Editorial

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the annual Journal of Research in Adult Learning and Education. The aim of this journal is to publish original research and contributions that span the adult education field from community, through further and higher education, taking in social policy, adult guidance and counselling. A particular focus of this journal is to promote work completed by new researchers studying adult education in Maynooth and other similar institutions so that they can experience writing for publication in a supportive environment and gain an outlet for their work which might otherwise remain unread.

The journal is peer reviewed, which ensures that the papers presented here meet academic standards for publication. However, we would like you, the reader, to bear in mind that these contributions typically represent a first step in writing for many of the contributors. That being said, these articles demonstrate high-quality research with underrepresented populations, by authors who have a personal and significant connection with the field. All of the articles in this current issue are drawn from Master's research on the MEd in Adult and Continuing Education completed in 2025 at Maynooth University.

The first article by ***Patrick Skelly*** focuses on the experiences of individuals who have transitioned from incarceration into teaching roles in Ireland. Patrick argues that although education is widely recognised as supporting rehabilitation and reintegration, less attention has explored the experience of individuals who seek entry into regulated professions such as teaching. Patrick draws out the complexities implicit in navigating issues around transformation and professional recognition within highly regulated educational systems where access is shaped by stigma, disclosure, and institutional gatekeeping.

Audrey Hayes presents the results of her research into climate change education for adults in Ireland. She explores how a dialogical community-based approach provides a much-needed counterpoint to current individualised, encouraging critically reflective practice on the drivers of ecological crisis, social inequality and power. In this, she argues, that education can become a site for hope, offering a counter hegemonic perspective supportive of climate justice education.

Francis Kavanagh focuses on the experiences of students in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction studying at Irish higher education institutions, paying particular attention to issues around identity, stigma, belonging, and institutional support. Drawing on sociological perspectives, Francis highlights a significant disconnect between espoused policy and lived experiences, arguing that recovery should be recognised as a legitimate student identity with targeted support structures and pedogeological awareness.

Matthew Hutnik explores his experiences with older adult students on digital literacy programmes within the community education sector. His research considers how supportive, non-judgemental digital skills education supports a transition from a position marked by anxiety and low self-efficacy to one characterised by increased self-confidence and motivation, allowing for meaningful participation in an increasingly digital society.

Natasha Marron presents a highly original autoethnographic account of self-guidance within adult education. She examines how narrative identity is shaped, disrupted and reshaped through lived experience, exploring the transformative potential of revisiting life stories, realigning dominant narratives with experiences of authenticity, belonging and purpose. Natasha's research provides an important lens through which practitioners can explore their own experiences and navigate periods of uncertainty and identity transition.

Finally, ***David Irwin*** explores how adult education can best meet the needs of recovering addicts on holistic community-based rehabilitation programmes, specifically focusing on long term recovery trajectories and structural life chances. It presents the experiences of both practitioners and service users to map each component of the rehabilitation process onto a theoretical synthesis of adult education models (Freire; Knowles and Mezirow). Additionally, the article specifically addresses the impact of gendered systemic barriers and distinct trauma profiles on long-term recovery.

We, the editors, really hope that you enjoy reading this edition of the Journal, and you might consider submitting your own work for publication, either as a student, recent graduate or a more experienced academic or professional in the field of adult education.

Angela & Michael, October 2026