

***Academia* Special Issue**
“Higher Education and Lifelong Learning”

Editorial

Nowadays, Higher Education, as the major educational field of promoting knowledge production and creating new knowledge, plays an important role towards the enhancement and the dissemination of the idea and the concept of lifelong learning within the institutions of Higher Education. Both the supranational and national organizations and institutional structures (UNESCO, OECD, European Union, Ministries of Education etc.) during the last two decades, have promoted the contribution of Higher Education in LLL (mainly via the integration of the LLL perspective in higher education institutions, curricula, learning processes and teaching methods). Undoubtedly, LLL is related to social inclusion, personal and social fulfillment, social cohesion and employability, while it can substantially contribute in the mitigation of socio-economic and educational inequalities. Given all the abovementioned, the existing and potential interface between HE and LLL is crystal clear and eventually explains the gradual of institutional and capacity building towards the further integration of LLL in HE.

Nevertheless, the introduction of Lifelong Learning both as a concept and learning field within the era of Higher Education, undoubtedly has risen issues and (in some cases) concerns related to the gradual transformation of the regulatory and operational framework of the Higher Education Institutions. The increasing focus on the needs and demands of the labour market and the economy, could over-determine the Area of Higher Education, mainly via the increasing emphasis in Training, through the job-related LLL.

On the other hand, the challenges that Higher Education Institutions face on spending cuts due to the impact of the economic recession during the last decade and the expansion of the socio-economic and educational inequalities as well as the gender gap still remain. And in some cases, they are reproduced. LLL could operate as a redistributive mechanism within the HEIs.

Based on the abovementioned, the actual stake concerning the linking and/or the convergence between Higher Education and Lifelong Learning is multidimensional and in no case simple. Especially, in the European Union, where the processes of the policy making for Higher Education and Lifelong Learning are carried out through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) and they attempt to converge within a single and comprehensive European Lifelong Learning Policy. In conjunction with the context of the Bologna Process and the establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

This *Academia* Special Issue aims at identifying trends, operational parameters, regulatory challenges, issues of institutional and capacity building and drivers for change regarding the relation between Higher Education and Lifelong Learning. Emphasis is also laid in issues related to conceptual approaches, policy-making challenges, socio-economic, educational and gender inequalities in terms of the relation between Higher Education and Lifelong Learning, as well as the promotion of the conceptual dimension of Lifelong Learning either as adult education or as the whole of learning activities throughout people's life-course, within Higher Education.

The present *Academia* Special Issue mainly consists of the following thematic fields and topics (yet is not limited to them):

1. Conceptual and Theoretical Transformations and Changes concerning *Higher Education and Lifelong Learning*.
2. *European Policies of Higher Education and Lifelong Learning: convergences, disconvergences and challenges*.
3. *Socio-economic, educational and gender inequalities within the Era of Higher Education and the role of LLL in tackling with them*.
4. *Trends, best practices and drivers for change related to the integration of LLL in HEIs*.
5. *The conceptual and functional framework of Lifelong Learning within Higher Education*.

In the present Special Issue of the *Academia Journal*, **23 Professors, Researchers and International Experts** from **European and Asian Universities, Research Institutes and International Organizations** contribute with **11 papers**.

More specifically (in alphabetical order):

Dr Eleni Bakogianni, Prof. Meni Tsitouridou and Prof. Argyris Kyridis (University of Thessaloniki, Greece) focus on MOOCs' role and operation in teachers' professional development, while they examine teacher relevant readiness. The purpose of their article is the investigation of readiness of primary and secondary public school teachers to participate in MOOCs as a way of professional development. A total of 216 Greek in-service teachers participated in the quantitative study and attitudes towards readiness dimensions were examined. The results revealed that the teachers in general show quite high level of readiness to use MOOCs in the context of their professional development, while some of their individual characteristics seem to affect certain dimensions. According to the authors, teachers show low awareness of MOOCs level, recognize the benefits of MOOC learning as well as MOOC usefulness in their professional development.

Prof. Tien Hui Chiang (Zhengzhou University and Hangzhou Normal University, China), raises the issue of governance in lifelong learning in the age of neoliberal governance. He is emphasizing the way that, governmentality takes populations as objects and its objective, and this situation anchors the subject as the core focus of the art of governing. He ascertains among others that as the shaping of souls is able to create the enterprising subject, neoliberal governments need to apply performativity to teachers. In the regime of performance management, teachers are judged on their competence, the definition of which is rooted in their contribution to social progression. In this way, lifelong learning conveys the language of social obligation and returns, which serves to reconfigure teachers' subjectivity, self-knowledge or self-conscience. According to Prof. Chiang this moral framework serves as infrastructure for delivering the ideas of neoliberalism. Teachers are thus motivated to join the game of lifelong learning or continuing professional development.

Manuel Galvin Arribas (ETF), focuses on the case of Centers of Vocational Excellence and Innovation (CoVEs). His article builds on experience, analysis, research and other on-going developments of European Training Foundation (ETF) working with a number of partner countries on exploring and supporting how setting up VET Centres

of Excellence and Innovation (CoVEs). The analysis focuses on main ingredients and keys issues to boost policy development for establishing VET Centres of Excellence and Innovation (CoVEs). This is also documented by European and international examples. Further, the paper discusses the role of VET which is currently challenged by on-going fourth industrial revolution and current value of vocational skills for employment delivered by public sector. According to the author, VET institutions might be capable to contribute on lifelong learning linking vocational skills with Higher Education programs and also deliver Continuing Vocational Training (CVT). All this is progressively shaping a new-amplified- role for VET establishments which is opening increased policy dialogue in many countries around the world for reforming VET institutional networks based on setting up VET Centres of Excellence-and Innovation-(CoVEs). Given the abovementioned, the paper introduces a definition on CoVEs and a taxonomy for facilitating policy thinking, dialogue and further learning on how to set up CoVEs.

Prof. Andy Green (UCL Institute of Education, UK), presents, analyses and assesses alternative Policies and their Trade-Offs in England concerning the funding of mass Tertiary Education. The first part of his article examines the current funding arrangements in the higher and further education sectors, and the debates on the strengths and weaknesses of these. The second part looks at alternative funding proposals and how they measure up in terms of affordability and equity in access and cost sharing.

Prof. Anthony Hourdak and **Dr John Ieronimak** (University of Crete, Greece), deal with the role of Lifelong Learning in Museums, via a case study namely the case of the Museum of Education/ Xeniseum project of the University of Crete). The stress the fact that the learning experience that is acquired in a museum can be seen as a cultural achievement against social exclusion and social discrimination. In this sense, the museum exhibiting the lifelong learning represents different cultures/identities and motivates us to give them our own meaning. That is, they see identities as social achievements in the context of civic understanding and social connectedness, embedded in their contexts, and not outside of them. Given the abovementioned, their article aims at explaining how the interaction with the Xeniseum's exhibits can lead to the development of the visitors' citizenship. In that framework, they examine the role of the museum regarding an individual's education. Specific museum activities are also

reported. Finally, a more specified museum application is described, aspiring to the achievement of a cross cultural dialogue.

Prof. Mary Koutselini (University of Cyprus and Cyprus Quality Assurance Agency, Cyprus) focuses on the Quality assurance of e-learning within higher education, while she raises issues related to the relevant philosophical and operational framework. She points out that the quality of e-learning depends on a number of presuppositions, factors and variables deriving from the implementation of the European Standards and Guidelines that ask for justification of their methodology of delivery. These standards are closely linked with the philosophical principles of distance education and the advantages of the utilization of the virtual and visual environments. Prof. Koutselini's article also investigates a number of problems and operational disadvantages deriving from the lack of fidelity to the philosophy and principles of distance learning and the hasty transformation of the conventional programs to e-learning without any respect for the pedagogical background that safeguards their quality.

Dr. Ye Liu (King's College London, UK) and **Dr. Wenqin Shen** (Peking University, China), raise the fundamental question whether Higher Education has a Civic Bonu, via exploring the role of Higher Education in the formation of social attitudes in contemporary China. Their research-based article explores how higher education shapes youth's social attitudes in terms of gender equality, homosexuality and the urban underclass in contemporary China. They draw upon empirical evidence from in-depth individual interviews involving 68 students. Their findings highlight different patterns of acceptance, utilisation or rejection of knowledge to inform their social attitudes. The students further demonstrate varying levels of positional attitudes according to their socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. Moreover, the state and its command over quality citizenship and ideology education play an important role in shaping social attitudes. Their findings also highlight toxic consequences of rural-urban inequality on social attitudes.

Prof. Nikos Papadakis, Dr Maria Drakaki, Dr Stylianos Ioannis Tzagkarakis, Dr Apostolos Kamekis, Prof. Dimitrios Kotroyannos, Prof. Pella Calogiannakis (University of Crete, Greece) and **Prof. Kostas A. Lavdas** (Panteion University, Greece) focus on the multi-parametric relation between Governance, Sustainability and Human Resource Development (HRD) at the Regional Level, via a case study. Their article deals with the Training Programme for Local Government Executives in the Region of Crete, which was designed and implemented based on the findings of the

qualitative research-needs assessment, carried out within the framework of the large-scale Research Project entitled “Governance, Sustainability and Regional Innovation” in the Region of Crete. In particular, the first part of the article provides a brief analysis of the theoretical dimensions concerning the relation between governance, sustainability and regional development, with particular regard to the role of training-reskilling in the development of Local Government human resources. This is followed by a focus on the methodological strategy used for implementing the field study conducted as part of the Project, emphasizing on the primary qualitative research-needs assessment and its key research findings, based on which the Project’s Training Programme was implemented. Then, the framework, the methodology and the teaching modules of the Training Programme are presented and described, as they were designed and implemented, based on the qualitative findings of the Project’s field study.

Dr Volker Rein (BBB, Germany), deals with bridging conceptually academic and occupational learning and credentialing in US postsecondary education. He explores and analyses the current developments and research insights on challenges, approaches, and perspectives. According to the author, in the US as in other countries, a debate drives shaping programmes and credentials in all education and training sectors along competencies. The objective is to promote lifelong learning, the quality and the transferability of learning achievements sustainably between the education pathways to better address the needs of the learners, the society and the labour markets. Given that, his article assumes a potential compatible practice orientation in academic education and beyond for an acquisition of complete competency to apply appropriate knowledge, skills and competencies to solve complex problems and tasks. It first approaches the topic in the context of relevant developments in US postsecondary education at the system and policy level and at the instrumental and qualification conceptual level. Then the article discusses research generated empirical insights on appropriate conceptual competency oriented developments within Associate degree programmes, as well as, on relevant linkages to non-degree and Bachelor programmes. Finally, essential conceptual and practical implications are considered for academic and occupational learning and credentialing in US postsecondary education and training and beyond.

Dr Andreas Vassilopoulos, Dr Aggelos Kavasakalis and Prof. Georgios Stamelos (University of Patras, Greece), focus on the issue of the incorporation of non-formal types of lifelong learning (LLL) services delivery into the Greek Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). According to the authors, during the past three decades, this issue

appears to have received significant attention as a result of relevant policies promoted worldwide and the strong political will demonstrated by the European states. After briefly presenting the consecutive stages of LLL incorporation into HEIs, the article emphasises the incorporation of LLL into the Greek Universities and, especially, non-formal types of learning services delivery. The University has been undergoing a series of constant, rapid and profound transformations, in the last few years, that have, on the one hand, turned it into a vast and multi-dimensional organization and on the other, present it with unprecedented dilemmas and challenges. The authors point out that among these, one of the most fundamental pertains to the severe impact induced by the adoption of non-formal types of learning by the University, which may act in a corrosive and/or rejuvenating and modernising way on what we are used to calling the University.

Dr Loukas Zahilas (CEDEFOP), focuses on the future of vocational education and training. He points out that this future will look very different, as automation and artificial intelligence will make many manual, repetitive jobs obsolete and the VET systems will have to address fast several complicated challenges. Currently the discussion focuses on the accelerating pace of changes both in job creation and destruction. Another dimension that will significantly change education and training systems is the fact that most of us will live significantly longer than our parents, and in many cases the babies born today are expected to live for at least 100 years. Given the abovementioned, he presents and analyses Cedefop's project, entitled "The changing nature and role of VET in Europe" (2016-18), covering the 28 EU member states, Iceland and Norway. The project took a step back and painted a comprehensive picture of VET developments in Europe, identifying challenges as well as opportunities. The outcomes of the project are presented in the article highlighting developments from different perspectives (institutional, pedagogical and socio-economic). Building on the analysis of developments since 1995, the potential pathways are also presented in brief. Reference is made as well to Cedefop's work on the dynamics of change in VET and the wider European policy context highlighting the joint work that started in Copenhagen in 2002 and continued with the Bruges- Riga cycle.

We do hope that the present Special Issue of the ACADEMIA Journal, with the 11 stimulating and challenging articles, that deal with various aspects and facets of the multi-level (as well as complicated) relation between Higher Education and Life Long

Learning, will contribute and even-more enrich the relevant ongoing debate at the international level.

The Guest Editors:

Nikos Papadakis, Professor and Director of the Centre for Political Research & Documentation (KEPET) at the Department of Political Science of the University of Crete.

Maria Drakaki, Sociologist, PhD in Political Science, Researcher at the Centre for Political Research & Documentation (KEPET) of the Department of Political Science of the University of Crete, Greece.

Georgios Stamelos, Professor at the Department of Primary Education, University of Patras, Member of the Board of the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQA), Editor-in-Chief of the ACADEMIA Journal.