

Benseman, J. (2005). Paradigm lost? Lifelong education in New Zealand in the 1970s and 1980s. *New Zealand Journal of Adult Learning*, 33 (1), 6-20.

We remain convinced that the question of lifelong education, the decisions to take and the paths to follow in order to achieve it are the crucial issues of our time, in all countries of the world, even in those which have yet to become fully aware of this idea (Faure et al. 1972, p. 182)

Introduction

The concept of lifelong learning is very prominent in many New Zealand educational policies and writings at present. Although the concept can be traced back to many early educational writers, it first emerged as a tour de force in this country in the 1970s. This article reviews the development of adult and community education (ACE) in New Zealand from the early 1970s through to the early 1990s in terms of the ideals of *lifelong education* and the ensuing debates that surrounded it. A second article traces its more recent re-incarnation as *lifelong learning*.

The first part of this article provides a brief review of the social and political contexts within which lifelong education emerged; the concept of lifelong education is then examined, especially in the seminal 1972 Faure report *Learning to be* and its subsequent influence on New Zealand ACE. The waning of lifelong education in New Zealand is then examined as a succession of New Right governments undermined many of the developments achieved in the 1970s following Faure.

The historical context

Like other Western countries, New Zealand in the late 1960s and 1970s was experiencing unprecedented social change and challenge. Alongside the obvious elements of 'sex, drugs and rock 'n roll',¹ there were substantial challenges to many aspects of the status quo, including education. The advent of television, computers and other forms of technology spawned much debate about the rapidity and ubiquity of social change, best epitomised in the writings of Alvin

¹ Writing his autobiography recently, Bob Dylan has commented that "if you can remember the '70's, you weren't there."

Toffler's *Future shock* (1970). Russia beating America to put a 'man [sic] into space' for example, had considerable downstream effects on American schooling (and subsequently countries like New Zealand), particularly in the teaching of science and maths. Schools were under threat in other ways also. Newly independent African countries such as Tanzania seriously debated whether investing in universal primary education could deliver the impact as quickly or as effectively as adult education (Mulenga, 2001).

In the West, there was increasing criticism of education based on mounting volumes of research amid a political environment that questioned many aspects of convention. Concern for social equity and the new world of technology that was emerging also severely challenged the prominence and performance of schools generally. This period was rich in educational writings that challenged basic educational assumptions. Works such as Everett Reimer's *School is dead* (1971), Paul Goodman's *Compulsory mis-education* (1964), John Holt's *Instead of education* (1977) and Ivan Illich's *De-schooling society* (1971) and *After de-schooling what?* (1973) sold in large numbers and were seriously debated in educational courses, albeit somewhat ironically in mainstream tertiary institutions, which most of these writers criticised savagely. Illich² for example argued for de-schooling because of what he saw as schools' innate inability to overcome social inequalities, their stifling of creativity and their killing of the joy of learning in most pupils.

Many students, especially those who are poor, intuitively know what the schools do for them. They school them to confuse process and substance. Once these become blurred, a new logic is assumed: the more treatment there is, the better are the results; or, escalation leads to success. The 'pupil' is thereby 'schooled' to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new. His imagination is 'schooled' to accept service in place of value (1971, p. 9).

Other writers such as Jonathon Kozol (1980) and programmes like those of the Highlander Center in the United States (Glen, 1996) were also ringing alarm bells about poor literacy skills among adults. They challenged the myth of 100%

² Illich visited New Zealand in the late 1970s attracting large audiences to his public lectures.

literacy rates in Western countries for the first time, and again, pointed to the failings of schools.

Alongside these critiques of schooling, a growing number of writers posited various forms of adult education as more effective alternatives, such as Illich (1971) who advocated the development of learning webs (known in New Zealand as learning exchanges) where people of all ages could freely pursue educational interests of their own choice rather than within the narrow prescriptions of compulsory curricula. Such programmes, he argued, would be more egalitarian and also keep people's spirit of learning and creativity alive. Paulo Freire (1971) not only provided a theoretical framework for analysing all forms of education, but also put forward radical alternatives to conventional schooling. His ideas fired the imaginations of many social revolutionaries of the time, as epitomised by the international cadres of literacy workers (including New Zealanders) who helped in the national campaigns of Third World countries such as Cuba and Nicaragua and inspired the growing adult literacy programmes in Western countries such as New Zealand.

A few academic writers were writing about the concept of a *learning society*, but their works were either heavily oriented towards schools or made little impact in New Zealand (Husen, 1974; Hutchins, 1968). The key piece of writing that did achieve considerable impact however came from UNESCO – what Wain has termed a “canonical text” (Wain, 2001, p. 184).

The Faure Report and UNESCO

It was in this environment of social change and challenge to long-held assumptions about how education should be organised in society that the concept of lifelong education³ emerged, under the auspices of UNESCO. Debates among educational specialists about possible roles and models of education culminated in the report *Learning to be* by an international committee chaired by the former French Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Edgar Faure (1972). UNESCO adopted the report as its 'master concept' for educational development. The report was a far-ranging document and covered:

- historical patterns and contemporary trends in education and social developments throughout the world
- speculations about the future possibilities mainly based on research findings on science, technology and psychology, arriving at the goals of what it called scientific humanism, creativity, social commitment and 'the complete man' [sic]⁴
- its strategies for achieving what it called a *learning society*.

The report's goals

The report chose the term *scientific humanism* to describe its overall goals - "The search of a new educational order is based on scientific and technological training, one of the essential components of scientific humanism" (Faure 1972, p. 146), although they are careful to identify it as,

... real humanism, in the sense that (it) rejects any preconceived, subjective or abstract idea of man. The kind of person it concerns is a concrete being, set in a historical context, in a set period. He depends on objective knowledge, but that which is essentially and resolutely directed toward action and primarily in the service of man himself (ibid.).

³ The report also refers to *lifelong learning*, but more in the sense of a verb (what happens in lifelong education). In the second generation lifelong education has disappeared and lifelong learning is used predominantly as a noun.

⁴ The report is a product of its time, with sexist language used throughout.

The report stresses the importance of science and technology for coping in an environment where, “the content of a man’s universe has changed. Whether he likes it or not, the individual is precipitated into a world steeped in science.” (op. cit., p. 147). The report also stresses equal need for creativity and social commitment (including ‘the practice of democracy’, social participation and international co-operation) which all leads, as it euphorically declares, to the creation of “a new man for a new world!” This ‘complete man’ is “beginning to be able to control the processes of nature and take responsibility for them, thanks to his knowledge and mastery of scientific laws” (op. cit., p. 154). The report goes on to argue that while

... man is the potential master of his fate... for this to become a reality, the conditions which make men the victims of violence and tyranny must be eliminated” (ibid.)

This is where education makes its other contribution to social progress. Lifelong education must address all aspects of the human condition, with no aspect being inherently superior to another.

... the physical, intellectual, emotional and ethical integration of the individual into a complete man is a broad definition of the fundamental aim for education” (op. cit., p. 156).

The committee’s ultimate vision, for a learning society, is outlined in the epilogue.

The very nature of the relationship between society and education is changing. A social configuration which accorded such a place to education and conferred such a status on it deserves a name of its own – the learning society. Its advent can only be conceived as a process of close interweaving between education and the social, political and economic fabric, which covers the family unit and civic life. It implies that every citizen should have the means of learning, training and cultivating himself freely available to him, under all circumstances, so that he will be in a fundamentally different position in relation to his own education (op. cit., p. 163).

This vision reflects other parts of the report, stressing how education needs to become integral in society until the school will be

... less and less in a position to claim the education functions in society as its special prerogative. All sectors – public administration, industry, communications, transport – must take part in promoting education” (op. cit., p. 162).

Existing institutions will need to change dramatically to meet this new role and new organisations will also arise. Not only will education permeate all of society (“[it] will have many consequences”), it will be democratising and democratised in the process. All of this will involve what is referred to in the title as *Learning to be*, as opposed to a materialist drive simply to have.

Achieving the vision

The report’s vision of a learning society (op. cit., p. 160-165) contained the following elements:

- education should no longer be the privilege of the élite and confined to a particular age, it should reach out “to embrace the whole of society and the entire lifespan of the individual”
- traditional education has been too restricted and should embrace “the entire human being in all his dimensions which are too vast and complex to be contained within the limits of any ‘system’, in the static, non-evolutional meaning of the word”
- teaching needs to change fundamentally; it should no longer be focused *on* the learner, but should proceed *from* the learner
- education should be the concern of all of society and not just educational institutions and teachers; new types of organisations will need to be developed
- schools still have an important role, but need to change to fit the new model
- moving towards such an ideal will inevitably meet with resistance, not least from traditional educationalists
- the vision is unashamedly of a utopian nature – “if we wish to act resolutely and wisely, we must aim far”
- the vision is universally relevant.

While it is easy to become distracted by the details of the report at times, it is important to emphasise the core components of its proposals. These are summarised by Boshier's diagram (1997), who argues that the Faure Report was organised around four concepts:

[INSERT DIAGRAM ONE ABOUT HERE]

- horizontal integration where education would be promoted in non-formal through to formal settings
- vertical integration involving people regardless of age
- democratisation of education systems and these would then culminate in the fourth concept,
- a learning society.

While the diagram doesn't incorporate the element of democratisation, it is useful for pointing out that how front-end educational models are dominated totally by quadrant four, whereas a system built round lifelong education would see greater recognition and a more equitable distribution of resources across all four quadrants (hence the expected opposition from traditional educationalists as resources are re-distributed). Boshier also points out that the diagram illustrates the ease with which any learner should be able to move back and forward between the different sectors of the education system.

Related terms

While the Faure Report certainly brought the terms *lifelong education* and to a lesser extent, *learning society* and *lifelong learning* into prominence, the OECD promoted the concept of *recurrent education* and the Council of Europe referred to *éducation permanente*. Recurrent education was primarily concerned with interspersing periods of education with work over a person's lifespan and depended heavily on the availability of paid educational leave. While some writers saw it largely as a means of achieving lifelong learning (Council of Europe, 1973, p.7 quoted in (Tight, 1996, p. 39), most observers felt that recurrent education "carried a less humanistic and more pragmatic accentuation" (Rubenson, 1997, p. 4). Field (2000, p.6). says that it was "couched more in terms of human capital

thinking, albeit with a few dashes of radical humanism” This difference in emphasis is more in keeping with OECD’s prime concern (at that time) with economic factors compared with the broader humanitarian concerns of UNESCO. Neither recurrent education nor *éducation permanente* ever gained any great currency in New Zealand; instead, the term *continuing education* was used in the 1974 Education Amendment Act.⁵

Critiques of Faure

While lifelong learning was seen by some observers as a complete paradigm shift away from the ‘front-end’ model of education (Wain, 1987), others were less optimistic about its potential (Deleon, 1978). Some even foresaw considerable danger in the increasing pressures, both subtle and invidious, for greater participation (Quie, 1972). The most prominent critic at the time however, was the American John Ohliger. He believed that the Faure Report was “just another example of international bureaucratise, although in places the book has a haunting quality strangely akin to a tale of unrequited love” (Ohliger, 1974, p. 52). Ohliger believed that lifelong education would push societies further along the path of extending the compulsory nature of schooling beyond the school gates. If education were so great (as argued by its advocates), then it was logical that citizens would increasingly be increasingly required to partake of it. And in doing so, inevitably the revolutionary power and the ‘untainted’ nature of adult education would be lost. He argued that working towards a system of lifelong education would not only delay the achievement of a more just world, but it would deprive social activists of their most potent weapon (adult education, especially in its social justice tradition). He reminded his readers of Ivan Illich’s comment that “true adult education is more dangerous than training guerrillas” (ibid.).

Impact of Faure in New Zealand

Conceptually, lifelong education gave the education of adults outside formal institutions an unprecedented prominence. Field (2000, p. 5) quotes Joachim Knoll’s words, that *Learning to be* was a “broad and visionary manifesto” that

⁵ It is interesting to note that the Department of Education’s Officer for Continuing Education wrote that they “toyed” with terms like ‘further’, ‘recurrent’ and ‘adult’ education (no mention of lifelong education), but decided to adopt the term ‘continuing’ to reflect the new direction (Paterson, 1984, p.104).

started the debate about lifelong education and served to “initiate an optimistic phase of international educational policy and reform.” At the very least, it was a

... useful device for bringing together under a common heading a number of ideas and practices, which although possessing an inherent unity, would otherwise have continued to be treated as distinct from each other (Knapper & Copley, 2000, p. 7).

In broad terms, most commentators would agree that lifelong education never reached the heights Faure’s committee hoped for it, but it nonetheless helped change the status, funding and practices of ACE in many countries, including New Zealand.

It is not easy to measure the extent of influence that international bodies like UNESCO and the OECD exert on their members.⁶ While it is true that they do not determine policy in a direct sense, these organisations certainly appear to be significant influences on policy directions in member countries. This influence occurs not only because countries become signatories to various documents, but because government representatives and officials meet periodically under the aegis of these bodies and maintain strong informal links. A prime example of this has been the on-going influence of the OECD on adult literacy over recent years. These points notwithstanding, countries are able to ignore educational reports as freely as they ignore resolutions from these bodies concerning other spheres of social policy.

The release of the Faure Report coincided with the election of the fourth Labour government (1972 – 1975) in New Zealand under Norm Kirk. This government had a strong agenda of change and the Minister of Education Phil Amos undertook considerable reforms, including many in ACE, during his three brief years in office. Probably the most notable of these developments was the opening of the first community college in Hawkes Bay which was intended to incorporate ACE on an equal footing with vocational education and set out to achieve increased representation from groups traditionally under-represented in post-school education (Benseman, 1980). There were also numerous other

⁶ UNESCO is a worldwide body, while the OECD has only 30 members and is often criticised as a ‘rich man’s club’.

incremental changes undertaken during this period which reflected the general tenor of what Faure et al. had signalled in their report and which were subsequently reiterated in the 1976 UNESCO conference on adult education in Nairobi (UNESCO, 1976).

Boshier (1997, p. 10) argues that, “enormous energy was devoted to interpreting the Faure Report in New Zealand.” The most public evidence of this was in the 1974 Educational Development Conference organised by the New Zealand UNESCO Commission and the National Council of Adult Education for public consultation about future directions for New Zealand education. The conference was run in communities throughout the country, involved over 60,000 people and attracted 8,000 submissions (Haines, 1974). The conference’s final report included chapters on ‘Laying the foundations for lifelong learning’, ‘An open system of continuing education’ and ‘Serving the learning community’.

In 1972 the National Commission for UNESCO had published a report to “examine the concept of lifelong education and what its implications are for New Zealand” (Simmonds, 1972, p. 7). A six-person committee drawn mainly from mainstream providers or organisations and with a notable absence of representatives from ACE or non-formal groups wrote the report. Their report covered a wide range of implications, from pre-school to voluntary organisations and contained some interesting insights into the sorts of issues that would need to change if New Zealand were to become a learning society.

Most of the report’s recommendations (ibid, p. 9-10) were actioned. The most significant one not to be actioned was the setting up of a Committee of Inquiry to follow through on the report’s recommendations, but Dakin (1988, p. 69) argued that subsequent events overtook the need for this committee. The recommendations actioned included:

- the appointment of an ‘Officer for Continuing Education’ (Denny Garrett) at a senior level in the Department of Education
- pilot community education programmes in secondary schools
- changing of regulations and facilities to allow adults to attend secondary schools⁷

⁷ The impact of these changes has been researched by Cocklin (1992).

- establishing specialist adult education qualifications
- the appointment of adult education specialists in university extension departments
- establishing an educational role within the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation.

Boshier (1997, p. 11) summed up this period - “the impetus for all these events was quite utopian and infused with a feeling of possibility”. Boshier himself has been the most enthusiastic supporter and promoter of the Faure Report and its potential for transforming New Zealand education (1997;1998; Boshier & Benseman, 2000). This sense of optimism was reflected throughout the book he edited at the end of the 1970s, entitled appropriately, *Towards a learning society (1980)*.⁸ The book contains a discussion by Boshier on the nature of a learning society, including the importance of changing all aspects of educational provision, but the content of the book is largely limited to the implications for ACE. The irony is that the book with its optimistic tone was published at a time when the downstream effects of *Learning to be* were probably at a peak and beginning to decline. The lifelong education vision was disappearing off educational and political agendas and the more enlightened examples of it in practice were being abandoned or curtailed (such as the decline in government support for the two innovative community education programmes in Masterton and Nelson).

Although Boshier himself had left New Zealand by then for an academic career in Canada and the momentum around lifelong education had begun to stall, the book can be seen as symbolising the optimism that emerged during the 1970s.

This book is about New Zealand adult education in transition.... New Zealand adult education is moving from a system which in the days of the infant colony was largely fulfilling remedial functions, to a future where continuing education will be a major (perhaps the most crucial) component of a lifelong education system (op. cit., p. 7).

⁸ It is probably this book that accounts for New Zealand’s inclusion in many writers’ lists of countries that could be classified as learning societies – see (Tight, 1996).

The vision fades – lifelong education in the 1980s, early 1990s

Lifelong education was promoted and debated extensively through the 1970s and into the 1980s in many countries, although its implementation varied considerably from country to country. Reviewing the impact worldwide, Deleon (1996, p. 3) concluded that “the results achieved in different branches of education are far from satisfactory.” From the early 1980s through to the early 1990s, winds of political change blew through many Western countries, causing the vision of lifelong education to fade and be reduced to a narrow interpretation dominated by concerns of human capital.

The demise of lifelong education (and particularly ACE) in New Zealand began in the early 1980s, but reached its lowest point in the early 1990s. There has been considerable analysis of this period (Benseman, 1996; Boshier & Benseman, 2000; Findsen, 2001; Methven & Hansen, 1997; Tobias, 2000) that generally divide the demise of lifelong learning into three broad periods of government policy:

1. The National government under Robert Muldoon and his Education Minister Merv Wellington, from 1975 to 1984, especially the latter part of this time when there were cuts in funding for a few groups such as the WEA. These cuts were reasonably minor and appear to have been as a result of Wellington’s personal idiosyncrasies. This government’s attitude toward ACE is probably best described as ‘polite disinterest’.
2. The period of 1984 to 1990 under the Labour government of David Lange and Education ministers Russell Marshall, Lange himself and Phil Goff. The first half of this period appeared to signal a resurgence of the lifelong education philosophy and the fortunes of ACE with it (especially with the appropriately named *Learning for life* (Department of Education, 1989) reports on all education and two reports on ACE - (Lifelong Learning Taskforce, 1985; Shallcrass, 1987) which followed. But these developments were again clearly in decline by the time that Labour had lost the next election in 1991, with the triumph of New Right ministers within Lange’s caucus.
3. The third period occurred with the election of Jim Bolger’s National government (and later Jenny Shipley) and Lockwood Smith as Education

Minister, which lasted most of the 1990s. New Right policies started under the Lange government were taken to new lengths by these governments (Kelsey, 1995).

Although each of these governments operated from quite different philosophical positions (traditional conservative, liberal democrat, New Right), their net effects on lifelong education were cumulative and significantly detrimental. Tertiary education expanded during this period, but became increasingly financially punitive under a 'user pays' funding regime and more focused on narrow vocational outcomes (Boshier & Benseman, 2000).

By any set of criteria, ACE went backwards during this period. In terms of policy, the sector once again became largely invisible. For example, the policy released by the National government in 1994 *Education in the 21st century* makes no mention of any form of ACE (Bradford, 1999). The only body charged with advising government on policy, the Community Learning Aotearoa New Zealand (CLANZ) had this function removed in the mid 1990s. ACE-specific positions in the Department of Education, and especially that held by Denny Garrett until his death, disappeared without trace. The key ACE national body (the National Council of Adult Education) was dis-established and replaced by a lesser-funded, and consequently less active, National Resource Centre. In terms of funding, many ACE providers ended the 1990s with lower levels of funding than 20 years ago (especially if inflation is factored in) and some like the WEA lost theirs completely (Harre-Hindmarsh, 1993). Providers such as the Rural Education Activities Programmes (REAP) have been under constant review and staff felt that they have had the 'Sword of Damocles' hanging over them most of the time. The only ACE area to expand at all during this period was adult literacy.

Probably the greatest effect on ACE however, was the one that is most difficult to measure in any objective way – morale. From being a sector that felt that it was moving from the fringe towards the centre of debate and policy in the 1970s, ACE has been in retreat for most of the past two decades. Constantly fighting for survival and being ignored by policy makers, the field lost many key personnel and most of the innovative edge it had developed following *Learning to be*. New programmes and initiatives largely fell by the wayside and programmes concentrated on mainstream concerns. The national organisation for the field, Adult and Community Education Aotearoa (ACEA), experienced a steady decline

in membership and activity to the point where its future existence was under serious threat.⁹

Any literature search using the terms *lifelong education* or *lifelong learning* covering this period in the Index New Zealand database produces a gamut of publications, but they are dominated by concerns of the workplace (including continuing professional education) as these terms came to be synonymous with the term vocational education. Lifelong education during this period was probably most closely identified with Skill New Zealand, the crown agency charged with responsibility for workplace education and unemployment programmes. Tobias (1990) has calculated that 39% or \$481m of the education budget in 1987-88 was devoted to labour market education (including \$369m to Access programmes for the unemployed), while ACE received \$19m or 2% of the budget over the same period.

It was, as Methven and Hansen argued, “half a revolution” at best (Methven & Hansen, 1997), where the promise and momentum of Faure were largely lost and the interpretation of lifelong education became narrow and limited largely to vocational training. *Learning to be* appeared to herald the dawn of a new era of education in many parts of the world. Its call to extend education beyond the narrow confines of childhood and exclusive ivory towers into all elements of daily life represented a significant change in the discourse of education. In countries like New Zealand, there were some clear examples of change flowing from this type of approach, but not as extensive as Faure and his colleagues had advocated. Schooling was shaken, but not changed in any fundamental way. ACE had a brief moment in the sun, but was then relegated back to the shadows from whence it had come.

The promise of *Learning to be* was dashed on the rocks of economic rationalism, over-reaching promises of change and institutional inertia, if not outright opposition. Lifelong education was relegated to a minimalist version of vocational training and became a minority player for most of the 1980s and early 1990s.

⁹ ACEA re-launched itself as Lifelong Learning Aotearoa New Zealand, built largely round new optimism following recent developments under the current Labour government.

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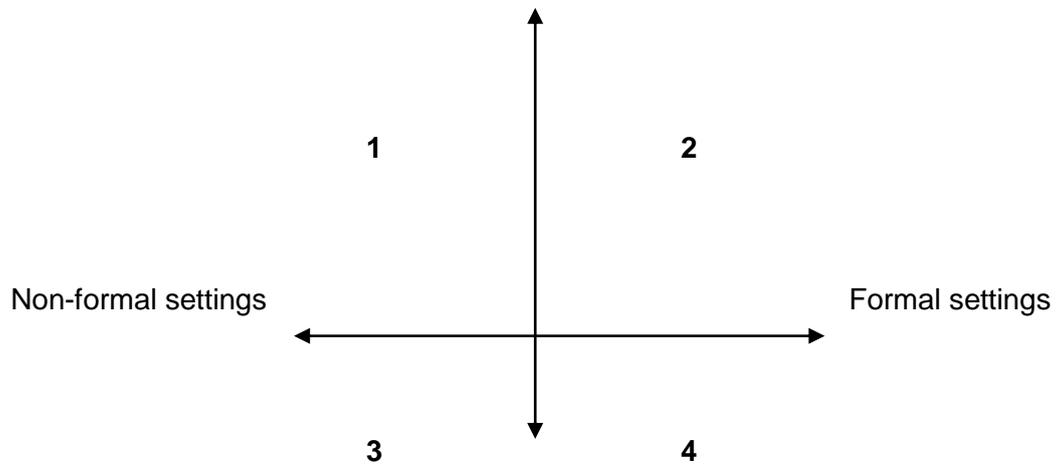
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Old people



Young people

FIGURE 1 – BOSHIER’S REPRESENTATION OF THE FAURE REPORT