

Arnold Hely and Australian adult education

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Arnold Hely (1907–1967) was a most significant figure in the history of adult education in New Zealand, in Australia and internationally. Arnold Hely, a New Zealander, Director of Tutorial Classes (later Adult Education) at the University of Adelaide from 1957 to 1965, was the prime mover in the establishment in 1964 of the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and was, until his most untimely death in 1967, its General Secretary. He previously had played, as an impartial newcomer/outsider, a leading role in the formation in 1960 of ALA (then called AAAE). In this paper I will focus on Hely's efforts to bring Australian adult education into the mainstream of world adult education. In telling Hely's story I will explore the context of Australian adult education in the 1950s and 1960s.

Introduction

At a ceremony held on 17 November 2009 three adult educators from Australia and New Zealand were inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame. They were Arnold Hely, Sandra Morrison and Michael Newman. The International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame was founded in the mid 1990s to recognise leaders in the field of adult and continuing education. The inaugural induction took place in 1996. Since that date some fourteen annual 'classes' have been inducted. Today the Hall of Fame membership consists of some 180 living and some 48 deceased members. The official home of the Hall of Fame is the University of Oklahoma's Centre for Continuing Education in Norman, Oklahoma. The virtual Hall of Fame can be found at www.halloffame.outreach.ou.edu

Arnold Hely, a New Zealander, Director of Tutorial Classes (later renamed Adult Education) at the University of Adelaide, since 1957, played a leading role in the formation of ALA (then called AAAE) in 1960. Later he was the prime mover in establishing the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and was, until his most untimely death in 1967, its General Secretary. In this paper I will focus on Hely's efforts to bring Australian adult education into the mainstream of world adult education. (Please refer to Appendix A for a brief outline of Arnold Hely's life and his career in adult education.)

Some background

The 1950s was a period of some uncertainty in Australian adult education. More and more it was becoming obvious that not all stakeholders were happy with the predominant position held by the universities within the field. This position of the universities is favoured by the 'great tradition view' of adult education. Derek Whitelock presented the most complete exposition of the great tradition interpretation of the development of Australian adult

education in his book, *The great tradition: A history of adult education in Australia* (1974). In his study, Whitelock strongly emphasised the continuity in the Australian context of the nineteenth-century English educational ideal that the liberally educated person, the cultured adult, was the ultimate outcome of successful adult education. Matthew Arnold, J.H. Newman and Albert Mansbridge were cited as the major intellectual influences on the development of adult education in Australia as well as in Britain. Of course, such adult education was not necessarily without important social and other purposes. However, there was a heavy insistence that the major purpose must be a liberal one and that adult education should be non-vocational and non-credit and pursued on the basis of the learner's own volition. Advocates of the great tradition point of view liked to distinguish between 'adult education', as a particular type of narrowly defined educational provision, and the 'education of adults', which was described as being merely educational activities engaged in by adults. While it has been argued (Morris, 1991) that this point of view presents an incomplete picture of the history of Australian adult education, broadly defined, it does present a reasonably accurate picture of the development of the university-delivered adult education in Australia at that time.

Australian universities and adult education in the 1950s

At the end of the 1950s, Australia had less than 10 universities—basically one per state, except for NSW, and the national university. All of these were public institutions. A number of new universities were planned or then under construction to cope with the rapidly growing population and steadily rising educational expectations. In three states (Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania) the universities no longer participated in adult education. In these states, there were now governmental authorities (boards or a council) that operated, at least initially, along the lines of the propositions advanced at the 1944 conference 'Future of Adult Education in Australia' (Duncan, 1973).

Even among those universities that were still active providers of adult education (Sydney, New England, Adelaide and Western Australia), there was little common ground in terms of basic ideas and programs.

The WEA only survived in two states (NSW and SA) and it was only with the University of Sydney that the WEA maintained its traditional form of relationship and mode of operation. The University of New England was developing a strong but non-radical community development thrust in its rural hinterland. The University of Adelaide was building a strong and pragmatic program, while maintaining many traditional features, in cooperation with a broad range of voluntary associations including the WEA. The University of Western Australia ran a most successful annual festival of the arts, which incorporated a superb summer school. The Australian National University was thinking about establishing an adult education division or department.

In 1960, the first national association—the Australian Association of Adult Education (AAAE)—was formed at a conference convened in Hobart. A leading player here was the Director of Adult Education at the University of Adelaide, Arnold Hely, a New Zealander who had been appointed in 1957. He played a major role, as a ‘newcomer’ and perceived honest broker, in helping to make this happen. However, all was still not well in the world of Australian adult education. The new national association had grown out of the meetings that had been regularly held over the years between the heads of the university departments of adult education, the secretaries of the WEAs and the senior officers of governmental bodies concerned with adult education. The prolonged series of meetings held in order to decide the form of the national association and the constitution finally adopted by the AAAE reflected the mutual suspicion, the fear of direct democracy and the fondness for feud that had long characterised Australian adult education at the organisational level (Duke, 1984).

This then was the situation at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. Some thoughtful observers of Australian university adult education were becoming convinced that the use of an inappropriate imported English model had retarded the development of adult education in Australia. Instead of evolving sound indigenous forms and modes of operation, organised adult education had frittered away the energies of its enthusiasts in petty jealousies between providers and on bitter personal rivalries (Alexander, 1959). However, on a more positive note, there was growing interest across the field in knowing and understanding more about the practice of adult education in nations other than the so-called white dominions of the British Commonwealth.

The formation of ASPBAE

This growing interest, indeed eagerness, among Australian adult educators to be more involved internationally culminated in the UNESCO Regional Seminar on Adult Education, held in January 1964. The leading player here again was Arnold Hely. In 1960 he had attended with Colin Badger, the Director of the Council of Adult Education in Victoria, the Second World Conference on Adult Education organised under the sponsorship of UNESCO.

In addition to the main UNESCO conference, which was held in Montreal, six other international meetings concerned with the education of adults were held—including the Sagamore conference, which focussed on university adult education. Hely also attended this meeting—the other invited Australian delegate, J.L.J. Wilson of the University of Sydney, did not attend. During the Montreal conference, Hely convened a meeting of delegates who lived in Asia and the Pacific. This meeting included representatives of the most and least populous nations in the world. The idea of forging closer links among the adult educators of the region had been strongly raised in

the Australian context at the national adult education meeting held in Adelaide not long before Hely had left for Canada.

The International Conference on University Adult Education (to give it its correct title) was held at Syracuse University's idyllic woodland Conference Centre, Sagamore Lodge, 3–8 September 1960. Here, Hely took a prominent role. He presented a very well-received paper on remedial and fundamental adult education and the university. He became a member of the ongoing committee, which went on to found the International Congress on University Adult Education (ICUAE). He made some important and influential friends, including Dr Alexander N. Charters, Dean of the University College and Vice President for Continuing Education at Syracuse University and a prominent US supporter of UNESCO.

Hely used his involvement with ICUAE and other international bodies, such as the World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP) and eventually his membership of the UNESCO International Committee for the Advancement of Adult Education (from 1963), as well as his network of international contacts to press the claim for an Australian organised regional Asia-Pacific seminar on adult education. The task was a very difficult one. The region had very many poor nations. Eventually Hely was able to gain the necessary approvals and put together a funding package for the seminar, which was held from 18 January to 1 February 1964 at the Women's College, University of Sydney. The theme of the seminar was a dual one: 'The role of schools and universities in adult education'.

According to John Lowe (1966), Director of Extra Mural Studies at the University of Singapore, who participated in the seminar, if the aim of the seminar was to interest Australian adult educators in Asia, then it was successful. However, on other fronts it was less than successful. There were no communist or pro-communist nations present. Neither were the leading neutralist nations—Indonesia,

Cambodia and Laos—present. Indeed, according to Lowe, the spread of nations represented was a little bizarre—Southeast Asia, plus Japan, Hong Kong and India, plus some US Pacific territories, plus Australia and New Zealand. Moreover, the splitting of the seminar into two parallel commissions—one to focus on the role of schools and the other on the role of universities—while understandable, was unnatural and unhelpful. There was a domination of the proceedings by the English-speaking ‘experts’, among whom there appeared to be little real understanding of the region’s needs and potentialities. However, Lowe thought that the product of the universities component of the seminar was very sound and quite useful because it provided a general statement on how universities should participate in adult education and was not specifically tied to the Asian region.

The most lasting and important outcome of the seminar was the formation of a regional adult education organisation—the second oldest such regional organisation in the world after the European Bureau of Adult Education, which has since been renamed the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA). The founding meeting of this Asia-Pacific regional adult education organisation was held on 30 January 1964. This meeting adopted three resolutions:

- The first had to do with what were to be the activities of the proposed body.
- The second named the organisation the South-East Asian and Australasian Bureau of Adult Education.
- The third appointed a small interim executive committee of seven members: Ang Gee Bah (Malaysia), Siva Dutta (India), Robert Gibson (South Pacific), Arnold Hely (Australia), Leuan Hughes (Hong Kong), U Kyaw Khin (Burma) and Artemio Vizconde (Philippines).

The interim committee met on 31 January and prepared three recommendations to go back to the full meeting:

- fixing the annual membership fee at 5/- (i.e. 50 cents)
- suggesting two additional members for the executive committee (representing Japan and Indonesia respectively)
- proposing that the name of the organisation should be the Asian and South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE).

The founding meeting was reconvened on 1 February 1964 and adopted the recommendations prepared by the interim executive committee, and the 33 foundation members of ASPBAE were enrolled.

ASPBAE: the early years

Shiva Dutta of India was the first President and Arnold Hely was the first Secretary of ASPBAE. Hely was assisted in carrying out his role in maintaining the ASPBAE secretariat by Dulcie Stretton, another significant adult educator of the time who played leading roles in the CAE, the AAAE and international adult education. The first decade and a half of the organisation's life was most difficult and it barely survived Arnold Hely's death in 1967. There were no real funds and only very limited regional activities were possible, usually in conjunction with, and as an add-on to, an activity organised and funded by some other body. In 1972, the then new Director of Continuing Education at the Australian National University (ANU), Dr Chris Duke, became the Secretary of ASPBAE. He was assisted by Dr Joan Allsop of the University of Sydney, who edited the bureau's newsletter (the *ASPBAE Courier*). Joan Allsop is another significant figure in the story of Australian adult education: she is generally regarded as the first Australian to gain a doctoral qualification in the field of adult education.

In 1977 Chris Duke (2003) attended a meeting of adult educators in Teheran. Here he held extensive discussions with Bernd Pflug of the DVV (the German Adult Education Association). The DVV was an important part of the process of postwar civic and socio-educational

reconstruction in Germany. While its main emphasis was on adult education at home it had a strong international cooperation and aid arm—the IIZ (the Institute for International Cooperation). Helmuth Dolff, Secretary-General of the DVV, had been one of the invited international experts at the 1964 seminar in Sydney. From 1978 the IIZ/DVV provided support for the work of ASPBAE, largely by means of the medium-term commitment of core funding. Almost simultaneously things also began to move on the organisational front.

In 1976, ASPBAE had been represented at the first ICAE (International Council of Adult Education) World Assembly in Dar es Salaam. The Canadian adult educator Roby Kidd, following the Third UNESCO International Adult Education Conference held in Tokyo in 1972, had formed the ICAE in 1973. Early on, it had been decided that the ICAE, whose members were national adult education associations, should recognise and would work with and through the regional adult education bodies such as ASPBAE and the other bureaux: the European, the African, the Caribbean, the South American and the Arab. So now ASPBAE was on much firmer ground both organisationally and financially. Duke continued in the role of Secretary until 1985 when he left ANU to accept a senior position at the University of Warwick in the UK. With the assistance of the DVV, ASPBAE continued throughout the 1980s and 90s and into the new century its steady and solid growth.

ASPBAE today

In 2004, ASPBAE celebrated its fortieth birthday with a revised/updated constitution, a general assembly conducted electronically, and a festival of learning held in Indonesia. In 2003, ASPBAE and the IIZ/DVV marked 25 years of cooperation with a most successful seminar hosted by the CAEA (the Chinese Adult Education Association) in Beijing on the theme of international cooperation for adult education. In 2007, to reflect its concern with fundamental or

basic education, ASPBAE changed its name to the Asian South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education but kept the same acronym ASPBAE. Currently, ASPBAE has some 200 member organisations in 40 countries. As well as being the second oldest, it is by far the largest (including as it does both China and India among its members) of the regional bureaux of adult education. However, its membership also includes some of the world's smallest and poorest nations. It operates with a small but highly effective secretariat located in India and a small number of regionally based staff, all under the direction of the Secretary-General, Maria Lourdes Almazan-Khan. ASPBAE is governed by its General Assembly, which meets normally once each four years. In between General Assemblies the organisation is governed by the Executive Council and led by an elected President. There are four sub-regional groupings within the region: South Asia, East Asia, South-East Asia and our own, the South Pacific.

Conclusion

Today we can look back on the history of ASPBAE and reflect upon its origins in an Australia, and a world, much different from our world today. ASPBAE's steady and solid development has not been easily achieved. Indeed, at many points in the course of its life, the end seemed imminent. But it did survive, largely through the very practical assistance provided by the IIZ/DVV, but also through the efforts of those adult educators of the region, like Arnold Hely, who believed that adult education and learning had the potential to build a better world across the boundaries of ethnic, cultural and political diversity.

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Appendix

- Arnold (A.S.M.) Hely, BComm, MA (1907–67)
- 1907 Born Birkenhead, England, 17 November
- 1918 Family migrated to New Zealand, father a sea captain
- 1920s Left school and became a seaman
- 1930 Married Madeleine Chaillet
- 1931 As an out-of-work (because of the Great Depression) seaman, he began to take WEA classes in Auckland
- 1932 WEA Scholar, Auckland University College, Bachelor of Commerce (later completed BA and then MA)

- 1937 WEA Auckland City Organiser with specific responsibility for building trade union affiliations and working-class participation (a one-year special appointment)
- 1938 Tutor-Organiser for Adult Education WEA, Wellington District (later Senior Tutor-Organiser) until 1947 (broken by military service 1943–45)
- 1947 Director, Department of Adult Education, Victoria University Wellington
- 1957 Director, Department of Tutorial Classes, University of Adelaide, South Australia. As an ‘outsider/newcomer’ played the leading role in forming the AAAE, overcoming deep divisions that had prevented the formation of a national inclusive adult education association in Australia
- 1960 Represented Australia at the Second UNESCO World Conference on Adult Education in Montreal, Canada and later at the founding meeting of the International Congress of University Adult Education in Syracuse, USA
- 1963 Became a member of the UNESCO International Committee for the Advancement of Adult Education
- 1964 Leading participant in the UNESCO Regional Seminar, Sydney, on the ‘Role of Universities and Schools in Adult Education’, which he had been principally responsible for organising. A founding member (indeed the founder and Secretary until his death) of ASPBAE
- 1965 Returned to New Zealand as Secretary of the National Council of Adult Education
- 1967 Died 17 December in Wellington aged 60

Source: Arnold Hely memorial issue of *Adult Education*, 12(4), 1968.

About the author

***Dr Roger K. Morris** was, until he retired in 2005, an Associate Professor at UTS, where he taught in the area of historical and social foundations of adult education. From 1987 until 2008 he was a member of the Board of AAAE and AAACE and was Adult Learning Australia's President from 1997–1999, and for most of the balance of his time on the board he was its secretary. He was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame at a ceremony held in September 2006 at the University of Bamberg, Germany. On Australia Day 2008 Roger was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to adult, continuing and community education.*

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