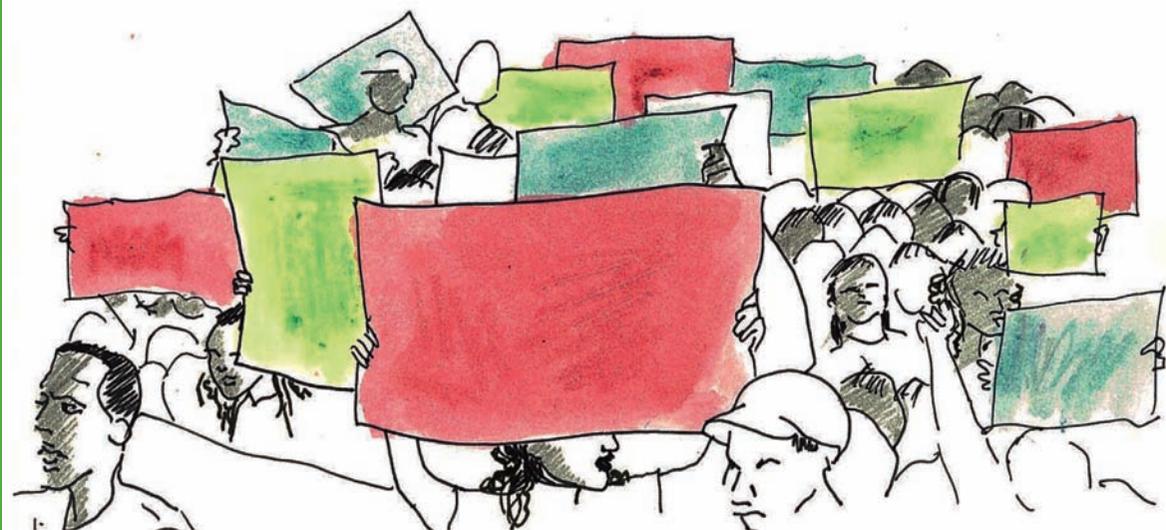


INTERNATIONAL ISSUES IN ADULT EDUCATION

# Learning with Adults

## A Critical Pedagogical Introduction

Leona M. English and Peter Mayo



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## LEARNING WITH ADULTS

# INTERNATIONAL ISSUES IN ADULT EDUCATION

Volume 8

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# Learning with Adults

## A Critical Pedagogical Introduction

*By*

Leona M. English  
*St. Francis Xavier University, Canada*

and

Peter Mayo  
*University of Malta, Msida, Malta*



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## DEDICATION

**This book is dedicated to the memories of  
Paula Allman (1941–2011) and Bruno Schettini (1952–2011)**

*Two wonderful scholars and friends who did much, through their practice, research and writings, to advance the study of adult education and critical education in their immediate contexts (USA and UK, Campania and the rest of Italy, respectively) and internationally.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Both authors would like to thank the following for feedback with regard to various chapters and ideas in this book: the late Paula Allman, Godfrey Baldacchino, Carmel Borg, chris cavanagh, Patricia Cranton, Antonia Darder, Mary Darmanin, Michael Grech, Catherine Irving, Dip Kapoor, Andre Elias Mazawi, Katrina Popovic, Anna Maria Piussi, Daniel Schugurensky, Ronald G. Sultana, Elizabeth Tisdell, Carlos A. Torres. The usual disclaimers apply.



## ENDORSEMENTS

This book offers new insight into what is a very dark moment of our human civilization.

*From the preface by Dr Carlos Alberto Torres, Director of the Paulo Freire Institute (UCLA) and Professor in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at University of California at Los Angeles*

In the midst of diminishing resources and growing inequalities, English and Mayo provide an incisive and much needed critique of adult education in ways that highlight not only its historical and philosophical roots but also its major significance to the practice of democracy. In a direct challenge to the neoliberal accountability craze, *Learning with Adults* offers a rigorous political reading of the field – one that systematically challenges oppressive educational policies and practices, while affirming an emancipatory vision of civic engagement. Truly an informative treatise that sheds new light on the education of adults.

*Dr Antonia Darder*

*Professor & Leavey Presidential Endowed Chair in Education  
Loyola Marymount University Los Angeles*

English and Mayo have pulled together the richest publication to date linking and deepening our understanding of critical theory, adult education and hope for a better world. This is a towering achievement that becomes a ‘must-read’ for all students and scholars in our field

*Dr Budd L. Hall*

*Former Secretary General ICAE*

*Professor of Community Development*

*Secretary*

*Global Alliance for Community Engaged Research  
University of Victoria*

English and Mayo have made an important contribution to the field of adult education that has suffered neglect from its halcyon days. This comprehensive oeuvre will contribute to the restoration of hope in a time of increasing hopelessness and despair by reminding us and arguing the case for the transformative capacity of adult education. The global crisis that we face today is an existential threat to

## ENDORSEMENTS

the sustainability of both the planet and the human race and unless we re-discover our individual and collective capacity as shapers of our own destiny, there can be no solution to the mess in which we have brought ourselves.

*Dr Didacus Jules*

*former Coordinator, Grenada Literacy Campaign  
retired Permanent Secretary for Education, St Lucia  
Director Creative Solutions Ltd.*

We are living in a reductionist age: education is increasingly confused with training, the quest for meaningful, solidarity and principled forms of life replaced by an obsession with ‘human capital’, and active citizenship domesticated by disciplinary regimes that recognise individuals only inasmuch as they are ‘consumers’. Here, in contrast, is an oppositional book that reminds us what education and educators should strive for. Here is a manifesto for education as a lifelong quest to engage with the world as it is, in order to imagine a world as it should and could be. And here is a timely reminder that so-called Knowledge Based Societies can ill-afford to rely on mere information and competence, when what they should strive after is wisdom.

*Dr Ronald G. Sultana*

*Professor & Director, Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research  
University of Malta*

The book offers decidedly critical and international perspectives on various aspects of adult education, especially on state, citizenship and neoliberal policies. Critical in both content and method, it is at the same time the part of the collective work needed to advance the Belém call to action by furthering awareness and capacity in the field of adult education.

*Dr Katarina Popovic*

*Professor, Universität Duisburg-Essen  
University of Belgrade & DVV International*

This book is essential reading for all those concerned with Learning with Adults. The authors provide an extraordinarily comprehensive, accessible and critical text, guiding the reader through key theoretical debates, illustrating their arguments from a wide range of contexts, from the global South as well as from the global North. In addition to engaging with topical debates on adult learning in relation to issues of race, gender, age, spirituality and sustainability, the authors demonstrate the relevance for related areas of practice, such as community development and health education. Learning with adults: A Critical Pedagogical Introduction will be a key reference for academics, students and professional practitioners from a range of fields, in years to come.

*Dr Marjorie Mayo*

*Professor of Community Development  
Professional & Community Education  
Goldsmiths, University of London*

*Learning with Adults* offers a synoptic overview of the debates and challenges confronting adult education, seen in the light of critical theory, and from the perspective of socially engaged academics. It will be a valuable resource to anyone embarking on a study of adult learning – both for its own analysis and as a signpost to further reading.

*Dr Alan Tuckett*  
*OBE, President ICAE*  
*Director, NIACE*

English and Mayo have written a marvelous introductory text to the field of adult education. Their approach is laudably critical, but they go beyond pure analysis to examine multiple contexts for adult education practice. In an era when the field is fighting for its life this is an energetic – and much needed – call to arms.

*Dr Stephen Brookfield*  
*Distinguished University Professor*  
*University of St. Thomas*  
*Minneapolis-St. Paul*

Leona English and Peter Mayo challenge hegemonic assumptions and ideas, while offering a constructive alternative based on the principle of working with learners and not just for them. Their analysis is accessible enough for newcomers to the field, while the authors' wide-ranging coverage and radical approach provide refreshing and challenging messages for the most experienced adult educator. Up-to-date, genuinely international and passionately committed, *Learning with Adults* is a great book.

*Dr John Field, Professor*  
*University of Stirling*

In *Learning with Adults: A Critical Pedagogical Introduction*, Leona English and Peter Mayo make an invaluable contribution to the field of adult education. Building on critical and social justice-oriented traditions, and drawing on relevant historical and current literature, English and Mayo not only cover an impressive range of theoretical perspectives and practical issues, but also establish insightful connections among them and provide inspiring examples from different parts of the world. I strongly recommend this book to everyone interested in the potential of adult education to bring about a better world.

*Dr Daniel Schugurensky*  
*Professor, Arizona State University*



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CARLOS ALBERTO TORRES\*

## PREFACE

*Learning with Adults: A Critical Pedagogical Introduction*

This book by Leona English and Peter Mayo offers a unique and critical perspective on the different policy challenges, theories and practices prevalent in the field of adult learning and education. In doing so, it introduces the reader to a very important and complex field of educational intervention. However, it is not just another book to add to the cornucopia of interventions in lifelong learning; it is a critical intervention. It tries to link the past with the present, showing that most of the great dilemmas of today in adult learning and education, while they may have been intensified with the implementation of neoliberal globalization for at least three decades, are substantially the same great challenges of the past.

Adult learning and education policies and practices cannot solve the great problems of adults or learning even in the so-called knowledge society, unless the tensions, ambiguities, and dynamics of unequal societies are confronted and resolved. The new technocratic answers to what are perceived in the field as the great challenges have been dealt with before in the context of social struggles and transformation.

To be sure, there are specific and different situations today. There are cries to develop rigorous evidence-based research in the field, or to incorporate best-practices, or to create worldwide standards. Yet, these pragmatic and technocratic solutions overlook the actual reasons why today, as before, the great challenge of adult learning and education is essentially not a pedagogical challenge but a political economy one. Paulo Freire (1970/1993), teaching us about the politics of education, opened a very rich and viable theoretical understanding of the connections between pedagogy and politics, the linkages between persisting and growing inequality in democratic societies, and the inevitable and much welcome struggles for liberation.

Yet, what this books does, and does very well, is to highlight that with each round of mistaken answers to the great policy pressures and challenges in the field, the new twists and turns in the field get more convoluted, and the problems are magnified. Now we are not only looking at a crisis of great epistemological and theoretical proportions in the field, but also some sort of policy paralysis given the immense crises of the world system in which we are living. Today we not

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\* Professor Carlos Alberto Torres is Director of the Paulo Freire Institute (UCLA) and Professor in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA).

only agonize over how to increase literacy (including the many varieties that have emerged with the process of modernization of societies and the digital divide in the context of the digital culture) but also how to link adult learning and education to work and employment, or how to address some of the perilous practices and policies that are taking our planet and our civilization to the edge of the abyss.

The task has been magnified in adult learning and education; its role in public policy and in activities of the civil society promoting civic engagement are every bit as important today with the decline of investment in adult learning and education by state institutions. This book offers new insight into what is a very dark moment of our human civilization.

## INTRODUCTION

### *Learning with Adults: A Critical Pedagogical Introduction*

Hope is a state of mind, not of the world. Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously heading for success, but rather an ability to work for something because it is good. (Havel, 1990, p. 181)

We willingly take counsel from former Czech president and playwright Václav Havel's words on hope, knowing that we are writing this book at a time when our own field of adult education is under assault from a variety of capitalist and neoconservative forces pressuring us to opt for the lowest common denominator and to turn away from the causes of criticality, lifelong learning, and education for freedom. Rather than succumb to these pressures, we have hope that our long term goals of education for life and living can and will be accomplished alongside professional and vocational education. Toiling in the field of critical adult education, and in this case writing about it, embodies our hope for the field and its promise to make a difference.

Ours is an approach to adult education that is committed to the promotion of social justice and to providing the space for a critical examination of our ideas and our practices. We use critical in the sense that Stephen Brookfield (2000) describes the adjective, that is not just asking questions, though that is useful, but asking questions that challenge hegemonic assumptions and ideologies. Brookfield (2005) builds on Antonio Gramsci, Cornell West, Henry Giroux and critical theory to establish an adult education rationale for challenging capitalism, assumptions of unbridled growth and progress, and the embeddedness of constraining ideologies. Along with Paula Allman, Stephen Brookfield, Antonio Gramsci, Henry Giroux, bell hooks, Paulo Freire, Myles Horton, Angela Miles and others, we dig deep, and in doing this we do not limit ourselves to "ideology critique" but seek to ferret out the concealed positive potential (that connects with people's preoccupations and quotidian experience), residing in ideology which is never 100% false but contains *partial* truths. The task of critical adult education is to analyse issues systematically and collectively with learners in order to develop a coherent vision for reconstruction. This lies at the heart of our conception of critical pedagogy, and we follow the lead taken here by Stuart Hall (1988) in his use of Gramsci's notion of hegemony (see Showstack Sassoon, 2009, p. 80). In so doing, we challenge systems of oppression and mechanisation and allow our critique to be guided by a

vision of a world which is “not yet” but which “should and can be.” Because we want to work within adult education frameworks to foster a commitment to hope in the future with our learners, our book title speaks of learning *with* not *for*. Indeed any *bona fide* adult education initiative such as community development, health promotion or citizenship education, initiatives that we focus on in various chapters of our book, is grounded in working with the co-learner/s so that our goals become mutually designed and delivered. Our task in the classroom, the community, and in the workplace is to collaborate with learners to further knowledge, skills and values that support the type of change that involves but also transcends personal growth to embrace systemic change. This task demands no less of us than everything as we utilise a critical pedagogy that celebrates hope, challenges economic and cultural oppression, and plants the seeds of change. In this book, we have taken a step back from the field that in some cases has become preoccupied with the person and self development to present a 21st century collection that takes us to the places where people gather to analyse real world problems and how they are enmeshed with the workings of the state, the economy and culture, and to create solutions to them. We engage critical issues like religion, race, gender, class and ageism which are interwoven through world challenges like illiteracy, poverty, and environmental degradation which plague many of our nations.

The reader of this book likely holds much in common with us – committed and engaged – but probably is just beginning to learn about this field, its theories and its practices. To respond to this thirst for more information we have provided substantive overviews of critical issues and approaches that are integral to practicing and theorizing on adult education in this century. For readers further along the spectrum, who have more knowledge, there is also ample discussion and food for thought about our field, especially as it concerns our diversity of perspectives, contexts and players. We know of a number of other introductory texts in adult education and each of them, as is usually the case, brings a particular strength. For instance, the Canadian book *Contexts of Adult Education* introduces readers to adult education in Canada and highlights many of that country’s experiments and forays in adult education (Fenwick, Nesbit, & Spencer, 2005). The decennial *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education* (Kasworm, Rose, & Ross-Gordon, 2010) in the United States serves a somewhat similar purpose, providing a broad overview of the field with a focus on that country’s issues and preoccupations, with some expansion into Canada. The Open University text, *Dimensions of Adult Learning* edited by Griff Foley (2004), then of University of Technology, Sydney, Australia, provides a critical, international dimension to the field with contributors from and focusing on different parts of the world. Ali Abdi and Dip Kapoor’s (2009) edited volume *Global Perspectives on Adult Education* extends the critical discourse in adult education from a very strong international perspective, particularly from the perspective of the Global South. Our jointly authored book continues in the same vein as the Foley book and, to a certain extent, the Abdi and Kapoor book, providing decidedly critical and international perspectives on various aspects of adult education such as its relationship to health promotion and to community development. Attempts are made to share examples from around the world and to

provide a critical perspective on them, raising questions of the system, its roots, its supporters, and its problems, and challenging the reader to become more active in creating democratic spaces for learning to occur. We assume that, like readers of the American, Australian and Canadian books, readers of this book will likely sample some but not all chapters. Therefore, we have taken the liberty of tracing some key themes (e.g., civil society) and authors (e.g., Freire) through many of the chapters. The reader is free then to read this book in whole or part and not miss important ideas or themes.

This book has been written in the wake of the sixth international conference on adult education, CONFINTEA VI, hosted by Belém, Brazil in late 2009. This United Nations sponsored conference entitled “Living and Learning for a Viable Future: The Power of Adult Learning” brought together international participants from the non-profit sector, the United Nations, UNESCO states, and many sectors of civil society to discuss the state of adult learning and the progress that had been made since the previous CONFINTEA. The resultant “Belém Framework for Action” reaffirmed the central role of adult education in addressing worldwide crises, environmental degradation, and in creating a sustainable world for all. Our book shares this belief in our field and shares also Belém’s affirmation that extensive adult education efforts are needed to promote literacy, as well as to support learning for knowing, doing, being and living together (UNESCO, 2009). This book is part of the collective work needed to advance the Belém call to action by furthering awareness and capacity in the field of adult education. Like CONFINTEA VI participants we see adult education as affecting and being affected by issues of policy, governance, financing, participation, inclusion, equity and quality. Hence, our critical approach in this text to the state, citizenship and neoliberal policies, all of which set the context for our work and influence its eventual success.

In true 21st century style, *Learning with Adults* has been completed across Skype and chat lines, as well as email, and the writing has been collaborative in a virtual sense. The technological reality of our present age is shaping the current field of adult education, and we have engaged it as actively as possible. Yet, this virtual space does not negate our physical and social locations in Malta and Canada, respectively. We invite our readers to interrogate their own positionality as they read the text, asking how the international examples provided relate or do not relate to their own, and what the implications are for adult education on a global scale. Indeed we challenge readers to think about the limits and possibilities of writing a text that is international in scope and which attempts to provide an introduction to a very diverse and amorphous field. Naturally, it would not have been possible to address every issue in adult education or to provide examples from every nation, and we are aware of the need for even more writing and exploration on many other topics. What we have provided instead is a critical and questioning perspective on the issues chosen – and woven this approach through a variety of issues and concerns such as spirituality, race, and health, asking the reader to rethink some assumptions about the world’s relationship to adult education and current concerns. Our selection of topics, though necessarily limited, is based on our reading of the primary journals, texts, internet resources, and major news sources. While we accord due attention to

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what is being written in the burgeoning literature on adult education and learning, we do not limit ourselves to just this area. As a matter of fact, we draw from a variety of sources including comparative and international education, social theory, community development, sociology (including sociology of education), philosophy (including philosophy of education), environmental studies, labour studies, political economy, political theory, gerontology, women's studies, critical race studies, critical pedagogy and cultural studies. Like many others, we want to prevent the field from suffering from "academic ghettoisation." An infinite range of disciplines and interdisciplinary studies constitute adult education's oyster.

What is common to our selection is that each issue is analysed and critiqued in a systematic way. The volume broaches a variety of themes though we recognise important absences which deserve greater treatment elsewhere, including issues such as sexual orientation, transformative learning, literacy, consumer-rights education, and disability. The selection of themes was conditioned by the areas that fall within our combined expertise based on our previous writings, areas of ongoing research and teaching commitments, and our own adult education practice. To address some of the gaps one of the authors is now preparing an edited volume of essays on topics which we have neglected here, such as workplace learning, disability studies and transformative learning (Mayo, in preparation).

## OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

This book is divided into four main sections: The first section, *Contextualising Adult Education*, begins with a discussion of lifelong learning and education, asking critical questions concerning the purpose of our field in the current age. This chapter challenges neoliberal assumptions of what learning is for, and asks how we can hold a space for learning across the lifespan. The second chapter continues the challenge by discussing notions of the state as an idea/place and network in which our work is happening. Given that the state sets the regulations and creates or blocks the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in any place across the world, a critical goal of adult education is to interrogate the state, its assumptions, its practices, and its effects. We also emphasise the centrality of the state (the nation state) in our times, thus avoiding the contemporary mantra that it is no longer important in the context of what we call the "intensification of globalisation." The state has not gone away. It is real, active, and matters. This leads to Chapter 3 which examines what it means to be a citizen in this state and in the international sphere in which it operates, and takes a cautious look at what adult education contributes to the advancement of citizenship. Our discussions here are based on the premise that citizenship is a contested terrain.

In the second section, *Contemporary Theoretical Perspectives*, we discuss some of the theoretical frameworks that are presently in use as heuristic lenses within adult education. Of course, we could not include all frameworks but the reader will find vestiges of other theories of feminism, human capital theory (HCT), and critical systems theory woven through chapters such as *Adult Education and Work*

and Women and Adult Education. In this second section we have provided in the first chapter, Chapter 4, a focused look at Marxist theory and the way it has affected adult education theory and practice in different parts of the world (mainly Europe and Latin America), and followed this in the next two chapters with post-modernist and post-colonial theories since each has direct implications for discussions of structures, identities, race, and lifelong education. Marxism has had the most enduring relationship with adult education, showing directly, for example, in the work of contemporaries, Paula Allman, John Holst, David W. Livingstone, Shahrzad Mojab, Oskar Negt, Roxana Ng, John Wallis, Frank Youngman and historical figures and movements such as James Connolly (Séamas Ó Conghaile), Antonio Gramsci, Raymond Williams, Myles Horton, Paulo Freire, Rosa Luxemburg, popular education, the Plebs League and independent working class education (IWCE). It also floats beneath the surface of the post-foundational theories that we also explore.

The third section, *Contexts of Practice*, discusses the various spaces where a great deal of teaching and learning is done with adults, whether formally, informally or non-formally. This section starts with Chapter 7 on work and adult education, which addresses on-the-job learning and the forces that attempt to make all learning focused on “employability” through skill acquisition and preparation for the workplace, without due attention to the potential for informal learning, and engaging in lifelong learning for a full and abundant life. The second part of the chapter looks at radical and reformist attempts at contributing to the education of workers that extend beyond the notion of education for work. They fall within the purview of workers’ education and we provide insights from Gramsci’s Factory Council Theory, the Workers’ Education Association (WEA) and Plebs League efforts, cooperative networks and self-management experiences. This is followed by a companion chapter that critiques notions of learning to meet competences that have been set by a neoliberal regime as a way of maximizing profits, inadvertently reducing people to resources. In the next chapter, we adopt a cultural studies approach as we conceive of museums as critical sites of learning in the community. This chapter is followed by one focusing on adult learning in social movements, arguably the place where most critical change is occurring. A companion chapter on adult education and community development follows, raising critical questions of development in the context of technological advances and increased government surveillance. We round off this section with a chapter on university continuing education (UCE) given its historical place in reaching out to communities to develop agriculture and sustainable living, and its current place as a venue to provide educational access to part time students, especially women, who are often older than average and who need more flexible means of learning. Issues concerning the corporatisation and “Bolognisation” (in the European Union and beyond) of higher education are raised. In each case we make a sustained effort to bring critical social and economic perspectives to bear on the discussion.

Section Four, *Concerns in Practice*, provides a discussion of several key issues in critical adult education. Of course, these are select issues that represent not only areas of our professional expertise but also current sites of exploration in adult education. We begin with Chapter 13 which presents the concerns of teaching

## INTRODUCTION

women, given insights into feminism, critical pedagogy and adult development theory. This is followed by individual chapters on racism, spirituality, and environment, all of which are interrogated in terms of purpose and intent in the context of adult education. Racism is given pride of place because of its implications for exclusion from learning and success, and because of the ways in which racialised and stereotyped policies and procedures have limited access and opportunity for immigrants, migrant groups and indigenous peoples. In the next chapter, we ask how spirituality has been absconded in adult education to further the bottom line and how creating a sustainable lifestyle engages our critical thinking and learning processes. Our final two chapters in this section look at adult health education and older learners, respectively. In Chapter 17 we ask how health systems have excluded the adult learner in the community who has a vital role in learning and teaching about health and ways to increase it. The concluding chapter in this section asks how we might meet the needs of the growing numbers of aging adults who are often keen to learn, and for whom stereotypes about aging need to be eliminated since they are clear-cut barriers to learning.

Our concluding chapter, “The Critical Turn,” is in many ways a return to the beginning of the book. It explores the notion of critique and how it has suffered a demise in our field. This chapter provides a summary of the issues raised in the foregoing chapters, brings other issues into the equation and provides an overview of how these issues were taken up in the international adult education literature giving importance to minority and majority world contexts. Due importance is accorded to what we regard as key writings in the field drawn from a variety of sources, many of which have informed our own thinking on critical pedagogy. Besides underscoring the richness of critical approaches to theory and practice, this final chapter challenges adult education teachers and learners to foster and support criticality to help render the field more robust.

## **Section 1**

### ***Contextualising Adult Education***



## CHAPTER 1

# THE DEBATES AROUND LIFELONG EDUCATION/LEARNING \*

Lifelong learning is arguably the most widespread term used throughout the entire discourse centring on education and training today. It seems to be the main concept for educational policy making in many parts of the world, not least Europe (Field, 2010), and particularly the European Union, and we will suggest throughout the chapter that there is a strong reason for this. Yet, it has not gained attraction in the United States where the main organisations like the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education and journals such as the *Adult Education Quarterly* have not surrendered their education-focused argot and titles. Likely, however, this is for continuity and historical reasons as opposed to political or ideological ones.

The Lisbon European Council of March 2000 declared the European Union's target to be that of becoming the "most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world" (CEC, 2001, p. 6). Eight months later, and in response to the conclusions reached in 1996, designated the European Year of Lifelong Learning,<sup>1</sup> the European Commission (CEC) issued a *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* which was to serve as a set of guidelines for educational policy making in member states, the European Economic Area (EEA), accession countries, each of which carried out a broad consultation process (CEC, 2001, p. 7). This process involved a variety of actions including seminars in which the *Memorandum* was disseminated and efforts made to develop national strategies for lifelong learning. Countries around the world were also grappling with the importance of lifelong learning and its relationship to the economy.

Lifelong learning has been on the EU agenda for quite some time (see Murphy, 1997, p. 362). Its related concept, "lifelong education" has been around for an even longer period including the late 1960s and early 1970s when it was promoted by UNESCO as its "master concept" for education (see also Field, 2001; Tuijnman & Boström, 2002; Wain, 2004b). The UNESCO version of lifelong education was advanced through a body of literature comprising books and papers by a variegated group of writers (ranging from Liberal to Marxist) with a strong humanistic base.

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\* This is a revised version of a paper which appeared as C. Borg & P. Mayo (2004). Diluted wine in new bottles. The key messages of the EU Memorandum on Lifelong Learning. *Lifelong Learning in Europe (LinE)*, 9(1), 19-25. Authorisation to republish granted by KVS Foundation, Helsinki, Finland, <http://lline.fi/>.

<sup>1</sup> Council Conclusions of 20 December 1996 on a strategy for lifelong learning (97/C 7/02).

The names of Paul Lengrand (1970), Ettore Gelpi (1985), Ravindah Dave (1976) Bogdan Suchodolski (1976) and Arthur J. Cropley (1980) come to mind, not to mention the authors of *Learning to Be* otherwise known as the Faure Report (Faure et al., 1972). Some of this writing had its basis in scientific humanism with which Julian Huxley, UNESCO's first Director-General, was associated (see Finger & Asún, 2001, p. 22).

At the risk of generalising from among the work of a motley group of writers, one can say that this movement for lifelong education provided an expansive and humanistic view of the entire process of human learning “from the cradle to the grave.” This movement, however, faded away in the late 1980s while the concept of lifelong learning had by then already been used by the OECD. As John Field (2010) explains:

In practical terms, the activities undertaken by UNESCO and OECD mainly helped focus policy attention on the educational needs of those who had benefited least from the front-loaded approach to initial education. In industrial nations, this often involved developing educational entitlements for workers, with laws on paid educational leave in a number of countries. In some, there was a broad entitlement to leave for general purposes (as in Sweden, and in state level laws on *Bildungsurlaub* in Germany); in other cases, educational leave was guaranteed for specific purposes, such as vocational training under the French law on *congé de formation* or British laws on health and safety and workplace representation. Many more countries experienced a growth of adult basic education, with particularly impressive innovations in adult literacy provision and women's basic education. (p. 90)

By the 1990s the discourse took on a decidedly economic turn and the OECD was not immune to this. Note the OECD's emphasis on “learning” rather than “education” in what seems to have been a far from innocent discursive shift. The emphasis is placed less on structures of educational provision and more on individuals taking charge of their own learning (Tuijnman & Boström, 2002, pp. 102–103). The concept was eventually embraced by the EU where “lifelong learning” was made the overriding educational concept for a concerted effort to lead member nations to pool their resources to become competitive in the new global scenario. The origin of this particular adoption of the concept has been traced back to the publication of *Education for Life: A European Strategy* by the European Roundtable of Industrialists (Murphy, 1997). Critics such as Roger Boshier (2005) agree that the recent adoption of lifelong learning (not Faure's lifelong education) by economic interests is a way of downloading responsibility for education to individuals and blaming them for failed economies and states. Boshier notes that it is in the state's and capitalists' interest to promote lifelong learning and to use it surreptitiously to advance neoliberal goals.

These economic imperatives were reflected in the European Union's *Memorandum's* definition of lifelong learning: “all purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence” (CEC, 2000, p. 3). This definition was formulated within the context of the Eu-

ropean Employment Strategy launched at the Heads of State European Council, Luxemburg, 1997 (CEC, p. 3). The definition was criticised during the consultation process on the grounds that it placed too much emphasis on the employment and labour market aspects of learning (CEC, 2001, p. 9). It was subsequently modified to read thus: “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and or/employment-related perspective” (p. 9).

The EU’s *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* has six key messages. These are: (a) new basic skills, (b) investment in human resources, (c) innovation in teaching and learning, (d) valuing learning, (e) guidance and information, and (f) bringing learning closer to home. We shall view each of the messages in some depth and provide critical comments. We also note that, though this discussion is centred on Europe, there are global implications, and this serves as a case study of universal trends in learning even though Ecuadorian practitioner and researcher Rosa Maria Torres (2003) had argued that this is very much a westernised concept which takes away focus from the role of adult basic education as a contributor to development in the majority world (in Field, 2010, p. 91). As Field (p. 90) remarks, the connection between the modern concept of lifelong learning and the interests of the industrially most advanced countries, within the context of globalisation, marks another significant departure from the old discourse of lifelong education as promoted by UNESCO and the Faure report. In the UNESCO discourse, the majority world’s influence and concerns were reflected (e.g., the valorisation of non-formal popular education within the context of *Education for All*).

#### MESSAGE 1. NEW BASIC SKILLS FOR ALL

The report published by Cedefop/Eurydice (2001) reveals a range of interpretations of the term “basic skills.”<sup>2</sup> However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the dominant discourse on “basic skills” is labour-market oriented. The net result of this orientation in curriculum reform is that “Arrangements for guidance, support and identification of skills needed by the labour market, in cooperation with the social partners, are highly significant aspects of curricular provision” (p. 15).

This trend towards the marketisation of curricula is echoed by Viviane Reding, former European Commissioner for Education and Culture, in her Preface to the above-mentioned document. Reding asserts that it is crucial to “adjust our educational systems to the requirements of the economy and the knowledge society” (p. 5).

Missing from the *Memorandum*’s section on “basic skills” is the notion of what Freire and others (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; Shor, 1999) would broadly term “critical literacy” defined in Freire’s sense of “reading the word and the world” (see

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<sup>2</sup> For a broader discussion of the actions surrounding Message 1, and therefore “Basic Skills,” contained in the 2001 Cedefop/Eurydice document, see Walters, Borg, Mayo, and Foley (2004). For a broad discussion of the actions in connection with all six key messages, presented by the 2001 Cedefop/Eurydice document, see Borg and Mayo (2002a).

Chapter 8 on competences). This attribute would render the discourse on new skills, in the *Memorandum*, less dominated by the ideology of competitive individualism. Also included in this message is the skill of being able to take charge of one's own learning, a key concept in the work of the UNESCO lifelong education movement. This is an important skill that can render the learner less dependent on others and an active seeker of learning opportunities and resources at different stages of his or her life. As with the old literature, however, the notion of "taking charge of one's own learning" is conceived of in simply individualistic terms that can result in placing the entire responsibility for learning on the individual, often at great financial expense, with the danger that failure to achieve can be explained away in "blaming the victim" terms. There are those who have argued that the notion of a "learning society" promoted by the UNESCO literature recognises learning as a social act and therefore allows possibilities for the collective, mentioned in *passim* by Dave (1976). It can also be argued, however, that the notion of a learning society can also be conceived of in individualistic terms in the sense that one can have a society of individuals learning on their own. In these stringent neoliberal times, this is the more likely conception. The individualistic notion of self-directive learning lends itself to a discourse that allows the state to abdicate its responsibilities in providing the quality education to which every citizen is entitled in a democratic society and shift them entirely onto the learners or larger entities such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in an era often said to be characterised by "ngo-isation." As indicated earlier, the shift from lifelong "education" to lifelong "learning" accommodates this discourse.

We reiterate the view that learning is a social act and so one should therefore add the "collectivity" dimension (this has gender implications as will be argued in Chapter 13) to the concept of self-directive learning by calling for an educational approach that allows people to learn how to take charge of their own learning both individually and collectively. Once again, we can perhaps begin to speak in terms of self and collectively directed learning. In this context, the *Memorandum's* term "social skills" assumes a broader meaning.

#### KEY MESSAGE 2: INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

This message's objective is to "Visibly raise levels of investment in human resources in order to place priority on Europe's most important asset – its people" (CEC, 2000, p. 12). Clearly the EU is trying in this section of the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* to emphasise the need for a culture of shared responsibility for the education of present and prospective employees. This takes the form of individual incentives such as the opening of learning accounts, subsidised study leave and the affirmation of one's right to training opportunities. It also emphasises the need for more flexible working arrangements that allow employees to learn and upgrade their profile. Once again, the education of workers, in this section, is presented in a manner that suits the interest of the employer by rendering employees partly responsible for their professional upgrading and by relieving employers

of part of the responsibility for the provision of training, making the other social partners share the burden. There is little in this section on the rights of employees and their representatives (important social partners) to negotiate paid educational leave (PEL) for studies in areas which extend beyond the narrow focus of vocational preparation. We develop this point further in Chapter 7 on work and learning and it brings to mind the point, attributed to Field (2010) earlier on, regarding how the old UNESCO literature led to non-vocational use of PEL in countries such as Sweden and Germany, the latter at *landes* (state) level.

### KEY MESSAGE 3: INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

This message's objective is to "Develop effective teaching and learning methods and contexts for the continuum of lifelong and lifewide learning" (CEC, 2000, p. 13). The message calls for "a major shift towards user-oriented learning systems with permeable boundaries across sectors and levels." It refers to the need for "individuals to become active learners" with the implication being that there is a need to improve existing practices and "take advantage of the opportunities offered by ICT [information communication technology] and by the full range of learning contexts" (CEC, 2000, p. 13). It adds that the "Learning systems must adapt to the changing ways in which people live and learn their lives *today*. This is especially important for achieving gender equality and catering to the increasingly active 'Third Age' [aging] citizenry" (CEC, 2000, p. 14). It also places the emphasis on upgrading the skills of those engaged as educators in formal and non-formal learning environments, be they paid professionals, volunteers or those to whom teaching is a secondary function (p. 14).

There is much in this section of the *Memorandum* that resonates with the literature provided by authors associated with the lifelong education movement. Quite commendable is the sensitivity shown towards social difference based on the recognition of the way traditional teaching ignores such differences and reinforces normalising discourses regarding femininities, masculinities and age. Ethnic difference is, however, not included here. One expected it to be included in the new communication that was meant to be produced around June-July, 2011, given the rise of migration into Europe during the decade since the publication of the *Memorandum*. We were, however, left awaiting the promised communication at the time of going to press.

There is an emphasis throughout this and other lifelong learning and lifelong education literature on the need for educators to serve as facilitators, resource persons, and animators. While this no doubt results from a dissatisfaction with traditional pedagogical methods that have been deemed, in several quarters, to be alienating to various categories of students (in terms of class, ability/disability, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and other forms of social difference), rendering them "objects" rather than "subjects" of the learning process, one must guard against the danger of the pedagogical approach involved degenerating into *laissez faire* pedagogy which inevitably favours those who enjoy greater access to resources.

As Paulo Freire (1970/1993) has cogently argued, educators should not shirk their responsibility to *teach* while rendering the teaching-learning process interactive. Teachers should not be denied *authority*, which ought to be distinguished from *authoritarianism*. The authority referred to here derives from their competence in the area being tackled and as pedagogues. The challenge is for both educators and learners to render knowledge *dynamic*, rather than static, through an interactive process in which the matter at issue becomes an object of *co-investigation* by the educator and learners, a process which, in Paulo Freire's terms, would help arouse "epistemological curiosity."

This section of the *Memorandum* should be applauded for recognising that a whole variety of settings can be conceived of as educational settings – different sites of educational practice.<sup>3</sup> They include schools, training centres, universities, museums, churches, mosques and other religious institutions, the workplace, libraries, the media, youth centres, hospitals, old people's homes and others – the list cannot be exhausted. This recognition is in keeping with the ideas concerning lifelong learning expressed in the "old" UNESCO sponsored literature, as is the idea that the personnel engaged in these settings can be conceived of as educators in the broadest sense. They contribute, often directly, to the education of those making use of their services in various settings. Pedagogical preparation should therefore constitute a feature of initial and in-service courses in their specific area of specialisation (e.g., journalism, librarianship, university teaching, gerontology, social work, health care, museumology). Furthermore, traditional academic certification provides no fit to the reality that there are different ways of learning/knowing that emerge from the multitude of learning settings (formal, non-formal and informal) to which a person is exposed, and this type of certification is increasingly being regarded as one that provides an inadequate measure of a person's capabilities and profile (Tuijnman, 2002).<sup>4</sup>

The use of ICTs in education is one of the realities facing educators in different learning settings. E-networking is an important development that allows possibilities for collective learning, often with a social purpose, across the globe. On a less optimistic note, however, excessive use of ICT in education can continue to render learning an isolated and individualistic activity. It can diminish the element of human interaction between teacher and taught, an interaction that is regarded as key to a dynamic learning process, one in which knowledge is created and recreated through co-investigation between educators and learners. Yet, it holds out particular hope for women who tend to have multiple roles and responsibilities that limit access to face-to-face instruction (although as we will argue in Chapter 12, there is a particular interpretation of this situation in Saudi Arabia).

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<sup>3</sup> The remaining parts of this section on Key Message 3 are reproduced from a short paper delivered by Peter Mayo at the National Consultation Conference on Lifelong Learning held in Malta in May 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Albert Tuijnman (2002) provides an interesting discussion in this regard, arguing for the development of a comprehensive and inclusive set of lifelong learning indicators that account for the existence of different and complex sources of learning. However, in keeping with the dominant discourse concerning lifelong learning, he develops this argument in the context of learning for the "new economy."

The flexibility offered by ICTs can be beneficial for them. It is also known to be helpful in community organising and education as the growing field of community infomatics, which concerns itself with community development and technology, shows (Loader & Keeble, 2004). The pursuit of productive and rewarding use of ICTs in learning is continued by numerous academics and practitioners in fields such as community infomatics, distance education, and ICT itself (see Chapter 11 on community development).

#### KEY MESSAGE 4: VALUING LEARNING

Message 4's objective is to "Significantly improve the ways in which learning, participation and outcomes are understood and appreciated, particularly non-formal and informal learning" (CEC, 2000, p. 15). The message stresses the need to address the current situation where it is stated that "The rising demand for qualified labour by employers and increased competition between individuals to gain and keep employment is leading to a much higher demand for recognised learning than ever before." Some of the claims here made in relation to learning and employment will be critically addressed in Chapter 7.

It also states that there is a need to do more in terms of "transparency and mutual recognition agreements, especially in the higher education sector and for regulated professional and technical occupations" (p. 15). It also stresses the need "to develop high quality systems for the Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning (APEL) and to promote their application in a wide variety of contexts" (CEC, 2000, p. 15).

The concerns regarding APEL (also known as PLA or prior learning assessment) are worth taking on board given the need to recognise different forms of learning especially those occurring in different sites of practice, including sites that, *prima facie*, do not strike one as being "educational." To what extent is the APEL process inclusive, on the lines suggested by Tuijnman (2002)? Other questions that arise here are: Who decides whether an activity is deemed educational or not, and according to what criteria? How real is the danger that these criteria are determined solely by current and powerful industrial interests? Is there a danger, often highlighted with respect to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), that only competence-based learning (often involving a limited range of skills) gains recognition within this process of assessment (see Chapter 8)?

These questions arise as a result of the vocational bias that characterises this particular section of the EU *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*. The point regarding the increase in demand for learning, cited earlier in this section, is one perfect example. One would have expected to find, in this section, the kind of broad philosophical discussion concerning the "value of learning" reminiscent of the "old" lifelong education literature. One writer who has commented on Message 4 is Kenneth Wain (1987, 2004b), author of insightful books on the issue of lifelong education. Speaking about the topic in 2001, he stated:

Indeed the whole tenor of the section could send out the wrong message to governments, institutions, and individuals, that what is valued is only this kind of learning, vocational learning for the purposes of the economy and the job market. While it recognises the great importance of such learning, the committee feels that learning for other than vocational purposes should have been duly recognised and given space in the memorandum especially since the memorandum itself speaks of ‘promoting active citizenship’ as ‘equally important.’ (Wain, 2001)

This position by Wain is referred to and endorsed by Zygmunt Bauman (2005) in his critique of the EU’s lifelong learning politics in the chapter “Learning to Walk on Quicksand” in his well known book, *Liquid Life*; this chapter makes interesting reading with regard to the ongoing debate concerning lifelong learning and its role in what Bauman regards as liquid modernity.

#### MESSAGE 5: RETHINKING GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

The objective of Message 5 is to “Ensure that everyone can easily access good quality information and advice about learning opportunities throughout Europe and throughout their lives” (CEC, 2000, p. 17). This message is of great importance for countries in Europe that still restrict guidance and counselling facilities to schools and tertiary institutions, as well as labour market public and private entities. Given the variegated and broad nature of the field of education, comprising the formal and non-formal sectors, not to mention informal learning, a holistic and lifelong approach to guidance and counselling is being advocated in European Commission documents (Sultana, 2003). The net result of this strategy at the European level is that more and more guidance and counselling provisions are: following citizens throughout life; enhancing social inclusion by engaging reluctant learners in educational and training experiences; presenting up-to-date information that responds to client and employer needs; networking with NGOs to address specific needs; and exploiting the potential of technology-based infrastructures for guidance and counselling purposes (Sultana).

The *Memorandum* should be applauded for attaching importance to the development of such a service intended to be accessible in terms of cost, location and suitability for people of different ages, young and adult alike. The notion of outreach is extremely important in order to target adults who would not normally seek such advice on learning opportunities in the first place. Any genuine attempt to render learning opportunities at all stages of life accessible to the greatest number of persons possible should entail a considerable amount of outreach activity.

The emphasis on placing “the client’s interests in the forefront” (CEC, 2000, p. 17) is quite appropriate given the learner-centred approach that is continuously advocated in the context of lifelong learning. One ought to be wary of the danger, especially when private agencies are involved, that the entire exercise can develop into simply a market-driven approach that continues to convert education from a public to a consumption good. The *Memorandum* itself points to this danger when

it states: “Over the past thirty years, market-based services have mushroomed, especially for the highly qualified. In some Member States, many guidance and counselling services are wholly or partially privatised” (CEC, 2000, p. 18). Rather than simply “define entitlements” and “set agreed minimum standards,” the public sector should take it upon itself to increase provision in this vital area, quality provision accessible to one and all. There is also a role for trade unions in providing a quality service in this area, targeting education, training and employment needs of the adult members of the communities they serve.<sup>5</sup>

#### KEY MESSAGE 6: BRINGING LEARNING CLOSER TO HOME

The objective of this message is that of providing “lifelong learning opportunities as close to learners as possible, in their own communities and supported through ICT-based facilities wherever appropriate” (CEC, 2000, p. 19). Clearly there is a recognition here of the well established fact that educational participation increases with proximity to learners and opportunities. This is a very interesting section of the *Memorandum* that again stresses the notion of outreach, which requires that one draws on the experience garnered in this area by organisations and educators involved in the related fields of community education, action and development, education in prisons, education of older adults and education of the disabled. The issue of mobility impairment is relevant to each of the last three areas. The section deals with the use of ICT in offering “great potential for reaching scattered and isolated populations” (CEC, 2000, p. 19). It also deals with developing the idea of “lifelong learning as the driver for local and regional regeneration” and the creation of “appropriate kinds of learning centres in everyday locations where people gather” (CEC, p. 19).

As with the rest of the *Memorandum* document, there is an over-emphasis on the use of ICT which no doubt has its merits but, as noted above, if not used carefully and creatively, with educators and learners as important mediators and, better still, co-learners using ICT equipment as a complementary resource, it can serve as the vehicle for the transmission of pre-packaged material. This would render the process of learning a perfect example of what Freire (1970/1993) calls “banking education.” It can also continue to render the learning process an isolated activity. Yet, its benefits for community organising, and access cannot be underestimated especially in industrially developing contexts (Huyer, 2006).

The idea of having “learning centres in everyday locations” is also to be commended since it is based on the recognition, very much a feature of the earlier writings on lifelong education, that learning takes place in a variety of settings, many of which constitute sites of much of what passes for “lifewide education” (Cropley, 1980, p. 4). The idea of transforming schools into community learning centres is also commendable especially in view of the situation obtaining in some of the smaller member and accession countries that are compelled, in view of the higher costs per capita of facilities such as schools, to make multifunctional use

<sup>5</sup> We are indebted to Professor Ronald Sultana, from the University of Malta, for this point.

of these resources (Baldacchino & Mayo, 1996; Mayo, Pace, & Zammit, 2008). It is imperative, however, that sites such as schools, which can evoke, in some, memories of past failure in their formal education, are refurbished and restructured to contain areas that appeal to learners of different ages, particularly adult learners. The traditional school culture must not be allowed to impinge on these multi-purpose settings. The adult learning provision involved should not be allowed to constitute another example of adult schooling. Otherwise, we would argue, taking liberties with the title of Illich and Verne's (1976) work, that the people involved would come to be imprisoned in the community classroom.

The *Memorandum* refers to lifelong learning as serving as the vehicle for local and regional regeneration. The EU's initiatives in this regard are interesting and include the 2002 Learning Region initiative, officially referred to as the "Regional Networks for Life-Long Learning-*R3L*" pilot initiative (CEC, 2002).

Initiatives connected with Message 6 allow scope for partnerships to develop among formal and non-formal, including grassroots, organisations. The question that arises is: On whose terms does this partnership occur? Such partnerships are justified on the grounds that some of the formal institutions, such as universities, are public institutions supported, for the most part, by public taxes, the taxes of those living within the region. To what extent would an institution of formal learning such as the university change its ways as a result of its partnership, or more likely the partnership of one of its centres, with grassroots movements? To what extent would the efforts of the grassroots movements improve through greater access to the university's resources? In light of arguments for diversified roles for universities (world class research universities, teaching universities and regional universities), often uttered in EU contexts (see, for example, Figel, 2006), an important question arises: which universities will "bring learning closer to home" via community outreach? What implications would this have for the esteem accorded to higher education institutions' lifelong learning activities?

And we cannot help wondering whether there are limits to the kind of regional regeneration and development that is possible in certain contexts given that uneven levels of development are widely held to be endemic to the capitalist mode of production.

#### CONCLUSION: THE WAY FORWARD

The over-emphasis on work, employability and ICT indicates that the discourse thus far is removed from a broad conception of education that takes on board the different multiple subjectivities characterising individuals. It still gravitates around the notion of a knowledge economy which as certain research from Canada shows is not the reality people are made to believe it is (Lavoie & Roy, 1998 in Livingstone, 2004) and might not lead to the level of employment and financial rewards being anticipated given the global competition for the few high paying middle class jobs available (see Brown, Lauder, & Ashton, 2010 on this).

As the foregoing has shown, the issues of education and learning continue to be wrapped around issues of economy and development. Questions remain about

how the state and the varied market apparatuses abscond with and use core terms and ideas like education and learning. The example given above of the EU's use of lifelong learning serves as a case in point of a less than desirable usage than was ever envisaged by Faure et al. (1972) in *Learning to Be*. Adult educators need to be constantly vigilant regarding how ideology resides in language.

The turn which the lifelong learning discourse has taken reveals the presence of a market oriented and neoliberal ideology. This discourse limits human beings to two-dimensional persons, consumers and producers, rather than expands the conception to embrace a more holistic view of persons who have the skills to engage critically and collectively not only in the work process but also in the public sphere, that domain of democratic practice entailing a notion of citizenship, which can be called "real and critical active citizenship." This notion of citizenship embraces collectivity and movements rather than the idea of the atomised individual citizens – atomised individuals who facilitate *governmentality*. Many of the issues being faced throughout society call for coordinated collective action involving both ICT and the streets and squares as the numerous demonstrations in Greece and other parts of Europe, as well as many parts of the Arab world in what has been referred to as the "Arab Spring of 2011," have shown. The actions involved are expressions of social and not individual responsibilities whereby emphasis is placed on collectivities. These collectivities place demands on the state to honour its commitments to citizens and not only to the demands of international capital. It is to a discussion on the role of the state in modern society, and its ramifications for adult education, that the discussion now turns.



## CHAPTER 2

# ADULT EDUCATION, NEO-LIBERALISM AND THE STATE \*

Adult educators and their work are contextualised within the nation states of the world, with many adult educators operating across national boundaries and focusing on issues that concern discussions of the nation state such as identity, politics, policy and mobility. Yet, the term “the state” is one of the most slippery concepts in social and political theory, which form by and large the theoretical basis for adult education. Major writers often demonstrate this slipperiness by using the term differently. There are those, for instance, such as Gramsci (1971), who use the term both with reference to the institution holding a monopoly over the repressive forces, reminiscent of Max Weber’s definition and Lenin’s “special bodies of armed men,”<sup>1</sup> and also as representing an ensemble of relations of production (in his Factory Council Theory) and, one can add, broader capitalist social relations, as indicated by Corrigan and Sayer (1985). The state is not a “thing” in the sense that it should not be reified (Corrigan, 1990).

### FOCUSING THE ISSUES

In this chapter, we will look at issues concerning the state from a Gramscian perspective, a very strong perspective on the state within critical pedagogy. We will do this against the background of a variety of conceptualisations regarding the state and its implications for adult education, according pride of place to the historical materialist tradition and its echoes (Allman, 2010; Youngman, 1986). This is, after all, the tradition within which Gramsci worked. When and where appropriate, we make connections with insights from other writers, for instance Foucault, Lyotard, Castells and Jessop, whose views are increasingly having a bearing on contemporary conceptualisations of the state.

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<sup>1</sup> See V.I. Lenin, *The state and revolution – Class, society and the state: Section on special bodies of armed men, prisons, etc.* <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch01.htm#s2>. Accessed 29th January 2011.

## CONTEXTUAL VARIATIONS

The level of social inequality varies from state to state. State formation varies from country to country within capitalism (see Corrigan & Sayer, 1985 with regard to England; Green, 1990, with regard to England, France, Prussia and the USA; Marx & Engels' writings on England and France; Gramsci on England, France, Italy and Germany). Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1979), who once engaged the historical materialist tradition, is on record as having referred to the state, in a context of dependent/peripheral capitalism, as a "pact<sup>2</sup> of domination," to underline the power dynamics that characterise the ensemble of unequal social relations involved (p. 38, cited in Morrow & Torres, 1985, p. 350).

Especially in the western hemisphere, one is more likely to hear the word "government" than state, and to have this linked to the government's responsibilities in terms of social welfare, jobs, and health. The term state, and even government (which constitutes only a part of the state), is increasingly dismissed as there is a growing belief, albeit inaccurate, that ours is a globalised society in which markets not governments make the difference. Yet for adult educators the notion of a state is very real and tangible.

The state in most western countries is responsible for primary and secondary education, and for the subsidisation of non-profit organisations, health and higher education, either in whole or part. It is the state typically that funds teachers and schools. In many cases the state provides ad hoc funds for literacy, training for work, and non-profit education through such organisations as the YMCA/YWCA. For debate is just how much the government funds and how much more responsibility it should assume. Adult educators frequently argue that existing adult education programs are poorly funded and quite marginalised, which often runs counter to state policy to support programs such as literacy. And, of even more concern to adult education is when the state has no policy on issues such as education and lifelong learning. As Selman, Cooke, Selman, and Dampier (1998) point out, no policy becomes unofficial policy.

Clearly there are many different conceptions of the state and we shall take a closer look at these theories further on in this paper. What we attempt to do here is provide an overview indicating the role which adult education plays or can play within the contexts of these conceptualisations. One major attempt at discussing adult education and the state, drawing on a range of writers, was produced in the 1990s (see Jarvis, 1994). This was preceded by brief discussions on the state and Latin America with regard to popular education (Carnoy in Torres, 1990) and more recently the state in relation to public and adult education in Brazil and other parts of Latin America (Morrow & Torres, 1985; O'Cadiz, Lindquist Wong, & Torres, 1998).

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<sup>2</sup> A pact can be understood as a platform that enables disparate elements to operate with some coherence in relation to a political and economic end, and strategic visions of power.

## TRADITIONAL CONCEPTUALISATION

It is common knowledge that the most traditional conceptualisation of the state is that of a large entity comprising its primary powers: legislative, executive and judiciary. This “separation of powers” thesis can be attributed to Baron de Montesquieu in his study of England and the British constitutional system. According to this conceptualisation, state sponsored adult education would thus feature as part of the state’s executive mechanism. Raj Pannu (1988), writing on adult education and the state in Canada, posits that the liberal democratic state comprises the government, the military, the judiciary and representative assemblies including provincial, municipal and other forms of government (p. 233). This renders the situation most relevant to adult education when so much of the provision falls under the most subsidiary forms of state direction such as for instance regional and municipal governments. Italy would be a case in point where much provision occurs within the context of the *territorio* approach (Allulli, 1990). However, later theories would underline the complexities surrounding the state and the agencies with which it operates.

## DIFFERENT MARXIST CONCEPTUALISATIONS

While the state is conventionally also regarded as the mechanism for regulating and arbitrating between the different interest groups within society (Poggi, 2006), several authors writing mainly from a historical materialist perspective underline its role in serving the interests of the ruling capitalist class. It does so by reproducing the social conditions for a dominant class to reproduce itself. Writing about adult education and its function within the state, Carlos Alberto Torres (1991) wrote:

Since the capitalist state has a class content reflected in its policy-making, adult education policies constitute an example of class-determined policies oriented to confront the political and social demands of the powerless and impoverished sectors of any capitalist society. (p. 31)

One would argue, along the same vein, that adult education has traditionally often had other contents reflected in its policy making, notably those related to sex, gender, “race”/ethnicity, ability, religion and other categories of social differentiation. Torres’s quote encapsulates the classic Marxist position which lends itself to different nuanced interpretations that stretch beyond the idea of the state’s “executive” being “a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie” (Marx & Engels, 1848/1998, p. 5).<sup>3</sup> It takes into consideration all well researched historical sociological accounts of state formation in say France and England as produced by Marx and Engels themselves,<sup>4</sup> its role as a form of cultural revolution

<sup>3</sup> This assertion seems to allow for more loosely coupled configurations than Cardoso’s (1979) notion of “pact” which accords the state a more deterministic weight.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, *Contributions to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, or *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (in Tucker, 1978).

in England (Corrigan & Sayer, 1985) and education and state formation, including popular education, in a number of countries (Green, 1990).

In Ralph Miliband's view (1969), the state agencies are characterised by the disproportionate presence of civil servants and other senior administrators of capitalist class background. The state mainly acts in the interest of the capitalist class but there are moments when it can extricate itself from this hold during, for instance, times of war (Held, 1987, p. 174). The state through its institutions or what Althusser calls "apparatuses" provides the conditions for the accumulation of capital. Adult education, therefore, has an important role to play here, more so at the present time, when education for the economy, including adult education (or lifelong learning) for the economy, is said to perform a crucial role in attracting and maintaining investment. In the post-war (WWII) period, a welfarist notion of state provision, undergirded by a Keynesian social and economic policy framework, was provided (Pannu, 1988, p. 234). This was in keeping with "the new deal" seen by many as a concession by capital to labour. It was, however, seen within labour politics as very much the result of the struggle for better living conditions by the working class and its representatives, thus underlining an element of reciprocity here. Much of what passed for social programs was welfare oriented, including adult education for employment and adult education conceived of within the traditional parameters of social work. It very much suited a sociological framework, known as structural functionalism, within which the modern state provides the mechanisms, including, for example, "second chance" education, and adult education combined with social work (*sozial Pädagogik*), as in Germany (Hirschfeld, 2010), to enable those who fall by the wayside to reconnect with the system or, better still, be integrated into the system. Marxists of different stripe and radical leftists exposed this as a palliative that served to maintain the status quo rather than to provide the means for such programs to contribute towards social transformation.

#### STATE'S LEGITIMATION – ACCUMULATION FUNCTIONS

Others such as the then Stanford University researchers, Martin Carnoy and Henry Levin (1985), drawing on the work of James O'Connor (1973) (see Pannu, 1988, p. 233), Claus Offe (1984) and others, emphasised the dual role of the state. On the one hand it had to tend to the basic function of ensuring the conditions and mechanisms necessary for the accumulation of capital and, on the other, to legitimise itself democratically by listening to and acting upon the voices emerging from different social sectors (see also, Held, 1987). As Raj Pannu argues, drawing on O'Connor, "the State must try to perform two basic but often contradictory functions: (a) to foster capital accumulation and (b) to foster social harmony and consensus" (p. 233).

## RECONCILING SOCIAL DEMANDS WITH TECHNICAL-RATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

This allowed possibilities for people to operate tactically within the system (London & Edinburgh Weekly Return Group, 1980) in a “cat and mouse” game to channel funds into adult education programs with socially transformative ends (see Mayo, 1999a). Examples of tactical resistance include pre-employment and ESL programs offered through local non-profit centres, whose staff use the funded educational program as a place to increase immigrant’s knowledge of women’s rights as well as to bolster self esteem. Though the state is officially in control, the non-profit organisation resists with subterfuge, a classic Foucauldian case of resistance to the exercise of power by the state (English, 2005a).

This approach to adult education was given importance in both minority and majority world contexts especially in revolutionary contexts such as that in Nicaragua where much publicised revolutionary adult education campaigns such as the Cruzada, which served to legitimise the revolution and keep the revolutionary momentum going, had to be reconciled with the more technical rational demands of the economic system which was crucial to the country’s economic development. In many cases, the citizens assumed authority or used various means and strategies of subterfuge to push back at the state. The point of having to reconcile the social and technical-rational demands was underlined by Carnoy and Torres’ account (1990) of popular education in Nicaragua in the 1980s.

Does this situation apply also to Venezuela which, according to UNESCO’s special envoy, María Luisa Jáuregui, is the first and only country to meet the commitments adopted by the region’s governments in 2002 in Havana to drastically reduce illiteracy (Marquez, 2005)? The state kept the Bolivarian revolutionary momentum going by teaching one and a half million people to read and write through the support of another revolutionary state, Cuba, who had Venezuelan literacy tutors trained in the “Yo si Puedo” pedagogical method created by Cuban educator Leonela Realy (Marquez). This satisfied a great social demand and it was then followed by an attempt to articulate the achievements of the crusade with the formal, technical- rational demands of a state educational system that is crucial to Venezuela’s development (Cole, 2011). Would a revolutionary state be in a much better situation to reconcile these demands given the level of ideological commitment involved on both sides (see Arnove, 1986; McLaren, 2000; McLaren et al., 2005; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005)?

## POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND ITS MEDIATIONS

As far as a more capitalist orientation to adult education is concerned, however, the relationship between economic requirements and the state has always been complex. Roger Dale (1982) argued persuasively in the early 1980s that state policies do not translate into practice in the manner they are intended for a variety of reasons, not least being the state agencies meant to execute them which, as with all bureaucratic agencies, generate their own rules and modus operandi as Weber’s own theories of bureaucracy and related neo-Weberian theories have shown. The

process of social and cultural reproduction is not as smooth as the ruling class and policy makers (who also follow their own set of procedures) would intend it to be, and this apart from the subversive roles that agents within the system, such as adult educators, have played in pushing actual provision in a certain direction.

#### HEGEMONIC GLOBALISATION, NEOLIBERALISM AND THE SHREDDING OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

While much of what has been attributed to bureaucracy and the state still holds, things have changed considerably in recent years. With the onset of neoliberalism (loosely defined as fiscally and socially conservative, and regressive), and therefore the ideology of the marketplace, which underlies hegemonic globalisation, the social democratic arm of the state, as presented by Carnoy and Levin (1985) has been severely restricted in its operations. The state has lost its welfarist function (the discourse shifted from welfare state to welfare society and more recently, as a result of Third Way politics, to workfare society) as it plays a crucial role in terms of providing a regulatory framework for the operation of the market; so does the EU as a supranational state (Dale, 2008). It is a neoliberal state that provides the infrastructure for the mobility of capital, and this includes investment in human resource development (note, not adult education) as well as the promotion of an “employability”-oriented lifelong learning policy, with the onus often placed on the individual or group, often at considerable expense. Welfare to work programs in the United States, for instance, have often been charged with blaming the poor for being poor, and for moving welfare clients to the unemployment line.

Adult education represents a curtailment of social oriented adult education in favour of a market oriented notion of economic viability also characterised by public financing of private needs. Adult education is no longer conceived of as a public good. Instead, it becomes a consumer good whereby the only programs that are funded are ones with goals that can be weighed, counted or measured such as employment statistics, GDP, and Return on Investment. In short, this is what Jean-François Lyotard (1989, pp. 47, 48) would call “performativity.” In countries undergoing the transition from socialism to a market economy, such as those of the “old” Yugoslavia (which had a strong adult education tradition that fore-grounded the concept of andragogy, see Reichman, 2005), former worker universities (reminiscent of the Josip Broz Tito period and its self-management programs) are transformed into HRD centres (Mayo, 2002). The discourse on the promotional material for these HRD centres is linked to efficiency, productivity and usability. We are reminded here of University of Toronto intellectual Janice Gross Stein (2003) who questioned the use of efficiency in everyday discourse, asking the provocative question: “Efficient at what?” The effect on the hearer of the word “efficiency” is either dismay or cynicism.

Furthermore, attempts are being made all over the world to leave as little as possible to the vagaries mentioned by Dale in his 1982 paper, a point he himself recognised as far back as that year when he mentioned the onset of standardisation, league tables, classifications and, we would add, more recently, harmonisation. This

is today reflected in the language of benchmarks and “quality” indicators (almost always of a quantitative nature) applied to lifelong learning which incorporates (or is often erroneously used interchangeably with) adult education. This is to render agencies of the state or that work in tandem with the state, through a loose network or “heterarchy” (Ball, 2007) in this day and age, more accountable, more subject to surveillance with the danger that it can ultimately become more bureaucratised.

#### NOT SO LEAN A STATE

Despite all the talk of the state withdrawing from the social sphere and the introduction of deregulatory measures, in keeping with neoliberal trends, we have witnessed moments when its presence continues to be strongly felt. Its role in serving the interests of capital is very much underlined whenever a fiscal crisis occurs such as the recent credit crunch. Depending on its relative strength, the state has no qualms about its role in bailing out the banks and other institutions in situations such as these. For instance in the recent credit crunch in the US with the collapse of the housing market, the state rescued, in an unprecedented move, many large banks and financial institutions which then paid their CEOs obscene amounts of money in bonuses. The discursive effect of such munificence to its friends is global cynicism and despair.

As Paulo Freire put it so clearly years before the recent credit crunch:

Fatalism is only understood by power and by the dominant classes when it interests them. If there is hunger, unemployment, lack of housing, health and schools, they proclaim that this is a universal trend and so be it! But when the stock market falls in a country far away and we have to tighten up our belts, or if a private national bank has internal problems due to the inability of its directors or owners, the state immediately intervenes to ‘save them.’ In this case, the ‘natural,’ ‘inexorable,’ is simply put aside. (Freire, in Nita Freire as interviewed in Borg & Mayo, 2007, p. 3)

The state is very much present in many ways (Meiksins Wood, 2003), a point that needs to be kept in mind when discussing adult education. One wonders what possible scenario opens up for adult education in this regulatory context: courses in financial services and regulation as a form of “sponsored mobility” within restricted and elite circles? Would there be similar continuing professional development courses in sensitive areas such as banking and public accounting? The idea of the state playing a secondary role in the present intensification of globalisation is very much a neoliberal myth. As Corrigan, Ramsay, and Sayer (1980) underlined three decades ago, drawing on Marx’s writings, “State formations are *national* states since capitalism as a global system involves national organization to secure the internationalization of its production relations” (pp. 8–9).

## THE REPRESSIVE, CARCERAL STATE

The state organises, regulates, “educates” (the ethical state), creates and sustains markets, provides surveillance, evaluates (Gentili, 2005), forges networks and represses. One should underscore the role of the repressive factor as manifest by the state during this period. Behind the whole facade of consent lurks naked power which, in Mao’s famous words, lies in “the barrel of a gun.” The state also provides a policing force for what can easily be regarded as the victims of neoliberal policies as well as related “structural adjustment programs” in the majority world. These victims, as Giroux has shown, include Blacks, Latino/as and those regarded by Zygmunt Bauman (2006) as the “waste disposal” sector of society. Prisons have risen in the US which has witnessed the emergence of the “carceral state” (Giroux, 2004). The prison metaphor can be applied on a larger scale to incorporate migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa knocking on the doors of “Fortress Europe” and who are contained in veritable prisons referred to as detention centres. Adult education, in this context, might well include prison education, education for integration or resettlement of immigrants. A number of NGOs are actively involved in this field. Issues relating to migration are expected to feature prominently in the agenda for the EU’s adult learning program, as part of the lifelong learning program, in the forthcoming years. These programs will no doubt be developed in light of the much awaited (at the time of writing) communication on lifelong learning by the European Commission 10 years after the publication of the European *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*. To what extent will such programs be conceived of outside the carceral framework which has been characterising the life of many immigrants in Mediterranean shores of late, most notably in islands such as Lampedusa (Italy), Malta and the Canary Islands (Spain)?

On a less literal level, as Foucault (1980) has shown, the public reacts to the coercive and threatening nature of the state by policing itself, in a form of self-regulatory behaviour. Citizens assume they are being watched so they silence their own voices of opposition, allow the state to take away human rights, and act as if they will be jailed for their own thoughts (English, 2005a). This is part and parcel of his concept of the state ruling from a distance (by proxy, if you will) through “governmentality” (Foucault, 1988). In Chapter 5 on post-structuralism, Foucault is discussed further.

## THE STATE AND ITS APPARATUSES

The carceral function of the state with its manifestly repressive orientation but not without its dose of ideological support takes us back to the writings of one of the major theorists on education and the state, the structuralist Marxist philosopher, Louis Althusser. At a more general level we have had Althusser pointing to the existence of the state, within a capitalist economy, having two important apparatuses serving the interest of capital, the repressive and ideological state apparatuses (RSA and ISA respectively), with the important caveat that there is no 100% purely state apparatus and no 100% purely repressive apparatus, the difference being one

of degree. Althusser referred to the school being the most important ISA. We feel that, had he been writing today, he would have probably referred to the media, an important source of adult learning, as the most important ISA. This calls for the kind of engagement in adult learning referred to as critical media literacy (Kellner & Share, 2009). Douglas Kellner (2005) wrote about “media spectacles”<sup>5</sup> which have come to dominate news coverage and deviate public attention from substantial public issues. Media politics play a crucial role in advancing foreign policy agendas and militarism.

Recall that, echoing Gramsci’s writings on hegemony, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988) had much earlier illustrated the way the “propaganda model” relies on the media to manufacture consent for policies in the public mind. Kellner (2005) argues that political forces such as Al Qaeda and the Bush administration construct or, in the latter case, developed media spectacles to advance their politics. This has particularly been the case with the Tea Party in the US which has built on public spectacles, including the self-identification with conservative speaker and so-called “feminist” Sarah Palin, to advance itself. The theme of the “spectacle” has also been broached by Giroux (2006a) among others. These writings highlight the link between the state and the corporate media during the period of US Republican government under George W. Bush. In this regard, therefore, critical media literacy becomes an important feature of a critical engagement within either the interstices of state involvement or social movements, in the latter case taking on the form of alternative media circulated via YouTube, Twitter and a variety of websites. These have a role to play in adult education in this day and age. Electronic networking has opened up a variety of spaces in this regard. More than this, however, critical media literacy provides an important and vast dimension to the meaning of critical literacy. Progressive social justice oriented social movements have proved to be very adept and savvy in making use of the current media to promote an alternative agenda.

There are times when social movements often engage in a cautious game of working in tandem with (actually being “tactically inside and strategically outside”) the state, as with the MOVA-SP project in São Paulo, Brazil (see O’Cadiz et al., 1998) when Paulo Freire was Education Secretary in the municipal government of the Brazilian megalopolis.<sup>6</sup> Where Althusser seems to be right on target is in his pointing to there being no 100% ideological state apparatus. Despite its obvious

<sup>5</sup> Shades of Guy Debord’s (1967). *La Société du spectacle* with its Marxist theses representing the shift from being to having to representing oneself (thesis 17), with images mediating social relationships among people (thesis 4). See translation: <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/debord/1.htm>, accessed 17 January 2011. See also Debord (1994).

<sup>6</sup> The book provides a fine discussion regarding theories of the state and then dwells, at considerable length, on the role of social movements in the struggle for power, with specific reference to Latin American social movements. The authors also provide a highly illuminating account of state-social movements’ relationships in Brazil and the kind of relationships the Freire secretariat sought to establish with respect to the process of educational reform in São Paulo. We consider this to be one of the most important discussions in the book that dwells on transformative education being carried out in the context of broader social movements. The study also conveys the idea that those engaged in the desired process of curriculum reform can constitute a social movement.

connection with the ideological arena, education has always had a very strong repressive function, more so today. Witness the US high school model with security guards making their presence felt in a heavy handed manner (Giroux, 2009). One can also argue that the apparent violence is not only real in a manifestly repressive sense but also symbolic (in keeping with an ISA) because of its important signification regarding their identities. They are potential outcasts who can eventually face incarceration. The repressive, therefore, is, at the same time, ideological.

Education can also play a repressive role among adults. Witness the provision, in a number of countries, of *forced* adult training programs for those registering as unemployed and often deliberately meant to target their involvement in the “hidden economy.” There is both an ideological and coercive element to this kind of adult education. As a matter of fact, one of us was once invited by an employment agency to address potential adult educators in the field. As soon as they were exposed to the scenario in which they will be working, involving people who are forced to attend classes at the expense of earning undeclared revenue, the adult educators balked at the prospect; many of them pulled out.

#### GRAMSCI AND THE STATE

Althusser’s conceptions regarding state apparatuses lead us to “revisit” the work of Antonio Gramsci (e.g., 1971). Gramsci is probably one of the most cited 20th century writers with regard to adult education and the state, and his relevance is still underlined today despite the fact that much of his analysis focused on Italy and the rest of the world until the first part of the previous century. Gramsci argued that, in terms of the way power operated and was consolidated, there was a great difference between the situation in predominantly feudal pre-1917 Russia, the site of the first socialist revolution, and that obtaining in Western capitalist social formations (Hobsbawm, 1987). In Russia, the locus of power rested with the state army and police. The country was virtually held together by force. Gramsci therefore considered it possible for a revolutionary group to wrest power from the grasp of the Tsar and the aristocracy by means of a frontal attack. However, a “war of manoeuvre,” the term Gramsci used to describe the tactic of engaging in this frontal attack, was not regarded by the Italian theorist as likely to prove effective in Western capitalist social formations. In these formations, the state is propped up by a network of cultural and ideological institutions that Gramsci referred to as “civil society.” This is part and parcel of the notion of the “integral state” so well described by Peter Thomas (2009). Both political and civil society are facets of the same state in western society. Their conceptual separation in Gramsci’s *Quaderni* (1975) is primarily for heuristic purposes. One cannot exist without the other and the two are much more related than the heuristic separation would suggest. The same applies to the relationship of repression and ideology which co-exist in a variety of institutions, as shown earlier.

In Gramsci’s (1971) view, the institutions of civil society function with regard to the state as a “powerful system of fortresses and earthworks” that assert

themselves whenever the state “tremble[s]” (Gramsci, p. 238). Civil society, as used by Gramsci, is therefore not conceived of primarily as an arena of popular oppositional politics. On the contrary, it is conceived of as a domain comprising ideological institutions that consolidate the existing hegemonic arrangements. It also contains spaces, often within the ideological institutions themselves (they are not to be regarded as monolithic), where these arrangements can be contested and renegotiated, having “to be actively constructed and positively maintained” (Hall, 1996, p. 424). In view of his conception of the state and civil society, Gramsci felt that a frontal attack could not lead to a seizure of power in Western societies. For such a seizure to occur, one would first have to engage in a “war of position,” which involves social organisation and efforts in the direction of cultural predominance. Yet, this talk of physical disruption and of attack has not left our adult education conversation. Australian Michael Newman, who frequently refers to Gramsci in his works, asserts that there may be times when such defiance may indeed be necessary. In his book *Teaching Defiance* (2006) he offers stories and strategies for training the activist educator.

#### EDUCATION, THE STATE, AND HEGEMONY

Gramsci attributed great importance to the sphere of civil society that, within orthodox Marxism, had been confined to the superstructure, namely education. For Gramsci, it is partly in this sphere that the prefigurative work (Allman, 2010) for the conquest of power must take place. Of course, the process of ideological domination and modification of class consciousness cannot be completed, according to Gramsci, prior to the conquest of the state (Gramsci, 1997, p. 161). Significantly, with a few exceptions (e.g., Nesbit, 2005), talk of class has been eclipsed in North America by gender, race and other identity politics. There seems to be an unwillingness to publicly recognise the power of social class and its impact on opportunity, education and employment. Yet, class is a major “factor in” on that continent. When one of the authors was a graduate student at an Ivy League university in the US, the question she was most often asked was, “Where did you go to college?” with college being the code word for social class. Higher education is a sorting mechanism, funded by capitalists to ensure the reproduction of class.

Nevertheless, there is important prefigurative work that, according to Gramsci (1971), involves working both within and outside existing systems and apparatuses to provide the basis for an “intellectual and moral reform” (p. 132). Such work occurs primarily in the context of social relations, which, for Gramsci, are established through the process of hegemony. Hegemony incorporates not only processes of ideological domination and contestation but, as Raymond Williams (1976) argues, a “whole body of practices and expectations” (p. 205).

Gramsci (1971) regarded every hegemonic relationship as an “educational” one (p. 350). That is, hegemony entails the education of individuals and groups in order to secure consent to the dominant group’s agenda (see Borg, Buttigieg, & Mayo, 2002; Buttigieg, 2002). Engagement in a war of position to transform the state

similarly involves educational work throughout civil society to challenge existing relations of hegemony. For Gramsci, “intellectuals” are key agents in this war of position, this “trench” warfare (Gramsci, 1971, p. 243). And we can include adult educators of a socially transformative kind here. Gramsci did not use the term “intellectual” in its elitist sense (see Hobsbawm, 2011, p. 325); rather, Gramsci saw intellectuals as people who influence consent through their activities and in so doing help forge alliances. They are cultural or educational workers in that they are “experts in legitimation” (Merrington, 1977, p. 153). Their “intellectual” activities take a variety of forms, including that of working within the state and other institutions of capitalist domination, or to use the one-time popular British phrase, working “in and against the state” and other dominant institutions (see London & Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, 1980). Michael Welton (1995b) echoes this sentiment when, clearly drawing on Jürgen Habermas (1970, 1998), he talks of being in “Defense of the Lifeworld” (*Lebenswelt*), which he sees as threatened by the hegemony of class, capital and marketisation.

#### GRAMSCI AND THE NETWORK STATE

This theorisation of the state and its potential for an effective adult education policy has some affinities, despite a strong (we emphasise “strong”) political/ideological difference, with some of the modern managerial technical-rational conceptions of the state with regard to policy formulation and action. The state and its agencies are nowadays said to work not alone but within a loose network of agencies – governance rather than government in what is presented as a “heterarchy of relations” (Ball, 2010) and therefore what Martin Carnoy and Manuel Castells (2001) call the “network state.” A Gramscian perspective would nevertheless underline that, despite appearing *prima facie* to be “heterarchical,” such relations under capitalism are, in actual fact, hierarchical and less democratic than they might appear to be. This certainly applies to relations between state and NGOs or labour unions.

On the other hand, one encounters situations when NGOs, especially those based in the west, are powerful enough to have leverage over certain states (e.g., Oxfam during the Brown government in the UK in relation to African states). Structured partnerships between state and business as well as between “public” and “private” tend to emphasise the link between the state and the imperatives of capital accumulation. For Gramsci, the agencies, constituting bourgeois civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*), buttressed the state. While Gramsci focused primarily on the ideological institutions in this network, which he calls “civil society” (see Korsgaard, 1997), one must also mention the point made by Nicos Poulantzas (1978) when underlining that the state also engages in economic activities which are not left totally in the hands of private industry. One might argue that this point has relevance to the situation today. A word of caution is, however, necessary here. State systems, or simply states, differ among themselves in their internal coherence, given their historical and other contextual specificities. It would be dangerous to infer that all states are equally positioned in terms of their power to intervene in

the economic sphere, especially when one takes into account their own differential location within the global market system.<sup>7</sup>

Industry often collaborates in policy formulation in tandem or in a loose network with the state just like NGOs or labour unions do, the latter often being co-opted in the process in a form of corporatism<sup>8</sup> (see Offe, 1985, on this in terms of disorganised capitalism; Panich, 1976). Nowhere is the role of the state as economic player in western society more evident than in university continuing education, as well as in university education more generally (see Giroux & Searls Giroux, 2004 with regard to the US). The division between public and private becomes blurred. So-called “public universities” (in places like Italy, all universities approved by the education ministry [MUIR] are designated public) are exhorted to provide services governed by the market and which have a strong commercial basis. Furthermore the state engages actively through direct and indirect means, and, in certain places, through a series of incentives or “goal cushions” (see Darmanin, 2009), to create a higher education competitive market (in which adult education plays a prominent part through colleges of further education, polytechnics or technical universities and institutes having the franchise for established foreign universities) as part of the “competition state” (Jessop, 2002). Drawing on Jessop, Jane Mulderrig (2008) states that the competition state was already conceived of in the 1980s with, for instance, OECD documents “on the importance of structural competitiveness for government policy” (p. 168). Here the focus is “on securing the economic and extra-economic conditions for international competitiveness” in a globalising knowledge based economy (Fairclough & Wodak, 2008, p. 112).

In many western democracies, such as the UK and Canada, the state exercises considerable control on higher education through its granting councils and funding bodies. The state, working through the people it hires and appoints to these councils and bodies, sets the direction for research and teaching, rewarding those who comply with their neoconservative agendas. Increasingly the state is directing research efforts in the social sciences to practical and useful research, especially including research & development [R&D], that will further its economic and workplace goals. A popular topic for research funding in the west at the time of writing is financial literacy; adult educators have pursued these grants with gusto, paying little attention to the fact that the idea of financial literacy is to blame the poor for being poor. Under the guise of providing information to the public to help them save for education and the future, the state is controlling the household and emphasising that the good family saves, wastes little and is to blame for not having enough money for higher education expenditures. Grant recipients become complicit in a government plan to relieve itself of responsibility for education and welfare.

The foregoing points, regarding the state working in concert with a variety of players, vindicate Gramsci’s position regarding relations between different institu-

<sup>7</sup> We are indebted to Professor André Elias Mazawi, from the University of British Columbia, for this point.

<sup>8</sup> These organisations establish formal and informal links, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary with key agents of the state in return for the advancement of their corporate interests (see Held, 1987, p. 206).

tions and agencies constituting what he calls “civil society” in the context of the capitalist state. The state regulates these agencies by having its own institutions working in tandem with them. It is certainly no neutral arbiter of different interests, even though it appears to be so, as it also engages in structured partnerships<sup>9</sup> with industry to secure the right basis for the accumulation of global capital. In this regard one can argue that the state is propped up not only by the ideological institutions of what Gramsci calls “civil society” but by industry itself (of which it is part), while it sustains both (propping both the civil society institutions and industry) in a reciprocal manner to ensure the right conditions, including the cultural conditions, for the accumulation of capital. All this goes to show that the state, the nation state, is an active player and has not receded into the background within the context of hegemonic globalisation. On the contrary, in its repressive, ideological and commercial forms, the state remains central to the neoliberal project (Mayo, 2011).

#### CONCLUSION

Given this scenario, the implications for state involvement in adult education are enormous. Our excursus has taken us through various conceptions as manifest in different historical periods. In continents like Europe, the EU plays a major role in funding adult education projects along the policies it formulates for its member states and would be member states. However, it does this mainly through national state agencies. The state has not gone away. As Ellen Meiskins Wood (2003) has argued:

The argument here is not that of capital in conditions of “globalization” has escaped the control of the state and made the territorial state increasingly irrelevant. On the contrary, my argument is that the state is more essential than ever to capital, even, or especially, in its global form. The political form of globalization is not a global state but a system of multiple states, and the new imperialism takes its specific shape from the complex and contradictory relationship between capital’s expansive economic power and the more limited reach of the extra-economic force that sustains it. (pp. 5–6)

Adult education, often transmuted in terms of terminology to be lost through its encapsulation in the broader and vaguer term “lifelong learning” (a “catch mechanism” for funding and therefore more state regulation), plays an important role

<sup>9</sup> Let us take higher education to extend the discussion around the example provided in this section. In 2008, the first European Forum on cooperation between higher education and the business community took place (CEC, 2008). The communication on the modernisation of universities and HE institutes underlines the importance of a “structured partnership with the business community” (CEC, 2006a, p. 6). It is intended to create opportunities for the sharing of research results, intellectual property rights, patents and licenses and allow for placements of students and researchers in business, with a view to improving the students’ career prospects. It is also meant to create a better fit between HE outputs and job requirements. It also can help convey, according to the communication, a stronger sense of “entrepreneurship” to enable persons to contribute effectively to a competitive economic environment (CEC, 2006a, 2006b; EC, 2006).

as part of this extra economic force that sustains capital's expansive power. This role is characterised by the dominant discourse of HRD, entrepreneurship and competitiveness. Yet this extra-economic force is never monolithic and it is in the interstices of this non-unitary force where avenues for critical and transformative adult education need to be explored.