

Through the looking glass: adult education through the lens of the Australian Journal of Adult Learning over fifty years

Roger Harris and Anne Morrison
University of South Australia

In this paper we review fifty years of articles published in Australian Journal of Adult Learning in its various iterations. We examine the different roles of the journal: to illuminate the history and trends of adult education authors; to be the flagship of the adult education profession in Australia; to reflect on significant national events; and to mirror the changing knowledge base of the discipline. We analyse the authorship of the articles over fifty years, and determine patterns in contribution to the journal by gender, location, institutional affiliation and author numbers. We also examine key themes that have surfaced in the writings on adult education. The articles published in the journal are significant because they are primary sources of the day, unfettered by the perspectives, viewpoints and standards of later periods. Our paper serves as a useful looking glass through which we might be able to view more clearly the shifting research interests of the past and the challenges in the future for the adult and community learning sector.

Introduction

Content analysis of publication activity can tell us much about a given field of study, as publications reflect the knowledge base of a discipline. The field of adult education in Australia has been well served by its national association, (now) Adult Learning Australia, and its two key 'voices': the annual national conferences and the journal. The five decades of the association have been succinctly summarised in volume 50(3) of the journal and, though this provides a contextual backdrop for this paper, the focus here is rather on the journal, currently entitled the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*.

The journal has just witnessed fifty years of publication (it was first published in July 1961). It is one of the longest running journals on adult education in the world: we believe that it may be the third most durable, after the *Indian Journal of Adult Education* starting in 1939 and *Adult Education Quarterly* in 1950. For example, *Studies in the Education of Adults* (UK) began in 1969, *Studies in Continuing Education* (Australia) in 1978, while the *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education* and the *International Journal of Lifelong Education* (UK) both commenced only in 1981. The Australian journal has, therefore, played a crucial and sustained role in the promotion of adult education in this country over a long period, and as such merits closer examination.

What role has this journal played?

Adult education in Australia has consistently been in desperate need of a voice. Hanna wrote in an early issue of the journal:

Adult Education is regarded as a marginal activity stuck on to our education system somewhere between our leaving primary school and our going senile; we have to run it with meagre budgets, leftover facilities and other people's spare time ... Though the situation is improving slightly all the time adult education has not achieved a recognised standing in this country. (1965: 3)

Hanna lamented the lack of recognition given to adult education in the Martin Committee report (1964) on tertiary education in Australia, and the lack of research to that time into adult education, methods of teaching adults and the adult learners themselves, despite the growth of adult education in the postwar period. Fast forward to the 1990s and there was a rosy glow of optimism following the Senate Inquiry of 1991, *Come in Cinderella*. This was the first national account of adult education since Duncan (1973 [1944]) and formally recognised ACE as the fourth sector of education. The Senate's follow-up report, *Beyond Cinderella: Towards a learning society* (1997), recommended an unequivocal commitment by government to the concept of a lifelong learning society, and the bringing together of the national ACE policy and VET policy. However, not much has actually happened since, and the celebratory fiftieth annual conference of Adult Learning Australia late in 2010 was still earnestly inquiring: Where has Cinderella gone?

Yet the journal (as well as the association and its conferences) has persisted as the voice for the field in striving to build its status and credibility. The very title of the journal provides a glimpse of the metamorphosis of the discipline over these fifty years. There have been only two changes of name, with the journal title mirroring the changing name of the association—from *Australian Journal of Adult Education* commencing in July 1961, to *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education* in April 1990 and to *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* in April 2000. These changes have reflected at least two significant shifts over this time—the first from education to learning, the second from emphasising the association to emphasising the field. We suggest that these re-alignments mirror quite accurately the discipline's changing focus on *learning* as core business.

Significant in the continuing life of the journal have been its editors. There have been seven main editors (Table 1). Across half a century, they gave birth to and nurtured the journal, providing 'a regular,

informative and spirited publication ... and have therefore left a legacy about which adult and community educators in Australia today can feel justifiably proud' (Harris, 1997: 56). For example, Hely gave us 'a journal which ... we could proudly send overseas' (Crowley, 1968: 42) and, under Shaw and Allsop, the journal 'became an adult education publication of high repute internationally, ... of high standing, ... the publication of which has always been recognised as one of the main reasons for [the association's] existence' (Crowley, 1976: 60). This standing has continued to this day, as evidenced by its high status accorded under the former Excellence for Research in Australia regime's journal ranking system.

Table 1: Editors of the journal

1961–1963	Arnold Hely	Adelaide University
1963–1965	Des Crowley	Adelaide University
1965–1970	John Shaw	University of NSW
1971–1973	John Shaw/Joan Allsop	Universities of NSW and Sydney
1974–1976	Joan Allsop	University of Sydney
1976–1978	Series of guest editors (Barrie Brennan, Chris Duke, Alf Wesson, Jack Mason/Jack McDonell, Doug Robertson)	University of New England, Australian National University, Preston Institute of Technology, Monash University
1979–1983	Nicolas Haines	Australian National University
1984–1989	Barrie Brennan	University of New England
1990–2012	Roger Harris	University of South Australia

We contend that the journal has played at least four significant roles. First, it has illuminated the history, trends and patterns of adult education authors in Australia (and even beyond) across half a century. Second, it has been the most visible, accessible and lasting voice of the adult education discipline in Australia—the flagship of the profession. Third, it has provided a reflection on significant national

events and trends. And fourth, it has been a mirror of the knowledge base of the discipline and its issues, and how they change over time. The analyses in this paper provide evidence for each of these four roles.

Durston noted as early as 1968 that ‘The *Australian Journal of Adult Education* is probably the most tangible proof of the Association’s stated concern for encouraging inquiry, research experiment and publication in the field of adult education’ (1968: 79). Twenty years later, continuing this theme, Brennan concluded that ‘One of the other important services to members, and adult educators generally in Australia and overseas, was the [journal] ... Working from Adelaide, Hely ensured that the new journal from a new Association would make an impact’ (1988a: 34–35); and ‘Publications continued to be significant in the service of members. The journal ... continued to serve Australian and overseas readers in the tradition set by Hely and Crowley’ (1988b: 28).

The policy and purpose of the journal (usually stated on the inside front cover) has not changed markedly over the years, continuing to emphasise its key functions of advocacy, research and knowledge generation:

1961: To provide a forum for discussion on adult education matters.

1973: To describe and discuss activities and developments in the field of continuing education for adults; to publish accounts of investigations and research in this field; to provide a forum for the discussion of significant ideas about the education of adults; and to review relevant books, reports and periodicals.

1984: It should be of a quality that will command respect in Australia and overseas. It should provide substantial original information and views on the practice of and research into adult education in Australia and overseas and the reporting of original research of significance to Adult Education.

1990: It aims to provide information and analysis on the theory, research and practice of adult and community education ...; and to promote critical thinking and research in this developing and increasingly significant field; ... [Its] prime focus is on Australia, though papers relating to other contexts are also published.

In this paper, we analyse authorship of papers over fifty years, and determine patterns in contribution to the journal by gender, location, institutional affiliation and author numbers. We also examine key themes that have surfaced in the writings on adult education. A non-refereed journal until April 1999, double-blind peer review was introduced in that year for the majority of submissions, which increased both rate of flow and quality of content. However, all articles are informative in studying the history of a profession and its journal. They are significant because they are primary sources of their day, unfettered by the straightjackets of later periods' perspectives, viewpoints and standards. So often we are prone to judging the past using our present-day lenses/frameworks/paradigms. In the final analysis this paper is 'postdictive' rather than predictive, and therefore tells us more about the last half century than what is likely to happen in the future. Given the brevity of this paper, our analysis spanning fifty years is, by necessity, a broad sweep. Nevertheless, we believe the paper serves as a useful looking glass through which we might be able to view more clearly the shifting research interests of the past and the challenges in the future for the adult and community learning sector.

Methodology

We have analysed the journal's content over this fifty-year span—a sizable task. Most content analyses of academics embrace only a decade. Previously in this journal, Durston (1968) reviewed the first seven years, Long (1983) studied 'preoccupations' through ten years, and Harris (1997) examined various aspects of the journal during its initial ten years. In relation to adult education journals

internationally, Taylor (2001) examined all submissions, both accepted *and* rejected, to the American *Adult Education Quarterly* from 1989 to 1999; Moreland explored in the British *The Vocational Aspect of Education* (now the *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*) ‘some of the recurrent and emergent issues which have occurred in the journal, particularly in the last 10 years’ (1992: 3); while Long and Agyekum wrote their ‘reflections of a changing discipline’ (1974: 99) by analysing the journal *Adult Education* (the forerunner of *AEQ*) from 1964 to 1973. An example of a twenty-year analysis was Dickinson and Rusnell’s study of *Adult Education* between 1950 and 1970, ‘to ascertain trends and patterns in the contents of the journal as indications of the development of the discipline of adult education’ (1971: 177).

We have not identified any attempts in adult education at journal content analysis over a fifty-year span. Two instances we have found in other disciplines are in sociology and training and development. Shanas (1945) analysed the *American Journal of Sociology* through fifty years in the first half of the twentieth century, while Galagan celebrated fifty years of the American ‘magazine’ *Training & Development* by presenting a brief sampling of some issues, ideas and people over the second half of the twentieth century: ‘From the no-nonsense idealism of the 1940s and 50s, through the social consciousness of the 60s and 70s, to the bottom-line thinking of the 1980s and 90s, *Training & Development* magazine has been the voice of the profession’ (1996: 32).

Our process in analysing the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* has involved hunting down back copies of the journal, a difficult task given changes in storage over fifty years and the absence of electronic access for much of that period. There were a few issues that we could not locate, but most were obtained. We compiled an inventory of all the articles, both refereed and non-refereed. Decisions needed to be made on what to include: we defined the term

‘article’ as a reasonably substantial paper, and we omitted editorials, comment pieces, book reviews, research abstracts and eulogies. We experienced considerable difficulty in tracking down details on such matters as author gender, institutional affiliation and geographical location, since early issues often did not record such information (e.g. the early preference for author initials did not provide gender clues). Some missing details were identified through alternative sources (e.g. electronic databases or other writings) but a few could not be identified at all. The most difficult task and one that required considerable discretion was deciding on the major theme(s) in each article. We allowed a maximum of four theme allocations per article. We minimised distortion by using two researchers working independently, and any discrepancies were resolved by negotiation. We consolidated and checked themes, tabulated data using Excel, compiled tables and graphs (and standardised wherever possible with the vertical axis to 30%), and undertook analysis and interpretation, searching for trends, explanations and surprises. Some early themes that received few allocations were collapsed into others, and we finished with 22 themes. In total, our analysis covered 143 issues, 1100 authors and 844 articles over the fifty years!

Trends in authorship over fifty years

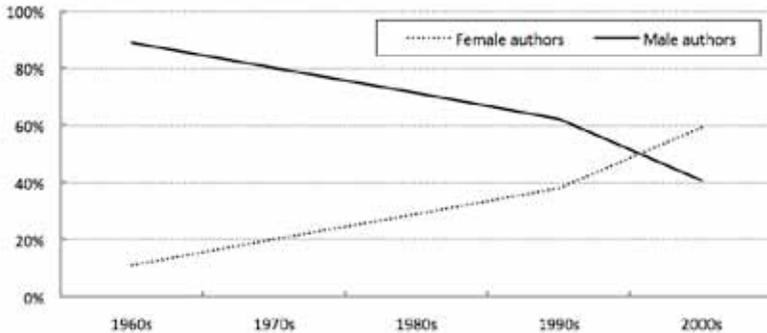
The first key role of the journal is that it illustrates the history of writers on adult education in Australia (and even beyond) over half a century. Below we have analysed authorship by gender, location, institutional affiliation and numbers of writers.

Author gender

Over the fifty years there has been a dramatic reversal in the proportions of men and women publishing in the journal (Figure 1). While in the 1960s, 90 per cent of the authors were male, by the 2000s that proportion had more than halved to only 41 per cent. Thus, female authors currently outnumber male authors. This trend

is consistent with findings of other journals (e.g. the *Adult Education Quarterly*, see Taylor, 2001: 329).

Figure 1: Gender of authors, by decade



Location of author(s)

Three quarters of all authors publishing in the journal have been located in Australia. However, the proportion of international authors has been gradually increasing, from 14 per cent in the 1960s to 30 per cent in the 2000s (Table 2). Despite the name of the journal specifically referring to Australia, it has always encouraged contributions from overseas, and as the press to publish has increasingly been felt worldwide, so too have the numbers of article emanating from international writers increased.

Table 2: Location of all authors, by decade

	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total
Location of authors	%	%	%	%	%	%
Australia (<i>n</i> =831)	86	75	84	79	70	76.6
International (<i>n</i> =254)	14	25	17	21	30	23.4
Total (<i>N</i> =1085*)	100	100	101	100	100	100

*The locations of 15 authors in the early years could not be verified

Within Australia, authors from New South Wales have been in the majority (37% overall). However, the trend has been for proportions from that state to decline (46% in the 1960s to 27% in the 2000s), as have those for Western Australia (13% to 5%). The proportions in each of Victoria, South Australia and Queensland have correspondingly increased, while those in the other three smaller jurisdictions have remained relatively constant (Table 3).

Table 3: Location of Australian authors, by decade

	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total
	(n=87)	(n=114)	(n=155)	(n=219)	(n=270)	(n=845)
Location of author	%	%	%	%	%	%
New South Wales	46	51	40	36	27	37
Victoria	16	13	12	17	24	18
South Australia	12	5	10	22	14	14
Queensland	4	-	20	13	17	13
Australian Capital Territory	5	15	7	-	6	6
Western Australia	13	10	5	3	5	6
Tasmania	5	4	4	5	4	5
Northern Territory	-	1	3	4	3	2
Total	101	99	101	100	100	101

Of special interest in these jurisdictional publishing patterns is the peaks in particular decades. Many factors may account for this pattern, but one that stands out is the location of the journal editor at any point in time. Comparing Tables 1 and 2, we find that the editorship of the journal was largely in NSW during the first three decades, when the percentages of contributions in that state were higher than in the last two decades. The peaks in SA in the

1960s, and again in the 1990s and 2000s, may also be explained in this way, as with the ACT in the 1970s and 1980s. This is a very interesting phenomenon. We are not suggesting that this is evidence of favouritism (and it could not be anyway once blind peer review was introduced), but it could be explained by the presence of the editor raising regional awareness of the journal, perhaps through seminars in local universities or by procuring local review writers.

International authorship exhibits some interesting patterns (Table 4). Published contributions have come from 37 countries around the world. Two countries show a marked increase in contributions over time: India (overall 16.5%) and Nigeria (overall 13%), possibly due to an awakening to the importance of (and even pressure to produce) publications, and to the focus of the journal on adult community education which remains critically important in those countries. It should be noted that no distinction has been made in the analysis between refereed and non-refereed (practice) papers—if there had been, the patterns may have been rather different. Overall, the patterns in published articles from the USA, Canada and New Zealand are similar (around 12%), though the proportion coming from the UK has been surprisingly small (5%) given the similarity between the adult education sectors in Australia and the UK.

Table 4: Location of international authors, by decade

Location of author	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total	
	(n)	(n)	(n)	(n)	(n)	(n)	(%)
India	-	4	1	15	22	42	16.5
Nigeria	-	3	1	3	26	33	13.0
USA	1	11	-	10	9	31	12.2
Canada	1	1	7	9	12	30	11.8
NZ	2	7	8	3	10	30	11.8
UK	4	3	2	2	2	13	5.1
Sweden	-	-	1	-	10	11	4.3
Fiji	-	-	-	7	-	7	2.8
Germany	2	-	2	-	3	7	2.8
PNG	1	3	1	1	1	7	2.8
Others	2	5	7	8	21	43	16.9
Total	13	37	30	58	116	254	100

Institutional affiliation

Two-thirds of all authors work in universities, not surprisingly given publishing is one of the core business activities for staff and higher degree candidates (Table 5). This proportion has remained fairly constant over the fifty years, though it has risen to just over three quarters in the past decade. This increase can be accounted for by the recent press by universities to have their higher degree students publishing both during their candidature and after completion.

This would not have been so urgent in the first three decades. The importance of publishing for staff in colleges of advanced education is reflected, especially as their institutions moved towards university status, in the rapidly increasing figures of publications in the 1970s and 1980s. The apparent fall away from the end of the 1990s is due to their change of status, resulting in their research productivity being subsumed under universities.

Table 5: Institutional affiliation of authors, by decade

Institutional affiliation of author	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total
	(n=100)	(n=152)	(n=185)	(n=277)	(n=386)	(N=1100)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
University	64	60	36*	65**	77***	64
Adult/community education organisation	22	13	14	10	7	11
Other HE institution (e.g. college of advanced education/teachers college/institute of technology)	2	13	21	1	1	6
VET/TAFE	-	3	10	5	2	4
Research institute	-	-	1	3	2	2
Private (including retired)	1	3	4	4	2	3
Government dept. (e.g. education, agriculture, health)	3	6	13	9	5	8
Other	8	3	2	2	3	3
Total	100	101	101	99	99	101

* Includes 4 HDR (higher degree research) students (where indicated)

** Includes 15 HDR students (where indicated)

*** Includes 61 HDR students (where indicated)

It is noticeable, and disappointing given the journal specialises in adult learning, that the proportion of articles being published from adult education organisations has reduced by one third (from 22% in the 1960s to 7% in the 2000s) over the fifty years. It would appear that this sector is being squeezed by the number of contributions from the higher education sector, but also from government departments and to a lesser extent from the VET sector. Those who work in adult and community education are inclined to practice, rather than publish, especially as the quality of published work continues to rise steadily.

The introduction of a more structured and enlarged TAFE system after the Kangan Report (TAFE, 1974) is reflected in these figures, with no TAFE articles published in the 1960s but 3 per cent in the 1960s and 10 per cent in the 1980s. The increasing ‘vocationalisation’ of tertiary education, especially from the mid-1980s, probably accounts for the percentages from the VET/TAFE sector declining from around that time. Furthermore, those authors in the sector undertaking higher degrees would have been counted in university figures (according to their article’s institutional affiliation by-line).

Single/multiple authorship

Over fifty years, this journal illustrates a marked trend towards multiple authorship. No doubt this is as much indicative of the more collegial, collaborative and intensified work environments in educational institutions nowadays, as it is symptomatic of the ‘publish or perish’ syndrome. Figure 2, which shows the ratio of the number of authors to the number of articles, reveals that papers were usually sole authored in the 1960s, while multiple authored papers were more common by the 2000s (with a mean of 1.7 authors).

Figure 2: Number of authors per article, in five-year periods



It is interesting that multiple authorship continues to rise, despite some universities implementing recording systems that reduce an individual's publication productivity according to the number of co-authors specified on a given article. In this way, university 'counting' regimes actually work *against* collegial and collaborative practices—even though in reality the processes of obtaining research grants, conducting research projects and publishing from such activities are most appropriately, and becoming necessarily, carried out in teams.

Key themes in the journal

A summary of the 22 key themes analysed in this study, and their frequency across the 844 articles, is presented in Table 6. 'Students/learners' was the most frequent theme, occurring in one quarter of articles, followed by 'philosophy/theory' and 'vocational education' in one fifth of articles.

Table 6: Frequency of themes in the journal over fifty years, 1961–2010

Key themes across 844 articles	Allocations	
	Number*	%
Students/learners	208	24.6
Philosophy/theory	170	20.1
Vocational education	163	19.3
Lifelong learning/education, continuing education, later-life learning	151	17.9
Adult and community education	147	17.4
Teachers/educators/teaching	146	17.3
International	136	16.1
Evaluation	127	15.1

Key themes across 844 articles	Allocations	
	Number*	%
Informal/non-formal learning	118	14.0
Higher education	117	13.9
Literacy/basic skills	66	7.8
Rural/regional	63	7.5
Methods/methodology	61	7.2
Historical	57	6.8
Formal learning	56	6.6
Curriculum	54	6.4
Technology	52	6.1
Gender (female/male/general)	34	4.0
Indigenous	32	3.8
Bridging/foundation education	27	3.2
Competency	18	2.1
Environment	15	1.8

* Up to four themes were allocated to each article

Having discussed the patterns in authorship, we now briefly discuss each of these themes in the sections that follow, structured according to the remaining three roles of the journal (voice of the discipline, reflection of significant events and trends, and a mirror of the knowledge base).

Voice of the adult education discipline

The second role of the journal is that it has served as the most visible, accessible and lasting voice of the adult education discipline in Australia—the flagship of the profession. As the voice of adult education, it is informative to examine the proportions of articles

focusing on philosophy/theory, lifelong learning/education, history and international matters.

Philosophy/theory (20%) and lifelong learning/education (18%)

Philosophy/theory has always been a focus in the journal, though the decline from the mid-1970s is an interesting and concerning trend (Figure 3). To a certain extent this may be explained by the greater emphasis on research-based articles, rather than relying merely on theoretical viewpoints and opinion pieces. Durston noted in an early review of the journal that

there has been an emphasis on inquiry and publication but very little research and experiment ... the fact remains that there are exceedingly few studies which meet the canons of adequate research. There has been little systematic attempt to isolate and investigate particular problems scientifically. (1967: 5)

The decline may also reflect the vocationalisation of the field, especially the vocationally oriented nature of adult education within the newer universities primarily concerned with development of post-school educators. This can be contrasted with the first few decades, when the discipline was intensely debated as the association established itself, as it became very involved with international adult education developments, and as articles were written by academics in departments of adult education whose core business was the study of the discipline. As Brennan reflected, '[t]here were many heated arguments in the early days on what "adult education" was and therefore what it was that was being advocated' (2001: 377). Rossell, like many others of this time, lamented the neglect of adult education in the Martin Report of 1964, and succinctly summarised the disappointment in this way:

The challenge faced by adult education today is in fact to bridge the gulf between the theory of continuing education and practice; if we fail to bridge the gulf, then we deserve the obscurity with which the Martin Report has shrouded us. (1966: 13)

Smith, for example, believed that ‘the term “adult education” has tended to be used almost exclusively for general enlightenment, hobby and recreation classes and non-vocational studies ... [and that] this is far too narrow a concept’ (1968: 69). A year later, Duke, in claiming that ‘adult education has been dubbed “therapy for normals”’ (1969: 105), compiled a remarkable piece of prescience:

But so long as immediately needed information or techniques appear more necessary than teaching how to think, I fear that continuing education will take the form of short-term technical instruction in a wide range of fields, with old-style adult education as a kind of social and personal fringe benefit. It will probably be only after bitter experience of redundancy, unemployability, employee and managerial inflexibility in the face of innovation, and of the economic and social costs of these, that the need for continuing education rather than just for *ad hoc* shots of reinstruction will be recognised. (p. 106)

But even by 1978, Rooth could lament the decline in the study of adult education as a discipline:

the formal study of the theory and practice of continuing education is regrettably missing in the Australian scene ... It must be acknowledged that in Australia continuing education is still in the process of emerging both as a discipline and as a profession. It lacks some of the definitive concepts and precision that give form to a discipline. (1978: 39–40)

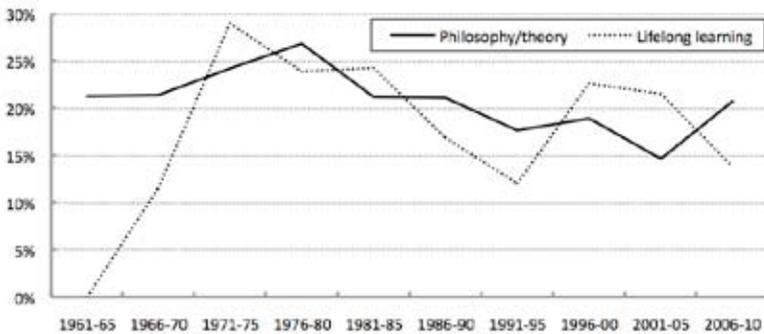
Around this time, with specific reference to learning theory, Corson pronounced that ‘any mention of learning theory in adult education can produce miscarriages amongst female tutors and premature impotence amongst the males’ (1976: 73–74)! Debates over the very nature of adult education have continued unabated, with Smith still asking in 1983:

What exactly is adult education; who does it; how do they do it; who do they do it for—and why? An appeal to adult educators

(whoever they may be) to close ranks and stop bickering does little to help them to answer this almost impossible question. (1983: 19)

The view of the situation this century was neatly encapsulated by McIntyre, who wrote that ‘adult education was defined as the negative other of vocational worth—as non-award, non-vocational, non-accredited learning for “leisure and personal enrichment”’ (2001: 65).

Figure 3: Percentages of articles on philosophy/theory and lifelong learning/education



One prominent and tangible expression of the philosophical approach is the trend in publishing on lifelong learning/education. The clear peak in the first half of the 1970s illustrates the intense focus at that time internationally on the notion of lifelong education, promoted in the publication *Learning to be* ‘as the master concept for educational policies in the years to come for both developed and developing countries’ (Faure et al., 1972: 182) and energetically fostered by UNESCO. Emphases on the importance of the individual learner and learning occurring in a wide variety of contexts and settings were especially appealing to adult educators. Encapsulated in this notion were such principles as: ‘Every individual must be in a position to keep learning throughout his [sic] life. The idea of lifelong education is the keystone of the learning society’ (p. 181) and ‘Education should

be dispensed and acquired through a multiplicity of means. The important thing is not the path an individual has followed, but what he [sic] has learned or acquired' (p.185). In this country, the Kangan Report (TAFE, 1974) shortly after was strongly imbued with this philosophy.

The notion of lifelong learning has been resurrected in recent years, though more strongly with an economic flavour. As Brown wrote, 'until very recently, the second wave of the lifelong learning debate concentrated almost entirely on the economic benefits of education reform' (2000: 12). Some writers in the journal have taken a critical approach. Clark, for instance, warned that 'in the contested ground of lifelong learning, there are real risks when one interest group gains hegemonic ascendancy' (2000: 144), and Sanguinetti believed that 'A kind of missionary zeal exudes from the idea that lifelong learning will solve the individual, national, economic and social problems of our time' (2000: 1). Cruikshank continued the debate over the economic predominance in the concept:

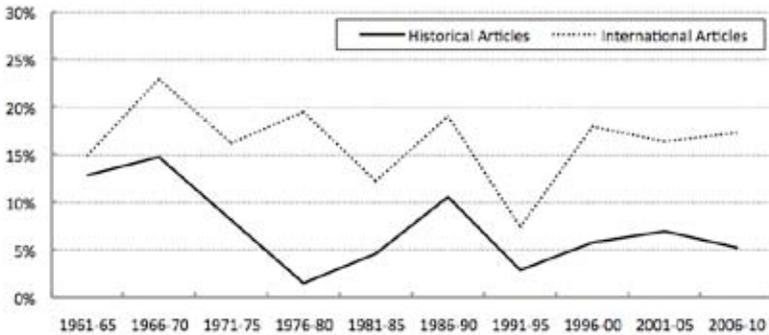
We must challenge the current focus of the new economy and the way that lifelong learning has been shaped to fit into this economy. Lifelong learning must be more than a 'competitive advantage' in a job search, and a means for displacing others in the job market. It must benefit both the whole person and the broader community. We must re-think the value of lifelong learning as it is currently constructed and work toward promoting lifelong learning policies and practices that will improve the quality of life for people—as workers and as citizens. (2003: 20)

International matters (16%) and history (7%)

The journal has always maintained a keen interest in international matters, evident in the proportion of articles focusing on international themes (Figure 4). Such interest was greatest, not unsurprisingly, in the early days of the journal, when those in the fledgling association often looked overseas at initiatives and developments in other countries and as the Australian adult education leaders played a

significant role in international adult education activities. Such a focus on international matters is an important indicator of the health of the journal, in that it demonstrates that it has not been overly localised in its interests and has continued to accept articles from overseas writers informing Australians of educational activities and trends in other regions.

Figure 4: Percentages of articles on international and historical issues



The fluctuating pattern of publishing on historical matters reveals a number of peaks of interest over the half century. There were many articles in the founding years (1960s) of the association and the journal, then another resurgence in the latter half of the 1980s when training reform was beginning to be debated seriously following the Kirby Report (Kirby, 1985) and the announcement of the CBT imperative by ministerial decree in 1989, and the Senate (1991) inquiry into the ACE sector stimulated publishing interest.

A reflection of significant national events and trends

The third role of the journal is that it has provided a reflection of significant national events and trends. We can see this, for example, in the histories of the three post-school sectors, and in many of the

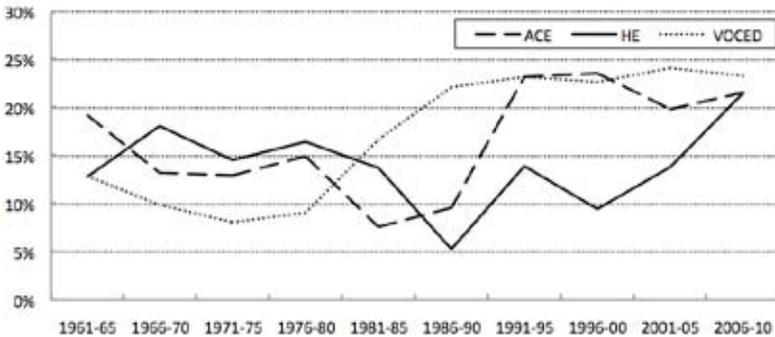
issues embraced in the publication such as literacy/basic skills, regional/rural matters and technology.

The three post-school sectors (voc. ed. 19%; ACE 17%; and HE 14%)

Figure 5 illustrates the proportions of articles published in the journal that relate to the three post-school sectors of adult and community education (ACE), higher education (HE), and vocational education and training (VET). The early dominance of publications on HE demonstrates the pre-eminence of the university sector in adult education in the 1960s and early 70s. The Australian Association of Adult Education was established by staff in departments of adult education in these universities. Since then two significant trends become evident in the figure. One is the increasing number of articles on ACE especially in the second half of the 1980s as the two Australian associations for adult education and community education grew closer and ultimately amalgamated in 1989 to become the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education (this change being reflected in the new name of the journal) and highlighting the strength of involvement of the community and neighbour house movement at that time. This flurry of activity was reflected in renewed publishing. The second marked trend is the increasing 'vocalisation' of the tertiary sector (including adult and community education) from the early 1980s so that the proportion of articles with a vocational education flavour rose sharply, peaking in the mid to late 1990s. By the beginning of the new century, Merlyn could write concerning:

the pervasiveness of the funding pressures on small community organisations to vocationalise their curricula. Indeed, adult education has had the ground under it shifted so far into the vocationalist camp, even those who align themselves with the status quo are beginning to realise that with the loss of ethical practice, critical development and learner volition, liberal democracy itself is under threat. (2001: 309)

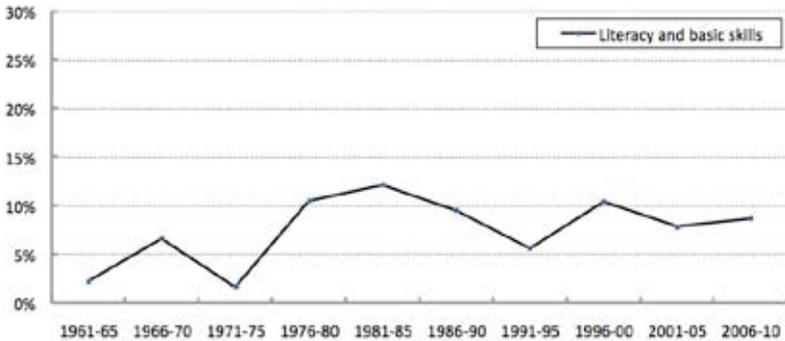
Figure 5: Percentages of articles relating to the three post-school sectors



Literacy/basic skills (8%)

From the mid-1970s, there was a marked rise in the proportion of articles published on literacy, and another smaller increase from the early 1990s (Figure 6). This trend corresponds with the expansion of TAFE following the Kangan Report (TAFE, 1974), with its emphasis on development of the individual and the growth in community colleges, and subsequently with federal government policies requiring literacy programs to be included as an essential part of retraining and upgrading existing skills—for example, the National Policy on Languages in 1987, the Australian Language and Literacy Policy in 1991 and the National Collaborative Adult English Language and Literacy Strategy in 1993. The consequence of such emphasis was ‘a reframing of adult literacy and numeracy programs away from literacy for social purposes towards literacy for productivity, for national economic goals’ (Castleton & McDonald, 2002: 5).

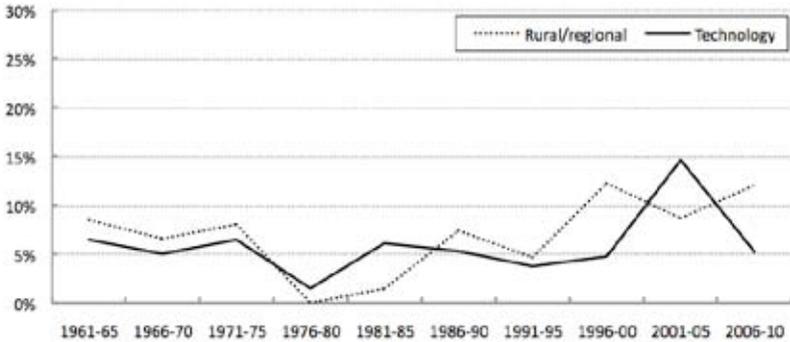
Figure 6: Percentages of articles relating to literacy and basic skills



Regional/rural issues (8%) and technology (6%)

The pattern for publications on regional and rural matters is a steady stream, with increasing interest from the 1990s (Figure 7). From early writings on such subjects as agricultural extension and rural adult education, the focus shifted later towards rural health issues and learning communities in regional areas. This rise corresponds with increasing political interest in regions, as well as the increase in international articles, particularly from countries like India and Nigeria where rural issues were understandably topics of intense research interest. A special issue on the Murray-Darling Basin in November 2009 also generated an increase in the number of articles in this category.

Figure 7: Percentages of articles with a focus on regional/rural and technology issues



Interest in technology has also been steady over the life of the journal, with a peak in the early part of this century. Naturally, what counts as technology has changed markedly over time. Early concepts of technology were concerned with radio, audiovisuals and television. While Krister acknowledged that ‘the selection of media for teaching is a task surrounded by mystique and uncertainty’, this same author, commenting on the role of technology in adult education, observed that ‘a bad lecture is still a bad lecture no matter how many technological gadgets it uses’ (1980: 24). Gradually, computer skills (often for later-life learners), computer-based learning, satellite technology, the internet, podcasting and online learning environments became important topics for discussion.

A mirror of the knowledge base of the discipline and its issues

The fourth significant role of the journal has been to act as a mirror of the discipline’s knowledge base and its issues as they change over time. What has been the pattern of publishing over the fifty years on its core areas of learning, teaching, evaluation and curriculum? The following graphs provide insights into these themes.

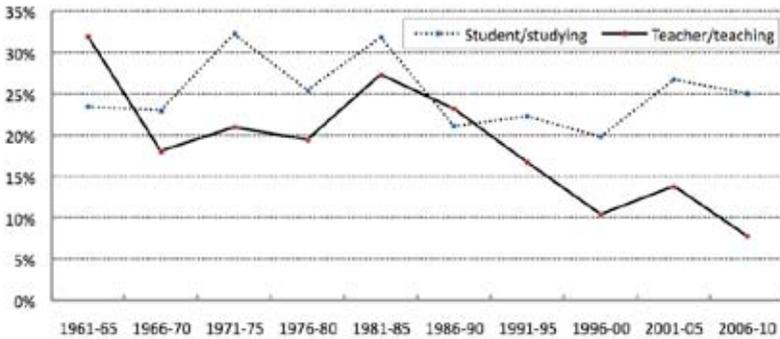
Teachers (17%) and learners (25%)

Understandably, given the nature of adult and community education, high proportions of articles have focused on teachers and learners (Figure 8). In the 1960s, the emphasis was on the educators rather than the learners; Wendel lamented in 1974

our inadequate understanding of how people learn. We have not yet closed the gap between our views of teaching method and our understanding of what actually occurs in learning ... what is needed in adult education is a learning method, *not* a teaching method. (1974: 4)

For the next twenty years, these two themes began to follow remarkably similar trajectories. However, by the later 1980s, learners had clearly become the key and sustained focus, to the point where currently three times more articles concentrate on learners than teachers. This shift over the past two decades may well be linked to a greater focus on equity groups and their learning needs, as well as on the learning approaches most appropriate for those studying within competency-based programs. The roles, characteristics and capabilities of educators have received decreasing interest, especially with the advent of competency-based programs and with the predominance of the Certificate IV (in training and assessment) that has been deemed to be sufficient training for educator roles.

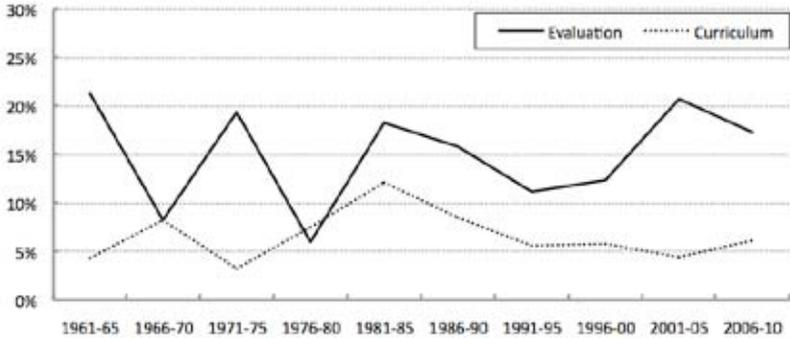
Figure 8: Percentages of articles on teachers and learners



Evaluation (15%) and curriculum (6%)

The evaluation theme exhibits a fluctuating trend with, interestingly, higher interest than curriculum (Figure 9). The gradual rise from the early 1990s no doubt can be explained by the increasing press for accountability in education generally, and in particular in this context in the adult and community education and vocational education sectors. The demand for evidence of outcomes has been felt strongly in these sectors. In contrast, there has been a steady interest in curriculum over the half century. The height of writing on curriculum was in the late 1970s and in the 80s, and what is most striking in the trend in Figure 9 is the drop in articles dealing with curriculum from the late 1980s. This coincides exactly with the introduction of the National Training Reform Agenda with its emphasis on competency-based training and the development of competency standards, and from the mid-90s where emphasis was on training packages in place of curriculum. Those publishing papers gravitated to these topics rather than curriculum *per se*.

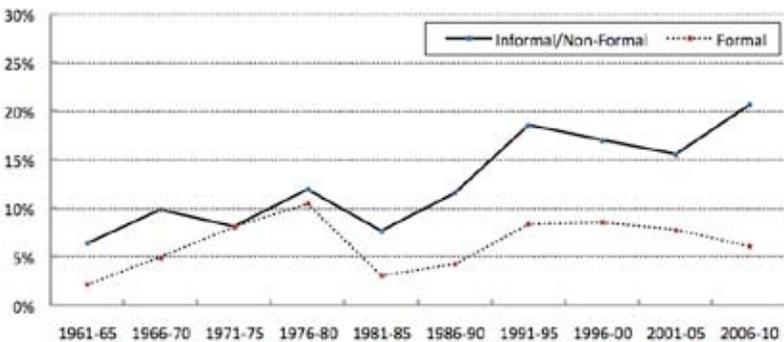
Figure 9: Percentages of articles with a focus on evaluation and curriculum



Formal (7%) and informal/non-formal learning (14%)

The discipline has seen a marked rise in interest in informal/non-formal learning, stimulated by research into, *inter alia*, the notion of situated learning, workplaces as learning sites, and learning in non-formal organisations. This rise has been reflected in literature and research. The pattern for this journal confirms the popularity of publishing in this area vis-à-vis formal learning (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Percentages of articles on formal and informal learning

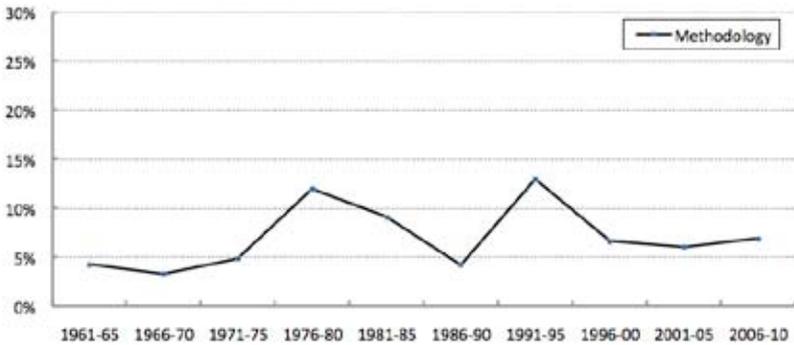


Blakely thought in the mid-70s that ‘non-formal education is an idea whose time for implementation has come, though the scholarly framework needed to propagate and extend that idea is lagging’ (1976: 11), and certainly during the 1980s the proportion of articles rose substantially. At century’s turn, Clark identified that ‘the view that the only “real learning” is accredited, competency-based and vocationally focused has been under challenge for some time’ (2000: 143). Yet the jury appears to remain out on its value and credibility. Mason and Randall lamented that ‘few adult educators have been able to convince governments that non-formal adult education provides vocational and life skills and should be as well supported as formal vocational education and training’ (1992: 179). Some years later, Whyte wrote in similar vein that ‘generally speaking governments do not regard non-formal, informal, or non-credit education as priorities’ (1987: 6). Still by 2009 the view could be articulated that ‘informality in the context of education and particularly adult learning is currently undervalued in economic terms’ (Golding, Brown & Foley 2009: 48).

Methods/methodologies (7%)

While not a sustained pattern of interest, there were two distinct bursts on this theme (Figure 11). The first was in the second half of the 1970s; this was an era when self-pacing was at its height, self-enhancement groups were popular as a method, maths methods were being debated, and open learning and personalised learning were beginning to be much discussed. Articles appeared on all these topics. The second flurry was in the first half of the 1990s, with papers published on feminism and inclusive methodologies, using metaphors, suggestopedic methods in language courses, managing organisational change, RPL methodologies and team teaching. Some of the papers on this topic related to research rather than teaching.

Figure 11: Percentages of articles on methods and methodology



The five themes least published (referred to in Table 6) all have relatively flat patterns over the fifty years (and so figures have not been included here for space reasons). However, they do reflect some interesting trends, though minor in terms of numbers of published articles.

Gender (4%). The pattern for papers concentrating on gender issues reveals a relatively late interest. There was a steady rise from the early 1970s, a sharper rise during the 80s and a peak in the first half of the 90s. Such increasing interest is probably linked to the increasing proportions of women authors and the increasing social and political awareness of gender issues. The peak reflects a guest-edited, special issue on gender in April 1994.

Indigenous issues (4%). The volume of publishing on Indigenous issues has remained surprisingly low, through relatively steady, with minor peaks of interest in the late 1960s and again from the 80s. These rises no doubt reflect such events as the official recognition of Indigenous Australians in 1967, the interest surrounding the *Mabo* case in 1992 and the increasing interest in and intense concern for Aboriginal education and health through the 1980s and 90s.

Bridging/foundation education (3% of articles). This topic has not generated much interest among those publishing in this journal. Two productive periods were in second half of the 1970s and first half of the 2000s. Papers were published on bridging programs at the University of Newcastle and University of Western Sydney in the earlier period, while a guest-edited, special issue on enabling education in November 2004 helps to account for the rise in the second period.

Competency (2%). This theme was another late developer, with little to no interest in publishing on this theme until the early 1990s. Following some interest at this time as the reform agenda focused debate on the nature of competence, the number of articles fell away in the later 1990s and early 2000s as these issues became more embedded and fascination with debating competency-based training waned. Later, concerns over the much publicised skills shortages and financial crises from the mid-2000s regenerated some interest in articles related to skills development.

The environment (2%). Interest in publishing on environmental issues is an even later phenomenon than for gender. No papers prior to the 1990s were categorised as having a focus on this theme; there were a few through the 90s, and since the early 2000s there has been increased publishing activity, corresponding to the greater emphasis in society and government on green issues. A guest-edited special issue on the Murray-Darling Basin in November 2009 explains the sharp rise at that time.

Conclusion

In this paper we have analysed four key roles of the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* over its fifty years of history, and illustrated the shifting patterns over this period in authorship and content. Analysis of authorship reveals a dramatic rise in the proportion of female authors (from 10% to 59%), a lift in the

proportion of international contributors (from 14% to 30%), a sustained high level of authorship from New South Wales (average of 37%), an increase in the percentage of contributors affiliated with universities (from 64% to 77%) and a marked trend towards multiple authorship (from 1.0 to 1.7 authors). Analysis of the 22 content themes illustrates how the prime focus has been, appropriately for this type of journal, on students/learners (25%), followed by philosophy/theory (20%), vocational education (19%), lifelong learning (18%), adult/community education (17%) and teaching (17%).

The journal has continued to make a substantial contribution to the cause of adult education in this country, providing a mouthpiece and conduit for the association and its profession which has:

- linked adult educators, both intellectually and in terms of communication, who were otherwise geographically scattered and numerically thin, and
- contributed to the legitimating of adult education as a discipline in Australia.

It has provided the opportunity for many to have their first paper published in an academic journal. Furthermore, the journal has served as a form of professional development for adult educators across the country, encouraging debate about goals and how to achieve them, acting as 'a medium for vigorous, independent thought about adult education and its problems' (Durstun 1968: 81) and providing valuable information on national and international initiatives and developments.

While debates have continued to rage over the very nature of adult education and its changing role in society, and while authors over time have lamented its shortcomings (as well as celebrated its successes), the editors' toil has not been in vain. Their efforts, combined with those of all the 1100 authors over this time who

contributed what they perceived as significant in each decade, have left a powerful legacy. From Hanna claiming in the early years that ‘adult education [had] not achieved a recognised standing in this country’ (1965: 3), Morris was able to pronounce 45 years later that ‘the story of adult education, in Australia as elsewhere, has been characterised by a fight for formal recognition’ and that ‘such recognition ... has now largely been achieved’ (2010: 556). In this ‘fight’, the journal has played a significant part, as the evidence in this paper suggests. However, the future can never be assured. Brennan, a former editor, had written a decade earlier that

Organisations like the ALA [Adult Learning Australia] are not guaranteed a future. There is little point planning for the 50th birthday—although if it does arrive, let’s hope the records of the organisation will be available for the newer members to consult and read about. (2001: 388)

That fiftieth birthday has now passed, and the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* continues to play its role in providing one essential form of record for posterity.

References

- Blakely, E. (1976). ‘Adult, non-formal education and development’, *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 16(1), 3–11.
- Brennan, B. (1988a). ‘A history of the AAAE: The first decade’, *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 28(2), 31–38.
- Brennan, B. (1988b). ‘A history of the AAAE: The seventies and beyond’, *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 28(3), 27–35.
- Brennan, B. (2001). ‘Learning in time: Learning from time. Some key questions for the present and future from ALA’s 40 years of learning’, *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 41(3), 374–389.
- Brown, T. (2000). ‘Lifelong learning in the community’, *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 40(1), 10–26.
- Castleton, G. & McDonald, M. (2002) *A decade of literacy: Policy, programs and perspectives*, Melbourne: Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium (ALNARC).

- Clark, T. (2000). 'Lifelong learning: Contested ground', *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 40(3), 136–148.
- Corson, D. (1976). 'Improving adult education teaching quality', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 16(2), 70–75.
- Crowley, D.W. (1968). 'Arnold Hely', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 8(1), 42–44.
- Crowley, D.W. (1976). 'Tribute to Dr Joan Allsop', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 16(2), 60.
- Cruikshank, J. (2003). 'The flexible workforce: Implications for lifelong learning', *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 43(1), 8–22.
- Dickinson, G. & Rusnell, D. (1971). 'A content analysis of *Adult Education*', *Adult Education*, 21(3), 177–185.
- Duke, C. (1969). 'Towards éducation permanente: The concept of life-long integrated education', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 9(3), 103–113.
- Duncan, W.G.K. (1973). *The vision splendid: The Duncan report with commentaries*, ed. D. Whitelock, Adelaide: Department of Adult Education, University of Adelaide.
- Durston, B.H. (1967). 'Research in adult education', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 7(1), 5–9.
- Durston, B.H. (1968). 'AJAE—A review of the first seven years', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 8(2), 79–81.
- Faure, E. et al. (1972). *Learning to be*, Paris: UNESCO.
- Galagan, P. (1996). 'The diary of a profession', *Training & Development*, January, 32–40.
- Golding, B., Brown, M. & Foley, A. (2009). 'Informal learning: A discussion around defining and researching its breadth and importance', *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 49(1), 34–56.
- Hanna, I. (1965). 'The adult student and languages', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 5(2), 3–9.
- Harris, R. (1997). 'The *Australian Journal of Adult Education* in the sixties', *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education*, 37(1), 49–56.
- Kirby, P. (1985). *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Labour Market Programs* (Kirby Report), Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Krister, L. (1980). 'Which medium for the job?', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 20(3), 24–30.
- Long, P. (1983). 'The AJAE: Preoccupations through ten years', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 23(3), 5–15.

- Long, H.B. & Agyekum, S.K. (1974). 'Adult Education 1964–1973: Reflections of a changing discipline', *Adult Education*, 24, 99–120.
- Martin, L.H. (chair) (1964). *Committee on the future of tertiary education in Australia: Report*, Canberra: Australian Universities Commission.
- Mason, R. & Randell, S. (1992) 'The future of adult education in Australia: Facing the educational challenge', *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education*, 32(3), 178–181.
- McIntyre, J. (2001). 'The discursive construction of ACE in national policy', *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 41(1), 56–71.
- Merlyn, T. (2001). 'The longest war: The two traditions of adult education', *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 41(3), 297–313.
- Moreland, N. (1992). 'The Vocational Aspect of Education: looking back and looking forward', *The Vocational Aspect of Education*, 44(1), 3–10.
- Morris, R. (2010). 'ALA in the 2000s', *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 50(3), 550–556.
- Rooth, S. (1978). 'Prophet, priest, king—The role of the adult educator in the context of lifelong education', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 18(3), 35–43.
- Rossell, P. (1966). 'The Martin Report and adult education', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 6(1), 4–13.
- Sanguinetti, J. (2000). *Coming to grips with ANTA's lifelong learning strategy*, Adult Learning Commentary, no. 13, Melbourne: Adult Learning Australia.
- Senate (1991). *Come in Cinderella: The emergence of adult and community education*, A Report to the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, Canberra: Senate Printing Unit.
- Senate (1997). *Beyond Cinderella: Towards a learning society*, A Report to the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, Canberra: Senate Printing Unit.
- Shanas, E. (1945). 'The American Journal of Sociology through fifty years', *American Journal of Sociology*, 50(6), 522–533.
- Smith, B. (1968). 'Some considerations about adult education in Australia (part 1)', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 8(2), 65–74.
- Smith, B. (1983). 'A critical comment on "Recent developments"', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 23(2), 16–23.
- Taylor, E.W. (2001). 'Adult Education Quarterly from 1989 to 1999: A content analysis of all submissions', *Adult Education Quarterly*, 51(4), 322–340.

Technical and Further Education (1974). *TAFE in Australia: Report on the needs in technical and further education, April 1974, Volume 1: Report (Kangan Report)*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

Wendel, R.L. (1974). 'Toward a methodology of adult learning', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 14(1), 3–7.

Whyte, A. (1987). 'Educational trends and the development of adult education in OECD countries', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, 27(1), 4–8 & 12.

About the authors

Dr Roger Harris is a Professor in the School of Education and Director in the Centre for Research in Education, Equity and Work, University of South Australia. He has extensive experience in VET teacher education and VET research, with a focus on national training reform. Recently he was director of the national research consortium supporting VET providers in building capability for the future. Current professional activities include the South Australian Training and Skills Commission; Program Leader in the CRC for Rail Innovation; the academic board of a private provider; and Visiting Research Fellow in the Institute for Adult Learning, Singapore for three months.

Dr Anne Morrison is a Research Assistant at the School of Education, University of South Australia.

Contact details

Prof Roger Harris, School of Education, University of South Australia, Mawson Lakes, SA 5095

Tel: 08 8302 6246

Fax: 08 8302 6239

Email: roger.harris@unisa.edu.au

Dr Anne Morrison, School of Education, University of South Australia, Mawson Lakes, SA 5095

Tel: 08 8302 6217

Email: anne.morrison@unisa.edu.au