

Education and the life course: guest editors' introduction

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This special issue of *History of Education*, on the theme of 'Education and the Life Course', arose from the 2019 History of Education Society Annual Conference. The conference was hosted by the International Centre for Historical Research in Education (ICHRE), based at the UCL Institute of Education, University College London. Held on the main campus of UCL, the conference involved 108 delegates from 17 countries, and took place from 8 to 10 November 2019.

The choice of a theme, which considered the history of education as a lifelong process, was informed by several considerations. An important starting point, however, was the centenary of the Ministry of Reconstruction report on adult education in 1919, and the publication of *A Permanent National Necessity*, the report of the Centenary Commission on Adult Education, which looked ahead to Adult Education and Lifelong Learning for twenty-first-century Britain.¹ John Holford, chair of the Adult Education 100 campaign steering committee, which promoted awareness of the report, gave a keynote lecture at the conference. Other keynotes reflected different stages of the life course in education: William J. Reese, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 'The Mysterious World of Child Prodigies in an Age of Wonder', a biography-in-progress of Zorah Colburn, born in the village of Cabot, Vermont, in 1804; and Sumita Mukherjee, from the University of Bristol, spoke on 'Indian Students in Britain: The Life Course, Mobility and National Identities before the Second World War'.

Stephanie Spencer also gave her History of Education Society presidential address at the conference: "'Out of the Classroom": Informal Education and Histories of Education'. A version of her presentation opens this special issue. It considers the ways in which historians have approached 'informal education', and draws on her extensive research into popular literature for children. Interwar boys' and girls' annuals were part of a wider educational project to induct children into the social, political, imperial and gender roles that they occupied, and would continue to occupy as adults. This contribution reminds us of the breadth to which research in the history of education should continue to aspire, and again suggests many agendas that might be followed as historians consider education in its most varied sense, in both national and transnational (and imperial) contexts.

The six remaining articles reflect the breadth of the 80 conference presentations. The broad theme 'Education and the Life Course' was sub-divided into nine separate, but connected, areas: 'Education and Childhood'; 'The Effects of Schooling on Later Life'; 'Youth and Youth Movements'; 'Students and Higher Education'; 'Adult Education and Learning'; 'Disability and Education'; 'Biographical, Autobiographical and Case Study' papers; 'Education and the Life of a Nation and its Citizens'; and 'Development of Curriculum, Pedagogy'. While some of these addressed a particular stage of the life course, others offered presenters the opportunity to range across the stages, and to look at areas of perennial interest in fresh ways.

Many delegates also took the opportunity to explore the materiality of the history of higher education on a tour of the conference venue, the landmark UCL building on Gower Street, designed in the 1820s by the architect William Wilkins, who, a few years later, was also responsible for the National Gallery in London's Trafalgar Square. Georgina Brewis,

¹ Ministry of Reconstruction, *Adult Education Committee: Final Report* (London: HMSO, 1919), Cmd. 321; Centenary Commission on Adult Education, *'A Permanent National Necessity...': Adult Education and Lifelong Learning for 21st Century Britain* (Nottingham: School of Education, University of Nottingham, 2019).

who has recently revised and updated the institutional history of UCL,² led a walking tour around the nineteenth-century campus. Such in-person activities seem very distant from the perspective of March 2021, as we are writing this introduction. In the context of the new and unexpected demands arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, we particularly appreciate the authors completing their contributions to this special issue, and look forward to further contributions on the theme of the conference, including some from the 16 postgraduate researchers who presented their promising and ground-breaking work.

The papers in this special issue are based on a wide variety of sources including teachers' and students' notes, oral testimonies, autobiographical reflections, and recently released student records. They also demonstrate a range of methodological approaches including biography and life history, oral history, case studies and literary analysis, as well as extensive use of archives and published primary sources in historical research. They range across several countries and contexts, reflecting the growing internationalisation of the activities of learned societies such as the History of Education Society and of this journal.

The lives of professional and volunteer educators provide the focus for three articles. The first, on the 'parallel' lives of Mary Hayden (1862–1942) from Dublin and Virginia Crocheron Gildersleeve (1877–1965) from New York, by Tanya Fitzgerald and Judith Harford, offers an account of the professional lives of two women educators and academic administrators who played a role in transnational educational networks in the early twentieth century. The article adopts a biographical approach to set the two individual women's experiences in the wider context of women's changing professional lives in a key period of educational reform. Kate Rousmaniere, meanwhile, examines stereotypes and experiences of older female teachers in several contexts, proposing an agenda for further feminist research in this important area of the life course. Ageing is a growing theme in the history of education, and Rousmaniere's article offers a number of directions in which historians might follow it in new and productive ways. Another article, by Ellen Regan and Deirdre Raftery, draws on oral history testimony from Irish women missionaries and volunteers in the period c.1950–2015. It offers fascinating insights into the lives of women who worked on educational and healthcare projects in Zambia, Nigeria and Malawi. The interviews explored participants' varied motivations for service including the influence of family life, schooling and faith alongside their lived experiences in the field over a period of significant social change, both in Africa and at home in Ireland.

Two contributions consider vulnerable children. Makiko Santaki, in a study based on recently released records from the Manchester Certified Industrial Schools (MCIS), analyses the central factors in support for destitute and neglected children. Santaki traces the life histories of four children who were considered to be threats to public order and were placed in the care of MCIS. The article provides new insights into the history of educational provision in industrial schools in the period c.1880–1920, as well as the ways in which the MCIS attempted to provide follow-up support for the former pupils in their young adult lives. Michèle Hofmann considers the ways in which children in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Switzerland were designated as 'normal' or 'not', based on perceptions of their intellectual 'ab/normality'. Hofmann demonstrates that, although there was widespread interest in the scientific analysis of child development, scientific metrics were not used to select children for special schools. School records, including teachers' notes, indicate that categories emerged from a year-long process of teacher interaction with, and observation of, pupils in their class.

Adult education is represented in the special issue by Keiko Sasaki's article on the history of adult education for women in Japan after the Second World War. Sasaki offers a periodisation of the history of women's adult education, which changed in the second half of

² Negley Harte, John North and Georgina Brewis, *The World of UCL* (London: UCL Press, 2018).

the twentieth century along with the economy, society and culture of Japan. The changing patterns of educational provision for adult women reflected challenges to a patriarchal model of social organisation and family life. Sasaki's case study of Chofu City shows how women's adult education also influenced the changing patterns of provision for men, and how women students engaged productively in local history research focusing on women's experiences in the city.

The special issue showcases a range of approaches and perspectives to a very broad theme, and we are pleased – on behalf of ICHRE – to present it as a record of some of the contributions to a worthwhile and memorable conference.