

University Adult and Continuing Education in the UK – a historical and contemporary overview

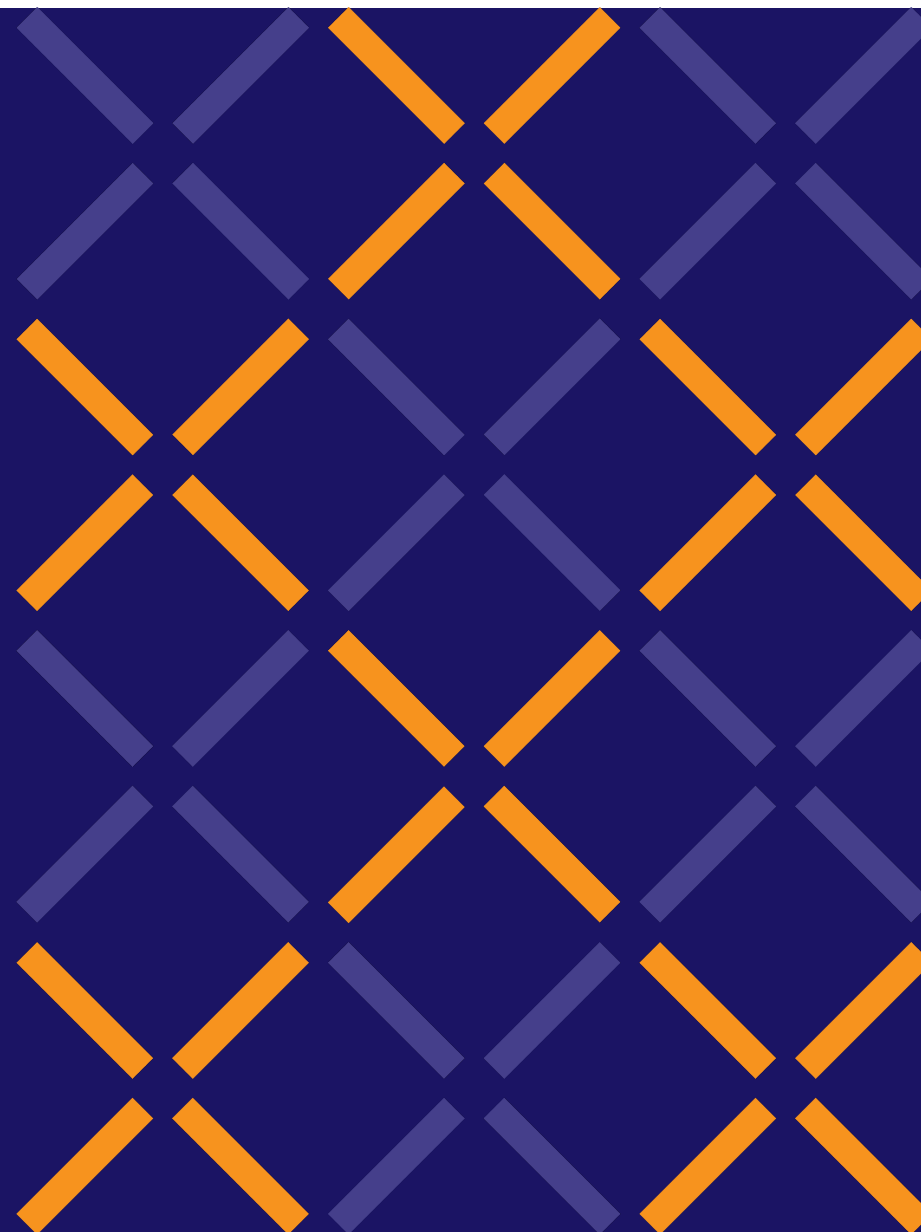
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The History

- First Courses – University of Cambridge, 1873
 - Tradition of learning for its own sake rather than for some ulterior purpose
- Linked to the advancement of the working class - allied to the Workers Educational Association (WEA), the co-operative movement and to trades unions
 - Publicly funded
 - A Political Project
- Report on Adult Education published by the Ministry of Reconstruction (1919) in the wake of World War I – part of re-building society in the aftermath of the War to End All Wars

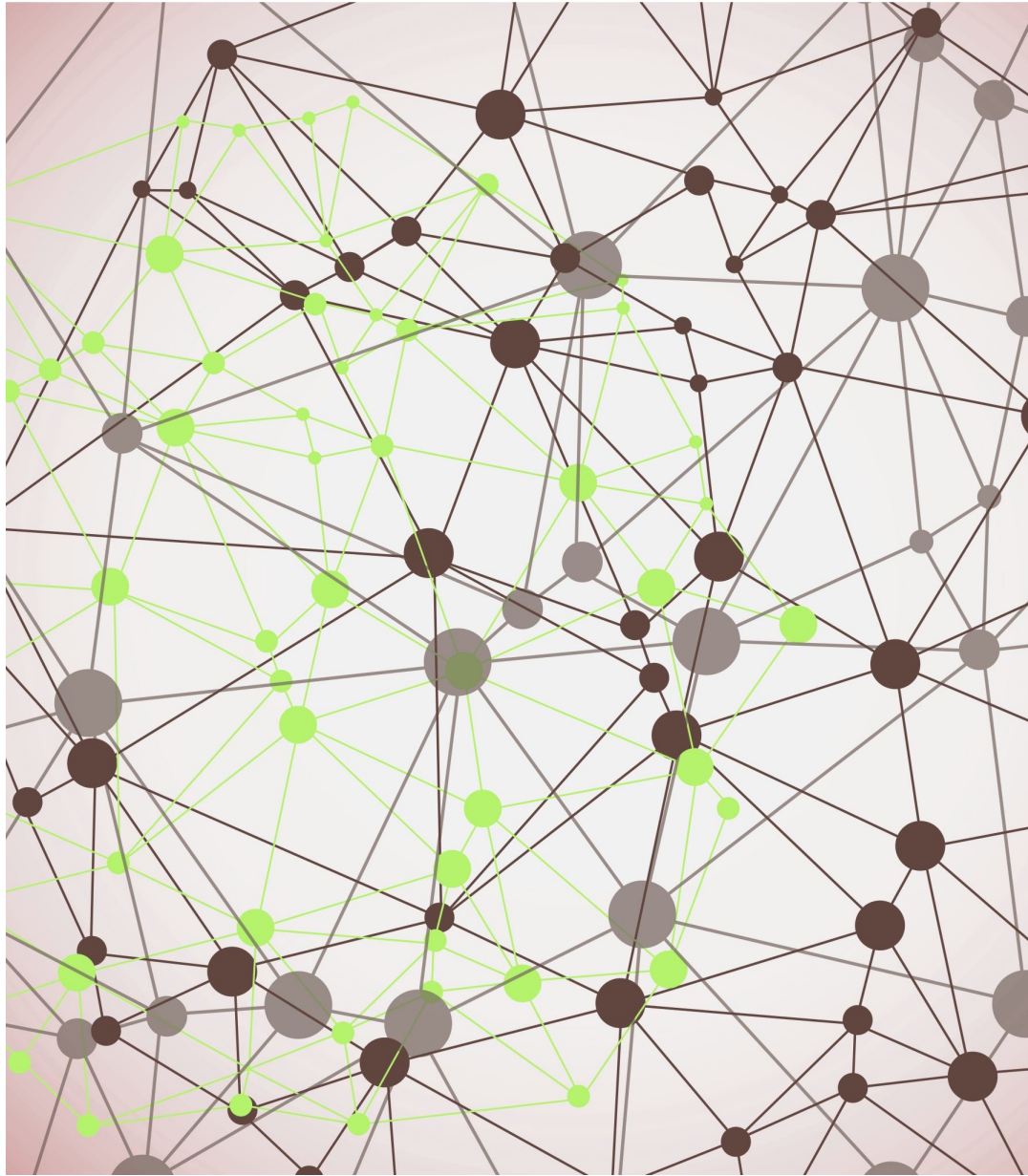
Fast Forward

Accountability, Credentialism, Quality and Flexibility

1980s - a concern expressed by many in the UK government about the general effectiveness of universities and their contribution to the economy

The spirit of Thatcherism

Jarratt Committee (1985) – establishment of **performance indicators** for universities, amongst which was **student achievement**



Accountability and its Measurement in the 1990s

For **spending** of grant allocation

Introduction of a measure of based on **recruitment to credit-bearing** courses

For diversity of student population

Introduction of a **disadvantaged student** category



Responses

- Complete change from non-accredited Liberal Adult Education to mainstreamed accredited continuing education
 - But ‘roubles in a dollar economy’
- Credit-bearing courses as part of modular flexible degree programmes – ‘micro-credits’, ‘credit accumulation’, ‘credit frameworks’
 - Failure to take opportunity
- Traditional universities slow in developing access provision for disadvantaged by comparison to vocational polytechnic sector

Other Stressors in 1990s

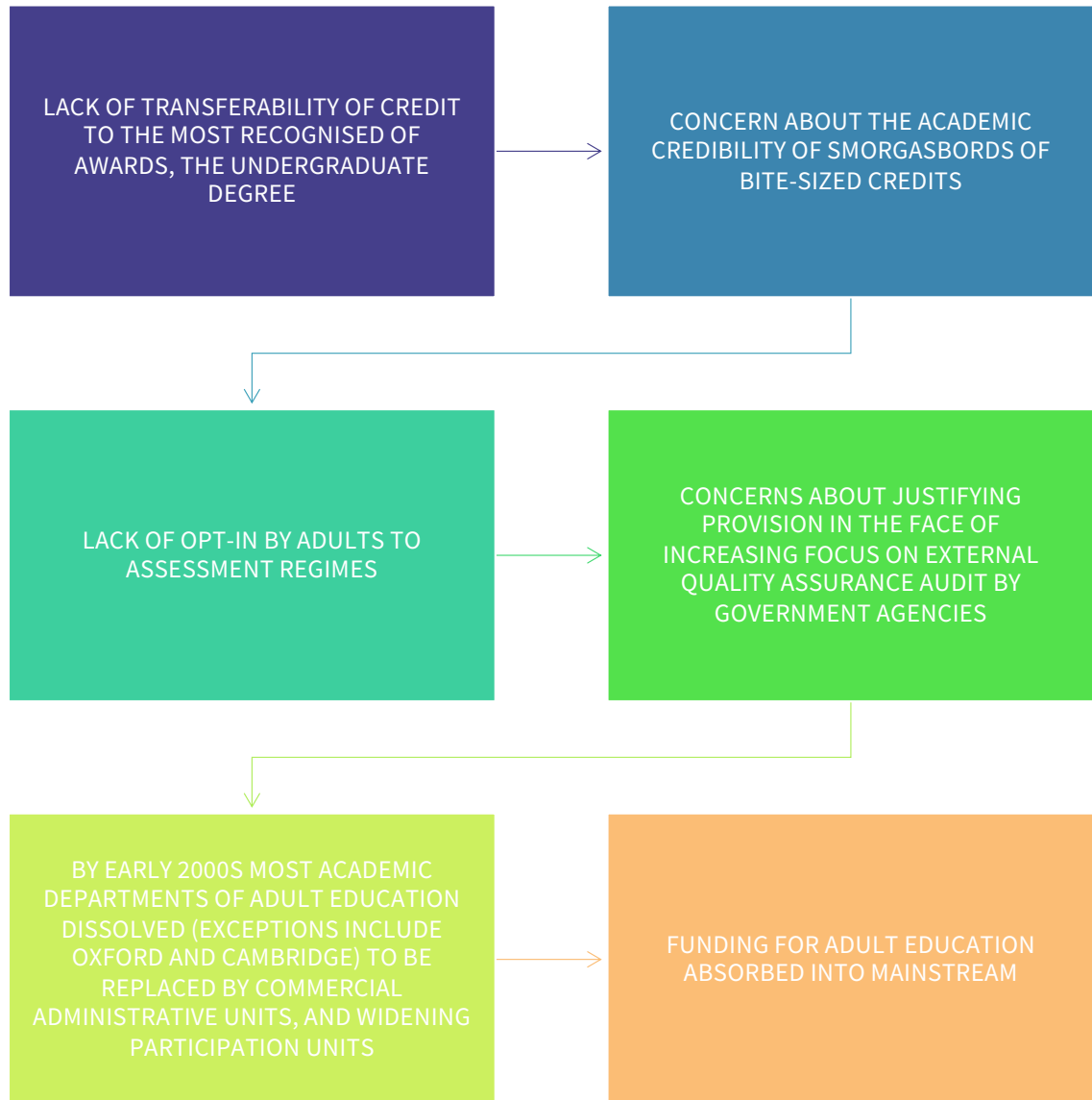


Cuts in funding for Local Government

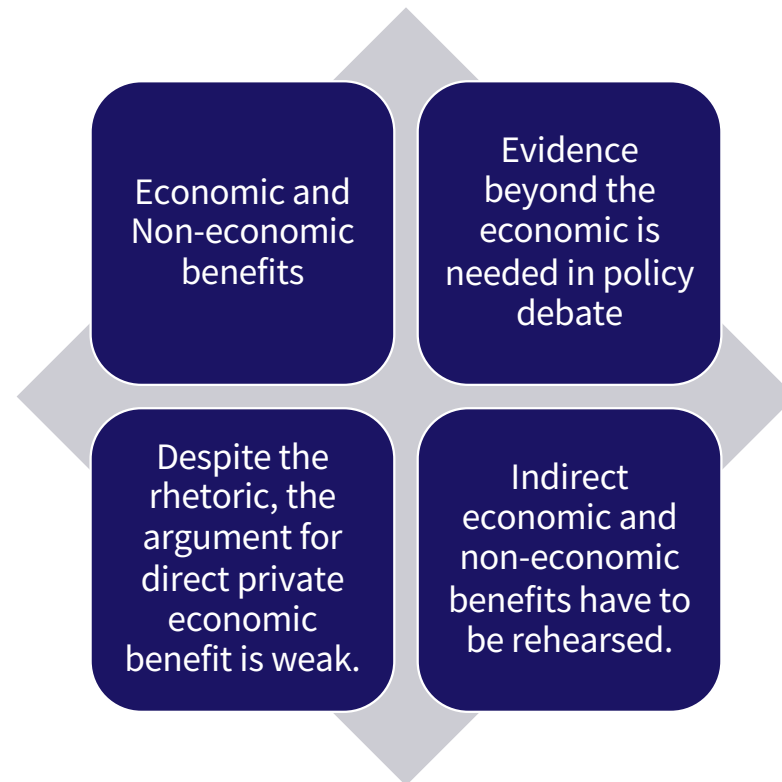


Introduction of quality indicators for research – Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) from 1986 onwards – now Research Excellence Framework

Decline and Fall



What have we lost?



The arguments

- Enhancement of psychological traits such as self-confidence, self-esteem, attitudes and motivation
- Health benefits
- Crime reduction
- Increasing civic engagement, through for example volunteering with concomitant development of social solidarity





Concluding Remarks and Options

A recognition of the value of liberal adult education – learning for learning’s sake

The world’s most successful education systems integrate within national policy the importance of liberal adult education for people all ages, all language groups and underrepresented target groups so that they can become attached to society.

Stronger state intervention and subsidy

Stronger regional and local government intervention

Different choices by universities about what to subsidise

References

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Contatti

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