



## Bulletin No. 33

Nov 2020

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## Editorial 2020 - Annus horribilis and a new beginning?

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The expression used by the Queen of Britain of the death year of the 'people's princess' in the nineties well applies as 2020 departs. That was a one-family crisis; this is a people's crisis world-wide. It is the first truly global pandemic for a century, following World War One. Governance seems close to collapse: globally in the UN system; and in weak, near-failing nation-states or under harsh authoritarianism. Outbreaks of civil disobedience approach civil war, heavy oppression, often full-blooded hot war across many parts of every continent; so many as to suggest that we are in a different kind of '3<sup>rd</sup> world war'. Thirdly, there is belated recognition, and evidence, on land and sea, of the fact and effects of climatic catastrophe reaching even to 6<sup>th</sup> continent Antarctica and into the greatest oceans.

What may we expect of 2021? What as practitioners and proponents of adult learning and education (ALE) do and should we do in this unfamiliar world?

*'Back to normal?' - or 'Don't let a good crisis go to waste?'*

Do we critique and demolish prevailing ideologies? Pragmatic gradualism or a cathartic break and renewal? Do we go for top-down policy and resourcing; or grassroots community empowerment and rebuilding from the base - or both? Does salvation rest with innovation, new technology, and magic bullets, or the rediscovery and revaluing of old wisdom - or both?

Whatever we do personally and collectively, the seasons of summer and winter still come round in each hemisphere in their turns, with next month marking an end and a new beginning for the dominant northern half of 'planet A'; with the dark time of review and rebirth in the North, come the summer and long school breaks in the south: for some their holiday time, for many a continuing time of fear and famine, fire, flood, and flight.

This Bulletin issue is a subject-player and object in each of these tensions. This is a rare 'paradigmatic moment' on a par with the post-World War Two years. Most states and their citizens must balance the value of human life and the threat of COVID-19 (C-19) scourge with damage to 'the economy', conventionally understood in numbers of GDP, per capita income, government intervention, and debt, or community self-reliance, wealth, health and happiness. Civil society more than ever needs the empowerment of ALE to enlighten, inform and inspire.

PIMA is searching for the best ways to support, equip, and engage the interest and energy of its members; to contribute to choosing pathways and finding connections and partners through today's interactive crises: *only connect?*

We begin with PIMA VP Heribert Hinzen's review of international trends and events, and the part PIMA plays there; and by taking up a theme from Bulletin Special Issue 31 on the global aspiration and strategy of the SDGs – the sustainable development goals, responding to Debbi Long's crucial critique 'oxymorons and ethnocentrism'. [see Debbi Long's paper in Bulletin Special Issue No. 31. Ed.]

As an engaged global ALE network, we continue considering how we are experiencing C-19 and behaving, with four contributions from different regions and perspectives. This thread interweaves naturally with exploring 'life-deep': a dimension of long fashionable, important but often confused and abused 'lifelong learning (LLL)'. Our exploration started at the PASCAL annual conference in Suwon, R of Korea, two years ago, and will be ongoing.

LLL includes not only the lifespan from the earliest years to '4<sup>th</sup> age' and life-end. It also means *life-wide* (in community and workplace as well as within the walls of education); and now *life-deep*: a dimension of self-reflection and discovery as lockdowns and travel bans of C-19 force more of us to live alone more, to look more in and on ourselves, and also perhaps our families and close neighbours; as well as freeing space not only for loneliness but also for reflection on values, feeling and beliefs and lifestyles. Back to normal? Or regeneration?

Every cloud has a silver lining, so we are taught: conversely, perhaps each silver lining carries a cloud: witness the mass media, social media, instant information and big data, intensification, efficiency, audit and assessment, innovation... The final section of No. 33 reveals continuing purpose, campaigning, and steady effort, in the struggles for gender equality, for workers' education in the Global South, in Hong Kong's 'little cousin' Macao, and, for Ireland echoing similar success in New Zealand as reported in Bulletin 32, a sizeable government grant win for ALE.

For us, as John Aitchison signs off his correspondence, *aluta continua* - the struggle continues (followed by 'victory is certain'), we handle disappointment and delay, and carry on, as Daniela Bavkandzi shows.

We celebrate the addition of two new members, and a cloud of sadness within the joy, note the passing of two great ALE workers. Dr. Wijetunga of Sri Lanka was long the faithful Secretary-General of now-mighty ASPBAE; and Scotland's Jim Gallagher is honoured in the remembrance by Mike Osborne.

As an editor's confession, *my takeaways* from *annus horribilis* are of hope, fascinations, and a restless search for answers: like how do things change? Is 'culture' not the true nerve centre?

How can we all be in the same boat globally yet each people and place is unique? All in the same boat and yet not? - asked President Shirley Walters in South Africa

Will 'regenerative farming', the big new thing, win out? - Along with revaluing indigenous knowledge and wisdom in the mass and social media?

In Australia, we now have Farmers for Wildlife fighting the extinction of species – who are the good and bad guys these days? And yet a 2003 world best-selling garden book advises: *until quite recently scientists smiled at all the wonderful medicinal powers claimed for garlic: but recent research has shown that there is some truth in a few of the old wives' tales.* 'Some?' 'a few?' 'old wives'? – no tribal elders?

I will still fret about the blunting of our tools: the casual abuse and eroded meaning of words; not just 'fake news' but also our sloppiness; like 'learning' when we mean 'education'. And I will be fascinated to watch the *liberal vs vocational (VET)* dichotomy crumbling as they merge within communities in the post-C-19 era.

## Working together globally – realising the SDGs as a shared reality

**PIMA moving - moving PIMA. Some considerations for 2020 and after**  
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2020 has been a very special year in many respects. Each of us will recall how she or he coped with the multiple forms of crises around us. We remember well that more attention was building up about the climate crisis, and that the young ones of the *Fridays for Future* movement were showing the older generations that dreaming of and struggling for another world was still possible. Then suddenly, early in the year, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic took all our attention. The lock-down and slow-down of economic, social, and cultural life are still seriously felt, as we approach the end of the year.

Education in all its forms has suffered. Kindergarten and often schools were closed for long periods, university teaching survived only with an intensive move towards digitalization, most adult education and community learning centres were part of the lock-down, only slowly adapting to digital modes in selected areas, and maybe only in the richer countries.

The just-concluded *Extraordinary Session of the Global Education Meeting on Education post-COVID-19* came up with the *2020 GEM Declaration* stating:

"We are convinced that quality education is a human right and essential for an equitable, inclusive, and sustainable recovery of all nations. To avoid what the UN Secretary-General has described as a 'generational catastrophe', we must build more resilient,

flexible, inclusive, and gender-responsive societies and education systems. To do so, we must address the holistic needs of all learners from early childhood to adulthood, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized.

Invest in skills development, including social and emotional learning and well-being, for inclusive recovery, decent work, and enhanced employability, and sustainable development through reskilling and upskilling opportunities for *all* young people and adults who have lost or are at risk of losing their jobs.”

It may be something for discussion, within PIMA and the larger adult learning and education (ALE) partnership, to look at the new understanding of skills which is getting to mean everything in education, training, and learning: no longer technical and vocational skills only, but also related to the emotional and social skills. Recent strategic documents coming out of the European Union (EU) point in a similar direction.

Looking back it seems that PIMA has managed to face a number of the challenges surrounding each of us: engaging in several events and policy arenas, and spending energy strengthening the organization for the next round of efforts. The Annual General Meeting and the Governing Committee Meeting provided guidance. Maybe needless to say, but the Bulletin as our flagship for information, communication, and discourse appeared regularly, the Website is in place and waiting for wider use, webinars have been successfully tried, and all of this grounded in a PIMA Communication Strategy showing more potential.

This Strategy has as one of its goals “to collaborate with other cognate and like-minded organisations to ensure that PIMA communications complement rather than duplicate or compete with theirs”. This year we had a special experience of this through intensive collaboration with the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). Many PIMA members have had some sort of affiliation with ICAE during their professional life, and a good number have held senior positions on secretary-general and vice-president level.

Every 25 years UNESCO invites leading educationists to form a Commission and reflect on the present situation of education and the future. 1972 the result was *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow* from a Commission chaired by the French Education Minister Edgar Faure. In 1996 *Learning: The treasure within Report to the UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century* was the result of the Delors Commission. *Learning to Become: The Futures of Education*, is the working title of a report in the making chaired by the female President of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, Sahle-Work Zewd. The plan is to present this at the UNESCO General Assembly in 2021.

The Delors Commission had invited ICAE to contribute a position paper which was widely circulated, *Adult education and lifelong learning: Issues, Concerns, and recommendations* This time a number of possibilities were created by UNESCO to send comments to the website as individuals, or to produce and submit longer documents as invited organisations. ICAE took up the challenge and decided early on that this policy

process should be participatory and wider in its scope, as a discourse, which could also look into the importance of ALE in a number of areas. The ICAE membership, colleagues, and friends were informed. At this point the PIMA President and Vice-President as well as other members joined and engaged in an ICAE writers' group, dedicating themselves to discussing several drafts before final editing led to a contribution which can be accessed here: <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/news/adult-learning-education-because-future-cannot-wait-contribution-ICAE>

The understanding of ICAE is that this started an important discourse and that further collaborative work should throw the net wider towards the CONFINTEA engagement which is very much in line with thinking in the PIMA leadership: we are already moving to *CONFINTEA VII – On the Way to the International Conference on Adult Learning and Education in Morocco in 2022*.

The process of preparation is now well underway, with country reports on the development of adult learning and education (ALE), which will be discussed in regional pre-conferences in 2021. These will pave the way for the 2022 global conference in Marrakesh. We will have the chance to advocate again for recognition that the longest part of life is as adults, and the largest age group in society are adults. We need to change our practice such that education during adult life is no longer the least financially supported in most countries. It is important to deepen this acceptance and understanding of ALE to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations.

During the last PIMA Committee meeting, it was decided to create a Special Interest Group (SIG), which should guide the activities. We established Terms of Reference, which were published in the last Bulletin. Already six members have shown interest, and we expect to start working when we know a little more about what is ahead of us. We know that the governing mechanisms of UNESCO and the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (UIL) will meet later this month. Decisions are expected on content orientation, bringing CONFINTEA and SDG closer together, and also on where the regional conferences are to take place.

Please contact Heribert Hinzen if you'd like to be a member of the PIMA CONFINTEA Special Interest Group, at [heribert.hinzen@gmail.com](mailto:heribert.hinzen@gmail.com)

### **The SDGs, Oxymorons, and Ethnocentrism: a response to Debbi Long's critical gaze *Katarina Popović***

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There are now many voices critical of the concepts and discourses of the SDGs. The criticism is mainly focused on their rhetorical character and lack of financial support; on what's missing and how are priorities arranged; on targets and indicators. It is a

discussion where enormous amounts of energy are wasted. It is therefore fresh and rewarding to read Debbi Long's thoughts on the paradoxes of the SDGs.

Debbi starts with Jeffery Sachs' framing of Sustainable Development. But there are far stronger conceptualisers and advocates of this concept than his, despite his publications, initiatives, speeches, and consulting engagements. His previous work on MDGs and failure to tackle the crucial issues around the SDGs make him not a serious party to this conversation. When the conference *Financing for development* was held in Addis Ababa in 2015 and the question was raised after his presentation: 'How can Africa find resources to finance the education Goal 4 of Agenda 2030' he offered two answers: 'they should have fewer children', and delegates should scout their 'neighbourhoods' for a 'friendly billionaire and tell her or him that they can help solve the global education challenge'. This discredits Sachs as a reliable source for discussion about the real nature of the SDG agenda.

Obviously, there is a tension between the concepts of 'sustainability' and 'development'. I would disagree with Debbi that it is an oxymoron, but I fully agree that it is an oxymoron in the way it is conceptualised in Agenda 2030 and its numerous elaborations. Sustainability must be understood as more than efforts to avoid the depletion of natural resources: more as an overall principle of doing things having long-term goals with future visions in mind; and measures capable of being continued viably. This is indeed present in Agenda 2030.

And when it comes to development, Debbi is right: the discourse of economic growth is embedded in Agenda 2030: a discourse that became axiomatic and is never questioned in the mainstream analysis. 'Development' is a word overused to banality. It might also mean taking further steps in looking for new paradigms and models; using creativity and innovation to 'save' natural and human resources and improve the quality of life for millions of people. It could mean plenty of alternative options for a better future.

But despite the discouraging results of the first stage of implementation (according to the UNESCO data, the education gap is already enormous), and repeated mantras that 'business as usual will not help', unlimited economic growth remains the *spiritus movens* of Agenda 2030. Instead, let us rethink the concept of growth, and look at the numerous practices of sustainable living; at new models developed within civil society, and at community levels worldwide.

SDG actors keep counting and re-arranging indicators, technical details, and measurement methods - and at a most creative moment suggesting to 'chase the neighbouring billionaires' to be merciful and donate more! Debbi is right: the SDGs, full of lovely rhetoric, are grounded in the neoliberal economy. This will not decrease economic inequity, only help to disguise it. We are trying to solve the problems by using the same kind of thinking that we used when we created them.

When it comes to the ethnocentrism of the Global Goals, I again agree very much with Debbi about the content and description of the problem, but less on the

conceptualisation. Huge inequalities and income gaps became undeniable and very obvious indeed. But this is not limited to ethnicity. We need a more refined analysis. For example, Branko Milanović, a leading researcher on economic inequalities, shows that rapid growth in the developing world narrowed inequality between countries (where China's development plays an important role) while widening it in the developed world. Here middle-class incomes stagnated as the wealthy prospered.

Full reparation and redistribution of income will not work without deep structural changes in the global economic and power architecture. While Debbi mentions some of the main roots of global inequalities - looting of resources from the Global South during colonial expansionism, empire-building, settler colonialism, the slave trade and other forms of ongoing resource and labour exploitation - we have to be aware of the fact that the wheel cannot simply be turned back. If the SDGs are to tackle the problems of global inequality, systemic changes are required. Any measure that doesn't include debt cancellation and change of global taxation policy is just a decorative charade. In this context also, current overseas development aid concepts and practices need radical changes.

I would strengthen Debbi's statement that 'an ugly irony of the SDGs is that the looters are now telling the victims of theft how they can lift themselves out of poverty' I illustrate it with the new mantra: a call for 'domestic resource mobilisation' that should solve all problems in closing huge financial gaps for achieving SDGs. 'Resources are there - you just need to collect them properly' - says this cynical call, while the global companies keep taking a huge amount of resources out of the countries paying no taxes, and increasing the countries' debts.

At the same time, the workers (and the middle class) in the companies' own countries face increased exploitation and pauperisation. They lose the power to keep their governments accountable, to require them to set limits to their companies, and to stop them from supporting unfair business, like ruining farming in the Global South. The demarcation line is not ethnic: less North-South, more a line between a minority that takes the biggest slice of the cake and those who share the crumbs in a more or less fair way. A new kind of solidarity is needed, based on universal human values, reconceptualising the main paradigms of our development, which the SDGs are based on.

Debbi mentions several obstacles for the SDGs if they are to be applied universally to all human societies. I need to add one that has exploded recently. This has clearly to do with western technological development. And we need to be aware of the increasingly inadequate use of the 'western', since China, Japan, South Korea have become among the main players, along with Russia too. It is the unlimited enthusiasm for digital learning, and digital services in general, that exploded during the COVID-19 crisis. Not only Microsoft but numerous other companies also shift the world's attention away from the crucial problems that the crisis revealed, to arguments about technology and a magical solution for all problems.



When for example *eLearning Africa News* says that 'for many years, we have been saying that technology is the key to the future for education and training... Now it's clear that technology-supported learning and training is not just an opportunity, it's a necessity', we can only expect to see more ICT, digital skills, and online platforms in all the SDGs, not only in SDG 4. We could then be even further away from 'moving beyond current epistemologies' as Debbi requires in her text. But that does not make it less important or less needed. If we do not now move beyond current epistemologies, discourses and paradigms, we will realise in 2030 that we didn't miss the targets; once again, we missed the point. And by then there might not be an opportunity for a Sustainable Agenda 2045.

## **Can we – should we – hold on to the Sustainable Development Goals?** *John Field*

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The July issue of the PIMA Bulletin carried a thought-provoking critique of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Debbi Long poses two fundamental challenges: first, she suggests that the very idea of sustainable development is an oxymoron and that growth is impossible without causing environmental harm; second, she argues that the goals themselves represent an ethnocentric set of metrics based on the global North's assumptions of the superiority of wage-laboured industrial capitalism over the ethical values and economic practices of the global South. She concludes with a call for us to see wealth rather than poverty as the central problem to be addressed.

On balance I am sympathetic towards these arguments, or more precisely to the values and hopes that lie behind them. I particularly agree that they ignore or downplay the significant changes in the wealthy (and extremely wealthy). My concern is that in seeking a comprehensive critique of the SDGs, they flatten out a whole series of bumps and gradients. They gloss over different models of development, ignoring those, which are seeking to shift the economy towards the valorisation of services and transfers, based on circularity and renewability.

These alternative models also challenge the dominant economics of development, not least in suggesting that we might need different ways of measuring success (and failure). And they require us to look at a global rebalancing of both sustainability and development.

Debbi's arguments also seem to me to take for granted an undifferentiated North (wealthy and with a history of colonisation and enslavement) and South (poor and historically the victims of theft and humiliation), with nothing much in between. Yet if we look at the years since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, we cannot fail to be struck by the remarkable growth in the numbers of middle-income nations, and the corresponding decline in the numbers of nations in poverty. It is also hard to overlook the burgeoning expansion of the middle classes.

Debbi rightly challenges the use of monetary measures as the primary indicator of poverty and development. But let's look at other metrics, many of which feature in the SDGs: child mortality, life expectancy, female access to education, adult literacy, latrines, disease-free water – at a global level, all the trends point in the same direction.

My worry is that by insisting that development has been a failure, we undermine the case for future commitment and investment. We have abundant evidence that people can move out of poverty, that we can reduce child death rates, that all can enjoy education regardless of gender and status. Rather than lament failure, we need to celebrate success and turn it into an argument for future commitment. The SDGs may not be very radical, but they seem to me, for all their faults, a practicable way of supporting development in a way that is just and equitable and sustainable and truly international.

### **A response to oxymorons and ethnocentrism** *John Aitchison*

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I found the piece by Debbi Long important because it highlighted for me that such critiques of the SDGs and similar international initiatives are themselves based upon certain presuppositions, and, indeed I would argue, a particular master narrative. That master narrative has been steadily constructed, embellished, and refined over the past fifty or even more decades. There is a certain irony that a new master narrative should have been made largely by people who were temperamentally post-modernists!

It is in many ways a compelling narrative that now has a high degree of congruence between its originally often quite disparate parts and an elegant way of combining its descriptive and ethical components. It is a description, a manifesto, and a creed for a motley crew of people working in development, adult education, climate change activists, and social movements for change.

I cannot fault Long's critique. She is correct in seeing 'sustainable development' as an oxymoron if, by definition, it means economic development with the increased use of energy generated by existing means and resources-stripping continuing unabated, and all the concomitant growing economic inequity. Similarly, it is undoubtedly correct that the being of subsistence farmers. And of 'vulnerable communities' and 'indigenous communities', will continue to be eroded if not smashed. Long's note on reconciliation is fair – 'No justice no peace', though I do not accept her interpretation of the meaning of the word.

The epistemic problem is that though our master narrative has it intellectually all sown up, does it help us if we cannot **do** much about the situation; if somehow it does not fully engage in political and economic realities?

Historically, the Northern industrial nations got closest to equality because of progressive income tax regimes - subsequently eroded under neo-liberalism - imposed by strong governments. If excessive Northern wealth were going to be shared globally it would require an enormous galvanization of sentiment in these countries to change their governments and their ways of life. Current events suggest that this simply not a realistic short-term possibility - certainly not in the SDG timeframe.

I think we have to accept that it is indeed “not possible for us to meet the SDG targets of sustainably lifting people out of poverty while development is linked to economic growth”. That is a harsh reality. We can centralize excessive wealth as the problem, but whilst that may fit in with our master narrative, it does not mean that we have the power to do much about that problem.

The question for me then, is do we do our damndest to try and ensure that the SDGs, flawed as they may be, underpinned by an oxymoronic contradiction, are implemented to better the lives of a large number of people (who will probably not be the truly vulnerable)? I would argue **Yes**. The critiques need to be continued but they must factor in the long haul of this struggle, and not be diverted into ideological purism or Tolstoyan disengagement from the larger world.

## **Adult Education – the Giant in Waiting** *Daniela Bavecandzi*

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In countries where education and economic reform take a slow pace, and reforms and foreign aid overlap, is there room for expectations of timely results?

In the Republic of North Macedonia, popularly known internationally mainly for furious differences about its new name with Greece (it was until this year officially FYROM – Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) - there is much talk of reforms. There are lots of new pieces of legislation and new strategies adopted in all sectors, all aimed at shaping the country's condition for EU accession. Education is central to this accession, and the EU and other international donors invest millions of € through their instruments, to bring North Macedonia's education closer to EU standards.

Of all education segments in the country, the adult education sector still receives least attention from central and local authorities. Its potential is still unrecognized widely, as a factor in the development, both economic and social. Reasons for this situation should be sought in the transition from communist to capitalist, that prolonged over a 30-year period, inexperience in modern governance processes, the proliferation of bureaucratic structures, and legislation that remains somehow detached from operational necessities.

The Education Strategy 2018-2025 sets several concrete aims and indicators concerning further improving adult education in the country. It is a mixture of measures and

activities evidently driven from lessons learnt in the past 5-year reforms, but there is still room for coordination and efficiencies, especially in the area of quality assurance, employers' involvement, and local self-government responsibilities.

Among many challenges, one of the major ones is the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The strategy sets the need to establish and implement a system of validation results of non-formal and informal learning, which is still in its embryonic phase. Furthermore, there is a need to manage the existing system for the Macedonian Qualification Framework (MQF) management.

The Strategy gives pathways to improve the inclusion of stakeholders such as businesses in education, which remain one of the major challenges yet. However, there is a need for innovative and proven mechanisms for involving businesses in education which are, even as we speak, given a back-seat in the formulation of qualifications, even in Occupational Standards creation. Regrettably, international expertise in this area was unable to convince the Macedonian education and labour stakeholders to turn the focus away from education bureaucracy structures and empower businesses to lead and drive the creation of Occupational Standards and qualifications, as main movers of the economy to achieve the relevance of education at all levels. Let's hope that implementation of the Strategy will be timely and effective, and will boost the potential that adult education has in the economic and social development of local communities and in general.

We remain "in waiting".

## **Covid and Learning Life-deep**

**This life: Secular faith and spiritual freedom – Martin Hägglund, Pantheon 2019** *Bernt Gustavsson*

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This is a book that is both existential and political. It is a rich description of our existence on the globe, both individually and for humankind. In a time of climate crisis and pandemic, our existence on the globe is put in question in a new way. This book helps us to think in a rich way of what it can mean for us. This is the first time a philosophy book is reaching so many readers and is on the lips of many. In Sweden, it is a bestseller, and even so in the US where the author is a professor in philosophy at Duke University. For me, it is a book for our century.

To have a secular faith is to care about someone or something that we risk losing, and to be preoccupied with problems that are worldly and temporal. Our time together takes place in light of the fact that it will not last forever and that we need to take care of each

other because our lives are fragile. The experience of finitude, of how fragile everything is that we care about, is the core of secular faith.

The most fundamental example of finitude in our historical epoch is that the earth's ecosystem itself is in danger of being destroyed. For that reason, the climate crisis and the destruction of the earth are to be seen as an existential threat to ourselves and future generations, which calls for deep-going political change. The fragility of life makes it necessary to create institutions of social justice and material welfare. All our freedoms are based on the freedom that we can have the freedom to decide over our allotted time. Already, by clinging to something fragile, we exercise an implicit form of secular faith through our actions. To live a good life is to get involved and put oneself at risk in activities that are important to me and others, not to achieve a specific goal. What we lack, therefore, is not eternal bliss but social and institutional forms that would enable us to live a prosperous life. We live in a time of social inequality, climate change, and global injustices. These are intertwined with religious forms of authority that deny the crucial importance of the problems.

What is interesting about this description of the state of the world is not primarily the sharp distinction between two different attitudes to life, the secular and the religious. To clarify his secular stance, the author uses religious sources. He enlists the help of Martin Luther, Augustine, and Søren Kierkegaard with whose help the conditions of religious faith are clarified. This is how he shows the limitations and difficulties of faith. The main figure when we come to the protest movements that sought the secular freedom to have the power to decide over our time is Martin Luther King.

Martin Luther King led a general strike in Memphis in 1968 and was shot shortly afterward, executed by those in power. His writings are today largely forgotten, but they contain the substance of radicalism and liberation that has no contemporary equivalent. He is more often portrayed as a kind of Uncle Tom, whereas he was the activist of the century. The biggest problem under capitalism is that we do not have institutions that can recognize and manage the value of our socially available free time. With the Hegelian analysis that is King's, the possible freedom cannot be separated from our self-consciousness and civil society.

The fragility of life shows itself in a new way in the climate crisis that sets conditions for our common continued existence. More and more people see that capitalist production does not go hand in hand with the survival of the earth, but few can see the mechanisms of capitalism that are the cause of the impossibility. The overarching purpose of all forms of capitalism is the growth of capital, whether regulated or deregulated. The criticism against capitalism is mostly focused on the distribution of wealth, not on the very mechanisms that drive profit as a purpose, nor that we are given opportunities to live our lives in spiritual freedom.

**Adult learning and education: A tool to improve health and well-being in the context of COVID-19** *Henrique Lopes and Veronica McKay*

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In this article, we argue that adult learning and education (ALE), as a component of lifelong learning, is critical in breaking secondary transmission chains. Education and specifically *health literacy* are necessary to enable citizens to obtain and use the appropriate knowledge to care for themselves and their dependants. In the long term, only the strengthening of learning and literacy levels and the improvement of the communication capacity of the health authorities can respond to these kinds of problems, and in the short term, ALE interventions become critical.

***Too much information***

The pandemic has required that all people of all social strata have needed to engage with the coronavirus. Discussions about the virus, its size, and how it is spread, have become common parlance. People, even the least prepared, were forced in a very short time to acquire knowledge of how the virus multiplies, flattening the curve, exponential growth, the national need for ventilators, and a range of information that they never expected to be included in their life skills repertoire. COVID-19 has necessitated understandings of concepts such as asymptomatic but contagious, social distancing, and also changes in social and cultural conventions, for example, greeting one another, and knowing that one has to wear a mask because of social responsibility and empathy towards others: "I wear a mask not only to defend myself from infection but also to protect others from an infection."

***The need for information on caring for dependents***

In particular, with older people being a high-risk group, it is necessary to know what they can and cannot do. ALE for this target group should also be aimed at helping this target group to change behaviours that have been ingrained for decades and should be specifically designed to support and manage emotional problems resulting from the interruption of contacts between older people and their families in situations such as when they are admitted to hospitals and nursing homes.

***Learning how to be ill and how to deal with risk patients at home***

Transmission pathways of the disease and their management in households have to be learned. People in households who were previously ill or who have comorbidities represent a risk to the other people in their households. Only by teaching the rest of the family how to behave will it be possible to avoid spreading the virus in households with an infected person.

### ***Taking on the functions of children's education***

With the closure of schools, the parents have to provide homeschooling for their children. In situations in which digital learning is possible, the parents need guidance on how to use digital resources to ensure ongoing learning at home. If such resources are not available, the parents need to learn how to manage their children in cooperation with their schools; and when children return to school they need to know how to protect themselves and others at school, when with friends and in other social spaces, to mitigate the spread of the virus.

### ***COVID-19 and the law***

As countries move to different levels of lockdown in line with the spread of the virus, their citizens have needed to understand the regulations associated with each level – what they may do and what is prohibited. Legislation pertaining to national social safety nets is important concerning accessing healthcare and social grants, and in providing information on their eligibility to access social services.

### ***The ability to decode information and identify fake news***

Since most national and international health authorities release daily statistics and other related information, people are required to navigate volumes of information and to be able to interpret the data correctly. Decoding and interpreting information is vital. When Trump announced his bleach-based vaccine, there was an outbreak in the United States of hospital admissions due to people drinking bleach to 'kill the virus', showing the need for accurate ALE that is accessible and packaged for various literacy levels.

### ***Digital literacy***

The pandemic has accelerated the digitalisation of all processes unprecedentedly with 'everyone going online'. Citizens, whether prepared or not, were forced to master digital tools for:

- using pandemic tracking systems;
- providing healthcare by digital means (consultations, counselling, daily follow-ups for COVID-19 patients, etc);
- performing professional activities through working remotely;
- participating in schooling and higher education through digital means; and
- accessing common services such as banking relationships, which are now online.

More than ever, the most vulnerable groups have been forced to go it alone, having been exposed to challenges for which no one has prepared them. COVID-19 has contributed to both highlighting what was already broken and increasing social inequality. What we see now is the tip of the economic and social iceberg; it is anticipated that this will impact vulnerable people who are thrown into situations of precariousness owing to

unemployment, their health status, and socio-economic challenges from which they are unable to recover.

The only tool that can begin to respond to these challenges is the long-term improvement in the education of the majority of the population and, immediately, launching health and digital literacy and numeracy training programmes (even if basic) that will enable citizens to gain an understanding of the current environment.

See <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11159-020-09843-0> for a more detailed version of this study.

## **Wrestle with mind, heart, and spirit to embrace the unfolding unknown** *Yahui Fang*

*yahui.Fang@gmail.com*

In this year 2020, people around the world might agree with retrospection that many unexpected complex issues made us more conscious of ourselves and the earth as indispensable.

I remembered the first announcement of COVID-19 infection, issued in news broadcast during the Chinese Lunar New Year Holidays. My family was 'showered' by public panics and compelled to adjust. We suddenly cancelled most of the public activities. At the same time, I was in charge of an international conference for Asian Teachers Trainers just five days away. My colleagues and I made an emergency call to decide how we could respond to it.

After back and forth communications and consensus with the conference organizer - the international organization - we decided to focus on epidemic prevention and health management for preparing the best physical and mental state and welcoming the upcoming gathering. We also wrote a letter to steering groups and participants that manifest our core value under such circumstances:

"We deeply felt, at this moment, that we are challenged by this unexpected infection that tests us all who engaged in the Waldorf education movement: How can we conquer our inner fear to face social risks fearless, and at the same time exercise ourselves to be more prudent and firm in implementing independent health management?"

Some people who had registered to come decided to cancel and not to come, after serious consideration. The conference was quite a success and paved a profound grounding for further collaboration. Then just one week after the conference, the Taiwan government announced a social distancing policy. Under social distancing policy, the school and cross-schools/organizations work that I worked hard to made efforts to maintain our work as a social space, with people that render warmth and safety both



physical and psychological. Together we organized, or supported others to organize, social gatherings every month, much more than the year before.

To my understanding, with the belief and value that I hold there is - never more clearly than now - an ongoing process of striving for human development for a better, healthier, and sustainable society. What I know this moment is to wrestle with mind, heart, and spirit to embrace the unfolding unknown.

Attached I share some insights harvested so far. This is a humble sharing about the many fronts where my impulses are working, how I am nurtured by colleagues to being present, with a hope-giving gesture - to sense what am I facing and how you are facing it; and If any of you feel these words that speak of movements and state of being.

In the space between the words that resonated with you, it could be a clear light in your inner soul that radiates. Wrestle with mind, heart, and spirit to embrace the unfolding unknown...

What is it  
that is calling me  
At this moment  
Go to a retreat  
to looking for a way out  
a praxis of Body soul and mind

To perceive inertia from habits  
On the move  
To reactivate the body's sensation  
through tuning in from a different perspective

Beholding, to listen to the flow of impulse  
Let myself become a carrier of invisible sacred power  
Devoting to Will work  
In my body temple and space in activities  
Co-create a garden of life that connects people and me

Resonate with your body sculpture  
In movement in-between  
Co-sensing you and me  
Therefore, enlightenment emerged,  
When we devoted to serving higher social values  
I am no longer just me, you are no longer just you  
Accepting each other  
convergence  
Support you, me, and us  
Expanding or horizon of knowing and being

Cultivate divinity  
and move towards completeness

Be part of the flow of the group  
See myself clearly  
Smash myself  
A re-moulding of the inner landscape  
is generating  
Even though on the way walked alone in the night  
Lost in the ocean  
In this journey, I was re-born from death  
The light of the spiritual divine rose before my eyes  
Point out the coordinates of returning to the origin,  
and returning to the spiritual world

## **How to recover from the COVID-19: Beijing Community college actions** *Min Gui*

*Guimin1987@163.com*

After great efforts, the city of Beijing has effectively controlled the development of the covid-19 pandemic ever since February, although the city experienced trauma for still lives in the shadow of the pandemic. The government sets strict policy rules to regulate every aspect of people's ordinary lives, such as using facemasks in public areas and public transport systems. Most schools, regardless of the education level, were closed from March to August in Beijing. The schools followed the principle of “No Schooling but not stop learning” and took up online teaching and distance learning.

The report “the 2007 Decision on promoting the building of Learning Cities in Beijing” illustrated that Beijing has a strong motivation to build a sustainable learning city, not only socio-economically but also culturally. Under the context of building a learning city, helping citizens recover from the pandemic emotionally and mentally, preparing them to improve vocational skills for a possible recession becomes one of the social responsibilities of Beijing community colleges. This paper chooses two colleges as cases to present community colleges’ efforts and actions.

### ***A. Beijing agricultural radio and television school Changping Branch “teaching in the air” program***

Beijing agricultural radio and television school Changping Branch, affiliated with Changping Community College, built in 1983, primarily focuses on secondary, and higher vocational training especially provided to farmers. The school closed since March, according to the policies during the pandemic, and carried out “teaching in the air”

programs to help and instruct rural people and farmer trainees to learn and train at home.

The program has divided into three parts. First the school statistics: 750 students were divided into 19 Wechat (a Chinese multi-purpose messaging, social media, and mobile payment app developed by Tencent) groups, and each was assigned a class adviser and technical assistance to help the Wechat group to manage courses. Then the school chose multiple online courses from the central agriculture radio and television school, Beijing agriculture radio and television school, and other administrative departments of agriculture. They selected courses on prevention and control of COVID-19, sprint vegetable and fruit tree planting, etc. These courses are close to learners' daily life, easy to understand, and to learn through. According to the course arrangement and the actual situation, the school regularly pushes course resources links to farmer learners twice or three times a week. In the last step, learners can share their learning results on the Wechat group at any time, and if they have any problems with certain courses, the teacher in charge will give feedback to the teacher who teaches the course, trying to meet the need of the learners.

The program mainly used online live lectures, video applications, and some Wechat Official Accounts to push courses. "Intelligent Farm Cloud" is an Application used as a major teaching online platform. This application is easy to operate and has plentiful agriculture content; learners can select courses that they are interested in. Online live lectures are also integrated into the application: 'fighting the pandemic, preserving spring ploughing and promoting production' is an online live lecture given by the Beijing Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences, which includes techniques for management of spring fruit trees, and a strawberry series of training from daily care to marketing mode during COVID-19.

### ***B. Chaoyang community college for seniors 'fighting the COVID-19' cloud-based program***

Chaoyang community college for seniors officially opened in 2016. It has four majors with degrees in Music Performance (piano, dance, vocal), Painting (calligraphy, Chinese painting, western painting), Photography, and English. The pandemic start coincided with the start of the new semester for senior students of the class 2020, and the college carried out "fighting the COVID-19" cloud-based program. The cloud located in colleges' online platform, cooperates with Wechat groups. Online classrooms push out educational resources and courses.

To strengthen the learning enthusiasm of senior learners, the college developed a teaching model "B+2P" (Basic plus Parallel resources and Practice). Take music courses as an example: senior learners need to understand basic staff and numbered musical notation, and then learn to extend the content of the music to better understand the course, and practise to use the instrument as an outcome.

Teaching activities change also with online cooperative learning assistance to senior learners. The college promotes “three learning and two evaluation” running through the whole online teaching. “Three learning” mainly refers to online independent learning, live Q&A learning, and WeChat small-application interactive learning; “Two evaluation” refers to teacher and student evaluating each other, and students evaluating each other.

An online exhibition of Painting and Calligraphy from senior learners was held by the college, which expressed their confidence and belief in the victory in fighting COVID-19.

*In conclusion*, under the strictest school closed policy, Beijing community colleges searched for ways to attract more learners and satisfy the learning needs of every learner; no one was left behind during this pandemic. Beijing is the capital of China, also a developed area, benefiting from the popularization and information development of mobile phones and laptops. Community colleges can teach through applications on mobile phones and computers, but online teaching still faces the challenges of educational inequality. As schools continued to open since June, more community colleges have taken to online and offline teaching models to deal with new requirements for the new semester.

## Other Themes - Moving Forward

### New resources

#### **Practitioner guide to creative feminist adult education practices and strategies** *Darlene Clover*

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Welcome to an accessible, open-source Guide entitled the *Feminist adult educators guide to aesthetic, creative, and disruptive practice in museums and communities*. This practice-based, how-to Guide was created in response to both advances and possibilities, challenges, and difficulties in adult education and society.

One advance is what Wildermeesch and Jutte (2019) call adult education's 'aesthetic turn'. Specifically, there is a marked increase, particularly by feminists, in the use and development of artistic mediums and creative strategies as pedagogical, research tools, and world-views. One of the challenges, however, is that much of this work is confined to academic journals, which may not be accessible to broader communities of practitioners. Our aim in making this open-source Guide is to enable practitioners as well as scholars around the world to access, use, and adapt the designs and activities. It also responds to a question we often hear as adult educators who use the arts: that is "but 'how' do you do it?"

A second advance to which this *Guide* responds is the 'critical turn' taking place in a growing number of arts and cultural institutions toward becoming what Janes and Sandell (2018) call 'agents of change'. Adult educators and curators working in museums and art galleries are transforming their practices to take up or counter the injustices of our deeply troubled world. Adult educators from outside these institutions are contributing by developing pedagogical strategies that unearth the problematic gendered, exclusive, and colonial natures of these institutions their contribution to social and gender injustice.

This *Guide* also responds to the challenge of what feminist adult educators Rajan, Jeberi & Mojab (2019) call continued and escalating "violence against women embedded in institutions and structures of society" (p. 255). As Bates (2019) reminds us, sexism exists in our relationships, our workplaces, our media, in our homes, and on our streets. It is also firmly rooted in our lifelong assumptions and the actions and attitudes, we explain away, defend, and accept. Running alongside this, however, are the actions and strategies of many women who with intentionality, aim "to change the order of the world" (Jarvis, 2019, p. 206). This comes in the form of an exciting 'feminist turn', manifest in a resurgence of feminist and Indigenous feminist public discourses, reactions, and actions. To borrow from Ktunaxa scholar Green (2017), by bringing together critical aesthetic feminist practices, as we have done in this *Guide*, we show how women are countering "colonialism, racism, sexism, and environmental dis-integrity" (p. 17).

This *Guide* is a work in progress, a living document that will continue to expand and grow. It is a compilation of the exercise of the imagination, and the imagination as "an exercise in alternative perspective-making amidst structural and systemic forms of gender inequality" (Sanford, Clover, Taber, and Williamson, 2020, p. 13). For Chandra (2012) "the imagination is the most subversive thing a public can have" (p. vii) so use this *Guide*, adapt the activities, disseminate it widely, and enjoy. <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/comarts/feminist-adult-educators-guide/>

## **Workers' Education in the Global South** *Linda Cooper*

*linda.cooper@uct.ac.za*

***Hot off the press*** is PIMA member Linda Cooper's important new book. We invite Linda to write more about the critical issues for adult learning and education in future PIMA Bulletins. [Shirley Walters]

*Workers' Education in the Global South: Radical Adult Education at the Crossroads*, 2020, is published by Brill/Sense Publishers, in the Knowledge and Education Series.

*Workers' Education in the Global South* explores the historical development of radical workers' education in South Africa as one particular strand within the broader tradition

of radical adult education. Drawing on the theoretical resources of Activity Theory, Gramsci, Freire, and others, it investigates the key features of workers' education as a form of pedagogy with a unique history and logic of practice, and explores how it has been shaped by its location within labour and other social movements as well as its 'southern' location within the global political economy.

Successive chapters explore its counterhegemonic but contested purposes, its knowledge practices that seek to overcome the historical divide between intellectual and manual labour, and a pedagogy that often assumes didactic forms but which retains a democratic character through its embeddedness in working-class experience. It illustrates the rich processes of experiential learning that happen through day-to-day organising, in workers' cultural activity as well as through mass action. It argues that this tradition of workers' education currently stands at a crossroads, as global neoliberal market policies and post-apartheid education and training policies threaten to undermine its radical social vision, and concludes by offering ideas on how this tradition of radical workers' education might be renewed.

For more information see <https://brill.com/>

## Country Updates

### **Report on the Development of Lifelong Learning in Macau since 1999** *Lawrence Tsui*

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Macau had its 'Adult Education Decree Law' approved by Macau's Portuguese Governor in 1995, far earlier than many developed countries in Asia to have an adult education law. The reason was that the Macau Government at that time was under the direct influence of Portugal and the European Union.

Macau's sovereignty was returned to China in 1999 and become a Special Autonomous Region (SAR). The Chief Executives in the past 20 years committed themselves to 'construct Learning Society in Macau', although progress might be seen as not good enough from the viewpoint of professional adult/lifelong educators.

Quite a few new adult secondary schools were established in early 2000 to accommodate the sudden growth of adult recurrent secondary students who were low-rank government employees of the Portuguese government, especially the front-line policemen, firemen, and employees of security forces who had reached only a primary educational standard.

The Macau SAR Government started to celebrate 'Lifelong Education Day' in Macau in November 2001. In 2002, the Macau SAR government set many goals and mechanisms to 'nourish the habit of lifelong learning; create conditions to actualize "Education for

All"; prepare Macau to step towards a learning society...' The Government even contracted adult education professors of Taiwan to plan a program to train adult educators in Macau, besides starting a magazine called *Lifelong Learning*, the Government prolonged 'Lifelong Learning Day' to 'Lifelong Learning Week' in 2002.

In 2004, a plan called 'Lifelong Learning Award' (something similar to Taiwan's Lifelong Learning Passport) was initiated to encourage citizens to participate in more learning activities.

A new Non-Higher Education Law was passed by the Legislative Council in late 2006. This law specified that Non-Higher Education is composed of Formal Education and Continuing Education. This law also points out that the lifelong education system is supported by Community, School, and Family Education.

Free formal education started to extend to 15 years (from kindergarten to senior secondary 3, instead of the existing 9-year free education (from primary 1 to junior secondary 3), in September of 2007 when the new academic year commenced. Yet, for the adult senior secondary school students, only a flat rate of Macau patacas (MOP)\$5000 per year subsidy was given to adult students this year. However, a new 'Continuing Education Subsidy Scheme' was introduced which functioned to subsidize adults to take short continuing/adult/community courses (with the highest subsidy up to 80% of the course fee). This scheme was also formally commenced in Sept. 2007. The subsidy was given to learners through Education/Training Institutes after citizens enrolled in recognized courses.

A few years after becoming a SAR, the issuance of more licenses for new casinos accelerated Macau's economy grew dramatically. The real estate grew crazily; the gaming industry became the 'Dragon Head Industry' for the Macau economy. The sudden growth of many new casinos meant a high demand for human resources. Under the influence of the 'Global Financial Tsunami' (or GFC) in 2008, the Government put its emphasis on vocational training and human resource development, playing down courses that aimed at upgrading the cultural quality of citizens.

A brand new idea for subsidizing continuing education was introduced by the new Chief Executive in his 'Policy Address for 2011': "Launch of the Continuing Education Development Programme to encourage citizens to pursue continuing education and training courses". In this Programme, which was estimated to cost 500 million Macau money (patacas), Macau citizens aged 15 or above would receive a subsidy for a period of three years, subject to a maximum ceiling of 5,000 patacas per applicant. This new idea was welcomed, but it was also criticized as being not enough for learning professional skills. This new Programme commenced formally in September 2011, and learners could spend the government subsidy in all education or training Institutes, The Programme has really encouraged the learning interest of citizens and a learning atmosphere in Macau.

When the 1st 3-year trial period (2011-2014) of the Continuing Education Development Programme finished, the Government continued into the 2nd stage of the Programme for another 3 years (2014-2017) and the subsidy to an individual was raised to MOP\$6,000.00. In 2014, the government put more emphasis on Vocational Education', to meet the future 'Diversification of Industries in Macau' (that is beside the gambling and tourism industries). A new grand Vocational Education Practice Centre was planned to build for the Practicum part of different vocational training courses.

To run for the next 5-year term (2015-2019), the Chief Executive promised that he would "fight for more percentage of total Budget for Education, work hard to improve the existing 15 years free education and thoroughly implement a '10-year priority development plan of education'. This included promoting lifelong learning in both formal and non-formal educational sectors. Meanwhile, the Subsidy per year for adult recurrent secondary students has increased gradually and has now reached MOP 40,000 (forty thousand patacas, which is equivalent to around US\$5000).

### ***An important limitation***

With only one Directorate inside the Macau SAR government to take up the responsibility for the magnificent construction of the Learning Society, it is a mission impossible. Educational NGOs have been proposing to the Chief Executive that a learning society "...needs the coordination and cooperation with all sectors, especially sectors of the economy, culture, environmental protection, law, labor... etc". In fact, at that time in China construction of the learning society is done not only by the Ministry of Education but also by the Central Civilization Office, National Development and Reform Committee, Ministry of Civil Affair, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Human Resource and Social Security, Ministry of Culture, etc. Macau should follow this good strategy.

### ***Concrete suggestions***

1. Existing Macao Government has to do more than just a Continuing Education Programme, and has to practice constructing Learning Communities and Learning Organizations in Macau
2. To have a new Coordination Office under the chief executive, and/or
3. To let the Secretary for Social and Cultural Affairs (who is also in charge of Education) chair a Special Committee on the Construction of Learning Society. All related directorates and NGOs should send representatives to sit on this Committee to make the dream of a Learning Society come true.



## **Renewed Political and Budgetary Focus on Community Education in Ireland** *Niamh O'Reilly*

*noreilly@aontas.com*

[AONTAS](#) is the Irish National Adult Learning Organisation. With a membership of over 400, we advocate for the rights of all adults to high-quality learning throughout their lives, with a specific focus on learner's voice and community education. October was a significant month for our advocacy work for community education, and I would like to highlight key areas for our friends in PIMA. As we collectively strive for educational equality, those of us in the global lifelong learning advocacy family share in our collective challenges, but also our successes. It is in this vein that I would like to highlight a 'win', at a time of widening inequalities, particularly for those most educationally disadvantaged. In budget 2021 a new fund of €8 million was designated to Mitigate Educational Disadvantage, and with a specific focus on community education. As those of us in advocacy know, such an outcome is a result of sustained effort from many, and a bit of luck.

### **Background to the 'win'**

As a context, AONTAS is represented on the *DES COVID-19 Tertiary Education Steering Group* which was set up in mid-March as the Government responded to COVID-19. From this I was tasked to set up and chair a *Mitigating Educational Disadvantage Working Group (MED Group)*, identifying key issues and challenges facing marginalised learners across the community, further and higher education. This is documented in a [range of papers](#). Many of the recommendations have been acted upon from access to IT Devices. This undoubtedly contributed to the aforementioned budget announcement, the title of which mirrors that of the working group.

During this time Ireland had a change of Government, and created a new Government Department under which community education was set, with the associated Ministers. AONTAS was delighted to meet Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD, in his first week of office. We shared our [Proposal for a COVID-19 Community Education Support Fund](#), last July. On the eve of Budget Day, 12<sup>th</sup> October, we were delighted to welcome Minister Harris for a virtual visit of community education organisations as part of the event "[Community Education in a Time of COVID-19: building back better together for community education](#)" and to share the [AONTAS Pre-Budget submission](#) which called for immediate action to address the impact the COVID-19 crisis is having on individuals and communities across Ireland.

### **COVID-19 Impact**

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, as with other countries represented in PIMA, vulnerable groups have experienced an exacerbation of disadvantage. Additionally, those with lower levels of qualifications are most likely to have lost their

job, have poorer health, and have fewer resources to engage in the shift to remote learning. Challenges impacting learning are complex, and negatively impacted by poverty, poor housing, domestic violence, isolation, mental health, marginalisation, and lack of essential supports.

In Ireland, we know that there has been a significant reduction in disadvantaged adults participating in education, particularly accredited programmes at the early levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Compared to 2019, in 2020 there was an average reduction of 50% in QQI Major Awards attainment at NFQ levels 1-4. However, AONTAS members report a demand for community education courses; but due to restrictions, not all learners can be accommodated on-site in centres; or learners do not have the IT devices necessary to engage in learning remotely. This is particularly a challenge for non-accredited programmes. This newly announced €8 million fund will go some way to giving greater opportunities for those who are not currently engaging in learning.

### **Collaboration is key to Build Back Better, Together**

AONTAS is an outward-looking organisation. We believe this 'win' can only meet those truly in need through open, effective collaboration. Having secured this fund, it is incumbent on us to make every effort to reach learners, and prospective learners, most in need. Furthermore, we must use this opportunity to collaborate across the education system to tackle systemic issues of disadvantage and create a fairer, more inclusive Ireland.

We know that community education effectively engages people who are most socially excluded in a local, supportive centre that is committed to addressing the multiple forms of disadvantage that learners experience. Yet, despite Ireland having this great tradition of community education, it remains overlooked, under-resourced, and lacking deserved recognition at the policy level. While we are happy with the outcome, we will if anything ramp up our advocacy work even more in 2021, as every effort must be made to advocate for educational equality at a time of COVID-19.

Follow AONTAS on Twitter @aontas @niamhvoreilly

## Obituary

*[This is a lightly edited extract from an obituary posted by Mike Osborne on the PASCAL Observatory Website on 10 November, where the full version can be read. It is reproduced here, unusually, so that Bulletin readers who do not access that Website do not miss it. Ed]*

### **Jim Gallagher: The passing of a great ALE citizen and colleague** *Mike Osborne*

*Michael.Osborne@glasgow.ac.uk*

On Saturday 31 October 2020 a great Scotsman died. Professor Jim Gallacher, for some four decades, was a driving force in the widening of access to higher education in Scotland, and in fostering the development of research in lifelong learning. He was a close personal friend and colleague of mine for over 30 years, and it is with great sadness that I write this account of his work.

I first met Jim in 1988, when he was exploring the creation of access provision in Scotland at the advent of the Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP). He had come to London to discuss the work that the late Maggie Woodrow was leading at the Open College of South London and somehow was directed towards me at a time when I was running Access Courses in the field of Food Science. It was an unlikely exchange between a sociologist and a chemist, but one that bore fruit for many years.

A year later I was appointed to the University of Stirling, and whilst I knew how to develop access provision, my knowledge of the country and of the academic underpinning of the field was limited. A typically warm welcome from Jim and his colleagues, Norman Sharp, and Bill Yule, at the then Glasgow College, ensured that I had collaborators with common interests to mine and with an academic literacy very different from mine. For the next two decades, with Jim in particular, we established a set of joint initiatives between the now re-christened Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Stirling that have had a lasting impact.

Through the 1990s and into the noughties, this included the establishment of the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning funded by the Scottish Funding Council, the joint online Masters in Lifelong Learning, and the delivery of a number of research projects for the Scottish government on Widening Participation and FE/HE links. Jim meantime was being increasingly influential at the Scottish and UK level: as a member of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) where he was chair of the Access and Inclusion Committee; and as Vice-Chair of the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL). He was also a member of the Scottish Executive's Lifelong Learning Forum, and an adviser to the Scottish Parliament's Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee for their Inquiry into Lifelong Learning.

In what some would call retirement, he seemed no less active. As well as holding an Emeritus Chair at Glasgow Caledonian University, he held honorary chairs at the University of Stirling and the University of the Highlands and Islands; and was a

Distinguished Visiting Professor in Capital Normal University in Beijing. He continued to be prolific in publication, and last year co-edited the Routledge collection, *New Frontiers for College Education: International Perspectives*, focusing on the vocational education sector, perhaps his greatest concern over the years.

## PIMA Matters

### **Tell us your ideas for further development: a survey of PIMA members** *Julia Denholm, Maria Slowey*

*jdenholm@sfu.ca, maria.slowey@dcu.ie*

We hope by now that you will have received a request to participate in a short survey aimed at keeping the EXCO) up to date about PIMA members' interests and, importantly, your ideas for future development.

The survey will remain open for a few weeks, so if you haven't filled it in yet can we please encourage you to look back in your inbox for an email from [pimanetwork@gmail.com](mailto:pimanetwork@gmail.com) which contains a message from PIMA President Shirley Walters, and the link to the survey.

It won't take much time to complete - that's a promise!

If you have any queries, or if you haven't received the email, please contact us on

[pimanetwork@gmail.com](mailto:pimanetwork@gmail.com)

A summary of the results will be reported in a future edition of the Bulletin.

Best wishes on behalf of the EXCO.

## Welcome to New Members

### **Bernt Gustavsson**

Welcome to Philosopher and Professor Emeritus Bernt Gustavsson [Bernt.kbd@telia.com](mailto:Bernt.kbd@telia.com) has worked at many universities and folk colleges in Sweden. He lists his experience and interests as being

- Popular education institutions
- Ideas about knowledge, Bildung, democracy
- Existential questions
- The universal and the particular
- Questions around truth in different areas
- Literature, story-telling

Bulletin readers can make his acquaintance, not only by writing to him but by reading his contribution to this issue, on the work of influential philosopher Martin Hägglund, in *This Life: Secular Faith and spiritual freedom*.

**Leslie Cordie**

Welcome also to Dr. Leslie Cordie [lesliecordie@auburn.edu](mailto:lesliecordie@auburn.edu). Leslie Cordie is an Associate Professor in the Adult Education program at Auburn University. She was recently awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to research and teach in the West Indies. She has over 25 years of combined experiences in higher education, government and military, and corporate America. Her background includes distance learning, adult education, training, instructional design, program and professional development, and healthcare.

Dr. Cordie's PhD in Adult Education and Technical Communication from Colorado State University includes distance learning, adult learning theory, online information, and instructional design, and curriculum development. She also has an MBA from the University of TX at Austin, and experience working with the airlines and the military in quality and performance improvement. Leslie started her career as a community health nurse. For more information, visit <https://aub.ie/LeslieCordie>