1

Adult Education in Austere Times: An Introduction

Nalita James and Ellen Boeren

Introduction

Adult education is known to be able to transform lives and can especially be powerful for those individuals who missed out on educational opportunities earlier in life. Participation in adult lifelong learning activities are linked to economic and social benefits, both at the level of the individual and the level of society (Field 2012). Many governments have highlighted the significance of learning for both economic gain and as a mode of social inclusiveness, in attempt to bridge the learning divide between those who have benefited from education and training and those who have not. However, in an economic and political climate dominated by austerity, support for adult learning

N. James (✉)
School of Education, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK
e-mail: nrj7@leicester.ac.uk

E. Boeren
Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK
e-mail: Ellen.Boeren@ed.ac.uk

E. Boeren and N. James (eds.), *Being an Adult Learner in Austere Times*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-97208-4_1

is significantly decreasing. This problem strongly present in Britain and around the world, is acerbated by neoliberal policies that have constrained the practice of adult education (Mclean 2015). Rose (1999) has argued that neoliberal rationalities of government has also depended on the construction and regulation of people who see themselves as individuals with the responsibility to shape their lives through their own actions and choices. In short, a high level of individual autonomy, in contrast to a high level of social engagement, is seen to characterize the ideal–typical, neoliberal citizen (Ginn 2013). The widespread existence of such forms of subjectivity have substantially constrained the forms of practice in which adult learners can engage in continuing education.

Research specific to, and explicitly naming austerity, is much more scarce in the field of adult education. The title of this book, *Adult Learners in Austere Times* aims to address this issue. The chapters in this book, of which some have emerged from papers presented at the 2016 Standing Conference for University Teachers and Researchers in the Education of Adults (SCUTREA) (James 2016), have been selected to specifically focus on adult education in austere times and to show how the political and economic contexts that adult education operates in, can impact on adult learners. They also highlight how adult education pedagogy and practice can be deliberately designed to challenge austerity measures arising out of neoliberalism.

This introductory chapter will discuss why adult education matters, and the impact of austerity measures on the delivery of adult education, as well as individuals' opportunities to access and participate in adult learning. The chapter also refers to a range of current policy actions that demonstrate the declining support for adult education. As well as setting the scene, the introductory chapter will signpost the rest of the book, which has been divided into two sections. The first section focuses on the context, history and classed nature of austerity and adult education, and positions the current state-of-art of participation in adult education in Britain against other countries in the EU-28. The second part of the book focusses on experiences of adult learners, reporting on findings from empirical research. Chapters in the second part of the book focus on adult education settings in higher education, further education and the community.

Adult Learning–Does It Matter?

Lifelong learning, traditionally conceived as learning for adult and mature students, can also be applied to the multiplicity of contexts through which people engage in learning across different phases and stages of their lives (Schuller et al. 2002). Adult learning can be a route to gain or maintain employment, and the means to sustain livelihood. It can offer second chances to people who missed out in their earlier education, and have been previously excluded from formal learning opportunities, and first chances to people who never had the opportunity to go to school (Coffield 2009). Many researchers have argued for the wider benefits of learning beyond the level of the individual, from family and household, through to community and wider society (Schuller et al. 2002; Tuckett 2017; James and Busher 2018). There is also powerful evidence that adult learning has positive mental health and well-being effects (Feinstein et al. 2009), as those who participate in learning are healthier, happier, and better paid than those who do not (Taylor 2014, p. 4). Further, the benefits of learning, particularly for adults in terms of the growth of human, social and identity capitals as proposed by Schuller et al. (2002) are evident in the key components of adult education and its positive impacts as presented in the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) Manifesto for Adult Learning in the Twenty First Century. These include:

- **Active citizenship, democracy and participation**: People who participate in adult education have more trust in the political system, participate more in society, by voting, by volunteering or taking active roles in communities.
- **Life skills for individuals**: Adult learners feel healthier, lead healthier lifestyles, build new social networks and experience improved well-being.
- **Social cohesion, equity and equality**: Adult education provides many opportunities to equalise societies on a larger scale and to create fairer societies as well as more economic growth.
- **Employment and enhanced career prospects**: Workplace learning is one of the key drivers for adults' participation in lifelong learning.

- **Migration and demographic change**: Civic education and intercultural learning can create integration-friendly cultures. Language and basic skills training can enable migrants to become active citizens in their new home countries.
- **Sustainability**: From environmentally friendly consumption and transport to energy efficiency, citizens need a lot of information and innovative spaces to develop new lifestyles, new projects, and new approaches. Adult education can help provide the information, the debate spaces and the creativity.

(Extract taken from the EAEA [Manifesto for Adult Learning in the Twenty First Century], Brussels, December 2015).

Governments have presented lifelong learning as a social good that opens up both social and economic opportunities to adult learners. Both Britain and Europe have responded to the challenge of changing economic climates by trying to create better access to qualifications and skills training because 'learning benefits individuals, the economy and society as a whole' (Taylor 2014, p. 4). For example, a rapidly changing economy, and the process of population ageing, means that wider access to higher education are priorities for many European nations (Field and Kurantowicz 2014). The European Commission (2011) called on member states and higher education institutions (HEIs) to encourage participation of disadvantaged adults, for example by attracting a broader cross-section of society into higher education and minimizing drop-out rates, and ensuring that financial support to potential students is better targeted. Across Europe, HEIs have been encouraged by policy interventions to create mass higher education that will satisfy the need of European economies for high-skilled labour in a global market (Field et al. 2010). However, in the current economic climate, gaining higher education qualifications does not always guarantee a greater likelihood of employment compared with people with lower qualifications (Holmes and Mayhew 2016). The high likelihood of people finding a job whatever level of skill they have and however well paid they are for the skills they possess, is likely to diminish people's enthusiasm for pursuing the risky route of returning to formal education as a mature learner (Mannay and Morgan 2013). Yet the

opportunities for pursuing a career which they cherish can be the expected non-financial reward to encourage people to pursue lifelong education, despite the risks and the potentially limited financial rewards on offer.

The economic imperative for adult education is that learning in the form of continued education provides a crucial resource that learners can take into the labour market (Tomlinson 2013). All adults beyond school age should have the chance and encouragement to start accumulating skills and qualifications that will lead to better, more fulfilling life chances, and be better equipped to support their families and local communities (Hughes et al. 2016). Yet the hollowing out of the labour market also has considerable implications for individuals hoping to improve the quality of their opportunities for employment through continuing education, and ignores the socio-economic contexts of such adult learners. This includes wider facets of their lives and identities that impact on the constraints and opportunities that facilitate their participation in adult learning (Busher et al. 2014). The choices that individuals make will be shaped by the parameters within which they make choices and understand their wider position both within the education system and beyond in the labour market (Tomlinson 2013).

Providing adult learning opportunities has the potential for transformation, however without a combination of public investment and effective targeting, it can also reinforce inequality, and the marginalisation of disadvantaged groups (Tuckett 2017). The importance of adult learning is clearly recognised both nationally through successive British government White Papers, and globally via UNESCO, European Commission and OECD policies and research findings (Boeren 2016). While such reports demonstrate the positive impact of adult participation in learning, further analysis of participation patterns and statistics also demonstrate that participation is unequal and varies between individuals and countries (Boeren 2011). A review of the participation rates in adult education commissioned by UNESCO (see Desjardins et al. 2006) provides evidence that those with high skills and education are more likely to participate in adult lifelong learning activities. While there is a global recognition for more adults to be economically and educationally active for much longer than in previous generations due to changes in state pensions and increased lifespans (Eurostat 2014) there is evidence

of a decline in adult participation in skills training and broader credit and non-credit bearing provision, and a decline in the broader programmes of adult education, notably those offered by local authorities and university lifelong learning departments, many of which have been closed in the last decade (Hughes et al. 2016). Despite the massive promotion of lifelong learning since the launch of *The Learning Age*, a Government Green Paper published in the 1990s, the policy initiatives the Labour government introduced at that time (which included individual learning accounts, neighbourhood learning development, and a national literacy, numeracy and ESOL strategy) (Tuckett 2017), and the idea individuals need to gain or upgrade their qualifications to obtain, or sustain, employment in any kind of job, the January 2016 House of Lords debate devoted to adult learning reported evidence telling the opposite story (Bynner 2017).

An Age of Austerity?

The notion of a country gripped by an age of austerity is not new. David Kynaston (2007) details the impact of an earlier age of austerity on the ordinary people of Britain, a time of huge hardship and want in the aftermath of the struggles of wartime and post-war Britain. Austerity is a highly contested concept in terms of both its necessity and its effect. Governments have claimed that austerity is the inevitable consequence of the global financial and economic crisis of the late 2000s, and the subsequent recession. However, liberal adult education in Britain became seriously vulnerable to attack from the early 1980's when the then Conservative government, bent on neoliberal reform, began to assert a strongly instrumentalist and individualised vision for education and training and to tighten funding controls on adult education (Bowl 2010). The logic of neoliberalism is underpinned by a conviction that the market is paramount and that the state should take a minimal role in the social realm. In the field of adult education and training, this logic places the responsibility for educational participation or non-participation, success or failure on the individual, rather than on government. In this formulation, the valid outcome of education is the development of human capital (Becker 1975).

Today, across Britain and Europe austerity is viewed as a neutral, almost technical phrase, simply referring to a period of economic stringency and constraint, driven by government strategies to greatly reduce public spending (O'Hara 2014). The political choice following the financial and economic crisis has shifted between austerity and stimulus, with Britain and many European countries choosing the former. As such, the term 'austerity' is especially prominent in European discourses to represent severe government cutbacks of social services. In Britain, the Liberal/Conservative coalition government of 2010 announced the biggest cuts in state spending since the Second World War (Farnsworth and Irving 2015, p. 2). Austerity then, can also be defined as 'enforced or extreme economy' (Sanburn 2010).

O'Hara (2014) argues that the 'age of austerity' is a fallacy, at least in terms of which individuals/groups in society are experiencing it. There is mounting evidence (see, for example, Hills 2015; Lansley and Mack 2015; Sayer 2015) that both Britain and Europe have become a more unequal society and that the gulf between the rich and the rest of society is increasing dramatically (Blyth 2013). In the past decade, the reach of neoliberalism has deepened as the post-crash austerity mode of governance has legitimated the discourses and practices of new managerialism throughout public services. Its impact has disproportionately affected certain sectors of the population in Britain and Europe, especially those who are more vulnerable, marginalised and precarious (Hills 2015). It is the most disadvantaged who rely the heaviest on such services and other amenities that are publicly provided—the national health services, social housing, state provided education, local authority health centres, leisure amenities, libraries etc. It can be argued that austerity is not 'fair' in its impact (O'Hara 2014), which has been profound and devastating for many in society. In Britain and across Europe, particularly in Greece, Portugal and Spain, austerity policies are not only dismantling welfare benefits and public services, but also the very mechanisms that have worked in the past to ameliorate the impacts of inequality. These policies have been used to forward a managerialist agenda to the point of the '…denigration of a whole host of public sector workers', including the targeting of educators (Coulter 2015, p. 13).

Not everyone suffers from austerity of course, reinforcing the Mathew effect (Desjardins et al. 2006; Boeren 2016) in which those who have, receive more. Those who have already been successful learners in the past are more likely to continue their education and training. Adult education participation is unequal, and especially in austere times, the gap between those who have and those who do not have can widen instead of narrow. Austerity policies are consistent with the ideology of the three major political parties in Britain, alongside the mantra of 'personal responsibility', implying that those who are poor have brought their situations on themselves (Ginn 2013). Shaw and Crowther (2014, pp. 398–399) also argue:

> the new hegemony that there is no policy alternative to austerity reaches deep into cultural life, reinforcing its veracity as it goes. The inclusiveness trope that "we are all in it together", despite vast differentials in power, wealth and agency, can all too easily become internalized by those who have most to lose – and the persistent demonization of the poor acts to reinforce the myth. So it is that neoliberalism hollows out the collective social and political imagination.

The austerity policies that have been rolled out in many European countries have brought all the pain of economic stagnation but hardly any of the promised benefits of debt reduction, renewed growth and prosperity (Schui 2014, p. 1). The combined austerity measures put in place by the current and previous British governments have resulted in generalised reductions in spending on adult education. The European Commission (2014) reported a 33% reduction in spend-per-student in post-secondary non-tertiary education, and a 12% reduction in spend-per-student in tertiary education (p. 2). The Association of College's Funding Survey (2014–2015) similarly reported reductions in adult skills funding (outside of Apprenticeships) of up to 23%.

Austerity has been a useful hook for successive governments to hang ideologically driven policies so as to blame 'outside' factors for 'cuts'. Adult learning has been seriously affected by these cuts and consequently learning opportunities for adults have been particularly

restricted (James and Busher 2018). Since the coalition government of 2010–2016, more than a million publicly funded adult learning opportunities have disappeared (Bynner 2017). Recent downturns in the global economy have resulted in significant cuts to adult education programmes and spiraling costs for higher education. The learning opportunities available to adults both in higher and further education have declined. Universities prefer to focus on first generation students while other adult education providers suffer from lack of resources and are challenged to deliver learning that has 'economic value' (Biesta 2006, p. 168). In the context of lifelong learning, adult learners must therefore constantly invest in a long string of credentials to continually adapt to the fluid market (Grace 2007). This investment is seen through a neoliberal lens as the product of an individual's hard-earned personal and professional efforts. In other words, within a neoliberal context, the responsibility for attaining educational credentials has become an individualized responsibility, as noted by Kopecký (2011, p. 256)

> Lifelong learning is expected to make a positive contribution to economic growth, innovation, and competitiveness or social coherence, but at the level of the individual, these certainties are transformed into (mere) opportunities.

During austere times, it is perhaps unsurprising to learn that 'employability' becomes a major focus for adult learners. However, wider issues are at play. For example, it has been demonstrated that employability programmes which are instrumental in their design and enactment serve to 'churn' unemployed people around a system that fails both individuals and communities (Forster 2015). Austerity is operationalised in this scenario through the impact of broader macro-level economic changes related to the global economic meltdown and through governments' short-sighted vision for the role of adult education, particularly in the higher education context. In both Britain and Europe, universities are encouraged to adhere to a primary mission of providing 'educated citizens' (albeit with an emphasis on those aged 18–24)

for the marketplace (European Commission 2011). Yet, two million part-time adult learners in Britain have been lost since 2007 as a consequence of the fees increase for university degree courses, while full-time undergraduate numbers have increased (Butcher 2015). Moreover, over the same period, adult participation in further education has gone down from 50% to 15%, a drop of over 500,000 aged 24 or more. This has been paralleled by a fall in the adult skills budget of 35% (Hughes et al. 2016). In view of the many ways in which part-time adult education supplies the foundations for extended learning through adulthood that the economy is said to need, the retreat from it is therefore significant. The collapse coincides with a number of shifts in British government policy towards adult education including:

- Students bearing the costs of adult education rather than the state
- Prioritising the Leitch skills agenda against the wider mission of adult learning in terms of personal development and well-being
- Raising the price of engaging in non-award-bearing courses coupled with ever rising university fees for both full-time and part-time study
- Restricting support for students taking award-bearing courses below degree level if not demonstrating progression in qualification terms. (Bynner 2017, p. 72)

Such factors provide a range of powerful disincentive for adults to sign up for learning, as researchers continue to argue (see, for example, Biesta 2006; Coffield 2009; Field 2012; Tuckett 2017; James and Busher 2018).

Adult Education: Moving Beyond Austerity?

Wolff (2010) has argued that there exists 'some alternative "reasonable" kinds of austerity', such as collecting incomes taxes from huge multi-million corporations. His point is that '…(even) if governments have no choice but to enforce austerity, it does not then follow that austerity itself is something other than a series of choices' (Veck 2014,

p. 778). While austerity may not solely provide the background for the cuts behind adult education (Sen 2012) it has certainly created barriers to individuals accessing and participating in adult education. The first section of the book, including this introductory chapter, further analyses this argument by looking both conceptually and theoretically at the nature of adult education participation from both a British and European perspective. Chapter 2, authored by Boeren, discusses this in more detail by examining the level and variability in adult learning participation in both Britain and Europe, drawing on evidence from the Labour Force Survey, data officially used by the European Commission to monitor participation in adult education and training. This chapter will focus on the situation within Britain, but will compare this with statistics from other European (EU28) countries drawing on research on adult learning and political economies (Desjardins et al. 2006). It examines the different determinants of participation at the individual level and focusses on bounded agency approaches to highlight the role of welfare state regimes. The chapter demonstrates that, although participation rates in certain countries (e.g. the Scandinavian ones) are higher than in other countries, generally those with the lowest educational attainment and the weakest positions in the labour market are least likely to participate. However, variation in participation rates also correlates with a number of system level characteristics, including the investment in research and development, in education and in the strength of the labour market. Given these findings of inequality, it is argued that not investing in adult learning will widen gaps in society, instead of narrowing them.

Chapter 3, authored by Clancy, further explores the historical context of adult education, and the strong relationship between class, knowledge dispossession and austerity. The chapter provides examples of traditional adult education practices, such as those that tend to take place in residential adult education colleges, with four of these colleges still being operational today. Clancy's work heavily draws on work by Welsh Marxist theorist Raymond Williams and puts a strong critical lens on the failed promises of opportunities of social mobility to be generated through the education system. The chapter makes a strong point for the need of a

stronger reclaim for adult education as a way to strengthen communities and society in general.

The second part of this book bundles five chapters highlighting the role of adult education in the age of austerity. These chapters are written around stories told by adult learners themselves, and also identify the experiences of those working with adult learners in education practice. As hinted at in the subtitle of this book, chapters in this second part focus on a range of diverse adult learning settings, more specifically higher education, further education and the community. The first three chapter (Chapters 4–6) focuses on being an adult learner in higher education.

Chapter 4, written by Harman and Fraser, explores the declining spaces for adult widening participation in higher education, the ongoing decline in part-time undergraduate education and the decrease in the number of mature full-time learners in the English higher education context. The chapter critically reflects on the recent Green and White Papers outlining the future of higher education. It draws on a range of concrete statistics from HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council England), OFFA (Office for Fair Access), and HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency), to highlight how adult learners, in particular those from disadvantaged social backgrounds represent a key but all too invisible example of a group under-represented in higher education. This includes students from white working class, specific black and ethnic minority groups and disabled students (OFFA 2017). The chapter will draw on two leading widening participation programmes in England (one in Leeds and one in London) in which the authors are involved in their own teaching practice. Their narrative strongly highlights how successful programme interventions can attract adult learners to higher education in spite of HEI cultures which can work against the needs of adult learners. Recommendations for a gentler policy agenda in relation to higher education part-time and mature students in times of austerity are discussed.

While adult learners can experience challenges in accessing higher education, often caused by a lack of or accurate information, advice and guidance, stringent admissions criteria, poor academic support, and/or high tuition fees, it is also important to generate insight into how

adults who do participate, experience their learning process in order to help them succeed in the system. Chapter 5, authored by Sutton, highlights the difficulties experienced by mature students undertaking an undergraduate degree level programme. This chapter aims to formulate recommendations towards policy makers and practitioners on how to support mature learners to survive in higher education in austere times. Specifically, this chapter generates more insights in how to prevent mature students from dropping out from the education system, as they are more likely to leave without a degree compared to younger students. Drawing on qualitative research data obtained through in-depth interviewing and diaries from one university, findings will indicate that mature students tend to feel more isolated than younger students and that these feelings are generated through either uncomfortable feelings towards being mixed with younger adults or through the need to strictly focus on study-related aspects in order to combine studying with other life domains. This chapter highlights the importance of supporting adult learners to find their place within the social fabric of university so they can easily self-identify as a fully legitimate student and member of the learning community (Lave and Wenger 1991).

Chapter 6, authored by Meir, offers more insight in how to attract mature learners in higher education in austere times, unfolded through in-depth engagement with narratives from working-class women's changed life experiences through participating on an Access to Higher Education Diploma course. The Access to HE Diploma is an important route for mature students and has been the focus of a new book by James and Busher (2018). Meir's chapter starts from the assumption that working-class adults who failed in the initial education system often lack a strong level of agency and are unaware of the learning they have acquired through non-formal and informal learning outside academic settings. It highlights, based on very in-depth experiences of three female adult learners, their socio-economic backgrounds and contexts, as well as their experiences of educational transitions. This includes their educational beginnings and experiences, which are often very negative. This chapter will bring out the message of increased empowerment, resilience and agency as a result of participating in the Access to HE course. Meir achieves this goal through a critical discussion of both

feminist and adult education theories. The chapter also confirms that investing in Access to HE courses for the most disadvantaged adults can generate a wide range of personal and social benefits. This message generated through timely empirical academic research is translated into a set of concrete recommendations for both policy makers and practitioners at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 7 of this book has been authored by Duckworth and Smith, and provides a critical discussion on the role of further education in transforming adults' lives. Their project 'FE in England: Transforming Lives and Communities', funded by the UCU (the Universities and Colleges Union) has received widespread attention in the wider adult education community in Britain. The chapter focuses on the role of the knowledge economy, and timely consequences of neo-liberal policies, such as the replication of social inequalities, further stratification and marketization of education systems. Duckworth and Smith then use powerful narratives of adult learners in further education to underline the transformative nature of participation, including aspects like confidence and self-value. The chapter critically discusses the current state of adult education in relation to class and austerity, the persistent role of social, cultural and education capital, and the important role of communities. It ends with a specific set of policy recommendations, intending to avoid future situations in which further education is being hit hard, mostly at the expense of the most disadvantaged adults.

The last chapter of this book, Chapter 8 authored by Jones, provides an insight into what is happening more generally within the wider adult and community education landscape in which arguably, both austerity and resilience operate in tandem. As argued earlier in the chapter, austerity is operationalised through the impact of broader macro-level economic changes related to the global economic meltdown and through governments' short-sighted vision. The funding base for adult and community education has never been lavish, so the reductions/removal of funds can mean it is more restricted, privatised and instrumental in purpose (Findsen 2014). Drawing on results from her doctoral thesis, Jones focusses on the impact austerity policies can have on homeless adults and community education. Jones explains that homeless adults are often excluded from mainstream education, but that specific third-sector community organisations do pay attention to this group.

These organisations help homeless adults to build confidence, reduce their social isolation, as well as help them find a place to live, and also a job. In this chapter, Jones shares the narratives from the in-depth interviews undertaken with practitioners working with homeless adults in the Greater Manchester area. The findings will give insight into how learning opportunities for the homeless population are structured, and how funding arrangements and policy interventions can support this type of provision. This chapter will also show how austerity politics has impacted on adult education in third sector organisations and how they have responded to welfare reforms. Jones will end with a set of recommendations for policy and practice, specifically targeted towards the government, the adult education sector and the homelessness sector.

Within the final chapter of the book, as editors, we will engage in a critical reflection on the previous chapters and will focus on the need for a continuous support for both research in the field of adult education as well as for the existence of learning opportunities for adults. This chapter will highlight the many positive empirical findings of the previous chapters as well as the remaining challenges to be tackled in the sector. It will therefore end with a specific set of recommendations for policy and practice, as well as future research. It will provide a comprehensive analysis of findings from each chapter with a specific focus on how to take the field forward.

Conclusion

The book will demonstrate both the policy impacts, challenges and successes of adult education initiatives and how the contemporary drive to redefine and re-orientate adult education in an era of austerity, along with the impact of professionalization and performativity measures of new managerialism on practice and learning has wider societal and justice implications. The deeply personal impacts of austerity cannot be understated. Austerity is unlikely to be temporary and long term strategies are required to assist in protecting education for adults, and specifically marginalised and excluded groups. The chapters of this book will identify key lessons and important challenges for adult education policy

makers, providers and practitioners. As Tuckett (2017, p. 237) argues, '…you cannot be certain of the purposes of the learners, or of the benefits they derive, from the title or category of the courses they join. There is always an interplay between skills acquired, personal confidence and social engagement.' As the book will show, in austere times, there is a critical need to respond effectively to adults' appetite for learning.

References

Association of Colleges. (2014). *College Funding and Finance*. https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/College%20Funding%20and%20Finance%201%20May%202014%20FINAL_0_0.pdf.

Becker, G. S. (1975). *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Biesta, G. (2006). What's the Point of Lifelong Learning If Lifelong Learning Has No Point? On the Democratic Deficit of Policies for Lifelong Learning. *European Educational Research Journal, 5*(3–4), 169–180.

Blyth, M. (2013). *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Boeren, E. (2011). *Participation in Adult Education: A Bounded Agency Approach*. Leuven: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.

Boeren, E. (2016). *Lifelong Learning Participation in a Changing Policy Context: An Interdisciplinary Theory*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bowl, M. (2010). University Continuing Education in a Neoliberal Landscape: Developments in England and Aotearoa New Zealand. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 29,* 723–738.

Busher, H., James, N., Piela, A., & Palmer, A. P. (2014). Transforming Marginalised Adult Learners' Views of Themselves: Access Courses in England. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 35*(5), 800–817.

Butcher, J. (2015). *'Shoe-Horned and Side-Lined'? Challenges for Part-Time Learners in the New HE Landscape*. York: The Higher Education Academy.

Bynner, J. (2017). What Happened to Lifelong Learning? And Does It Matter? *Journal of the British Academy, 5,* 61–89.

Coffield, F. (2009). *Differing Vision for a Learning Society*. Bristol: Polity.

Coulter, C. (2015). Ireland Under Austerity: An Introduction to the Book. In C. Coulter & A. Nagle (Eds.), *Ireland Under Austerity: Neoliberal Crisis, Neoliberal Solutions* (pp. 1–43). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Desjardins, R., Rubesnon, K., & Milana, M. (2006). *Unequal Chances to Participate in Adult Education: International Perspectives*. Paris: UNESCO.

European Association for the Education of Adults. (2015). *Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century*. http://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/manifesto.pdf.

European Commission. (2011). *Supporting Growth and Jobs—An Agenda for the Modernisation of Europe's Higher Education Systems*. Brussels: Office for Official Publication.

European Commission. (2014). *Education and Training Monitor Report*. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/publications/monitor14_en.pdf.

Eurostat. (2014). *Eurostat Regional Yearbook 2014*. http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/5785629/KS-HA-14-001-EN.PDF.

Farnsworth, K., & Irving, Z. (Eds.). (2015). *Social Policy in Times of Austerity*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Feinstein, L., Kirpal, S., & Arévalo Sánchez, I. (2009). *The Wider Benefits of Learning: Handbook of Technical and Vocational Education and Training Research*. Berlin: Springer.

Field, J. (2012). Is Lifelong Learning Making a Difference? Research-Based Evidence on the Impact of Adult Learning. In D. Aspin, J. Chapman, K. Evans, & R. Bagnall (Eds.), *Second International Handbook of Lifelong Learning* (pp. 887–897). Dorderect: Springer.

Field, J., & Kurantowicz, E. (2014). Retention and Access in Higher Education. Implications for Policy and Practice. In F. Finnegan, B. Merrill, & C. Thurborg (Eds.), *Student Voices on Equalities in Europena Higher Education* (pp. 163–169). London: Routledge.

Field, J., Merrill, B., & Morgan-Klein, N. (2010, September 23–26). *Higher Education Access, Retention and Drop-Out Through a European Biographical Approach: Exploring Similarities and Differences Within a Research Term*. ESRA, Sixth European Research Conference, Reykjavik, Iceland.

Findsen, B. (2014). Older Adult Education in a New Zealand University: Developments and Issues. *International Journal of Education and Ageing, 3*(3), 211–224.

Forster, J. (2015). *Churning or Lifeline? Life Stories from De-industrialised Communities*. Proceedings of the 45th Standing Conference for University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults, University of Leeds.

Ginn, J. (2013). Austerity and Inequality. Exploring the Impact of Cuts in the UK by Gender and Age. *Research on Ageing and Social Policy, 1*(1), 28–53.

Grace, A. P. (2007). Envisioning a Critical Social Pedagogy of Learning and Work in a Contemporary Culture of Cyclical Lifelong Learning. *Studies in Continuing Education, 29*(1), 85–103.

Hills, J. (2015). *Good Times Bad Times: The Welfare Myth of Them and Us*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Holmes, C., & Mayhew, K. (2016). The Economics of Higher Education. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 32*(4), 475–496.

Hughes, D., Adriaanse, K., & Barnes, S. A. (2016). *Adult Education: Too Important to Be Left to Chance*. https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/research/adult_education/dh_adult_education_full_report.pdf.

James, N. (2016, July 5–7). *Adult Education in Austere Times*. Standing Conference for University Teachers and Researchers in the Education of Adults (SCUTREA) Conference Proceedings, Vaughan Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Leicester.

James, N., & Busher, H. (2018). *Improving Opportunities to Engage in Learning: A Study of the Access to Higher Education Diploma*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Kopecký, M. (2011). Foucault, Governmentality, Neoliberalism and Adult Education—Perspective on the Normalization of Social Risk. *Journal of Pedagogy, 2*(2), 246–262.

Kynaston, D. (2007). *Austerity Britain. 1945–1951*. London: Bloomsbury.

Lansley, S., & Mack, J. (2015). *Breadline Britain*. London: OneWorld.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mannay, D., & Morgan, M. (2013). Anatomies of Inequality: Considering the Emotional Cost of Aiming Higher for Marginalised Mature Mothers Re-entering Education. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education, 19*(1), 55–75.

Mclean, S. (2015). Individual Autonomy or Social Engagement? Adult Learners in Neoliberal Times. *Adult Education Quarterly, 65*(3), 196–214.

Office for Fair Access (OFFA). (2017). *Strategic Guidance: Developing Your 2018–19 Access Agreement*. www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Strategic-guidance-developing-your-2018-19-access-agreement-FINAL.pdf.

O'Hara, M. (2014). *Austerity Bites a Journey to the Sharp End of the Cuts in UK*. Bristol: Polity.

Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sanburn, J. (2010). *What Is the Definition of Austerity?* http://newsfeed.time.com/2010/12/20/what-is-the-definition-of-austerity/.

Sayer, A. (2015). *Why We Can't Afford the Rich*. Bristol: Policy Press.
Schui, F. (2014). *Austerity: The Great Failure*. London: Yale University Press.
Schuller, T., Brassett-Grundy, A., Green, A., Hammond, C., & Preston, J. (2002). *Learning, Continuity and Change in Adult Life*. London: The Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning.
Sen, A. (2012, July 3). Austerity Is Undermining Europe's Grand Vision. *The Guardian*. http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jul/03/austerity-europe-grand-vision-unity.
Shaw, M., & Crowther, J. (2014). Adult Education, Community Development and Democracy: Renegotiating the Terms of Agreement. *Community Development Journal, 49*(3), 390–406.
Taylor, C. (2014). On Solid Ground. *Adults Learning* (Spring), 4–5.
Tomlinson, M. (2013). *Education, Work and Identity*. London: Bloomsbury.
Tuckett, A. (2017). The Rise and Fall of Life-Wide Learning for Adults in England. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 36*(1–2), 230–249.
Veck, W. (2014). Disability and Inclusive Education in Times of Austerity. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 35*(5), 777–799.
Wolff, R. D. (2010, July 15). Austerity: Why and for Whom? *In These Times*. http://inthesetimes.com/article/6232/austerity_why_and_for_whom/.