

Chapter 2

Research Lifelong Learning: then and now

By Professor Michael Osborne

Keynote at NAEL 2022

Thank you for honouring me with this invitation to address your conference. We are very close neighbours in Scotland, and once there was talk of an arc of prosperity that ran from Finland to Ireland across the north of Europe.

Then there was the great financial crisis and meltdown of the economy in Iceland and Ireland, and then we began to hear less of our Nordic future. And then there was Brexit that Scotland voted overwhelmingly against. No surprise then that there is still regular talk of Scotland joining the Nordic Council and who knows there may be another independence referendum that will move the nation closer even to you. Scotland would certainly be a friendlier neighbour than one of those you have to the east.

So Russia and Brexit, and this is only the first few minutes of my speech. What else could go wrong in the world? I've just remembered – almost two and a half years of one of the **worst pandemics** we have experienced. I'll say something more about that a little later.

But just for now, if there has been one thing that was positive about COVID-19, it was that it allowed us a bit of time to reflect.

One of my reflections was to consider the work of the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning, of which I was a co-director. I reflected also on its work because its founding co-director was Jim Gallacher, who died in October 2020. Some of you may have seen a tribute to him that I wrote shortly afterwards – he was a leading figure in developing a research agenda for lifelong learning.

So with time on my hands, I thought that I should reflect our work together. In particular, I thought to myself that I'd take a look at the proceedings of our five international conferences, our Scottish Forums on Lifelong, our Briefing Papers on Lifelong Learning, and the many books and academic papers we had produced. There is a wealth of material, but a few problems arose:

- Lockdown meant that I couldn't get into my office
- The laptop where I had kept a lot of historic material was stolen from my office many years before – needless to say I hadn't backed up properly
- Surely our excellent administrator of CRLI had safely created an archive in a shared drive before she moved on? Yes, but no-one could locate it at our former partner university.
- Surely Richard Edwards who was a key figure In CRLI would have the material – Richard many of you know I'm sure. A very tidy mind – he's retired and enjoying the wonders of Vancouver Island, but with no excess baggage. His laptop wasn't stolen – he just deleted everything and went trekking and skiing.

And so it went on – absolutely no-one associated with the centre had kept electronic copies.

I found a few things on a legacy website, but mainly had to wait until I could get access to my office again, and retrieve hard copies.

Well, that's the end of the shaggy elk story – that's the correct expression here isn't it? (a Raggete elg)

My purpose in looking for this material was principally to think about the research agenda for lifelong learning. So with the miracles of modern technology, (which in this case was to take photos, convert jpgs to pdf to word) here is the research agenda of CRLI.¹ In our very first Briefing Paper (Osborne, Gallacher and Cloonan 1998), we set an agenda in three parts:

- Social Inclusion
- Economic Issues
- ICT

And we posed a series of questions in each of these areas.

Social inclusion

The questions relating to social inclusion were as follows:

¹ The genesis of CRLI and its relevance for today is dealt with in more detail in Osborne, M., Edwards, R. and Mayes, T. (2023) Relations in learning and research: the case of the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning. In: Parry, G., Osborne, M. and Scott, P. (eds.) *Access, Lifelong Learning and Education for All*. Series: Palgrave studies in adult education and lifelong learning. Palgrave Macmillan: Cham, pp. 325-348., a chapter in a book honour of that late Professor Jim Gallacher

- How do the major influences on participation (national financial policy, regional and local economic factors, institutional policies and individual factors) interact?
- To what extent have the various initiatives of Government and its agencies affected participation in Lifelong Learning?
- Who participates in Lifelong Learning, who does not, and why?
- What outreach initiatives are the most successful?
- What sorts of “learning careers” are adults negotiating through the post-compulsory system, and to what extent are these a function of circumstance and opportunity?
- How would a multi-agency approach make a difference to participation?
- What are the benefits of participation?
- What is known of local and national labour market needs?
- Is there a knowledge of local community education needs?

It is not a surprise that the topic of social inclusion was a high priority. We have just in the UK had the results of the quality exercise for research, the Research Excellence Framework (REF), and I suspect there is hardly a School of Education in the UK that does not say that it is committed to social inclusion.

Much of that commitment relates to equitable participation in formal education, particularly higher education. This has been a longstanding issue in the UK which can be traced back to the 1970s, and started as an issue that related to offering second chances to adults from black and ethnic minority groups to join professions such as teaching and social work. But it is by no means an exclusive issue to the UK or indeed only to adults (Osborne 2022).

However, I think that it is important to note that widening access started as an issue in the field of adult education and then became mainstreamed. I think that this is important for three reasons:

1. Issues of concern to adult educators are often viewed as on the margins by policy-makers and other academics in the field of education, where most attention is given to schooling. Areas that transcend age have more leverage.
2. Secondly linking such topics to grander challenges is vital. So, for example the widening of access could be situated alongside other aspects of the regional engagement role of universities, sitting alongside economic, cultural and environment challenges. This gives greater internal leverage to researchers in our field – it becomes part of the core narrative.
3. The other aspect of mainstreaming is viewing many challenges as ones that can only be solved by inter-disciplinary working. So

if we think about a field such as widening of access, factors that might impinge an individual participation might include:

- The availability and affordability of transport from the home to the place of study – we know that in some cities in the global south travel can be very slow and very expensive taking up to 25% of income
- Health and well-being – we know that there is a strong association between health and educational participation
- Neighbourhood conditions – the quality of housing, feelings of security and belongingness. In other words, the sorts of conditions that create good places, which in turn effect various forms of engagement, including in education.

I could list other factors, but it is obvious that these sorts of challenges require co-operation with specialists in urban planning, health sciences, data scientists and many more.

Participation you will see is mentioned five times in our research questions, and of course not only were we concerned with participation in higher education, but more widely in other aspects of formal education, including technical and vocational education, but also non-formal and information participation and learning.

Economic Issues

If we consider the questions posed around economic issues, the focus was **workers and workforce learning**. We were concerned with knowing more about how the workforce was changing, and the implications for learning needs, given the diversity to be found in that workforce.

- To what extent have we moved to a post-Fordist economy?
- To what extent is there a growing differentiation between core and peripheral workers?
- How do we establish the differing learning needs of the various groups which exist within the workforce?
- Are existing strategies designed to ensure that the workforce will have the appropriate level of skills?
- Do workers have the opportunities to acquire the types of knowledge and skills required in a “flexible workforce?”
- To what extent have “learning organisations” been created?
- To what extent do workers have differential access to learning opportunities?
- To what extent are national initiatives such as Modern Apprenticeships and the helping to address the issues above?

The idea of **precarity** is signalled through emerging distinctions between a core and peripheral workforce, and the opportunities afforded to them.

A core idea posited is that workers would have to be ‘flexible’ and that learning opportunity would have to be flexible in turn. And there is also the implication that employers play their part by creating learning organisations. Similarly, we looked to research the effectiveness of various schemes such as Modern Apprenticeships. There were many more, including Independent Learning Accounts and schemes to accredit prior and experiential learning, and as you know there have been equivalent schemes in your countries.

Once again such an agenda implies inter-disciplinary collaboration with labour market economists, human resources specialists and psychologists as well as the normal suspects in sociology.

Lifelong Learning and ICT

Before I move onto the final area of lifelong learning and ICT, I need to tell you something that I missed out previously – the year that the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning was established. I should at this point be using a bit of clever technology.

Have any of you used Slido to engage your audience in live polls? It’s great. Am I going to use it now? You must be joking. I embrace technology, but would be more confident in the success of herding a pack of ginger tom cats. So my interactivity will be more basic. A show of hands for 1988, for 1998, for 2008.

Of course, it was 1998 and that is no accident. There had been an EC White Paper on Lifelong Learning (EC 1995), which influenced subsequently policies in many EU states. In the UK there were national White and Green Papers on lifelong learning, and Tony Blair’s famous speech that included his remark “Education, education, education” at the 1996 Labour Party conference referring to his three top priorities on coming to office. It was a period of great optimism with the learning society firmly at the fore. It was augmented through the pronouncement of the 2000 Lisbon European Council, the EC’s Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (EC 2001), and a succession of further policy drivers at the beginning of the noughties.

So, what did we say about ICT and learning?

- How should technology be used to support learning?
- What is the relationship between the human element and the technology?
- How is the relationship between home, family and work being changed?

- What are the dangers of social exclusion associated with access to technology? How can these be overcome?
- Will the controllers of technology control the curriculum?

Well, I think that these were pretty good questions for 1998. The World Wide Web had only invented in 1989, and whilst emails can be dated back to 1971, most of us probably didn't start using email until the mid 1990s. My first was received on 2 February 1994. Facebook didn't start until 2004.

Our interests clearly were anticipatory of ICT both offering solutions and potentially raising new issues of concern.

Would technology create new forms of exclusion? Of course not – it would lead to a paperless office, much less work and a fully employed workforce (working two days a week for a full salary).

Would there be a global curriculum controlled by the private sector? – impossible.

Fast-forward

Of course, there continue to be challenges, many of which we identified in our research plans three decades ago. I list some of these here. They are familiar to you all I am sure, and I won't elaborate on all of them today.

Let's consider the issues linked to social inclusion as it pertains to higher education.

Specifically, in relation to access to education by adults, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning's first Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) report in 2009 painted a pessimistic picture of policies to widen participation as they pertain to many countries, with 'wide gaps between legislation, policy and implementation, with weak relationships between formal policy-making and practice.'

In most of the 160 countries monitored, integrated and comprehensive policy environments that give equal status to initial and continuing education for young people and adults were absent, with the Sweden highlighted as a notable exception. Obviously I had to find a good example from a Nordic country.

Despite what the GRALE report says there definitely has been some progress internationally as measured by the sheer quantity of students getting access to higher education, but there are for me three key issues that remain:

- 1/ Does *increasing* access equate to *widening* access?
- 2/ As access is widened, are adults channelled differentially into certain types of less prestigious institutions, resulting in poorer longer-term labour-market prospects?

- 3/ Are they are also channelled away from prestigious disciplines such as medicine and law?

Such channelling would have considerable impact on individuals' longer-term earning opportunity and their societal status and preserves the elitism of these professions. We can then ask questions about interventions that could be taken to widen participation and I could provide for you a range of possibilities. Here are just a few.

Second Chance

Specialist Programmes

Cross-Sectoral Institutional Collaborations (TVET and Universities)

Contextualised and Alternative Admissions Criteria

Tariff Reductions

APL/APEL

Assessment on Demand

Transfer with credit (Short-cycle)

The key word is 'flexibility' in terms of **access to and retention within HE** (Osborne and Young 2006). Flexibility in Access may occur through the creation of customised programmes, and through inter-sectoral collaboration, for example with the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector.

Other forms of flexibility in Access have been created. This has included schemes for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), and has included credit being given for short-cycle Higher Education qualifications offered in TVET colleges and schemes for the assessment of workplace learning.

Actually, I am a little sceptical about the practicality of APEL. I have been involved in many APEL projects, work-based learning programmes and various other alternative forms of validation. They are something of a mantra in our field, and of course we must value learning wherever it occurs, but I do wonder about the effectiveness and efficiency of some of the systems that have been created. I also wonder why so many development projects in this area have been funded, but there seems to me little focus of evaluation of impact.

It would be interesting to compare the outcomes for example of the system of *Validation d'Aquis* in France and the Spanish *La Prueba de acceso para mayores de 25 años (or para mayores de 45 años)*. The *Validation d'Aquis* is of course radical and unusually within Europe a right that is legislated for and extremely supportive. The entry test in Spain is effectively, 'Assessment on Demand', and less resource intensive for institutions, but arguably less flexible.

APL of course is simpler in principal. It is standard in many jurisdictions around the world, partly through the use of qualifications frameworks and involves transfer with credit into year 2 or 3 occurs. However, there are caveats, the main ones being:

- curriculum mismatch between vocationally-oriented short cycle provision, and more theoretically oriented university higher education
- differences in assessment methods
- this in turn tends to lead to differential transition to research intensive and teaching intensive institutions

These are structural issues, and are not insuperable problems, and it is quite possible to set up systems of cross-institutional structural flexibility where there is geographical proximity between institutions.

Moreover, there are more radical structural approaches that may work, including the creation of dual sector institutions combining TVET and universities, rare in Europe, but common in Australia. And these are very apposite since the COVID-19 academic. The Australian model of dual-mode universities that offers programmes in face-to-face and virtual mode has become commonplace. This could create many advantages for adult learners, though as you will know there are dangers of new forms of digital exclusion because of a lack of digital literacy especially amongst socially disadvantaged communities, affordability and availability of broadband especially in remote areas.

For researchers then I see several outstanding questions.

Which, if any of the various arrangements that have been put in place are really major contributors to expanding access to high quality learning for adults?

Are they, in the main, schemes to fill spaces in the least prestigious universities and the lowest demand subjects in differentiated higher education systems, and in universities where supply outstrips demand?

Are these schemes just tinkering at the edges, and we still in need of radical transformation of structures in terms of flexibility in mode, timing and place of study?

Have the transformations made during the pandemic made higher education more open to adults because of the move to online and hybrid working?

I pose these questions because Access to Higher Education is inequitable almost anywhere you look in the world. I have written a chapter in the latest edition of the Routledge Handbook of the Sociology of Education on access and amongst other thing report:

- Across Latin America, those from ethnic minorities are 15 percent less likely to access higher education than the population as a whole.
- In a recent overview of Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, significant gaps in access for the least wealthy, exacerbated by gender inequality are found.
- In the UK those with a Black Caribbean background, are not faring well in participation, and this is accentuated in elite institutions that demand high scores from national end-of-high-school examinations to secure entry (see Osborne 2022a)

Let's go back to the persistent issues and another area of international concern – **literacy** and in particular **data and information literacy**.

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) reminds us that despite some improvements that there are huge challenges as they relate to literacy, especially for women, and especially in the global south².

Achieving SDG 4.6 that relates to **literacy** is not on target, but then that is the case with many of the SDG targets according to the Global Education Monitoring Report of 2019 (UIS 2019). It is predicted that 30% of adults in low-income countries will still be unable to read by the deadline for achieving targets of 2030.

We might imagine that the COVID-19 pandemic has added a few more years to the time. Or has it? Has the increased use of technology created some winners?

Clearly educational opportunity more generally has changed because of the advent of modern information and communication technologies. As a result, there are vastly more potential ways for individuals to manage their own learning in a variety of contexts throughout their lifetimes. The World Economic Forum in 2016 summarises that potential well:

² See <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/literacy>

‘Technology holds enormous promise to help foster 21st century skills, including social and emotional skills. It can personalize learning, engage the disengaged, complement what happens in the classroom, extend education outside the classroom and provide access to learning to students who otherwise might not have sufficient educational opportunities’.
World Economic Forum (WEF, 2016, p. 11)

However, it is also the case that new forms of literacy related to these technological and communication changes – along with the challenges of artificial intelligence, smart city development and the automisation of processes – represent an enormous challenge to education policymakers across the globe.

The risks and difficulties for labour markets and to social inclusion as a result has created new imperatives with lifelong learning seen potentially as among the tools to tackle the inequalities that have emerged from these changes.

Governments at local, regional and national levels around the globe have been adjusting and renewing education systems to keep up with technological developments. Previous generations have appealed to education as well to be able to face economic exigencies and challenges provoked by technological development, but the current challenges and opportunities are greater than ever.

Amartya Sen has argued in this regard, that the capability to be educated provides citizens with the possibility of freedom to achieve what they reflectively consider to be valuable.

The development of ICT skills has become fundamental since it can potentially empower all citizens, including those in the ‘third age’, and can reduce their risks of exclusion from social, economic and cultural life. These skills can be acquired in the context of traditional learning initiatives, namely onsite activities, but also through more targeted learning courses based on social networking.

The opportunity to develop technological and communication skills for vulnerable groups potentially represents an opportunity for a better life, but there is a downside.

There are risks of **new digital divides** that are emerging in terms of access to technology and training to be suitably literate. We speak of digital natives and digital immigrants – some born with an iPhone in their hand and some who have accommodated to the challenges of technologies. Well there are also those without any digital opportunities at all.

Historically, the digital divide has been posited in terms of class and race, with particular concerns also for those living in remote and rural locations. There are also geographical dividing lines between ‘developed countries and developing countries’ and ‘urban areas and rural areas’.

These persist, but now it is also the old who are mostly likely to be excluded along with low-income and marginalised groups, with studies in many countries illustrating age-based disparities.

Furthermore, technologically driven **smart city** developments that neglect the social dimension and the involvement of citizens in planning processes are likely to exacerbate exclusion.

I've presented a lot of issues here, and from these I think we can see a range of strands of research that may be worth pursuing in the future. They can be wrapped up in one overarching question?

What are the dangers of social exclusion associated with access to technology? How can these be overcome?

For those of you who have not inwardly absorbed my earlier comments, this was one of our questions in 1998. The technologies may be different, the forms of exclusion different, but the essential core question remains.

Persistent Issues

I've spoken about some of the persistent issues, which we highlighted in 1998 as research challenges that relate to inclusion and to information and communications technologies. These still exist, and in many ways have become more entangled.

That entanglement also applies to economic issues, and of course in reality the distinction between the social and the economic, representing these as dichotomies, has been a gross simplification. For example, the majority of surveys related to motivation for participation in adult learning, reveal improvement of economic conditions as the principle reason for doing so.

We are now in the midst of the fourth industrial revolution, which according to Klaus Schwab is 'characterized by a range of new technologies that are fusing the physical, digital and biological worlds, impacting all disciplines, economies and industries, and even challenging ideas about what it means to be human'.

This is reflected in precarity in work with little security for many in the gig economy, and increasing risk with automation for low-skilled jobs.

Add to this Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and the linked devices of the Internet of Things, and the Smart Solutions we find in, for example smart city developments, and it becomes obvious that many of us are living in a quite different world from three decades ago with quite different economic and social challenges, and related challenges for adult learning.

We might have thought that there were major economic challenges in 1998 and there were, but clearly changes in technology have brought new ones.

Then let us add in the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, and maybe another similar crisis coming up. This has not only increased precarity because of casualisation within the workforce, but also because of the elongation of working life for those in work and the reduced benefits of pensions.

New foci

Some of these issues in the last decade have come into sharper focus. There is even greater focus now on longstanding concerns about inequitable access for many minority groups because of the Black Lives Matters movement, and the plight of migrants, internally displaced and forced. You will be only too aware of this issue with the influx of Ukrainian refugees in your countries – many will bring excellent skills with them that will contribute to Nordic societies, but they will also bring with them demands for various forms of lifelong learning as they seek to enter the workforce and manage everyday life.

And now the Trump moment - the pervasiveness of social media and the difficulty in recognising truth. We have encountered this in many ways, for example in climate change denial and it has been highlighted through the COVID-19 pandemic, and makes information literacy vital.

Issues of ageing populations and health have become increasingly important for adult education given the strong association between learning and health that I mentioned before.

No doubt I could find other issues, but let me as I near the end of this presentation say something more about COVID and something about the importance of place.

COVID

I've written with colleague papers for the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning on learning for global health in cities (Osborne, Nesterova and Bhandari 2021) and for United Cities and Local Government on how local and regional government and its partners have contributed to delivering SDG4 (Osborne 2022b) before and during the pandemic.

We have provided case studies for all parts of the world that illustrate the powerful potential of adult education in its many guises. Here are just a few examples.

- Corona Podcasts for Refugees in Berlin
- Videos Help Hearing Impaired People in Brasília

- Community-based learning for citizens and health professionals in Bogotá
- Organisational Learning in the Construction Services in Helsinki
- Community Connector Hubs, Community Learning and a Learning Festival in Melton
- Talakalayaan – a platform for conversations at neighbourhood level in Manila
- Online capacity building of adult educators in Armenia

I could give you many more examples, but what can we learn in general terms?

Issues for Consideration

First, it is clear that the educational challenges of the pandemic required involvement from all stakeholders within the local learning ecosystem.

Second, it is important to have a structure that brings together all providers and citizen groups is vital, and in that structure to facilitate both adequate supply of learning provision, but also the capacity to respond to citizen demands.

Third, adult education and lifelong learning in particular can support intergenerational learning by equipping adults with required skills, especially in relation to digital literacy. Increasing and improving adult education and lifelong learning opportunities can help families in coping and understanding how to support their children's and their own well-being during and after the crisis.

Fourth, it is important to adequately resource the adult education sector, and recognise its vital community and resilience building role as it is often along with youth services the closest agency to citizens

Cities and Regions as Drivers

What is very evident is the important of place. Proximity to communities and local stakeholders place local and regional governments in a privileged role to contribute to education objectives, including those of adult education.

Cities and regions, and even neighbourhoods can create improved learning environments, building on the synergies between different SDGs. In many countries, the provision of adequate education requires responses to a number of fundamental needs that include water and sanitation (SDG6), health (SDG3), food (SDG2) and infrastructure in areas such as transport and housing, and this is especially the case in cities (SDG11).

Actions related to these matters as they pertain to adults are much more likely to be taken at a local and regional level than they are by national governments. As we know In many countries national government invests little in adult and lifelong learning with few spending even the 4% of the total education budget as recommended by UNESCO. I am not sure we will see that change very soon, and I really think it is at local level where it is going to be easier to promote an adult education focus.

I'm therefore an advocate of the idea of the learning city³ or educating city⁴ that potentially brings all stakeholders together to create cradle to grave opportunities.

However, there needs to be some sharpening of the learning city concept, but is something of a catch-all term for a range of activity. Nonetheless, it has become a strong rhetorical device, and as you will all know a major strand of UNESCO's adult and lifelong learning agenda.

However, rhetoric only gets us so far. My view is that as with many issues we are concerned about is that we need **improved data**. We know from successive GRALE reports, including the most recent GRALE V that there is an inadequacy in national data on adult education in the majority of countries in the world.

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2019) has recommended that 'governments should finance labour force surveys and direct assessments to understand how skills are distributed across populations and to inform the design of education and training programmes'. Furthermore, it has proposed that 'international partners should coordinate improvements in labour force survey questions on youth and adult education and training'.

But it's not just more data that we needed, but **more sophisticated ways of gathering data**, in part because traditional methods are very expensive.

Open Data

Let me give you one example of work that we have done in the city of Glasgow as part of the Integrated Multimedia City Data project within our Urban Big Data Centre (see Lido, Reid and Osborne 2019; Thakuriah *et al.* 2020).

We conducted a traditional household survey, but we also tracked individuals using GPS trackers and we equipped them with life-loggers

³ See the work of UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities (<https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities>) and the PASCAL Observatory's Learning City Network (<http://lcn.pascalobservatory.org>)

⁴ See the Educating Cities Network (<https://www.edcities.org>)

that took photos of where they travelled every minute over several days. We got details of where they were and what they were seeing. We also captured Twitter data to get a sense of sentiments about education. So we used a combination of traditional approaches and other approaches that used technology. Together we got a rich picture of engagement, and could link that to a range of other data sources. We were able to combine self-reported data with data that related to actual behaviour. From the household survey we got self-reported data on older adult engagement and could link it to other variables such as health. From the GPS tracking we could make links between use of transport, travel more generally and engagement in learning. So we can begin to answer fundamental questions such as *‘What is the effect of transport infra-structure on participation in learning?’*

We also incidentally have gathered huge administrative datasets on educational participation and attainment down to individual level, and then enhanced them with geographical information such as data that relates to access to greenspace. So we are able to ask questions such as *‘To what extent does access to greenspace or the visibility of greenspace affect educational participation and attainment?’*

Conclusions

Having just spoken about travel, I can certainly conclude that I have moved around a little bit in this speech. So let me gather a few final thoughts.

- 1/ Having spent half a lifetime in the field of adult education, I can say with certainty that many of the issues that were prevalent at the beginning of my career are still vital today. Other new issues have emerged, and there are many global challenges.
- 2/ These are likely only to be solved through inter-disciplinary working that crosses the social sciences and extends to other disciplines such as computing science and engineering. Adult educators and educators generated has worked in ways that traditionally have been siloed.
- 3/ I was in a discussion that involved various key international organisations in the field of adult education recently in preparation for a response to the then forthcoming CONFINTEA VII conference in Morocco⁵. There was much rhetoric about what should happen, about in particular that governments should commit more

⁵ See <https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/seventh-international-conference-adult-education?hub=39>

funding to adult education. But there not enough discussion about evidencing the benefit of adult education through robust research. Of course, governments are not always rational in the ways they act, and often ignore the evidence or choose to give more weight to a counter-claim. I am sure however that without really rigorous research, we won't see action.

- 4/ In the UK as I previously mentioned we have just had the results of the quality exercise on research in universities.

What scores badly?

- Small scale non-replicable studies

Conversely what scores well?

- Larger scale inter-disciplinary research that tackles the big problems of society
- Strong theorisation

Put the two together and you have a winning recipe.

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