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Editorial

2016 – A new dawn for Adult Education

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I am delighted to report to our readers that this is the first edition of JACE to be published by SAGE, who have taken over the journal following Manchester University Press's withdrawal from the journals' market. JACE has received great support from MUP during the past few years and I would like to express my thanks to everyone there for the efforts they have made over that time.

I am perhaps a little more optimistic as I write this at the beginning of 2016 for the future of adult education internationally. Despite the marginalization of the sector in many parts of the world, and the dominance of the understandable concern for the challenges raised by youth unemployment, UNESCO's recent publication, *Rethinking Education* (UNESCO 2015), perhaps gives some hope that policy-makers realize the reality and value of the lifelong and life-wide dimensions of learning. Perhaps the most important global publication concerning the totality of education since the *Delors Report* (Delors *et al.* 1996), this document stresses and re-affirms the principles of a humanistic approach, that education and learning is a 'common good,' and that knowledge creation is part of a 'collective societal endeavour'. Above all it links learning to issues of sustainable environmental development and the many challenges to basic human rights around the world. Arne Carslen (2015), director of UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), is among many who have made the link between adult education and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also published in 2015. Most notably for those working in our field are SDG 4 (*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*) and 11 (*Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*) (UN 2015), the latter in particular being connected to burgeoning learning city developments (Yang and Valdés-Cotera 2011). And earlier in 2015 the Incheon Declaration following the World Forum on Education organized by UNESCO together with UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women and UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had endorsed the then proposed SDG 4 and its targets. In paragraph 5 of the summary of the declaration, what later is found in *Rethinking Education* is made crystal clear:

We reaffirm that education is a public good, a fundamental human right and a basis for guaranteeing the realization of other rights. It is essential for peace, tolerance, human fulfilment and sustainable development. We recognize education as key to achieving full employment and poverty eradication. We will focus our efforts on access, equity and inclusion, quality and learning outcomes, within a lifelong learning approach. (UNESCO *et al.* 2015: iii)

I recommend all readers to consider analyzing these publications and to consider how their recommendations can be used to shape policy in their own countries.

One of the groups who have consistently been neglected within the provision adult education during recent decades are older adults. In many countries it was formerly the university sector that showed some commitment to those in later life through what various has been termed as extra-mural, third age or continuing education provision. That is now not universally the case and it we start this issue of JACE with **Findsen and Mark's** article concerning the provision in this area of two universities, one in New Zealand and one in Scotland, both countries with a considerable history of adult education in HE. Whilst the article presents two cases only it perhaps reflects the nature a general demise of provision in both countries despite great efforts to sustain the work in the face of neo-liberal ideologies.

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) has been central in European Commission policies for lifelong learning and the subject of a number of previous articles in JACE. **Lima and Guimarães** in this issue consider the case of Portugal, surveying and interviewing adults who had been through the RPL process during the period 2007 to 2011. The rhetoric of economic benefit in policy discourse is not matched by the experiences of this sample of learners. It was increased self-esteem and personal development rather than professional development that was the principle result of the process. In a sense it would appear that RPL is more effective as a means of raising awareness in learners of their potential and to enhance motivation to learn rather than a direct instrument to enhance opportunity by mechanically awarding credit towards qualifications.

Neo-liberalism surfaces in this edition through **Worthman and Troiano's** use of Foucault's later work to inform their research on adult education programmes in the US. The data presented comes from one specific programme in a rural US country that was amongst some 38 in total that were the subject of a larger study concerning the 'relationship between program literacy instruction and participant conceptions of literary instruction and literacy practices'. The authors use the concepts of capillary discourse and fissure points drawn from Foucault in their analysis.

The final two articles in this edition are both concerned with cities and services. **Laitinen and Stenvall** are concerned with the 'customer' in the context of 'third-generation services' in cities and regions. Initially readers may wonder how this concern relates to adult education, but soon it becomes evident because their interest is in the learning processes that produces services in new ways. They draw on research material that has been gathered from a number of cities, including Barcelona, Glasgow, and Melbourne, through over 100 interviews with professionals. **Konvitz** argues that cities and regions, irrespective of whether they want autonomy or not, will become more responsible for the provision of services, states both having lost a measure of sovereignty during the recent economic crisis and in their own self-interest encouraging greater de-centralization. He suggests that in the future opportunity will exist for cities and regions to lead not only in various areas of public service, but also in risk management and social reproduction/lifelong

learning, and that their success in doing so will depend in part on their collaboration with universities.

I hope that readers enjoy this the first of many volumes with our new publisher.

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