

LET'S PUT THE LIFE BACK INTO ADULT LEARNING

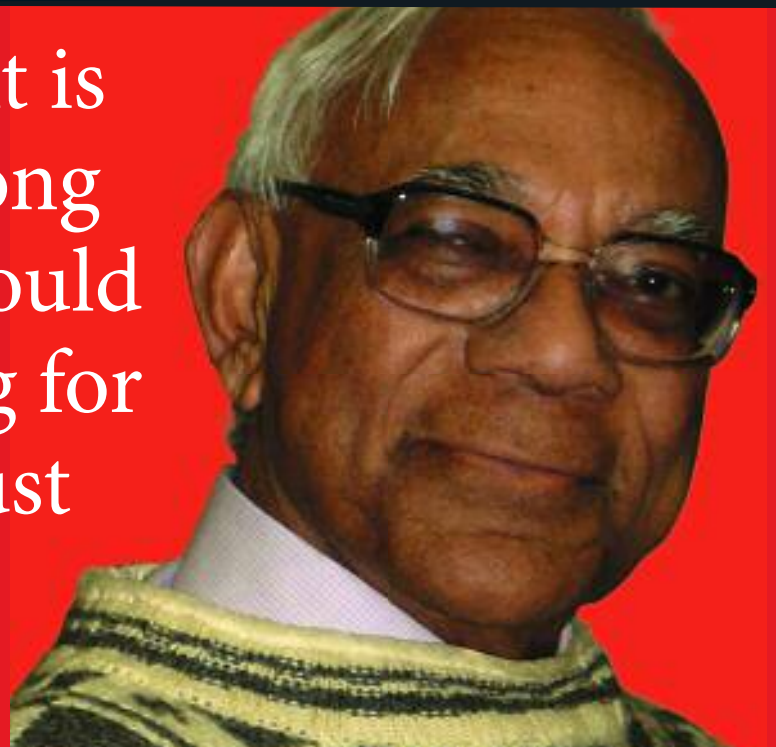
Education can support people of all ages to develop interests and passions, to be active in their neighbourhoods and communities, to connect with fellow citizens, to keep up with what's happening in the world, to improve conditions at work, to feel better about themselves and to gain relevant qualifications.

Around fifty learners, community activists and education workers from the North of England met up recently to produce a manifesto to put the life back into adult learning. The meeting was facilitated by NIACE and supported by the Workers' Educational Association (WEA).

Discussion was lively and invigorating. We all agreed that adult learning matters because it gives people the knowledge, belief and confidence to change things – in their own lives and for the wider benefit of their communities and workplaces.

This kind of adult learning – that is inspiring, challenging, pleasurable and fulfilling – is now under attack from education policies that are preoccupied with skills and qualifications for work but not for the rest of life. It's time for grass roots voices to be heard and for all those who oppose this threat to wider learning to work together for change.

“If the Government is committed to lifelong learning then it should be lifelong learning for all purposes, not just to get a job.”






MANIFESTO FOR A CHANGE

We think these are the main principles and actions that should inform adult learning provision for the next five years and beyond!


Funding – we need...


 Long-term public funding for adult and community-based learning.

Funding that isn't dominated by crude labour market targets, that


 recognises the value of learning for personal fulfilment, social development and participatory democracy.


 The right to paid educational leave and time-off to learn.


 Funding for literacy, language and numeracy that starts with people's strengths and interests rather than their alleged deficiencies.


 Funding for outreach and networking in local communities – twenty-five years of positive evidence about the importance of outreach can't be wrong.

Learning – we need...

 Rich and varied learning opportunities for everyone – irrespective of their age or employment status – to build a society of confident, critical, creative and curious people.

 To focus on learning that respects people's differences and raises awareness about social justice, to help make our world a more equal and inspiring place to live in.

 To focus on learning that enables people to question and challenge in informed ways: learning that is connected to social and civic action, and which transfers power from the powerful to the powerless.

 Equal status for accredited and non-accredited learning.

 Equal rights to funding and resources for full-time and part-time students.

Active Citizenship – we need...



Recognition that education is a right for all, not a privilege. Citizens should choose to learn and should not be forced to join courses as a condition of benefit, work or citizenship.



Grass roots decision making – to shift power towards local people and their organisations, transforming the rhetoric about consultation and partnership into a reality.

If you agree with the ideas in this manifesto, please discuss them with others and take action to support them. You can use the manifesto to...



Inform discussions about the wider purposes of learning with policy makers, education managers, education and community workers and local learners and citizens.



Draw up a learning charter for your organisation.



Build alliances with others who feel the same.



Help you make your case for relevant funding.



Campaign to protect learning for personal and community development, active citizenship and social justice.



Lobby against cuts in adult learning and narrow government priorities.



WEA



Learning for Life

niace

promoting adult learning

What else can you do?

Please pass this manifesto on to others to raise awareness of the issues and to encourage more debate and action. You'll find an electronic version to download or share at www.wea.org.uk or www.niace.org.uk