



Osborne, M. (2017) Editorial. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 23(1), pp. 3-4.

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/152294/>

Deposited on: 24 November 2017

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow_
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

Editorial

Michael Osborne, University of Glasgow

In this issue of JACE, a number of the articles concern the experience of adult students both in seeking access to higher education, and beyond, when access has been achieved, topics that seems to have persisted as a focus for research over the last four decades across most of the world. Zurba from a Canadian perspective considers access to HE, and in the context of a key issue, which increasingly has become posited as a global challenge: our parlous ecological environment. Her focus in her contribution is to argue for the role of 'Access' programmes in providing opportunity for indigenous and local populations in the fields of environmental, economic, and social policy in order to build the capacity of local communities. The article helpfully assesses a number of approaches that have already been taken, including within Australian, Canada and New Zealand, and advocates for provision that recognizes and values learning from experience, traditional and indigenous knowledge and decolonizing pedagogies. Four papers written respectively by Isopahkala-Bouret, Richardson, Philips, Baltzer, Filoon and Whitley, and Repo, Lehtinen, Rusanen and Hyytinen consider experiences of higher education. In the case of Isopahkala-Bouret, the context is older adults studying at Masters level in Finnish universities, and the purpose of the research is to establish the benefits of higher education in mid-life from the agency that individuals attempt to utilize to influence their life trajectories. These perceptions vary considerably from person to person, and of course intersect with many variables, and the author, having introduced and reported this particular approach, suggests avenues for future research. Richardson in the US also considers adults in mid-life, in this case women studying at colleges or universities in the Southern states, all of whom has been subject to mistreatment. Using a narrative approach, she also examines life trajectories, and adopts a critical feminism and constructivist framework for analysis. The stories she relates are rich and compelling examples of resilience, and of how protective factors prevented self-silencing and enhanced self-awareness, ultimately leading to success in study. Philips, Baltzer, Filoon and Whitley, also using a US HE context apply mixed quantitative and qualitative methods to consider the perspectives of adult students concerning what characteristics make for successful teaching and learning environments. Their small-scale study raises a range of questions in relation to what students desire and what they get from their teachers, and they suggest this might have implications for academic staff recruitment. Repo, Lehtinen, Rusanen and Hyytinen also consider student perspectives, in this case the self- evaluation by Finnish Open University adult students of their critical thinking skills. They utilized the Collegiate Learning Assessment and a retrospective self-evaluation scale, and whilst this self-evaluation showed no significant difference across adult age bands, students with prior experience of adult education had better critical thinking skills and evaluated their skills more accurately. This implies attention being

given by teachers to the different prior experience of students.

Greece has been subject to major economic challenges following the global economic crisis of the last decade, and it is against this backdrop that Karalis analyses participation in adult education in the country. The quantitative element of the research involved multistage stratified sampling of representative population of over 1200 adults in Greece using an instrument informed by a number of the tools concerning factors impacting on participation, used since the early 1970s, and adapted to the local context. He finds that participation during this period, and indeed adults are well disposed to participation in learning. Whilst there is a perhaps a paradox, this increase may be explained by various interventions of the European Union and the Greek state. However, many traditional situational and structural/organizational barriers remain.

Tambaum's article considers inter-generation learning, and digital literacy using a context of teenagers interacting with older learners as tutors. She considers the extent to which these tutors use scaffolding, which has been used increasingly as an instructional technique in e-learning in recent decades. In the context of a detailed observational qualitative study, she argues that their use of this approach suggests a need for training.

We complete this issue of JACE with an article from Laitinen, Piazza and Stenvall, which considers learning in the context of 'smart cities', using the cases of Catania and Helsinki. They show clearly different perspectives amongst key actors in the Italian and Finnish cases with regard to their understanding and attitudes towards the smart city, and link these differences to theories of organizational learning.