*Full Length Research Paper*

# Gender Identity and the Role of an Adult Educator in a Vocational Training Institute

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**This study examined the degree of sensitization of an adult educator in a Vocational Training Institute with regard to the link between his (her) gender identity and his (her) pedagogic role. In effect, the degree of sensitization connotes the extent to which an educator experiences the sexism. Thirty eight adult educators (19 male and 19 female) have been interviewed for the purpose of the inquiry. The results showed that the female adult educators experienced and perceived higher the above link than the male educators. The origin of this differentiation has been largely based on the social construction of the gender identity and the segmentation of the labour market, and internalized in values and beliefs about appropriate masculine/feminine roles and expectations.**

## Introduction

Gender identity is one aspect of the social identity; it is the meaning women and men attach to their membership in the categories 'male' and 'female'. Identification with these categories can be associated with the salience and nature of comparative distinctions between men and women in a given setting. These distinctions and the value attached to them in turn affect their self-attributions, including stereotypic attributions (Alderfer, 1987; Ridgeway, 1988). The stereotypic attributions are closely linked to traditional social roles and power inequalities between women and men (Eagly, 1987). Gender-based stereotypes are usually perceived by many as a logical consequence of the situation. For instance, gender-neutral areas, such as the educational system and labour market, produce different results for women and for men, without any explicit gender-separating purpose being discernible (Westberg-Wohlgemuth, 1996).

Focusing on the researching area of this study, the *adult technical education*, which is closely related to the practical/technical qualifications and characteristics of an occupation in the labour market, numerous books and articles have been written about the gendered pattern of career salience and educational and occupational choices of the adult learners (Hackett, Esposito, & O'Halloran, 1989; Phillips & Imhoff, 1997), the perceived differences in male and female roles through vocational/career guidance services (Ellis, 1990), the fact that men's goals and aspirations exceed those of women (Leung, Conoley & Scheel, 1994; Mednick

& Thomas, 1993), the gender gap as an obstacle to women seeking and obtaining educational leadership positions (Eakle, 1995), the discrimination against female adult educators due to the organizational structures and practices in education (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996), as well as studies about the attention of adult educators to male learners more often than female in technical disciplines classes (Ayala, 1996; Deligianni, 1993; Kabounidi, 1990). Despite the broad scope of this literature, there is little scholarship about *how male and female educators are aware of their pedagogic roles in a Vocational Training Institute in virtue of their gender*, which is the researching goal of the present study. Throughout the literature on vocational training, there is remarkable absence of any debate about the role of the teacher/trainer in the promotion of vocational training, without gender diversity being included (Rogers, 2006). However, the above literature indirectly contributes to a conceptual framework within which the researching goal of the study may be shaped and developed.

The pivotal aim of the research refers to the fact that female adult educators in a Vocational Training Institute perceive and experience much more sexism than male educators on the grounds of their 'role'. By demarcating the pedagogical content of the term *role*, we mean that adult educators should encourage creativity, bold self-critique, familiarity with research theory and practices, genuine collaborative inquiry, and renewed interest in ongoing professional learning (Paterson & West-Burnham, 2005). The effective

pedagogical role of an adult educator presupposes and fosters collaborative group learning, which emphasizes the process of listening to and respecting others, understanding alternative views, challenging and questioning others, negotiating ideas, and caring for group participants (Imel and Tisdell 1996). Besides, the most important conditions for school success are the qualities of relationships; that is, whether they create or fail to create a sense of safety and belonging that fosters collaborative inquiry (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Thus, how could a sexist perception of a male adult educator in a Vocational Training Institute be compatible to the promotion of professional learning and collaborative inquiry in virtue of his pedagogical role? In other words, how could his pedagogical role be positively effective to adult learners when sexual orientation-based and gender identity discrimination is being perceived by him as a natural occurrence in many workplaces? The present research aims to shed light on the above contradiction by estimating the degree of sexism experience of male and female adult educators in a Vocational Training Institute and demonstrating the recognition of the need for action by the educational community in securing the advancement of women and the elimination of gender-based discrimination in the field of vocational education.

Actually, sexism experience connotes the continuing existence of gender segregation: the process in which women and men end up in different types of occupation, so that two different types of labour market may be said to exist, female and male. Gender segregation is not synonymous with gender marking – a process that renders an occupation typically female or male (Bradley, 1989; Westberg-Wohlgemuth, 1996). Notions and ideas about what is feminine and masculine legitimize the placement of women and men in different occupational categories or the same occupational categories, but with the content differently defined. This leads to notions that "female" qualifications and qualities differ from "male" (Elgqvist-Saltzman, 1998). For instance, The World Bank paper, "Women in Higher Education", notes that technology has a strongly masculine image not only because men still dominate the field, but also because they dominate the language and images found in scientific literature (Dundar et al, 1994). Lack of women's visible participation in technology and its consequent occupational categories, and a dearth of female role models result from, and perpetuate the socio-cultural absence of women in this area (Hafkin & Taggart, 2001; Hassan, 2000), a parameter that implies the social construction of female qualifications enhanced many times by the gendered instructional practices of male educators mostly. With the rapid development in occupational, educational, and computer technologies, the gendered instructional model of transmitting to adult learners a discrete and 'feminine' or 'masculine' well-established set of skills must be called into question. Within our uncertain environment of change, the ability of an adult learner to construct viable anti-sexist knowledge and to adapt is paramount.

Additionally, on one hand, the possible low degree of sensitization of a male adult educator concerning the link

between his gender identity and pedagogic role in a Vocational Training Institute could also enhance the antagonistic (and/or traditional) teacher-principal relationship with female colleagues or adult learners and exclude the opportunity for an open and trusting pedagogical way of communication. On the other hand, the higher degree of sensitization of a female adult educator could possibly offer the opportunity for all to move from an old way of seeing things to a new one and promote a less sexist teaching and learning. Moreover, it could develop women's educational leadership, as female educators acquire, over years of sexism experience, bundles of beliefs and assumptions about schools and school systems work, authority, leadership, the purposes of schooling and the role of competition, from a feminist perspective; these "mindscapes" could prepare quality school administration and lead female educators to transform the culture of the schools into one that emphasizes cooperation, trust, openness, and continuous improvement (Hoy & Miskel, 1996). Actually, this connotes a developmental shift during which a woman's judgments change from the conventional mode of taking responsibility to feeling empowered and committed to choosing goals which are self-directed and life-giving (Gilligan, 1993). Thus, the female school leaders could be open-minded, flexible rather than dogmatic in their thinking within a system of anti-sexist values, persistent, resilient and optimistic. "Such traits help explain why successful leaders facing daunting conditions are then able to push forward where there is little reason to expect progress" (Leithwood et al., 2007, p. 14).

## Methods

### The Research Goal

We attempted to define the *way male and female educators are aware of their roles in a Vocational Training Institute in virtue of their gender*. Particularly, the definition of the "way" acquires the meaning of the *degree of sensitization of an adult educator concerning the link between his (her) gender identity and his (her) pedagogic role* ("functional definition"). The *structured interview* was used as tool of research. We presupposed that a practically constant, immutable core of personality should exist, according to which an individual would give information under certain conditions (Cohen & Manion, 2000, p. 377-378), even if nobody could keep under all the aspects of the cooperation between the interviewer and interviewee (Cicourel, 1964).

The researching goal requires a systematic record of the positions of the interviewer; on that account we selected structured questions. Thus, an evaluation scale of equal numerical intervals was used for the quantification of the predefined answers (very much / much / not much / not at all). Therefore, the following values were presented (from the lesser starting point to the higher): not at all = 1 (0, 50– 1,50) / not much = 2 (1,51 – 2,50) / much = 3 (2,51 – 3,50) / very much = 4 (3,51 – 4,50). The bigger the number is the higher the degree of sensitization of an adult educator becomes.

On the strength of the above pointing out we brought forward the following hypothetical query: *The degree of sensitization of female adult educators is higher than the degree of*

*sensitization of male adult educators.* (In other words, the degree of experiencing the sexism by female adult educators is more appreciable and existent in virtue of the way of their perception).

Table 1
*Variables of the Research*

| DIFFERENIAL VARIABLE [Gender Male adult educators ↓ Female adult educators | DEPENDENT VARIABLE [The degree of sensitization] |
|---|---|

In parallel, some contiguous findings may also be noted down as they come of the non predefined parameters (speciality, residence area, economical status, previous service) in combination with the educators' answers.

Additionally, we should point out the following: (a) The verification or not of the hypothetical query concerns the local limits of our research. (b) The male educators usually present a lower degree of sensitization, because, as they are hidden behind the ostensibly innocent and neutral significances: *right, person, adult educator, normal situation,* which are in favour of the masculine subject (Kokogiannis, 2008), they cannot finally perceive (or they do not want to acknowledge) the possible nuances of sexism that are presented at the expense of the women. (c) The interview (and particularly the form of the "oral questionnaire") was preferred (Paraskevopoulos, 1993, p. 128) avoiding the mailing of the questionnaire. We considered that our option would lead the participant to a more comfortable dealing with the researcher, because as more rationalist the interviewer becomes as less genuine the answer of the interviewee follows (Cannell & Kahn, 1968).

**Time – Place – Way of Data Collection**
Thirty-eight adult educators of two Vocational Training Institutes (a town of a northern Greece: Veria/Imathia) were interviewed (19 male educators – 19 female educators), 88, 3 % of the educators of the two Institutes totally (43 educators: 3 educators were absent during the interviewing process and 2 educators refused to participate). The interviews took place by the present researcher visiting by himself the Institutes (winter 2008), seeing that he had already communicated with the interviewees. The pre-existing familiarity of the researcher with the local educational spaces (he has been working for many years as educator in the specific region) facilitated by far the process of receiving the interviews. The interviews lasted out three days. The use of tape recorder was considered unnecessary, provided that, on one hand, the pre-defined alternative answers of the interviewees could easily be noted by the interviewer and, on the other, the interviewees countenanced that they would escape in this way from an asphyctic pillory of observation.

Except gender (a pre-defined parameter of the selection of the educators), the consequent noticed parameters that come of the 38 interviewees are the following: the *speciality*, the *residence area*, the economic *status* and the *previous service*, seeing that the latter parameters could affect the dependent variable (*degree of sensitization…*). Particularly, we divide into two general categories the various fields of the educators who work in a Vocational Training Institute: a) *educators who teach subjects on theoretical level* and b) *educators who teach subjects on laboratorial level*. This general demarcation of the specialities defines the more theoretical or technical character of the teaching object respectively. Then, regarding the *residence area,* we must note that the quantity and quality of the stimuli in an urban or in a semi-urban/ rural area are differentiated by far and certainly this may affect the educators' self-image (Kiridis, 1996, p. 120) and consequently the way male and female educators perceive their role in virtue of their gender within a Vocational Institute. Finally, the *previous service* (of short or long time: a) 1-10 years b) 10+…) in a Vocational Training Institute perchance differentiates the degree of their sensitization concerning the link between gender identity and pedagogic role (and, particularly, the understanding of some practices/stereotypes of gendering reactions, the realization or not of the gender inequalities and so on).

**Structure of the Questions**
Each question was composed on the strength of the link between gender identity and the role of the adult educator. This link was expressed by a quite negative perspective of experiencing the potential sexism in the Vocational Training Institute (the same structure of content in each question). Additionally, the questions were subsumed in some categories, which were based on aspects of the role of the adult educator: 1. Self-image of the adult educator in the Vocational Training Institute (one question) 2. The role of the educator and the effectiveness of his/her pedagogic work (four questions) 3. The role of the educator and the structural function of the Vocational Training Institute (five questions) 4. The role of the educator and his/her relationships with the colleagues and the adult learners (three questions). All the questions are inter-dependent, although they are placed among the above categories.

In parallel, we took into consideration the following: (a) Usually, the interviewee is prone to give a socially desirable answer (Shrauger, 1975; Berglas & Jones, 1978; Fiske & Taylor, 1984). Apart from that we did not ignore the fact that "interviews are fluid encounters where balances shift between and during different interview situations" (Cotterill, 1992, p. 604) (b) The possible gender bias of the interviewer and interviewee (Rosenberg 1979) and (c) The emotional guidance of the interviewee (Ribbens, 1989).

**The Questions of the Interview**
1. On the strength of your experiences, could you characterize your self-image negative as male (or female) educator in the specific Institute you work? 2. Do you consider that the degree of the success of your instructive

objectives is negatively influenced by the fact that you are male (or female) educator? 3. Do you believe that the degree of creativity and friendliness you attempt to manage to the adults' classroom (irrespective of some fluctuations) is not satisfactory because of your sex? 4. Do you feel that the expectations of the adult learners for your educational role sometimes dissimulate sexism, so that the quality and style of your pedagogic efforts are influenced negatively? 5. How much do you believe that the possible problem of the harmonization between your pedagogic efforts and the expectations of the adult learners comes of the more technical (less theoretical) character of the teaching object in combination with your sex? 6. Do you feel that the expectations of your colleagues for the effectiveness of your work dissimulate sexism, so that they are doing you an injustice? 7. Does the fact that the structural function of a vocational Training Institute is mostly based on technical specialties impede your self-expectation for the effectiveness of your role? 8. On the strength of your experiences, could you characterize the relations with your colleagues as "relations of inequality" because of your sex? 9. Do you disagree with the standpoint that the majority of male directors in Training Institutes of adults are justified by the fact that they are in practice more successful than female directors and consequently they facilitate the role of adult educators? 10. Do you consider as necessary that adult educators should be committed to attend specific courses of sensitization on gender issues before they teach in the Institute? 11. Do you disagree with the standpoint that sexism as fact-finding tool of the role of an educator is henceforth considered out of date and quite useless in regard to other tools and theoretical approaches? 12. Do you disagree with the standpoint that the "authentic by nature" masculine rationalism is more consistent with the teaching of practical specialities in a Vocational Institute, in contrast to the inclination of female educators to teach more effectively the specialities of theoretical direction? 13. Do you disagree with the standpoint that female adult learners must be encouraged by their educators to more "female" training specialties (e.g. hair-dressing, ornamental painting) so that they would be more successful in their career?

Table 2
*Demographic Factors/Data*

| [Predefined parameter] | [Consequent parameters] |
|---|---|
| 1. *Gender* <br> a) Male    19 <br> b) Female 19 | 2. *Speciality* <br>   a) Theoretical teaching object ☐ <br>   b) Laboratory teaching object ☐ <br> 3. *Economical status* <br>   a) Very well – well ☐ <br>   b) almost well – badly ☐ <br> 4. *Residence area* <br>   a) Urban area ☐ <br>   b) Semi-urban & rural area ☐ <br> 5. *Previous service* <br>   a) 1-10 years ☐ <br>   b) 10+…years |

**Findings**

$\overline{X} = \Sigma xi / N \Rightarrow$ Numerical average of the answers of the interviewers: $\Sigma xi$ = The total of the numerical values of the answers, N = The number of the researching subjects of the categorical variable *Gender*.

See Table 3.

Thus, $\overline{X}$ 1 we call the total average of the answers of the female educators:

$\overline{X}$ 1 = 35,526
See Table 4.

$\overline{X}$ 2 we call the total average of the answers of the male educators:

$\overline{X}$ 2 = [$\Sigma X(1…19)$]/19 = 543/19 = 28,578

**Statistical processing/ Pointings out / Diagram**
According to the definition of the researching goal we examine *mixed co-variables:* a) Bi-variable *gender* $\Rightarrow$ Categorical variable separated into two categories (male and female adult educators) and b) Dependent variable *the degree of sensitization…* $\Rightarrow$ Numerical variable.

In that case, we attempt to describe the degree of correlation (numerically) between the above mixed co-variables in a systematic and accurate way. Thus, we used the most appropriate (in that case) *pointer of correlation*: the Biserial. As is usual, statistical anticipation is completed approximately and contains a percentage of error. This error is as minor as the degree of the interrelationship of the two variables is higher (Paraskevopoulos, 1884, p. 93-96).

$$\text{Biserial} = [(\overline{X}1 - \overline{X}2) \sqrt{(N1)(N2)}] / (s)(N)$$
$\downarrow$
$\overline{X}$ 1 = the total average of the answers of the female educators

$\overline{X}$ 2 = the total average of the answers of the male educators

N1 = the number of female educators

N2 = the number of male educators

N = N1 + N2

s (formal variation) = $\sqrt{\sum xi( \ )/N - \overline{X}}$
$\downarrow$

$\Sigma xi\square$ = the total of squares of values of the answers
N = the number of female and male educators
$\square$
$\overline{X}$= the square of total average of the answers of male and female educators

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Table 3.
*Answers of the Female Educators.*

| S / N* | S | E | R | P | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | 6th | 7th | 8th | 9th | 10th | 11th | 12th | 13th | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 19 Female adult educators | | | | Answers to the thirteenth questions (xi) ** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | a*** | b | a | b | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 41 |
| 2 | a | b | a | b | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 39 |
| 3 | b | a | a | b | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 35 |
| 4 | a | b | b | a | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 39 |
| 5 | b | a | a | b | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 35 |
| 6 | b | a | b | a | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 33 |
| 7 | b | a | a | a | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 37 |
| 8 | a | b | a | a | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 38 |
| 9 | a | b | a | a | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 39 |
| 10 | b | a | b | b | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 27 |
| 11 | a | a | a | a | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 36 |
| 12 | a | a | a | a | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 35 |
| 13 | b | b | a | a | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 32 |
| 14 | b | a | a | b | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 35 |
| 15 | a | b | a | b | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 35 |
| 16 | b | a | a | a | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 30 |
| 17 | a | b | b | b | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 40 |
| 18 | b | b | a | b | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 32 |
| 19 | a | a | a | b | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 37 |
| Total | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 64 | 54 | 72 | 68 | 675 |

* Truncated terms: S / N = Serial number, S. =Specialty, E. =Economic status, R. = Residence area, P. = Previous service, **V. much = 4, Much = 3, Not much = 2, Not at all = 1; *** According to the Tables 5 & 6.

Table 4.
*Answers of the Male Educators.*

| S / N | S | E | R | P | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | 6th | 7th | 8th | 9th | 10th | 11th | 12th | 13th | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 19 Male adult educators | | | | Answers to the thirteenth questions (xi) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | b | b | a | a | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 24 |
| 2 | b | a | b | a | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 26 |
| 3 | b | a | b | a | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 25 |
| 4 | a | b | a | b | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 32 |
| 5 | a | a | a | b | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 32 |
| 6 | b | b | b | b | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 24 |
| 7 | a | a | b | a | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 37 |
| 8 | b | a | b | b | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 26 |
| 9 | a | a | b | b | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 31 |
| 10 | a | b | a | a | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 32 |
| 11 | a | b | b | a | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 30 |
| 12 | b | b | a | b | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 25 |
| 13 | a | a | b | b | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 31 |
| 14 | a | b | a | a | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 30 |
| 15 | b | a | b | a | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 27 |
| 16 | b | b | a | a | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 27 |
| 17 | a | a | b | b | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 31 |
| 18 | b | a | b | a | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 24 |
| 19 | a | b | b | a | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 29 |
| Total | | | | | 29 | 28 | 37 | 42 | 38 | 38 | 41 | 40 | 50 | 47 | 42 | 48 | 64 | 543 |

Thus, according to the tables 3 & 4,

$\Sigma x(1\ldots38) = 39.966$

$N = 38$

$\overline{X} = 1027, 2$

$s = \sqrt{\sum xi(\ )}/N - \overline{X} = 5$

Consequently:

**Biserial** = $[(\overline{X}1 - \overline{X}2)\sqrt{(N1-N2)}]$ / (s) (N) = **0, 69**

☞ As we can understand, the value {0, 69} connotes a very strong relation between the independent categorical bi-variable *Gender* and the dependent numerical variable *the degree of sensitization…*

This means: a) the statistical error is being minimized and b) the fact that $\overline{X}1 > \overline{X}2 \Rightarrow$ our hypothetical query: *The degree of sensitization of female adult educators is higher than the degree of male adult educators* (in other words, the degree of experiencing the sexism by female adult educators is more appreciable and existent in virtue of the way of their perception) is being verified – of course, on the grounds of the local research without any generalization. See Figure 1.

Figure 1.
*The Average of Female and Male Educators in Relation to Their Average*



━■━ Average of female educators   ━■━ Average of male educators
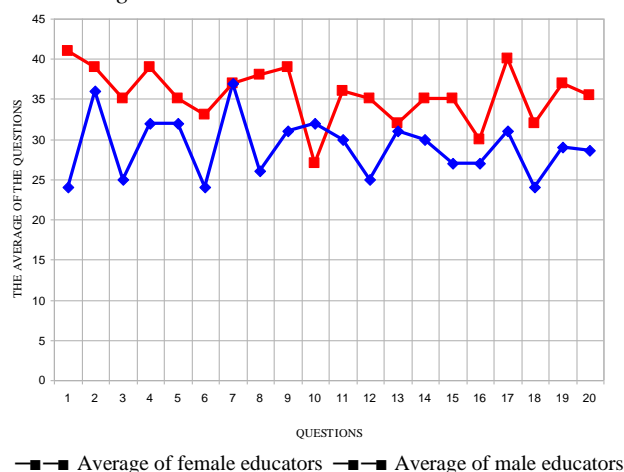
The correlation shows the extent to which the question is measuring the same way of sensitization that the total test is measuring. A negative or zero correlation means the question is measuring something different than the rest of the test is measuring. In that case, the strong positive correlation (0, 69) indicates that the questions are measuring what the rest of the test is measuring.

**Contiguous Findings**
See Table 5 for consequent general data of female educators. According to the above averages we could note the

following: The female educators, who teach theoretical courses, live in an urban area and their economical status is almost good or bad, present higher (more positive) degree of sensitization. It also seems that the previous service does not play an important role concerning the differentiation of the degree of the sensitization. We could also point out that bad (or not good) economical status presumably amplifies the sense organ of the female educators on gender inequalities or emerges cases of gender inequality more frequently sharpening the way of female perception.

See Table 6 for consequent general data of male educators. First, the averages of male educators (according to the resultant general data of the table 4) are much lower than the corresponding averages of female educators. This confirms the different degree of sensitization between male and female educators generally. Second, we can observe that the parameter *speciality* gives an important outcome (male educators who teach theoretical courses present much higher degree of sensitization) in contrast to the other parameters, which do not lead to remarkable differentiations.

Additionally, as it comes from Tables 3 & 4, the parameter *speciality* remarkably differentiates the degree of sensitization not only between male and female educators but among educators of the same gender. Obviously, the familiarity with the theoretical teaching object presumably prepares or amplifies the sensitization of an adult educator on gender issues.

**Discussion and Conclusion**
It seems that there is a strong link between gender identity and pedagogic role of an adult educator in a Vocational Training Institute, according to the *Biserial correlation* we used. Certainly, we found that the female adult educators experience higher the above link than the male educators; that means female educators perceive adult vocational education more as a place of sexist learning experience than a cooperative creation of new knowledge and shared understandings that could help transform their lives and break the bonds imposed by forces for 'intense sexist individualism'. Besides, the significance of professional community as a variable influencing classroom organization demands attention to the development of workplace relationships that promote openness, genuine reflection, and collaboration focused on student (anti-sexist) learning (Louis, 2006). Thus, relying on the answers of the female educators we easily understand that they do not experience deep engagement with the intrinsic satisfaction of their work, not only with adult learners but also with their male colleagues (question 2,4, and 6) and they seem to need relationally more 'safe' spaces than male colleagues to support genuine collaborative learning (question 8). Collaborative learning as the result of the degree of creativity and friendliness in adult's classroom (question 3) may increase adult's understanding and adaptability when he or she is able to examine an experience from multiple perspectives. These perspectives provide the adult learner with the ability to become an occupationally self-regulated, self-mediated, and self-aware individual, which should be the goal of career and

Table 5.
*Consequent General Data of 19 Female Adult Educators.*

|  | Specialty | | Residence area | | Economic status | | Previous service | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Theoretical teaching object | Laboratory teaching object | Urban area | Semi-urban & rural area | Very well & well | Almost well & badly | 1-10 years | 10 + … years |
|  | (a) | (b) | (a) | (b) | (a) | (b) | (a) | (b) |
|  | 10 | 9 | 15 | 4 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 10 |
| $\overline{X}$ = | 33, 8 | 32, 8 | 35, 7 | 34, 7 | 34 | 37, 2 | 35, 4 | 35, 6 |

*Note.* Numerical averages relying on the answers of the Table 1.

Table 6
*Consequent General data of 19 Male Adult Educators*

|  | Specialty | | Residence area | | Economic status | | Previous service | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Theoretical teaching object | Laboratory teaching object | Urban area | Semi-urban & rural area | Very well & well | Almost well & badly | 1-10 years | 10 + … years |
|  | (a) | (b) | (a) | (b) | (a) | (b) | (a) | (b) |
|  | 10 | 9 | 7 | 12 | 10 | 9 | 11 | 8 |
| $\overline{X}$ = | 31, 5 | 25, 3 | 28, 8 | 28, 4 | 29 | 28, 1 | 28, 2 | 29 |

*Note.* Numerical averages relying on the answers of the Table 2.

technical education (Grubb, 1997). The issue is that the career choices of an adult learner depend to a large extent on how gender identities are constructed. Thus, the fact that careers are gender-marked and the labour market is gender-segregated indicates the socially conditioned character of the choices.

Consequently, on one hand, adult learners ought to redefine their 'professional self' released from gender bias and, on the other, male educators ought to realize that their pedagogic role could be based on the dynamic interplay of mind and culture, knowledge and meaning, and reality and experience viewing equality of opportunity as an anti-sexist knowledge issue; actually, the findings that teaching practical specialities in a Vocational Institute (question 12) is more consistent with the "authentic by nature" masculine rationalism and also the more technical (less theoretical) character of the teaching object (question 5) is being harmonized with the teaching effectiveness and pedagogic efforts of male educators manifest that the opportunity for an open and trusting pedagogical way of communication among male and female colleges and adult learners could hardly be happened. Low sensitization of male educators (according to their answers) prevents the possibility of negotiated futures built upon trust in relationship and breaks those collaborative reflective processes that lead to the successful educational professionalism and pedagogical role in developing social capital and promoting social cohesion to optimize anti-sexist learning conditions for students.

In parallel, female educator's underrepresentation in the director position of a Training Institute (given that the answers of male educators to the question 9 were moved onto a lower scale again) affects professional women's social construction of gender difference and gender identity at work. Research results (Ely, 1995) suggest that gender roles are more stereotypical and more problematic in firms with relatively low proportions of senior women. Thus, the overrepresentation of male educators in director position reinforces the devaluation of female educators even more. In particular, the commonly accepted stereotypes of women's thinking as emotional, intuitive and personalized has contributed to the devaluation of women's minds and contributions, especially in Western technologically-oriented cultures, which value rationalism and objectivity. Given that successful leaders have historically been characterized as decisive, analytical, individualistic, powerful, and willing to make the hard decisions, it has also been a given that women's ways of leading have been devalued.
However, in the past decades, influential thinkers have pointed to the need for a new style of leadership to meet the complex demands of the workforce and the organizations of the future—a style that defies the old stereotypes of leadership (Bennis & Goldsmith, 1994; Block, 1993; Wheatley, 1992). Instead of being devalued, it has been suggested that women are ideally suited to the new style of leadership and, in fact, are better leaders than men are in today's workplace (Applebaum & Shapiro, 1993; Smith & Smits, 1994). What is this new and increasingly prevalent leadership paradigm?

According to Peter Senge (1990), the era of the leader as charismatic decision maker is over; future leaders will have to build *learning organizations* wherein people can expand their "capabilities to shape their future" (p. 8). Such leaders will be *designers* and *teachers*, helping organizational members identify and deal with underlying causes of problems. In parallel, according to Kegan's model (1982, 1994), *our order of consciousness* (or stage of development) determines our relationship to the world we live and work in. What we perceive as reality—"how things are" or "how I am"—is largely our own construction based on our

interpretation of perception. In fact, we perceive and understand in increasingly complex ways; we become more tolerant of ambiguity and more willing to recognize that we participate in the construction of our beliefs.

Thus, female educators as *designers* and *teachers* and *receptive* to the reality based on their interpretation of anti-sexist perception could be successful leaders of educational change. The anti-sexist sensitivity of female educators as potential leaders includes reorienting their concerns toward nurturing the growth of teachers and students; ensuring that there is a relationship with and honest contact between them; intentional restructuring of the Institute; empowerment; and exploration with adult educators and learners. There is no room for antagonism in one who would be nurturing and open, respectful, and trustworthy. All of these actions and qualities on the part of the female educational leader involve shifts into a praxis that is philosophically and emotionally different from the usual sexist practices used by the male directors in the Vocational Training Institutes since now. Besides, we must admit that resolving conflict, building networks, listening to colleagues and students, and sharing power and information—skills identified as contributing to effectiveness of the educator's pedagogical role in schools, training institutes and so on—are relationship-building skills into which women have historically been socialized.

Moreover, it has long been an axiom in feminist literature that the personal is political and that women consistently look to the needs of the community as well as their own (Tisdell, 2000). Defining leadership as "a relational process of people together attempting to accomplish change or make a difference to benefit the common good" (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998, p. 21), high sensitization of female educators (according to the findings) includes elements of inclusiveness, empowerment, ethics, purposefulness, and process orientation, which prepare adult female educators to become decisive leaders who promote change in their Training Institutes and on no account they become discouraged, scarred and thus compromised in their overall capabilities; in other words, they become healthy resilient leaders who will not only survive but also thrive in their pedagogical role.

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