

Institution: University of Wolverhampton		
Unit of Assessment: 23 Education		
Title of case study: Increasing participation and influencing policy in adult and lifelong learning to challenge social inequalities		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-20		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Professor Sir Alan Tuckett	Professor of Education	Jan 2015 to December 2020
Dr Lydia Lewis	Post-Doctoral Research Fellow	Nov 2012 to the Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-20		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact <p>Changing and updating adult and lifelong learning policy and practice are effective ways to address many aspects of social inequalities, such as age, poverty or exclusion. Increased participation after compulsory education is associated with wider benefits in terms of social and cultural inclusion. Within this key area, our research inspired and informed new strategy and development work in the adult community learning (ACL) sector in order to improve accessibility and learning outcomes. Using research-led engagement with marginalised, under-represented and under-served minority ethnic groups, we contributed to enhanced educational and social participation. Finally, our research stimulated policy debates and led to the confirmation and implementation of new government policy, specifically on a credit-based system for learning.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>The underpinning research comprises two distinct but complementary bodies of research into adult and lifelong learning. Both of these have focused on participation for socially marginalised and under-represented groups in adult education.</p> <p>The first of these was part of a programme of research on education and mental health, focusing on adult community learning (ACL), led by Lewis since 2012. This was conducted in collaboration with the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), the largest UK third sector provider of ACL. Two key findings [F] from this research [R] are:</p> <p><u>F1.</u> The creative arts in ACL offer effective ways of facilitating social and educational participation and combatting social isolation and exclusion for marginalised groups. The creation of opportunities for mutuality between a range of people involved in the adult learning helps promote social inclusion [R1, R2, R3].</p> <p><u>F2.</u> ACL provision is an effective social policy response to mental health and wellbeing issues experienced by individuals, particularly for those who are disadvantaged and/or hard to reach. The provision often fills a gap for people who do not have access to other forms of mental health support, and can help tackle interrelated mental health, social and educational inequalities [R2, R3].</p>		

Tuckett's analysis of national and international adult education policy, and of the key role of advocacy in influencing policy makers and motivating adults to engage, addresses the conditions needed to increase participation and make it more equitable. Since he joined the University in 2015, his research has focused on identifying the benefits of, and barriers to, participation in adult learning for groups including working class men, ethnic and linguistic minorities, people with physical disabilities and mental health issues, and older people. In addition, his research on post-2015 adult education policy in the UK has examined lifelong learning policy's lack of continuity and its failure to address the needs of the least engaged. His analyses of international policy influenced the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals by UNESCO and the International Council for Adult Education.

Key research findings include:

F3. Sub-regional cross-sectoral initiatives, like Learning Cities, are valuable in bringing together education, local/regional government, business and civil society in the creation of effective lifelong learning strategies [R4, R5, R6].

F4. Motivational campaigns can be key elements in effective strategies to overcome barriers and engage under-represented adults in learning, increase adult literacy and make adult learning more equitable. In addition, as advocacy tools to engage policy makers, they are essential aspects of policy engagement [R4, R5, R6].

3. References to the research

The following six references have been assessed by peer review and are used as reference points for further research beyond the original institution. For example, R1 has been cited in the *Journal of Applied Arts and Health* and R6 is extremely highly cited in the field, having received approximately 9.47 times more citations than average. Relevant evidence of funding for the impact described is also detailed below.

R1. Lewis, L. and Spandler, H. (2019), 'Breaking down boundaries? Exploring shared art-making in an open studio mental health setting, *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*, 10(1): 9-23. https://doi.org/10.1386/jaah.10.1.9_1
<https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/intellect/jaah/2019/00000010/00000001/art00002>
(REF 2 Output)

R2. Lewis, L. (2014), Responding to the mental health and wellbeing agenda in adult community learning, *Journal of Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 19 (4): 357-77. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13596748.2014.955364> (REF 2 Output)

R3. Lewis, L. (2019), Adult Community Learning, Wellbeing, and Mental Health Recovery. In R. Papa and D. Matheson (Eds.), *Handbook on Promoting Social Justice in Education*. New York: Springer. <https://link.springer.com/referencework/10.1007/978-3-319-74078-2> (REF 2 Output)

R4. Tuckett, A. and Popovic, K. (2015) 'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose': Adult literacy policy since 2000, *Andragoska Studije*, 1, 19-35. ISSN 0354-5415 UDK 37.014.22:502.131.1"20"
(REF 2 Output)

R5. Tuckett, A. (2015) ICAE and adult learning policy: Addressing the gap between rhetoric and practice in Nesbit, N. and Milana, M. (eds.), *Global perspectives on Adult Learning and Policy*. London: MacMillan, 221-236. ISBN 978-1-137-38825-4

R6. Tuckett, A. (2017) The rise and fall of life-wide learning in England, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 36(1-2), 230-249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2017.1274546>
(REF 2 Output)

Grant

Award (AH/K003364/1), 'Mutuality, Well-being and Mental Health Recovery: Exploring the roles of creative arts adult community learning and participatory arts initiatives', (£202,000) was led by Dr Lewis from 2013-2018. It was part of the AHRC/ RCUK Connected Communities Programme (£1.2m), led by the University of Nottingham, on Creative Practice as Mutual Recovery: Connecting Communities for Mental Health and Wellbeing (CPMR).

4. Details of the impact

The research findings have led to impact through changes in lifelong and adult learning policy and practice which, taken together, demonstrate strong regional, national and international significance and reach. Impact in this area of research is emerging in a non-linear fashion, influencing a wide range of stakeholders, as the appearance of cause and effect can be obscured by the policy process. A good example is Tuckett's advocacy of a more equitable approach to adult literacy and lifelong learning, which is part of a sustained pattern of influence that has long helped shape international discourse on lifelong learning.

I1. Inspiring and informing strategy and development work in the ACL sector

Lewis' programme of collaborative research with the third sector has inspired, informed and supported the WEA's strategic development work and provision in the area of mental health and wellbeing, including promotion of creative arts provision in this area. This included the WEA East Midlands pilot for the Department for Education Community Learning Mental Health nationwide programme and a Mental Health and Wellbeing research project associated with a Lottery-funded project called Leicester Aging Together [F1, F2]. The WEA has used the resources produced from collaborative research with Lewis to raise the profile and illustrate the mental health-related outcomes of its provision [C1].

The AHRC study that Lewis has conducted in partnership with the WEA was chosen as a National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) case study providing insights on key factors that make community-university partnerships work. The work also features in a NCCPE report including best-evidenced practice on sustaining community-university partnerships [C2].

I2. Research-led engagement with marginalised, under-engaged and diverse audiences leads to increased cultural participation

Community-based participatory work by the WEA with women from British Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, who are among the groups with the lowest levels of participation in adult learning in the UK and a difficult group to reach in social policy terms, led to increased educational participation and social engagement among the women involved [F1]. The practical outcome was to increase the frequency of ACL sessions to make the adult learning a bigger part of learners' lives. The WEA reported a general improvement in attendance and retention as a direct result of this change. Course timings were also changed following the research's recommendations to help the women to attend, thereby improving access and retention [C3].

The WEA has used resources produced during the collaborative research programme with Lewis to raise the profile of adult education for hard to reach and traditionally excluded groups, and illustrate the outcomes, of its provision. They saw it as:

"a useful process for us in assessing the impact an additional course had for our students. It gave us a structure to collect evidence about aspects like how involved students felt and what impact course activities had on their lives. We found that increasing the number of sessions to two a week made it a bigger part of learners' lives and we have found an improvement in attendance and retention. It also gave us feedback to act upon in terms of course timings which we addressed the following term... We... particularly appreciated the time that was spent drawing together the findings from this focus group and our wider data with local public health data from a number of sources. This kind of wider review is

something that we rarely have the opportunity to do mid-project and helps us to put the work and learning on the ground into a wider context.” [C3]

13. Sir Alan Tuckett: A Lifetime in Adult Education - Policy debate has been stimulated and informed by research evidence, leading to confirmation and implementation of policy

Sir Alan Tuckett has influenced adult education for many years and has been a stalwart advocate for continued and improved provision in that area [F3 and 4]. The impact claimed here concerns his research and involvement in the political process following from his appointment at the University of Wolverhampton at the beginning of 2015. Tuckett has had both direct and indirect policy impacts through commissions and reports, and evidence provided to Select Committee.

The November 2017 Government Office for Science/ Foresight report on skills, the *Future of Skills and Lifelong Learning*, reflected commissioned papers from Tuckett and noted his particular contribution in their report, especially relating to class, qualifications and key skills, such as literacy, numeracy and regarding IT [C4]. This gave GO Science and Foresight a greater appreciation of the skills required to stimulate labour markets and productivity growth, address skills gaps and tackle disadvantage.

Tuckett was then appointed Vice- chair of The Centenary Commission in Adult Education in 2018, and his work in the West Midlands led to the launch of the UNESCO Wolverhampton City Learning Region in 2017 [C5]. In 2018, he has also contributed to the development of the World Economic Forum’s lifelong learning policy at their Annual Meeting in Davos and his findings have been cited in its White Paper [C6].

The second main area of influence was Tuckett’s evidence to the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, which was published and used in their 2nd Report of Session 2017–19, entitled *Treating Students Fairly: The Economics of Post-School Education* [C7]. This evidence underpinned two of the report’s recommendations at paragraphs 194 and 195 (based on Paragraph 192, page 65, and note 216 thereto):

“Flexible learning is one method to increase higher education qualifications. It needs to be supported and encouraged by: (a) higher and further education institutions working closely with each other and with employers; and (b) providers adopting innovative methods of study, such as online learning and shorter courses.

But this alone will not be enough. Flexible learning must be backed by a robust, properly enforced credit-based system (where, for example credits accrued studying a Level 4 qualification would count towards— and reduce the cost of—a full degree). This requires regulatory reform and should be a priority for the new higher education regulator.”

Both points were accepted in the Government (HMG) Response [C8], reflecting that Tuckett had been able to engender strong and demonstrable impact from evidence to recommendation to HMG acceptance.

The arguments for a credit-based system outlined by Tuckett, and endorsed by the HMG Special Report, were also discussed favourably in the Lords in the debate on the Economic Affairs Committee Report [C7] on 16 January 2019 [C9] (Columns 243/4 and Column 256/7). This and the foregoing is strong evidence of policy purchase and impact on Government policy.

Finally, Tuckett’s national and international policy influence is evident through a range of activities. The Augar Review [C10] on skills policy consulted him and his point on a credits system. Tuckett’s opinion was then positively reflected in the Augar Review (pages 38-43 and, especially, note 28 thereto), echoing the points made at C7.

The overall significance of all of the impact above is that understanding has been informed and shaped about how to engage hard to reach and traditionally excluded groups of learners, such as

women from British Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. Moreover, better informed policy has influenced stakeholders and beneficiaries to seek mechanisms to improve the current situation regarding lifelong learning and the extension of opportunity it brings. The reach of the impact under consideration has been regional, national and international and extended from the private individual to the workings of the Government and the Legislature.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

C1. Testimonial from the WEA, December 2020.

C2. *Mutual Recovery through Creative Connection*, WEA Website. Saved as PDF.

C3. E-mail to Dr Lydia Lewis from WEA Project Manager, Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 10 October 2013.

C4. GO Science/Foresight – *Future of Skills and Lifelong Learning*, November 2017.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/727776/Foresight-future-of-skills-lifelong-learning_V8.pdf

C5. Stephen Exley – ‘Alan Tuckett among FE figures on New Year's Honours List’, *TES*, 27 December 2017, <https://www.tes.com/news/alan-tuckett-among-fe-figures-new-years-honours-list>

C6. Accelerating Workforce Reskilling for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, World Economic Forum, 27 July 2017, <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/accelerating-workforce-reskilling-for-the-fourth-industrial-revolution>

C7. Evidence cited in Report of the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, 2nd Report of Session 2017–19, entitled *Treating Students Fairly: The Economics of Post-School Education*, HL Paper 139.
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldeconaf/139/139.pdf>

C8. HMG Special Report - *Government Response to the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee Report: Treating Students Fairly: The Economics of Post-School Education*, August 2018, Paper Cm 9689.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732675/Treating_Students_Fairly-The_Economics_of_Post-School_Education_-_print_version.pdf

C9. The debate on 16 January 2019 was covered in Hansard HL, Volume 795, from Column 221. The motion was: ‘To move that this House takes note of the Report from the Economic Affairs Committee Treating Students Fairly: The Economics of Post-School Education (2nd Report, HL Paper 139).’
https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/house-of-lords/by-date/lords-hansard-bound-volumes/hl_bv795_index.pdf

C10. Augar Review - the *Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding* in May 2019.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805127/Review_of_post_18_education_and_funding.pdf