

## 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 at 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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