

BOOK REVIEW

Peter Mayo (2007) *Adult Education in Malta, Bonn, Germany*, DVV International, 76 pp., ISBN: 9783885137931 & 3885137933 (paperback)

Adult education is changing at a tremendously rapid rate in this contemporary, urban world, so that this publication serves as an opportune attempt to take stock of the Maltese situation. Adult education in Malta has gone a long way since Rev. Paolo Pullicino set up adult education schools in the mid-1800s on the lines as those established in Italy. This is especially true of recent times which witnessed the transformation of vocational training to a neo-liberal discourse of ‘human resources management’, increasing levels of funding opportunities provided by the EU’s Grundtvig action within the Socrates and Leonardo programmes, more private institutions providing attractive qualifications at degree and diploma levels granted by foreign universities, and the re-establishment of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). The strength of this publication is that it is not only based upon the author’s rigorous perusal of literature and documents, throwing light on the historical and contemporary formation of adult education in Malta, but that it is also grounded upon (elite) interviews with influential and prominent adult educators. I also welcome the emphasis on ‘adult education’ rather than ‘lifelong learning’ (erroneously used interchangeably with adult education when it should be an all-embracing concept) – the catchphrase of our era, a slogan brandied about in symposia and seminars by academics, policy makers, trade unionists, and employers – since there is still a need for specialised literature on the educational provision for adults.

Following an initial focus on the historical development of adult education in Malta, the publication’s key chapter includes an inclusive survey of the contemporary provision of local adult education. This opens by delineating how both the Nationalist Party (PN) and Malta Labour Party (MLP) hold important adult education agencies. Despite the fact that both emphasise emancipation as a key goal of their educational programmes, it emerges clearly that while the PN’s objectives are increasingly directed toward self-empowerment and self-actualisation, the MLP’s training purposes revolve around the fostering of a distinct type of socio-economic and collective consciousness. Mayo also goes at length to review the travails of state sponsored education, especially its forays in the co-ordination of adult literacy programmes, community learning and prison education. Ample space is allocated to the role of adult education in promoting vocational and workers’ education through the Employment & Training

Corporation and MCAST, the input of the University of Malta to adult education, as well as the various church and catholic inspired forms of adult education. Mayo concludes that, despite these interesting developments, adult education still remains the 'Cinderella' sector of the Maltese educational system. Although one must read Mayo's monograph in full to empathise fully with such judgement, it suffices to say that Malta still lacks a public National Strategy for Lifelong Learning.

Adult Education in Malta is an extremely interesting, thought-provoking and comprehensively referenced text (Appendices include a list of local journals on education, organisations related to adult education, plus a chronology of adult education landmarks in Malta). It is also an eminently readable and accessible book, and will be warmly welcomed by academics, students, policy makers and other professionals interested in adult education.

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