

# LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE UK: THE NEED FOR ADULT CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the purpose of adult education with reference to the UK, and in particular England where there has been significant change since the 1980s. It is argued that the social purpose of adult education that existed prior to the 1980s has been undermined by successive governments under a learning economy hegemony, premised upon an economic imperative. A decade of austerity has resulted in adult education being severely underfunded, which it is argued has affected the most marginalized and vulnerable in society: those who need education the most as their only route to social mobility and social contact. The paper highlights the benefits of basic skills and non-formal courses not only in terms of economic benefit but also of individual well-being. However, for true emancipation it argues for the teaching of Citizenship Education (CE); only by being politically literate can one be cognizant of one's rights, and demand them, in addition to engaging in active civic participation. Unfortunately, in the UK, CE is only available to children in compulsory education and for immigrants, which leaves many native adults without any. The consequences for political literacy, social mobility, and economic and social wellbeing are considerable. CE it is argued is vital for sustaining democracy.

**Keywords:** Citizenship education. Adult education. Democracy.

## RESUMEN

### APRENDIZAJE A LO LARGO DE LA VIDA EN REINO UNIDO: LA NECESIDAD DE LA EDUCACIÓN DE ADULTOS PARA LA CIUDADANÍA

Este artículo explora el objetivo de la educación de adultos en Reino Unido y, sobre todo en Inglaterra, donde ha habido cambios significativos desde la década de 1980. Se argumenta que el objetivo social de la educación de adultos que existía antes de la década de 1980 fue debilitado por sucesivos gobiernos bajo una hegemonía de la economía del aprendizaje, basada en un imperativo económico. Una década de austeridad ha tenido como resultado una falta de recursos para la educación de adultos y según se argumenta, ha afectado a los más marginados y vulnerables de la sociedad: aquellos

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que más necesitan educación como su único camino hacia la movilidad y el contacto social. El artículo destaca los beneficios de las habilidades básicas y los cursos no formales, no solo en términos de beneficios económicos, sino también para el bienestar individual. Sin embargo, para una verdadera emancipación se defiende la enseñanza de la Educación para la Ciudadanía (EC); solo siendo alfabetizados políticamente es posible conocer los derechos y exigirlos, además de participar activamente en la participación cívica. Desafortunadamente, en el Reino Unido, la EC solo está disponible para los niños en educación obligatoria y para los inmigrantes, lo que deja fuera a muchos adultos nativos. Las consecuencias para la alfabetización política, la movilidad social y el bienestar económico y social son considerables, siendo la (EC) vital para sostener la democracia.

**Palabras claves:** Educación para la ciudadanía. Educación para jóvenes y adultos. Democracia.

## RESUMO

### APRENDIZAGEM AO LONGO DA VIDA NO REINO UNIDO: A NECESSIDADE DA EDUCAÇÃO DE ADULTOS PARA A CIDADANIA

Este artigo explora o objetivo da educação de adultos no Reino Unido e, em particular, na Inglaterra, onde houve mudanças significativas desde a década de 1980. Argumenta-se que o objetivo social da educação de adultos que existia antes dos anos 80 foi minado por governos sucessivos sob uma hegemonia da economia do aprendizado, baseada em um imperativo econômico. Uma década de austeridade resultou na falta de recursos para a educação de adultos, o que, segundo se argumenta, afetou os mais marginalizados e vulneráveis da sociedade: aqueles que têm na educação o seu único caminho para a mobilidade e o contato social. O artigo destaca os benefícios de habilidades básicas e cursos não formais, não apenas em termos de benefícios econômicos, mas também de bem-estar individual. No entanto, para a verdadeira emancipação, defende o ensino da Educação para a Cidadania (CE); somente sendo alfabetizados politicamente é possível conhecer os direitos e exigí-los, além de participar ativamente da participação cívica. Infelizmente, no Reino Unido, o CE está disponível apenas para crianças na educação obrigatória e para imigrantes, o que deixa muitos adultos nativos sem nenhum acesso à CE. As consequências para a alfabetização política, a mobilidade social e o bem-estar econômico e social são consideráveis, sendo a CE vital para sustentar a democracia.

**Palavras chaves:** Educação para a cidadania. Educação para Jovens e Adultos. Democracia.

The way we define citizenship is intimately linked to the kind of society and political community we want.  
(Chantal Mouffe, 1992 p25)

## INTRODUCTION

There are many for whom the school days are the happiest of their lives: they build lifelong friendships; pass their exams with good grades, go on to university, or into good jobs. But imagine if you come from a disadvantaged background with parents with poor literacy, brought up in relative poverty suffering from hunger<sup>1</sup> and so forth; and then hungry and sleepy at school<sup>2</sup> you may be deemed stupid or disruptive by your teachers. These are hardly conditions conducive to be educated to take your legitimate place in society. These are real issues faced by millions of families every day; against these overwhelming odds some with great determination manage to escape. However, many do not<sup>3</sup>; they end up in dead-end jobs, may become alone and isolated, are more likely to become homeless<sup>4</sup>, and in the

worst scenario end up in prison<sup>5</sup>. And it is for these people that Adult Education has a potentially transformative impact on their lives, ending the cycle of disadvantage

I know of Adult Education's life-transforming potential at first-hand having taught for the last 16 years in this sector, teaching Numeracy, ESOL and Literacy to the most marginalized of society's individuals. I have witnessed the flourishing of people who had lost hope and confidence; women who thought of themselves only in terms of being housewives, subsuming their desires in favour of their families. Yet, within a short period of time and a little encouragement, they were writing poetry and plays: being inspired to look upon themselves as individuals with their own dreams and aspirations, and going on to mainstream education. Others, skilled migrants but with little knowledge of the British education system, I helped gain entry to university. Yet others, the long-term unemployed, regained confidence through being in the classroom with others, forming friendships – feeling part of a community and society.

It would be naïve not to underestimate the effect of structural inequalities on one's life chances, and think that education alone can facilitate social change, but adult education can help many economically and socially: adult education is key to increasing social mobility and productivity (Social Mobility Commission, 2019).

The aim of this paper is to explore the purpose of adult education with reference to Britain, and in particular England where

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the National Qualifications Framework, or GCSE grade D-G), compared to 15 per cent of the adult population of England.'

5 For people in prison, 90% of those enrolled on Literacy classes have poor numeracy skills (below Level 2), for literacy the figure is 86% (Department for Education, 2017).

1 According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2018), 7% of people in the UK are in persistent poverty (4.6 million people). More than one in five of the population (22%) live in poverty – 14.3 million people. Of these, 8.2 million are working-age adults, 4.1 million are children and 1.9 million are pensioners.

2 (The Guardian, 2019a)

3 It was recently reported that 18% of children leave school by the age of 18 years without basic qualifications. This figure rises to 45% of children with special needs education, and 37% of those with free school meals. With respect to numbers, this means is that last years 98,799 children in England left school without basic qualifications (The Guardian, 2019b).

4 'One-and-a-half million people were living in destitution in the UK at some point during 2017, including 365,000 children' (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2018: 3). According Dumoulin and Jones (2014: 14) '51 per cent of people who are homeless lack the basic English skills needed for everyday life (i.e. equivalent to below Level 1 on

there has been significant change since the 1980s. It is argued that the social purpose of adult education has been undermined by successive governments since under the learning economy hegemony, premised upon an economic imperative. Moreover, during the decade of austerity, adult education has been severely underfunded, which it is argued has affected the most marginalized and vulnerable in society: those who need education the most as their only route to social mobility and social contact. The paper then illustrates various benefits of providing basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills courses, and non-formal *Leisure* courses to adults, in terms of individual well-being, and argues that for true emancipation to arise Citizenship Education (CE) for adults is essential. The paper explores the two main conceptualizations of citizenship, the civic republican model of citizenship as practice and the liberal model of citizenship as a legal status, and the attributes required of a citizen, and sides with the civic republican model as something to aim for should one desire a civic minded polity and real emancipation of all the citizenry. Enhancing political literacy would enable informed and effective participation in a democracy; yet, notwithstanding CE's significance, there exists a great *lacuna* in its provision: it is *not* aimed at native adults. The consequences for political literacy, social mobility, and economic and social well-being are considerable.

### **LIFELONG LEARNING: LEARNING-TO-BE TO LEARNING- TO-BE-PRODUCTIVE-AND- EMPLOYABLE**

In the UK, adult education has a long history that goes back to the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup>

century to miners' libraries, Toynbee Hall in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>6</sup>, and the Workers Education Association<sup>7</sup>, however, its conceptualization as *lifelong learning* emerged in the 1970s. In its early days, lifelong learning was founded primarily upon a social justice agenda – the 'social purpose' tradition in which adult learning is seen as a lever for empowerment and emancipation (see Fieldhouse 1996; Faure Report, 1972). Lifelong learning was viewed as a pre-requisite for social justice and participation in a democracy: a 'public good', a means of emancipation and empowerment of citizens, liberating them from ignorance and thus exploitation. In 1947 for example the British Ministry of Education's guidance for further education (as adult education was then termed) called upon local authorities to greatly extend educational and social resources to enable all people

to deal competently and democratically with the complex political questions of our time, or to develop those interests and activities which go to the making of a full and satisfying life, thereby 'making for individual happiness and ... a civilised community (Ministry of Education, 1947, in Benn 2000, p32).

Here then you have a desire for a social justice underpinning adult education. More specifically the purpose of education was to create a civilised community which was politically literate, whose citizens would be able to calmly deliberate complex matters, and enabled individuals to pursue a fulfilling life, which would lead to individual happiness. The social purpose of adult education

6 Founded in 1884, for future leaders to live and work as volunteers in London's East End, encountering poverty at first-hand, and affording them an opportunity to develop practical solutions that they could take into national life.

7 Founded in 1903, the WEA is the UK's largest voluntary sector provider of adult education in England and Scotland.

was reflected internationally (Faure et al, 1972; Hamburg Declaration UNESCO 1997). The aim of lifelong learning was defined by Faure the Chair of the 1972 UNESCO report *'Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow*, in Aristotelian terms, as enabling 'man to be himself' - his 'complete fulfillment.' This learning-to-be needs to be understood in democratic terms, i.e. as learning-to-be-with-others. It was not enough to unite *homo sapiens* and *homo faber* - the knowing and the producing humans. What was needed instead was *homo concors*, the human being 'in harmony with himself and others' (in Biesta, 2006: 174). Or as Aspin and Chapman (2001) helpfully summarised: the 'triadic nature of lifelong learning', representing three different 'agendas', serving three different purposes: (1) for *economic progress and development*; (2) for *personal development and fulfilment*; and (3) for *social inclusiveness and democratic understanding and activity* (Aspin and Chapman, 2001).<sup>8</sup> How far this has been achieved is open to debate, especially given the English context with 1 in 6 with low literacy skills and 1 in 4 low numeracy skills (OECD, 2019). What arguably is not in question is that since the 1980s there has been an undermining of (2) and (3). This has not been helped by the great volatility that further education in England has had to endure: '28 major pieces of legislation bearing on FE, 48 secretaries of state with responsibility for the sector and many agencies [...] coming and going' (Norris and Adam, 2017, in Augur, 2019, p122). This period has witnessed the erosion of the consensus around the social purpose of adult education and lifelong learning. Lifelong learning has increasingly been viewed through the lens of human capital and the economic imperative. The OECD

8 Cited in Biesta (2006, p173)

(1996) and the EU (Kocanova et. al., 2015) have been in the vanguard of this transformation of lifelong learning as 'learning to be' to the learning economy discourse of 'learning to be productive and employable.'<sup>9</sup>

The result has been that in a drive for improved literacy, under the banner of a 'modernizing' agenda, successive governments - Labour and Conservative - have radically restructured the welfare state by co-opting social and educational policy to the imperatives of economic policy (Martin, 2003), for economic growth and global competitiveness (Leitch Report 2006). That is to say literacy skills are equated with economic success, with the onus on the individual to make up the literacy deficit to improve his/her economic situation. As Tony Blair, the former Prime Minister, articulated: 'Education is the best economic policy we have' (Blair 1998 quoted in Martin, 2003 p567). In this vein, the former Education Secretary Alan Johnson, in promoting the skills agenda of lifelong learning in 2006, stated:

We need ...to subsidize precision engineering not ... flower arranging, except of course where flower arranging is necessary for a vocational purpose! ...Tai Chi may be hugely valuable to people studying it, but it's of little value to the economy. There must be a fairer apportionment between those who gain from education and those who pay for it—state, employer or individual. Surveys show that adults agree they should pay more for courses where they can (in Bynner, 2017, p71).

Johnson is right: it is essential to educate citizens in order for them to earn a living;

9 Although internationally it was not all one way and the social purpose of adult education was retained - see Learning: the treasure within; Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by Jacques Delors, former EU president (1996).

not to do this would be a dereliction of government's duty toward its citizens to help them flourish economically. Consequently, one can make a case for an education system predicated upon a skills-based agenda. The significance of education to an individual and nation's economic well-being cannot be underestimated; Adult Education is key to increasing social mobility and productivity (Social Mobility Commission, 2019) yet, under the parameters of 'The Comprehensive Spending Review 2010', the adult Further Education budget was set to decrease by 25% £4.3 billion in 2010-11 to £3.2 billion in 2014-15. (Foster 2019, p7). In actual terms, and

[l]argely reflecting the collapse in learner numbers, total spending on adult skills has fallen by approximately 45 per cent in real terms<sup>10</sup> between 2009/10 and 2017/18. This is one of the most important statistics in this entire report and cannot be justified in terms of either economics or social equity (Augur Report, 2019, p119).

This has had a significant impact on the lowest attaining and most vulnerable individuals; for example, the number of those with below Level 2 (excluding English and Maths) has declined by a dramatic 46% from 745,300 in 2012/13 to 399,000 in 2017/18. This is of concern given that a significant proportion of the adult population in England and Northern Ireland have poor literacy and numeracy skills: in literacy 16.4% (around 5.8 million people) are at the lower scale of proficiency (at or below Level 1)<sup>11</sup> and in numeracy, 24% (around 8.5 million) are at or below Level 1 (OECD,

2016).<sup>12</sup> Also of note is the 87% decline in number of students gaining a full Level 2 qualification, which is down from 418,900 in 2012/13 to 56,300 in 2017/18. This reduction is very worrying, because gaining a full Level 2 qualification can lead to an increase in earnings of 11% (Augur Report, 2019, p124).

However, even more worrying is the 86% decline in those recorded with *No Level Assigned* to their qualification: from 209,900 in 2012/13 to 29,300 in 2017/18 (Augur Report, 2019, p119). This category would most likely have included those who previously may have attended non-formal (non-credit) learning - the 'Leisure and Life skills' subjects, such as Gardening/Garden Design, Local history, photography, Handicraft, Arts and Culture and so forth. The increased targeting of funding toward developing specific occupational skills and the reduction in funding for many short courses in favour of longer, qualification-led ones, follows the Foster Report (2005) and Leitch Report (2006) advocating skills development. Indications of this can be discerned from the *National Adult Learner Survey 2010* carried out by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BiS, 2012, p5) which reported that given the background of the economic downturn since 2008, cost was cited by 58% as an obstacle to learning compared with 21% in 2005.

*The rising cost to students of part-time adult education courses, at one time no more than 15% of provision costs or free, is a reflection of the policy thinking that depends on distinguishing what is seen as a public benefit from a private one. (Bynner, 2017, p72)*

The problem with a policy that focuses so

<sup>10</sup> Belfield, Farquharson, and Sibieta (2018: 46)

<sup>11</sup> At Level 1 in literacy, adults can read brief texts on familiar topics and locate a single piece of specific information identical in form to information in the question or directive.

<sup>12</sup> At Level 1 in numeracy, adults can perform basic mathematical processes in common, concrete context.

much on skills is that such targeting ‘could leave individuals more vulnerable to negative economic shocks than if they had more general skills’ (Belfield, Farquharson and Sibieta, 2018, p8). It can also disadvantage those who may not have gained any qualifications whilst at school, and encountered many difficulties, now unable to gain funding for those courses, which although not deemed of any economic value, can nonetheless help in improving their well-being: improving a person’s confidence and sense of self may in turn lead to them moving on to further study, that may well lead to economic gains for the individual and the economy.

Admittedly, literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are the bedrock upon which all other learning is built. Data from a longitudinal study following the lives of children born in 1970 suggests that ‘poor acquisition of the basic skills in childhood carried through to a chequered educational career, followed by poor progress in the labour market’ (in Bynner, 2017, p79).<sup>13</sup> Proficiency in literacy and numeracy also positively correlates with individual well-being (OECD, 2016). The following illustrates a strong correlation on aspects of well-being with low numeracy and literacy skills and employment: one in two people with poor literacy skills are in work, compared to more than eight in ten people who have those skills (Learning and Work Institute, n.d.). The effects of poor literacy skills and disadvantage is transferred intergenerationally; it is important to educate adults as they play an important role

in raising their children’s educational level (Parsons and Bynner, 2007).

Moreover, there are also non-economic benefits of studying *Leisure* courses. According to the 1958 National Child Development Study, which follows the lives of a cohort of people born in 1958, the non-economic returns on taking two or more Leisure courses between the ages of 33 to 42 resulted in improvements in psychological and physical well-being,<sup>14</sup> such as: decline in smoking; increase in exercise; reduced drinking, and resistance to and exit from depression. In addition, benefits for better social cohesion were seen such as: increases in racial tolerance, voluntary association, political interest and participation in elections,<sup>15</sup> and a decline in authoritarian attitudes.

Given the above, it is deeply worrying that there has been a drop in the numbers taking up literacy and numeracy courses below Level 2. This is partly associated with the targeting of higher levels (Level 2 and above) because at this level an economic difference is measurable at 11% increase in earnings. However, once again this leaves those who most need qualifications and learning the most neglected, caught in a perennial trap of disadvantage and marginalization, with consequences for their children in terms of: socioeconomic status; aspiration; achievement; and active political participation.

A narrow focus on the purpose of lifelong learning, or education in general fails to acknowledge its humanizing/social nature. Colleges of Further Education are not

13 A collaborative study shared between the *Wider Benefits of Learning*, the *Centre for Economics of Education* and the *Institute of Fiscal Studies demonstrated*, from modelling the data from two longitudinal studies following those born in 1958 and 1970, potential gains of £2.54 billion for numeracy and £0.44 billion for Literacy (Bynner *et al.* 2001).

14 See also OECD (2016), those with poor level of literacy are more likely to report poor health.

15 People with lower levels of literacy and numeracy believe they have little impact on the political process; consequently, and they do not participate in associative or volunteer activities, and are less likely to trust others (OECD, 2016).

exclusively academic or vocational teaching institutions, but also serve as local community hubs, where local people, in addition to learning for pleasure, can socialize with others. This is particularly important at a time when more and more people are living longer and alone<sup>16</sup> with little communication with the outside world. Many of those living alone suffer from financial precariousness, spending '92% of their disposable income, compared with two-adult households who spend only 83%', and are more likely to be living in rented accommodation (ONS, 2019). This isolation and financial insecurity affects their levels of happiness - with 'higher levels of anxiety than those living together with a partner and no children' (ONS, 2019). Currently, over '1 million people aged over 65 without children were "dangerously unsupported" and at acute risk of isolation, loneliness, poor health, poverty and being unable to access formal care' (The Guardian, 2019a). This number will increase dramatically given an ageing population: the rise in people living alone is mainly in the older age groups (with those aged 45-64 having increased by 53% from 1997 to 2017).

Therefore, it is important to keep adult education in its non-formal route open not only for those with few or no qualifications, but also for the elderly, for whom adult education may well serve as a place where they could maintain and develop social contact and avoid loneliness and isolation. A case then can be made for the importance of governments attending to the general welfare of their people, especially the most vulnerable; for what is the *raison d'être* of a government, if not the welfare and well-being of its people. By exclusively underpinning lifelong

16 According to the Office of National Statistics (2019) by the year 2039, nearly one in seven people will live alone.

learning to the economic imperative, governments risk losing sight of this expectation. The recognition of learning simply for its intrinsic worth, and not for a particular end, or certificate, should be encouraged because it contributes to our self-realization and general well-being, but the reduction of the 'human' to 'capital' prevents us from recognizing our humanity, and our obligations to our fellow citizens. This is not to say that governments should not focus on employability skills, but that an overemphasis of education that 'comprise[s] the whole or even the most important part of it', is bad because it neglects the fact that work/skills alone do not lead to well-being, nor a compassionate, harmonious and humane society. 'The key point is that [skills] should be approached through other aspects of education and as part of the whole task of learning to be human in its richest and most fulfilling sense' (Macmurray 2012, p662). Arguably then, the provision of lifelong learning along with compulsory education should be regarded as a 'public good'<sup>17</sup>, for it is an essential provision for any democratic society that wishes to sustain effective participation of all its citizenry, irrespective of their background.

In the following section, I explore the definition of citizenship, as the way it is defined affects what citizens ought to do, what is needed in order for citizens to exercise their rights and responsibilities, and how core attributes of citizenship are developed.

## THE WESTERN CONCEPT OF CITIZENSHIP

The western concept of citizenship is borne of two main strands: the liberal citizenship-as-legal-status into which we are born, or acquire through naturalization certain

17 For more see Nordic Council of Ministers (1996)



fundamental rights and responsibilities; and the civic republican, that emphasizes a direct relationship between citizenship and active political participation.

### The Liberal Model

The roots of liberal model of democracy can be traced to the Roman Empire of the mid-5th century BC, through Rawls, Dahl, Marshall, Adam Smith, Locke and Hobbes. Liberal democracy conceptualizes citizenship as an ‘important but occasional identity, a legal status rather than a fact of everyday life’ (Walzer 1989, p215) – this citizenship-as-legal-status gives citizens protection of the law rather than any role in its formulation or execution as in the civic republican model<sup>18</sup>. This is not conducive to promoting or preparing citizens for greater political participation. But then again, one may argue that it would be unrealistic to expect active participation in states of many millions of citizens. One has to concede the fact that in modern societies as Constant observed many citizens no longer see politics as being central to their identity, given their many social and economic interests. There is some evidence to corroborate this, for example according to the Audit of Political Engagement 16 survey (Hansard Society, 2019), 22% indicated that they would not be prepared to do any political activity. Furthermore, 35% are *not* interested in participating in decision-making processes at a national level (32% at a local level) (p.25). But one could argue that this may be partly due to a sense of powerlessness: 47% feel they have no influence over national decision-making (and 42% for local decision-making) (p.24). Moreover, given many people

*are unacquainted with political processes, as well as never having had the opportunity to participate in politics except in Local and General Elections, one could also argue that their concept of personal identity does not encompass the idea of the zoon politikon being integral, as was the case for the Athenian polis. Consequently it is unsurprising that they do not give political participation a high priority in their lives. (Shah, 2014, p7-8).*

### Civic Republicanism

The civic republican model is underpinned by the idea of civic self-rule, as articulated by Aristotle, whereby the citizen was a *zoon politikon* who enjoyed the right of sharing in deliberative or judicial office (*Politics* Book 3 Part I). Aristotle’s citizen was one capable of ruling and being ruled in turn.

The citizen should be both the starting point and the focus of democracy, but this is no longer the case. And, one may argue that in modern societies of tens, and hundreds of millions, it is unrealistic to expect every citizen to engage actively in civic affairs. Benjamin Constant (1819 in Leydet 2011) contended that the scale and complexity of the *grands États modernes* precluded the kind of civic engagement required by the civic republican ideals of a participatory democracy. Constant’s ideas were echoed in the 20th century by Joseph Schumpeter (1943) and Robert Dahl (1961) for whom the complexity of the modern state necessitated the concentration of power in the hands of a professional elite. They argued that post-industrial societies require technical, political, and administrative expertise to function, in addition to the time and interest for sufficient deliberation to reach informed judgments, instead of being susceptible to uninformed public opinion. There is some point to this, especially when one considers the election of people like Donald Trump, Jair

18 For more see John Rawls, ‘Justice as Fairness, Political not metaphysical’ (1985); Jurgen Habermas, ‘Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe’ (1992)

Bolsonaro and Boris Johnson on the wave of populism. How is it possible that leaders with a questionable moral compass and anti-democratic tendencies, with little respect for the 'truth', get elected? Perhaps David Hume was right to locate our motivations in the passions, rather than in rational thought and practical reasoning. For Hume, to be driven by the passions was a positive, ergo his famous saying: 'reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions' (Hume, 2010, p216).

For Hume it was the passions that were the engine of motivation; passions are strong impressions/feelings that drive our impulses, whilst reason can rarely generate impulse by itself. Hume may be right, but should reason really be slave to the passions? As with most things, the extreme position is always problematic which is why in most instances one should tread the path of the mean. Like Plato's chariot allegory in the *Phaedrus*, the charioteer (*Reason*) has to bring under control the soul: two winged steeds: the white representing: boldness, glory and the black (the appetitive element), the purpose of the charioteer is not to deny human appetites and passions but to bring them into harmony.

Given the success and rise of populist leaders with questionable moral compass and dictatorial tendencies, one may argue that what perhaps is lacking is an appropriate education that would permit citizens to carefully deliberate, and not be overly ruled by their passions, frustrations and biases, nor easily manipulated by the rhetoric of populist leaders.

Humans are affective creatures, our emotions shape our deliberations: anger and fear are instrumental in our decision-making processes. If one is angry one is given to making rash judgements, paying insuffi-

cient attention to detail, or even ignoring, whilst when anxious do we think carefully. This then leads to the questions what core attributes of citizenship are needed in order for citizens to exercise their rights and responsibilities in a reasoned and considered manner; and how they are developed. Here it is important to say that one's definition of citizenship shapes the conception of the *knowledge, abilities, and dispositions* that a citizen ought to possess. In terms of knowledge, if one views citizenship as a legal right then knowledge of one's rights and responsibilities would be essential, as well as the political structures, parties, names of official and so forth. However, if one views citizenship as requiring active participation, then in addition one would need to understand the relationship between political culture, power and participation and its *public, hidden* and *invisible* manifestations (Lukes, 1974). Without recognizing from where power emanates and its workings, citizens would be unable to identify, decode and interrogate and thus influence power.

Moving on to abilities, inherent in being an active citizen is the act of engagement with one's fellows. Consequently, it is important to develop abilities that promote association, communication, negotiation, collaboration and deliberation. Deliberation is essential as it 'requires both voice and listening, both negotiation and compromise along with influencing others', and 'involves the testing of arguments for and against a course of action' (Merrifield, 2001, p6). With respect to dispositions, i.e. the underlying values that citizens hold, knowledge and skills do not necessarily lead to holding 'democratic values', these values have to be inculcated.

What we need is a citizenry who can hold their leaders to account. This can part-

ly come about by having a politically literate polity, which can deliberate calmly, without prejudice, as well as also being capable of active participation, should they desire to do so. This would allay Schumpeter and Dahl's fear of the tyranny of (an uninformed) majority, as many ordinary citizens have neither the expertise, nor the time or interest to actively participate. If we are to produce a politically literate citizenry who are resistant to manipulation, then some form of political literacy has to be taught to the population as a whole. And it is this subject to which I will turn in my next section.

## CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN THE UK

In Britain from the end of the 1980s to the early 2000s there was a growing concern regarding declines in interest in politics and political participation; the weakening of democracy (Power, 2006; Hay & Stoker, 2009); declining community cohesion and solidarity (Power, 2006); and the alienation of minorities as a result of cultural diversity, ethnicity and identity (Kymlicka 1995; Young 1989). Civil unrest and political apathy across Britain prompted successive Governments to commission a number of reviews (Commission on Citizenship 1990; Crick et al., 1998; Crick et al., 2000; Cattle, 2001; Denham et al., 2001; Crick et al., 2003) to identify the underlying factors and to recommend action to arrest the decline. During the same period, the discourse on citizenship in policy terms moved towards 'active' citizenship (Commission on Citizenship, 1990; Crick et al., 1998). The consequence was the introduction of various educative measures to improve citizenship skills in key sections of the population.

Citizenship Education (CE) became part of the curriculum in Britain in compulsory

education in September 2002 following the Crick report (Crick and Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998). Two subsequent reports, from Crick-chaired committees, concerned the CE needs of 16- to 19-year-olds (Crick, 2000), and migrants to Britain (Crick, 2003) which affected the teaching of ESOL courses (English for speakers of other languages) by making it a requirement to have CE components in the ESOL curriculum. According to Bernard Crick, the intent of CE was 'to change the political culture of this country both nationally and locally' (Crick and Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998, para.1.5). Concerning political citizenship, the 1998 report emphasized that political citizenship should not be taken for granted, and that

*Civic spirit, citizens' charters and voluntary activity in the community are of crucial importance, but individuals must be helped and prepared to shape the terms of such engagements by political understanding and action (para. 2.3).*

Here therefore we have a civic republican conceptualization of citizenship that extends beyond being simply a good citizen and helping one's community, to developing political literacy, and taking opportunities for action 'to make themselves effective in public life' (Crick, 1998, para. 2.12). To participate in political action, citizens first need to possess political knowledge: only by becoming informed, can they come to realize the importance not only of becoming active citizens in order to secure their freedoms and rights, but also to understand their obligations, and seek ways to become active

Unfortunately, CE was undermined at its inception because the emphasis on political literacy was watered down, with the promotion of community cohesion and integration as the underpinnings of CE's curriculum (Keating and Kerr, 2013). Community

cohesion was made a legal requirement by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in 2007 following the Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review 2007. Later the National Curriculum was updated in 2008 to include a fourth thematic strand attached to CE, that of identity and diversity: living together in the UK (QCA, 2007, in Keating and Kerr, 2013, p8). Consequently, political literacy was deferred in favour of discussions on diversity, community and social cohesion. CE was further weakened with the introduction in 2015 of a legal duty to promote Fundamental British Values (FBV) in schools: democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith, as part of the prevent policy (HM Government, 2011) aimed at children at risk of being drawn to terrorism. The teaching of FBV has filtered through to the adult ESOL curriculum. Moreover, the teaching of CE is compounded by the fact that there exist too few CE specialist teachers in British schools (Jerome, 2012): many had either received no training in the subject, or thought they required more training (Keating et al., 2010, p39–41). As a result these non-specialist teachers lack the confidence to teach CE; this situation is compounded at ESOL (Shah 2019).

In the provision of CE however there is a gaping hole: there is no CE provision for native adults. One wonders why for example Literacy courses were not designed to promote CE; perhaps it is thought that native adults do not need CE because through normal education and life experiences they can acquire the citizenship skills needed to become active if they so choose. Certain academics eschew the provision of CE. William Galston (1989, 1991) for example, argues against living an examined life, as it may lead

to the questioning of one's private beliefs, and this for him is a private matter in which the state should not interfere. Others such as James Tooley (2000) object to 'compulsory entitlement' to CE, and against 'any attempt to bring high-order values into the curriculum through government edict' (p. 147). For him such an emancipatory education is politically biased, 'indicative of a left-wing ... anti-capitalist agenda.'<sup>19</sup> For Tooley the school (and one presumes adult education) is not the best place to develop the habit of active citizenship. He is suspicious of State intrusions into the individual's autonomy. For him there are wide-ranging resources outside the classroom that are better placed to provide education for democracy, such as the family, the media, political institutions, political parties, lobby groups etc. (p. 148). Tooley is right: spaces exist to develop one's political literacy and participation. For example critical literacy *à la* Freirean 'conscientisation' that challenges the participants' worldview can arise through political and social campaigns (Foley, 1999). Connections have been shown between participation in the civil society and greater political awareness and action (McDonough et al., 1998; Elsdon, 1995).

Nonetheless, these spaces require individuals who are motivated and desire to seek them in the first instance. The motivation to be politically active depends on factors such as socio-economic background, having relatively well-educated parents and good literacy resources (Benton et al., 2008;

<sup>19</sup> These articulations were present in the early twentieth century where fear existed about the potentially disruptive social and political effects from offering formal education to the working-classes in Britain, and they continued through the issue of what to include in state schooling.

Henn and Foard, 2014).<sup>20</sup> The role of public educational institutions as an “equalizer” of opportunity (to offset less advantageous family circumstances) is very important. These places offer neutral ground where students are exposed to the opposing ways of conceptualizing the world. In the current polarized world of post-truth, of populism and alternative facts, it is essential to have neutral spaces where opposing views can be heard and openly questioned calmly, without prejudice and bias. There are few spaces where one can encounter the gamut of such thinking. Other organizations where one can become politically active are not neutral grounds; they usually offer selective worldviews, and worse still inculcate in particular ideologies. Tooley’s objection to a CE that prepares for the *citizenship-as-desirable-activity* is itself not a neutral stance. Schools (and adult education institutes) remain ‘the most promising contexts in which all children and young people [and adults] are likely to engage to an adequate extent in an adequate way with resources to the achievement of citizenship’ (McLaughlin, 2000, p548), especially those from less-advantaged families. This is because:

*Citizenship is not just a matter of learning the basic facts about the institutions and procedures of political life; it also involves acquiring a range of dispositions, virtues and loyalties that are intimately bound up with the practice of democratic citizenship’ (Kymlicka, in Halstead & McLaughlin 2005, p79).*<sup>21</sup>

Civic understanding is not a given; it must be learnt by each generation. Ralph

<sup>20</sup> For more on the socio-economic status influencing a person’s level of civic participation see Civic Voluntarism theory (Verba et al., 1995; Pattie et al., 2004).

<sup>21</sup> For more on a model of democratic participation of staff and student see Michael Fielding’s article: Alex Bloom, Pioneer of Radical State Education (2005)

Miliband similarly spoke of ‘the practice and the habit of democracy’ which needs to be understood, experienced, and practiced as part of the texture of our everyday lives (1994, in Martin 2003, p575). Without educating native adults to become politically literate, it is difficult to conceive how they could ‘distinguish between law and justice and with political skills to change laws peacefully and responsibly’? (Crick 1998, p2.1). According to *Audit of Political Engagement 16* (Hansard Society, 2019), 30% never discuss politics (p.27), 26% are not interested in politics with 18% saying they know nothing about politics, and 20% know nothing about the UK Parliament (p26). What is really worrying about knowledge and interest in politics is that when it is viewed from the demographic perspective, the proportions from the lower social economic classes (C2 and DE) expressing interest are very low.<sup>22</sup> As Aristotle reminds us: ‘There is no profit in the best laws... if the citizens themselves have not been attuned, by the force of habit and influence of teaching, to the right constitutional temper’ (*Politics* 1310a).

Notwithstanding the importance of teaching Citizenship Education, CE alone is unlikely to bring about the social and political change required for active participation. For active citizenship to take root, citizens need opportunity to participate in the decision-making process: we need modern-day *agora(s)* - the ancient Greek assembly where citizens can debate local and national key issues of the day. Citizen participation should encourage the redistribution of power and enable the disenfranchised – those excluded from the political and economic processes – to be deliberately included. Evidently,

<sup>22</sup> Interest in politics: 35% (C2) and 34% (DE); knowledge of politics 32% (C2) and 29% (DE); knowledge of Parliament 31% (C2) and 25% (DE) (Hansard Society (2019: 31-32)

it would be impractical and unrealistic to imagine that every citizen would participate, but every citizen should be educated to do so. The Aristotelian view, David Miller argues, can still serve today as ‘a benchmark that we appeal to when assessing how well our institutions and practices are functioning’ (Miller, 2000 in Leydet, 2011). This requires reclaiming the idea of the *zoon politikon* as an integral part of citizens’ identity – this requires redistribution of power, with genuine forums for expression.

The civic republican conceptualization of CE is also not neutral, but it is essential to retaining one’s democratic freedoms. As Aristotle in his *Politics* (Book 4, Part IV) says:

*If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost.*

Machiavelli argued in his *Discourses* that though most of us desire a personal liberty unencumbered by others, this cannot be achieved unless we live in a community whose Constitution is based on free institutions in which all citizens participate actively. Why? Because Machiavelli believed that to pursue self-interest (although considering it a natural human instinct) was a symptom of corruption, as it results in citizens forfeiting their civic obligations, and this in Quentin Skinner’s view inevitably leads to the destruction of the free state (Skinner, 1983). However, civic virtues need to be cultivated through coercion and constraint (Skinner, 1986) by law, and this paradoxically forces the citizen to be free. Skinner holds that once we abandon the liberal notion of constraints as interferences, this paradox can be resolved, and the liberal claim of liberty and political participation being incompatible refuted. The idea of the *zoon politikon* needs to be inculcated in individ-

uals until no distinction exists between the individual and the citizen.

## CONCLUSION

Lifelong learning is essential for sustaining democracy; this paper has highlighted the purpose of adult education from social justice ideals of emancipatory education for democracy, to an economic imperative prefaced upon a skills-based agenda, since the 1980s. This transformation of policy, together with austerity-reasoned justifications for the reduction in budget for adult education, has precipitated a dramatic reduction in the number of adults participating in education. This is a worrying trend because it affects the most marginalized and vulnerable in society. Adult education is a transformative experience: it offers people a route to turn their lives around. Acquiring basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills is the gateway to other sources of knowledge and participation in social, economic and political spheres. These basic skills are however insufficient to produce an informed and active citizen. Essential elements for social interaction such as association, communication, negotiation, collaboration and deliberation are required. Deliberation is particularly significant as it encourages people to have an open mind; the ability to consider others’ viewpoints and to weigh their relative importance/worth. These social skills can be developed outside the confines of academic institutions. However, no other place provides a neutral ground where a gamut of different worldviews may be encountered. Only in institutions of formal educational can such myriad worldviews be found and debated. Though these social skills are important, one still needs Citizenship Education in order to help us understand political, social and economic structures, and the role

of power in governance. Without being cognizant of these matters one remains helpless and blind to one's predicament, and comes to feel powerless. It would be naïve to think CE alone is sufficient to transform the social structures that prevent many from full emancipation, nevertheless, what CE does is help citizens recognize the opportunities that exist, and be able to demand them. This is why the provision of CE for adults is of vital importance.

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