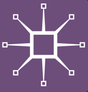

PALGRAVE STUDIES IN
ADULT EDUCATION
AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Access, Lifelong Learning and Education for All

Edited by
Gareth Parry
Michael Osborne
Peter Scott

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Foreword

This collection of essays was inspired by the work of Professor Jim Gallacher, who for some four decades, until his death in 2020, was a driving force in the widening of access to higher education in Scotland, and in fostering the development of research in lifelong learning in the UK and beyond. Each of the editors and many of the contributors to this collection had close working relations with Jim, and considered him a close friend. All who met Jim will remember him with fondness and respect.

Jim's academic career began in the 1970s within the Department of Social Sciences at Glasgow College of Technology, which later became Glasgow Caledonian University. Some of his early work in widening access involved the creation of part-time degree provision, and he became one of the driving forces of the Scottish Wider Access Programme from the late 1980s onwards.

Through the 1990s and into the new century, he was core to the establishment of the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning funded by the Scottish Funding Council, the creation of an online Masters in Lifelong Learning and, importantly, the completion of a number of

research projects on widening participation for the Scottish Government and other funders. Key concerns in this work were the links between further education and higher education and the accreditation of prior learning.

In parallel he became influential at Scottish and UK levels as a member of the Scottish Funding Council, where he was chair of the Access and Inclusion Committee, and as Vice-Chair of the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning. He was also a member of the Scottish Executive's Lifelong Learning Forum, and an adviser to the Scottish Parliament's Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee for their Inquiry into lifelong learning.

In what some would call retirement, he seemed no less active. As well as holding an Emeritus Chair at Glasgow Caledonian University, he held honorary chairs at the University of Stirling and the University of the Highlands and Islands and was a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Capital Normal University in Beijing. He continued to be prolific in publication, and as recently as 2019 was co-editor of the Routledge collection, *New Frontiers for College Education: International Perspectives*, focusing on the vocational education sector, perhaps his greatest concern over the years.

Jim's achievements were substantial and he would have been able to comment authoritatively on all of the chapters in this book. We hope that in some small part it pays tribute to the legacy of someone whose contributions were immense.

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1

Introduction

Gareth Parry, Michael Osborne, and Peter Scott

This book is concerned with access, lifelong learning and education for all. Three different but intersecting and overlapping domains.

- The first is fair(er) access to post-secondary education, in particular, higher education and its elite university segment. This is key to

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securing greater equity in education because participation in education beyond compulsory schooling is highly stratified in terms of social class, although now less so in terms of gender (at any rate in developed countries). Fair access to initial higher education is also crucial because, for better or worse, most post-secondary education systems are heavily front-loaded in terms of resources, mass participation and public and political attention. Their predominant focus is on young adults, which makes it difficult to catch up later. In addition, because participation in post-secondary education, especially at the elite university level, is most influential in shaping the structure of (well-paid and socially respected) professional work and in (re)producing class structures, more equitable access presents a key challenge for both socio-economic modernisation and educational reform and progressive politics.

- The second domain is lifelong learning—in effect, the drive to spread educational opportunities more equitably across the life cycle. To some extent, this has begun to be addressed by the advance of mass higher education systems. Despite front-loading, there has been a slow but steady chronological shift in the balance of post-secondary education. Pressure for more flexible forms of access and delivery has led to more open course structures—for example, modular and part-time courses—which can be a more congenial learning form for the no-longer young adult. Mass participation at undergraduate level has also stimulated large-scale expansion of postgraduate courses. This postgraduate expansion has tilted away from advanced academic courses, which were once its core, to more applied programmes, whether in the later stages of professional accreditation or continuing professional development. This has chimed well with the need to respond to the acceleration of economic and technological change, the advance of the so-called 'knowledge society'. The idea of lifelong learning has also chimed with the greying of many western societies (the developing world is different), both demographically and socio-culturally.
- The third domain is education for all. Even in its most expanded form, higher education is not—yet—for everyone. In many developed countries, participation rates have ground to a halt between 50 and 60 per cent, although there are some outliers, very high participation

> systems with rates exceeding 70 per cent. Inside these systems access to elite universities in particular remains tightly rationed, focused on a minority of academically well-qualified young people (who align uncomfortably closely with the most socially advantaged). Lifelong learning too has its own exclusionary features. It tends to be most available to those with the highest level of initial education, to those with the high-grade professional skills seen as most deserving of upgrading and development and to those with the most social capital (and money and leisure). Too often the Matthew principle has applied—'to those who have shall be given'. Also, lifelong learning is defined in temporal terms, spreading educational opportunities over the life course. Education for all, in contrast, is defined in spatial terms, aspiring to offer universal access across class, gender, culture and ethnicity as well as age.

There have been two frameworks in which the connections between these three domains have been imagined. The first is the imperialism, but also democratisation, of mass higher education systems, as they have supplanted or absorbed other sectors of post-secondary education and radically widened their social bases. When the American sociologist Martin Trow first theorised the development of these systems half a century ago, he suggested three stages of development—elite higher education with up to 15 per cent participation among school leavers, essentially universities segregated from other types of post-secondary education; then mass higher education with between 15 and 50 per cent participation, when universities expanded and proliferated and some of these other types (notably more advanced types of technical education) joined them to form these greatly expanded systems; and finally, universal higher education with participation rates in excess of 50 per cent, which he only lightly sketched but certainly envisaged the incorporation of most of the adult and continuing education (Trow, 1973, 2010). Put simply, it was assumed, lazily and complacently, that the first domain, higher education, would expand to absorb the second and third domains, lifelong learning and education for all. By these means, any differences would be reconciled.

The second framework is to envisage alternative, even oppositional, forms of post-secondary education to the (traditional) university. In the giddiest days of the New Left in the United Kingdom in the 1960s and 1970s it was even hoped that the university itself might become this opposition to itself, especially in the shape of newly established universities with radical agendas, which would be swept up in an unstoppable tide of liberation from class structures and hierarchies of knowledge. More practically it was imagined that new, or remodelled, institutions outside the university would be needed to realise this emancipatory project, as bases for opposition. So some university extra-mural departments reached back to their radical roots in workers' education, at any rate rhetorically. The new polytechnics in England were briefly conceived to be 'people's universities'. Others argued that theories of education such as those associated with activist-theorists such as Paulo Freire, linked in turn to wider theories of liberation, would need to be called on to animate the opposition to traditional academic forms, and their political and socio-economic underpinnings.

There is another variant of this second framework, with different ideological roots. It has perhaps a common starting point with the liberationist variant just described—the belief or premonition that, even in mass systems, the inherent academicism of the university ultimately cannot be overcome. Both variants concluded that lifelong learning and education for all would have to be realised, initially at any rate, outside the university. But, according to the second, more practical forms of post-secondary education focused on the skills essential for successful economies must be protected and expanded to counter this inherent academicism of the university—or, perhaps, to protect the traditional university from contamination by lesser-breed students and lesser-breed subjects. This has led to two contrasting policy discourses—the first emphasises the need to rebalance post-secondary education by placing greater emphasis on, and increasing the funding of, further and technical education at the expenses of higher education, and universities in particular; the second promotes the development of entrepreneurial 'alternative providers' typically for-profit colleges operating (if possible) in a market economy, providing utilitarian knowledge and skills with no pretence of fostering critical enquiry.

The first two domains, access to higher education and lifelong learning, have their own distinctive institutional settings. Higher education is strongly institutionalised. Although higher education is predominantly provided by universities, higher technical and professional education institutions such as *Fachhochschulen* in Germany also play a significant role, as do specialist institutions in art, design and music. The institutionalisation of higher education is also overwhelmingly national. National policies, and national funding and regulatory regimes, predominate. The growing emphasis on internationalisation in contemporary higher education systems can be misleading. Internationalisation continues to serve largely national (and institutional) agendas.

The institutionalisation of lifelong learning is looser and more diffuse. It is also provided by universities, in particular distance learning universities such as the Open University in the United Kingdom and also through continuing education departments and centrally run departments focused on short courses, micro-credentials and MOOCs (massive open online courses). But other adult education institutions and community organisations also play an important role, as do broadcasting organisations, industry, business and specialist training providers. Funding of adult education is often precarious with few countries reaching UNESCO's recommendation that it should be at least four per cent of total education spending, and often highly localised and devolved to sub-national jurisdictions. The institutional setting of the third domain, education for all, is looser still. It is rooted in but transcends the institutional bases of higher education and lifelong learning. In one register it can be regarded as an intensification of mass higher education—the advance to the universal stage in Trow's triptych, or a realisation of many of the impulses already present in lifelong learning and continuing education. But its expression is not primarily through creating and adapting institutions but in terms of higher levels of participation, new modes of delivery and progression, new types of credentials and qualification and new articulations with the labour market (and social life, more widely).

In conceptual terms, it is important to distinguish between these three domains, not so much to maintain a spurious separation but to understand their different dynamics. This distinguishing is more not

less important as they have intersected and overlapped. At times, it seems access, lifelong learning and education for all have come close to being treated as near-synonyms and, as a result, used almost interchangeably. Therefore, there is a risk that lifelong learning may be totally subsumed into higher education and reduced to just another of the multiple missions of the modern university. Similarly, mass high education can be regarded as providing education for all—or, rather, all those who are seen as well enough prepared academically and with sufficient motivation to benefit from advanced study. Fair access is then used as a kind of lubricant to reduce the friction between traditional academic culture and the forces of democratic entitlement.

Conceptual differences (still) matter. Access is focused on greater educational opportunities predominately for young adults and, it is hoped, improved social mobility following graduation in the context of mass higher education systems which have retained many of the attributes of the elite university systems that preceded them. Lifelong learning is focused on equalising opportunities across the life course, which has the contingent benefit of partially rectifying past inequalities as well as rebalancing provision across the generations. But efficiency, in the form of optimising human capital in the service of future economic growth (and social well-being), is as important an impulse as equity for promoting lifelong learning. Education for all can be seen as the culmination of a historical process, extending universal primary and secondary education into the post-secondary phase (a process that in most developed countries is close to competition although in a highly stratified form in terms of social class and public investment), or as a more radical project challenging these forms of stratification. On a wider global canvas education for all can be linked with wider development goals, especially in poorer countries, and also global equity, remedying gross inequalities between countries.

However, in the world of systems and policies, the three domains have intersected with increasing force. Even the most traditional institutions have become more permeable and fluid. By absorbing many other once-distinct post-secondary education institutions the 'university' has taken on multiple missions alongside full-time academic and professional undergraduate courses for young adults, postgraduate programmes

aimed at apprentice academics (and the later stages of preparation for entry into the traditional professions), and research and scholarship. In the process, it has become more open, in terms of its student body and its knowledge domains. As such, it now appears a more congenial environment for the development of lifelong learning. Not all universities, of course—they now comprise a diverse, disparate but stratified range of institutions (or hierarchy—with elite universities, only modestly changed except in their research function, now semi-industrialised but also, to a degree, focused also on social impact). At the same time, the territory of the rest of post-secondary education has shifted. Institutional ambition and efficiencies-of-scale have encouraged the formation of quasi-university conglomerations even where university titles have been unavailable.

New forces are in play—most especially corporatisation stimulated by mission heterogeneity and sometimes mandated by state-sponsored modernisation; and marketisation as the norms and practices of the private market have penetrated deeply into the world of post-secondary education. Networks and partnerships have become increasingly important, locally and globally. What was once termed 'info-tainment' has been turbocharged by the contemporary dynamism of the creative and cultural industries, from the citadels of high culture to the wilder shores of games technology and social media. This transgression of formerly firm boundaries, which walled around education, has had far-reaching consequences for access, lifelong learning and education for all, the subject of this book.

This book attempts to illuminate these three domains—fair access to post-secondary education, lifelong learning and education for all, their dynamics and the intersections between them. It has 12 chapters, which are not arranged typically under these three domains (because that would have imposed too rigid a structure on highly fluid definitions and connections but grouped instead under three broad themes—policy, theory and research; boundaries and pathways; and movements, communities and centres.

Access Beyond Elites

Grouped under the first theme there are four chapters. In the first, Peter Scott discusses fair access, particularly to higher education, linking it to the achievements and disappointments of mass higher education. Access has been both the organising principle of massification, because its defining characteristic has been the explosion of student numbers (the number and types of institution), but also one of its major deficits, in the sense that mass expansion has produced near-universal participation by the more socially advantaged while continuing to ration access for less favoured social groups. One reason for this ambiguity about access is that at the very period when mass higher education accelerated, from the 1980s and 1990s onwards in Europe (earlier in the United States and later in many Asian and African countries) and when mass systems absorbed previously independent sectors of post-secondary and adult education, societies were becoming less equal in terms of income, wealth (and life-chances too) as a result of market deregulation, the erosion of the post-war welfare state and the advance of neoliberal ideas celebrating individuals rather than classes or communities.

Scott's chapter considers three topics. The first, echoing the previous discussion, is the persistence of highly differentiated participation rates in higher education, with young people from the most privileged social groups between three and four times more likely to go to university than those from the most deprived social groups (with ratios considerably greater in terms of access to elite universities). Next, he reviews the various policy instruments deployed by different countries to promote fairer access to higher education, including national targets, school outreach programmes, financial support, flexible entry standards and guaranteed places. Of particular salience here is the perennial debate about the advantages and disadvantages of free tuition, which remove financial barriers to participation and promote the idea of higher education as a public good, and tuition fees, some of the proceeds of which can be recycled back into scholarships.

In the third and final part of his chapter Scott debates the more fundamental question about what is 'fair'. Most access and participation programmes in universities are designed to help applicants from poorer

backgrounds who have the necessary academic potential to benefit from what universities currently offer, by seeking to remedy the 'deficits' in their prior schooling. This approach, he argues, is closely related to ideas of social co-option and meritocracy. These ideas were accepted very much as 'givens' by many of the liberal exponents of mass expansion. But more recently the work of Peter Mandler and Michael Sandel and others has emphasised instead the darker sides of meritocracy, its false promises (because traditional elites have largely retained their privileges) and its hollowing out of deprived communities, which has been seized on by right-wing 'populists' in their attacks on liberal democracy and professional society (Mandler, 2020; Sandel, 2021). Instead, Scott argues for a more radical conception of social mobility, focused on social justice for deprived communities not just disadvantaged individuals. But even mass universities, with their still strong elitist habits, are not well positioned to adopt such a radical strategy, not least because it would require them to interrogate their own organisational practices and cognitive values.

The theme of increasing inequality is taken up by Gavin Moodie and Leesa Wheelahan in Chapter 3 with its provocative title 'Human Capital Theory and its Discontents'. Their focus is on the limitations of human capital theory, which has come to dominate higher education policy, whether in terms of individual pay-offs, or rates-of-return, or of national economic success in the context of global free-market competition. Human capital theory's focus on instrumental outcomes relates well to neoliberal ideas with their focus on the primacy, and efficiency, of the private market. They review the limitations of human capital theory—on empirical, methodological and normative grounds.

However, despite these limitations, versions of human capital theory have become increasingly influential in policy circles in order to legitimate a narrowly instrumental view of the value of higher education. Sadly, these views are by no means confined to the radical right but now extend all the way to the centre-left across the political spectrum. Moodie and Wheelahan point out that, as a result of the high political favour enjoyed by human capital theory, its limitations and weaknesses have gone unacknowledged. Instead post-secondary education, to the extent it does not conform to the expectations and demands of human capital theory, is itself regarded as having chronic weaknesses. In place

of the narrow instrumentalism apparently validated by human capital theory, the authors argue for an alternative approach to post-secondary education based on asserting human rights and improving human capabilities. This alternative approach has three elements—the educational, to develop students' appreciation of academic knowledge; occupational, to develop individual and collective productive capacities; and social, to help develop society in accordance with respect for human rights, social justice and social inclusion.

Idowu Biao takes a different tack in Chapter 4. His focus is, first, on sub-Saharan Africa in a welcome contrast to many studies of access, lifelong learning and education for all that concentrate on policy and practice in developed countries; and, secondly, on the epistemologies that underlie policy and practice in adult and continuing education in this important and demographically dynamic world region. Three different epistemologies are considered.

- The first is African traditional education, with its orientation on individuals in their social roles—which superficially may encourage an instrumental and utilitarian approach, but also places greater emphasis on conservation and sustainability—age-old imperatives in pastoral and agricultural societies that have acquired a new, and more urgent, resonance in the twenty-first century.
- The second is the approach to adult and continuing education that developed in Anglophone countries, typically associated with ideas of liberal education and often delivered through extra-mural university departments and community organisations.
- The third, and least developed in Biao's view, is the approach taken in Francophone African countries, where both the epistemological and institutional bases of adult and continuing education were weakest.

He argues these deficits in Francophone Africa need to be addressed, and the epistemologies characteristic of both African traditional education and of the Anglophone tradition are best placed to develop into a forward-looking twenty-first-century epistemology for adult and continuing education focused on sustainable development.

In Maria Slowey's and Hans Schuetze's chapter we return to the Euro-American heartland—but with an interesting twist because one of their main strands is (lifelong) learning opportunities for refugees. The other strand is similar opportunities for older adults. They examine these two strands in two different European countries—Ireland and Germany—and highlight important differences between them. Both countries have absorbed large numbers of refugees, in particular, Germany since 2015. But for Germany with limited experience of inward, or outward, migration (at any rate in recent historical experience, except for post-war expulsions and the immigration of 'guest workers', mainly from Turkey) this has been a novelty, even a shock. Ireland in contrast has had long as well as recent experience of, mainly outward, migration. So their national contexts differed. They also differed in the context of their second strand with Germany projected to have one of the oldest populations in Europe. Some important initiatives are discussed in their chapter, including the University of Sanctuary and the Age-friendly university (both in Ireland).

But their core argument is that formidable barriers to the development of access, lifelong learning and education continue to exist. They emphasise three—first, reductions in public funding for post-secondary education, which have increased competition between sectors and institutions (usually with elite sectors and elite institutions winning out); second, the impact of neoliberal ideas and their (related but not identical) analogue in the context of the governance and management of higher education, the so-called 'new public management', which have prioritised a more strong market orientation and emphasised the importance of efficiency; and finally, the increasing influence of university rankings and the perceived imperative to build and sustain 'world-class universities'. All three make opening up access and routes into lifelong learning more difficult.

Alternative Pathways

Grouped under the second theme there are also four chapters. What binds them together is a focus on alternative pathways into and through post-secondary education—alternative in the sense that they complement, or rival, the conventional elite pathway from academic courses in secondary schools into full-time university education. These pathways are especially important in terms of access, because they draw their students from a much wider social range and, for the same reason, they hold out greater promise in terms of providing education for all.

The chapter by Andrä Wolter discusses the much praised, but sometimes poorly understood, 'dual system' in Germany—the clear institutional division between vocational and academic education in upper secondary and post-secondary education. The 'dual system' has been praised, especially outside Germany, by policy makers in countries with much weaker and more open binary structures who envy its apparently clear-cut division of roles and functions and are particularly attracted by the lack of permeability between the two streams. The German system has often been poorly understood because, as Wolter demonstrates, it has been under strain for a number of years and has been substantially modified, even weakened.

The main source of strain has been the development of mass higher education, which has led to a large-scale expansion in the number of students in universities (and, indeed, in the number of universities). This has not been matched by a parallel expansion in the number of students in the vocational half of the 'dual system'. Instead, their number has grown at a much slower rate, or even contracted, partly because vocational pathways have tended to be squeezed by, supposedly, academic pathways—the imperialism of mass higher education discussed earlier in this introductory chapter—but also because changes in the occupational structures have tended to shrink the pool of potential vocational students.

However, according to Wolter, it is much too simple to see the erosion of the 'dual system' in terms of the growing predominance of its traditional academic strand. Instead, he points to the 'academicisation' of

vocational pathways and the 'vocationalisation' of academic pathways—in other words, not simply academic drift but also vocational drift. He emphasises the process of 'reverse engineering', as university graduates go on to take vocational courses and universities accredit vocational competences (and prior learning). The result of this greater permeability between academic and vocational strands of post-secondary education is improved access and wider opportunities, especially for students most likely to enter vocational pathways, who are also likely to be drawn from non-elite social groups.

In Chapter 3, Rebecca Natow discusses the second potentially paradigmatic example of alternative pathways in post-secondary education—the US community colleges. It was the community colleges that initially provided the United States with its access advantage, although it has now been overtaken by several countries in terms of mass participation. But the community colleges always had two faces—as institutions that prepared students for subsequent transfer to four-year colleges, what might be described as the basement floor of mass higher education in the United States; but also as institutions independently oriented to workforce development and also community service. As a result, community colleges are simultaneously feeder and free-standing institutions.

Natow highlights three particular aspects of the development of community colleges. The first is the need to raise income. This has been an imperative common to all US post-secondary institutions, which four-year colleges and research universities have addressed by aggressive increases in tuition fees (even in public institutions). On the whole, this option has to be less available to community colleges with their low-fee or no-fee traditions. Instead, their search for income has tended to push them towards employee training and development. Second, she emphasises their emphasis on less traditional forms of course delivery and credentialisation, with more virtual and asynchronous provision an example of the former and credits for life experience an example of the latter. Although 4-year colleges also engage with both, these trends are more pronounced in community colleges. Third, and most important in terms of the overall theme of this book, is their emphasis on open access. Whether as feeder or as free-standing institutions, community colleges remain key to access.

In Chapter 4, Gareth Parry offers a deep historical dive into the evolution of an alternative route in England based on further education colleges. He frames his account in terms of the milestones provided by major policy interventions—starting with the Crowther report in 1959, which first opened up the possibility of an 'alternative route' into post-secondary education, both as a normative concept and as potential policy; through the 1987 White Paper which brought special-purpose access courses and vocational qualifications alongside the standard academic pathway; to the 2016 Sainsbury panel report accompanying the government skills plan, which redefined the distinctiveness of the vocational pathway.

Often the-ghost-at-the-feast appears to have been the model of the German 'dual system', albeit with more permeable boundaries and common destinations. What was at stake in these successive attempts to define what was distinctive about these vocational pathways—to emphasise their role as an alternative route into higher education (represented by the incorporation of advanced further education into the expanding higher education system, and the development of customised access courses), or to emphasise instead their place as a quite separate system of courses and qualifications rooted in the workplace and focused on skills and employment?

The concluding chapter in this section by Fiona Reeve and Ruth Whittaker continues the discussion begun by Gareth Parry. They offer a comparative case-study of contrasting approaches taken towards higher-level vocational qualifications as pathways for further progression. The comparison is within the United Kingdom between England and Scotland.

- In England, the link between higher-level vocational qualifications and access has weakened. Instead, their potential to promote progression has been downgraded, and the focus has shifted to regarding higher vocational education as an alternative to (supposedly) academic higher education, in a perhaps anachronistic bid to reproduce a German-style 'dual system'. As a result, new forms of higher-level qualification have been developed—initially Foundation Degrees and latterly higher and graduate apprenticeships. Greater emphasis has been placed on the

role of the market both as a principle of organisation but also, more concretely, in terms of meeting business needs.

- In Scotland, a different approach has been taken. Higher-level vocational qualifications are provided in colleges, which are jointly funded alongside universities by a single agency, the Scottish Funding Council. As an organising principle, the market has been allowed little play, although not in terms of meeting business needs for a well-educated and trained workforce. Instead, a policy of college mergers has been pursued within a top-down managed system. Also, traditional forms of higher-level vocational qualifications have been maintained, principally Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Diplomas (HNDs). But the key difference is the role these qualifications play in the progression to university in Scotland. Although they also operate as free-standing qualifications, many HNCs and HNDs act as preparatory courses for students who aspire to study at degree level at university. In this mode, Scottish colleges act like US community colleges in widening the social base of higher education. Almost half of the Scottish university students from the 20-per-cent most deprived communities in Scotland came via this college route rather than as direct entrants from school.

Learning in Community Settings

Under the final theme, there are also four chapters which are bound together by a common preoccupation with lifelong learning in community settings outside formal education institutions. Two have a welcome focus on world regions outside the Euro-American heartland, one that focuses more broadly on the changing landscape of lifelong learning and one that offers a fascinating case-study of one attempt to articulate and institutionalise a research and development agenda.

The first two chapters offer a marked contrast.

- In Chapter 2 Srabani Maitra, Saikat Maitra and Sadat Sethwala focus on the contradictions between India's ambition to create 'smart cities', focused on high-technology industries, and the neglect of socially

marginalised groups, whose access to the labour market is severely constrained by the absence of opportunities for lifelong learning. Their chapter reports on research in four regions or cities—Gujarat, the capital New Delhi, Varanasi and Lucknow. They highlight the limitations of a top-down approach to citizen engagement and, in particular, the negative effects of economic liberalisation. Their striking conclusion is that developing opportunities for lifelong learning and building a supportive infrastructure for lifelong learning are 'a critical principle of inclusion in smart cities'.

- A similar theme is pursued in Chapter 3 by Khau Huu Phuoc and Chris Duke. Their focus is on community learning centres (CLCs), a UNESCO initiative, in the Asia–Pacific region. They estimate there are 170,000 CLCs in this, admittedly extensive, world region, although these centres take many forms with many concentrating essentially on basic literacy. Others have a wider scope embracing healthcare, economic development, democracy, science (and especially the environment) and, of course, community development. In their view, a key principle is that centres must be rooted in their communities—'of, by and for'.

In Chapter 4, in the final section, Karen Evans considers learning 'outside the academy', in terms both of conceptual shifts and new agendas for research. She argues it is necessary to move beyond the definitional debates about the placing of adult and continuing education within wider systems—topics discussed at the start of this introduction in terms of the imperialism of mass higher education systems absorbing other once-distinct sectors of post-secondary education, and the resistances to this imperialism and the desire to maintain independent institutional bases for adult learning. While recognising that these definitional debates were valuable in shaping the work of national and international organisations as they developed systems of lifelong learning, Evans argues that they have now been superseded. Important conceptual shifts have taken place in the why and how of lifelong learning, particularly in relationship to learning spaces and their properties and dimensions. These conceptual shifts have been reflected in, and encouraged by, research into workplace learning.

In her view, adult and continuing education and lifelong learning is a domain ripe for re-evaluation in the light of what she describes as 'social and ecological perspectives', against this background of their conceptual and organisational topography. A stronger social perspective would make it possible to reveal more clearly the key contribution of day-to-day practice and of wider social processes in producing capabilities in individuals and communities, a contribution that in the past had been rendered largely invisible by formal educational processes. A stronger emphasis on the ecology of adult and continuing education that aspires to be both social and progressive would allow greater recognition of the way in which the complex life-worlds and diverse needs of adult learners reflexively shape their personal, social and occupational development. Her chapter is a powerful statement of the potential for progressive change in eco-social systems, in which learning 'outside the academy' has an important role to play.

The last chapter in the book is by Michael Osborne, Terry Mayes and Richard Edwards. At first sight, it is an account of the life (and death) of the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning (CRLL) established more than two decades ago by the University of Stirling and Glasgow Caledonian University in Scotland. But it illustrates and illuminates many of the themes that have resonated through previous chapters. The first is that lifelong learning is a capacious and permissive category, which is both a strength and weakness. It is a weakness in the sense that it resists the institutionalisation and systematisation that are central elements in accounts of mainstream higher education—although this fluidity and indeterminacy can also be seen as strengths. It is a strength because it represents an open field for experimentation in terms of policy, organisation and intellectual exploration and elaboration. This openness goes far beyond the conventional two-strand perspectives on lifelong learning—access and social inclusion on the one hand and skills development on the other. As a result, CRLL was able to pursue a wide range of research projects, and also interventions in policy and practice, licensing others to do the same.

A second key theme of CRLL's work was its emphasis on 'learning relations', in other words, the wider social environment in which lifelong

learning takes place (in contrast with the bounded institutional environment in which much—most?—of mainstream higher education takes place). CRLL focused on understanding not so much the details of the lifelong learning process itself but the conditions under which learning could be sustained especially by potentially 'non-standard' and therefore potentially unconfident learners. This emphasis on the social dimensions of lifelong learning leads Osborne, Mayes and Edwards to emphasise the horizontality of learning. This echoes Karen Evans' emphasis in her chapter in the first section of this book on the changing ecology of lifelong learning and emergence of new learning spaces often only loosely, if at all, related to colleges and universities. It also echoes the significance of community learning centres discussed, in the context of the Asia–Pacific region, by Phuoc and Duke. Finally, it also echoes the emphasis placed by Maitra, Maitra and Sethwala on the role lifelong learning can play in promoting social inclusion in 'smart cities' where low-skill jobs are increasingly scarce.

And so we come back to questions raised at the start of this introduction. Access to higher education, lifelong learning and education for all—convergent and overlapping concepts, or competitive policy agendas? Putting all our eggs in the basket of mass higher education or relying instead on building alternative pathways, whether old-style such as 'dual systems' or new-style such as community learning in diverse organisational settings? Lifelong learning as social inclusion and community empowerment or economic efficiency and skills maximisation—if, indeed, these are opposing principles? These are the threads that run through this book.

References

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