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## NÉMETH BALÁZS

Adult Learning and Education at the Institute for Human Development of the University of Pécs

[ORCID: 0000-0002-4916-5741](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4916-5741)

### Adult Education and Social Justice: International Perspectives

Maria Slowey, Heribert Hinzen, Michael Omolewa and Michael Osborne (Eds.) Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2023, 324 pp.<sup>1</sup>

#### Review

*Adult Education and Social Justice: International Perspectives* is a magnificent collection of studies with a special focus to pay tribute to Lalage Bown, a great scholar, a practitioner, a reflective thinker and promoter of adult learning and education by connecting between the legacy of Bown and the influential topic of social justice in adult education in the context of concept, action and reflection. Consequently, it is important to note that the editors formulated four chapters so as to reflect to specific approaches to adult education by pointing out the influence of Bown's work on the development of adult education for inclusion, equity and equality.

As a reviewer, may I indicate to have met Lalage Bown at the University of Dundee, Scotland at an international conference on the history of adult education in 1998 to discuss the rise and fall of adult education institutions and social movements. In her keynote presentation, Lalage was arguing that mobilisation, popular participation and sustainable development were themes of development in poor countries' adult education. (Cooke and MacSween, 2000) In the context of historical approach to adult education, she claimed with passion and enthusiasm that adult education had a particular role and responsibility to promote social justice, inclusion and equity for underrepresented and vulnerable social groups of adults. Twenty-five years later, I am still convinced that enormous impact of her thoughts and achievements is a light-tower for adult educators and that is what this collection of studies clearly reflects.

Editors of this book made it clear that it should have a twofold role, on the one had to recall the legacy of Lalage Bown with some special personal reflections and, on the other, to demonstrate how her manifold legacy may be explained and demonstrated through practical dimensions of research and development in international adult education with a special attention and focus to Africa where Bown spent many decades to help forming a humanistic post-colonial era to fight back inequalities.

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Baron Jan Royal, principle of Sommerville College at the University of Oxford, wrote a personally driven foreword to recall the memory on Lalage to be followed by acknowledgments to authors of this collection raising both the scope and the quality of discourse and reasoning referring to the trends and issues of adult learning and education with dimensions of social justice, development work, inclusion and equity.

In this book, thematic parts address relevant aspects of adult education to both recall and promote responsible actions for a more inclusive policy formation in adult education to refer to challenges of shifting from colonial past to post-colonial present and future, but also to follow the changing nature of lifelong learning and education related policy concepts and practices in accordance with quality focuses and challenging aspects of profession and professionalisation from local to global with intergenerational and intercultural concerns.

The introduction part is dedicated namely to *The Legacy of Lalage Bown: An Inclusive and Post-Colonial Vision for Adult Learning and Education*. This Chapter introduces the professional life and work of Lalage Bown so as to take the reader to understand her vision for adult education together with a strong influence on international developments and organisations. Also, this detailed insight takes attention to her interest and passion towards African culture, people and well-being, by connecting such issues to adult education with a post-colonial dimension.

The first part of the collection provides several reflection on *Lalage Bown. Impact on International Developments in Adult Education*. This section of the collection points out some major steps of the international post-war developments in adult education, according to Hinzen, through UNESCO CONFINTEA series to explain the roles and mission of Bown in providing a reasonable summary for UNESCO's campaign to put the right to learn into the focus of discussion especially generating policy attention and support for vulnerable groups of adults, women amongst them.

Lalage Bown reflected upon the CONFINTEA series with critical focus to demonstrate a rather one-sided approach to dominate discourse from richer Western states of the developed world. Therefore, she believed the positive impact of increasing to participation of representatives of developing countries to enhance new focuses and approaches in international and comparative adult education. Such aspects, she was convinced, could accelerate a more sophisticated discourse at international meetings to use the cohesive and inclusive character of adult education with its primary mission, principles and goals. All these, according to Robert Hamilton, raised attention, respect and recognition towards diversity of values, identities in different regions of the world. Maria Slowey explains the legacy of university adult education as an instrument of the rising social role and responsibility of higher education. Her example for the University of Glasgow and its Department of Adult and

Continuing Education makes it understandable how difficult and complex and how much necessary it might be to outline, strengthen and save a social purpose mission and role within academic cycles.

Referring to Bown's struggle for women's education for personal development and empowerment, Jean Barr points out some particular aspects of Bown's gentle fight for women's right to education and to available grants, but she also underlines the constant need to recognise the empowerment of women through participation in adult education with necessary flexibility towards emerging grounds of learning. Accordingly, Stella Nwizu and Mejai Bola Mike highlighted the necessity of women's education so as to support poverty reduction and elimination in Africa. Finally, Alan Tuckett formulates concluding remarks to this part of the book by calling for the legacy of Lalage Bown to address and strengthen messages towards policy makers to stand by and promote commitments to lifelong learning for all and to turn such commitments into actions and better policies to help poor and marginalised adults, women amongst them.

The second part of the book scrutinizes the roles of adult education, decolonialisation, post-colonialism and indigenous knowledge. Thereby, a relevant chapter discusses the theme of liberation and empowerment by Michael Omolewa and co-authors like Ruphina Nwachukwu and Ann Katahoire, institutional developments are elaborated upon by Samir Halliru and Audu Semiu Aganah. The African story in global partnership development is analysed by Akpovire Oduaran and Gbolagade Adekanmbi with Rashid Aderiyone. A further part is provided by reflective approaches of Abimbola Abodunrin, Jason Chan, and Srabani Maitra towards decolonialised language learning. A final reflection is made by Budd Hall to address the rise of the 'African Voice' and that of the so-called decolonial intent.

The third part of this collection of studies is dedicated to the topic of 'From Literacy to Lifelong Learning.' Mia Perry, Marcel Ramos and Nany Palacios deal with the concept and changing conceptions of literacy. Michael Osborne continues with a special approach to discover relations and interplay amongst some particular SDGs in the context of capacity building of researchers in the global South. After Osborne's chapter, Oluwayemisi Obashoro-John and Brian Findsen search for good reasons for supporting lifelong learning for older adults. And this part is closed by the input of Ellen Boeren and Cathrine Lido to discuss the capture of lifelong learning metrics through international surveys and emerging innovative methods.

The fourth part of this book is focused to methods to enhance future development of adult learning and education by fostering excellence and professionalisation. Avramovska, Belete, Gartenschlaeger, Hinzen and Kvatchadze reflect upon decades of experience and achievements of DVV International. Shirley Walters provide a thorough analysis of a distinctive case study, called the 'professors of the street', as Ievgeniia Dragomirova and Rob

Mark looks into the education of adult migrants in Europe by resonating to experiences of Ukrainian refugees. Bonnie Slade and Preeti Dagar conclude this section by looking into some future perspectives of professional development of adult educators to address matters of both diversity and that of responsibilities.

The final chapter is the concluding personal reflection of Richard Taylor, having worked with Lalage Bown over decades, upon the everlasting legacy of hers to underline the sensitive character and spirit to have gained respect and recognition in various parts of the world for being a humanist, a thinker and an educator of adults at the same time.

In this review, let us underline that this book clearly represents that the legacy of Lalage Bown can be understood both as a reminder and as an inspiring example of human dignity combined with endless curiosity. This valuable collection of studies is a profound proof of that.