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## Editorial

**Zoraida Mendiwelo Bendek**  
**Editor**

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**Special Issue for  
 Take Part Active Learning for Active  
 Citizenship  
 UK National Framework**

New government initiatives such as the Active Learning for Active Citizenship programme (ALAC), initiated at the Home Office's Civil Renewal Unit in 2004 and continued by the Empowerment Division of the Department for Communities and Local Government, are enabling an increasing role for active citizenship in community empowerment. This programme recognised and made evident approaches to learn actively in communities, and its experiences produced the "Take Part National Framework for Active Learning for Active Citizenship". This framework offers an approach to give content to processes for community empowerment

The papers in this special edition of the OR Insight offer a conceptual discussion of active citizenship as well as implementation case studies about informal adult active learning in communities.

The first paper by *Rebecca Herron* and *Zoraida Mendiwelo-Bendek*, from Lincoln University, explores links between the ALAC Programme/ Take Part approach and the concerns and interests of the 'community operational research' community.

The second paper by *Charles Woodd*, the civil servant directly responsible for the ALAC programme and team leader in the Community Empowerment Division, Department for Communities and Local Government, sets the policy context in which ALAC and Take Part were developed. He outlines their history providing valuable insight into how the programme has come to take its current form and some indications about likely future directions.

The third paper by *Val Woodward*, ALAC's National Coordinator and author of the original report published by the Home Office in 2004, and currently Head of Community Development at the University of Central England, gives the detailed background of the programme and why it is important an active process of learning and citizenship to empower community development.

The fourth paper by *Carol Packman*, coordinator of the Greater Manchester Take Part hub and Director of the Community Audit and Evaluation Centre at Manchester Metropolitan University, draws the role of informal education in Active Learning for Active Citizenship and works throughout its key characteristics. She also looks at the role of facilitators in this process and how it plays a role in producing social capital.

The fifth paper by *Marj Mayo*, ALAC's National Evaluator, and Professor in Community Development at Goldsmiths College, University of London, looks at the role of participatory evaluation in empowering communities. She explores 'Social Capital' in terms of the promotion of community cohesion and social solidarity, within and between communities.

The last paper by *Ted Hartley* and *Zoraida Mendiwelo-Bendek*, coordinators of the South Yorkshire and East Midlands hubs respectively, looks at the role of networks in building and implementing the *Take Part National Framework*, in particular the role of 'hubs' in producing empowered communities with the capacity to create social capital.

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