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50th Anniversary Editorial

Miriam Zukas and Jim Crowther

Introduction

Studies in the Education of Adults (*Studies in Adult Education* until 1984) is fifty years old. This very special edition was commissioned by the Editorial Board to mark that anniversary, to provide a historical record and reflective account of the journal and to republish some key articles from the last fifty years. Jim Crowther and Miriam Zukas, as previous editors of the journal and current members of the Board, were asked to put together an introduction to the anniversary edition with an invitation to write what they saw fit.

Although we have chosen to write a somewhat introspective account, a journal never stands on its own: it is always located in a scientific field (Bourdieu, 1984) – a field constituted by both the broader social world within which the field is embedded and the scientific field itself. In celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of this journal, we are fortunate to be able to locate *Studies in the Education of Adults* in its scientific field through the intellectual analysis of colleagues who have undertaken the necessary bibliometric slog (e.g. Rubenson and Elfert, 2015; Milana et al, 2016; Fejes and Nylander, 2017; Nylander, Österlund and Fejes, 2018), as well as our own intellectual histories.

And in thinking about a journal's relationship to the scientific field, a number of theoretical metaphors come to mind: it might be understood as a 'gate' (Nesbit et al, 2009), controlled by editors, to maintain and shape the field, admitting some and excluding others. It might be understood as part of a network of actors (authors, reviewers, editor, publisher and so on), making as well as maintaining a field (Zukas, 2009, 1). Or it might be understood as a 'face' (Goffman, 1959) for the field, with editorials doing impression management or 'face-work' on behalf of the field. In writing this editorial, we try to make explicit some of the 'face-work' of the journal. We have taken the liberty of developing something of a reflective history in the context of a rapidly-changing field, particularly in terms of the British university adult education system which was responsible for the establishment of the journal in the first place. Later, we will explain how this special edition was put together and introduce the contents, but first, we recall the journal's history (as we have pieced it together) and comment on several aspects, including the development of its ways of working.

What was surprising to us in developing this editorial was that *Studies* (used throughout this editorial to include both incarnations) was one of the oldest surviving Anglophone research journals focusing on the education of adults; only the American journal, *Adult Education Quarterly*, is older, having started nineteen years before *Studies* in 1950. The journal's development reflects Rubenson's and Elfert's (2015) assessment of the phases of the scientific field in the US: first, the gradual professionalization of adult education, with the development of organisations such as the Universities Council for Adult Education (UCAE), established in 1947 (now, after several name changes, the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning) and the setting up of university qualifications in adult education such as

postgraduate diplomas and Masters, leading to a call for ‘a body of knowledge that would help in the growth of the evolving field’ (p 27). The second phase identified by Rubenson and Elfert was the development of adult education as a field of study in response to the emergence of adult education as a field of practice, marked by an increase in adult education programmes, scholarly conferences and research journals (Wiltshire, 1983). In the UK, the founding of both *Studies* and the the Standing Conference on University Research and Teaching in the Education of Adults (SCUTREA) in 1969 were early signs of this more general picture in the US and Europe. Journals such as the *International Journal of Lifelong Education* (UK), *Studies in Continuing Education* (Australia) and the *Canadian Journal of Studies in Adult Education* (Canada) all followed swiftly. But, note Rubenson and Elfert, the third phase has been marked by amalgamation of adult education programmes with other fields and, in some cases, closure – very much echoed in the UK, though not in Europe.

There is no established history of the journal so what follows in our history was pieced together from editorials, the inside cover of the journal and snippets of insider knowledge. Nevertheless, we felt it important to establish a record, with all its faults, for this fiftieth anniversary edition. We welcome corrections, amendments, amplifications and comments.

The journal’s early history

Editor	Year & Issue	Reviews Editor
Thomas Kelly (1969-1973)	1969 (1:1)	
H.A. Jones (1974-1982)	1974 (6:1)	William Forster (1975-1982) listed as Assistant Editor
William Forster (1983)	1983 (15:1)	From 1983 Sallie Westwood
Stuart Marriot (1984-1988)	1984 (16:1)	Sallie Westwood
Teddy Thomas (1989)	1989	Sallie Westwood
Sallie Westwood (1990-1993)	1990 (22:1)	John Wallis
John Wallis (1993-1997)	1997 (29:1)	Until 1996 Barry Bright From 1996 Janet Bunker
Richard Edwards (1998-2004)	1998-2004 (30:1 – 35:2)	Until 2002 Janet Bunker From 2002 John Field
Miriam Zukas (2004-2010)	2004-2010 (36:1 – 40:2)	Until 2008 John Field From 2008 Lyn Tett
Jim Crowther (2010-2015)	2010-2015 (42:1 – 47:2)	Until 2011 Lynn Tett From 2011 Barbara Merrill
Christine Jarvis and Kevin Orr (2016-2018)	2016 (48:1 -)	Until 2017 Barbara Merrill From 2018 Lyn Tett

Table 1 Editors, Editorials and Reviews’ editors 1969-2018

We begin with an overview in Table 1 which lays out the chronology of editors, editorials and reviews' editors. Inconsistencies in Issue dates and numbers between editorial periods are covered by Special Issues (discussed later). The periods for the editors are in brackets in the first column and the second column which refers to Year and Issue indicates the frequency of editorials. The single issues of the first seven editors is based on the editorials that occurred; thereafter, the editorials were regularised by Richard Edwards in 1998. The final column refers to the reviews' editors and their periods in office.¹

It is a matter of record that the journal was first established in 1969 with the sponsorship of the Universities Council for Adult Education (UCAE), which itself had been founded in 1947 as a successor to the body which represented university extramural directors from 1923. (Following a series of name changes, that body exists now as the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning or UALL.) The journal and first editor of *Studies in Adult Education* was the 'brain-child' (Jones, 1974, p 1) of the then Honorary Secretary of UCAE, Tom Kelly from Liverpool University, Professor of Adult Education and Director of Extramural Studies. It was published by David and Charles. Kelly believed that the journal was necessary because, although Britain had been at the front of adult education practice, he thought that it was 'one of the last to give serious consideration to the theory of adult education' because 'adult education had been, for so long, a small-scale operation, 'largely academic in content and dominated by the tutorial tradition of the ancient universities'. In other words, university adult education had, he believed, been primarily content-focused with little concern about broader questions of purpose or pedagogy. In his view, adult education now encompassed a wide variety of activity and a journal was required which would 'concern itself with the whole range of adult education from philosophy to basket-weaving'. The journal was unashamedly British and, announced Kelly, it would publish work from other countries 'wherever their experience seems relevant to British problems'.

In the sixth volume in 1974, a new editor and collaboration was announced, although the reasons for this are now lost from view. While the collaboration with UCAE was retained, the publisher was to become the National Institute of Adult Education (NIAE) (which had been publishing its own journal of adult education in various guises since 1925) and the editor Professor Henry Arthur Jones, Director of the Department of Adult Education at the University of Leicester and, *inter alia*, chair of NIAE's Publications Committee. It was intended that the journal would continue to assist in the growth of adult education as an academic discipline whilst, at the same time, 'strengthening ... the whole range of adult education publishing in the United Kingdom by making it easier for material to be published in the form most suitable to the content and readership' (Jones, 1974).

In 1983, William (Bill) Forster, Professor of Adult Education at Leicester and Honorary Secretary to UCAE which would become the Universities Council for Adult and Continuing Education (UCACE), took over as Editor for a year, regarding the 1983 volume as 'something of a *Festschrift*' (Forster, 1983) to Jones, concerning the 'ideologies and thoughts, ... values, and ... the way in which these can be distilled into practice in the community, the institution and the classroom.' Forster had previously served as Assistant Editor between 1975 and

¹ We have pieced together the rest of the journal's early history with the help of Stuart Marriott, the journal's fourth editor, to whom we are most grateful, and the few editorials appearing in the journal, together with the contents pages and inside covers.

1982. But only a year later the editor changed again as did the character of the journal. The then Director of NIACE, Arthur Stock, wanted to distinguish the journal from NIACE's other journal, *Adult Education*, by making *Studies* more obviously academic. Stuart Marriot from the University of Leeds and, at the time, in the Adult Education division of the Department of Adult Education and Extramural Studies, announced in his first editorial (Marriott, 1984) that the journal title would change (to the present one), a third body – SCUTREA - would be involved (to enhance the academic status of the journal?) – and a new Management Committee would be formed, with two representatives from each of the three sponsoring organisations. The most surprising announcement from today's perspective was that, from 1984, the journal would be refereed; it seems hard now to imagine that for some time, it was not.

Less surprising was the absence of women from the Management Committee, all three organisations having chosen men to represent them. At the inception of the journal, men dominated university adult education in general, and adult education research in particular, despite the fact that the majority of adult education participants and educators were women (Benn, 1998). However, the under-representation of women on the Management Committee (later the Editorial Board) was to change from the 1980s as a result of feminist challenge and campaigning within the adult education research community, such as the women's 'interest' group established within SCUTREA, and broader changes to the curriculum of adult education such as the development of women-only provision (Coats, 1994).

In 1989, Teddy Thomas from the University of Nottingham edited the journal for a short time, but the editorial of the 22nd volume (1990) announced further developments for the journal. Although not named, the new Editor was Sallie Westwood, then Senior Lecturer and later Professor of Sociology at the University of Leicester. (As discussed below, Sallie had been the Reviews Editor for the journal from 1983 until this point.) The journal was to appear in a new format, but for the first time referred to the Editorial Board which would take it forward. Deeper changes were afoot too: by drawing on cultural studies, the journal would provide for adult education 'a more theoretical account ... separating itself from the *bricolage* of field reports and the managerial concerns of public discourses, but articulating the world of theory and of practice in novel and illuminating ways.' (Westwood, 1990, p 1). This was not, of course, the first time that the journal editor had aspired to position the journal as more theoretical and still relevant to its professional field. But, for the first time, the editorial indicated that the politics of difference were also to be foregrounded: 'a politics pre-figured by the new social movements for racial justice, women's emancipation, gay rights, peace and democracy, and for the re-casting of citizenship rights across the globe'.

A published assertion of this new politics appeared in 1991: *Radical Agenda: the Politics of Adult Education* was edited by Sallie Westwood and Teddy Thomas and published by NIACE. The collection of eleven essays – eight of which were first published in the journal and reprinted in that volume – included commentaries, manifestos, case studies and analyses of left radical practice. In reviewing the collection in the pages of *Studies*, Stephen Brookfield commented that it was 'a useful anthology of where left of centre British adult education has been in the last twenty years, and it offers an interesting perspective on how the larger

optimistic visions of the Russell era² have been reframed in the face of hostile conservatism. Tactical guile and situated activism are the new world order in the field.’ (Brookfield, 1992, p 252)

The editorial voice was not heard again until 1995 (Volume 27) by which time John Wallis from the University of Nottingham had taken over. An editorial comment announced that, given the overwhelming pressure for publication (presumably because of increasing pressure to publish in response to the British Research Assessment Exercise) and the need to exercise even more editorial judgement, the journal was seeking to make explicit the elements informing its assessment of work submitted to the journal. Basic principles included: the promotion of the study of adult education as a field of study in its own right; the recognition of theory in academic debate and the encouragement of its development; support for innovative work which directly challenges conventional wisdom; a desire to ensure a diversity of voices and paradigms; and the provision of a forum for critical debate.

In the thirtieth volume in 1998, a new editorial voice was heard. Richard Edwards, then at the Open University and later to become Professor of Education at the University of Stirling, established the practice of an editorial for each edition. The history of the journal, through its editorials, is more visible because it is reflected in the concerns and issues articulated in commentaries from Edwards, through to Zukas, Crowther, Jarvis and Orr, which are referred to later.

Reviews

One of the strong features of the journal from its inception was the reviews section. We have been unable to ascertain whether the early book reviews were commissioned by the editor or by someone in the role of book reviews editor (perhaps the Assistant Editor, William Forster from 1975). But certainly from 1983, *Studies* had a separate book reviews editor: Sallie Westwood until she became editor in 1990. Initially, the reviews section was a substantial part of the journal with features that we might not expect to find. Extended reviews were published (sometimes with several books on similar topics reviewed together) together with a section for shorter reviews (often considerably longer than reviews today). The book reviews section also included books which had been received but were not being reviewed as well as a most interesting development, a reminder of how important journals were in knowledge circulation: a review of the contents of other journals such as the Australian Journal of Adult Education, Adult Leadership, Convergence and the Community Development Journal. Several other experiments were also tried, reminding us how difficult it was to find resources pre-internet: for example, for a brief time (1977-1978), a ‘register of research theses and reports’ was published which included theses by Peter Jarvis (on Professions in Process) and Judith Bell (on women returners). Lists of bibliographical research projects were also published between 1970 and 1980.

Although the length and coverage of the reviews section transformed over time so that reviews became shorter and the books reviewed more varied, this has remained an essential element of the journal. As with the Management Committee, early reviewers were all men –

² The Russell Report on Adult Education in England and Wales, published in 1973, assessed the need for and reviewed the provision of non-vocational adult education before making recommendations that funding and student numbers should be doubled over five years. The recommendations were not, however, implemented.

often the heads of extramural departments - but it is noticeable that, when Sallie Westwood became Reviews Editor, many more women's names appeared. John Wallis, from the University of Nottingham (and later Editor) succeeded Sallie Westwood and was, in turn, succeeded by Barry Bright from the University of Hull in 1994. In October 1995, unusually, the reviews editor's voice was to be heard commenting on two 'experiments' being tried out within the reviews section: one combining an in-depth review of three books, and the second seeking two independent reviews of the same book: Robin Usher and Richard Edwards' 'Postmodernism and Education'. (The two reviewers do not, of course, agree in their evaluation of the text.)

Editorial structure and function

The journal has both an Editorial Board which meets twice a year and an international advisory group although this was not always the case. Consultants to the journal were named on the inside front cover for the first time in 1983, and from 1984, representatives of the three organisations (NIACE, UACE and SCUTREA) constituted the group of editorial advisors, with a separate group of overseas correspondents also appearing on the inside cover. An additional representative from the European Society for Research in the Education of Adults joined the Board in the early 1990s.

The Editorial Board in its current form (from about 1998) is a 'working' one, to quote former editor, Richard Edwards who, in consultation with the Editorial Board, built on a Board member 'job description' to suggest the role of Board members would include: contributing to policy development; providing subject-specific and country-specific expertise; reviewing paper and advising on reviewers of papers; being pro-active encouraging contributions to the journal; acting as guest editors; attending Board meetings where possible and promoting *Studies* to a wide range of audiences. An unwritten convention that Editorial Board members attend at least one in three meetings (or the 'three strikes and you're out' rule) was developed at the same time. Not only has this proved helpful in ensuring continuity of discussion and debate, but it has also ensured a sense of shared responsibility for the journal, even if editors have ended up with most of the action points on the journal's 'to do' list. For example, with the help of the publisher, the Editorial Board stepped in both to run the journal and to appoint a new editor when a previous editor took up a post abroad at short notice.

But despite the network involved in encouraging, reviewing and selecting articles, the public 'face' of the journal remains the editorial, written by the editor of the journal. We can think of the function of editorials as one of 'impression management', in the sense meant by Erving Goffman ([1959] 1990) in his analysis of social interactions. Changing the reference point, the task of the editor is one of impression management by presenting the journal in the best possible light to its readership and (potential) authors. Goffman characterised this as 'facework'. As we go on to explain, this is often a complicated process affected by a number of factors beyond the control of editors or Editorial Boards.

One main task of the editor is to ensure that 'the performance' happens, in this case that the journal is published twice a year. As in Goffman's analogy, there is a front region – the publication of the journal itself – and the back region in which all the other preparations for

the performance take place. The performance preparation requires that sufficient copy comes in (usually unsolicited but also by commission), that knowledgeable and willing peer reviewers are available and reviews chased up, that reviews are processed (and, if necessary, rough edges are smoothed before feedback to authors), that authors are steered to constructively engage with feedback (including 'softening' harsh rejections), that the journal is published on time, through regular contact with the publishing company and that the Editorial Board meetings are serviced and so on. Whilst all these tasks are important for the timely production of the journal they tend to tell us very little about the 'face' of the journal.

Just as the identity of a person is etched on the face so too the journal displays its identity in its outward appearance. Perhaps the most telling of these 'facial' features are its name. The original title of the journal was *Studies in Adult Education* but this was changed in 1984, as we noted earlier. The context in which adult education occurred, the institutions and agencies involved and the reference to the UK tradition of adult education had, historically, been fairly stable until the late 1970s and 1980s. The change in name of the journal – to its current one – was in response to significant changes underway. The demise of liberal adult education in the academy and the widening out of the field of practice and the professions involved was captured in the more expansive notion of 'the education of adults', a term which incorporates a whole range of contexts and purposes in which adults engage in systematic learning. Debate on whether the journal should also include 'learning' in its title has occurred intermittently but, in particular, with changes in the wider policy context of lifelong learning.

Another significant feature of the journal's 'face' are the logos of its supporters. UALL (previouslyUCAE and then UCACE) were the original sponsors of the journal which they saw as providing academic support for the professional practice of adult education in the UK. However, partly in response to austerity measures affecting the organisation and the need to focus resources and, partly in response to the increasing drift between the academic focus of the journal and the professional focus of UALL, the latter ended its relationship with the journal in 2010.

SCUTREA, another supporter of the journal, has continued its relationship with the journal since 1984. Both SCUTREA and *Studies* share a common interest in promoting research in the education of adults, improving its quality and disseminating it. As noted earlier, the former has had a representative on the Editorial Board since their relationship was formed and the Editorial Board of the journal has regularly held one of its meetings each year at SCUTREA annual conferences. This linkage has often led to presentations at the conference being upgraded for subsequent publication in the journal.

For a time, ESREA's logo also appeared on the journal, until in 2010 it developed its own open access, online-only journal, the European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA), which focused on adult education and learning in Europe.

The issue of quality

Putting 'your best face forward' involves an academic journal standing *for* something rather than simply being reactive and what that something means is partly determined by the interests of editors but also by the Editorial Board steer and, consequently, the type of 'stage' they wish to create for the wider professional and academic field.

At its inception the journal had no explicit criteria and no process of peer review. Occasionally, articles were peer reviewed but in 1985 the Editorial Board instituted a peer review process for submissions. The drive to increase the academic and scholarly status of the journal, as distinct from its professional and policy relevance, led to the publication of criteria for inclusion and to a double-blind system of peer review in 1998. The wider policy context affecting British academic careers, the Research Excellence Framework (and its precursors), influenced this development, but so too did the desire to increase the rigour and quality of submissions. These themes recur in editorials, particularly in the periods of Richard Edwards and Miriam Zukas. Edwards, commenting on the number of rejections to the journal, highlighted the lack of engagement with previous literature in the journal, methodological flaws, poorly written papers and largely descriptive accounts (see Edwards 2003 35:1, also see Zukas 2004 36:2). However, as an indicator of how the quality of submissions appears to have shifted it is worth looking at the editorial by Jarvis and Orr (2017 49:1) who comment on the 'highly eclectic, inclusive, international collection of articles...marked [by the] integration of theory and practice...' that reflects a research community which '...challenge[s] assumptions and tackle[s] critical issues of social justice, equality, diversity and identity'.

One of the unintended consequences, perhaps, of this acceleration in the academic status of the journal, was its disconnect with instrumental and narrow policy interest and concerns. On the one hand, the journal successfully encouraged and published a wider range of theoretical perspectives of increasing complexity and sophistication but, on the other hand, these articles seemed to be far removed from the increasing policy interest as lifelong learning for the economy 'took off' in the 1990s. The existence of '...parallel worlds: the world of research, as we know it, and the world of government – or quango-sponsored research studies', Miriam Zukas notes, increasingly means '...we seem to have policy formulated by research which is disconnected from the broader theoretical and conceptual issues played out in journals' (2005 37:2). The tension between academic and scholarly arguments, often with little explicit connection to policy and practice, and the policy interest in 'what works', were exacerbated by attempts to develop assessments of the impact of research which gathered pace from the 1990s onwards. Rather than succumb to a more instrumental focus (and what that would entail) the niche *Studies* aimed to create for itself was that of high quality research, theorised analysis, which was willing to express and reflect 'complexity, difference and diversity' (Edwards 1998 30:2). One significant aspect of this mission is the opening up of the journal to a wider range of voices in terms of geography, race, language, politics, and theoretical and practice orientations.

Readers and reading

The corollary of a wider range of published voices should be a wider readership – wider in terms of politics, interests, practice contexts, and so on. But the journal has had to assume its 'audience' for, until relatively recently, we knew about our readership only through proxies: how many copies of the journal were sold? Who bought them? Who cited articles in the journal? Who submitted papers to the journal? Who responded to calls for special issues? Recently, data harvesting has produced more detailed reports: for example, which articles are the most read? Where are our readers in terms of institution and country (we know for example that 13 per cent of our readers are in Asia Pacific)? But data alone is not

explanatory: a sudden spike of interest in one paper might be because of its appearance on the required reading list of a large class of adult education practitioners somewhere or it might be the initiation of a vigorous debate between adult education researchers (or, as is likely, both). These measures are still proxies, so editors, authors, Editorial Board members, reviewers have imagined and reimagined who we want our readers to be, and the journal assembled with this putative readership in mind. As our ambitions for the journal have changed, so have our imagined readers – they are more diverse in terms of geography, ethnicity, race, professional practice, education, political concerns.

Studies has also made several attempts to engage direct with readers. For instance, a survey of readers (Zukas, 1998), conducted through the auspices of the Editorial Board, sought feedback on the journal asking, for example, if we met the aims we had set for ourselves. As might be expected, there was little consensus from our respondents. Another initiative developed by the Editorial Board sought comments on papers that had been published to encourage debate, though few readers took up the challenge.

An active and successful approach to widening readership, initiated by the Editorial Board, has been to emphasise the interdisciplinary nature of the education of adults through soliciting the publication of thematic Issues. These have enabled the journal to diversify its 'face work' to different audiences and widen its scope of influence by seeking to attract new readers who might not necessarily identify their interests with adult education. In addition, a thematic focus brings a coherence to an edition which may be lacking in open issues, which depend on suitable copy being available for publication at any time. The list of thematic issues and their increasing frequency is indicated below.

Table 2 Thematic issues

Editor	Theme	Year & Volume
John Field and Tom Schuller	Investigating the learning society	1999 vol.39 (1)
Kathryn Ecclestone	An identity crisis? Using concepts of 'identity', agency and 'structure' in the education of adults	2007 vol. 39 (2)
Mary Hamilton and Yvon Appleby	Critical perspectives on practitioner research	2009 vol. 41 (2)
Budd Hall, Darlene Clover, Jim Crowther and Eurig Scandrett	Social movement learning: a contemporary re-examination	2011 vol. 43 (2)
Barbara Merrill and Lyn Tett	Access retention and withdrawal: A European perspective	2013 vol. 45 (2)
Catherine Etmanski	Adult Learning and Food	2015 vol. 47 (2)
Darlene Clover, Lorraine Bell, Kathy Sandford and Kay Johnson	Adult education through museums, heritage and exhibitory practice	2016 vol.48 (2)

One of the challenges thematic issues present for the journal is ensuring that it retains quality and relevance whilst at the same time handing over a degree of editorial control. This has been addressed partly through the involvement of *Studies* Editorial Board members in the thematic issues but also by ensuring articles included in thematic issues involve at least one Board member in the double-blind peer review process. Another challenge arises because the journal only publishes two issues per year; the frequency of thematic issues has therefore to be limited to ensure space for submissions for 'open' issues.

Internationalising the journal

It is immediately obvious from the journal's historical record that, despite its international authorship and readership, *Studies* was and is still a UK-based journal, published for many years by NIACE until that organisation's demise in 2016 (see Holford et al, 2016 for an account of NIACE's publishing story) and the journal's move to its new publishing home, Taylor and Francis.

In the academy today, the meaning of international is often synonymous with publication in journals which are included in the ISI/Web of Science index. The ranking of journals for inclusion in this database is based on 'impact factors', which are often crudely reduced to some form of citation metrics from which 'quality' can be read. As the university sector competes globally for international status and steers academic careers towards publication in high impact journals, the outcome is unlikely to be a thriving global community of scholars but, instead, a narrow one where only particular types of knowledge and interests are researched and shared (see Larrson 2010. Also see Fejes and Nylander 2017). However the Editorial Board has been preoccupied with internationalising the journal's identity, by which they have meant primarily opening up the journal to a wider, more global authorship. It led, in 2003, to the creation of an International Advisory Group (later renamed the International Editorial Board) whose job has been to act as reviewers, authors, consultants or 'sounding Boards', conduits for copy to the journal and ambassadors for promoting the journal in their own spheres of activity. This development was aligned to greater awareness by reviewers and editors about the need to take account of an international readership unfamiliar with the history and traditions of UK adult education.

Despite this commitment to internationalising the the journal, its success has been uneven with few articles from the global south or parts of Asia and non-English speaking European countries. Drawing on actor network theory, Larrson (2010) argues that the 'invisible colleges' which connect authors and connect texts simply reproduce the Anglophone dominance of academic publications and his citing of *Studies* in his research examples is a sobering one for the journal's Editorial Boards.

One consequence is that it has led to some important intellectual, theoretical and curricula debates being absent from the journal, for example, in relation to indigenous epistemologies, decolonising whiteness and issues of 'race'. Nonetheless, in terms of representing and articulating greater gender parity and a wider English speaking academic world, the journal has broken out of its predominantly white, male-UK, based academic mould (see Edwards 1998 30:1). Partly this reflects the decomposition of traditional centres of adult education and related scholarship in the UK but it is also due to the expansion of multiple fields and contexts for educating adults which have had an impact, nationally and internationally, on

practice, who it involves, where it occurs, how it is researched, the types of traditions of research which are drawn on and, ultimately, what is submitted for publication.

Facework in difficult times

More significant for the journal and its identity has been the impact of different UK environmental factors beyond its control. These include the policy context (e.g. the focus on lifelong learning and vocational training), the politics of higher education (e.g. marketisation and the increasing emphasis on publication in high quality journals for research assessment purposes), the changing field of professional and academic practice (e.g. the demise of liberal adult education, the reorganisation of departments of extra-mural studies and changing intellectual resources, fashions and interests which enliven academic debate), as well as the demands, procedures and practices of publishing companies responding to different economic and technological changes (e.g. digitalisation of journals). More broadly still, the journal is located in a context of social change taking place in society, the rise and decline of different social forces, the emergence of new ideological orientations and their concerns, which work on and through authors and, in turn, shape the content and material that feeds into debates and makes the journal a space for reflection and critique. This inevitably means that the journal is also a space for reflexive analysis on the community of practice, who it involves and why, through debates on the purpose and meaning of adult education, adult learning, professional learning, traditions of research, knowledge and pedagogy.

From 2010 onwards, austerity cuts in the UK and policies of marketisation in higher education have been the 'back drop' to the journal which has seen former departments of extra mural studies, lifelong learning and adult education disappear from the university sector through reorganisation and restructuring. This is a theme that has preoccupied the journal for some time and recurs in editorials by Crowther. At the same time, the journal's readership has remained buoyant - increased in some respects - in being part of a more global publishing house with online access to the journals copy becoming more prominent than hard copy of the journal, and downloads more than doubling in 2017.

Despite the challenges of the environmental factors, particularly the elision of education with learning, the Editorial Boards (the UK Board and international Board) have been resistant to diluting the emphasis on education and the significance of the educator's role in the era of learning. In 2012, the Editorial Board reiterated its position and its commitment to being inclusive in the theorisation and representation of multiple contexts for education and learning and published the following:

Statement of intent:

Studies is an international journal for scholarly, rigorous theorising and the critical interrogation of policy and research on the education of adults in different settings and countries. We encourage writers to publish material from a broad range of ideological interests, theoretical positions and research traditions. Multidisciplinary research, often a hallmark of adult education, is particularly welcome.

The journal provides opportunities for experienced and new writers to engage in spirited debate and the critical exchange of knowledge and ideas. It will particularly

encourage and address the role of adult learning and education can make to social justice. Quality articles are supported through a systematic and thorough process of peer feedback. We seek to foster and stimulate a global community of academics and researchers with a broad interest in the education of adults.

We will provide the thematic exploration of specific areas of interest as well as the exploration of new territory for adult education. The education of adults occurs in community, institutional and professional settings, many of which are not traditionally associated with education such as the workplace, trade unions, the home, through leisure activities, in voluntary organisations, social movements and virtual spaces. We invite readers with an interest in developing a themed issue to submit outline proposals for consideration to the editor.

Whilst adult learning is central to our concerns we are equally focussed on the nature of the adult curriculum and the role of the educator. It is essential to keep these issues at the forefront of our thinking because they address the purpose of learning, the selection of knowledge, and the process of learning. Education is a public issue and creates a particular space for debating what is happening to the public sphere both locally and globally. (Crowther 2012, 44:1)

While the Editorial Board were reiterating their commitment to a creative and intellectual space, *Studies'* publisher, however, was moving in the opposite direction. In 2015, after several years of restructuring and reorientation following government policy shifts, NIACE merged with another organisation to form the Learning and Work Institute. Separately, but relatedly, NIACE had been running down its academic publications whilst increasingly focusing on vocational literacies and employability. NIACE abruptly ended its relationship with *Studies* in 2015 when it closed its publications division and ended the NIACE imprint. The disappearance of NIACE is thus symptomatic of the impact of the policy environment on the journal. Nevertheless, the contributions of Virman Man at NIACE, until 2008, and subsequently David Shaw until 2015, had provided excellent professional support and guidance on the publication process and the journal's marketing.

The Editorial Board weighed up a number of issues in thinking about its next publisher and decided, in the end, that factors such as wider distribution were critical, and that therefore a larger publisher was preferable. Going beyond the call of duty, David Shaw elicited proposals from likely publishers to take the journal forward, and towards the end of 2015, the Board decided to go with Taylor and Francis. In view of the surge in readership over the last two years, and the digitisation of all the back editions which Taylor and Francis undertook, this has proved to be a wise decision. Perhaps it was one that should have been taken earlier in the journal's history, but the Editorial Board's loyalty to NIACE had been strong.

Looking forward: threats and opportunities

Currently, the journal is subscription-based primarily through university library purchases rather than through individual subscribers. Whilst this mode of distribution has served the journal well in the past, the squeeze on library budgets and re-organisation within the higher education sector may result in the journal losing institutional subscribers. But journal subscriptions are changing from individual ones to 'package' deals between publishers and

organisations. As a result, in addition to our individual subscribers, *Studies* is now available to thousands more institutions. This, together with online copy and 'pay-as-you-read' approaches to the circulation of articles can widen the potential readership of material. Digitalization has also facilitated an archive of back issues, housed in one site, thereby creating a useful resource for future historians of adult education. One negative consequence of the above is the digitalisation of the journal and submission processes which rely on authors submitting copy online can also reduce the contact between editors, authors and potential reviewers. The rehousing of the journal with Taylor and Francis has meant adopting their technical systems of producing material which in turn have implications for the social relations of journal production. A friendly chase up for reviews from the editor is replaced by automatic reminders of lapsed deadlines – an inevitability as any editor can testify – which depersonalises a process that often requires a 'human touch' to produce positive results.

An issue on the horizon for the journal, which will significantly impact on its future, is the economic model it may be pressured to adopt. Increasingly, changes in the university sector and assessment of research quality, are moving in the direction of 'open access' as a requirement for inclusion into assessment of research quality, at least in the UK, and a direction of travel which is likely to be reproduced elsewhere. One of the consequences of open access is that whilst it makes access to copy freely available to the consumer the cost of production is born by the producer and their capacity to pay. This latter requirement will often depend on academics having access to research grants which, in turn, will be influenced by what research councils and bodies decide gets funded. The epistemological, methodological and ontological consequences of this for research and scholarship have to be factored into thinking about the future of the journal. The likelihood is that it will further reinforce the anglophone tendency in the literature, in terms of where in the world research is funded. Moreover, as research funding becomes more competitive and increasingly tied to policy interests the kind of intellectually and ideologically open, quirky space, that the journal has provided is faced with a distinctive and difficult challenge. Research in the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA) has opted for an open access model which uses the 'creative commons', an alternative which makes no charge to the reader or the writer and so far this model seems to be working well. RELA is sponsored by ESREA and, so far, Linköping University in Sweden.

This issue

When the Editorial Board finally decided how best to celebrate our fiftieth anniversary, we agreed that, in keeping with the 'working' nature of the Board, we all needed to take on some of the work. We decided that we wanted to publish an anniversary edition, selecting two papers from each of the five decades of the journal. The Editorial Board split itself into pairs, with each pair taking responsibility for reading a decade and deciding on the two papers to go forward for this edition, with the following criteria in mind: the papers which best represent the issues from that period and resonate with adult education concerns today. It was a challenging task, but we were surprised by the content and pleased at the opportunity to read and reflect on each of our decades.

But, of course, this selective approach does not reflect the full range of the journal in terms of focus, theoretical resources, geographical spread, methodologies, and so on. Selection

inevitably leads to omission of one sort or another. We notice, for example, that there is little in the selection about adult literacy or globalisation. Although some of the papers are concerned with gender and class, there is not much on race. Post-colonial theorising emerges later in the selection, but post-modernism makes only a single appearance. Authors are anglophone, for the most part, and come from the UK, Canada, Australia and the US. Topics which have been fiercely debated in the journal such as the therapeutic turn in adult education did not make it into this selection.

In addressing the selection for this issue, we can identify three themes which are represented from the selection process. Firstly, the issue of *professional identity* for adult educators: this emerges across time in different ways. The first article from 1969 by Duke and Marriott focuses on the fragile professional identity of the adult educator and the disciplines that inform it as well as the lack of research supporting it. By the 1990s issues of professional identity emerge more markedly in relation to the rise of vocational training (Field) and its pedagogical implications as well as the turn towards a behaviourist perspective on learning. The wider impact of this vocational focus and its impact on learner subjectivities and the role of Higher Education (HE) is the theme of the article from 1999 (Usher and Solomon).

Secondly, related to the above and reinforcing concerns about professional identity is the theme of the *changing spaces for adult education* and the turn towards adult learning. Two of the early contributions from the 1970s and early 1980s stand out as 'square pegs in round holes' in that they are written by adult education practitioners highlighting the contribution of HE provision of liberal adult education for women. The article by Swarbrick on women and the Open University (from 1978) and the New Opportunities for Women article in 1980 (Aird) are also of historical value in terms of providing insights into what we have lost from the field of practice. The importance of HE provision for adults is the subject of Tett's article, from 2004, but notably these are adults no longer in dedicated spaces of adult education but are students enrolled in a degree course in an elite research-intensive institution.

The contribution of Jackson (1970) is also linked to the changing spaces of adult education in his argument for aligning adult education to community development and his reflections on the projects underway in Liverpool during the 1960s and 70s. Social class inequality is his preoccupation rather than patriarchy as such. This article and the two previously cited are clearly focussed on the contribution that adult education can make to individual and collective change starting from the level of community. The informal spaces for learning as well as learning from experience in non-formal contexts is central to the concerns of Biesta and Tedder (2007), who address how people achieve agency and the role of learning in that process through developing narratives. Clover and Sandford (2016) are also concerned with informal and non-formal learning in the contexts of museums and the kind of critical cultural pedagogy that can be developed through deconstructing museum objects and recontextualising such exhibits in their 'real' context.

Thirdly, the selections for this issue demonstrate a growing awareness and reflexivity which might be expected from the deepening of analysis, opening up of critical debates and increasing sophistication of research which this first half century of *Studies* documents. The first article by Duke and Marriott (1969) in a sense shows where things started in that the theme of the article is one of lamenting the lack of research in adult education because of its

low professional status and because it has been ignored by traditional disciplinary areas of expertise. The intellectual maturing of the field of practice is signalled by the increasing conceptual awareness and critique (e.g. Brookfield's exploration of self-directed learning in 1985), a trend which characterises all the articles which follow along with explicit attention to methodological issues and research evidence as essential features of the professional field despite the seismic shift from adult education to adult learning. If critical reflection on practice is a mark of maturity the final contribution by McLean (2017), on the colonising practices of adult educators with the Inuit, is a good example of the confidence that critique is an essential ingredient of a profession that needs to understand that it might be 'part of the problem' rather than 'part of the solution' for people's lives.

Conclusion

Will *Studies* be publishing in another 50 years time? We can't be sure but we can be sure that, if it is, it will undoubtedly be a very different journal to the one it is now, just as the current version of *Studies* is very different from the model it was founded on. The profession of adult education and the research which gave it a professional status, published in journals like *Studies*, is in varying degrees of decline across the globe. As the discipline, or sub-discipline of adult education, is apparently marginalised in the university sector and in the world of academic publishing, it appears that those academics who identify with this field will increasingly need to publish in related journals or journals with no particular adult education interest. This invisibility makes it difficult to imagine how a community of scholars might thrive, at least in its current format.

The pessimistic view above, however, has to be offset in at least two ways. One is by recognising the rapidly expanding and global readership of *Studies* which digital availability and 'pay as you read' has enabled. The long-term success of this might be critical to the journal's flourishing, though the impact of the British research assessment demands on its operation cannot be underestimated. Thus, if there is a demand for open access, it is hard to see how the RELA model will work in the UK context without the kind of institutional support which, in this case, is behind the creative commons software approach to publishing. Whilst this version of open access is preferable, in terms of the availability of material which can be freely downloaded, the institutional infrastructure of support which underpins it is critical and there are very few institutions in the UK with an interest in adult education which could match that given to RELA.

The second, which applies as much to the sub-discipline of adult education as it does to *Studies*, is that, as the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci noted, we need both 'pessimism of the intellect alongside optimism of the will'. To factor in the latter, it is also clear that the invention and reinvention of *Studies*, over the five decades documented here, has largely depended on a small number of committed people who have supported the journal, nationally and internationally. Their agency, creativity and energy – and sometimes plain doggedness to keep it going - has enabled the journal to move forward in difficult times and we therefore conclude that there is still much to hope for in the future.

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