About MENON

The scope of the MEJER is broad, both in terms of topics covered and disciplinary perspective, since the journal attempts to make connections between fields, theories, research methods, and scholarly discourses, and welcomes contributions on humanities, social sciences and sciences related to educational issues. It publishes original empirical and theoretical papers as well as reviews. Topical collections of articles appropriate to MEJER regularly appear as special issues (thematic issues).

This open access journal welcomes papers in English, as well in German and French. All submitted manuscripts undergo a peer-review process. Based on initial screening by the editorial board, each paper is anonymized and reviewed by at least two referees. Referees are reputed within their academic or professional setting, and come from Greece and other European countries. In case one of the reports is negative, the editor decides on its publication.

Manuscripts must be submitted as electronic files (by e-mail attachment in Microsoft Word format) to: mejer@uowm.gr or via the Submission Webform.

Submission of a manuscript implies that it must not be under consideration for publication by other journal or has not been published before.

The reproduction of any issue is prohibited as long as the source is acknowledged. Readers may print or save any issue of MENON as long as there are no alterations made in those issues. Copyright remains with the authors, who are responsible for getting permission to reproduce any images or figures they submit and for providing the necessary credits.

Editor
Lemonidis Charalambos, University Of Western Macedonia, Greece

Editorial Board
- Alevriadou Anastasia  
  University Of Western Macedonia, Greece
- Griva Eleni  
  University Of Western Macedonia, Greece
- Iliadou-Tahou Sofia  
  University Of Western Macedonia, Greece
- Konstantinidou Efthalia  
  University Of Western Macedonia, Greece
- Papadopoulou Vassiliki  
  University Of Western Macedonia, Greece
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language choice among Albanian immigrant adolescents in Greece: The effect of the interlocutor’s generation</td>
<td>Aspasia Chatzidaki - Ioanna Xenikaki</td>
<td>4-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening skills development: The effect of the implementation of an ESAP module</td>
<td>Dora Chostelidou</td>
<td>17-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekistics monumental heritage in today’s Turkey: current status and management prospects</td>
<td>Eleni G. Gavra</td>
<td>32-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider Benefits of adult participation in Lifelong Learning courses</td>
<td>Eugenia A. Panitsidou</td>
<td>45-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The effectiveness of a pilot intervention program of Physical Education in Multicultural Preschool Education</td>
<td>Eva Pavlidou - Virginia Arvanitidou - Sofia Chatzigeorgiadou</td>
<td>53-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A comparison of the educational performance of students attending IPS and MPS on abilities crucial for school learning and adaptation</td>
<td>Georgios Nikolaou - Aikaterini T. Papadia</td>
<td>67-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From another(‘s) viewpoint – narrative approaches in special educational research</td>
<td>Lena Lang - Birgitta Lansheim - Lisbeth Ohlsson</td>
<td>78-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An attempt to modernise vocabulary teaching through the use of a user-oriented web-based learning management system</td>
<td>Maria Paradia</td>
<td>87-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor im unterricht: ansichten der lehrer</td>
<td>Nikos Chaniotakis</td>
<td>100-111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The development of pupils’ moral behavior through handbooks of “Morality” at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century in Greece</td>
<td>Roula Ziogou-Karastergiou - Efstratios Vacharoglou</td>
<td>112-129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The contribution of School Principal of Secondary Education in the induction of novice teachers in Greece</td>
<td>Sofia Kastanidou - Georgios Iordanidis</td>
<td>130-144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MENON: Journal Of Educational Research
http://www.kosmit.uowm.gr/site/journal (ISSN: 1792-8494)
Wider Benefits of adult participation in Lifelong Learning courses

Eugenia A. Panitsidou, M.Sc. Ph.D.
Department of Educational and Social Policy
University of Macedonia
epantsidou@uom.gr

Abstract
The present study draws on the wider benefits emanating from adult participation in Lifelong Learning (LLL) courses. Throughout contemporary literature, participants in LLL have been reported to acquire knowledge and skills, develop understanding and enhance self-confidence, parameters that induce changes in their personal lives, while enable them to undertake a more active role in their family, community or work. Moreover, it has been depicted that “disadvantaged” individuals tend to report increased benefits, resulting from their participation in educational courses. Findings entail considerable practical and theoretical significance for LLL and its substantial contribution in economic and social realm, as a means of facilitating social inclusion and enhancing economic growth.

Keywords: Lifelong Learning, European Union, education policy, wider benefits

Introduction
In light of continuous technological advancement, socioeconomic globalisation, and demographic reallocation, widening access and raising adult participation in Lifelong Learning (LLL) has emerged as a major component of sustainable economic growth and social cohesion reinforcement, both globally as well as within the European Union (EU). The dynamics of LLL have been widely discussed in contemporary literature, contributing both to personal emancipation (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1981), as well as economic advancement (Commission of the European Communities, 2005; de la Fuente & Ciccone, 2002; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2002; Schulz, 1963). At the same time, there are references to the estimated effect of LLL in social well-being, assuming that the returns of education are not solely externalised in the economic field, but produce a beneficial effect in the social sphere too, leading to wider public and private benefits.

In this vein, the present study attempts to draw on the wider benefits, personal, social and economic, emanating from adult participation in Lifelong Learning (LLL) courses.

Methodology
Literature review was conducted following a four-stage process, including research of preliminary sources, use of secondary sources, study of primary sources and synthesis of the literature (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996: 117). Preliminary source research was conducted using bibliographic databases, such as Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Hellenic Academic Libraries Link (HEAL LINK), as well as the Europa database for tracing EU policy papers. References within preliminary sources helped draw up a comprehensive list of primary material relevant to the topic, which once assembled and studied through a critical approach, allowed a deeper insight in the subject and a broader understanding.

EU Policies: LLL & estimated benefits
Rhetoric of EU policy papers, in light of Lisbon and ET 2020 strategies, has highlighted the socio-economic value of LLL and benefits of investment in knowledge, stressing its
effect on economic growth and social stability (Commission of the European Communities, 2003, 2005). However, although investment in LLL has long been an explicit or implicit policy goal, non-economic returns are rather vaguely perceived (McMahon, 1998; Schuller et al., 2004).

According to Popkewitz (1980), political “slogans” tend to bring attention to some general and ambiguously defined purposes or goals. Hence, in the case of the “LLL slogan”, political discourse repeatedly accentuates multifarious benefits, such as increased earnings and employability, social cohesion enhancement, health standards improvement, active citizenship, lower crime rates and greater prosperity and fulfillment (Commission of the European Communities, 2005, 2003, 2006).

In this context, it is argued that there is "compelling evidence that education contributes to personal development, social cohesion and productivity, has a measured impact on economic growth and reduces societal costs by preventing social exclusion, health problems and crime" (Commission of European Communities, 2003). More analytically, findings of a study investigating the efficiency of investment in education and training have depicted that a variety of benefits are produced at multiple levels, benefits for individuals, businesses and society at large (Commission of the European Communities, 2005). Private benefits incur through higher earnings and increased employability, while communities benefit directly from investment in LLL through higher productivity and indirectly through a series of additional benefits such as health and social cohesion.

In the same vein, in Commission Communication "Adult Learning: It is never too late to learn" (Commission of European Communities, 2006), it is acknowledged that adult learning increases social returns in terms of improved civic participation, better health, and increased individual well-being and fulfillment. More precisely, it is assumed that education not only "transforms people's lives", but also enables them to cope with stresses of daily life, maintain mental and physical health, increase well-being and self confidence, and combat feelings of social isolation or exclusion. Thus, rising participation in LLL is closely interrelated with: a) increasing overall skill levels and ensuring basic skills acquisition by all citizens, b) helping respond to demographic changes, such as population aging in Europe and problems arising from migration and c) enhancing social integration, as low levels of initial education, unemployment, rural isolation and reduced opportunities may lead to marginalisation of large numbers of people, while new forms of illiteracy, in the form of access to and use of ICT, intensify the phenomena of social exclusion (Commission of European Communities, 2006). Moreover, it is outlined that research on older adults indicates that those engaged in learning tend to be healthier, reducing, consequently, health costs.

It is therefore evident that, throughout EU political discourse, is made extensive and repeated reference to private and social benefits of LLL. However, most references are based on hypotheses, lacking substantial evidence. One could argue, for example, that it is not participation in LLL that contributes in improving health levels of the elderly, but healthy seniors have more chances to participate in LLL. Thus, we deem important that further research is required to control variables that might impact data, so as to avoid simplifications.

**Wider Benefits of Adult Participation in LLL**

The role of non-governmental organisations in shaping education policy in the EU and adding to the “LLL slogan” has been significant. According to OECD studies (OECD,
1982, 2001), investment in human capital can generate a significant number of non-economic benefits. In particular, it is argued that education a) tends to improve health, b) seems to make people happier, c) contributes to improvement of intergenerational educational level, d) is associated with higher civic participation, volunteering and charity and e) minimises the risk of criminal activity. In the same vein, McMahon (1998) considers investment in education able to produce measurable benefits beyond economy and productivity, including improved health, longevity, political stability, respect for human rights, decrease of crime and poverty, and respect for the environment.

Haveman, and Wolfe (2001) assume that the non-economic impact of learning is even likely to exceed the market returns. However, few studies have been conducted in the field due to methodological difficulties entailed. According to Downs (2004), to vaguely understand that there are wider benefits from participating in LLL is a part of the issue, being however able to measure such benefits constitutes an entirely different matter, while there is lack of an institutional framework for their recognition.

Behrman, Crawford and Stacey (1997:3) argue that the schema through which LLL may produce outcomes is tri-fold: a) by augmenting knowledge and information on which individuals’ attitudes and values are based, b) by removing constraints limiting action through competence development and c) by transforming behavior, preferences and goals. Furthermore, subsequent benefits can be realised on multiple levels: individual, social or economic (Schuller et al., 2004), while all outcomes are initially deployable on individual basis and diffused into social and economic spheres (Clemens, Hartley & McRae, 2003).

Dewson et al. (2000) distinguish between soft and hard outcomes, where “soft” stand for not directly and objectively measured outcomes, such as changes associated with interpersonal, personal, organisational and analytic skills. In contrast, "hard outcomes" are clearly and objectively measurable, including professional skills and qualifications. In the same vein, Anderson, Foster and McKibben (2006:60), attempting to investigate the outcomes of informal learning, developed a register, Soft Outcomes Universal Learning (SOUL), comprising 21 self reported statements, according to which "soft" or "intermediate" outcomes are categorised into three domains: attitudes, personal/interpersonal traits and practical skills.

"Soft" outcomes fall under what is often referred to in literature as "identity capital", which is made up of resources deployable on an individual basis, representing how people most effectively define themselves and have others define them in various contexts (Côté & Levine,2002:142). As with human or social capital, identity capital comprises tangible resources, which tend to manifest in behaviours and possessions of individuals, like educational credentials, memberships, and parental social status credentials, as well as intangible resources, including personality attributes, such as ego strength, internal locus of control, self-monitoring, self-esteem, a sense of purpose in life, critical reflection and moral reasoning abilities (Côté & Levine, 2002, p. 144), while it is susceptible to cognitive and psychodynamic transformations, even during adulthood.

In particular, increase of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy through LLL, mediating to the production of wider outcomes, have been indicated as core benefits among findings of a number of relevant research studies (Downs, 2004; Dymock & Billett, 2008; Preston & Hammond, 2002; Ward and Edwards, 2002). Watters and Turner (2001), based on findings of a study investigating the impact of adult participation in courses not leading to certification, identified increased self-confidence, promoted by successfully attending a course, getting familiarised with technology or accepting risk taking and
change, as central outcome, generating and disseminating wider benefits, positively impacting family life and social relations. In the same vein, Ward and Edwards (2002) used the term “learning journey”, as a metaphor, to describe changes occurring through the enhancement of confidence and self esteem of trainees.

Increased psychological (increased self-confidence and self-esteem) and health benefits have also been reported among findings of a great body of research building on literacy courses (Boggs, Buss & Yarnell, 1979; Cervero, 1983; Darkenwald & Valentine, 1984; Dymock & Billett, 2008; Eldred, 2002; Lance & Bates, 1998; Merrifield et al., 1993; Ward & Edwards, 2002). Other areas in which substantial benefits have been identified fall under improvement of basic skills and educational level, advancement of professional and financial status, increased participation in LLL, as well as enhanced civic participation.

Another issue, which has also been recorded in relevant studies (Brassett-Grundy, 2002; Bynner et al., 2001; Schuller et al., 2002), is the positive impact of parental participation in LLL courses, being related to benefits for parents themselves, as well for their offspring. In particular, it has been noted that cognitive development of parents, along with psychological changes, such as renewed expectations, new objectives and increased self-confidence, may affect interpersonal relationships between family members, as well as performance of children at school.

Furthermore, the relationship between adult participation in LLL and change in attitudes was investigated by Preston and Feinstein (2004), through data retrieved from The National Child Development Study (NCDS), a longitudinal study collecting evidence from citizens living in Britain, born during the first week of March 1958 (Centre for Longitudinal Studies, http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/). Findings indicated that although there is limited data to interpret causal relationships, LLL can have some influence on transforming attitudes, such as adoption of more “democratic” attitudes and values. Therefore, LLL is regarded as an important tool for policy planning to strengthen social cohesion, foster active citizenship and reduce racism.

Data from the NCDS was also used to investigate the impact of LLL in health, social capital and social cohesion (Feinstein et al., 2003). Findings once more indicated that although changes occurring through LLL are relatively small, attending LLL courses is directly related to positive changes in a wide range of health and social life spheres, emphasising, thus, the need to increase investment in LLL.

The interrelationship between LLL and social capital has been widely drawn upon through research in Adult and Community Education (ACE) courses in Australia. According to Falk, Golding and Balatti (2000), having investigated the wider outcomes of learning through semi-structured interviews, LLL plays an important role in generating social and economic benefits. In particular, it is argued that strengthening of social capital through LLL programmes, at mid-level (groups, networks, communities) and micro-level (individuals), is crucial for multiple socioeconomic benefits, under the mediation of acquisition of knowledge and skills, as well as identity capital. On the grounds of another empirical study, Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) developed a model which implies that learning takes place along with social capital building, that is, when interaction in a community mobilises existing cognitive and identity resources and builds on them.

In the same vein, attempting to research the private and social dimensions of LLL benefits, Schuller et al. (2004) came up with a triangular framework, within which twelve categories of learning outcomes were categorised into three forms of capital: human capital (skills developed), social capital (social relations) and identity capital (perceptions of individuals...
about life and themselves). Moreover, the static and the transformative dimensions of learning have been investigated (Schuller et al., 2002), depicting the critical importance of static results, which, although usually underestimated, are assumed of significant importance for maintaining wellbeing levels, as well as social cohesion.

Finally, Green, Preston and Sabates (2003), attempted a critical assessment of the models developed with regard to the triangle of education, social capital and social cohesion. Using quantitative data from fifteen developed countries, they came up with a theoretical model, evidencing that investment in LLL is an important factor in enhancing social cohesion. However, it was outlined that increased provision of LLL courses cannot itself ensure social solidarity in cases of uneven distribution of social skills and income.

Discussion

Research findings (Balatti, Black & Falk, 2007; Dymock & Billett, 2008; Eldred, 2002; Preston & Feinstein, 2004; Preston & Green, 2003; Preston & Hammond, 2002; Schuller et al., 2004) have indicated that the changes brought about on individual level, through participating in LLL courses, are deemed to produce a wider impact on family, friends, social or natural environment, as affected by changes in individual’s actions, attitudes or values. More precisely, participants in LLL courses are provided with the chance to acquire new knowledge and skills, and develop understanding and self-confidence, parameters that induce changes in their personal lives, while enable them to play a more active role in their family, community or work. The increase, therefore, of personal skills and competences, in relation to self-esteem enhancement, as well as social interaction and networking, are key variables, acting as mediators in fostering prosperity, development and social cohesion.

Moreover, for individuals with low education background, women or older people, participation in LLL courses can serve as a catalyst for personal development and overall welfare (Hammond & Feinstein, 2005; Lightfoot & Brady, 2005; Preston & Feinstein, 2004; Swain, 2006). More specifically, successful completion of LLL courses, offering a "second chance", can be proven exceptionally beneficial for the self-esteem of individuals who failed within formal education (Preston & Hammond, 2002; Preston & Feinstein, 2004). Participants, for example, in literacy courses report they have changed in general, renewed hopes and aspirations, as well as increased self-esteem and confidence, which provides them with the chance to control and redefine their lives (Swain, 2006). In the same vein, it is argued that women who participate in education courses go through a cyclical and reciprocal process of increasing self-efficacy, enhancing personal development, improving family and social relationships, as well as their professional status (Hammond & Feinstein, 2005). Especially non-working women experience greater self-satisfaction, getting a chance to undertake new roles and engage in new activities, realising that they can successfully respond to tasks other than those normally engaged in (Lightfoot & Brady, 2005). Equally significant is contribution of LLL in the quality of life of older people, helping them to remain active after retirement and enabling them to establish new social relationships (Preston & Hammond, 2002).

However, it should be pointed out that, in generalising the above findings, there are several limitations to be taken into consideration, such as intrinsic bias, that is, individual differences in personality, attitudes and behaviour, as well as differences arising from family, community or social context which individuals grew up and live in. These characteristics are not only likely to affect the outcomes of participation, but actual participation in educational courses during adulthood. According to Behrman, Crawford & Stacey (1997:3), education is a process in which important factors, such as individual,
family and social attitudes and choices, play an important role, not able to be depicted among data sets analysing educational outcomes. Hence, research in the field tends to simplify complex processes and interrelations. Most importantly yet, a major constraint is subjectivity of data, as research is grounded on individuals’ statements.

Conclusions

The present paper sought to depict wider outcomes arising from adult participation in LLL courses. Existence of wider benefits as a result of participation in LLL courses is widely recognised in literature, while the European rhetoric, in the context of the Lisbon and ET 2020 Strategies, highlights the socio-economic value of LLL and returns of investment in knowledge, stressing its effect on economic and social growth (Commission of the European Communities, 2003, 2005).

Findings, thus, entail political significance, depicting the need to enhance access to LLL for all citizens, so as to acquire, update and develop skills and key competences needed both for employability as well as for active citizenship. Most importantly, however, targeted action should be taken to increase and widen opportunities for participation of vulnerable social groups, so as to provide for inclusion of disadvantaged individuals and bridging of social inequalities. In a contemporary context of deregulation of socioeconomic environments and rise in inequality phenomena among countries, peoples or social groups, promoting LLL and widening participation, especially through targeted action and positive discrimination interventions, could account for prohibiting marginalisation or exclusion of individuals from the economic and social spheres, while it could foster development through exploiting creativity and productivity of all human resources. In this vein, the Commission (Commission of the European Communities, 2004) identifies widening of opportunities for participation in LLL and developing of an integrative framework to approach people with learning deficits or confronted with the risk of poverty, as a major challenge in tackling social exclusion in the EU.

References


**Brief biography**

Eugenia A. Panitsidou

Dr Eugenia A. Panitsidou is Scientific Collaborator with the Department of Educational and Social Policy, University of Macedonia, Greece. She holds a Master's Degree in Continuing Education and a Ph.D. in Lifelong Education, while her research interests include European Union education policy, private and social impact of participation in lifelong education and quality provision and assessment of adult education courses.