

BEYOND SCHOOLING: ADULT EDUCATION IN MALTA

Godfrey Baldacchino and Peter Mayo (Eds.) (1997). Msida, Malta: Mireva Publications.

This book is the first publication in English that provides a comprehensive overview of the broad field of adult education in Malta. The editors have managed to avoid undue overlap and repetition in the great variation of the 28 topical papers here, which portray a broad awareness of praxis on an international plane. The editors have managed to attract not only people working in adult education, but also a number of contributors who are not often associated with this field. Some of the papers are highly theoretical and academic, whereas others combine theory and practice. Many, but certainly not all, of the papers are informed by a neo-Marxist perspective.

This book is not only about the historical roots, development, and current state of adult education in Malta, but also deals with what adult education in Malta *should* be. Perhaps the subtitle to the book should have been "The Past, Present and Future of Adult Education in Malta." The papers are divided into four sections: *The Historical Context*; *Adult Education Practice: Alternatives to Chalk and Talk*; *Worker Education: Developing Worker Resourcefulness*; and *Adult Education as a Change Agent*. I highlight some of the findings and comment only on the papers which I consider to be of major interest from an international perspective.

The introduction by Baldacchino and Mayo provides an excellent analysis, from both a Maltese and international perspective, of progressive adult education, and of the impact and dangers of the historical baggage of the schooling approach. The papers in the historical section deal with several key issues: the impact of the British colonial administration until Malta gained independence in 1964, the pervasive influence and control of the Roman Catholic Church on Maltese society and life, and the intense language struggle over Italian, English and Maltese (which several of the authors say has taken energy from more important social and economic issues). The revival efforts to re-establish the Maltese language and the socio-political conscientization efforts early in this century reminded me of the national reawakening in the 19th century of the Slav nationalities in central Europe. There are differences as well—the Roman Catholic clergy supported the Slav struggles, whereas in Malta they acted as an oppressor. I note with interest that the prime motivator for the considerable literacy efforts in English (supported by the Ministry of Education) during the first half of this century in Malta was to aid emigration and to act as a safety valve during high unemployment.

In the section dealing with adult education practice, Bezzina, in "Adult Education for Peace," presents a very comprehensive overview and harmoniously combines theories of peace education, an account of its Maltese

manifestations, and ideas for further implementation. In a chapter on the use of radio in adult education, Borg draws extensively on foreign literature and examples, but seems oblivious to Canadian efforts such as Farm Radio Forum and Citizens' Forum. I commend the editors on the inclusion of another article by Borg, "Painting a Realistic Picture: Art in Malta Today," a subject that is sadly so often missing in accounts of adult education. Cutajar in "The Cultural Construction of Femininity: Women's Magazines and Maltese Women," reports on her analysis of an unnamed (why unnamed?) women's magazine which has a wide circulation in Malta. Unfortunately she limits herself to content analysis and her own conclusions as to what impact the magazine content has (can have?) on Maltese women's perception of gender identity. In addition, although many papers in this book mention the repression of women in Maltese society, which is to this day predominantly patriarchal, women's education is addressed in only three papers. The sad fact is that many, if not most, Maltese women are still unaware of the level of repression and a major conscientization effort is required to change this situation.

In the section on workers' education, the papers discuss how the development of the trade unions and of non-formal workers' education in Malta came rather late (in the late 1880s and early 1890s, respectively) due mainly to the repressive role of the Roman Catholic Church. In this section, Bugeja and Chircop employ an innovative dialogue approach in their paper on initial and continuing education of nurses.

In the last section, which looks at the role of adult education as a change agent, I take issue with three of the authors' papers. In "Imposing Freedom," Baldacchino claims that "adult education has nothing to do with schools: it goes beyond the school" (p. 489). I am similarly concerned with the real and imagined harm school-based adult education can and has done to adults, and alarmed at recent attempts by schools and school teachers to embrace (for all the wrong reasons) all of adult education under the guise of lifelong learning. I do not agree, however, that educators must eliminate formal adult education from the field of adult education. Surely adult education should be seen holistically as comprising formal, informal, and nonformal education and learning by adults. I also fail to see how Azzopardi's paper "*Adult Learners: Students and Participants*" [italics mine] addresses adult education when the paper deals entirely with youth in secondary and tertiary educational institutions and with adults engaged in "youth work." I wonder why this paper was included. Finally, I have to question whether the paper by Borg, Camilleri, and Mayo, "The Maltese Community in Toronto: A Proposed Adult Education Strategy," should have been included in a collection on adult education *in Malta*. Furthermore, Borg et al. appear to have overestimated the size of the Maltese community in Canada. They offer a rough estimate of 100,000 (p. 474), which is hard to believe given that the 1991 Canadian Census lists 15,521 of Maltese origin (all but 1,000 are

living in Ontario). In this paper, Borg et al. regret the loss of identity and the acculturation of the second and third generations of Maltese. I would argue, however, that in largely immigrant countries like Canada, there is a need for building up a new national, *Canadian* identity, which must incorporate the best of the various original cultural and social heritages of the people who make up its population. They provide an example of the regressive Maltese patriarchal social clubs in Toronto (p. 479) and have, perhaps unwittingly, offered an example of national identity traits which are counterproductive (and which *should* be abandoned in the new home).

The book is aimed at students in the recently established adult education training programs at the University of Malta, those who work in non-governmental organizations, and adult educators in general, as well as an international audience. The book appears to meet these aims quite well. Nevertheless, an introduction to the historical, political, social, economic, and cultural context of Malta might have been useful for an international audience, although to a certain extent this information is woven throughout the various contributions (and may have been redundant for Maltese readers). This book should be included in university libraries and should be in the hands of those who are interested in the development of adult education, adult education abroad, and dialogue between South and North.

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