



Promoting, Interrogating and Mobilising Adult Learning and Education

BULLETIN NO.32
SEP 2020

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EDITORIAL Chris Duke

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'Only connect'. Never was this injunction more fitting than today. I scan the material in this issue and realise how much each is part of an interwoven web. As Chris Brooks observes below, we see 'how poorly policies are tied up into a coherent strategy: housing, education, skills and infrastructure are all conceived and implemented as separate and non-connected policies'. If only one could find a clear beginning and untangle strands into a neat and orderly ball. But there are too many ends and no free ends at all.

Like the shipwrecked sailor in an old and very British AA Milne children's poem, I think of so many things to do, so many ways to start. But each time, something else needs doing or saying first. In the end, the puzzled sailor did nothing at all, but just sat wrapped up in a shawl, waiting for rescue. So far, no rescue mission has arrived in this Year of COVID-19. Like the people in Casablanca at another difficult time, too often we wait--- and we wait--- and we wait.

There are populist leaders in 'democracies' old and less old who assure us that rescue is in sight; that being shipwrecked is not so bad; soon we will all be back to normal; black is - in fact really - white. If Black Lives Matter, so do other lives - what is the fuss about? Eventually, we are swamped by rumours, untruths, and deceptions. We despair of understanding and acting confidently. Like the beached sailor we get flooded by fake news, drowned in lies, choked with false bribes: waiting in a looking-glass world. PIMA sets its face against such fatalism.

Little wonder that with lockdowns and self-isolation there is a boom in individual reflectiveness: good if stocktaking, revaluating what matters for health and happiness; bad if in the 'fake solutions' of cults and phobias, irrational flights into private hells unreached by familiar therapies. A 'good crisis' may helpfully disrupt bad habits and assumptions, clearing the way for cultural and identity renewal. But rebuilding community - older and simpler time multigenerational families, new neighbourhood camaraderie - can be inward- or outward-looking: a basis for renewal or a remaking of prejudicial hostilities.

PIMA is committed to building: to identifying and addressing sources of social malaise in and by our human species. Tough pragmatic optimism needs courage, open communication, and firm action. Our exploration here of learning life deep as well as lifelong looks inward, to affect outward. Our critical dialogue seeks to resolve problems, step by step, on a road without end or remission. Maybe ordering and clustering papers into themes matters little: so long as we realise that all interweave and interact.

Some contributors share how lockdown is experienced; and how global news is heard and judged. Others identify central issues that if engaged may turn a downward cycle upwards. Hopefully, we will all call out the misuse of statistics and will name what infects and corrupts.

Educators may like their familiar role: teaching well the way they know. But we cannot ignore the content of what we teach; and the totality of what learners imbibe - the full

experienced curriculum. If that does not explicitly connect with the 'perfect storm' of crises 'outside the school gates', it is unfit for purpose.

Our credo is adult learning and education (ALE) within lifelong learning. For sure, let us collaborate and co-campaign for ALE resources. But let us also ask why such a fast-rising proportion of lonely citizens live alone; why is it that very young woman from Pakistan and Sweden are better known, loved and honoured – or feared -- than many world leaders. Why are early teenagers in rural-remote Australia today initiating a class action against their government's climate-heating practices, trying to save our shared future through the courts as well as on the streets?

Please read each item below for what it says, and implies, where it points, and connects.

LIFE-DEEP LEARNING: THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. ALE AND LLL

Life-deep learning Dorothy Lucardie

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Since the 1960s the concept of Lifelong Learning has been developed to portray the ongoing, self-motivated learning undertaken in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. The term is inclusive of all age groups across the life span and brings together the previously separated areas of children's learning and adults' learning. While the concept is inclusive of a wide range of learning such as personal development and citizenship, it has been narrowly interpreted by governments and funding bodies as a linear path from Kindergarten, through 10-12 years of education and then completion of tertiary studies.

To emphasise the breadth of Lifelong Learning the dimension of Life-Wide has been added to encompass learning for all aspects of an individual's life, at work, at leisure, in the community and in relationships. So, Learning is Life Long and Life Wide.

Over recent years the term Life-Deep Learning has been introduced into the conversation. While this added dimension has been welcomed it has not been clear what the concept of life deep learning is describing. Belanger (2015) in *'Self-construction and social transformation: Lifelong, Life-wide and Life-Deep Learning'* proposed that "The demand on individuals to co-determine their increasingly non-linear educational life paths is one of such trends reflecting the growing emphasis on the intimacy of learning". For Belanger, the intimacy of learning includes the subjective experience of learning and the process of constructing the self.

In the 2018 PASCAL conference held in Suwon, the Republic of Korea, discussion on Life-Deep Learning arose from presentations made under the theme "Lifelong Learning as the key to solving community problems". The presentations spoke about spirituality (Maria Liu Wong), wisdom built over time (*Gumpanat Boriboon*), emotional learning and inspired learning (Eunice Q Areola). PIMA members were invited to contribute to the 2019 Bulletin No 23 to follow up on the discussion; three articles there addressed their perspectives of life-deep learning.

In responding to the question what is Life-Deep Learning, Gumpanat Boriboon's article asked 'Is it a term that includes the cultural dimension of learning and knowing?' and expanded his contention at Suwon of the value of local wisdom as a "valuable treasure of the country". He believes that older people's "knowledge and experience should be preserved and transferred to the next generations." (PIMA, 2019)

Eric Zimmerman contributed a piece on 'Jewish Resiliency: personal, collective, political and religious'. For Zimmerman "Jews' (resiliency) has always meant not springing back to a previous condition but being able to create something new, a better situation for the collective". (PIMA, 2019)

The third contribution was from Peter Kearns: 'Being human in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and AI'. In his article, Kearns proposed that "The process of lifelong learning must be directed at the qualities that make us distinctively human, with the four bits of intelligence identified by Schwab being expressed in imagination, compassion, empathy, autonomy, citizenship, and creativity. This gives meaning and purpose to our lives, and empowerment to individuals and communities" (PIMA, 2019)

Is Life-Deep Learning about spirituality, wisdom, emotional development, inspiration, resilience, making meaning or making sense of life, reflection and transformation? Can this dimension of learning embrace the concept of *learning to be* as proposed by Kearns?

During 2020 the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has upended our sense of normality and introduced great uncertainty. It has exposed the great inequalities between people and between nations. Many are re-examining their expectations of life. It may be that a great deal of transformational learning has occurred as a result of the dramatic changes we have all experienced.

Adults and children have had to learn a whole a range of new skills and attitudes including learning at home, parents as teachers, using technology, developing empathy and compassion for others in the community, stepping up as active citizens to meet lockdown requirements. Increased participation in learning for pleasure and interest has also been displayed by individuals, families and communities. Singing, life drawing, dancing, cooking, creative pursuits, seem to have replaced learning for work for many people across the world, not least because so many have lost all or part of their jobs.

Has the pandemic also sharpened our focus on Life-Deep Learning, what it means, and the impact it may have on individuals, communities and our societies? PIMA is intending to extend the discussion on Life-Deep Learning as a regular feature of the Bulletins, with a special focus in a pandemic or other major crisis.

If you would like to contribute an article on Life-Deep Learning or you have examples that you have seen or experienced in your life or as a result of the pandemic, please contact dorothy.lucardie@bigpond.com.au (copy to Bulletin editor dukeozenay@gmail.com for convenience); or join the online discussion forum on the PIMA website.

COVID-19: What Lessons Can We Learn? [Chris Brooks](#)

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The predicament

Being right does not always help. We have seen this in many instances with the COVID-19 pandemic these last six months. In these columns, we have worried about several major defects in our societies, which do not appear much in the newspapers or television discussions. But they are fundamental to education, and its role in trying to keep our societies reasonably stable and capable of plotting and planning a better future. Of the many issues, we have discussed there are four I would like to remind us of:

1. We are ill-equipped to analyse data and information to draw rational decisions. In particular, we are generally very poor at understanding and analysing numbers and statistics.
2. The internet and associated “social media” add to these difficulties by propagating erroneous or deliberately false information which often acquires a life and a truth of its own in large parts of the popular mind.
3. The institutions of liberal democracy are less and less credible in much of the population’s mind, the leaders of these institutions are more and more questioned, and their knowledge and authority increasingly repudiated.
4. The “elite” are less and less tolerant of the views of others that do not coincide with their own. The alliances between the liberal, progressive intelligentsia and the working class have broken down; in significant part because of the arrogance of the elite.

The COVID-19 climax

We have seen all of these issues at play during the crisis we are living through with COVID-19. There is not enough space in this article to enumerate all the examples. Suffice it to say that we have all seen that the statistics are at best unhelpful, and at worst misleading; we have all seen how journalists have used them for sensation rather than an explanation; we have all read of the conspiracy theories about the origins of COVID-19 and more seriously about the corrupt conspiracy between governments and the pharmaceutical industry concerning vaccines and drugs. The French Professor Didier Raoult propaganda campaign has gained much popular support because of its anti-intelligentsia tone, etc. None of this will help us in preparing to cope with the future waves of COVID-19, or in rebuilding the shattered economies which will soon emerge in what is likely to be the worst economic recession since the end of the Second World War.

In the coming weeks and months, we will see many parliamentary and independent commissions and enquiries into the COVID-19 Crisis. Most will centre on the fairly pointless exercise of apportioning blame and finding scapegoats. Few will concentrate on trying to address the long-term problems that this crisis has brought to light. Emmanuel Macron, the President of France, has described the French executive as “flabby and hard of seeing”. That seems to me an understatement, but at least a helpful starting point. We must all be concerned about building a new public policy system which is less vulnerable than the one we have seen in action this last nine months.

Political failure and social disaster

It is clear to all of us that the organisation of both our economies and our societies leaves much to be desired. We have seen how COVID-19 disproportionately affects the vulnerable--those who are sick and towards the end of their lives, but more crucially the poor, the badly housed, the unemployed, those with hard manual jobs and poor working conditions, like garbage removers and road sweepers, and immigrant communities. Those

living in cramped and dense housing with little or difficult access to green space have also been highly vulnerable and disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

So COVID-19 has underlined the growing inequalities of our increasingly materially prosperous world. Incremental change to the ordering of our societies is likely to do little to remove these underlying causes, which have meant that the poor pay a very disproportionate price once again.

The forthcoming recession will make change more difficult but also more necessary. Inequality issues will become aggravated by a major economic downturn and large-scale unemployment, especially the large-scale youth unemployment that confronts us for the next ten years. Health inequality, housing inequality, education inequality and the growing gap between the haves and the have-nots are likely to get even worse. And the miserable efforts of public policy to tackle these issues in the past are certainly no way forward for a better world.

So, what about Emmanuel Macron's "flabby and hard of seeing" State? Like others in developed countries we have seen how poorly policies are tied up into a coherent strategy: housing, education, skills and infrastructure are all conceived and implemented as separate and non-connected policies. Taxation policy is even worse, in that it constantly fails to address the splits of GDP between capital and labor, when we know that a higher proportion of national wealth going to the wages of the mass of the workforce is an indispensable element for reducing poverty.

And what about the hard of seeing or shortsightedness that Macron talks about? How are our education systems turned towards the future and have they started to give all young people some chance of playing a constructive role in the economy of artificial intelligence? Have we thought about the distribution of infrastructure, housing and training opportunities in relation to the gaping inequalities that COVID-19 has so clearly underlined? No. Governments have just continued to waddle on.

Letting go and getting on with it

One of the bright spots of the COVID-19 crisis is how those towards the bottom of the power pyramids have so often taken the problem by the scruff of the neck, just got on and done what needs to be done. Local general practitioners, nurses, local mayors and community groups of all sorts, often at great risk to themselves and in defiance of central rules have helped limit the disaster. This underlines the massive inefficiency of the over-centralised State, and the need to decentralise decision-making and action to the lowest possible level to ensure that central government concentrates on the strategic issues helps the process of action and change, and does not harm it.

We need less centralised government, more strategic central government and more public investment that enables citizens and their families to take responsibility for their lives, rather than providing miserable income transfers which mitigate the misery but maintain the poverty. Why do so many people have to eat bad food? Or have no access to green space or clean air? So little chance of access to good schools or decent jobs? Surely the State with all its redistributive power was supposed to be responsible for these considerations.

Making a new start and trying to provide the basis of rebuilding public confidence in the institutions which are supposed to hold society together and to plot pathways to a better future: this is the challenge laid bare by the crisis of COVID-19. Failure to rise to the challenge is the guarantee of victory for the populists. This situation also requires us to see the failures of the meritocracy which has shaped the post Second World War world. Whilst it may have helped liberate us from the restrictive social structures of the past, it has created generations of leaders who have no self-doubt. Over time this lack of self-doubt turns to arrogance and a despising attitude towards the poor. These then become the electorates of Trump, LePen and Bolsanaro. Contempt can be just as lethal as poverty.

Unlearning During Lockdown? [Rajesh Tandon](#)

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Staying inside the house with two grown-up kids (my son & daughter) for 10 weeks straight... what a constraint! No house help, no vendor at the door, no sight of neighbours! This was an enormous constraint, externally imposed, with an infusion of fear and uncertainty. So, pressure for 'unlearning' began to mount.

Food habits, work habits, travel habits... every aspect of my being had to be 'unlearned'. And each 'unlearning' had to be infused with new learning.

I got 're-connected' with my two kids... by cleaning the house together, by washing dishes and clothes, by cooking interesting food, based on whatever supplies existed at home then.

And, we started to find new ways of 'being' with each other... playing cards, listening to music (even with diverse tastes), exercising at home together, watching serials & movies together (even though it took a while for all three of us to agree on some).

I called up many distant relatives to ask about their health; I connected with some old college friends I had lost touch with. It turned out to be quite a pleasant experience, surprisingly. Many a time, I have believed that it would be difficult to 're-connect', and do not try. Lockdown induced trying... trying new behaviours, to learn anew, as we 'unlearn' the old.

PRIA offices were closed down; so work from home was not difficult, as it was a part of the habit anyway. But, not being able to visit the office and not meeting colleagues was irritating. As more gradual lockdown began two months ago, returning to office gave a sense of comfort... of the familiar.

Taking walks in the neighbourhood parks was sheer joy, with the smell of fragrance in the fresh air. I even started tending to my garden and got some fresh plants. The colour of the flowers began to shine, as 'new' birds began to sing. My senses of smell, hear, taste and touch got revived to a new level of pleasure... the forgotten 'id'... (Freudian, not my email ID, please).

A realization has begun to sink in about my privilege; I am part of that tiny percentage of Indian (indeed global) citizens who own a house with separate rooms for us all, a terrace

to look out, a garden to tend to; we had food stored in the house, in the refrigerators; we have the comfort of fans and air-conditioning; we have savings to lean on, and jobs which still pay; we are healthy, our bodies are well-nourished from birth!! I began to re-learn to thank Gods for our fortunes, for being able to 'stay the course' during such violent disruptions, to be able to relish the warmth of love and camaraderie.

Soon, I also realised that the work I have been doing for the past four decades is not enough; more and more, stronger and deeper, efforts are needed to 'disrupt' the forces of privilege to just a few, the underlying dynamics of perpetuating and exacerbating inequality within and across societies today.

My thanks to lockdown, so that I have begun to take unlearning-changing-relearning seriously again, not only for myself but finding ways to support others too.

Looking for light from Down Under Aotearoa – mood music [Diana Amundsen](#)

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The big things in life? -

food, climate change, race, pandemic, elections, water, identity, economy

Last night, I ate my dinner *food* while watching the six o'clock television TV1 News at home in my lounge, in Tauranga, New Zealand. In a combination of world and local New Zealand news, five main stories featured. First, images of helicopters rescuing trapped campers amidst blazing flames and billowing smoke appeared behind the usual show presenters, Simon and Wendy, who reported a dangerous and unprecedented heatwave was baking areas of the western United States. During the weekend, many California locations registered record-high temperatures of up to 49°C in Los Angeles County. *climate change*

Upbeat music, "ba-da, da-da-da-daaaah" blares loudly, and we switch to more US news. With a buoyant voice, Wendy announces we are moving on to "heavily armed Trump supporters confronting the Black Lives Matter protestors in Louisville, Kentucky". Sounds of gunshots and angry crowds rise through my TV speakers while scenes of gun-toting "far-right militia" groups clashing with Black Lives Matter anti-racism protesters fill my screen. Simon states that protestors and counter-protestors were out *en masse*, particularly since the Kentucky Derby horse race had been delayed since May. More tense scenes between the pro-Trump and BLM activists are shown. *race, elections*

A snippet of the calm, familiar TV1 News theme music heralds the arrival of the next news item. COVID-19 coronavirus. No news item these days is complete without it. Even during New Zealand's glory period of 100 days with no COVID-19 transmission, the news somehow managed to keep reporting updates daily. I take a sip from my drink *water*. Today, we hear of an ill-fated flight where "a staggering 17 people" who travelled from India to Auckland have tested positive for COVID-19 since arriving in New Zealand. That brings our present national total to 118 active cases, four in hospital. We are reminded that while over 71,000 people in India have died, the third-highest toll in the world, globally, there have been more than 27.2 million cases and 890,000 deaths. Then, the

music goes darker, and it is revealed that “research shows Māori are more likely to die from COVID-19 than any other New Zealanders

Fill in the gaps here - than any *white* New Zealanders. The study was based on international data of risk factors for COVID-19 fatality (e.g. heart disease, diabetes and asthma). Prevalence of these existing health conditions among Māori, combined with lower life expectancy, crowded housing and higher unmet healthcare needs contributes to the risk of dying from COVID-19 being at least 50% higher for Māori “than for European New Zealanders”. *pandemic, race*

Ta-daaaaah! Upbeat music! “Ba-da, da-da-da-daaaaah” trumpets from the TV. Here is a close-up of Jacinda Ardern’s fresh young face, a mouth full of smiling white teeth telling Kiwis that she has listened to us. If her Labour Government is re-elected in our upcoming election this year, *Matariki* will be made a new public holiday from 2022!! Wow! This is a brilliant move. Jacinda explains, “As I’ve travelled around New Zealand I’ve heard the calls for Matariki to become a public holiday -- its time has come”. This is exciting stuff, and many Māori and non-Māori voters alike will likely interpret this as a long-overdue acknowledgement.

Matariki is the Māori name for the Pleiades star cluster, its annual appearance mid-winter in May/June signals the start of Māori New Year. Traditionally, Matariki was the time to acknowledge people who died in the year gone by marking the event signifies renewal. After all, says Jacinda, these are, “things we should be moving forward with as a nation that will only strengthen our unique national identity”. *race, identity, elections*

The news has been going for about 11 minutes, and the spinning TV1 News theme wheels around to signal an advertisement break in just a minute. Wendy and Simon give us a quick sneak peek at what we will see after the break. It will be all about the negative interest rates that are anticipated for April 2021 as the world economy struggles through the impact of COVID-19 and holds back New Zealand’s recovery. *pandemic, economy*

I’ve finished my dinner, and when the advertisements come on, I push the mute button on my remote while I enjoy my organic vegetables and wash down a mouthful of rice with a drink of water. Privileged, fresh clear running water, from my tap in the kitchen. Climate change, race, pandemic, identity, elections, economy, food and water.

So, what about the 2020 elections and our leaders? What kind of post-virus world are they (and we) going to create? How will it turn around our economy, or effects of climate change, or race-relations, or poverty and hunger? What do adults need to learn and to know to move forward in these times? Where’s the adult learning?

Clearly, we need more effective ways of thinking, better ways of working and cooperative ways of learning from each other. We have shown we can do this when we must. The speed at which the Black Lives Matter social movement spread almost matched that of COVID-19.

Social movements are versions of lifelong learning through the knowledge they create, identities they grow, learning spaces and educational opportunities they generate. The potential of social movements to generate new knowledge, in turn generating alternative

worldviews, which can influence collective and individual transformation, cannot be overestimated.

Jacinda Ardern has continuously modelled her political and cultural consciousness-raising leadership in ways that challenge the status quo, through her emphasis on issues of identity, ideology, culture and social integration. Although these efforts have been concentrated in the local context of Aotearoa New Zealand, she has gained great solidarity worldwide, across national boundaries brought about through the impact of social media to gain momentum.

The commercial break has finished. I un-mute my remote again to listen to what Simon and Wendy have to say about the world's economy. It strikes me that if we can all do a lot more listening and learning from one another, and a lot more un-muting of the voices that must be heard, our adult learning social movement has the potential to spread more powerfully than a pandemic.

LATER LIFE LEARNING

COVID-19, older people and alternative viewpoints [Brian Findsen](#)

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The advent of COVID-19 has changed most societies' lives perhaps indefinitely. Many older people have borne the high cost of human life, especially those living in care facilities. The disproportionate negative effects on older adults have raised questions which some authorities have found it difficult to answer adequately. In the single most troublesome incident in New Zealand during the first lockdown period (26 March to 12 May in level four) there were 12 deaths (out of a country total of 22) from the Rosewood Rest home in Christchurch. When one member of the caring team tested positive to COVID-19, the entire staff of 71 were asked to stand down, thus leaving the already precarious older people to be looked after by novices! Many questions need to be asked.

This raises in my mind the extent to which questions asked regarding COVID-19 are only allowed within the frame of the dominant narrative. This narrative includes mandating of social distancing, the frequent washing of hands, testing if you have sickness symptoms akin to COVID-19, all quite appropriate. However, if the questions potentially challenge taken-for-granted knowledge or even scientifically based proclamations, they can be labelled as 'conspiracy theory'. What happened to critical thinking *à la* Stephen Brookfield, as advocated in 'adult education 101' courses? When the NZ Government with minimal notice throws Auckland, the business/commercial powerhouse, into lockdown, is it okay to ask questions that may be uncomfortable for the authorities?

As more and more practices of surveillance of the populace by authorities are enacted, is it proper to challenge their legality and ethical base? Where is the line between the safety of the masses (government decision-making and actions) and individual freedom? How many older people have died with co-morbidities and been counted as COVID-19 statistics? COVID-19 has brought such questions to the fore.

Am I a conspiracy theorist by raising what appear to be reasonable questions? Perhaps they do if I suggest that the phrase 'alternative thinking' should be used as an acceptable replacement.

Learning in Later Life Special Interest Group [Brian Findsen, Convenor of the Later Life Learning \(LLL\) SIG](#)

It has been a quiet period in recent months with most people preoccupied with dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic in respective countries.

I have had the privilege of participating in a kindred network of educators in the Asia Pacific region in webinars (usually three-four presenters) focusing on how the pandemic has affected societies with special reference to the plight of older adults. This is the Active Aging Consortium Asia Pacific (ACAP) co-ordinated in Hawaii by Professor Kathryn Braun. I presented on how New Zealand had fared to that point. Other speakers were from Singapore, the UK and India. It is my intention to facilitate a PIMA equivalent webinar for the LLL SIG, open to all members, in October.

There has been increasing debate on the strategies adopted by governments from attempted COVID-19 extermination (as in New Zealand) to using a herd immunity approach (Sweden). For 102 days, New Zealand had returned to "normality" at level one and people had become smug. Now the government faces returnees to NZ with COVID-19 (in quarantine) and community transmission so far linked to a particular Auckland cluster. Auckland, the main centre for commerce, was temporarily isolated at an advanced level of constraint. The stakes are now much higher as an election is to occur on 17 October. There is no room for complacency.

Membership of the LLL SIG remains small and I welcome new members. My communication with fringe members did not result in enthusiastic responses. Hosting an open webinar to all PIMA members on older people and COVID-19 should help with recruitment.

We know that face-to-face conference opportunities are sparse and fraught with uncertainty. There is to be a combined Age Concern New Zealand (ACNZ) and the Association for Gerontology NZ to be held on 1 and 2 October in Wellington. If this eventuates (dependent on new announcements from the Government on COVID-19 levels), I shall report on this venture in the appropriate newsletter.

Older adults and COVID-19 in the UK: the changing face of learning [Alexandra Withnall](#)

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Introduction: the context

COVID-19 first reached the United Kingdom (UK) late in January 2020 since when every part of the country has been affected; by the end of August 2020, there had been well over 41,000 deaths. Older people appear to be particularly vulnerable to the virus and their comparatively high death rate at the height of the pandemic can be ascribed to the physiological changes that accompany ageing especially if they also have underlying health

conditions. In the UK, it was unfortunately also the case that early on, many older people were returned to a care home after a hospital stay without being tested for the virus despite the remarkably high risk of transmission to other residents.

On 23rd March, the country was placed in lockdown, somewhat later than other European countries. Those of any age considered 'extremely clinically vulnerable' received official letters advising them to remain at home at all times. Other people aged over 70 and/or with underlying health conditions were also advised to remain at home although they were allowed to take exercise outside once a day. Others were advised to work from home where possible. On May 11th, the Prime Minister announced a three-phase strategy to gradually move the UK out of lockdown (although reactions to his plans were heavily criticised). Accordingly, three months after the lockdown began, he introduced the beginning of the end of 'national hibernation' with the re-opening of some businesses. Almost a month later, he set out his roadmap for ending lockdown when almost all businesses were allowed to re-open in a bid to kick start the economy although social distancing was still to be observed for the foreseeable future and, it was later announced that face coverings were to be worn inside shops and other buildings.

Contact tracing, abandoned early on in March, has been resumed. However, it should be noted that emergence from lockdown has been managed somewhat differently in the four countries of the UK. More recently, there has been a rise in cases of COVID-19 in some towns and regions and these areas have been placed back in partial lockdown. In addition, as a new academic year looms and children and young people return to education, new fears are emerging as to the impact this might have on the potential spread of the virus since any hope of an effective vaccine still seems some way away.

The move to online learning

There is no doubt that lockdown has been especially difficult for older people, many of whom spent several months confined to their homes unable to see family and friends with some experiencing difficulty in obtaining basic food supplies. For people living alone, the sense of isolation has been particularly acute and even now, many older people remain fearful and reluctant to venture out. Yet since we know that continuing to learn during difficult times can help build confidence, and create a more fulfilled life as well as improving wellbeing, what forms of learning have been available to older people during this unprecedented time? Since what most isolated older people probably need is to make contact with others, this is where a number of educational providers and others with an interest in older people's lives have used the internet to reach them and to expand their repertoire of learning opportunities. Some examples are discussed below.

Digital skills and communicating online

Obviously, a pre-requisite for online communication is the possession of basic digital skills. Learn my Way is a website of free online courses to help people in general to develop these skills including a guide to online safety whilst the BBC has produced a simple step-by-step to video calling your family using a smartphone or how to receive such a call using a desktop computer. The University of the Third Age (U3A) in the UK has been especially pro-active in producing a series of 'how-to' guides for online communication including the use of Facebook, WhatsApp groups and the increasingly popular internet conferencing tool, Zoom.

Maintaining physical and mental health

Obviously, imparting information and advice to older people as to how to maintain physical and mental health during the lockdown and beyond has been a priority for government and, accordingly, there has been no shortage of internet advice from national and international organisations with regard to setting a daily routine, maintaining physical wellbeing through daily walks or home-based exercise, alleviating stress, 'keeping an active mind' by reading, writing, playing games, doing jigsaws and so on as well as paying attention to sleep, taking time to relax and learning how to express worries to others by phone or through video calls. Exploring what the internet has to offer that might include discovering 'things you enjoy' or pursuing a new interest is also recommended. Many organisations working with older people have also produced detailed advice and links to guidance specifically relating to the coronavirus for people with serious underlying health conditions.

The arts and creativity

Of course, pursuing interests through internet learning is not new. Platforms such as Futurelearn in the UK have been offering a range of online short courses (known as MOOCs) for some years now and although they have apparently proved very attractive to a range of older learners, there is still a paucity of research as to how they engage with MOOCs (Liyaganawardena and Williams, 2016). Similarly, the Open University in the UK offers a range of courses for over-50s that are entirely free. The University of the Third Age (U3A) which boasts 444,000 members across the UK has been particularly active during the lockdown in offering ideas for its members to keep learning and to keep them connected such as joining a virtual choir; taking part in a maths challenge, and participation in an interactive creative writing session. In addition, a comparative newcomer to the scene, Rest Less, which describes itself as 'the UK's fastest-growing digital community for the over-50s' offers the chance to browse over 50,000 courses from various countries, some free and some incurring a cost. It also offers help with job search, managing money and volunteering. It is also likely that GetSetUp, an American site that considers itself 'the largest senior to senior live interactive educational platform' and which advertises its 'fun and engaging' short courses frequently on social media, attracts older learners from the UK.

As with other generations, older people may well enjoy the online availability of arts productions from the National Theatre which has been offering Thursday night play screenings, international concert series, museum tours, online access to art collections etc. which are widely available and can be accessed through the Google Arts and Culture website. However, in respect of older people, two particular developments are worthy of note. The first of these is the work of the Women's Institute (WI), the largest community-based organisation for women in the UK which originated in Canada and now boasts 220,000 members nationwide, the majority of whom tend to be older women. Currently unable to meet in person, members can now access a fascinating range of online events such as cookery demonstrations, talks and practical activities many of them organised through Denman, the WI's own residential adult education college or through their local Federations. Use of Zoom enables participants to watch and engage with Denman tutors and to learn new skills. Sadly, Denman's future as a residential centre is in doubt due to loss of income during lockdown but the move to online learning appears to have been very well received by many WI members in spite of a small charge to register for online activities.

The second development, the King Lear prizes, is an innovative creative arts competition for people aged over 70 (over 60 in one case) who were quarantined or mainly stuck at home during the lockdown. The categories in which entries were invited included a short story, poetry, a solo musical composition, a 15-minute drama and art or photographic offering. Although final judging has not yet taken place, the organisers were amazed at the number of entries in each category – more than 16,000 short stories alone were submitted. The King Lear initiative has continued over the summer on a small-scale basis inviting entries for haikus, face mask designs and a ‘Samuel Pepys’ diary entry challenge as well as an artistic depiction of summer fruit or vegetable. Documented reactions so far seem to show that many older entrants were delighted to be offered a showcase for their creative talents.

Is online learning the future for older people?

The above snapshot of online learning and creative activities for older people in the UK suggests that during the pandemic, the internet has come to the fore as an educational tool. Even before the coronavirus struck, there had been a rapid increase in the numbers of people aged 55 plus who had recently used the internet (for any purpose) according to figures produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2019). However, in a briefing produced by the Centre for Ageing Better (2020), a charitable foundation funded by the National Lottery, it is suggested that whilst COVID-19 has actually encouraged more older people to get online and to use the internet in new ways, it has also actually deepened the digital divide in that those who do not have digital access are at even greater risk than before of missing out in all kinds of areas of life. Sadly, age remains the biggest predictor of whether or not a person is able to get online; 3.7 million people over the age of 55 were among the four million who have never used the internet in 2019 (ONS, 2019). They are also likely to be in poorer health, less well-off and less well educated than their peers.

Further research by the Centre for Ageing Better has indicated that there is a range of complex barriers that some people in later life still face in getting online. These include a lack of confidence; prior limited exposure to computers during employment; ageism and internalised stereotypes about the ability to learn; perceived value and relevance; and, of course, access to, and affordability of equipment especially as community provision in centres and libraries has mostly disappeared during the lockdown. The Centre emphasises the need to provide other opportunities for those older people who are currently excluded, especially in relation to public health messages and advice; but a need to expand access to technology, provide equipment and invest in building digital skills is also identified. There is still a long way to go, especially if social distancing measures remain in place for the foreseeable future. In addition, older learners who lack confidence both in their own abilities and in using technology will doubtless continue to need a degree of personal support. Online learning may be the future for later life but we cannot afford to leave anyone behind.

Finally, we need carefully designed and executed a research to help us better understand how older people who do embrace online learning choose their platforms, what they are interested in learning, and how they engage with what is offered. How do they seek and use the information to enable them to better manage their health and wellbeing in a time of pandemic? If they choose to build on an existing interest or learn a new skill, how is this best delivered digitally, bearing in mind what we already know about how older people learn? And crucially, what training will be available to those who develop online programmes and activities specifically aimed at older learners and who will deliver it?

There is a new and potentially rich research agenda waiting to be explored here but time is short if we are to face the digital future with confidence and renewed enthusiasm.

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WOMEN LEARNING

Digital popular education: A contradiction in terms? A reflection on a smartphone-based health course [Astrid von Kotze](#)

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Health relates directly to gender, economic systems, cultural norms, the history of colonialism. It is a political issue. Given basic inequalities between men and women, women face much greater risks of disease and poor health. Furthermore, since care work is mainly performed by women, their health and wellbeing are closely connected to community health. These are some of the issues that gave rise to the 'Woman's Health Course' (WHC), offered by the Popular Education Programme (PEP) in Cape Town for the last three years. In 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the course had to be offered via smartphones, using a WhatsApp platform.

The timing of the WHC worked well. Just as participants were pushed into severe COVID-19 lockdown and anxiety and insecurity levels were rising, the course opened a little window to the world. In retrospect, participant Abigail Izaks posted: 'This group helped me cope during the lockdown and kept my mind occupied while there was such a lot of stress due to personal issues etc but also the global pandemic, all the insecurities, how are we as a family going to get through this?' The WHC had a therapeutic value; it enriched women's lives. But this doesn't mean it was worth-while as an example of popular education. If physical distancing is to be part of our world in the future, we need to better understand how to shape popular education so it can still achieve its political purpose of leading to progressive transformative action.

Can a popular education approach work online, and if so how? The contradiction between collective participation, the ongoing negotiating of power, and individual engagement through a medium was felt, in every way. Popular education is about balancing power and forging horizontal relationships so that dialogue leads to the production of 'really useful knowledge'. As facilitators, we tried to make the process as interactive and creative as we knew how to, given the short timeframe. Here is a report on some of the tensions and contradictions, as an invitation to engage further with the question: how can a popular education approach work, online, across cultures, languages, generations and geography – in times of pandemics?

Tension 1: between isolation and the curse of insularity

All digital education confronts the challenge of isolation. In times of pandemic, this becomes double isolation. Everyday life shrank to immediate family and household members. Livelihood activities within the informal economy, and the daily small acts of hustling for food, were not permitted. On the one hand, insularity was to be a safety precaution; on the other, it increased the risk of hunger. This was experienced as a curse when access to virtual channels of communication was limited, and, conversely, gossip and hear-say fed intolerance and stigma. Reality became distorted – made worse by the fear of infection (rates of diabetes and hypertension are high), food insecurity and the threat of domestic violence. If nothing else, the course broadened horizons, asked questions outside the ambit of daily life, challenged thinking, and corrected misperceptions and stigmatizing rumours.

Tension 2: between the head, the heart and the hands

We all learn best when activating all our senses and faculties. What happens to embodied learning when all we have is WhatsApp exchanges? Communication thus truncated lacked the empathy and warmth transmitted in face-to-face learning. The face mask that shields in physical encounters seemed to be carried into WhatsApp communication as, again, there was a barrier. This was exacerbated through the use of English as a lingua franca. The frequent sharing of prefabricated knowledge and downloaded quotes by participants acted as a further distancing mechanism, despite the intention of creating empathetic bridges.

Tension 3: between 'enough' and 'too much'

We should be delighted that the course was experienced as relevant and useful. We should take the positive assessment as a compliment – and yet, there is the niggling doubt that the course did not go beyond individual personal growth, towards recognizing the common good as a greater good. As an educator-activist with a clear bias and political purpose the question of 'is it enough?' arose frequently. For example, within the limited scope of the course, we could only touch on the broader dynamics of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism. The limitations were frustrating in their superficiality. How much information, time spent on dialogue and analysis, is enough? And how much is too much, given the extremely little time available and participants' previous marginal exposure to and engagement with printed text?

Tension 4: between individual and group tasks

The mix of individual and group tasks was well received. It posed individual challenges to 'dare' to articulate own views; but also provided opportunities for exchanges with others, thus widening one's perspectives and interpretations. But did we go far enough in critical explorations? Did we push assumptions, challenge long-held beliefs, make connections between the singular and the common? How could group tasks have functioned as 'rehearsal space' for new views and feedback-giving on arguments?

Tension 5: between experiential knowledge and online information

There was extraordinary diligence with collecting information from the internet: many participants submitted lengthy, detailed text, most of which was copied directly from the internet without reflection, and/or from their own experience and knowledge. Maybe the joy of internet 'surfing' with purpose took over, together with the belief that this is what education demands? In any case, if we are looking for our ideas and personal experiences, tasks will have to be formulated explicitly!

Tension 6: between hope and faith

The metaphor of *hope* was intended to inspire a positive outlook towards the future. Many participants responded to the question ‘what gives you hope?’ by affirming their faith. On the one hand, the powerful strength that women derive from their faith is a relief; yet on the other, it leads to asking: how does faith relate to agency? We also realized that in preparation for the task we needed to have been sent more text, images, inspiration.

Tension 7: between reflection and action

The most severe limitation of the course was in the area of action. Popular education has a strong emphasis on praxis. While tasks took care of the reflection, the action was lacking, mainly, due to the corona pandemic that still enforces physical distancing or even isolation. The question as to how participants would use what they had learned was mainly responded to with examples of how they would impart the knowledge, teach the skills, share the information with others around them. Any implementation of campaigns will have to wait until after the crisis.

Can we do popular education using smartphones? We will certainly make adjustments - and try again.

Women rise for climate justice Shirley Walters

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Inviting you to join in organising PIMA climate justice webinars

A short documentary www.womenholdupthesky.co.za tells the stories of women in Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Africa who are rising to say ‘no’ to the extraction of natural resources by international companies. In Uganda, women have been using the courts to challenge oil exploration. The government took their land and promised new houses far from their fields. Their understanding is that ‘Only government benefits from the oil’.

In the DRC women are saying ‘no’ to the building of a third dam. The community’s lives are disrupted and they do not benefit from the hydro-electric power. They use oil lamps and, as fishers, have no electricity to refrigerate their catch. ‘Energy has become a fantasy’, they say, ‘It goes only to the elites’. They continue to resist, come together and learn about the alternative sun and wind energy.

In South Africa, women are resisting coal mining. The company did not fulfil its promises; they made a deal with the male traditional leaders; families have been removed far from arable land. Their cattle are dying from eating the coal dust; the water is contaminated; the mine is using the scarce water resources; crops are covered with dust and are withering. Women have organised a water assembly. Women are defiant.

There is strong evidence that in crises, be it environmental, food insecurity or health, poor and working-class women are the shock absorbers of the crises. They experience greater levels of job losses, food poverty and suffer even higher levels of gender-based violence. The majority of women in the world carry the greatest load in terms of family, community, health, food security, physical environment. They are given little recognition for their enormous contributions. They learn in and through their daily livelihood struggles.

It is these women who must be at the centre of ALE considerations as we consider climate justice and our responses as adult educators. We need to be in solidarity with one another. As Lilla Watson, an Aboriginal Australian woman, is quoted as saying, “If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together”. The thesis is, that if poor and working-class women attain social, economic, environmental and gender justice, the well-being of everyone, including the Planet, will be vastly improved. This is in line with the visionary intentions of UN’s Agenda 2030.

PIMA has chosen to host, with others where possible, a series of webinars on ALE and Climate Justice. The first webinars focused on the drought in Cape Town and fires in Australia. A group of PIMA members is shaping these webinars (Shauna Butterwick, Darlene Clover, Dorothy Lucardie, Astrid von Kotze, Shirley Walters, Joy Polanco O’Neil). Tentative titles for forthcoming webinars are: (i) *Climate justice and related struggles: Aesthetic, creative and disruptive strategies*; (ii) *Imagination and climate crises: how are artists and educators implicated?* (iii) *Climate justice: defending the land from resource extraction*.

[Look out for the notices!](#)

We invite PIMA members who are interested, to put your hands up, to join us. Please share ideas for ‘climate justice and ALE’ webinars you would most value. Contact Shirley Ferris@iafrica.com – you may even want to propose and lead another webinar series?

PARTNERSHIPS AND PIMA EXECUTIVE ACTIVITY

Campaigning together towards CONFINTEA 2022: TOR for a PIMA Special Interest Group (SIG) on CONFINTEA [Heribert Hinzen](#)

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Background

The PIMA Committee has decided to create a Special Interest Group (SIG) on CONFINTEA. This SIG would be of particular interest for all those in adult learning and education (ALE) with a lens on biographical and institutional perspectives of lifelong learning (LLL). The SIG would be linked to other PIMA activities, and at the same time contribute to the implementation of the PIMA Communication Strategy. Expectations are that this SIG could have an impact on CONFINTEA VII, and make PIMA more widely known.

CONFINTEA as a process

The first CONFINTEA was held in 1949. These global UNESCO events have been convened every twelve years ever since. They are excellent opportunities to inform and meet at regular intervals to take stock of achievements and lessons learned. The first was shortly after the establishment of UNESCO, with a post-war message. CONFINTEA II in 1960 in Montreal was much influenced by post-colonial thinking. CONFINTEA III in Tokyo in 1972 was important for adult education in its attempt to define ALE as a profession; it was

followed by the first UNESCO Recommendations on Adult Education in 1976. During CONFINTEA III the idea of a global ALE civil society organization was born: in 1973 the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) was founded.

CONFINTEA IV was held at the height of the Cold War, but still asserted adults' 'right to learn'. In 1997 in Hamburg CONFINTEA V created a new milestone for the development of ALE within LLL with strong civil society influence. CONFINTEA VI took place in Brazil in 2009, concluding with the Belem Framework for Action (BFA): "We recognize that adult education represents a significant component of the lifelong learning process, which embraces a learning continuum ranging from formal to non-formal to informal learning."

CONFINTEA VII is just around the corner and is planned to be in Marrakesh, Morocco, in 2022. In 2021 there will be continental pre-conferences for Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Europe and North America. National reports on the development of ALE since Belem are being prepared, based on a questionnaire coming from the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning UIL.

International commitments

BFA is a guiding and binding document for the international ALE community. The Education 2030 Agenda Goal Four of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) strengthened the LLL paradigm. The SDG was signed up by all Governments at the UN Summit in 2015. During the UNESCO General Conference in 2015, the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE) was adopted by all Member States, with important messages on policy, governance, financing, participation, and quality. It invites international cooperation between all stakeholders, including civil society. International statements like the above are helpful for a common understanding of ALE principles, and for instruments to hold Governments accountable.

ALE monitoring

The BFA recommended regular monitoring of ALE achievements. UIL has developed the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) as an instrument. The most recent publication from GRALE is *Trends in Adult Learning and Education in Africa: Findings from the 4th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*.

GRALE 5 is now under preparation, with citizenship education as its theme, based on background papers, and evaluating the CONFINTEA questionnaires. UIL, with ICAE and DVV International as partners, has just run a webinar series on "Enhancing national capacities for monitoring adult learning and education".

Experiences

Several PIMA members have been active in the CONFINTEA process in the past: Chris Duke was a Conference rapporteur in 1985. Heribert Hinzen was on the drafting group in 2009, and Shirley Walters gave the keynote at the CONFINTEA mid-term event in 2017.

Many more are active now in their different capacities: Robbie Guevara as ICAE President, Maria Khan as ASPBAE Secretary-General, Uwe Gartenschlaeger as EAEA President.

Potentially all PIMA members could become active in the process. We could all participate in UIL webinars, engage with focal points at our country UNESCO National Commissions in

respect to the questionnaires, or prepare for participation in the pre-conferences and Marrakesh in 2022, whether physically or on-line.

SIG activities

Various potential activities in the CONFINTEA process could be taken forward with the membership or wider public:

- Regular information to the membership
- Inform of important news via the Website
- Contribute materials and reflections to the Bulletin
- Liaise and cooperate with partners and stakeholders
- Jointly work on specific professional ALE aspects

Engage in parallel processes like the current UNESCO *Futures of Education*

An interesting document is available on the history of CONFINTEA (Ireland, Spezia, 2014), and there are huge amounts of materials on the UIL website. SIG members would receive the basic documents on CONFINTEA, RALE, GRALE and SDG.

Please contact Heribert Hinzen if you'd like to be a member of the CONFINTEA Special Interest Group! heribert.hinzen@gmail.com

SEAMEO – the Southeast Asia Organisation twin of UNESCO [Khau Huu Phuoc](http://www.seameo.org)

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Establishment

In 1965, the Ministers of Education and Ministers responsible for economic planning from the Asian countries came to Bangkok to attend a UNESCO Conference that was purposed to help countries plan the development of education on a national level. The participants agreed that the Southeast Asian countries ought to plan for regional cooperation and develop regional educational development projects. An organisation was thus needed to plan, and coordinate efforts in unison. As a result, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization was founded on 30 November 1965. (For comparison, ASEAN was established on 8 August 1967 with a mission to preserve peace and security, promote economic co-operation and integration as well as social development.)

Organisation

SEAMEO is a chartered inter-governmental organisation of 11 Southeast Asian countries. The SEAMEO Council, the organisation's governing body, comprises the 11 Ministers of Education of the SEAMEO Member Countries. Headquartered in Bangkok, it determines the general policies and strategic directions of the organisation.

SEAMEO serves as a forum for policy deliberations and coordinates cooperation in a wide range of areas in science, education, and culture through its current network of 26 regional Centres of Excellence. Each Centre is unique in terms of expertise in the network, and responsible for researching, and promoting one particular field of study for the whole region. Early SEAMEO Centres of particular relevance to the ALE and LLL work of PIMA included VOCTECH (Vocational and Technical Education and Training) established in 1990 and located in Brunei Darussalam, and SEAMOLEC (Open Learning Centre) in 1997 in

Tangerang, Indonesia. The most recent and directly relevant were CELLL, the Centre for Lifelong Learning located in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and CED (Community Education Development) in Vientiane, Laos, being established in 2013, and 2017 respectively.

The Organisation currently has eight associate and five affiliate members: Australia, France, New Zealand, Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, United Kingdom; and the British Council, China Education Association for International Exchange, International Council for Open and Distance Education, the University of Tsukuba and the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding.

The Organisation sees itself as the leading body for enhancing regional understanding and cooperation in education, science, and culture, for a better quality of life in Southeast Asia. This vision when translated into mission shares much of its targets with UNESCO's: to contribute to the building of a culture of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information. The two organisations have throughout the years supported each other in various projects and programmes, especially in literacy, adult education, and lifelong learning, cooperating especially through their Bangkok offices and also for example with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg. In a way, they function like twin organisations with UNESCO operating via its network of regional offices across the world and SEAMEO with its regional centres in ten of the eleven Southeast Asian countries.

Programmes

Since its establishment, the Organisation has conducted various programmes and projects. In 2011 it set forth the SEAMEO Strategic Plan (2011-2020) with the vision of 'Golden SEAMEO' by 2020. Nine goals were articulated, with different priority areas selected. In 2015 these were grouped into seven areas to be realised through different initiatives and programmes by the SEAMEO Centres over 20 years from 2015 to 2035, spanning beyond the SEAMEO Strategic Plan (2011-2020). These are:

1. Achieving universal early childhood care and education: This especially targets the disadvantaged, such as poor children; rural communities; marginalised ethnic and linguistic communities; and children with disabilities.
2. Addressing barriers to inclusion and access to basic learning opportunities: This is carried out through innovations in education delivery and management to provide for previously inaccessible and vulnerable groups.
3. Resilience in the face of emergencies: This aims to prepare schools leaders, teachers, students, and local communities in managing and maintaining the delivery of education services during emergencies such as conflicts, extreme weather, and natural disasters.
4. Promoting technical and vocational education and training: This aims to make technical and vocational education and training more visible to learners, providing a clear pathway to lifelong learning, higher education and regional labour, skill and learner mobility.
5. Revitalising teacher education: This aims to make teaching a first-choice profession through comprehensive, strategic, and practice-based reforms of teacher management and development systems; and to promote a shared teacher competency framework and a set of standards applicable across the region.
6. Harmonising higher education and research: This aims to enhance cross-border collaboration among universities and to improve human resources in each country.

7. Adopting a 21st Century curriculum: This aims to provide people with the knowledge, skills and values needed to effectively respond to the changing world through a myriad of education and training programmes and activities for a strong (ASEAN) community.

The Seven Priority Areas agree with some of the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) put forth in 2015. The alignment is especially strong in SDG4 which is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” To take a few examples, Priority Areas 1 (*Achieving universal early childhood care and education*) and 2 (*Addressing barriers to inclusion and access to basic learning opportunities*) serve towards the achievement of target 4.1 of SDGs, which aims to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

Priority Area 4 is part of SDG 4.3, which aims to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable quality technical, vocational and tertiary education; and SDG 4.4, which aims to increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

Priority Area 3 is a supporting condition for the achievement of SDG 13.3, which is on climate change mitigation. Priority Area 7 embraces a range of activities and programmes that lead to the achievement of many other SDGs, like SDG 5 for gender equality, SDG 8 for decent work and economic growth, SDG 11 for resiliency in human settlements.

Towards a bright future

The year 2020 marks the Golden SEAMEO milestone when review and assessment of SEAMEO Strategic Plan 2011-2020 are conducted, and SEAMEO itself re-defines its Mission, Vision, Core Values, Core Competencies and Motto in line with changes and trends on the regional level concerning the global context. The organisation will maintain “its work and aspirations for development with peoples of the region to make lives better in quality and equity in education, preventive health education, culture and tradition, information and communication technology, languages, poverty alleviation and agriculture and natural resources”. (Source: SEAMEO Action Agenda for 7 Priority Areas). And the next Strategic Plan will advance the ideological ambition expressed in the SEAMEO Song.

It's time to open our eyes
To a bright and promising future.
We'll rise to the call of the times
And create a stronger tomorrow.
Let's start to make a difference
...
We will achieve our goals through partnership
Creating opportunities
By working hand in hand.
We can accomplish all our dreams.

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From the PIMA President **Shirley Walters**

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In times of the coronavirus pandemic and unprecedented socio-economic-ecological turmoil, we express solidarity with communities around the world who are struggling and do hope that PIMA can, in some ways, contribute to the rebuilding of connection, as expressed in this Bulletin.

Your Executive Committee has been active during the lockdown. We have developed the new PIMA strapline for communications which describes more clearly what we stand for **Promoting, Interrogating, Mobilising, Adult Learning and Education (ALE)**. Linked to this we have adopted a Communications Strategy and Plan of Action which addresses the question 'how can we feel that we belong to the network so that we can promote, interrogate, mobilise ALE, as effectively as possible?'. Maria Slowey and Julia Denholm are alerting you to a short members' survey designed to find out more about your interests and ideas for the further development of PIMA. Please respond when it lands in your inbox!

Please also respond to invitations in the Bulletin to be active in the Webinar Series on *Climate Justice and ALE*; to join the new *CONFINTEA Special Interest Group*; and re-commit to the *Later Life Learning SIG*. We encourage you also to take initiatives of your own – please send proposals through to the committee.

An update report on the launch of the DVV initiated Adult Learning and Education (ALE) brand project, which we have reported on previously, is that the date of the 22 September has been postponed because of the need to clarify legal implications. We will let you know as we receive updates.

We understand ALE within the context of social solidarity, human development, and socio-ecological justice – the time is NOW to ensure our contributions matter!

PIMA Members – Tell us more about your interests and ideas **Julia Denholm, Maria Slowey**

PIMA is a membership association - we have no budget, no employees, a 'light touch' constitution with an EXECO, which works simply as a coordinating group. What we do

have is a growing network of over 180 leading adult educators, scholars, activists who bring their wealth of expertise, energy and commitment to the promotion of ALE across more than 40 countries.

We are planning a short survey to find out more about members' interests and ideas for the further development of PIMA. The aim is to help us know about each other and what we can do collectively to promote, mobilise and advocate for change through ALE.

So, please do complete the online questionnaire when the invitation lands in your inbox shortly- ***it won't take much time... that's a promise!*** It will be entirely up to you if you wish to complete it anonymously or add your name- especially helpful if you might be offering to be involved in particular activities.

Summary results of the survey will be circulated to members and reported in a future edition of the Bulletin.

OTHER MEMBER STUDIES AND NEWS

Tumbon Premium Products: Promoting Work and Income-Generation in Rural Thailand **Sumalee Sungsri**

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Adult learning and education in Thailand

In Thailand, the Office of Non-formal and Informal Education (ONIE), which did the work that this report is based on, is the main agency providing non-formal and informal education for out-of-school people. According to the structure of administration, the country has five regions. Within each region, there are a total of 77 provinces. Each province is divided into several districts and then sub-districts. To extend educational opportunity to people in all areas ONIE has followed this country's administrative structure by establishing Non-formal and Informal Education Centres in every region, province and district.

The Provincial Non-formal and Informal Education Centre acts as an administrative and academic supporter for all the District Centres in its area, which are the operating units. Each District Centre provides non-formal and informal education for people in every sub-district and village in its areas by sending two or three volunteer teachers to each sub-district.

Non-formal and informal education (NFIE) in Thailand is provided mainly for out-of-school people. They include young people who have no opportunity to further their education after compulsory education (early secondary school), working-age people and elderly people. The total number of out-of-school people is more than 45 million out of a total of 67 million.

Non-formal and informal education activities.

Non-formal and informal education activities provided by ONIE are of various types and forms to serve the needs of the target groups in each area. They can be categorized into three main groups, for 1) Basic education, 2) Vocational education, and 3) Quality of life development activities.

1) Basic education.

Non-formal education activities in this group include literacy classes for those who cannot read and write, or who forgot their literacy skills; reading promotion for everyone; primary education, early secondary education and upper secondary education which are equivalent to formal education in school.

2) Promotion of Vocational education.

Activities in this group are aimed at providing knowledge and skills for people to upgrade their present occupations; to create new occupations; to add value for the products; and to do more income-generating and the like. Activities include short courses and long-term vocational training in various subjects. Courses and subjects provided are flexible and varied to meet the needs of the people and the context of each local area.

3) Quality of life development activities.

Activities in this group are aimed at developing the quality of life of people for physical health, mental health, living situation, social conditions and the environment. Activities in this group are on for example teaching about food for nutrition; exercising for health; drug prevention; meditation camps; workshops on environmental preservation; and the role of people in a democratic society.

Informal education and learning activities are available or supported in various forms, for example employing learning resources. Different types of learning resources are established in each local area, such as a library, museum, art and craft centre, information centre and local wisdom centre. Informal education also takes the form of knowledge disseminated through the media: NFE centres at provincial and district level distribute knowledge and information through different types of media, such as radio and television programs, local newspapers, village news towers, and traditional plays. Religious activities and day-to-day living activities also let people obtain informal education automatically.

Needs for income-generating among people in rural areas.

NFIE Centres in every province and district always conduct need assessments of people in their areas prior to providing non-formal and informal education activities to them. One of the main problems which the staff found in every part of the country was that people had little income. Most people in rural areas are farmers or agriculturists. They usually obtain their income from their crops once a year. The price of the crops is not high, so their income is low. Moreover, in some years the weather is not good, and they have not enough rain for their crops, so get little income for their crops. Most of the time, it is not enough for expenses for the whole year.

This strongly affects people's living situations and other aspects of their lives. Many young adults move to work in industries in big cities, instead of living with families and working from home.

One Community vocational training centre in one Tumbon

ONIE realized the impact of this problem among people in rural areas. The problem not only has an impact on people's living situation. It also affects the educational opportunity for their children. In order to take part in helping people to overcome this problem, ONIE has introduced the policy of formulating one Community vocational training centre in one sub-district, or Tumbon, in 2012. The policy has been transferred out for implementation by the Provincial NFE centres and District NFE centres across the country. (Office of Non-formal and Informal Education Promotion, 2012).

Farmers and agriculturists have tried to solve the problem by themselves too. Each family tries to create extra income-generating work by using their expertise, or the knowledge obtained from their older generations. But each works separately with very small budgets. Each district has a number of sub-districts or Tumbons. To implement the policy known originally as OTOP (one Tumbon one product) provincial NFE centres encourage District NFE centres within their areas to form up Community vocational training centres, with the participation of the villagers in every Tumbon. Each Community vocational training centre then provides knowledge and information about occupations to people, organizes vocational training, and encourages people to set up a vocational group that suits the context of the area.

To select the types of vocation to set up the kind of vocational group most suitable for that Tumbon, people have to consider a number of factors such as availability of resources in their Tumbon; the expertise of their people; and market needs and opportunities. Encouraging people to form a vocational group instead of just working separately, helps them generate more power, and the teamwork to create a better and larger volume of products. The community vocational centre provides advice and suggestions, inviting resource persons to help the Tumbon vocational group with modern techniques, and to value-add to their products.

Tumbon Premium Products

Setting up a community training centre in each Tumbon and encouraging people to form an occupational group has a lot of advantages for people in rural areas. They can earn extra income apart from their main occupation. They can help one another to innovate and develop high-quality products of their Tumbon. They have more power for marketing and more networks. Their Tumbon becomes well known by people in other parts of the country. People in rural areas can work in their home town and not move to find jobs in the cities. Moreover, it helps to create good relationships among people, encouraging them to participate and formulate a community identity.

ONIE Promotion has thus promoted occupation and income-generating among people in rural areas continuously. The policy of one premium product of each Tumbon was introduced and implemented throughout the country. According to this policy, committees for selecting premium products are appointed at district and provincial level. At the district level, two or three best products will be selected from the best products of all Tumbons to be the premium products of the district. At provincial level, three best products from all districts will be selected as premium products of the province. Thus, every province across the country will have its own premium products.



Examples of premium products.

- A premium product of Nawha District: Product from Kok weaving

Tumbon Naseaw in Nawha district, Nakhon-Panom province has the product of kok-weaving; Kok is a kind of grass growing in water: a reed or papyrus. The villagers in Tumbon Naseaw weave kok and make it into several forms such as handbags, briefcases, vases, placemats, coasters, tissue boxes, purses, keyring bags, etc. These goods are handmade from the natural plant and can last a long time.

- ☐ A premium product of Reanoo-Nakhon District: hand embroidery blouses and t-shirts

This is a product of Tambon Pontong, Reanoo-Nakhon district, Nakhon-Panom province. Here the villagers weave cotton material themselves. The hand-woven material is then dyed with natural colour, as traditional cotton and the villagers make blouses and t-shirts from the cotton, which they then embroider to decorate blouses and t-shirts.



- ☐ A premium product of Maung District: Krunkrao flower

This is a product of Tambon Nai-Maung, Maung District, Nakhon-Panom province. They make use of the Krunkrao flower in different styles for decorating, and also in a bouquet style.

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Acknowledgement: Thanks to Miss Bussalin Changsaluk NFE educator of Nakhon Panom Provincial NFE centre, for information about the premium products and the pictures.

Lifelong learning: transitions, changes and learning across working life – reporting on a webinar [Dorothy Lucardie](mailto:dorothy.lucardie@bigpond.com.au)

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On August 26th Stephen Billett, Griffith University, introduced a project entitled *Practices and policies for sustaining employability through work-life learning* at a webinar hosted by Adult Learning Australia.



This project has been funded under the Australian Research Council's Discovery scheme and includes researchers from Switzerland and Denmark.

The project is exploring the question *“What personal, educational and workplace practices can best sustain employability across working life?”* and is being undertaken in three phases:

Phase 1 –Identifying processes and outcomes of work-life learning

Phase 2 –Elaborating processes and outcomes of learning, and learning support

Phase 3 –Advancing policy and practice implications

In the webinar Professor Billet discusses the findings from phase one of the project. The data suggest that changes that initiate and comprise transitions are most frequently mentioned as personal/lifestyle and occupational changes.

We thank Adult Learning Australia for providing the following link to a recording of the webinar.

<https://ala.asn.au/lifelong-learning-transitions-changes-and-learning-across-working-life/>

A win from Government for Adult Learning and Education [Colin McGregor](#)

colin.mcgregor@aceaotearoa.org.nz [From the Director of ACE Aotearoa]

Adult and Community Education (ACE) Aotearoa (New Zealand), a non- government organisation, is the peak body for the ACE sector in New Zealand. We are a membership organisation which delivers support to the sector through training, conferences and development of tools. We also actively engage with government and public sector officials.

Right now, we have good reason to celebrate. We are at the vanguard of investment by government in the Adult and Community Education sector. The economic focus of the current government has been wellbeing and they produced a Wellbeing Budget in 2019 and repeated this focus in 2020. This most recent budget allocated NZ\$16 million (US\$10.5 million) of additional investment over four years to the Adult and Community Education sector. The expected focus is on social cohesion, well-being and vocational programmes. This level of funding hasn't happened overnight; it is the result of many years of working with governments and the sector to highlight the value of ACE.

This investment in the sector comes at a time of economic uncertainty with COVID-19 impacting on New Zealand and across the globe. We are particularly pleased that the investment is directed across a number of programmes, reflecting both social and economic priorities. The sector has provided feedback to the government on where this spend could be best directed and the importance of having a balanced approach to the selection of programmes to support learners.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS OF PIMA

Dr Amy Pickard, pickard@iu.edu, is an Assistant Professor of Adult Education at the Indiana University School of Education in the United States.

She is a qualitative researcher whose interests center on policy, equity, and adult literacy education. As a former adult literacy teacher, she is interested in how marginalized and/or

minoritized adults define their own learning needs, and how to improve public policy and public programs to better meet these needs.

Amy is interested in joining PIMA because she hopes to engage in a community of those interested in connecting adult education to social justice issues on both local and global scales, something that sits at the very heart of PIMA's values and purposes in the Network's sense of mission.

Her other interests include community-based adult education, urban education, new literacy studies, digital literacy, critical literacy, racial and cultural diversity in education, and educational ethnography.

Dr Linda Cooper Linda.cooper@uct.ac.za is a Professor Emerita at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, and a Member of the Advisory Committee for DITSELA, the Workers' Education Institute.

Linda lectured on the Adult Education programme at the University of Cape Town from 1993 to 2018. She has a long history of involvement in trade union education and other radical adult education initiatives. She is concerned with the role of adult education in promoting social justice.

Her research has focused on the history of workers' education; Recognition of Prior Learning and widening access to adult learners in higher education; and the relationship between experiential, academic and work-based forms of knowledge.

She acts as an education advisor to DITSELA and is a member of the International Advisory Committee of the Researching Work and Learning conference. We welcome her to the PIMA Network.

Dr Jane Burt Jane.reallife@gmail.com is a popular educator committed to socio-ecological justice. She is a South African currently living in England.

Her particular interest in learning is the politics of knowing, cognitive justice, gender, mediation and change-oriented learning. This leads her to work with emancipatory pedagogy and consider ways to learn and change including theatre for the oppressed, photography, spiritual practices, creative writing techniques and care work.

Welcome to the PIMA Network, Amy, Linda and Jane. We look forward to hearing more from you and interacting purposefully together.

PIMA Website <https://pimamembers.wixsite.com/network>