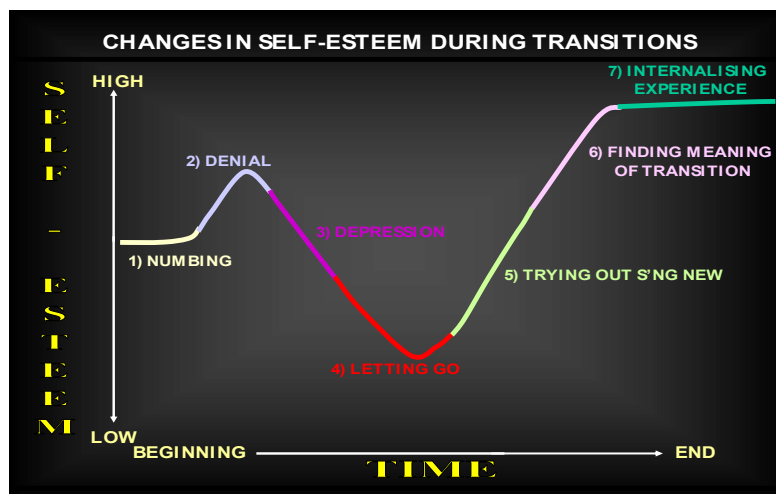


Figure 4. The vertical axis stands for self-esteem & the horizontal one stands for the duration of the transition stages

S/he initially feels **numb** due to the sudden change. **Denial** towards the change follows and the person tries to avoid change. At this stage her/his self-esteem moves higher, thinking s/he is right to try to avoid the change. Yet, realizing that this is inevitable s/he feels **depression** and the self-esteem drops. When defenses disappear, s/he **lets go** with a feeling of **resignation**. At this stage, her/his self-esteem reaches its bottom. If s/he manages to **try out something new**, and as s/he experiences the new situation, **analyzes the meaning of the transition in her/his life, s/he internalizes the meaning of this experience** and realizing that s/he managed to deal with the transition, her/his self-esteem increases⁵.

High self-esteem is an element of a *self aware* person. So, one can understand the role of self awareness for successful transitions. It should thus be clear that throughout the educational process educationalists, undertaking the role of counsellors (Kosmidou-Hardy 2008a, 2020, 2024), need to recognize the importance of self awareness and its development based on a holistic and critical developmental model.

Personal development has been recognized as one of the important European priorities in European Programmes emphasizing the development of:

- Lifelong learning, personal and interpersonal skills,
- *Critical thinking, problem solving and decision making skills,*
- Research skills,
- Media Education skills⁶
- Transition skills

⁴ Detailed analysis in Kosmidou-Hardy, 1996.

⁵ Of course, a person seldom follows these stages so orderly. This depends on the person's self awareness level and the kind of transition.

⁶ Presented analytically in Kosmidou-Hardy, 2004, Kosmidou-Hardy and Hardy R, 2006.

1. Transition as a basic aim of VET: A creative return to the past?

Transition and the way we face unexpected situations is a complicated process (figures 4, 5) requiring development of the self-esteem so that one can stand steadily on one's feet rather than feel 'meteoric' when facing uncertainty.

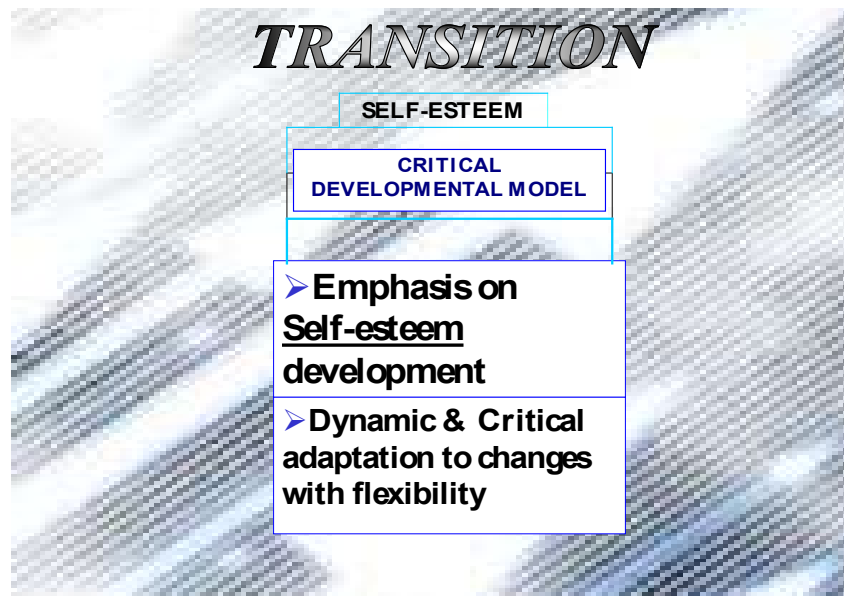


Figure 5: Transition leads to a dynamic adaptation to changes with flexibility

Yet, the VET 'steps' are 'meteoric', or *hovering* like a stork's steps. They are 'meteoric' between:



Figure 6. representing differences in expectations

- People's *expectations for stability* and the *instability* of our new times.
- The stance of *seeing VET as the selection of jobs* and the *necessity for lifelong development*, important for our synchronization with the changing labour market.
- *Superficial theoretical and methodological approaches* to VET and a *holistic, Critical Developmental Model* we suggest⁷ presented in summary in this paper.

For securing dynamic transitions and career decisions what is required is knowledge of our internal and external world, or, according to our *Critical Developmental Model*, *Critical Self Awareness* (figure 7) and *Social*

⁷ Analysed in Kosmidou 1990, 1991, Kosmidou-Hardy 2008a, b, 2020, 2024.

Awareness (figure 8).

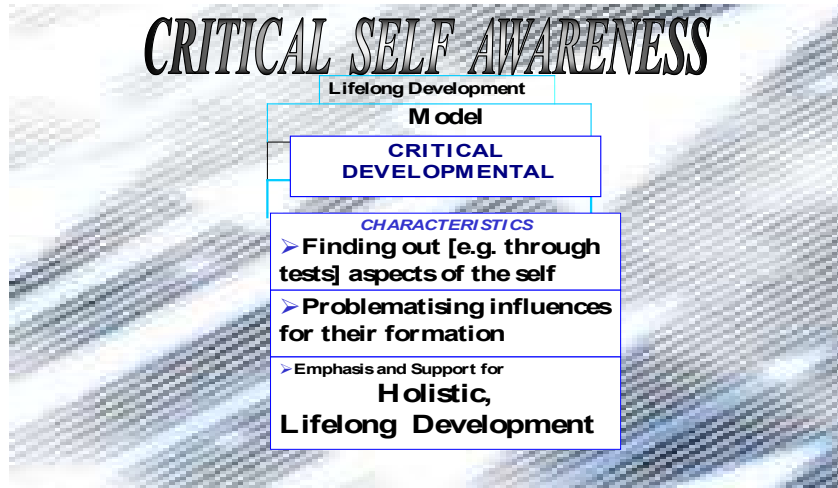


Figure 7: Locating aspects of the self, analyzing what influenced their formation & following a process of lifelong development

The first aim, *Critical Self Awareness*, does not refer to the simple finding of aspects of the self (e.g. using interest tests) and their acceptance without any analysis of the way they developed. Such a process legitimates the existence of socio-economic inequalities usually leading to the development of limited self aspects without problematizing the factors influencing this development. It also promotes the reproduction of inequalities in a conservative way, which is based on the view of the person as a static being who does not change or develop. *Critical Self Awareness* implies that, after the initial realization of self aspects and their analysis, what needs to follow is the acceptance of our aspects which cannot change, changing those which can change and distinguishing the difference: what can change and what cannot. Thus, *Self Awareness*, means that we view the person as a dynamic and multilevel personality who can follow a process of development, especially with the support of educationalists and career counsellors. Development of the self follows a holistic way to help people accept the insecurity of today’s reality and strategically prepare to learn how to develop their own competences and skills in a process of *self* education for facing changes and transitions.

The second aim which is necessary for dynamic transitions is *Critical Social Awareness* (Figure 8).

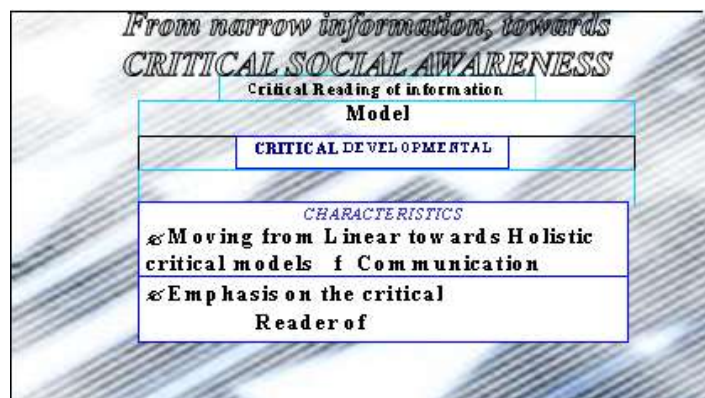


Figure 8. Moving from the passive receiver to the critical reader of information based on a holistic model of communication

In an uncritical approach of VET, through the aim of *Information*, what is implied is the passive role of

information receivers in a process based on a *linear* model of communication⁸ (Fisk, 1981) which promotes passivity on the part of the learner who uncritically accepts what any transmitter sends. On the contrary, for the implementation of the *Social Awareness* aim, the emphasis is on a *holistic model of communication* which faces the individual as the *critical reader* of information, based on the methodology of semiotics (*ibid*). The reader of information also needs to become an *active researcher of sources of information* which, after its critical reading s/he can use it to organize strategically *flexible decisions and choices*.



Figure 9. *The self aware person searches the social environment & finds opportunities. This Social awareness process can lead to Self awareness development*

As figure 9 shows, the relationship between the aims of *self awareness* and *social awareness* is dialectic. Thus, the more the person and her/his self-esteem develops, s/he realizes that s/he is able to be active in more sectors (educational, professional, social). At the same time, the more s/he researches her/his surrounding context critically, the more stimuli s/he gets through the information to which s/he is open. Therefore, s/he has the opportunity to realize the existence of sectors which s/he ignored before and in which s/he may now be interested in. This implies that her/his interests increase and with the proper encouragement and support s/he can decide to 'invest' time, energy and funds in order to develop further her/his skills and qualifications.

Finally, in the context of the Critical Developmental Model, *Decisions* related to education and VET (figure 10) have a broader orientation and are not limited in short-term decisions. They are also flexible aiming at the best possible synchronization between the person and the opportunities of the labour market. In this way a flexible combination of personal aspects with those aspects of the labour market can be attempted with a positive outlook and the creative use of imagination.

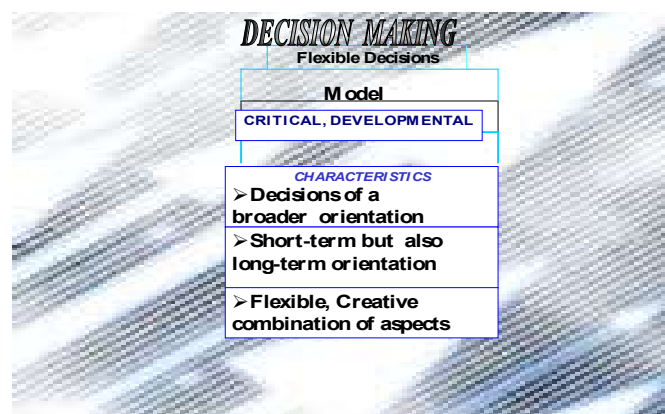


Figure 10, *referring to broader decisions aiming at combining aspects of the Self with those existing in the labour market*

⁸ *Transmitters sending information to passive receivers. This is the typical model of the Media.*

The logic of professional education, which is limited -and limiting- in only one specialization and one orientation to specific work pathways on the basis of restricted information related to the present, needs to change. For the development of professional flexibility aiming to a dynamic adaptation to new data in a world which changes radically with continuous reverses in the conditions related to work roles, the knowledge we need to acquire needs to be converted in order to be applied creatively in a variety of work and social contexts. The speed and acceleration of socio-economic changes overthrows predictions and cancels work plans.

In this context the planning and organizing the educational and work future by young people presupposes avoiding the choice of only one job and supports the argument for the development of survival skills in a world where flexibility and lifelong development are rewarded.

Therefore, for the 'steps' of VET to stop being '*meteoric*', especially young people need to be supported with up-to-date services and processes which:

- Are grounded on a complete Critical Developmental Model of VET and Careers Guidance so that they can avoid being trapped in suggestions lacking serious theoretical and methodological paths.
- Aim to support young people develop a positive self-concept and a high self-esteem, which will give them a sense of internal security. This sense facilitates flexibility in a world where almost nothing is stable. It also supports them to dynamically adapt to changes and transfer knowledge and skills in different situations.
- Support young people to develop their competences and skills necessary for their survival⁹. Such competences and life skills are: *interpersonal and personal, cognitive, communication and cooperation, decision making, problem solving, active research and critical reading of information which can be used for the strategic development of a future plan, and networking skills*¹⁰.
- Develop job profiles based on up-to-date information about the labour market and are related to all careers.

All the above are necessary in the context of a developmental economy, and according to research findings in enterprises¹¹, these are the elements required by modern work organizations (ibid) so that they can survive through investing in the "human capital" and move 'beyond certainty' (Handy, 1996).

Yet, if the message for *investing in the human capital* seems to view the person as a commodity so that s/he becomes employable and in this way education "invests" in people in order to serve the needs of the economy and production, we need to remember that the idea for people's lifelong development is not new. What seems to be "new" is that today follows the 'discoveries' of the economy rather than education leading the process, when, of course, education is genuine. Yet, the economy and the labour market today do not require a narrow specialization lasting forever but they require a person who changes, is conscious of her/his ability to develop, is also in a position to make decisions based on complicated data and cope with transitions learning in a lifelong process.

Therefore, because of the continuous changes, modern enterprises have realized that people need to be in a process of lifelong development, to be in a position to take *risks* for new orientations and adapt dynamically in new situations. So, we could support the view that in a kind of *universe conspiracy*, the fundamental aims of education are necessary today for society, for the economy and the labour market. In this context the Vocational Education issue is important. However, the term 'vocation' is not compatible with the problematic we analyze in this paper, because it refers to a concrete type of work. The description of a vocation (job profile) is influenced by the dominant ideology which determines what an employee is supposed to do in a concrete vocation. Yet, the planning of the future needs one to be flexible and have a broader perspective and thus, the term 'career' is more appropriate.

⁹ A detailed analysis in Kosmidou-Hardy 2001a, b, 2003, 2004.

¹⁰ Analytically in Kosmidou-Hardy 2002.

¹¹ E.g. Arthur et al 1989, Kosmidou-Hardy 1993, 2006.

The argument that the planning of a concrete educational program should be developed on the basis of the economy needs and of the existing structure of the labour market –even if we know it–, is based on the restricted and obsolete idea that the educational, the employment and the economic structure of a society are rigid and, therefore, one is legitimated to make predictions. Yet, in reality predictions are not at all safe, whereas the term 'transition' does not any more signify a concrete period in a young person's life which necessarily coincides with the completion of particular studies and the passage from school to work¹². On the contrary, transition threatens or even 'promises' (ibid) to appear throughout the process of work life, since stability and permanency of one kind of education and only one job is a characteristic of the past. This implies that we can no longer refer to the transition towards the 'security' of the labour market without realizing the possibility of transition towards the painful experience of unemployment.

From the above discussion it is clear that the certification only of studies, which is the main aim of the traditional school, in no way is helpful for young people. On the contrary, it deprives them of the opportunity to develop flexibly for their personal and professional lives, and risks to 'prepare' them for periods of unemployment and marginalization.

For the development of agility aiming at the dynamic adaptation to new data in a changing world, the knowledge we develop needs to be transferable so that it can be applied creatively in different socio-economic contexts. This is a characteristic of the person who is in a process of personal development and lifelong learning.

Therefore, the future seems to demand a creative *return to the past* in order to critically draw from sources of wisdom. It is not coincidental that we now remember Socrates and the Delphic '*know thyself*' or the Socratic "*I grow old, always learning many things*".

Research in Albania indicates that the labor market shortage is less about technical expertise and more about advanced capabilities such as critical thinking, creative problem-solving, innovation, and the ability to adapt in complex or uncertain environments (WEF 2023; McKinsey 2021; SHRM, 2019). According to the level descriptors of the Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF), aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), such learning outcomes correspond to level 6, which is the general qualification level of a bachelor's degree.

National statistics show that approximately **25–26%** of Albanian youth (ages 15–29) are not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), a rate more than double the EU-27 average of 11% (UNICEF). Reports consistently identify a **skills mismatch**, notably deficiencies in digital and soft skills as a key barrier preventing young Albanians from competing effectively in the labor market. Surveys indicate over **70% of youth express a strong desire** to acquire both digital and soft competencies, yet many struggle to access quality training or relevant internships. The inadequacy of soft skills among graduates is confirmed by employers, who cite poor communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and adaptability as primary obstacles to employability.

Based on the previous study by Bici & Spahiu (2023), "Soft Skills of Youth Needed for Engagement in the Work Sphere and Launching Entrepreneurial Business", which engaged human resources managers from various sectors through a focus group, the aim was to identify the most in-demand soft skills in the Albanian labor market. The study's findings showed that effective communication, critical thinking, adaptability, teamwork, innovation, and business ethics were rated as essential skills for professional success. Participants emphasized that soft skills are more important than technical skills, as the latter can be acquired through experience, whereas soft skills require time and systematic cultivation. The consensus among all participating companies was that the lack of soft skills among applicants is one of the main challenges to employment, considering these skills as fundamental to the personal and professional success of young people.

The limited availability of career counselling and structured job-matching services further compounds

¹² Analytically in Kosmidou-Hardy 1993, 2020.

the problem; many firms prefer informal hiring networks, sidelining capable but less connected candidates. Consequently, although market vacancies exist, young Albanians often feel ill-prepared or discouraged from seeking them (UNDP). These findings underscore the urgent need for coordinated efforts among government, education, and employers to enhance soft skill development, integrate practical experiences into curricula, and strengthen institutional support for youth transitioning into the workforce.

2. Discussion: Towards a “socio-economic meteorology” ?

With regard to the issue of investing in people, our vision should be critical. If we analyze certain language symbols semiotically, we will spot the economic essence in certain expressions. In our discussion we referred to the phrase ‘investing in people’ but the expression “investing in the human capital” is also used. In this case, the noun which seems to absorb the energy of the investment is the economic term ‘capital’, whereas the term ‘human’, being in the position of an adjective, seems to have a weak role in the phrase. So, it may depend on the intentions of enterprises and the possibility of the simple working people to distinguish the boundaries between investment and exploitation as to where the ‘pendulum’ referring to the ‘human capital’ will move: towards the *human* person or towards the *capital*?

Therefore, if we really intend for the ‘steps’ of the person not to be ‘*meteoric*’ in the narrow economic tendency of certain enterprises, “*investment in people*” needs to have as an orientation the recognition of the value of people as beings who are necessary for the development of all the social fabric. “*Investing in people*” is a debt of years on the part of the economy towards people. The *universe conspiracy*, which seems to lead towards the fulfillment of this ‘debt’, needs to conform to a “*socio-economic meteorology*” of more secure predictions which are based on the correct and timely organization of structures and institutions avoiding a narrow conception of interests. These safe ‘predictions’ will be facilitated by VET institutions functioning at the base of the Critical Developmental Model presented earlier on.

In the context of this model, we need to think if all young people actually select a job or are selected according to the marks they get in school subjects. Streaming individuals to jobs on this basis, or on the superficial use of interests tests, tends to ignore socio-economic or cultural factors influencing job and life selections. Through the whole educational system, young people are prepared for different socio-economic destinations depending on the ‘station’ from which they embarked and the ‘luggage’ they carry (Sofer, 1974). So, if some persons are selected by the labour market due to unemployment issues as well, we need to think if this ‘selection’ is valid for all young people.

Decades ago, Turner (1960), analyzing the issue of contest mobility in USA schools, compared it with a race in which everybody gives battle to succeed for a number of prizes which is limited. The socialization processes at school level still ‘prepare’ students for different employment orientations (Ashton and Field, 1976), despite the theoretical statements of school aims which are supposed to promote social equality.

A ‘*socio-economic meteorology*’ needs to take into consideration the above problematic so that social inequalities are inhibited.

But how can this happen, one wonders.

In a recent publication¹³ a ‘mini’ list for the jobs of the future was presented, based on the population

¹³ Source: Magazine **K** of the newspaper ‘KATHIMERINI’ where there was a ‘dedication’ to the ‘jobs of the future’ (21/9/25, pp. 66-86).

aging, up to AI¹⁴. The writer, admits that the list of jobs she considers as ‘future indicative jobs’ is subjective.

In an advertisement of this publication, we can read slogans such as:

“Widen your World”,

“Transform your Career with a program designed for changemakers”,

“Expand your career horizons”,

“Adapt to change with confidence”,

“Go beyond borders”

“Embrace agility”

The main future jobs presented are:

- Sustainability / ESG Expert (ESG = Environmental, Social, Governance)
- Fintech Specialist (combining knowledge on economics with new technologies)
- AI Specialist
- Legal AI Ethicist
- Blockchain Lawyer
- Cybersecurity Lawyer
- Health professionals with emphasis on Digital Health
- Energy Engineer
- Prompt Engineer (the professional who can ‘talk’ to a system of AI)
- Visual Tour & AR/VR specialist.
-

For the above presented list of future jobs, a combination of university studies and diplomas is required together with a number of postgraduate degrees certifying specializations.

One wonders: Who can pay for all these studies leading to such professions?

Is this really social equality or ‘social meteorology’ in practice?

However, on the 23rd of September 2025, in an internet publication, the following picture including written messages in Greek was presented:



Figure 11 relating to AI. Wording is in Greek and the translation of the messages is: “Put immediately regulating rules for AI”

“*A cry of agony by hundreds of scientists of an international status.*”

“*The human skills will soon become obsolete*”.

“*There is a danger of pandemics, fake information and issues of security*”.

Taking the above messages into consideration, we need to read critically the ‘future jobs’ advertised above and think seriously: *How ‘socio-economic meteorology’ can be applied and survive in democratic societies?*

3. Basic conditions for the sustainability of a ‘socio-economic meteorology’ and of our Critical Decelopmental Model

We ended the previous chapter with the question: *How ‘socio-economic meteorology’ can be applied and survive in democratic societies?*

The question poses issues of sustainability. A question asked to me by another presenter, through e-mail, after my presentation in the zoom seminar in Italy in July 2025 was: “This is a verry good model. But have you met any difficulties by those trying to inhibit your activities to apply the model in praxis?” This and other questions are related with sustainability issues related with the suggested model and its methodological approach. Therefore, I would like to refer to at least four factors related to this issue.

1) The sustainability of all the present discussion about skills and jobs may be ‘marked’ with a zero in the era of acceleration where everything changes rapidly! The view I am supporting is that we have no ethical right to trap young people as ‘prisoners’ in a kind of den that is described in a marvelous way by Plato in the allegory of the Symposium (figure12). You can watch the video (Kosmidou-Hardy, 2024, p.242) presented in the address bit.ly/4agvv01¹⁵.



Figure 12.
the Allegory of the Den. Painting by A. Aivazoglou¹⁶.
The chained prisoners in the den can only see false images
projected to them by those who are behind the raised wall

¹⁵ It is noted that the video is in Greek but the ‘language’ of pictures through which the allegory is presented overcomes the issue of the language expressed in words.

¹⁶ The painting was developed by the painter to be used as a part of my presentation in Poland (Poznan University) and, later on, for an experiential learning exercise (p. 241) in Kosmidou-Hardy, 2024: *Beyond silence. A Self awareness journey to find my own Voice*. Athens: Sideris.

The prisoners living in the den are shown only false images projected to them by those who are either ignorant of the seriousness of their actions or even they may develop limited and/or distorted job profiles on purpose because they wish to push prisoners of the den to places in the labour market where particular employers need them, disregarding the fact that they will soon be thrown relentlessly to the unemployment desert when they are no more needed.

2) With regard to the sustainability of the Critical Developmental Model, this has been analyzed in depth in quite a few publications in Greece and European scientific journals¹⁷ and books. An example in Greece is the two-volume¹⁸ (Kosmidou-Hardy, 2005) book developed under the present author's guiding and editing of a group of writers' work employed for this job by the National Centre of Professional Orientation (EKEP).

3)

4) This model continued its development for years and, therefore, its sustainability increased due to the fact that it has been applied in different contexts: in Secondary Education, in Careers Centers, in tools development for VET, in Athens and Panteion Universities, in the Hellenic Pedagogical Institute (Ministry of Education) for training teachers and Counsellors etc, in European Projects, an example of which is SY.N.TH.E.SI¹⁹.

Some basic elements which support its sustainability are the following:

- It recognizes the universal/global context of our era
- It suggests two important aims for facing changes and transitions, which are *Self awareness and Social awareness*
- It is interdisciplinary and offers a holistic methodology
- It suggests ways for cognitive and emotional development based on Research, Communication and Counselling
- It emphasizes the professional development of Educators. and Careers Counsellors as a precondition for its successful application
- It suggests ways for the development of Educationalists at all levels as:

Counsellors, Communicators, Researchers.

5) For the sustainability and for the support of the Critical Developmental Model for VET and Careers Education and Guidance what is needed is:

The development of psycho-pedagogical material aiming to facilitate the educational and career decisions of students and young people with a final objective the broadening of their educational and career orientation

I can refer to the following example of this approach. Some years ago, as a Consultant of the Pedagogical Institute of the Hellenic Ministry of Education where I was also the President of the Careers and Counselling Domain, I developed a proposal in the context of the Programme for "Vocational Orientation and Linking with the Labour Market"²⁰. The proposal was submitted and approved. It was

¹⁷ See, for example, Kosmidou 1990, 1991, or Kosmidou-Hardy 2004, Kosmidou-Hardy and Hardy 2006.

¹⁸ Volume one was for VET and Careers Guidance in Education and Volume two was for VET and Careers Guidance in Employment. The volumes were based on the Critical Developmental Model.

¹⁹ Acronym for: "SYnergetic New THesis for European Education SImera -Greek word for the word 'today'". Four countries were partners: Greece, Spain, Italy and the UK. I was the coordinator of the project. Another example is the European project run by Panteion University for 700 VET/Career counsellors of Greece for 520 hours out of which 200 hours were based on experiential learning activities. Its title was '**SOS Orientation**'.

²⁰ It was in the context of Action 2.4.1 «Counselling and Careers Orientation, category 2.4.1.d «Development and transmission

entitled:

“Investment in people: Development of Methodology and Application of up-to-date Tools²¹ for VET and Counselling Services

The project included

- Interest/personality tests, skills and ability tests, decision making and self efficacy testing.
- Matching the above results tentatively with groups of jobs
- Implementing Counselling processes after the use of testing aiming at supporting students for further and holistic development
- A long manual based on the Critical Developmental Model.
-

We referred in the abstract to Antonio Gramsci's position that young people do not just need a narrow approach to VET but they need to have general education and not a simplistic narrow approach of Technical education. Yet, general education does not simply imply general school subjects. Of course, in the context of this article detailed analysis of our position is not possible. It should just be mentioned that a Critical Developmental Model for VET needs to be grounded in a Critical Developmental Model for Education as well, having as basic axes the ones presented in summary below in figure 13.

Model of Critical Developmental Model of Education
(Kosmidou-Hardy 1991, 1996, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2020)

Model of Critical Developmental Model of Education
(Kosmidou-Hardy 1991, 1996, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2020)

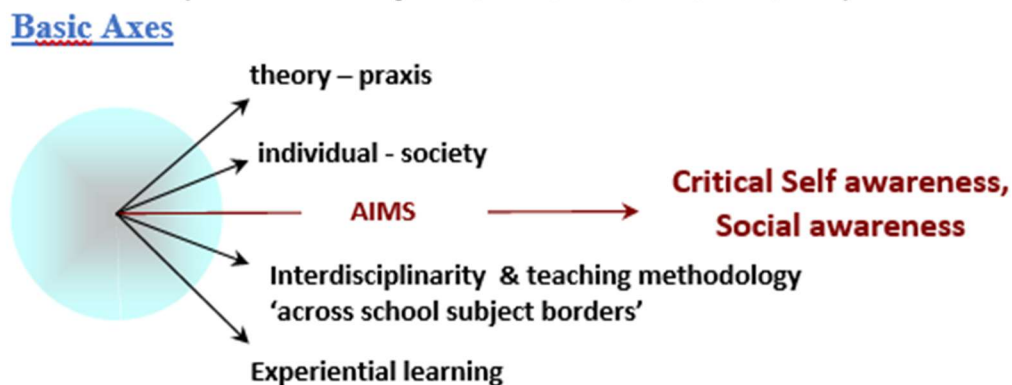


Figure 13. Referring to important aspects of the model.

This model requires an educator who:

- Recognises the dialectic relationship between *theory and praxis*. This implies that s/he becomes conscious of her/his theory leading her/his actions and *vice versa* aiming at enriching and developing both.

of informational and psycho-educational material» 75% funded by European sources.

²¹ These tools were initially developed for Careers teachers/counselors so that they can offer free and serious VET and Counselling services to all young people and this is very important for poorer young people as well as for those living in geographically distant places. Today they can be accessed directly by all young people through the National Organization of Certification and Vet Orientation (EOPEP).

- Is conscious of her/his view of the *individual-society nexus* and promotes a dialectic relationship between them, on the condition that the self is in a process of *self awareness – social awareness*.
- Follows an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge and teaching and adopts a critical teaching methodology across the curriculum beyond 'subject borders'.
- Uses *experiential learning* critically (Kosmidou and Usher 1992, Kosmidou-Hardy, 2000, 2001b).

The model responds to the idea of modern professionals for professions such as educators and career counsellors²², who need to develop certain concrete competences and skills such as:

- **Cognitive Skills**²³ (e.g. Critical reading of information and experience),
- **Interpersonal Skills** (e.g. Active listening, Empathy),
- **Effectiveness Skills** (e.g. risk taking for new directions),
- **Networking Skills** (e.g. locating and using social networks).
-

Some important questions for professionals in VET and Teaching are:

- What is the identity of those professionals (e.g. teachers, career counsellors, directors, politicians) who develop proposals for competences and skills without any discussion with those interested?
- Which is the personal and professional identity of educators who undertake the task of offering knowledge to students and young people?
- What is the philosophical and pedagogical approach which supports general education? Is it really an approach applied in all school subjects across the curriculum 'crossing borders' of specific school subjects and taking into consideration the macrolevel where education functions today or is it limited in the transmission of the cognitive part of each school subject following a linear communication model?

In summary, if we really wish to support the promotion of '*socio-economic meteorology*', of democracy²⁴ and the *active European citizen* who undertakes her/his personal lifelong learning and development with responsibility, then we need to promote *self and social awareness* through all school subjects on the basis of democratic educational and career approaches in the context of which democracy is *experienced* and knowledge, skills and competences develop through *praxis with pbronesis* (in the Aristotelian sense of the term) and they are not dryly taught as 'cognitive parcels', through anachronistic processes.

4. Concluding thoughts on Sustainability

One might wonder whether all this can be implemented or perhaps, feeling paralyzed by the existing reality which seems chaotic, one may resign using *a language of despair*. My position is that we need to avoid the trap of panic and develop *a language of possibility*. The situation may in fact seem chaotic. However, as Prigogine and Stengers (1984) suggest from the area of the Physical Sciences, order and organization may emerge 'spontaneously' through disorder and chaos; through a process of 'self organization' in a revolutionary or 'unique moment', as they describe it.

They state that the resistance of human systems towards change with the aim to impose standards of the past on the present and the future and inhibit becoming, may probably delay the emergence of order through chaotic uncertainty. It is possible that it may lead systems to dissolve in chaos in a 'unique

²² Klemp 1977, Kosmidou 1989, 1990, 1991, Elliott 1991, Kosmidou-Hardy 1997, 2002, Kosmidou-Hardy *et al* (2020).

²³ In detail Kosmidou-Hardy 2004.

²⁴ We presented this issue, with a use of a self-developed video, in the International Conference in Berlin in 2003, in Poland in 2004 and in Athens in October 2004, always with successful results.

moment'. With regard to our discussion, it may also be possible that education and training will change their vision and support human systems to become more 'open', to feel in harmony with change and befriend with the feeling of uncertainty and chaos, thus avoiding the consumption of valuable energy for 'violating' what is unknown. In such a case education and training can contribute through challenging the existing situation with one revolutionary 'unique moment' and lead to an advancement at a 'higher level of order or organization' (*ibid*).

Through the cooperation of Institutes and really educated scientists, through self and social awareness and *horizontal dialogue* among all interested partners, I feel a certainty that we will be in a position to design sustainable plans and suggestions of a holistic approach to education, VET and/or Careers Guidance and thus contribute to a flexible and sustainable preparation for the future and the implementation of a "*socio-economic meteorology*".

In this way I support the view that we will be able to plan and promote:

- A school which does not trap young people but really educates,
- A school which, turning to the past in order to draw from its wisdom and 'remember' timeless values, has the *future as its orientation*,
- A school which is:
 - *Democratic,*
 - *Socially critical,*
 - *Communicative,*
 - *Erotic -with a psychoanalytic vision of libido as an instinct of joy for learning, creation, life-,*
- A school which promotes divergent thinking, flexibility, creativity, imagination.

For such a project the main responsibility lies with ***Politicians and Intellectuals***. I started this article drawing from the deep thinking of Antonio Gramsci. Allow me now to finish this article with an abstract from Plato who wisely states:

***“If philosophers do not reign the cities or
if the ones who are now called kings (rulers)
do not philosophize in a dignified way,
if philosophy and political power do not coincide in the same persons,
the end of misfortunes for the cities and for the human kind is not going to come”***

Plato Republic

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