

Editorial

Peter Mayo

Convergence. An International Adult Education Journal in its revived form, that was resuscitated two years ago at Volume 43 no 1, and as a bi-annual Journal, is gradually being re-established as a prominent outlet in the field of Adult Continuing Education. Key figures in the area are contributing. There have also been events to support such writing. Four papers in this issue, emerging from the first Global Adult Education Malta Seminar in November 2023, organised by the UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education at the University of Malta, responsible also for this journal's revival, derive directly from this event. These are the ones by Marcella Milana, Rose Kando, David Abril and Angel Marzo Guarinos and Elisabeth Lange. Canada, Italy, Palestine and Spain are the sources of these papers added to by others from Austria and Germany.

Each year, we keep losing stalwarts in the field whose contributions and personal qualities are highlighted in the In Memoriam section. One such stalwart is R.H. Dave from India, a major figure in the Lifelong Education movement that gravitated around UNESCO in the 70s and in the context of the multi-authored *Learning to be*, otherwise referred to as the Faure Report. This takes me back to my initial steps in Educational Foundations when Professor Kenneth Wain taught us, prospective school teachers, a study unit on Lifelong Education. I quite recall Dave's notion of vertical and horizontal integration and his key edited text *Foundations of Lifelong Education*.

The area lent itself to different interpretations within its expansive UNESCO conceptualisations, some seeing it as utopian and futuristic with the preposition.

'towards' thrown in. There was also a more empiricist take on the concept: Lifelong Education already exists and research can highlight the various forms it takes. However, well after the UNESCO movement ran its course, the concept transmuted into Lifelong Learning. It began to be criticised for its overly economy-oriented turn. It became reductionist, with a connotation of *responsibilisation*, more individualistic than social. This was more in keeping with the Thatcherite mantra of there being no such thing as society. The OECD and the EU are often criticised for promoting this version of the concept. It became a key topic of critical policy research.

John Field was a key figure in this research as he was in other enquiries concerning Social Capital, Globalisation and Workers' Education, among others. I recall his slight criticism of my 2005 paper with Carmel Borg for *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, on the EU Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, stating that, in his opinion,

we went a tad far in our assertion that it is very Neoliberal in tenor. He was, however, positive about our piece overall and seemed to gesture in this direction in his later writings on the matter. An article on Lifelong Education he wrote for the *International Journal of Lifelong Education* is de rigueur for anyone researching the evolution of the concept. I recall having recommended him to the Centre for Labour Studies (then the Workers' Participation Development Centre) at my university to deliver a Friedrich Ebert Stiftung-funded tripartite weekend seminar in Malta on Workers' Education. I can attest that he was impressive as key resource person for the seminar which involved trade union personnel, among others.

Well John is no more as a heart attack suddenly took him away from us. His co-researcher and former colleague, Tom Schuller is to be thanked for quickly agreeing to write a tribute to him for this issue. I also thank Kiran Mirchandani, Hongxia Shan and Bonnie Slade for agreeing to pit their memories together to honour Srabani Maitra whose relatively young life was snatched away when she was in her prime. Srabani, as the title of the tribute shows, was a major contributor to decolonizing Adult Education and had just been promoted to Full Professor at the University of Glasgow when she was struck down by meningitis. I knew her as a contributor to the Erasmus Mundus International Master in 'Adult Education for Social Change' which Bonnie Slade coordinates. One of her last contributions was to the recent book *Adult Education in India*, edited by Prasenjit Deb and Asoke Bhattacharya in the Brill series, *International Issues in Adult Education*. Her death was announced in this journal's December issue.

On a happier note, this year marks the 50th Anniversary of a landmark in the history of European Adult and Workers' Education: Italy's 150 hours experiment in working class education. In an age when social class continues to be placed on the back-burner and when the mere utterance of 'working class' often prompts, strange and unapproving looks in places generating this aura, since it renders the place less 'marketable', this occasion and its different celebrations can help restore this term's one-time collective dignity, its sense of solidarity-based warmth and belonging. As this issue goes to press, I speak as an invited contributor to a seminar marking the 150 hours (they were actually more than that) project deriving from the metal workers initiative in securing paid educational leave for non vocational education. This positively affected not simply employees but also women in general, boosting the feminist movement. Articles on this and related issues are welcome for future issues of *Convergence. An International Adult Education Journal*.