

Why and how adult learning and social movements connect

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1976 to 2008

- 1970s key decade
- Emergence of two contradictory issues/ideas:
 - Neoliberalism & Sustainability
- The first has dominated thought up to 2007/08 crisis
- It's now broke and they won't fix it
- Led to 'there is no alternative' and 'it's the economy, stupid'

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In adult learning

- Callaghan at Ruskin in 1976:
 - *"In today's world, higher standards are demanded than were required yesterday and there are simply fewer jobs for those without skill."*
- Leitch 30 years later
- Skills farming and lifelong learning for survival in globalised economy

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Sustainability in 1970s

- Think Global act Local
- 1970s identified potential for CFCs to create a hole in the ozone layer and Jimmy Carter advised American's that oil would eventually run out.
- But a failure to link social movements with adult learning around these issues
- Adult learning had to become defensive

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On the defensive

- Through the 80s - Miners Strike, Trade Union legislation, mass unemployment
- Some successes: Women's Education; focus on disadvantage; profile of Literacy and Numeracy
- Throughout NIACE has provided the evidence, built the critique, celebrated the successes - kept the case alive

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But, defending has consequences

- new managerialism
- greater interest/intervention by state
- less independence
- and innovation more difficult

Adult learning's focus was *turned towards the State* and its shifting interpretation of the skills issue:

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Skills, Skills, Skills

- Education = Skills
- Skills = Qualifications
- Qualifications = Learning Aims
- Learning aims lead to success
- Success is measurable
- Success leads to Excellence

So...

- Harvest the learning aims
- And drive up success rates

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Excellence or Neatness?

Since 2005-06 we have lost 470,000 adult learners in FE (nearly 12%) in exchange for an improvement in success rates of 3.5%.

	2005/06	2009/10	Result?
Total Learners	3,996,000	3,526,600	-11%
Success rate	76.8%	80.3%	3.5%

Adult (19+) FE and Skills Participation by Level (2005/06 to 2009/10) - Learner Volumes
(The Data Service Current Statistical Release)

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Are things changing?

- **Previous administration:**
 - We know best
 - Just deliver
 - Here's some money
- **Current administration:**
 - It's up to you
 - We don't mind
 - Lots less money

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Social movements

- Will they link to adult learning in post 2008 climate?
- Possibly - if adult learning clearly shows that:
 - You can't leave things up to leaders - whether politicians or in the corporate world
 - Communities and individuals need to be resourceful to care for themselves and each other
 - You can't wait for business or government to improve the environment, economy or equality
 - We can use education to help people cope with work, worklessness and the fragmenting and individualising outcomes of modern international capitalism

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So...

- Listen to learners
- Engage in communities
- Students and tutors meet as equals
- Leadership is local
- Stick to mission
- Keep making the case for public funding to maintain infrastructure/reach

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