

CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review

Bringing to the fore equity, inclusion, and effective delivery of quality youth and adult education

By Maria Khan, ASPBAE Secretary-General,
and Nani Zulminarni, ASPBAE President

The global community of adult education practitioners, policy advocates, civil society, academicians, researchers, and national government representatives from 95 member States of UNESCO gathered in Suwon City, South Korea, in October 2017 to review the progress of the achievements and challenges, since the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) held in Belém, Brazil, in 2009. The CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review (MTR) Conference – themed on *The Power of Adult Learning: Vision 2030* - was organised by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Education (UIL) in cooperation with the Korean Ministry of Education, the Korean National Commission of UNESCO, and the National Institute for Lifelong Learning (NILE), and co-hosted by the Municipalities of Suwon and Osan cities.

In the main, the CONFINTEA VI MTR Conference was organised as a platform to - take stock of the progress made in implementing the Belém Framework for Action (BFA) and the regional action plans put into place following regional CONFINTEA VI follow-up meetings; draw stronger connections between the BFA and the



This issue of Ed-lines focuses on the representation of youth and adult education and learning in education frameworks such as the UNESCO Recommendations on Adult Learning and Education, the Belém Framework for Action, and SDG4.

2030 Agenda (Education 2030 and SDG4, in particular) and how adult learning and education (ALE) can powerfully contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) and the other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and agree strategies and measures to enhance the full implementation and sound monitoring of the BFA and the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE) towards the convening of CONFINTEA VII in 2021. The Conference was also designed as a space for sharing, capacity building,
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UNESCO Member States gathered in Suwon City, Korea, to review the progress of the achievements and challenges, since the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) held in Belém, Brazil, in 2009.

networking, and advocacy, especially in support of greater investments in adult learning and education.

The CONFINTEA VI MTR Conference reaffirmed the recognition of adult education and learning as a right – and an essential means to the exercise of other rights. This reinforces ASPBAE’s own belief -

“ASPBAE believes that the right to education, like all other human rights, are universal and apply to all people, irrespective of age. The Human Rights Convention also underscores that, “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (Article 26, Universal Declaration of HR). They define education to be directed to building “a sense of dignity” and to “enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups” (ICESCR, Article 13). These aims cannot be attained solely through formal schooling or through education solely for children: youth and adult education, within a lifelong learning framework, are thus integral features of the right to education.” (ASPBAE Strategic Directions 2017-2020)

To enable the full exercise of these rights by all requires political commitment, financing, effective strategies, delivery mechanisms, programmes, and sound

governance and accountability mechanisms. Ensuring the universal exercise of these rights also necessitates focused attention on those who tend to be left behind, recognising disparities in voice and power of different groups and communities to education and learning opportunities.

The Belém Framework for Action, the UNESCO Recommendations on Adult Education and Learning (RALE), SDG4, and the Education 2030 Framework for Action, together outline the measures governments, donors, and all other stakeholders in adult education and learning committed to undertake to better guarantee adult education and learning for all youth and adults. The Belém Framework for Action covers the five core areas of policy, governance, financing, participation, inclusion and equity, and quality. RALE further identifies three domains of learning and skills - literacy and basic skills; continuing education and vocational skills; community education and active citizenship skills, concretising the means by which the targets related to youth and adult education and learning in SDG4 can be achieved: Target 4.6 on youth and adult literacy; Targets 4.3 and 4.4 on skills for work and life; and Target 4.7 on citizenship education. The Editorial of this issue of Ed-lines, by Werner Mauch of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning - *Repositioning adult learning and education in the perspective of the 2030 agendas* - describes the inter-relationship of these policy

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frameworks in favour of adult learning and education.

The CONFINTEA VI MTR Conference emphasized the need for these policy frameworks to interact more strongly in the advancement of youth and adult education and learning. Civil society observed that while Adult Learning and Education (ALE) found strong mention in the SDGs, in SDG4, and in the Education 2030 Framework for Action – with global agreement to a lifelong learning framework underpinning the new education agenda – ALE remains the weakest link in the lifelong learning chain in the roll out of SDG4. This is most pronounced in the area of monitoring and financing. The database on non-formal youth and adult education, essential to inform strong policy, programming, and delivery, remains weak and limited. Governments and donors offer scant and decreasing funding for adult education with as many as 42% of countries surveyed by the 3rd Global Report on Adult Learning (GRALE) investing less than 1% of their education budgets on adult education. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development omits reference to financing for adult literacy – even in the face of great need with a total of 750 million adults and 100 million youth denied access to literacy skills (GEMR 2017).

The Asia Pacific CONFINTEA VI Mid-term Report on Adult Education and Learning (<http://uil.unesco.org/adult-education/confintea/confintea-vi-mid-term-review-2017-status-adult-learning-and-education-asia>) underscored the need to reverse this trend, recognising that, “*sustainable development cannot be achieved without ensuring transition to higher levels of learning beyond basic education*”. However, many countries in the region “*continue to view ALE only in project mode, severely affecting financial investment for adopting an integrated lifelong learning perspective.*”

In his article in this issues of Ed-lines, Rangachar Govinda, author of the Asia Pacific CONFINTEA VIMid-Term Report on Adult Education and Learning (ALE), calls for the promotion of ALE within an agenda that is “*more holistic, combining the overlapping principles of lifelong learning, global citizenship, and sustainable development that constitute the cornerstones for education development of the future*” – and the need to thwart the shift in policy attention from ALE recognised within a “*socio-political agenda of transformation and human development to an economic agenda of skill building, market orientation, and economic growth.*”



The CONFINTEA VI MTR Conference emphasized the need for education policy frameworks to interact more strongly in the advancement of youth and adult education and learning.

In the face of these, ASPBAE and other civil society thus welcomed agreement of the CONFINTEA VI MTR Conference to action points as outlined in the Suwon-Osan CONFINTEA VI Mid-term Review Statement, The Power of adult learning and education – a Vision towards 2030 (http://www.aspbae.org/userfiles/jan18/CONFINTEA_VI_Mid_Term_Review_Statement.pdf). A number of these bear highlighting here, as follows -

- ALE should be acknowledged as a means to realise the right to education and therefore be embedded in legislation. Member States are encouraged to use the UNESCO Recommendations on Adult Education and Learning (RALE) guidelines adapted to their level of development.
- Legislative mechanisms and policies for life-wide and lifelong learning should involve learners, and should centre on their needs and aspirations. Learners’ cultural and linguistic diversity and experiences should be taken into account.
- ALE, in a lifelong learning perspective, should be an integral part of education sector plans.
- Following the Incheon Declaration and Education 2030 Framework for Action, which calls for countries to allocate at least 4-6% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and/or at least 15-20% of their total public expenditure to education, countries to prioritise ALE and allocate an increasing percentage of their education budget to it. Given that ALE provision is also supplied by different sectors, other ministries should also contribute funds to the implementation of a proposed ALE budget.

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ASPBAE President, Nani Zulminarni, addressing the CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review Conference in Korea.

- Development partners should recognise the importance of ALE in a lifelong learning perspective and therefore provide funding for it. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and other influential global funding partners, should include this sub-sector in their overall strategy for education and invest in and be made accountable for funding the whole ALE agenda as a part of lifelong learning.
- Domestic resource mobilisation should be increased through tax justice mechanisms.
- Literacy must be understood as an indispensable foundation for lifelong learning; Political will needs to be generated and strengthened, backed by adequate and sustainable funding, to ensure equitable provision of ALE and literacy.
- Member States to reinforce UNESCO and its institutes, particularly the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, so that appropriate monitoring of organised learning activities takes place in relation to the SDG4 targets.
- Member States to work inter-sectorally and increase policy dialogue that includes all stakeholders, including civil society and learners, to create lifelong learning systems and societies.
- Adult literacy should be reinstated in the Human Development Index.
- The Education Commission, Global Partnership for Education, and Education Cannot Wait, as well as other development partners and national and sub-national governments, to restore attention to and provide adequate funding to adult literacy.
- UNESCO to popularise and articulate RALE and

the Belém Framework for Action with the SDG4 implementation processes and architecture such as the Global Education Meeting, SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee, and regional SDG4 coordination mechanisms, as well as within the wider United Nations structures. It must be used as a reference for National Voluntary Review and High Level Political Forums yearly meetings as well as guiding the work of the Global Alliance on Literacy.

This issue of *Ed-lines* features rich inputs and analysis offered by civil society during the CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review Conference to sharpen attention to equity, inclusion, and effective delivery of quality youth and adult education truly for all.

We reproduce the remarks of Robbie Guevara, Immediate Past President of ASPBAE, during the Conference Plenary session on the UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE).

Christoph Jost, Director of DVVI International, highlights the critical role of Adult Education Centres, or Community Learning Centres (CLCs), as delivery mechanisms of ALE, especially to address equity and inclusion considerations; and recommendations to policy makers to strengthen Adult Education or Community Learning Centres.

Ricarda Motschilnig, Policy and Advocacy Officer of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), outlines the main discussions of the Civil Society Forum, *‘Education 2030: From Commitment to Action’*, convened by ICAE in preparation for the CONFINTEA VI MTR Conference.

Thomas Kuan of the University of the 3rd Age in Singapore draws attention to the oft-neglected area of learning for older adults and its value, especially in an era of great technological change.

We hope you find these reflections useful in appreciating the rich debates hosted by the CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review Conference. We are hopeful this process will contribute well to facilitating the full implementation of the Belém Framework for Action, RALE, and the SDG4 agenda - and the preparations for a successful convening of CONFINTEA VII in 2021.

EDITORIAL

Repositioning adult learning and education in the perspective of the 2030 agendas

By Werner Mauch, Senior Programme Specialist, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is, in its own words of 2015, "a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity." It seeks to "strengthen universal peace in larger freedom." Its signatories "recognise that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions ... is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development." All countries and all stakeholders have agreed to implement this plan, structured according to 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), acting in collaborative partnership. Educational requirements to that end were defined in SDG4, and specific targets defined in the Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA).

Members of the global community of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) stakeholders have been aware for several decades about the contribution of ALE to all dimensions of sustainable development. The Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning, adopted by the Fifth International Conference on Adult Learning and Education (CONFINTEA V) in 1997, already underlined that adult learning represents a "powerful concept for fostering ecologically sustainable development, for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social and economic development, and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice". The Belém Framework for Action (BFA), adopted by CONFINTEA VI in 2009, substantively built on this critical insight while recognising the "key role of adult learning and education" in achieving "sustainable human social, economic, cultural and environmental development".

The CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review 2017 held in Suwon and Osan (Republic of Korea) in October 2017 intended to take stock of developments in ALE since 2009 from a global perspective, and to elaborate proposals for the way forward. The aim was to gather effective ideas fostering full implementation of the recommendations of the past as laid down in BFA, while also starting to build a bridge towards the new 2030 horizon.

Against this background, it seems appropriate to highlight the function of the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE). Adopted by UNESCO Member States in 2015, RALE provides a missing link between Belém Framework of Action (BFA) and the Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA). The former framework (BFA) established the five areas of action in which stakeholders in Member States – governments in particular – should aim to improve conditions for ALE: (1) policy; (2) governance; (3) financing; (4) participation, inclusion and equity; and (5) quality. The latter (FFA) defined the specific targets to be achieved through improved education provision.

RALE now reiterates the need to take necessary steps to improve Adult Learning and Education (ALE) provision in the relevant areas, but also defines three key fields of adult learning and education, namely - (1) literacy and basic skills; (2) continuing training and professional development; and (3) active citizenship. Across all these fields, Member States are asked to provide adult learning opportunities in accordance with their specific needs, in line with their contextual development aspirations.

RALE meaningfully complements the Belém Framework for Action by pointing to the relevant Education 2030 Framework for Action targets (i.e. target 4.6 concerning literacy and basic skills, targets 4.3 and 4.4 concerning continuing training and professional development, and target 4.7 concerning active citizenship) to guide further action and initiatives on international, regional, national, and sub-national levels. Together, both frameworks should help to get a better view (through two lenses in one pair of glasses, as it were) on all aspects of improving ALE, revealing existing barriers to achieving relevant learning results. These two lenses might then be useful for recognising and



Werner Mauch

combining all three dimensions of lifelong learning (lifelong, life-wide, all modes of learning), since two eyes are helpful, if not conditional, for a three-dimensional view.

Consequently, the specific recommendations of the Suwon-Osan CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review Statement are structured in line with both, BFA and RALE. Under the heading *The Power of Adult Learning and Education: A Vision Towards 2030*, the Statement elaborates on needs and strategies to further improve ALE provision, with a special concern for international cooperation and partnerships. It also underlines, however, that further efforts are needed to raise awareness of the potential of ALE among all relevant stakeholders, and it ends with a call upon Member States and partners to provide all relevant information and data on progress made for the preparation of CONFINTEA VII in 2021.

At this point, we might be confident that the international ALE community will be reasonably equipped with appropriate instruments to embark towards new horizons, at least up to 2030. Let us make best use of them, keeping in mind the upcoming preparation of the fourth Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 4). But this is another topic, on which more information will be available soon.



UNESCO's Recommendations on Adult Learning and Education reiterate the need to take steps to improve the provisioning of adult learning and education through literacy and basic skills, continuing training and professional development, and active citizenship.

Adult education centres key to providing education opportunities to respond to societal needs

By Christoph Jost, Director, DVV International

DVV International organised its 5th Adult Education and Development Conferences (AEDC) in October 2017 in Tbilisi, Georgia. The Conference was titled, ‘Adult Education Centres as Key for Development – Responsibilities, Structures and Benefits’. More than 100 national and international stakeholders and experts informed and exchanged about their approaches, experiences, and the various challenges encountered.

The location of the conference was selected for good reason. DVV International, jointly with its local partners, has been supporting a well-functioning adult education system in Georgia in the course of the last years. Nowadays, ten adult education centres and an umbrella organisation provide a wide range of learning opportunities for the sake of the people most in need. This experience was shared with participants from the global network of DVV International and compared with approaches in other world regions.

The main outcome was a comprehensive set of key messages drafted with support of the global office network of DVV International, validated, and



Adult education centres are instrumental in tackling global challenges such as migration, mass unemployment, poverty, inequality, instability and conflicts, and social exclusion.

refined during the conference. The key messages take the diversity of approaches, forms, and institutions into account. To reflect this diversity, the key messages, outlined further below, explicitly make use of the combined wording of Adult Education Centres/Community Learning Centres (AEC/CLC).

Overall context – Why adult education centres matter

The establishment and improvement of educational structures for youth and adults is more important than ever. This holds particularly true for poorer parts of towns and cities, rural areas, and the community level where huge gaps in access and quality of education prevail. Lower literacy rates, higher levels of out-of-school youth, and drop-out rates result in a lack of opportunities and prospects. The limited provision of education and training for young people and disadvantaged groups has become a global issue since many of them leave home in search of employment and better living conditions.

Adult education centres are instrumental in tackling global challenges such as migration, mass unemployment, poverty, inequality, instability and conflicts, and social exclusion. Community-based learning centres are flexible and respond quickly to changing needs and new demands of individuals and society in the era of globalisation, digitalisation, demographic changes, and ongoing technological development. They provide education for all regardless of class, gender, education, age, religion, ideology or nationality; they also reflect diversity and strengthen



Christoph Jost

inclusion.

Global policy papers and processes, such as UNESCO’s Belém Framework for Action (BFA) and the Recommendations on Adult Learning and Education (RALE), strongly advocate the creation of multi-purpose community learning spaces, centres, and networks. The effectiveness of community-based approaches and learning centres is also explicitly addressed in the Education 2030 Agenda and the overarching Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Key messages

27 key messages focus on challenges, requirements, and recommendations for policy makers and other stakeholders. They are meant as global reference documents that may be further refined and adapted according to local needs. The following three examples provide a first insight into the full set of key messages that can be downloaded from the webpage of DVV International at <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/materials/expert-and-position-papers/>.

Policy, legislation, and financing: For AEC/CLC to function well, similar legal provision, governance, and support structures as those available for schools, vocational training, and higher education are needed. Funding should be adequate, predictable, and sustainable.

General, specific, flexible: AEC/CLC provide a variety of relevant educational opportunities allowing for flexible and quick responses to

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societal needs. They range from basic education, literacy and foreign

languages to income generating activities, vocational training, and life skills.

Cooperation and networking: AEC/CLC run by civil society or private organizations should set-up umbrella bodies such as associations for joint awareness raising, lobbying and advocacy, networking and fundraising to respond to expanded learning needs.

Dissemination and further use of key messages

These key messages are intended to provide guidance and support

advocacy for the further set up of related learning structures. They were presented and disseminated during a well visited side event of the CONFINTEA VI Midterm Review in Suwon in October 2017, together with first-hand experiences from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe.

Stakeholders are encouraged to inform and further disseminate the key messages to national governments, international organisations, donors and funding agencies, civil society, academia, and the private sector to strengthen the debate in the future.

Youth and adult learning in the Asia Pacific: Need for combining economic concerns with a socio-political agenda

By **Rangachar Govinda**, author of the **CONTINTEA VI Asia Pacific Mid-Term Report on Adult Education and Learning**

Asia and the Pacific has more than half of the world's population, including nearly 900 million of the world's poor, and 30% of the global land mass. Demographic shifts in recent years, accompanied by what is often called demographic dividend, is a major factor shaping formal as well as non-formal education, its contents, and processes. A central message of this phenomenon is the need to focus on the educational needs of the youth and the working age population, equipping them with relevant productive and life skills. In fact, this is already getting reflected in the way youth education as well as adult learning and education (ALE) is being designed and organised in many countries of the region, with emphasis on creating an eco-system necessary to foster innovation and entrepreneurship. Further, education in the region, as also elsewhere in the world, is opening new vistas for accessing knowledge through non-institutional and non-formal means, enormously enhancing the capability to learn and develop one self. ALE has to reckon with and adapt policies and practices to the increasing, and somewhat unpredictable, influence of constantly evolving digital technologies.

ALE policies and practices have also to be closely aligned with the progress of school education. A quick look at the state of development of education reveals that while all countries

in the region have witnessed significant progress, around 16 million children of primary school age, and around 34 million of lower secondary age adolescents, are still out of school in the Asia Pacific, and two-thirds of these are in South Asia.



Rangachar Govinda

Out-of-school children are an important concern as they would likely remain non-literate and grow into adulthood if there are no special interventions. There is a need also to tackle persisting inequalities to ensure that educational programmes are inclusive and cover the disadvantaged groups effectively. Quality of education continues to be a central concern in all countries of the region, even as many innovative efforts are being made to address this issue. Most countries have made significant progress in promoting gender equality in education, though the goal is far from accomplished.



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Sustainable development cannot be achieved without ensuring transition to higher levels of learning beyond basic education - education has to embrace a lifelong learning perspective.

Besides these concerns, it is well recognised that sustainable development cannot be achieved without ensuring transition to higher levels of learning beyond basic education. This has led to increasing realisation that education has to embrace a lifelong learning perspective. But translating this perspective into action has been a slow process as it involves restructuring both formal and non-formal education programmes, including ALE. Unfortunately, many countries continue to view ALE only in project mode, severely affecting financial investment for adopting an integrated lifelong learning perspective.

As we review the ALE policies and programmes, with economic liberalisation sweeping the whole continent, one can see great degree of consensus in perspectives across the sub-regions. Countries across the continent seem to be shifting the emphasis from a socio-political agenda of transformation and human development to an economic agenda of skill building, market orientation, and economic growth.

Ultimately, ALE is about providing opportunities for learning that are responsive to the needs of adults. However, in the diverse socio-cultural setting of the region, inequalities in education tend to reinforce lack of voice and power and impede the full and free participation of all in civic and



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political life. This in turn undermines good governance and the capability of all people to be agents of development consequently weakening social bonds, undermining environmental sustainability, and feeding disengagement and dissent.

Seen in this context, ALE in the region is at a critical juncture as we realign education policies and programmes with the long term global Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030. We have to consolidate the gains made in recent decades and envision a new agenda that is more holistic, combining the overlapping principles of lifelong learning, global citizenship, and sustainable development that constitute the cornerstones for education development of the future.

Youth and adult learning and education have to go beyond employability and foster the values of active citizenship, strengthen personal growth, and secure social inclusion. It has also to imbibe values that underscore inevitability of interdependence and collaboration; concern for environmental sustainability or the need for a new ethics combining enterprise and environmentalism, and learning to live together within a world of increased diversity and inequality.

Renewing momentum in promoting adult learning

*By Jose Roberto Guevara,
ICAE Vice President Asia Pacific, and ASPBAE Immediate Past President*

I would like to share my thoughts on how the Recommendations on Adult Learning and Education (RALE) can strengthen the implementation of quality Adult Learning and Education (ALE).

Our strength is in our coming together – RALE enshrines governance that recognises civil society's contribution and participation at all stages and at all levels, through multi-stakeholder partnership structures and processes. As civil society organisations (CSOs), we



Jose Roberto Guevara

want to emphasize that this extends beyond the often assumed role of CSOs in the delivery of adult learning and education, but includes the development of both policies

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and programmes. At the heart of quality, RALE underscores adult learning and education's potential for transformation in all relevant spheres, through the provision of contextualised and learner-centred ALE. Therefore, we need to continue to call attention to the need for flexible and seamless learning pathways across formal and non-formal education and training as it relates to learning.

RALE is also committed to mobilising sufficient financial resources. There is continued lack of funding of adult learning and education by the current global funding facilities for education. This is evident from both the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Education Cannot Wait, with their respective education priorities. This is not to paint it is an 'us' or 'them' situation. But it is to acknowledge that we have all committed to while of the SDG4 goal of lifelong learning and therefore should try to help generate resources for all.

RALE is committed to - Participation, Inclusion and Equity – *“that no individual is excluded from adult learning and education and that quality learning opportunities are available to all.”* Indeed, we do recall the commitment of the SDG 2030 that “No one is left behind”.

As a policy framework, RALE is very timely as it contributes to a suite of policy frameworks and commitments (Sustainable Development Goals, Belem Framework for Action, Education 2030 Framework for Action). There is global policy coherence and these international policy frameworks enable us all to work to contribute to youth and adult education.

As development practitioners, we often focus on the needs of the



RALE enshrines governance that recognises civil society's contribution and participation at all stages and at all levels, through multi-stakeholder partnership structures and processes.

'others'. And so it is the 'other' that needs to be saved from poverty, the 'other' that needs to become literate, and the 'other' that needs to be given access to safe drinking water. Reflecting on RALE's commitment to international cooperation, it is important to recognise that we too need to rethink and relearn how to better engage in international cooperation and partnerships that recognise and value local capacity. Recent conversations have suggested that we should re-visit the principle of solidarity whereby it is not about the 'other' but about our shared

humanity that is inextricably linked to the survival of our planet earth.

RALE was updated to *“reflect contemporary educational, cultural, political, social and economic challenges as set out in the Hamburg Declaration and the Belem Framework for Action”*. It also highlighted that the other purpose was *“to give renewed momentum to adult education”*. It is this momentum that does not just ask us to reflect and respond, but to truly transform these challenges that we have committed to.



There is continued lack of funding of adult learning and education by the current global funding facilities for education. RALE is also committed to mobilising sufficient financial resources.

Education 2030: FROM COMMITMENT TO ACTION

The crucial role of adult learning and education to address current crises

By Ricarda Motschilnig, Policy and Advocacy Officer,
International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)



Ricarda Motschilnig

The Civil Society Forum, ‘*Education 2030: From Commitment to Action*’, organised by the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), in cooperation with ASPBAE and other partners, in the framework of the CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review held in Suwon City, Korea, on 24 October 2017, looked at civil society’s contribution to securing the right to education and lifelong learning for youth and adults.

For the representatives of civil society from over 50 countries, this gathering offered the possibility to appraise the challenges and opportunities related to adult education and learning in the current context, profile the importance of adult learning and education in the new global education and development agenda, and confront the challenges related to its implementation on both the national and the global levels.

Monitoring and supporting implementation

The Civil Society Forum (CSF) looked at the Belém Framework for Action (BFA) and UNESCO’s Recommendations for Adult Learning (RALE) and how

these can reinforce the commitment to the universal right to education and learning. It was organised as a platform for civil society to strategize on its advocacy within the CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review (MTR) processes and other related education and development policy arenas. Therefore, a Civil Society Statement was formulated and agreed upon at the Forum, which urged inclusion in the MTR outcomes and was delivered to representatives of governments, UN agencies, and international organisations at the event.

Taking on a holistic approach

The CSF concluded that adult learning and education should be truly transformational, critical, empowering, participative, and inclusive, so it can support the development and transformation of individuals, communities, societies, and economies according to individual needs. An intersectoral approach is needed, which acknowledges the urgent need for recognition of different learning pathways.



The Civil Society Forum, in the framework of the CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review, profiled the importance of adult learning and education in the new global education and development agenda and confronted the challenges related to its implementation nationally and globally.

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Civil Society Forum participants recognised that adult learning and education is the least supported link in the lifelong learning chain, currently facing further cuts in funding at the national level in many countries.

Adult Learning and Education in the Sustainable Development Goals

The CSF analysed how it can support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed on by the United Nations in 2015. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) focuses on lifelong learning (LLL), but adult education is the weakest link in this chain. For the full realisation of SDG4, and indeed all the other SDGs, it was seen as necessary to discuss what kind of lifelong learning will need to be promoted and advanced.

The least supported link

CSF participants recognised that adult learning and education (ALE) is the least supported link in the lifelong learning chain, currently facing further cuts in funding at the national level in many countries. ALE's position should be strengthened, secured, and fully recognised in order to make sure that all adults are not left behind. The political commitment to promoting the fully inclusive understanding of lifelong learning is imperative.

The role of civil society

The Civil Society Forum and the active participation and contribution towards the Mid-Term Review showed

once more the important role civil society plays in adult learning and education worldwide. Thus, as one of the key players, it should also be recognised as a partner in policy creation, planning, monitoring, and evaluation of policy implementation.

Four years to go

Given that the next CONFINTEA conference is four years away, this Civil Society Forum provided the opportunity to deliberate on the main challenges and opportunities for the right to youth and adult education and lifelong learning in the current policy and development context. Participants celebrated civil society's achievements, learnt from its rich and diverse experiences, forged solidarity, and collectively defined coordinated ways forward.

The Civil Society Forum agreed a set of recommendations to the CONFINTEA VI Mid Term Review Conference, outlining its main advocacies for this process. These are contained in the statement for from the CSO Forum, **'Education 2030: From Commitment to Action'** – (https://ec.europa.eu/epale/sites/epale/files/confintea_mtr_-_civil_society_statement.pdf).

Harnessing new potential with later life learning of older adults

By Thomas Kuan, University of the 3rd Age, Singapore

The recent CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review Conference in Suwon, Korea, in October 2017, was well attended by NGOs and some governmental agencies from 50 countries. The Civil Society Forum issued a Statement that education and learning are crucial to all youth and older adults. The later life learning of older adults is one of the emerging trends that has impact on future learning and education. World Ageing Report (UN 2015) stated that older adults form a huge segment of the population, with about 901 million people aged 60 or over in 2015, and growing to 1.4 billion by 2030 (which is only 13 years

away). This data shows that new human potential can be harnessed for the Sustainable Development Goals by adding education to life experiences of older adults.

Adult Learning and Education (ALE) for third age adults is already popular in the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, universities of the third age (U3As or UTAs in China), elder colleges and networks in USA, and informal learning spaces and institutions in many countries. Today's learning and education are influenced by internet and social media; in 13 years' time the new paradigm shift to embrace technology advances and artificial intelligence (AI) will be the norm. For older adults, abilities to manage AI intrusions into our social and cultural values are useful skills to share with youth and children. Will this result in a new understanding in profiling learners, especially older adults?



Thomas Kuan

As economies grow, more adults will be 'forced' out of jobs by robots, digitalisation, and trade wars. SDG4 ('Ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all') could recommend that policy makers ensure timely access to correct information for older adults to chart their employment opportunities by unlearning and relearning. This will ensure equity employment for all.

My thanks to mayors of Suwon and Osan Cities for hosting the MTR Conference and showcasing their older adults learning communities. Their models show that ALE for older adults can improve life satisfactorily. As a good late friend mentioned, lifelong learning is like breathing; we need to breath in order to live. As stated in the Belem Framework for Action, continuous learning and development of adults is a prerequisite. Similarly, as we know that in an emergency inside a plane, oxygen masks are dropped for adults to put on before helping babies and young ones to put theirs. I wonder if this may be another way for the ALE approach to harness potential in older adults.



SDG4 could recommend that policy makers ensure timely access to correct information for older adults to chart their employment opportunities by unlearning and relearning, ensuring equity employment for all.

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