AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF ADULT LEARNING

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Foreword to the Special Edition

Dr Trace Ollis Principal editor AJAL

This 60th Anniversary Special Edition of the Australian Journal of Adult Learning (AJAL) is a remarkable milestone and one which I am honoured to write the foreword for. The Journal commenced in 1961 as the Australian Journal of Adult Education (AJAE) and has since had several name changes. There have been a number of notable editors in this time, and I'd like to acknowledge them: Arnold Hely was the first editor, followed by Des Crowley, John Shaw and Joan Allsop who formed an editorial team and also later, both at different epochs edited the Journal on their own. Other editors that followed were Barrie Brennan, Roger Harris and Tony Brown. Co-editors Sue Shore and Elaine Butler assisted at different periods and a variety of guest editors contributed to the Journal over the decades. All of the editors have been scholars of adult learning and have contributed to our understanding about what adult learning is today in both Australia and the Asia Pacific.

AJAL has a first rate International Editorial Board with leading scholars in adult education in Australia, United Kingdom, Asia Pacific, Canada and the United States ensuring the rigour and high standard of publication continues today. I want to thank and acknowledge the work of the editorial board. It is remarkable that a journal of this size and scope of AJAL is still housed within a non-government organisation. Particularly, in an age of open access journals, and large publishing

houses around the globe housing the majority of journals in the world. Add to this, the advent of viper journals (fee for service), open access journals and the inevitable scholastic mode of production that comes with journals - including increased competitiveness, discourses of 'quality' journals and increased pressure for journals to produce large numbers of citations.

AJAL and the not for profit organisation it is published by, Adult Learning Australia, has thrived in difficult times and continues to maintain its commitment to advancing research and scholarship in adult learning in Australia and beyond. I want to thank our special edition editors Associate Professor Annette Foley and Associate Professor Rob Townsend for their work in bringing this special edition together. The special edition has articles from both leading and emerging scholars, and focusses on adult learning in Men's Sheds, in Neighbourhoods Houses, learning cities, histories of adult education in Australia and workers education movements. The commissioned article by Professor (Adjunct) Barry Golding, outlines the rich history and evolution of Adult Learning in Australia and poses questions for the 'vision splendour' and the future of adult learning. Diana Amundson's article outlines a history of adult education in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Finally, I would like to thank the Board of Directors of Adult Learning Australia and the CEO Jenny Macaffer for their continuing support of AJAL. Particular thanks must go to Catherine Devlin who oversees the copyediting and publishing processes of the Journal and drives much of the administrative and production work. We look towards the future of AJAL and it continuing to be a leading journal of adult learning in Australia as it further advances adult education, theory and practice today and in the future.

Guest Editorial

Associate Professor Annette Foley

Associate Professor Rob Townsend

It is indeed an honour and a privilege to take on the shared editorial of this 60th Anniversary Special Edition of the Australian Journal of Adult Learning (AJAL). We would like to sincerely thank the ongoing Editor, Dr Trace Ollis, for inviting us to be part of such an important publication. We had no idea at the onset of taking on this shared role that we, who both live in regional Victoria, would be facing such an unprecedented and complex year that would impact all communities and adult education providers. Adult community education will now be more important than ever for people across the country to engage and re-engage with and connect to local community, brush up on literacy and numeracy skills or reskill and pathway into further education and training for new futures.

This special edition focuses on and celebrates the long and important history of adult education and adult learning across Australia and New Zealand and highlights, through the articles, the breadth and depth of adult learning across our countries. The special edition commences with a featured article, commissioned by Adult Learning Australia (ALA), researched, and written by **Adjunct Professor Barry Golding**, a leading researcher in adult education in Australia and internationally.

Barry's article entitled **'Getting Serious: The national 'vision splendid' for adult education 60 years on'** takes us on a wonderful journey through the history of Adult Education in Australia. This article begins by posing three research questions. Firstly, it asks what was the context for establishing a national adult learning association, the Australian Association of Adult Education (AAAE) in 1960, renamed the Australian Association for Adult and Community Education (AACE) in 1989, and then Adult Learning Australia (ALA) in 1998? Secondly, it asks how the association, the research in its journals and the field of adult education adapted to the rapidly changing context, opportunities and needs for lifelong learning in Australia? Finally, the third research question seeks to explore the current situation of Australian adult education and what possible new courses for the future ALA and AJAL might take. The article makes use of back issues of AJAL as a way of framing and contextualising the focus and journey of adult education across 60 years. In the article, Barry critically examines the evidence of ongoing tensions and difficulties delivering on ALA's 2020 vision of 'lifelong and life wide learning for all Australians' and asks, what is the current situation for Australian adult education? This article is particularly interesting given the importance of Adult community education and its capacity to work with communities given what we have experienced in 2020 and will experience into 2021 and beyond, which is likely to bring with it significant challenges for education, employment and training for all Australians.

The article by **Stephen Billett and Darryl Dymock** 'Educating Australian adults in an era of social and economic change' discusses adult education origins across Western countries, particularly concerning its formation and continuity based on three key premises: 1) meeting adults' specific and heterogeneous learning needs; 2) educational purposes and purposes being understood in the local context; and 3) the enactment of adult education being shaped by local considerations such as resources, accessibility, teaching capacities and participants' readiness. The article discusses addressing the educational needs of adults and their communities in recent times drawing from these three key premises.

Bob Boughton's article titled 'Esmonde Higgins and the lost history of Australian adult education' traces back sixty years when the Australian Association of Adult Education (AAAE) was formed, and the world was

in the grip of the Cold War. This article suggests that as a consequence of these prior events, late 20th century adult education lost many of the historic links it once had with progressive social movements, especially those of an anti-capitalist character. These links have now re-emerged, in the study of social movement learning, known in the Global South as popular education (Choudry & Kapoor, 2010; Hall et al, 2010). This article sets out to recover these lost memories, through what Choudry and Vally (2018) call "history's schools".

Diana Amundsen's article, 'Sixty Years of Adult Learning in Aotearoa New Zealand: Looking back to the 1960s and beyond the 2020s' traces 60 years of adult learning in the New Zealand context. The article draws from a substantial body of research on adult education in New Zealand and discusses traditional Māori education, colonisation, bi-culturalism, and multi-culturalism. This article tracks adult education through a decade-by-decade review looking back to the influences that have shaped the New Zealand adult education landscape and discusses trends and emerging directions into the future.

The article by **Ursula Harrison, Tracey Ollis and Cheryl Ryan** draws from Bourdieu's Theory of Practice and makes use of a qualitative case study of 87 diverse learners from a mixture of rural, regional and urban Neighbourhood House contexts to uncover the relational practices in Neighbourhood Houses as people develop knowledge, skills and new ways of knowing through their participation. Many of the participants in the research lacked confidence as learners and were re-engaging with learning following former negative and/or incomplete education experiences.

The article by **Leonie Wheeler and Diane Tabbagh** explores the development of a learning community/city approach within the Wyndham City, Melbourne, Australia and compares it to other approaches within the greater Melbourne area. This article examines the journey of Wyndham City Council's approach to developing successive learning community strategies and identifies critical incidents that led to progress towards a sustainable learning community. The article makes use of evaluative vignettes of the Wyndham Learning Community and concludes that the implications for adult education and theory includes a discussion about the avoidance of the label 'learning city' as a marketing tool rather than a 'social process of participation and negotiation' to point to the need for further research into the area.

The final article in the special edition is by **Barry Golding, Annette Foley, and Helen Weadon**. This article takes the opportunity to critically examine the adaptability and resilience of a community-based Men's Shed against a backdrop of Covid-19. The article explores a disadvantaged, small, Australian rural community that had faced three catastrophic, human induced disasters; the Millennial Drought (1996 to 2010), the March 2013 bushfire and the COVID-19 epidemic of 2020. This article draws on interviews conducted in late 2019 and early 2020 with men and women 'shedders' as well as their significant others in a usually vibrant and unusually gender inclusive Men's Community Shed to tell the story of a unique community-based organisation, exercising a needs-based form of lifelong and life-wide learning. The practices and commitments detailed in this article point to how a community-based organisation can provide the community with opportunities for developing personal and collective wellbeing and the necessary resilience for adapting to likely future shocks beyond Covid-19.

As joint editors of this special edition of AJAL, we hope you enjoy reading and contemplating on this celebration of adult learning and adult community education history in Australia and New Zealand. We join the community of ALA, AJAL, adult learning and ACE providers in celebrating 60 years of ALA and its predecessors as a source for so many of engagement with community, the development of knowledge and skills and the empowerment of people to create better futures for individuals, groups, communities and societies.

Getting serious:
The national 'vision splendid' for
adult education 60 years on

Barry Golding

Federation University Australia

This paper poses three research questions, based primarily on evidence from six decades of the Australian Journal of Adult Education (AJAL, 2000-present) and its antecedent journals dating back to 1961. Firstly, it asks what was the context for establishing a national adult learning association, Australian Association of Adult Education (AAAE) in 1960, renamed the Australian Association for Adult and Community Education (AACE) in 1989, and Adult Learning Australia (ALA) in 1998? Secondly, it asks how the association, the research in its journals and the field of adult education adapted to the rapidly changing context, opportunities and needs for lifelong learning in Australia? In doing so, the paper critically examines evidence of ongoing tensions and difficulties delivering on ALA's 2020 vision of 'lifelong and lifewide learning for all Australians'. It also asks what the current situation is for Australian adult education, and what possible new courses for the future ALA and AJAL might take. The first two research questions are addressed in the body of this paper. The third question is addressed primarily within the Discussion.

Introduction

Duncan (1944) wrote about a national 'vision splendid' for adult education in Australia almost 80 years ago. The four quotations, below, each separated by approximately 20 years (written in 1944, 1965, 1991 & 2009), raise questions about what has happened to this vision since the Australian Association of Adult Education (AAAE), was formed in 1960, as well as where it might go hence.

R. B. Madgwick, then Director of the Australian Army Education Service at the University of Sydney, later to become the first President of AAAE in 1960, wrote in 1944 that:

> *We must never go back to adult education as we knew it. In the past, adult education was a thing of shreds and patches. We did a little here ... we did a little there ... But when we look at it dispassionately, it is clear that we only lived from hand to mouth. – and ... the hand when it reached the mouth was usually empty, anyway. (in Duncan, 1944, pp.25-26).*

These same words written 75 years ago, along with those that follow written 45 years ago, could have similar applicability in 2020.

> *Adult Education is regarded as a marginal activity stuck onto to our education system somewhere between our leaving primary school and going senile; we have to run it with meagre budgets, leftover facilities and other people's spare time. ... In spite of the ... growth of adult education there has been little enough research into adult education ... and very little investigation of the most basic component, the adult student himself [sic.] (Hanna, 1965, p.3).*

Perhaps the closest Australia came to achieving Duncan's (1944) vision was almost 30 years ago, when the 'Come in Cinderella' Senate (1991, p.160) report concluded that:

> *A commitment to a 'clever country' and 'lifelong learning for all'*

> *requires a willingness to embrace a larger vision of how people get their education and training in Australia. If we as a nation are to get serious about economic and social justice goals we need to get serious about adult education.*

Holmes (2009, p.1) summed up frustration around Duncan's still unrealised national vision a decade ago.

> *After several decades, the merits and necessity for lifelong learning have been dutifully intoned by policy makers and elsewhere. In practice, and sadly more so in Australia than in many comparable countries, the pursuit of lifelong learning has been honoured more by the breach than the observance.*

Each of these statements highlight that adult learning has been regarded in Australia for at least eight decades as a marginal activity, not taken sufficiently seriously by governments or policy makers. This paper takes up the Senate (1991, p.160) call 'to get serious about adult education'. It is called 'Getting serious' in three main senses.

Firstly, it contends that given the situation and the imperative nationally to 2020, as summarised in this paper, it is time to get serious in terms of ALA's unmet vision for lifelong and lifewide learning for all Australians. This is despite 60 years of evidence-based exhortation and government policy commitments. Secondly, it is arguably time for communities, non-government organisations (NGOs) and governments to get serious and heed the research evidence about the many benefits of learning. Finally, for many Australians, *not* having access to the learning they need to flourish, stay connected, in work and well, poses serious future risks to individuals, their families, the community, democracy and the economy.

Method

A full set of back issues was assembled of the association's 168 journal issues: the A*ustralian Journal of Adult Education* (AJAE, 1961-1989), the *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education* (AJACE, 1990-1999) and the current journal, AJAL. Of these journals, more than one third (37%; 62/168) included sets of papers solicited, contributed or organised around a particular 'theme', a practice that began on a regular but intermittent basis from 1984. AJAL journal articles in the 25 issues published between 2011 and 2019 (No. 1) were coded using Harris and

Morrison's (2011) code frame from their comprehensive, thematic and quantitative 50-year study (1961-2010) in relation to authorship and paper theme. The aim was to provide two new data points within the nine years post 2010 to extrapolate to the present.

In total, over the approximately 60-year time frame, there have been 1,031 journal articles published (not counting book reviews) with a total of 1,450 authors, noting that some authors have multiple publications. Each of the journals was examined to identify particular articles and content that would help inform this retrospective historical study.

Literature review

AJAL is likely the third oldest extant adult education journal in the world after the *Indian Journal of Adult Education* and the US-based *Adult Education Quarterly* (AEQ), which commenced in 1938 and 1950 respectively. Reflecting critically via content analysis over several decades on such a rich, formally organised academic publication trove, as Harris and Morrison (2011, p.18) noted, 'can tell us much about a field of study, as publications reflect the knowledge base of a discipline'. Harris (1990), the journal editor for 23 years had previously editorialised in *AJACE* on the journal's 30th anniversary that 'this journal itself can act as a mirror, reflecting back the contours and complexions of those three decades that this journal itself can serve' (Harris, 1990, p.2).

There have been several previous historical analyses of adult learning in Australia and ALA and its antecedent organisations including by Harris and Willis (1992). As for the current article, several reflective thematic and historical analyses have been published around the turn of each decade beyond 1960 as articles in ALA's journal.

There have been several previous content analyses of adult education journals internationally. Taylor (2001) undertook an analysis of all submissions to *AEQ* over the decade of the 1990s. Long and Agyekum (1974) undertook a similar decade long (1964-73) study of AEQ's antecedent journal, *Adult Education* as did Dickinson and Rusnell (1971) over two decades from 1950. Shah and Choudhary (2018) published a comprehensive 75-year history of the Indian Adult Education Association (1939-2014) that included an analysis of the content in its journals and newsletters.

Golding and Harvey (2019) undertook a 50-year study of the Irish peak adult education organisation, AONTAS, based on an analysis of *The Adult Learner* and antecedent journals dating back to 1971. As for the current study, Golding and Harvey used a thematic, partly quantitative methodology informed by Harris and Morrison's (2011) methodology.

The context for establishing a national learning organisation in 1960

This section seeks to answer the first research question about the context for the creation of a national learning organisation in Australia. The formalisation of the initial national association, AAAL, occurred six decades ago in 1960. Some understanding of the events that preceded its formation is important in establishing how, when and why it was formed and through the agency of which prior organisations.

Lifelong learning cultures in Australia: An ancient perspective

It is misleading to start a history of adult learning in Australia commencing with Duncan (1944). Australia's diverse First Nations peoples have one of the oldest continuous lifelong learning cultures in the world. For almost 230 years migrant and refugee cultures, initially from Europe, particularly the UK, largely ignored, discounted and suppressed these rich and complex Indigenous learning cultures, knowledge systems, pedagogies and languages, through centuries of patronising and culturally insensitive state and missionary interventions, including through adult education. The patronising term 'adult education for Aborigines' was a commonly used term until quite recently, even in ACE.

As a brief illustration, in the same year that W. G. K. Duncan's national vision was finally published, Alan T. Duncan's (1973) article on 'Strategies in Aboriginal adult education' in *AJAE* makes for uncomfortable but important contemporary reading. It reminds us of how far we have come and also how far we have to go in terms of national reconciliation. Alan Duncan, a Sydney University academic reported on an attempted 'experiment' teaching Aborigines in a formal lecture style. This formal delivery style had been the cornerstone of university extension and WEA programs. Because it didn't work, Duncan rationalised that 'Today Aborigines find the concept of deferred gratification very difficult to accept … [as] clearly demonstrated in attitudes towards education

and employment'. One of the problems Duncan identified '… in teaching Aborigines how to overcome the problem of isolation on one of the reserves', in his view, 'arose from the fact that Aborigines were encouraged to express themselves freely' (p.117).

Twenty years later Byrnes (1993, p.157) identified that for many years adult education programs 'have been instituted in Aboriginal communities, primarily by non-Aboriginal people which have not worked as intended … because both the intended outcomes … and the teaching methods were based on false assumptions'. As McClay (1988, p.147) put it in his doctoral thesis on S*urviving the Whiteman's world: Adult education in Aboriginal society*, 'adult education can be an agent that serves Aboriginal people or one which seeks to control or dominate them.'

Adult education in Australian Indigenous contexts, and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems and pedagogies have seldom been discussed or seriously interrogated within the association journals. By contrast, contemporary ACE Aotearoa approaches and pedagogies which validate and equally value Indigenous (Maori and Pacifica) learning cultures and peoples and that involve bicultural management of adult education in New Zealand are extensive and inspiring: light years ahead of anything yet contemplated or attempted in Australia.

Almost 180 years after the Maori and Pakeha had negotiated the Treaty of Waitangi in Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1840, the Australian government in 2019 refused to even consider the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart' (Uluru, 2017). That statement respectfully asked for a well overdue 'First Nations Voice in the Australian Constitution' and a 'Makarrata Commission' to supervise a process of 'agreement-making' and 'truth-telling' between government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. If and when these processes finally take root nationally, acknowledging and supporting culturally appropriate forms of adult and community education underpinned by Indigenous pedagogies and knowledge systems can be one important way of ensuring respectful and effective dialogue as part of a well overdue national reconciliation.

The loose and fraying strands of Australian adult education since 1960

W. G. K. (Walter) Duncan's biography (Stretton, 2007) identifies why historians of Australian adult education have conventionally gone back to the Duncan (1944) report as the start of adult education in Australia.

> *Duncan was seconded in 1944 to the Universities Commission to investigate adult education in Australia. He believed that lifelong learning `should cater for all the interests and problems of adult life'. His report recommended that `adult education ... should be organised as a nation-wide service; and that responsibility for it (both moral and financial) should be accepted and shared by Commonwealth, State and Local Governments'. The [Duncan] report was neither adopted nor published. (Stretton, 2007)*

There are many strands in the story of how adult education was introduced to colonial Australia, well before 1960 and long before Duncan in 1944. Much of it is about boom and bust. Mechanics Institutes on the British model spread across Australia beginning during the 1850s gold rushes and had spread to over two thousand sites within 60 years. This network at its peak, was perhaps the most devolved and widespread local adult education network in Australia's white history. Though targeted at working men, particularly on the goldfields, Mechanics Institutes are seen by many as a very early forerunner of the national TAFE (Technical and Further Education) system first envisioned in Australia by Kangan (1974).

'Evening Schools', were set up by some state governments in the late 1800s 'to provide primary education for adults who had missed out on normal schooling' (Dymock, 2001, p.5). Several early Australian universities including Melbourne and Sydney had Adult Education Extension Boards before 1900, but most had disappeared by the 1980s.

Workers Education Association (WEA) providers briefly boomed but soon busted in most states in the three decades after 1913. WEA's birth in Australia was prompted by the 1913 visit to Australia by the WEA's British co-founder, Albert Mansbridge (Dymock, 2001). Mansbridge's original rationale for setting up an association to promote higher 'liberal' education of working men was that workers wanted industrial and political power but lacked the knowledge to use it (Dymock, 2001, p.3). WEA was based on a voluntary and democratic model committed to high academic standards and a pursuit of objectivity. Like the Mechanics Institutes, they tended instead, partly due to the inappropriate pedagogies, formal content and delivery styles, to cater for the middle classes rather than the workers for whom they were intended.

Unlike the Mechanics Institutes, the effective reach of all other forms of early white adult education was limited to some states and some capital or regional cities. John Anderson's free-thinking liberation philosophies about free and open discussion of issues in Sydney in the decades of the 1940s and 1950s (Duke, 1970, p.107) provided alternative and challenging home grown visions of adult learning aside from WEA's relatively liberal pedagogies.

Several (now mostly defunct) state-based Boards of Adult Education were established from 1946. The Council of Adult Education (CAE), which dominated the scene in Victoria from 1947 was effectively subsumed by Box Hill Institute after 2012. While each of these adult education 'movements' has shone brightly (and declined) over different decades and with different emphases in different Australian states, the reality of adult education in Australia as a national project remains problematic and unfulfilled to 2020.

At the time AAAE formed in 1960, WEA was in decline but still retained strategic alliances with the small number of adult education extension departments operating on the fringes of some of the older 'sandstone' universities, particularly in NSW but also in South Australia and Western Australia. Smith (1968a) cuttingly remarked from his Adult Education Board, University of WA vantage point that whilst WEA was created to 'fill a deplorable gap' in educational provision, since the gap no longer existed, WEA had 'become quite redundant and something of an encumbrance' (p.68).

Smith's (1968b, p.116) scathing critique of liberal education WEA style comes close to more contemporary thinking when he wrote in 1968 that:

> *It is time we stopped dreaming of a population agog for pure enlightenment and looked at the situation as it exists. ... The brute fact is that in this country, at this time, very few people study for the joy of it. The vast majority of adult students are seeking social contact, amusement, status advantage, useful skills or, above all, economic advantage. This does not mean that they may not achieve a considerable measure of 'broad liberal education' in the process.*

Badger (1966, p.51) also recollected that before World War 2, formal provision of adult education beyond the universities was extremely

limited. An Army Education (later Services Education) system operated during the war on the premise that 'the ordinary man [sic.] in the services should know something about the purposes of the war'. This purpose was seen to distinguish informed democracies from uninformed dictatorships. Badger (1966, p.52) noted that during the post-war years, 'much energy and invention, that extended in part to adult education, was associated with 'post war reconstruction'. The Argus (22 Sept 1945, p.2) noted, in the context of the then recent Commonwealth government announcement about 'taking full control of education in Australia', that the problem of adult education, made more acute by demobilisation, was:

> *… a national problem with a vengeance. It is usually undertaken at present by university extension boards in collaboration with the Workers' Educational Association, with state endowments that can only be called beggarly.*

By the mid 1950s, the seedbed for a national adult education association was being prepared by several players in spite of defensive resistance from the WEA. Fred Alexander's (1953) book, *Adult education in Australia: An historian's point of view*, was republished in Australia in 1959. It poured fuel on an existing heated debate about whether WEA, particularly in metropolitan NSW, had become an outmoded and elitist form of adult education (Dymock, 2001, p.34). By then several State Adult Education Boards had become active and some universities and WEAs perceived a threat to their government funding.

Annual meetings of various state adult education providers had commenced in Australia in 1955. At the 1958 (Sydney) and 1958 (Adelaide) meetings the question of a national adult education association was discussed. AAAE was formally established at the 1960s National Directors Meeting in Hobart. Arnold Hely played an important role in resolving conflicts between the many people and organisations involved and their different perceptions of adult education. Hely became inaugural AAAE Editor for the first *AJAE* published in July 1961. Hely's life and considerable Australian adult education legacy are covered in Morris (2011). Two of the three articles in the first association journals addressed the issue of a national association, including W. G. K. Duncan's article, 'Agenda for a national association' and E. M. Hutchinson's (Secretary of NIACE in the UK) article on 'The international importance of a national Association'.

AJAE (3[2], pp.5-22) in 1963 contains a comprehensive article titled 'Background to the foundation of the Australian Association of Adult Education' by the CAE Director, Colin Badger. In summary, at the time of the association's formation in 1960 the key, all male players in Australian adult education were part of an uneasy and fractured coalition. The coalition comprised mainly city-based WEA's and university-based Adult Education providers, Evening Colleges in NSW and state-organised Adult Education Boards, as well as the Council for Adult Education (CAE) in Victoria. The *AJAE* 'News' (p.3) in December 1962 reported that the association's first year was 'formative and exploratory'. It was acknowledged that 'There is a still a good deal of experiment to be carried out on what the Association can and cannot successfully do, and room for improvement on what it is doing'.

Adult education in Australia across the decades since 1960

This section seeks to answer the second main research question about how the association, its journal and the field changed in the past six decades. The first two decades that followed the long and painful birth of AAAE in 1960 (Hely, 1961) would perhaps be the most difficult and contested ones. As soon as the ink was dry on the formal agreement to associate, the very different histories, pedagogies and visions for the future of the key players and organisations would emerge and lead to ongoing contestation, including between researchers and practitioners, about what adult education was or should be. Evidence-based research was rare in those decades. Unlike the early *Adult Learner Journal* in Ireland, the Australian association's early, very academic journals included very little learner or practitioner voice.

Duncan's (1961) 'Agenda for a national association' that appeared in the first edition of *AJAE* in 1961 was found to be difficult to implement in practice. In Duncan's (1961) words, 'the duration and difficulties … of the issues involved and the unconscionably protracted period of gestation … would have shamed even an elephant'. The diverse, highly opinionated, often quarrelsome men and organisations that had given birth to the new association were in for a very difficult fatherhood.

By 1964 the AJAE 'News' (p.4) was asking adult educators who had assisted:

> *… the developing countries in their construction of adult education [effectively the birth of ASPBAE in 1964], whether the time had*

> *come ... to come to grips in our discussions – to sift out the wheat from the chaff among our differing perceptions? And is not Australia – heir to the British tradition and culture, but strongly influenced by her sister frontier-born society, the United States -well placed to make a reconciling contribution to world debate?'*

This jingoistic exhortation aside, there was no government funding, limited resources and serious disagreements between organisations about the desirable role of AAAE during the 1960s, which became 'years of crisis' for the association. Examination of the rapid turnover of AAAE office bearers in the five years between 1963 and 1967 confirms there was much shuffling of positions on the decks during this titanic struggle. The association's home base moved from Adelaide to Sydney to Melbourne and back to Adelaide. One new bright star that would become ASPBAE (Asian-South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education) was born in this tumultuous period in 1964. This occurred through the efforts of AAAE, largely due to the stellar networking and insight of Hely. The July 1964 AJAE News confirms that the impetus for ASPBAE arose out of a UNESCO Asian-South Pacific seminar that AAAE helped to organise. The December AJAE News in 1964 reported that after eight years in Australia, Hely, then Chair of AAAE was returning to New Zealand to head up their Council of Adult Education.

The Universities Commission (Martin) Report in 1964 recommended that university provision of adult education should cease. It led to 'old wounds' being reopened about the nature of adult education and how it might best be provided. If AAAE was to support this recommendation, the status of State Boards would increase. AAAE by a slim margin, with WEA and university lobbying, opposed the recommendation. The fierce debate associated with this decision about what counts as adult education and who might be funded to provide it did a lot of organisational damage.

'The Martin Report and adult education' article was published in the July 1966 issue of *AJAE* by Phillip Rossell of University of Sydney. It acknowledged (p.4) that '... the Australian adult education provisions are not only limited, but the scene is confusing and many who operate within it are confused'. There was disagreement also among 'many adult educators as to aims, functions and standards'.

Duncan's (1944) ideas therefore remained largely 'a vision splendid' nationally when revisited and published by Whitelock (1970). Fifty years on from Duncan, Crombie (1995) confirmed that well developed community state-supported and coordinated ACE provision was restricted to Victoria and NSW. The federal government (and some states such as Queensland without state-based ACE provision) sometimes released reports and policies but rarely provided any funding. Eighty years on from Duncan things have changed little. It is now almost a decade since Golding and Foley's (2011) 'All over, red rover' paper about the demise and unrealised potential of Australian adult education. This is despite new and compelling international research evidence identified in their paper and published since, about the many benefits of learning, lifelong and lifewide.

Brennan (2010) described the 1970s as AAAE's period of 'adolescence'. The tensions of the previous decade were still evident in 1970. Chris Duke's article on the 'Liberal and the socio-emotional' (*AJAE*, 1970, 10(3), pp.107-17) identified the nub of the tensions. The 'discipline-oriented liberal adult education' at one polarity 'emphasised a teacher who was an authority on a subject and who exposes his students to the discipline of the subject'. The other polarity was referred to by Duke as 'problem- or student–oriented adult education ... which emphasises an environment of learning in which students undergo experiences which they are induced to relate to previous experience ...' (p.107).

During the decade of the 1970s the federal government gave a funding grant to AAAE for the first time. It allowed the appointment of the first paid association Secretary/Treasurer from January 1971. The 'block grant' over the following decades grew but more recently has shrivelled, being only partially replaced by funding for providing services such as Adult Learners Week.

Whitelock (1970) took Duncan's unpublished (1944) report and republished the main text with 15 commentaries as *Adult education in Australia*, a 288 page tome, introducing it as the *Magna Carta* of Australian adult education, asserting that it was `the most substantial, comprehensive and thoughtful document on adult education in this country' (Stretton, 2007). Even in Whitelock's view, the authors were each grinding their own axes. The book was reviewed by Duncan (1970), who observed that each contributor 'deplores the lack of recognition accorded, as yet, to adult education' (p.83), that 'remains in all its forms

beset by many problems', including a want of resources, adequate buildings, lack of money as well as sufficiently skilled staff to practise, experiment, write and research.

Zelman Cowen (then a university Vice Chancellor, later to become Australian Governor General, 1977-82) put the most positive spin on a fractured coalition. He rationalised in the Preface of Whitelock (1970) that each adult education agency (by then identified by Duncan (1970, p.82) as comprising 'universities, statutory bodies, government departments and voluntary bodies') '... has its place and special qualities. The last thing that the adult education movement in a democratic society wants or needs is conformity'.

Winds of change were blowing through the 1970s, and some people could see some forward-looking national solutions for adult education. Joan Allsop, then AJAE Editor, contributed an article on 'Toward lifelong learning' in the July 1974 issue of AJAE 14(2). It optimistically and presciently anticipated that "Educational Resources Centres' across Australia will be essential for all its citizens, not just as community centres, ... but as places of social and civic learning for all ages and at all times' (p.54). The same winds of change also blew through AAAE, which by 1975 diversified membership. It abolished the distinction between 'professionals', who had dominated the executive, and 'associates' with an interest in the field, and allowed for the creation of state branches. By 1976 the Australian Council of Adult Literacy (ACAL) was operating as an independent entity following discussions within AAAE and there was an upturn in ASPBAE activity.

In 1978 national Labor politician Al Grassby, sometimes referred to as 'the father of Australian multiculturalism', was urging adult educators to get more involved in the cultural revolution in 'multicultural and poly-ethnic' Australia (AJAE, 18:1). Grassby lamented that Australia's '... extirpation of 500 Aboriginal languages ... [built] one of the most mono-lingual, xenophobic people on earth' (p.17).

But still researchers locked horns trying to make theoretical sense of what adult education practitioners were actually doing. In 1977 (*AJAE*, 17:1) Guest Editor A. Wesson complained that:

> *... it has not proved possible for our craft to agree on a framework in which to develop an adult education theory; it*

> *may indeed be a fruitless search. ... [W]e continue, on one hand,*
> *to amass fairly unconnected heaps of "hard data" and, on the*
> *other hand, peddle our current favourite framework, in the hope*
> *of acquiring fellow believers amongst our colleagues. (p.1)*

By the mid-1980s as 'community education' and 'ACE' started to enter the discourse, national training reform began to be debated seriously in the journal. Radical changes to state-based ACE and TAFE provision became evident with this national reform with the release of the Kirby Report (1985) and the introduction of competency-based training (CBT) by ministerial decree in 1989. The National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA) constituted a series of reforms in vocational education and training. These reforms were designed to improve the competitiveness of Australian industry, progressively introduced by commonwealth, state and territory governments from the mid 1980s to 1996.

The association journal under Barrie Brennan's Editorship set up an Editorial Panel in 1984, later to become an Editorial Board by 1999. Articles became somewhat more evidence-based, but few articles during the 1980s had more than ten references. By 1990 with Roger Harris as Editor, the Panel would have its first international board member, a trend that accelerated in *AJAL* from 2000.

Deliberately or not, the NTRA reforms had the effect of largely emasculating the FE (further education) including ACE from Kangan's (1994) original TAFE vision, making life much harder for many providers of ACE within and beyond TAFE. The journal records the pushback against vocationalism as the NTRA gathered pace into the mid-1990s. Butler's (1989) *Lifelong learning* revisited for the Commission for the Future was buttressed by international exhortations for action coming out of the 'World Conference on Education for All'.

Despite this pushback, many providers of adult education would either drastically change or go to the wall in this new competitive environment over the decades that followed. The association by the late 1980s (Brennan, 1988b, p.34) was hamstrung by its restricted resource base. This limited the scope of its activities, the quality and intensity of its work, the ability to respond quickly or over an extended period of time, and the ability to service the field as well as its members. Brennan (1988b, p.34) wrote presciently that 'Those who write the story of the AAAE, if it survives, will be able to recount how these problems, that

are not new but as old as the Association itself, were resolved …'. The following year the 'C' (Community) was added, to become AAACE in 1989, when AAAE 'amalgamated with the ailing Australian Association of Community Education whose core focus was the community learning role of schools' (Crombie, 2010, p.542).

A lot was written, researched and promised about adult education on many fronts in the 1990s as *AJAE* logically became *AJACE*. Much of it came to very little in practice or for the association. In several senses the decade to 2000 represented a high watermark for adult education nationally and for some states. In the most recent two decades there is evidence that the tide has been going out, as have been the resources to properly carry out the association's national vision. The national policy preoccupation in the past two decades with training reform and privatisation has meant that invitations to the 'Adult Education Ball' have not extended to the 'Cinderella' sector, despite the visionary recommendations in the 1991 and 1997 Senate reports. In effect invitations were only extended to the increasingly competitive universities, an increasingly emasculated TAFE and increasingly unscrupulous Registered Training Organisations.

After three decades of men's domination of the field of theory and practice, adult education in the 1990s was characterised by Brennan as 'a decade of women' for the AAACE. The association had appointed a female Secretary from 1965. Its Business Managers from 1982 had all been women. Joan Allsop had been *AJAE* Assistant Editor from 1968 and was Editor several times between 1974-76. Women have comprised a majority (54%) of those 72 persons invited onto the journal Boards and Panels in the 25 years since these positions were created in 1994. During the 1980s Diane Berlin became the second female association President in 1987-8 after Pauline Seitz (1983-4). Berlin (2000) leveraged off Brennan's (2000) 1990s 'adolescent' characterisation to instead describe the 1980s as an era of 'young womanhood'. There was the emergence of the community-based adult education movement particularly in Victoria from the 1980s, largely for and by women. This development paralleled the global movement towards feminisation and would have an ongoing national impact on adult education.

Crombie (2010, p.543) described the 1990s as the 'decade of AAACE'. It was bookended by the shift in name and emphasis of the association

to AAACE and the journal to *AJACE*, as the field in some (but not all) states moved more towards community education. The move to ALA in 1998 in Crombie's (2010, p.543) words, '… to claim to being the peak advocacy body on behalf of adult learners, as well as providers … was bound to be a difficult act to sustain'.

Mezirow's major works on critical, transformative and emancipatory education in 1990-91 began to inform and enthuse scholars and practitioners to work with learners to transform their fields of adult education practice. However the national policy makers remained largely unmoved. One national innovation that was taken up in the mid-1990s (in Australia in 1995, following its UK invention by Alan Tuckett in 1992), that has proved to be successful and persistent over the 25 years since, has been national 'Adult Learners Week' (ALW). It gave ALA an annual 'reach' into states and territories where adult education has a lower profile. ALW has also been increasingly important as a source of otherwise diminishing national funding and loss of most of its core grant.

The decade from 2000 started positively with a flurry of serious and critical investigations of adult education in Australia. *Come in Cinderella: The emergence of adult and community education* (1991) identified significant changes in the patterns and level of participation by adults (particularly women) in education and training. It described the organisation of adult and community education (ACE) provision in the states and territories and identified emerging technological, demographic and economic trends such as an ageing population and the internet. In retrospect, the Senate report completely missed the main population segments that still tend to be underrepresented in community forms of ACE: young adults and men.

Later in the same decade, *Beyond Cinderella: Towards a learning society* (1997) sought to bring together national ACE and VET policy, leading to the creation of the first national ACE policy. It is pertinent to add here that the 'Cinderella' metaphor in relation to adult education was first used at least two decades earlier by J. L. J. Wilson (ANU) in 'Some reflections of adult education in Australia' (*ASPBAE Journal,* 1(4), cited in AJAE, 1968, 8(2), p.94). The same 'Cinderella' metaphor had earlier been used to describe Australian technical education in 1936 (The Age, 2 July, p.9). University research was also called 'the Cinderella of tertiary education' in 1945 (*The Argus,* 22 Sept, p.2).

The decade from 2000 also saw a lot of retrospective soul searching as ALA turned 40. NCVER commissioned *A consolidation of ACE research 1990-2000* (Golding, Davies & Volkoff, 2001). It waded through recent and voluminous literature about the complex, poorly defined, nationally patchy, very loosely coupled and often elusive ACE 'sector'. Sometimes ACE was described as a type of course, a type of organisation, an ethos and a sector of provision (Schofield & Associates, 1996). At other times, for policy, planning and resource allocation purposes, the term 'ACE' was used loosely and interchangeably to describe a group of clients, a learning philosophy, a category of provider, an educational sector and a type of course.

These obvious ambiguities, combined with the artificial distinction between ACE and VET, plagued and impacted on national and state surveys of ACE as well as on ACE research published in *AJAL*. By the end of the 1990s, AAACE had become ALA. This change reflected both the perceived need to better understand adult learning wherever it might occur, and the trend towards acknowledging the agency and needs of learners rather than the primacy of educators. Consistent with these changes, by 2000 the *AJACE* had become *AJAL*. There was a move to peer review most articles in *AJAL* after 2000. Articles and issues became larger, and during subsequent decades reference lists have often spanned several pages.

It is perhaps too soon to confidently characterise adult education in the decade to 2020 aside from what is evident though *AJAL*, including a further decade of data to add to Harris and Morrison's (2011) 50-year analysis in a section to follow. Two years after the celebration of 50 years of ALA, including many retrospective and historical articles in AJAL in 2010(3) and its 2011 'Special Edition', Tony Brown replaced Roger Harris in 2013 as AJAL editor, followed by Trace Ollis from October 2017. From 2013, AJAL created a web presence and author contributions were managed and reviewed online.

During 2014-15 evidence of the downsides of the widespread marketisation of VET (Vocational Education and Training) had become a national disgrace. A feeding frenzy by private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) further eroded the public TAFE system and the very small amount of ACE still embedded within it. The learning needs of men, particularly of older men, crept into the adult learning research discourse. The 'Men's Shed' movement developed some parallels with the women's 'Community 'House' movement in the 1980s (Golding, Kimberley, Foley & Brown,

2008). As global warming became more of a recognised phenomenon the trickle of papers on environmental themes also increased.

If all of what happened before 1944 is put to one side, and the birth of AAAE in 1960 is taken as an arbitrary starting point, there is one obvious, fundamental problem permeating Australian adult education and policy research over the following six decades. It is that there has been no simple way of defining a coherent national ACE 'sector' (Golding, Davies & Volkoff, 2001, p.39). Australia to 2020 remains a nation riven by division between states and territories that have (and have not) provided government support for adult education in community settings. The Australian ACE and TAFE typology proposed by Crombie (1996, in Golding, Davies & Volkoff, 2001, Figure 2, p.40) remains somewhat similar 25 years on.

The 'state-supported and co-ordinated ACE sector' in Victoria remains the strongest ACE sector in Australia to 2020. Ongoing support from the current Minister for Training and Skills, Gayle Tierney, was outlined in her commitment in the 2020-25 statement (Tierney, 2019). Considerable resources and support are provided to the 'Learn Local' sector and Victoria is the only state to have legislation supporting an entity such as the Adult, Continuing and Further Education (ACFE) Board. The NSW Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, Geoffrey Lee recently released a statement (Lee, 2020) in support of ACE. While some Community Colleges have received extra resources in NSW, the ACE sector does not have the same level of support as in Victoria. Over the same 25 years recognised ACE provision, including through TAFE in WA, Queensland and Tasmania has greatly diminished or disappeared.

If adult learning is to be defined as all informal, non-formal and formal adult learning, it raises the question of where does one start and stop, and how might it be measured and analysed (for example by learner surveys), other than in particular sites or via its component parts. Hierarchical education systems position formal education in universities at the top and the least formal and less literate and informal learning, including ACE on the bottom. These hierarchies are '... regarded as normal and desirable by most stakeholders ... legitimised through neo-liberal educational discourses such as standards, standardisation and accountability that permeate the educational structures in the contemporary Australian education system' (Golding, Brown & Foley, 2009, p.53). Formal,

accredited learning, with many more things to measure, is also much easier than ACE to define, measure, track and research.

Evidence from the changing nature of research in the journal

Most of the 'research' reported in many early association journals would likely not be published in the current journal *AJAL*. Durston's (1967) article about 'Research in adult education' was based on an examination of 60 articles already published in the *AJAE*. It provided evidence of the poor quality of these early articles. Durston found 'exceedingly few studies which 'meet the canons of adequate research' (p.5), with 'little systematic attempt to isolate and investigate particular problems scientifically' (pp.5-6), inadequately defined problems for investigation and methods, plus inadequate description and presentation of data, raising serious questions about 'the value and reliability of conclusions' (p.6).

Durston (1968) undertook another systematic, critical analysis of all 76 articles published in *AJAE* spanning 1961-7, noting that most 'articles [were] descriptive or narrative accounts ... and should more properly be termed writing than research' (p.81). Durston urged contributors to move beyond the preoccupation with case studies and 'move on to the level of generalisation, proposition and theory' (p.81). However, he acknowledged that adult education was then a new field of academic study and that no '… large accumulation of factual material concerning it exists' (p.81).

In the defence of journal contributors in the early decades, the first *AJAEs* were very slim volumes, and academic guidelines were far less defined or rigid. Guidelines as to style and length (4,000 word maximum) were only introduced in 1984 under Barrie Brennan's editorship, as were regularly 'themed' editions of the journal. The list in Table 1 identifying those themed issues illustrates how Editors were shaping as well as responding to contributions by actively soliciting articles.

The themes adopted for all 'Association conferences over 50 years' to 2010 were listed in *AJAL* 2010 (Issue 50 (3), pp.636-9). Four national ALA conferences were held in Australia to 2020: Melbourne 2011 and Byron Bay 2012 , one conference conducted jointly with ACE Aotearoa in 2013 in Wellington, New Zealand and one held in partnership with LincTas in 2017 in Hobart. In 2018, in lieu of a conference, ALA declared it the Year of Lifelong Learning (YOLL) and held a series of forums. These typically broad-based, future-oriented conference themes as well as journal issue

themes in Table 1 shine the light on new or emerging trends, sectors or aspects of ACE delivery and practice. In the fourteen years between 1985 and 1999, over one half (55%: 25 out of 45) of journal issues were themed, likely influencing several of the thematic peaks evident in Harris and Morrison's (2011) nine content-related graphs. In several instances, the Editor (Harris) had called for articles on themes but was unable to get enough articles to fill an issue. In other cases, an 'overarching theme' was created retrospectively to fit the author contributions.

Table 1: Journal themes

Year (Issue)	*Themes*
1977 (3)*	*Adult education & development*
1985 (1)	*Technology & education*
1985 (3)	*Multicultural education*
1986 (1)	*Learning*
1986 (2)	*Adult education in Asia & the Pacific*
1986 (3)	*Innovations*
1987 (3)	*The celebration of learning*
1988 (1)	*The history of adult education in Australia*
1988 (3)	*A re-examination of the future of adult education in Australia*
1989 (1)	*Prison education*
1989 (2)	*Adult education in rural areas*
1990 (2)	*Adult basic literacy*
1991 (1) *AJAE*	*Community education*
1991 (3)	*Adult education responses to economic rationalism*
1992 (2)	*From the learner's standpoint*
1992 (3)	*Ways of working with adult learners*
1993 (2)	*Workplace education*
1994 (1)	*Gender & community education*
1994 (3)	*Education for marriage and family life*
1995 (1)	*The adult vocational sector*
1995 (2)	*Adult learners & learning in the adult HE sector*
1995 (3)	*Adult community education sector*
1996 (1)	*International perspectives*
1997 (1)	*The many roles of ACE*
1998 (1)	*ACE in regional areas*
1999 (1)	*Adult learning in different sectors*
2000 (1) *AJACE*	*Lifelong learning*
2000 (3)	*40th Anniversary edition*
2002 (1)	*Explorations of practice*
2002 (2)	*Informal learning*
2003 (3)	*Online learning*
2004 (3)	*Enabling education*

2007 (2)	*Outcomes from learning*
2009 (3)	*Learning to be drier*
2010 (3) *AJAL*	*AJAL 50 Years*
2011 (Special)	*50th Anniversary edition*
2012 (3)	*Food pedagogies*
2014 (3)	*Adult education & lifelong learning in the Asian century*
2015 (3)	*Public pedagogies*
2017 (3)	*Getting of wisdom: learning in later life*
2018 (3)	*Lifelong learning & sustainable development*
2019 (3)	*Bridging social movement theory with popular education*
2020 (3)	*60th Anniversary edition - Adult learning: Transforming individuals and communities over the decades*

* The 1977 themed issue preceded Editorial policy from 1985 to theme one or more issues each year, though no themed issues were published in 2001, 2005-6, 2008, 2013 or 2016.

There has been a gradual and significant increase in the association journal over the six decades in academic formality, permissible maximum length, average number of references cited and the international spread of those references. This trend was also observed in Golding and Harvey's (2019) 50-year Irish Adult Learner Journal study. Just one typical, peer reviewed journal article in *AJAL* in 2019 took the whole article space of one *AJAE* issue published during the 1960s.

There has been increasing pressure in the past decade for university academics to publish in higher status international journals and development of more rigorous research methodologies. An extension of the word limit to 6,000 words and the introduction of double blind reviewing has raised the academic bar and affected authorship in many ways. This phenomenon is later analysed in more detail, for AJAL for the decade since 2010.

Evidence from reviews of the journal contents

Long (1983) provided the first systematic content review of the association journal, *AJAE*, covering the decade 1970-1979. Long was puzzled by what he regarded as the observed mismatch between the journal's interest in articles contributed from Australia either to do with the philosophy of education (23% of topics) or on overseas topics (14% of topics). Given the 1970s in Australia was in such a state of political, demographic and public policy flux, Long speculated that the data 'might suggest an intensive period of self-conscious reflection,

coupled with a certain degree of insecurity about the directions of adult education in Australia' (Long, 1983, p.7).

Long was surprised to not see more articles from Australia reacting 'to the events swirling around the association at that time' (p.8). The same might be said of most of the journal articles in the decades since. Writers often have research interests that do not necessarily match the concern of practitioners, providers, learners, governments or policy makers, and vice versa. Indeed, if researchers are involved in truly critical research, their perspectives may be oppositional. While academic journal editors are, by convention, free to select themes and publish articles independently without pressure from the organisation that sponsors them, in the case of AJAL there are times over the decades where the line with the association has perhaps been blurred.

At the time of his 1983 study, Long noted that whilst the stated objectives in the association's journal did not include establishing an international reputation (p.11), the significant proportion of overseas authors was indicative of the '1:4 dependence on foreign scholarship' (p.10). 'Journal objectives over 50 years' (reproduced in AJAL, 2010, 50(3), pp.628-30) and subsequent journal objectives confirm that between 1990 and 2012, the journal's objectives had changed. Before 2013, the journal acknowledged that whilst the '... prime focus is on Australia ... papers relating to other contexts are also sometimes published.' Since 2013, after Tony Brown became Editor, the overseas invitation became more global and more explicit. Still acknowledging that the journal's prime focus was on Australia, the objective shifted to emphasise that '... the practice of adult learning is an international field and Australia is connected to all parts of the global, and therefore papers relating to other counties are welcome' (AJAL inside cover, post 2013).

The current paper does not revisit Harris and Morrison's (2011) comprehensive 50-year content analysis of the history and trends in the association's journal authorship to 2010. As outlined earlier in the Methodology, the section that follows seeks to extend that study to the present decade (to 2019).

Evidence from AJAL since 2010

Data were analysed from 25 AJAL issues since 2010 in two time convenient intervals (2011-2014: 12 issues, 90 articles, 185 authors;

2015- April 2019: 13 issues, 97 articles, 180 authors). Table 2 presents data on AJAL author characteristics by these time periods inclusive of the most recent publication period (2011- April 2019), alongside comparable data from Harris and Morrison (2011). Authorship data available from a similar time period (2011-17) from Golding and Harvey's (2017) study of the Irish Adult Learner Journal, a journal with a somewhat similar national profile, have been added as a useful international comparison.

Table 2: AJAL author characteristics by time period

	Journal time period				
Author characteristic	50 year average to 1961-2000, % n=1085	1999- 2000, % n=386	2011- 2014, % n=180	2015- April 2019, % n=185	*The Adult Learner,* 2012- 17 %
Female	?	60	68	68	61
Male	?	40	32	32	39
Overseas	23.4	30	23	34	33
Australian	76.6	70	77	77	
University affiliation	64	77	93	97	65
NSW	37	27	23	20	
Victoria	18	24	30	32	
SA	14	14	11	5	
Queensland	13	17	26	25	
ACT	6	6	3	5	
WA	6	5	3	7	
Tasmania	5	4	3	5	
NT	2	3		1	

In summary, Table 2 confirms that many of the previous broad trends in journal authorship, identified by Harris and Morrison (2011) in *AJAL* over 50 years, continued into the decade after 2010. There was a further increase in: the proportion of authors with university backgrounds (rising steeply from 77% in the decade from 2000, to 95% since 2010); female authors (increasing from 60% in the decade from 2000 to 68% since 2010). Overseas authors fluctuated around the same level (30% in the decade from 2000, 29% since 2015). Of the small proportion (5%) of *AJAL* authors without a university affiliation in the past decade, aside from the 'private, including retired' authors, no authors in the most recent decade identified an ACE affiliation, and only two were affiliated with a VET or TAFE provider.

There is an overwhelming proportion of *AJAL* authors with a university affiliation, often addressing themes related to formal university-related programs. This is perhaps indicative of the languishing state of adult education as a professional practice and academic discipline in Australia. Many of these Australian trends parallel findings in the Golding and Harvey's (2019) Irish Adult Learner Journal study. However in the Irish journal, one third of authors were still from non-higher education backgrounds, including ten per cent with an ACE work affiliation. As a caveat, it should be noted that some authors, particularly those studying a higher degree by research, may have another personal, vocational, or professional association with adult education. *AJAL* authors from India and Nigeria, prominent in the decade to 2010 (total 46 authors in the decade to 2010; two since 2011), slowed to a trickle as the proportion of authors from Europe (10 nations) and other countries in Asia (six countries) and Africa (three countries) increased.

Table 2 shows that the proportion of *AJAL* authors from South Australia fell since 2010 and from NSW reduced, as Victorian and particularly Queensland authors greatly increased. Some of these changes are likely to be indicative of the demise of 'adult (and vocational) education' in University of South Australia and University of Technology Sydney around this time and the retirement of the relevant staff and researchers. As Harris and Morrison (2011) suggested, some of these trends by state are partly related to the state and institutional location of the journal editor. Others are likely affected by states that have adult and vocational programs and researchers in many of their universities.

When Australian authorship was analysed by university affiliation spanning the most recent decade since 2010, authors identified affiliations with a large number of (30) different Australian universities. Six universities affiliated with ten or more authors across the past decade contributed 44 per cent of all Australian authors, including from NSW: University of Newcastle (11 authors) and UTS (10); Victoria: Monash University and Deakin University (both 14); SA: University of SA (15); Queensland: CQU (19). Some of these trends appear to be related to more academics researching and publishing in groups.

Numeric analysis of the same 22 themes utilised in Harris and Morrison's study (similarly allocating up to four themes per article) did not yield statistically meaningful results when applied to the small

number of (187) AJAL articles published over the past decade. However some recent trends were evident. There is an increasing trend towards research about adult learning practice, pathways and pedagogy in higher education contexts, workplace settings and informal community settings, including for older adults.

What is as interesting is what is missing. It is useful but concerning to be able to return to words written by Long (1983, p.14) in a content analysis of a decade of AJAE articles going back 40-50 years (1970-79). Inserted, in square brackets, is the number of articles on those topics in the most recent decade of the 187 articles published in AJAL. Long wrote there is a trend towards:

> ... an abundance of articles on topics of relevance to those catered for educationally (e.g. Retraining, Upgrading [29]) and a dearth of articles reflecting migrant education [4], literacy development [8], participation, public policy [0], prisons [3], agriculture [3], [A]boriginal education [5] and union education [0], to name just a few.

Few articles since 2000 have been about young adults (1) or people with a disability (2) in ACE, compared to 34 that included learning in older age as a theme.

Discussion

This section seeks to discuss and explore the third main research question, about what the current situation is for Australian adult education and what possible new courses for the future ALA and AJAL might take. The discussion here is necessarily brief but is covered in more depth in a separate paper prepared for the ALA Board, titled 'Casting forward: Alternative futures for adult education in Australia' (Golding, 2019).

Discussion about ALA in the future

Duncan's original (1944) vision for a comprehensive national adult education system in Australia has not yet been realised despite 75 years of effort. Looking across the decades, the closest Australia came was perhaps soon after the 'halfway post' with the 'Come in Cinderella' and the 'Beyond Cinderella' recommendations in 1991 and 1998 respectively. Many of

these key recommendations were never implemented or funded. State-funded, decentralised adult education systems lingered longer in Victoria, but in other states and territories there has been less or no appetite for governments to pay for adults to learn. By 2020 they had virtually disappeared as state-funded systems in all states except Victoria.

Community and neighbourhood houses, as well as Men's Sheds have, in the past two decades by bottom up, local action taken up some of the more acute needs for adults to learn to live, connect with other people, share their skills and dreams and survive on the margins beyond paid work. However adult education coverage per se remains patchy nationally, and restricted to some states and territories. As of early 2020, state funded ACE provision was much reduced in Western Australia, at risk of further cuts in South Australia and almost totally missing in Queensland and the Northern Territory.

There remains an almost total silence in the critically important national migrant and Indigenous adult education space. Opportunities for lifelong and lifewide learning across most Australian states and territories remain more limited and patchy, particularly in rural and regional Australia than they were one decade ago.

In what form ACE survives or transforms beyond the long tail of the 2020 COVID-19 epidemic nationally and in Australian states and territories is unclear. However seismic shifts in other forms of education, the economy and government funding and the likely long road to recovery for many already socially isolated and economically disadvantaged people, groups and regions is suggestive of a need for future increased government support.

Meantime, Australia is far from a clever country educationally as Golding and Foley (2011) concluded in 2011. Prior to the COVID-19 epidemic, around third of Australian adults were functionally illiterate. One third spoke a language other than English at home. One half of all adults were not in full time, paid work. One half of adults in paid work in Australia had completed no formal qualifications post-school. One half of adults who were unemployed or not in the workforce were unwell. And yet research shows that adult education can make a huge difference to people's employability, lives, literacy, language, productivity, families, communities and their wellbeing. All the while most governments have been totally concerned about the cost of educational provision and

ignorant of the multiple likely wellbeing benefits and savings of adult learning and community association.

ALA on its own to early 2020 lacked the membership, resources, funding or networks to gain sufficient political traction for a national system, where front-end education and training imperatives dominated. There might be an opportunity to link strategically and more effectively with other national or international peak bodies, but the emphasis can't be on learning for learning's sake. It has to be about saving governments money by ensuring people of all ages, in and beyond paid work, are socially connected, physically and mentally well, and learning in the process. Before the COVID-19 epidemic in late 2019 I wrote in a draft of this article that it may 'perhaps and unfortunately' take a '… catastrophic natural event, or future crisis in the national or international economy to change the situation in relation to national policy or funding for adult learning'.

Discussion about AJAL in the future

AJAL remains one of a small number of well-regarded adult education journals in the world. This is a huge achievement for the journal and Adult Learning Australia and one that must not be lost or squandered. ALA, its journal as well as the adult education field of practice and research are clearly related. However they are never accurate or complete reflections of each other. The Harris and Morrison (2011) 'through the looking glass' metaphor, taken from the Lewis Caroll novel, means 'on the strange side, in the twilight zone, in a strange parallel world'. This is arguably pretty close to what Harris and Morrison saw when they looked *only* at the journal. A journal will never be an accurate reflection of the very diverse adult education communities of practice in Australia or worldwide. Nor will it provide a full or accurate history of the organisation that sponsors it.

Researchers choose whatever they are most interested in and passionate about to research and write. Similarly, associations choose annual conference themes and newsletter articles which they sense are strategic, useful and timely. Researchers will choose a convenient or interesting site or research method and may write it with a specific journal in mind. A particular article that appears in *AJAL* will be only one of around one thousand articles about adult education published globally annually. Whether it actually gets published will be mediated by deliberately chosen themes and by a rigorous peer review and selection.

What gets published where is also increasingly affected by academics seeking to publish in journals with higher impact and quality ratings. Examination of international journal impact and quality as measured by Scimago scores to 2017 (Scientific Rankings, 2018) ranks *AJAL* third in the world in the second quartile (Scimago score 0.3) after two like journals: *AEQ* (0.57) and the UK-based *International Journal of Lifelong Education* (0.48).

However these league tables raise the question as to what value the journal is and should be beyond its status, including to ALA and the field of adult education. Impact on the field internationally is one just measurable value. An advanced search of Google Scholar shows that some articles published within *AJAL* in the past decade (to 13 August 2019) already had a significant impact, as measured by the number of subsequent citations internationally.

Five illustrative examples include Owen's (2014) 'Teacher professional learning communities: Going beyond contrived collegiality toward challenging debate and collegial learning and professional growth' (128 citations); Christie, Carey and Robertson's 'Putting transformative learning theory into practice' (144 citations); Le Clus' (2011) 'Informal learning in the workplace' (115 citations); Falasca's (2011) 'Barriers to adult learning: Bridging the gap' (94 citations) and O'Toole and Essex's (2012) 'The adult learner may really be a neglected species' (64 citations).

Conclusion

In relation to the first research question, the context for establishing a national adult learning association in 1960, whilst fundamentally different to early 2020, remained even less receptive than ever to an inclusive and effective national system. Many of the early debates of 'classical liberal versus learner-centred' have moved on to become debates about the cost and values of learning in work, versus those beyond paid work. The institutions that created ALA have thankfully transformed to be more inclusive, pedagogically informed and learner-centred six decades on. Sites, institutions, and states where adult learning provision was strongest six decades ago have largely vanished or diminished. Universities with adult education as a specific research or curriculum focus have come and mostly gone in Australia and many similar, mostly English speaking nations.

Adult *education* has totally transformed in six decades, from being controlled and provided formally by a small number of men, providers and courses in a small number of capital cities, to adult *learning* now being facilitated informally mainly by women in very diverse community settings. State and territory funded adult education systems only took hold in around half of Australian states or territories, but by early 2020 most were much diminished or run down. There is a government attitude at national, state and territory levels that mediocre is good enough and that if adults want and value learning enough they should access it online, or if face to face, pay for it themselves. The non-funded or low-funded ACE contributions continue to produce important outcomes across the country despite the national government's continuing blind eye and ignorance of the multiple benefits and beneficiaries of learning.

The account in the body of this paper confirms how the national peak body (previously an association: since 2018 'Adult Learning Australia Limited'), the research in its journals and the field of adult education have adapted to the rapidly changing context, opportunities and needs for lifelong learning. By its heavy reliance on significantly reducing government funding in the most recent decade, ALA is just able to cover all its essential bases including its role and as a member-based national adult education peak body. Understandably, ALA is careful not to over extend. It has little capacity to fund research and by 2018 its journal editor was working unpaid.

Mounting an effective campaign for a national, place-based adult education system is perhaps an even more daunting task in 2020 than was in 1960, given the many more efficient ways of networking and learning via new media and online information and communications technologies (ICT). These ICT platforms have become almost universal during 2020 as a way around mitigating the risk of COVID-19.

The Discussion section, above, has summarised what possible new courses for the future ALA and AJAL might take. What happens to adult education and who funds or pays for it depends in part on the Australian economy and also which government is in power. Priorities about learning and education also shift depending on a wide range of social and demographic changes that occur independently of governments.

The 2019 national election showed that Australians had no appetite for national policy-based change. The penultimate version of this paper written in late 2019 before the COVID-19 epidemic prophetically read as follows.

*If, however, the social, environmental or economic order
becomes frayed as a result of any external or internal future
shock, the imperative of governments might be to act on the
copious, existing research evidence of the multiple benefits
of adult learning. Meantime in Australia, there is a national
attitude of mediocre is 'good enough' in terms of adult education,
which may prove disastrous, costly and difficult in terms
of social cohesion, sustainability and future international
competitiveness in the case of internal or external shock.*

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Educating Australian adults in an era of social and economic change

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The origins and focuses of adult education across Western countries are often about meeting adults' needs, and for purposes they have nominated, not those compelled by others. Unlike other sectors (e.g. schools, vocational colleges and universities) that were mainly initiated and sustained by church or state, adult education has long been grounded in communities and provided through hybrid institutions. Across Western countries, the term 'movement,' is often associated with adult education's origins, and it is sometimes regarded as a 'fourth sector' of education, apart from schools, vocational education and training and university studies. In recent times, the concept has expanded and diversified, however, making it more amorphous and less distinctive as an educational 'sector'. Nevertheless, one of the continuing features of 'adult education' has been its concern for adults' learning needs and preferences. This paper proposes that the formation and continuity of adult education have been based particularly on three key premises: i) meeting adults' specific but heterogeneous learning needs; ii) educational purposes and purposes being understood in the local context; and iii) the enactment of adult

education being shaped by local considerations. Furthermore, the values underpinning 'traditional' adult education have not only been sustained in what is now more commonly known as Adult and Community Education (ACE) but have expanded into other educational contexts. Informed by considerations of selected research projects the authors have been involved with in recent years, this paper identifies how the three premises have emerged as features of other educational provisions for adults.

Adult education provisions: origins, forms and transformations

The form and purposes of educational systems, the institutions that initiate them and imperatives driving them are usually shaped and regulated by government in the contemporary era, albeit fashioned by societal, economic and political factors (Pring, 1995). The formation of modern nation-states, industrialisation and rise of central government led to the development of universal schooling and mass tertiary education provisions. That is, the purposes, forms and processes of school education, vocational education and higher education are subject to the demands of central government, often mandated by legislation and administered through funding arrangements. Of course, there are some exceptions (e.g. Montessori schools), but in the Western world, state or church as founders and key sponsors usually, legitimately, define the purposes, forms and processes of these educational systems, institutions and provisions (Skilbeck, 1984).

The press of these imperatives by the state is never greater than in times of social and economic distress (Stevenson, 1995). Governmental concerns about global comparisons, for instance, have led to the introduction of literacy and numeracy testing, associated with improving comparative outcomes in state schools (Gable & Lingard, 2013). Also, concerns about alignments between what is learnt in vocational education institutions and perceived or real unmet gaps within the labour market have long shaped efforts to regulate what is taught, and how it is taught and assessed (e.g. competency-based training, industry-

led processes) in state-funded Technical and Further Education institutions (Stevenson, 2001).

The establishment of Australian universities of different kinds (e.g. social science universities and teacher education colleges of the 60s and 70s, the technical universities of the 80s) was also a product of governmental imperatives (Marginson & Considine, 2000), as have been their subsequent transformations. Moreover, governmental funding provided directly or indirectly to these institutions is often contingent on being utilised for achieving purposes associated with policy imperatives, not necessarily for the students attending them. A recent example is the Australian Government's 'Job-ready Graduates Package' under which university students pay less for degrees in areas of perceived employment (Tehan & Cash, 2020). These sorts of actions have long led to discussions about the extent to which it is reasonable for such imperatives to influence people's education and the role of educators (Skilbeck, 1984, Smith and Lovatt, 1990).

The sector broadly described as 'adult education' often has quite different origins and forms from these other educational sectors. Whilst the motives of the instigators of adult education provisions have differed, there is an underlying notion of individual development and often of social change (Elsey, 1986). Essentially those origins in Australia and elsewhere are grounded in the communities that adult education serves. In the main, they were not initiated by church or state. Indeed, across Western nations, the term 'movement' is often associated with the origins and provision of adult education (Nesbit, 2011), particularly when addressing disadvantage that is perceived or actual. In Britain, Kelly (1962) traced a history of diverse provision that linked adult education with religious instruction, literacy, mechanics' institutes, working men's clubs, university extra-mural programs, and local government. This involved, along with its auxiliary programs in libraries, art galleries, museums and broadcasting, being based in and responsive to local communities. Danish Folk High Schools and the Chautauqua Institution in the US performed similar functions (Houle, 1992).

Unlike mandatory school education or the increasing compulsion to engage in tertiary education, much of adult education has, traditionally, been elective and at the discretion of students. Ultimately, they decide how and in what ways they participate. In recent times, however, the

defining qualities of adult education has moved beyond its local roots to encompass such diverse areas as human resource development, vocational education and training, health education, adult literacy development, and indigenous education (Foley, 2020). At times, the concept of 'adult education' have also been appropriated within the newer concept of 'lifelong learning' (Field, 2006). In Australia and other developed countries, governments have attempted to shape the curricula of adult education provisions through legislation and funding control (Tennant & Morris, 2001, Scarfe, 2011). Attempts have been made both within the sector and by governments to soften the profile and to recognise its roots by expanding the concept to include community education. As a result, 'adult education' has become an amorphous term, covering diverse provision of adult education, and has therefore struggled to preserve a distinct identity.

Nevertheless, the proposition advanced in this paper is that the values underpinning 'traditional' adult education have been sustained and have expanded into other contexts and purposes. A key contention is that the characteristics that help define the sector reflect what and how adults learn within it. That is, over the years there has been a conscious intention by educators, both professional and volunteer, to focus on the needs of adult learners. Indeed, as adult education has evolved in recent decades, this aspect has often been emphasised, as in an Australian Senate Committee's acknowledgement that what came to be known as (ACE) was much more consumer-driven than schools, TAFE and universities (Aulich, 1991). It was, the committee said, defined by its participants, who 'have already left the formal education system, have returned to learning of their own volition, and have chosen an educational structure and environment which is compatible with their situation' (Aulich, 1991, 7). Similarly, in Victoria, the state with the most extensive network of ACE providers, the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board proposed that three descriptors defined the ACE 'sector': it is by and for adults; is what adults learn in a community setting; and is community owned and managed (Scarfe, 2011). More recently, the Training and Skills Commission in South Australia (2017, 5) reported that ACE providers are 'far more than a place of learning; they offer an environment that generates a sense of belonging to, and being part of, a community and a place for personal enrichment'.

From such considerations, it is held that the formation of 'adult education' provisions is founded on three key premises about the

education of adults: i) meeting the heterogeneous needs of adults as learners; ii) educational objectives needing to be understood in the local context; and iii) the enactment of adult education being shaped by local factors such as resources, accessibility, teachers' capacities and participants' readiness.

It seems, however, that these three premises are no longer restricted to the sector traditionally known as 'adult education' but have now embraced other educational provisions for adults as a means of achieving more effective outcomes. So, the question arising from that understanding which is explored in this paper is: In what ways have the three premises identified above, in relation to the education of adults, emerged as features of other educational provisions for adults, particularly in vocational education and training, continuing education, and workplace learning?

This question is explored through a consideration of findings from selected research projects that the authors have been involved with in recent years. These studies, whilst funded by national bodies, with one exception (Dymock & Billett, 2010), engaged with adults as learners, who were interviewed, observed and engaged within their own communities.

In advancing this case, firstly, a brief discussion about the origins and distinctiveness of adult education as a "sector" is presented. Then, a consideration of the three key premises of educating adults is explored through re-engaging with a range of research projects undertaken by the authors in other Australian education and training contexts. The paper concludes with comment about how the three premises under discussion have contributed to initiatives that have helped transform individuals and communities.

Formation of adult education provisions

Educational provisions and institutions have, as noted above, by tradition in Western countries, mostly been a product of either government or religious institutions. That is, these provisions and institutions have largely been initiated, resourced, regulated and enacted in ways of meeting the needs and goals of those institutions, or some variation of them, including universities and prestigious private schools. The advent of mass schooling in many countries coincided with the formation of modern nation states and their industrialisation. The

concern of governments, sometimes in newly formed states, was for an educated population that could contribute economically, but also be aligned with the mores and ambitions of the nation state (i.e. loyal, obedient citizenry) (Gonon, 2009).

Whereas in France, the guilds were disbanded as being emblematic of the ancient regime (Troger, 2002), in Germany they were placed under bureaucratic control, because their worth was recognised in regulating the development of a skilled workforce for newly industrialised workplaces (Deissinger, 1994). Indeed, whenever there are social and economic threats to the nation state, education provisions, and the work of those teaching in them often become more controlled, regulated and mandated (Stevenson, 2001). This approach has led to traditions of highly centralised educational provisions and decision-making in countries such as Australia that position educational institutions and educators as subordinate to the centre and the achievement of government goals.

However, as foreshadowed, the origins of adult education are not predominantly from church and state. Instead, this sector has arguably been community-initiated. For example, the Nordic folk high schools originated as community-based education for adults to support their general education and social betterment (Larsson, 2013). In the United Kingdom, the need for and provisions of adult education arose from demands arising from the Industrial Revolution associated with developing mechanical skills and were initiated by local organisations such as the Birmingham Brotherly Society and widely enacted by local Mechanics Institutes, sometimes supported by local philanthropy (Kelly, 1957).

Although there was a focus on mechanics and mechanical arts, general education for adults was also provided through these institutes. One of their features was a library for adults, intended as a distraction and more worthwhile pursuit for adults than drinking and gambling. The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and university extension departments were established for similar purposes (Dymock, 2001). There was also adult education provided by Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of the Arts in communities across Australia (Beddoe, 2003). Like their British counterparts, a key feature of these institutions were the reading rooms and libraries they provided across suburbs of large cities, regional towns and relatively small rural communities.

All these initiatives arose from concerns that the educational needs of working age adults, albeit mainly males, were not being addressed. Sometimes initiatives such as the WEA were criticised as instruments of the capitalist system, designed to steer workers down a safe pathway that did not challenge the privilege of the 'ruling class' (Boughton, 1999). Nevertheless, 'Labour Colleges' and other more radical educational institutes also claimed to be meeting individual learning needs, as well as initiating social change (Elsey, 1986).

Over the years, the term 'adult education' has tended to retain a strong connection with the notion of community learning, reflected in the renaming of national bodies which became the National Institute for Adult and Community Education (NIACE) in the UK and the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education (AAACE).

So, it was localised interest, commitment, and imperatives that often led to the formation of adult education provisions across many Western countries. This largely occurred without direct government action. Instead, adult education generally evolved at some distance from and through autonomy from direct control of the state, notwithstanding that it also benefits from (sometimes sporadic) state support for the important contributions it makes to adults' lives. Central to the nature of adult education is a concern that its purposes, forms and enactment need to be shaped by local factors and contributions.

However, as with other educational sectors, in times of social and economic distress, governments have sought to intervene in adult education to realise policy goals. For example, such interventions commenced at the outbreak of the Second World War when, for the first time, the Australian federal and state governments collaborated to implement programs focused on training adults to provide materials to prosecute that war (Dymock & Billett, 2010). Following this initiative, the same collaboration turned its attention to providing educational provisions for returning servicemen and women to assist them find employment and pursue careers post the end of the conflict. Indeed, these two examples established a precedent for what followed in terms of state intervention nationally in tertiary education in times of social and economic distress (Dymock & Billett, 2010).

This kind of intervention has also been evident in the adult education sector in Australia in recent decades. The nature of adult education has

been changing since the 1980s as successive governments have sought to harness 'the movement' for what some describe as utilitarian purposes (Tennant & Morris, 2001). From the early 1990s, following leads from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a 'national training reform agenda' dominated governments' vocational training policy (James & Beckett, 2013), and what was now called ACE increasingly became an awkward 'also-ran'. The New South Wales Board of Adult and Community Education attempted to identify a legitimate role for ACE in this new policy paradigm with the publication of The vocational scope of ACE (McIntyre, Morris & Tennant, 1993). In Victoria, the Managing Director of the Board of ACFE argued similarly:

> *ACE is ideally suited to compete in the vocational education and training market because it is cost effective and concentrates its efforts on particular parts of the market. ACE provides first step opportunities for people returning to learning or learning to earn. Program costs are kept to a minimum because of low overheads and high community and volunteer support. ACE providers are able to attract students to programs and achieve good outcomes from programs because they respond to local demand. They can develop and maintain a positive support environment which is flexible and responsive to the needs of students. (Sussex 1994: 1–5, quoted in Tennant & Morris, 2001, 50).*

Although this statement was intended as a justification of ACE providers' contributions to government's focus on vocational education and training, it also provides, inter alia, a reinforcement of the three premises of educating adults identified earlier in this paper: i) meeting the heterogeneous needs of adults as learners; ii) educational objectives needing to be understood in the local context; and iii) the enactment of adult education being shaped by local factors such as resources, accessibility, teachers' capacities and participants' readiness.

Nevertheless, by the end of the first decade of the present century, Victorian ACE providers, who have long prided themselves on meeting local needs, were increasingly being drawn into the State government's vocational training agenda (Golding & Foley, 2011).

As a result of such developments and the demise of government funding for adult community education in every state, it has been suggested that adult education is no longer recognisable as a distinct sector of education

in Australia or as a social movement (Tennant & Morris, 2009). On the other hand, Adult Learning Australia (Bowman, 2017) maintained that ACE continues to be a discrete fourth sector of education in Australia, distinguished from other sectors by being local, learner-centred, inclusive and not-for-profit. Certainly, attempts to define ACE have found it a slippery concept, as Golding, Davies and Volkoff (2001: 57, quoted in Golding & Foley, 2011, 63) recognised: 'On one hand, ACE is a diverse adult and community learning network whose essence is not amenable to simple definition or boundary setting. On the other hand, ACE is at least in part, a publicly funded form of educational provision and, for the purposes of rationing of public funding, requires definition and boundaries.'

The popularisation of the concept of lifelong learning in the past two decades has served only to reinforce the lack of clarity around the nature of adult education, and to draw attention to the tension between meeting community learning needs and serving government economic agendas (McIntyre, 2012; Field, 2006). 'Lifelong learning' – a personal process, is often confused with 'lifelong education' – the provision of educational services that may facilitate learning (Billett, 2018). Yet the term 'lifelong learning' has been appropriated in Australia by ACE providers themselves (McIntyre, 2012), and around the world by educational providers across the age range, from pre-schools to universities, and adopted as policy by governments (Field, 2006).

As in Canada and the United Kingdom, despite the transition of ACE providers in Australia to an increasingly certified education environment, and the demise of many 'soft' courses deemed not sufficiently 'vocational' (Tennant & Morris, 2009), there is evidence that during such transformations the three underpinning premises have not been lost. Instead, they have emerged in other education and training-purposed contexts that reflect changing times more broadly.

A key point emerging from the origins and later development of 'adult education' is its concern for the 'education of adults'. Instead of a focus on the provision of education, the major concern of the adult education sector has remained on adults' learning and – their needs, capacities and outcomes. Indeed, earlier, building on Schofield and Associates' report (1996) on ACFE in Victoria, it was proposed that the kinds of models adopted by the adult education sector might well be a more effective approach for use in vocational education than the top-down approach currently adopted (Billett, 1998).

Moreover, the three premises of what constitutes effective practice in ACE still provide a platform for adult education to make its distinct and important contributions, fend off unhelpful encroachments and be used as premises for sustaining and advancing the sector. Indeed, for government to erode them further would reduce its capacity to achieve the outcomes it seeks. This has been evident in studies conducted by the authors across the last two decades which included responses to key societal concerns.

It is not suggested that the projects discussed here comprehensively cover the fields of vocational education and training, continuing education, and workplace learning. It is proposed, however, that the selected projects are indicative of the sorts of Australian education and training contexts in which the three premises have begun to take on increasing significance.

Although the focus of some of these studies is on vocational education, the point is that the educational provisions that are the objects of these investigations are intended for working age Australians, and therefore are concerned with the education of adults. The lessons from the ACE sector are, therefore, potentially highly pertinent. Moreover, whilst some of the examples emphasise preparation for occupations, they do so to make the point that the outcomes government want to achieve through programs and content taught in particular ways, usually arising through centralised processes, are often seen to be difficult to translate, tend to miss the mark, and are inappropriate for the circumstances of their enactment.

Each of the three premises of educating adults is now discussed using examples from recent investigations in different educational contexts.

1. *Heterogeneous needs of adults as learners*

A common basis for educational provisions, such as schooling and tertiary education, is to make student cohorts as homogeneous as possible, so the educational processes can be organised and directed towards collective readiness (i.e. what they know, can do and value), needs and capacities. This basis is founded on concerns about organising and enacting educational arrangements that are appropriate for students based on assumptions about their readiness. The original meaning of the word 'curriculum' referred to the track to progress along. The inference here is that everybody would commence from the

same starting line. Instances here include five-year-olds commencing primary school, foundation courses in universities being undertaken largely by school leavers, apprentices commencing their programs first needing to learn basic hand and tool skills et cetera, higher education students needing basic occupational skills before work placements. These assumptions are important for efficacy of educational provisions, and effectively managing learning support for cohorts of students with similar levels of readiness (i.e. existing knowledge).

However, adopting this premise for educating adults is quite problematic. The diverse characteristics of adult learners in terms of age, educational background and existing capacities mean that adult students' readiness is likely to be quite heterogeneous. Moreover, adults are more likely to participate in educational programs to meet their needs, not the compulsion of others.

For instance, in a national study of adult literacy programs, the answer to the research question, 'What are adult learners' motivations and goals in nonaccredited language, literacy and numeracy programs?", the answer was that they want "to engage with the world on their own terms, and that their goals are a mix of personal, social and vocational" (Dymock 2007, 8).

Whilst measures such as categorising courses as beginning, intermediate or advanced can be helpful they will never be sufficient in such situations, as adults' interests are also likely to be diverse (ACFE 1996). Regardless of whether the courses are associated with literacy development, cultural betterment or developing quasi or actual occupational capacities, it is likely the readiness of adult students will be quite diverse.

All of this means that the planning and implementation of programs cannot proceed with any great confidence unless much more is known about the learners than can be deduced from simple entry information. Instead, understanding goals, needs and readiness and having the flexibility to respond to them are central to effective educational provisions for adults. Moreover, adult participants' satisfaction is the predominant basis of such an evaluation, not the degree by which sponsors goals have been met.

The diversity of adult learners' needs was centre stage in another study of non-accredited adult literacy and numeracy programs that aimed

to engage adults with a range of literacy capacities to develop further those capacities (Dymock & Billett, 2008). These courses were unusual because, being non-accredited, they were an exception to guidelines to receive national funding premised upon alignments with qualification levels in the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF). Instead, these non-accredited programs were for adults who did not need or were not yet able to cope with certificate level training. The investigation aimed to identify means by which that development could be assessed and was undertaken in collaboration with six community educational providers in four states and featured collaborations amongst researchers, coordinators, teachers, tutors and students in the development of a number of assessment instruments. However, it was found that these adult learners' needs were so diverse and complex that they could not be captured by specific assessment tools.

Ultimately, these courses were mostly defunded, as they failed to meet the requirement of being aligned with government accreditation criteria. This outcome ignored the diversity of adults' learning needs and readiness, and that these needs were best understood locally. That is, they could only be ascertained by teachers working closely with adults and understanding not only their readiness but also the interests and needs that would be the focus for them to engage in the effortful process of learning.

So, all of this suggests that the institutionally focused processes of schooling and tertiary education are even less likely to be appropriate for educating adults than for those other sectors. Adults' participation is also often not constrained by needing to meet certification requirements that are often key premises for the kinds of content being presented and intention of the experiences provided. For example, in a national investigation of continuing education and training in Australian workplaces, Billett et al (2015) found that workers' motivations for undertaking training were often to develop skill sets for specific workplaces, rather to complete a full vocational certificate.

All this reinforces the view that whilst the goals, content and assessment of courses are pre-specified and nationally stipulated they are not necessarily a good fit with adults' needs and readiness as learners. This is because their heterogeneity means their involvement as adults in educational provisions will be far from uniform.

Even when the goal of educating adults is to achieve uniform outcomes, such as understandings about health care, public education about obesity or smoking, let alone developing occupational skills that have national uniformity, this requires an understanding of how experiences can be provided to achieve those outcomes, the gaps amongst learners' readiness and capacities, the goals to be achieved, and the kinds of specific factors that might either impede or support achieving those outcomes.

For instance, it was found that when there was concerted effort to meet localised needs by vocational education institutions it was necessary to adapt uniform curriculum intents and programs and engage teachers directly with local employers (Billett 2000). Hence, to address the diversity in readiness, needs and interest, the course objectives and content ideally need to be generated locally.

2. *Educational programs needing to be shaped in the local context*

Early definitions of educational objectives stated they were focused on achieving the goals of the school (Tyler, 1949), thereby reflecting a focus on education institutions and provisions, rather than realising the needs and goals of learners. As proposed above, this is quite misaligned with the origins of adult education or, even pragmatically, of achieving the kind of purposes for which it was founded and, more recently, governments would like to realise.

For instance, an NCVER-funded project on how older adults could sustain their employability through continuing education and training found that what constitutes an older worker was very much premised upon the kind of work they did (i.e. age tolerant), their own personal circumstances, health, interests and opportunities available to them for employment and further education (Billett, Dymock, Martin, & Johnson, 2009).

When asked what constitutes an older worker, one respondent stated that if you are a concreter, 'older' is when you reach 40, but if you are an academic, it will be much older, emphasising age tolerance. We know that frontline emergency service workers and defence force personnel are deemed not to be able to conduct that work beyond 45 (Billett et al 2012). Other informants suggested that being an à la carte chef was only sustainable for younger workers, and an advertising agency worker stated that it also was an industry for younger people. Interestingly, both informants found work in their occupation in different kinds of work that

were more age tolerant. However, both informants made career changes that were probably only available in the metropolitan capital, and their pathways might not have been what others would have pursued (i.e. charity cooking project and public relations in a government department).

So, such is their person-dependence and complexity, that the factors shaping what is possible and what constitutes employability can only be understood through processes that could account for the interdependence amongst sets of personal, workplace, occupational and community considerations, and these can be best understood at the local level. Addressing the issue of sustaining adults' employability, which is a key goal for Australian government with an ageing population and lengthening working lives needs, therefore cannot be understood from a distance or captured through national prescriptions. Instead, it needs to be understood and negotiated at the local level.

A number of research projects undertaken in the late 1990s and early 2000s focused on how the local educational needs of an adult population might progress, including a project comparing the needs of adult and vocational education provisions across metropolitan, regional and remote Australian communities (Billett, 1998a). That study found that the needs of adults and the opportunities for educational provisions and employment options differed across metropolitan, regional and remote communities, often based on the kinds and qualities of needs found in those communities and localised engagements.

It was also found that accommodating these factors through the education of adults required adaptations by local adult educators and communities. It was a curious coincidence that at the time of this study the federal government was making much of the need for vocational education to meet the demand-side of students, but mainly industry, need rather than the supply-side (i.e. the programs they wanted to offer). Yet, concurrently, top-down approaches were being adopted through the provision of national curricula in the form of training packages. Far from accommodating the demand-side, this approach reflected a top-down and supply-side emphasis. That is, programs were tightly prespecified, modularised and organised with an imperative to be nationally consistent. So, taking the governmental rhetoric on being responsive to the demand-side, it is worth considering this in the context of formulating provisions for, and the enactment of, educating adults.

Demand-side emphases in educating adults

Curiously, and as noted, whilst deploying top-down and pre-specified outcomes, much of government policy has emphasised meeting the needs of the demand side, and those of employers and industry. Yet, often, these needs can be only be understood at the local level. A review of market-driven policies found that achieving this goal required understanding and being responsive in the locality of those needs (Billett 1998b). Also, an inquiry appraising the demand side of adult and vocational education in Australian metropolitan, regional and remote communities (Billett 2000) found that even when the educational goals were about nationally consistent occupational competences, that these need to be understood and developed at the local level. Indeed, the policy rhetoric at that time was about focusing on demand side need rather than supply side provisions of adult and vocational education.

For instance, one of the sectors involved in the study was food-processing. Across Australian regional and remote communities, the requirements for such a sector were found to be quite highly diverse, albeit addressed under one food-processing qualification. Requirements for working in viticulture, making potato chips, producing breakfast cereals and processing and canning fruit products require quite distinct sets of skills.

Also, with clerical work, there was a need for flexibility to address two very different kinds of workers: school leavers and older workers, and the kind of work that they could likely secure in those relatively isolated localities (Billett, 2000). The preference was, however, still for having nationally consistent programs and certification referred to as training packages. Yet, industry spokespersons were requesting a greater tailoring of these courses to the needs of local enterprises. For a short time, there were elements within these Training Packages that were discretionary to meet specific enterprises' requirements, but, since these were in addition to nationally prescribed outcomes, they were phased out over time.

Similar sentiments were expressed by representatives of local enterprise who wanted courses tailored to meet their specific needs and to engage with local educational providers (often TAFE) to achieve these needs. Local educators and administrators in those institutions reported being keen to engage more with enterprises to understand their specific needs.

Indeed, business and government representatives for these regions were complimentary about the local TAFE providers and praised their engagement (Billett & Hayes, 2000). Also, in regional and remote communities, the centrally developed governmental imperatives about competition and the private provision of adult and vocational education were often viewed as problematic as it eroded the service side and engagement of local education provision.

The demand-side includes those who participate in adult and vocational education, as well as industry and the providers. The responses from individuals in these communities were insightful, often because of the person-dependent focus they emphasised, along with the lack of alignment with the prescribed focus of national adult and vocational qualifications. More than just employment, these outcomes are about progression within and across enterprises and self-employment. Pathways to higher positions and the attainments of personal goals reinforce this focus. To illustrate these person-specific needs of adult learners, the following short statements capture the diverse backgrounds and goals of five participants in one focus group about what they want from their education courses:

- A good job, which is not in a factory and pays well so she can buy a house.

- Partner wants to retire from train driving in 5 years' time and drive trucks. She wants to be the bookkeeper for this business.

- Has been in catering for the last 10 years but was made redundant last year. She enjoyed some short computer courses and decided to work her way up the ladder.

- Daughter is now in high school and will need to know how to use a computer. It is important that she can show her because her daughter has a learning disability.

- Completed a course last year, Cert. in General Ed. for adults, and decided she wanted to do another course. She is new to the region and hopes to meet people and get some work in office admin, even as a volunteer. She has not been in the workforce for 20 years and wants to bring herself up to current standards and get over her fear of computers. (reproduced from Billett, 2000)

These examples indicate that adults' goals for learning and processes to achieve them are diverse and need to be understood and responded to at

the local level, not only within the ACE sector. Indeed, a key finding of an associated study examining the role of adult and vocational educators (Billett, 1999) found that teachers need the capacities to be responsive to the kinds of diversities associated with learner readiness, the specific needs of enterprises and variations in the requirements for occupational skills across enterprises where occupations are practised.

All of this points to the need for local factors to be understood and accommodated as it is only through those that the needs of these enterprises can be understood. So, and more broadly, such education provisions need to be informed by a consideration of local factors.

3. *Adult education provisions shaped by local factors*

More than understanding the needs of courses and the readiness of local learners, the third premise here is how educational provisions for adults can best be offered, because the factors shaping it and needs for it differ across communities (Billett, 2000). Some communities have well-established educational institutions that can provide a base for organising educational programs and engaging adults, either directly or by electronic means. Even then, these institutions may or may not be able to offer the kind of programs that are needed. However, in other locations, such institutions are absent, and the physical settings used for these purposes may not be suited for such activities.

Some specific examples of these localised factors arose from these earlier studies. For instance, in an evaluation of continuing professional development programs (CPD) for the Victorian VET Development Centre (Billett, Choy & Smith, 2013), the difference in options for adult educators in metropolitan and non-metropolitan centres was quite marked in terms of their access to face-to-face events and interactions with other educators. The concentration of experienced participants and access to administrators and government workers in the metropolitan centres, provided a different set of experiences than those in the regional areas of Victoria.

One reason this was particularly important is that the distinction between initial teacher preparation and continuing professional development has become blurred in this sector with the cessation of comprehensive initial teacher education programs. Instead, these have been replaced by short (Certificate IV) level programs. Hence, many

of those participating in CPD programs are at the commencement of their teaching careers and novices. Given the diversity of participants experience, unlike such programs for teachers in schooling, there can be no confidence about starting points for such programs, or the best way of providing experiences.

Moreover, in the same project there were marked differences across regional centres. For instance, in one regional city that was seeking to respond to the closure of a large manufacturing plant, the needs for worker education, and the work of adult educators, were very distinct from a community 30 kilometres away which was the centre of a fruit production area. Whereas the regional centre had a large tertiary education institution, with practical workshops, equipment and industry-experienced staff, the small nearby town had an integrated community centre that provided access to library, healthcare, counselling and education facilities in one building.

So, the needs of adult learners were distinct across these two regional communities as were the institutional arrangements for enacting those provisions. Indeed, localised planning and enactment are essential to achieve the kinds of goals that governments often want of adults' education, despite their adopting top-down, pre-specified approaches that are regulated in ways that inhibit being flexible to meet local needs. This approach risks disempowering teachers who are requested to undertake their work through highly prescribed syllabus documentation, and, of course, over time de-professionalising those who educate adults.

Also, findings from the NCVER funded project: 'Towards more effective continuing education and training for Australian workers' suggested that adults,' learning for their working life was most effective when enacted and supported in the immediate circumstances of work and workers' learning preferences (Billett et al 2015, 39). Consistently, among workers from a range of industry sectors, the most common reference to learning was as a product of both a workplace and personal need or imperatives, but mainly realised through everyday work activities (Billett et al, 2012).

In many of the examples here, there were specific circumstances that were central to developing these capacities and which can only be understood at the local level. For instance, these included 30-minute 'Shed meetings' between shifts at trucking companies, and a buddy

system for new staff at an aged care facility (Billett, et al, 2012). To instantiate, the truck drivers' responses were summarised as 'Learning is an ongoing process and arises through undertaking work tasks ('getting on the road'), meeting clients and responding to their changing needs, to new equipment and driving environments.' (Billett et al, 2012, 17).

Taking another example, in a study of how small business owners had learnt to implement and administer the goods and service tax (Billett, Ehrich & Hernon-Tinning, 2003) it was found that a set of conditions had to be applied to their business and it was only through intimate knowledge of that business that their learning associated with the GST could progress. Moreover, many of the small business operators wanted to avoid becoming captive to accountancy companies and consultants and preferred instead to engage locally and with individuals they could trust to be fair and provide impartial information. An example of a particular localised process was the partners (i.e. wives) of many of the small businesses having the role of managing the finances. There were also highly localised processes through which these women came to share information and learn from each other, again with trust being central to the sharing.

So, all of this suggests that understanding the requirements for adults' learning and how to best meet the needs of adult learners are found locally. This suggests that those directly teaching or providing educational experiences for adults require the discretion and capacities to undertake this role.

Conclusion

A key founding and enduring premise for adult education has been that the participants are undertaking the learning of their own volition and will only engage purposefully when they believe their purposes are likely to be met and view the process as being advanced in their interests. The history of adult education is replete with examples of such provision, including the Workers' Educational Association, Mechanics' Institutes, Chautauqua lectures, folk high schools, university extra-mural departments, community adult literacy programs, Neighbourhood Houses, and the University of the Third Age. In this respect, then, until recent times 'adult education' arguably has been differentiated from 'institution-centred' education of adults (as in universities and technical colleges) to a more

learner-centred education for adults. This focus on the individual has meant a recognition of the diverse range of adult learners' needs and the significance of the local context. That is, adult education has been strongly demand-driven and within specific communities.

In recent decades, however, governments have increasingly intervened in the adult education 'marketplace', through withdrawal of funding and targeted funding, as a means of developing the sorts of skills they believe are needed to develop and sustain a modern economy. As a result, the education of adults has become much less volitional and less centred on individuals' preferences, and more focused on nationally certified training. It has become supply driven. The concern here is that the essence of adult education, i.e. the premises that underpin effective adult learning, will be lost.

As the examples from the research projects above demonstrate, it is essential (and possible) to capture those premises – the heterogeneous needs of adults as learners, the significance of the local context, and local factors – in other contexts. In fact, the evolution of those contexts, such as in vocational education and training and workplace learning, have validated the efficacy of the premises of adult education. In other words, the three key premises for adult education are not restricted in terms of their utility to that sector alone but provide an ongoing legacy for the education of all adults and have helped transform individuals and communities of all kinds.

Ultimately, whether referring to compulsory, tertiary or adult education, the quality of the outcomes will depend upon how the learners have come to engage with what is offered. This is no more or less true for adult education than any other sector, however it is adults who are likely to be most selective and have discretion about what provisions they engage in and how. Hence, whether provisions for the education of adults are wholly centred on the needs of adults, or are derived from plans and intentions from others, unless these requirements are addressed, the learners' participation is likely to be less than full-blooded, and the outcomes partial.

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Esmonde Higgins and the lost history of Australian adult education

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When the Australian Association of Adult Education (AAAE) was established in 1960, Australia was locked into a global conflict between capitalism and communism, known as the Cold War. With anti-communism at fever pitch, AAAE's founders who were fighting to retain some influence with Australian universities and with government funding authorities needed an origin story which would appeal to these prejudices. Not surprisingly, therefore, histories of 'the profession' produced in the first decades largely dismissed the role of the many radical adult educators and left-wing organisations which had been instrumental in extending adult education to the working class in the first half of the twentieth century. One of the main sources for these early histories was a memoir of David Stewart, founder of the Workers Education Association, written in 1957 by a university adult educator, Esmonde McDonald Higgins. In this paper, I tell a different story, through a close examination of Higgins' own role in this early history, to show how 1960s 'official' adult education lost touch with its own roots in radical working class politics, roots which are only now re-emerging, through the study of popular education and social movement learning.

Key words: *Adult education history, Australian Association of Adult Education (AAE), Workers Education Association (WEA), radical adult education, popular education, communism*

Introduction

The Australian Association for Adult Education (AAAE) was formed in 1960, at a meeting of professional adult educators, mainly drawn from university adult education departments and the Workers Education Association (WEA) branches in some states. Today, AAAE has become Adult Learning Australia (ALA), representing the organisations which comprise a recognised 'sector' of the Australian education system, known as Adult Community Education (ACE), and the professional adult educators who work in and with ACE 'providers'. The most recent 'environmental scan' of the ACE sector estimates there are 2500 providers in this sector, providing accredited and non-accredited courses including personal enrichment/interest learning, adult basic education in language, literacy, numeracy, digital and other foundation skills and …. formal vocational education and training." (Adult Learning Australia 2020).

The ACE sector, as defined by ALA, has a history. Some providers, such as the WEAs, trace their origins back to the early twentieth century (Dymock 2001; Morris 2013). Even before then, the Sydney Working Men's College, the Mechanics Institutes, Railway Institutes and Schools of Arts were forerunners to today's vocational education and training providers (Candy & Laurent 1994). But the history of today's ACE providers is not the whole story. Rather, ACE and ALA which represents it, is the outcome of a long history during which the more 'mainstream' forebears of today's providers vied with other, more radical institutions for the allegiance and interest of adult learners. Sixty years ago, when the AAAE formed, the Cold War and the bitter anti-communism of those times had cut a swathe through the field of adult education, casting many of the most progressive providers and practitioners of earlier decades into oblivion. As a consequence, late 20th century adult education lost many historic links it once had with progressive social movements. Today, those links are re-emerging, through the study

of social movement learning, known in the Global South as popular education (Kane 2001; Hall *et.al.* 2012). But few social movement educators in today's Australia know anything about their profession's radical past (Boughton 1997a). This paper contributes to filling that gap, through a detailed investigation into the life of Esmonde Macdonald Higgins, a leading university adult educator of the 1940s and 1950s.

For most of its history, the 'adults' in adult education were workers, but the histories which the post-1960 adult education professionals studied about the origins of their field largely ignored the rich sources of organised working class (i.e. labour) history. Instead, they featured the work of a few 'great men', mostly not workers at all, but university academics, business leaders, military officers and churchmen. The Scottish-born carpenter David Stewart (1883-1954), who was General Secretary of the NSW WEA from its inception in 1913 until his death in 1954, is a rare exception, and the account of his life and work which Higgins wrote in the 1950s became the main source for most studies subsequently undertaken into the origins of Australian adult education (e.g. Whitelock 1974). But who was Higgins?

Higgin's own life (1897-1960) illuminates another side to adult education's 'origin story'. It shows that, prior to 1960, the profession was embroiled in a decades-long bitter intellectual and political struggle over what would count as 'real' adult education. For the first twenty years of his adult life, Higgins was one of the radical 'zealots' and 'propagandists' that Stewart, his WEA colleagues, and the founders of the 1960s AAAE condemned. But by the time he wrote his memoir of Stewart in 1957, 'Hig', as his friends knew him, had changed sides. He was thus the perfect candidate to construct an adult education 'origin story' which dismissed the educational work of radical socialists as an annoying side-plot to the 'main game' of liberal education and ignored the role they had played since the late nineteenth century as a driving force in adult education's development. Higgins' sanitised history helped calm the fears of those in power, who might otherwise have baulked at supporting the new 'profession', given some of its radical origins. At the same time, it gave its author a chance to settle accounts with his past comrades, the leadership of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), who twenty-five years earlier had dumped him from his post as the country's paramount communist educator.

Universities and the WEA

The early history of the WEA was chronicled by David Stewart himself, in articles published in 1947 in the NSW WEA journal, Australian Highway. At the time, the NSW WEA was locked in a dispute with the CPA-led left wing of the labour movement, a dispute which broke out five years earlier, at the height of WW2, but whose origins lay in two decades or more of political and intellectual conflict. Higgins became a protagonist in the 1940s dispute, usually referred to as the 'B40 Affair', from his base in Newcastle, where he had been Sydney University's Director of Tutorial Classes since 1941. No wonder, then, that his memoir, commissioned by the WEA when Stewart died in 1954, did nothing to contradict its founder's recollections of those 'early days'. From Higgins' memoir, the same version of the story found its way into Whitelock's classic history (Whitelock 1974), and was still being recycled in the 1990s (e.g. Phillips 1993).

However, the WEA's first classes were not the beginnings this century of working class adult education programs. There was already a vital, independent, working class and socialist education movement flourishing in Australia in the last decade of the nineteenth century, a movement which continued to expand up to and during the WW1. It included among its principal 'providers' the Victorian Socialist Party (VSP), the International Workers of the World (IWW), the Plebs Leagues, and the Labour Colleges, along with a host of other small socialist parties and associations (Boughton 1997a; 1997b; Boughton, Welton & Taksa 2004). Much of this work, along with many of the activist educators who had sustained it, continued through the educational activities of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), founded in 1920. This movement saw the WEA as a direct challenge to its independence, designed to win workers to an alternative non-socialist theory about the best ways to achieve change. A vigorous struggle was then fought, both within and outside the WEA and its union affiliates, as the activists of this independent socialist tradition challenged the WEA's promotion of "class collaboration" in the name of "national development" and "social efficiency" (Taksa 1997; 2003).

Sydney University first moved to formalise an educational relationship with the working class movement in 1905, when its Extension Board, which was responsible for adult education, invited representation from the NSW Labour Council and began offering short annual lectures and

courses by notable academics to Labour Council delegates at Sydney's Trades Hall (Markey 1994, p. 147). In 1909, the UK Report, Oxford and Working Class Education, became available in Australia, and a young economics lecturer on the Board, R.F. Irvine, "successfully moved a motion to appoint a committee to consider the adoption of such a scheme … this committee recommended that tutorial classes (the Oxford model) should be conducted by the University concurrently with extension lectures." (Taksa 1996). The next year the British WEA's National President, Temple, a "fledgling archbishop" as Whitelock called him, travelled the country lecturing on topics such as Education and Democracy, promoting the view that the workers needed "what only the universities can give" (quoted Whitelock 1974, p.175). Whether or not the workers agreed, some university men did. They affiliated to the British Association and corresponded with Temple on his return.

The next initiative to establish this 'worker's organisation' came from Dr. James Barrett, a member of the Melbourne University Senate, and Peter Board, the NSW Director General of Education, who invited British WEA leader Albert Mansbridge to Australia. He arrived in August 1913, in the middle of the great British strike wave of 1912-14. His oratory about working class education had strong appeal among some workers and their organisations, but perhaps more to the point were his claims that:

> *Without education the masses would drift hither, thither, cooperating not with the forces which build but with those which destroy (quoted Whitelock 1974, p. 176).*

Mansbridge had already written to Stewart, who organised to become his union's delegate to the Labour Council's Education Committee. Peter Board then provided an Education Department grant to the Committee, while Mansbridge's "magic aura of Oxbridge approval" helped win over the University Senate. Whitelock, no friend of the WEA's critics, wrote:

> *Mansbridge's message …. appealed to the universities and the establishment because it substituted definition for the muddle of extension, it might de-fuse industrial unrest, and it soothed sore consciences. (Whitelock 1974, p. 177; my emphasis)*

G.V. (Gerry) Portus, another of official adult education's 'founding fathers', wrote in his autobiography:

> *There were the queerest ideas (within the universities) about what the movement (i.e. the WEA) might accomplish. A professor in Sydney after quoting to me the old nineteenth century slogan, 'Open a school and close a gaol', immediately paraphrased it as 'Open a tutorial class and stop a strike.' 'For God's sake,' I implored him, 'don't say that in public' (Portus 1954, p.193).*

The WEA, though clearly a movement, was thus neither particularly working class in its leadership, nor particularly educational in its underlying purpose. It could as easily be characterised as a bourgeois political movement, which sought to involve leaders of the trade unions and the political labour movement with a predominantly middle class form of education, directed by university-based intellectuals and senior government officials.

Helen Bourke's study of five key intellectual figures in the WEA (1913 - 1929) adds another dimension:

> *The WEA provided a group of young intellectuals with their first footing on academic life and through its platforms and publications it gave them a public role and a forum for their social theory and criticism. The funding which supported them ... enable(d) the universities to employ these men and so, indirectly, enabled the basic development of the social sciences to which they were all committed....A basic premise of their thinking was that an alternative must be found to the threat of proletarian revolution (Bourke 1981, p. 21-2, 29; my emphasis).*

In another account of the period, Rowse called the WEA's intellectuals "secular evangelists", "ideologues" of liberalism, men who "rationalised the practice of a certain institutional ordering of society, the dominance by a ruling class over subordinated and fragmented classes," and "self-appointed instructors in social efficiency, armed with the new secular doctrine of sociology" (Rowse 1978, pp 6, 31, 37-76).

Solidarity vs. Efficiency, War and Imperialism

Lucy Taksa, a labour historian, points out the connection between the 'social efficiency' theories of the early WEA intellectuals and the scientific management movement in the United States, whose leading theorist was F.W. Taylor (Taksa 1995; 1997). The WEA's offer

to fulfil working class interests and aspirations was in no time at all "subordinated to the principle of non-partisanship adopted from the English Association's constitution", a principle which progressive middle-class intellectuals saw as crucial for the organisation to become a 'common meeting ground to all' (Taksa 1996, quoting the WEA's First Annual Report). In practice, this meant that the WEA refused to abide by fundamental labour movement solidarity principles, the 'closed shop' and 'preference to unionists'. When the NSW Typographical Association's requested that WEA printed matter bear the union label, the WEA argued the 'preference to unionists' principle was 'outside its sphere.' Tutorial classes established in highly unionised industrial towns in NSW were suspended when industrial and political strife escalated during 1915; likewise, classes for women factory workers in Sydney were halted during the war, because the male academics on the University of Sydney Joint Committee's Executive thought circumstances were "inopportune for continued 'organising work specifically among women'....." (Taksa 1996, p.20; see also Rowse 1978, p. 59).

These conflicts reached a peak when some WEA leaders began campaigning openly for political and industrial policies opposed by large sections of the organised working class movement, advocating Taylorist 'scientific management' in the interests of 'national efficiency', and supporting military conscription. The 'national efficiency' movement was launched in the Victorian Railways with the support of leading WEA figures. In a booklet issued by the employers, WEA economics lecturer Irvine argued that the crisis of war called for the inauguration of special organisation 'for the efficient use of all our resources of men and material' in place of the old laissez-faire methods. He advocated American so-called scientific management principles and practices to remedy Australia's inefficiency, its waste of natural and human resources and its need for 'more effectual training of the population'. Through education, he suggested, the prevailing negative attitude to scientific management could be overcome. (R.F. Irvine, 'National Organisation and National Efficiency,' quoted Taksa 1996). In advocating such views, WEA intellectuals sought to increase production for the imperial war effort, but they also hoped their ideas would be adopted by the newly emerging industrial bourgeoisie in post-war Australia. The war provided an opportunity for expanding state planning and regulation capacities and increased manufacturing industry

development which would increase total wealth, obviating the appeal of 'old-fashioned' ideas about class conflict. In effect, the WEA social scientists were striving to become what Italian communist social theorist Antonia Gramsci dubbed the 'organic intellectuals' of the emerging capitalist class (Pizzalato & Holst 2017).

The relationship between the WEA's university-based intellectuals and new progressive groupings in the capitalist class warrants more research, but one particular incident from this time helps re-focus attention on Higgins. Among the speakers at a 1915 WEA Conference on *Trade Unionism in Australia*, was W.C. Cleary, the senior manager of Tooth and Company's large Kent Brewery in inner Sydney. An ex-student of Irvine, Cleary was one of a new breed of managers, who wished to apply the 'new' social sciences to the problems of industrial production. Higgins' personal papers deposited in the Mitchell Library include a letter to him from Cleary, telling how Cleary and Stewart organised classes at the brewery under WEA auspices, where Cleary taught Economics and Economic History to "his men". His letter complained that, as one of the three main speakers at the above conference, he had been challenged by "disrupters from the Plebs League ..... planted in the conference to cause trouble ... *communists* .... jumping in with propaganda about production for use, not profit". (ML MSS 740, Box 1; emphasis added). Militant unionists on the receiving end of scientific management obviously believed that the problem was not so much their own 'prevailing negative attitude', as Irvine called it, as how to "educate the educators"(Boughton 2013). Engage in debate, they certainly did, though not with the polite restraint expected in tutorial classes. More decisively, they advocated militant industrial action to prevent the introduction of these methods, resulting in NSW's first ever General Strike in 1917 (Taksa 2017).

Such actions expressed more powerfully than any rational argument the growing appeal of the new theories and strategies of industrial unionism promoted by, among others, Bill Earsman, a metal worker who had been a union delegate in the Victorian Railways when Irvine began promoting his theories. A follower of VSP founder Tom Mann and one-time organiser of its Socialist Sunday School, Earsman had like Mann embraced the theories promoted by the International Workers of the World (IWW), known as the Wobblies (Burgmann 1995). In 1917 and 1919, Earsman helped found the Victorian and NSW Labour Colleges,

to promote an alternative theory of social change to that promoted by the WEA's social scientists. Then, in 1920, he wrote a pamphlet, extraordinary for the times, called *The Proletariat and Education. The Necessity for Labor Colleges*, in which he proclaimed:

> *The universities of today, like the early capitalists, are recognising that too long they have kept aloof from the working-class, and so now they are cooing in the ear of labor to come and get educated. The universities have come alive to the danger of labor. They see it marching on and upward, and are anxious to be in the good grace of the ever-advancing army. Consequently, they have approached with the suggestion of giving assistance in adult education.... (but) the University is also a class institution which is used for the purpose of bolstering up the system that exists and as a recruiting ground for obtaining more officers for the capitalists" (Earsman 1920, pp 9, 13-14).*

In October that same year, Earsman was elected the first General Secretary of the newly formed Communist Party of Australia (CPA) (Macintyre 1998).

The 1916-17 conscription dispute provided more grist for the independents' mill. Meredith Atkinson, the newly appointed WEA President from Oxford, saw no contradiction between that role and his Presidency of the Universal Service League, which, in opposition to the majority of the labour movement, campaigned throughout the country in favour of conscription for overseas military service. Like scientific management, this was also not an issue simply for polite debate, as Sam Aarons, a future CPA leader discovered, when he, along with many others, was "batoned down by police and soldiers during a 2000 - strong (anti-conscription) march to Parliament House, Melbourne in 1916" (Aarons 1993, p.2).

In his biography of Stewart, Higgins acknowledged the damage Atkinson's actions did to the WEA's working class support:

> *From then on there was a permanent body of opposition to the WEA in many unions, even in those which continued to be affiliated ... The Labor Council was persuaded to set up a Labor College, to battle with the WEA under the banner of 'Independent Working Class Education.' Although the WEA continued to win*

> *affiliations and class enrolments, it never fully regained its position in the trade union movement.... (Higgins n.d.)*

Atkinson moved to Melbourne and eventually withdrew altogether to return to England, having, in Bourke's words, "alienated his colleagues" by his "preoccupations with status, tenure and personal entitlements" (Bourke 1981, p.55); but also, perhaps, because leadership of a workers' education organisation was hardly the place for a man who believed, as he told the Anglican Social Questions Committee in 1918, that "the masses are entirely unfit to build up a new social order" (Quoted ibid., p. 74).

Enter Esmonde Higgins, Stage Left

It is now time to introduce Higgins himself into the story he was telling, something he chose not to do for his adult education audience of the 1950s. Higgins, we can now reveal, had been playing his own not-insignificant role in the heady events of these earlier times. Born in 1897, "son of a staunchly Baptist Melbourne accountant," young Esmonde proved himself a rebel while completing his leaving certificate at the prestigious Scotch College, writing an article for the Victorian Socialist Party's paper, Socialist. This was the same paper which greeted the WEA when it attempted to extend its influence to Melbourne as "a gigantic conspiracy of benevolence." The paper's editors were the radical clergyman Frederick Sinclaire and the socialist poet Marie Pitt. Sinclaire later helped Earsman, Guido Barrachi and others set up the Victorian Labour College (Walker 1976). At Melbourne University, where Higgins went to study Arts, he continued his journey to the left. In a talk he later gave to the Melbourne University Labour Club, Higgins' recalled the time his friend Barachhi published an article in the university student paper which began by saying that the war (WW1) was not 'our affair'. According to Higgins:

> *...there were howls for his blood. With Menzies as judge, he was given a lynch trial one moonlight evening and tossed into the University lake by an infuriated crowd from the Colleges (From an Antediluvian. Higgins papers, ML MSS 740).*

Menzies the right wing college student became, of course, the ultra-conservative and anti-communist Australian Prime Minister, who was in power when David Stewart and the WEA was published in 1957.

Despite his anti-conscription stance, Higgins enlisted to fight, leaving for France at the end of 1917. At the end of the war, he left the Army Education Scheme to which he had been posted. Funded by his uncle, Justice Higgins, he went up to Oxford to pursue his studies (Irving 2012). By 1920, his socialist tendencies had matured into a full-blown commitment to revolutionary Marxism, and he joined the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), becoming a full-time functionary in its Labour Research Department. Among his closest London friends were Harry and Marjorie Pollitt, leading British communists. As Higgins was moving to the left in Britain, so was the WEA in NSW, but it was only temporary. Higgins' memoir of Stewart recorded that in 1923 the WEA even cooperated with Workers International Relief (one of the Comintern's fraternal organisations) in a series of lectures on international relations. However, the contradictions could not be overcome, and in 1925, when the Association organised a conference on *How To Make the WEA More Effective as an Instrument of Working Class Education*, it "degenerated," according to Higgins, in his 1950s persona, "into a debate between adherents of the Plebs League, which had been formed to spread the doctrine of Independent Working Class Education, and the WEA" (Higgins, n.d.).

The irony of this account is that Higgins had returned to Australia the previous year a committed communist, to take over important aspects of the CPA's educational work, including the Labour Research and Information Bureau which operated out of Trades Hall. His return had been organised by Christian Jollie Smith, socialist feminist barrister and a founding member of the CPA, who was a school friend of Higgins' sister Nettie, and one-time lover of Bill Earsman (Damousi 1988; Boughton 2020b). So, whether or not Higgins himself was one of the "disrupters" at the above Conference, he would certainly have been egging them on, perhaps in his role as editor of *Workers' Weekly*, the CPA's newspaper. Among his other duties, he and his partner Joy Barrington ran the Young Comrades Club, a version of the old VSP Socialist Sunday School for children, causing the NSW Minister for Justice to threaten its organisers with imprisonment, for aiming "to build up a race of criminals and disloyalists" (Johnson 1990).

By 1928, Higgins standing in the Communist Party was high. He was editor of the party paper, and in charge of 'Agit-Prop', Agitation and Propaganda, the term that parties in the international communist

movement used to describe the 'Department' which ran both their own media - newspapers, leaflets, books and pamphlets – as well as their educational classes and research sections. Higgins' contribution to the CPA's education work included producing the first Party Training Manual. He was also chosen that year to lead the CPA's Delegation to Moscow for the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, from which he returned carrying 1000 pounds to top up the CPA's coffers (Irving 2012; Macintyre 1998, pp.123,148).

By the end of the decade, the battle lines were clearly drawn between the CPA leadership and the WEA intellectuals, over what each considered to be 'real' workers' education. Among the communists were many men and women who for decades had been committed to the 'independent' tradition, and their views were shared by many in the trade unions and sections of the ALP, as well as in a multitude of socialist and radical working class organisations. On the other side were ALP parliamentarians, some of the more conservative union officials and delegates, like Stewart himself, progressive industrialists like Cleary, and the academic social scientists. For the next three decades, the field of adult education was dominated by the struggle between these two traditions for hegemony (Boughton 1997b).

Communists in the WEA

Lloyd Ross was a son of R.S. Ross, who helped Tom Mann found the Victorian Socialist Party. A few years younger than Higgins, Ross also studied at Melbourne University. Prior to 1935, when he became NSW Branch Secretary of the Australian Railways Union (ARU), he was a university adult educator, holding positions between 1924 and 1935 as a tutor-organiser at the University of Otago Dunedin in New Zealand, as the Newcastle District Tutor for Sydney University's Department of Tutorial Classes, and as Assistant Director of Tutorial Classes under Portus and Duncan in Sydney. In this latter period, he also edited Australian Highway. While his brother Edgar and his colleague Esmonde Higgins were, during this time, both CPA members, Ross did not join up, at least publicly, until 1935. He left the party in the wake of the 1939 upheavals caused by the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact (see below) and in November 1943, became Director of Public Relations in the Chifley's Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction. After the war, he was active in the anti-communist Industrial Groups set up in the ALP and

the trade unions to counter the growing hegemony of the communists. (Morris 1992; Rowse 1981; Macintyre 1998). Higgins(n.d.), Whitelock (1974) and Morris (1992) all wrote of Ross' interventions into adult education debates in the 1930s, but none acknowledged his associations with the CPA. At least the latter two could claim they did not know.

Ross, in fact, was only one of several WEA figures with such associations. Lloyd's brother Edgar, also involved in adult education and the WEA, joined the CPA a little earlier. In Melbourne during WW1, Edgar worked on a paper edited by Meredith Atkinson (Ross, E. 1982, p.15). In 1925, he moved back to Broken Hill, where his father had organised for the VSP, and worked on the local newspaper, the *Barrier Daily Truth*. "Even before I joined the Party," he wrote in his memoirs, "I was giving lectures to such bodies as the YMCA on 'The Case for Communism'" (ibid, p.56). Though he worked closely in Broken Hill with the communists, he did not initially become a CPA member, because, according to his own account:

> *... I was suspect as an intellectual, and was sneered at because of my activities in the Workers Educational Association of which I occupied the positions of president and secretary.... (ibid, p.50)*

He was allowed to join the party when he went to work on the Miner's Union paper, *Common Cause*. Bill Gollan was another Broken Hill WEA tutor who joined the CPA in this period. Educated at Sydney University in the 1920s, Gollan moved to 'the Hill' as a High School teacher in 1929 and began lecturing part-time for the WEA. Edgar Ross, who became his close friend, arranged for Gollan's WEA lectures on the Russian revolution and socialism to be published in the *Barrier Truth*. Gollan continued as a WEA lecturer when he moved to Goulburn, where he was also in the ALP. In the early 1930s, he moved to Sydney, and became active in the Educational Workers League, a communist-led grouping within the NSW teacher's union which aimed "to introduce proletarian politics into the Federation." He became a CPA member in 1935, the same year as Lloyd Ross. He continued lecturing for the WEA when he moved to Cessnock in 1936, where he also resumed activity in the ALP, as part of the CPA's policy at the time to "find positions in the Labor party and influence its policy." He also knew Lloyd Ross well; "he was, in a sense, a leader of the left among the lecturers." In Cessnock, the WEA was an important point of contact for Gollan with the miners and

their union in the northern coalfields. Through his work for the WEA, as well as in Spanish Relief, the MAWAF and his own union, Gollan won significant support among workers, enough to become "the main spokesman for the Labor Party in the northern coalfields", and to lead the ALP delegation from that region to the 1940 NSW ALP Conference (Gollan 1980).

The Un-making of a Communist

As Ross moved from the WEA into the CPA's innermost circles - the Central Committee minutes of March 1939 record an extensive discussion of the educational work he and other communists had undertaken in the ARU - his friend Higgins was heading in the opposite direction. Internal disputes among the communist leadership from 1929-31 led to Higgins being removed from all his posts (Macintyre 1998). The bitterness these early disputes aroused on both sides would haunt the communists for many years to come. Nevertheless, he remained an active member, joining the ranks of the unemployed for several years, working on relief on road gangs. Like the good communist he still was, he relished the chance to work directly with the rank and file of the unemployed workers movement, of whom he was later to recall:

> It was largely those who had learned political practice in the CP inspired unemployed movement who blossomed out as trade union officials in the metal trades and building trades from 1935. So with the seamen and watersiders (Quoted Roe 1977).

He also helped edit *Red Leader*, the weekly newspaper of the CPA-led Militant Minority Movement. Eventually, he gained some lecturing work with the WEA in Asquith, taking a class on the Communist Manifesto. In 1936, one of Higgins' old connections found him full-time work in adult education, and he moved to Launceston to take up a post as the Staff Tutor for the University of Tasmania's Department of Tutorial Classes. Roe (1977) says that he left the CPA at this time, but letters in Higgins' papers in the Mitchell Library suggest otherwise. One addressed to the Tasmanian party organisation from "CC Secretariat per JBM" (presumably J.B. Miles), dated 19 March 1936, reads:

> the bearer Cde. E. Higgins ... (is) going to Tasmania to work as a tutor for the WEA. Can't appear openly as a PM. (i.e. Party

> *member. BB), but will be able, per contacts with T.U., L.P.*
> *(Labor Party) etc., to assist growth of united front work and*
> *bring people towards party. You cannot instruct him but neither*
> *can he instruct you. He will attract workers to the WEA, well and*
> *good: but don't let the WEA overshadow party classes. He can,*
> *if essential, report direct to us even without consulting you, or at*
> *least, only your secretariat (Higgins papers, ML MSS 740).*

In 1937, Higgins wrote to his sister Nettie, about a peace conference they had both attended in Melbourne. He was scathing about some delegates, describing them as "university liberals being the wise-heads, carefully drawing attention to the implications of the other's arguments but still pretending to be in agreement". Always self-critical, he also scoffed at his own "pious hopes that liberalism can detach people from prejudices and make action possible." "The real lesson of the congress," he concludes, "is to hang on to straight Leninist anti-militarism." In the next breath, however, he dismisses this as "out of the picture." In Tasmania, he says, he "feel(s) just as impelled as ever to try the liberal racket, because there is simply no other way to get a hearing for anything." He finishes up with a telling statement, an unwitting prediction of his own eventual apostasy:

> *And the more I succeed in becoming academic, the more I'll get into*
> *that most pestiferous of all liberal moods - that of 'seeing good in*
> *every manifestation of effort' and ending up with no beliefs of my*
> *own. (Extract of letter reproduced in Roe, 1977, pp 20-21):*

Higgins left Tasmania in 1938 for New Zealand, to take up a job as a tutor at Auckland University. Thereupon, the right wing ALP Tasmanian government "took steps to strengthen its control over WEA matters lest there be another such appointment" (Roe 1977, p. 13). This marked the beginning of a series of interventions into the WEA by state governments to prevent the communists gaining any further footholds in the organisation, interventions which by the mid 1940s, a number of key leaders of the adult education 'establishment' had begun to support. Before the decade was out, Higgins himself was to become one of them.

Higgins returned to Australia in 1941, to take up a position as the Newcastle Staff Tutor for Sydney University's Department of Tutorial Classes. The country was at war, and Menzies as Prime Minister

had declared the CPA an illegal organisation, driving its leadership underground. Some of his colleagues, Lloyd Ross included, had publicly broken with the CPA, for its failure to condemn the Hitler-Stalin Non-Aggression Pact of 1939 and Stalin's subsequent invasion of Finland. Higgins had allowed his membership to lapse since he too was clearly disillusioned with the direction the international movement had taken. Nevertheless, he agreed to preside at a meeting that year in Newcastle on Aid for the Soviet Union, at which Katherine Susannah Prichard, noted communist novelist, was speaking (ML MSS 5765, Box 2). Within the space of 18 months, he was caught up in a major dispute between the CPA and the WEA, the so-called B40 Affair (Morris 2013). Although Stewart, Higgins and their allies in university adult education insisted this was a conflict between 'propaganda' and 'real education', it was in fact, more about control over the NSW ALP and trade unions than about adult education principles. Moreover, some of the personal bitterness this dispute engendered was clearly related to the fact that several of the protagonists were old comrades, with Bill Gollan leading the fray on behalf of the Teachers Federation in Newcastle (Gollan 1948), where, as Higgins reported without mentioning his own role or his highly relevant past, the dispute with the WEA was particularly savage. The struggle in the labour movement of which B40 was one episode eventually led to a major split in the NSW ALP when its increasingly left-wing leadership voted to amalgamate with the Communist Party (Boughton 1997b).

In 1945, Higgins returned to Sydney, to work in the Department of Tutorial Classes there, and in 1950, became its Assistant Director. Having left the CPA, he was now confirmed in his opposition, writing in 1951, the year Menzies legislated once again to make the Communist Party illegal:

> *I've come actively to dislike practically all that the Communist Party stands for. If I must have a label, I'm a sort of a Fabian with an over-plus attachment to democratic methods (Quoted Roe 1977)*

Nevertheless, he refused publicly to cooperate with the Commonwealth's new internal security police force, A.S.I.O., who approached him to inform, as many other ex-communists had, on their former comrades (Irving 2004). In 1954, he completed his Master's degree, and in 1957 completed his memoir of Stewart. He died three years later, in 1960, the year in which the AAAE formed.

Conclusion

Lascelles Wilson, one of the 'great men' of 1960s adult education, wrote an obituary to Higgins in March 1961 (Wilson 1961) which, without a trace of irony, told readers that R.G. Menzies, still then the Prime Minister, was among Higgins' fellow undergraduates who had been his 'stimuli' at university. He explained away Hig's joining the communist movement as youthful idealism and significantly understated the length of time he had been an actual party member. The 'real' life of Higgins, it seems, whom he applauds for his "relentless intellectual honesty", began with "his return, in truth his entry, into academic life". Whereupon follows the most telling comment of all:

> *Thus, the last twenty-five years of his life were spent, to its great gain, in adult education.*

Then what, we must now ask, was he doing for the first twenty years of his working life? Was this not adult education also, directed toward a different end? From the point of view of social movement learning, Higgins may well be said to have done his most effective work as an adult educator in the earlier part of his life, working for the communist movement; rather than in later years, spent in what he himself disparagingly referred to as "the liberal racket."

Wherever one sits in this debate, it should be clear that all educational interventions directed to the working class movement are political and cannot be understood outside the context of their times. For much of the 20th century, the WEA and its partner, university adult education, represented a conscious effort to build a movement among workers which, while it claimed simply to be educational, was much more. Its educational focus 'covered' an ideology about the way forward, about the kind of society which could and should be built. Its ideology based on class collaboration - consensus, we might call it today - was consistent with some traditions in the British labor movement, but not nearly as universal as Higgins in his 1950s persona led his readers to believe.

The sixtieth anniversary of the foundation of adult education's national association provides an occasion to revisit the traditions which formed the field. What should stand on the historical record, but has not - partly because Higgins and those who followed him preferred to celebrate a more passive tendency in the politics of working class education - is

that most, if not all, the progressive changes won by organised labour in Australia involved struggles in which communists and socialists played leading educative roles. Liberalism, on this account, is not as transformative a tradition as its proponents once argued (Boughton 2020a). In the twenty-first century, adult educators who aim to play a more effective role in social change will find, if they look, there is still much to be learned about popular education by studying the experience of past social movements, which Choudry & Vally (2018) rightly call "history's schools".

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Sixty years of adult learning in Aotearoa New Zealand: Looking back to the 1960s and beyond the 2020s

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This article offers a historical analysis of the past sixty years of adult learning in Aotearoa New Zealand and critically appraises events which have shaped today's context. Drawing on a substantial body of research by key adult educators, researchers and scholars, the review assesses historical, socio-cultural, and political factors that influenced adult learning policies and practices. First, a brief discussion is given of traditional Māori education, colonisation, bi-culturalism and multi-culturalism for relevance to the Aotearoa New Zealand context. Next, a historical analysis is offered in a decade-by-decade review. Looking back over the past sixty years, this historical analysis exposes key influences which have shaped adult learning in Aotearoa, and discusses trends emerging as significant future directions going into and beyond the 2020s.

***Keywords:** Adult learning, Adult education, Aotearoa New Zealand, Lifelong learning, neo liberalism, equality, social justice*

Introduction

2020 has been a momentous year, characterised by the global Covid-19

pandemic, Black Lives Matter protests, unprecedented consequences of climate change, a worldwide economic crisis, and a US election, to name just a few significant events! Reviewing the past sixty years of adult learning it is timely to consider how we can understand the key influences that will shape the 2020s and beyond. Events of 2020 have brought significant public attention to global and very real social problems such as inequality, technological divides, and inter-cultural conflicts which urgently demand innovative solutions. Radical change will require radical questions to be asked of those in authority, those in policy and in politics to disrupt the status quo and bring about social transformation.

From its origins, adult learning flourishes within the lifelong learning platform of professional, personal and social development to facilitate real social transformation. As an integral part of society, life-long, life-wide and life-deep learning must be forefront in all citizens' minds, whatever their age. In the first part of this article, the field of adult learning in Aotearoa New Zealand's is reviewed over the past sixty years to critically appraise key historical, socio-cultural, and political events. The second part of this article considers adult learning in the 2020s and examines the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on adult learning. A discussion is presented of how these effects have exacerbated a legacy of existing inequities. Lastly, the rise of the internet and online learning is evaluated in terms of its meaning for adult learning.

Aotearoa New Zealand context - A legacy of more than 60 years

Over the past sixty years, colonial influences on education in Aotearoa have been significant. Prior to British settlers arriving from the early 1800s, traditional Māori society had in place long-established oral educative philosophies and systems, using Māori language to communicate Māori knowledge (Bishop, 1998; L. Smith, 1999; Pihama et al., 2004). Traditionally (and contemporarily) many Māori adults learnt on the marae (open space; forum for social life) by listening and participating in oratory (Pollock, 2012). Education worked both informally through iwi (tribe) and whānau (family group) relationships, and, formally through systems such as whare wānanga (traditional houses of higher learning) and tōhunga (experts). Numerous researchers have explored, documented and discussed the ways in which pre-colonial education operated in traditional Māori society (Hiroa, 1950; Hōhepa, 1978; Mead, 2003; Pere, 1994; Zepke, 2009).

Colonial settlers aimed to recreate British educational oral and literacy traditions through establishing education institutions modelled on their home country. The earliest adult education example was the Mechanics Institutes established in Wellington and Auckland in 1842 offering evening classes to working men (Dakin, 1996). A later example was the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) formed by labour leaders and university teachers. WEA became the main adult education provider for working men and women in English literature, economics, psychology and arts from 1915 (Dakin, 1996; Pollock, 2012). Further still, the Adult Education Act of 1947 established a National Council of Adult Education (NCAE) with the express purpose to foster adult education and cultivate the arts.

Quite clearly, the 1900s' governmental strategies of assimilation and integration disclose an unofficially mono-cultural nation favouring the dominant New Zealand European culture (Hayward, 2012). For Māori, the injustices of colonisation have resulted in cultural and identity dislocation, and deprivation and subjugation. Injustice and racism have been discussed more as social times have changed, (Hokowhitu et al., 2010; Irwin, 1989; Sullivan, 1994) including presently in conjunction with the Black Lives Matter protests (Rindelaub, 2020). National discussions of bi-culturalism and multi-culturalism particularly came to the forefront from the 1970s, with bi-culturalism playing a key part of adult educational policy development.

Biculturalism and multiculturalism

Based on the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, a focus on the partnership between Māori and the Crown began cultivating a national emphasis on bi-culturalism (Liu & Robinson, 2016; Orange, 1988). Māori politics demanded newfound cultural recognition and identity, yet, many European New Zealanders resisted Māori activists' politics (Bidois, 2012). A contested history of identity and cultural politics framed debates around bi-cultural relations in Aotearoa. Bi-culturalism gained momentum as governmental agencies began recognising English and Māori languages, cultures, traditions in policy and in practice (Barrington, 2008; Hayward, 2012). Bi-culturalism was to be about power sharing and mutual respect, based on an anti-racism, cultural pluralist paradigm (Banks, 1988).

Notions of bi-culturalism are challenged by views that Aotearoa should officially become a multi-cultural society to recognise, in policy terms, the diverse ethnic backgrounds of Aotearoa citizens (Hayward, 2012).

Bi-culturalism and multi-culturalism spring from different ideologies and are in principle, separate, although overlaps exist (Walker, 1990). While these perspectives are subject to debate, though not more in this article, a socio-cultural and political backdrop influenced by colonisation underpins the evolution of adult learning in New Zealand.

Looking back: Decades in review

This article illustrates how the intersection of the history of adult learning provision and the social-cultural and political forces have implications for future practice and provision. In this part of the article historic provision of adult learning is traced and the social, cultural and political forces that have mediated that provision are evaluated. Later, the legacy of these past sixty years is considered for its influences on adult learning in the 2020s and beyond.

1960s: Movements and reformations

Around the 1960s, Aotearoa's economic and political connections to Britain began weakening (Bowl & Tobias, 2012). Simultaneously, as on the international scene, social and educational movements began strengthening in Aotearoa, e.g., anti-apartheid (Edmundson, 2011); anti-nuclear movements (Boanas, 1989); peace activism/movements (Locke, 1992); Indigenous movements (Smith, L., 1999); feminism and environmentalism (Tobias, 2016).

This social and political climate led to a growing interest in movement-based education (Benseman, 2005; Locke, 1992). Māori rights was one such movement-based education initiative. Beginning with the formation of the first national Māori organisation in 1951, the Māori Women's Welfare League (MWWL) created a forum for Māori women to air their concerns around detrimental social issues of post-war urban Māori migration (MWWL, 2015). Promotion of activities to improve the position of Māori in health, welfare and education paved the way for later decolonisation initiatives. Ideologically decolonisation initiatives triggered radical thinking about education methods especially adult and community education (Freire, 1970; Illich, 1973; Smith, G. 2000).

Dominant discourses of the 1960s and 1970s in adult education however, generally involved traditional forms of university and WEA

provision (Tobias, 2016). Influentially the Parry Report (Hughes Parry, 1959) recommended that regional councils focus on university-led programmes to enrich professional workers. These actions forced the NCAE to reconsider its future and make significant reformations. Shortly thereafter, in 1961, the University of New Zealand was dissolved and the University Grants Committee (UGC) took over. The newly reformed NCAE had the role of advising the UGC on the annual amounts universities should be paid for their adult education work (Dakin, 1996). Universities were freed up to rearrange into departments of university extension and provide adult education in more specialized and advanced courses. In rural areas, the Community Arts Service (CAS) toured artists and exhibitions and, by means of the NCAE and CAS, many adults took non-work-related courses for personal enjoyment (Pollock, 2012).

In the working sector, the 1960s also saw significant shifts in technical education with the government founding the first technical institutes to assist apprentices gain their trade's qualifications (Dakin, 1996). By 1968 the Vocational Training Council (VTC) was set up and promoted various industrial sectors to establish training boards, many of which received government grants to employ training officers. As ties to Britain loosened during the 1960s, through organisations such as the MWWL, the UGC and the VTC, adult education in Aotearoa began taking on a life of its own.

1970s: Booming optimism

The 1960s was a decade of reforms brought on by social movements. Worldwide, adult and community educators stood up for the cause of reducing inequalities (Tobias, 2016). The 1960s had provided fertile ground for the 1970s' booming optimism. Following both the seminal 1972 Faure report (Faure, 1972), and a large subsequent 1976 UNESCO conference in Nairobi (Nyerere, 1978), attention to lifelong education grew from a backing by the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In Aotearoa, the concept of 'lifelong education' emerged as a keen focus (Benseman, 2005; Brown, 2018), and was examined by a committee appointed by the 1970 National Commission for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Dakin, 1996). Following their recommendations for adults to attend classes in daytime secondary school classes, a 1975 Radio New Zealand's Continuing Education Unit was created (Dakin, 1996). The Education Act (No. 2) of 1964 had made it very

clear that the term 'continuing education' was meant to embrace both vocational and non-vocational education. The theme 'lifelong learning' also gained prominence as an idea of education as a community activity.

During this time, Adult Continuing Education (ACE) gained momentum (Bowl & Tobias, 2012). The 1972-1975 left-wing Labour Government facilitated adult education for social democratic as well as vocational purposes. Optimism fuelled by a trade boom energised an expansion in education generally. ACE opportunities were offered widely through community colleges and universities, notably through Centres for Continuing Education (CCE) or departments of extension (Findsen & Hindmarsh, 1996). By 1970, two newly established universities, Massey in Palmerston North and Waikato in Hamilton, took over the central-north island's university extension functions (Dakin, 1996). Through correspondence offerings Massey University helped particularly large numbers of adult learners to access extramural university education. Nationwide community colleges were inaugurated and by 1980 four community colleges were established in Hawke's Bay, Whangarei, Rotorua and Invercargill (Pollock, 2012).

Additionally, voluntary organisations were state funded alongside distance learning organisations. Farming communities were included—the government backed Rural Education Activities Programmes (REAPs) (Pollock, 2012). REAPs were primarily instituted to assist country schools and providers of adult education in rural areas quickly became active promoters nationally (Dakin, 1996). Adult literacy programmes blossomed into more than 180 projects through volunteer organisation the Adult Reading and Learning Assistance Federation (ARLA). Roots remain of ARLA today in the organisation Literacy Aotearoa which is a fully bicultural, Treaty-based organisation (Literacy Aotearoa, n.d.).

The 1970s was an important time in New Zealand's history of adult literacy programmes during which an emphasis towards student-oriented philosophy was developing. The Minister of Education (Gandar, 1977 as cited in Tobias, 2016) pointed out that community education was a form of action, part of the process of controlling social change toward a more just society.

1980s: The turning tide - Two trends

The 1980s was marked by two trends of remarkable Māori educational

growth whilst adult community education withered, and the tide turned away from education for social participation towards neoliberalism. Certainly, influences of international trends in lifelong education and ACE were reflected in Aotearoa's 1970s policies and practices. Gradually, technical colleges became divided into standalone upper secondary schools and Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs), and community colleges proliferated regionally, reaching their peak of 25 by 1990 (Mischewski & Kitone, 2018). Nevertheless, needs were not being met among educationally disadvantaged groups, particularly Māori (Boshier, 1970; 1971). The NCAE's Task Force report (Lifelong Learning Task Force, 1985) stressed how non-formal, non-institutional education systems would empower those 'experiencing inequity' to self-determine their educational agendas.

A significant step in 1982 was the formation of Te Ataarangi, an organisation for community and workplace education of and about Māori culture, language, literacy and practices. This organisation is still among those at the forefront of Māori language and culture revitalisation (Te Ataarangi, 2011). During the 1980s, alongside the growth of state-sector bi-culturalism, and driven by tino-rangatiratanga (self-determination), other Māori education initiatives began flourishing. Te Kōhanga Reo (Māori immersion early childhood centres), Kura Kaupapa Māori (Māori immersion primary and secondary schools), three contemporary wānanga (Māori institution of higher learning, like a university) and Māori departments at universities exemplify meaningful education initiatives for and with Māori in what was previously a mono-cultural education system. Meanwhile a totally polar trend to the galvanization of Māori educational initiatives growth occurred. Quite suddenly the brakes were applied to funding for adult education activities. Economic repercussions from rapid oil price rises of 1979-1980 and increasing global capitalism brought on wage and price freezes (Pritchard, 1982) and cuts to educational expenditure. Throughout the 1980s, funding to the NCAE was slashed (Dakin, 1996), damaging its prestige and crippling its effectiveness, resulting in its abolishment by the Education Amendment Act of 1990.

A National Resource Centre (NRC) Trust took over the NCAE assets, but, despite its title, few resources existed beyond the former NCAE Wellington Tinakori Rd building (Dakin, 1996; Tobias, 2016). The NRC was funded by Community Learning Aotearoa New Zealand

(CLANZ), who advised the Minister of Education on criteria for grant distribution for community education. Even so, CLANZ became severely underfunded during the 1990s.

Approaching the 1990s, with the demise of NCAE and other adult education organisations, the New Zealand Association for Community and Continuing Education (NZACCE) became a key voice, supported by professional and voluntary adult educators. These educators waged a 'Save Adult Education' campaign, meeting with some success in saving the WEA despite funding loss. As a result of its involvement in the campaign NZACCE strengthened nationally (NAACCE, 1982, 1983) later changing its name to the Adult and Community Education Association Aotearoa New Zealand (ACEA), and later again changing to become a new organisation in 2002, merging with the NRC, named ACE Aotearoa (ACE Aotearoa.org, 2020).

It is generally agreed (Benseman, 2005; Findsen, 2016; Zepke, 2001) that the late 1980s mark the turning tide during which Aotearoa began to come up against harsh neo-liberalism. Both public and private institutions were fully exposed to the competitive forces of multi-national capitalism "in this radical new neoliberal hegemony" (Tobias, 2016, p. 17). The 1987 election campaign hinged strongly on educational issues and when Labour Prime Minister David Lange was re-elected he also took the education portfolio (McLean, 2017). Amidst great national debates concerning neoliberal economic policies Lange rejected the neoliberalist application to social and educational policies. Despite this, the tide turned away from education for social participation towards neoliberal governance.

1990s: Neoliberal governance

The Education Amendment Act 1990 was a major law that heralded the beginning of the neoliberal tertiary education sector as it is today. Until this law passed three distinctions had clearly existed between 'higher education', 'adult education', and 'vocational education'. Although the 1970s concepts of 'lifelong', 'continuing' and 'community' education had first begun blurring some lines it was not until this 1990 Act was passed that 'tertiary education' steadily headed towards becoming an umbrella term for all post-compulsory education activities.

During the 1990s, worldwide and underpinned by neoliberalism, higher education was confronted for being an élitist privilege which stimulated

policy shifts to widen availability for a massive section of society (Leach, 2013; 2014). Technological advances, alongside globalisation and international competition, directed tertiary education from élitism to mass education, or massification (Leach, 2013). Massification was first about increasing participation and next about widening access to 'non-traditional' learners.

In Aotearoa, Māori political and cultural movements gained momentum in mainstream society, backed with academic clout through respected Māori academics (e.g., Sir Ranginui Walker, Sir Hirini Moko Mead, Sir Mason Durie, Graham and Linda Tuhiwai Smith).

Significantly, within tertiary education, the government's formal recognition of three existing wānanga as tertiary education institutions augmented their funding. In 1999 Te Wānanga o Aotearoa had just over 1,000 students enrolled whereas, incredibly, five years later in 2004 there were 63,387 students enrolled and more than 1,200 staff (Strathdee, 2009). Backed by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) Māori made many inroads to change education throughout the 1990s. Despite improvements educational disparities still exist between Māori and non-Māori (Amundsen, 2019a; Walters, 2018).

Under neo-liberal auspices education became the government's major enabler to improve Aotearoa's productivity and enhance economic growth. A perception grew that a more skilled (educated) worker is a more productive worker, and, more skilled people receive higher earnings for their increased productivity (Tholen, 2015). Neo-liberal logic shifted the responsibility for ACE participation and success, and non-participation or failure away from government and onto individuals. Consequently, a focus grew on credentialed, job-outcome-centred education, diminishing social, community and active citizenship education (Bowl & Tobias, 2012).

Neo-liberal societies operate on free market economics and the individual as a rational, economic actor often referred to as homo economicus or an economic human (Bowl & Tobias, 2012; Leach, 2014; Olssen, 2002). Neo-liberal governance depends on individualisation, decentralisation, and privatisation—in short, a minimal role for the state. Under a right-wing National Government for most of the decade, neoliberal policies were steadily implemented.

Individual tertiary institutions were required to compete against each other for student enrolments. Standardised tertiary fees were replaced

by institutional freedom to set fees (Leach, 2013); tertiary grants and bursaries covering costs for students were replaced by student allowances; a student loan scheme was established; and drastic cuts or complete funding withdrawal occurred for many ACE organisations. Despite the ACE sector economic setbacks, Harré Hindmarsh's (1992) research shows the remarkable resilience of community organisations, none of which closed down due to considerable reliance on voluntary and low-paid workers.

When Helen Clark's Labour Government was elected in 1999 (Electoral Commission, 1999) a short-life Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (TEAC) was established to undertake a review of post-compulsory education (Boston, 2002). The Labour Party were partially elected on their successful argument that the market-led system had not produced the social and economic benefits promised by the National Party (Strathdee, 2009). Labour, a centre-left political party founded on democratic socialist principles, promised to reform the market-driven tertiary education funding system (Bowl & Tobias, 2012). They were to reconcile neo-liberal and social democratic ideologies and create a socialised market economy on the tail of a decade of neoliberal governance.

2000s: Swept under one umbrella of tertiary education

Commentaries on tertiary education during the 2000s continued to discuss connections with neoliberal ideologies (Bowl & Tobias, 2012; Findsen, 2016; Olssen, 2002; Strathdee, 2009; Zepke, 2001; 2009). From 2000 onwards successive Governments' stated emphasis was on aligning tertiary education with New Zealand's socio-economic development. Tertiary education's scope expanded to include the then-existing 8 universities, 20 polytechnics, 4 colleges of education, 3 wānanga, 500+ Private Training Establishments (PTEs), 46 Industry Training Organisations (ITOs), 9 Government Training Establishments (GTEs) and 17 Other Tertiary Education Providers (OTEPs) (MoE, 2002; 2004). Tertiary education also included numerous ACE providers and Rural Education Activities Programmes (REAPs), ACE funded schools, voluntary organisations and community groups. The placement of all post-compulsory education under one umbrella of tertiary education governance and funding was justified as a unique, forward-thinking approach; nowhere else in the world had gathered its academic, vocational and community adult education together in this way (MoE, 2008).

Under advice from TEAC, the Labour Government established the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) funding body to steadily assume responsibilities to oversee, plan, fund and monitor the entire post-compulsory education sector (Goedegebuure, 2012). In theory, this gave ACE equal standing among education institutions such as universities, polytechnics and ITOs. The role of ACE was acknowledged and efforts to re-build got underway (MoE, 2001a). Future visions for ACE were redefined, prioritising lifelong learning, and strengthening social and community life through education. According to Irwin (2008) Māori also laid out their own agenda for ACE based on tino-rangatiratanga. Non-accredited education was to be recognised as having a place within the wider tertiary education sector.

In reality the position of 'non-formal' community education became problematic for the TEC when they brought all funded and accredited post-compulsory education under one umbrella. Academics (Olssen, 2002) warned, justifiably, that ACE would be difficult to integrate into the TEC's vision. Whereas universities and polytechnics had well-established systems to meet TEC requirements ACE had a rather more vague and nebulous structure.

Essentially the TEC ended up narrowing ACE's role in promoting empowerment, equity, active citizenship and sustainable development by relegating it to contributing to governmental goals of raising foundation work-related skills. For instance in 2001, New Zealand's first ever official adult literacy strategy was released (MoE, 2001b), highlighting the interrelationship between adult literacy and the government's strategy to develop a more literate workforce. Overall the TEC's thrust was to meet industry needs through training and improving literacy and numeracy in the workforce.

Since the early 2000s the TEC has released four versions of the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) as reform centrepieces. Each TES iteration has seen purposeful changes which impacted adult learning. From the get-go the first Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) 2002-2007 (MoE, 2002) provoked a strong, unified reaction among a diverse range of education providers that the document did not express 'their strategy', but instead, the Government's neoliberal aims for taking Aotearoa forward over the next decades.

The 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) hit sharply. High interest rates, high food and fuel prices, combined with falling house prices, painted a

bleak picture for Aotearoa's economy. In the 2008 election John Key's National Party overthrew Helen Clark's Labour Government (Electoral Commission, 2008). Under National control TEC staff reductions occurred and the ACE sector underwent more major funding cuts as a result of economic rationalisation (Bowl & Tobias, 2012).

The GFC took its toll on participation in the tertiary sector. In 2009 $NZ500 million of governmental funding was withdrawn from tertiary education and enrolments were capped (Leach, 2013). By 2010 universities were turning away thousands of students. Performance-based criteria on student loans were initiated; loans were restricted and funding became tightly linked to student performance such as course and qualification completion, progression to higher study and retention (Joyce, 2010). Sweeping up all post-compulsory education forms under one umbrella of tertiary education management has been paralleled by a falling participation trend by all tertiary students in Aotearoa during the 2000s (Education Counts, 2017). Sweeping up adult learning under one umbrella of tertiary education to compete for funding alongside universities, polytechnics and other tertiary education organisations has had disastrous financial and other consequences.

2010s: Financial squeeze

From 2010 to 2020, under tertiary education auspices, adult learning has been gripped in a financial squeeze. Approaching the end of this decade, confronted by the Covid-19 pandemic and an impending economic crisis, Aotearoa's October 2020 election was significant for the future of adult learning education policy. The decade from 2010 to 2020 was already becoming more economically restrictive for adult learning; there is no doubt that all education funding will be tightly contested going forward.

Blaming budget cuts upon the 2010-2011 Christchurch earthquakes the National Government made a significant decision in 2012 to withdraw funding to universities for ACE provision (Findsen, 2016). Universities' CCEs were practically demolished owing to massive restructuring and cost-cutting. The 2012 Budget also brought about student loan repayment rate increases which began narrowing students' pathways to tertiary education by making them more costly and exclusive.

The TEC continued to expand the types of education encompassed under its control. Cutting back on the funding and availability of 'non-formal'

education, a 'user-pays' ideology developed. Types of education previously viewed as non-formal either largely disappeared (e.g., community education in schools), or were re-directed through Government initiatives to formal tertiary education providers for delivery.

Vocational education, also controlled by the TEC, was subject to tightening control over funding and operational rules with implications nationally and regionally. As with other countries (Goedegebuure, 2012) inter-institution competition, staff reductions and mergers within and across regions occurred among vocational education providers. Under neoliberal auspices successive ITP mergers saw 25 polytechnics in 1990 reduce to 16 by 2018 (Amundsen, 2019b).

Under the management and regulation of the TEC non-formal and formal education steadily and purposefully merged into one formal sector. ACE has been a casualty. Leach (2014) lamented that whereas ACE was considered non-formal education it is now swallowed up into the formal tertiary landscape. Consequently, ACE is "explicitly steered by education policy, its role severely narrowed, its emphasis shifted from empowerment, equity, active citizenship to preparation for employment and skills for work" (Leach, 2014, p.705). Scott (2010) maintains this comes at the expense of sustaining social capital and cultural identity for marginalised populations—namely Māori.

Policy directions of tertiary education have been subject to political forces. From 2008 to 2017 the National Party, in coalition with three smaller parties; United Future, ACT Party and the Māori Party, held governmental power until their defeat in the September 2017 elections. Partially due to campaign promises of 'free' tertiary education Jacinda Ardern's Labour Party became the new Government in coalition with New Zealand First and in confidence and supply agreement with the Green Party (Electoral Commission, 2017).

Immediately Labour ushered in changes to tertiary education. School-leavers became eligible for one year of free provider-based tertiary education or industry training. This extended to adults who had previously studied for less than half a year of full-time tertiary education or industry training (MoE, 2017). These were initial steps in Labour's stated intent to offer a full programme of three years fee-free tertiary education by 2024, although this has been subsequently placed on hold following economic consequences of Covid-19. Other instantaneous

actions included announcements to abandon the tertiary education funding model of the previous government on the basis that it is a "failed ideological experiment" (Chris Hipkins, 2018). Hipkins disagreed with tertiary education providers being forced to bid against each other for funding shares in non-degree post-schooling education and called for a significant review of New Zealand's entire education system in a Cabinet Paper (MoE, 2018). National consultations throughout 2018 and wide sweeping education reformation across all education sectors were recommended and initiated.

As part of the reformations the vocational education proposal the ITP Roadmap 2020 (Mischewski & Kitone, 2018) intends to salvage a financially crippled polytechnic sector by unifying the funding system into a sole organisation currently being established. The 2018 Cabinet paper stated polytechnics were rapidly trending towards an economic crisis and that without halting the present unsustainable financial trend eight ITPs would be in deficit by 2020 (MoE, 2018). The new 'New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology' intends to consolidate all 16 existing ITPs into one national body headquartered from Hamilton.

All this, and to start off the next decade, in 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic has swept throughout the world, creating significant social, cultural, political and educational disruptions as well as a forecasted economic recession of enormous proportions. Effects of the pandemic completely upend and forever change the landscape looking ahead to a new decade.

2020: Effects of Covid-19 on adult learning

On March 25, 2020 Aotearoa went into Level 4 lockdown for a period of 33 days to manage the Covid-19 pandemic (New Zealand Government, 2020). Level 4 has the highest restriction levels requiring citizens to stay at home other than for essential personal movement. Other than essential services such as supermarkets, pharmacies and petrol stations, all businesses shut down. Healthcare services were reprioritised and educational facilities were closed.

Immediate effects of Covid-19 on adult learning have essentially meant a reduction in availability of face-to-face learning opportunities for adult learners. In adult learning spaces libraries closed, learning festivals, training courses, workshops and conferences were all cancelled or postponed indefinitely. Although the Level 4 restrictions have since

eased, uncertainty and unease over public gatherings throughout 2020 has resulted in fewer meetings, less travel, less personal contact and, as a result, less face-to-face learning opportunities for adults.

Simultaneously a rise of online learning opportunities has burst forth in some areas. Tertiary education organisations providing formal education such as universities and polytechnics were well positioned to quickly offer all kinds of webinars, online courses and workshops. Yet, other organisations offering non-formal education such as Literacy Aotearoa, Ako Aotearoa, English Language Partners and REAPs saw their learning activities grind almost to a halt. This was partially due to their systems being geared up for in-person learning delivery and partially due to some of the adult learner base of these organisations being without access to digital devices or internet services. ACE providers saw large drop-offs in attendance at courses as learners also expressed their fear of being in close physical contact with others preferring to take self-isolation precautions (ACE Aotearoa, 2020).

As with other countries the Covid-19 crisis catapulted Aotearoa society into unprecedented internet reliance (for those with access). This unexpected glimpse into how society operates in a more fully online environment shone a light on how access to internet and digital devices is inequitably distributed throughout society. It also highlighted long-present issues of structural inequities, notably for Māori, inherited from previous decades of neoliberal and capitalistic socio-political policies as described earlier in this article.

Limitations of online learning include the prerequisite of access and adequate digital skills, equipment and computer devices, not to mention the struggle of educators accustomed to in-person delivery (OECD, 2020). If issues such as these are squarely addressed, online learning provision in the post-COVID crisis era has the potential to become more inclusive. For instance a greater number of learners could be reached through minimal investment in education infrastructure. Considering the increasing unemployment due to the Covid-19 crisis and associated economic recession online learning opportunities become a meaningful alternative to face-to-face instruction. Yet job-seekers will demand such learning provision to represent high-quality upskilling and reskilling prospects as they will be searching for education that translates into employment possibilities. However as has happened in previous decades this emphasis

may come at the expense of developing social capital and cultural identity for marginalised populations such as Māori (Scott, 2010).

Presently users of online learning are likely to be highly educated adults possessing strong digital skills (OECD, 2020). Equipping adults with basic digital skills prior to the Covid-19 crisis was already a goal for the TEC in Aotearoa but now, more than ever, meeting this goal is urgent. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are an example of zero to low cost online learning options, but they tend to have very low completion rates presently – many as low as 10 per cent (OECD, 2020). Fundamental factors for making online learning a viable option include helping learners to acquire access to digital infrastructure and skills, maintaining motivation for self-directed online learning, and broadening the range of online learning opportunities to become more inclusive and less 'white-collar'. For providers of adult learning going forward raising the quality of online courses and equipping teachers to effectively design and deliver learning opportunities will be paramount.

A recent decision by the NZ government to fund additional investment over four years to the ACE sector (MoE, 2020) was a welcome response to many years of the sector's hard work to emphasize the value of ACE. An allocation of NZ$16 million (US$10.5 million) to focus on social cohesion, well-being and vocational programmes reflects Jacinda Ardern's governmental focus as part of the 2019 Wellbeing Budget. This action reflects the Labour government's decision to move away from the existing tertiary education funding model which it views as a "failed ideological experiment" (Hipkins, 2018). Annual government funding is tied to student enrolment numbers from the previous year. Without guarantee of funding, courses could close and opportunities for adult learning become tighter. The October 2020 election came at a fiscally critical time for ACE providers considering the impacts of Covid-19.

Beyond 2020: Looking forward

Analysis of the past sixty years exposes historic, cultural, social and political influences which have shaped adult learning in Aotearoa. With a colonial legacy of more than 180 years the Indigenous Māori rights movements have persistently called for justice and equality to address disastrous effects of institutionalised racism for Māori. Though some ground has been made more needs to be done in light of how the

Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequities. It is likely that the field of adult learning can play a significant role in social movement activities for Indigenous Māori rights, for climate change, for women's rights and for digital equality.

Social movements are versions of lifelong learning through the knowledge they create, identities they grow, and learning spaces and educational opportunities they generate. The potential of social movements to generate new knowledge, in turn generating alternative worldviews which can influence collective and individual transformation, cannot be overestimated. Since the 1960s, the concept of lifelong learning has continued to develop and encompass self-motivated learning undertaken by adults in formal, non-formal and informal learning settings. Although the term is widely inclusive of learning for personal development and citizenship governmental funding agencies in Aotearoa have tended to more linearly interpret the concept to mean progression from pre-school, to compulsory primary and secondary school and on to tertiary education. It is timely to broaden these policies to address the reality of adults who are having to learn a whole new range of skills and attitudes including learning at home, being parents as teachers, acquiring new technology skills, growing empathy and compassion for others and stepping up as active citizens to respond to the effects of the pandemic.

The grand scale disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic through travel bans, flight restrictions, sporting, cultural, educational event closures, quarantine and self-isolation measures and economic recession represents a time for adult educators to create innovative and inclusive learning experiences for New Zealanders. The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted almost everyone's sense of normality and brought about great uncertainty. Pronounced inequities between groups of people and between nations have also become clearer. This disruption has triggered a re-examination of expectations of life and perhaps significant transformational learning might be occurring as a result of these dramatic changes. As eloquently stated by the late Sir James Hēnare, (McConnell & McConnell, 2020) and especially relevant for the Black Lives Matter movement presently, "Kua tawhiti ke to haerenga mai, kia kore e haere tonu. He tino nui rawa ou mahi, kia mahi tonu" (We have come too far, not to go further. We have done too much, not to do more).

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Practice in the social space of Neighbourhood Houses: Community, relationships and adult learning

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Neighbourhood Houses are significant sites of community-based adult learning spaces that are empowering, supportive and caring. They embody inclusive community development processes and adult learning practices that facilitate formal, informal, and incidental learning. Practices in these sites of social inclusion support relationships and shared learning. This paper uncovers the relational practices in Neighbourhood Houses as people develop knowledge, skills and new ways of knowing through their participation. Many participants in this research lacked confidence as learners and were re-engaging with learning following former negative and/or incomplete education experiences. They came to learn new skills following personal interests, to re-engage with learning for employment, seeking involvement in the community and reconnecting with others following periods of isolation and loneliness.

Drawing on Bourdieu's Theory of Practice we interpret the dispositions, practices and habitus in the Houses that support learner

*relationships and learning. We argue it is the Houses' intimate
and nurturing relational practices that transform learners' lives,
families and their local communities. This qualitative case study
research involved adult and life-long learners in Neighbourhood
Houses across Victoria. In-depth interviews were conducted with 87
diverse participants and from a mixture of rural, regional and urban
Neighbourhood House locations.*

Keywords: *Neighbourhood Houses, adult learning, Bourdieu,
relationships and learning, adult community education*

Introduction and background to the research

The early aims and practices of Neighbourhood Houses focused on
empowering local communities, especially women, and on providing
accessible learning opportunities for adults. Focussed in particular, on
those who for various reasons, had not been able to complete secondary
schooling or continue to post-secondary education (Harrison, 2018).
These practices were underpinned by the philosophies and activism
of two social movements – the women's liberation movement and the
popular education movement.

Popular education is a tradition in the field of adult education that
broadly encompasses community development activity, activism and
social change. Learning and education in this sense is a necessary part
of the effort to achieve significant social change in some way (Walter,
2012). According to Crowther, Martin and Galloway (2005), popular
education is a process of acting towards a social order that is more just
and egalitarian. Popular education movements were founded on the
critical pedagogy tradition of adult learning influenced by Freire (Freire,
1970/2000) and Illich (Illich, 1971), educators who spoke about the
capacity to raise consciousness and transform people's lives. Education
in this sense rejects rationalism and the banking system of education
and eschews non-democratic forms of teaching and learning.

With a focus on empowerment, education, social inclusion, and non-
hierarchal forms of organisation and participation these two movements
complement one another. The women's movement and second wave

feminists adopted the slogan 'the personal is political' focusing attention on the subordination of women in the private spheres and aspects of women's lives that were constructed on the notion of women's inferiority to men (Cahill, 2007). Both movements deeply respected lived experiences as sites of knowledge. Encouraging learners' input and sharing stories of their lives enabled individuals to collectively become aware of the social and political influences on their lives. Women shared their experiences with other women in a process of consciousness raising and transformation. Importantly, both traditions embrace the idea of learning and change as a relational and collective effort rather than an individual process.

The Neighbourhood House model offered the flexibility and support that women as primary carers of young children and women from diverse backgrounds required in order to fully participate in their communities, to further their aspirations to enter the workforce or continue their education, and to become leaders and engaged citizens (Aytan, 1991; Bennett & Forster, 1985; Golding, Kimberley, Foley, & Brown, 2008; Gravell & Nelson, 1986; Harrison, 2018; Humpage, 2005; Kimberley, 1998; Moloney, 1985; Ollis, Starr, Angwin, Ryan, & Harrison, 2016; Permezel, 2001; West, 1995). As Foley (1993, p.25) wrote:

> *The houses were established for a variety of reasons: women's desire to come together to end their suburban isolation and obtain social and intellectual stimulation, to establish playgroups for young children, to provide education for women, to furnish productive outlets for women's skills.*

Neighbourhood Houses offered women opportunities to engage in education, decision-making and to exercise agency in relation to their goals and aspirations. Women in particular experienced these opportunities as empowering (Duckworth & Smith, 2017; Harrison, 2018; Ledwith, 2011; Moloney, 1985).

Literature review

Popular education is a tradition in the field of adult education that broadly encompasses community development activity, activism and social change. Learning and education in this sense is a necessary part of the effort to achieve significant social change in some way (Walter, 2012).

According to Crowther, Martin and Galloway (2005), popular education is a process of acting towards a social order that is more just and egalitarian.

Kimberley (1998) considered that all participation in Neighbourhood Houses was a form of learning, and along with Rooney (2011) concludes that adult learning is a necessary aspect of the community development approach of Neighbourhood Houses. Furthermore, Rooney (2011, p.205) argues that these sites of adult learning are often overlooked:

> *A failure to acknowledge the learning potential of centres is a considerable oversight given that a community development focus typically means that those people involved are often highly representative of people under-represented in other educational settings.*

Ife (2016) refers to the important place of relationships in community work, outlining the key role that community workers play in nurturing and supporting the relationships that underpin successful community development work. Integral to relationship is dialogue. Through dialogue people learn from and with each other 'in an open and learning way' as a community (Ife, 2016, p.279). He argues that 'relationships are our reality' (p.86); we are not simply a collection of individuals, we exist in relationship to others. With respect to adult learning in community sites, Crossan and Gallacher's (2009) writing on further education in the United Kingdom identifies the importance of learning relationships as one of the distinctive characteristics of these sites of learning.

A learning relationship is established when people learn from and with each other and when a relationship influences a learner's view of themselves as a learner and their attitude towards learning. They identify a spectrum of learning relationships including learner to learner relationships, and learners' relationships with key staff who are involved in various ways in supporting their learning (Crossan and Gallacher, 2009). Importantly, within the learning environment relationships are built on enhancing knowledge and understanding through sharing and respecting historic and contemporary stories of lived experience.

Duckworth and Smith's (2017) concept of 'dialogic bonds of care' further describes the nature of adult learning in community sites where the establishment of affective bonds and awareness of the lived experience of learners are integral to the practice of teaching. This reaffirms what

many adult educators know that building relationships with learners is vital in establishing a positive foundation for learning. The teachers' role in facilitating a learning environment that encourages dialogue between learners themselves and between learners and teachers is vital.

Adult community education, commonly known as ACE, is widely viewed as the fourth sector of education in Australia (Devlin, 2020).

ACE is described as a:

> *… community based, owned and managed not for profit sector, committed to providing accessible learning opportunities for adults in local communities that meet their needs and support place-based community development (Bowman, 2016, p.7).*

ACE delivers formal, informal and incidental learning in the social environment of Neighbourhood Houses. It is regarded as an important means of achieving social change and personal and community empowerment (Foley, 1993; Kimberley, 1998; Ollis, Starr, Ryan, Angwin, & Harrison, 2017; Rooney, 2011). Today, Neighbourhood Houses are the largest single provider type in the ACE sector, with approximately 1000 centres across Australia catering for men, women and communities (Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association, 2011; Devlin, 2020). It is not surprising given their feminist history that women remain the most frequent users of the houses at 70% (Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, 2018). It is fitting to recognise this contribution to adult learning in the 60th year of Adult Learning Australia. In Victoria, there are now over 400 Neighbourhood Houses across all local government areas offering a wide range of learning, recreation, and support activities in response to locally identified interests (Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, 2018). Formal accredited courses in English Language, Literacy, Computer and Business Skills, Children's Services, Hospitality, Aged Care, and Horticulture are offered in Neighbourhood Houses that are registered training organisations. Other pre-accredited adult education is offered in preparation for work or further study. The range of programs offered appeals to a wide range of learners, including second chance and later life learners (Bowman, 2016).

Second chance and later life learners in Neighbourhood Houses

Our study identified two distinct groups of learners within

Neighbourhood Houses – second chance learners and later life learners. Second chance learners are people returning to study because they have incomplete education, do not have qualifications suitable for their employment aspirations, or who wish to upgrade their qualifications to support a move outside their current workplace (Robertson, Hoare, & Harwood, 2011). Pedagogical approaches in Neighbourhood Houses, small class sizes, non-hierarchical relationships, social and supportive learning environments, are ideally suited to support adults who have not completed secondary school and have had chequered histories of learning (Crossan & Gallacher, 2009; Duckworth & Smith, 2017).

An early phase of this research was undertaken in the Greater Geelong area, responding to concern about the rising levels of unemployment and redundancies following significant industry restructure and shutdowns (Ollis et al., 2016). At the same time, increasingly stringent eligibility criteria for income support was forcing many adults to try and remain within the workforce. The industries hardest hit were those with high proportions of early school leavers, those with no post-school qualifications, or those whose qualifications were superseded by new technologies. Many of those learners were not ready to enter the TAFE or higher education system, although a small number were considering a pathway into TAFE following successful completion of courses at a Neighbourhood House (Ollis et al., 2016).

The significant role of ACE has been recognised for its flexibility, local responsiveness and inclusive learner-centred approaches that support second chance, hard-to-reach and vulnerable learners to re-engage with education and learning (Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education, 2008). The provision of accredited VET programs in many Neighbourhood Houses allows learners to upgrade their qualifications to improve their opportunities for employment and re-entry to the workforce (Robertson et al., 2011).

The proportion of older people as a percentage of the population in western countries has been increasing in recent decades (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). As the population ages, adjustments are being made in the labour market, with labour force participation continuing until later in life (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). In keeping with changes to economic policy, social policy is also making adjustments, with the recognition of lifelong learning as more than a

means for enabling the labour force to "continually update and learn new skills" (Dench & Reagan, 2000, p.1). Lifelong learning benefits older people "in terms of their own health and well-being [such that] they lead a more active social life and become involved in their community" (Dench & Reagan, 2000, p.1)

Older learners, or later life learners (Withnall, 2006), are a significant cohort in Neighbourhood Houses (Ollis, Ryan, Starr, & Harrison, 2018a). In the literature, these learners are variously described as older adult learners (Findsen & Formosa, 2011), or later life learners (Dench & Reagan, 2000). Withnall (2006, p.32) prefers describing these learners as 'post work', on the basis that their primary activity is no longer full-time work to earn a living, or to support a family, rather than using age-based definitions. With the increasing ageing of the population, changes to the constitution of the labour market and the age of retirement, there needs to be more flexibility in describing this cohort of learners. We use the term 'later life learners' to encompass the notion that these learners are post-work in Withnall's sense, rather than attempting to describe them via an imposed age-defined entry point.

The older learners in Neighbourhood Houses are heterogeneous, with diverse employment and educational histories, interests, aspirations, and life experiences, and various motivations for learning. Older learners typically re-engage or engage with learning post-long-term employment, or following the cessation of family caring roles (Ollis, Ryan, Starr, & Harrison, 2018b). Participating in learning and social activities for later life learners often becomes a "long-term and an integral part of their daily lives" (Narushima, 2008, p.680). Learning is generally for personal interest and pleasure, and to develop skills which will enhance their current and future life plans. Smaller numbers are learning to increase their options for re-entering the workforce, some after the industries they were working in had made them redundant (Ollis et al., 2016).

For both second chance and later life learners, learning for any purpose is multilayered. Alongside learning skills and knowledge for employment and further study, or personal interest, it offers opportunities for social connection, to contribute to their communities, maintain physical and mental health, and enhances feelings of self-worth and confidence (Ollis et al., 2018b).

Methodology

For this research, a qualitative research design focused on "people, situations, events, and the processes that connect these" was used to provide deep insights into the relational and shared learning practices in Neighbourhood Houses (Maxwell, 2013, p.29). The aim and purpose of this research was to identify the learners, practices, and learning outcomes of adult education in Neighbourhood Houses. Qualitative research allowed the researchers to explore questions around the experiences, practices and importance of adult learning in Neighbourhood Houses. This approach provided insights into the diversity and significance of the learning relationships individual learners developed, relationships that helped them to re-engage with and enjoy learning and to re-frame previous negative views and learner biographies. The interpretive constructivist epistemology of this research allows that "what we know about the world always involves a knower and that which is to be known" (Kincheloe, 2005, p.2). Qualitative research approaches, such as case study research, "make the world visible" by providing insights into how people experience their world (Liamputtong, 2012).

Multiple case studies were chosen to illustrate the experiences of adult learners because they enabled us to show different perspectives and lived experiences of learners in the Neighbourhood Houses (Creswell, 2013). This enabled the research to provide "thick descriptions" (Merriam, 1998) of the learning experiences of individual adult learners in Neighbourhood Houses located across Victoria. This was important because of the diversity of the lived experiences and circumstances and the range of learning opportunities available in Neighbourhood Houses across Victoria. Furthermore, for the research team, it was important for individual learners' stories to be shared in a way that illustrated the nuanced and transformative impact of their learning experiences. We wanted to tell the stories of the participants in ways that held up to view the importance of their experiences with sensitivity and tone representative of the communities that were researched.

Data collection and participant selection

The research was conducted in two phases during 2016 and 2017. Phase one was conducted in partnership with two Neighbourhood

House networks located in the western areas of Victoria, and Phase two was conducted in collaboration with Neighbourhood Houses Victoria. Information about the research was disseminated through the partners, and participants were purposively selected following recommendations from individual Neighbourhood House coordinators and managers (Merriam, 1998). They were sent information about the research and a *Consent to Participate Form* by the research team, and a suitable interview date arranged. The data sample included 87 individual face to face interviews held across Victoria, in the Neighbourhood Houses participants were attending. Confidentiality was assured through the use of pseudonyms. All participants were sent a copy of the transcript of their interview and invited to review these for accuracy and to recommend changes if needed.

The transcripts were analysed using category construction (Merriam, 1998), finding themes and similarities within the data that helped to identify the complexities across the cases. Multiple case study research uses category construction across the sum of cases, to interpret and cross reference emergent themes within the whole range of case studies (Stake, 2006). The software program NVivo was used to manage the substantial volume of raw data, using a detailed set of codes developed from a close study of the interview transcripts. Several readings of the data and coding enabled major themes to be identified using an iterative approach moving between the codes and the transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this article we focus on relationships and the relational nature of learning in Neighbourhood Houses, a strong recurring sub-theme in the data. This aspect was integral to the first and third of the key themes identified in the data:

- The welcoming and inclusive nature of the learning environment

- Becoming more independent as learners

- Becoming more interdependent as learners

- Becoming more worldly as learners and citizens

Theoretical framework and conceptual analysis

Bourdieu (1990) notes the importance of ensuring careful, ethical and sensitive approaches are used by academics when researching communities of difference, communities that have oftentimes been

neglected for the sake of generating data. This notion underpinned the methodology and complements the theoretical framework of the research. Conceptually, our approach to this research is informed by the importance of how relationships are built in adult learning; those built between the learners themselves and the relationships between the facilitators and learners. Knowing how these relationships are shaped and structured in Neighbourhood Houses and how they provide opportunities for adult learning is central to this research. We use Bourdieu's (1990) writing on practice, which is a relational ontology, one which gives primacy to relationships and is also a theory of action. Bourdieu's theory sought to integrate an understanding of practical knowledge based on "the continuous decoding of the perceived – but not consciously noticed" (Bourdieu, 1977, p.8), by beginning to analyse the ways in which people organised, practised and interacted with each other (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). There are a number of Bourdieu's thinking tools that we use to discuss the findings in this research. Bourdieu's concept of habitus is integral to understanding informal learning in these spaces of community learning. Bourdieu believed certain habits, practices and dispositions are developed and reproduced largely through socialization (Bourdieu, 1984). Habitus is a collective process through which generative dispositions of family, class, social environment and cultural traditions contribute to a habitus within a social field (Bourdieu, 1977). Field is used to describe the space or field of struggle. A field is a system of social positions, it is "a field of struggle within which agents compete or confront each other" (Bourdieu, 1998, p.32). Field and habitus work together; habitus is the practices and dispositions of agents that are brought to the field. Bourdieu uses the term cultural capital to define the resources, knowledge, skills, abilities, networks and connections that players bring to the field. Agents are advantaged or disadvantaged based on the cultural capital they have (Bourdieu, 1984).

Theorists such as Jarvis (Jarvis, 2010) have examined how building relationships with learners is important in education. We now know that relationships are central to much of adult learning and that most people learn informally and incidentally for most of their lives (Beckett & Hager, 2002). This was demonstrated in the writing of Lave and Wenger (Lave, 1991) on situated learning which outlined how adults learn in the situated site of practice, in workplaces, in small groups and communities by sharing knowledge and problem solving with others. We learn by

social interaction with one another and this is not necessarily a cognitive act (Jarvis, 2010). In studies by Duckworth and Smith (2017), drawing on research in further education in the United Kingdom, they argued learners who have not flourished in formal spaces of learning need empowering education with support and bonds of care. Consistent with this notion, our analysis of learning in Neighbourhood Houses is cognisant of the key role played by the "relationships formed between learners and between learners and all staff" in the successful outcomes of learners (Crossan & Gallacher, 2009, p.133).

This is important to note because this research revealed many of the participants in the Houses had negative past experiences of the formal education system which impacted on their ability to identify as capable learners. In the interviews participants frequently expressed that they were not good at school, struggled with the formal education system, and did not enjoy learning. Many were disengaged and frustrated at school, which in turn, had a deleterious impact on their learner biography.

Findings

Our research found Neighbourhood Houses are a significant social space and an enriching shared learning environment for second chance and later life learners. The study provides a nuanced insight into the transformative nature of shared and relational learning pedagogies on people's lives. The findings provided insights into the distinctive habitus of Neighbourhood Houses created by the reciprocal and dialogical dispositions, habits and practices of adult learning. In the social environment of the Neighbourhood House, learners sharing their stories in the classroom was a valued source of knowledge included in learning activities (Harrison, 2018; Kimberley, 1998; Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Furthermore, the findings showed the importance of this habitus for people with diverse motivations and lived experience, for second chance and later life learners alike. Learners were enabled to explore new horizons, gain skills for employment and living, and to develop new relationships within their communities that enhanced their sense of self, connection, and belonging.

Monet, a later life learner following diagnosis of a chronic illness, noted the importance of the group environment, social connections, and friendships she made in a painting class for her skill development and her sense of wellbeing:

The friendships and the group environment, I could be doing this at home and learning off YouTube, but it's the one to one interaction with other people that I think is extremely important and the feedback that you get for your work. Social interaction is important for a lot of people, it might be the only time that they see someone all week and interact as a group and as a friendship in that as well. I think that's extremely important; I really don't know where I would have been without that in the early days.

First theme: Making social connections

Many of the learners in the study had identified the Neighbourhood House as a place to establish social connections. Their reflections establish that one of the main reasons for initially attending was a desire to establish or re-establish social connections and networks. They engaged with the Neighbourhood House at a time in their lives when they were experiencing change and disruption to social connections and networks as the result of moving to a new town, redundancy or unemployment, isolation, or due to complex life and family issues. They appreciated the local accessibility and welcoming environment of the Neighbourhood House, and the range of program and activity options available to them.

Some knew from previous experience with other Neighbourhood Houses that this was a probable outcome of becoming involved. Rowena, a later life learner, who was hoping to find work in her new location, came to the Neighbourhood House because she knew it was a place to meet people and 'become involved in the community'. Others were referred by friends, health professionals or Job Network providers. Nadir, a second chance learner, arrived in Australia as a refugee and was waiting for his permanent residency. A doctor recommended coming to the Neighbourhood House when he was experiencing isolation and depression:

I needed to be involved and communicate with other people to improve my English, to make friends and to meet other people.

Ruby, newly arrived in a small coastal town, was living alone and hoped to form new lasting connections within the community:

Because I'd retired and moved to [coastal town] and although I'd lived in [large town in area] years ago [this] was a

> *new community, so it was to start a network and to start a*
> *permanent relationship with the community. I had to go looking*
> *and exploring to find what was happening for older people and*
> *the House did that.*

Even learners whose primary motivation was to gain a qualification or
skill to facilitate their entry or re-entry into the workforce discovered
that coming to the Neighbourhood House provided opportunities for
developing and extending their social connections. Bird, a second chance
learner undertaking a Children's Services qualification, said that the social
environment was good for mothers who had been out of the workforce for
long periods of time. The sense of connection and feeling of belonging it
engendered kept many learners engaged with the Neighbourhood House for
many years. Being acknowledged for the time she had spent in a gardening
program gave Ruby, a later life learner, the sense that she belonged:

> *Someone called me an original, that was really nice, so that did*
> *achieve that bit of community and belonging.*

For Caroline, a later life learner, who had been in computer and
writing classes, and a sometime committee member over 26 years, the
Neighbourhood House formed the backdrop of her social networks.
June, also a later life learner, decided to join a computer class because
her husband seemed to be having a lot of fun being involved at the
Neighbourhood House. Self-described as 'not a social person ... a hermit'
she was surprised that she no longer wanted to stay at home, as she was
learning to mix and improve her social skills. For Francis and June,
volunteering in later life created a sense of belonging and fulfilled the
desire to contribute to the community. Francis was volunteering in the
Men's Shed and a committee of management member, he claims:

> *... being able to help solve problems, feeling useful I suppose*
> *you'd say I feel like I can contribute to the organisation, and also*
> *knowing that you are being appreciated back.*

Similarly, June says she gained a great deal from her volunteer work:

> *I feel a treasured member of the community and I know I'm*
> *adding to my community as well, so it's win, win because you*
> *don't do anything like even volunteering you don't do it unless*
> *you get something out of it too.*

Second theme: Learning together

Our previous research revealed many of the learners in Neighbourhood Houses came with negative learning identities and incomplete and unsatisfactory educational histories (Ollis et al., 2018a, 2018b; Ollis et al., 2017). Some of this can be attributed to the dominance of competitive learning models driven by market imperatives and power inequities based on class, gender and ethnicity in which learning was an isolating and individualistic exercise (Duckworth & Smith, 2017). Teresa, a later life learner in a writing class, noted the lack of competitiveness between learners in the Houses:

> *There hasn't been any competition in the courses that I've done, which I felt was great. That gives you more confidence because we're all doing the same sorts of things.*

One of the most striking aspects of the participants' reflections was the almost universal experience of learning with other people and its significance for their learning. Learning was relational, a shared rather than a solitary activity, undertaken in small groups with people regarded as friends, learning peers, and acquaintances. Crossan and Gallacher (2009, p.134) suggest that learning relationships are formed when "we learn from or through others", or when a disposition for learning forms as a result of relationships between people. For the participants, the initial motivation for learning primarily came from personal aspirations for re-entry into the workforce, a new career direction, or to learn skills for life and interest. Once they were within the small group environment of the Neighbourhood House learning became a collective and shared endeavour, and motivation and interest in learning was enhanced.

Adult learners in Neighbourhood Houses are heterogeneous and diverse, coming to classes and activities from different backgrounds and with varied lived experience. Learners recognised their own and others' areas of knowledge and understood that in the relaxed environment of the Neighbourhood House they could help one another. Learning from and with each other was supportive and reciprocal. When someone had more understanding or knowledge in a particular area they would help others, and in turn would be helped when they needed it. They looked to each other, not just the teachers as the quotes below from Dorothy and Annabella, both second chance learners, and Connie, a later life learner reveal:

> *We helped each other out a bit, some things I could do, some things they could do, so we put them together and we got it right (Dorothy).*

> *We all came from different backgrounds and it was just the encouragement and talking through answers, working through it together that was a massive help (Annabella).*

> *Whenever we've been in class we ask each other questions for help, we all help each other, we're always there to answer each other's questions, which is good (Connie).*

The horizontal relationship between learners and staff members engendered respect for each other and was an important aspect of the learning environment. Many commented that the small class sizes ensured that 'there is plenty of interaction between the teacher and yourself'. Teachers were appreciated for their professionalism and experience and were often regarded as friends. The learning experience was enriched when teachers were willing to share their interests and lived experience with the learners. This dialogical relationship between the teachers and learners and learners and teachers, forged important connections and bonds within the group:

> *Our teacher has got lots of life experience, she's done lots of different things and she has brought a great deal of knowledge to the table, not just what we have to learn, her life experiences and the information she's given us as well has been a big help to me. I work in a bit of a tricky centre and she's been a great support and has given me lots of advice which has been great (Alice, second chance learner).*

For adults who had not been confident learners, hesitant to ask questions, or were not able to keep up with the class content when they were at school, it was important that the Neighbourhood House class created a safe space of care and support, and that they could voice their opinion about what they wanted and needed to learn. Support and understanding from the teacher helped when learners felt 'overwhelmed' when beginning a course of study. Ann, a second chance learner, said it was easier for her because the teachers did not 'just walk over you' when she asked questions, she was surprised that 'they listen'! For

many learners knowing that the teacher was 'approachable' was very important in their assessment of the learning environment.

Third theme: Making friends

In addition to the sense of belonging and connection to social networks, the learning shared with others in classrooms and learning sites, participants formed new friendships with other participants in the classes and activities they attended.

Many participants commented on the 'friendly learning experience'. They knew each other's names 'whether you're a teacher/trainer or not'. While it was not uncommon for friendships to form with classmates, Reem, a second chance learner in a Computer class, commented that for her the language barrier meant that it was 'too hard' to make friends. Friends were people who helped each other out, inside and outside of the classroom. Friends in the classroom helped each other to catch up or understand course content. Evie, a second chance learner in a Horticulture course, commented that:

> When I was stuck with learning instead of constantly pestering the tutor I was able to lean on my friends that I've made in the course and we'd stay back a little bit longer to help me catch up.

Linh, a second chance learner in a Computer class, says that her classroom friends:

> … understand more than me and when I come back to the computer class and there's something I don't understand I ask them, 'Do you know this one, and can you teach me before the teacher asks me?' They're very good friends.

The way that friendships were enacted differed according to people's circumstances and needs. Mary, a second chance learner in English Language and Computer classes, brought friends 'from my neighbourhood to learn because they were interested'. Caitie, a later life learner who became a volunteer writing tutor, was busy with family and had limited time, and mentioned her lovely friends:

> It's not the friendship where I'd have them around all the time, but friends they'd ring if they want something, and we'd help each other out. We like to go out for dinner at the end of the year, we meet socially that way. They're really lovely friends.

Valued friendships were formed between people with differing life experiences and circumstances. Bianca, a young single mother returning to study after a long disruption with a sick child, made friends for life during a pre-employment course:

> *… lifelong friends actually and they're all lovely people. Everyone was from a different walk of life, all different ages, different genders.*

Sally, a second chance learner in an English Language class, appreciated the diversity of cultures in her classroom and the new friendships and understandings that were forming between herself and her classmates:

> *I'm happy because I've really made friends from different countries and their culture makes a lot of diversity. We teach each other by their culture and their food. Sometimes they give us the fruit, and sometimes in gatherings, each one brings a plate of food, so we share with each other.*

Bianca, Ruby, and Kaye talked about the way their classroom friendships have extended outside the classroom into other areas of their lives:

> *We talk through things, some things we'd get on a really deep level, other things we wouldn't get so then we'd talk about that … we've helped each other, we still help each other with things like that. She's a really lovely person, we actually worked out that her boys are cousins to my son, so it was very surprising, but we're just going to stick together from now on (Bianca).*

Ruby's shared interest in gardening led to her and a small group forming a working-bee-style gardening activity that began to meet fortnightly and rotate between each other's gardens. This group who have become 'really nice friends', and the ongoing community garden group, form the basis of Ruby's friendship network:

> *We'll often say the reason for coming is to spend time together because we've all got gardens at home, so we don't need like a plot to do our own gardening, it really is that connecting of people. That's important to me but I think it's important to the others too so that certainly achieved that. It's a really nice group, it would be my network and my friendship group now.*

Kaye, a later life learner and volunteer, spoke about her growing friendship with the Neighbourhood House coordinator who has no family in Australia:

> … she's got my phone number any time she wants to ring me. Last Saturday we went to Melbourne on the bus to see Matilda together, the first time we've actually been to something together and it's lovely to have that.

Discussion

Neighbourhood Houses are dynamic social spaces that provide important opportunities for learning, social inclusion and community connection. It was evident in the data that the practices and dispositions of staff and participants within the Neighbourhood Houses have shaped the learning cultures within these community-based organisations. Many participants noted that friendships and relationships formed in the Houses were ongoing and important. For some who came to the Houses because they were socially isolated and looking for something meaningful to do, the Neighbourhood House provided a social space, connections and engagement with people in their local communities. For the later life learners in this research, connecting with people through their personal interest learning provided ongoing connections and friendships in their local community. Some participants became actively involved in the governance of the Houses, through volunteering on the management committee, furthering their connection to the Houses and developing knowledge and skills in governance.

The central proposition of this paper is that learning in Neighbourhood Houses is relational and embedded in the historical development of the Houses. We argue that the feminist history of the Houses, including the historical practices of empowerment, advocacy and social inclusion, have been integral in shaping these democratic spaces of learning. It is also the practices and dispositions of the tutors, volunteers and staff that ensure a social space that is caring, egalitarian, supportive and empowering. Duckworth and Smith's (2017) significant study of further education in the United Kingdom argues that feminist bonds of care and support ensure a holistic approach to learner empowerment and success. Similarly, Crossan and Gallacher (2009, p.135) claim that in community learning spaces what is valued is the relaxed and informal relationships

between the staff and participants, where learners had expectations of staff to not be "too teachery". This was a striking feature in the data. Facilitative teacher practices and pedagogy coupled with empathy for participants' lives and circumstances and inclusive dispositions of practice helped to keep participants engaged and focussed.

Learners were pleased and surprised by the lack of competitiveness in the classroom. In addition, other wraparound services provided within and by the Houses such as access to health support services and care, work experience programs, volunteering and other support services contributed to the Neighbourhood Houses habitus of social inclusion. We found the horizontal relationships that were formed in the Houses between the teachers and learners and learners with other learners, ensured the boundaries of the learner/teacher relationships were non-hierarchical. This was important as many of the participants were disengaged in schools, but some had also experienced difficult family and personal relationships, mental health issues, language barriers, were socially isolated and dealing with a myriad of complex social issues. Crossan and Gallacher (2009, p.136) referred to the "permeable boundaries" of learning that occur in these community spaces that "enabled people to bring many of these issues with them into the centres".

Notably, the data revealed many of the second chance learners in the Houses had struggled with the formal education system that ranks, assesses and categorises students according to their abilities (Duckworth & Smith, 2017). Their experiences of formal education had made them feel inadequate and not capable of learning. Many did not inherit the symbolic capital of social networks, resources and connections that would enable a schooling trajectory to continue seamlessly (Bourdieu, 1984). Others did not have the symbolic capital, including linguistic capital, that would ensure academic success in the upper years of schooling. Some had struggled with literacy and numeracy in school. Others were encouraged by family to leave school early, to get a job and contribute to the family income. These forms of capital created barriers for second chance learners in particular and were embedded in their individual habitus from an early age. As Moore (2008, p.105) claims:

> *'The formation of habitus takes place initially within the family, the domestic habitus, but, for Bourdieu, the most important agency is education where capital assumes an institutionalized form'.*

As a consequence of this lack of symbolic capital many of the research participants had a negative perception of themselves as learners embedded in their personal habitus (biography) which provided barriers to returning to study. Bourdieu uses the metaphor of "fish in water" to describe when we are comfortable with the world. "When habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a "fish in water". It does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted ..." (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In this research, learners expressed feelings of alienation from and within the mainstream education system, feeling more like a 'fish out of water' in the neoliberal system of education. This misrecognition of ability was affirmed through the symbolic violence of the education system, where academic progress is impeded by learners not having the required cultural capital, enabling them to immerse themselves in education and feel comfortable in the field of schooling (Bourdieu, 1977). The capital, therefore, in its institutionalised forms (formal schooling), for different groups in varying ways, attempts to make embodied a habitus with the principles that are dominant in a particular field where capital resides (Moore, 2008). In the case of learners in Neighbourhood Houses and their educational trajectories, the capacity to know "the rules of the game" of secondary schooling was absent, without these forms of academic capital they found it difficult to survive in the education system (Moore, 2008, p.106).

The case studies of these Neighbourhood House learners are significant because they provide us with a cautionary tale of the importance of economic and symbolic capital in terms of access, equity and success in education. If we are truly committed to understanding the systemic logic that contributes to student disengagement in formal schooling, these case studies can contribute to understanding some of the significant barriers they face in an education system whose logic entrenches power relations and structured inequalities (Moore, 2008).

Notwithstanding these barriers, it is evident from this research that the social space of Neighbourhood Houses has enabled learners to reconstruct their personal habitus about schooling, it has enabled them to experience some academic success and to begin to experience the joy of learning. What the data did reveal is that once these learners started to feel like a "fish in water", they had a "feel for the game of learning", that they were capable learners and their lives flourished

in transformative ways. Their family relationships improved, their incomes improved through gaining accredited qualifications and earning more income, and their social isolation decreased as new friendships were formed. There is much to celebrate regarding the pedagogy and practices in Neighbourhood Houses and the ability of these spaces to transform individual lives and communities.

Conclusion

Formed in the 1970s on community development principles of advocacy, empowerment and social change, and having provided adult learning in local communities for close to 50 years, Neighbourhood Houses are important spaces of learning and social inclusion. People came to the Houses for a variety of reasons, to attend a class, to socialise, to join a personal interest group, and to volunteer. Many came with previous negative experiences of learning, seeing themselves as unsuccessful learners, and lacking confidence in their ability to learn. The horizontal relationships that developed within the Houses, shaped by the practices and dispositions of both the staff and the participants, influenced the learning and organisational cultures of these spaces. The community development and learning practices in Neighbourhood Houses portend and reaffirm their former connection to social movement history. The idea that learning and social and personal change is a relational and collective process are dispositions embedded in and stemming from the new social movements, in particular, the women's movement. Horizontality encourages relationships, not only between learners, but between learners and teachers, and learners and other staff members. These learning relationships in which people learn from and with each other, as they shared their stories and experiences, influenced and in some cases reconstructed learner's view of themselves as learners and changed their attitude towards learning, transforming their lives. This strong and distinct aspect of the learning environment in Neighbourhood Houses supported and encouraged learners to embrace learning with a sense of confidence and agency.

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Wyndham City: A tale of steady progress towards a sustainable learning community

Leone Wheeler
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The purpose of this paper is to explore the development of a learning community/city approach within Wyndham City, Victoria, Australia. The journey commences with a discussion of the demographic and economic context in which Wyndham has established its Learning Community Strategies. The development of Wyndham's Learning Community is placed in the context of a history of other learning community/city approaches within greater Melbourne, Australia and internationally. This history includes learning community and learning city frameworks such as the Australian Learning Community Framework and UNESCO's Key Features of Learning Cities, which have influenced Wyndham's Learning Community Strategies. Further, an in-depth examination of the journey of Wyndham City Council in developing successive Learning Community Strategies identifies critical incidents that have led to steady progress towards a sustainable learning community. Also, the development and evaluation of the Wyndham Learning Community are examined, including some vignettes of successful case studies. In conclusion, the implications for adult education and theory, including avoiding the use of the label 'learning city' as a marketing tool rather than a 'social process of participation and negotiation' is examined with pointers given for further research.

Introduction

> *Stakeholders credited the Wyndham Learning Community Strategy 2014-2017 as key to building the foundations for strong partnerships and collaborations on which to promote lifelong and life-wide learning across Wyndham's increasingly diverse community (O'Connor, Wong, Scrase, 2018).*

In order to understand the context in which Wyndham has developed its Learning Community Strategies it is useful to provide a brief Snapshot of Wyndham City. The City of Wyndham is located on the western edge of Melbourne, Victoria, between Metropolitan Melbourne and Geelong. Wyndham covers an area of 542km² and features 27.4km of coastline bordering Port Phillip Bay to the east and has some of the richest basalt soils on the continent (Wyndham City Council (WCC), 2016).

For some time, Wyndham has experienced very rapid growth. Wyndham is the 3rd fastest growing municipality in Australia – by volume and by rate of growth. Around 13 babies are born to Wyndham mothers each day. It is predicted that in 2040 Wyndham's population will have almost doubled.

Wyndham's population (288,212 in 2020), is dominated by millennials and younger generations: 58% of residents are 35 years or younger. The Wyndham Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is the largest in all of greater Melbourne. Almost half of all Wyndham residents were born overseas from 162 different countries; 53% of Wyndham residents speak a language other than English. More than half of Wyndham households are families with children. Together with the cities of Casey and Hume, Wyndham has the largest average household size in all of Greater Melbourne.

Transport is a key challenge with 70% of employed residents leaving Wyndham every morning to go to work. Such high numbers commuting out of Wyndham place great stress on public transport and traffic congestion and are in stark contrast to the 20-minute neighbourhood concept where people can 'live, work and play' (Victorian State Government, 2020). This also compounds issues of time spent with

family, on recreation, education and sport, and associated health issues. More than 1 in 10 young people in Wyndham are neither working nor studying. Wyndham experiences lower levels of tertiary attainment than greater Melbourne and a higher unemployment rate. However, housing in Wyndham is 15% more affordable than greater Melbourne (WCC, 2016).

It was against this backdrop that successive Learning Community Strategies have been developed, the latest adopted by Council on 5 February 2019. Through this succession of Strategies, a strong foundation for the creation of a community of lifelong learners in Wyndham has been created.

The Learning Community Strategy (LCS) 2018-2023 identifies the drivers facilitating lifelong and life-wide learning in Wyndham. Wyndham City Council's (WCC) multiple direct roles in relation to this Strategy include advocacy; facilitation of partnerships, collaborations and relationships to deliver lifelong learning opportunities; implementing new models of service development; and initiating new responses to existing and emerging needs; and the delivery of programs and services for social, economic, environmental and the healthy wellbeing of the community. (WCC, 2018, p.15).

These ideas build upon a knowledge base of practical, action-oriented lifelong learning strategies that have taken place in Australia and internationally (Brimbank City Council, 2010, 2018; Hume City Council, 2007, 2010; Kearns, 2005; Longworth, 2006; Mitchell, 2006; National Institute of Lifelong Learning, 2016; City of Melton, 2015).

Learning From Literature And Practice

Learning Community/Learning City Developments in Australia

The Learning City was defined geographically in the 1970s when the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) invited seven cities around the world (including Adelaide in Australia) to become part of 'Educating Cities'. (Jordan, Longworth, Osborne, 2014, p.275). More recently, Australia's history of learning community/ learning city developments are well documented in the literature, with a flurry of activity from about 1998 onwards. (Kearns, 2005, Longworth, 2006, Longworth and Osborne, 2010, Galbally & Wong, 2008). Learning community initiatives included 10 Victorian Learning Towns projects

funded in 2000 by the Victorian State Government and 10 learning communities across Australia funded in 2001 by the former Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) (Global Learning Services, 2001, Henderson, Castles, McGrath & Brown, 2000, Wheeler & Wong, 2006). Once the funding ran out the momentum was not sustained for many of these communities (Kearns, 2015).

Nevertheless, lessons were learnt and documented. An Australian Learning Community Framework (ALCF) was developed (Wheeler & Wong, 2013), and good-practice case studies from Hume Global Learning Village (HGLV), and Gwydir Learning Region (GLR) were published (Wheeler, Wong, Farrell & Wong, 2013,). The ALCF was updated in 2014 to align with the UNESCO Key Features of Learning Cities (UNESCO UIL, 2013), and the introduction of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLCs) in Beijing in 2013. A case study on the City of Melton was added (Wheeler, Wong & Blunden, 2014, 2014a). Melton became the first Australian city to join UNESCO's GNLC and was one of 12 award winning case studies (Valdes-Cotera, Longworth, Lunardon, Wang, Jo, Crowe, 2015) which informed the Guidelines of Building Learning Cities (UNESCO UIL, 2015, 2015a).

Australian good practice examples were also featured in a number of international publications and on PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE) (Kearns, 2013, 2014, Longworth, 2006, Plumb, Leverman & McGray, 2007).

Wyndham's Learning Journey

The City of Wyndham commenced a journey to develop its own learning community strategies in 2006. A process of action learning developed a collaborative learning community vision and strategies for Wyndham. Figure 1 maps this process.
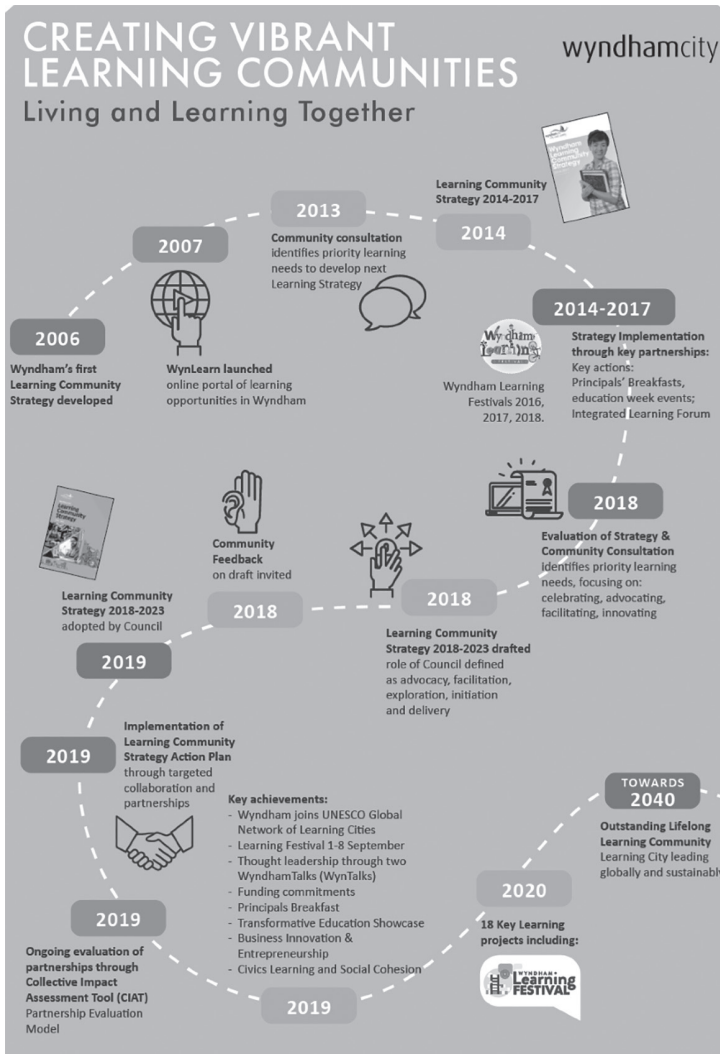
Figure 1: Wyndham's Learning Journey

Source: Wyndham City Council Infographic, written by Tabbagh, designed by Wyndham City Council Communications and Marketing unit. First published by PASCAL International Observatory (2020). Adapted from Neylon, 2017, p.10.

Critical incidents identified in Figure 1 are:

- the launch of the first Learning Community Strategy (LCS) in 2006, and an online learning portal (Wynlearn) in 2007 which highlighted learning opportunities across the municipality.

- the introduction of a stronger community engagement process in 2013 that led to a second LCS (2014-2017) which brought together the community's learning priorities, the education theory and the WCC's desire to improve social equity, and create a sustainable vision for the future of Wyndham.

- Council resources behind its commitment to lifelong learning through the appointment of a Coordinator Learning Community to oversee the implementation of the Strategy.

- a strong partnership approach to deliver the learning outcomes identified in the Strategy, and the development of an evaluation approach that measures the strength and outcomes of these partnerships.

- an evolving and strengthening governance structure that resulted in a dedicated Learning City Portfolio Committee (LCPC) that now aligned with other Council Committees. The head of this committee was elected mayor 2019-2020, demonstrating strong support for lifelong learning from the leadership of the city.

- a celebration of lifelong learning in the city through an annual Learning Festival.

- close involvement of the LCPC in the development of the current LCS 2018-2023, with a working group formed from Committee members to guide, advise and inform the Strategy.

- role clarification of Council in LCS 2018-2023 as one of advocacy; facilitation; exploration; initiation and delivery.

- Wyndham City Council being accepted as a member of UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities. The idea is to use membership as a motivational tool to promote lifelong learning in the community.

- further commitment by Council through the appointment of a Learning Community Officer recognising the breadth and depth of the Action Plan.

In the 14 years since Wyndham initiated its learning community strategy, planners have built on what has come before, consulted with adult learning experts, and the citizens of Wyndham to adapt its strategies and actions for a local context. It is no surprise that items highlighted above are also key elements of the Australian Learning Community Framework and UNESCO's Key Features of Learning Cities. A more detailed comparison of the elements of the UNESCO framework with WCLS 2018-2023 is contained in Table One. Wyndham City Council recognised and supported the roll-out of Wyndham's Learning Community Strategy in alignment with the policies of Adult Learning Australia (ALA), the ALCF, UNESCO's Key Features of Learning Cities, and the United Nations Sustainability Goals (SDG), particularly SDG 3, 4, 5 and 11 (WCC 2018, pp.12-13). The Council supported the attendance of the Coordinator Community Learning at two international conferences including UNESCO's Third International Conference on Learning Cities held in Cork in 2017. The Wyndham Learning Festival is modelled on Cork's (Ireland) renowned Learning Festival. The city is also positioning its citizens to understand and respond to emerging economic and social change demonstrated by the Wyndham Smart Cities department's award for its Smart City Strategy 2019-2024 (WCC, 2019).

Table One: Comparison of Learning City Frameworks to Wyndham as a Learning City

UNESCO Key Features of Learning Cities (UNESCO UIL, 2013)		Wyndham City Council (WCC) and Learning City Portfolio Committee (LCPC)	Related Plans and Strategies
Foundations	**Strong political will and commitment**	In 2018 LCPC was established as one of 12 Portfolio Committees to focus attention on key priority areas for Council. The current Mayor is also the Learning City Portfolio Holder	Learning Community Strategy 2018-2023 (LCS2018-2023) Evaluation of the Wyndham LCS 2014-2017
	Governance and participation of all stakeholders	Governance model links Wyndham City Council and key departments (e.g. Libraries and Community Learning) to community and other stakeholder representatives. The inclusion of a LCPC structure highlights the importance of the LCS 2018-2023.	LCS 2018-2023 Section 3.2 Governance Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with key stakeholders LCS 2018-2023 Section 5.2.3 Facilitating Partnerships and Collaboration.
	Mobilisation and utilisation of resources	WCC has the Wyndham 2040 Vision (Community Plan) and the City Plan 2017-2023 and LCS 2018-2023 aligns with these.	LCS 2018-2023 Section 6 Measuring Success and Section 7 Promoting the Wyndham LCS 2018-2023. It is seen as critical to success to 'mobilise all types of learning' and reach **all** people in the Wyndham community.
Building Blocks	**Inclusive learning in the education system (Universal Education in Australia)**	WCC Social and Economic Inclusion unit	LCS 2018-2023 Section 4 Learning across life. A focus on life stages, that is Early Years, School Years, Youth, Adults and Seniors. Also, People and Diversity 'providing rich intercultural opportunities to support new ways of learning, earning and living together. LCS 2018-2023 action 7: Inclusion and Equity in Learning for All
	Re-vitalised learning in family and communities	The LCS 2018-2023 aligns with Wyndham's Family Friendly Charter principles.	See above LCS 2018-2023 Section 4 Learning across life. Particular emphasis is given to 4.3 learning places and 4.4 Ready for the Future

UNESCO Key Features of Learning Cities (UNESCO UIL, 2013)		Wyndham City Council (WCC) and Learning City Portfolio Committee (LCPC)	Related Plans and Strategies
			– New Skills and New Ways of Learning
	Effective learning for and in the workplace	The LCPC and The Employment, Education and Training Portfolio Committee; Smart City and Future Focussed Economy Portfolio Committees	LCS 2018-2023 Section 4.4 Ready for the Future – New Skills and New Ways of Learning
	Extended use of modern learning technologies	WCC and the LCPC is encouraging local, national and international connection, for example, through membership of the UNESCO GNLC, presentation at international conferences and hosting international conferences.	LCS 2018-2023 Section 5.2.4 Innovative Learning, for example, Wyn Talks, Community Hackathons. The Coordinator Learning Community works with the Manager Smart Cities Office to develop and showcase video based and other resources to celebrate and promote learning in Wyndham. (see Section 7)
	Enhanced quality and excellence in learning	WCC and the LCPC promotes and advocates for equity and quality in service provision through LCS Actions (for example, "I Love Kinder" and "Schools4Wyndham" campaigns; Education Roundtable; Principal's Breakfast)	LCS 2018-2023 Section 6 Measuring Success. For example, the Collective Impact Assessment Tool (CIAT) measures and evaluates the strengths of partnership in contributing to the achievement of the aims of the LCS. Wyndham Liveability and Wellbeing Indicators for Earning and Learning.
	A vibrant culture of learning throughout life	Support of LCS Actions through WCC units (for example, Libraries, Youth Resource Centre, Communications) and LCPC	LCS 2018-2023 Section 5.2.1 Celebrating living and learning in Wyndham. The running of an annual Learning Festival is a classic example.
Benefits	**Individual empowerment and social cohesion**	WCC and LCPC supporting LCS Actions; Social and Economic Inclusion unit working across business, community and government to provide local people with better connections to work and community life (for	LCS 2018-2023 Section 5.1 Underlying Principles, for example, ensuring equity and inclusion and leveraging success and promoting lifelong and life-wide learning. Section 5.2 Key Actions are designed to mobilise learning for all by

UNESCO Key Features of Learning Cities (UNESCO UIL, 2013)		Wyndham City Council (WCC) and Learning City Portfolio Committee (LCPC)	Related Plans and Strategies
		example the Community Mentoring program)	celebrating, advocating, facilitating and innovating. Other examples are Section 5.2.3 Action 9: Aboriginal culture driving new ways to learn; Action 18: Civics Learning and Social Cohesion.
	Economic development and cultural prosperity	WCC through its Wyndham 2040 and City Plan and LCPC through LCS support economic development and cultural prosperity (for example by facilitating partnerships and collaboration across sectors and innovating learning and fostering new entrepreneurial spirit).	LCS 2018-2023. Underlying Principles and Key Actions. An example is Section 5.3.2 Action 10: Developing Leaders in Local Communities and Action 11: Alumni as Leadership Mentors. Also, Section 4.4 Ready for the Future – New Skills and New Ways of Learning

Source: Wheeler and Tabbagh 2020, adapted from Wheeler et al (2014), Table 16 Australian Learning Community Framework critical success factor checklist p.39

Drivers of Economic and Social Change

There are a myriad of drivers of global economic and social change such as rapid growth in information and communications technology, globalization, climate change, and changes in the world of work. For example, automation, artificial intelligence (in particular robotics), and other new technologies are developing at an unprecedented rate, and this is significantly impacting industry and jobs, tasks and the skills required. In addition, issues such as growing inequality; a growing number of displaced persons because of conflict; climate and health crises all impact on people in communities (UNESCO, 2018). A learning community approach such as that adopted by Wyndham can contribute practical action-orientated programs to a whole of community approach.

Wyndham is a diverse and young community. The Wyndham LCS 2018-2023 with a theme of lifelong learning is the guiding principle driving social, economic, environmental and cultural life. The Strategy identified youth unemployment, education attainment levels, and the need for more local jobs as key challenges. The Strategy contains a

pragmatic Action Plan, which is implemented in collaboration with key stakeholders, and designed to provide opportunities to build skills for adaptation and resilience for the future. For example, themes include Aboriginal Culture driving new ways to learn; Developing Leaders in the Local Communities; Creative Learning Program; Community 'Hackathons' (changemakers collaborate with volunteers to solve issues to the benefit of the community); Entrepreneurship in Business; Civics Learning and Social Cohesion.

Evaluation And Results

The process of collaboration and community engagement is very important in the development and evaluation of this learning community. The current and previous Learning Community Strategies were created through a process of listening to what the community valued in the previous Strategy and during the process, identifying learning priorities for the future of Wyndham.

An evaluation of the Wyndham LCS 2014-2017 took place in early 2018. The aim was to assess how effective that Strategy had been in creating and facilitating learning partnerships; engaging the community in learning and delivering learning outcomes that position Wyndham for the future (O'Connor et al 2018, p.13). After extensive consultation with stakeholders and analysis of the available data, a major finding was that the Strategy had acted as a catalyst for facilitating the implementation of a number of learning initiatives, as well as to support and extend existing learning initiatives within the community.

There were many recommendations from the evaluation that are being implemented in the current strategy (Wyndham LCS 2018-2023), including the implementation of a five-year term; the funding of another learning officer to support the growing action plan; leveraging the success of the Learning Festival into promotion of other lifelong learning initiatives; keeping the concept of Life Stages – Early Years, School Years, Young Adults, Adults and Seniors, as a mechanism for focussing actions of the Strategy; further developments of local leaders and the joining of UNESCO's GNLC (WCC, 2018).

It was noted that in previous Strategies accurate and complete participation data for some Actions that involved wide scale mobilisation, for example, the Learning Festival, were not easy to

collect. The effective measurement of outcomes for collaborative partnership approaches were also noted as a challenge for other learning communities (Cavaye et al, 2013, Wheeler et al, 2013). The effort to place value on the strength and outcomes of partnerships within communities and localities to build social capital is worthwhile. Parker (2019) reflects that internationally it is now more contemporary to see the learning city as a living system within a sustainable framework where learning activities are valued for more than financial returns and how such activities contribute to economic development. A key recommendation of the evaluation of Wyndham LCS 2014-2017 was to strengthen baseline data to enable more thorough pre- and post-Strategy comparisons of the impact of the Strategy on Wyndham community in the future.

The Collective Impact Assessment Tool (CIAT) (City of Melton, 2017), a tool for measuring and evaluating the strength of partnerships in contributing to the achievement of collaborative projects, was applied successfully to the evaluation of the Wyndham LCS 2014-2017 to assess the collective impact of partnerships across the Life Stages. CIAT generates consistent numerical data about subjective findings and provides baseline data and is illustrated in Fig Two.

Once set up the online Tool took partners through a series of questions about the collective impact of the partnership for key elements of the Wyndham LCS 2014-2017. In particular learning objectives were established for collective action projects in five key areas: Learning for Everyone; Early Years; School Years; Young Adults, and Adults and Seniors. The results are calculated using a weighted average method.

The resulting CIAT graph (Figure Two) plots partnership strength (horizontal axis) against outcome and sustainability measures achieved (vertical axis).

The graph is divided into three sections:

• Low Impact

• Moderate Impact

• High Impact

Strong partnerships and the achievement of their project outcomes is an indicator of solid conditions for learning between partners. Moderate

impact indicates that the project outcomes are having an impact and that partnerships are developing. The conditions for learning are sound. However, the outcomes have not reached the stage where they are sustainable. Further work would improve the engagement of partners (City of Melton, 2017a).

Collective Impact Assessment

Project name: Wyndham

Outcome	AverageProjectStrength (%)	Average Achievement & Sustainability Strength
Learning for Everyone	88.38	9.25
Early Years	22.22	7.00
School Years	29.37	4.00
Young Adults	32.32	5.00
Adults and Seniors	87.04	8.33

[1] Strong outcomes but isolated impact - need to strengthen the partnership,
[2] Strong partnership - need to strengthen the outcomes to generate impact,
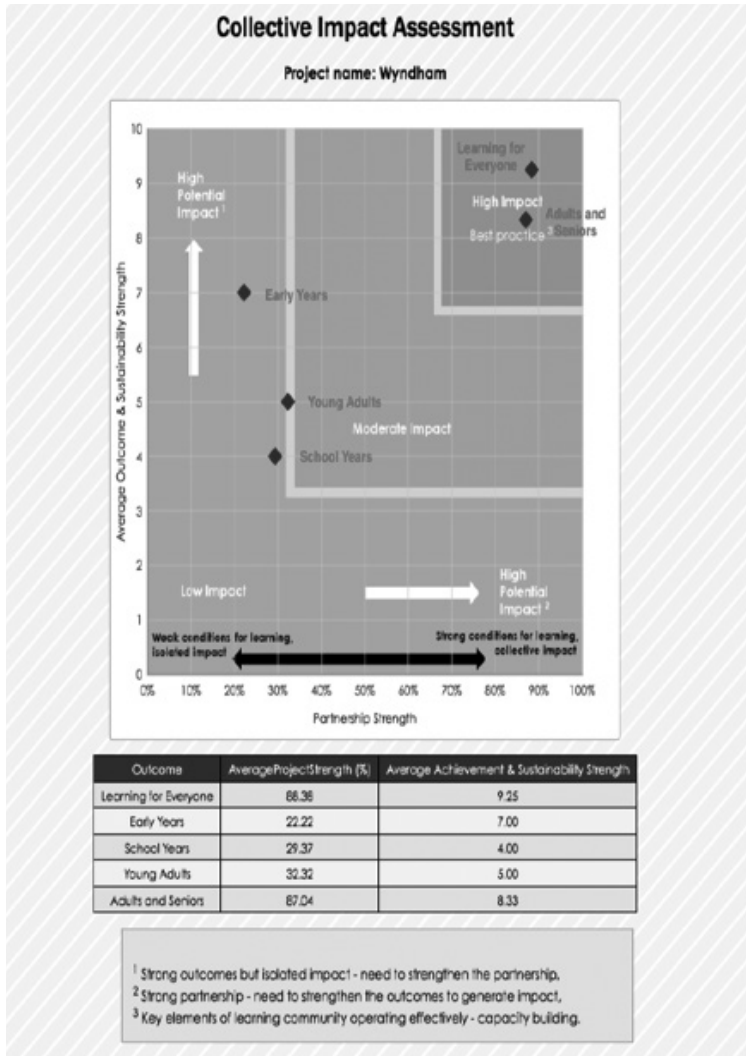[3] Key elements of learning community operating effectively - capacity building.

Figure 2: Collective Impact Assessment Graph

Source: O'Connor, B., Wong, S., Scrase, S., 2018, p.33.

CIAT was able to quickly identify strong partnerships, for example, in the Adults and Seniors area, and those that needed strengthening, for example, the School Years. Subsequently, CIAT was adopted as the preferred baseline tool for measuring and evaluating the 'strength of the partnerships in contributing to the achievement of the aims of the Learning Community Strategy 2018-2019' (WCC 2018, p. 35).

To improve the collection of quantitative baseline data, the Coordinator Learning Community will work with the Manager Smart Cities Office to identify cost effective digital solutions for the collection of data and promotion of learning activities (WCC 2018, p. 37).

Boshier (2018) says that the scope of a learning city depends upon the combined effect of at least three variables. First, the nature of what is learnt. Second, the duration of learning activities from short festivals to sustained activities. Third, the extent of learner participation. The following vignettes illustrate four examples of the scope and breadth of learning activities in Wyndham. Vignette A outlines the Wyndham Learning Festival. Vignette B describes a Science, Technology, Mathematics and Engineering (STEM) awareness competition for young people. Vignette C building on Welcome to Country in Kindergartens and Vignette D, a local photographer giving back to community.

Vignette A: The Wyndham Learning Festival

The result of a partnership between Wyndham Community & Education Centre and the Wyndham City Council, the Wyndham Learning Festival is now in its 5th year. The Festival is held from 1-8 September, coinciding with Australia's Adult Learners Week, and provides a showcase, recognition and celebration of learning across Wyndham. Upwards of 5000 people attend around 180 Festival events each year.

The Festival is a whole of community event that provides opportunities for free learning activities across the City of Wyndham for all ages and interests, promoting lifelong learning for all and welcoming new events, sponsors and participants to reflect this diverse and dynamic learning community.

Learning Festival activities have included cooking, pyrography, photography, craft, hip hop dance, bowling, gardening, painting,

cooking, Lego construction, African drumming, creative writing, knitting, Spanish, ceramics, drawing, gaming, music therapy and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Festival participants have listened to author talks, competed in the Young Scientist of Wyndham competition, enjoyed music from a local High School Chamber group, improved their CVs and interview skills, achieved better sleep, practised their English, joined in the Wyndham Park Party in the Precinct and Pop Up School, talked to the animals at Rhyme Time at the Zoo, heard inspirational stories of refugee survival and learnt about local Aboriginal culture

Festival event providers include clubs, groups, individuals, businesses, schools, early learning centres, community centres, libraries, higher education providers, arts spaces and more. The Festival encourages the community to get out and try new things in both formal and informal learning settings.

See: https://www.wynlearnfestival.org.au/

Vignette B: Young Scientist of Wyndham Competition

VJ, a long time Wyndham resident, is on a mission: to encourage young people to love, or at least, get involved in, Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). As a participant in the Wyndham Building Blocks program (a 15-week community program run twice a year through a collaboration between Wyndham City Council and Victoria University Polytechnic), she honed and strengthened her community leadership and participation skills. One of the key objectives of the program is for participants to mobilise and empower others to make positive change within the Wyndham community through tangible actions with demonstrable community benefits.

After graduating from the program, VJ has not only mentored subsequent participants, but she has single-handedly run a Young Scientist of Wyndham competition in 3 consecutive Learning Festivals. The Young Scientist competition encourages young people to solve a community problem – for example, Wyndham's recycling dilemma, creating wealth out of waste – through the application of

STEM. Each year about 20 competition entrants have submitted their designs, models and ideas and have been judged by a local panel of experts. The results have been impressive – the participants gaining experience in presenting their entries to the judges, their original thinking bringing creative ideas to dilemmas experienced across Wyndham.

https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/services/community-support/building-blocks-community-leadership-program/about-building-blocks

Vignette C: Welcome to Country

Since 2018 all kindergartens in Wyndham have incorporated an Acknowledgement to Country at the start of their day – an Acknowledgement of Country is an act of respect for the continuing connection of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners and Custodians to the land on which the early learning service (school, or event) stands.

In 2016, the Victorian Department of Education and Training published Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016 – 2026 which set out a ten-year vision identifying significant actions to be taken to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal peoples in the long term. Marrung's vision is for Victoria to be a state where the rich and thriving culture, knowledge and experiences of Aboriginal people are celebrated by all Victorians; where our universal service systems as inclusive, responsive and respectful of Aboriginal people at every stage of their educational journey; and where every Aboriginal person achieves their potential, succeeds in life and feels strong in their cultural identity.

Through the implementation of Marrung, Wyndham service providers highlight everyday practices that embed and respect Aboriginal perspectives and cultures. Future teachers of the students are then informed of their current knowledge and understanding of the First Nations peoples to assist in future planning for curriculum design; with an emphasis on continual improvement of inclusive practices for all service providers involved.

In this way, collaborative practices and strengths of the educator teams are combined at each Kindergarten service. Wyndham children grow up with a deeper knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

Children attending Wyndham kindergartens also gain an appreciation for 3 flags – the Australian flag, the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Island flag, and the significance of the design and colours of all three. Whole families are included in this knowledge sharing and custom.

Included in the physical design of some Wyndham kindergartens are traditional indigenous fire pits, 3 flag poles, the incorporation of traditional practices such as Wayappa; bush cooking; aboriginal resources embedded into the curriculum so children can explore and be immersed year-round.

Through a presentation to the Wyndham School Principals (Action 5 and 9), kindergarten staff were able to inspire schools with their award-winning journey and to invite them to create their own Reconciliation Action Plan for their own school, to contact their local kindergarten for support in this process and to share resources.

See WCC, 2018, Actions 5 and 9, p.27 & 30 and WCC, 2020, p.6 and Victorian State Government, 2019.

Vignette D: Photographer as a Social Entrepreneur

With a commitment to building and enriching his community, Imran, a local Wyndham photographer, has provided free photography workshops over several Learning Festivals. These free workshops serve as a way for Imran to share his love of taking photos, his skills as an accomplished photographer and published author, and his desire to 'give back' to the Wyndham community. During one of his 2019 Wyndham Learning Festival workshops, a participant, who co-incidentally managed a community centre in a neighbouring Council, was so impressed with the workshop she signed up Imran to deliver her centre's photography classes for the next term.

See: https://www.imranabulkashem.com/about

Implications for fhe development of adult education and theory

Plumb, Leverman & McGray (2007) are very critical of learning city developments, especially those that do not focus on an adult education/ lifelong learning approach. Plum et al (2007, p.42) argues that in the past some learning city initiatives were too weakly developed and could be easily misappropriated for self-interested purposes such as a marketing label. However, quoting examples such as the HGLV, they note that a 'fully developed concept of the learning city has great promise to inform core theories and practices in the field of adult education' (p. 38). Boshier (2018) identifies that there is 'no one size fits all' learning city and often the model is shaped by the city's location and the political orientation of the country. However, Boshier urges adult educators to become involved, and in this way, they can influence 'smart city' enthusiasts. Borkowska and Osborne (2018, p. 355) recommend that urban communities that desire to be technologically innovative would be well placed, especially in regarding active citizenship, learning opportunities for all and social inclusion if smart city strategies were underpinned by the broader ideas and frameworks of learning cities. The Wyndham Learning Community area and the Wyndham Smart Cities Office collaborate regularly in areas of technical themes included in the LCS 2018-2023 such as jobs of the future, and utilising data and analytics to enhance service development and direct service delivery (Tabbagh & Mowlam, 2020).

Wyndham has been able to build on a theoretical and practical knowledge base of learning communities and learning cities in Australia and internationally. In a recent presentation on Smart Learning Cities, Osborne (2020) reminded the audience of key concepts that underpin Learning City approaches. The idea of the Learning Society is one where education is not a segregated activity for a certain time and place. There is an acceptance of a learning culture; formal, non-formal and informal learning using a lifelong and life-wide approach that encompasses the individual, families, workplaces and communities. The embedding of Indigenous knowledge is highly relevant for Australia, most recently illustrated in a discussion about learning from the fire management knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when caring for bushland. Equity: fair and equitable access to learning which should reflect the population in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, disability, migrant/refugee status, socio-economic class, location. Increasingly

there are Digital Opportunities which enable access to 21st Century skills including emotional and social knowledge. To be sustainable Regulatory and Policy Frameworks should be supportive, and it would help if there was a National Lifelong Learning Framework. Vitally, there must be Intersectoral Co-operation, across different sectors such as local government, education (kindergarten to the tertiary sector), community, business and public agencies (libraries, museums, health bodies). These concepts are evident in the Learning Community Strategies developed by Wyndham.

The key message from Wyndham is that the process of collaboration and community engagement is vital. Wyndham's leaders understand the benefits of lifelong and life-wide learning. There is a strong governance model. Through successive Learning Community Strategies, a collaborative approach to implementing the Action Plans and running the annual Learning Festival, Wyndham is building a learning culture. Wyndham has developed a pragmatic, asset-based approach which has mobilised the learning resources and expertise across different sectors. While there are no specific regulations about lifelong learning for local governments in Australia, Wyndham links policies on lifelong learning to community strengthening which is a vital area of work for individual empowerment, social cohesion, and economic and cultural prosperity. UNESCO UIL sees the Learning Cities concept as a person-centred, learning-focussed approach that provides a collaborative, action-oriented framework for working on the diverse challenges related to sustainable development including smart cities. The journey the City of Wyndham has taken as illustrated in Figure 1 mirrors this approach.

Boshier (2018, p.432) noted areas of further research by Learning Cities. One question was 'what can be done to interest lifelong learning advocates and adult education researchers in conceptual and operational issues related to Learning Cities?' One idea is to document the process. This paper has illustrated that the City of Wyndham has underpinned their learning community/city approach with adult education principles including learning as a driver for change. Leaders, advocates, adult education researchers, and most importantly practitioners in the field, must communicate the benefits of this approach to residents which is vital to maintain and sustain social participation, responsiveness, harmony and prosperity.

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Community learning through adversity and disaster: An Australian case study of rural adaptation and resilience beyond paid work

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'The things that change the world, according to Chaos theory, are the tiny things. A butterfly flaps its wings in the Amazonian jungle, and subsequently a storm ravages half of Europe.'

Pratchett & Gaiman (1990)

Our paper uses a qualitative, case study approach to critically examine the role of community involvement in learning to adapt and develop resilience in the face of disaster. Within a decade, the already disadvantaged, small, Australian rural community of 'Bellbird' faced three catastrophic, human induced disasters: the Millennial Drought (1996 to 2010), a March 2013 bushfire and the COVID-19 epidemic of 2020. Our interviews were conducted during late 2019 and early 2020 with men and women shedders as well as their significant others in the usually vibrant and unusually gender inclusive 'Bellbird Men's Shed'. For at least six months following the interviews, the Bellbird Men's Shed was shut as a consequence of the COVID-19 lockdowns.

We opportunistically reflect on the data from our interviews and emerging literature on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to critically interrogate the role local community learning plays in responding to and developing resilience in the face of locally experienced global disasters. We conclude that Bellbird is a good example of a small, rural community where formal, top down decision making approaches to adult and community education in 2020 in Australia are sometimes impossible or inappropriate. Bellbird in effect exercised agency to create its unique, place and needs-based form of lifelong and lifewide learning 'bottom up' at its atypical community Men's Shed. The practices and commitments the Shed adopted have provided the community with opportunities for developing personal and collective wellbeing and the necessary resilience for adapting to likely future shocks.

Key Words: *adaptation, resilience, learning, disaster, Men's shed, agency, COVID-19*

Introduction to Bellbird

> *"I've seen fire and I've seen rain, I've seen sunny days that I thought would never end, I've seen lonely times when I could not find a friend. But I always thought that I'd see you again."*
> James Taylor (1970) 'Fire and Rain'.

The first disaster to affect the small Australian rural community of 'Bellbird' (population 500) was the Millennial Drought (1996 to 2010). The drought was extensive, unprecedented and national in extent. A subsequent bushfire roared through the district on the 28th March 2013, unanticipated in its seasonal lateness and devastating in its impact. Before 2013, the township had no internet or mobile phone reception, no place to gather, no local shops and services and a languishing men-only Men's Shed. The post 2013 Bellbird Men's Shed literally 'sprang from the ashes' as part of the post-bushfire reconstruction of the town, with women as unusually equal Shed participants.

The third ongoing disaster, the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded in Australia during March 2020. Within six months it had become global in extent, with a death toll exceeding one million people by late

September 2020. Immediately following our interviews in early 2020, the Bellbird Men's Shed was shut as a consequence of the virus's rapid community transmission and potentially deadly impact on older or health compromised adults. In September 2020, we opportunistically and critically reflected on the data from our interviews, drawing on emerging literature about the international impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature review

Walker, Holling et al. (2004), used the term 'resilience' to refer to the capacity of a socioecological system to absorb disturbances and reorganise while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure and identity. It is no accident that such expressive terms have been adopted by Martin (2012) to describe human society as it grapples, locally and globally, to adapt to the several 'wicked', human induced disasters that become apparent over the past few decades. The local effects on the Bellbird community of climate change, including unprecedented drought and bushfires as well as the ongoing 2020 COVID-19 pandemic are very recent cases in point.

Increasingly, there is a realisation that the ability to reach a state of equilibrium is vexed by the changing and interconnected nature of the world. Instead, human systems are having to constantly adapt to meet these challenges. Martin (2012) refers to the process of constantly adapting to an ever changing environment as 'adaptive resilience', believing that regions may never need to be in equilibrium but instead show an ability to 'bounce back' to a more stable position. Robinson and Carson (2015) argue that the notion of resilience as described by Martin (2012) is inherently fuzzy and difficult to apply to communities in a homogenous way as it fails to capture the complexity of the resilience concept (Quinlan, Berbes-Blazquez et al., 2015) because of the interaction of individuals and communities in a complex system. Adger (2000) defines resilience as:

> *[t]he ability of communities to withstand external shocks to their social infrastructure. This is particularly apposite for resource-dependent communities where they are subject to external stresses and shocks, both in the form of environmental variability (such as agricultural pests or the impacts of climatic*

> *extremes), as well as in the form of social, economic and political*
> *upheaval (associated with the variability of world markets for*
> *primary commodities, or with rapid changes in property laws or*
> *state interventions). (Adger, 2000, p.361)*

Utilising ecological models as lenses to understand human resilience provides an opportunity to engage with people at both an individual and collective level (Preston, Chadderton, Kitagawa & Edmonds, 2015). Such models have been useful in determining how communities navigate the issues associated with disasters and the learning associated with them. The importance of the socio-cultural context (Robinson & Carson, 2016) cannot be stressed enough in terms of the pathways communities adopt to become more resilient both economically and socially. Magis (2010) points out that many resilient communities have found ways to thrive despite constant change and are able to maintain a sense of their own equilibrium.

The quality of social support between individuals plays an important role in establishing resilient communities. Walker and Salt (2006) contend that resilience has to be understood in terms of the fundamental interdependence and interrelatedness of all things. In order to understand an individual's response to his or her environment, it is important to understand the system (community) and the way its parts interconnect. Helfgott (2018) suggests that interconnectedness is an important consideration in resilience thinking. Helfgott refers to the work of Folke et al. (2002), where they emphasise the importance of the interplay between the physical, social, economic, political and ecological systems.

Helfgott (2018) proposes ten considerations for building community resilience underpinned by the paradigm of interconnectedness. For the purposes of this paper we wish to highlight the following from her work on resilience in relation to our study, including local ownership and leadership, alignment with local values, visions and aspirations for the future and learning by doing. Like Helfgott we identify community organising as a major source of local adaptive capacities for poor, small rural communities like Bellbird in coping with disaster.

Research into the aftermath of disasters show that gender stereotypes play an active role in determining the health and safety of everyone involved. Zara, Parkinson, Duncan and Joyce (2016) studied the highly gendered responses to the Australian Black Saturday (7 Feb 2009) bushfires. In the wake of this disaster men were found to face a huge

risk of not living up to the impossible male hegemonic role in the face of a firestorm. Zara *et al.* suggested that if women were to play more equal roles in emergency management and more men were to take up more caring responsibilities in the aftermath many of the gendered risks associated with such disasters could be minimised.

Educationists have long contended that transformational learning is enabled in 'situated learning' (Wedgeworth, LaRocca, Chaplin & Scogan, 2017). Knowles (1989) argued that adults become ready to learn when they experience a life situation where knowing may be the difference between surviving, thriving or resorting to inherent habits of mind that have not served them well in the past. Whitaker (1993, p.53) proposed ten attributes that need to be present for beneficial adult learning to take place including; voluntary participation, collaboration, action and reflection, choice and change, motivation, critical thinking, self-direction in a setting where there is mutual respect and consideration of social, economic and cultural factors.

Collaboration via voluntary participation, respect for others, their world views and values and a vision and aspiration for change are key factors in learning identified by Whitaker (1993). Bound up in the learning communities discourse is the ability to learn as a community, an attribute that is arguably highly relevant in responses to disaster. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism recognises the contribution of others to every individual's learning.

Tschakart and Dietrich's (2010) model of resilience included learning as one of the important factors in adapting and becoming resilient in areas affected by climate change. Unlike the traditional, linear, self-directed learning (SDL) models of Knowles (1975), more interactive models have emerged that emphasise how life circumstances contribute to the learning of individuals and communities consistent with ecological models of resilience (Spear & Mocker,1984). The literature review of the ecological, educational and SDL approaches to resilience point out that there is not one model of community learning that can be overlaid as a universal template in times of disaster, crisis and recovery.

By September 2020 a sufficient number and range of academic articles about the local and international impact of COVID-19 pandemic began to appear. They highlighted the devastating impact on already disadvantaged groups including on older adults in the US (Campbell

2020; Hamm, Brown, Karp et al., 2020) and men's sheds participants in Ireland (McGrath, 2020). The research also identified particular concerns about the severe impact of the virus as well as the associated lockdowns on mental health (Amundson & Taylor, 2020; Talevi, Socci, Carai, et al., 2020), psychosocial wellbeing (Otu, Charles & Yaya, 2020) men's health (Baker, White & Morgan, 2020) and substance abuse (Biddle, Edwards, Gray & Sollis, 2020).

The context for the Bellbird study

The grassroots community 'Men's Shed' model had, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, spread widely within Australia, the UK and Ireland to become a well-known and widely accepted community-based template for building resilience and camaraderie amongst older, predominantly rural men (Golding, 2015). In this paper, we focus on a small rural community that developed its own distinct and atypical, gender inclusive interpretation of a Men's Shed. The Bellbird Men's Shed manifest is focussed on inclusion, friendship, support and collaboration of the Shed participants extending to their male and female spouses, partners and carers. We chose the case study to illustrate the complex interactions and factors that we postulate act together to contribute to learning to be resilient in the face of unanticipated, successive disasters.

The Bellbird Men's Shed would not register on Australian or state ACE (adult and community education) participation statistics, as it does not offer accredited programs. No one counts who comes or goes during the five hours each week that the Shed was open before the pandemic (from 12 midday to 5 pm each Wednesday). Nor would the many others be counted who participate informally in small groups on demand on several other days. If not for the present study, what happens to participants, spouses, partners and extended families through participation in this Men's Shed and the multiple benefits of their participation would otherwise not be known outside of the community.

Our interviews took place in the Men's Shed ten years after the end of the protracted Millennial Drought and seven years after the devastating 2013 bushfire razed sixteen houses in the tiny, rambling rural settlement. Bellbird has no clearly defined town centre aside from a precinct that includes the Men's Shed, the adjacent Soldier's Memorial

Hall and a volunteer fire brigade facility, all renovated as a Victorian state government response to the 2013 bushfire devastation. The local post office closed almost 50 years ago in 1971, and there is just one bus service still running on weekdays to the nearest sizeable city with shops and services.

Most of the current district residents are for a range of reasons including unemployment, disability and age, beyond paid work, and many men and women participate in the Men's Shed. Buying a bush block and building a shack for many is dressed up as a lifestyle choice. However, for most it's one of the few places that people working poorly paid, part-time jobs or living on government benefits on a poverty wage can survive and build their own 'castle' in inland, rural Australia. Bellbird shares its postcode with 57 other small rural communities, effectively hiding its evident social and economic disadvantage in objective studies of inequality (Vinson, 1999).

Our first interviews were conducted during December 2019 and February 2020 just prior to the protracted COVID-19 lockdown. This period coincided with an urgent national and international dialogue about the impact of human-induced climate change as the unprecedented 'Black Summer' 2019-20 bushfires burned much of southern Australia. Nearly 3,000 homes and 34 lives were lost and 186,000 square kilometres were burnt. This time, Bellbird was fortunately spared.

Our intentions as researchers

We seek first to identify in our interview narratives what our interviewees told us, both as Shed participants and significant others of participants, about the Bellbird Men's Shed and its multifaceted role and impacts in their lives and on the community. We then proceed to tease out these impacts and responses and opportunistically extend our original research intentions to be inclusive of and anticipate the effects of the subsequent disaster, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. We plan, like Zara *et al.* (2016) to later make this study longitudinal in order to look at the 'back end' of a disaster, in this case the 2020 pandemic. Meantime we seek in this paper to highlight that disasters can and do change the world, and that resilience sometimes involves exercising local agency and learning to respond at the grassroots level of community.

The wider contention we explore in this paper is about the value of learning and acting locally in the wake of disaster. We postulate that there may be value post the pandemic in re-examining how communities can and do exercise agency, acting and adapting to take charge of their own and common destinies, in spite of rather than because of government and 'top down' service agency and professional program intervention.

Opportunistically reflecting back

Almost fifty years ago 'A grand natural experiment: The Nadgee wildfire' played out in a remote forest on the New South Wales - Victorian border in Australia. It was written up as an opportunistic study by Australian wildlife ecologists, Recher, Lunney and Posamentier (1975). A small, local study of the impact of logging on wildlife in 1969 took an unexpected but opportunistic turn. A catastrophic wildfire caused by lightning during an unusually dry summer in 1972 transformed it into a major but unplanned landmark study on the impact of wildfire on wildlife.

The unexpected dramas that played out within the past decade in response to the successive disasters affecting the 'Bellbird' community (its actual name is anonymised to protect confidentiality) would, like the Nadgee wilderness area, otherwise never have been heard of. We sense our study is opportunistically timely, being written up during the unprecedented global disruption caused by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

Though it is just six months into the pandemic as we write this, a widespread and safe vaccine is still a long way off. The long tail of the COVID-19 will likely decimate and bankrupt many learning institutions and organisations and bring further seismic shifts to the way and the places that learning takes place in Australia in the community, from cradle to grave. Sixty years after the first Australian Journal of Adult Education was published in July 1961, W. G. K. Duncan's Editorial provides us with a useful, very live question in the context of our current study: How is adult education to move beyond its historic 'old fashioned', 'missionary', 'self-improvement' mantra, to opportunistically '... be adapted to changing needs, how are newcomers to be initiated, and the 'old brigade' sustained and invigorated?' (p.7).

Method

Our paper uses a case study approach drawing from the literature about

the development of personal and social resilience in the face of adversity through disaster. It proceeds to critically interrogate the role local community and adult learning play in responding to and developing resilience to locally experienced global disasters.

Our research interviews were conducted in late 2019 and early 2020 with men and women as well as their spouses, partners and carers who regularly and enthusiastically participated as equal 'shedder' members in the only community meeting place within 30km of Bellbird, the Bellbird Men's Shed. By interviewing adults who participated in this Men's Shed as well as their significant others we got to see, hear and gain a unique insight into the role agency and resilience plays in their lives and experiences.

Our paper is based on fully transcribed interview data from focus group interviews with adult male and female 'shedder' participants and their substantive others in the Bellbird Men's Shed. The research methodology was qualitative. Data were collected via three semi-structured, face-to-face interviews of between 30 and 60 minutes in duration. University research ethics approval was granted that enabled on-site interviews with 18 fully informed and consenting adults. These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and themes were extracted from the transcribed data.

The interview questions explored the shedder and significant other's perceptions of the impact of their participation in the Men's Shed and on the community. Interview participants recruited by shedders as significant others included husbands or wives, partners and carers. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the participants.

Critical event narrative analysis (Webster & Mertova, 2007) was used in the study in order to acknowledge the complex, layered, and dynamic nature of the perceptions and experiences of the shedders, and substantive others. Webster and Mertova note that critical events have the capacity to capture the unforeseen, arguably typical of disaster experiences and responses. Narratives were used to story the participants' responses. Although informed by a myriad of disciplines, and theoretical perspectives, 'most scholars concur that all forms of narrative are interested in making sense of experience, in constructing and communicating meaning' (Chase, 1995, p.1).

A narrative thematic analysis process was employed consisting of 5 stages: (1) organisation and preparation of data, (2) obtaining a general sense of the information, (3) the coding process, (d) categories or themes (5) interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2014).

This paper takes the opportunity to reflect and analyse the interview data from the Bellbird Men's Shed in the light of the community of Bellbird experiencing bushfire associated with climate change and a total lockdown due to the 2020 pandemic. The central question that underpinned our original case study was, 'What benefits are there for shedders and significant others from participating in the Men's Shed?' Opportunistically, we extrapolate from this question and well beyond the Bellbird Men's Shed setting to reflect critically on 'What role has local community learning played in responding to successive disasters and developing community resilience?'

Limitations

The interview data analysed in our paper come from just three group interviews with 18 people conducted in one atypical, gender inclusive Men's Shed as part of a pre-COVID research design. We are not able to draw conclusions about the Bellbird residents who are not associated with the Shed. We have not yet been able to return to the Shed to reinterview participants and find out how they have fared during the pandemic. We acknowledge the limitations of tentatively extrapolating from a local case study to rapidly changing, current world events and educational trends. We do so as we sense it is important at a critical juncture in world history to opportunistically encourage critical reflection and debate, by acknowledging evidence of a community acting locally and thinking globally.

Findings

The Bellbird Men's Shed data were examined through a lens that concentrated on participant's reflections on the journey of the redevelopment of the Men's Shed after the 2013 devastating bushflies that swept through the town and district. The intention of our original, wider case study that included three other Men's Shed was to gain insight into the role agency and resilience played in the lives and experiences of the shedders and significant others.

We came to understand that the creation and reinvention of the Bellbird Men's Shed was a critically important journey of community and personal adaptation to both adversity and successive disasters, the most recent of which was the community lockdown associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Common themes, which refer to important points in the study relating to participants' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes were identified in the data (Anzul, Downing, et al., 1997). These themes are broken into four sections. The first section concentrates on the participant stories regarding the journey of the re-creation of the Shed after the 2013 Bushfires.

The second section identified three themes in the data:

1. Socialisation and Friendship
2. Health and wellbeing
3. Community involvement.

The journey of the re-creation of the shed

It was clear from the interviews that the pre-2013 Bellbird Men's Shed had experienced protracted difficulties related to becoming established in the community. The original Men's Shed was initiated informally by a resident who made his property available for gathering by men from the community. According to some participant accounts, the initial Shed organisation was not run effectively or inclusively. John talked about a culture of gossip and other mishandling:

> *There was a lot of dodgy things happening, and I didn't want anything to do with it because I keep to me self, like I don't run around and gossip about people … a lot of the people that were involved were coming to the Men's Shed and they were talking, sitting around, not really doing much. They were sitting down and saying such and such were doing this and that.*

In 2013 the Shed was burnt down in a devastating bushfire, one of many that swept through many other parts of Victoria that same summer. After the fire, the then Bellbird Men's Shed president resigned his position, sold his property and moved away from the area.

The next president also ran the shed from his own property. This too was described as not being run very effectively. According to John,

during that time, the Shed was 'struggling' and was down to less than ten members. The decision was made at the time to include women in the Shed in order to bolster the numbers. The then president resigned not being happy with the move towards shed gender and age diversity and a new and more inclusive thinking president took over. Women and people of any age were welcomed into the Men's Shed with an equal voice and the community involvement and friendships flourished.

Post the 2013 bushfires the government funded the building of a new Shed building located next to the fire brigade and alongside the renovated community hall.

Socialisation and friendship

Having a place to go to, socialise, and develop friendships was a common theme running through the participant's responses, when they were asked what benefits they experienced when coming to the Shed. For Sam, the question 'was hard to quantify' because there were so many benefits. 'It's good to come and talk to people … just have a laugh'. For Ingrid when asked the question, her immediate response was 'definitely'. Coming to the Shed for Ingrid was all about socialising and making friends. She reported that since coming to the shed she had made 'a lot of friends', and that are now friends that she socializes with outside the shed. She felt since she had been coming, she had an active social life.

For Cheryl not only had she made a lot of friends and enjoyed coming to the Shed, she also reported that her 'job' was to introduce herself to new people in the community and invite them to come to the Shed. She also reported that many people that she had met at the Shed she didn't previously know were living in Bellbird. 'People that have lived here for a long time and you come here and meet Allen and I didn't even know he lived in my street'.

Jane described feeling isolated in Bellbird when she first moved to the town. Since she had been attending, she has 'lots of friends now … and a better attitude'. For Allen, the social activities crossed over from the Shed to the community hub located next to the Shed, where shed participants were involved in activities such as the Saturday coffee club, exercise classes and the Wednesday walking group. 'It's all tied into the community centre and the Men's Shed'.

Friendships for some involved sharing skills, like Don, who not only made friends but had learnt skills such as 'pulling the head off the tractor' which he had never done before. Don talked about the benefits that he received from the other members regarding advice about learning new skills.

Health and wellbeing

All participants agreed that there were health benefits for them coming to the Shed. For Ingrid this particularly involved her mental health:

> *It does help a lot with my mental state, through the friendships. You know you come here and see the faces; I can have a laugh I just think it's really good for my mental health, that's what I can say.*

Sam's response when asked about health benefits replied by saying, 'If it weren't for the Shed I would go crazy and need to go to the funny farm'. For Jane who reported she had had depression in the past before attending the Shed, it had helped her overcome her depression.

> *I felt isolated, just dreadful really, and now I've been coming to the shed for quite a few years and I've got a lot of people I know, a lot of friends, and I have just felt I have a better attitude now. It's social and I have friends that extend outside of the Shed and into my life.*

Jane reported that she and Pete, her husband, had been coming to the Shed for some years and that their relationship was better because of it. She also reported that Pete's health was better. For two of the participants, the benefits were also associated with having something to talk about with their partners when they went home. This was particularly the case for Ingrid, who admitted that prior to attending the Shed she didn't have much to talk to her husband about but now 'I go home and I talk about the Shed, otherwise there's nothing to talk about'. For Jane when commenting about her husband Tom, who attends the Shed with her:

> *He likes it here, but sometimes it's hard getting him to come, but when he's here he likes it. When we come back for the Shed … we talk about it, we've got something to talk about.*

Community development/involvement

The contributions to the community made by the Men's Shed were something the participants spoke about with pride. When asked about the Shed's contributions, Sam, the president, was quick to report that a local community representative spoke to him the other day and said that they intended to donate to the Shed for all the work that had been done for the community.

Participants' proudly spoke about the community activities, some of which involved a fee, with the money returned to help maintain the Shed. Much of the work, however, was free and done proudly for the community including, according to Sam, 'lots and lots of things that we do around town'.

Some of the work done at the Shed and in the community involved repairs, building, gardening, painting and 'hole digging'. For John, the Shed 'belonged to the community' and he was happy to help anyone that dropped in. 'We are part of the community and everybody's welcome … if they have a job to do, we'll help. They come in off the road and we're happy to share our skills or help them with fixing something'.

When asked about the aftermath of the 2013 fires, Sam spoke about the rebuilding of the Shed through funding from the government and the work that members did to help the community. This included members speaking about fire safety at the local school and others digging holes for new signposts put around town. The camaraderie and pride of the Bellbird Shed members was clear when they reflected on their efforts and contributions to and for their community after the significant and devastating fire. This practical community involvement is evidence that people involved in the Shed are willing to contribute to the wellbeing and resilience of the wider community.

Analysis

The original focus of this paper, as discussed earlier, was to re-examine the Bellbird Men's Shed data with a lens that concentrated on participant's reflections on the journey of the development of the shed after the 2013 devastating bushfire. Themes in the interview data confirmed that there were clear benefits for the Shed members relating to the gender inclusive socialisation and friendship, the health

and wellbeing benefits as well as the contribution of the Shed to the community. Several of these post-disaster benefits of gender equity were anticipated by Zara *et al.* (2016).

Themes from the data told the story of the Men's Shed facilitating stronger and closer friendships post the bushfire. For others, it was about assisting them with their depression, mental health and feelings of isolation. For some of the members they spoke of having somewhere to go and how their participation in the Shed facilitated better conversations for them with their partners at home.

The community contributions and the feelings expressed by the participants of pride and belonging described by the participants are in line with definitions of community wellbeing and community resilience. Notions of community wellbeing are understood as connecting with an increased quality of life, happiness and life satisfaction. Resilience is understood to emerge with and through dimensions of wellbeing 'echoed through dimensions of resilience' (McCrea, Walton & Leonard, 2014, p.172). Many rural communities have and continue to face challenges in the form of change, exemplified in Bellbird by the COVID-19 pandemic in the wake of the 2013 bushfire. Sudden and unplanned change such as an 'unplanned disaster or an uncertain or unpredictable change … or a change that is slower such as prolonged drought' are changes that can see communities challenged and adapt and transform (McCrea et al., 2014, p.172).

The data in this study showed the Bellbird Shed participants were no longer thinking about themselves as agents in isolation, some lonely and struggling with mental health issues, but rather as connected to a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that provided opportunities for personal and collective wellbeing and also facilitated personal and ongoing collective agency and resilience. Collective agency can be defined as 'a group of individuals acting as agents not only to improve their own living conditions but also to bring about change in their sociality thus transcending the limits of their individual wellbeing concerns … [allowing] the interacting group of people to carry out things and achieve states of being that would not be possible when acting alone' (Pelenc et al., 2013, p.88).

There is evidence in the interview data that the participants in the Bellbird Men's Shed as well as their significant others have found a way of connecting with the wider community that serves them and the

community well. The ability to adapt successfully to change is indicative of a community that is learning, has the ability to self-organise and can be flexible and resilient in times of need (Robinson & Carson, 2016). The participants in the Bellbird Men's shed were seen to be displaying a community resilience along with personal agency as they worked together to form collective agency and personal and collective community resilience during a significant time of change.

We came to understand that the creation of the Bellbird Men's Shed was a critically important journey of community and personal adaptation to both adversity and successive disasters, the most recent of which was the unprecedented community lockdown associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

In bouncing back from the ravages of bushfires, drought and a declining population, this largely unknown community resource the Bellbird Men's Shed has transformed itself into the centre of informal learning as this community has adapted. In doing so, it has arguably become more resilient to future shocks, including the likely long tail of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion

We submitted this paper for final peer review to AJAL in October 2020. Just one year before (8 October 2019) Barry Golding submitted an earlier version of 'Getting serious: The national 'vision splendid' for adult education 60 years on' for peer review, since edited and published elsewhere in this Special 60th anniversary edition in AJAL. Its original conclusion included the following statement that has proved to be particularly prescient and highly relevant to the present paper.

What happens to adult education and who funds or pays for it depends in part on the Australian economy and also which government is in power. Priorities about learning and education also shift depending on a wide range of social and demographic changes that occur independently of governments.

The 2019 [Australian] election showed that Australians had no appetite for national policy-based change. If, however, the social, environmental or economic order becomes frayed as a result of any external or internal future shock, the imperative of governments might be to act on the copious, existing research evidence of the multiple benefits of adult

learning. Meantime in Australia, there is a national attitude of mediocre is 'good enough' in terms of adult education, which may prove disastrous, costly and difficult in terms of social cohesion, sustainability and future international competitiveness in the case of internal or external shock.

Australia, like Bellbird, has since experienced two very recent human-induced disasters. The 'unprecedented' 2019-20 summer national bushfire crisis had been predicted for decades as a downstream effect of human-induced climate change. As the current paper was being finalised in October 2020, Victoria was at a critical point in the tentative easing of the COVID-19 lockdown.

The impacts of both disasters within Australia during 2020 have been incredibly costly and difficult. The long tail of both will likely haunt Australia and lead to intensive soul searching about learning to be resilient to future internal and external and global, human induced disasters.

While Adult Learning Australia (ALA) battled to stop community-based learning centres and their staff 'going to the wall', ALA's planned 60th Birthday celebrations had been scaled back to 'online by Zoom' and its collaborative 2020 international conference in Canada was cancelled. ALA's staff were working remotely. Almost every adult learning organisation including approximately 2,600 Men's Sheds around the world had been locked down. Learning in previously face-to-face mode had almost all been put online as teachers and students in almost every education and training provider and sector had been physically locked out of their learning organisations by the pandemic to slow its spread. As a consequence, all formal learning became either individual or mediated via a range of technology-dependent platforms.

Within Australia, like other nations, a range of unprecedented financial interventions sought to temporarily shield community organisations, businesses and their employees from the worst of the enforced shutdown. The people of Bellbird lost access to their only community meeting place and were forced into lockdown, mainly communicating using drastic social distancing or online.

Conclusion

The Bellbird community has transformed the Bellbird Men's Shed from a place and organisation originally intended mainly or solely for older men,

to become a de facto community centre for men and women across the community. Until early 2020 when shut down by COVID-19 restrictions, it was catering 'bottom up' for people with a range of complex and chronic wellbeing issues related to rural poverty and social isolation.

We conclude that Bellbird is a good example of a community where formal, top down approaches to the organisation of adult and community education in 2020 are impossible or inappropriate. It is, however, an excellent example of a community of practice that, like most Men's Sheds and community ACE providers, has been empowered and resourced to exercise collective agency to create its unique, place and needs-based form of 'lifelong and lifewide learning' through practices and commitments that provided them opportunities for personal and collective wellbeing. There is no curriculum, teachers or assessment. There are no customers, students or clients, but importantly, as in the early ACE providers of the 1970s and more recently Men's Sheds, there are experienced volunteers and a handful of skilled community development workers holding it all together.

To return to Duncan's challenge in his 1961 Editorial, this is a particularly challenging conclusion for the 'old brigade' in adult education and the current skills outcomes-based funding model. We conclude that such models are very difficult to transfer to small rural communities without radical change, decentralisation and transformation of large, formal adult education 'providers', that have previously been working on a combination of professional, business and missionary models of top down 'provision' of accredited courses and programs.

We conclude that the people of Bellbird, as for all people and communities, need to be fulfilled and connected in order to be physically and mentally well, as well as to respond to unplanned and unforeseen future crises and disasters. Whether it is provided through 'houses' or 'sheds' as in our 2008 paper (Golding, Kimberley et al., 2008) matters less than empowering and acknowledging the significant value of and resourcing of people to create their own solutions. and in doing so develop a collective community resilience that will provide them with a readiness for future challenges faced by their communities.

We draw two tentative, broader conclusions highly relevant to the contentions in the first sentence of the 1960 Montreal Declaration on Adult Education published in the association's first AJAE journal (Montreal, 1961).

'The destruction of [hu] mankind ... has become a technological possibility to our present generation. ... Either we survive together or we perish together. [We] ... must learn to live together in peace. "Learn" is the operative word. Mutual respect, understanding, sympathy are qualities that are destroyed by ignorance, and fostered by knowledge.

Our first broad but speculative conclusion relevant to the Pratchett and Gaiman (1990) Chaos Theory citation at the top of our paper, illustrated by the Bellbird study is that that human induced disasters such as climate change and global pandemics have unseen, unforeseen and perhaps surprising downstream effects at the level of a local community. In the case of Bellbird, we conclude that the community response to the 2013 Australian bushfires is consistent with Preston et al.'s (2015, p.730) observation that 'It is perfectly possible to have very cohesive local, or networked, communities while society as a whole is not socially cohesive'. While it is too early for us to conduct another round of interviews which will make our original Bellbird study longitudinal, we anticipate, based on evidence from previous disasters, that the downstream effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will be severe and long-lasting and exacerbate existing inequalities.

We also speculatively conclude that while some human interventions into complex systems may have little effect, if governments and world leaders neither learn from previous disasters nor are reliably able to forecast future disasters, it can have potentially deadly and catastrophic impacts. Not learning from data, history, science, the experience of others (including the insights and stories from our interview participants) can be very deadly. Unless we work together collaboratively, nationally and internationally and learn about and address the causes and effects of inequality to health and wellbeing, we contend that similar disasters can and will occur again and potentially cause massive impacts.

Acknowledgements

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Sixty year ALA history, including the broader Australian adult and community education (ACE) context

Time Line

Barry Golding

Preamble

This timeline focuses on the main developments in the field of Adult and Community Education (ACE) in Australia from the formation of the first national association, Australian Association of Adult Education, (AAAE) in 1960 to the present association, Adult learning Australia (ALA). It is based primarily on documentary evidence available in the association journals. The timeline starts in the early 1900s to provide the context for the formation of AAAE and includes several developments internationally, nationally and within states that affected the development of ACE in Australia as well as the association as it transformed over time to become AAACE and more recently ALA. It is necessarily selective and partial but provides references to other sources for those seeking a more detailed history.*

Years	Key Developments
1913	*Indian Journal of Adult Education* (first such journal) established by IJAE, that published a 228-page book in 2018, 'Indian Adult Education Association: Some Glimpses covering the events from 1939 to 2014' as part of their 'Platinum Jubilee' celebrations.
1944	1944 Duncan Report, the 'Future of Adult Education in Australia' proposed a national system of adult education for post-World War II Australia; its recommendations were not implemented. implemented. Duncan returned to the report in 'A vision splendid: the Duncan Report with commentaries' in 1973.
1946	Queensland Board of Adult Education established (first in Australia) by 'The National Education Co-ordination & the University of Queensland Acts Amendment Act' to 'organise, supervise and generally direct Adult Education activities in Queensland and to arrange for their extension wherever practicable throughout the State. NOTE: Badger in AJAE 1963 (3), No. 2., 13 wrongly suggests QAEB was founded in 1941.CAE (Council of Adult Education) created in Victoria by the Cain government 1945-7 (The Act to set up the CAE was passed 1946).
1947	Victorian CAE created; Adult Education Board, Tasmania created.
1949	World Association of Adult Education created; 'NIACE' created from the amalgamation of the National Foundation for Adult Education & British Institute of Adult Education.
1950	*Adult Education Quarterly* established in the US (AEQ remains the preeminent ACE journal in the world to 2019).
Post War	Adult education carried out in Australia through agencies at state level: WEA (Workers Education Association) in NSW & SA, Universities at Sydney, Perth, Armidale & Adelaide; State Boards operated in Queensland & Tasmania & CAE in Victoria.
1955-59	Annual meetings of the various state adult education providers commenced in 1955; at the 1958 (Sydney) and 1959 (Adelaide) meetings, the question of formation of a national association was discussed. Fred Alexander's book *Adult education in Australia* poured fuel on the debate about whether WEA, particularly in metropolitan NSW, had become an outmoded and elitist form of adult education. The full history of the events is detailed Badger AJAE, 3 (2), Dec 1963, pp.5-21.

Years	Key Developments
1960	UNESCO second adult education conference in Montreal. AAAE (Australian Association of Adult Education) was formally established at the 1960 Hobart 'National Directors Meeting'; Arnold Hely played an important role in resolving conflicts between the many people & organisations involved & the differing perceptions of adult education.
1961	July 1961 *Australian Journal of Adult Education* first published with three articles: Arnold Hely, Adelaide University was inaugural AJAE Editor; 3-5 Oct 1961 first Association Conference in Adelaide, with theme 'Adult education: The nation's responsibility'; 6 Oct first annual meeting of the Association (AAAE), a voluntary organisation with part time office bearers and headquarters moving between different places over the next few years. It was unable to get financial support or influence policy and practice. Professor W. G. K. Duncan's [University of Adelaide] paper in AJAE Issue 1 'Agenda for a national association', anticipated that the journal and conferences were important to give members a 'lift'. Duncan's national agenda was difficult to implement in the 1960s with limited resources, disagreements about the nature of adult education & the role of the Association. E. M. Hutchinson's [Secretary, NIACE] article on 'The international importance of a national association' pointed to existing national associations 'virtually confined to the Commonwealth and the United States (p.12), in Canada, NZ, Norway, India, UK and the US. The third article 'An experiment in method' by J. L. J. Wilson [University of Sydney] is a now excruciating account of providing lecture courses 'for aborigines' at Tranby in Sydney and reflecting why the 'experiment' did not work. The 'News' in the first Issue (p.30) rightly anticipated Dr R. B. Madgwick, Vice Chancellor of UNE 'for a time Director of Army Education during the war ... and a champion of adult education in university circles' would become the first President of AAAE.

Years	Key Developments
1962	The Association's first year was formative and exploratory. The second (Dec 1962) Issue of *AJAE* began with news of the 2nd National Adult Education Conference in Sydney, in August 1962, noting (p.3) that the Association's first year was 'formative and exploratory', observing that ' There is still a good deal of experiment to be carried out on what the Association can and cannot successfully do, and room for improvement on what it is doing, but one can no longer doubt the need for a national organisation'. This second Issue included the Association's submission (including seven recommendations, pp.43-4) on the future of Australian tertiary education. The key ACE-related recommendations included support 'for mature aged students who have proved their ability in adult education courses'; reducing the heavy strain on resources of [State] Boards or Councils of Adult Education'; researching and experimenting in 'Community Development'; investigating educational radio and TV; securing overseas adult education experts from overseas; flagging that AAAE has been functioning without government assistance, and linking it to the potential for developing adult education in Asia and 'among Aboriginal and Papuan peoples'. Page 48 has a full-page advertisement for 'West End' beer.
1963	July 1963 *AJAE* Issue, first ever 'Editorial', by Arnold Hely about 'Television and adult education in Australia'; Issue includes six articles: one by Colin Cave about 'A Victorian experiment in adult education' in Wangaratta; another 'The beginnings of WEA in Victoria' by L. T. Leathley. Issue 4 (Dec 1963, incoming Editorial by D. W. Crowley, first Association Secretary & later Chair, also a New Zealander, awarded AM 1984: Hely then became AAAE Chair). Issue 2, Dec 1963, includes an article on 'Background to the foundation of the Australian Association of Adult Education' by Colin Badger, who had just been appointed as Director, CAE in Victoria.

Years	Key Developments
1964	Martin Report, 'Tertiary education in Australia'. *A handbook of Australian adult education* published by AAAE in 1964, including 'a guide to the adult education organisation in each of the Australian states, complemented by Directory of Australian Adult Education with contact details & brief organisational description. July 1964 AJAE Issue, includes 'News' that one outcome of the UNESCO Asian-South Pacific seminar (that AAAE helped to organise) on 'Role of universities and schools in adult education' (held in Sydney, late Jan to1 Feb 1964), had led 'to the founding of the Asian-South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education' (ASPBAE); Dec 1964 Issue 'News' includes 'further progress for ASPBAE, including meeting in Hong Kong in late 1964. The 'News' exhorts adult educators in Australia who have assisted 'the developing countries in their construction of adult education … to come to grips in our discussions – to sift out the wheat from the chaff among our differing perceptions. And is this not Australia – heir to the British tradition and culture, but sister born frontier society, the United States – well placed to make a reconciling contribution to world debate' (p.4). The Dec 1964 issue (with Hely still as Chair of AAAE) notes that after eight years in Australia, Arnold Hely is taking up position of Secretary of the National Council of Adult Education in New Zealand.
1965	July 1965 *AJAE* Issue includes 'Regional Seminar Reports on the Role of Universities' by Hew Roberts, UWA, and 'The role of schools (A. J. A. Nelson, UNE). Crowley briefly becomes AAAE Chair as well as Journal Editor. July 1965 Issue: John Shaw, Uni NSW, becomes AJAE Editor; Shaw later worked on the journal separately and together over 11 years with Joan Allsop (Dr Allsop was the first Australian awarded a Doctorate in adult education, also awarded an AM, 1981). Advertisement for AAAE publication (then located at CAE, 256 Flinders St) includes mention of forthcoming 'Monographs in Australian Adult Education' with the first to be by Noel Anderson, 'History of Mechanics Institutes in Victoria'. Anderson published a previous 1961 book Mechanics Institutes and Schools of Design.

Years	Key Developments
1966	1966-7 were 'years of crisis' for the Association: the Universities Commission Martin Report recommendation that university provision of adult education should cease led to 'old wounds' being reopened about the nature of adult education and how it might best be provided; if the report recommendation was supported by the association, the status of the State Boards would increase. AAAE, by a slim margin, opposed the recommendation. July 1966 *AJAE* Issue includes a critique of the 'The Martin report and adult education' by Phillip Rossell (Uni Sydney) than acknowledges (p.4) that the Australian adult education provisions are not only limited, but the scene is confusing and many who operate within it are confused', with confusion also among 'many adult educators as to aims, functions, and standards'. The main problems cited by Rossell were about continuing education's lack of visibility, accessibility, facilities, teachers and methods, as well as it being 'a peripheral, low priority concern' (p.5). The July 1966 issue also includes 'Origins of the Council of Adult Education' article. The1966 Dec Issue includes a very strong response from Association Chair, D. W. Crowley to Colin Badger's 'Origins of CAE' article. Clearly the article opened up old wounds about the role and funding of WEA in NSW as a consequence of CAE's creation in Victoria by the John Cain government in 1945-7. It also mentions the then recent inaugural publication of the ASPBAE Journal, 'available via Secretary Hely' who had moved back to Wellington, New Zealand.
1967	June 1967 *African Adult Education* journal published by the Adult Education Association of East and Central Africa. 'Untimely death' of Arnold Hely, 1967. July 1967AJAE Issue includes an article about 'Research in adult education' by Berry Durston (UNE), observing (pp.6-7) that most of the research reported in AJAE does not meet the canons of adequate research, inadequately defining problems for investigation and methods, with inadequate description and presentation of data raising serious questions about the value and reliability of conclusions. Dec 1967 Issue notes Professor Zelman Cowen is new Association President, with Joan Allsop appointed Assistant journal Editor with John Shaw.

Years	Key Developments
1968	'Convergence international adult education journal published in Ontario, Canada'. First year where three *AJAE* Issues published (April, July, Nov): Obituary to Arnold Hely, by D. W. Crowley, in April 1968 Issue. July 1968 Issue, plus and article about the history of WEA in Queensland 1913-1937. and Part 1 of 'Some considerations about adult education in Australia' by Brian Smith (UWA). The article argues for adult education, vocational, non-vocational and recreational dealt with on a state-wide basis, operated by only two organisations: the universities and the State Education departments. Joan Allsop, becomes Acting *AJAE* Editor for the Nov 1968 Issue, that includes Part 2 of Smith's article, arguing for a diminishing but complementary role of universities in adult education. It includes (p.116) 'It is time we stopped dreaming of a population agog with the urge for pure enlightenment and looked at the situation as it exists. ... The brute fact is that in this country, at this time, very few people study and learn for the joy of it. The vast majority of adult students are seeking social contact, amusement, status advantage, useful skills or, above all economic advantage. This does not mean that they may not achieve a considerable measure of 'broad liberal education' in the process ...'.
1969	Studies in Adult Education first published in Britain. Nov 1969 *AJAE* Issue includes article by Chris Duke 'Towards education permanente: The concept of life-long integrated education', asserting that life-long 'continuing education' will become the norm (p.104).

Years	Key Developments
1970	Barrie Brennan (2010) described the 1970s as AAAE's period of 'adolescence"; Federal Government gave funding of a grant to AAAE for the first time, for $8,000 per year for three years, to support the Association. *Adult Education in Australia* 288-page book by Derek Whitlock published in Sydney, with 20 chapters written by 16 different practitioners. W. G. K. Duncan reviewed Whitlock's book in the July 1970 AJAE. Zelman Cowen says in his 'Preface' that each adult education agency (identified by Duncan, p.82) as 'universities, statutory bodies, government departments and voluntary bodies') '... has its place and special qualities. The last thing that the adult education movement in a democratic society wants or needs is conformity' (in Duncan, p.82). In Issue 3, Duke's article 'The liberal and the socio-emotional' identifies the tensions between 'discipline oriented liberal adult education and problem- or student-oriented adult education'. The former is associated with Albert Mansbridge (who cofounded WEA in Britain in 1903), the latter with 'Andersonianism by adult educators in Sydney' (John Anderson was an influential, free thinking Sydney philosopher, died 1962, whose work was taken up by the Sydney Push, left wing intellectuals from the late 1940s to the 1970s.
1971	AJAE Issue 1, Duke & Butterfield introduce a tool trialled at Centre for Continuing Education at ANU for researching and surveying 'non-certifiable education of adults in Australia'; Douglas Roberson becomes first paid Association Secretary/Treasurer in January 1971; John Shaw & Joan Allsop, AJAE Editors.
1972	Publication of UNESCO Faure Report 'Learning to be'; UNESCO third adult education conference in Tokyo, The development of adult education in Queensland: The Thiele report 1972: a report for the Board of Adult Education' by a Committee of Review.
1973	*AJAE* Issue 1 includes 'Organisation of adult education in Tasmania'. Issue 3 includes an article by Alan T. Duncan (Uni of Sydney) on 'Strategies in Aboriginal adult education', which is today cringe-worthy. For example (p.115), 'Today Aborigines find the concept of deferred gratification very difficult to accept .... [as] clearly demonstrated in attitudes towards education and employment. One of the problems the author identified 'in teaching Aborigines how to overcome the problem of isolation on one of the reserves' (p.117) 'arose from the fact that Aborigines were encouraged to express themselves freely'.

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Years	Key Developments
1974	Kangan Report, *TAFE in Australia* published, 1974. Joan Allsop (Uni Sydney) AJAE Editor. AJAE Issue 2, July 1974 includes Joan's Allsop's 'Toward lifelong learning 'article, that optimistically & presciently anticipates that 'Educational Resources Centres' across Australia 'will be essential for all its citizens, not just as community centres ... but as places of social and civic learning for all ages and at all times' (p.54).
1975	Prior to 1975 Association members were 'professionals' (who dominated the Executive) or 'associates' with an 'interest' in the field. Once this distinction was abolished membership diversified. In 1975 the possibility of 'branches' was also legalised.
1976	UNESCO Nairobi Conference (Oct/Nov) considers 'Draft Recommendations on the Development of Adult Education'; ICAE World Conference on Adult Education and Development in Dar es Salaam; upturn in ASPBAE activity; Australian Council of Adult Literacy (ACAL) began operating as an independent entity; Editorial in AJAE Issue No 2 by Barrie Brennan, as Acting Editor, flagging a change in AAAE publications policy, with more emphasis on journal articles, moving reviews on books and journals to the newsletter. Issue No. 3 was themed around adult education and development; Editorial by Chris Duke flagging the move towards future journal papers around a theme.
1977	*AJAE* Issue 1 Editorial by A. Wesson (Preston Institute) complaining 'it has not proved possible for our craft to agree on a framework in which to develop an adult education theory': on one hand we amass 'unconnected heaps of hard data'. On the other, we 'peddle our current favourite framework in the hope of acquiring fellow believers amongst our colleagues'; Issue 2 emphasis on continuing professional education; 1977-8 Association income $61,000 with a grant of $17,000.

Years	Key Developments
1978	Jack Mezirow published a new theory of transformative adult learning in AEQ 1978. AAACE publishes 'Special group needs' Report; *AJAE* Issue 1 Editorial by Nicolas Haines; Issue 3 includes an article by Joan Allsop flagging that Australia was being urged to take up 'Recommendations' from the UNESCO 1976 Nairobi report; A national conference held at ANU on 'The Provision of Adult Education in Australia'; Issue 3 includes Al Grassby article, 'The adult educator in multicultural Australia', lamenting the 'extirpation of 500 Aboriginal languages and to building by 1939 one of the most mono-lingual, xenophobic people on earth'.
1979	Nicholas Haines, *AJAE* Editor, based at ANU. In Issue 2 Editor notes that 'community education' is being run up the mast in Australia bringing new confusions ... having nothing to do prima facie with age'; in 1979 the Association made its first foray into 'commissioned research'; AAAE felt vulnerable with the creation and rise of the AAACE. Haines noted that at the 1979 conference, participants '... assembled, gyrated and dispersed with no published, or perhaps, publishable proof that the fundamentals we possess have been mentioned, let alone explored in reasonable debate'.
1980	1980s described by Brennan (2010) as a 'decade of women' for AAAE; in the 1980s the emergence of a community-based adult education movement, particularly in Victoria, had national implications. *AJAE* Issue 3 includes an attempt by Marianne Devin to construct a state level profile and typology of adult education in NSW.
1981	Douglas Roberson (Association Sec/Treasurer) died unexpectedly 1981; Association headquarters then moved from Canberra with the office of the Association Secretary/ Treasurer between Adelaide & Sydney (two periods each) & Melbourne prior to 1988. *AJAE* Issue 1 includes Charles Bentley's article 'Adult Education statistics' (pp.11-14), identifying significant problems of categorisation and measurement (p.13). Issue 1 also includes 'Instruction for illiterates' (pp.15-18) by three academics from Latrobe University. [AJAE Issue 3, Nov 1981 erroneously has 'No. 2' on the cover].

Years	Key Developments
1982	*AJAE* Issue 2 includes Roger Harris' 'Spring or Indian Summer: Competency-based approaches in Australian post-secondary education', anticipating that Competency-Based Education (CBE) 'would have considerable application' ... 'in several areas in Australian adult education and training', particularly in most role-training areas' (p.9). Issue 2 also includes David Battersby's 'Gerogogy' (education of the aged) article.
1983	BACE in NSW sought to stimulate community agencies to boost their provision as TAFE NSW virtually withdrew from adult education courses in the early 1980s. WEA-University of Sydney alliance finally severed in 1983. *AJAE* Issue 2 1983 includes Keith Solomon (Darwin Community College) 'Recent developments in Australia and overseas' that gives consideration (pp.8-10) to the many unmet research needs in Australian adult education, urging AAAE to actively encourage research through a recently established 'Research Network'. It also identifies a need for training adult educators (pp.11-12). In Issue 3, Peter Long, from TAFE Brisbane 'The AJEA: Preoccupations through ten years' undertakes a retrospective, partly quantitative, thematic analysis of the AJAE contents between 1970 and 1979. In that decade only 17% of contributors were women; 26% were from overseas; 55% of Australian authors were university academics; 48% of all Australian authors were from NSW (none were from Queensland). The heavy emphasis on philosophy was seen as being related 'to people in the field trying to understand the parameters of the enterprise'. There was 'very little in the journal which reflected the pre-occupations of the nation' (p14), and a perceived '... abundance of articles on topics of those already catered for educationally.... [as well as] a dearth of articles reflecting migrant education, literacy development, participation, public policy, prisons, agriculture, aboriginal education to mention but a few' (p.14). The final contention in the Conclusion is that 'It may be time for the Association to note who does speak for adult education and to ensure that this voice is more representative' (p.15).

Years	Key Developments
1984	ABS undertook a national survey in 1984 that identified 13.6% of adults involved in programs or courses of adult education in that year. In 1984 Barrie Brennan, UNE became *AJAE* Editor, in Issue 1, noting changes in the management, presentation & content of AJAE, creation of a six person 'Editorial Panel' & two numbers in each Volume devoted to a particular theme. Margaret Valadian (Aboriginal Training and Cultural Institute) was likely the first Aboriginal person on that Editorial Panel, that included Dorothy Davis [now Lucardie] at ANU. Issue 2 was special issue on 'Literacy'. Issue 3 was a special issue on 'education of the aged', including 'The continuing education for the elderly' by Kennece Coombe and David Battersby, providing an evidence-based case for the democratic concept of lifelong learning, including for the elderly.
1985	Johnson & Hinton: 'Adult and continuing education in Australia' (1985) and other reports highlighted the importance of adult education and its contribution to the community, particularly to women. Kirby Report, 1985. *AJAE* Issue 1 theme 'Technology and adult education. Issue 3 theme, 'Multicultural education'. Founding of the NOW in AACE (Network of Women in Australian Adult and Community Education) marked a significant step for women working in vocational and adult education.
1986	Publication of *It's human nature: Non-award adult and community education in Australia* (1986) & *Helen Kimberley's Community learning: The outcomes report for Victorian Technical and Further Education Board*, Melbourne (1986). AJAE Issue 1 theme, 'Learning'; Issue 2 theme. 'Adult education in Asia and the Pacific'; Issue 3 theme, 'Innovations'.
1987	*National policy on languages* published, 1987. AJAE Issue 1, Barrie Brennan editorialises that 'the adult education movement' has perhaps 'become bogged down by becoming bureaucratised, professionalised or divided between conservative thinkers and activists'; Issue 3 theme, 'The celebration of learning'.

Years	Key Developments
1988	*A nation of learners report* (M. Evans, NEET, 1988) stressed the participation of a wide range of adults in the field. AJAE Issue 2 theme 'History of Adult education in Australia'; also includes Barrie Brennan's 'The history of the AAAE: The first decade' (pp.31-38); Roger Harris joins the Editorial Panel. Issue 3 theme 'A re-examination of the future of adult education' in Australia', includes Brennan's 'A history of the AAAE: The seventies and beyond' (pp.27-35).
1989	*Lifelong education revisited* (A. Butler, 1989 for Commission of the Future). Late 1980s: First Adult Learners Week celebrated in the US; CBT announced in Australia by Ministerial decree, 1989. AJAE Issue 1 includes the first relatively 'modern' critical perspective on 'Aboriginal community education', concluding that 'Their struggle against paternalism ethnocentrism and the Anglo-centric society which dominates them can only be fought through education. ACE programs help bridge that gap' (p.40): Issue 2 theme, 'Prison education'. Issue 3 theme, 'Adult education in rural areas'. AAAE & AAACE merged in September 1989.
1990 AJACE	World Conference on 'Education for all'; 1990 Training Reform Agenda; 1990-1991, Mezirow's major works on critical, transformative and emancipatory learning. 1990s described by Crombie (2010) as the 'decade of AAACE' bookended by two name changes. New journal title *AJACE*, new Editor (Roger Harris, Uni SA) and new Editorial team; Harris editorialises in Issue 3, p. 2, that' this journal itself can act as a mirror, reflecting back the contours and complexions of those three decades' that 'this journal itself can serve; Issue 2 theme 'Adult basic literacy' in World Literacy Year; Issue 2 commences 'Research in Progress' reports in journals.
1991	*Come in Cinderella: The emergence of adult and community education* Senate Report, 1991. Alastair Crombie, AAACE's final & ALA's first full-time Director was instrumental in getting the Senate to undertake the 'Come in Cinderalla' and the 'Beyond Cinderalla' landmark reports in the 1990's. ACE formally recognised in Victoria via the Adult, Community and Further Education Act 1991. Australian language and literacy policy, 1991. *AJACE* Issue 2 theme 'Community education', including Peter Willis 'Community education in Australia: Reflections on an expanding field of practice'; Issue 3 theme, 'Adult education responses to economic rationalism'.

Years	Key Developments
1992	First 'Adult Learners Week' in the UK; *AJACE* Issue 2 theme, 'From the learner's standpoint'; Issue 3 theme, 'Ways of working with adult learners'.
1993	National collaborative adult English language and literacy strategy, 1993. Issue 2 theme, 'Workplace education'.
1994	Issue 1 theme, 'Gender and community education', an all women edition was co-edited by Elaine Butler and Sue Shore; Issue 3 theme, 'Education for marriage and family life'. Sue Shore went on to co-edit a number of other AJACE journals throughout the 1990s
1995	First Australian 'Adult Learners' Week' (10-16 Sept 1995). *AJACE* Issue 1 theme, 'The adult vocational education sector'; Issue 2 theme, 'Adult learners and learning in the adult higher education sector'; Issue 3 theme, 'Adult community education sector'.
1996	*AJACE* Issue 1 theme, 'International perspectives'.
1997	UNESCO Hamburg conference acknowledged the value of adult education. *Beyond Cinderella: Towards a learning society'* (1997) sought to bring together national ACE & VET policy, leading to the creation of a national ACE policy (MCEETYA). AJACE Issue 1 theme, 'The many roles of ACE'; Issue 1 includes Roger Harris' 'The Australian Journal of Adult Education in the sixties' (pp.49-56).
1998	*AJACE* changes to AJAL; Issue 1 theme, 'ACE in regional areas'. After a member ballot was taken, the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education (AAACE) changes its name to Adult Learning Australia (ALA) to reflect the changing adult education environment.
1999	UNESCO General Conference approved 'Adult Learners Week'. Issue 1 theme 'Adult learning in different sectors'; Issue 2 gives first mention of intention for the journal to become partly peer refereed. Dorothy Lucardi becomes first female president of ALA. Tony Brown appointed ALA Director. ALA located in Cook public school in Cook ACT along with ASPBAE, HERDSA and Learning Circles Australia. Before that it was located at ANU, Canberra.
2000 AJAL	*AJAL* new cover, title and format. Roger Harris AJAL Editor; Issue 1 theme, 'Lifelong learning' includes first two peer refereed articles (plus 4 non-refereed). Issue 3 observes ALA's 40th anniversary celebrations, including several 'Blasts from the past' (pp196-244): by Colin Lawton, a foundation member of AAACE in 1960; reprinting of W. G. K. Duncan's 1961 'Agenda for a national Association' and Edward Hutchinson's 1961 'The international importance of a national Association'.

Years	Key Developments
2001	*AJAL* Issue 2 article by John McIntyre on 'How the ACE sector was discursively constructed in national policy during the period of Australian training reform': Issue 3 article on 'The two traditions [radical versus liberal] of adult education' by Teri Meryn. Tony Brown departs, and Francesca Beddie appointed Executive Director 2001/2. NOW in AACE rebadged itself to become WAVE (Women in Adult and Vocational Education) as the first national and autonomous non- government organisation for Australian women in the adult, community and vocational education and training sector.
2002	*AJAL* Issue 1 theme 'Explorations of practice'; Issue 2, 'Informal learning' a 'predominant theme'; Issue 3, 'online learning … a predominant theme'.
2003	*AJAL* Issue 1 theme, 'Lifelong learning'.
2004	Ron Anderson replaces Francesca Beddie as Executive Director of ALA; *AJAL* Issue 2 Editor, Tom Stehlik; Issue 3 theme 'Enabling education', with guest Editor Jo May.
2005	ANTA (Australian National Training Authority) transfers to DEST (Department of Education, Science and Training). *AJAL* Issue 3 includes Editor's [40 year] retrospective examination of Dec 1965 Issue of AJAE
2006	*AJAL* Issue 2 includes Editor's [30 year] retrospective examination of April 1976 Issue of *AJAE*. Issue 2 includes Editor's [20 year] retrospective; 1986 Issue 3 includes Editor's [20 year] retrospective on Nov 1996 Issue of *AJACE*.
2007	*AJAL* Issue 2 overarching theme 'Outcomes from learning'; Issue 3 Co-Edited by Roger Harris & Keryl Kavanagh. ALA in conjunction with the Australian Education Union develops a policy paper 'Let's Get Serious 'on adult literacy and numeracy in Australia. Peter Peterson takes on the role of Executive Director.
2008	2008 'Ministerial Declaration on Adult Community Education'; *AJAL* Issue 2 Co-Edited by Roger Harris & Lili-Ann Berg.
2009	Australia did not send a national representative to CONFINTEA VI. *AJAL* Issue 3 theme 'Learning to be drier' with Guest Editors Barry Golding & Coral Campbell. Ron Anderson returns as acting Executive Director

Years	Key Developments
2010	*AJAL* 50 Years; Roger Harris extended Editorial in Issue 3 (p.455-467) includes background on previous key Journal Editors. Issue 3 includes five 'Recollections on the Association over five decades' by Arch Nelson (1960s), Barrie Brennan (1970s), 1980s (Dianne Berlin), 1990s (Alistair Crombie) and 2000s (Roger Morris), 'Revisiting the first issue of the Journal with rejoinders 50 years on' (six articles, pp.557-613) & 'Facts and figures' recording Journal objectives, editors, covers and conferences over 50 years' (pp.628-639). ALA adopted formal policy position on what constitutes adult education. ALA 2010 Conference, Adelaide, theme, 'Looking Back, Moving Forward: Celebrating 50 years of adult learning in Australia'. Special Issue includes a list of all association Conferences, themes & locations (post 2010 Conferences details are included below). Sally Thompson appointed as CEO. ALA headquarters at CAE, Melbourne.
2011	*AJAL* Volume 51 'Special Edition', December includes Harris & Morrison's 'Through the looking glass: Adult education through the lens of the Australian Journal of Adult Learning over 50 years' (pp.17-52), & Roger Morris 'Arnold Hely and Australian adult education' (pp.192-204). ALA 2011 Conference at CAE, Melbourne, theme "Celebrating learning spaces'.
2012	*AJAL* Issue 3 theme, 'Food pedagogies'. ALA 2012 Conference, Byron Bay, NSW, theme, 'Lifelong learning - Resilient Communities'.
2013	*AJAL* Issue 1, Tony Brown commences as AJAL Editor; AJAL has a web presence www.ajal.net.au, with contributions managed online. ALA & ACE Aotearoa combined 2013 Conference, 'Confident communities, education and learning', Wellington, New Zealand.
2014	2014-2015 saw widespread marketization of VET in Australia; *AJAL* Issue 3 theme, 'Adult education and lifelong learning in the Asian Century'. First year without an ALA Conference. Joint ALA, ACTU, AEU conference in Canberra featuring Bill Shorten MP about young people and adult education. ALA moves headquarters to Footscray Community Arts Centre. Tony Brown commences as AJAL editor.
2015	NIACE becomes National Learning and Work Institute in UK, 2015. Issue 3 theme 'Public pedagogies', guest Editors Karen Charman & Maureen Ryan. Sally Thompson departs as CEO. Stephen Dunn commences as CEO.
2016	No themed issues for *AJAL*.

Years	Key Developments
	Stephen Dunn departs as CEO, Catherine Devlin appointed acting CEO, Jenny Macaffer appointed CEO.
2017	*AJAL* Issue 2, final Tony Brown Editorial after 5 years as Editor; Issue 3 theme 'Getting of wisdom: Learning in later life', four guest Editors including Golding and three internationals: Krasovek [Slovenia], Findsen [NZ] & Schmidt-Hertha [Germany]. Trace Ollis commences as Editor Nov 2017.
2018	Trace Ollis *AJAL* Editor from Issue 1; Issue 3 theme, 'Lifelong learning and sustainable development'. Tony Brown's paper in 2018 Special Edition 2018, commissioned as part of ALA's 'Year of Lifelong Learning' campaign. AJAL moves to an on-line journal system.
2019	In late 2012, an amendment to the Education and Training Reform Act was passed to enable the operations of the CAE to be governed by the Box Hill Institute (BHI) Board. From 30 June 2019 the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) began operating by Box Hill Institute. The Victorian Government launches 'The Future of Adult Community Education in Victoria' 2020-25. *AJAL* Issue 3 theme. 'Social movements, popular education and power of knowledge'. ALA contributes to the Spotlight on Australia's Progress on SDG4: Education and Lifelong Learning with ACED submitted to the UN.
2020	ALW successfully celebrates 25 years in Australia during COVID-19. ALA, RMIT and the ALCN hold a joint forum examining Smart Learning Cities. The NSW Government launches ACE Policy Statement. Tasmania launches the Adult Learning Strategy – skills for work and life ALA celebrates 60 years with special events. *AJAL* celebrates 60 years anniversary with special edition.

*Editor's note: this historical timeline is a work in progress and is subject to ongoing revision and change. Any key events or members missed are not intended. The timeline will be updated and revised on ALA's website in future versions. If you have relevant information that you believe should be included please notify info@ala.asn.au

Book review

Reflective teaching in further, adult and vocational education (fifth edition)

Maggie Gregson and Sam Duncan, with Kevin Brosnan, Jay Derrick, Gary Husband, Lawrence Nixon, Trish Spedding, Rachel Stubley and Robin Webber-Jones (2020) Reflective Teaching in Further, Adult and Vocational Education (fifth edition) Bloomsbury Academic AU$59.99 (pback); $65.99 NZD (pback) 504 pages; ISBN (HB) 978-1-3501-0201-9; (PB) 978-1-3501-0200-2; (ePDF) 978-1-3501-0203-3; (ePub) 978-1-3501-0202-6

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This book is a labour of love. Now in its fifth edition, Reflective Teaching in what the authors call 'FAVE' ('further, adult and vocational education') describes itself as 'the definitive textbook for reflective professionals in further, adult and vocational education'. This is a mouthful but then describing what we mean by post-compulsory education, that doesn't include universities, has often created confusion. 'FAVE' is good enough it seems to me to cover adult and community education, training organisations, TAFE colleges and VET. When you

look closely at what people actually do rather than the institutions and services they come from you can see there is pedagogy in common and the challenges to staff working in them is similar. So 'FAVE' is a reasonable collective abbreviation. In fact, the whole first chapter is about identities, not just of institutions but of individuals. The writers take pains to centre their work in the post-compulsory education sector.

The book has been brought together by a group of well-respected teacher educators from across the UK. *Reflective Teaching* provides anyone teaching in FAVE, particularly teacher educators, with a comprehensive and helpful reader. It is a book for dipping into rather than reading from cover to cover. Aimed at new and existing FAVE teachers, each chapter of the book covers different aspects of pedagogy and suggests reflective activities, with illustrative case studies. Importantly, a set of ten guiding principles underpin the book, drawn from a major UK research project. In addition, there is a companion volume with readings and a website where further books and resources can be found. The book is designed to be consulted by teachers and instructors wherever they are, which recognizes that access to libraries may not be possible.

The structure of the book is simple and set out in 17 chapters divided into five parts:

1   Becoming a reflective professional (identity; learning; reflection; principles)

2   Creating conditions for learning (contexts; relationships; engagement; spaces)

3   Teaching for learning (curriculum; planning; pedagogy; communication; assessment)

4   Reflecting on consequences (quality; inclusions)

5   Deepening understanding (expertise; professionalism)

Reflective teaching is a key concept among adult educators. Essentially, it is about encouraging teachers to be self-critical about their practice, but in the Conclusion on 'professionalism' (17) the authors suggest it is much more than this:

> *Reflection on our teaching provides us with an opportunity to question whether what we do is contributing something positive to our own lives and the lives of learners… We must take care,*

> *though, that what we believe in is enabled to flourish. If we*
> *place our learners at the centre of our professional activity, then*
> *we will find that we must challenge, from time to time, some*
> *of the policies that are implemented. We must speak out for*
> *the values that we believe in, treating people with respect,*
> *encouraging people to think for themselves, building confidence*
> *and celebrating success. We must also acknowledge the value in*
> *what we do and celebrate it publicly.'*

(page 443)

Such a conclusion is heartening. Teachers of adults need their voices heard, particularly when policy changes might affect the experiences of learners. The authors suggest that this is an essential part of being reflective and without it, we risk losing what we value.

For me, the high spot of the book is that it provides useful research and academic texts underpinning the narrative. Take, for example, Chapter 13 which poses the question, 'How can assessment enhance learning?' In a very good explanation, based on the excellent work of Black and Wiliam (1998) on assessment for learning, the chapter explores classroom strategies and the centrality of good questioning. It whets the appetite to know more about these key ideas.

It is not surprising that the chapter on pedagogy (11) also makes good questioning an important ingredient in adult learning. This is a chapter which touches on how to ask questions as well as how to use effective strategies. It also discusses what the authors call 'a pedagogic repertoire' which includes whole group and small group discussion, and that difficult habit for teachers to break – question-and-answer in whole groups. Handling this aspect of teaching in a better way is encouraged by suggesting different kinds of questions and ways of asking them. In most chapters there are some useful ideas, reflective activities and case studies to dip into.

Australian readers will need to use Reflective Teaching wisely, taking from it whatever is useful. The book is unashamedly UK-based and includes plenty of UK acronyms in places (there appears to be no early glossary of these). This detracts from the text occasionally, as in the perplexing but short Foreword, and the 'Contexts' chapter (5), which reads more like an academic essay on the confusing recent history of FAVE in England. Perhaps the weakest part of Reflective Teaching is

the chapter on 'Inclusion' (15) which fails to say enough about how teachers can be more inclusive in their teaching, instead falling into the trap of describing different protected characteristics set against the UK law. But even the weaker chapters have moments of insight and helpful suggestions and ideas.

If you are a teacher of small adult and community education classes, then this is a book to dip into selectively. For example, for ESOL teachers there are lots of good bits, especially in 'Communication' (12). If you are working across more than one part of the education 'FAVE' sector or in TAFE then this will help you enormously, touching as it does in many places on vocational teaching and learning.

If you are providing professional development for teachers of adults, or initial teacher education, then this book will be essential, because it offers good teaching and learning ideas; plenty of activities; good literature to recommend and use; all with a healthy and readable academic underpinning.

Call for papers
Special Edition – Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Adult Learning, Paulo Freire,
and critical pedagogy possibilities

Guest editors: Prof Peter Lavender (University of Wolverhampton), Prof Sir Alan Tuckett (University of Wolverhampton), Dr Fergal Finnegan (Maynooth University) & Dr Trace Ollis (Deakin University)
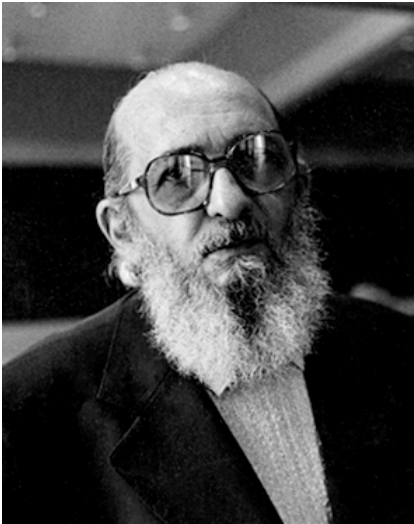
To celebrate 50 years since Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed was first published in English, the Australian Journal of Adult Learning is marking the occasion with a special edition. As readers know, the purpose of the Journal is to promote critical thinking, research and dialogue in adult education. In this celebratory edition, we seek contributions from scholars at any level of their career who can see Freire's legacy reflected or built upon in their work. We see this legacy embracing many important themes and areas of practice in lifelong

learning. Examples may include adult literacy, popular education, dialogic teaching, collective learning, learner voice, and emancipatory education.

We are interested in how this work is being renewed and critically developed through engagement with complementary bodies of thought, such as critical theory, feminism, post-colonial thought and social movement theory. We would like to hear how such thinking speaks to contemporary issues such as climate justice, equality, racism and the politics of identity. Freire's legacy is also methodological and submissions on developing codifications, the use of Participatory Action Research and arts-based methods which are explicitly Freirean are very welcome.

Apart from research and scholarship papers we would also welcome notes on pedagogy. In the mode of Freire's renowned book, Letters to those who Dare Teach, we invite 'Letters to teachers' from teachers, organisers and activists who would like to share them. For 'Letters to teachers' we would welcome contributions from practitioners and activists in the form of letters on pedagogy to learners or teachers. These will be included in a non-refereed section in this special edition.

We are especially interested in articles for peer review that explore policy, theory and practice about power and the voice of learners and teachers. Paulo Freire considered co-operative learning and dialogue was central to helping students understand the nature of the word and the world, and the way in which power was understood.

For articles, we invite explorations, research work, thoughts and provocations on the following, and other, questions:

> *How relevant is critical pedagogy today?*
>
> *To what extent can critical theory help to make sense of social injustice?*
>
> *How have literacy practices been shaped by education systems, and how can good literacy practices develop in state funded adult education provision?*
>
> *What constitutes dialogic teaching and how can we best develop it?*
>
> *Freire once said conscientization does not take place in abstract beings, but in real men and women and in social structures. How*

> *do we awaken critical conscientization ('conscientização') in teaching and learning?*
>
> *What we know together is more than what we know individually. How?*
>
> *'There is only reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it': to what extent have teachers in adult education misunderstood the nature of reflective practice?*
>
> *What counts as change in adult education? How can we incorporate Freire's ideas on culture and power in the diverse classroom?*
>
> *Does engagement in social movements empower groups and individuals to continue to act locally and globally on issues of social justice? How do we incorporate Freire's ideas about 'Naive' activism in our work in popular education and social movement learning?*
>
> *How can we best implement Freire's ideas of love and courage in a modern context?*
>
> *How can particular research approaches be used to encourage meaningful praxis?*

We invite papers on these and related themes from international contexts, and from activists as well as scholars. We would like the special edition to showcase the work of emerging scholarship from around the globe, encompassing different approaches and perspectives on these topics and alternative ways of theorising them.

Academic papers (approx. 6-6,500 words) will be blind double peer reviewed.

'Letters to teachers' and practice-based papers from activists and adult educators (approx. 500-1,000 words) will be reviewed by the editorial group of this special edition. We also aim to hold a seminar based on the published papers.

Deadlines: Call for papers (November 2020); Peer reviewed papers (June 30, 2021); Letters to teachers (July 31, 2021); Publication (Nov 2021); Seminar (Nov 2021).

Please refer to the submission guidelines on the AJAL web site: https://www.ajal.net.au/peerreview/index.php/ajal/about/submissions