

CONFERENCE REPORT

UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education Conference Proceedings, Webfests and Seminars

Autumn / Fall 2024

Ever since its inception in September 2021, the UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education has been actively engaged in promoting Adult Education globally, in keeping with its remit. It revived *Convergence*. *An International Adult Education Journal*, following its lengthy hiatus, for which the University department housing this Chair is mainly and financially responsible, with support (translation of *Convergence* article abstracts into French and Spanish) from the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). In addition, it has been organising numerous other activities.

This Autumn/Fall saw the publication, in paperback, of the book of papers from the May 2023 International Conference on Critical Education in general (ICCE XV) which included International Critical Adult Education and Learning. The conference was organised and hosted by the Department of Arts, Open Communities and Adult Education and the UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education with funds and organisational efforts shared by these two entities within the University of Malta's Faculty of Education. These two entities were also responsible for editing and producing the book that emerged from the conference, *Stretching Boundaries of Critical Education. Past, Present and Future Possibilities* (Faculty of Education, University of Malta). It contains articles from and about Africa (Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, Education for Self-Reliance and *Ubuntu*), Asia (Lebanon and the Arab World through the Arab House for Adult Education and Development-AHAED), the Caribbean (Popular Education during the Grenada

Revolution), Asia (Older Adults in South Korea), Latin America (Nicaragua, Brazil) and Europe (Resistance education in Greece, Popular anti-Neoliberal education in Türkiye, Revolutionary STEM in the Soviet Union, Philosophical insights from Foucault etc). A copy of the book at a snip can be purchased from the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, Msida 2080, Malta.

The two book editors and main conference convenors were Carmel Borg from this university's Department of Arts, Open Communities and Adult Education and Peter Mayo, UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education, the Chair housed within the same department. The book was officially launched at the University of Malta's Valletta Campus on Thursday 12th December 2024.

The outgoing year also saw the launching, under the aegis of the UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education, of the international online MA degree in Adult Education. The participants have thus far completed their two foundational courses, one in the Theoretical Foundations of Adult Education and the other in Research Methods in Adult Education. This Autumn/ Fall, they worked on their dissertation proposal. There are ten participants in this cohort, from Malta, Australia and the UK.

Ever since its inception, the UNESCO Chair has been responsible for holding annual webfests celebrating momentous events in Adult Education. In 2021, there were webfests celebrating the Birth Centenaries of Paulo Freire (three days) and Raymond Williams. 2022 saw the celebration of the Birth Centenary of Julius K. Nyerere while similar birth centenary webfests were held in 2023 for Don Lorenzo Milani and in 2024 for Alberto Manzi. The Manzi event was held on Tuesday 10th December, 2024. On Tuesday 17th December of the same year, a similar web event was held to commemorate the third anniversary of the passing away of bell hooks while, on Thursday 19th December, 2024, the 50th Anniversary of the 150 hours Italian experiment in Working Class and Women's Adult education was also marked by a webfest in Italian and English. The different webfests involved Zoom connections with different corners of the earth; some of the most prominent global scholars on the topic participated. The Freire event

involved interventions from such established scholars as Ira Shor, Carlos Alberto Torres, Margaret Ledwith, Donaldo Macedo, Tal Dor, Alessio Surian, Didacus Jules, Walter Kohan and Anne Hickling Hudson. The Raymond Williams event attracted inputs from Ian Menter, Sharon Clancy, Linden West, Eugenio Enrique Cortés Ramírez and Handel Kashope Wright. The Nyerere session featured interventions from Njoki Wane, Budd L. Hall, Marjorie Mbilinyi, Heribert Hinzen, Annagrace Rwehumbiza, Mewmezi Rwiza and Ahmadi Kipacha. The Lorenzo Milani session featured Domenico Simeone, Federico Batini and Evelina Scaglia among many others. Alberto Manzi's event saw the participation of Roberto Farne', Lisa Stillo, Elena Zizioli, Giulia Franchi, Sandro Caruana and Tania Convertini. The memorial for bell hooks involved interventions from Tal Dor, Edith Gnanadass, Shermaine Barrett and Gisella Vismara. The 150 hours session featured Francesco Pongiluppi, Giulia Pizzolato, Anna Maria Piussi and Fiorenzo Parziale. The sessions spread across continents and time zones. All recordings of the different webfests are available on the UNESCO Chair UM website.

In 2023, a UNESCO Chair Global Adult Education two-day Seminar started being organised around November. The 2023 seminar invitees discussed challenges and trends in adult education. The participants were Marcella Milana from Verona, Italy, Agnes Andollo from Nairobi, Kenya, Rose Kando from Bethlehem-Palestine (online intervention because of travel restriction in the wake of the Israeli-imposed embargo post October 7, 2023), David Abril and Angel Marzo from Spain, specifically Mallorca and Barcelona respectively, and Elisabeth Lange from BC, Canada. November 2024 saw the organisation of the second seminar, the theme being the International Council for Adult Education on its half century of existence. The seminar involved the following participants: Katarina Popovic (Serbia and ICAE General Secretary), Alan Tuckett (UK), Timothy Ireland (Brazil), Elsy Wakil (Lebanon and AHAED) and Heribert Hinzen (former DVV Director, Germany), with online interventions from Budd L. Hall (former ICAE General Secretary) and Darlene Clover, both from Victoria, BC, Canada.

Both seminars were held in the Boardroom of the Faculty of Education, University of Malta. Papers from the 2023 seminar appeared in previous issues of *Convergence. An International Adult Education Journal*.

2025 marks the end of the Chair's first four-year cycle. An International Adult Education Conference, a follow up to the 2023 one, is being planned for the latter part of 2025. Next November's webfest is being planned to mark the 80th year since Chilean educator, education policy maker and poet, Gabriela Mistral (Lucila Godoy Alcayaga) was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.