



Latent Potential :

Tapping Human and Social Capital to promote and support Gender Equality in decision-making



Felisa Velasco



PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Current Work	Member of the Toledo City Council. Member of the Province of Toledo Council
Area	Toledo, Spain
Education and Professional Training	Diploma as a primary school teacher at the University School of Toledo. (Escuela Universitaria de Toledo). Degree in Pedagogics at the UNED. Previous work: Advisor for psycho-pedagogic matters in the secondary education.
Professional areas of interest	Member of the Province of Toledo Council in charge of the Assistance to Municipalities in Education matters;
Areas of Expertise	Gender Equality, Education

PROJECT PROFILE

Participant	Felisa Velasco
Area	Toledo, Spain
Project	Consultant in Psycho-Pedagogic Orientation in Institutes of Secondary Education
Theme	School and Families

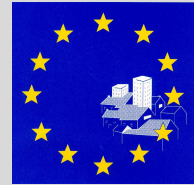
Socio-economic context

Castilla-La Mancha is one of the least populated region in Spain, with a surface of 80000 squared Km and just 1800000 inhabitants: 908125, a bit more than half of them, are



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women, while 20% of the population is older than 65, and 24% is composed of women older than 65.

This ageing process of the population is due to migration during the last century which produced a massive depopulating dynamic, but in the last 10 years we can see a trend reversal due to an immigration which has corrected the previous migration movements.

Castilla-La mancha is composed of 919 municipalities, but nearly all of them live in very small villages, just 59 of them have more than 5000 inhabitants. As many as 800 municipalities are less populated than 3000 inhabitants, and 9,8% of the population live in villages with less than 1000 persons. 4 persons out of 10 live in towns with less than 5000 inhabitants. So the population is very spread out in little villages in the middle of a very extended area (this is the third most extended region in Spain).

The borders of this region are the Autonomous Community of Madrid, in the north, Andalucia in the south, and Estremadura and Portugal in the east side.

Historically, Castilla was a region forgotten and left behind by governments and kings, but since democracy and the entry in the E.U. it has known an incredible development, which in 25 years has completely changed its look and its deeper social and economic structure.

From being mainly based on agriculture, its economy has become now service-oriented, even though still 10% of the active population is employed in agriculture.

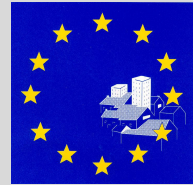
A heritage from the past is the heavy unemployment rate affecting women three times more than men: in the fourth term of 2004 the males' unemployment rate was 5,66% on the active population, versus the 16,90 of the women's one; the rate of the males' employment gets up to 66,53%, while the women's is stuck at 36,38%. But this is just a synchronic picture, which does not register a dynamic movement, changes and improvements; we can say that women are integrating in the professional life more and more in the region: in four years (2001-2004) the women's employment rate had an increase of 5,5%, and in 2004 3 new jobs created out of 4 were taken by women. This is due to the new positive discrimination policies carried out by the regional government, and the new attention developed since the 90's to the issue of a higher women's participation.

Toledo is the Capital City of the autonomous Region Castilla- La Mancha: in this system based on devolution of powers the government here lies in the "Junta de Comunidades" of Castilla la Mancha. This institution comprises a Women Institute and a Project for Equality, which affects and concerns all of us at a regional level. You can also check for reference the web page of the Junta www.jccm.es, The Province Council ("Diputación") does not have any specific programme concerning gender equality and women, even though many people in charge of policies and programmes are gender focused.



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Project description and objectives

Key issues and problems to be addressed

I am married, mother of three children, and have been contributing actively to society since 20 years, taking into consideration either my professional activity out of my family environment, and my family tasks.

I have been working for 12 years in different primary schools in the Province of Toledo, fighting actively for the gender equality and recognition of the women rights in the labour market and in a professional frame: equality towards the pupils, equality in the decision making process, equality in the appointing process of managing positions with a certain degree.

I give contributions and I participate to seminars and workshops of Co-education and equality.

As Consultant in Psycho-Pedagogic Orientation in Institutes of Secondary Education, I keep the same attitude and the same focus in carrying out my activity and targeting my purposes, taking into account that the social and cultural context where my action takes place are villages with 1000 to 10000 inhabitants, in rural areas, where the gender differences are stronger, as in the pupils mentality as well as in the teachers'.

For two years I have been taking a political commitment and working as town councillor at the Toledo City Council, for the Socialist Party group, in the opposition, and at the same time as a member of the Province of Toledo Council for the matters concerning assistance to Municipalities and training.

The province Council is an institution established by the new Constitution of 1978, whose purpose is the organization of the Province of Toledo, comprising 200 municipalities of different size and with different needs. The Province Council is in charge of balancing the differences between the municipalities, in the name of the principle of solidarity, it is in charge of giving technical, economic and legal support to them as well as training courses not only to its own workers but also to people working for the City Councils of the Province.

Objectives delivered and actions taken

In September 2004 I was invited by the FEMP-CLM (Federation of Municipalities of Castilla-La Mancha) to participate to a workshop of the Latent Potential Programme, taking place in Belfast. More concretely I participated to a Peer Review: during the different sessions we got to know the issues affecting the Belfast environment and two concrete experiences. We analysed phenomenons of social destructuring because of political and religious conflicts, and the need of basic welfare services for a better childhood care. In the social setting where I come from there were no social issues like that, but nowadays we assist to new social problems related to the childhood care and education, notably referred to the immigrant population, a very recent issue in Toledo.



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Analysing the projects carried out in Belfast, results and objectives we got several suggestions on how to act in our situation, and progress in the future also concerning the social and professional involvement of women as for controlling and implementing the programmes.

Results, evaluation and obstacles

Being a Member of the Province of Toledo Council I participate to the political decision making process: in my area of expertise and interest, ie. assistance to Municipalities and Education, positive discrimination policies are not carried out concerning gender equality matters.

Discrimination against women exists, but not at the level of the Province Local Government and in professional terms: the access to working positions is equal for men and women, as well as salaries and working conditions.

The obstacles and real discrimination lies in the cultural and social system based on domestic work for women, which is now a second activity for every working woman. But specific projects have not been launched, and it is very difficult to change mentalities and deep social structure with political means.

Lessons learned

The lessons I could learn from this experience are several, and can be summed up this way:

- When you face concrete needs, you have to look absolutely for solutions, and make many efforts to sort something out;
- Working in a public position, and having taken a political commitment, there is the absolute need of listening to citizens, in order to try, from the positions you have in public institution, to solve the basic problems of society.
- The Belfast project is meeting its inhabitants' concrete needs. I will have to make sure that when I advise policy changes, I am meeting the real needs of people.

This project itself cannot be transferred and applied to my local situation, as the issues focused are not the same: but the rules, and the methodology, of implementation are the same: **identifying needs, trying to meet them in the short, medium and long term, involving the social actors in the process of finding solutions, and controlling and accompanying the process.**