Social Class, Gender, Participation and Lifelong Learning

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Lista de contenidos / List of contents

Social Class, Gender, Participation and Lifelong Learning

Presentation

Gender-role stereotypes are barriers to women trying to access education, choosing the course they want to study (for example, nursing versus engineering) and participating in lifelong learning. And in the job market, salaries, promotion opportunities and professional development all reflect gender inequalities. In both cases – a professional career and access to education and lifelong learning – reality shows that the personal factors derived from caring for dependent persons and greater family responsibilities are the main causes of the inequalities between men and women. This situation creates an unequal society in which the variable gender must be taken into account together with social class, educational attainment, ethnicity, family responsibilities, and background to get an in-depth picture of the situation of women.

In 2011, the project entitled 'Social class, gender, participation and lifelong learning' (GLAS) officially started, platforming the HEFCE initiative of Lifelong Learning Networks in Europe by comparing, developing and disseminating best available practice in supporting the social inclusion and progression of working class individuals and, in particular women, in lifelong learning (see <http://www.linkinglondon.ac.uk/europe> for further information). Today, the aim of this special edition of the *International Journal of Organizations (Revista RIO)* is not only to make the results of the project visible in two articles written by members of the consortium but also to go beyond the objectives of the project itself and provide readers with added value by including three studies that incorporate visions and perspectives in the field of lifelong learning.

In this special edition, then, the first article is "Findings of, and reflections on, the Gender, Lifelong Learning and Social Class (GLAS) project. A UK partnership based perspective" by Sue Betts and Kate Burrell. Readers will find here a description of the GLAS project and the different work packages

(The accreditation of prior [or experiential] learning, Work based learning, Social mobility, Widening participation, Civic and community engagement, and continuous professional development). The added value of the article, written from the perspective of the United Kingdom, will help readers to apply the tools presented and "creatively reimagine" how to apply them to their own reality and socio-economic context. The article "The role of tutoring in higher education: improving the student's academic success and professional goals" by Núria Ruiz Morillas, Manel Fandos Garrido, describes the URV's Tutorial Action Plan as an experience designed to tutor and guide lifelong learners.

The article by Camila Valenzuela, entitled "Lifelong Learning and equal gender opportunities: a social justice approach" is a theoretical reflection of the evolution of lifelong learning and its relation to the concept of social justice from the perspective of gender equality of opportunities. In this article readers will find arguments to understand why the gender perspective and the search for aims related to an as-yet inexistent equality need to be a part of any policy or activity at either the macro or the micro level.

Karsten Krüger, Marti Parellada, Alba Molas, Laureano Jiménez, Mike Osborne and Muir Houston, all members of the THEMP project – Tertiary Higher Education for people in mid-life – are the authors of the article "The relevance of University Adult Education for labour market policies". This study describes the results of an analysis of adult training programmes from the perspective of understanding lifelong learning as a tool of active labour market policies within the EU, and the importance of not forgetting that the assessment of lifelong learning must include the perspective of social effectiveness. Readers can find further information at the project's website (http://www.themp.eu/).

Another important contribution to this special edition is the study by Victor C. X. Wang and Judith Parker, entitled "Lifelong Learning in China". The best way of improving lifelong learning policies in Europe is not only by analyzing best practices but also by "travelling", albeit on paper, to learn from other contexts. In the words of Victor Wang and Judith Parker, "It is by examining the acts and practices of others that we improve our own. If we adopt this as a powerful motto, we can improve lifelong learning in any organization." These words reflect the spirit of the work carried out by the members of the GLAS project and the review by Carlos Yáñez about the study "Linking recognition practices and national qualifications frameworks" published by UNESCO.

The URV, as a partner in the GLAS project, hopes that this special edition responds to the need that prompted the creation of the consortium: to provide

academics, policy makers, lifelong learning policy makers and decision makers ate HEI with a better knowledge and understanding of lifelong learning, class and gender-related issues. We do believe that better knowledge is the first step towards real change.

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Findings of, and reflections on, the Gender, Lifelong Learning and Social Class (GLAS) project. A UK partnership based perspective.

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Abstract: *This paper describes the main findings of GLAS, a two-year, EC co-funded project to address potential barriers to lifelong learning. In considering the genesis of the project, its structure and partnership, we will discuss findings from the perspective of UK partners, Linking London. We will show that tackling complex issues of social inclusion requires the creative use of processes and strategies which already exist within higher education, and conclude by making recommendations for future research and action.*

Keywords: *Gender, social class, lifelong learning, inclusion*

Resumen*: Este artículo describe los principales resultados del proyecto GLAS, un proyecto bianual, financiado por la UE, que analiza las principales barreras en el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida. Tras exponer la génesis del proyecto, su estructura y sus colaboradores, el artículo presenta los resultados desde la perspectiva de Linking London, socio en el Reino Unido. Defiende que para tratar el complejo tema de la inclusión social se requiere el uso creativo de procesos y estrategias que ya existen en la educación superior, y concluye con recomendaciones para futuras investigaciones y líneas de actuación.*

Palabras clave: *Género, clase social, aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, inclusión.*

1. Introduction to the Gender, Lifelong Learning and Social Class (GLAS) project

The GLAS project came about through the recognition from partner countries in the European Union that despite increased opportunities to pursue education over the last few decades, barriers still remain which prevent some individuals from accessing education or learning opportunities. These barriers are often not due to a lack of ability or desire to learn but to the gender and the social background from which the person who wishes to seek the education originates. The barriers can be societal or cultural, and can be further strengthened, unconsciously, by the practices and processes present in the education systems themselves. The consequences of this for European society are the reinforcement of social injustice, a contributing factor to perpetuating the present downward trend of social mobility and the reduction in social cohesion. From an economic standpoint, Europe itself loses out in global competition in education, research and innovation, and its people fail to keep pace with the demand for higher skills in the work place.

The current economic climate compounds the issue, yet by simply naming it the GLAS project has brought it into the consciousness of the staff and policy makers of higher education institutions (HEIs). This has sparked discussion and a realisation that an individual's gender and social class can and still does remain a barrier to accessing learning opportunities despite widespread massification of higher education in partner countries. Furthermore, partners in the GLAS project have started to benefit staff working in HEIs in both academic and administrative roles by creatively using existing processes and strategies to widen access and diversify HEI student populations with talented individuals who reflect the communities in which the HEI is located, by using inclusive educational approaches, suggesting changes to policy and supporting staff.

2. Project structure

The GLAS project achieved its aims by looking closely at six core themes which, so the consortium believed, could have the potential if used creatively to help achieve social inclusion in HE in situations where gender and class could be barriers. These core themes were:

1. The accreditation of prior (or experiential) learning
2. Work based learning
3. Social mobility

4. Widening participation

5. Civic and community engagement

6. Continuous professional development

For two years (2011-2013) the GLAS partners produced concise and easy-to-read reports for each of the six core themes. These include an introduction to the core theme itself from each partner country's perspective, and an explanation of how existing processes and strategies can be used to achieve social inclusion, in particular whilst addressing issues of class and gender. In addition to accessible reports, GLAS, where possible, provided staff with practical suggestions on how to address these issues in the form of staff development resource packs and case studies of situations where schemes to address the potential barriers of gender and class have worked well. The fourth output from each core theme was a policy recommendation paper for government, education policy makers, senior staff within education and others, to improve the access situation in relation to class and gender for the future.

3. Partnership

The people who researched, wrote and collated these resources and managed the GLAS project are potential users. GLAS partners included HEI academic staff, administrative staff and practitioners working within a non-governmental organisation (NGO). In addition, the UK partner and coordinating institution, Linking London brought the project a slightly different perspective as a consequence of the collective experience of several years' work with its varied membership. The implications of this independence from one institutional perspective resulting in objectivity, for the project's success, will be discussed next.

A unique type of partnership perspective from the UK

Linking London is currently a partnership of twenty eight organisations, comprised of ten universities, ten further education and adult education colleges, a sixth form college, a school, a union learning organisation, two awarding bodies, a professional body, an organisation to support the innovative use of information technology in teaching and research, and a London council office with responsibility for the education and skills of young people in the capital. Currently in its eighth year of operation, it is now a subscription funded network. Linking London began in 2006 as a Lifelong Learning Network (LLN), one of several initiatives of this kind (designed to improve the access to HE for students

from lower socio-economic groups with vocational backgrounds and from those in work or currently under-represented in HEIs) set up over a number of years by the last Labour government (1997–2010) and supported by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Financed through a HEFCE funding stream designed to stimulate innovative working, LLNs were tasked to achieve change, and to bring a 'clarity, coherence and certainty of progression' to vocational learners. This is significant for GLAS as in the UK most vocational learners tend to come from more disadvantaged and socially deprived sections of our communities, or have found the traditional model of academic learning uninspiring (Betts and Burrell, 2011). Therefore, it was a natural development for the Linking London partnership network to seek a collaborative project in which to explore what it saw as "unfinished, yet vital business".

The nature and constitution of Linking London, as a network independent of any one specific educational establishment or government department, has been able to bring a collaborative approach which has not been bounded by the dictates of "institutional professionalism". This has facilitated a refreshing and objective look at the issues faced by HEIs, and it is from this starting point that Linking London has led and directed GLAS. It is interesting to note that LLNs or similar FE/HE partnership organisations are not found in any of the partner countries.

4. Main findings

4.1 Reflections from the UK

It became clear early on in the project that each partner country in the GLAS consortium is facing similar issues but to different extents with respect to the impact of the financial crisis. Other obvious similarities across partner countries include a collective move towards the individual bearing the cost of higher education and therefore towards society not being responsible for the cost of an individual's education beyond the statutory level, subtle political movement towards right wing policies especially around immigration of labour (and students), funding cuts leading to job losses and course attrition, and a greater emphasis on monitoring and evaluative practices to make the most of what little there is and to justify future expenditure.

During the course of the GLAS project, however, it should be clearly stated that the UK has been experiencing the most significant changes to HE for over half a century, with the implementation of the "Browne Review" (Lord Browne

of Madingley, 2010), the tripling of tuition fees, competitive bidding for student places and the move towards opening the sector more widely to private profit making institutions.

It was interesting to note that colleagues from other partner countries could not imagine such significant changes to their Higher Education systems in the absence of the equivalent of full parliamentary scrutiny which comes with new legislation. In fact, as the project progressed a number of differences in the fundamental workings and ethos of universities in the UK, compared with those in partner countries became apparent. These will be addressed when they arise in the sub-headed sections below and summarised in the conclusions. Findings from the core themes which we have classified as processes – the accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L), work based learning (WBL) and continuous professional development (CPD) – will be discussed first, followed by the strategies of social mobility by widening participation, and community and civic engagement.

4.2 Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning (AP(E)L)

Despite differences in the management and delivery of AP(E)L processes across the partnership, all countries demonstrate similarities in the philosophy (that is, seeing AP(E)L as a learning innovation) and the intended purpose of an AP(E)L process for (mainly vocational) learners. The UK AP(E)L system, which was first developed in the 1990s as 'advanced standing', predates both the systems found in the Netherlands and Spain. In both continental countries, however, the development has been driven forward by political commitment to the process as a way of up-skilling and empowering individuals. As a consequence there exists in the Netherlands and Spain a type of central regulation and control that is absent in the UK system. In fact, in the Netherlands, nationally quality assured structures are in place around the use of AP(E)L, and both countries have a central funding allocation.

A key difference, between the UK, Spain and the Netherlands, however, is the age groups of the students involved. In the Netherlands and Spain approximately ninety per cent of AP(E)L takes place at pre-HE levels, unlike the UK where AP(E)L is exclusively offered at HE level. Spain is in the process of developing an AP(E)L system for HE and so the process is currently used only at the discretion of individual universities. Interestingly despite this difference in age groups, similar curriculum areas make the most use of the process (see Table 1) and a similar methodology using learner portfolios exists in all countries.

Table 1: Main curriculum areas in which APEL is practised

UK (mainly HE level)	The Netherlands (mainly pre-HE level)	Spain (mainly pre- HE level)
Health, Social Care, Business, Management, Engineering, Built Environment and Education. Evidence of practice in other vocational areas and subjects like Music.	Technology (40%), Business Services (17%), Carpentry and Wood Sector (17%), Health and Welfare (13%), Trade and Transport and Logistics (3%)	Social Care, Children's Education, Automotion, Health, Water, and Catering

Source: authors

The UK AP(E)L system is characterised by the lack of a standard operating model or approach as variability of models of AP(E)L management and delivery are evident between, and indeed within, HEIs in the UK; instead the development of systems has been organic and at the discretion of individual HEIs. In addition, there is no requirement for the training of AP(E)L practitioners in the UK. The Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) is dealt with as an administrative task whilst AP(E)L is normally managed as a taught or tutor-supported learning activity, often in a module that may or may not be credit bearing.

This is in contrast to the Netherlands, where government policy encourages the use of AP(E)L and training, which is effectively a 'license to practice' similar to that of teacher training, has evolved and is a requirement in order to work in this area. Spain also has clear requirements to be fulfilled in order for assessors and evaluators to practice These can be at least four years' experience as a qualified teacher or an equivalent competency, along with additional knowledge and training requirements. The Spanish approach is much more formal and is backed by legislation, which probably reflects its more recent genesis within the national education system.

A common thread in all countries was "scepticism of equivalence", which translated into concerns about 'quality' in AP(E)L processes. This is to say, despite the system being based on the fact that the learning was equivalent, it was not seen as being of a comparable quality to that achieved through traditional methods. As a consequence of this criticism, the issue of quality has been brought to the forefront of AP(E)L use and practice. In the Netherlands there is a code (supported by a covenant) and in Spain legislative standards control the quality. In the UK the result was often over-bureaucracy, portfolios becoming overly full and not reflecting an equivalent to a traditional learning process. However,

the publication of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2004) guidelines has led to a more recent approach that is consistent and transparent.

The funding of AP(E)L, as with other aspects of education, has probably determined its successes or otherwise in the UK. In the Netherlands, AP(E)L is a national government funded initiative which offers tax incentives for individual learners and their employers who use AP(E)L. This clearly 'locates' the role of AP(E)L as something for use in or associated with work-based learning (WBL). Similarly, in Spain AP(E)L is also state funded, with users paying only a small administration fee. By contrast, in the UK funding for AP(E)L is only available if it is part of a delivered module and as a consequence the costs for the process are passed on to the students. A wide variation in cost does little to help promote the system's profile or transparency amongst students and other stakeholders. In fact a coherent national message is absent in the UK, and this is probably the result of the organic evolution of the system in a variety of HEIs.

Therefore AP(E)L is promoted by different HEIs and further education colleges (FECs) to differing extents but there is no national effort for this or evidence of targeting APEL to specific groups. AP(E)L opportunities are commonly found several clicks away from the front page on HEI and FEC websites, if they have a web presence at all. However, it is of interest to note that Newcastle College in the North of England has recently launched an exciting 'Recognise me' service (Newcastle College Group, 2012) with an attractive and straightforward website as a way of engaging students with AP(E)L online. Renaming the process with a catchy and more self-explanatory title may prove to be a way of making AP(E)L more accessible. In the Netherlands, universities, employers, trade unions and a specific Dutch Knowledge Centre for AP(E)L have a national role in disseminating knowledge and information about the process. In Spain, as AP(E)L use is mainly pre-HE it is part of the national vocational offer and through targeted initiatives is promoted by local authorities and trade unions. However, interestingly, such is the demand that education providers themselves do not promote it.

One outcome of the GLAS project partners' investigation into AP(E)L was a consensus that, when used appropriately, AP(E)L could be a powerful process that helps to involve learners who might face specific barriers to engaging or re-engaging with learning at any point in their life time. The project partners concluded that the HE funding reforms, currently happening in England, offer an opportunity to "rethink" the way AP(E)L is funded, developed and monitored. This could ensure that it becomes embedded in the education offer and a national process for enhancing access to HE for all. Linked with AP(E)L is work-based learning (WBL), the key findings relating to which will be summarised next.

4.3 Work-based learning (WBL)

For the purposes of this collaborative work, GLAS partners identified three main types of WBL: learning that is about or related to work, learning that takes place at or in work, and learning that is achieved through work. Importantly all partners identified WBL as having an established role in lifelong learning and, poignantly, a valuable role to play in supporting personal, corporate and social regeneration in the current economic crisis in Europe. In a similar way to APEL there was variability within the partnership of the age groups and therefore sectors typically engaged in WBL activities.

In Spain much of the vocational education offer happens at pre-HE levels in the form of apprenticeship type schemes accessed usually by 16-18 year olds to achieve the title 'Technician' or as an 18 year old to become an 'Advanced Technician' (the latter provides a direct route into related HE studies). However, in Spain there is very little activity in the area of in-company accreditation though it is recognised that this is an area of WBL that requires further exploration by HE. There is, therefore, greater central control within the system in Spain, and indeed in the Netherlands, at pre-HE levels compared with HE based systems in the UK. A recent WBL innovation in Spain is the presence of compulsory internships for most undergraduate degrees, determined by the Royal Decree (Ministerio de la Presidencia, 2011). This requires students to gain in-depth knowledge of a business organisation so that they can combine their theoretical knowledge with practical skills and have experience of the professional world prior to graduation. Students on internships are protected by a cooperative educational agreement which regulates the relationship between the student, the company and the university. In addition the university closely monitors the arrangements, and a final activity report is produced.

In the binary system that exists in the Netherlands it is the Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) that focus on vocational qualifications, training and professional research. UASs offer an extensive range of vocationally related courses from Associate Degrees (AD, similar to the UK Foundation Degree) to undergraduate and Master's level qualifications. These cover many sector areas including Economics, Management, Law, Education, Society, Arts, Languages, Communication, Healthcare, ICT, Engineering, Construction and Life Sciences. Full-time, part-time or dual modes of delivery are available although, as in the UK, in the Netherlands it is young learners who tend to use the full-time study option. Business apprenticeships are also offered in the Netherlands within organisations or in fully working training companies within provider institutions

(e.g. the Hotelschool Maastricht at Zuyd University of Applied Science which provides a unique learning environment in the form of a teaching hotel and restaurant).

As with other learning innovations such as APEL, WBL has not been generically promoted on a regional and national level in partner countries, with the possible exception of some specifically targeted literature from the Netherlands. The consensus was that any WBL offer that does exist would be, in general, difficult to locate by the target groups with which GLAS is concerned, unless they had prior knowledge or experience of the process. However, as a process WBL offers the chance to empower and engage with learners who might not normally have considered formal learning. In addition, a belief was shared by all partners that WBL can act as a way of incorporating personal, professional and employment development and therefore lifelong learning across a learner's life. By flexible delivery it offers an alternative educational experience to learners who may have been disaffected by formal educational systems and could help re-engage and retain learners who have dropped out or are at risk of doing so. It is therefore an important and unrecognised process for widening participation. What is more, by using APEL, WBL can help learners who lack formal education and learning by acknowledging and accrediting the learning, skills and competencies acquired for, at and through the workplace. This is of particular economic importance considering that an ageing population means that 70% of the workforce required for the year 2020 has already completed compulsory education.

4.4 Continuous professional development (CPD)

Across all countries the GLAS project found that the majority of CPD processes within HEIs are individually staff focussed, covering support around leadership and management, and other generic skills. A significant exception to this rule was the example of a recent small pilot programme offering support for teachers of lifelong learning in Zuyd in the Netherlands, which is explained in more detail in the CPD report (GLAS, 2013). We also found CPD to be largely inwardly focussed by being directly linked to learning or skill needs identified during the institutional Professional Development Review (PDR) or equivalent process.

Despite the focus of work-related skills there also exist Study Assistance Programmes or schemes in many partner country HEIs, which enable staff to follow intellectual interests which may be directly outside of skills required and used for work. In addition, some HEIs offers courses in academic development

through their own internal centres with names such as "Centre for Learning and Professional Development" (CLPD).

What is immediately clear, and is seen as a missed opportunity by the GLAS partners, is the lack of CPD support to help staff to understand the learning needs of non-traditional learners (which are not be covered in the Equality Act 2010) both prior to and after recruitment. The implication perhaps is that the needs, issues and barriers for this target group, perhaps first-generation learners or mature learners, are no different to those of traditional learners. However, being cognizant of the varying needs and contexts of different cohorts of potential students, or to coin government rhetoric "customers", must surely be an area of increasing interest to HEIs in most EU countries, not least because the issue for many HEIs in the UK and continental Europe has shifted from being purely an issue of recruitment to one of retaining and supporting the success of enrolled students, and seeing them through to gaining appropriate employment.

Therefore, it is the opinion of GLAS partners that the current climate is conducive to reconsidering the support and CPD available for staff who are in the role of enabling the access of non-traditional learners. The reasons for this are threefold: the current HE reforms which have tripled tuition fees have the potential for further disadvantaging those learners who do not wish to acquire debt; the fact that the population is aging throughout Europe; and, lastly, the overarching austerity measures meaning less financial freedom for all.

In the UK, institutional Access Agreements, are needed and have to be "ratified" by a branch of a government department, aptly named "The Office for Fair Access" (OFFA), in order to allow the institution to charge students more than £6,000 per annum. These documents are a statement of how institutions will ensure the access of non-traditional learners whilst charging higher fees, by providing a detailed description of whole institutional outreach targets. We believe that Access Agreements might need to better reflect institutional support for staff so that they can achieve these objectives.

In addition to this and from our prior learning within the GLAS project, we see opportunities for acquainting HEI staff with the tools and strategies we have been examining which have the potential to enable access (e.g. APL and WBL) because our work on GLAS has made it clear that these instruments are not universally regarded as widening participation and access tools.

4.5 Social mobility and widening participation

Despite subtle differences in definition and target groups between GLAS partners, they all recognised 'intergenerational' social mobility as important for a cohesive society. Importantly, all partners also recognised that this goal is not something that can be achieved by HEIs and colleges alone; rather a whole society approach is required in which opportunity for learning is equitable throughout an individual's life-time. The GLAS project included within its analysis an examination of widening participation strategies as it recognised that enhanced access to HE will be a key factor in achieving social mobility. Various strategies exist for widening participation and they were similar in essence across all three countries. They include work to remove the financial barriers to participation for under-represented groups and an increasing focus on retention strategies and initiatives. Beyond strategies organised by HEIs and FECs, the project concluded that cross-party and cross-ministerial government policies related to poverty and employment creation, alongside measures to make lifelong learning a 'reality', will be required to solve often intractable issues.

In the UK, discourse in this area, rather than addressing the other potential reasons for this, has developed a deficit model to explain these issues. This deficit model assumes that the learner lacks the correct tools to progress. What has, for a number of years now, been absent is any consideration of how the institutional workings and actions of course developers, admissions tutors and senior management, as well any unintended, or indeed intended, consequences of HE policy, are perpetuating barriers and reducing opportunities for lifelong learning for all.

The signs are that the current UK government's A level (Level 3 pre-HE qualification) reform programme which began this month, in the name of increasing rigour and standards, will make the present situation worse. This is because the top grades at A level may become harder to achieve and those students who miss a grade needed for university admission will be unable, unless they fund an earlier re-sit themselves, to re-sit their exams until a full academic year later.

In addition, the numbers of part-time and adult learners in higher education has rapidly decreased (40% and 7.1%, respectively) (HEFCE, 2013) since the tuition fees were tripled in the UK. Again, this is significant as learners in this demographic are more likely to be currently under-represented in HE. This is also of serious concern because, as described above, more mature students are needed to satisfy the increasing demands of the UK economy. When all these significant changes are considered we may be seeing, in the UK at least, the emergence of a

two-tiered higher education system, with research intensive institutions offering high cost prestigious courses to those (most likely) younger learners with the individual (parental) wealth and social capital to ensure entry, compared with a low cost alternative of HE perhaps delivered in further education colleges for the rest.

4.6 Community and civic engagement (CCE)

Unsurprisingly different countries and cultures have embraced different interpretations of CCE strategies. The Universitat i Rovira Virgili explored the topic through the lens of a single HEI with a "social contract" in Spain. The Dutch partners, ECHO and Zuyd, described a national approach which starts in the school sector, includes volunteering by adults, and considers various initiatives in the context of higher education. And Linking London examined CCE as undertaken by HEIs from the perspective of a partnership organisation in the UK. For the purposes of this paper we will focus on the CCE activity engaged in by HEIs in all partner countries.

Just as CCE is defined, and therefore interpreted, differently by the European partners, it is also defined, interpreted and manifested in different ways by HEIs in the UK. These manifestations range from 'outreach' and other 'widening participation' offers, through large- and small-scale research projects, to 'public engagement' lectures from staff and activities that can be broadly interpreted as 'corporate and social responsibility'. All such activities have the potential to address entrenched issues of class and gender, which the GLAS project is focusing on, especially when approached in a strategic manner with buy in from those with key roles within the HEI, and supported operationally by staff who see this work as a key part of their mission. For the purposes of the GLAS project we defined CCE as the partnership or dialogue between HEIs/stakeholders and their surrounding geographical or cultural communities for mutual benefit.

Many universities across Europe have a long standing relationship with their locality, be it the inviting in of the local community to follow accredited courses or informal learning, or the use of university facilities. In the UK a great deal of CCE is through "public engagement" by HEIs, but its position in mission statements, and strategies and structures is not always obvious. This is in contrast to the situation in Spain where legislation states the participation of university in society enshrined within its governance system.

Therefore, from a UK perspective, it is possible that the full opportunities of CCE are not being realised. There may be a role within the new national strategy for access and student success to ensure that HEIs report on CCE in future

widening participation documentation. However, CCE and possibly some of the other core themes which have been explored by GLAS may be interpreted by some HEIs as superfluous to core business and are therefore more likely to be 'put on hold' during the current economic crisis. A counter argument could of course be made that in such a period of instability and economic turmoil it is the place of the HEI to contribute to local engagement and capacity building.

Incentives may well be needed to engage and invest in CCE activity, and naturally the passion of the vice chancellor or governing body for this area of work would help considerably. There might also be concern about future CCE activity because of the HEIs' focus on fee paying international (EU and non-EU) students, who may be in competition for places with local students. This brings into the debate the whole issue of the role, purpose and place of an HEI in its locality.

5. Conclusions

For two years the GLAS project partners have shared their local, regional and national experiences and knowledge. The combination of institutions and organisations has provided this particular European project with a unique perspective, which this paper has collated and reflected on from the viewpoint of Linking London.

The overarching message from GLAS is that overcoming barriers to lifelong learning requires joined up policy and practice at every level, from government, down to institutional and departmental quarters. However, and in addition to this strategic approach, it is encouraging to know that the UK higher and further education sectors already have at their disposal processes and strategies that, if used appropriately, could strengthen lifelong learning.

For example, we already have a way of acknowledging prior learning through a university level AP(E)L system. However, the system in the UK is not a nationally transparent, consistent and easily accessible system, unlike, for example, the system in the Netherlands. We therefore recommend that there be a national centre from which to promote AP(E)L to certain groups of individuals, and that tax breaks be used (as they are in the Netherlands) to encourage employers and individuals to use AP(E)L processes.

We feel that policy makers simply cannot ignore the implications of our aging demographic for European competitiveness; with nearly three-quarters of tomorrow's workforce having left compulsory education, the onus will be on employers to ensure that the workforce remains up to date and the country

economically effective. This is why we make recommendations for a government-fronted sustainable funding model for WBL and a set of national quality assurance guidelines.

Behind both AP(E)L and WBL is the need to know more about how many people take or use opportunities of learning in this way and what the benefits are to the individual and to the state. This is why we suggest that accurate, reliable, annual data should be published on national AP(E)L and WBL participation rates.

On the face of it, it seems obvious to state that an organisation should provide training and support for its employees so that they can meet the organisation's mission statement. However, since that is not the case when it comes to the widening participation agenda we suggest nationally recognised and accredited academic and professional qualifications for staff recruiting and supporting widening participation learners once enrolled.

In re-reading and reflecting on our recommendations we wonder if we have been too ambitious, since it is unlikely that the power dynamic between the university and learner will ever be challenged. However, universities are currently facing unprecedented demand, and if that demand should significantly alter, or the learner voice should directly "ask" for a different, more flexible provision, universities will need to respond or suffer the consequences of reduced funding. If demand significantly outstrips supply, in the quasi-market which has been created for UK HE, this is likely to be a way of sparking long-term change. However, we also acknowledge that a "degree" or other level 4 offer is not necessarily desired by all learners so we re-iterate the need for a government funded publicity campaign to achieve greater public acceptance of different types of qualification. We need more alternatives to the traditional three-year full-time degree, which directly links higher vocational level skills with the needs of the economy and promotes parity of esteem between academic and vocational awards.

In the meantime the GLAS project team sees the potential short-to-medium-term impact of its work as helping to begin to facilitate a cultural change within HEIs, the current culture being one in which the student is expected to 'fit' into the often rigid structures and processes of HEIs, which in many cases have inadvertently created barriers so that certain groups of people are prevented from participating in HE. The staffing structures of institutions play their part here also, hence our focus in year two on continuous professional development strategies to support the aims of GLAS. By raising the issues and adopting new approaches, staff within HEIs could be encouraged to consider and then

alter their current practice, which could therefore contribute to a change in the existing "culture" of an institution.

Ultimately the project partners believe that the HE funding reforms and austerity measures which many institutions are facing provide us with an opportunity to creatively re-imagine how we might use or recombine the tools that we already possess (e.g. AP(E)L and WBL to name but two). The six core themes were in fact chosen for their mix of process and ambition or target. We felt that the need to widen participation could not be discussed fully without incorporating a new look at the processes of AP(E)L and WBL, for example. Ultimately GLAS expects to benefit the HE sector as a whole by providing a way of ensuring that universities and colleges are open to a diverse range of individuals. As Page (2007) states: "Groups that display a range of perspectives outperform groups of like-minded experts. Diversity yields superior outcomes". GLAS will help to ensure that talent within communities is not wasted, the benefits of which are manifold to the individual, HEIs, communities and the European community as a whole. An elaboration of the issues addressed in this paper can be found in the GLAS interim reports downloadable from our project website at <www.linkinglondon.ac.uk/europe>.

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Lifelong learning and equal gender opportunities: a social justice approach

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Abstract: *This article reviews how lifelong learning has evolved and how it relates to social justice from the equal gender opportunities point of view. The first section summarises the development of lifelong learning and the second section provides an overview of the concept of social justice and its strong links to education. Throughout these theoretical sections, particular emphasis is placed on the essential role of lifelong learning and social justice in promoting equal gender opportunities.*

Keywords: *lifelong learning, gender, professional development, work based learning, recognition of prior learning, social justice.*

Resumen: *El siguiente artículo tiene por objetivo revisar la evolución del aprendizaje permanente y su vinculación al concepto de justicia social desde la perspectiva de la igualdad de oportunidades de género. Por lo cual, primeramente se hace una síntesis del desarrollo del concepto de aprendizaje permanente. Posteriormente, se da una mirada a los conceptos de justicia social y su vinculación a la educación. A lo largo de estos dos bloques teóricos, se resalta el papel fundamental que tienen a la hora de promover la igualdad de oportunidades de género.*

Palabras clave: *aprendizaje permanente, género, desarrollo profesional, aprendizaje en el puesto de trabajo, reconocimiento de aprendizajes previos, justicia social.*

1. Introduction

The lifelong learning paradigm is a fundamental component of the knowledge society characteristic of the post-industrial era. In this paradigm, learning is necessary for human beings and needs to be promoted throughout their lives. However, not everyone has the same opportunity to access learning and training, and these differences are particularly evident at the gender level. While some people are highly trained and belong to society's elite, others struggle to access basic education and develop their competences.

This has generated the need for specific plans and policies for women and men with little access to training programmes in order to promote lifelong learning as a mechanism for providing equal gender opportunities. However, as women tend to join the labour market in low-paid jobs that require only basic skills, it is necessary to review these programmes and evaluate other strategies proposed by the main actors and the target participants of lifelong learning programs.

These programmes, promoted by governments based on recommendations made by international organizations such as the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong learning, are mainly aimed at providing a second opportunity and do not take into account aspects of gender that are fundamental to the pursuance of more equal societies.

This highlights the need to develop continuous training plans from a gender perspective (both female and male standpoints) that promote lifelong learning as a real and effective dimension of social justice, which requires regulating social and economic inequality through a wide range of concepts and theories (including merit, entitlement, equality of outcome, equality of opportunity, need, etc.). In this regard, we should emphasise the educational purpose of social justice as a human right. The full capacity of the learning process should be utilised in order to empower not only the productive dimension but the social and personal ones too.

In this article we provide an overview of the concept of lifelong learning and its impact on equal gender opportunities through a social justice approach. The article is divided into two sections: the first section describes the development of lifelong learning and the second one discusses social justice and equal gender opportunities. The main conclusion drawn from this analysis is that promoting lifelong learning programmes with a gender perspective is crucial to achieving more equal and cohesive societies.

2. Lifelong learning

2.1. Conceptual evolution

Learning through existence and experience is a process inherent to human activity. The concept of lifelong learning (LLL) has been developed throughout the history of education but it reached its maximum level of propagation after the 1970s thanks to the work of international organisations.

In 1969 Philip H. Coombs, the Director of UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning, published "The World Educational Crisis", in which he proposed education as a continuous process throughout life. This opened up debate and acceptance on the topic, generated a large number of reports and publications both within his organization (from a broad and humanistic perspective) and other organizations, and had repercussions for educational policy at the regional, national, and international levels, before eventually becoming a supranational education policy (Jacobi, 2009).

In 1973, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defined recurrent education as the distribution of education throughout an individual's life in a recurrent way (OECD, 1973: Jarvis, 2010) and claimed that all people should have the right to education beyond compulsory education.

At first, the approach was to restructure the educational system and emphasize adult education and non-formal learning. However, in the last few years emphasis has been placed on the reform of formal educational systems through international evaluations conducted by OECD (such as PISA). This evolution and complementation of LLL—from adult education to international assessment—is due to the move towards the knowledge society, where it is necessary to strengthen competences from the bottom up.

In this way, LLL developed from the 1960s into today's Learning society, which is based on the LLL paradigm and on which all educational reforms must focus (Ven Der Zee, 2006).

Disseminating the concept is the responsibility of various social agents such as geographically limited regional organisms. One of these is the supranational organism that is the European Union (EU), whose educational activities were not so explicit at first but which over the last decade has generated an enormous number of documents and policies to illustrate the meanings of the concept. In coordination with these international and supranational organisms, invaluable activity has been conducted by non-governmental organisms and by the scientific community, whose research in this field has contributed greatly to the development of LLL activities. Greater coordination is perhaps required among

all these agents in order to create a more harmonious and coherent dynamic, although each agent, from their own sphere of construction, supports and depends on the other (Jacobi, 2009).

In the 21st century the European Union views LLL as the guiding principle of its transversal education policies, which are focused on creating the most competitive knowledge-based economy. The EU has defined LLL as all learning activity that takes place throughout one's life and is aimed at improving knowledge, skills and competences from a civic, social, professional and personal perspective (European Commission, 2001).

This definition has encompassed a range of activities conducted by the European Union in its committees for education, work and research, etc. and generated a comprehensive and global strategy for achieving both competitiveness and social cohesion.

The principles that support LLL and guide its effective implementation emphasize the central role of the learner, the importance of equal opportunities, and the quality and relevance of learning opportunities (European Commission, 2001). The guiding principles behind the development strategy have also been adopted by the educational policymakers of other countries. One of these is Chile, which belongs to the OECD and as such promotes and participates in international networks for knowledge and scientific development that enable experience in the success of the principles highlighted by the European Commission to be shared.

Other definitions of LLL originate from the academic sector. Jarvis (2010) defines LLL as the combination of processes throughout the life of the person as a whole—his or her body (the genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses)—experienced in a social situation. The perceived content is that which is then transformed cognitively, emotionally or practically (or by any combination of these) and integrated into that person's biography, resulting in an individual that is continually changing.

Garrido and Ejido (2006) view LLL as an ongoing process throughout one's life that provides and articulates formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences. This process contemplates the acquisition of competences that include both knowledge and practical skills and are oriented towards personal, social and professional development so as to facilitate active participation and involvement in the knowledge society.

Both of these conceptual definitions, one of which focuses more on process and one of which is more comprehensive, are valid and give an idea of the

flexibility of the concept, which ultimately has one main objective: to improve people's quality of life by facilitating equal access to learning opportunities.

2.2 Types of learning situations and classification of the educational structure

According to Jarvis (2010) and Colley, Hodkinson and Malcolm (2002), and based on the 1974 proposal by Coombs and Ahmed, different learning types exist depending on whether the learning situation is formal, non-formal or informal.

Formal learning is that which is typically provided by a recognized training institution; is structured (in terms of learning objectives, pace, and learning support); and leads to a certificate. From the learner's perspective it is intentional.

Non-formal learning is typically provided by an educational or training organization and is structured and intentional but does not lead to a certificate. Jarvis (2010) differentiates between two main types of non-formal learning. On one hand is Human Resource Development (HRD), which incorporated the concept of human capital and sought to increase people's knowledge and skills. Nowadays, training based on competencies and vocational qualifications is being developed. The latter involves learning based on work with mentoring systems and has led to the concept of social capital (Kilpatrick, Field and Falk, 2003). On the other hand is liberal adult education, which is stereotyped as middle-class spare time and which emphasises the idea of extending knowledge, skills and hobbies.

Informal learning is the outcome of daily activities related to work, family and leisure. This type of learning situation is not structured and does not lead to a certificate. In most cases it is not intentional.

However, distinguishing between these types of learning situations is quite complex and formal education scenarios are assumed to play an important role in informal learning. In this context, Colley et al. (2002) combined three approaches (the participative perspective of learning theories, community education and mentoring) and suggested that few learning situations do not entail a combination of formal and informal learning elements. Consequently, the boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal learning are significant in relation to the context and purposes involved. For specific situations, it is appropriate to examine the formal and informal dimensions and analyse how these interact, though the historical, social, political and economic context and the theoretical vision of learning held by society must also be taken into account.

With regard to these types of learning situations, a conceptual structure of learning has been developed. In the first stages of development, adult education

ruled. This later diversified into adult education from a liberal approach and profession-centred higher education. Lifelong learning as an idea became popular once it became clear that the formal school/university educational system was insufficient and that the provision of education had to be considerably wider.

The evolution that resulted from the learning systems in accordance with the learning situation led to Continuous Education, which combined professional education, diversified it into professional training (related to training within industry) and professional development (related to career development), and led to Human Resource Development (HRD). However, the advent of new learning opportunities—and the technologies that support them—underlines the fact that learning is an inherently collaborative activity that requires a great deal of exchange in and between communities and encompasses several disciplines that have a common objective or are related to a specific profession or problem. These opportunities may be found in one organization or among several organizations. Individual learning systems for work are therefore going to require social interaction in a virtual world (Carneiro, 2011). This is the case, for example, of work-based learning for schoolteachers and many other professions, or of mentoring in companies, or programmes for marginalised young people, all of which combine both formal and informal elements (Colley, Hodkinson y Malcolm, 2002).

2.3 Learning theory implicit in the concept of lifelong learning

Different forms of understanding the concept of lifelong learning exist since the advent of community education, as reflected by Overwien (2000), who takes into account the educational dimension of social movements such as the Popular Economical Organizations (PEO) of Latin America in the 1970s. Weight is added by the incorporation of the non-formal and informal learning dimensions, all the more so when the temporal perspective is emphasized and the importance of continuity and permanence are highlighted. It is at this point that education turns towards the concept of lifelong learning.

In the last few years, LLL has become not just the organizing principle of many policies but the dominant one, encompassing all learning activities "from the cradle to the grave", including community education, adult education, vocational education, work-based learning, distance learning and higher education (Francis and Leathwood, 2005). LLL blurs institutional boundaries, thus reconfiguring learning and its environment.

Today there is an important debate in which the concept acquires one meaning or another depending on where the focus lies in the learning-training

process. Some authors are critical of the development of the concept, regarding it as a tool of neoliberal discourse (Coffield, 1999; Field, 2001; Olssen, 2006). This appropriation of the neoliberal discourse emphasizes the idea of personal responsibility in educational development: "whereas learning refers to an autonomous person as a consumer, education requires public policies and deliberate actions" (Garrido y Ejido, 2006: 26), implying there is personal choice when taking advantage of educational and learning opportunities.

However, opportunities for accessing education are clearly unequal (Garrido, 2006), since barriers such as time, cost, gender and failure impact greatly on access (Jarvis, 2010). The category of gender cannot be understood without also contextualizing the categories of social class and race since within the construct of LLL is observed the hegemony of white middle class men and opportunities are denied to men from certain ethnic minorities and marginalized social classes (Francis and Leathwood, 2005).

This debate on the meaning of the concept helps to reconcile two dimensions of LLL: on the one hand, the instrumental dimension, which addresses professional life and competitiveness; and on the other hand, the humanistic and civic dimension, which addresses the enrichment of society and individual self-fulfilment (Garrido and Ejido, 2006). For UNESCO, LLL is the essential organizing principle for achieving the objective of a global knowledge-based economy that promotes formal, non-formal and informal learning and is complemented by the four pillars of learning proposed by the International Commission on Education for the 21st century: learning to be, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to live together (Carneiro, 2011).

This difference between education and learning has led studies to focus on learning, which implies that individuals are active in their acquisition of aptitudes, skills and competencies in an inherent process; and education is the result of policies that are implemented as interdependent processes that feed from each other (Garrido and Ejido, 2006).

With regard to the neoliberal discourse in the development of the LLL paradigm, Olsen (2006) applies Foucault's governmentality concept to the interdependence between learning and education and invokes a movement towards a discourse of democratization and social justice, even during the conditioning and mutual adaptation of education and economic practices.

Both education and learning spring from a vision constructed from a three-dimensional system that encompasses the learning classroom, which involves students and teachers; the learning school, which incorporates inspectors, directors, administrators, and parents; and the learning community, which

extends to members of the community, lifelong learners, the mass media, and social and cultural institutions (Carneiro, 2011).

Carneiro (2011: 4) refers to the double role of education and connects the old to the new: "this penetrating duality of education comprises a rapidly changing society… as if the old order of thinking were being changed for new paradigms for understanding the reality… and this increase in the speed of change prevents us from stopping and reflecting". In this way, knowledge and learning are two sides of the same coin. The real challenges are to understand a united world in which connectivity should be understood as greater proximity and to realise that in a global world minorities should be committed to their citizenship in deprived regions.

Consequently, learning occurs in diverse and non-academic scenarios, is less instructor-centred and more learner-centred, requires self-regulatory skills, and regains the essence of the training concept (bildung), which implies active, experiential and practical pedagogy. The instructor's role needs to be reformulated as learning moves away from the acquisition of knowledge (curriculum) towards the development of skills. Biesta (2006) states that focusing on learning rather than on teaching presupposes that learners know what they want and that formal education is a component of the wide range of available learning opportunities (distance learning, non-formal learning, etc.).

The need to be constantly up-to-date—not only professionally but also socially and personally—due to the rapid changes of an interconnected society requires a new vision of learners as students in new environments (Barnett, 2006) permanently reconstructing their identities in accordance with the meaning bestowed by the context in which they find themselves.

This implies the development of new curricular styles that incorporate the potential for change of new educational policies for the learner's new profile and trajectory that include and exceed the discourses superimposed in the establishment of those policies regarding deficit, disadvantage and diversity (Blundell, 2005; Rogers, 2005).

Another dimension to consider are forms of assessment, assuming that men and women differ in learning style and access to opportunities, since new models need to be constructed and revised in accordance with the gender continuum, thus changing established hegemonic androcentric patterns and fostering new forms of assessment that positively connect the adult learner to the adult teacher (Stalker, 2005). These are key quality factors for the relevance and impact of adult education (UNESCO, 1997, 2009).

According to Carneiro (2011), a completely comprehensive model takes into account three temporal variables (past, present and future), paradigm shifts (from industrialization to globalization and towards a new renaissance period), modes of delivery (from uniformity to segmented distribution and towards customization), and driving forces (from bureaucracy to the market leading to more empowered communities). Moreover, the teaching-learning process can be understood if one observes the route taken by the theories of learning from behaviourism, cognitivism, constructivism, and conectivism to today's generativism.

The latter approach derives from two philosophical approaches that deal with scientific knowledge and set a clear distinction between received vision, a passive recollection of existing knowledge, and the semantic vision, which involves a fully-fledged reconstruction of received knowledge and presupposes a constant quest for added-value meaning. This involves a chain that goes from data to information (meta data), from information to knowledge (meta information), from knowledge to learning (meta knowledge), and from learning to meaning-making (meta learning). Generativism is therefore between innovative learning and learning to innovate and directs the foundations of a creative society in which the challenge is to create new knowledge from knowledge that was previously codified (Carneiro, 2011).

In this way, the concept of learning is related to the constructivist paradigms and the learner's active participation, fostering creative skills, critical and analytical thinking, and problem solving strategies, all of which promote autonomy and innovation. This approach recalls authors such as Dewey and Rogers to address certain shortages in the current education systems and promote a knowledge-based society. Learning is done in a wide range of contexts and highlights different types of needs that are not always recognised or met by the formal system.

From this perspective, Jackson (2011) shows that the learning activities of migrant women in social environments provide them not only with skills—such as literacy and language proficiency—but also with relational capital that reveals the capacity to develop not only economically but also socially and personally, which is fundamental to human development. In this way, a sense of belonging is developed. Devos (2011) highlights gender inconsistencies in the transnational knowledge society in a study of women with higher education studies who, having moved geographically for various reasons, were unable to develop certain aspects of their identity because their identities were related to their land.

The concept of LLL has therefore had implications at the gender level with omission from neoliberal discourse (Francis and Leathwood, 2005; Rogers,

2006) and pressure from various theoretical and critical approaches (e.g. feminism, Marxism, etc.) to incorporate not only gender diversity but LLL for all, not through a unified discourse governed by the neoliberal hegemonic system but in accordance with specific local and individual needs and with the aim of connecting those who are disconnected.

The philosophy behind this LLL approach lies in addressing certain forms of social inequality in order to create a more just society that interacts on an interpersonal basis and that allows the locality to generate its own ethos. It will be the task of social policy and educational commitment to direct educational resources to the non-privileged (Jarvis, 2010). This makes it necessary for us now to reflect on the social justice paradigms and how they impact on the education process.

3. Social justice

Educational research from a gender perspective is not new. This trend, observed around the world in the last few decades, has been promoted by several international organizations, especially UNESCO, which has set up a specific body to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. In English-speaking countries social justice in education has recently become a powerful and highly relevant research topic with much scientific production.

The present study links social justice to lifelong learning from a gender approach. The concept will be developed from an equal opportunities perspective, the theoretical development will be continued, and both the capabilities approach proposed by Marta Nussbaum (2010, 2012) and the participation model proposed by Iris Marion Young (2006) will be emphasised. This is because the origin of the concept considers the distribution of material benefits and because over the years these other points of view have been adopted. These complement the model by recognizing the diversity of the abilities to develop and the procedures and freedoms available to develop them, as well as the possibility to be part of the society, considering the wide variety of identities that need to be represented and that need to participate in society.

Social justice is a concept with a wide and historical development that has thrived in a number of disciplines, including Philosophy, Politics, Sociology and Economics. In each of these disciplines, education is regarded as essential to the development of social justice.

The evolution of the term therefore incorporates several approaches. According to Murillo and Hernández-Castilla (2011), current approaches derive

from the paradigms of distribution, recognition and participation. Social justice as distribution is the way in which primary goods are distributed in society, in accordance with Rawl's theory of the 1970s, which was based on the philosophy of Aristotle. The later capabilities approach, created by the economist Amartya Sen and continued by Marta Nussbaum, proposes that the idea of justice is found in the real freedoms enjoyed by individuals. The importance of this approach lies in the fact that it requires us to examine the value of the procedures and capabilities rather than simply considering that means that are needed for achieving these freedoms.

Education is therefore a central element of the capabilities approach since the development programmes administered by non-governmental organisations shape learners' aptitudes, transforming them into inner capabilities, which then become a lifelong source of satisfaction. "People that have received an education enjoy much better employment, political participation and productive interaction options with other members of society at the local, national and global levels" (Nussbaum, 2012: 181).

The same author also affirms that women who can read and write have more opportunities to communicate and share with similar people, which leads to other advantages for the involvement of women in society, at home and at leisure, and encourages equal gender opportunities (Nussbaum, 2010, 2012).

These apparently conflicting approaches are summarized in the recognition approach developed mainly by Nancy Fraser, which involves devising a political orientation program that combines the best of the policies of redistribution and the best of the policies of recognition. The recognition model derives from Hegelian philosophy and the phenomenology of conscience, which points to an ideal reciprocal relationship between people in which each one views the other as both equal and detached. This relationship is composed of subjectivity, where each person becomes an individual only insofar as he or she recognizes the other and is recognized by him or her (Murillo and Hernández-Castilla, 2011).

Fraser (2006) has generated a large contribution to social justice theory through the development of an approach in which the dimensions of social justice interplay with regard to the distribution of resources, the recognition of diversity, and the representation of language. Consequently, this model proposes a dualistic perspective that maintains that class (distribution) and identity (recognition) policies are integrated from moral philosophy, social theory and political theory.

Iris Marion Young develops the concept further and makes it more complex out of the need to understand social justice as a procedure or process in that it

becomes a tool for achieving distributive justice and political recognition from a participative perspective (Murillo and Hernández-Castilla, 2011).

In "Responsibility for Justice" (2011), Iris Marion Young makes an extensive analysis of the concept with a series of theoretical developments illustrating that the entry of women into the workplace helps to introduce both greater competition into the labour markets and greater expectations about the appropriate roles for women. She also provides a more individualistic understanding of the social relationships that blur collective responsibility.

Young continues: "Through the structural processes of market relationships, how a person's life goes depends partly on the fit between his or her talents, skills, and ambitions, on the one hand, and what an aggregate of what other people value enough to pay for, on the other. While the market demand for a person's skills and what they produce is a circumstance conditioning a person's life that is largely beyond her individual control, it is not usually a matter of brute luck. Market relationships are constituted by cultural traditions and changing fashions that influence preferences, by institutionalized relations of power that enable some people to have greater command over resources than others, and by other institutional missions and rules" (Young, 2011: 43). This situation may narrow conditions of participation for certain groups in society, especially minorities or non-dominant groups.

Young's (2011) model articulates that few people today believe that social opportunities are equal. Huge differences exist regarding the quality of education and, shamefully, these depend on race and social class, largely because each community is expected to assume the costs of their own education.

It is accepted that the education system is unfair and this model suggests what would be needed to make it fair, but these are radical suggestions. During schooling, effort should always be compensated and the achievement of high levels of competence should be recognised. On the other hand, failures should not be punished. Those who fail to reach their educational objectives should always have another opportunity. Moreover, a failed attempt should not rule out the opportunity for them to try again (Young, 2011).

This philosophy maintains that anyone who wishes to learn something, improve their skills, and be better able to contribute to the social structure should have the opportunity to do so. The opportunity to learn something should not be closed even when the individual fails constantly. If we take this principle seriously, it is the task of society to collectively provide the lifelong opportunity for people to acquire a certain level of knowledge and skills. However, academic failure has a high cost in terms of social stigma and closed opportunities. Most societies offer just one chance in life to acquire the skills needed to develop well-being (Young, 2011).

The contributions made by social justice, both from the capabilities approach and the recognition and participation approach, express the need for opportunities throughout life to promote the development of skills and allow people to achieve their maximum potential at every moment and in every field. Social interplay and the speed of change make it necessary to find opportunities that enable everyone to reach their maximum development, especially if they belong to groups who have fewer environments in which to progress and participate. This is important when learned attributes become obsolete and opportunities to update skills or learn new ones are few.

Some European societies offer a system of recycling for workers but even the best programmes are limited. A fair society would not punish failure and would provide everyone with some opportunity for lifelong learning and the acquisition of new skills (Young, 2011).

Moreover, although the education and learning system is promoted as a universal right, some gender-, class- and race-related inequalities due to globalization have gone unrecognized. Although lifelong learning is seen as inseparable from the development of social justice, practices and policies are varied, have sometimes been segmented, and have even reproduced the imperialist order (Jackon, 2011).

An important current problem of the capabilities approach is gender since the inequality of women slows downs the development of nations and shows certain development approaches to be inadequate. One of the main instigators of gender equality is access to education, which besides teaching "a wide range of skills" provides "exit options from traditional roles" (Nussbaum, 2012: 176).

In this sense, UNESCO and other international organizations have encouraged an increase in women's participation in education and the development of learning paths that allow them to live in better societies. This is a product of agreements reached at World Educational Forums (such as Jomtien 1990 and Dakar 2000) and the Millennium Declaration, which defined Millennium Development Goals (MDG) that should be attained by 2015. One programme making an effort to attain these goals is Education For All (EFA), whose Goal 5 refers to the elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005. Goal 4 promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women. In accordance with these goals, UNESCO has published the "World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education" (2012), which highlights the fact that girls are still at a disadvantage in most regions and countries but tend to increase their retention rates and obtain better outcomes than boys once they are in the education system.

However, there is a horizontal and vertical segregation (where women do low-paid jobs and are absent from positions of high responsibility) in which roles are stereotyped and approaches to the evaluation of economic development focus largely on indicators that analyse the production of goods and services but ignore reproductive non-remunerated work. Raising and caring for children are not valued or considered when policies are implemented to bring about a more just and gender-equal society, despite the fact that these activities contribute to the knowledge society and the training and development of human resources (Ribas, 2005).

4. Conclusion

The evolution of lifelong learning, with approaches of contrasting ideological dimensions, has had an important impact on international and supranational policies. However, it is the powerful rise of the discourse of social justice that has criticised the gaps or deficits in the programmes implemented and highlighted the importance of providing educational opportunities at all levels in order to promote the inherent learning process of all people and develop their skills and competences to the full, irrespective of their socioeconomic background, ethnicity or gender.

In this way, initiatives to recognize previously acquired skills through non-formal and informal learning activities both in the work place and in diverse community practices are extremely important for validating the participation of people from various sectors of society who have not yet been represented in Lifelong Learning programmes.

Lifelong learning discourse must make an effort to value new learning styles and promote educational organisations that harness the potential of all the skills of human beings and create cohesive, productive and developed societies not only from the economic point of view but also from the points of view of citizen involvement, personal development, and social inclusion. Policymakers should bear in mind that society is fragmented, that learning occurs at all levels, and that policies should be implemented with recognition of prior learning so that talent is not wasted when innovation is developed. Therefore, policies should be flexible, based on programmes that are customized for each community, and used with generativist teaching strategies.

Policies should always be developed with the philosophy of equal gender opportunities in mind, aim to fight traditional gender stereotypes and increase the presence of women in positions of responsibility, and balance this with child

raising and caring, activities that are essential for the sustainable development of a growing and cohesive society.

At the learner level, much work is needed in sharing experiences and knowledge and discovering what it means to be a lifelong learner. All the organisations in which people interact and the differences in opportunities due to gender and social class should be addressed with a great awareness of the leading role that can be played by lifelong learning. This is especially important when the role of men and women in society is discussed in relation to their potential and skills for participating in the development of an equal, just and sustainable life.

The challenge throughout this research appears complex since it considers various areas that interplay and highlights the need to develop transversal policies. One of the main tools for improving equal gender opportunities is to promote lifelong learning activities with a social justice approach that enables the capability of every human being to be recognised and development to be improved by including women in positions of responsibility while sharing their historical child raising and caring role with men.

In general terms equal gender opportunities should be promoted using a transversal approach that encompasses all the learning activities that allow men and women to develop their capabilities and be fully represented in society. As learning occurs in everyday life and in every situation, a lifelong learning programme with a social justice approach will allow equal gender opportunities to be promoted using a participative methodology.

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The relevance of university adult education for labour market policies

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Abstract: *Lifelong learning now plays a key role labour market policies within the EU. Against a background of increasing rates of highly educated people and changes in graduate labour markets, universities have started to become involved in adult learning and active labour market policies. The article presents the results of 21 non-representative case studies of university adult learning programmes from seven EU-countries with particular focus on people in mid-life, who are becoming more and more socially vulnerable. One of the main features of the case studies was the social effectiveness of university adult learning programmes in terms of access to jobs and quality of work/life. The results of the case studies together with a review of the results of other European lifelong learning projects made it possible to draw up a scheme of the core dimensions of socially effective university adult learning.*

Keywords: *Lifelong Learning, Adult Education, Universities, Higher Education, Transitional Labour Market, Capabilities, Human Capital, Cultural Capital, Social Capital.*

Resumen: *La formación permanente desempeña un papel fundamental en las políticas del mercado de trabajo en la UE. En el contexto de la creciente tasa de personas con estudios superiores y de cambios en los mercados de trabajo cualificados, las universidades han empezado a involucrarse en la educación para adultos y en las políticas activas del mercado de trabajo. El artículo presenta los resultados de estudios de casos no representativos de programas universitarios de educación para adultos realizados en siete países europeos con especial atención a las personas de mediana edad, quienes son cada vez más vulnerables socialmente. Uno de los rasgos más destacados de los estudios de casos fue la eficacia social de los programas universitarios de educación para adultos desde el punto de vista del acceso a empleos y de la calidad de trabajo/vida. Los resultados de los estudios de casos junto con el análisis de los resultados de otros proyectos europeos de formación permanente permitieron elaborar un esquema de las dimensiones esenciales de las universidades de educación para adultos socialmente eficaces.*

Palabras clave: *formación permanente, educación para adultos, universidades, educación superior, mercados laborales de transición, aptitudes, capital humano, capital cultural, capital social.*

1. Introduction[1]

In recent years, societal transformations in the EU have produced substantial changes in the conception of education and training and its interrelation with other socio-economic policies. The continuous participation of the citizen in education and training is seen as key to the quality of life and work, and has become part of active labour market policies aiming to transform the European social model into an activating model that prevents cases of social need by proactive social investments (Palier 2004 and 2006; Pfau-Effinger 2006). This strategy advocates "a market-oriented approach to social welfare" (Gilbert 1999: 21), reinforcing the link between social rights and social obligations, and fostering social inclusion through active participation in the labour market. At the end of the 1990s, the Transitional Labour Market approach (TLM) emerged as an alternative to activation policies (Schmid, 1995; Schmid & Auer, 1997). This approach links social risk management in transitional work periods with concepts of social equity dating back to Rawls (1971) and has been further developed by Sen (1999 and 2010) and Nussbaum (2007). TLM stresses the role of public institutions in managing situations of social risk, promoting proactive flexible

public actions to avoid individual social risk, and reinforcing the qualitative dimension of labour market policies as compared to the orientation to mere quantitative results. The TLM thus provides a framework to identify specific social risk situations (transitions) and ways to provide appropriate measures aimed to mitigate the negative impacts of life changes.

This suggests that in involuntary transitional periods, citizens should be able to count on institutional support devised in different forms (for instance through direct financial support or the funding and organising of Lifelong Learning [LLL] activities). However, in this respect, only institutionally-supported formal LLL activities with a clear labour market orientation are considered part of transitional labour markets. In this regard, university programmes for adult learners have a considerable potential as institutional support to manage life and labour market transitions. The TLM approach, thus, can be seen as an effective 'social bridge' that prevents individuals from being trapped in exclusionary transitions and a means to increasing the probability that, for example, non-standard jobs become 'stepping stones' to sustainable job careers (Räisänen & Schmid, 2008).

In the THEMP Project (Tertiary Higher Education for People in Mid-life), we distinguish between social danger, social risks and individual risks. The difference between risk and danger is a) the degree of knowledge that individuals have about the possibility that certain events may occur[2] and b) an individual's capacity to act. The latter can also be called 'social vulnerability as a measure of an individual responsiveness' – in short it distinguishes between the capacity to act preventively in responsive mode and the capacity to react in advance of the risk situation. In other words, citizens' vulnerability is assumed to increase as a function of the limits of their action capacity. Without denying the self-responsibility of citizens, bounded knowledge of social-economic developments limits citizens' capacity to prevent future labour market situations. Further limited action capacity restricts their ability to prevent (or stimulate) undesired (or desired) labour situations, to act proactively or to react in advance of potential negative events.

As a reference for measuring the effectiveness of Tertiary Lifelong Learning (TLLL) programmes beyond the labour market, and from a life-wide perspective, TLM suggests a link to theories of social justice. Such theories have recently been expanded and developed under the heading of the capability approach. This perspective, especially as articulated by Sen, enables the quality of social

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2 One example is a company that steps into a critical situation because of risky management decisions that have not been communicated to the employees. The managers were aware of the possibility that these decisions could have a negative impact on the company's economic situation: for them it is a risk situation. However, the workers are only aware of the company's high productivity and do not have complete knowledge about the situation: they are exposed to social danger.

insurance programmes to be measured by taking into account not only the rates of active participation or employment but also the quality of work and life. It is based on the idea that each individual has a set of capabilities (individual agency) and objectives regarding their quality of life (functionings), which should be considered in the design of concrete measures. Resources are not aims per se, but a means to achieve a (subjectively defined) better quality of life.[3]

One main area where resources can be obtained is the labour market, but position in the labour market depends on the outcomes of various formal, informal and non-formal learning processes. TLLL aims to improve the qualifications of learners, by providing them with new knowledge, to support intellectual development and to facilitate new social relations. However, seen through a labour market lens, learning outcomes must be converted into resources. This means that they must be recognised as having a value in appropriate labour market segments: learning outcomes must be converted into human, cultural and social capital.[4] This is a complex process of social bargaining in specific labour market fields. Such a TLLL-acquired capital opens or restricts the opportunities for developing professionally, for facing critical life transitions in an age of TLMs and for achieving new levels of well-being (or *functionings in Sen's terms*).

THEMP focuses on tertiary lifelong learning as a means of managing social vulnerability. Participating in informal learning programmes is – from the learners' perspective – a social investment of money and time that is expected to give some return in terms of human, cultural and social capital, allowing the participants to enter the labour market, or to maintain or improve their labour market position and thus achieve their desired quality of life. Therefore, we shall use the well-known notion of 'capital' to measure the social effectiveness of TLLL for learners in mid-life, under the overall analytical framework provided by TLM theory. Each labour market segment is conceived as a social field that determines which learning results are convertible to capital and how much the capital stock of each individual is worth, thus defining their positions in the labour market and

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3 Sen criticised that the resource-based approach because it confuses resources with the aims of social and employment policies. But resources can only be used to achieve other goals or, in the terminology of this approach, functionings.

4 As well as physical and financial capital, we refer to three capital types that occupy prominent places in social science debates: i) Human capital (Becker, 1964); ii) Cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1983 and 2005). It is difficult to make a clear distinction between human and cultural capital. Both approaches are quite different in theoretical orientation, but both refer to the acquisition and use of knowledge, skills, competence and aptitudes throughout the life course putting specific interest in the early accumulation stage. Hereinafter, we will use the notion of human capital for the type of cultural-human capital that has obvious labour market relevance in the economic system. The third type iii) social capital is defined by Bourdieu as individual investment in social relation or networks. This is also part of the definitions by Putnam and Coleman, who also include such other elements as trust and norms. We considered these elements to be part of the social fields (Bourdieu 1979 and 1988) in which human action is embedded (Granovetter 1985).

their occupational opportunities. The labour market position of the citizens and their occupational opportunities depend on their capital stock and its valuation in the labour market segments. There is a complex interrelation between capital accumulation, capability development, learning outcome and quality of life in a given socio-economic context.

If the social efficiency of HEIs and the positive contribution they make to social risk management are to be measured, those that are committed to LLL must be evaluated in terms of (i) the design of appropriate lifelong learning programmes, (ii) the institutional and financial support provided to socially vulnerable people in life and work transitions and (iii) their capacity to adapt internal structures and procedures to new requirements of the adult population and to changed labour market conditions. When university adult education (UAE) programmes focus on the labour market – and many do have this orientation – it is important to evaluate the social efficiency of the programme in terms of employability and quality of work. This evaluation leads to constant revision of the programmes and constant reflection, and must take into account external conversion factors. For example, a university adult programme will not have the same impact in Germany as in Spain, Portugal or Greece, where the financial and economic crisis has had a devastating impact on the labour market.

Our empirical work was centred on two perspectives: on the one hand, the organisation & institution and teaching & learning; and, on the other hand, the impact on quality of life, measured in terms of employability and quality of work. We asked in which ways institutional structures and the design of learning and teaching allow learners to acquire human, cultural and social capital that is relevant to the labour market and which permits them to achieve or maintain a desired quality of work. In other words, the project attempted to determine the conditions of institutional structure and the design of the learning and teaching process that would be socially effective in terms of employability and quality of work.

2. Social vulnerability of highly educated people in mid-life

The strategies of the EU-member states for reforming their national welfare regimes has produced substantial changes in the labour market structure that affect people in mid-life. This is especially the case with pension reforms that seek to delay the age of retirement and the active working life of working people in mid-life (45-65 years old) between the year 2000 and 2012 has now been increased.

Figure 1. Activity rates by age cohorts of the EU-27
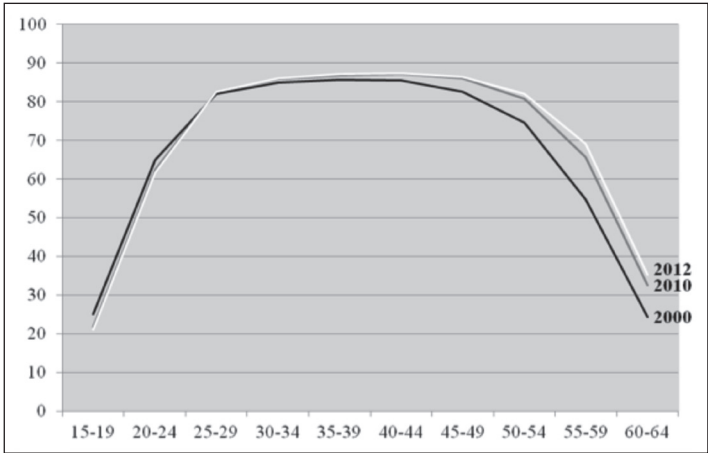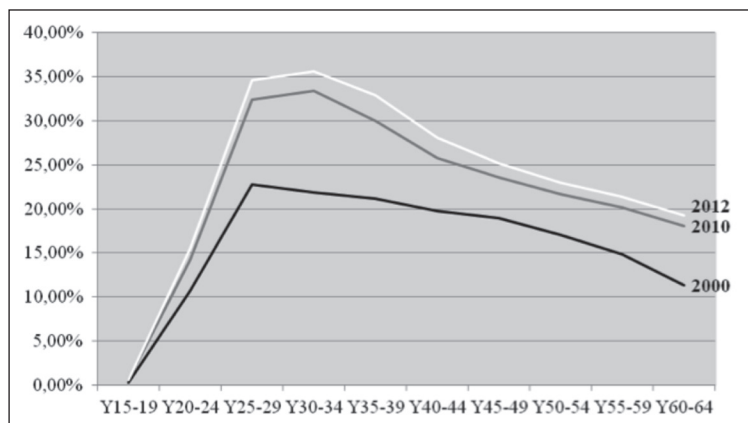

Source: *Eurostat LFS.*

Whilst people between 30 and 44 years are still the core age groups in the labour market the 45–49 year olds now have similar rates of activity and can be considered to be part of the core group. This also means that these age groups are more exposed to the labour market crisis and, therefore, that there is a need to provide them with lifelong learning activities or measures of continuous vocational education and training.

One of the main targets of "Europe 2020" is to increase the share of population aged 30-34 that has completed tertiary education to at least 40%. If they achieve this objective, the EU-member states will have managed to generalise higher education. Nowadays it is generally accepted that higher education offers people a better chance of finding a job, of having a higher income than other education groups and of having better living conditions. For instance, the Eurydice report (2012: 115) on the Bologna Process stated that they were not only more likely to find a job, but also that they would not take as long to find it and they would earn more. Overall the human capital theory provides a wide range of studies that confirm this. Also OECD studies on the social benefits of education show that it has a positive effect on the quality of life. For instance, Desjardins & Schuller (2006) confirmed what the population has perceived for decades. In a study about the expansion of universities from 1870 to 1985 in Germany, Italy, France, the United States and Japan, Windolf (1992: 3) showed that the number of students enrolled in higher education has grown constantly. In other words, the population perceives the socio-economic benefits of higher education.

Figure 2. Rate of highly educated people by age cohorts of the EU-27
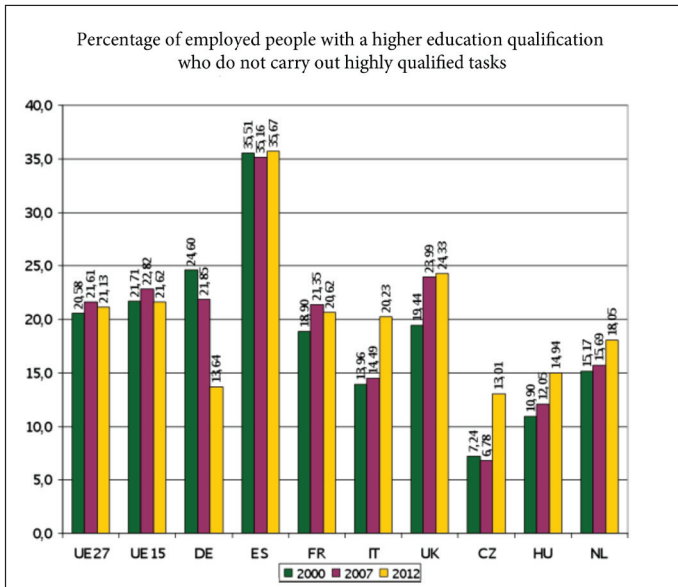

Source: *Eurostat LFS.*

Achieving high rates of highly educated workers means that it is necessary to take a closer look at how these groups are internally differentiated in terms of access to employment, conditions of work and quality of life. The impact of the financial and economic crisis on the most affected EU-member states – Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain – shows that highly educated people have more chance of staying in the labour market, but also that they are vulnerable to labour market risks. In these countries, the unemployment rate has significantly increased between 2000 to 2012, but it is still lower than in other educational groups: in Greece between 8.3% and 19,4%; in Spain between 10.0% and 15.0%; in Portugal between 2.9 and 11.8%: and in Ireland between 1.6 and 7.1%. This is also the case in other EU-member states. The unemployment rate has increased in this period in Hungary from 1.3% to 4,2%, in Slovenia from 2.6% to 6.3% and even in Sweden from 2.3% to 4.3%.

The impact of the increasing rate of highly educated people on the quality of 'knowledge work' is discussed by Brown *et alii* (2011). They found that the increasing international competition for knowledge jobs is exerting pressure to lower the quality of working conditions. Boes & Kämpf (2011: 13) draw a similar conclusion and find that highly qualified workers must compete with workers with similar qualifications from countries with low salary levels. Also the literature on off-shoring work has shown a trend towards geographically distributed knowledge work (see Manning *et alii* 2012 and Slepnio *et alii* 2013). If the European strategy 'Europe 2020' achieves the objective of generalising higher education, it can be assumed that the competition between graduates for good jobs will increase. In itself this trend could downgrade the conditions of knowledge work.

The growing literature on the mismatch between higher education and the skills required at work places calls attention to another problem (see Nieto & Ramos 2013; Fehse & Kerst 2007; Liviano & Nuñez 2012; and Scarpetta & Sonnet 2012). Parellada (2013: 4) discusses the mismatch between people's jobs and their educational level in the EU countries. For the countries under scrutiny in this project, we observe that Spain has the highest rate, but also in the United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Hungary and the Netherlands, the inadequacy rate increased between 2007 and 2012.

Figure 3. Mismatch between higher education and the labour market

Source: *Eurostat – Labour Force Survey* consulted 01/08/2013.

Spain is a prominent example of this mismatch. A considerable share of highly educated people cannot find a job appropriate to their qualification, and they are obliged to work in jobs that require lower skills. This means that they earn less than other similarly qualified people working in appropriate jobs, but more than people with lower qualifications working in similar jobs (see Nieto & Ramos 2013).

Increasing competition among high-educated people for good jobs and mismatching has led to a need for a more differentiated analysis of the labour situation of graduates and post-graduates. And it probably means the end of the link between higher education and better jobs for a considerable number of highly educated people.

3. Case studies[5]

The mapping of the TLLL landscape in the seven EU member states under scrutiny is highly heterogeneous and complex in the EU and the member states. In this context, three case studies at universities in member states (see www. themp.eu) are only illustrative examples and not representative of the whole system.

Our case studies and discussions with experts and those responsible for ULLL at two mutual learning seminars and one conference have allowed us to draw some conclusions about the measurement of social effectiveness (and to design socially effective adult education programmes).

Table 1. Programmes at 21 European universities

Czech Republic			Germany		
Programme for School Consultants	PERFEKT	Traffic Psychology	Change Management	Business Computer Science	Interdisciplinary Distance Learning for Experimental Science
Hungary			Italy		
Farmers' Training Programme	Quality Management Engineering Studies	Coach Postgraduate Programme	Educational Campus	Business Leadership	Environmental Design
Netherlands			Spain		
Course Public Affairs	Learning Network Management of Innovation	Master of Criminal Investigation	Human Resource Management	Management of Non-Profit organisations	a) Photovoltaic energy; b) Car design c) European Financial Advisor
United Kingdom					
BA Community Development	Health and Social Care, Business and IT	Health and Social Care, Community education			

These programmes are designed and implemented in different institutional frameworks. Several organizational units are outsourced mainly for regulative and financial reasons in order to offer training programmes to groups of

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5 The following chapter is based on the THEMP reports about social inclusion (Öz & Hamburg 2013) and teaching and learning (Osborne & Huston 2013)

population other than traditional degree students. This makes it possible for programme managers to overcome some regulative and staff-related constraints, and to achieve some autonomy regarding in the design and implementation of the programmes. Some of the programmes in our case studies take the usual organizational form. Especially, programmes which require accreditation and certification are organized by universities.

Most programmes require participants to already have an undergraduate degree. However there are several programmes – for instance, two in the United Kingdom, one in Italy and one in Hungary – which do not require academic degrees to access. Also in four of the five Spanish cases, people without a degree can provide other specific certificates.

Another barrier to adults seeking to access ULLL could be the fee. "There is considerable diversity in the range of costs of the case programmes varying from free, through hundreds of euros to the most expensive costing over €7500. It should be noted though that a number of courses which are classified as continuous professional development often attract some form of employer support" (Osborne & Houston 2013: 48).

The courses analysed are taught in a variety of ways: face-to-face in most cases, blended learning in some and distance learning in very few. The length of the course also varies considerably: in some cases, participants are required to attend on one or two days over a set period of time. The majority, however, require more intensive participation and some require a commitment over a considerable period of time (1–3 years).

In nearly all of the programmes some participants are trying to prepare labour transitions. Examples of transition to other work places in the same enterprise are the programmes of school consultant, management of non-profit organisations, and master's degree in Criminal Investigation. To some extent, courses on public affairs are also examples of this. Other courses aim to update knowledge, competences and the ability to adapt to changes in jobs (for instance, the farmers' training programme, photovoltaic energy, European financial advisor, learning network management of innovation, and environmental design). Some focus on preparing for the transition to other work places (for instance, the three UK programmes, change management, car design) or to new labour market segments (the traffic psychologist programme). The Italian programme 'Educational campus' is a special case because it is the only one to focus on the transition from unemployment to employment. Through capacity building and upgrading skills and competencies, participants have better chances in the labour market.

However, labour market transition is not generally the main issue in programme design. The programmes are based on an intuitive analysis of training needs, which is later confirmed by the success of the programmes in the number of students attending and completing.[6]

It is no surprise that very few programmes directly address the over 40s, but almost all programmes have participants in this age group. They are treated like other age groups and their participation is rather random and not the result of specific programme objectives. It is not the age but the work experience of the participants and their concrete objectives that distinguish these programmes from traditional higher education programmes.

Our case studies confirmed that working in ULLL is not the same as working in 'traditional programmes'. For instance, one person responsible for a programme mentioned that working as a lecturer in the adult programme is a mutual learning process not only between students but also between lecturers and students, which provides the programme with more practical knowledge.

And the focus on people with professional experience gives the course a more practical orientation combining scientific with practical contents in order to achieve a good learning process. "In general, programmes addressed to people with an academic background focus combining scientific knowledge with the professional needs of the participants. Since many participants are working part time or full time and have, hence, professional experience, this leads to the incorporation of practical experiences into program contents" (Fikret 2013: 25). But there is little evidence to show that the programmes developed special teaching and learning approaches to accommodate adults with long professional experience.

A further consideration in relation to teaching is the recruitment and selection of lecturing staff. In many cases, there is a considerable mix of academic and professional reinforcement so "It is not surprising that in a number of cases teaching is shared between those with an academic background and employed directly by the institution on academic contracts; and those with a professional or practice background or specific relevant expertise" (Osborne & Houston 2013: 41). This cooperation with professionals can take such different forms as contracted lecturers, guest lecturers, seminars, and workshops leaders. "Moreover, in at least a couple of cases, external staff were responsible for at least 50% if not more of teaching input" (Ibid).

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6 The Spanish cases are examples of success stories, but the universities have provided no account of the failed programmes.

But little effort is made to provide specific training on teaching and learning for lecturers. "Only a small number of the cases noted specific training in teaching and learning for university lecturers and in very few cases did this have an emphasis on adult education" (Ibid 43). On the other hand, the role of the lecturers is not limited to teaching; they also act as mentors, tutors and supervisors of professional practices.

4. Analysing the complexity of university adult education

The complexity of university adult education prevents substantial generalisations or recommendations from being made. Any work carried out into social effectiveness must take this complexity into account. Out analysis provides a way of reducing such complexity. On the basis of our empirical work, we propose a scheme for analysing different dimensions of the social effectiveness of adult education at universities. We use four main dimensions with 16 sub-dimensions.

This indicates how the core conditions of the social effectiveness of ULLL can be defined in terms of employability and quality of work considering not only the specific profile of programmes and organizing institutions, but also the specific political and socio-economic environment. A detailed discussion of all these dimensions is beyond the scope of this article so we shall concentrate on those that we consider most relevant to social effectiveness. [7]

Table 2. Analytical dimensions of the social effectiveness of ULLL

Learners	Structure	Teaching and learning	Mechanisms to cope with risk
Labour transitions	Institutional integration	Type of certificates	Assessment and consultancy services
Requirements for access to UAE	Organisational structure	Access to programmes	Funding of the programme
Learners' expectations	Distribution of tasks	Recognition of prior learning	Evaluation procedure
	Integration in networks	Teaching staff	
	Networking intensity	Learning methods	

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7 In the annex, we present a scheme that summarises the different dimensions of the analysis of socially effective ULLL, which can be used also as a model to design programmes.

A) Learner

To achieve social effectiveness, the labour market situations of the learners must be considered. Using the TLM approach, we conceptualize different types of labour market transition by distinguishing the transitions within an enterprise (internal labour market) and outside it (external labour market).

Labour transitions, studied from the individual point of view, allow us to evaluate and assess the extent to which the programmes have successfully helped individuals to carry out a transition or to avoid negative impacts of (involuntary) transitions.

The particular labour market transition can influence learners' possibilities of putting into practice what they are learning in the programme. Learners who are preparing a transition within a company may have the chance to test at work what they have been learning. But people who are unemployed have fewer chances to test learning achievement. However, this can be compensated for by making placement opportunities available as part of the programme – although in these cases quality must be controlled – or by integrating practical orientation into the programmes (for instance, through problem based learning).

Another issue that is just as important as transitions is learners' expectation and awareness regarding the acquisition of capitals. Our project assumed that learning programmes are oriented to the transmission of knowledge, competences and abilities that can be converted into human, cultural and social capital that is relevant to the labour market. This approach makes a more precise analysis of the interrelation between universities and labour markets, and also of the impact of lifelong learning on labour.

Table 3. Type of labour market transitions

Internal Labour Market
• Adaptation to changes at the individual workplace
• Personal development
• Vertical professional development: upward professional career
• Horizontal professional development: from one workplace to another at the same hierarchical level
External Labour Market
• From unemployment to employment
• From one employment to another employment
• From one employment status to another

Those who are aware of the capital they need in the labour market can make better decisions about which learning activities they want to carry out and how

particular learning programmes respond to their expectations. It is important for learners to know more about the labour market and learning opportunities, so that they can make informed decisions. We will come back to this issue later.

One of the EU's main concerns about higher education and lifelong learning is to make it easier for adults to access learning opportunities by providing flexible learning schemes that advocate conciliation between learning, work and family. Learners' personal characteristics must be taken into account: for example, the time at their disposal, which is conditioned for instance by their working conditions, their family situation, social commitments and distance from work or home to the learning place.

B) Structural Analysis: Integration in Networks and Networking Intensity

The LLL-project MASON (2013) underpins the importance of the regional engagement of lifelong learning policies. National and regional diversity must be taken into account to ensure that lifelong learning has a positive impact on social and economic development. Regionally anchored lifelong learning policies "promote better LLL policy coordination on the ground, increased commitment by those who are implementing LLL strategies at local level, more efficient use of resources, and sharing of ownership and responsibility. Furthermore, place-based approaches can enhance LLL policy comprehensiveness because they allow for a more flexible and localised identification of LLL needs and priorities and a better mobilisation of a wide range of LLL stakeholders at local level." Ensuring the positive impact of lifelong learning on social and economic development "requires going beyond 'one-size-fits-all' policies towards integrated, place-based, approaches to the design and implementation of LLL policies that meet regional and local needs in partnership with regional and local authorities, economic actors, social partners and the civil society" (Mason 2013).

In the measurement of the social effectiveness of ULLL in terms of employability, quality of work and quality of life, the degree of the orientation of ULLL to the labour market and social policies is of particular importance. The coordination of education policies and, even more so, the coordination between labour market and education policies is a complex issue. Networks beyond the institutional boundaries illustrate the diversity and complexity of the field; cooperating with other training entities and social actors as political authorities, entrepreneur associations, companies, trade unions, professional organisations is important. "The more diversified and specific learning needs and provisions

become, the more pressing also becomes the need for integration of the diverse experiences and approaches. To form and participate in interorganisational and personal networks seems to be one answer to overcoming the fragmentation of the lifelong learning landscape" (Bienzle *et alii* 2007: 19).

Taking up a distinction introduced by Bienzle *et alii* (2007), we identify three types of networks:

- Dissemination networks oriented to the interchange of (good) experiences acquired in programmes, initiatives and research projects and the diffusion of innovations in the field.
- Resource networks oriented to share resources, including staff, for the development of lifelong learning programmes and initiatives. This also involves analysing the usefulness of the resources regarding the specific programmes.
- Policy development networks focus on influencing policy (including legislation) and public initiatives in the field of ULLL at local, regional, national or European level.

Belonging to these networks helps organizations to structure the frequency and intensity of work, the degree of formalisation of arrangements, the creation of joint decision structures and the geopolitical level of networking (local, regional, national or international) (Bienzle *et alii* 2007: 14).

C) Teaching and learning aspects: Certificates and teaching staff

The formal learning outcome of the programmes – the symbolic capital – is a central issue: will the learners obtain a certificate at the end of the programme? And what formal status will the certificate have? The formal status of the certificates can be measured in two systemic dimensions: its relevance a) for the education system and b) for the labour market.

The first dimension is the relation of the ULLL programme to the Bologna cycles: for instance, if the adult learning programme provides the successful learner with

- an official higher education certificate (bachelor's degree, master's degree, etc.),
- credits recognised within the Bologna cycles,
- professional certificates, allowing the holder to enter specific labour markets,

+ a certificate issued by a particular university but which is not official recognised by the education systems; or

+ no certificate.

Table 4. Distribution of tasks among ULLL lecturers by type of lecturer

TASKS	Academic teachers	Academic teachers with professional background	Professional with academic background	Professional
Learning needs assessment				
Preparation of courses				
Facilitation of learning				
Monitoring and evaluation				
Counselling and guidance				
Programme development				
Financial management				
Human resource management				
Overall management				
Marketing and PR				
Administrative support				
ICT-support				
Overarching activities				

Source: Based on the task classification by Buiskol *et alii* (2010).

The second dimension is the relevance of the programme to the labour market. One of the questions to be asked in this case is whether the programme provides the successful learner with an official professional certificate that is indispensable for access to particular labour market positions or a labour market segment. An alternative question is whether the programme provides the successful learner with a certificate that enjoys high prestige in the business world and facilitates access to certain work positions.

Another important aspect of teaching and learning is the recruitment and selection of lecturing staff. In a number of our case studies, teaching is shared by staff with an academic background and directly employed by the institution on academic contracts; and those with a professional or practical background or specific relevant expertise. In some cases the role of external professionals is limited to seminars or workshops; in other cases the external professional staff play a major role in the delivery of the programme.

However, Buiskool *et alii* (2010: 3) point out that the tasks of the lecturers are not limited to teaching, but can include programme design and administration.

Using the list of tasks mentioned by Buiskool *et alii* the distribution of roles between academic staff, academic staff with a professional background, professionals with an academic background and professionals can be analysed in greater detail. Another important issue that needs to be borne in mind is that both academic and non-academic staff need to be specially prepared for university adult education.

D) Mechanisms to cope with risks

If UAE is regarded as a mechanism for reducing social vulnerability in the labour market because it prepares learners for transitions in labour markets and in-company labour markets, then learning programmes must be framed as services to support the learners' decision. THEMP regards action capacity and knowledge of social risk to be crucial to defining the social vulnerability of an individual. Providing adults who are preparing labour market transitions with information about labour markets and learning trajectories increases the chance that they will take appropriate decisions. This capacity for decision is further improved if barriers to access in terms of costs and conciliation of work, family and learning demands are reduced. We consider here three dimensions of vulnerability management: assessment, funding and flexibility of learning arrangements. A fourth category related to the self-reflexivity of the university should be added: the availability of instruments to measure the social effectiveness of programmes in terms of employability and quality of work.

It is of vital importance that adult learners can access tools and instruments that inform them of their chances of successfully making labour market transitions. This implies two questions:

a) Does the university have tools and instruments to undertake or access labour market analysis?

b) Does the university have a consultancy service to inform students of their options in the labour market and to recommend learning trajectories?

The mechanisms for informing learners about opportunities and risks can be managed by the university itself or by such external providers as public employment agencies. Whatever the means, before they decide on their learning trajectory it is important that adult learners have access to information about learning and working opportunities so that they can take informed decisions. This includes information about funding opportunities. In other words, he learner access to pre-course guidance could be a means of reducing the risks

involved in social investment in learning. Our case studies, however, show that guidance mechanisms are generally underdeveloped.

It is obvious that the funding of the participation of learners in a programme has a key role. In some countries, the fees that learners pay for a programme are so high that they prevent participation. So it is important to know who covers the cost of the programmes. In those cases in which the learners have to pay fees, it is important to know whether there are mechanisms for reducing this individual contribution (for example, fees subsidised by private business or public or semi-public funding

This could also be an indicator of the involvement of people and entities from outside the university in programme design, application and evaluation. If participation in the programme is paid for by a company, a branch association, trade union or a public authority the possibility that they are involved in curriculum design is high. For instance, it can be supposed that in tailor-made programmes for a company, a group of companies or a branch, the implication of the stakeholders will be high. In such cases, the purchaser may not be the learner.

From the perspective of social vulnerability management, it is important to know if these mechanisms are available, and if the university provides information about possibilities and facilitates access. However, funding mechanisms are not limited to fees: they can also include monetary encouragement to take part in university adult education as often happens in the schemes for the unemployed.

Social vulnerability management must take into account return on investment. The learners and/or their funders are investing money and time in adult learning measures under the expectation that they will obtain benefits. Like all types of investment, this also involves a risk of losing financial, cultural or social capital. In our scheme, the investment in the first stage is related to a) money and b) time:

a) Participating in ULLL programmes involves the risk of losing financial capital because the learners invest money for their participation. This not only takes the form of fees, but also losses in income and pension contributions or travel costs. The return on this investment is not predictable but it can be estimated.

b) Investing time in training and learning involves reducing other activities and can lead to a temporary loss in social capital (for instance, less time for family relationships and friendships) and cultural capital (for instance, less time attending cultural events).

As far as monetary risk is concerned, the main issue is whether the learner has to pay to participate in the programme and if the university provides a mechanism to (co-) fund the participation. Also important is whether the

university facilitates information (consultancy) about public or private (co-) funding mechanisms so that the individual risk of losing capital will be reduced.

On the other side of the balance are the benefits in terms of monetary, human, cultural and social capital that adult learners obtain from the programme. Adult learners are able to appreciate the extent to which what they have learned can be converted into labour market-relevant capital. At least, they can perceive the extent to which the acquired capital has had a positive influence on their labour market transitions in terms of quality of work. We propose to measure the satisfaction with the changes in the quality of work in the following dimensions: economic security, knowledge & intellectual development, social relations, political rights & participation, balance of time, health, work environment and social mobility (the possibility of changing jobs).[8]

5. Conclusions

The EU's Europe 2020 strategy aims for 40% of the people between 30 and 34 years to undergo higher education and has helped higher education to become universal. This could change the labour market for highly educated people. Studies of skill mismatch and off-shoring of knowledge work provides some indication of substantial changes in the sense of the internal segmentation of this specific labour market. It seems that the supposed link between good jobs and higher education is no longer valid for all highly educated people and that some of them are becoming more vulnerable to labour market risks. Although the demand for highly qualified workers can reinforce the labour market position of mature highly educated people, there is an increasingly greater demand for tertiary lifelong learning.

Advocating the transitional labour market approach, THEMP investigated *a)* the role of ULLL in the labour market transitions of learners in mid-life and *b)* the potential of ULLL to be a means to support such transitions institutionally. Because formal higher education and the labour market operate with different logics, and are therefore difficult to coordinate, THEMP focused on university adult education as a more flexible means of providing tertiary education to people in mid-life that is relevant to the labour market. We advocate strengthening the

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8 Satisfaction with changes does not only mean that the acquired capital improves the situation in the different categories; the new capital may also be an impediment or lead to impoverishment. For instance, economic security means the certainty of keeping a job or the security of having an income from work. In such European member states as Spain, Portugal and Ireland the employment perspectives of highly educated people have become impoverished and wages are being reduced. The question is how acquired capital can prevent greater deterioration of an individual's socio-economic situation.

role of the universities, but we do not advocate a particular institutional model. The case studies showed that the institutional options were highly heterogeneous and ranged from the integration of ULLL in the university's own structure to networking structures, where the universities cooperate with other actors without taking the lead. However, all the structural configurations require more intensive networking with such social actors as the public administration, entrepreneur associations, enterprises, trade unions, professional associations etc.

Desk research, mutual learning seminars, and conference and case studies carried out in the course of the project have shown that ULLL can help learners prepare labour transitions but generally is not a part of labour market or social policies. And the universities do not evaluate the social effectiveness of programmes. Following the logic of the education system, these programmes are also designed more with education and training in mind than labour market needs. However, successful programmes also respond intrinsically to labour market needs.

The analysis of successful programmes allows us to classify the social effectiveness of ULLL and its potential for social vulnerability management. In the article we advocate that learners should be the centre of ULLL strategies that minimize the risks of their social investment in learning programmes. In this context, social risk is defined in two dimensions: knowledge of the labour market situation and the ability to take decisions to invest time and money in (informal) learning.

As far as the first dimension is concerned, we argue that there should be mechanisms for improving the knowledge of potential learners about the labour market and training opportunities, so that they can take informed decisions. This requires intensifying the relationships with external actors so that this information can be disseminated and guidance services provided for learners. Universities must cooperate in dissemination, and resource and policy networks with the aim of a) providing learners with the best possible information and b) facilitating learners' decisions about their options.

When decision capacity is limited, people are more vulnerable. We have discussed under the categories of monetary and time investment and we have argued in favour of a) the TLM approach to facilitate learners' access to funding mechanisms and b) a flexible arrangement to reduce the time investment of adult learners so that they can conciliate learning, work and family.

And it is important that ULLL is evaluated for its social effectiveness defined here in terms of a) the acquisition of human, cultural and social capital that is relevant to the labour market; and b) employability and the quality of work. The

proposed evaluation scheme provides universities with a means to reflect about their own programmes.

To finish, one final comment: the project team is very aware of the difficulties of making lifelong learning a priority within the university agenda. Our case studies confirmed that university lifelong learning is still not generally a priority on the political agenda of governments or universities. But the trend to the universalisation of higher education, a priority of the EU strategy Europe 2020, will increase the demand for tertiary adult education and training. And it is still an open question as to what role the universities will play in this field.

6. Annex: Modelling Social Business for ULLL

Modelling Social Business for University Lifelong Learning activities					
Learners' motivation	Key partners (Networking)	Key activities	Value proposition	Disposable resources	Funding mechanisms:
Transition: Company internal: • adaptation to new challenges • new work tasks Company external • new company same professional field • new professional field • re-entry labour market	*Internal partners* • University administration • Faculties • Departments • Academics	• Programme idea • Programme development • Establishing academic norms • Proposing budgets • Approval of training activities (incl. budget) • Approval of criteria of remuneration • Assuming economic risks • Commercialisation	*Orientation* Training & Education Labour Market	*Teaching resources* • Human resources • Infrastructures • Material	• Enterprises • Entrepreneur ass. • Branch associations • Trade unions • Public authorities • Citizens
Intrinsic motivation	*External partners* • Enterprises • Entrepreneur association. • Branch associations • Trade unions • Public authorities *Status of the university* • project leader • co-operator • provider	• Budget management • Performance evaluation • Accreditation • others	Focused on Human capital: • Divers technical Comp. Cultural capital • Social competence • Communication competence • Networking competence Social capital • Professional network	*T & L approach* • blended • online • face-to-face • problem based • project based • self-directed • others	

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Lifelong Learning in China

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Abstract: *Lifelong learning in China is explored in terms of China's developing modernization in the areas of agriculture, industry, military, and science and technology. Issues involving labor distribution allocation, skill and training, and potential problems are addressed. The role of adult learning in China is contrasted with Western ideas and traced through time to show how it has changed to accommodate the country's needs in terms of illiteracy and skill development and used to be inexplicably intertwined with the country's political agenda and educational policy.*

Keywords: *Lifelong learning, Xina, labor allocation, skill development, educational theories.*

Resumen: *El artículo explora el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida en China en relación a la modernización del desarrollo en las áreas de agricultura, industria, industria militar, y ciencia y tecnología. Se tratan temas relacionados con la distribución del factor trabajo, habilidades y formación, y problemas potenciales. El papel del aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida en China se contrasta con ideas de mundo occidental y se analiza a lo largo del tiempo para mostrar cómo ha cambiado para adaptarse a las necesidades del país en términos de analfabetismo y desarrollo de habilidades y cómo, inexplicablemente, se ha entrelazado con la agenda política y educativa del país.*

Palabras claves: *Aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, China, distribución del trabajo, desarrollo de habilidades, teorías educativas.*

1. Introduction

China, the third largest country in terms of geographical area in the world after Russia and Canada, has more people than any other country (approximately 1.3 billion) (China Internet Information Center, 2003). China has relied heavily upon its lifelong learning to promote desired changes in political ideology, socio-economic relations, and human productive capabilities. To outsiders, China's huge population could be seen as a problem: just feeding the people is a heavy burden. However, the Chinese regard their huge population as a vital asset in overall economic development. To this end, many Chinese quote their late chairman Mao by saying, "many hands make light work." This saying has almost become the Chinese people's political motto, encouraging millions of Chinese to work harder in order to contribute to China's four modernizations: agriculture, industry, military, and science and technology. According to Kaplan, Sobin and Andors (1979, p. 126), full utilization of the country's vast workforce has been a consistent aspect of strategies designed to place the country on a firm economic footing. Between 1949 and the mid-1970s, the government was successful in mobilizing the rural workforce in support of national development schemes. Now the government is mobilizing both rural and urban workforces to surpass countries such as Japan, Germany and the United States. As of 2006, China successfully surpassed France and the United Kingdom in terms of its GDP. Now, China has become the world's second largest economy. After 20 to 30 years of continual economic reform, the country's foreign currency reserves reached a record $1 trillion in March, 2007, as its factories churned out goods for markets around the world, heightening the likelihood of fresh trade tensions with the United States (Goodman, 2005). The Chinese government announced the formation of a new agency to oversee the investment of these foreign currency reserves, representing a potent new force in international finance (Yardley & Barboza, 2007). Although economic policies and institutions have fostered China's economic growth – which has taken place at such a rate that it has shocked the rest of the world – the efficient use of human resources has also played a major role. When speaking of human resources in China, one must turn to the definition of the country's labor force, which is far from clear given its large population.

> China's mass labor mobilization campaigns obscure boundaries between those who are in and outside of the workforce. Students attend class, but they also work while going to school. Peasants farm, but can also be employed in rural and urban industries in slack seasons. Women still bear a major responsibility for housework, but millions take part in neighborhood service centers and

small-scale industries. Military personnel engage in production. Thus, it is very difficult to trace with any precision the size or growth of the urban or rural, industrial or agricultural labor sectors. (Kaplan, Sobin & Andors, 1979, p. 126)

In any examination of China's economic accomplishments, the mass labor mobilization to improve the lifelong learning of its human resources is what first springs to mind. On the one hand, China has set a shining example for other developing countries in terms of properly feeding its huge population by mobilizing its mass labor force. On the other hand, China has revealed a plethora of problems by aggressively improving its lifelong learning. In the next sections, we will discuss lifelong learning in relation to labor distribution, skill and training, labor allocation and its associated potential problems.

2. Labor distribution and lifelong learning

Lifelong learning refers to the desired end results or accomplishments of purposeful behavior or activity (Rothwell & Dubois, 1998). A broader definition of lifelong learning offered by Bennett and Bell (2010) includes "preconscious as well as conscious learning resulting from the transformation of experience in all contexts and stages in life and integration into the individual's personal biography" (p. 415). This definition includes the social context of learning as well as the continual changes in self-identity and one's life world that are both the beginning and the outcome of new learning. It addresses the ability of individuals to learn from experience so that they can cope with continual change.

The more skilled and productive individuals are, the more valuable they are to industry and commerce and, by inference, the national economy (Van Der Linde, 2007, p. 45). China's leaders have never stopped finding and formulating optimal or desirable ways of solving lifelong learning problems or seizing lifelong learning improvement opportunities. As soon as the Chinese communist party came to power in 1949, the future course was set as follows:

The culture and education of the People's Republic of China are new democratic, that is, national, scientific, and popular. The main tasks for raising the cultural level of the people are: training of personnel for national construction work; liquidating of feudal, comprador, fascist ideology; and developing of the ideology of serving the people. (Kaplan, Sobin & Andors, 1979, p. 217)

During the Great Leap Forward (1958-1959) and the Great Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), one of Mao's major policies for improving lifelong learning was *uniting theory with practice:* the direct interaction of educational

institutions with productive labor and the establishment of self-supported schools by factories and commune units. Elias and Merriam (2005) express a similar view in their statement "theory without practice leads to empty idealism and action without philosophical reflection leads to a mindless activism" (p. 4).

Prior to the economic reforms implemented in the early 1980s, the West's so-called "democratic individualism" was viewed as a key threat to improving Chinese people's performance in the work place. According to democratic individualism, the fundamental role of educating and training people for the sake of improving lifelong learning is the physical, intellectual, emotional and ethical integration of the individual into a 'complete man' (Van Der Linde, 2007, p. 42). Before China opened up to the outside world, its leaders decided that the best way of solving lifelong learning problems was to attract foreign investment. To this end, the government set up many special economic development zones along its coastal provinces where China's workers, engineers and scientists could work side by side with their foreign counterparts. The goal of this historic endeavor was clear: not only could China use foreign capital but its personnel could also learn advanced human management skills. During the 1980s and 1990s, the late leader Deng's theory became popular. It must be pointed out that his theory was found akin to John Dewey's pragmatism (1963, 1966). Literally translated into English, Deng's theory states: "it makes no difference whether you are a black cat or a white cat. As long as you can catch mice, you are a good cat." Applied to lifelong learning, Deng's theory does allow China's personnel to focus on practical skills to get their work done. Further, nothing goes wrong in emphasizing skills development as a charter for education and training to meet present and future industry and economic demands (Van Der Linde, 2007, p. 48). This theory ran contrary to Mao's policy in that being "red" was more important than being "expert." During Mao's time, as long as Chinese people were loyal to the supreme leader, that was all he needed. Because of Mao's leftist policy, his theory, uniting theory with practice turned Chinese personnel into a class struggle.

Both Mao's policy and Deng's theory have contributed to disproportionate urban and rural labor distribution in China. As a result of Mao's uniting theory with practice, millions of urban youth emigrated to the countryside to improve their performance. Writing in 1979, Kaplan, Sobin and Andors (p. 129) indicated,

> Since the population in 1970 was estimated at about 753 million, with 125 million or 16.5% living in urban areas, this would mean that in 1975 the urban population totaled about 135 million. The rural segment therefore comprised 685 million people or 83.5% of the total population. These ratios between

urban and rural population have remained remarkably stable since 1958, when the urban population was about 14.2% of the total. Roughly 44% of the urban population, or 59.5 million people, made up the urban labor force in 1975; a smaller percentage of the rural population—42% or 290.5% million people—made up the rural labor force.

Today, China's population remains predominantly rural, despite a strong trend toward urbanization. Over 60% were classified as rural by the 2000 census, compared with 83.5% two decades ago (Brooks & Tao, 2003). As a result of new strategies for lifelong learning, changes in the size of the labor force largely reflect the degree to which women and young people become part of it. Because of Deng's pragmatism, changing attitudes toward female social roles also affect the size of the workforce. Now, participating in economic activities outside of the home or family seems to be the norm throughout China. These new additions to the workforce are accompanied with new traits and skills. While Bell and Bennett (2010) are predominately describing a Western population in their depiction of the net generation born between 1981 and 1984, some of these traits are global. They include familiarity with technology, optimism, ability to multitask, "lack of critical thinking, and naivety about intellectual property and information authenticity of internet resources" (417). All of these will impact life-long learning throughout their careers.

3. Skill and training and lifelong learning

Writing in 2003-2004, Wang and Bott (p. 37) indicated,

> Mass illiteracy was one of the main problems facing the new government of China in 1949. Illiteracy was a serious obstacle to technical progress, both in industry and on the farm. The adult education curriculum prior to the post-Mao period in China was geared to eradicate illiteracy, and a massive assault on illiteracy became the first priority. Spare time education programs were set up for workers in cities while some literacy classes were held in the villages during those early years. Since 1984, 11 Chinese units have won prizes from UNESCO for their work in eliminating illiteracy. As a result of these efforts, by the end of the last century, China's illiteracy rate among young and middle-aged people had dropped to less than 5%.

Prior to the 1980s, the number of highly skilled workers within the industrial sector is estimated to comprise about 15% of the workforce. Most industrial workers can be assumed to have been unskilled or semiskilled if wage-grade rankings are taken as equivalent to skill criteria (Kaplan, Sobin, & Andors,

1979, p. 129). According to Paltiel (1992), the Chinese pioneered the system of education and training to boost lifelong learning as early as the 10th century AD. Prior to the 10th century AD, the Chinese philosopher Confucius, who lived in the 5th century BC, postulated that no nation goes bankrupt for educating its people. Those who do well in education and training are assigned public service positions in China. To some extent, this is still the case in China. Within the industrial sector, large numbers of workers went through work-study schools at the secondary level or attended part-time courses in their factories in the 1960s and 1970s. As shown by Kaplan, Sobin and Andors (1979, pp. 129-130),

> As of June 1976, there were some 251,000 workers enrolled in high-level technical training courses in "July 21" workers colleges (named after the college at the Shanghai Machine Tools Plant cited by Mao on July 21, 1968); 900,000 workers and students in technical secondary schools; and 44.6 million students in middle schools, most of which emphasize practical production skills. In the 1970s—as an outgrowth of reforms brought about through the Cultural Revolution—many young workers just out of school have been entering the labor force with basic skills and some work experience, as well as with basic mathematical and reading abilities.

While in 1949 over 90% of the general population—and 80% of the industrial force—were illiterate, this changed in the 1960s and 1970s when China's leaders emphasized the importance of education and training initiated by the Chinese as early as the 10th century AD. Although a lot of time and energy were wasted in the political power struggle, young workers and students did master some rudimentary production skills. Indeed, the labor force in China has been transformed. In the post-Mao era, to get entry level jobs in the industrial sector, workers must have a college degree and upward mobility is most possible for those workers who hold graduate degrees. It is no exaggeration to say that the more education and training workers receive, the better they will perform on the job. Work is a process between humans and nature, a process in which humans, through their own activities, initiate, regulate, and control the material reactions between themselves and nature (Marx, 1890/1929). More importantly, it is lifelong learning that produces surplus value (Wang, 2006). Without surplus value, humans could not have progressed from the Stone Age to modern civilization.

As shown above, China's leaders viewed the West's so-called "democratic individualism" as a key threat to improving lifelong learning. On the other hand, China has never stopped modeling itself on foreign lifelong learning models. Parker (2010a) notes that many of the theories reveal themselves in models with

geometric shapes. Kolb's circular learning cycle and Illeris' triangular depiction of the dimensions of learning are examples. Just as Confucius suggested selecting members of the ruling class on the merit of individual lifelong learning, Mao rejected formal training as the basis of his new hierarchy. Instead, he insisted on individual cultivation of moral worth as a means of inculcating revolutionary solidarity in a collective setting (Wang, 2005, p. 35). Because the Soviets were interested in indoctrinating Chinese youth with revolutionary spirit in China, Mao sent Chinese youth to Russia to improve lifelong learning. Later, the Marxist-Leninist Training Academy was established on Chinese territory. In the post-Mao era, China's trainers began to borrow buzzwords like "system theory" and "decision-making theory" from the West. Because of China's willingness to learn from the West, more and more multinational corporations have gained a foothold to help improve lifelong learning in China (Wang, 2005, p. 31). Likewise, going abroad to receive a foreign education to improve lifelong learning is viewed as "realizing one's self-actualization." (Wang, 2004-2005, p. 30) In the post-Mao era, lifelong learning does not seem to be closely connected with politics in China. As summarized by Wang,

> Western ideas, customs and culture are much in favor, and anyone who still clings to the "four olds" (e.g., old ideas, customs, culture, habits) is considered old-fashioned. Individual aspirations for lifelong education have been stimulated by a quasi-market economy since the beginning of the early 1980s. Freed from the limitations of Mao's political agenda, motives for improving lifelong learning have become more and more closely tied to individual, practical purposes, such as jobs, incomes, and materialistic success in life. (p. 30)

4. Labor allocation and potential problems

China has a history of boosting lifelong learning by using sayings or quotes from influential people such as Confucius, Marx and Mao. Confucian thought has inspired generations of Chinese. To encourage Chinese youth to learn, twenty-five centuries ago Confucius had this to say, "Those who are born wise are the highest type of men; those who become wise through learning come next; those who are dull-witted and yet strive to learn come after that. Those who are dull-witted and yet make no effort to learn are the lowest type of men" (Chai & Chai, 1965, pp. 44-45 as cited in Wang & King, 2007, p. 253). Today, politicians and educators still use this saying to encourage young men and women in China to work hard to achieve their goals in work and in life. As soon as the Chinese

Communist party came to power in 1949, Karl Marx became the foremost leader in China. His ideas and concepts have been widely studied in the country. Even to this day, students are required to memorize and be examined on his thought in order to be admitted to a university or a college. *From each according to his ability, to each according to his need* (or *needs*) is a slogan popularized by Karl Marx in his 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program*. The phrase summarizes the idea that, under a Communist system, every person shall produce to the best of their ability in accordance with their talent, and each person shall receive the fruits of this production in accordance with their need, irrespective of what they have produced. In the Marxist view, such an arrangement will be made possible by the abundance of goods and services that a developed communist society will produce; the idea is that there will be enough to satisfy everyone's needs. While such an ideal could be realized in a pure communist country, China's leaders determined that it could not be achieved in a semi-Communist and semi-capitalist country such as China. The Marxist slogan was changed into *From each according to his ability, to each according to his work.* Without any exaggeration, this slogan to some extent boosted lifelong learning throughout China especially in post-Mao China. Those who worked harder and more intelligently in the early 1980s and 1990s gradually became richer and richer. Those who refused to make an effort to learn new skills became poorer and poorer. Today the gap between the haves and the have-nots is getting wider in both cities and the country. Writing in 2006, Gittings (p. 260) indicated that the fifty richest millionaires in China were worth more than Y 100 million each, and the ten wealthiest among them Y 375 million and upwards, according to the Forbes Survey in 2002. On the contrary, some of the counties in the province of Shanxi are among the poorest in China and many people still live in caves (Clissold, 2005, p. 28). From another perspective, Marxist's slogan (Chinese version) confirmed the Protestant ethic of work in that it was man's obligation to God to extract the maximum amount of wealth from his work (Petty & Brewer, 2005, p. 97). Since lifelong learning is synonymous with hard and intelligent work, lifelong learning, like work, should carry with it seven viewpoints that can be served as a theoretical framework in any social setting: (1) lifelong learning is continuous and leads to additional performance; (2) lifelong learning is productive and produces goods and services; (3) lifelong learning requires physical and mental exertion; (4) lifelong learning has socio-psychological aspects; (5) lifelong learning is performed on a regular or scheduled basis; (6) lifelong learning requires a degree of constraint; and (7) lifelong learning is performed for a personal purpose (intrinsic or extrinsic).

Regardless of what indoctrination China's leaders employ to boost lifelong learning, underemployment and unemployment have been problems in China, especially during the first decade of the Communist government. On labor allocation, Kaplan, Sobin and Andors (1979, p. 130) reported,

> Unemployment was particularly serious in the mid-1950s and immediately following the Great Leap Forward. During the First Five-Year Plan (1953-57), the unemployed were usually the less skilled, order workers, and some youths with a primary level of education. Rural-to-urban migration exacerbated this problem, so that by 1956-57 it was estimated that anywhere from 9.6 to 18.3 million people were underemployed or unemployed—roughly from one-fifth to one-third of the urban labor force. State expenditures for unemployment relief in 1956 totaled Y 186.5 million.

During the Great Leap Forward, large masses of the unemployed were mobilized for work, including millions of women who left home to join the labor force for the first time. The problem of unemployment in China during this period was compounded when the Soviet Union decided to precipitously withdraw its industrial aid to China. Failures in agriculture brought more labor into rural industry. The so-called backyard furnace in China was a direct product of the Great Leap Forward. Labor allocation during this period caused lifelong learning problems in China. As an incentive to boost lifelong learning, Mao started a concerted effort to begin to shift portions of the urban population back to the countryside. This was done in China in order to achieve Mao's integration of theory with practice. Regarding education and training, the following was reported,

> Students and faculty were sent to farms and factories; curricula were formulated based on immediate agricultural and industrial needs; schools, factories, and farms shared management; classroom-centered schooling was replaced by work-study programs; workers and farmers were dispatched to take up teaching and school-management positions; and full-time and institutional facilities were increasingly replaced by part-time and non-institutional programs. (Cheng & Manning, 2003, p. 359)

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, labor was allocated by local governmental authorities who worked closely with industrial enterprises and other units in the area to ensure balance between available manpower and jobs (Kaplan, Sobin & Andors, 1979, p. 130). At the time, China was still considered a command economy by Western standards. In the rural areas, communes and counties played the most important role in allocating labor for industry. According to Kaplan, Sobin and Andors (1979), these administrative levels work in close

coordination with the brigades and teams, the units that manage the distribution of agricultural labor. Despite China's concerted efforts, unemployment has not been eliminated in all regions or economic sectors in China. In the last twenty years, China has made strides towards a more market-oriented labor market. To this end, the urban private sector has become more important and state-owned enterprises have downsized. Millions of urban workers have been laid off. As rural employment has slowed, migrants have begun to seek jobs in the more dynamic coastal provinces (Brooks & Tao, 2003, p. 3). Both urban and rural employment situations have produced a new problem—surplus labor in the 21st century in China. According to the National Bureau of Statistics in 2002, urban unemployment rate was about 4-5% of the labor force. Since over 60% was classified as rural in the census in the year 2000, the unemployment rate is certainly much higher than is shown by official data. Because many of the low skill level jobs are filled by rural surplus labor, it is hard for the urban unemployed to find jobs. Since China is turning from a command economy to a market economy, nowadays governmental authorities no longer allocate labor. Twenty years ago in China, a college degree was a passport to a guaranteed job. Nowadays, college students with just a bachelor's degree find it hard to find quality jobs in China. Wang (2005, p. 36) noted this labor market situation in China by saying, "Numerous Chinese graduates of MBA programs at the institutions of American higher learning have difficulty finding appropriate positions in China. Some MBA graduates have taken jobs teaching English as a foreign language for Chinese universities."

5. Reflections

Unlike the West, lifelong learning has been inextricably intertwined with China's leaders' political agenda and educational policy. Social, political, and economic conditions shape individual lifelong learning in China (Wang, 2004-2005, p. 17). Between 1949 and 1976 when politics took precedence over educational policies, young people in China were forced to devote their time and energy, even their entire youth, to advancing authoritarian political goals. During this time, young people were not judged on their academic achievement or their occupational expertise but by how "red" they were (i.e., whether they were loyal to the supreme leader, Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Communist Party) (Wang, 2004-2005). China has a history of creating personality cults. From its emperors to its contemporary leaders, all these people wanted the Chinese to follow their "teachings" to the letter. Those who deviated from their "theories" or

"policies" should be punished one way or another and many Chinese took pride in admiring the wisdom of their supreme leaders. For example, between 1949 and 1976 when Mao wanted to create a classless communist China, everyone's performance was geared towards realizing this political goal. During this long period, all forms of education and formal training were sacrificed to pursue political goals under the leadership of Mao. To support its political agenda, China borrowed Marxist theories to guide lifelong learning. As mentioned above, the Marxist grand theory "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" was changed to "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work" to fit Chinese society. Like Mao, Marx became a personal cult that all Chinese youths including Chinese communist leaders worshipped throughout China between 1949 and 1976. In the post-Mao era when national policy was geared towards economic reforms and the open door policy, to some extent, the influence of Marxism and Maoism on lifelong learning lessened. Mao's successor inspired millions of Chinese to work harder and more intelligently in order to become rich. While hundreds of Chinese became rich overnight, some ethical standards were lost in the process of pursuing wealth in China. Marx condemned exploitation in the English factories but Chinese rich people used the very same form of exploitation to accumulate wealth. Millions of Chinese workers now sweat in factories in order to make ends meet ($1 to $10 per day). Slave labor is rampant under the guise of realizing the four modernizations (i.e., agriculture, industry, military, and science and technology). Where is the money earned at the expense of maximum lifelong learning? It is at the disposal of a few top level leaders and their offspring. In difficult times, China's leaders are good at using propaganda and nationalism to boost lifelong learning.

On the contrary, Westerners may not believe in China's way of exerting external control and threats to boost lifelong learning. To Westerners, lifelong learning is related to human nature and behavior. They believe in theory X assumptions about human nature and theory Y assumptions about human nature. According to this dichotomy, some people inherently dislike work and will avoid it if they can while others consider the expenditure of physical and mental effort as natural as play or rest (Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson, 2005, p. 257). Further, Westerners believe that lifelong learning is bound by teaching/learning theories such as the theory of adult learning, the theory of multiple intelligences, the theory of emotional intelligence and the theory of transformative learning. Educational leaders such as Rogers (1951, 1961, 1969) and Knowles (1970, 1973, 1975, 1984, 1986, 1998, 2005) firmly believe that humans will exercise self-direction and self-control in order to perform at the optimal level.

In other words, human beings have a natural potentiality for improving their own performance. Punishment should not be the only means for bringing about lifelong learning toward individual or collective objectives. The essence of adult learning theory is about releasing the energy of others (Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson, 2005). Therefore, lifelong learning is closely related to self-initiated learning, which involves the whole person—feelings as well as intellect—and is pervasive and lasting. Gardner's (theory of multiple intelligences 1983, 1991, 1993) looks at the brain and how people learn to improve their lifelong learning. Based on this theory, lifelong learning can be considered as an internal and biologically driven need to know for survival (Anderson, 2005, p. 3). Westerners believe that even if one's IQ is higher than that of the average person, one cannot perform at the optimal level if one's emotional intelligence is low. According to Goleman (2005), out-of-control emotions make a smart person stupid. The theory of transformative learning is useful in understanding lifelong learning simply because it argues that learning is needed throughout our lifetime to help us respond to changes in the nature of work, navigate passages from one stage of development to another, and accommodate new personal and professional situations (Mezirow, 1978, 1990, 1991, 1997, 2000; Cranton, 1994; Lamdin & Fugate, 1997; King, 2005; Wang & King, 2006, 2007). Such popular Western theories of teaching and learning in relation to human nature and human behavior may have been studied in academic circles in China. However, they have not been widely applied to improve lifelong learning in China. To some extent, lifelong learning in China is still tied to political agendas, national education policies, propaganda and nationalism, to say the least.

While many of the Western theories mentioned above form the basis for lifelong learning in Western countries, what drives adult learning practice is the fulfillment of societal needs. Examples can be found in the workers' education movement in Great Britain, the needs instigated by the industrial revolution, agricultural extension programs, Americanization programs to educate the influx of immigrants in the early 1900s and the entire field of vocational education (Parker, 2010b). This interchange of theory and practice has influenced lifelong learning and moved it forward through the centuries.

6. Conclusion

It has been demonstrated in this article that lifelong learning has been promoted in China by methods such as politics, the influence of a few outstanding leaders, education policies, propaganda and nationalism rather than theories of teaching

and learning as preferred by its Western counterparts. The article points out that perspectives of lifelong learning in China have changed as the political, social and economic conditions have evolvedg. It was valid to pursue political goals prior to 1976 as a means of improving lifelong learning. In the post-Mao era, pursuing materialistic goals as a means of improving lifelong learning seems to fall squarely in line with the seven views of lifelong learning given China's political, social and economic conditions. The article also shows that labor distribution, skill and training, and labor allocation create new problems for overall lifelong learning in China. It must be pointed out that China believes in using punishment to coerce young people into leaving poor learning behavior behind and embracing more positive and appropriate learning behavior in order to improve lifelong learning. At the heart of this thinking is that leaders/teachers are in control of all means of improving lifelong learning. This mode of thinking is okay in authoritarian countries such as China although it is questionable whether it will work in democratic countries. In fact it seems to be in conflict with Knowles' assumptions (2005) about adult learners articulated in his six core andragogical principles: "the learner's need to know, self-directed learning, prior experience of the learner, readiness to learn, orientation to learning and problem solving, and motivation to learn" (p. 183).

As problems such as underemployment, unemployment and surplus labor continue to erode the so-called "socialist system", China must look for alternative ways to improve its lifelong learning so that changes can be made to political ideology, socio-economic relations, and human productive capabilities (Wang & Colletta, 1991). To this end, China has adopted a more flexible labor market strategy. That is, urban job-seekers are allowed to find work in the state, collective, or newly-recognized private sectors, and enterprises are granted more autonomy in hiring decisions. The authorities continue to formulate a labor plan, but instead of unilaterally allocating workers to enterprises, labor bureaus have begun to introduce workers to hiring units.

To improve the training and education of the largely unskilled workers, China must introduce Western teaching/learning theories to training academies throughout China and tie training and education directly to the seven viewpoints of lifelong learning instead of to politics, nationalism, or political agenda. "Politics takes command" should be a thing of the past. Surplus labor can be a bad thing or a good thing. If positively used, it can be turned into a productive labor force in China. The number one priority should be to provide training and retraining to the surplus labor in the country. Since they have already been exploited according to Marxist theory, training and retraining should be free.

This study of lifelong learning and training issues in China has presented readers with a totally different picture. Nobody needs to learn the lifelong learning theories and concepts practiced in China by heart as a course of study. This article provides an opportunity for our readers to use their critical thinking skills to critique, analyze and compare issues related to lifelong learning and training in China with those in the United States, Europe, South America, and India in order to develop the best strategies to improve lifelong learning in a particular organization in a particular country. It is by examining the acts and practices of others that we improve our own. If we adopt this as a motto, lifelong learning can be improved in any organization.

7. Appendix

The Great Leap Forward (1958-1959). In 1958, the Chinese Communist party and government leadership offset up the rural people's communes which, on the scale of Marxist development, moved China's revolution well beyond the stage achieved by the Soviet Union (which had earlier tried and failed with a similar approach). At the same time, the Great Leap Forward movement was set in motion as vast segments of the population enthusiastically engaged in self-initiated efforts to expand production (Kaplan, Sobin, & Andors, 1979, p. 221).

The Great Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, a movement that was to dominate China's political, cultural and educational climate for more than a decade, began as a literary debate. Wu Han, a writer and vice-mayor of Beijing, had prepared a series of literary compositions focusing on the unjust dismissal from office of Hai Rui, a Mind Dynasty official who had fallen from favor because of his outspoken criticisms of the emperor. It became apparent that Wu's historical compositions were in fact intended as a veiled attack on Mao's dismissal of Peng De-huai in 1959 and on the policies of the Great Leap as well. The movement and its debates quickly spread throughout the country. Schools and universities were the initial focal points of the struggle. Within months, virtually the entire school system in China had shut down. To show support for Mao's policies, everyone in China was supposed to hold aloft the great banner of Mao Tse-tung's thought and put proletarian politics in command (Kaplan, Sobin, & Andors, 1979, p. 223). Mao died in 1976 and the post-Mao era started in China.

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The role of tutoring in higher education: improving the student's academic success and professional goals

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Abstract: *Tutoring is a part of the university teaching-learning process and is a basic strategy for improving the student's academic success and professional goals. It is also in line with the policies of the European Union for improving the integration of lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies. This article reviews the process of implementing tutorial action plans in Catalan universities, with particular emphasis on the Universitat Rovira i Virgili. The training and functions of tutors, the recognition of the tutoring task and the tools available to tutors at the URV are described.*

Keywords: *Tutor, tutorial action plan, academic success, professional goals, lifelong learning.*

Resumen: *La tutoría es una parte del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de la universidad y una estrategia básica para mejorar el éxito académico de los estudiantes, así como sus metas profesionales. Además, la acción tutorial está de acuerdo con las políticas de la Unión Europea para mejorar la integración de la orientación permanente en las estrategias de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida. En este artículo se revisa el desarrollo de los planes de acción tutorial en las universidades catalanas y, especialmente, se profundiza en la Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV). Se describen y analizan las acciones realizadas para la formación de tutores, las funciones que éstos realizan, el reconocimiento de la tarea de tutoría y las herramientas disponibles para la tutoría en la URV.*

Palabras clave: *Tutor, plan de acción tutorial, éxito académico, metas profesionales, aprendizaje permanente.*

1. Introduction

Ever since Spain became part of the European Higher Education Area, tutorial action plans have been developed by most universities. Tutoring is an important part of the university teaching-learning process designed to improve student success rates and to enable students to achieve their professional goals. It is regarded as a basic strategy for any model of student learning, student guidance, individualization and monitoring. And university lecturers regard it as a professional competence and use it as a teaching strategy (Jiménez, 2010).

Several reports emphasize the importance of a lifelong guidance process. The Council Resolution of 28 May 2004 on strengthening policies, systems and practices in the field of lifelong guidance sets out the key objectives of a policy for all European Union citizens (European Council, 2004). Also, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENCA), the Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación *(ANECA)*, and the Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya (AQU) regard student guidance as a quality indicator for implementing new degrees in the European frame (Gisbert *et alii*, 2010).

The Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies (European Council, 2008) confirms "the definition of guidance as referring to a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used. Guidance covers a range of individual and collective activities relating to information-giving, counselling, competence assessment, support, and the teaching of decision-making and career management skills".

In this framework, the guidance and tutoring are a major issue in Higher Education. Innovations in tutoring are numerous and have been promoted at universities so that their guidance and tutoring systems can incorporate new technologies and scientific developments that respond to identified needs (Lobato *et alii*, 2013). High quality tutoring enhances retention and facilitates advancement throughout the higher education pipeline, positively impacting undergraduates, graduate students and even junior faculty. Tutoring is especially important for students who are at risk of dropping out and for gender equality and the integration of minorities(Girves *et alii*, 2005; Burrell, 2013).

The Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV) has been using a competences framework since the academic year 2003-2004. This model is structured on the basis of specific, transverse and nuclear competences. One of the nuclear competences related to orientation processes is "C6: [Students must] Be able to define and develop their academic and professional project." In this context, the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV) implemented a Tutorial Action Plan (TAP) as a permanent support process that responds to the problems and needs of a student's life at university, particularly at those moments when they have to take decisions (URV Governing Council, 2007).

2. Tutorial action plans at universities: the case of the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV)

The Tutorial Action Plan (TAP) defines the actions that the University might undertake to ensure that students receive monitoring and guidance. This is especially useful in three transition periods of a student's life (Sobrado, 2008):

- *University entrance:* assessment of the abilities and competencies required for successful academic results.
- *During the course:* introduction of the concepts relating to professional development, supervision of internships in companies, facilitation of employment and exploration of the labour market.
- *Transition from the university to work:* development of job search strategies, design of a career plan.

The areas it focuses on are the following: academic guidance, careers advice, continuous evaluation, academic decisions and conflict resolution.

By implementing the TAP, the URV hopes that every student will be able to define and develop their own academic and professional profile (URV core competence C6). This competence is defined as having the following learning outcomes:

- Each student can develop their own interest/motivation in the academic and professional field.
- Each student can identify and respond to their training needs.
- Each student can define and develop their academic path considering their formative needs, interests, and academic and professional motivations.
- Each student can develop resources and strategies that facilitate the transition to work.

The strategies designed to help students acquire this competence are the use of tutors and mentors and seminars and activities for training and informative purposes.

Three URV administrative units have participated in the implementation and development of the Tutorial Action Plan:

- Educational Resources Service (SRE): manages and directs methodological and technological design, integration and monitoring in the URV's faculties and schools.

- Institute of Education Sciences (ICE): manages teacher training.

- Rector's Technical Bureau (GTR): defines the Internal System of Quality Assurance and prepares the assessment report.

The URV provides two basic resources for monitoring students: the Tutoring Virtual Space (TVS) and the electronic portfolio.

The TVS is a technological tool designed to facilitate the management and implementation of academic tutoring (Montserrat *et alii*, 2006). Through a range of planning, communication, monitoring, evaluation and management tools, the TVS provides:

- A longitudinal vision of a student's learning process from the beginning of his/her degree course to the end.

- Access to information.

- Communication and monitoring tools.

- Automatic mechanisms for arranging tutorials (both face-to-face and on-line).

- Combined work spaces for student and tutor, or student and student.

The TVS was designed with the same features as a Moodle course, but with a block called tutorials specifically designed to facilitate the mentoring activity (Castaño, 2004).

The e-Portfolio is implemented in the Moodle Virtual Campus supported by open source software and is in the design phase. The e-portfolio is intended to be aligned with the URV's Strategic Plan for Teaching and the TAP. The e-portfolio is a powerful tool for capturing student progress. Students learn to apply reflective thinking to their experiences. The e-portfolio makes explicit the lifelong learning path and professional career trajectory of each individual (Castaño, 2004).

In order for the TAP to be implemented correctly, URV faculties and schools are responsible for organizing a series of activities annually. For this reason, every faculty and school is assigned a TAP coordinator and a specialist to support the quality of teaching. The activities are grouped into three periods of the academic year:

- ✦ At the beginning: coordination with tutors, and training for tutors including the use of e-tools for tutoring (EVT and e-portfolio).
- ✦ In the middle: coordination with tutors, e-reports on tutoring.
- ✦ At the end: coordination with tutors, e-reports on tutoring, inquiries by students and tutors, TAP evaluation report.

At the end of the academic year 2011-12, a progress report on teaching quality was drawn up by the URV (URV Quality Commission, 2013). The report collects data from the last three academic years. Some of the data are shown in the table below:

Table 1. Data on the implementation of TAP

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Number of degrees that have implemented the TAP.	32	40	43
Number of tutored students	2275	4948	6883
Number of tutors	223	317	473
Student-tutor ratio	11	16	15
Training sessions for tutors	10	9	13
Participants in the training sessions for tutors	139	72	134

As seen in table 1, both the number of degrees that have implemented the TAP and the number of tutored students and tutors have increased in three consecutive academic years. The student-tutor ratio has stabilized in the last year. However, the ratio in some degrees is higher than in others and, in some cases, the number of tutees per tutor is higher than 20, which is the maximum agreed to in the Tutorial Action Plan Regulations for new degrees (URV, Governing Council, 2011). A total of 42 training sessions were offered to lecturers and 345 took part.

The report also says that there were more individual tutoring activities than group activities and face-to-face was the most common interaction (table 2). Motivation, personal interests, evaluation, planning and college tuition were the priority issues for the students. However, it is noteworthy that only 29% of students took the initiative to ask for tutoring. All the others were called to tutoring meetings by their tutors. Even so, students greatly appreciate tutoring and highlight the good relationship with the tutor.

Table 2. Tutoring actions (nd: not determined)

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Number of tracking reports by the tutor	1285	2910	3791
Percentage of student participation in tutoring actions	52	55	42
Number of individual sessions	nd	2311	2669
Number of group sessions	nd	529	556
Face-to-face sessions	nd	2427	2676
Virtual sessions	nd	268	550

2.1 The tutor: assignation and functions

Tutors can be full-time URV lecturers who express an interest in becoming involved in tutoring. They have to have social and communication skills and have taught on the degree their tutees are studying. Tutors can also be students in the final years of the undergraduate degree, master's degree or doctorate (peer mentoring) who have enough time and the appropriate social and communicative skills. These peer mentoring initiatives have become widely adopted across European universities as a way of integrating students into the higher education system (Risquez, 2011).

Tutors are assigned jointly by the faculty or school, and the department. Each tutor should be responsible for 20 students maximum (URV Governing Council, 2011).

The functions of a tutor are set by the university's guidance service (Sobrado, 2008). At the URV the general functions of a tutor (Gisbert, 2010) are to:

- Facilitate the integration of students into university.
- Assist the students in their academic work.
- Help students solve problems related to academic and university life.
- Facilitate the student's personal and professional progress.
- Help the student in his/her transition to the professional world.

Tutors must call students to at least three individual tutorial sessions and have documentary evidence of the tutoring. They must also take part in tutor training, in follow-up meetings and in evaluating mentoring.

Establishing a good rapport between students and tutors is the most important factor in the success of tutoring. For this to occur, tutors should first make contact with students and actively seek them out for follow-up meetings (Malik, 2000). A recent study by the Interuniversity Group for Teacher Education about the skills

required by academic staff shows that interpersonal skill is especially important in tutoring actions. This group defines the interpersonal skill as "promoting critical spirit, motivation and confidence, recognizing cultural diversity and individual needs, and creating a climate of empathy and ethical commitment" (Torra *et alii*, 2010).

Meetings between tutors and students can take any of the following forms:

+ Seminars (for all students who wish to participate, to provide information or training).

+ Group tutoring (training, discussion and student participation).

+ Individual tutoring (personal guidance).

All degrees at the URV plan for 25 hours of guidance with the tutor and include other agents in the process when necessary. For example, the degree in Chemistry has planned the following sequence of activities for students (table 3):

Table 3. Sequence of tutoring activities for the degree in Chemistry

Period	Type	Who?	No. of sessions	When?	Proposed time (in hours)	Real time (in hours)	Date
1st year	Welcome session	Decanal Team	1	First week	2		
	Individual session	Tutor	1	Preregistration	2		
	Individual session	Tutor	1	After welcome session (first month)			
	Individual session	Tutor	1	Early first semester			
	Group session	Tutor	1	Mid-year	1		
2n year	Individual session	Tutor	1	Before registration	2		
	Individual session	Tutor	1	Early first semester			
	Individual session	Tutor	1	Early second semester			
	Group session	Tutor	2	Mid-year	2		

3rd year	Mobility information session	Mobility coordinator	1	1Q	1		
	Information session on final degree project (FDP) and Practicum (Pt)	FDP and Pt coordinators	1	2Q	1		
	Individual session	Tutor	1	Before registration	2		
	Individual session	Tutor	1	Midfirst semester			
	Individual session	Tutor	1	Early/mid -second semester			
	Group session	Tutor	1	Mid-year	1		

4th year	Official master's degree information session	Dean and master's degree coordinators	1	2Q	1		
	Individual session	Tutor	1	Before registration	2		
	Individual session	Tutor	1	Mid-first semester			
	Individual session	Tutor	1	Early/mid -second semester			
	Group session	Tutor	1	Mid-year	1		

Others	Initiation to university sessions	Dean's team / URV units	2	Early September	3.5 + 3.5 1 or 2 sessions		
	Activities recommended by the tutor or student consultations	Tutor	Throughout university studies	Throughout university studies	7		
			Total hours:		Minimum 25		

2.2 Training plan for tutors

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) has developed the Training Plan for Teaching and Research, which includes courses designed to improve teaching and research, and the application of new teaching methodologies and the integration of IT in the teaching and learning processes.

This training program includes three levels of action:

- The General Plan targets all URV lecturers. The course topics are related to training, teaching methodology and learning, practice in the use of new technologies and the university as an educational institution.

- The Specific Plan targets the departments of each specific training group.

- Training Plan for Integration of Degrees in the European Higher Education Area, which is part of key skills training for skills assessment and tutorial action.

During the last three academic years, the Educational Resources Service (SER) in collaboration with the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) has conducted training sessions specifically for tutors. Three types of training were organized based on the demands of the faculties and schools:

- Use of the e-tutoring space.

- The TAP-URV, TAP-center (objectives, contents, functions of tutors) and the use of the e- tutoring space.

- Program Training and Competency Evaluation (PTCE), the relation between the TAP and PTCE (objectives, content, functions of tutors, sequence of activities, content of tutoring sessions and the use of the Personal Development Plan as a strategy for student orientation) and the use of the e-tutoring space.

2.3 The recognition of tutoring

The Office of the Vice-rector for Teaching and Research Staff is responsible, among other things, for the working conditions of the university's lecturers and researchers: in particular, management, evaluation, training and working hours. The agreement on working hours for teaching and research staff, reached during the 2003-04 academic year, enables the work that has to be done to be done efficiently and the collective objectives of departments to be satisfactorily achieved (URV Governing Council, 2008). The activities carried out by each lecturer and researcher are parameterized by standard measuring units defined by the URV, so the working hours' agreement is linked to productivity and becomes a system for evaluating performance. Tutoring activities are included in the working hours' agreement, so the Tutorial Action Plan has finally been linked to policies for managing human resources as a motivating tool.

3. Concluding remarks

As a result of the Strategic Plan for Teaching, all the URV faculties and schools have implemented an academic tutorial process that responds to students' need for guidance. Tutoring plays a major role in university teaching-learning and is a strategy for improving the process. Furthermore, tutorial action is in accordance with the policies of the European Union for integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies. Since the 2007-08 academic year, it's a priority for all the centres to have a TAP, with a tutor assigned to each student, public information on the website, and recorded evidence of the tutorial process.

The TAP provided was implemented through a virtual tutorial space. This space, which is part of the virtual education environment (Moodle), aims to facilitate the management and undertaking of tutorials and, at the same time, ensure that tutors and students can undertake academic tutorial work by means of information and communication technologies. Meanwhile, a space in which technical support staff can give virtual tutorials to teaching staff is currently being designed. This will facilitate quality assurance.

Likewise, in the degrees adapted to the parameters of the European Higher Education Area, student monitoring and guidance is a quality parameter with which the courses must comply. The commitment to specify and implement the TAP has been included in the verification reports. Working sessions with the tutors of the new courses, which have begun to use the virtual tutorial space, have also taken place satisfactorily.

However, the implementation is very different in each faculty/school and has been going at different speeds. For this reason, some improvements still need to be made:

- Digital tools (TVS and e-portfolio) are not fully integrated into the work of all the tutors because the levels of training required vary considerably depending on the faculty or school. Specific training programs are necessary.
- Considering that tutors need to invest a considerable number of hours if they are to fulfil their duties, the amount of time recognised by the working hours' agreement is low.
- The student-tutor ratio in some degrees exceeds the maximum agreed in Tutorial action plan regulations for new degrees.
- Although students value tutoring positively, they only call a meeting on their own initiative in a very low percentage of cases.

- Tutors need to be trained in both the methodology and the technology. They should also be trained in interpersonal skills in order to improve their empathy with the students.

All faculties and schools are making great efforts to implement and evaluate the TAP. In particular, they are focusing on new students to facilitate their integration into the university and students who are trying to plan their professional career. The new web-based institutional questionnaire of student satisfaction has provided important data. Actions are required to motivate students, who should inform of how helpful tutorials are to them. Students and tutors appreciate e-tutoring because it promotes individual tracking and makes group sessions more individual. However, most students and tutors prefer face-to-face tutoring. The topics covered in tutoring are usually general guidance, motivation and interest, evaluation, planning and registration.

Peer mentoring is being included in some the URV's faculties and school. This method is regarded as being very positive in terms of overall student training.

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Revista de Libros

La vinculación de las prácticas de reconocimiento y los marcos nacionales de cualificaciones
Madhu Singh y Ruud Duvekot (eds.)
2013. UNESCO.

La publicación realizada por el Instituto de Formación Continua de la UNESCO en el año 2013 ofrece un panorama general de los proyectos educativos desarrollados en 23 países que quiere responder al objeto principal del libro: la vinculación de las prácticas de reconocimiento y los marcos nacionales de cualificaciones; en particular, atiende al "aprendizaje permanente" en los contextos de educación formal, no formal e informal.

Los capítulos centrales atienden a cada una de las cinco regiones que distingue la UNESCO: África, Estados Árabes, Asia y el Pacífico, Europa y América del Norte, y América Latina y el Caribe. Los editores destacan en cada uno de ellos los retos que enfrentan las distintas regiones para validar el aprendizaje que tiene lugar fuera del contexto formal. Los informes que conforman la publicación se basan en los resultados de la conferencia internacional «La vinculación de las prácticas de reconocimiento de los marcos de cualificaciones - Investigación colaborativa Norte-Sur».

Singh y Duvekot apuestan por una misma estructura para cada informe, que se articula en cinco puntos (p. 13):

1. Enfoques en los puntos de referencia nacionales para el reconocimiento, la validación y la acreditación (RVA)

2. Política y legislación

3. Contribución al reconocimiento de la inclusión social

4. Participación de los interesados

5. Características de los procesos de reconocimiento

La parte introductoria del libro proporciona al lector una visión general de los resultados obtenidos en los distintos informes. En la revisión

de la literatura se presenta la metodología utilizada; en ella se detallan el objetivo principal y las preguntas de investigación en que se han basado los informes. "El objetivo es averiguar si los países tienen marcos nacionales de cualificaciones (MNC) o alternativas a los MNC, en los que el RVA del aprendizaje no formal e informal está integrado y en qué medida" (p. 14).

En ella se explicitan también varias limitaciones de los estudios centrales. Un primer punto tiene que ver con el número de países analizados por región; ante la baja participación de los países, los editores explican que los datos se pueden tomar como una tendencia aproximada trasladable a escala global. Los autores de la obra trazan una línea entre los países del Norte y países del Sur. Esto puede resultar confuso para el lector, pues el término "Norte" incluye todos los países europeos participantes, pero también Nueva Zelanda, la República de Corea (miembro de la OCDE) y Sudáfrica. Del mismo modo, el término "Sur" incluye a todos los países participantes de Asia (con excepción de Nueva Zelanda y la República de Corea) y a los países de América Latina, el mundo árabe y África (excepto Sudáfrica) (p. 15). Los autores también apuntan: «equilibramos esta limitación, garantizando la participación de los representantes que tienen experiencia en el desarrollo de MNC a nivel nacional, en el ámbito de aplicación de RVA, o en los institutos

nacionales de investigación para resolver estas limitaciones" (p. 15).

En el marco metodológico se visualiza claramente el concepto de aprendizaje permanente. También se explica la relación que puede existir entre el aprendizaje permanente no formal e informal y el aprendizaje formal. A su vez, los autores subrayan que en los diferentes países evaluados subyacen diversos contextos políticos en relación con el reconocimiento de este tipo de aprendizaje: «La instrumentación del aprendizaje permanente, desde esta perspectiva multinivel, implica varios desafíos. La responsabilidad de hacer frente al problema de la desigualdad de oportunidades educativas y elevar la calidad de los resultados del aprendizaje se encuentra tanto en el nivel macro de las políticas como en el nivel micro institucional» (p. 16).

Además, se consideran los modos de aprendizaje formal, no formal e informal, que se describen como parte fundamental para el reconocimiento de los RVA. En este sentido, se subrayan las diferencias en cuanto al uso de estos conceptos entre los países del norte y los países del sur. Un elemento determinante de la estructura de cada uno de los informes que se incluyen en este trabajo son los MNC, que los autores describen como «sistemas de equivalencia referentes a un conjunto de normas acordadas a nivel nacional establecidos por las autoridades públicas competentes» (p. 16).

En la sección titulada "Vínculos entre los MNC y RVA", los autores realizan una comparación entre los distintos países participantes en la conferencia. En esta sección se muestran cinco enfoques para el reconocimiento del aprendizaje:

- Reconocimiento de los resultados de aprendizaje y competencias basadas en los estándares definidos en los MNC.

- Reconocimiento de los resultados de aprendizaje individuales basados en los programas de educación y formación.

- Marcos de competencias basadas en las habilidades de reconocimiento de resultados de aprendizaje y trabajo personal.

- Reconocimiento de MNC en educación y formación vocacional y técnica.

- Marco alineado equivalencia a la educación formal.

En la sección "Políticas y legislación" se muestra la importancia de la adopción de actividades de RVA en los sistemas educativos de los países que desarrollan estas prácticas. Los autores señalan que "En el ámbito económico, las políticas nacionales y los acuerdos de colaboración también se han establecido a través de la cooperación con los interlocutores sociales" (p. 22).

En la sección "La contribución de RVA a la inclusión social" se muestra la participación activa de los modelos de aprendizaje no formal y su contribución a la sociedad. Los resultados evidencian que estos modelos impactan de manera muy importante en los países en desarrollo, por ejemplo, permitiendo el acceso a mejores oportunidades económicas. Un punto clave de esta sección es la forma como se articulan las actividades políticas y sociales. A este respecto los autores comentan que "En estos países, los vínculos directos son evidentes entre los objetivos de las políticas articuladas y la ciudadanía activa, la realización personal / social, y los objetivos de desarrollo de la comunidad" (p. 23).

En las secciones "Desafíos en la recopilación de datos suficientes", "Habilitación para el medio ambiente" y "Vínculos intersectoriales" los autores se refieren a las políticas aplicadas en los países desarrollados y los países en desarrollo para la acreditación de la RVA en los contextos informal y no formal. Un punto importante a propósito de esta cuestión es la cultura. En efecto, los autores señalan que en la revisión de los estudios de caso de diversos países se encontraron algunas limitaciones o barreras culturales (p. 32).

A su vez, en este trabajo se ha realizado una comparación teórica entre los desafíos de los países desarrollados que cuentan con un buen sistema de educación no formal y los países que dependen de la economía informal. En este sentido, los autores sugieren que, si bien se dan notables similitudes,

«En el futuro, será necesario que los resultados no formales e informales de aprendizaje se integren en un MNC y sean evaluados con estándares formales» (p. 34).

Como se mencionó más arriba, este trabajo toma como eje las cinco regiones que distingue la UNESCO. A partir de la página 40 se incluyen los correspondientes informes. La primera región que se presenta es África, y cuenta con un total de seis capítulos, relativos a Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Mauricio, Namibia y Sudáfrica. La segunda región está formada por los estados árabes, e incluye Siria y Jordania. La tercera región incluye algunos países de Asia y el Pacífico, en concreto, Afganistán, Bután, República de Corea, Malasia y Nueva Zelanda. La cuarta región es Europa, a la que se destinan siete capítulos: República Checa, Dinamarca, Finlandia, Francia, Países Bajos, Noruega y Portugal. La quinta región, que ocupa los dos últimos capítulos, corresponde a América Latina y el Caribe; los países participantes son México y Trinidad y Tobago.

Cada uno de los informes incluidos en el volumen presenta el mismo esquema. Todos adoptan como elementos clave del análisis los impactos y desafíos que los sistemas de educación tienen para el reconocimiento de la RVA a través de entornos políticos, culturales y económicos. Otro elemento relevante del trabajo es la calidad de los datos utilizados en la mayoría de los informes. Varios de los informes describen la funcionalidad del Marco Nacional de Cualificaciones. Finalmente, hay que tener en cuenta que los autores destacan que, en algunos casos, no han podido recabar información sobre la educación permanente, la educación no formal o prácticas de reconocimiento; en estos casos, apuntan las estrategias que han adoptado los gobiernos para hacer frente a esos retos.

Juan Carlos Yáñez-Luna

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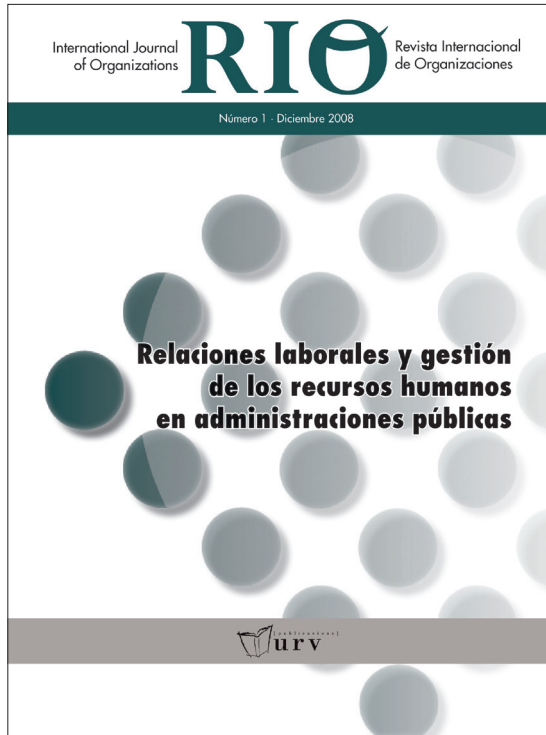
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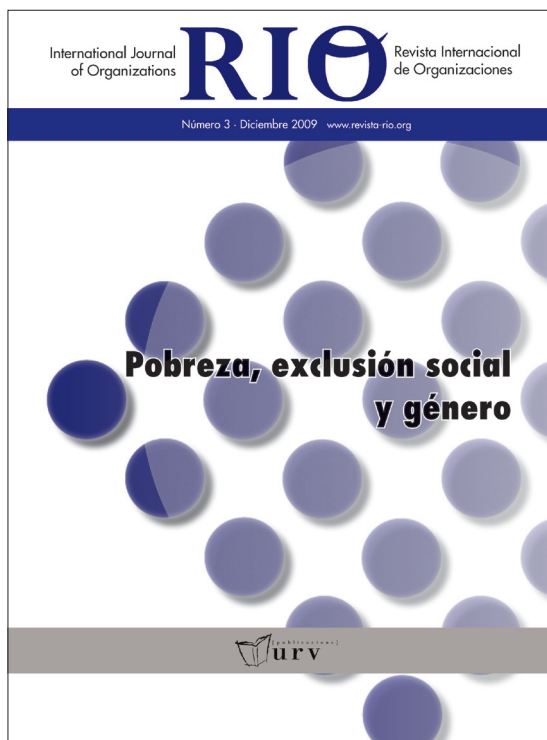
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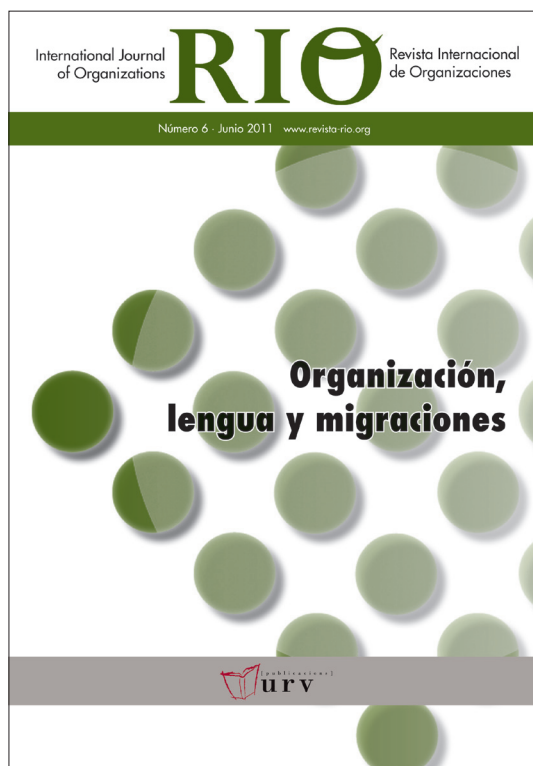
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