

# AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF ADULT LEARNING

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From the Editors' desk

274 *Robert Townsend & Jeffrey Bryant Jones*

Celebrating 65 years of Adult Learning Australia 1960-2025

279 *Jenny Macaffer*

## Refereed articles

284 Therapeutic Theatre as a process for the inclusion of students  
with mild dementia in Adult Community Education courses

*Jeffrey Bryant Jones*

309 Performing pedagogy: Exploring the impact of theatre in  
trauma-informed teacher education

*Anne Southall, Juliana Ryan, Siobhan O'Brian & Melissa Giles*

337 Reimagining learning spaces: A call to action for the Schools of  
Social Work

*Ashwathi Muraleedharan & Lizy P.J.*

- 357 Utilising photovoice to engage critical reflection of field placement experiences among international university students  
*Shane McDonald, Mary-Anne Wallwork & Lauren Terzis*
- 381 Transformative journeys beyond schooling: Storytelling and poetic inquiry as catalysts for adult learning in community spaces  
*Tracey Ollis & Vicky Duckworth*
- 404 Effects of a creative pedagogy (peer instruction) in promoting learners' subjective well-being in a seniors' university in China  
*Chunlin Yao, Zonglin Dai & Yan Zhang*
- 427 Curious-creativity and ageing: An Australian conversation crisscrossing lifelong learning  
*Carol McDonough & Samantha Bews*
- 446 Creative polygogies: Facilitating transformation through perinatal singing  
*Georgina Veevers-Williams*
- 469 Creating value for creatives: Considerations in the design and evaluation of an online professional learning community  
*Liesel M. Arden & Catherine H. Arden*
- 482 Beyond the stethoscope: Dance, creativity and the healing arts in medical education  
*Lucy Mayes*

## Book reviews

Arts education and creative ageing: Older adults as learners, makers, and teachers of art

497 *By Melanie Davenport, Linda Hoepfner Poling, Rebecca Bourgault & Majorie Cohee Manifold*

*Reviewed by Carol McDounogh*

Policy, practice and pedagogy: Adult education in times of decaying capitalism and failed democracy

500 *By Lucy Macnaught*

*Reviewed by Garry Argent*

504 **Call for papers**

## **From the Guest Editors' desk**

### **Creative Pedagogies**

Robert Townsend  
Professor, Alliance Higher Education Institute, Australia

Jeffrey Bryant Jones  
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*Guest editors: Rob Townsend is a Professor of Social Work and Academic Dean at Alliance Higher Education Institute (AHEI), and higher education consultant with Naturally Gifted Research & Associates.*

*Jeffrey Bryant Jones is Artistic Director, Drama Educator and Drama Therapist with Hobo Playhouse Australia.*

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### **Introduction**

This special issue of the Australian Journal of Adult Learning (AJAL) explores the various movements at the forefront of creative pedagogies in adult education, exploring the ways that creative arts education processes are being defined and enacted in current times through

creative arts practices, adult learning programs and popular education in communities, and social change movements.

Arts Education can include creative writing, poetry, painting and drawing, singing, music, dance, acting, directing, and multimedia. Creativity education-oriented courses can cultivate problem solving and innovative thinking by using the creative arts in adult and community education across diverse contexts, community-based arts programs and festivals, or master's level courses in creative arts therapies.

Creative pedagogy, as defined by Aleinikov (1989), is the science and art of creative teaching, emphasising creativity as essential for successful learning. In essence, creative pedagogy teaches learners how to learn creatively and to become creators of themselves and their futures. The overarching principles of the five major pedagogical approaches - constructivist, collaborative, integrative, reflective, and inquiry-based learning - are inherently active and student-centred (Chan & Lee, 2021).

The pedagogies and psychologies of creative arts encompass how adult education processes in creative arts processes transform lives. Creative arts approaches to education are more inclusive and accessible for marginalised communities, including women, people in rural areas, minority ethnic/linguistic groups, and learners with disabilities. Creative problem-solving in community contexts often highlight coregulation and self-care strategies with creative arts educators facilitating creative self-care and problem solving for themselves and their students.

This special AJAL edition is structured into five sections; the first has three articles exploring *Theatre as creative pedagogy*. Jeffrey Bryant Jones explores therapeutic theatre as a pathway to extend the inclusion of students living with dementia in adult, community education courses in rural and regional communities in Victoria. Within the same context, Dr Anne Southall and colleagues present 'Biting the Hand', a theatre project in Bendigo that informs teachers' professional development on neurodiversity in our schools. Ms Ashwathi Muraleedharan from India reimagines learning spaces for the higher education schools of Social Work using theatre as a process of immersing students in empathy, creativity and problem solving.

Theatre can be entertaining, educational, even therapeutic; it can also be a metaphor for life as a theatre of learning. To borrow a few lines from

*As You Like It* by William Shakespeare, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts, His acts being seven ages".

The second section contains one article exploring a living pedagogy, where learning is embodied, relational, and emergent. **Curious creativity** and co-inventing conscious-living: an Australian conversation towards learning of ageing and learning with elders by Carol McDonough and Samantha Bews. A reflective treatise on ageing in community and the creativity that can ensue in many forms. Visual, written and active imagery are utilised across boundaries in the next section of articles which highlight adult learning as processes of empowerment, meaning making and professional development.

The third section enlightens us with research about **Creative pedagogies for professional practice**. Shane McDonald, Mary-Anne Wallwork, Lauren Terzis from Queensland propose utilising Photovoice to engage critical reflection during the Field Placement experience of international university students. Associate Professor Trace Ollis and Professor Vicki Duckworth explore the transformative journeys beyond schooling in a transnational space with storytelling and poetic inquiry revealed as catalysts for adult learning in community spaces. Professor Chunlin Yao and colleagues from Tianjin Chengjian University, China, reveal the significant effects of a creative pedagogy through peer instruction in promoting learners' subjective well-being.

Always practicing and practising creativity and creatively. The distinction stems from the evolution of English and its borrowing from French and Latin. The noun "practice" comes from the Old French word *pratique*, while the verb "practise" evolved from the Latin *practicare*. British English preserved this distinction, but American English chose to simplify it by using "practice" for both forms.

The fourth section is three articles on Reflections on **Practicing creatively** in very different contexts. Ms Georgina Veevers-Williams offers her practice reflection on a program she has devised, *The Singing Mamas*, which stimulates transformation in and for motherhood. Liesel M. Arden and Catherine H. Arden reflect on their projects, creating value for creatives: the considerations in the co-design and evaluation of transformative approaches to creative and business development in

an online professional learning community in Australia. Lucy Mayes then takes us 'beyond the stethoscope' with examples and reflections of dance, creativity and the healing arts in medical education.

The final section features two book reviews: the first by Carol McDonough on '*Arts education and creative aging: Older adults as learners, makers, and teachers of art*', edited by Melanie Davenport, Linda Hoepfner Poling, Rébecca Bourgault, Marjorie Cohee Manifold and Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group), 2024.

The second is by Dr. Garry Argent on '*Writing with students: New perspectives on collaborative writing in EAP contexts*', edited by Lucy McNaught and Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024.

We hope you enjoy this journey through creative arts and pedagogies for adult learning in all its forms and contexts.

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## **Special Adult Learning Australia webinar**

Adult Education and Creative Pedagogies  
Thursday, 26 March 2026 — 1:00 pm (AEDT) (time TBC)

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Join us for this special webinar following the release of Adult Learning Australia's special issue of the Australian Journal of Adult Learning (AJAL) - December 2025.

This session will delve into the diverse movements shaping creative pedagogies in adult education today. It will explore how creative arts education processes are being defined and enacted across adult learning programs, community-based initiatives, and social change movements and highlighting the transformative potential of creativity in learning and practice.

### **Special editors and facilitators**

**Rob Townsend** - Professor of Social Work and Academic Dean at Alliance Higher Education Institute (AHEI), and higher education consultant with Naturally Gifted Research & Associates.

**Jeffrey Bryant Jones** - Artistic Director, Drama Educator, and Drama Therapist with Hobo Playhouse Australia.

They will be joined by several contributing authors from the latest AJAL publication, who will share their insights into creative practice in adult learning.