

Invited Article

Adult Education From “The Bottom-Up:” An Analysis of an Educational Journey From an Adult Educator in Aotearoa, New Zealand

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Abstract

This article relates the personal and professional journey of an adult educator from Aotearoa New Zealand, discussing major influences on his career development from the early 1980s to the present time. Related to this development, the author analyzes three issues associated with his professional journey which connect to wider issues within the field of adult and continuing education: establishing an identity as an adult educator; the roles of universities in adult and continuing education; and older adults' learning within lifelong learning.

Introduction

This paper seeks to integrate my biography with career development and issues related to adult and continuing education. I am reminded of Mills's (1959) sociological analysis of biography, social structure, and history in constructing this personal and professional profile. My own personal history and different locations in which I have lived have heavily influenced my thinking and directions in adult education. Most of my social history has been as a citizen of Aotearoa New Zealand whereby I have been exposed to events/issues resonant with this country's distinctive development under colonization but also wider global phenomena

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impinging on our collective consciousness as a nation in the South Pacific. I am also deeply conscious of my current positionality as a white middle-class male in my early sixties in a world where social inequities prevail, especially in terms of gender, ethnicity, social class, and age (Phillipson, 1998). My middle-class status was achieved rather than ascribed: I grew up in Hamilton city in New Zealand in a working class neighborhood, primarily a railway settlement, and I used education as a vehicle for social mobility. While I see myself as a third generation New Zealander, I have been fortunate through my academic career working in four universities (five, if I count my doctoral studies in North Carolina State University, 1984-1987) to live for an extended period of time in the USA as a doctoral student and later in Scotland as an academic, based in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education at the University of Glasgow. Hence, as does Michael Collins (1998), I see myself also as an internationalist, analyzing the local scene from a global perspective. I am concerned about how this field of adult education has relevance in varied settings (developing versus developed countries; in formal learning contexts or non-formal or informal environments) and how it can change people's lives for the better.

Career Development and Significant Milestones

I am arbitrarily dividing my life as an adult educator into three phases on a chronological timeline for convenience.

Phase 1: Dipping My Toes Into The Water

As a trained teacher in elementary education with a bachelor's degree in social sciences and a Master of Arts in English literature, I looked with some envy at a former school friend who worked at the University of Waikato (Hamilton, New Zealand) as a continuing education officer in a newly-formed unit to take the University to the people (outreach). Not long later he left to go to Australia and I won that position to replace him in late 1979. At a time when continuing education in universities in this country knew few boundaries, the expansion of this Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) was substantial. The innovative team of people I worked with, who were more than administrators but less than "real academics," provided programs in the city environs and in many regions of the University throughout the central North Island of New Zealand. I frequently visited several regions and worked with local people to discuss learning needs and set up appropriate programs in truly

diverse subject areas—local history, philosophy, geography, natural sciences, politics, child development, Māori studies (Indigenous language and culture); anything seemed possible. It was a truly imaginative and exciting time to be engaged in adult education. During this period I became the National Secretary for what was then the New Zealand Association for Continuing and Community Education (NZACCE) and our Centre injected much-needed life into this fledgling national body for the field. (This association is now known as ACE Aotearoa and receives modest government funding). This experience exposed me to the fuller dimensions of adult and continuing education and helped consolidate my emerging orientation towards the political realities of this field, often referred to as a “poor cousin” in comparison with the compulsory system. Another initiative in which I became engaged was to serve with a group of people providing an education program at a local prison where primarily young offenders were in the majority, a high proportion of whom were Māori. In effect, our group changed the pedagogical approach taken in this oppressive environment from a transmission mode to one of dialogue (Findsen, 1984).

Aside from the mainly non-credit programs developed by myself and colleagues during the 1980s, the CCE offered two Certificates (six papers) which functioned as entry points to university for some mature age students: the Certificate in Continuing Education in which I taught papers; and the Certificate in Māori Studies which the CCE administered on behalf of the Department of Māori Studies. Both of these programs had quite a profound influence upon me personally and professionally. The former because it whetted my appetite for the theoretical underpinnings of practice in adult education; the latter because as a student I completed the Certificate and I became more attuned to issues of Māori people in Aotearoa New Zealand. (New Zealand is officially a bi-cultural country relating back to the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, 1840, when the British Crown and mainly Northern indigenous tribes [iwi] agreed on ways forward in terms of principles of co-operation, especially in terms of protection, partnership, and participation of Māori; the words *Aotearoa New Zealand*, used alongside each other, emphasize this partnership.) One of my early publications was a sociological analysis of the Certificate in Māori Studies (see Findsen, 1992) in which the co-construction of the curriculum between University and Māori was a feature.

At this time, the University operated a visionary scheme where continuing education officers could apply for paid study leave of one year to upgrade their qualifications related to adult education. A number of

my colleagues had taken advantage of this provision (which no longer exists) and my turn arose for a period of study in 1984. For a variety of reasons, I chose to study at North Carolina State University, having considered other options in the USA/Canada. (The UK was too expensive and their programs appeared less extensive.) I completed a major in adult education and minor in sociology for a doctorate of adult education, after extending my time away from New Zealand on unpaid leave. Fortunately I acquired a research assistantship to the Head of the Department of Adult and Community College Education, Dr. Edgar Boone, to enable me to support my family while studying. I valued this overseas experience immensely and I still keep in contact with colleagues around the world who were at that time fellow students. This time away engaging in research in adult education I did not want to relinquish. Not long after my return to the University of Waikato I changed my role from administrator to teacher/researcher and began life as an academic in the University of Waikato's Department of Education. (This Department was subsequently merged with the Hamilton Teachers' College on the same campus to form a new School of Education, now the Faculty of Education; this merger was typical of all universities, pressurized by government to rationalize the subject "education" and reduce resources. Higher education in many Western countries has followed this pathway under a neo-liberal agenda.) For myself, I awaited new ventures.

Phase 2: Consolidation of an Academic Identity in Adult Education

During the 1990s most of my time was spent in developing adult education as an academic field of study in Auckland, New Zealand's largest city. As a senior adult education specialist, I moved away from a focus on administration/management to teaching and research. At the University of Auckland, I worked with a close colleague, John Benseman, to further develop the study of adult education. We also worked with allies in the University of Auckland from higher education and established a concentration in adult/higher education with the Master's of Education. We were restructured from the Centre for Continuing Education at the University of Auckland to the School of Education—hence, the University senior management had decided to separate the practice of adult and continuing education from the scholarship/teaching/research of the field. I was now firmly in the latter camp though inspired by my time of program development previously.

We were cognizant of the wide range of adult education practitioners in this city who did not have a philosophical depth to their work but

who practiced in a wide range of settings such as trade unions, health promotion, community development, women's groups, school-based community education, and rural development. As at Waikato, there was a fledgling Certificate in Adult Education. We revamped this qualification and went through an exciting period of further development, many of the students already having first degrees but wanting a "top-up" in the specific field in which they worked. We also developed a Diploma in Adult Education to which students from the certificate could qualify and concentrate more on a research orientation. Hence, there was a clear pathway for students to enter and depart at whatever point was appropriate for each individual (certificate, diploma, master's).

During this time my academic outputs became more plentiful and serious. As a senior lecturer in adult education I had a responsibility to reflect on wider societal events and to develop myself professionally. I taught a wide range of courses related to the field, most with an issues orientation, and supervised many theses. My orientation, derived principally from my earlier studies at North Carolina State, was sociological and many of my publications were and still are concerned with social equity issues. In recognition of the absence of a useful book to map the field of adult and community education (ACE) in New Zealand, John Benseman and I, together with a colleague from the Manukau Institute of Technology in Auckland, co-edited *The Fourth Sector: Adult and Community Education in Aotearoa New Zealand* (1996). Not since Roger Boshier (1980) had anyone attempted to encapsulate the main features of this diverse field in this country. Importantly, this book of 25 chapters included five focusing on the issues of Māori adult education, especially adult literacy, reflecting a bi-cultural approach to this publication.

One of the benefits of academic life is the provision of study leave. Throughout my career I have taken advantage of this option while investing much of my own funds into these opportunities. In this period I spent 3 to 4 months at the University of Warwick in England (1994) and then in 1999 a further period at the University of Georgia (USA) followed by time at the University of Surrey in Guildford, England. All three locations had strong reputations in adult education. These periods away broadened my academic horizons, enabling me to make comparisons of adult education practice of New Zealand with other countries. Significantly too, these periods helped to consolidate social capital amid adult educators.

Given my time spent in centers for continuing education (Waikato; Auckland) and equivalent sites overseas, I developed a critique of adult

education in universities, especially when restructuring was carried out with minimal consultation with staff. Beyond a chapter in *The Fourth Sector* co-written with Jennie Harre-Hindmarsh (1996), I have reflected on changes in adult and continuing education in universities (Findsen 1996, 2001a), including the special challenge of incorporating older adults' access to higher education (Findsen, 2001b). Beneath the surface of these publications, was the spirit of upholding fairness and social justice, a sentiment which I trust has continued throughout my career.

Phase 3: Becoming a Senior Academic

While I was not dissatisfied with my work at the University of Auckland, I wanted to spread my wings. In the year 2000, the previous Auckland Institute of Technology (AIT) became the eighth New Zealand University, focusing on vocational, professional, and technical education. The Auckland University of Technology (AUT) emerged and I joined the staff as an associate professor of education in a newly-formed School of Education. I experienced developments from the ground floor as this institution sought to transform from a major polytechnic to a respected university. As Associate Head of School I was instrumental in developing/strengthening specific education programs, including the birth of a doctorate of education (EdD). Simultaneously, I worked to further the adult education program and to support junior staff in establishing research portfolios. I took study leave in 2003 from AUT to the University of Stirling in Scotland where the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning (CRL) was an attraction.

While on study leave in Scotland at the University of Stirling a position in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education (DACE) arose at the University of Glasgow. This department has been one of the oldest and strongest in the world in adult education; the temptation was too great. My wife and I returned from leave from Stirling to Auckland and soon after were back in Scotland in Glasgow. We lived there from 2004 to 2008 during which time I climbed the academic ladder to a full professorship on the back of the publication of *Learning Later* (2005) and other publications emerging from a new focus on older adults' learning (educational gerontology), particularly from a political economy perspective (see, for instance, Findsens, 2006, 2007a, 2007b). In particular, I acquired funding from the then West of Scotland Wider Access Programme, a Scottish initiative to better understand educational access and participation patterns, and recruited the capable Sarah McCullough, an

outstanding master's student, as a research assistant to study the engagement of older adults with further and higher education in the west of Scotland. We tracked the journeys of over 80 older people from mainly working class backgrounds from the perspective of their motivations, their actual teaching-learning experiences as older people in these institutions usually geared for youngsters fresh out of school, including the impact on themselves, their families and immediate communities. We demonstrated that even amid working class older people, traditionally disenfranchised from formal education, there is a yearning for lifelong learning in later life to achieve a wide variety of goals (Findsen & McCullough, 2008). Scotland is well-known for its innovative approach to education policy exemplified in this case by favorable policy from the Scottish Executive (government) such as fee waivers to enable poorer, older, people to study in three universities and four further education colleges.

Given the importance of family, my wife, Caterina, and I returned to New Zealand in 2008 where I took up a position as the first director of the Waikato Pathways College (WPC) at the University of Waikato. Hence, after a period of around 18 years, I returned to the location where my career in adult education started. The WPC had been established to integrate the diverse units of bridging/foundations studies, English language teaching for international students, student learning for the University and the Centre for Continuing Education. This was a demanding task in senior management. While the new College accomplished most of its goals, government policy in the sphere of bridging studies and in continuing education was working against its purpose. The University itself, under a policy of "managed entry," tightened entry to credit studies in the University. It removed funding, from a major WPC program, the Certificate in University Preparation, based on the fact that the College was preparing students for study, a significant number of whom were mature students, in a context where already-qualified students were at its doorstep. In addition, the New Zealand government reduced funding to adult and continuing education (ACE) in universities in 2010 by nearly 50%, thus undercutting continuing education programs for the public. By 2012 the New Zealand government completed the exercise of cuts by removing funding altogether for ACE and the University closed the doors of the Centre for Continuing Education permanently.

During the period of my return to the University of Waikato I have fortunately continued to engage in teaching in adult education for the Faculty

of Education. I continued in this mode before and after the closure of the CCE and I have since focused on teaching at primarily the undergraduate level with one postgraduate course, given that in this country adult education is not usually interpreted as an area for postgraduate enquiry as in the USA. My research interest in older adults' learning really began back in 1999 when I was offered the opportunity to "represent" New Zealand at an Asian South Pacific Bureau for Adult Education (ASPBAE) conference on older people's learning held in Singapore. The upshot of that conference was a personal commitment to establish a stronger base of practice in older adult education and to engage in research in this area, as a primary area of scholarship. I believe I have achieved this goal, marked more recently by the co-editorship of the book, *Lifelong Learning in Later Life: A Handbook on Older Adult Learning* (2011), with Marvin Formosa of the European Centre for Gerontology, University of Malta. Another significant piece of the educational gerontology puzzle has been my membership on the Executive of the Association of Education and Ageing (UK) which keeps me informed of significant initiatives in Britain in this emergent and exciting field, despite my living at the other end of the world.

My career has seen me move backwards and forwards in terms of adult and continuing education theory and practice. I have had serious periods of administration/management at the University of Waikato, Auckland University of Technology and Glasgow University. My research/scholarship has continued wherever I have been based but has been more productive when my role has been primarily a teacher/researcher as I am currently and was previously at the University of Auckland and University of Glasgow (and at NC State as a student). Moving around fairly often in my career has been both positive and negative: professionally stimulating but financially limiting! Experiencing different higher education systems first hand has helped me develop greater understanding than is possible through literature reviews.

Selected Issues in Adult and Continuing Education

While there are numerous issues about which it is possible to make commentary (such as adult basic education), I will refer to those closest to my formative experiences and research interests: development of an identity as an adult educator; the role of universities in adult and continuing education; and issues of social equity in adult education, particularly learning/education amid older adults.

1. Developing an Identity as an Adult Educator

As we know well within the field, the identification as an adult student or as an adult educator is rather fraught. As compulsory education in the form of schooling dominates popular discourse (as in faculties of education), the role and status of adult education and those who work within it is typically marginalized. This is both a disadvantage and advantage: it is a disadvantage because adult educators have to scarp to get funding beyond basic necessities and too many workers get little financial recompense for their efforts; on the other hand, to the extent that adult education is autonomous away from dominant ideologies, it enables us to engage in more innovative and radical enterprises. For instance, the famous Highlander Research and Education Center established by Myles Horton exemplifies this point and has been an inspiration in other places. In New Zealand, the Kotare organization, a coalition of youth workers, religious advocates, trade unionists, feminists and other agents of social justice, has modelled itself in part on Highlander, guided too by much of Freire's philosophy (1984). Becoming a mainstream educator in a schooling system may be a safer bet, but at least the career of an adult educator is seldom boring. Given that most participants are volunteers for learning, the field necessarily needs to be agile and responsive to learners' individual and collective needs.

An inter-connected issue around an adult educator's identity is the consideration of professionalization. While in the USA professionalization has been continuing unabated from the earliest pioneers such as Malcolm Knowles who formed a nucleus of adult educators to become the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE), in other countries such as New Zealand, the direction has been less clear. In an article on this issue (Findsen, 2009), I argue for caution about developing a fully professional pathway. It can be effectively argued that professionalization presents positive outcomes: consolidation of shared values and practices; the strengthening of learning communities; sustained professional development opportunities; heightened credentials and certification; a degree of standardization which may provide participants with increased confidence. Yet these likely favorable trends need to be balanced against possible negative consequences: a tendency to conform to norms of the mainstream and less risk-taking; a constriction on what counts as knowledge to align with neo-liberal agendas; the embracing of a competency-based model of operation as it makes measuring "success" easier, precluding a more humanistic open-ended process for learning. Yet the most salient feature is the likely detrimental effect on

the vast array of volunteers and part-timers who work in this field. There is inevitable distancing of the marginalized workforce as they attempt to remain anchored in grassroots development and keep relevant to local people and their daily issues. Codes of practice emanating from professionalization can work both ways: constraining deviants' behaviour but also constraining spontaneity and creativity.

Another identity-related issue springs from the historical divide between proponents of adult and community education (ACE) and those from vocational education and training (VET). In different countries this divide takes varying forms in line with localized cultural features. In New Zealand, where I have spent the majority of my time as an adult educator, the national association, ACE Aotearoa, is essentially a defender of the former identity, as the name suggests. However, this focus on the ACE context blinds us to the possibilities inherent in workplace learning. It makes little sense now to maintain such a division. It makes better sense to refer to adult learning/education wherever it may occur and to look for synergy across these historical formations. Some national associations, such as Adult Learning Australia (ALA), have already moved down this track. It is time for New Zealand to follow suit.

2. The Role of Universities in Adult and Continuing Education

Given that the majority of my career has been engaged with adult and continuing education in a higher education context, it is not surprising that how universities treat this sector has been a lifetime pre-occupation. Some of my publications (e.g. Findsen 1996, 2001a, 2001b) have critiqued the practices, structures and processes in higher education and queried the commitment of universities to this often marginalized field of theory and practice. More recently, I have questioned the decisions to wind-down continuing education in universities, given these units' strategic importance in terms of connecting with various publics. While government funding is important to the sustaining of such organizations within a university, universities themselves should have a better developed social conscience towards outreach work. They need to welcome non-traditional students to higher education, and recognise the importance of initial contact via non-credit programs (Findsen, 2001b). Mature-aged students' lives seldom fit into the progressive paths of study organized by institutions. I argue that universities need to be more proactive in their recruitment and retention of older students, providing both pedagogical and pastoral care in a continuous fashion.

Issues confronting universities in regard to adult and continuing education include establishing an effective funding regime; locating centers for continuing education (or their equivalents) as part of the mainstream; developing relevant curricula (programs of study) responsive to adults' contemporary issues; having centers for continuing education (CCES) as part of a wider scheme for promoting social equity; enabling portability of qualifications within and across higher education institutions. These issues pertain to the practice of adult education as if separate from the study (research upon) the field. Initially, in many Western countries, including New Zealand, "university extension" was adopted from the United Kingdom as a suitable model of operation. The advantage of this model was that the practice and study of the field were inseparable. Recently, centers for continuing education were established, as "an American model," where the personnel were administrators/animations, whose major task was to identify community learning needs and match these against the expertise of the University (and in some cases, the expertise of the wider society). Even as this model has eroded, so too has the "other side" of adult education, the scholarship and research/teaching imperative. My attraction to the Department of Adult and Continuing Education (DACE) at the University of Glasgow was mainly to a unit in the university which blended the administrative and teaching/research functions. Unfortunately, this once mega department has been largely dismantled but has survived because the public, through strategic resistance, demanded that the University continue its existence. Around the world now we see small fragments of adult and continuing education continuing to survive in a neo-liberal environment where learning outcomes and qualifications completion take precedence. Much of the liberal education ethos has been lost.

As an example of the diminished impact of adult and community education in my own backyard, the once innovative and socially important relationship between the University of Waikato and the Rauawaawa Charitable Trust (an indigenous holistic, social enterprise of services in adult education, social and health services for Māori controlled by Māori) ended at the end of 2012 when the government cut all funding to universities for ACE. The adult education curriculum at the Trust was heavily oriented towards kaupapa Māori (philosophy), the tutors were selected from within the group itself (peer teaching) and the larger purpose of capacity-building of the local people was validated by the university. In short, the co-constructed program was consistent with Gramsci's (1971)

notion of organic intellectuals where leaders from usually marginalized cultural groups were able to develop leadership (Findsen, 2012). Given that the CCE had a memorandum of agreement (MoA) with the Trust for delivery of culturally appropriate adult education courses (e.g. te reo - Māori language; waiata - singing; basket-making; food preparation), this arrangement of over a decade was destroyed by a lack of vision by the state. As we know, in most countries, the funding to ACE is insultingly small in comparison with compulsory schooling. The maintenance of this program requires little financial input. Ironically, given that the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), the primary funding body for tertiary education (including mainstream ACE), has as its priorities Māori, Pasifika, and people under 25, the cuts to ACE went against its own agenda. The challenge is for ACE in universities to find new ways of working with varied communities and to assert important values of mutual respect, co-operation, and community development.

3. Older Adults Learning

It has become commonplace to acknowledge that in most countries there are aging population structures so that increasingly older adults and their learning agendas will gain prominence in wider society. While older people learn in a variety of contexts, it is usual to emphasize the informal and non-formal spheres of learning (Findsen, 2002). It is through learning in day to day life (incidental learning) and via organizations of different types that most learning occurs for people in later life. Yet, as demonstrated in my research in greater Glasgow (2008), there is a thirst among older people to continue to learn for a variety of reasons—changing jobs late in life; developing further an interest suppressed from earlier times; training in the workplace to maintain one’s current position; undertaking more serious self-development—in relation to formal education.

In discussing “older adults,” there is a myth of homogeneity to dismantle. The diversity of older people is considerable; the difference between “young-old” and “old-old” is similarly marked. Older adults can be differentiated according to this age gap, their socio-economic status, gender, race/ethnicity, geographical location, (dis)ability etc. and combinations of these elements of social structure. We need to bury the notion of the generic adult learner (Knowles, 1980) and instead argue for the rights of different individuals/groups in older adulthood to learn what is appropriate for them. To some extent, the middle class has continued the pattern of accessing the kind of learning which they value: the institution

of the University of the Third Age (U3A) has found considerable traction in Commonwealth countries; in North America, lifelong learning institutes (LLIs) and Elderhostel, an educational tourism venture, have found resonance with people in later life with discretionary financial capital (Findsen & Formosa, 2011). The truism that “those who have, get more” is accurate in older adulthood education. So, the fundamental issue facing adult and continuing education is the familiar one of who gets access to what kind of knowledge/education. It is a sociological question of significance in terms of social justice.

In my work within critical educational gerontology (applying critical theory to older adult learning), I have become deeply conscious of the need to understand and analyze the learning undertaken by marginalized older people from a political economy perspective. This approach emphasizes how areas of social stratification (e.g. gender; social class) intersect to potentially limit the possibilities of older adults’ learning. It also interrogates the role of the state in terms of policy and provision (Glendenning, 2000). Through this lens, the plight of many older people is dire, especially as the global financial crisis accentuates disparities between rich and poor and their relative access to educational opportunities.

The literature on lifelong learning focuses on four themes:

- Economic development: nations need to up skill their workforces; individuals feel compelled to be more knowledgeable to compete for scarce jobs; organizations need to be more productive. Learning helps people engage more productively in the labor force.
- Personal development: learning is to extend individuals cognitively socially and affectively; learning for its own sake is highly valued.
- Active citizenship: learning is to prepare citizens to be more critically aware of their civic duties; to become more active participants in society.
- Social inclusion/exclusion: learning is to embrace all people in increasingly diverse societies; policies of equal educational opportunity and/or social equity promote the chances of the marginalized to participate in learning/education (Findsen & Formosa, 2011)

When these themes are matched against the aspirations and capabilities of older people, the importance of the financial aspect for previous

professionals and business owners now in later life may be diluted but many older people need to work to sustain a decent standard of living. This imperative is producing new demands on the labor market and workplaces are necessarily responding to this fresh issue (see Beatty & Visser, 2005, for the myriad challenges facing employers).

According to Laslett (1989), the third age (post-work) is one of creativity and personal development after the trammels of the second age (adult roles related to family and work). To the middle class this may well be true but as the instrumental purposes of learning gain more prominence, expressiveness may take a backseat to economic sustainability. The role of active citizenry among seniors can be observed in their willingness to volunteer, providing a free or cheap source of labor to civil society. The challenge for seniors here is to maintain their social capital (Field, 2003), particularly as they enter advanced old age.

The biggest challenge facing older adults is to remain part of the mainstream. Too often older people suffer from social isolation and fight to retain visibility in youth-oriented societies. For instance, the world of information and communication technology (ICT) is foreign to many but may be alleviated soon by the advance of baby-boomers into later life who should have more advanced technological literacy. Another positive for significant numbers of elderly is that through inter-generational activities (as grandparents especially) they are encouraged to continue to be active contributors in civil society.

In sum, we are entering new territories where old norms will be increasingly cast aside, particularly as the bulge of baby-boomers in many Western societies becomes enlarged. Both expressive and instrumental learning will be required and the central imperative will be to sustain inclusivity in provision of adult learning into later life.

Conclusion

This paper sought to describe and reflect upon my professional career related to my position as a White, middle-class educator in adult education, influenced by my historical journey, especially from the 1980s to the present day. I have moved in and out of managerial and fully academic positions, each providing me with a fresh perspective on the functions of adult and continuing education. From my experiences I have identified the following issues of significance: what constitutes the identity of an adult educator; the role of universities in ACE; and finally, the chal-

lence of understanding the character of older adult learning in nations' aging structures.

My ethos is one of upholding social justice in my work as an adult educator. As a practitioner and theoretician in this field, I have endeavoured not to become cynical arising from the considerable challenges facing educators who hold democratic ideals in the face of indifference but instead to engage in thoughtful reflection and positive action to improve the lives of the marginalized in societies.

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