



CONFITEA VI



Key Issues at Stake

International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)

Public Paper

Following a large consultation among its members and networks, the *International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)*, in a spirit of dialogue with Governments and international agencies, proposes four themes as key areas of debate and decision on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) during the coming CONFITEA VI Conference in Belem, Brazil in May 2009 and the preparatory meetings to be held in each world region.

The four themes are:

1. Poverty and growing economic social and cultural inequality an important background for work oriented *adult learning and education (ALE)*.
2. The right of education and learning of migrant women and men. Fundamental tenets of this theme are that there are no illegal migrant people, only people in irregular situation, and that above all, refugees have a right to survive and reconstruct their lives.
3. The priority of adult education, including literacy, as both part of the *Education For All - EFA* goals and a critical tool for reaching them. Equally, adult education is a central but invisible component of the MDG goals and is indispensable to all strategies for achieving them.
4. The need for new policy and legislation to ensure the right to learn without discrimination based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, religion and disabilities and national status, and for their real implementation where a critical test of truth will be the concrete financial allocation. Policies and legislation (including measures to address discrimination in all these areas) are pre requisites for achieving this but implementation of the right to education will be dependant on securing sufficient resources, including funding. This will be the ultimate test of governmental commitment.

To these ends, legitimate international monitoring mechanisms are absolutely necessary.

1. Poverty, economic inequality and adult learning and education

Poverty and social exclusion cannot be dissociated from the structured inequalities reflected in and reinforced by the uneven distribution of work related learning education activities, either of vocational education and training or of provision for livelihood skill development. Economically marginalised

people must be a priority for the deliberations of CONFINTEA VI, which should recognise the interdependence of learning for work, learning for individual and collective empowerment, and learning for social justice. In this context, the issue of unequal participation in organized adult and non formal education should become a priority in the coming CONFINTEA VI deliberation.

At stake are the learning and education right of people excluded from significant initial education, of older people, of members of minority groups and indigenous peoples, of asylum seekers or refugees and adults with learning difficulties and disabilities, amongst others.

Women and men, who work in the formal economy, require decent, sustainable work and opportunities to continue to learn, improve their skills as well as possibility to improve their qualification and protect or enhance their chances to earn a living and gain satisfaction from their work.

The demand of people active in the informal agricultural or craft economy for non formal education and training is not less urgent. Women and men working in the informal economy have the rights to require equal access to skills and knowledge in order to improve their ways of securing a livelihood and of progressing economically, socially and educationally.

The majority of workers with low or no remuneration for their labour are women. They are active in the informal economy in great numbers and, at present, are becoming heads of households. Women are a priority population for the development of policies around decent work, social security, education and development.

Strategies for achieving this must take account of the impact of unpaid, 'invisible' and domestic work (care economy) on the capacity of women to engage with learning activities designed to reduce economic inequalities and restricted employment opportunities.

A successful strategy to solve the current food crisis has to include strong agricultural extension and literacy provision in rural areas on all continents.

CONFINTEA VI will need to address in both formal and informal economy, gender bias in access to basic education and adult learning in general organized education and training, as demonstrated in *Global Monitoring reports (GMR)* of UNESCO on EFA. Similarly, at work place, discrimination in work-related learning opportunities is taking place. Analyses should also take account of the impact of the under representation of women in status categories and networks where learning provision is provided more frequently.

A key strategy for a fair development in work related adult learning in order to reduce economic inequality is a learner-led approach, recognizing the diversity of populations, a valuing of their lifestyles and their multidimensional learning aspirations.

The conference must consider the influence of gendered curricula on the aspirations and work patterns of both men and women, and be mindful of the potential to reinforce rather than challenge gender stereotypes.

Finally, adult learning responses to poverty, including economic inequalities, must be supported by, and linked to, interdisciplinary, cross-governmental action in other areas, such as childcare, health, justice, civil society, housing, and the environment.

For example, the right to education and lifelong learning (and particularly literacy), in order to work in livelihood economies cannot be separated from economic policies, and agrarian and land reforms, sustainable production and sustainable consumption as key elements to be assigned in adult education programs linked to quality of environment and quality of life.

Presently, global food crisis is the absolute priority to be faced since it threatens the most basic need which concerns the biological survival of millions of people, particularly in poor countries. Adult education must provide appropriate information and education to face this vital problem which affects very specially women and children.

2. The education and learning rights of migrant women and men

Migration is a global phenomenon north-south, east-west, south-south, within countries, etc. There are no illegal migrant people, but people in irregular situation. Similarly, the educational rights of refugees are essential for the fifty millions of them to survive and reconstruct their life. We are all world citizens covered by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* stating that not only registered citizens but *all human beings* have the right to education.

The social demand for adult learning is reciprocal. First, there is the right of migrants to language education, to vocational education and training, to citizenship education, and to the benefit from the general provision of learning opportunities, to employer supported training, and to recognition and validation of past experience, learning and qualifications.

Migration education also entails learning for receiving communities, for local leaders, service providers, trades unions, and the general public. Programmes should cultivate the skills, understanding and knowledge needed to address issues arising from migration and migrants, and include education in Human Rights – all cultures are respectable but some cultural practices are oppressive.

Migration offers unique opportunities for multicultural and intercultural education. That requires safe, local spaces for mutual learning. However, migration is hazardous and education strategies also need to contend with such global issues as the concurrent rise of trafficking in women.

The financial support of diasporas to their communities of origin is three times more important than the full *Official Development Assistance (ODA)* and should be recognized. Moreover, financial responsibilities for draining other nations of skills and expertise should be addressed. The brain drain process requests international compensation.

3. The absolute priority of adult literacy

The well documented deficiency in the implementation of the EFA objective on adult literacy is a global disgrace. And this in spite of well substantiated evidence on contribution of adult literacy to quality of life of people, to school achievement of children through parental education, to increase of agricultural productivity and food production, to conflict solving capacity of communities, to basic skill improvement at work place as required by industrial development, to efficient delivery of universal health care, etc.

A substantial policy shift is required and should become key expectations at CONFINTEA VI Conference.

Adult literacy is a multi-dimensional reality and thus requires a diversity of approaches and measures as well as the development of significant literate environments.

It is a continuum and its development is an on-going process rather than a cognitive set of skills, which result in a state of permanent literacy. Policy must move beyond providing for the acquisition of skills, to supporting their sustainability. The problem of relapse into illiteracy is acute. Key to addressing this is linking adult literacy to the lived experiences of learners' lives, such as micro credit based programmes for women.

The expertise exists. The social demand is well expressed. What is needed is ACTION from national government (allocating the equivalent of 3% of national education budget), cooperation or multilateral agencies (recognizing adult literacy as a complementary priority to UPE) and other partners. The *Literacy Initiative For Empowerment (LIFE)* is clearly underfinanced. The *Fast Track Initiative (FTI)* has to rediscover the essential contribution of adult literacy to become successful.

The current International Monetary Fund (IMF) policy requiring national governments to freeze investment in education must be challenged and revised.

CONFINTEA will take place at the end of key policy reviews that will create a momentum: the mid-term review of the Fast Track Initiative, the *UN Literacy Decade* review; the **EFA** mid-term review, the 2009 **GMR** report (*Overcoming inequality: why governance matters*) to be issued in November, the *Global Campaign for Education (GCE)* the *Conference on finance for development* and the *Millennium Development Goals* mid-term assessment process. Positive examples illustrative of the concern being demonstrated by some governments and some cooperation agencies should be exposed in regional preparatory meetings.

International quantitative and qualitative benchmarks are required to monitor governments' committed leadership and resources, to look at the situation literacy participants and of literacy facilitators, their conditions of work and their training, to the provision of learning materials and the enrichment of literate environments, to sustained and appropriate public, national and international investment. Agreed upon indicators are needed in each of these dimensions of adult literacy policies.

4. New policy and legislation, real implementation, real financial allocation

Adult learning policies are cutting across all sectors of activities, because increased capacity of action of the whole adult population has become a prerequisite in all areas of activities: in agriculture, in industrial development, in health, in environment, in criminal justice, etc. The issue is twofold: accessibility of adults to learning opportunity and the quality and relevance of such learning provision.

A central issue for CONFINTEA VI and the preparatory meetings is the absence of adult learning and adult literacy within the **MDGs**, despite the fact that none of the existing *Millennium Development Goals* could be achieved without them. Although it is formally nowhere, adult learning is required everywhere to ensure the active participation of local civil society in the implementation of all and each of these targets.

It is also fundamental to mainstreaming the *Millennium Development Goals* - MDGs with a gender equity approach. Various steps must be taken to address the current neglect of adult learning. Those countries that do not have one should formulate an adult learning policy – an overall policy on education is not sufficient to counter the tendency to marginalize the interests of adults; delivery arrangements and responsible bodies and departments must be identified and communicated clearly, particularly when adult learning is a cross-cutting concern; adult education programmes must be responsive to gender discrimination and other causes of poverty and social exclusion; and capacity-building educators and facilitators is needed in order to improve their understanding of pedagogy and the dimensions of marginalization.

However, without governmental intervention, without policy orientation, without public institutional support, without state regulation, without national monitoring, without public investment, the prevalent trend of reproduction of inequality will prevail. Without such policies, the contribution expected of adult learning and adult literacy in particular could not be achieved.

Our goals regarding the financing of education are clear: we need to increase the share of the education in national budget in respect to other budgets, to increase the part of educational budget allocated to *adult education and learning (ALE)* and to adult literacy and to be able to monitor national budgets in order to ensure efficient investment where it matters most: in the collective intelligence and creativity of our society, and the initiative and ingenuity of people.

Advocacy and dialogue with donors should be undertaken for the recognition of **adult literacy** as a complementary priority to *universal primary education (UPE)*.

Successful policy advocacy in adult learning requires the participation of a large spectrum of civil society organisations: adult learners' movements, trade unions, women's groups, national and regional movements of adult education. The adult learners and their successful stories are the strongest advocates.

The necessity of legitimate international monitoring mechanisms

For action to happen, international monitoring mechanisms are needed, without which there is no possibility to do data based advocacy work. That could be done within the **EFA** framework, the **MDGs** by adding adult learning relevant indicators to each of the goals, to proceed to similar addition of adult literacy and **ALE** indicators in the FTI, using the *Global Campaign on Education (GCE)* benchmarks, and as an autonomous post-CONFINTEA follow-up initiative.

New quantitative and qualitative benchmarks are needed to evidence gender mainstreaming and all its intersections around race, disability, and so on. Furthermore, there can be no effective solutions to poverty, exclusion, the food crisis, migration and displacements resulting from climate change, unless educational policies take account of the changing and unstable global context. In the area of access, monitoring mechanisms need to track against the multiple causes of marginalization, and provide retention and achievement data, particularly in relation to literacy. In elementary education, retention data has proved crucial to realigning and designing policies and programmes.

Conclusion: Time for action

Concrete action is urgently needed to recognize the dignity of each woman and man. The right to learn of a person, above all, her right to literacy, is her right to improve her life conditions, to dream about her future and to be able, with others, to construct and reconstruct their life and their environment. The exercise of this fundamental enabling right is more urgent than ever in rural village and urban districts, in livelihood economy and at the workplace, among national citizens as well as migrants and those in irregular situation, and this in every regions of the world.

There will be no solution to food crisis without the increased capacity to act of women and men to work on the land on each continent making better quality of life and qualify of the environment revising patterns towards sustainable production and sustainable consumption.

We will never achieve the goal of *Health For All*, without significant increase and universal dissemination of health literacy.

The planet's future is dependent on the capacity of citizens to share environmental concerns and responsibility. The unique enjoyment of a meal with family members and friends without fear of war or violence will not be reached without grassroots diplomacy and mediation competency at all levels of social and political life.

Concrete action is required NOW to ensure the fundamental right of women and men to learn and to develop themselves throughout their life. At stake is the dignity of each citizen as well as his and her aspiration to share in the exploration and development of *another possible world*.

We know what kind of policies and actions are needed. So many success stories have been and could be told. We have discussed them at CONFINTEA V and explored them since. What is required now is **action** and, for this, **political and community will**.

Time is pressing. The risk of not acting is too high.

The message, received from all regions of the world, is clear: CONFINTEA VI is about achieving real, visible and enduring change.