

Editorial

Peter Mayo

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This second issue of the revived *Convergence. An International Adult Education Journal*, carries this outlet's original title. It does so to continue to link it to its past and also to distinguish it from other journals bearing the same title, *Convergence*. It comes out in a year in which the international adult education machinery resumed its normal course of events following the Covid lockdown. These included ESREA's Triennial Conference in Cork, Ireland in which more persons who made their mark in the field have been inducted into the International Adult Continuing Education Hall of Fame (IACEHOF), the last inductions before the lock down having been held in Belgrade, September 2019.

June 2022 however marked the holding of CONFINTEA VII in Marrakech, Morocco. As befits a global UNESCO conference of this standing, this journal issue gives prominence to this event in most of its articles and published statements. The statements arising from CONFINTEA VII and the Civil Society Forum (CSF), held concurrently in Marrakech, are included in this issue, the first (CONFINTEA VII) provided in different languages. The Arab world is represented in this issue through a contribution by Elsa Wakil, from Lebanon and the Arab House for Adult Education and Development. This article is also written in the context of CONFINTEA VII. I must thank our Moroccan hosts for their impeccable and lavish organisation of the Conference and the ICAE for the smooth running of the co-event.

The co-event, held at Marrakech's Longue Hotel, provided a most suitable context for the official relaunching of *Convergence. An International Adult Education Journal*, with participants present hailing from different parts of the world. The CSF programme was however jam packed which made the journal relaunch activity start later than as scheduled - late into the evening. This also affected participation at the event by a number of people who understandably required time off after a long hard day of presentations and discussions culminating in the CSF statement reproduced in this issue. The statement covers many issues including the pertinent one of governments and international entities delivering on the commitments agreed upon at the various CONFINTEA gatherings. The strictures about one's not 'putting money where one's

mouth is', as the popular phrase goes, are highlighted in this issue's contribution by Sir Alan Tuckett, former Director of NIACE which, during his tenure, published *Convergence*, in what were its final throes before its hiatus.

I personally did not leave the main CONFINTEA VII conference convinced that the worst fears, in this regard, will not be confirmed. There were the usual platitudes, during the plenaries, and a few critical insights such as those from Argentina or esteemed plenary speakers such as Sylvia Schmelkes, a fine educational sociologist from Mexico, and Antonio Novoa from Portugal. Schmelkes raised the important question: whose knowledge is given space in adult education policy and practice? She echoes ideas from Novoa's compatriot, Boaventura de Sousa Santos. The latter's concepts of epistemicide and cognitive justice immediately came to my mind. Needless to say, she highlighted adult education's resonating with the various Indigenous lifeworlds and the epistemological bases and valorisation of Indigenous knowledges, wisdom and learning traditions. This contrasted sharply with the uncritical equation of adult education with the requirements of the Capitalist economy; adult training *for* the economy and not adult education to *engage critically with* it. The official Brazilian representative, somehow echoing the policies of the then (now electorally rejected) Bolsonaro government, that same government which, among other things, sought to deny Paulo Freire the title of patron of Brazilian education and followed the mantra of 'Escola sem partido', argued ('gestured' would be too soft a word) in the former direction.

The major challenge for UNESCO in conferences such as these, massive conferences which almost naturally lend themselves to the transmission mode of delivery, is to imaginatively explore different ways of generating popular healthy debate. There can be exploration of ways to circumvent the procedure of formally booking an intervention slot beforehand. Participation worked better in the parallel sessions. Interventions, during plenaries, were often made in a very formal manner and without engaging with the issues raised by the invited speakers. Some of those who intervened limited themselves to the usual celebratory expositions of what their government or organisation is doing, with prepared texts. One was left wondering: where is the popular education tradition in all of this? This is the tradition we immediately associate with Latin America. There are antecedents as those in the Spanish Second Republic. An article in Castellano, in this issue, by Marina Aparicio Barberan and Pep Aparicio Guadas, important figures connected with *rizoma freiriano* and *Quaderns d'Educació Contínua*, considers adult education as popular education.

With regard to CONFINTEA VII, where were the voices of Indigenous praxis to which Schmelkes referred? Where were the voices from physically small states or island states highlighting the small scale factor? There are realities that would be unaccounted for in a 'one size fits all' strategy. Literacy and migration, as expected, featured prominently at CONFINTEA and the CSF. In this journal issue, Natascha Khakpour poses the challenge of translatability and mediation for adult education in the contexts of migration, literacy and flight. In this issue, we also pay tribute to an adult educator

who contributed internationally to the debate and practice of adult literacy, post-literacy and development – more on him shortly.

There was much talk of the right to adult education, a human right (human rights do not seem to be part of the UNESCO lexicon, as Antonio Novoa subsequently declared during the Q & A following his keynote in Lisbon - ICET, July, 2022). Affirmation and exercise of this right would be part of a new 'social contract', a recurring theme throughout CONFINTEA VII. This begs the radical question: what kind of social contract is being referred to here? Would it be one that signifies accommodation to and within the present socio-economic framework or one that transcends it, in the latter case, keeping alive the World Social Forum's dream of *um outro mundo é possível* (another world is possible)? Also as far as the CSF statement is concerned and its call for partnerships between different providers, State and Civil Society (term used in the contemporary not the specifically Gramscian sense), one is reminded of Freire and his engagement with the latter in São Paulo: how does one ensure that this would not result in co-option of Civil Society by the State? Freire states that one can learn from social movements and, by implication, civil society (in the contemporary sense) agencies, and be revitalised in the process, as long as one is not attempting to take them over. This applies to state or state agencies with regard to NGOs and social movements. The opposite can occur, in certain situations regarding global NGOs (e.g. Oxfam) vis a vis governments in geographically impoverished territories.

Aside from CONFINTEA and other issues in adult continuing education, this volume of *Convergence* reintroduces a Reviews section. This time we have a review of a Gramsci book on education, edited by Nicola Pizzolato and John Holst, penned by Joseph Gravina. *Convergence* also pays tribute, in this issue, to a contributor to the field who, alas, passed away this year. Professor Alan Rogers, like Professor Lalage Bown, commemorated in the previous issue, is part of a generation that left its mark on adult literacy and adult continuing education more generally. Author of the best-selling text, *Teaching Adults*, Professor Rogers organised, through *Education for Development*, an important seminar, at the University of Reading in 1993. The seminar focused on Sustaining Local Literacies. Invited as a speaker, I was introduced, through this event, to such household names in the debate on literacy as Nancy Hornberger, Heribert Hinzen, Paul Bellanger, the late Brian V Street, David Barton and the late Lalage Bown. Alan was full of ideas about organising adult education seminars. He talked me into organising and co-convening, with our University's Islands and Small States Institute and Education for Development, an international conference, held in the autumn of 1995. It focused on Adult Education in Small States and Islands. ACCESSI was the acronym used by Alan and was adopted all along. It is an area UNESCO would do well to take up, as mentioned previously. There is hope as lifelong learning and the plight of Small States have been included in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Of interest to this journal is that the proceedings of the 1995 Malta conference were published in a special issue of *Convergence* (Vol. XXIX, 2) a year or so later. The tribute to Professor Rogers is penned by his colleague, Anna Robinson-Pant. May he rest in peace.