

Active citizenship and university lifelong learning



**Sir Alan Tuckett
Professor of Education
University of Wolverhampton**

EUCEN – Universities' engagement in and with society – What ULLL can do

- Higher education institutions in many countries are struggling with ideas of public engagement, and are under pressure to demonstrate the value of their contribution to their wider society...
- (*Current trends*) result in the need for the development of overall university policy which answers different societal expectations and balances internationalism and regionalism, balances the need to be at once global and local.
- One major focus of these strategies has been an expansion of lifelong learning
- *Universities and engagement (2016)* Field,J., Schmidt-Hertha,B., & Waxenegger,A. eds

Thomas Carlyle, (attributed)



It is the first duty of government
to see that the people can think.

Raymond Williams



At times of change adults turn to learning:

- to understand what is happening
- to make adjustments in the light of it
- and to shape change

Our work is key to an active and informed democracy

Among our current discontents



- The COVID-19 pandemic
- Climate change/living sustainably
- The ravages of globalisation and its attendant inequalities
- Gender violence, xenophobia, racism,
- The rise of populism and anti-democratic action
- Sharply divided societies, erosion of trust
- Fake news and the social media

Trump!



- Populism
- Fake news
- Challenges to democracy
- Alienation
- Xenophobia
- Racism
- Gender inequality
- Won't go away with Trump

Among our challenges

- Structural unemployment, especially for young and old workers – exacerbated by COVID-19;
- And by the impact of technological change accelerated by artificial intelligence and robotics
- Managing the impact of ageing societies
- Mass migration

- Securing informed debate

The problem of meritocracy (Sandel): Universities are seen as part of the problem

- In the UK graduates voted to remain, people without HE voted leave.
- People with low/no educational qualifications – more unemployment, more poverty, lower life expectancy; less likely to vote; distrust elites
- Education systems designed to select success, also select failure “Education’s for other people”
- HE better at talking to/engaging with the already successful
- Neo-liberal forms of working, measurement and accountability make engagement harder

Educational responses are often led outside HE

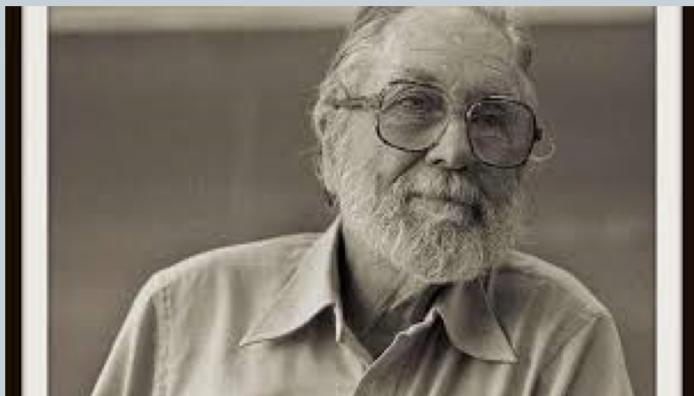


- Civil rights – Highlander;
- Gender rights/literacy – Nirantar;
- Climate change – Philippines community organisations
- Global citizenship education – Bridge 47

Myles Horton/Highlander



- We must try to give students an understanding of the world in which we live (a class-divided society) and an idea of the world we would like to have.







What can universities do?



- **Secure university strategic commitment to civic engagement to include:**
 - Demonstrating a commitment to inclusiveness, diversity and respect for difference
 - Recognising the importance of **place**
 - Making the work of HE accessible to wider society
 - Civic engagement not just the job of LLL departments

What can universities do? 2



- **Work with agencies already engaged:**
 - Access to target groups (age/faith/ refugee/working class, Bridge 47)
 - Identify new forms of action/response
 - Develop trust
 - Use HE resources/facilities to this end – address the digital divide
- **Work with partners with common concerns:**
 - A key lessons of the SDGs is the need to work inter-sectorally
 - Learning cities (Cork, Suwon, Glasgow, Cape learning region)
 - Health agencies; unions; expert patient groups
- **Generate research findings for advocates to use**

Advocates



- Climate science research is powerful
- But to make it beat on the pulses of the people , and build momentum for change needs good advocates
- But advocates need good evidence, accessibly presented

What can universities do? 3



- **Listen and respond to community needs**
 - David Browning, Tom Lovett, Mike Newman, Popular planning
 - Write it up – make it accessible.
- **Co-produce with participants**
 - Participative research
 - GLACER, Budd Hall, Rajesh Tandon
- **Value learner voice**
 - Foreground voices from marginalised communities, in seminars, publications,

Lions – from an Oxfam poster

- Until the lions have their own historians tales of hunting will always glorify the hunters



What can universities do? 4



- **Teach: Offer accessible curricula inside and outside the academy**
 - What do we want and how do we get there workshops
 - Current challenges – where they come from and what can be done about it?
 - MOOCs
 - Partner with broadcasters
 - Teach in unfamiliar places (football stadia, pubs, care homes...)
 - New patterns of provision

What can universities do? 5



- **Education and training of activists**
 - Theatre of the oppressed; School for radicals; popular planning
 - Trade union studies; Women's studies
 - Highlander again
- **Conscientise other university staff – academic and others**
- **Celebrate the diversity of learners and learning engaged with.**- importance of festivals, posh frock days
- **Host community organisations – HE is resource rich**
 - Conferences, webinars, reading groups,
- **Outreach centres – Bristol eg.**
- Above all:
- **INNOVATE, BE CREATIVE, HAVE FUN**

How do we
find and
share effective
responses?

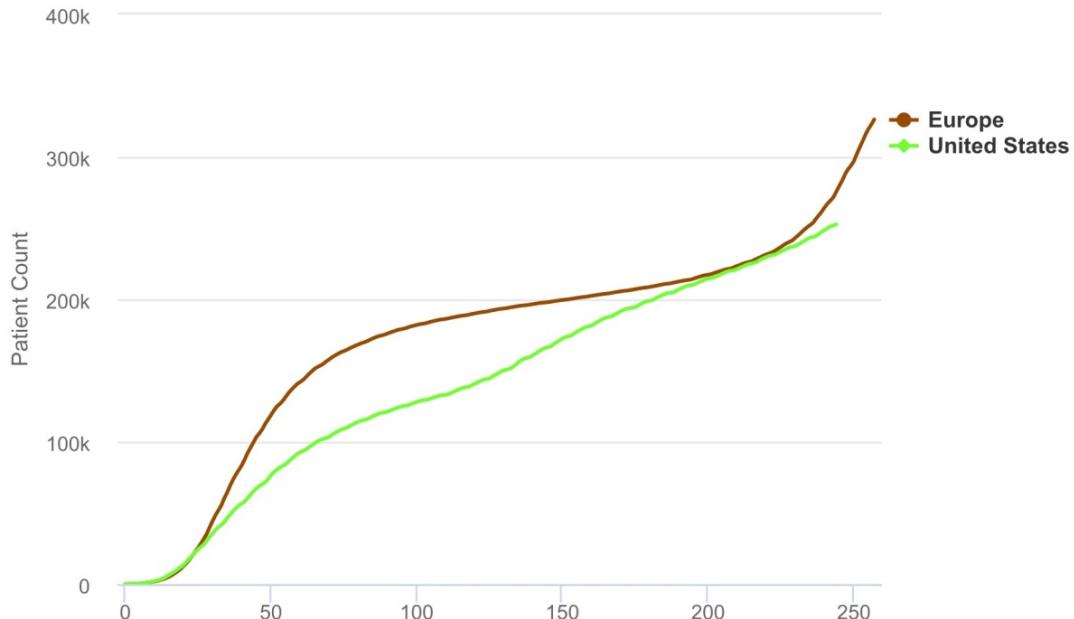
What about
Anti-vaxxers?

Deniers of
science?

What allies
can we work
with?

Cumulative number of deaths Europe vs USA (by number of days since 100 deaths)

Cumulative number of deaths Europe vs USA, by number of days since 100 deaths



**COVID -19 – a global pandemic
highlighting inequality, and calling
for solidarity**