

**SIXTH INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON ADULT
EDUCATION – CONFINTEA VI,
BELEM, PARA, BRAZIL
1ST – 4TH DECEMBER 2009**

ORAL REPORT OF THE RAPPORTEUR GENERAL

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BELEM, 4TH DECEMBER, 2009

PREAMBLE

The Sixth International Conference on Adult Education – CONFINTEA VI – was held in Belem, Brazil from 1st to 4th December 2009

160 representatives from Member States including 50 Ministers or Vice Ministers of Education and over 1000 participants are in attendance at this Conference and have deliberated extensively on the theme: “Living and Learning for a Viable Future: The Power of Adult Learning” a theme that strongly echoes the deep faith that participants at the Hamburg International Conference on Adult Education CONFINTEA V had placed in adult education as the key to overcoming the serious challenges that lay ahead in the Twenty First Century. As the Hamburg Declaration (1997, para) aptly predicts, “Sans une participation veritable et eclairee des hommes et des femmes de tous horizons, l’humanite ne sourait survivre ni relever les defs de l’avenir”.

Organisation of the Conference

OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE

A melodious prelude to the opening ceremony was provided by a Belem musical ensemble, taking the audience down memory lane with a rich medley of cabaret style sentimental classics, the bolero and the thumping racy Amazon beat of the Samba.

The representative of the President of CONFINTEA V Mr Walter Hirche informed delegates of the former President Ms. Rita Sussmut’s regret for her international absence and her best wishes for the work of CONFINTEA VI. He recalled the spirit of CONFINTEA V embodied in the Hamburg Declaration and Agenda for the Future as timeless, relevant and indispensable. He acknowledged that the social, political, economic and environmental contexts of the 1997 Conference had changed: there were new challenges, increasing demand for education, daunting economic, political and ethical crises which together make education provision through access, equity, quality and inclusion more critical today than ever before. Investment in adult education and learning was the only way out of the crisis.

After declaring the Conference open, Mr Hirche handed over the baton to the CONFINTEA VI President, Mr Fernando Haddad, Minister of Education of Brazil.

This Conference, drawing fully on the spirit of the Hamburg Declaration and Agenda for the Future, the range of conclusions and recommendations of the International Conferences on

Education, current global frameworks and the Regional Conferences on literacy /Adult education among others, is driven by the following concrete objectives:

- To push forward the recognition of adult learning and education as an important element of and factor conducive to lifelong learning of which literacy is the foundation;
- To highlight the crucial role of learning and education for the realization of current International education and development agendas (EFA, MDGS, UNLD, LIFE, and DESD);
- To renew political momentum and commitment and develop the tools for information in order to move from rhetoric to action

Addresses were also made by Mr Fernando Haddad, Minister of Education Brazil; Ms Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO; Mr Mattar Baldeh; Ms Maria Khan from the Global Campaign for Education; Mr Alpha Oumar Konare, Former President of the Republic of Mali, Ms Ana Julia Carepa, Governor of Para; Princess Laurentien des Pays Bas, Presidente de la fondation neerlandaise Lire et Ecrire, Envoyee special de l'UNESCO pour l'alphabetisation au service du development and video-taped goodwill messages from Mr Ban Ki-moon and Mr Jacques Delors former Chairman of the European Commission.

Speakers extended warm felicitations to the Brazilian government, for this CONFINTEA VI and the great hospitality and the sterling example of cultural pluralism and diversity.

Holding the first conference in the South at Belem has been singularly appropriate – its location in Para embodies the global challenge of sustainable development which rests on sustainable economic development. Each speaker stressed the inter-relationship of adult learning and sustainable development.

MAIN ISSUES

Speakers also noted that the challenge of illiteracy remains immense with almost 800 million people unable to read and write, two thirds of them being women. In spite of global goals and campaigns, progress remains slow. More importantly, literacy brings with it immense benefits in other areas of life including health, economic prosperity and the ability to participate as a citizen.

The gender gap in literacy and education more generally is holding back progress. Educating mothers changes outcomes for children and literate parents support schooling. The sustainable future of individuals, communities and society depend on better education for women.

Adult learning and education should be embedded in the broader vision and wider perspective of sustainable development which encompasses cultural, political, economic and social issues. A dynamic and binding relationship between sustainable economic development and sustainable human development is a key challenge that must be strongly addressed in democratizing societies and lifelong learning opportunities.

The huge, and politically unacceptable, figure of 774 million illiterate – two thirds of them women – demands serious rethinking and the designing of strategies towards the achievement

of the Millennium Development Goals and the targets of the UN Literacy Decade. Mainstreaming literacy as a core educational policy is a powerful way to improve the well-being of the needy and to strengthen participation in national societies.

Although there is an increasing political recognition that adult learning and education is vital for building a sustainable and socially cohesive future – an effective way of enabling adults to learn how to know, to do, to be and to live together, it remains chronically underfunded and undervalued. Political recognition has not paved the way to effective political action in terms of prioritizing and providing adequate resources to ALE.

The gender gap emerges as a great barrier in achieving the EFA goals. Providing educational opportunities to families, and in particular to mothers, is a strong foundation for improved learning outcomes among children and young people, and more globally, contributes to the empowerment of communities and the democratization of societies.

The hosting of CONFINTEA VI in the Amazon region is very significant; apart from being the first in the southern hemisphere, it represents (a) how natural and human resources are very closely linked. (b) The need of all developing nations to achieve a good level of sustainable human and environmental development and (c) the hope that it would be a focus of attention since the 1994 Rio conference.

It was consistently re-iterated that “adult learning turns poverty into opportunity” and that the current global challenges have justified the vision of CONFINTEA V. Consequently, expectations are at their highest that Belem or CONFINTEA VI will make the difference as a global commitment to “human freedom through wholesale commitment, strong political will, partnership building and the participation of all stakeholders in advocacy and policy design that benefit youth and adults. Only then would CONFINTEA VI be able to move from rhetoric to concrete, purposeful and sustainable action.

The Global Campaign for Education had some very clear key messages for the CONFINTEA VI. The Big Read projects now exist in 120 countries. However, the challenge of securing 10 billion US dollars by 2015 was thought to be daunting but realizable if certain conditions are met by all stakeholders. These include: the urgent need to abolish the literacy-illiteracy dichotomy; increased national research/survey for creating reliable database; setting and using international benchmarks on adult literacy; commitment of at least 6% of their GNP to education of youth and adults and challenging the IMF micro-economic conditions that undermine investment in education and FTI initiative too tied to “credible strategies and investments” being reflected in education sector plans.

The State of the African continent was also the subject of a passionate plea for the global community to see Africa’s current travail as a consequence of several external economic and funding frameworks which have distorted the continent’s true image and capacity to self- help.

The current economic crisis should serve as a salutary lesson to erstwhile donor nations or financial institutions which have directly or indirectly contributed to worsening poverty, high illiteracy rates, brain drain or brain poaching. There should be a paradigm shift in the system of

development aid. Nonetheless, the solution to Africa's problems and challenges can equally come from the political will of /African governments and stakeholders.

The opening session encouraged participants as stakeholders and owners to seek to

- Gain recognition for the place of adult learning within Lifelong Learning and develop a framework for the future;
- Stimulate a real dialogue on human development and a future built on gender equality and human dignity;
- Gain commitment from governments, civil society and the private sector to join forces and find new partners beyond the educational field;
- Scale up the investment in adult learning as the basis for supporting economic development, justice and democracy;
- Move from planning and policies to concrete action plans, targets and monitoring;
- Make literacy and adult education everybody's business and commitment since investing in a multifaceted project of literacy and adult education has clear implications for all aspects of the life of youth and adults and other at risk groups.

ELECTION OF CONFERENCE OFFICERS

The President of the Conference, Mr Fernando Haddad, tabled the adoption of the amended rules of procedure for CONFINTEA VI which, with a proposed amendment by the United States of America, further amended by a draft proposed by South Africa, was adopted by acclamation.

The five Vice-Presidents, representing the regional groups, and the Rapporteur General representing Nigeria were elected by acclamation.

The President of the Commission from Morocco and the two Vice Presidents from Iran and Zambia respectively were elected by acclamation

The drafting committee made up of regional group representatives, and those representing the United Nations (1), Civil Society (2) and the Private Sector (1) were elected by acclamation, after which the Executive Secretary of the Conference presented the procedures and the revised programme of the conference.

As the Conference programme shows the deliberations were organized around four plenary key speakers; two special reports presentations; 5 Panel discussion around thematic issues, and 32 parallel workshops focused on as many themes organized by a wide range of stakeholders public and private and civil society organizations. For the purpose of this oral report, we shall approach the rest of the report thematically across keynote panels and workshops.

THEMATIC ISSUES

1. POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

Five main issues framing the discussion:

(i) Mainstreaming Adult learning and education policies (ALE) within life-long learning, ESD frameworks and EFA

Regions and countries differ considerably in the approaches, content and scope of adult education and learning policies, – i.e. framework-setting, promotion of literacy and non-formal education, regulation of vocational or adult education, creation of specialized agencies and provision for the implementation of specific programmes. Despite these relevant differences, there is a growing consensus about positioning the ALE policies within the comprehensive frameworks of life-long learning and Education For Sustainable Development (ESD). This would entail and adopting ALE as a core strategy of EFA within renewed national and international engagements and agendas to further accelerate its fulfillment under a holistic perspective. More specifically, donors need to clearly recognize and fund initiatives related to EFA goals 3 and 4.

Within an enhanced EFA framework which places equity and quality at the core of national plans, the purpose and scope of adult education should include basic literacy, vocational training, human resource development and continuing professional development. Professional and vocational training programmes need to be integrated with basic education and basic skills programmes.

(ii) Comprehensive and well coordinated long-term public policies to sustain quality in ALE

Although there is an increasing political recognition that adult learning and education (ALE) is vital to building a sustainable and socially cohesive future – an effective way of enabling adults to learn to know, to do, to live together and to be- it remains chronically undervalued, underdeveloped and underfunded. Globally, it is not clearly recognized as a public good. Not necessarily political awareness, recognition of and social pressure about the ALE relevance have resulted in effective political will in terms of developing long-term sustainable quality public policies, and of prioritizing and providing adequate resources to ALE. Universal inclusive public policies on ALE, grounded on trust, genuine policy dialogue and agreements among different stakeholders (emphasis on bottom-up policy making), can significantly contribute to the democratization of education and society. Providers can be public and private.

(iii) Multi sectoral approaches to foster social and educational inclusion

The conceptualization and implementation of multi sectoral approaches, policies and practices (i.e. putting ministries working together) would serve to strongly position adult learning and education as a key strategy to attain social inclusion and inclusive education systems. The coordination among social policies (i.e. family, health and education) and their links to the economic policies, would lay the foundations for the empowerment and development of the capacities of the communities to actively participate in society and exercise their right to

education and longlife learning opportunities. Within a coordinated framework of public policies, labour market policies need to go hand in hand with the educational policies.

(iv) Mainstreaming ALE in educational policies and good governance

Mainstreaming ALE within educational policies and development plans, and overcoming historical institutional separation and segregation, are major challenges to further democratize life-long learning opportunities. Policies require good governance at all levels, permanent search for finding out appropriate synergies between the national and local levels, grass roots level participation of adults and the engagement of different stakeholders. Likewise, sound decentralized initiatives are a vital component of good governance as effective ways of addressing diverse expectations and needs of different social and cultural groups. Decentralization policies have legislative backing that sets out aims and regulatory principles, define roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms at both the national and local levels.

In general terms, key features of inclusive policies towards ALE are long-term clear objectives based on political agreements among different stakeholders (sense of policy ownership); the provision of a broad range of adult education concepts, typologies and understanding; solid legislation that prescribes the right to adult learning; a financial regime that offers adult learning free of charge and a comprehensive educational and curricular proposal which includes validation of adult learning, guidance and counselling, flexible time-tabling to suit adult learners and friendly learning environments.

(v) Partnerships sustaining ALE policies

Sustainable partnership building has been recognized as a vital tool to promote equity and inclusion of diverse cultural and social groups, particularly the marginalized populations. It aims at collaborating in a transparent, responsible and participative way within a system of good governance. This is the way forward for ALE.

It has to be noted that private-public partnerships are successful if the value of each partner is recognized and their diversity respected. Formal agreements must clearly define responsibilities as well as a work plan which should be monitored and each partner's contribution assessed. Other factors of success are transparency, accountability and a sense of ownership by all partners in order to guarantee sustainability.

Equally critical, partners should design adult education programmes on the basis of a diagnosis of the learners' needs in a given context and include, in addition to basic education and specific professional skills, social and entrepreneurship skills, a gender perspective, values, orientations, knowledge, behaviours and skills for sustainable development.

2. PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

The theme of exclusion and non-participation was the focus of the very first Round Table of the conference. The Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) report had revealed that, even with the limitations of data, participation in adult learning remains unacceptably low. The figures for illiteracy demonstrate the scale of the problem of a high proportion of adults who have not completed primary education. The GRALE presentation

also highlighted that participation is not just about how many participate but who participates and to what purpose.

Within this general pattern there are some groups who are particularly likely to be marginalized, among them women, rural dwellers, older people and the poorest. The very first keynote address, given by Senator Marcia Osmarina Silva Vas de Lima exemplified these issues. Her amazing struggle which led to her being at the forefront of activism on human development and the protection of the environment was inspirational, especially perhaps in the way her indigenous knowledge was shared and celebrated, but made clear the barriers that exist. These are, in the south, situational, institutional and informational, but in all countries dispositional barriers – motivation – can get in the way of learning and a key factor in dealing with inclusion is the need for motivational activity.

The Round Table on inclusion focused on measures for addressing the main barriers to participation with examples of how these are being successfully addressed by some countries. It was also an opportunity for the conference to follow the theme of the keynote address since the session also contained the stories of two learners, Mr John Gates from the UK and Mmme Magdalene Motsi both of whom were active in learner networks. These networks put into practice the idea of learner centredness since they advocate with providers and policy makers for provision that involves those who learn in the planning and organizing of their opportunities.

More importantly, the message of the Round table was loud and clear and is reflected in the Learner's Charter which both representatives recommended to providers and governments. That is a most effective form of adult learning. Those most likely to motivate participation are those that learners themselves have designed and requested. This grass roots approach must be embedded holistically where the participatory process must also be genuine and meaningful for learners and providers alike.

The need for relevance was stressed in the contributions from both India and Sweden, in this session. From such different countries came a shared understanding that relevance is vital to motivation, that validation and use of newly gained skills is important and that effective governance is indispensable to effective action.

Apart from the specific Round Table on this issue, the parallel workshops focused on a wide range of urgent related matters, specifically on challenges and ways to overcome them, including gender. The majority of those with least education are women. The exclusion of prisoners and indigenous people was considered. The growing issue of migration was discussed especially the vast numbers involved –billion people on the move each year and how adult learning can both enhance the lives of migrants and mitigate the hostile reactions of those in host countries.

Inclusion was also emphasized within the Round Table on financing adult education which discussed how partners who were able to reach the marginalized communities were an essential tool in combating exclusion and how funds are needed for the disadvantaged. Also emphasized was the need to mainstream the outcomes of inclusion by developing qualifications systems that recognized literacy and post literacy achievements and accredited informal learning.

Inclusion remains a huge challenge both in terms of scale and speed in developing countries. While situational barriers prevent inclusion in the South, the challenge in Europe and all countries as they develop is to motivate adults to enroll or to learn. Within the challenge of

developing equitable participation the issue of gender is of prime concern as is the ageing population which explains the growing concern about education for older people. Of course, prisoners, indigenous people, rural populations and the disabled from all these groups suffer double disadvantage.

Governments need to focus on the equity issues within their adult learning policies and plans if participation is to be addressed. Those who have succeeded in education can see its value and feel its benefits and continue to invest in the education of their children or wards.

The battle for inclusion is one in which partnerships are not a just desirable but an essential ingredient for success. New partners across other sectors like health must be sought and viable and stable relationships forged since inclusion is a long term project.

In terms of gender, investing in women's education has important implications for all aspects of life. Ignoring the scale of exclusion suffered by women is not an option.

Finally one of the lessons from this discussion is that adult learners themselves can be the best allies in combating exclusion. They are experts in their communities and understand their needs, they offer motivation in the form of powerful and attainable role models and they are entirely rooted in reality. Supporting them and their networks helps in developing cost effective strategies for reaching people. Working with learners rather than merely delivering to them is not only respectful of their adult status but also likely to bring positive results.

3. FINANCING ADULT EDUCATION

(i) Under-funding of adult education

It was shown to be a chronic problem. All the regional preparatory conferences and the regional synthesis reports (which were included in the form of a CD in delegates' bags) highlighted the challenges of financing. The roundtable on this theme generated widespread interest. It was a key issue running throughout the Conference, from the presentation of the *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* to workshop sessions.

Given the impact of the economic and financial crisis on public sector budgets, there is even greater concern about the strain on the already hard-pressed and often neglected adult education sector, especially in developing countries. However, it is clear that the chronic underfunding of adult education is not merely a financial matter, but also an issue of priorities. Unless a political case can be made for the role of adult education in dealing with economic, social and developmental goals, it will continue to be undervalued and under-funded. Low political commitment leads to low prioritization which in turn leads to poor visibility among top officials. Adult education is often seen as a competitor for scarce resources which are needed to address a range of other priorities, for example universal primary education.

(ii) Making a case for valuing adult learning and education

In the past, stakeholders were busy counting the cost of adult education, and it has been regarded as being in competition with other sectoral budgets – even within the education sector. Many governments believe that funding adult education necessarily takes money and

resources away from other important sectors, such as early childhood development and universal primary education. That is not the case. They are complementary rather than competitive arms of the same cause – namely to build inclusive, healthier, wealthier, more peaceful, tolerant and democratic societies.

Furthermore, a case has to be made for a shift from a discourse solely of cost to one of investment and benefits. Governments, of course, need to be assured that their investments in adult education will be rewarded. It is, however, difficult to measure and report the wider benefits of learning to all stakeholders, including government officials and individuals. Many of the benefits are difficult to measure, and even unmeasurable in many cases. It is clear that what is needed are better, more reliable and comparable sources of data on which we can make political decisions. This has also been a trend in many of the discussions in the various sessions.

Adult education supports economic development, by building a more creative, productive and skilled workforce. At the same time, there is a need for governments to recognise adult learning and education as a public good. Citizens who are more articulate, able to participate in democratic public life and aware of their rights are able to play a critical role in determining the future for themselves, their families and communities. They are among the greatest assets that any nation can have. It concerns all strata of many nation's human resources. Many countries have identified that it is essential for financing of adult education to be made on an inter-ministerial basis, understanding that adult education occurs in many guises, be it health education, agricultural extension or environmental programmes.

In all of this, however, extra money alone may not be the way out. Countries from the south do not want to continue being passive recipients of charity or hand-outs. They have (and want) to find new and different ways to achieve objectives effectively, taking responsibility to use existing funds judiciously. Accountability and monitoring mechanisms, demonstrable political will and a transparent strategy to deliver on objectives are necessary to ensure effective and efficient use of the funds that are available.

(iii) Finding other ways of financing adult education

Other sources for scaling up funding are increasingly coming into play, and we should encourage these to lift the burden from the public purse. Business is beginning to recognise that investing in their employees is a means of increasing profitability, of maintaining market share in their products and services, and of reducing recruitment costs. They do need, however, incentives to invest more in adult learning and education (for example, tax breaks). Individuals, too, need incentives and motivation in the form of educational savings schemes, learning accounts, tax deductibility, grants or loans. Demand-driven funding is important to increase relevance: the recognition of learning is important for motivating individuals to invest.

Decentralisation and devolution of funding decision-making improves the match between provision and local needs, and involves key local stakeholders.

What is required for greater mobilisation of resources to finance adult education?

- *Conducting research to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of adult education and literacy programmes.* We also need to find ways of demonstrating the other social and cultural benefits of adult education, as it is not always easy to show the cause-effect relationship between adult education and economic growth.
- *Accountability and transparency:* governments as well as civil society organisations involved in adult education should be made more accountable by developing transparent mechanisms to allocate funds and to assess the effectiveness and impact of adult education. This transparency also allows governments to show how the money allocated for adult education is being spent.
- *Governments should acknowledge that adult education is an integral part of Education for All.* They should adopt legislation which recognises the rights of all adults to have access to adequate learning opportunities.
- *Multiple strategies to mobilise financial resources:* creating taxes for adult education (cigarette taxes), tax breaks for companies that allocate time and provision for learning, developing memoranda of understanding which specify the contribution of central government, municipalities and local government to adult education.
- *Establishing indicators* to measure adult education
- *Developing multi-sectoral approaches* which embed adult education in all public policy portfolios.
- *Developing effective monitoring and evaluation systems* for adult education, so that policy and financing decisions can be made on an informed basis.

Stakeholders should always bear in mind that what looks cheaper in the short-term can be more expensive in the long-run: there is a need for continuity and long-term investment rather than quick easy-fix campaigns and initiatives.

There was a strong feeling that civil society organisations should not just be involved in policy consultation but also in budget formulation and monitoring, as a means of enhancing credibility and responsiveness to learners' needs.

In terms of external funding, donors too need to recognise and fund initiatives related to EFA goals 3 and 4, which are as important as other EFA goals. However, there was a real sentiment expressed that international organisations should not continue to impose ready-made adult education policies, often based on models which are inappropriate to the needs and policies of some countries, especially the developing and least developed.

There was a call for less general recommendations on financing of adult learning and education, and more concrete targets. Minimum targets for spending on youth and adult education should be at least 6% of national education budgets. For countries with significant challenges of illiteracy, it was proposed that more than half of this be spent on literacy. Suggestions were made for international commitments to a target of at least 6% of aid to education being spent on youth and adult education.

4. QUALITY IN ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

CONFITEA VI has underscored the enormous diversity of adult education provision. As such, providers and practitioners often develop their own specific definitions and ways of assuring quality. But as more countries move to integrate adult education programmes into a broad lifelong learning framework, there is an increase interest in, and demand for, greater specification of the quality of the adult learning experience and learning outcomes. Adults are certainly more likely to participate in learning programmes if they believe that they will gain

some personal, economic or social rewards from their learning in return for their investment of money, time, energy and commitment.

What then constitutes an appropriate approach to understanding, recognising and demonstrating quality in adult learning and education? From the deliberations and interventions during the CONFITEA meeting quality emerges as a complex concept, and becoming ever more so as the provision of adult education continues to diversify.

Overall, the following aspects of quality were given the greatest attention during the past three days.

(i) The Primacy of Relevance and Flexibility

Relevance to learners is vital for quality in adult learning and education. Many CONFITEA VI participants emphasized that the content of adult education must respond, first and foremost, to the needs of adult learners, while keeping in mind the concerns of other stakeholders. For example, in a workshop on 'Education for sustainable societies and global responsibility' participants discussed the importance of contextualizing the pedagogy to the specific environmental challenges faced by the adults, especially those living in rural and agriculture areas. Programmes are most relevant when they draw upon local and traditional sources of knowledge, especially those of migrant and tribal peoples. Many colleagues stressed the relevance of language policies, especially those that build on learner language proficiencies, as a crucial factor in promoting quality in ALE.

Flexibility in provision helps to ensure relevance. In several sessions participants highlighted instances in which ALE providers developed flexible programmes to meet the specific needs of different populations. In the workshop on reading culture and the literate environment moderated by Princess Laurentien, participants discussed how flexibility is enhanced by: a) considering diverse venues for ALE such as prisons, libraries, community buildings, workplaces, civil society organizations and families; b) employing an array of different tools such as multimedia, awareness campaigns, special books targeting neo-literate youth, adults, and persons with disabilities; c) developing written materials in different languages including Braille; and d) addressing the many motivations that bring adults to want to learn such as pleasure, job training, functioning in everyday life, and proficiency in a mother tongue.

In the 'Roundtable on Inclusion and participation' colleagues from Sweden highlighted the importance of validating adult learning, providing guidance and counselling and flexible schedules to suit adult learners as a critical component for assuring high quality adult education. Mr. Seydou CISSE of ISESCO pointed out that when adult education is sensitive to the surrounding social and cultural context, including religious institutions and sensibilities, then quality and relevance in adult learning are enhanced. Finally, in the workshop on Learners' voices, participants argued that learners should take the lead in planning and designing the learning in which they will be engaged. In this way their needs and interests are prioritized.

(ii) The Role of Teacher-Educators

Quality in ALE is deeply linked to the role of teachers/educators. Diverse learning environments and diverse learners mean that teacher-educators must be able to adjust to the specific needs of the learners they encounter. For many participants, quality in ALE underscores the critical role that teacher-educators play in aligning specific contents, pedagogy and educational strategies to the knowledge and skills that adult learners wish to acquire. Mr Florenco MENDES (Cape Verde) highlighted the importance of having a holistic vision of teacher-educators and the communities in which they work. Others pointed to the many teaching resources at the community level that often go underutilized such as community leaders, skilled adults, and holders of indigenous knowledge.

In the roundtable on quality, teachers were also recognized as one of the most important elements in quality of adult education. In the best of circumstances, the adult educator is a certified teacher with a higher education degree. Professional development frameworks are well established. These features are seen as indispensable to avoid turn-over rates and ensure motivation. However many countries still rely on non-professional adult educators. Others work with volunteers that are trained as adult educators. Overall there is a clear preoccupation with finding ways to improve the professional training of adult teacher-educators.

(iii) Monitoring, assessment and evaluation

There is a growing awareness of the need of data, data analysis and, particularly, of its use to improve quality of provision, results and policy. Countries use different strategies to collect and analyze data on adult learning and education. For example, many employ surveys to provide information on the needs of learners and the scope of provision. In some countries monitoring systems are established to track inputs, expenditures, teacher training, student satisfaction and adequacy of provision. Ideally these efforts are frequent enough and reliable enough to provide feedback for programme adjustment and policy reform.

More and more countries are also monitoring learning outcomes either through surveys or on line as a means of assuring quality. In some countries, there are clear standards and assessments are carried out through national surveys. In others, there is a competency-based framework that leads to certification of competencies. In many cases, literacy is no longer viewed as a dichotomy but part of a continuum, which allows for the definition of levels of literacy. Assessment exercises are well established in some countries, and have led to complex systems of certification.

Several countries were asked about the most promising ways to formulate quality criteria and standards in adult education. Country experiences are quite diverse in this regard. In some cases, input, process, output and impact standards and indicators have been defined and are being proposed. In other countries there are only a few indicators for adult education. Most countries are working on improving their set of indicators in order to be accountable to society for progress made in this area.

Overall there is a clear need to define valid and reliable indicators of quality at all levels: from local and provincial and to the national and global.

(iv) Why quality in ALE matters

Many interventions underscored the links between improving and assuring quality in ALE and broader development agendas. In India, for example, enhancing relevance—through increased functionality in everyday life, by being sensitive to adult learning skills and by helping adults to better employ their newly acquired prowess in life—was seen as a path to improve access among the lowest castes, tribal areas, religious minorities, and women who suffer compound disadvantages.

Providing educational opportunities to adult members of a household, in particular to mothers, helps to improve learning outcomes among children and young people, and more globally, contributes to the empowerment of communities and to the democratization of societies. Reports from Tanzania and Senegal provided examples of intergenerational learning, from parents to children, which link non-formal and early childhood education. Family literacy programmes can be a powerful tool for individual growth and development.

5. LITERACY

(i) The scope of the challenge

One in five adults worldwide live without basic literacy skills—two thirds of whom are women. Countries emerging from conflict face special challenges and adult literacy and education can play a key role in reconstruction and rehabilitation. Literacy and adult education are a matter of national urgency. This necessitates a rethinking of strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the ambitions of the UN Literacy Decade. It is important to mainstream literacy as a core element of educational and development policies.

(ii) Concept of literacy

The concept of literacy has evolved over time. Efforts have been made to integrate literacy into a lifelong education perspective. Literacy goes beyond reading, writing and numeracy and includes communicative practices, critical thinking, active citizenship, and individual rights. Acquiring literacy entails a fundamental improvement in the quality of life.

(iii) Laws and effective policies

The participants strongly emphasized the need to establish the importance of education as a right and recognize the importance of literacy for economic and social progress by focusing on vulnerable groups and putting in place responsible public policies. Balancing literacy with the need for social cohesion is important as it leaves citizens better prepared to respect cultural diversity.

Furthermore, effective language policies which recognize linguistic diversity and its importance for education and development should be promoted and actualized. Equally, learners' first

languages should be used to promote literacy acquisition not only in these languages but also in other languages used for literacy and adult education.

It is important to adopt a multi-sectoral approach to literacy and adult education in order to mainstream literacy into education and other development sectors.

Quality adult literacy provision is closely tied to the allocation of adequate resources, at least at the level of 6% of the national budget.

Accountability and transparency mechanisms should be jointly developed by the government and civil society organizations in order to ensure appropriate distribution and use of funds for adult literacy.

Member States need to establish national qualification frameworks which integrate the recognition of prior learning (certification) and the establishment of pathways which allow cross-fertilization between non-formal and formal systems.

National adult literacy curriculum frameworks as guideline should be adapted by various literacy providers at the local level in order to promote relevant literacy programmes which respond to the diverse needs of the adult learners.

(iv) Partnership between governments, the civil society organizations and the international community

Participants fully agreed that: Partnerships between the government, civil society and the private sector are a critically important strategy to mobilize broad political support and resources for adult literacy.

Governments should adapt international literacy and adult education frameworks to the needs of people at the country and regional levels.

The sharing of innovative literacy practices, particularly through South-South cooperation, should be promoted to enable countries to learn from each other and strengthen solidarity.

(v) Development of a reading culture and literate environments

In order to create a dynamic reading culture and literate environment stakeholders need to consider the different motivations for reading (reading to learn, reading to feel included, reading to develop skills which enables individuals to function adequately in society, reading to communicate, reading for pleasure).

Strategies to improve the reading culture might include the production of reading materials, use of ICTs and websites which are directed to new readers. It also comprises the use of a wider array of writing materials and tools.

In order to strengthen literate environments, reading should be promoted in diverse settings including the family, the community, workplaces, houses of worship and prisons. Schools should also be used as a platform to reach out to and encourage parents to read aloud for children and young people.

(vi) Monitoring and Evaluation

Research, monitoring and evaluation are considered crucial to the credibility and promotion of literacy initiatives and projects. It is vital to conduct national surveys and collect reliable data to determine the scope of the literacy challenge. Literacy assessment can help align needs with available resources. In this respect countries should invest and use flexible management information systems for Non formal education.

Monitoring and assessment should be used to orient the policies and close the gap between policy and practice.

Main points Paul Belanger

CONFINTEA VI made a strong political appeal to understand adult learning and education as a triad made by lifelong learning, lifewide learning and life deep learning. To move forward this agenda, we require the adoption of long term policies, the engagement of multiple actors, the mobilization of financial and human resources, follow up actions and the participatory control of outcomes.

The context of CONFINTEA VI is strongly permeated by worldwide expectations on the outcomes of the Copenhagen Summit on climate change. CONFINTEA VI focus on living and learning for a viable future is inextricably linked to the Copenhagen Summit. If the summit is a success, ALE will be crucial to transform our life styles. If inversely, the summit is a failure, ALE will be even more crucial as a way of engaging citizens in assuring a viable planet for our kids

EXHIBITIONS AND CULTURAL EVENTS

A vibrant part of the conference was the live music and cultural events, including a splendid reception hosted by the Governor of Pará. The exhibition featured 63 stands with displays from all over the world and lots of relevant documentation to take away.

CONCLUSION

The culmination of the Conference will be the Belém Framework for Action which will be presented to you for adoption later today. All the plenaries, workshops and commission sessions, as well as National Delegations, have had an opportunity to contribute to a document which will set the course for future action.

It has been an engaging week and recalling the objectives of CONFINTEA VI. It is my humble submission that those objectives have been realized.

Acknowledgment

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