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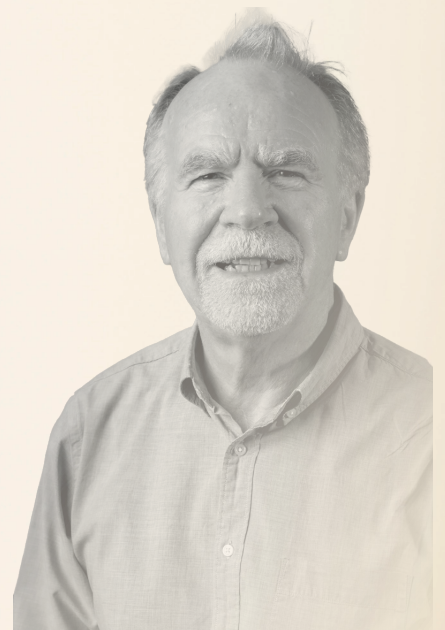
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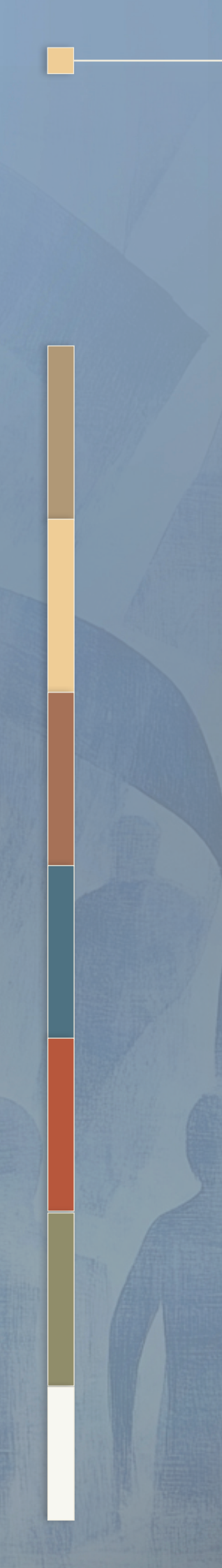
Adult Education:
Widening access and
accessibility

Stephen Billett,
Griffith University | Australia



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Adult Education: Widening access and accessibility

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Accessibility to educative experiences for adults is central for their personal and occupational development and to contribute to their family, community and as citizens. Central here is being and remaining employable, but also the ability to pursue social and cultural interest and make informed decisions for themselves and advise others. Securing and widening access to the educational experiences is central to achieving these goals. This presentation addresses these issues of access and accessibility of worthwhile educational experiences for adults. It commences with three brief country case studies (i.e. Japan, Singapore and United Kingdom) and discusses the mix of purposes for adult education and how it is enacted, supported by data from the Programme of International Assessment of Adult Competence. The aim here is to indicate how institutional and societal imperatives come to shape these adult education provisions and how access is viewed and enacted. Where possible, specific comparisons will be made with Switzerland. Then, drawing on work life history narratives of through working age adults, the discussion leads to a consideration of the educative experiences that are afforded and engaged with work and communities. The informants included economic and refugee migrants, indigenous adults. These comprised provisions of guidance and support, interactions, access to knowledge and development of capacities that would have been otherwise unavailable or inaccessible for these adults, including through formalised provisions of adult education. It was found that these kinds of educative experiences were not only accessible and engaged with, but were salient for decision-making, opportunities and guidance in ways that address a range of personal, employability and participatory outcomes. That salience was noteworthy for refugee migrants, for instance. Given the importance of accessibility and effective educational experiences, a more inclusive view about the purposes, practices and provisions of adult education are then concluded.

Professor Stephen Billett

Dr Stephen Billett is Professor of Adult and Vocational Education at Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia. After a career in clothing manufacturing, he was a vocational educator, teacher educator, professional educator and engaged in policy work in Queensland. Since 1992, he has researched and published widely in fields of learning for occupations, vocational education, workplace learning, work, higher education and conceptual accounts of learning for occupational purposes. He was a Fulbright scholar (1999), National Teaching Fellow (2009-11), ARC Future Fellow (2011-16) recipient of honorary doctorates from Jyväskylä University, Finland (2013), University of Geneva (2020) and University West, Sweden (2024), elected Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences of Australia (2015), research fellow at Oxford University (2019-22), adjunct professor at University of Stavanger, Norway (2019-23) and University Väst, Sweden (2019-2023). His current projects focus on: the standing of vocational education, integration of work experiences to promote employability, alignments between learning and innovations at work, resilience in healthcare workers, worklife learning, continuing education and training, developing adaptability through internships in Singaporean post-secondary educational institutions, wisdom in practice and widening access to mature ages students. He is the founding and editor in chief of the *journal Vocations and Learning*, and the *Professional and practice-based learning book series*.