

“A Permanent National Necessity ...” Adult Education and Lifelong Learning for 21st Century Britain

The Centenary Commission on Adult Education Report

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Chair, #AdultEducation100 campaign
Joint Secretary, Centenary Commission

*Society for Educational Studies workshop
Thursday 13th December 2019
University of Nottingham*

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#AdultEducation100 - Steering Group: Co-operative College; Raymond Williams Foundation;
University of Nottingham; University of Oxford; WEA.



Published
18th November 2019

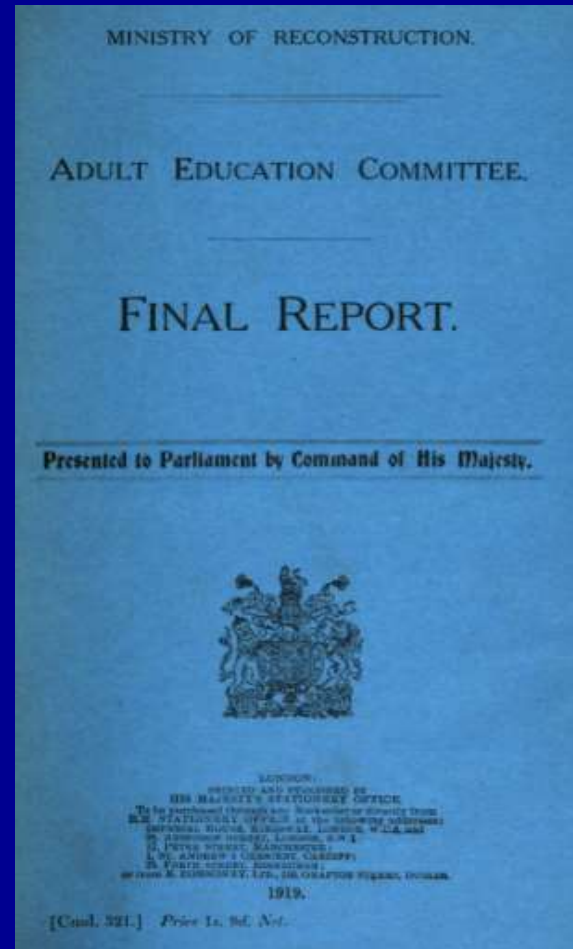
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- “Economic recovery of the nation” and “the proper use of their responsibilities by millions of new voters” requires education “throughout the life of the adult”
- Adult education **“MUST NOT BE ... A LUXURY FOR A FEW EXCEPTIONAL PERSONS”** nor for **“ONLY A SHORT SPAN OF EARLY MANHOOD”**, but is **“A PERMANENT NATIONAL NECESSITY, AN INSEPARABLE ASPECT OF CITIZENSHIP, AND THEREFORE SHOULD BE BOTH UNIVERSAL AND LIFELONG”**
- **“OPPORTUNITY FOR ADULT EDUCATION SHOULD BE SPREAD UNIFORMLY AND SYSTEMATICALLY OVER THE WHOLE COMMUNITY”**

(Original emphasis.)



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Centenary Commission: Remit & Rationale

Remit: *“To consider the provision for, and possibilities of, Adult Education in Great Britain, and to make recommendations.”*

- Democratic, inclusive values, social justice, and enhancing people’s lives as a whole, should be central to adult education.
- Broader approach needed to prepare for unknown future industries/jobs :
 - machine learning, AI, robotics
 - creativity, empathy, imagination
- Lifewide learning essential for communities and individuals to respond to challenges of change.



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Dame Helen Ghosh <i>Chair</i>	Master of Balliol College, Oxford (Chair). Previously Chief Executive, The National Trust; Permanent Secretary at Home Office and Dept for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA).
Sir Alan Tuckett OBE <i>Vice-chair</i>	Professor, University of Wolverhampton. Previously Chief Executive, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (1988-2011); President, International Council for Adult Education (2011-2015).
Melissa Benn	Author, novelist, journalist, broadcaster. Chair, Comprehensive Future (cross-party group campaigning to end selective education); Council member, New Visions for Education Group; founder member, Local Schools Network
Lord (Karan) Bilimoria CBE	Co-founder & Chairman, Cobra Beer; Chancellor, University of Birmingham; Vice President, CBI.
Dr Sharon Clancy	Chair, Raymond Williams Foundation. Previously Head of Community Partnerships, University of Nottingham; Chief Executive, Mansfield Council for Voluntary Service.
Melissa Highton	Assistant Principal, Online Learning and Director of Learning, Teaching & Web Services, University of Edinburgh.
Uzo Iwobi OBE	Chief Executive Officer, Race Council Cymru. Previously Principal Equality Officer, South Wales Police; member of the Commission for Racial Equality. Qualified as solicitor and barrister in Nigeria; called to the Nigerian Bar.
Roger McKenzie	Assistant General Secretary, Unison. Previously Vice Chair, West Midlands Assembly; Midlands Regional Secretary, TUC; Race Equality Officer, TUC.
Sir Ken Olisa OBE	Chairman, Shaw Trust; Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London; founder & Chairman, Restoration Partners; Deputy Master, Worshipful Company of Information Technologists. Former member, Indpt Parliamentary Standards Authority.
Dr Sue Pember OBE	Director, Holes (professional body for Adult Community Education and Learning). Previously lead Director for FE, Dept for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS) & DfES; Principal, Canterbury College of F&HE.
Dr Cilla Ross	Principal designate, Co-operative College, Manchester.
Sir Peter Scott	Emeritus Professor of Higher Education, UCL Institute of Education. Previously Vice Chancellor, Kingston University, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Professor of Education, University of Leeds; Editor, <i>The Times Higher Education Supplement</i> .
Ruth Spellman OBE	General Secretary, WEA. Previously Chief Executive of Chartered Management Institute, Institution of Mechanical Engineers, and Investors in People UK.

Centenary Commission Process

- Funding from FETL
- 5 meetings in 2019: Jan. (Oxford), March (Manchester), May (London), July & September (Oxford), all with thematic focus.
- Researcher
- Literature review, focus groups, expert testimony, questionnaire survey, site visits, ENLIVEN project research input
- Follow on activities throughout 2020



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- Destruction of adult (& further) education infrastructure
- Plummeting participation in last 15 years (29% 2004; 15% 2018)
- Dominance of skills acquisition & 'employability' in learning policy
- Austerity; deepening social and economic inequalities
- Fragmented communities; disrupted civic/civil society
- Polarised democracies
- Changing world of work
- Demographic change; diversity
- Seeking an Adult Education 'for our times'

Centenary Commission Themes



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“We need to think out educational methods and possibilities from the new point of view ... of the adult learning to be a citizen”

(1919 Report).

On learning from community initiative

- “We need to learn from new forms of adult education emerging today, often outside formal institutions.
- “These include initiatives that have arisen in response to the great challenges that concern people ...
- “Particularly important are informal learning spaces and approaches that help foster active citizenship, address inequalities and exclusions, and encourage democratic participation.” ...
- “This element of dialogue, exchange and discovery – involving the social movements that are shaping new ideas in society, as well as educational organisations – has been good not just for adult learners, and for the movements, but also for education, for knowledge, and for public debate.”



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On workplace learning

- “The way in which workplaces are organised can itself play a vital role in adult learning.
- “While some workplaces provide ‘expansive’ environments, encouraging workers’ learning, others are much more ‘restrictive’.
- “This is not a matter (only) of what training courses an employer offers, but (much more important) of whether the organisation of work (production processes, group working, allocation of responsibilities, use of technologies, role of trades unions, etc.) encourages informal learning.
- “Research shows that learning ‘spills over’ between different dimensions of life (work, civic, personal). This applies not only to technical knowledge and skills, but also to learning, skills and attitudes relevant to citizenship.”



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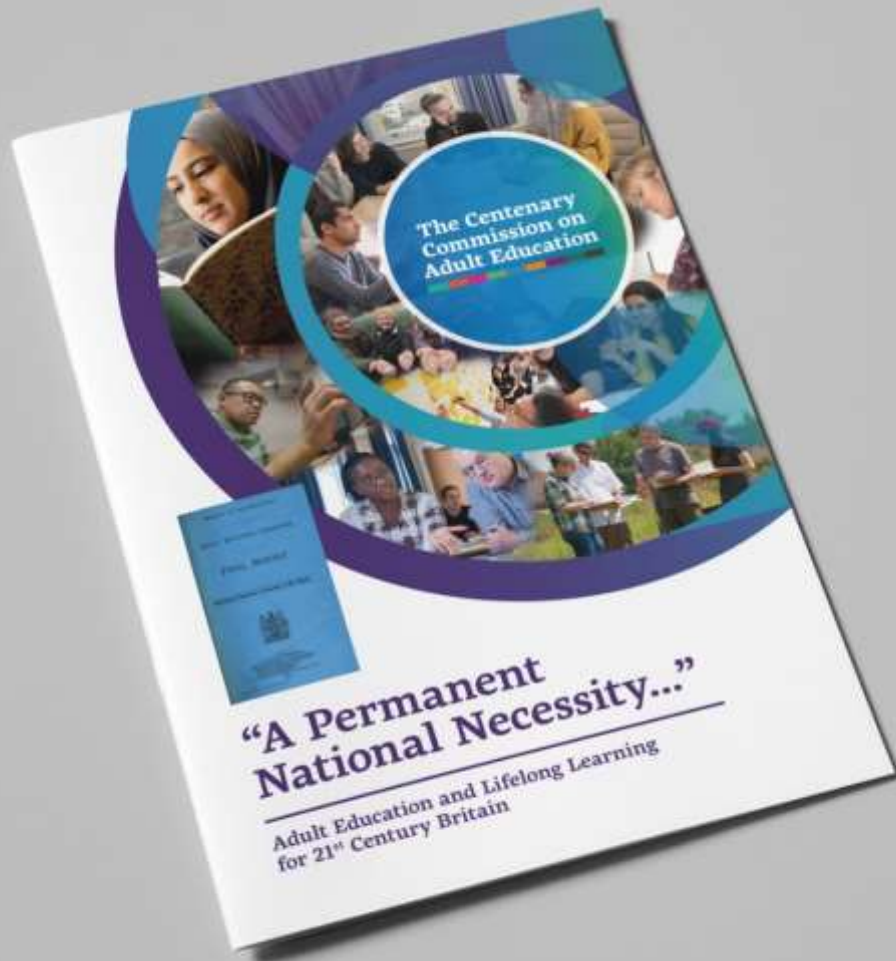
Selected Commission Recommendations

- National Adult Education & Lifelong Learning (AELL) Strategy
- Adult Learning Partnerships (ALPs):
 - regional/sub-regional, bringing together local/regional government, universities and colleges, community and educational groups, local employers to *collaborate* in delivering AELL Strategy
- Ensure diversity in topics studied
- Paid time off work for learning, including in 'gig economy'
- Employers to report annual E&T spending



- Community Learning Account to fund informal, community-based learning initiatives by local groups
- Rebalance funding to those who previously 'missed out'

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