

Fanciful Landscape (Collage, Monoprints), 2023
by
Lilian H. Hill

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General Issue

Editor

Leslie A. Cordie

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President's Message: PIMA Bulletin No. 56

Dear PIMA Members and Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the April 2026 General Issue of the PIMA Bulletin. As we move through this season of transition and reflection within the global field of Adult Learning and Education (ALE), I am struck by the incredible breadth of work being undertaken by our members to foster resilience and innovation.

Our association continues to live by its mission of Promoting, Interrogating, and Mobilising Adult Learning & Education. This issue serves as a testament to that mission, weaving together a "Global Tapestry" that spans from the national literacy initiatives in Brazil to the community-based learning models in rural Taiwan.

To our long-standing members, I encourage you to make full use of this Bulletin as a resource for your professional practice and a platform for dialogue. For those who are new to our network or are considering joining, we invite you to become part of this vibrant global community. Engaging with PIMA offers a unique space to share your work, learn from international colleagues, and contribute to the future of ALE.

As we look toward the horizon, I want to emphasize the importance of our upcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM) in May. This meeting is a vital opportunity for our community to connect, share our collective progress, and actively shape the future direction of the PIMA Network. Your voice is essential as we determine how to best support the evolving needs of adult learners worldwide.

Highlights of this Issue

In this edition, we explore the essential dualities of our field:

- The Digital Frontier: We continue to interrogate the synergy between Generative AI and lifelong learning, ensuring that technology serves as a tool for empowerment.

- Human-Centric Learning: Simultaneously, we celebrate the enduring power of sensory and ecofeminist approaches that remind us of the social and emotional heart of education.
- Learning Across the Lifespan: From supporting the "Baby Boomer" generation to finding joy in adult learning, we remain committed to education at every stage of life.

Finally, this issue is also a space for both celebration and remembrance. We warmly welcome our newest members, Casandra Coin-Sweeney and Dr. Nancy Pratt, to our vibrant community. We also pause to honor the significant legacy of Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. mult. Rita Süssmuth. Her lifelong advocacy for community-based ALE continues to inspire our path forward.

I invite you to engage deeply with the diverse perspectives presented in these pages and to continue "**Planting Seeds of Tomorrow**" within your own unique contexts.

Warm regards,
Suwithida Charungkaitkul,
President, PIMA Network

Editorial – Bulletin 56

Welcome to the PIMA Bulletin No. 56, April 2026. This General Issue arrives at a time of significant transition and reflection within the global field of Adult Learning and Education (ALE). As your Bulletin Editor, I am delighted to present a collection of voices that span the globe—from the coastal paths of Scotland to the community markets of Taiwan—each offering a unique perspective on the resilience, innovation, and enduring human spirit that define our work.

A Global Tapestry of Learning and Action

Our articles in this general issue highlight the diverse contexts in which ALE operates today. **Heribert Hinzen** opens the discussion by looking at ALE through a "System's Lens," emphasizing the need for coherent policy, legislation, and financing to sustain the field. We see these systems in action in **Brazil**, where **Timothy Ireland and colleagues** detail a massive national pact to combat illiteracy through innovative teacher training, while **Ana Ivenicki** provides a "Letter from Brazil" exploring the multicultural nature of adult education and the drive toward inclusion.

From **Africa**, **Shirley Walters** shares the powerful story of the "Women Learning Liberation" course, a radical ecofeminist approach that serves as a vital counterpoint to high-tech, AI-driven trends. Similarly, **Ya-Hui Fang and Hsin-Pei Chen** invite us into a "Dish to Dialogue" in rural **Taiwan**, where communal dining and sensory archaeology foster trust and connection across political and familial fractures.

Embracing Technology and the Future

The intersection of technology and education remains a central theme. **Idowu Biao** explores the synergy between REFLECT, AI, and ALE, arguing that a combination of these

methods can enhance the success of literacy education. **Sofia Kasola** further discusses how adults are constantly turning to both lifelong learning and adult education in order to meet the needs of both society and the labour market. We also include a review of our recent **Generative AI Special Issue** by **Kailea Manning and Shuqi Du**.

Learning for All Stages of Life

The nuances of learning in later life are explored through **Colin McGregor's** personal journey of resilience on the Fife Coast of **Scotland** and **Ernst Dieter Rossmann's** insights into the evolving mandate of German adult education centres to support an ageing "Baby Boomer" generation. **Dorothy Lucardie** reminds us that "adults still want to have fun," highlighting the critical role of enjoyment and engagement in successful learning.

Community, News, and Remembrance

This issue is also a space for community and memory. We celebrate the legacy of Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. malt. Rita Süßmuth, a passionate advocate for community-based ALE and former President of the German Adult Education Association, in an obituary prepared by Heribert Hinzen.

We warmly welcome our new members, **Casandra Coin-Sweeney** and Dr. Nancy Pratt, and look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming **Annual General Meeting** in May.

Finally, I invite you to explore the resources mentioned, including new materials for literacy educators, and to consider contributing to our next special issue on **Prisons**.

I hope this issue inspires you to continue "planting seeds of tomorrow" in your own communities.

Leslie Cordie Bulletin Editor

Adult Learning and Education – Looking Through a System`s Lens

Heribert Hinzen

Abstract

Adult Learning and Education (ALE) is a fragmented field of policy, practice and study as can be seen clearly in respect to their governance, legislation and finances, but in many other aspects also. A more recent discourse in the context of increasing participation, reducing inequality, and improving quality looks at ALE as a system which has implications and interventions on national, regional and local levels. The article reflects current debates and events where ETF (European Training Foundation) and DVV International have taken the lead, and combines it with some prior examples and personal experiences.

Keywords: Frameworks, institutionalization, professionalization, participation, structures

Background

During my 50 years of working in ALE on local, national and global levels, the interest in sustainable structures as well as the institutionalization and professionalization of providers and programs has been quite a stable feature. The participation in the *International Seminar on Comparative Structures of Adult Education Developing Countries*, convened in 1975 by UNESCO in Kikuyu, Kenia, was a real revelation. Those following decades with DVV International were strongly driven by the funding mechanisms of the respective German Federal Ministry and its budget line on *Sozialstrukturförderung* (Support to Social Structures) which resulted in numerous activities strengthening institutional arrangements and capacity building of current and future professionals (Hirsch et al., 2019). This interest has not diminished in the last decade of active

retirement. A few examples, recently mainly in and with countries on their way to accession into the European Union (EU), may serve for better understanding.

Examples of Activities

The most recent is an on-going consultation with colleagues who are involved in the *Development of the Framework of the Renewed Strategic Platform on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in the Context of Lifelong Learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Within the European debate there are strong arguments closer to the acceptance that ALE requires its own regulations towards policy, legislation, and finance to function well in practice, and create and sustain opportunities for the education, training and learning of adults which cover all spheres of life and work, for the individual as well as for society. Therefore, in the advocacy work on macro level it is argued that ALE would need to receive a stronger attention, and of course provision and support – within and beyond the education system. Demographic changes show that more people are living longer. Technological advancements require up-dating our knowledge, competencies, and skills continuously. Societal and cultural changes ask us to pay higher attention to attitudes, behavior, and values in a lifelong perspective. A comprehensive ALE System would best serve all of these developments.

I had the opportunity to participate in the *High-Level Round Table, 'A Framework to Drive Adult Learning Reforms: Advancing Lifelong Learning in the Context of EU Accession and Neighbourhood,*' held in November 2025 in Turin, Italy. Representatives from approximately 15 countries, including both EU candidates and member states, shared insights and exchanged information on the status of ALE in their respective nations. There was agreement that the fragmented situation of ALE, unclear responsibilities and unstable financing, are part of the reasons for low participation and quality. Instead, the building of Adult Learning Systems (ALS)

within a lifelong learning perspective and connections between the different education sub-sectors and respective requirements to create a balanced system, was called for. The *Policy Brief* that followed advocates: “...the central task is to build coherent, well-governed ALS in which legal frameworks, strategic planning and sustainable financing are closely aligned with effective implementation” (ETF & DVV International, 2025, p. 5). I received highly encouraging feedback about the topics we discussed during our panel, particularly regarding the 'golden triangles'—policy, legislation, and financing; global, national, and local perspectives; as well as formal, nonformal, and informal approaches; and the interplay between providers, programs, and participants—all considered within the context of lifelong, lifewide, and lifedep learning. Currently, when discussing lifelong learning strategies and systems, it seems appropriate to look at building bridges, overcoming barriers, enabling connectivity and joining-up between sub-sectors of the education system, but not only within the education system but also with other relevant sectors and developments for the individual and society.

The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) had invited to join a writers group for a statement that could be taken forward to the UNESCO International Commission on the Futures of Education for their Report on *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education* (International Commission on the Futures of Education [ICFE], 2021). The ICAE Statement included: “Quality ALE can only be achieved on a large scale if and when it has governance mechanisms and support structures as all the other sub-sectors of schooling, vocational or higher education. Within the appropriate, inclusive and effective LLL governance, ALE requires its own regulations towards policy, legislation, and finance to function well in practice, and create and sustain opportunities for the education and learning of adults which cover all spheres of life and work” (ICAE, 2020, p. 8).

More than a decade back, DVV International started to develop what today is available as *Adult Learning & Education System Building Approach (ALESBA) Toolkit for Implementation* (Belete, 2020). I invite you to visit the ALE Toolbox on the DVV International website (<https://www.dvv-international.de/en/ale-toolbox>), which provides more information about ALESBA and other tools for capacity building and organizational development in ALE. At a meeting of the International Society for Comparative Adult Education (ISCAE) in Florence 2024, comparative aspects of implementing the ALE Toolbox were discussed (Denys et al., 2025).

Outlook

I may stop here. For those interested, the 50-year history of DVV International and a century of Germany's community-based ALE via Volkshochschulen (Hinzen & Meilhammer, 2022) offer many more examples and experiences. One key lesson is that by further institutionalising and professionalising ALE structures and systems, participation can increase and inequality may decrease. Looking at the issue from a *systemic lens* is beneficial.

Author Bio

Heribert Hinzen, is a senior consultant on adult education and lifelong learning for sustainable development. He worked for DVV International for almost four decades in headquarters and offices in Sierra Leone, Hungary and Lao PDR. He is Honorary Fellow of UIL, Honorary Professor at the Universities of Pécs, Bucharest and Iasi, Visiting Professor at the University of Glasgow, and teaches comparative adult education at the University of Würzburg. He has served as Vice-President of ICAE, EAEA, and PIMA. In 2006, he was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame. Email: hinzenh@hotmail.com

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REFLECT, AI, and ALE

Idowu Biao

Abstract

REFLECT, AI, and ALE are three typologies of literacy and learning methods which, if employed individually, may exhibit instructional weaknesses. However, when the individual strengths of these literacies are combined for purpose of instruction, these literacies hold the promise of delivering a higher rate of success within literacy education domain.

Keywords: Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques, Artificial Intelligence, Adult Learning and Education.

Introduction

The Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Adult learning and education (ALE) are all both tools and processes that promote human emancipation, each in its own unique fashion. REFLECT is a typology of critical literacy that enables the individual to demonstrate understanding of the dynamics that rule the world s/he lives in. AI is a tool that can supply the kinds of information that may amplify the understanding of dynamics ruling individuals' worlds while ALE is a process that makes it possible to intermittently or/and continuously participate in seeking understanding of the world we live in.

The current article seeks to explore the extent to which these three phenomena may interact to produce the kind of immediate and life-relevant effects that are so crucial to adult learning. In other words, expectation of fairly immediate and life-relevant effects of adult learning having been found to determine success in adult learners' retention (Knowles, 2025; Mezirow, 2012), how may these three phenomena interact to produce fairly immediate and life-relevant impacts within the context of adult learning?

Mutual reinforcement provided by REFLECT, AI and ALE

REFLECT is derived from Freire's theory of literacy that prioritises dialogue, reflection and action (Archer, 1995). AI has been viewed as a digital tool capable of facilitating the creation of varying models conceivable within human realm and/or a 'machine learning' that has come to extend human intelligence (Richard, 2026). ALE is an aspect of lifelong learning designed to assist learners to carry on learning discontinuously throughout life.

Where these three concepts are considered as some forms of literacy (e.g. both a process and outcome of skills and knowledge acquisition), their ability to promote immediate and relevant impacts may become easily comparable. The emphasis of Freire on praxis (e.g. reflection and action on the world with a view to positively transforming it) enables REFLECT to align very well with the immediate (urgent) and relevant impacts usually sought by adult learners. While AI is imbued with the capacity to assist in obtaining urgent results (e.g. in creating models and providing answers to questions), the ethics underlying this process remains a subject of contention in transparency within current literature (Hill & Conceição, 2026). To this extent, the relevance of a number of AI outcomes remains questionable. Adult learning is a broad activity covering all human knowledge areas. Not all these activities yield either immediate or relevant impacts. This is because the field of adult learning and education is populated by numerous providers (e.g., government, non-government, private, commercial entities, etc.) that may provide learning programmes that may or may not yield immediate effects or impacts relevant to the needs of adult learners all the time.

Consequently, of the three concepts, REFLECT seems to possess the capacity to deliver both immediate and relevant impacts of learning through the triple path of dialogue, reflexion and action. Yet, neither REFLECT nor AI nor adult learning can continue to be exploited and employed independently one of the other for the purpose of driving the kinds of learning that demand immediate and life-relevant impacts. For one reason, the emergence of REFLECT is

more than three decades old and REFLECT itself is more linked to the general theory of participatory rural learning (PRL) than it is to the myriad of other literacy types.

Since in modern times, literacy education addresses more than rural-literacy issues, the AI capacity to readily generate models that may be used in a ubiquitous and universal fashion (rural, urban, semi-urban, etc.) would be helpful in expanding the literacy environment within which REFLECT may be usefully deployed going forward. Additionally, it has been found that thirty years prior to the emergence of REFLECT in the 1990s, only 12.5% success had been recorded in the domain of literacy education across the world (Archer, 1995). Judging from the fact that the Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL) has since emerged (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning [UIL], 2025), global literacy success can be said not to have significantly improved since the 1990s. Therefore, as a way of ameliorating global literacy success rate going forward, the AI-modulated REFLECT may subsequently be deployed in adult literacy programmes as a way of ensuring future greater literacy successes.

Conclusion

Consequently, while REFLECT, AI and ALE may individually exhibit instructional weaknesses, through a selective combination of the strengths of these literacies and learning methods, their weaknesses can be remedied with a view to improving the rates of the immediate and relevant impacts of adult learning programmes.

Author Bio

Idowu Biao is professor of adult and Lifelong learning and part-time conference organiser within African universities. Previous positions held include Deputy and Acting Director, Institute of Extramural Studies, National University of Lesotho.

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Latest published works include:

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Embracing Adult Education through Lifelong Learning

Sofia Kasola

Abstract

Lifelong learning refers to the continuous acquisition of knowledge and skills throughout life, which extends beyond formal education and includes informal and non-formal learning. Adult education, on the other hand, offers education programmes aimed at enhancing knowledge, skills and competences of adults. In an ever-changing environment, adults are constantly turning to both lifelong learning and adult education in order to meet the needs of both society and the labour market.

Keywords: lifelong learning, adult education, public policy, labor market, social cohesion, economic development, government responsibility

Lifelong Learning is a fundamental concept in today's knowledge society and refers to the continuous learning process that accompanies individuals throughout their lives. It is not limited to formal education systems, but includes all forms of learning – formal, non-formal and informal – that contribute to social, economic and technological development. The need for lifelong learning arises directly from the rapid social, economic, and technological developments that characterizes our era. These changes affect the way people live, work, communicate, thus creating the need for continuous upgrading of knowledge, skills, and abilities. More specifically, societal change in terms of structure and demographics, along with the rise of multiculturalism and increasing population mobility, are fostering a new social regime. With this new status citizens are called upon to develop skills of adaptation, critical thinking, and social integration. At the economic level, globalization and constant changes in the labour market have created new demands for professional skills. Many professions are being

transformed or eliminated, while new ones are emerging, often with increased specialization requirements especially since the advent of artificial intelligence. At the technological level, the development of technology and automation has changed the way knowledge is disseminated. Digital skills are no longer a privilege but a basic requirement for everyday life and professional engagement. Lifelong learning contributes to the active participation of citizens in public life and to the reduction of social inequalities by offering equal opportunities for access to knowledge. At the same time, it is the means by which workers can upgrade their skills to remain competitive in the new reality. Helping employees to make use of new technologies and thus avoiding digital exclusion. Constant development of knowledge, changes in the labour market and upgrade of digital technology make it necessary for citizens to undergo continuous training. Therefore, learning is no longer considered a process that is completed in youth age, but a dynamic process of adaptation and development. Lifelong learning can use adult education as a key tool for achieving its goals, namely the continuous and comprehensive development of individuals on a personal, professional, and social level.

Adult education can act as the mechanism through which learning becomes continuous, flexible, and accessible to all age groups, beyond the limits of formal education. Adults are given the opportunity to return to learning whenever their personal or professional needs require it, enhancing their knowledge and skills. Moreover, employees can acquire modern skills and adapt to technological and economic developments. Distance learning programs and online courses, especially during and post Covid-19 period, seminars, workshops, and short-term training courses enable adults to participate in the learning process alongside their work and family life. Through training, adults can acquire modern skills, respond to technological

developments, adapt to the changing demands of the labour market, and develop self-awareness, critical thinking, and self-confidence, gaining the ability to effectively manage the challenges of modern life. One could claim that through adult education, which is essentially embraced by lifelong learning, adults gradually transition from a limited training to a process of holistic development. Learning ceases to be exclusively utilitarian and becomes part of a broader context of personal, social, and intellectual development. It has been also maintained that adult education is not limited to enhancing employability since it contributes significantly to the personal fulfilment of adults, strengthening their self-awareness and cultivating critical thinking. Adults are trained to "learn how to learn," acquiring self-regulation and knowledge management skills. They learn to recognize their learning needs, set goals, and seek knowledge independently. In this context, the basic principles of Andragogy are adopted, according to which adults play an active role in the learning process, take responsibility for their learning, and use their personal experiences as valuable learning capital. Prior learning is not treated as an obstacle but as a stepstone on which new knowledge is built while the immediate application of learning in everyday, professional, and social life makes the learning process meaningful and functional. In this way, Adult Education integrated into the framework of Lifelong Learning, contributes to the formation of autonomous, active, and constantly evolving individuals, capable of responding to the challenges of a constantly changing society.

However, strategic planning, funding, and cooperation with social and economic actors are required in order for adult education to be an effective tool. It is not enough to just have individual learning programs. A comprehensive policy that links education to the real needs of society and the labour market is needed. Governments have the opportunity—and the responsibility—to make strategic use of adult education

to enhance economic growth, social cohesion, and the personal development of citizens.

In a constantly changing world, it is up to governments and states to use adult education as a tool to respond to the demands and needs of the times.

Author Bio

Sofia Kasola is a researcher in Adult Education field. Through research and studies, she attempts to record and discover new paths that will strengthen adult education and promote lifelong learning. She holds a master's degree in Adults Education and a PhD in proposed evaluation methods for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning. Email:

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Brazil Innovates in Teacher Training and Seeks to Reduce Illiteracy Rates

*Timothy Ireland, Daniele dos Santos Ferreira Dias,
and Dimítria de Faria Coutinho*

Abstract

The Brazilian government invites participation in the national pact to combat illiteracy and improve qualifications in Youth and Adult Education. In this regard, the Federal University of Paraíba, together with the UNESCO Chair in YAE, has achieved significant results in the continuing education of trainers and teachers in this field.

Key words: teacher training, youth and adult education, illiteracy rates

Since the beginning of last year, Brazil has been developing a massive teacher training strategy throughout its territory, focusing on Youth and Adult Education (EJA) in Portuguese.

In Brazil, 7% of the population aged 15 and over cannot read or write a simple note, totaling 11.4 million people. With a view to reducing and even eliminating this number, in 2024 the Brazilian government launched the National Pact for Overcoming Illiteracy and Qualification in Youth and Adult Education, known as the EJA Pact. One of the programme's fronts is training for teachers and popular educators, an area in which the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB) and the UNESCO Chair in EJA have been directly involved. The university is home to one of the university extension programmes of ProfEJA (National Programme for Training Teachers in EJA), which reaches both regional trainers working throughout the country and teachers working in classrooms and popular educators.

Significant Results

Launched in February 2025, the UFPB programme under the EJA Pact has already achieved significant results. Currently, regional trainers participating in the In-Service Training offered by the institution serve all Brazilian states and most of the country's municipalities.

These trainers are responsible for training educators, who, in addition to in-person activities in their territories, have the opportunity to participate in specific distance learning on Youth, Adult and Elderly Literacy, which already reaches more than 25,000 educators.

The In-Service Training for Regional EJA Trainers (360 hours) is a pioneering and innovative initiative never before established in Brazil, which addresses – from a Freirean perspective – 14 thematic areas based on the relationship between theory and practice. The areas are: (1) subjects of EJA; (2) The classroom and its pedagogical organisation; (3) Planning and organisation of pedagogical practice; (4) Identity; (5) Art and Culture; (6) Human Rights; (7) Democracy and Social Participation; (8) Work; (9) Health; (10) Environment; (11) Financial Education; (12) Technologies; (13) Culture of Peace; (14) Systematisation in the Literacy of Young People and Adults.

All the themes and modules of the course address the areas of language, mathematics and technology in a dialogical manner, understanding them as fundamental areas in the literacy process, which goes beyond the decoding of words. It is considered that mastery of reading and writing involves being able to communicate fully, knowing and skillfully using multiple languages in a graphocentric world.

The main objective is for these regional trainers to expand their knowledge in order to improve training processes in the education networks in their regions, creating a networked training system capable of reaching the entire country and enabling them to consolidate knowledge and practices that extend beyond the formal period of the Pact. It is worth noting that Brazil is a country of continental dimensions, with five regions, 26 states, more than 8.5 million km² and over 213 million inhabitants.

Inspiration from the Four Corners of the Country

In addition to the impressive numbers, the EJA Pact has also achieved qualitative results. Since the beginning of the programme, UFPB has been collecting inspiring records of

good practices developed in EJA classrooms. At the end of 2025, an ebook was published with more than 40 experiences recounted by teachers, presenting and documenting literacy strategies developed in classrooms from north to south Brazil. These practices are based on the principles of teacher leadership, valuing and sharing teaching and learning experiences, which are central factors in the training offered by UFPB and the UNESCO Chair in EJA.

In 2026, we plan to publish another five ebooks with successful experiences, each one focusing on practices implemented in one of the regions of the vast country of Brazil.

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One Step at a Time: Walking, Learning, and Resilience on the Fife Coast

Colin McGregor

Keywords: Scotland, adventure walking, coastal trails

It's noon, 10th September 2025. I am hanging off a chain 10 metres (about 30 feet) above a rocky beach on the East Coast of Scotland. My hands are shaking and my breath comes in short bursts. I am a McGregor, I keep telling myself. We McGregors don't give in. Thirty minutes later and another 7 chains under my belt, I complete the Elie Chain Walk. I collapse into a heap and have a Yorkie Chocolate Bar.

The Elie Chain walk is a 500m (one third of a mile) alternative route on the Fife Coastal Walkway. There are clear warnings about the difficulty of the walk. Ever the adventurous soul, I took the road less travelled and regretted it almost immediately. However I had - and still have an enormous sense of achievement.



Elie Chain Walk

Sometimes you have to test yourself to see what you are capable of doing. I was fit, flexible and keen. In New Zealand, I had been the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Adult and Community Education Aotearoa, and a representative on the Older Peoples Panel for a government agency. To this, I had brought my experience in Adult and Community Education in communicating with adults. I also became the “poster person” for engaging in activities to improve balance; in fact, I still do these balancing activities to this day. I had done my homework and read about the chain walk. I talked to a couple who had just finished it when I took off.

The Chain walk is a short section of the 200km (124 miles) Fife Coastal Walk. I completed this across September and October 2025. As an older adult learner, I have taken up long distance walking. Both for my physical health and keeping me mentally alert. I chose this walk because of the promised variety of scenery. I was not disappointed by the views, which ranged from industrial (scrap metal yards), to perfectly formed coastal villages, medieval towns (St. Andrews) and forest walks.

I did the walk from South to North, starting in Kincardine and finishing in Newburgh. I spread the walk over 8 days, averaging 25kms a day, taking about 6 to 7 hours each day. The walk was done alone, as I prefer walking by myself, and spontaneously talking to people along the way.

Due to the fantastic public transport network in Scotland I was able to return to home base in Edinburgh for all but the last two sections of the walk. I was also able to use a Seniors Rail Card which reduced fares by 33%; one advantage to being an older person in the country. Another advantage is the kindness of strangers. After a particularly long day I fell asleep on the train. I am grateful that two young women woke me up at my destination. I was still a bit befuddled and unfortunately left my ticket on the train which went on its merry way. In Scotland you need your ticket to access the station after you train arrives. Luckily, a kindly

inspector took pity on this bedraggled visitor from the Pacific and let me through without additional payment.



Forth Bridge

Scotland often gets bad press about its weather. To be fair the weather can be extremely changeable. I was extraordinarily lucky, as over the 200kms, the only wet weather I had was about 10 minutes of rain starting off on my final day of walking.

I had two particularly memorable conversations along my walking journey. One was with Mary, who hailed from the United States and worked in a University. She was gobsmacked when I told her New Zealanders were actively avoiding visiting the United States of America (USA) and preferred travelling to Europe via Asia. This was before the latest round of USA entry requirements which have made transitioning through the USA a nightmare. She was despondent on the current state of her country, especially the reduction in funding to places like universities. She couldn't see improvement any day soon and was out of ideas what an individual could do to explain the situation in the USA.

On a more positive note, I chatted to Mark, who was walking the path to collect money for a charity that provides support to bereaved parents. His good mate had lost a child and he wanted to do something practical to support his grieving friend.

As an adult learner, I am committed to continual education. The Path featured numerous interpretive panels addressing various topics. These included explanations of the construction of the Forth Bridge, the historical presence of a windmill near St Monans—which was utilised for salt production in the 1700s—and details regarding an 18th-century barrel-vaulted ice house used for salmon storage.



Rock Formation

The other thing the path reminded me of was the importance of resilience. Unlike the Chain Walk where fear was the key that kept me going, on two sections I really had to dig deep just to keep going. Both were at the end of exceptionally long days (30kms). On one of them I sat down absolutely bushed beside a motorway. My demeanour wasn't helped when a Police car drove by very slowly with the policemen glaring at me. The second section was the final

day. With about 3kms to finish, the path took a circuitous route around Newburgh to the final point of the path. I managed to keep going but was stuffed and frankly over it. Yet I recovered quickly. Sometimes keeping going is as important as being brave!

The path passes through several towns that collectively reflect the diversity of the country. Inverkeithing is characterised by its industrial background and a predominantly working-class community. St. Monans, Anstruther, and Crail are notable for their picturesque coastal settings. St. Andrews is renowned for its prestigious golf course and university and is considered one of the most expensive locations in Scotland.

The Fife Coastal Path proved a highlight on my trip to Scotland. The people, the places, the challenges and the sense of achievement have carried with me. I am now busy planning this year's walk. Onward!



Anstruther

Author Bio

Colin McGregor is from Aotearoa/New Zealand. He has had an extensive career in the New Zealand Public Sector, mostly in the Ministry of Education. A strong supporter of Adult Education, he was appointed the Chief Executive Officer of Adult and Community Education Aotearoa, the lead agency for Adult Education in New Zealand. He held this position for 5 years. He is a past member of the PIMA Executive Committee. A lifelong learner himself, Colin has a Masters in Business Administration, a Masters in Psychology, and an Executive Master in Public Administration. Email: colinmcgo1@gmail.com

**Note: All images in this article produced by the author.*

‘A Dream in a Storm’¹: Women Learning Liberation

Shirley Walters

Abstract

We are living through an ecological and political storm globally where long traditions of radical adult education are overtaken by hi-tech, AI related education and training concerns. The Africa-based Women Learning Liberation course is given as a counterpoint, to emphasise the ongoing importance of the radical adult education approaches to help imagine alternative futures.

Keywords: Women Learning Liberation, ecofeminist popular education, radical adult education, WoMin Africa Alliance

Introduction

Poetry captures succinctly what descriptive text can't. This poem embodies the spirit and politics of the Women Learning Liberation course.

A dream in a Storm – by Oumou Koulibaly

We plant our visions in scorched soil,
Dreaming of rivers where profit has drained.

We speak of freedom,
While the world chants markets, borders, chains.
Our hearts lean toward the women,
Their hands holding seeds of tomorrow.
Yet too often the stage is crowded
By voices shaped by iron and command.

Still, we dare to imagine –
A circle not a throne.
A chorus not a crown.
A future stitched by many hands,
Where justice grows
Like wildflowers through the cracks of empire.

¹ A dream in a Storm by Oumou Koulibaly

Fifty women from five countries in West, East and Southern Africa, gather in Maputo, Mozambique in October 2025. They are part of an 18-month course, Women Learning Liberation (WLL) developed by the civil society organisation, WoMin African Alliance. The meeting in Maputo is the only opportunity participants have to meet together in person. On the first day of the five-day meeting, they share stories with one another about their community struggles.

Each country delegation presents a five-minute story beside their exhibit, describing who they are, their main struggles, and the messages brought from their communities (WoMin, 2025).

Ivory Coast participants speak about the loss of agricultural land and bodies of water through extractive projects. They have responded by developing alternative livelihoods (fishing and coconut-oil production) and promoting agroecology as a form of cultural resistance.

Ugandan participants describe the displacement of the Benet community from Mount Elgon, the destruction of forests, and women's efforts to restore the land through replanting. Their display includes calabashes and baskets as symbols of continuity and care. They also speak about struggles against oil pipelines and land grabs. They tell how women are leading campaigns for fair compensation and environmental justice.

Madagascan, South African, and Cameroonian participants describe moving accounts, each connecting ecological harm with social injustice and gendered violence, including sexual violence, but also with stories of courage and reinvention. Messages of solidarity: "Together is power," "Where there is no land, there is no life", resonate across languages.

The women are community activists who are among those displaced or forced to fight for access to clean water, fertile land, and basic survival as the climate crisis deepens and mining expands. They are powerful and tireless organisers. They provide food, fetch water,

care for the sick, and ensure safe shelter, while fighting for justice from governments and corporations for themselves and their communities. The majority have very limited if any formal schooling. Against all odds, they are fighting for justice. They are ‘like wildflowers in the cracks of empire’.

In this short article, I describe WLL, an ecofeminist popular education course, which is shared as a counterpoint to the dominant high tech, AI related concerns in education and training literature. It is part of the long history of radical adult education serving the interests of the majority world.

Women Learning Liberation (WLL): An Ecofeminist Popular Education Course

Popular education starts with the people – who are they, what matters to them?

The course participants are women living in rural areas; they are poor, eking out livelihoods. They are mothers, grandmothers, wives, activist community members. They have no or little formal schooling; very limited written literacy in their own or another language. They speak a range of different local languages. A few have access to smart phones. They want and need support in their struggles for justice against governments and corporations whose mining activities and land grabs disrupt their ways of life, livelihoods and threaten their very survival.

WoMin African Alliance launched WLL as integral to its programme of support to women’s organising and movement-building to resist destructive extractivism. WoMin works to advance change through research, feminist schools, exchanges, solidarity, organising, and campaigns in partnership with organisations in thirteen countries across, West, Central, East, and Southern Africa.

In designing the course, central concerns relate to ‘who are the women and what matters to them’. To ensure that the women could successfully participate and succeed in the course, we had to create the enabling conditions. Some of the design considerations:

1. We could not rely on digital technology or extensive written text. Participants needed to come together in periodic face-to-face workshops, well facilitated by a feminist popular educator, who knows the local context and can communicate in local languages.
2. They need to be able to travel to a national venue for the eight, two-monthly, training workshops. To get there, they need safe transport, childcare support, a stipend in lieu of lost income for the times away. For a successful workshop they need comfortable accommodation, healthy food, and access to the natural environment. Interpretation facilities were critical to some groups, like Uganda, where 5 different local languages were spoken.
3. The quality of the design and facilitation of the course was key. The core team of three, developed the curriculum and materials. Detailed facilitation notes for each module, with supporting materials, were shared with the 7 facilitators who were supported through a scaffolded training and development process. A Resource Garden of materials grew with the course – this was an important reference for facilitators.
4. Two main languages were French and English. The facilitator training was on Zoom with interpreters. All materials were translated in the two languages.

Curriculum

Ecofeminist popular education frames the methodology and the philosophy of the course and its curriculum (i.e., for more background see Hargreaves et al., 2025). An overarching purpose was to strengthen pan-African ecofeminist solidarity, to explore what pan-African ecofeminist alternatives look like in practice, and to strengthen women's organising across African regions.

The meeting in Mozambique, which was Module 7, was critical to achieving this goal. As reported by Magdalene Idiung and Eliana N'Zuala (2025), participants exchanged their

personal experiences, shared traditional medicine and seeds, and spoke truths about the violent extraction tearing through the continent. Their testimonies laid bare their pains and disappointments, but also gave hope that change is possible. Through their stories, they show they have deep experiential knowledge of the oppressive systems of patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism, racism, and environmental degradation. They may not use the words, but they understand deeply their impacts. Through the common stories of struggle and transformation, the women found strength in the growing awareness of themselves and the world around them.

As one participant said: *“We all have the same struggles around the question of land grabs and extractivism in our different communities, and we stand in solidarity with [other African women].”* – Sharell, participant from South Africa.

A dream in a storm

We are living through a storm globally. With the rise in authoritarianism and fascism, and never-ending wars, there is little concern by the elite for the majority world who bear the brunt of the violence, greed, and destruction wrought by powerful nations and corporations. How do we respond? Ylkye (2026) reminds us to draw on our experience from other times, like the crisis of Covid. He suggests:

“We must rebuild the quiet circuits of care that sustain life when the systems meant to do so have collapsed under their own narcissism. The pandemic exposed this mercilessly. Governments fumbled, markets froze, and yet life continued. Not because of the state, but because of the neighbour. As the machinery of the world stalled, people improvised: food deliveries, rent relief, mental-health check-ins, mutual care” (Ylkye, 2026, p. 124).

WoMin’s Women Learning Liberation course is building the ‘circuits of care’, building solidarity with all life forms. It is planting a seed - a dream of ecologically just futures, which women together are imagining and building towards.

Author Bio

Shirley Walters lives in Cape Town surrounded by mountains and oceans. She was a core member of the Women Learning Liberation (WLL) curriculum design team from late 2023 to 2026. She's an activist scholar, professor emerita of adult and continuing education at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa, and immediate past PIMA President.

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Adult Education Academy 2026 at the University of Würzburg

Balázs Németh

Abstract

This short reflection tries to underline the quality dimensions of the Adult Education Academy of the University of Würzburg in Germany based on international collaboration of universities with their teaching staff and students involved in master and doctoral studies in adult education to improve professionalisation and comparative work to develop quality aspects of adult learning.

Keywords: professionalisation, profession, comparative studies, international collaboration, quality

Introduction

With the partnership of sixteen universities, three professional organizations (EAEA, DVV International, Age-It), and the Indian Institute of Adult Education Research, a two-weeks-long Adult Education Academy took place at the University of Würzburg from 2 to 13 February, 2026, and was attended by nearly one hundred and thirty masters and doctoral students, together with several practitioner adult educators. During the program, participants attended lectures on international trends in adult education, joined presentations of representatives of international professional organizations, and received insights to the works of influential thinkers in adult education and training, including Paulo Freire.

The program's first week was complemented by professional visits to folk high schools, vocational training institutions, and local training enterprises. At the same time, students and practicing professionals participated in workshops where they could learn about project-based research and development outcomes, methodological tools, and innovative

training platforms, with particular focus on quality developments in adult learning and education.

In the second week of the Academy, participants worked in thematic groups conducting comparative analyses in adult education, with topics having been actually determined a year before based on incoming proposals as part of a joint agreement between experts and researchers from the partner institutions. For this reason, comparative work was carried out in thirteen thematic workshops to explore the current challenges of adult learning and education. The topics of the thematic groups' comparative analyses were:

- Peacebuilding and intercultural dialogue in adult learning and education
- Developing learning ecosystems through adult education - The role of learning cities and communities
- Active aging in a world of longevity: Adult education, lifelong learning, and competencies
- Program design and analysis in adult education: Managing power and seeking opportunities beyond power
- Artificial Intelligence and Adult Education: Policies, Practices, and Challenges
- National/Regional Adult Education and Lifelong Learning Policies
- Generative Artificial Intelligence in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning
- The Social Impact of Adult Education on Learners' Lives
- Adult Education and Gender: Mature Women in Higher Education
- Internationalizing the Curriculum in Higher Education: Policies and Strategies
- Faculty Development: Policies, Organizational Challenges, and Professional Growth
- Adult Education for Everyone?! Inclusion Issues Through the Lens of Disability
- Time Matters: Mapping Temporal Challenges and Opportunities in Adult Education and Learning

Based on active participation in the program, participants collected certification and credits, which can be recognized by their delegating institutions through credit transfer!

The 2026 Adult Education Academy marked the thirteenth iteration of the initiative since its inception in 2014. Originating as a winter school within a framework of university partnerships, the Academy has evolved into a project-based model aimed at advancing professional development and fostering research collaborations among universities throughout Europe and beyond that organize and offer adult education MS programs.

Also, such universities, having been active in thematic research networks of ESREA (the European Society in the Research of Education of Adults), could integrate a number of topics for research and development into the Academy for further investigation through comparative group work. Moreover, the partnership with DVV International has provided a significant international ground to include several young practitioners as adult educators from various countries to collect and share good examples of their practices with master and doctoral students so as to reflect and relate in between theory and practice.

Looking at the story of the Adult Education Academy at the University of Würzburg in Bavaria, Germany, it's clear that the demand for professional development among adult educators—and the broader challenge of professionalisation—has led universities to enhance the quality of skills and knowledge for young professionals in adult education. This progress has also signalled curricular and methodological developments combined with research to address changing concerns towards learners, learning environments be supported with flexible arrangements, recognition of prior learning, guidance and counselling and monitoring of learners' choices referring to employment.

Let me hereby indicate that platforms like PIMA may wish to involve key figures of this Academy to share their experience upon having worked with universities from Nigeria, India, and the US in the field of comparative studies in adult learning and education. Such

network-based outreach and engagement would help PIMA and its members to reflect upon upcoming issues of research and development of ALE in Europe and beyond!

Author Bio

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Dish to Dialogue: Tending the Fire After the Words

Ya-Hui Fang and Hsin-Pei Chen (Vina)

Abstract

Amid political and familial fractures, *Dish to Dialogue* invites dialogue to unfold through communal dining and attentive listening in rural Taiwan. By giving time and space to difference, it fosters trust and renewal without insisting on quick resolution.

Keywords: Sensory Archaeology, Compassionate Listening, Communal Dining, Embodied Facilitation, Temporal Ecology

Introduction

"Dialogue is not a technique for solving conflict. It is a practice of becoming—one that asks whether we can stay with complexity without rushing toward closure, and whether, in doing so, we might allow fractures to surface with clarity — even when that clarity leads to transformation, reconfiguration, or dissolution. In this sense, dialogue is a practice of truthful becoming."

The Context: Healing the Fractures of Stance

In an era plagued by political polarization and rigid stance, the space for genuine human connection is diminishing. Conversations that once embodied curiosity have gradually hardened into declarations; disagreement has become a marker of identity, and identity has created distance. **Dish to Dialogue** emerged from this concern—not as a formal methodology, but as a humble response to a local community meal. We recognized that, amid fragmentation, it is essential to protect the "hearth"—the physical and metaphorical space where people engage with one another's lived experiences rather than feeling compelled to defend a position.



The Soul of Shijiao Farmer's Market: The Leopard Cat Kiln

Photo by Hsin-Yu Chen

The Story: When Memory Rises with the Steam

On a Sunday morning in late January 2026, the **Shijiao Earth-Friendly Farmer's Market** was alive with the scent of woodsmoke. This fragrance came from "orchard debris"—the pruned branches from local hillsides, now fueling the communal "Leopard Cat Kitchen". As the aroma of rainforest coffee drifted through the air, a routine communal meal transitioned into a "**Dish to Dialogue**" session, where children and community leaders gathered to explore the intersection of food and life.

Having witnessed this market transform from a wasteland into a vibrant public space, we have observed the profound connection between local "terroir" and community identity. Ya-Hui envisioned communal dining as a catalyst for meaningful social dialogue, while Vina translated this vision into a sensory facilitation process—a fieldnote of "**Sensory Archaeology**" designed to bridge generations.



Transitioning from a Communal Meal to a Table Discussing Food

Photo by Jai-Yi Liu

1. The Wisdom of the Clay Pot: Hakka Braised Pork

"When that piece of meat is served, it jiggles—tender yet holding its form".

This description of **Hakka Braised Pork** (*Kong-Rou*) by a community leader reveals an art form that masters the passage of time. The family secret involves placing thick slices of sugarcane at the bottom of a heavy clay pot instead of using processed sugar. The natural sweetness infuses the meat, while the fibers prevent scorching—a masterclass in fire control and rural ingenuity.



Share Preparation

Photo by Chen-Jin Wong

2. The Dawn Harvest: Savory Rice Dumplings

Brother **Guang-Ming** shared the story of "Savory Rice Dumplings" (*Xian Tang-Yuan*), whose essence lies in is the **Ma Bamboo Shoot**. To ensure they are sweet and never bitter, the shoots must be harvested at the crack of dawn. His memory of treading through the morning dew with his mother remains vivid. He also recalled a unique tactile memory: these soft dumplings were traditionally stuck to doorframes as ritual offerings for ancestors, eventually drying until they became rock-hard—marking the sacred rhythms of village life.

3. From Singkawang to Shijiao: The Pandan Collision

A-Mei, who migrated from Indonesia over 20 years ago, brought the fragrance of coconut and palm sugar to the table. She prepared **Nyonya layer cakes** using **pandan leaves** that someone originally "smuggled" from her homeland to plant in the yard. In a beautiful

cultural fusion, local Hakka aunties mistakenly cut her cake into the trapezoidal shapes of traditional Hakka "**Nine-Layer Rice Cakes**". This "mistake" gave the Indonesian dessert a Hakka silhouette, symbolizing how cultural diversity blends to create a new home.

Facilitator's Lens: Protecting the Conditions of Perception

During the process, the participation of two children was particularly striking. Acting as "**Story Collectors**," they practiced deep listening while managing recording equipment, ensuring that the seniors' memories were no longer dusty relics but living resilience unearthed for a new generation.

As the facilitator, Vina observed a shift from confusion to deep engagement. Initially, some participants were perplexed; when asked to use a "Sensory Collection Form" to record memories, some found the act of writing challenging.

"I sensed the difficulty for some," Vina recalls, "and I responded by welcoming oral storytelling instead of formal writing, ensuring the space remained inclusive and hospitable".

The first speaker did not write a single word, yet his passionate description of ingredient selection was so compelling that everyone was drawn into his narrative world. "In that moment, I felt as if everyone was walking into the recipe through his eyes," says Vina. By preserving the conditions that allow perception to deepen without forced alignment, understanding began to grow.



Photo by Chun-Min Syu

The Backstage: Dialogue as a Temporal Ecology

Through this practice, we gradually came to understand dialogue not as a single event but—a living relational system that unfolds over time. Just as an ecological system contains multiple organisms and rhythms, dialogue encompasses speech, silence, embodied reactions, and subsequent reinterpretation.

Trust, in this context, is cultivated not through speed but through sustained relational presence. This shifts the facilitator's role from that of a conflict resolver to a steward of time. When a participant approaches us weeks later to share a lingering discomfort, we understand that the dialogue has not failed; it has simply continued elsewhere.

Such trust requires discipline. After each gathering, we return to reflective writing—what we describe as self-rotation and co-rotation. We revisit our own embodied responses to

discern whether what lingers belongs to the collective field or to our own unfinished processes.

Conclusion: Seasoned Just Right

Dish to Dialogue is an evolving experiment in becoming. What began as a small Sunday gathering now holds the potential to become something more enduring: a space where people with divergent convictions can maintain relationships. By practicing a form of sensory archaeology—engaging our senses and listening with compassion—we reclaim the "Art of Living."



Guarding the Firelight
Photo by Hsin-Yu Chen

This is the Hakka philosophy of life: being "**Seasoned Just Right**" (*Xian-Dan-Gang-Hao*)—the precise balance of flavor and life that preserves the warmth of our human connections.

This article is written for community practitioners who sometimes feel that solutions must be forged alone, through personal endurance and relentless innovation. It suggests that an

alternative path may exist—one that patiently nurtures relationships, trusting that social warmth can be cultivated rather than forced.

It is also written for those who quietly bear the pain of familial or relational fractures. If dialogue does not immediately resolve the pain, it does not mean it has failed. Sometimes, the most important progress occurs beneath the visible surface—when time is allowed, when silence is respected, and the fire is kept alive without demanding immediate answers.

Authors' Bios

Known in PIMA as Yahui, Fang Ya-Hui is an adult educator, researcher-scholar, and community practitioner. Active in the global ALE network and PASCAL International, she has contributed to PIMA since its early years. Her work centers on civic engagement, community empowerment, adult education, and the relational dimensions of social change.

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Vina (*Hsin-Pei Chen*) is an emerging facilitator whose practice bridges community engagement and intergenerational dialogue. Since 2022, she has contributed to the revitalization of Dongshi Farmer's Market through participatory design and sensory-based facilitation. Her experiences include collaboration with ICA Taiwan and ICA Japan, as well as civic engagement initiatives such as the Judicial Reform Foundation. She will soon begin her undergraduate studies in the Department of Finance and Cooperative Management, bringing her interest in economic systems into conversation with community-based relational practice.

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Letter from Brazil

Ana Ivenicki

Keywords: Adult Education, Lifelong Learning, Cultural Diversity

In Brazil adult education has been viewed as a responsibility of the Federal Government since the introduction of the National Constitution in 1988, which considers it a way to address persistent high rates of adult illiteracy among the country's disadvantaged groups from the age of 15 years old and over (Ivenicki, 2020). It has been provided as literacy development, primary education and secondary education, generally in night classes at municipal and state schools premises.

It is noteworthy that even though the expression “lifelong learning” has been gaining more attention lately, adult education is still viewed as the focus of national policies, such as in the Brazilian National Plan for Education 2014-2024 (Ministry of Education, 2014). As argued elsewhere (Ivenicki, 2020), a lifelong framework could possibly contribute to a more organic adult education perspective which could consider a process that could be carried on to higher education (and beyond). It is important to note that federal and state universities have been providing multicultural initiatives towards cultural diversity and inclusion of adults such as night classes and the system of quotas for black, indigenous and poor people, among others.

Whilst the project for future approval of the Plan for Education 2024-2034 (Ministry of Education, 2025) is still being discussed, and has still to be approved by the National Congress, it already shows an important awareness of the multicultural nature of adults in Brazil, stressing that the 18 objectives of the document should deal with education in all levels, including adult and young people's education, in a perspective that values cultural diversity and inclusion, among other issues. That is arguably one incredibly positive way to challenge the recent diminution of registration of students in

adult education courses and contribute to transform adult education into a positive and inclusionary experience for many groups of adults in Brazil.

Author Bio

Ana Ivenicki is a Professor Emerita at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and Senior Researcher for the Brazilian National Research Council (CNPq). She specialises in multicultural, comparative, and international education. Holding a PhD from the University of Glasgow, she is a CNPq 1A researcher focused on curriculum and teacher training through an intercultural lens. A recipient of the prestigious *Cora Coralina Award*, her work promotes social inclusion and diversity. Professor Ivenicki remains a prominent global scholar, contributing to international debates on educational policy.

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Ageing Society – Mandate and Opportunities for Adult Education Centres (Volkshochschulen)

Ernst Dieter Rossmann

Abstract

This article is based on a keynote from the Lower Saxony Adult Education Centre Assembly in Westerstede in 2025. The speech explores the evolving mandate of German adult education centres (Volkshochschulen) to address the needs of an ageing society, particularly the diverse "Baby Boomer" generation.

Keywords: Geragogy, active ageing, Volkshochschulen (VHS)

Education in Older Age as a Mandate for Adult Education Centres

Volume 2 of the *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education*, edited by Rudolf Tippelt and Aiga von Hippel (2018), contains a chapter entitled, “*Active Ageing as an Objective of Comprehensive Education Policy.*” This is a well-chosen heading and an insight that also serves as a fundamental guideline for the work of the adult education centres (Volkshochschulen, VHS). It is understood:

1. Comprehensive education policy with regard to ageing does not begin in old age.
2. Every age has its own learning needs and its own path towards a differentiated and holistic experience of learning and education.
3. Learning and education in later life depend heavily on a person’s accumulated “capital” of willingness, ability, and joy in lifelong learning.

As adult education centres, we claim — and have the competence — to be spaces of experience, learning, and education for all generations: *for the young and the old, with the young and the old, and through the young and the old.*

Turning to demographic change and the situation in the VHS, it may initially appear that the age distribution among VHS participants is largely comparable to that of the general population. A closer look, however, reveals that younger people come to the VHS disproportionately through mandatory integration courses and usually have a migrant background, while the older generation — typically with predominantly German biographies — attends the traditional programmes of general adult education out of their own motivation and with clearly self-determined interests.

It should be noted that this age divergence aligns with other structural characteristics of the VHS as Germany's leading institution for general adult education. The characteristics that we must address:

- The VHS is an institution of the middle classes.
- The VHS has a strong female imprint — in its staff as well as among its participants — with particularly high proportions of older women as long-standing attendees.
- The VHS has relatively few older first-time learners and, compared with the general population, relatively few participants over the age of 75.

These fundamental characteristics of the VHS across Germany always manifest differently at the local level, shaped by specific conditions, priorities, and individual programme profiles. These must be analysed carefully when designing education programmes for older adults in each unique VHS setting. This is all the more relevant in light of demographic developments that are already clearly foreseeable.

The Baby Boomers – A Challenge and an Opportunity

Adult education centres — though by far not only they — must prepare themselves for the enormous task, challenge, and indeed the opportunity of addressing the needs of the roughly **12 million Baby Boomers born between 1955 and 1969** in Germany. This will likely be a generation that — as sociologist Andreas Reckwitz has described — is

individualistic, oriented toward singularity, consumption-conscious, demanding, somewhat conservative, status-focused, potentially committed yet also volatile. That is one side. At the same time, this Boomer generation will likely experience more loneliness than previous generations. Even today, **22% of women over 65 and 15% of men** report feelings of loneliness.

For a form of adult education that is free, self-directed, and in some respects even self-optimising, these 12 million people should be receptive to the notion of “flourishing” in later life — *flourishing* being the fashionable new term — through education and participation. And they should be reachable *especially* through the VHS,

- **IF** we focus on people’s potential rather than their deficits, viewing age not as a decline but as a kind of added value. “Pro-Aging” must become a cause the VHS actively champions.
- **IF** we offer learning in a flexible, innovative, forward-looking manner — enabling people to believe in themselves and strengthen their self-confidence.
- **IF** we cultivate social togetherness — that anthropological constant no AI can replace — through shared learning, mutual visibility, recognition, and affirmation.

Many adult education centres have already set out on this path. Yet we must guard against illusions or the naïve hope that all 12 million Baby Boomers will automatically flock to the VHS. There are, after all, clear challenges, including:

- **Competition in adult education is enormous**, with nearly 60,000 providers — public, communal, commercial, and self-employed — as documented in the DIE Continuing Education Register for the National Education Report 2024.
- **Traditional language learning may decline in relevance** due to translation tools and AI. Likewise, classroom-style learning formats will come under pressure if they do not modernise.

- **Those with financial means have many alternatives;** for those with limited resources, even VHS courses may become too expensive.
- **Many older adults will likely work beyond age 67,** by choice or necessity, reducing time and energy for general lifelong learning.

For all these reasons, the VHS must sharpen and strengthen their profile regarding education in older age. The German Federal Government’s decision to dedicate the 10th Report on Older People to “Education and Learning in Later Life” for the first time since 1993 is encouraging — and motivating. We need an open, curious, and self-critical discussion within the VHS, across adult education, across the full breadth of ageing research, and especially in the field of geragogy. A universal “one-size-fits-all” concept will not be feasible given the diversity of ageing processes and needs. The VHS should adopt an agenda of **exploration, experimentation, and practical innovation**, as many are already doing successfully.

What Needs to Be Done Now: 11 Concise Action Points

1) Health Education

Older adults already participate disproportionately in health-related courses — men in back training, women in yoga. The VHS must build on this and offer a comprehensive programme in fitness, prevention, health literacy, and wellbeing. Not all sports need a club or gym; the VHS can be the ideal place for movement, community, and education. Franz Müntefering famously said: *Laughing, walking, learning — that’s what matters for a healthy and satisfied old age.*” A strong partnership with health insurers should be developed under a shared motto: **“VHS education makes you healthy — and healthy people want more VHS education!”**

2) New Media and Communication Technologies

Older adults continue to demand IT training disproportionately. After the PC boom, mobile phone training, language apps, and ChatGPT, interest in AI is now rising — particularly

among older adults. The VHS has the opportunity to become a leading place for *upgrading* — to use the modern term — digital competence and enabling self-directed, helpful uses of new technologies. A single advertising image of a cheerful older woman attending a social media course, as used in the DVV’s 2024 campaign, is not enough. We need a whole series of visual narratives aimed at older adults if lifelong learning is to be understood as an opportunity open to all.

3) Senior-Specific Programmes and a “Senior VHS”

Just as the concept of a “Young VHS” targets youth and young adults, explicit and positively framed senior programmes — even a dedicated “Senior VHS” — may become valuable. In principle, age-mixed access is desirable. Yet, as an entry point, a safeguard against perceived overwhelm, or a protected space, age-specific formats can be meaningful and should be tested without dogma. This includes the particularly underrepresented group of older men: Do we truly address their backgrounds, technical skills, DIY hobbies, cooking interests, and traditionally male-coded leisure activities? Similarly, do we offer enough to older adults who continue working after retirement — courses on pedagogy, digital skills, AI literacy, or maintaining personal health and fitness?

4) Intergenerational, Age-Integrative Exchange

Such age-specific offers are not contradictory to intergenerational learning, which remains a core objective of the VHS, as outlined in the VHS “Blue Book” (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband [DIE], 2011). Many older adults have rich life experiences to share — political, social, professional, personal. Many younger people bring questions about their futures. Sharing stories fosters identity and understanding. The VHS can organise such reciprocal dialogues and help build bridges between generations — especially as family structures change. This can be a significant contribution to shaping a *new* age and a *new* ageing.

5) Holistic Learning and Learning as Enjoyment

Programmatic categories are useful, but holistic learning — engaging all the senses — adds value, especially in older age. Learning becomes richer when connected with imagery, music, culture, movement, or dance. Festivals and activities build bridges between the familiar and the new. Food and drink always work — and “pleasure learning” should become a practical and programmatic hallmark of the VHS.

6) High-Quality Spaces as a “Second Place”

The VHS should become a high-quality place of belonging for older participants — a “second place” for those no longer working. Places that are less school-like, and more like civic hubs, where people meet around shared learning interests. This includes not only class times but the time *before and after* courses, with opportunities for coffee, conversation, and social connection. Courses where older participants arrive 30 minutes early and stay 30 minutes afterward deserve a gold star.

7) Added-Value Learning Environments

As people age, room quality matters more: accessibility, warmth, lighting, acoustics. These must be taken seriously—not as luxury, but as essentials. Good seating is not comfort; it is a necessity . An 80-year-old participant with visual and hearing impairments recently remarked, upon seeing the newly modernised VHS facilities in Hamburg: “*Wonderful — that means I can keep coming here for at least another ten years.*” That is what future-proof investment looks like.

8) Accessibility and Outreach

Accessibility becomes critical in older age. VHS should work locally, be decentralised, and close to seniors’ everyday environments — perhaps inside health, rehab, and care institutions. If people cannot come to the VHS, the VHS must go to them.

Outreach education — ideally with VHS programmes and future education vouchers in hand — should become standard, especially in combating loneliness among those over 75 or 80. A 10% discount for all retirees at model VHS locations would be worth testing. A national education pass for older adults could be a longer-term goal.

9) Participation, Co-Determination, and Cooperation

Older adults can and should co-design programmes through self-organised courses, planning groups, VHS advisory councils, and cooperation with senior councils and organisations. Such partnerships expand the VHS’s reach and bring diverse expertise and new audiences.

10) Addressing Human Limit Situations

Ageing brings people to limits: loss, loneliness, illness, dementia, need for care, dying, and death. Though life satisfaction is statistically lowest around ages 30–45, it rises again into very old age — yet crisis moments remain profound.

The VHS must engage with these realities — with affected individuals and their environments. With 1.2 million people living with dementia in Germany — and numbers rising — the roughly 500 VHS programmes addressing dementia are far from sufficient. One year less dementia has been estimated to save society €20,000 per person — a powerful argument for prevention and education.

11) Geragogy in Theory and Practice

Geragogy — pedagogy for later life — is becoming increasingly important. Although the 12 million Boomers are, fortunately, still some distance from needing it, VHS should aim to have at least one trained geragogy specialist on their academic leadership teams. The newly launched federal programme *BELL – Bildung und Engagement ein Leben lang* (“Education and Engagement Throughout Life”; European Social Fund for Germany, n.d.) explicitly supports expanding geragogical expertise.

The VHS and Their Claim to Participation

The adult education centres — through the national association DVV and the state associations — must take part in the emerging national debate on education in later life. They must contribute to the dementia strategy, the loneliness strategy, integration conferences, the federal report on education in older age, and advocacy for better funding of adult education. They can contribute substantially to preparing a new national education summit spanning the entire educational biography — from early childhood to old age.

For such a comprehensive lifelong learning approach, not only each individual VHS must advocate locally and regionally — the entire VHS system must act together, with partners, at municipal, state, federal, European, and international levels. The long-standing DVV President Rita Süßmuth's credo applies here: *“Those who do not fight have already lost.”*

She was right. And we may wish ourselves much success and good fortune on our shared mission.

**This keynote is from the Lower Saxony Adult Education Centre Assembly in Westerstede on 28 October 2025 has been granted permission for publication to PIMA.*

***The information from the keynote been translated, adapted and extended from German into English using AI and may contain some inaccuracies.*

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Citizenship Education and Adult Learning and Education (ALE)

*Prepared and edited by Katarina Popović
ICAE, Belgrade, 2022*

Abstract

The relevance of citizenship education (CED) for the further development of adult learning and education (ALE) and its impact on (current and future) ALE practice from ICAE's perspective. The background paper for supporting the thematic chapter of GRALE 5, 2020.

Executive Summary

There is hardly a concept, paradigm or topic that is used, promoted and advocated as much as citizenship education, while remaining so vaguely defined and differently understood. Presenting the International Council for Adult Education's (ICAE) concept, discourse and understanding of citizenship education, together with the examples from various regions, this paper shows clearly that citizenship education, especially understood as global citizenship education, is an urgent issue in the contemporary world. The core meaning of global citizenship education is recognized in ICAE's mission: to promote learning and education for adults and young people in pursuit of social justice within the framework of human rights in all its dimensions, to secure the healthy, sustainable and democratic development of individuals, communities and societies around the world and across diverse contexts (International Council for Adult Education [ICAE], 2020).

Citizenship – or civic – education has always been part of national education systems and has been defined by national discourses about what constitutes a good citizen. In situations where educational programmes promote exclusionary nationalism, school climate is generally authoritarian and repressive, which is not conducive to the development of civic competencies. There are also longstanding traditions of marginalizing minorities and women

and widespread unease with growing diversity (Bassel & Ghosn-Chelala, 2018). In these circumstances, adult learning and education, especially within the civic sector, becomes increasingly important. While countries involved in conflicts, troubled by persistent poverty and large numbers of fleeing people lead often to nationalist discourses in education, civil society makes tireless efforts to promote participatory, inclusive and cross-country programmes, and pays special attention to vulnerable groups, to the rights of women, youth, people with disabilities, and others.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) often use Freirean approaches and related emancipatory and transformative educational practices. CSOs incorporate the ideals, approaches and values of global citizenship education to enhance civic responsibility and political competencies at the country-level where the struggle occurs to different cultural traditions and evolving democratic aspirations to achieving a just and equal society for all. Global development in the 21st century has not only added more topics to citizenship education but has also sharpened the critique of existing approaches and curricula. This is based on the recognition that the world has become a global village in terms of means of communication, and a global market where goods and services of one country can be purchased or sold in other corners of the world, while the mobility of people is still limited, often in the service of narrow political and economic reasons.

In education, this was accompanied by an awareness that large groups were left behind economically through globalisation, especially in lower-income countries, while inequalities increased even within upper-income countries (Milanović, 2016). The dominant modern idea of citizenship was linked closely to the emergence of individuals endowed with entitlements or rights in relation to the governments of territorial sovereign states, but numerous changes re-shaped this understanding. The nation-state no longer [has] absolute claim over the individual as belonging to a particular state as individuals now have dual or

even multiple citizenships because of states' membership in extra-national organizations (Nwaogu & Nwaogu, 2009).

There is also increased movement of people across national borders for political or economic reasons. Financial crises, armed conflicts, the alarming effects of climate change and environmental degradation, and several waves of pandemics– most recently COVID-19 – has strengthened both the feeling that the world is very much connected and that national boundaries are increasingly meaningless. It is civil society that can fulfil new needs and close the gap that traditional education providers leave when confronted with these new challenges. New political structures and relationships, new connections between the local, regional and global (especially the complex interdependency and interconnectedness of political, economic, social and cultural norms and decisions), and new ways of community organising all require providers that will not only offer relevant knowledge but also foster informed decision-making and constructive engagement in these dynamic processes. Civil society is a traditional provider of education for vulnerable and marginalised groups – exactly those who might have additional interest in citizenship education as a means of empowerment and transformational engagement to improve their lives.

Representing a broad network of civil society organisations, ICAE promotes education and learning that deal with the most pressing problems facing humanity. ICAE members address nearly all elements of the modern understanding of active, global citizenship, in a contextualised manner, responding to local needs and urgent issues, while being guided by global goals and universal human values. In this paper numerous practical examples illustrate a very organic way of dealing with problems in an intersectoral manner in ALE, understanding them in their real-life complexity. Examples include: COVID-19, health and learning in times of crises, Democracy, human rights and political literacy, Community learning, neighbourhood and youth, Gender, indigenous population and diversity, Peace,

international understanding and the fight against racism, Citizenship education, skills, private sector and employment. Ultimately, Global Citizenship Education (GSE) cannot simply advocate for new approaches and measures that are suitable for upper-income countries and communities. Instead, it needs to take into account the global context and what these initiatives, new forms of behaviour, and new approaches to learning mean for other regions.

Research is needed to connect universal goals with diverse local practices and contexts. Further research should inform the evolving global aspects of citizenship education. Careful analysis of both advantages and failures and risks of the process of globalisation is needed. Citizenship education must be clearly conceptualized; include relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours; be contextualized in the global and the local; and be pedagogically informed by de-colonising, feminist, Freirean and Indigenous perspectives.

ALE alone will not rewrite our collective narrative. But without ALE, it will be exceedingly difficult to achieve the kind of world that we want. A new collective narrative must reflect a renewed commitment to participative democracy, recognize the imperative to reverse the causes of climate change, question the consequences of unlimited economic growth, and promote respect for diversity and all forms of life. Just as we have been promising Education for All, since Jomtien in 1990, we now need to reaffirm that education for all is a prerequisite for democracy and that sustaining life worldwide is a prerequisite for both.

***Editor's note:** This Executive Summary has been reproduced with permission from ICAE to emphasise the link between adult education, lifelong learning, citizenship and democracy.*

Source: International Council for Adult Education. (2022). *Citizenship education and adult learning education (ALE)*. <https://icae.global/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Citizenship-Education-and-ALE.pdf>

****PIMA will be publishing a special issue of the Bulletin in November 2026 focussing on the theme of Democracy.**** If you would like to contribute to this special issue, please contact Chris Brooks and Dorothy Lucardie at dorothy.lucardie@bigpond.com.au

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Adults Still Want to Have Fun

Dorothy Lucardie

Abstract

In 2014 research into the role of fun and enjoyment in adults learning (Lucardie, 2014) identified that that experiencing fun and enjoyment facilitates learning by increasing learners' motivation and engagement. Over the past decade a growing body of research into fun and enjoyment and its impact on learning has developed firstly in areas that have for many years supported fun and enjoyment in learning such as information technology and environmental studies and secondly extended to new subject areas such as language learning, medical education and publishing.

Keywords: fun, enjoyment, learning



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Bianco et al. (2003) found that enjoying oneself and recognising the value of goals are common reasons adults pursue and accomplish objectives, such as learning goals. Their studies suggested that the higher the sense of fun and importance of an activity, the more that

enjoyment increased, and this further reinforced the activity as meeting the individual's more specific goals. Bianco et al. (2003) recommended that educators should change "the content to make it more enjoyable or fun" (p. 1093) and that this will assist learners to achieve their goals. Bianco et al. (2003) argued for distinguishing between enjoyable and interesting fun, noting that interesting fun may blur the lines between fun and goal importance (p. 1093). Corporate learning organisations worldwide have increasingly developed and implemented learning games and simulations for their employees. Learning games and simulations, much like the ones that were played during primary school, improve learner engagement and have been found to improve learner participation, comprehension, and retention (McLean, 2006).

Over the past decade the growing body of research into fun and enjoyment and its impact on learning has developed further in areas that have for many years spoken about fun and enjoyment such as information technology and environmental studies. This research interest has now extended to new subject areas such as language learning, medical education (anatomy) and tertiary studies such as Publishing. These studies have evaluated the effect of specifically designed activities that aim to enhance enjoyment and generate a sense of fun with the intention of improving learners' motivation and retention of learning.

Environment education has a long history of using fun and enjoyable activities to engage learners and build their understanding of environmental issues (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Kovan & Dirx, 2003). To address low environmental literacy in marine edutourism courses in Indonesia and Malaysia, Hayati et.al (2025) developed a learning model that combined joyful and experiential learning concepts (EJoy-ME) and implemented the model in Wakatobi National Park, Indonesia, Mangrove Point, Klang River, Malaysia and Kuala Sela Nature Park, Malaysia. Learners reported that while they felt like they were playing they were undertaking learning that was meaningful to them. Hayati, et.al. (2024) found that

the implementation of EJoy-ME increased learners ocean literacy while providing enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences.

Recent studies of language learning programs are also reporting the positive effect of experiencing fun and enjoyment on learning outcomes. The Online Buddy program in the Netherlands (Heikamp, et.al. 2025) affirmed that experiencing enjoyment stimulates participants learning of cultural content. They explained this as a key to cultural learning where experiencing enjoyment stimulates self-disclosure. Wu and Wang (2025) also discovered in China that second language learners achieved much better results when they enjoyed listening to their teachers. Exposure to stimulating conversations with their teacher increased interest, motivation and enabled ESL learners to gain mastery of the language (Wu & Wang, 2025). This program placed learning both outdoors and used technology to help learners to become motivated, optimistic and to tackle complex tasks. Participants commented that having fun in a supportive and collegial atmosphere optimised their learning (Caetano et al., 2024).

Game Based Learning (GBL) or gamification literature has for many years supported the concepts of fun and enjoyment as described by Maalej (2026). When describing the impact that enjoyment has on learning inter-professional skills in Germany. Maalej (2026) relates that this produces positive emotions and helps to remove anxiety and stress. Maalej (2026) presented ten physical and fun activities to help learners to understand basic programming and abstract concepts of software development. Examples include paper planes as messages and moving around in a lecture hall imaging it as a tree. These activities were used in lecture halls of over 500 learners. The interview study showed that using fun activities helped learners to focus, remember and reflect on key concepts.

GBL has included total immersive experiences with elaborate games designed for individual or group learning over lengthy periods of time or smaller components such as Gamerscore, leaderboards, medals, and bonus products inserted in learning programs to boost

satisfaction and fun (Ritvanen, 2021). This has spilled over into m learning. A systematic review undertaken by Garzón et al. (2025) considered 441 empirical studies published between 2013 and 2023. This review that showed that GBL plays a significant part in m learning. Garzon et al. (2025) identified this role as an advantage by encouraging enjoyment, satisfaction and motivation to m learning.

The role of fun and enjoyment has also emerged across medical education to help the retention of both soft and hard skills. In the teaching of anatomy, Wilmshurst et al. (2025) proposes that “teaching is a performance” (p. 3) and entertainment can benefit learners by increasing their motivation, retention and participation. According to Wilmshurt et al. (2025) quizzes, anatomy board games and humour successfully enhance learning. This widening interest in fun and enjoyment is seen in several tertiary studies, including in Publishing studies in New Zealand. Smith et al. (2026) recent study on Whitireia Graduate Diploma in Publishing learning experience found that graduates spoke about enjoyment, fun and friendships. Example comments that reflect these sentiments, include “I came away with great friends” (Smith et al., 2026, p. 8), and “I consider it one of the best years of my life because it was just so fun, and I gained lifelong friends from the experience” (Smith et al., 2026, p. 9). Smith et.al. (2026) propose that the social dimensions of learning may be “equally as important as the academic component of tertiary courses” (p. 9).

Interest in the role and impact of fun and enjoyment on adults learning has grown with several research studies considering their role and gathering evidence from across a wider sample of adult learning topics. This growing interest is across the world with the small sample of studies included those from Indonesia, Malaysia, China, USA, Germany, Australia and the Netherlands. It may be that soon fun and enjoyment will no longer be considered as “added extra’s” to adults learning but essential components as they are in children’s education (Lucardie, 2014).

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PIMA AI Bulletin Review

Kailea Manning and Shuqi Du

Abstract

This article provides a review of the recent PIMA Special Edition Bulletin (January 2026) that examined the rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) into adult education, highlighting both its opportunities and risks. The Bulletin explored how AI can reshape learning expectations, challenge traditional notions of effort and understanding, and raise concerns about bias, misinformation, and inequity. Emphasizing critical AI literacy, the review underscores the need for intentional, human-centered integration that preserves ethical engagement and supports meaningful learning in an evolving educational landscape.

Keywords: AI Literacy, Adult Education, Ethical AI Use, Human-AI Interaction

When a technology moves faster than the institutions meant to guide its use, questions tend to multiply faster than the answers. This is where adult education now finds itself with the rise of generative artificial intelligence. The shift does not feel gradual; it feels like being pulled forward before there is time to decide what should be held onto and what should be reconsidered. This shift lands unevenly for adult learners as many are already balancing work, family, and limited time for study. Introducing AI into that reality is not a quick fix, nor does learning automatically become easier. It changes expectations, reshapes how time is used, and redefines what counts as effort, and what it means to truly understand something rather than simply produce it.

For adult learners, these are not abstract concerns. Bringing AI into this context could open doors, but it may also introduce new barriers under the guise of opportunity, especially when

producing answers becomes easier than developing them. The promise of efficiency introduces its own tensions. Access to information becomes easier, but so does the spread of misinformation. Output comes faster, yet it becomes less clear what constitutes depth. Even systems that appear neutral still carry the biases embedded in the data on which they are built.

How can adult learners and educators navigate the benefits and risks of AI while preserving ethical, human-centered learning and meaningful cognitive engagement?

Hill and Conceição lay the foundation for understanding generative AI as both an opportunity and a risk, positioning it as a tool that can enhance creativity and accessibility while simultaneously introducing concerns related to misinformation, bias, and inequity. Taken together with Lelescu's emphasis on the ethical consequences of AI use, it becomes clear that adult learners and educators cannot simply adopt these tools at face value. Instead, they must develop the skills to critically evaluate and intentionally use AI in ways that support both learning and equity.

In this sense, AI literacy becomes less of a technical skill and more of a necessary framework for navigating an evolving educational and workforce landscape. By developing an understanding of how AI systems function, including algorithms, training data, and inherent limitations, adult learners can better position themselves to use these tools effectively while also advocating for more equitable and responsible applications. Importantly, the uncertainty surrounding AI is not something to be avoided, but something that can prompt deeper reflection and more thoughtful engagement.

At the same time, this shift is reshaping the role of educators and instructional designers. As Haren Conely suggests, the integration of AI introduces both deskilling and upskilling, requiring educators to reconsider where their value lies within the learning process. Rather than replacing human expertise, this tension appears to be pushing the field toward a more efficient yet

still deeply human-centered practice, where critical thinking, ethical judgment, and intentional design remain central.

Where Should We Draw the Line Between AI Assistance and Human Thinking?

This question sits at the heart of the human-AI partnership debate. Jiahao Liang and Khau Huu Phuoc offer a cautionary answer: if we cross the line too carelessly, we risk intellectual degeneration. Liang’s “singularity of education” envisions a future where shared intelligence replaces individual thinking; Khau warns that convenience may erode the very process of internalizing knowledge. These concerns reflect a common fear that AI assistance becomes a substitute rather than a support.

But where is this line in practice? Stein and Pan’s study offer an important insight. They appreciate AI’s immediacy and coherence yet still recognize its limits. AI lacks emotional depth, lived experience, and genuine understanding. Learners already have an intuitive sense of what should remain human, but this awareness needs to be made more explicit and intentional.

Rotschnig, Fritz, and Turner’s “wrAIte” project illustrates a possible way forward. AI supports creative writing by enriching human expression rather than replacing it. Dong’s framework also offers a practical guide. They point to a deeper goal of AI literacy. It is not only about using AI effectively, but about understanding its boundaries. If this line is clearly maintained, the future Liang warns about may not be inevitable, but something education can actively shape.

How can AI literacy move beyond skills to address power and inequality?

When promoting AI literacy, emphasizing critical thinking and ethical reasoning is essential precisely because, as Gao notes, technology learns from biased data and risks automating historical inequalities. The data used to train AI systems are not neutral; they reflect existing power structures. If AI is intended to support human advancement, then overlooking these biases risks

doing the opposite by reinforcing inequity. Orias pushes this argument further by framing AI literacy not simply as understanding, but also for the capacity to responsibly shape future AI technologies.

Literacy, in this view, cannot be passive consumption; it must be tied to agency. Yet, as Miao's exploration of AI certificates reveals, even the pathways to acquiring such literacy are uneven. Certificates marketed for career advancement often remain inaccessible across different adult populations, raising questions about whose literacy is being cultivated and who gets left out. Instead, the real risk is that without asking who gets to learn, who builds the tools, and who benefits, AI literacy can become another way to sort people instead of setting them free.

What role does intentional AI integration play in shaping how educators adapt to shifting expectations, pressures, and possibilities in contemporary education?

Artificial intelligence is no longer a tool that educators can choose whether or not to adopt; it has become an embedded and lasting component of contemporary education. As a result, the conversation has shifted from whether AI should be used to how educators are expected to respond to its presence. This shift occurs within a broader system of pressures, as educators navigate expectations from students, institutions, professional fields, and larger societal forces.

Within this context, educators' perceptions of AI play a critical role in shaping their response. As Broughton, Berry, and Lin suggest, AI can support well-being by reducing workload and streamlining tasks when implemented intentionally, with comparisons to tools like calculators emphasizing its role in extending human capability. However, educators may initially approach these tools with skepticism or uncertainty. Richards similarly frames AI as an extension of human cognition, referencing earlier innovations such as the primitive axe, suggesting that how AI is conceptualized can shift how it is received. Together, these perspectives indicate that when AI is

positioned as both a support for practice and an extension of thinking, educators may move from hesitation toward more strategic and confident use.

Importantly, this shift is not automatic. Intentional intervention through faculty development and educator training is essential for supporting adaptation. As highlighted by Sebastien, these efforts must extend beyond one-time workshops to include sustained, collaborative spaces where educators can build confidence and reflect on their practice. At the same time, broader structural factors, including institutional policies, limited educator input, and persistent inequities such as the digital divide, continue to shape how AI is experienced in practice.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that educator adaptation to AI is not simply a matter of learning new tools, but of navigating a complex and evolving landscape. Ultimately, how educators respond depends on how AI integration is presented, supported, and embedded within these broader systems.

Conclusion

Across these sections, a consistent theme emerges: generative AI is not simply another instructional tool, but a force reshaping how learning, teaching, and knowledge are understood. The question is no longer whether AI should be integrated into adult education, but how that integration can be guided in ways that preserve human-centered learning.

The perspectives in this bulletin highlight ongoing tensions: efficiency and depth, assistance and overreliance, access and inequity, and adaptation and pressure. Navigating these tensions requires more than technical skill. It calls for critical AI literacy, intentional implementation, and a willingness to engage thoughtfully with the role AI plays in learning.

Ultimately, the future of adult education will depend on how individuals and institutions respond to this shift. Rather than allowing AI to dictate the direction of education, there is an

opportunity to shape its role in ways that support ethical engagement and meaningful understanding.

Authors Bios

Kailea Manning is a doctoral candidate in Educational Psychology at Auburn University and an instructor of record in the Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology department. Her research focuses on faculty in higher education and how psychological factors, particularly motivation, influence decision-making around the adoption of emerging technologies such as generative AI.

Shuqi Du is a doctoral candidate in Educational Psychology at Auburn University, with a focus on AI literacy, self-regulated learning, and the integration of generative AI in educational settings. She has worked as an Instructional Design Assistant at Auburn Online, contributing to the development of online courses and AI-related professional learning initiatives. Her research and practice center on how AI can support meaningful learning experiences while preserving critical thinking and learner agency.

Literacy Matters - Resources

Two resources have recently been launched to assist Literacy Educators:

1. Tutor Manual Resources

Adult Learning Australia recently held a webinar promoting the release of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Tutor Manual. The Manual provides resources to help you help others to improve their reading, writing, maths and computing skills. Some of these resources may be suitable for independent learning while other resources will need tutors to provide support. It bridges a long-standing gap in the sector—connecting the science of how adults learn with the practice of effective tutoring. It draws on the expertise of master educators, linguists, psychologists, and literacy specialists from across Australia and New Zealand, translating decades of research into clear, practical strategies tutors can apply immediately. The manual is designed to help tutors build learners' confidence, independence, and opportunities for lifelong learning.

The three parts of the Tutor Manual are freely available as PDFs on the Libraries Tasmania website: <https://libraries.tas.gov.au/get-help/reading-writing-maths-help-for-tasmanians/literacy-resources/>

2. Improving the Digital Competencies of Literacy Educators

In today's digital world, information and communication technologies (ICTs) increasingly shape how we learn, work, and communicate. Literacy educators play a crucial role in enabling youth and adult learners to engage confidently with these technologies and benefit from the opportunities they offer. UNESCO Institute of Learning (UIL) has developed an online course with the support of the Global Alliance for Literacy Associate Member Huawei.

This course supports educators in strengthening their digital knowledge and skills through a flexible, self-paced learning journey. The course is available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic.

Why enrol in this course?

- Free, open-access, and self-paced, with practical, sequential lessons designed specifically for literacy educators
- A certificate from the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning upon successful completion
- Ready-to-use and adaptable materials that can be applied directly to training and teaching in diverse contexts

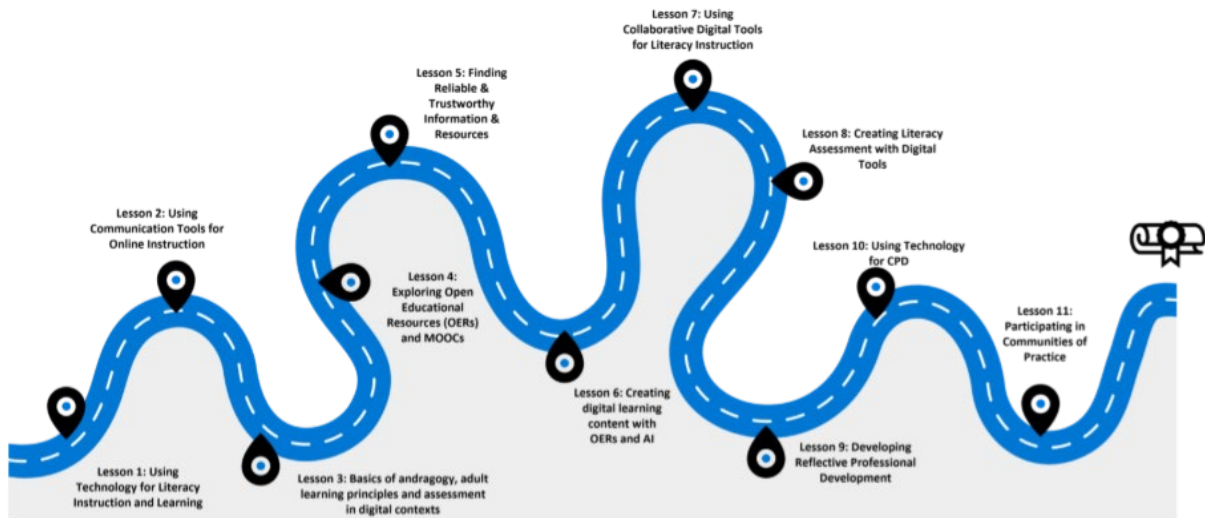
Course objectives:

- Explore innovative and creative ways to integrate digital tools into literacy teaching and learning.
- Build capacity to design engaging learning materials and inclusive learning environments using technology.
- Strengthen professional development by engaging with current approaches in educational technology.

What does the course entail?

- 11 units of learning
- 2.5 learning hours

Below is the overview of the course journey and topics in this course.



You can access the course in your preferred language using the link below or by scanning the relevant QR codes.



If you have any questions, please contact UIL at uil-learningecosystems@unesco.org.

PIMA Resources on the Web

Learning outside of the box

Marking PIMA's 10th Anniversary current and former Presidents and Vice Presidents of PIMA, Suwithida Charungkattikul, Timothy Ireland, Shirley Walters and Heribert Hinzen share their views of the challenges for Lifelong Learning and PIMA now and in the future. Please find below a link to the pre-recorded presentations. <https://youtu.be/GURsCo4CF-A>

The Power Point presentation and discussion notes are available on this link. pimanetwork.com/post/learning-outside-of-the-box

Futures of Education

Futures of Education is a global initiative, launched in 2019, and led by UNESCO (United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), which aims to rethink and shape the future of education. In this first webinar celebrating the 10-year Anniversary of PIMA, **Sobhi Tawil**, Director of the Future of Learning and Innovation Division (UNESCO) discussed the rationale and framing of the Futures of Education, the process of consultation and preparation, and examples of the reports impact at diverse levels. The recording of his address is at <https://youtu.be/k6nWURCs6hA>

The Power Point presentation and discussion notes are available on this link. pimanetwork.com/post/futures-of-education

Joint webinars PIMA and IACEHOF

Higher education supporting the development of adult learning and education.
Two power point presentations from the first webinar held on 5 May 2025 can be found at pimanetwork.com/post/joint-webinars-pima-and-icaehof

Professionalization of adult teachers and educators for the digital futures, Zan Chen, Singapore University of Social Sciences.

University Lifelong Learning for Adult Education, Pascal Paschoud, President EUCEN.

Please Welcome Two New Members!

Casandra Coin-Sweeney is an Associate Professor of English and Humanities. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Cleveland State University's Urban Education program, with a specialization in Adult, Continuing, and Higher Education. Casandra holds an MA in English from DePaul University and a BA in Psychology from Cleveland State University. Her passion for advocacy in the classroom stems from her involvement and research interests related to diversity in the modern environmental movement. When she isn't working or studying, she advocates for the climate as a Climate Reality Project leader and speaks regularly about the need for sustainability education in higher ed. She enjoys reading, spending time outdoors with her family, practicing yoga, and petting her many cats. Email: Casandra.sweeney@tri-c.edu



Dr. Nancy Pratt is Executive Director, Division of Continuing and Extended Education, Cleveland State University. Her professional interests focus on workforce education as a distinct field of scholarly inquiry and practice, the role of adult learners within higher education ecosystems, and the ways institutions translate workforce and policy pressures into coherent educational design. She is particularly interested



in questions of power, knowledge, and expertise inside higher education organizations, and how those dynamics shape decision-making, credentialing, and access. Email: n.pratt@csuohio.edu

PIMA

Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2026

Tuesday May 5th (9pm Bangkok) OR
Monday May 11th (1pm Bangkok)

This is an early notice for our 2026 AGM in May. To make our next AGM more accessible to our members across the world we will be holding two meetings with the same agenda on different dates and times. There are no committee elections this year. You can choose which meeting to attend, you only need to attend one. Essential items will be the Presentation of the Annual Report and the Financial Statements for 2025. At both meetings members will also be able to identify and discuss with other members the issues you see as priorities for PIMA to focus on over the next twelve months or in the future.

The dates for the meetings are **Tuesday May 5th (9pm Bangkok)** and **Monday May 11th (1pm Bangkok)**. Please calculate your local time for the meeting. An invitation will be circulated with ZOOM details to all PIMA members 3 weeks prior to the meetings. Please RSVP your attendance for the meeting you wish to attend. If you are unable to attend either meeting, can you please send your proxy nomination to dorothy.lucardie@bigpond.com.au

Call for Contributions - PIMA Special Issue Bulletin:

International perspectives on educational and cultural practices in contexts of confinement

Dear PIMA Members and Friends,

Our specialized thematic issues always spark deep debate. To consider this, we are preparing a Bulletin focused on **Education and cultural practices in Prisons**, with a specific emphasis on the promotion of formal and non-formal education and cultural activities/practices developed in contexts of confinement.

We are seeking contributions that explore theoretical and practical approaches to non-formal and formal education and cultural activities for persons deprived of their liberty. We especially encourage submissions covering:

- **‘Formal’ Education:** literacy, compensatory/second chance and higher education for those in prison.
- **‘Non-formal’ Education:** the promotion of educational activities/projects in the spirit of lifelong learning (study/cultural circles, reading/book clubs) whose objective is not formal certification.
- **Cultural practices:** The promotion of diverse cultural activities (cultural circles, cinema, yoga and meditation, libraries, Story Telling, theatre, etc.) by state and civil society providers.
- **Gendered experiences:** the ways in which the promotion of these educational and cultural practices take into account the interests and needs of women and non-binary individuals.

Who Should Contribute?

We welcome diverse perspectives and encourage contributions from:

- **New Members:** Introduce your research or field work to our global network.
- **Members with Wide-Ranging Interests:** Share reflections or projects that connect the question of education in prison to the broader theme of adult learning and education.
- **Potential Members & Partners:** We invite qualitative pieces, reflections, art, or poems from those working in or around the prison system.

Submission Guidelines

To ensure your work is considered, please follow these working instructions:

- **Length:** 750 to 1,000 words.
- **Style:** APA 7th Edition.
- **Format:** Microsoft Word document, 1-inch (2.5 cm) margins, Times New Roman 12-point font.
- **Abstract:** 50 words or less (2 to 3 sentences).
- **Keywords:** 3 to 5 keywords.
- **Author Bio:** A brief biography of approximately 100 words.
- **Images:** Submit as separate, high-resolution files. Ensure they are free of copyright restrictions and include the source.
- **Formatting Note:** Avoid footnotes. Limit italics to the reference section and use APA 7th Edition levels for headings.

Timeline & Contact

Please send your proposals (including a title, abstract, and bio) to **Timothy Ireland** or **Amy Rose** [ireland.timothy@gmail.com / arose@niu.edu].

- **Submission Deadline:** 01/06/2026
- **Planned Publication:** July 2026

We look forward to receiving your diverse and insightful contributions as we explore these vital issues together.

Best wishes,

Timothy Ireland

Amy Rose

Leslie Cordie, on behalf of the PIMA Bulletin Management Committee

Obituary

Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. malt. Rita Süßmuth



It is with great sadness that I report the passing of Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. malt. Rita Süßmuth (1937-2026). Rita Süßmuth died on the 1st of February 2026 at the age of 88 years.

From 1988 to 2015, she served as President of the German Adult Education Association (DVV) and then, because of all her achievements, became the first Honorary President.

Prof. Süßmuth was an important, well known, and highly respected person of public life in Germany. She served as a Federal Minister of Youth, Family, Women and Health, and for almost a decade she was the President of the German Parliament. A State Ceremony to honor her life was held on 24th February 2026.

During her time as Minister, HIV /AIDS had become a key issue, and she strongly argued against any form of discrimination. Other areas of her outstanding engagement included gender and women, migration and integration, democracy, human rights, and peace.

She studied History and French literature, and later for her doctoral studies Pedagogy, Sociology and Psychology. She became a Professor in the Comparative Studies of Education at the University of Dortmund, as well as, Director of the Research Institute *Women and Society* in Hannover before starting her political career in the 1980s.

Prof. Süßmuth was a strong advocate of community-based adult learning and education, especially of the German system of Volkshochschulen (folk high schools). She

supported their inclusive and integrative functions for the local communities, rural and urban. She called for the acceptance of cultural diversity and saw the Volkshochschulen as instruments for democratic cohesion.

She has been an appreciated supporter of the international work of the Volkshochschulen, and served on the Board of Trustees of DVV International for the last two decades. In recognition of her services, the *Rita Süßmuth Award for the International Volkshochschule* was established in 2019. The Frankfurt Volkshochschule was awarded in 2025 for their civil engagement and exchange with Sweden; Potsdam for their cooperation with Namibia and their work on colonial heritage.

She was a passionate European and a longstanding advocate of lifelong learning, which she saw as essential to adult education, civic participation, and international development. She served on committees of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as well as the International Organization for Migration. In 1997 she was elected President of CONFINTEA V in Hamburg.

Her engagements were highly recognized and rewarded in many ways, including the German Federal Cross of Merit, and several Honorary Doctorates. In 2006 she was inducted to the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame.

Throughout her life, she kept her interest in higher education. In 2023 she gave the keynote on *Adult Education – Science for Practice* on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Adult Education Academy of the University of Würzburg. This is where the photos were taken.

May her soul rest in peace.

Heribert Hinzen

IACE, Class of 2006

Email: hinzenh@hotmail.com



From right to left: Jost Reischmann, Regina Egetenmeyer, Rita Süßmuth,
Sabine Schmidt-Lauff, Heribert Hinzen

Book Review

Mapping the Field of Adult & Continuing Education: An International Compendium

Edited by

Alan B. Knox, Simone C. O. Conceição, & Larry G. Martin

Abstract

The field of Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) serves as a critical nexus for innovation, influencing diverse disciplines including social work, nursing, counseling, and educational administration. Commissioned by the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE), this four-volume compendium provides a comprehensive mapping of the field's evolving landscape. Through a series of concise, expert-led articles, the collection explores the foundational theories and contemporary practices that define adult learning today. Organized into four distinct themes - Adult Learners, Teaching and Learning, Leadership and Administration, and Inquiry and Influences - the work synthesizes national and international perspectives to address the needs of established practitioners and newcomers alike. By offering both individual volumes and a consolidated, hyperlinked e-book, the compendium facilitates interdisciplinary pathways, allowing readers to navigate the complex intersections of formal and informal learning in a rapidly *changing global society*.

Keywords: adult education, compendium, lifelong learning, continuing education

A Comprehensive Review of the AAACE Four-Volume Compendium

The boundaries of Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) have always been porous, bleeding into and enriching the professional practices of healthcare, social services, and corporate

leadership. As the demographic of the "traditional" student shifts and the necessity for lifelong learning becomes a global economic imperative, the need for a definitive, accessible, and interdisciplinary reference has never been greater. The American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) met this demand with a commissioned work: a four-volume compendium that serves as both a historical anchor and a forward-looking compass for the field. Although published in 2017, these volumes remain relevant in today's rapidly changing world of work and learning.

Structure and Scope

The compendium is masterfully organized to reflect the multi-faceted nature of adult education. Rather than a dense, monolithic textbook, it utilizes a series of brief, targeted articles that allow for rapid information retrieval without sacrificing theoretical depth.

Volume One: Adult Learners tackles the most vital component of the field. Given that adult learners now represent the largest segment of the student population, understanding the nuances of adult development, diversity, and personality is essential. This volume excels in its exploration of how experience—the hallmark of the adult student—serves as a primary resource for learning. It moves beyond generic pedagogy to address the cognitive and social complexities that define the adult educational journey.

Volume Two: Teaching and Learning shifts the focus to the "how" and "where" of ACE. By encompassing both formal classroom settings and informal occupational or cultural environments, this volume captures the sheer breadth of the field. It provides a necessary bridge between high-level theory and the practical application of methods and materials, making it an indispensable guide for instructional designers and frontline educators.

Volume Three: Leadership and Administration addresses the systemic infrastructure required to sustain adult learning programs. In an era of shrinking budgets and organizational volatility, the articles on resource allocation, cultural change, and shared vision are particularly timely. The volume balances the granular—such as managing volunteers and staffing—with the visionary, challenging administrators to rethink the future of the field in a global context.

Volume Four: Inquiry and Influences grounds the entire collection in the rigors of research and evaluation. ACE has long been defined by its wide-ranging inquiry, and this volume highlights how that research is becoming increasingly central to broader societal health. By examining current trends and evaluation methods, it provides the evidence-base necessary for the field to maintain its status as a source of innovation for neighboring disciplines.

Connectivity and Navigation

Perhaps the most significant innovation of this collection is its delivery as a combined e-book. In a field defined by "inter-relatedness," the digital version utilizes live links and a consolidated index to turn a static reference work into a dynamic learning ecosystem. This architecture allows a nurse educator, for example, to follow a keyword like "experiential learning" from the psychological foundations in Volume One directly to the instructional methods in Volume Two and the evaluative research in Volume Four.

Critical Contribution

The strength of this compendium lies in its inclusivity. By bringing together a host of national and international contributors, the editors have ensured that the "global" in global education is not just a buzzword but a core methodology. The articles provide a "broader understanding of the transformative period in higher education," helping readers navigate the

transition from traditional pedagogy to andragogy—and toward more self-determined learning frameworks.

One of the few challenges of such a broad collection is the brevity of the individual articles; however, this is mitigated by the inclusion of keywords and extensive indexing, which serve as springboards for deeper study. The compendium does not claim to be the final word on any single topic, but rather a "source of important ideas" and a "mapping of the field."

Conclusion

Whether you are a seasoned academic, a student just beginning a graduate program, or a policymaker tasked with workforce development, this compendium is an invaluable resource. It successfully captures the spirit of ACE: it is practical yet theoretical, regional yet global, and focused yet interdisciplinary. At a time when the "AI frontier" and social shifts are redefining what it means to be a learner, this work provides the essential framework for creating learning environments that foster not just knowledge acquisition, but a lifelong passion for learning.

This four-volume set is more than a reference; it is a testament to the enduring influence of adult education on the modern world. It is highly recommended for any institutional library and for the personal collections of those dedicated to the art and science of teaching adults.

Leslie Cordie

**Note:* Artificial Intelligence tools were used to support the summarization and revision process. Gemini and Grammarly were used primarily to refine language and wording.

Author Bio

Dr. Leslie Cordie is a Associate Professor of Adult Education within the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology at Auburn University, where she also serves as Affiliate Faculty with University Writing. A Fulbright Scholar with over 30 years of experience across academic, corporate, government, and military sectors, Cordie specializes in

adult learning theory, professional development, and the application of AI in workforce education.

Cordie has served on PIMA's board and now acts as the Bulletin Editor. Email:

lesliecordie@auburn.edu