

CONFINTEA VII FOLLOW-UP

Co-edited by Julia Denholm, Heribert Hinzen, Balázs Németh, Khau Phuoc

Table of Contents

CONFINTEA VII FOLLOW-UP.....	1
MESSAGE FROM PIMA PRESIDENT	3
<i>Shirley Walters ferris@iafrica.com</i>	3
EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION.....	4
<i>Julia Denholm jdenholm@sfu.ca</i>	4
<i>Heribert Hinzen Heribert.Hinzen@glasgow.ac.uk</i>	4
<i>Balázs Németh nemeth.balazs@pte.hu</i>	4
<i>Khau Phuoc khauhuophuoc@seameocell.org</i>	4
ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION IN TIMES OF WAR AND CONFLICT – FINDINGS FROM THE WORK OF DVV INTERNATIONAL	8
<i>Uwe Gartenschlaeger gartenschlaeger@dvv-international.de</i>	8
BRIDGING UNIVERSITY LIFELONG LEARNING TO UNESCO CONFINTEA VII AND ITS MARRAKECH FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION 2022	12
<i>Balázs Németh nemeth.balazs@pte.hu</i>	12
A CASE STUDY ON PRISON EDUCATION IN KYRGYZSTAN – IN LIGHT OF CONFINTEA VII RESULTS	15
<i>Aidai Salmorbekova Aidai.salmorbekova@gmail.com</i>	15
CHANCES AND CHALLENGES IN THE POST-CONFINTEA VII TIME – THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MARRAKESH FRAMEWORK OF ACTION FROM THE EAST AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE.....	20
<i>Frauke Heinze fheinze@dvv-international.co.tz</i>	20
FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN EUROPE. RESULTS FROM A SURVEY FOR THE ERASMUS+ PROMOCITI PROJECT.....	25
<i>Mats Ehn mats.ehn@folkbildning.net</i>	25
<i>Jonathan Korsar Jonathan.korsar@farnebo.se</i>	25
THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMAL LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.....	31
<i>Julia Hufnagl julia.hufnagl@uni-bamberg.de</i>	31
LIFELONG ESD IN AN AGING SOCIETY FOR 2050.....	37
<i>Hideki Maruyama hideki@sophia.ac.jp</i>	37

MICROCREDENTIALS AND INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS: TWO INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES TO FOSTER A LIFELONG LEARNING CULTURE.....	41
<i>Éva Farkas farkaseva9@gmail.com.....</i>	<i>41</i>
POPULAR EDUCATION AS A COUNTERFORCE IN TIMES OF AUTOCRATIZATION AND DEMOCRATIC REGRESSION	47
<i>Daniel Bladh daniel.bladh@gmail.com.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Serhii Chumachenko chumachenko.serhii@gmail.com</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Mihail Krikunov mihail.krikunov@yahoo.com</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Anastasia Nekrasova Anastasia@intelligentmindsets.com</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Yurii Pyvovarenko yurko.lisnyi@gmail.com.....</i>	<i>47</i>
REFLECTIONS ON CONFINTEA VII RESULTS AND THE MARRAKECH FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION: FINDINGS FROM ARMENIA	52
<i>Avetik Mejlumyan avetiq.mejlumyan@gmail.com.....</i>	<i>52</i>
REGIONAL FINDINGS FROM MFA REFLECTIONS IN ARMENIA, GEORGIA, MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE	58
<i>Ravshan Baratov baratov@dvv-international.md.....</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Heribert Hinzen Heribert.Hinzen@glasgow.ac.uk</i>	<i>58</i>
REMEMBERING CHRIS DUKE.....	63
<i>Maria Lourdes Almazan Khan maria.aspbae@gmail.com</i>	<i>63</i>
REPLY TO MARIA’S TRIBUTE AND DEDICATION TO CHRIS.....	65
<i>Liz Sommerlad liz.sommerlad@gmail.com</i>	<i>65</i>
INPUTS ON MOVEMENT-BUILDING FOR ALE IN ASIA PACIFIC.....	68
<i>Helen Dabu helen.aspbae@gmail.com.....</i>	<i>68</i>
RESEARCH FINDINGS “STUDY ON ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION“: REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EIGHT COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE	70
<i>Anke Grotlüschen anke.grotlueschen@uni-hamburg.de</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>Alisa Belzer alisa.belzer@gse.rutgers.edu</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>Keiko Yasukawa Keiko.Yasukawa@uts.edu.au</i>	<i>70</i>
SHIFTING PARADIGMS: EMPOWERING LIFELONG LEARNING THROUGH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)	73
<i>El Iza Mohamedou el-iza.mohamedou@oecd.org</i>	<i>73</i>
RAISING AWARENESS OF THE MFA: TAKEAWAYS FROM A U.S. WEBINAR.....	77
<i>Christy Rhodes rhodesc14@ecu.edu.....</i>	<i>77</i>
WELCOME NEW PIMA MEMBERS	81

Message from PIMA President

Shirley Walters | ferris@iafrica.com



“If you don’t know, vote NO!”, Liz Sommerlad explains in her article, was the morally bankrupt slogan of those against the recognition of the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Australian Constitution, to give them a voice in Parliament. The campaign was based on the idea that if you don’t know, don’t bother to find out! This could not be further away from the ideas captured in this bulletin. Sadly, the highly politicised, populist, fake news, conspiratorial, anti-science position won the day in Australia. Indigenous people, who have occupied the continent of Australia for 65000 years, were once again spurned by the settler colonialists.

How do we educators, committed to socio-ecological justice, counter growing right wing, populist authoritarianism, and war? How do we work towards peace, justice and equality in a world which is increasingly consumed by extremities, war, and violence?

In this bulletin, there are several examples of adult learning and education (ALE) interventions in war situations, from Uzbekistan, to Mali, Ukraine, and Afghanistan. Daniel Bladh et al provide a rich example of growing authoritarianism, democratic regression, and contexts of war in their article. They question roles for popular education within highly charged conflict zones.

Through the articles, there is acknowledgement that we are living in the times of ‘the great unravelling’ where we are navigating the poly-crisis of environmental and social breakdown. (Post Carbon Institute, 2023) We are challenged to grapple with the prospects of far more difficult futures across environmental and social systems in complex ways, in many places and with different results. While the Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA), which resulted from the CONFINTEA VII conference in 2022, urges us to harness the transformational power of ALE, many conditions we confront are new – we can’t necessarily rely on our past experiences. As suggested in threads through the bulletin, this demands cross-disciplinarity, humility to know that we don’t know, and to be inspired to explore the complexities through collaborative relationships which lead to co-constructing new ways of knowing/thinking.

The PIMA Bulletin is an important vehicle for ‘thinking beyond the box’ in relation to ALE, human development, and socio-ecological justice towards more egalitarian futures. Thank you to our co-editors, Julia Denholm, Heribert Hinzen, Balázs Nemeth, and Khau Phuoc for leading in the publication of this extraordinary bulletin that traverses many regions of the world, through the stories of over 20 authors, in pursuit of answers to complex problems. This is very much in the spirit of PIMA’s mission.

For more information on PIMA and to become part of the PIMA network, please consult www.pimanetwork.com or PIMA Secretary Dorothy Lucardie dorothy.lucardie@bigpond.com.au

Editorial Introduction

Julia Denholm | jdenholm@sfu.ca



Julia Denholm is the dean of Lifelong Learning at Simon Fraser University. Before joining SFU, she was dean, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and dean of ká lax-ay, the Sunshine Coast campus, at Capilano University. She previously held roles at Langara College as instructor and chair, English, and division chair, Humanities, and her academic career started at UBC, where she taught in the Department of English, the Faculty of Commerce and the Faculty of Applied Science, as well as through the Distance Education and Technology unit. A lifelong learner herself, Denholm is committed to community engagement and to the development of academically excellent continuing education programs. She has a PhD in educational studies and a BA (Hons) and MA in English literature from the University of British Columbia.

Heribert Hinzen | Heribert.Hinzen@glasgow.ac.uk



Heribert Hinzen, Prof.(H) Dr. Dr. h.c. mult., is a senior consultant on adult education and lifelong learning for sustainable development. He worked for DVV International for almost four decades, both in headquarters and offices in Sierra Leone, Hungary and Lao PDR. He is an Honorary Professor of the Universities of Pecs, Bucharest and Iasi, Visiting Professor of the University of Glasgow and teaches international and comparative adult education at the University of Würzburg. He has served as Vice-President of ICAE and EAEA, now of PIMA, and as an Associate of PASCAL. He is an Honorary Fellow of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and a member of the Editorial Board of the International Review of Education. Journal of Lifelong Learning. In 2006 he was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame.

Balázs Németh | nemeth.balazs@pte.hu



Dr. habil Balázs Németh is a researcher on European adult and lifelong learning policy development and comparative adult education. He is an associate professor and reader in Adult Learning and Education at the University of Pécs and a founding member of the Hungarian Universities Lifelong Learning Network (MELLearN). Further research topics of his are: Politics and Adult Education; Comparative Adult Education; History of Modern European Adult Education and Learning City-Region Developments in association with the global network of learning cities programme (GNLC) of UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

Khau Phuoc | khauhuophuoc@seameocell.org



Khau Huu Phuoc already had 22 years' experience in teacher training and curriculum design at Ho Chi Minh University of Education, Vietnam, before he transferred to the Regional Centre for Lifelong Learning (SEAMEO CELL). As Manager of Research and Training at the Centre, he has conducted workshops and seminars aiming to promote understanding of lifelong learning and adult education, and sharing of related good practices for master trainers and teachers of non-formal education from the region.

CONFINTEA VII Follow-up – Reports and Reflections from Civil Society. Editorial Introduction

Julia Denholm, Heribert Hinzen, Báalazs Németh, Khau Phuoc

This is a Jubilee Issue of the Bulletin – the 50th PIMA Bulletin. The first was published in 2015, just a few pages long, and only shortly before the first General Meeting of what is our PIMA today. Most of the previous issues were edited by Chris Duke as former editor, and now after his untimely death we are trying to follow his energy, scope and route. It is also a Special Issue on CONFINTEA; actually the second PIMA Bulletin that tries to ensure action and follow-up on what happened nearly two years ago.

Time is running fast. Starting with the preparation for any large event, to during and then after in retrospective is often a process with overlapping boundaries, as can be seen through this series of reflections on CONFINTEA VII held June 2022 in Marrakech, Morocco.

Early in 2022 PIMA colleagues supported activities towards CONFINTEA VII through a publication on *Global Collaboration and Advocacy for Adult Learning: contributions of a Civil Society Network* (Duke, Hinzen 2022). PIMA colleagues contributed to two important articles advancing CONFINTEA VII (Belete et al. 2022; Benavot et al. 2022). A good number of PIMA members participated in June 2022 in Morocco onsite or online and contributed to the *Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA)* (UIL 2022). In September 2022 the PIMA Bulletin was a Special Issue with national, regional and global perspectives on what has happened and achieved in the process (Denholm et al. 2022).

A bit over a year later, the PIMA Committee decided to investigate where further initiatives on CONFINTEA results could be documented and shared with the adult learning and education (ALE) community through the PIMA Bulletin. The earlier quartet of co-editors agreed to team up again and make use of joint experiences and move ahead with a division of labor.

An initial search revealed that the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) had announced a series of some ten webinars at the regional level with partners invited to discuss a monitoring strategy for CONFINTEA VII follow-up. Participants learned more about what UIL plans include, and at the same learned from others what they have started to implement. One of the webinars was related to Europe, and the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) was an important partner. Participation in the webinar enabled attendees to build contacts.

Almost as a coincidence, at the same time DVV International started a new project towards “Reflection of CONFINTEA VII results from national perspectives and development of recommendations from civil society in four partner countries – Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine”. Involvement in this project allowed for substantial insights into the dynamics of civil society engagement, often in joint efforts with governmental organisations on different levels as well as with universities and other academic institutions. In building this Bulletin these experiences helped in understanding and it was therefore a welcome opportunity to include a national case study of Armenia as well as a regional review of the diversity of approaches.

Looking back from where we have reached when writing these introductory notes we realize that our concept turned out to be a moving target where we saw ourselves participating in or organizing events which were directly related to CONFINTEA or to themes prominently treated in the MFA as its outcome document: ALE has been strengthened as a human right in a lifelong learning dimension, with key areas for peace and citizenship education (CE); climate justice within education for sustainable development (ESD); professionalization and institutionalization; ALE as a movement and as a sub-sector of the education system supported by policy, legislation and financing.

This Bulletin includes contributions from numerous authors spanning a number of years of reflection, including the following:

- We go back as far as 2022 when, soon after Marrakech, DVV International with partners from Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda held a conference to discuss the potential of recommendations in the MFA for implementation from the East/Horn of Africa perspective; this is what Frauke Heinze presents here.
- In July 2023 the team of Anke Grotlüschen, Alisa Belzer and Keiko Yasukawa presented findings of a study on ALE they had prepared on behalf of DVV International's report from eight countries worldwide and a set of recommendations (Grotlüschen et al. 2023).
- The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) celebrated in November 2023 in Bali its 50th anniversary, and the programme had a session on movement building which included contributions by Helen Dabu, Maria Khan and Liz Sommerlad as a tribute to Chris Duke, a champion of former CONFINTEAs.
- Also in November 2023 the International Conference on Adult Education for Peace and Development in Moldova took place in the neighborhood of war-stricken Ukraine. The expertise written by Uwe Gartenschlaeger served almost as a background paper. Hideki Maruyama came as far as from Japan and agreed to contribute a look into the future of ESD in an ageing society.
- Daniel Bladh and colleagues from Ukrainian Bildung Network sent the manuscript on "Popular education as a counterforce in times of autocratization and democratic regression".
- December 2023 saw the PIMA webinar on skills with Eli Iza Mohamedou and her "Shifting Paradigms: Empowering Lifelong Learning through Vocational Education and Training (VET)" as well as Éva Farkas who deepened the debate on "Microcredentials and Individual Learning Accounts".
- In February 2024 the Adult Education Academy of the University of Würzburg took place for the 11th time, and its 15 university and civil society partners in one of the comparative groups looked into examples of CE and ESD. Here Julia Hufnagl presented a paper on "The importance of informal learning for sustainable development". And another participant, Rose Kando from Dar al-Kalima University in Bethlehem wrote on *Strengthening the Marginalized Communities in Palestine through Civic Education Approaches* for the new CONVERGENCE that came out just recently.
- "Bridging University Lifelong Learning to UNESCO CONFINTEA VII and its Marrakech Framework for Action" is a reflection by Balázs Németh on his wider experiences as a professor at the University of Pécs, his engagement with UIL, EAEA, and EUCEN. One of his students in Pécs, Aidai Salmorbekova, wrote her thesis for the Master in ALE on "Prison education in Kyrgyzstan – in light of CONFINTEA VII results".
- On April 11, 2024, the Coalition of Lifelong Learning Organizations (COLLO) and the ICAE co-hosted the webinar on "Marrakech Framework for Action: Connecting to Global Initiatives for Lifelong Learning and Education"; Christy Rhodes organized the event and wrote the report.

What can be seen from this list is that we tried to harvest materials from a number of events and have authors writing articles for the PIMA Bulletin to share with a wider audience. Thereby we wanted to show that CONFINTEA and MFA implementation is a moving target involving many people and organisations.

But this is a continuing process. Preparations are already underway for the conference on "Renewing Education to Transform the Future" in Suwon - Gyeonggi-do, Republic of Korea from 2 to 4 December 2024. This is a follow-up to the UNESCO Report series with Faure in 1972 "Learning to be: The world of education today and

tomorrow” and the Delors Report of 1996 on “Learning: The treasure within” as well as “Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education” by the International Commission on the Futures of Education in 2021, chaired by the Mdme Zahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia. This report was a major background document to CONFINTEA VII, and as these UNESCO reports come out only every 25 years it is our recommendation to read and discuss with colleagues these futures of education should bring better and more for ALE (ICFE 2021).

References

- Belete, S., Duke, C., Hinzen, H., Owusu-Boampong, A., & Phuoc K. H. (2022). Community learning centres (CLCs) for adult learning and education (ALE): Development in and by communities. *International Review of Education*, 68(2), 259–290. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-022-09954-w>
- Benavot, A., Hoppers, C.O., Stepanek Lockhart, A., & Hinzen, H. (2022). Reimagining adult education and lifelong learning for all: Historical and critical perspectives. *International Review of Education* 68(2), 165–194. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-022-09955-9>
- Denholm, J., Hinzen, H., Khau, P., & Németh, B. (Eds) (2022). Special issue on CONFINTEA. *PIMA Bulletin*, 44. <https://www.pimanetwork.com/post/bulletin-special-issue-confintea-vii>
- Duke, C., & Hinzen, H. (Eds) (2022). Global collaboration and advocacy for adult learning: Contributions of a civil society network. CR&DALL Working Paper, WP901/2022, Glasgow: University of Glasgow. https://cradall.org/sites/default/files/wp_901_22.pdf
- ICFE (International Commission on the Futures of Education) (2021). Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education. Paris: UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707>
- Kando, R. (2024). Strengthening the Marginalized Communities in Palestine through Civic Education Approaches. *CONVERGENCE*, 45(1), 3-12. <https://www.convergencejournal.org/vol-45-no-1.pdf>
- UIL (2022). CONFINTEA VII, Marrakech framework for action: Harnessing the transformational power of adult learning and education. Hamburg: UIL. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382306>

Resources

<https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/articles/confintea-vii-follow-meeting-europe>

<https://www.dvv-international.de/en/materials/global-processes-and-policy-documents/confintea>

Adult Learning and Education in times of war and conflict – Findings from the work of DVV International

Uwe Gartenschlaeger | gartenschlaeger@dvv-international.de



Uwe Gartenschlaeger, M.A., studied History, Political Science and Philosophy at the Universities of Berlin and Cologne. After working for four years with a church based adult education provider specialized on topics of reconciliation and history, he joined DVV International, the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association, in 1995. DVV International is the leading professional organization in the field of adult learning and education (ALE) and development cooperation. The main focus is on improving the framework conditions for ALE and offering capacity building for the partners. Within the institute, he held the positions of Country Director in Russia and Regional Director in Central Asia and Southeast-Asia. Since March 2023, Uwe Gartenschlaeger is DVV International's Director. Additionally, he serves as the President of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), the main European ALE network with around 120 members from 43 countries, since 2019.

Wars and violent conflicts are significantly increasing in extent and intensity worldwide with serious consequences for the lives of millions of people. Almost always, access to formal education systems is interrupted or severely restricted – often for years. Schools and other educational institutions in many places are the first to be affected by closures, and many people migrate abroad and need further education there. Adult Learning and Education (ALE) makes an important contribution in the support of people and societies in situations of war and conflict. Its importance is not limited to immediate instances of conflict; it can also effect positive change in the lead-up to conflicts and in their aftermath.

ALE supports people and societies 1) through conflict prevention, 2) through the coping with and 3) through the processing of conflicts as well as 4) through the integration of refugees. ALE thus makes an important contribution in all stages of dealing with conflicts. (See, for example, the OSCE conflict cycle: <https://bit.ly/3GBDxEEm>). Many partner countries of DVV international find themselves currently in war and conflict situations. The Institute therefore works with its local partners to develop educational programmes to support those affected and to address both the causes and consequences of conflicts. The examples drawn from practical experience demonstrate the full potential of ALE.

Tackling the causes of conflicts

ALE reinforces the ability of people to interact with one another in a nonviolent manner. ALE can contribute to the initiation of dialogue between people from opposing groups, to reveal prejudices and to help them reconsider existing stereotypes.

Nonviolent methods of communication can not only be used to deal with conflicts, but also to prevent escalation. For instance, ALE enables people to change their perspective in order to reflect on the causes of conflicts and work towards peaceful solutions. ALE can thus contribute to the transformation of conflict-ridden relationships. Grassroots educational work, which focusses particularly on disadvantaged groups of the population, also makes it possible to methodically reduce existing frustrations and fears at the local level. It thus emboldens a broader range of people to get involved in society. An investment in ALE is therefore a long-term investment in conflict prevention.

Through its work in more than 30 partner countries, DVV International strengthens dialogue between the state, civil society and various societal groups. Constructive relationships are built which are based on participation, active involvement, transparency and accountability and thus create mutual trust. We support civil society actors to participate in political and societal processes that strengthen the common good. Through dialogue initiated by these actors, state institutions develop a stronger orientation towards citizens.

In conflict situations: support those affected

During wars and violent conflicts, many educational institutions are faced with major tasks and challenges. Staff and teachers are often directly threatened and are then not available to continue teaching. Rooms for teaching are no longer available or are unsafe. ALE structures can often adapt more flexibly than formal systems to volatile conditions, utilise niches and quickly provide suitable programmes. Civil society organisations especially are developing an impressive level of commitment in this respect and are frequently able to find creative solutions to support the civilian population in coping with the extremely stressful situation.

The need for ALE services in conflict situations is great and diverse: on the one hand, it is about counselling services and socio-psychological support that helps people continue to live their everyday lives despite the traumatic experiences of death and loss. Often, there is a great need for new life skills and employment-securing skills and knowledge to ensure their own survival or to help them build a new outlook. For example, this includes first aid courses or programmes in the medical field as well as training that helps people generate income, such as in the area of business start-ups. Not least, civil society organisations in particular are often in a position to provide compensatory educational opportunities that help to make up for shortfalls in the formal education system.

Coming to terms with what happened and the consequences

Conflicts from the past continue to have an impact on the situation in many countries. A deficient and inadequate reappraisal of past conflicts often leads to a new flare-up of violence, which is then sometimes difficult to contain.

There are many examples of how ALE contributes to dealing with the consequences of war and violent conflict. On the one hand, it is about coming to terms with what has happened – a topic that ALE in Germany has addressed intensively in discourses on “coming to terms with the past” after World War II, but has also been addressed by DVV International in various projects abroad. ALE can make a contribution to ensuring that lines of conflict do not remain obscured, but are instead made transparent through the participation of all societal groups, thus creating an all-round view of the past. This reconciliation work is lengthy and often painful, but it contributes to a sustainable, lasting prospect of peace. In particular, groups that see themselves as losers of conflicts are thus now presented with a positive view of the future.

ALE can, on the other hand, significantly contribute to opening up new perspectives for people with disrupted educational biographies – one of the most common consequences of war and violence, especially among young people.

Support refugees and host communities

Wars and violent conflicts are always associated with a large number of refugees. Most of them are displaced within their own national borders, but often many people are forced to leave their home country. As a result, wars and violent conflicts also impact countries, regions and societies that are not directly involved.

This is where ALE structures provide important anchors for the reception and integration of refugees, as has been impressively demonstrated by the work of our partners in Ukraine, Jordan and Tunisia, for example, but

also by the commitment, in recent years, of German ALE centres (Volkshochschulen) to the integration of refugees in Germany.

ALE forms a key component in the care and, if necessary, permanent integration of refugees. This begins with the provision of low-threshold counselling services to help refugees find their bearings in their new environment. Often, there are also offers for the recognition of professional skills, combined with vocational training programmes. In cases where the refugees find themselves in an unfamiliar language environment, they are additionally offered language courses, which are often very extensive. Alongside language integration, cultural and social integration is also taken into account: ALE programmes support refugees to understand their new environment and find their way in it. Conversely, by offering appropriate programmes, ALE can help to awaken understanding for the new arrivals amongst the local population and break down barriers.

Examples from our project work in wars and violent conflicts

DVV International has been involved in ALE projects for over 50 years. During this time, in our work, we have been and continue to be confronted with warlike and violent situations. Our experiences strengthen us in the conviction that ALE, as part of a functioning social structure that reliably satisfies people's basic needs, has an important role to play, especially in these contexts. Some recent examples provide an insight into our global work and its impact.

Addressing the causes of conflict: PREVECA project in Uzbekistan

DVV International supports civil society and state actors in Uzbekistan in reducing so-called push factors contributing to radicalisation and intolerance. As part of the PREVECA (Prevention of Violent Extremism in Central Asia) project, we have strengthened the skills of a number of non-governmental organisations and local experts working in the field of radicalisation prevention. Together, we have expanded services in the areas of vocational and political education – including basic religious knowledge – as well as psychosocial, legal and medical counselling, alongside resocialisation approaches for socially disadvantaged target groups. In this context, we promoted shared values, social cohesion and constructive dialogue. The pool of local trainers was enlarged and a special curriculum for the prevention of violent extremism (Curriculum PreViEx) was developed and introduced.

ALE in war and conflict situations: support for those affected in Mali, Ukraine and Afghanistan

Mali: New prospects for internally displaced people

In Mali, since the security situation deteriorated in 2012, more than 160,000 people have had to leave their communities in the Mopti and Bandiagara regions due to ongoing terrorist attacks. In July 2023, many people from the entire Djenné district fled to the Sio community and its main town of Soufroulaye, where DVV International supports a community education centre. In order to create a new basic livelihood possibility for the displaced families, DVV International is involved in setting up REFLECT learning circles for members of the displaced families. The REFLECT method combines participatory approaches to local development with literacy. In this way, the participants are taught basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic in their mother tongues of Peul and Bambara as well as skills for income-generating activities based on their needs, such as keeping small livestock (goats, sheep) or trading in everyday consumer goods.

Ukraine: Local education programmes for people suffering from trauma and internally displaced people

After the beginning of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the partner organisations of DVV International in Ukraine – local ALE centres run by civil society – reacted quickly and developed new services for people suffering from trauma, for internally displaced people and for other interested people. The ALE centres are deeply rooted in their communities and know the mood and needs of the population well. They know how to

utilise the transformative role of ALE in order to support people in need to adapt to the difficult conditions in which they live. Educational work, even in those centres which are at great risk due to their relatively short distance from the fighting, has hardly been interrupted. At the same time, the centres are places of support and coordination for civil society initiatives and volunteers who help those in need and try to maintain the continuity of civilian life.

Afghanistan: Online courses, especially for women and girls

War has been raging in Afghanistan for decades. Since 2002, in cooperation with the Afghan National Association for Adult Education (ANAFAE), DVV International has established a total of 25 education centres in the country. Currently, 15 of these centres are still run by ANAFAE. They are key contact points for the local population and internally displaced people – as well as for women and girls. Thanks to local exemptions specially negotiated by ANAFAE, they can continue or supplement their school education in person at the centre and acquire important skills for the labour market. In recent years, a wide range of online learning opportunities have also been created and utilised – since the Taliban came to power, they are the only way for many women and girls to continue their education and explore their remaining options in the world of work.

Overcoming the past and its consequences: new perspectives in Colombia

Despite the peace agreement concluded in 2016 – which raised high hopes for a peaceful future – Colombia continues to struggle with high levels of violence, crime, poverty and social inequality, particularly in the rural frontier areas. In order to counteract the factors driving the decades-long conflict, a new outlook is needed in the form of alternative approaches to living in the community and obtaining sources of income that offer the local population a way out of the spiral of violence. DVV International, along with the ADC – Asociación para el Desarrollo Campesino (Association for Rural Development) – supports the goal of comprehensive rural development as formulated in the peace agreement. With innovative educational programmes such as the Regional Peace School and the Binational School of Agroecology, alternative, more peaceful forms of living and working together as well as social and ecological transformation processes are being advanced.

Support refugees: integration of migrants in Tunisia

In Tunisia, migration from sub-Saharan Africa is mainly concentrated in the greater Tunis area and on the eastern coast. In these areas, DVV International supports ALDA, Association pour le Leadership et le Développement (the Association for Leadership and Development), which provides migrants with comprehensive assistance for their integration into everyday life in Tunisia. The measures include the development of a handbook for learning the Tunisian Arabic dialect, exchange events with locals, the development of an awareness-raising campaign for the concerns of migrants, and workshops that aim to provide participants with solutions to improve their (precarious) security situation. In this regard, representatives of state organisations are also closely involved.

Recognise and utilise potentials

These examples clearly demonstrate the great potential that ALE offers in providing essential aid for people in war and conflict situations. Stable structures and sufficient funding are needed for this to work. A functioning, sustainably equipped system for ALE can, in times of peace, help to avert conflicts and social tensions. But even, and especially in times of war and violence, an investment in ALE is essential and has a major impact.

DVV International and its partners worldwide are committed to ensuring that the potentials of ALE in the context of war and conflict are recognised and used to a fuller extent.

Further reading

DVV International. (2023). *Annual Report 2022*. <https://bit.ly/4185MDM>

Global Education Cluster. (2010). *Education Cluster Coordinator Handbook*. <https://bit.ly/3GxwXOT>

INEE. (2010). *Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery*. 2nd edition. <https://bit.ly/4ad2raY>

United Nations. (2010). *The right to education in emergency situations, resolution adopted by the General Assembly*. <https://bit.ly/3t7w3FQ>

UNESCO. (2023). *Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development*. <https://bit.ly/47WFZ3U>

UNESCO/UII. (2022). *CONFINTEA VII Marrakech Framework for Action*. <https://bit.ly/3RvdYLc>

Vision of Humanity. (2023). "Conflict Trends in 2023: A Growing Threat to Global Peace." <https://bit.ly/3QWoHNk>

Note this text was originally prepared for the series of Expert Papers of DVV International. www.dvv-international.de

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

Bridging University Lifelong Learning to UNESCO CONFINTEA VII and its Marrakech Framework for Action 2022

Balázs Németh | nemeth.balazs@pte.hu



Dr. habil Balázs Németh is an associate professor in Adult and Lifelong Learning at the University of Pécs in policy studies and learning city-region focuses. He has participated several European projects and beyond academic work, he is an EPALE Ambassador for Hungary and EAEA board member. Dr. Németh represents the UniPécs in Erasmus+ KA3 PDS4BST project and in PIMA Network, eucen as ambassador, and also in PASCAL International Observatory.

This short article is to demonstrate the role of university lifelong learning in the promotion of the results and goals of UNESCO CONFINTEA VII and its Marrakech Framework for Action by pointing out the roles and responsibilities of the third mission of higher education institutions in the formation of effective knowledge transfers and skills developments for vulnerable adults in community.

Such arguments can be discovered in some recent papers both from the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and from eucen, the European Universities Lifelong Learning Network to address matters of lifelong learning for adults (UIL Research Reports on Lifelong Learning in Higher Education, 2023a and 2023b; (Royo-Cendon-Nemeth-Hienber - eucen Position Paper 2021 and Sonne – eucen Position Paper, 2022).

This issue relates us to three main areas for action to widen participation and performance in university lifelong learning programmes:

- Policy environments to promote lifelong learning in higher education
- Institutional governance and implementation
- Widening access through diversification and flexibility

The third above-mentioned area takes us to some key issues of adult learning, like reaching out to non-traditional learners and vulnerable groups, diversified learning provision, flexible learning pathways, technology-enhanced learning, social responsibility, and local partnerships. These areas can allow universities to both initiate action in accordance with those emerging areas of intervention for better participation in quality learning and to enhance learning opportunities for a potentially wider group of non-traditional learners. This is the field in which connections can be made to UNESCO CONFINTEA VII and its Marrakech Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2022). Both the CONFINTEA VII report and MFA strongly underline the need for more equitable, quality adult education to be formulated by educational providers of multiple kinds, such as universities based on partnerships and collaborative knowledge transfers. The roles of higher education in lifelong learning as emphasized by UNESCO UIL reflections are the results of a wider scope on interactions amongst various sectors of education and beyond to understand the potential of skills development as a dominating layer of educational policy. Focuses indented to improve engagement and participation should be settled through equitable measures and quality concerns by recognising, on the one hand, the impact of national qualifications frameworks for both educational and VET programmes and for skills policies, but also, on the other hand, to rely more on identifying developments in non-formal and informal learning for adults.

However, it is still rather complex and challenging for HEIs to build on such holistically understood missions when STEM-focuses dominate academic cycles and have reduced priorities in lifelong learning at HIEs. That is why it is still rather difficult to promote lifelong learning, adult education, and adult learning beyond basic principles and to develop and strengthen learning capacities of adult learners through non-formal and informal grounds. Two examples where universities are showing interest are first, continuing VET with professional development focused to teachers, trainers, and facilitators, and second, encouraging learning city-region developments with smart and creative approaches (Nemeth, 2022) to balance economic and social interests such as communities, families and neighbourhoods. The involvements of Irish universities in their learning city developments are good cases for such a purpose. (O'Tuama – O'Sullivan, 2016)

UNESCO's intention in lifelong learning policy formation is ideational (Nemeth, 2015) to turn the international dialogue and collaborative actions with inter-governmental character into quality directions by emphasizing discourse by both individual and community benefits of participation, performance, and partnerships which governments and other key stakeholders many recognise as necessary.

Examples of UNESCO UIL's recent survey on lifelong learning at universities clearly reflect that funding schemes mainly support economic, namely, labour-market oriented, learning and training. Quality assurance schemes try to connect credentials systems to promote assessment and evaluation of adult and lifelong learning to be better recognised and validated for life and for work. There are several examples which demonstrate the growing claim of HEIs to address the needs for flexible learning pathways and to improve on-line learning for lifelong learning provision. (UNESCO, 2023b) In this manner UNESCO is asserting that HEIs must evolve into agents for lifelong learning with the help of innovative institutional strategies. (UNESCO UIL weblink - [University leaders commit to](#)

These are the ways and forms by which universities can be involved in the continuing education and lifelong learning actions eucen, European Universities Continuing Education Network, has been representing in the last three decades through thematized annual conferences, seminars, policy talks and problem-based projects around adult and lifelong learning, including a particular focus on digital, professional, responsible and inclusive learning (eucen weblink - [Home - Eucen](#)). As the largest multidisciplinary association for University Lifelong Learning in Europe, eucen is turning attention towards issues which can combine not only the matters of organizational change of universities with effective management to increase a third mission of higher education, but also to raise concerns about quality research and education through the lifelong learning university mindset. This is now focused attention on learning and skills eco-systems as topics for recent discussions about the changing dimensions of lifelong learning.

In this respect national networks of eucen also play a certain role to collect and share remarkable knowledge to improve skills of universities in lifelong learning with convincing quality concerns. eucen's partnerships with the European Commission, the European Parliament and other European bodies widen the scope for such an approach. Moreover, international connections through the European Lifelong Learning Platform (LLLP weblink - [Lifelong Learning Platform | Civil Society \(lllplatform.eu\)](#)) also provides a reliable arena to exchange with a good range of stakeholders involved in the lifelong learning policy discourse to move actions and necessary reactions towards quality with measures upon equity, equality and inclusion.

University lifelong learning in eucen, therefore, claims for active moves from universities to change for more flexible provisions through digitally supported knowledge transfer by using, for example, microcredentials as tools. Another aspect of university lifelong learning is to address matters of adult basic education with prepared professionals. In this respect, collaboration with EBSN's professional development of basic skills teachers is a profound example (EBSN PDS weblink - <https://teaching.basicskills.eu/>). Inclusion and responsibility can be easily detected by higher education institutions' orientations to UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education so as to provide lifelong learning for all. Such a sensitive issue encourages universities to reconfigure over lifelong learning and to fairly discuss matters of adult learning and education with pro-active reflections to recall the goals of the Marrakech Framework for Action in realising the goals of UNESCO CONFINTEA VII with realistic focuses and explanations. (UNESCO MFA, 2022)

As conclusion, let me call for attention to eucen's recent Position Papers and relevant articles in the European Journal of University Lifelong Learning (EJULL) dedicated to changes in provision, structures, methods to support adult learning through university lifelong learning having to recognise trend of how, what, when and why adults intend to learn with universities. (eucen weblink for EJULL - <https://eucen.eu/journal-2/>)

References

- Németh, B. (2015). Lifelong Learning for All Adults? A New Concept for UNESCO - Limits and Opportunities for a Changing Inter-Governmental Organisation. In Marcella Milana, Tom Nesbit (Eds.), *Global Perspectives on Adult Education and Learning Policy*. (pp. 165-178). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Németh, B. (2022). Changing Roles of Universities in the Development of Learning Cities into Smart and Creative Communities. In *European Journal of University Lifelong Learning* (2789-4029): 6 (2), 15-27. <https://doi.org/10.53807/0602lds5>
- Ó' Tuama, S & O'Sullivan, S. (2016). Designing and Implementing Learning Neighbourhoods in Cork'S UNESCO Learning City Project. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2764262> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2764262>

Royo, C., Cendon, E., Nemeth, B., & Hiebner, S. (2021). *Equipping Higher Education Institutions for the Future – The Role of University Lifelong Learning*. eucen Position Paper, Issue [36-04 eucenrecenttrendsIII ppaper v2-2 final.pdf](#)

Sonne, K. (2022). *Responsive Universities for Lifelong Learning: Making Flexible Learning a Reality to Sustain Current Needs in Europe and Beyond*. [PositionPaper ResponsiveULLL-issue5 v1-4 FINAL \(eucen.eu\)](#).

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning - Shanghai Open University. (2023a). *International trends of lifelong learning in higher education: Research Report*. UNESCO UIL. [International trends of lifelong learning in higher education: research report - UNESCO Digital Library](#).

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning - Shanghai Open University. (2023b). *Institutional practices of implementing lifelong learning in higher education: Research Report*. UNESCO UIL. [Institutional practices of implementing lifelong learning in higher education: research report - UNESCO Digital Library](#).

UNESCO UIL. (2023). *CONFINTEA VII Seventh International Conference on Adult Education: final report; Adult learning and education for sustainable development: a transformative agenda*. [CONFINTEA VII Seventh International Conference on Adult Education: final report; Adult learning and education for sustainable development: a transformative agenda - UNESCO Digital Library](#).

UNESCO UIL. (2022). *CONFINTEA VII - Marrakech Framework for Action*. [CONFINTEA VII Marrakech Framework for Action: harnessing the transformational power of adult learning and education - UNESCO Digital Library](#).

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

A case study on prison education in Kyrgyzstan – in light of CONFINTEA VII results

Aidai Salmorbekova | Aidai.salmorbekova@gmail.com



Aidai Salmorbekova is a Doctoral School of Education student in the Research Methodology program at the University of Pecs. Her doctoral dissertation topic is “Prison Andragogy: A Tool for Functional Literacy Improvement and Individual Transformation of the religious extremists and Terrorists in Prisons”.

In 2023 she pursued her Master’s degree at the University of Pecs in the Andragogy program and participated in the Adult Education Academy of the University of Würzburg.

In 2009 Aidai Salmorbekova obtained her Higher Education Diploma in Linguistics and Philology at the Kyrgyz National University where in 2010 she started her teaching career.

CONFINTEA VII in Marrakesh called for a new social contract for education to reinforce the activity of stakeholders in building a strategic policy. Several workshops took place during the conference which focused

on effective governance, learning provision, citizenship education and teacher training. A key finding is that, in maintaining learning provisions, libraries are especially efficient in communities and institutions with strict regulations such as prisons where the information-rich environment is mostly limited. Teachers correct people's vulnerable psychological and pedagogical state not only by providing information and applying various teaching methodologies but also by maintaining dialogue.

The Seventh International Conference on Adult Education advocated the transformation of society through education. Within the conference framework, effective governance, learning provision, and teacher training were identified as key dimensions appointed to unfold and tackle the educational discrepancy among vulnerable people including inmates. The Report "noted that libraries were ideally placed not only to bridge digital divides in terms of connectivity, but also to offer the literacies and skills necessary to work in an information-rich environment, transforming lives and communities, and promoting active citizenship. Numerous examples, covering national, public, academic and prison libraries, highlighted what could be achieved through collaboration, and participants called for libraries to be placed at the heart of partnerships" (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2023, 34).

Prison education in Kyrgyzstan

We base our findings on the research on prison education conducted in support of a thesis written to obtain a Master's degree in Adult Education at the University of Pecs in Hungary. The Correctional Institution №3 (CI3) in Kyrgyzstan was the site of the case study. The objective is to reflect on prison education (PE) from an international perspective and national reality. During the investigation process, we interviewed four teachers whom we named Respondent 1 (R1), R2, R3, etc.: all of them were employees of the vocational school №1 and held positions described not as "teachers" but "masters" (translated from Russian) meaning technical trainers. All taught at the CI3. In terms of teaching qualifications, the interviewees consisted of a computer literacy specialist, an electrician, a hairdressing master, and an occupational safety teacher. All interviewees had a vocational education (VE) degree and certificates of conformity validating their rights to work as pedagogues - teachers. They have been teaching inmates for five to ten years. In addition to this group, we interviewed the head of the CI3 Toktosunov Turgunbek, the manager of the AFEW (AIDS Fund East-West) Kyrgyzstan Imankulova Chinara, and Deputy Head of the Department of Educational and Social Work with Convicts of the Penitentiary Service Sataev Marat.

Effective Governance

Effective governance is both a quality assurance and an outcome of legislation, policy, and financing. The main questions we explored were the existence of the National Regulator of the Penitentiary Education System (PS), a single standard, policy, and financial allocations for PE.

A separately allocated National Regulator of the PS does not exist in Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless, the Republican Scientific and Methodological Center develops vocational and basic education programs for prisons whilst the Primary Vocational Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) regulates the provision. In terms of financial allocation, PE is funded by the public sector and donor organizations. Over time, funding has increased by 70%, and consequently salaries increased by 100% by 2023. Donor organizations overall allocated eight to ten thousand US dollars of donor funds as material support within 2021- 2022 (T. Toktosunov, personal communication, February 28, 2023).

An interview with the manager of AFEW Chinara Imnakulova revealed the contrast between state and non-state organizations in their operations in prisons. AFEW was registered in Kyrgyzstan in 2006. The mission of the organization is to assist in improving the quality of life of citizens of Kyrgyzstan infected with AIDS and tuberculosis. During the cooperation with prisons, the organization worked with Correctional Colonies No. 1, 2, 3, 16, and 27 located in the Chui region, and Correctional Colony No. 51 in the city of Balykchy: a baker-

confectioner course among inmates and probation clients. They also implement the project with an eight-month cycle in partnership with DVV International. In 2021, a program was launched to teach computer literacy to inmates. Due to the low level of basic education and the lack of computer experience, out of 12 students, only two were able to pass the exam. The program consists of eight to ten courses and is designed for groups of 12 people. The first year (2021) the program was attended by 96 people. For the second year (2022), 120 people took part in the PS. In the third year (2023) 96 people finished the training program. Concerning the selection criteria for participants, those inmates who have six months left before release participate, and when groups are not full, other inmates are also involved.

The Red Cross, OSCE, DVV International, and UNODC are among the key donors for the development and support of PE in Kyrgyzstan. Their activities include equipping classrooms and workplaces with the necessary materials such as carpentry equipment, learning rooms, and greenhouse repair. Training programs were held in the following areas: seamstress, shoemaking, greenhouses, hairdressing, bakery, and confectionery.

We questioned the possibility of giving inmates a higher education, to which we received a positive answer, and this idea was taken into account to be included in the plan for the development strategy of the PS of the KR

It is necessary to take into account the specifics of the Kyrgyz society, their attitude towards inmates, and social and traditional foundations. Society is not ready. Nevertheless, it is necessary to conduct monitoring among inmates to find out whether there is a need for higher education with subsequent analysis and conclusion. It needs to be analyzed and included in the strategy. (M. Sataev, personal communication, March 3, 2023).

Teachers evaluate the work of the administration and the whole PS in organizing the educational process on an average of four on a five-point scale. They mention a shortage of learning-teaching material and equipment (Salmorbekova, 2023).

Learning Provision

During the period of accreditation, the methodological, personnel, and technical base including libraries and conditions are analyzed and validated. In the 2022-2023 academic year, the PS launched two groups for primary general education. In 2021, 450 people were enrolled. To date, the number of students is declining due to the humanization of the system and the introduction of a probation system. Hence, the term "Re-education" has changed to "Resocialization" which, in turn, is laid down in the criminal code which means six months before release the process of preparation for the labor market and civil life starts.

We discussed the importance of certification of qualifications and education:

certification of a profession and skill is a guarantee of employment. The certificate does not indicate the social status of an inmate. The main thing is to live according to the law of citizenship, and not criminal after upon release (Salmorbekova, 2023).

When asked what motivates students' desire to study or work, teachers noted understanding of education as a path to liberation, the ability to communicate with teachers, the ability to create something with their own hands (sew clothes, cut hair), learn specialties that make it possible to earn a living after release (Salmorbekova, 2023).

The approach of AFEW to involving the inmates is different. Hence, motivational packages are made, consisting of tea, socks for men, and tea, and hygiene packages for women. Classes conducted by a peer coach i.e. a trainer, a former inmate who previously was a drug addict or has an HIV status and managed to find a job, get married, and lead a civilized lifestyle in freedom, is also an incentive to participate in training. Also, the work on developing plans for after-release life involves students, which is the basis of the program for preparation for release and socialization. The criterion for selection for vocational training is the presence of nine years of

school-based education. The organization does not work with minors, as there is a general education program for them, and vocational training is not provided due to their non-working age. When compared with the male contingent, women are more involved in the learning process: either studying or working in enterprises within the walls of the prison. This phenomenon is due to the lack of "*prison rules*" in the women's colony:

Difficulties arose with the inmates as some of them only came for motivational packages while others came to learn something (Ch. Imankulova, personal communication, April 4, 2023).

Teacher training

The motivation of interviewees to work with inmates is an opportunity for additional wages, curiosity, an invitation from the school administration, and a desire to help inmates reintegrate into society. The interviewees expressed their belief in the PE perspective, second chance, learner-centered approach, and labor as emancipation tools.

As R2 and R3 stated teachers tend to be psychologically prepared for conflict situations: occasionally inmates in a permanent psychological tension opt to be rude and disobedient. Teachers get acquainted with criminal culture and jargon during the training process with the help of inmates. Nevertheless, students show respect for the teacher, which is dictated by prison culture.

Additionally, we questioned the presence of dialogue and equality in teaching techniques. Hence, to the question "Is equality possible between a teacher and a student?" all interviewees gave a negative answer except R1 who believes that equality is necessary to be maintained whilst R2 thinks:

the lessons of equality are not acceptable - everyone has their role. Subordination must be observed. The teacher is above. The degree of equality should be light only to gain the confidence or favor of the student (Salmorbekova, 2023).

The responsibility for PE is shared between the state and the school. Hence, the recruitment of teaching staff is the responsibility of the school head. The selection criteria require experience and qualification of a teacher-pedagogue and technical education: from certificates of initial VE to university. As noted, the vocational schools require from teachers' staff the qualification of a 'master' (translated from Russian) to be accredited and licensed to operate as an educational institution (T. Toktosunov, personal communication, February 28, 2023).

Interviewee R2 said that initial training for teachers as prison educators is not provided except for informal discussions with staff members who have more experience in psychological self-preparation. Short training with prison staff is provided on topics such as contacting inmates to prevent suicide and possible aggression, and working closely with employees:

Professional prison teachers must treat the inmates with understanding and patience. Inmates are imprisoned for authority, and not for the teacher. Mercy is important. A teacher does double work - professional and psychological support. Therefore, professionalization in the field of teaching in prison - psychological knowledge and skills are necessary to predict the behavior and actions of the inmate. Each teacher knows his students. The administration must work on it (Salmorbekova, 2023).

The method of AFEW is:

1. 'peer to peer' approach: former inmates facilitate the students;
2. the teacher is replaced when necessary;
3. training and technical support for teachers' staff.

The organization's staff, including teachers, go for internships in countries with a more developed PS such as Germany. The mandatory requirement is that teachers from technical schools are hired to work with students due to their official certificates. However, the trainer-educators did not receive prior training to work with inmates since the program is run by DVV International and, under the mandate of this organization, they can only train the students themselves in the groups, and not the trainers.

Prison personnel and the guards provide support to new teachers in the form of activity protection and convoy. Due to the mentioned advice given by the more experienced teachers and following flaws the teachers experience such as psychological difficulty, absence of initial training for work in prisons, and lack of programs for advanced training the following necessary elements of an efficient PE that teachers underline occur:

- professionalization in the field;
- internship practice;
- improved working conditions for teachers;
- professionalism and personal excellence are equal;
- self-defense training and knowledge of criminal culture;
- monitoring the quality of service delivery.

Though R3 was skeptical about the transformational character of PE saying:

The foundations and unwritten laws among inmates do not make it possible to transform the worldview of a person through education (Salmorbekova, 2023),

other teachers stated professional success when their students:

- Develop creative and original ideas;
- Gain academic achievements often for the first time in their lives;
- Express their opinions without fear of being judged and gain self-confidence;
- Are employed upon release and driven away from the 'everlasting criminal circle'
- Acquire civil skills and develop team spirit (Salmorbekova, 2023).

Here we return to the question: What is the aim of the legislation on education in prisons? The adaptation period of the inmate upon release must be witnessed not only by his/her family - 'people innocently punished', but assisted by the state and society since recidivism is not only a case of reoffending but an act resulting in victims and financial cost. In this regard the Lifelong Learning principles must imply to the government, to be able to maintain rehabilitation programs based on education, as well as to society to not turn to 'a larger prison'. Hence, the aim is not to destroy artificially created barriers but to prevent their production.

Conclusion

Legislation and policy in PS are implemented by the correctional institutions with international donors and non-governmental organizations. Despite the absence of modern concepts and approaches in the PS of the KR following the responses of the interviewees, specifically the representatives of the PS and NGOs we state that our view on the necessity of educating society on the value of human basic rights is supported. The PS of Kyrgyzstan is experiencing reformatory changes based on the Global frameworks and international good practices of rebuilding the social stigma into emancipatory power on inmates.

References

- Imankulova, C. (2023). *AIDS Fund East-West. Prison Education*. Personal communication. (A. Salmorbekova, Interviewer, & A. Salmorbekova, Translator) Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. <https://youtu.be/MVSJUMMRTcE>
- Salmorbekova, A. (2023). *Prison Education in Kyrgyzstan*. (V. S. №1, Interviewer)
- Sataev, M. (2023). Kyrgyz State Service for Execution of Punishment. Personal communication. (A. Salmorbekova, Interviewer, & A. Salmorbekova, Translator) Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. <https://youtu.be/Z09xI9gQAXM>
- Toktosunov, T. (2023). Personal communication. (A. Salmorbekova, Interviewer, & A. Salmorbekova, Translator) Chui region, Kyrgyzstan. <https://youtu.be/9t03d0friMY>
- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. (2023). *CONFINTEA VII Seventh International Conference on Adult Education: final report; Adult learning and education for sustainable development: a transformative agenda*. International Conference on Adult Education, 7th, Marrakech, Morocco, 2022 (pp. 31-39).

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

Chances and Challenges in the Post-CONFINTEA VII Time – The implementation of the Marrakesh Framework of Action from the East African perspective

Frauke Heinze | fheinze@dvv-international.co.tz



Frauke Heinze is an international public health and adult education expert with more than 25 years' experience in international cooperation across Africa and Asia. Currently, she is working as the Regional Director DVV International East/ Horn of Africa and has been involved in ALE system strengthening in the region. She is passionate about enhancing national systems for quality health and non-formal Youth and Adult Education service delivery, and designing respective policies, implementation frameworks and curricula. She also has a keen interest in research and developing community-needs oriented education, skills development and behavior change interventions and trainings.

Background

From the time the CONFINTEA VII Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA) (UNESCO, 2022a) was released, processes have been set in motion to follow up actions in priority areas outlined in the MFA within the Africa region. Given that the MFA provides an opportunity for critical analysis of the status of adult learning and education (ALE) in the East African/Horn of Africa region, and the formulation of recommendations for harnessing the transformational power of ALE., DVV International organized an East/Horn of Africa sub-regional conference shortly after the CONFINTEA VII conference in 2022. This conference provided a platform for various

actors from Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda to analyse contributions by different stakeholders to the implementation and monitoring of MFA and to formulate recommendations for the implementation and follow-up from the East/Horn of African perspective.

The fact that discussion around the effective implementation of MFA among stakeholders in the East African/Horn of Africa region is crucial can be seen from the available data in the Africa Regional Report (UNESCO, 2022b) and census reports. In East Africa, literacy rates differ from 82% (CSA 2022c) to 52% in poorer and less stable countries such as Ethiopia (CSA 2017). Illiteracy is still persistent among communities and a high number of youth and adults critically need relevant and useful new knowledge and skills to manage the current socio-economic realities and the demands of life.

Despite this situation, East African countries still allocate less than two percent of their education budgets to ALE. Generally, more investment is required to generate the necessary outcomes and impact of ALE. Combined efforts are needed in ALE whereby national governments have critical role in developing ALE along with various actors from civil society, academia, and the private sector. More remains to be done to implement the relevant enabling environment—policies, strategies and programme guidelines and national qualification frameworks. In this respect, national ALE policies and practices need to consider the needs of different age groups, levels of education, learning needs, learning spaces and modalities, recognizing that ALE is the main driver of social change, development and poverty reduction for a high percentage of society. At the same time, progress needs to continue regarding stakeholder engagement, capacity-building, inter-ministerial cooperation, civil society involvement, and monitoring and evaluation.

The East African perspective—recommendations for the region

Following the MFA, key areas have been identified for action—policies, governance, financing, inclusion, equality, and quality—required to ensure equitable learning opportunities for youth and adults and for creating a culture of lifelong learning through a holistic approach with ALE being a key component of lifelong learning. To strengthen the multisectoral and transdisciplinary power of ALE as a tool for social change, the MFA calls for greater cooperation and joint action among actors.

In relation to this, in the CONFINTEA follow up conference East/Horn of Africa particular attention was given to the following two areas:

- **Professionalisation of ALE** in the sub-region: The MFA highlighted the need for the professionalisation of ALE to ensure quality of ALE services in learning spaces.
- **Community Learning Centres (CLC)** and their contribution to the implementation of the MFA, as the main local and regional provider of ALE and literacy service providers.

Let me elaborate further on these two areas and their relevance for the East African region.

Professionalisation of ALE

We know that adult teachers and educators, volunteer tutors, trainers and facilitators engaged in ALE have the key role in ensuring quality of learning. This is why adult teaching should be a valued profession and every learner should be taught by qualified, motivated and empowered teachers within well-resourced, efficient and effective learning environments to foster learning and to achieve inclusive and equitable quality ALE. The MFA underlines this need for a comprehensive approach to the professionalisation of ALE to ensure ALE learning spaces like CLCs are well-resourced with qualified adult educators to enable relevant ALE training and learning initiatives.

Despite its importance, professionalisation of ALE is recognized as a major challenge around the world, including East/Horn of Africa. According to the statement by UNESCO (2019) the lack of professionalisation and training

opportunities for educators has had a detrimental impact on the quality of ALE provision. This decision is particularly important for countries like Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania, where CLCs and other accessible spaces for ALE rely on qualified adult educators to provide high-quality learning opportunities for youth and adults.

There is a high need both for professionalisation at all levels and for pathways to professionalisation like pre-service, in-service and continuing training, combined with a demand to set standards and norms for educational provision, standards of practice or standards for teacher preparation institutions. At the same time, the improvement of working conditions, salaries etc. for ALE teachers needs to be discussed. The situation is particularly aggravated in countries such as the East/Africa region. Little attention is paid, and little investment is made, to provide well-trained ALE teachers and educators, trainers and other professionals. Often the working conditions are unsatisfactory, and the learning environment is not conducive, salaries are low or not in existence. Often trainers and facilitators are expected to work on a voluntary basis at the community level.

Community Learning Centres

ALE service delivery points, such as CLCs, play a critical role in providing a well-resourced, efficient, and effective learning environment to foster learning in ALE. DVV International supports the governments in the sub-region in establishing high-quality CLCs. A core goal is to make CLC a service delivery point that offers the integration of ALE services that bring the experiences of different actors, thereby creating a commutative and synergetic effect for improved ALE quality.

Being a venue for delivering various services to the community, the benefits of CLC can be seen from the overall improvement of lives and the level of satisfaction of the youth and adult learners, and other members of the community in meeting their felt needs and demands. From the government side, the benefit is delivering appropriate and quality services to the needy community in an integrated manner, at the right time, and place.

To achieve these benefits it needs fully qualified, motivated and empowered ALE teachers and educators who are capable to help learners in the following ways:

- Achieving literacy. In addition to reading, writing and arithmetic, their financial and digital skills also need to be strengthened;
- Developing and improving their technical capacities for generating income and boosting their livelihoods, youth employment, and income-generating activities;
- Achieving lifestyle changes such as improved hygiene, nutrition, practice of immunization, family planning, among others, but also concern for the environment and the use of reduced resources;
- Ensuring civic education is part of political processes and decision-making at governance levels;
- Realising women's empowerment and allowing their full participation in individual, community and social developments.

In order to make informed decision on whether the ALE services are being implemented in the required manner and quality, supportive supervision and monitoring is needed combined with the relevant pre-service, in-service and continuing training of adult teachers and educators, trainers and facilitators. This means that the professionalisation of adult educators must go hand in hand with capacity building of managers from different sectors and organisations, and this is based on the recognition of ALE as a profession with its own standards and norms—as a strategic dimension for planning, design and implementation for ALE, and for supporting training and learning initiatives at the CLCs.

Recommendations for the way forward

Related to these actions and activities from government, non-governmental institutions and academia came to a number of conclusions and recommendations through various discussion forums and presentations during the sub-regional conference, which are crucial for the implementation of ALE in East/Horn of Africa.

- Professionalisation being imperative, a foundation and useful for policy, funding, advocacy and quality improvement for ALE programmes.
- They agreed on teaching in ALE should be further professionalized as a collaborative endeavour where teachers are recognized for their work as knowledge producers and key figures in educational and social transformation.
- Participation strategies and quality of services to attract more learners are to be improved. Data on ALE will be collected in order to establish a database for supporting the design of curricula and policy-making.
- Public recognition of ALE service potentials must be ensured for outcomes such as certificates, credit points, etc., received by ALE participants and graduates.
- They underlined that enacting ALE policy demands agreements on national goals and priorities, cooperation between different stakeholders, including ministries, governmental and non-governmental organizations, academia, providers, business entities and learners. The participants also committed to making sure that political and government leaders from the grassroots to the national level are engaged in the development of ALE.
- Funding shall be increased, e.g., by reviewing the distributions of national budgets. To gain stakeholders' support for this, strategies have to be developed to prioritise ALE funding by showing the benefits of ALE.

How far have we reached?

After more than a year it is good to review how far the countries have reached in the implementation of the recommendations from the CONFINTEA follow-up conference. It is useful to mention that the journey towards professionalism in ALE in the East African region has progressed well and the regional Curriculum globALE (CG) Master training programme has been conducted in 2023.

The CG, developed by UIL, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, DVV International, German Institute for Adult Education and International Council for Adult Education is the first comprehensive framework of competencies and practical tools for policy and practice towards the professionalisation of ALE, which is designed to train adult educators and in use in a number of countries around the globe. The learning outcomes defined in the curriculum comprehensively represents those competences which adult educators should possess, regardless of their geographical, institutional, or domain-specific context they work.

The training played a pivotal role in driving the path to professionalization and influence the realisation of MFA recommendations in the region. Five master trainers from key ALE training and government institutions of respective countries discussed key aspects of ALE like the broader concepts, stakeholders and the funding structure of ALE, the learning theories and principles, engaged in more context specific discussions on perceptions of communication, group dynamics and effective teaching methods and learned about curriculum development, planning and delivery, and evaluation of training. After participating in a five-module cycle and completing a final practical exam, candidates were certified as CG Master Trainers in December 2023.

To promote the importance of CG for the professionalization of ALE and the follow-up of MFA in the region, DVV International has involved leading experts in the CG trainings who are now certified master trainers. Among them are experts from the Institute of Adult Education in Tanzania, from the training institution on social and community development in Uganda as well as Makerere University, the University of Bahir Dar in Ethiopia and experts from the responsible Ministry of respective countries.

These master trainers have agreed on the role to provide guidance and capacities in applying the concept of CG in their respective countries to improve adult educators' training at all levels of implementation to secure quality services at the CLC and moreover, to work on standards for the qualification of adult educators that are aligned with the specific and local context of the country. At the same time, the master trainers understand their role as a motor to drive discussions around the non-formal National Qualification Framework and related aspects as assessments and competence frameworks. In Tanzania, the call for a dedicated professional cadre of adult educators is growing louder, while in Uganda comprehensive assessment has been conducted to find entry points for a new policy that covers the outcomes and impact of ALE comprehensively and ensures the results shall fuel the development of a qualification framework.

Overall, the CG master trainers have been equipped with the necessary knowledge and competencies to play a key role in improving training structures and quality for adult educators. In addition to this, they can further play a leading role in advocating for and implementing enabling environment, governance and funding structures for ALE that promote inclusive, equitable, and qualitative ALE. They are a role model and driver for change.

References

- Central Statistical Agency (CSA). (2022). Dar es Salaam. [National Bureau of Statistics - Tanzania in Figures 2022 \(nbs.go.tz\)](https://nbs.go.tz)
- Central Statistical Agency (CSA). (2017). Addis Ababa. [CSA \(Central Statistics Agency\) Ethiopia data from 2016/17, 2017/18](#)
- DVV International. (2021). *Curriculum GlobALE*. [DVV International: Curriculum globALE](#)
- UNESCO. (2022a). *CONFINTEA VII Marrakech Framework for Action Harnessing the transformational power of Adult Learning and Education*. <https://www.uil.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2022/06/FINAL%20MarrakechFrameworkForActionEN.pdf#fr>
- UNESCO. (2022b). *CONFINTEA VII Regional Preparatory Conference for Africa: priorities, challenges and recommendations*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380782>

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

Folk High Schools and Active Citizenship in Europe.

Results from a survey for the Erasmus+ Promociti project

Mats Ehn | mats.ehn@folkbildning.net

Jonathan Korsar | Jonathan.korsar@farnebo.se



Mats Ehn is a senior folk high school teacher and one of the founders of Färnebo folk high school, a folk high school run by organizations within the Swedish environmental and international solidarity movements. He has also been working as international secretary for the Swedish folk high schools and in that role participated in the boards of ICAE and the Nordic Folk high school council.



Jonathan Korsar is a teacher in Färnebo Folk High school. His background is also as an active citizen in movements for common welfare, participatory democracy and decentralization. In the last few years he has been involved with solar energy together with residents in Österfärnebo and the surrounding area. He teaches in the second chance program, as well as courses that focuses specifically on citizen journalism, sustainable development and community organizing.

Introduction

The Promociti project explores and develops ways in which folk high schools and similar adult education institutions can provide resources and act as focus points for civic engagement, locally, nationally, and internationally. The project involves folk high schools from Austria and Sweden and associations of folk high schools and adult education in Spain, Poland, Austria and Germany. The first step in the project is this qualitative study.

To provide a basis for further work on methodological development, we conducted an interview study in the spring and summer of 2022 on the schools' work on active citizenship. A common interview guide aimed at principals or leading representatives of the schools was developed in a dialogue between Färnebo Folkhögskola and the other project partners.

The project managers in each country identified five relevant schools to interview and conducted interviews with the head teachers of these schools. The interview guide asked for background information about the school, and the context in which the school is located. The informants were asked to reflect on successful approaches and working methods, difficulties and challenges, and the extent to which it would be possible for others to use the same methods and approaches.

The transcribed interview responses were sent to Färnebo for collation and analysis. The focus of the analysis is on the schools' different understandings of active citizenship and the school's role in this. Furthermore, what obstacles and challenges do they identify to better work for civic engagement? Emphasis is placed on identifying the successful strategies, approaches, and methods used by the schools.

Adult education and Active Citizenship

The Promociti project aims to develop the work of folk high schools on active citizenship. In this context, it is important to emphasize that the link between adult education and active citizenship is strongly supported by international agreements and policies.

In June 2022, UNESCO organized the global adult education conference CONFINTEA VII. The final document, the Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA), recognizes learning for active citizenship as one of the three main areas of adult education. The Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 5), focusing on active citizenship and civic education, was produced for the conference. This report highlights the links between adult learning, active citizenship on a humanistic basis, and the major societal challenges we face globally, nationally, and locally. These include global warming, migration, armed conflict, disrespect for human rights, and inequality. Despite these strong links, the report notes that the adult learning sector is seriously underfunded.

Similarly, the European Commission in its "Council Resolution on a New European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030" highlights the link between adult learning, active citizenship, and community learning. Adult learning is highlighted as particularly important to meet the transition to a low-carbon economy and the digital transformation of society. It is also seen as a key component of gender equality and intergroup solidarity, as well as of the EU's fundamental democratic values.

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) brings together European civil society organizations working in the field of adult education. The EAEA's "Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century: The Power and Joy of Learning" highlights active citizenship as something that should permeate all adult learning. In particular, it highlights the role of adult learning in providing positive solutions to societal challenges, as well as its importance in sustaining and developing a strong civil society.

Contexts of participating schools

The concept of folk high schools can be interpreted in many different ways. In this context, we do not pursue this discussion further. However, for the understanding of this report, it is important to know something about the similarities and differences between the organizations and folk high schools that participate.

ARGE Bildungshäuser Österreich and Verband der Bildungszentren im ländlichen Raum e.V. (VBLR) are umbrella organizations for education centers located in rural areas in Austria and Germany. Ogólnopolska Sieć Uniwersytetów Ludowych (OSUL) is a newly established umbrella organization for a growing folk high school movement in Poland. Federació d'Associacions Culturals i Educatives de Persones Adultes (FACEPA) is a federation of different organizations working with adult learning in Catalonia and Färnebo folkhögskola is one of 155 folk high schools in Sweden.

What they have in common is that all participating organizations and schools work to promote active citizenship, but they do so in different ways and with a variety of activities. For some schools, the local area is the central arena for the work on active citizenship, while others also have a national and global focus.

The financial conditions are very different. Folk high schools in Sweden have continuous public funding, while organizations in other countries are more dependent on generating their income through projects and participation fees.

The organizations are anchored in civil society but the links to the local level are different. All schools approach the opportunities and challenges of digitization in their work on active citizenship, but in different ways and with different attitudes.

The importance of volunteers and the approach to volunteering in implementing activities and driving the school's work on active citizenship varies.

All schools are grappling with issues of how to respond to threats from right-wing extremism, xenophobia, and conspiracy thinking.

Perspectives on Active Citizenship

In this section, we highlight some different perspectives on active citizenship that were highlighted by school leaders and other school representatives in our survey. These perspectives do not provide an unambiguous definition of what active citizenship is and what folk high schools should do to promote it, but rather point to several working definitions that allow the schools in this study to orient themselves and make different choices related to their activities.

1. Active citizenship as a function of competence

Several school representatives see active citizenship as dependent on certain skills, general capacity development, or, in other words, as dependent on citizens acquiring certain competencies. The various courses and other activities offered by the schools allow participants to acquire and practice these competencies.

2. Active citizenship as voluntary engagement

Another perspective highlighted by several school leaders is active citizenship as all the civic engagement and activities citizens participate in between elections to influence their own life situation, and as part of this the society in which they live. Here, it is often emphasized that active citizenship tends to take the form of volunteering or voluntary work in associations and movements, or in other more local initiatives to improve and develop life in different ways. The folk high schools in the survey are all active in one way or another in supporting local, regional, national and/or international associations and movements.

3. Active citizenship as an issue of justice

Many school representatives also highlight the importance of an equity perspective for active citizenship. For example, it may be that some schools problematize that they don't reach out very much to less vulnerable groups in society. On the other hand, many schools have a primary focus on organizing courses and activities that help more vulnerable groups to become active citizens. Related to questions of justice is of course the human rights perspective, an ethical perspective that proclaims everybody equal in terms of their humanity and in line with this distributes rights and duties to everyone in relation to the democratic project.

4. Active citizenship concerning parliamentary politics

At the same time, active citizenship is of course also perceived as linked to local, regional, and national elections. This is also why several schools are actively working on facilitating pre-election discussions and other topical discussions linked to the policies handled by elected representatives at different levels of society. Political institutions are also often important financially for the work of folk high schools, and they have often, though not always, mandated folk high schools to support active citizenship locally, in a region or nationally.

5. Active citizenship as a function of subsidiarity

Several school representatives highlight that they perceive the principle of subsidiarity – or in other words the decentralization of all decisions that can be decentralized to as low, and participatory, a level as possible – as very important in society for the public to be able to exercise active citizenship.

6. Active citizenship and cultural work

Cultural work and art have the potential to be an important resource and give people tools for communication and community. It stands out as an important aspect of the work folk high schools do to contribute to active citizenship.

7. Active citizenship in the economic sphere

The economic sphere where we meet as professionals, workers, colleagues, managers and employees etc. is also a sphere where active citizenship can be both present and absent. However, several folk high schools have been involved in citizens' groups' endeavors in the economic sphere, for example in setting up wind energy cooperatives, local cafés that can serve as meeting places in rural areas, tourism initiatives that have provided local jobs, as well as activities together with trade unions or other actors working for a democratic working life.

8. Active citizenship and internationalism

Finally, there is this perspective on active citizenship as something that by its very nature needs to traverse national borders. For example, there is the striving to meet across national borders and learn to build community between people in different countries. There is also the internationalist call for sustainable development for all, in all nations, and the will to be part of a movement able to achieve this in the coming decades.

Challenges and Dilemmas

Folk high schools that want to develop their work on active citizenship face challenges and dilemmas. This study identifies several issues that schools need to address.

1. Lack of resources and lack of continuous funding

A consistent challenge faced by schools is the lack of continuous funding for active citizenship work, which makes it very vulnerable. This lack of core funding means that schools must spend a lot of time chasing project funding rather than on their activities. However, project funding risks lead to the cessation of activities when project funding runs out. It can also be difficult to link existing needs with available project funding. Participation fees are not a sustainable source of income for financing active citizenship work.

2. Lack of recognition

In several countries, folk high schools and civil society adult education organizations are not recognized as fully-fledged institutions within the education system by the authorities. The potential of adult education to promote active citizenship is therefore not fully exploited.

3. Polarization, hatred, conspiracy thinking and anti-democratic movements

Almost all schools testify that they are struggling with how to deal with populist, anti-scientific and undemocratic currents. In an era of fake news, conspiracy thinking and racism, how can we be an inclusive force that counters destructive polarization? How do you get people to overcome fear and dare to meet others in respectful dialogue? Where do you draw the line on what is unacceptable?

4. Lack of commitment and passivity

Several schools feel that there is a declining interest in participating in volunteering and community activities outside the family. During the covid pandemic, these trends have been greatly reinforced, routines have been broken and they may be difficult to re-establish. It is pointed out that young people do not feel they are being listened to or represented and this is a threat to our democratic culture. A major challenge is to find new ways of working that welcome the younger generation. The willingness of our organizations to change needs to be strengthened and ways of co-creation and decentralized decision-making found.

5. Need for skills development, staffing and networking

It is sometimes difficult for staff to have the time to develop their skills in working on active citizenship and it can also be difficult to have enough staff to meet the needs of different partners. Networking is very important for the development of activities, but it is also very resource-intensive. There is a need to create long-term collaborations and projects with partners, but it is difficult to find the human resources for this.

6. The balance between paid and unpaid work

Folk high schools and adult education organizations are embedded in civil society structures where unpaid volunteering is a central component. This can create friction between volunteers and staff, with volunteers feeling exploited and staff experiencing an unreasonable workload.

7. Projecting and New Public Management

Funders are increasingly demanding documentation, reporting and measurability to grant funds for active citizenship work. There is a lack of understanding among public authorities that educational processes leading to personal development and civic engagement are complex processes that cannot be measured in the short term.

The tendency to move from core funding to project funding reduces our freedom to develop our activities, leads to competition and sometimes even conflicts with other organizations and institutions. The focus shifts from doing good work to writing good proposals.

8. Digitalization

The digital divide has a major impact on our participants. It is as much about having access to digital tools as it is about knowing how to use them. This is a major problem for many older people. The enforced isolation during the pandemic has made it necessary to rethink how digital and hybrid activities can develop the work on active citizenship.

9. Patriarchal structures

In many places, there are deeply rooted authoritarian and patriarchal structures when it comes to leadership. Folk high schools can play a major role in challenging these by supporting women's organizations and participation.

Successful approaches

In our survey, we asked the school leaders what they do and how they work to promote active citizenship in their institutions and their communities. From the answers we have distilled 10 successful approaches that we think others can learn from. For details consult the full report.

1. Identify and serve the needs of citizens

To effectively support active citizenship, folk high schools need to continuously identify the needs of citizens in their area of operation and design activities that respond to these needs. What is needed is to be able to balance the continuity of collaborations on the one hand, and responsiveness to new goals that emerge as society, communities, and social movements develop on the other.

2. Identify your area of activity and engage in networks

A prerequisite for success in listening to needs and designing appropriate activities to meet them is presence and participation in relevant networks. It is therefore important to identify the school's area of activity and relevant networks. They can be local, regional, national, or even global. The area of activity can also be thematic. Long-term commitment within networks is key to building trust.

3. Let your school be a meeting place

Schools have the potential not only to serve as organizers of courses or similar activities. They can also become meeting places where civic groups have their meetings. Courses and other activities should also be designed to facilitate meetings between different groups in society.

4. Be visible leaders and facilitators for active citizenship

To function as a facilitator and multiplier of active citizenship schools and their staff need to be visible in the public sphere. They need to focus efforts on communication besides only arranging courses.

5. The whole school should be on board

Working to promote active citizenship should involve everybody at the school, from teachers and course participants to administrative and service staff. This way the school can develop a participatory and democratic culture promoting active citizenship.

6. Let active citizenship permeate all your activities

Learning for active citizenship does not have to be specific activities. It can permeate all school activities as an aspect of the activity being carried out, as an approach of school staff, and as part of the design of school environments. In this way, crafts courses, vocational training, language courses or various aesthetic activities can be part of the school's work on active citizenship.

7. Provide participants with the necessary tools for active citizenship

To serve society through active citizenship, one needs an ethical compass, personal qualities, and practical skills. Folk high schools have great potential to contribute to the development of these capacities. This can include working in groups, developing leadership, supporting volunteering, learning about specific issues, etc.

8. Be good listeners and creative didactic designers

Working with adult learning and active citizenship means constantly listening to the needs of participants and partners and adapting content and methods accordingly. Learning can take place in many different ways and in many different contexts and settings. Digitalization offers many new opportunities and challenges.

9. Have steering documents that support your work

Many schools have it as a founding principle to support learning and development for the citizens of their area or for citizens more broadly. When this is written in the statutes or bylaws of the school it gives legitimacy to all such work being carried out in the school.

10. Lobby for adult education and active citizenship

Despite the support for adult learning and the link to active citizenship in international agreements, the adult learning sector is severely underfunded. It is therefore important to demonstrate to policymakers that the defense and development of democracy depend on active and engaged citizens who understand the value of human rights and that adult education organizations have unique competence in developing learning for active citizenship. It is also important to highlight the potential of adult learning for local development.

Individual folk high schools can be in continuous contact with local decision-makers and demonstrate the importance of school activities for the local community. To influence the long-term funding conditions, the umbrella organizations of folk high schools, such as VBLR, OSUL, ARGE, and FSO (the Swedish umbrella for all folk high schools), need to be proactive at the national level in demonstrating the needs that schools can meet in terms of democratic participation, working life, health, and social welfare and that continuous and sufficient funding is needed for this. In lobbying, cooperation with other civil society organizations should be sought.

Link to the full report

<https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/resource-centre/content/folk-high-schools-and-active-citizenship-europe-survey-erasmus-promociti>

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

The Importance of Informal Learning for Sustainable Development

Julia Hufnagl | julia.hufnagl@uni-bamberg.de



Julia Hufnagl is a research associate at the Professorship of Business Education at the University of Bamberg. Her research interests are sustainability in corporate education and training, discrimination processes in vocational education and training (VET), and intersectional educational disadvantage. She studied at Skagit Valley College (USA) and the Universities of Göttingen (Germany), Nuremberg (Germany) and Graz (Austria). After her training as a bank clerk, she gained practical experience at the Burlington Chamber of Commerce (USA) and in various companies in Germany. In recent years, she has held positions at the Universities of Göttingen, Nuremberg, Bamberg and Nijmegen (Netherlands) and at the Leibniz Institute for Educational Trajectories (Germany). Interdisciplinary cooperation and science communication are a personal concern of hers.

Informal learning plays a crucial role in sustainable development by fostering awareness, empowerment, and action in a problem-oriented manner. As questions of sustainability are complex and multifaceted, associated learning processes need to take place in various forms (formally, non-formally and informally) and different contexts. The informal sector, where learning takes place "on-the-go", should be given greater consideration here, as education for sustainable development has so far been strongly discussed in the school context and other formal environments, but less is said about how education for sustainable development can take place informally.

Informal learning prevents acquired knowledge from becoming dead knowledge – knowledge that is no longer relevant, useful, or applicable in a given context or timeframe (Vollmer et al., 2015, p. 164). Instead, informal learning contributes to the promotion of self-efficacy, as it enables individuals to recognise and use their skills in concrete situations (Vollmer et al., 2015, p. 172). This can bring about actual behavioural change, as it is not just about obtaining a certificate. Furthermore, organisational competences are created (Brodowski, 2009, p. 64, 70). They are essential for driving performance, fostering innovation, adapting to change, and sustaining long-term success in dynamic environments. This article emphasises the importance of informal learning in addition to formal education. It explores the significance of informal learning, the keys to its success, and the diverse contexts in which it thrives. This exploration addresses fundamental questions about informal learning, such as why it matters, how it can flourish, where it occurs, and how it can be integrated into formal educational structures. The multifaceted impact of informal learning on shaping a sustainable future is also highlighted.

The aim of this article is therefore to illustrate the significance of informal learning for sustainable development. The following questions are answered: Why is informal learning important for sustainable development? How can it succeed? In which contexts can it take place? To what extent is its integration into formal educational institutions important for sustainable development?

Why is informal learning important for sustainable development?

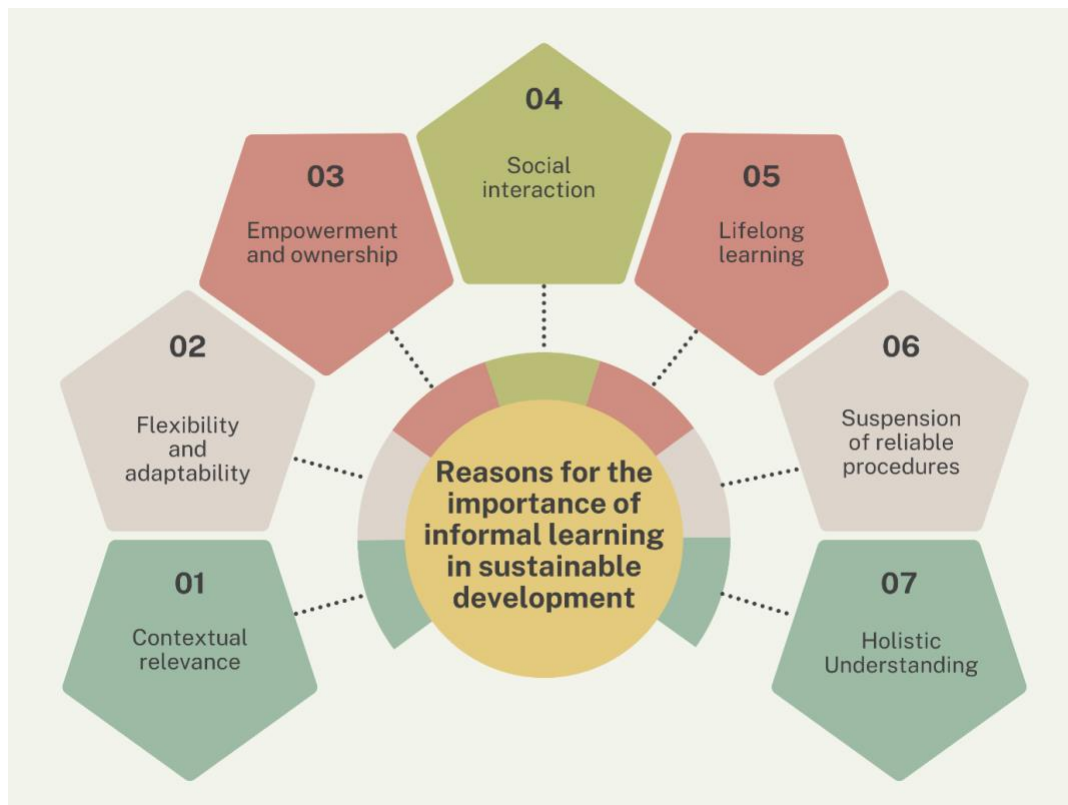


Figure 1: Reasons for the importance of informal learning in sustainable development (author's illustration).

- 01) **Contextual Relevance:** Informal learning often occurs unintentionally in real-life contexts, allowing individuals to understand sustainability issues within their local environments. It may even be incidental. This contextual relevance fosters a deeper understanding and a more immediate connection to sustainability issues, which are embedded in complex real-life settings. This might raise awareness to problematic areas of sustainable development (Vollmer et al., 2015, p. 172). Learning is thereby problem orientated. Learning environments in which such concrete experiences with sustainability can be made are necessary to understand the complex issue of sustainability.
- 02) **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Informal learning is flexible and adaptable to different learning styles and preferences. This flexibility enables individuals to engage with sustainable development concepts in ways that are most effective for them, whether through hands-on experiences, peer-to-peer interactions, or self-directed exploration. Flexible learning is becoming increasingly important because of an increased individualisation and dynamisation of social relationships (Tully & Krok, 2009, p. 184). Flexible learning also makes lifelong learning easier (see also 05), as it can be adapted to individual life circumstances.
- 03) **Empowerment and Ownership:** Informal learning empowers individuals to take ownership of their learning journey. This is particularly relevant in times when binding standards and structures are being dismantled (Tully & Krok, 2009, p. 184). When people actively seek out information about sustainable development issues that are relevant to them, they become more engaged and motivated to make positive changes in their communities (see also 01) and personal lives. The high degree of autonomy and self-governance stands in contrast to the normativity and superiority that sometimes prevail in formal education in the context of education for sustainable development. It instead promotes commitment to a sustainable future, by encouraging learners to think about how they themselves (want to) shape society.
- 04) **Social Interaction:** Social interaction is very present in informal settings, while social skills are often regarded as secondary to content in formal education (Brodowski, 2009, p. 63). Informal learning often involves interactions with a diverse range of people, including friends, family members, colleagues, and community members. These interactions expose individuals to different perspectives and experiences, enriching their understanding of sustainability and fostering collaboration and cooperation towards common goals. Lifelong learning is not possible without this social component (Brodowski, 2009, p. 62) (see also 05).
- 05) **Lifelong Learning:** Sustainable development is an ongoing process that requires continuous learning and adaptation to changing circumstances. Informal learning encourages lifelong learning habits by promoting curiosity, exploration, and reflection, ensuring that individuals remain informed and engaged in sustainability efforts over time (see also 03). Therefore, knowledge is continuously activated and prevented from becoming dormant knowledge (Vollmer et al., 2015, p. 164). Lifelong learning has gained importance in recent years due to globalisation trends and is supported by education policy makers, such as UNESCO (e.g., UIL, 2022).
- 06) **Suspension of Reliable Procedures:** The supposed suspension of reliable procedures is another reason why the importance of informal learning is growing (Tully & Krok, 2009, p. 184). A focus on sustainable development necessitates questioning familiar structures and procedures. For example, familiar ways of doing business need to be scrutinised. Informal learning environments often encourage experimentation and creativity, which are essential for finding innovative solutions to sustainability challenges. By fostering a culture of experimentation and risk-taking, informal learning can inspire individuals to develop novel approaches to sustainability issues.

07) **Holistic Understanding:** Informal learning often encourages a holistic understanding of sustainable development by integrating various perspectives, including ecological, economic, and social dimensions (see also 04). Through informal channels like storytelling, discussions with peers, or community gatherings, individuals can gain a comprehensive view of sustainability and its interconnectedness with different aspects of life. For example, participants in partnerships between municipalities from different countries can learn from each other and reflect on their own perspectives on sustainable development. In this way, informal learning can contribute to a global understanding of sustainability. It helps to take account of different experiences and perspectives and to learn from each other (Devers-Kanoglu, 2007).

How can Informal Learning Succeed?

Informal learning is particularly effective when environments are problematic, varied and characterised by uncertainties. In such situations in particular, individuals have the opportunity to develop and expand their competences (Vollmer et al., 2015, p. 164f.). As in 'real life', there is often no right or wrong solution in such situations, no black or white. Instead, the learning experience is entirely open-ended and different outcomes are possible. In complex and uncertain environments, informal learning provides individuals with the opportunity to develop competencies that are relevant for a sustainable future and life skills.

Plus, throughout learning processes, reflecting on one's own actions and those of others is particularly important for sustainable development (Vollmer, Kuhlmeier & Vollmers, 2015, p. 165). After all, sustainable development is always about balancing different needs and perspectives in complex situations. For example, social concerns can conflict with ecological concerns, or interests in the Global North and Global South can differ. Emotional distress and crises can serve as catalysts for change, prompting a re-evaluation of perspectives and actions. Through emotional distress, discussions can be stimulated, which in turn can have a learning effect. Informal spaces, free from inhibitive authority dynamics, facilitate those discussions and reflections on sustainability. They promote better learning outcomes through equal participation and consideration of diverse viewpoints. Informal spaces in which discussions and reflections on sustainability issues can take place make an important contribution to the success of informal learning (Vollmer et al., 2015, p. 165). Informal spaces, which provide environments conducive to self-directed exploration, peer interaction, and experiential learning, can be community centres, public libraries, museums, outdoor settings, online communities, social media and informal workplaces. They have the advantage that they usually cause hardly any inhibition threshold that would otherwise be associated with a relationship of authority. This means that individual alternatives for action can be discussed and conflicts of values can be debated in the context of sustainability. This often leads to better learning because there is no fear of being lectured to and subjectively relevant perspectives on meaning can be reflected on as equals (Brodowski, 2009, p. 64).

However, challenges arise in cross-cultural cooperation, which can be exacerbated by language barriers and unequal power dynamics. Furthermore, the significance of informal learning in comparison to formal education is unclear, requiring a balanced approach and structural modifications to encourage sustainability competences. A good balance between formal and informal education is needed as one form alone is not enough to promote sustainable design skills (Brodowski, 2009, p. 71; Vollmer et al., 2015, p. 163). Furthermore, it should not be neglected that repetition is necessary for long-term learning success (Tibus & Glaser, 2009, p. 230). Such structured repetition and planning of the learning process is easier to achieve in formal learning environments but can also be achieved in informal contexts where regular meetings are organised in the respective contexts (see below for contexts where informal learning happens).

To this end, framework conditions and structural changes must be created to enable spaces for informal learning (Brodowski, 2009, p. 71). Informal learning can take place in a wide range of informal spaces, both physical and virtual, that encourage curiosity, exploration, collaboration, and self-directed learning. Therefore, the number of identified spaces in which informal learning takes place could increase significantly. To address exclusionary

structures and promote sustainability and equality in educational institutions, a 'whole institution approach' is recommended in those spaces. However, there is a research deficit for non-formal forms of learning to date (Brodowski, 2009, p. 62). Plus, some countries, Germany for instance, largely neglect informal education (Wohlers, 2009, p. 127).

In Which Contexts Can Informal Learning Take Place?

Informal learning can occur in a variety of contexts. Firstly, it can take place via the internet. Free access to knowledge, for example via platforms such as Wikipedia and YouTube, can contribute to education and thus also makes understanding complex sustainability issues possible. Another possibility for informal learning is via mass media such as television (Tibus & Glaser, 2009, p. 235). Television programmes can have an influence on people (Tibus & Glaser, 2009, p. 230) and can therefore stimulate discussions on sustainable development. Regular conversations with family and friends based on mass media consumption can help anchor what has been learned in everyday life, as repetition is necessary for long-term learning success (Tibus & Glaser, 2009, p. 233).

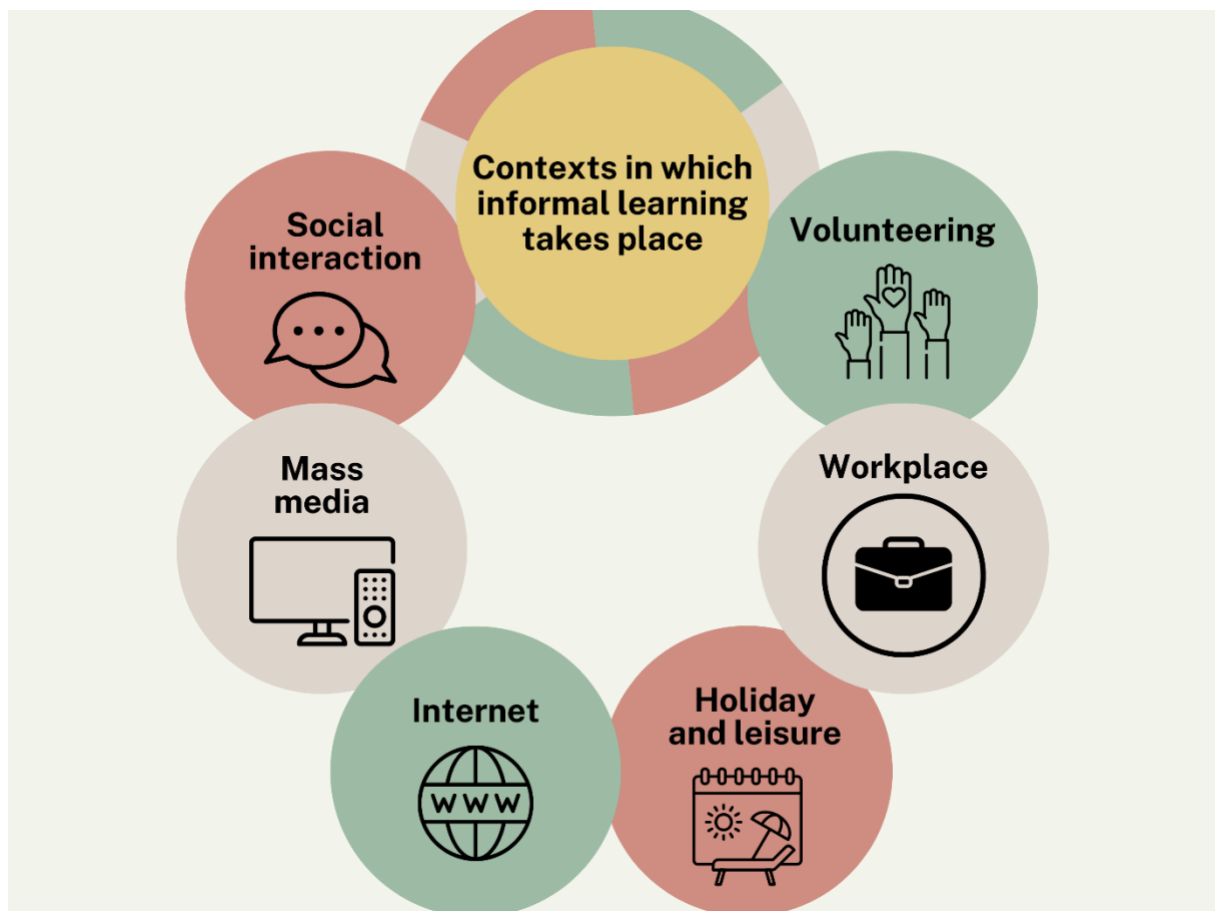


Figure 2: Contexts in which informal learning takes place (author's illustration).

Another context for informal learning can be voluntary participation in projects. Volunteering in projects provides individuals with direct, hands-on experience in tackling real-world challenges. Through active participation in activities such as community clean-ups, conservation projects, or humanitarian aid efforts, volunteers learn practical skills, problem-solving techniques, and gain insights into the issues being addressed. Here, there is also potential for constant repetition and long-term anchoring. Another opportunity for informal learning processes to take place is on holiday: leisure facilities, which are particularly popular on holiday, can

provide the ideal space for informal learning in relation to sustainable development. For example, educational programmes have already been successfully offered in leisure parks (Wohlers, 2009, pp. 122, 127). These facilities can promote a better understanding of socio-ecological relationships. They also have the advantage that not only the visitors, but usually also the employees of the facilities, learn informally by engaging with the topic (Wohlers, 2009, p. 126).

Furthermore, informal learning frequently happens in the workplace through on-the-job training, where employees learn by performing tasks, observing colleagues, and receiving feedback. This hands-on approach allows for practical skill development and knowledge acquisition in real work situations. Further ways of how informal learning occurs in organisations are: mentorship and coaching relationships; informal communities of practice around shared interests, expertise, or job roles; social learning networks within the workplace; job rotation and cross-training programs; and informal learning spaces.

Conclusion

In summary, it is evident that informal learning can lead to innovation and a holistic understanding of ecological, economic, and social dimensions. Social aspects are an important factor for informal learning, as interaction with others helps to reflect on what triggers informal learning processes.

To succeed in informal learning, it is important to have a conducive environment that is characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and emotional engagement. These spaces foster the development of competencies and life skills. However, challenges still exist, particularly in cross-cultural contexts, emphasising the necessity for fair frameworks and resources. Furthermore, it appears that the interlinking of informal and formal learning is crucial for a holistic and long-term impact on sustainable development.

Informal learning thrives in various domains, ranging from digital platforms to leisure facilities, workplace settings to voluntary projects. Each setting provides unique opportunities for engagement and knowledge acquisition, highlighting the interplay between social dynamics and learning outcomes.

Essentially, informal learning can be a powerful catalyst for sustainable development, promoting adaptability, empowerment, and community-driven action. By utilizing the transformative potential of informal learning in various contexts, we can pave the way towards a more sustainable and equitable future.

References

- Brodowski, M. (2009). Kompetenzerwerb durch informelles - kooperativ/kollektives Lernen - Aspekte zum Zusammenhang beider Lernformen im Rahmen der UN-Dekade BNE. In M. Brodowski, U. Devers-Kanoglu, B. Overwien, M. Rohs, S. Salinger & M. Walser (Eds.), *Informelles Lernen und Bildung für eine nachhaltige Entwicklung: Beiträge aus Theorie und Praxis* (pp. 62–74). Verlag Barbara Budrich.
- Tibus, M. & Glaser, M. (2009). Informelles Lernen mit Massenmedien. In M. Brodowski, U. Devers-Kanoglu, B. Overwien, M. Rohs, S. Salinger & M. Walser (Eds.), *Informelles Lernen und Bildung für eine nachhaltige Entwicklung: Beiträge aus Theorie und Praxis* (pp. 227–236). Verlag Barbara Budrich.
- Tully, C. J. & Krok, I. (2009). Nachhaltiger Konsum als informeller Lerngegenstand im Jugendalltag. In M. Brodowski, U. Devers-Kanoglu, B. Overwien, M. Rohs, S. Salinger & M. Walser (Eds.), *Informelles Lernen und Bildung für eine nachhaltige Entwicklung: Beiträge aus Theorie und Praxis* (pp. 181–189). Verlag Barbara Budrich.
- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). (2022). *Making lifelong learning a reality: A handbook*. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg, Germany.

Vollmer, T., Kuhlmeier, W. & Vollmers, B. (2015). Der Stellenwert des informellen Lernens im Kontext der 'Beruflichen Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung' (BBnE). In G. Niedermair (Eds.), *Informelles Lernen: Annäherungen, Problemlagen, Forschungs-befunde* (pp. 159–177). Trauner Verlag.

Wohlers, L. (2009). Informelle Umweltbildung in Urlaub und Freizeit. In M. Brodowski, U. Devers-Kanoglu, B. Overwien, M. Rohs, S. Salinger & M. Walser (Eds.), *Informelles Lernen und Bildung für eine nachhaltige Entwicklung: Beiträge aus Theorie und Praxis* (pp. 122–128). Verlag Barbara Budrich.

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

Lifelong ESD in an Aging Society for 2050

Hideki Maruyama | hideki@sophia.ac.jp



Hideki Maruyama, a professor at the Faculty of Global Studies at Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan, has studied lifelong learning and education for sustainable development (ESD). He previously served as a science teacher in the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers programme and made significant contributions to UNESCO and OECD education projects at the National Institute for Education Policy Research (NIER). He has also been an advisor for non-formal education and literacy projects at the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). He currently leads education programmes such as the "Sophia Program for Sustainable Futures: SPSF" and "Field Study for Sustainability" at the university.

Introduction

Contemporary Japan faces a confluence of demographic challenges. The nation is experiencing a rapidly aging population alongside a persistently declining birthrate. This trend results in a shrinking youth cohort, effectively rendering children and young adults a numerical minority within the broader social landscape. Given this demographic shift, the traditional model of education confined solely to the classroom environment may no longer be sufficient to cultivate a sustainable future. Alternative educational pathways and lifelong learning initiatives become increasingly crucial to ensure the equitable distribution of knowledge, skills and commitment across age groups. Furthermore, the current system of social rule such as legal, political and economic frameworks designed primarily by adults presents an obstacle for youth engagement. The principle of majority rule often proves ineffective in amplifying the voices of this minority group, leading to a sense of disenfranchisement and a diminished perception of the value of their contributions to society. The prevailing cultural emphasis on respect for elders within Japanese society further reinforces this trend. This veneration can inadvertently create a power imbalance that hinders youth participation in shaping the future of their society. This paper, therefore, describes Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as lifelong learning for adults to reflect and restructure "business as usual: BAU", has shaped the present society, for a sustainable future.

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) from 2005 to 2014 witnessed a significant expansion of ESD practices within Japanese school education. However, has it revolutionarily transformed the system of Japanese society? The answer to that question is not quite yes. The 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and subsequent nuclear disaster serve as an example. This event demonstrably heightened public awareness regarding disaster prevention and catalyzed citizen science initiatives such as independent radiation level measurements. Nevertheless, these developments fell short of instigating a systemic shift within

the educational or social spheres. The persistence of BAU approaches underscores the inherent complexity of social factors that defy simplistic, linear projections of a sustainable future from the existing situation. Therefore, a more effective approach to lifelong learning necessitates embracing the inherent complexity of the future in its unpredictable nature, an aspect that remains fundamentally unaddressed within BAU paradigms. This paper posits that a future-oriented ESD framework (ESD 3.0) should transcend the limitations of mere educational borrowing (ESD 1.0) and reductionist approach (ESD 2.0).

ESD as Lifelong Learning

Contextualised Learning

The pursuit of a sustainable future necessitates an educational paradigm shift. As Sterling (2013) aptly argues, education should not aim solely at acclimating learners to existing systems or BAU, but rather empowering them to participate in their transformation. In this context, it becomes crucial to acknowledge the inherent complexity of both the present and the future. ESD, therefore, cannot be conceived of as a linear pursuit towards a predetermined sustainable future. Instead, it must embrace and navigate the complexities that characterize both the current state and the unpredictable nature of future possibilities.

The prevailing characteristics of Japanese school curricula presents a significant challenge for fostering ESD. As mandated learning objectives, standardized content delivery through textbooks, and the expectation of consistent outcomes, the school system fosters a rote learning approach. Many adults who have experienced such schooling recall the methods and content in school for the act of correct "learning" or "studying, while excluding alternative acts. Scott & Gough (2003) provide a valuable lens through which to critically evaluate approaches to ESD. The first ESD approach, characterized as a "problem-solving" model, views environmental challenges as amenable to solutions through the application of appropriate scientific and technological advancements. The second approach, labeled as a "socio-political" perspective, emphasizes the historical context of environmental degradation and prioritizes addressing the social and political factors underpinning environmental issues. And the third approach, which acknowledges the inherent limitations of our current knowledge and tools for navigating the future, is of paramount importance for effective ESD. This third approach aligns with the principles of collaborative learning. This approach exhibits flexibility akin to non-formal educational/learning settings, emphasizes the significance of cultural practices and their associated cognitive activities, and prioritizes the co-construction of meaning and collaborative relationships. It emphasises a lifelong learning mindset, essential for navigating the inherent complexities of an unpredictable future.

Deeper ESD for Confronting Complexity

Bateson's (2000) learning typology differentiates between learning I (acquiring the "right" answer), learning II (understanding the context), and learning III (engaging in critical questioning and re-contextualization). By leveraging these frameworks, I posit that ESD can be more effectively conceptualized as a three-phased process, culminating in a heightened capacity to grasp the complexities of our real life. ESD 1.0 can be characterized as an additive approach, seeking to supplement existing educational systems with content and skills relevant to sustainability. The focus here remains on adapting learners to the prevailing system. ESD 2.0 represents a more systemic shift, aiming to reform educational structures in response to the challenges of sustainability. ESD 3.0, however, transcends these initial approaches, advocating for a fundamental transformation of educational paradigms. This phase prioritizes fostering learners' ability to navigate and comprehend the inherent complexities of the world around them. Each ESD can be presented as follows:

ESD 1.0: Learning the right answers

- Simple
- Good practice must work at other places. A routine manual helps to solve a problem set by someone else.

- *Action:* Beach cleaning as imitation

ESD 2.0: Learning the contexts

- Complicated
- The problem is reducible to each element. Adapting and reforming to change, analyzing best practices, updating and overcoming challenges
- *Action:* Organise environmental conservation seminars based on local needs and characteristics and call for action.

ESD 3.0: Reweaving contexts

- Complex
- The problem is unresolvable/ unpredictable/ unique. Learning as change, learning from the future, emphasizing indigenous wisdom, shifting dimensions, setting a different agenda, everyone is lifelong learners.
- *Action:* Even if it is not recognized as environmental preservation, it is seen as an emergent mechanism or system that changes the lifestyles of the people involved and themselves, and sometimes creates other options.

The early years of the United Nations Decade of ESD (2005-2014) were characterized by the dissemination of best practices through a primarily "transmissive" approach. This initial stage, which I designate as ESD 1.0, emphasized the acquisition of pre-defined solutions and positioned learners as passive recipients of information. This focus on replicating successful practices without critical contextualization limited the capacity for transformative learning. ESD 2.0 represents a shift towards embedding ESD principles within existing educational structures. This phase prioritizes system reform in response to emergent sustainability challenges. It entails deconstructing complex problems, identifying root causes, and promoting the sharing of effective practices and relevant research. Research efforts during this stage focus on analyzing the factors contributing to the success of these practices and improving their overall efficiency. This aligns with Bateson's (2000) notion of adapting to changing circumstances. However, a crucial limitation of both ESD 1.0 and 2.0 lies in their reliance on past experiences and events to inform the development of future skills. This retrospective approach fails to adequately address the inherent complexities of the future.

ESD 3.0 emerges in recognition of the inadequacy of traditional approaches when confronted with "wicked problems" characterized by their inherent complexity and lack of definitive solutions. This stage eschews the notion of deconstructing these problems into manageable components and instead prioritizes comprehending the intricate dynamics of the systems themselves. Learners in this phase actively engage as participants in grappling with the multifaceted nature of real-world challenges, acknowledging the absence of predetermined answers due to the inherent uncertainties surrounding future possibilities. Traditional frameworks of knowledge may prove insufficient, necessitating the integration of research from outside the domain of education itself.

It is important to emphasize that this three-phase model is not intended to represent a strictly linear progression. While ESD 3.0 offers a deeper framework for addressing the challenges of the future, the continued relevance of elements from earlier phases (ESD 1.0 and 2.0) should not be discounted. Similarly, the emergence of ESD 3.0 does not negate the value of past efforts or render earlier practices obsolete.

Lifelong Learning for Sustainability

UNESCO (2021) presented a sustainable future created together, emphasizing collaborative efforts and acknowledges the significance of formal, non-formal, and informal learning throughout one's lifespan,

transcending the confines of traditional schooling. This vision resonates with the core principles of ESD 3.0, which acknowledges the inherent complexity and interconnectedness of global and local systems in an unpredictable future. ESD 3.0 fosters a learning environment that reframes challenges as potential opportunities, prompting a shift from viewing problems as intractable obstacles to identifying leverage points within complex systems. This approach necessitates a critical departure from the limitations of BAU methodologies. The emergence of previously unimaginable systems serves as a testament to the transformative potential of ESD 3.0. Initiatives such as the digital nomad visa, which grants residency rights independent of traditional employer location, and Minerva University, a geographically decentralized institution offering global learning experiences, exemplify this paradigm shift.

It is crucial to differentiate between the concept of BAU and “old ways”, place-based knowledge systems. Indigenous and local knowledge represents a rich repository of wisdom accumulated over generations and should not be dismissed simply due to its perceived lack of modernity (Robertson, 2021). As articulated in the 2021 UNESCO report, ESD 3.0 fosters a critical approach to navigating an unpredictable future. This entails an examination of "what to continue, what to abandon, and what to invent afresh." However, this process is not undertaken in a vacuum; it necessitates a deep understanding of the historical, cultural, and socio-ecological contexts that have shaped the present. By integrating both indigenous and universal approaches within this framework, ESD 3.0 promotes a form of sustainability as a dialogue tool. This fosters a collaborative learning environment where diverse knowledge systems can be mutually enriched through ongoing research and exchange.

Conclusion

This paper presented a dimension in which the majority reflect their own "BAU" in a society like Japan, where the birthrate is declining and the population is aging. It may not be necessary to call the approach ESD 3.0, but it could address deeper aspects of lifelong learning. Toward 2050, the year set by the UNESCO report, many societies - including global society - will choose what teaching and learning approaches we will sustain, abandon and create afresh. The 2020s will be the decade to chart such a restructuring.

(This article is based in part on the following paper: Maruyama, H. (2024a). ESD 3.0 de 2050 nen no Kyouiku to Shakai wo Souzou suru [ESD 3.0: Deeply Reimagining Education and Society in 2050], Comparative Education, 68: 138-150. (Japanese))

References

- Bateson, G. (2000). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. University of Chicago Press.
- Robertson, M. (2021). *Sustainability Principles and Practice (3rd ed.)*. Routledge.
- Scott, W.A.H., & Gough, S.R. (2003). *Sustainable Development and Learning: Framing the Issues*. Routledge.
- Sterling, S. (2013). The Sustainable University: Challenge and Response. In Sterling, S., Maxey, L., & Luna, H. (Eds.), *The Sustainable University: Progress and prospects*, (pp.17-50). Routledge.
- UNESCO. (2021). *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A new social contract for education*. UNESCO.

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

Microcredentials and Individual Learning Accounts: Two Innovative Initiatives to Foster a Lifelong Learning Culture

Éva Farkas | farkaseva9@gmail.com



Éva Farkas has 25 years of experience in adult learning and education policies in Hungary and Europe, with a special focus on the validation of learning outcomes achieved in non-formal learning contexts, as well as the professionalisation of adult learning. In 2019, she was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame, and has served as its President since September 2022. She holds a Ph.D. in education and works as a teacher and supervisor at the Doctoral School of Education, University of Szeged, Hungary.

Introduction

The implications of the global megatrends we face every day, including but not limited to Industry 4.0, digitalisation, ageing society, climate crises, migration, COVID, war, and limitations on human rights, have made it clear that lifelong learning is crucial for adapting quickly and flexibly to accelerated change, as well as for individual, social, and economic development.

Adult learning and education (ALE) is a key component of lifelong learning, and ALE policies and practices apply to a wide range of ages, education levels, learning spaces, and modalities (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2022). Skills and related skills policies, which are increasingly valued alongside traditional qualifications, have become an essential element in European employment, social, and education policy discussions (European Commission, 2020). At the same time, ALE has become a critical and indispensable factor in global education policies and skills agendas.

The European Union has set ambitious targets for upskilling and reskilling adults by 2030, namely that at least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year and at least 80% of the adult population should have basic digital skills (European Commission, 2021). Despite significant efforts and financial investment, participation in ALE has not increased significantly over the last decade. 40.2% of the EU-27 population aged 25-64 participated in education and training in 2011. This figure increased to 43.7% in 2016 and 46.6% in 2022 (EUROSTAT, 2023). Impact assessments identify two main problems: (1) individuals do not receive sufficient financial support for training, including overcoming barriers to time spent on training; (2) lack of motivation to take up training (which is also due to a lack of appropriate training provision and the poor quality of training) (European Commission, 2022). It has become clear that the 2030 targets cannot be achieved with the current ALE and funding systems. Therefore, innovative approaches, initiatives and tools are required to supplement the existing ALE and funding schemes. Among the 12 flagship actions of the European Skills Agenda (European Commission, 2020), the European approach to microcredentials and individual learning accounts, by addressing financial constraints and promoting a culture of targeted skills development, can be effective strategies to increase participation in ALE, and thus, employability.

The Innovative Approach to Microcredentials in the Adult Learning and Education Sector

The recommendation of the European Union [Council on a European approach to microcredentials for lifelong learning and employability](#) was adopted by the European Commission in June 2022 (Council of the European Union, 2022). According to the recommendation, microcredentials (MCs) provide short, modular, learning outcome-based learning opportunities that align precisely with the needs of both learners and employers. These certifications validate specific skills that respond to societal, personal, cultural, or labour market needs. MCs allow learners to accumulate credentials progressively, building a comprehensive and adaptable skillset over time (Council of the European Union, 2022).

Learning Outcomes Approach

One of the most important features of MCs is that they are documents/certificates that certify learning outcomes. MCs are based on either a short cycle of adult learning (learning process) or validation (certification of learning outcomes acquired in a non-formal learning environment). Therefore, the requirements for training leading to MCs must be defined in terms of learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are statements/expectations/requirements of what learners should be able to achieve and do independently at the end of the given learning process. The output requirements should be defined in terms of learning outcomes, in the categories of the European Qualification Framework, in the context of skills, knowledge and autonomy responsibility (Council of the European Union, 2017). Learning outcomes approach is more than just a tool; it is an educational culture, philosophy, and mindset that must pervade all aspects of education, in order to develop and implement a more intentional, yet flexible, learning-teaching pathway. It is a modern way of thinking based on (professional) work and learning activities that, unlike an instructor-centred culture, focuses on learning and the learner, making the learning process and the learner's competence development relevant. It is also vital to recognise that learning outcomes-based training courses are output-oriented rather than input-, content-, and subject-based. The learning outcomes approach is based on the constructivism learning theory, which emphasises the learner's active engagement in the process of learning, the role of prior knowledge, and contextualised development of the learner's complex thinking and competencies. The learning outcomes-based approach reflects a paradigm shift in education, where the focus has shifted from what the teacher does (teaching) to what the students do (learning), with students providing evidence of their learning. This shift has a significant impact on the design of qualifications, curricula, assessment, and teaching/learning activities. Alignment between statements of learning outcomes, the teaching/learning activities and the assessment processes, is critically important. This interaction determines whether learning outcomes add value to the learning process and influences our ability to move from intended learning outcomes to achieved outcomes. Assessment plays a key role both in training leading to MCs and validation. Learning outcomes must be assessed based on transparent and clearly defined criteria. The institution issuing the MCs must guarantee that the individual possesses the learning outcomes certified by the MCs, which have been verified through an objective, reliable, and valid assessment process.

Small Learning Units

'Small learning units' are shorter than traditional qualifications; however, this does not mean that only very short courses (as the name suggests) can lead to MCs. The Council recommendation does not propose a minimum or maximum number of hours of training leading to MCs. This is because MCs are outcome-oriented and certify learning outcomes (competencies) regardless of the learning environment, the form, or the hours of learning.

It is important to emphasise that MCs are intended to supplement, rather than replace, existing qualifications. Formal qualifications that aim to provide school or vocational qualifications for complex or multiple jobs are the cornerstone of the national qualification system; however, they may be too supply-driven and do not always correspond to the needs of learners and employers. The role of qualifications also varies between countries and

sectors. In rapidly changing sectors, such as ICT, traditional qualifications are losing their value and are increasingly being replaced by smaller, more specialised ones that are better tailored to the specific needs of the job and can be acquired much more quickly to meet the rapid developments in the sector (CEDEFOP, 2023). Training leading to MCs aims to meet urgent skills needs, address skills mismatches, and provide short(er)-term training that is best suited to adults' abilities and interests, while also offering flexible, learner-centred learning pathways and quality competence development. They also have the potential to offer education and training opportunities to a wider range of learners, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

Training or Validation

The need for upskilling and reskilling strategies is one of the factors driving discussions about the position of MCs in national qualification systems. Due to the rapid changes in the labour market and the pace of digitalisation, there is a clear need for flexibility to meet global technological, digital, social, and environmental advancements. MCs are suitable for addressing the needs of the labour market, lifelong learning, upskilling and reskilling, recognising prior learning, and widening access to a greater variety of learners. In the context of lifelong learning, recognising learning outcomes obtained through various learning pathways, including formal, non-formal, and informal learning, can encourage individuals to upgrade their skills and obtain new competencies. Two main approaches can be taken to position MCs within the broader recognition of the prior learning system. Firstly, MCs can be considered as an outcome of recognition of prior learning. The second approach is to view MCs as a tool that can potentially facilitate the recognition of prior learning process (CEDEFOP, 2023). In this context, a very important question arises: can MCs awarded solely based on the completion of a performance-based assessment be considered MCs? Or should MCs only be issued after training and learning activities? I am of the opinion that sectoral and professional skills certificates (MCs) can be awarded both upon completion of an organised learning activity followed by a form of assessment, or solely following a performance-based assessment (validation of prior learning).

Transparency

Transparency is the foundation of trust in MCs. To ensure transparency, MCs must be clearly identifiable and provide elements that allow learners, educational and training institutions, quality assurance agencies, and employers to understand their value and content, and compare them. The European approach to MCs recommends including a list of critical information elements in any micro-credential. When designing and issuing MCs, ten key principles must be followed that specify the nature of MCs and offer guidance on their design and issuance to ensure high-quality. The ten principles include quality, transparency, relevance, valid assessment, learning pathways, recognition, portability, learner-centredness, authenticity, and provision of information and guidance. These principles highlight the key characteristics of the European approach to MCs (Council of the European Union, 2022). They are universal and may be applied in any area or sector.

Main Characteristics of the Individual Learning Account

The recommendation of the Council of the European Union [on individual learning accounts](#) was adopted by the European Commission in June 2022 (Council of the European Union, 2022a). The individual learning account (ILA) serves as a funding mechanism within the ALE ecosystem, providing tailored entitlements and subsidies based on individual needs, policy priorities, and available resources, while addressing financial and motivational barriers to learning. It is designed to provide portability across jobs and life stages, cover a wide range of learning subjects, and puts emphasis on individuals' needs and their responsibility in career and skills development planning.

The main objective of implementing ILA is to promote participation in adult learning by reducing financial and motivational barriers to training participation. The ILA is an essential component of today's adult learning ecosystem, a continually available funding instrument. It is a virtual account where entitlements and subsidies

can always be tailored to individual needs, policy priorities, and available resources. The ILA is designed to supplement, rather than replace, existing training and financing initiatives schemes. The most obvious differences between the ILA and the previously existing funding schemes are the characteristics of the ILA that provide portability across jobs/life stages, covers a wide range of learning subjects, and focuses on individuals' needs and their responsibility to plan their career and skills development over a long period. However, the ILA can coexist with other training or funding schemes, e. g. training funds, training levies or training loans.

The innovative aspect of the ILA is that it places the individual directly at the centre of skills development. Training rights should not be attached to a specific job or workplace, but rather to individuals, allowing the transferability and portability of training rights from one job or employment status to another. The ILA would provide working-age people with a budget for training to improve their skills and employability throughout their lives, regardless of their employment status. The ILA should be accessible to all adults aged 18-65, following the principle of universality. However, it may offer varying entitlements and opportunities for different target groups. Training rights and financial resources can be accumulated and utilised for a limited period (e. g. 5 years or 10 years).

Building Blocks for the Introduction and Implementation of Microcredentials and Individual Learning Account

Neither MCs nor the ILA has the best model. Each country can develop its own model to address its unique challenges and policy objectives in adult learning. However, there are building blocks that provide a solid foundation for the introduction and implementation of MCs and ILA.

Table 1: Building blocks for the introduction and implementation of MCs and ILA

Clear and targeted policy objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define clear and specific policy objectives. Policy objectives will identify the target groups (as well as their eligibility criteria), sectors, skills, and training that the MCs and ILA can support • Consult broadly with stakeholders (the MCs and ILA are at the crossroads of numerous policies, e.g. employment, economic development, digitalisation, social inclusion, VET, HE, funding, etc.)
Regulations and guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a framework for providers to follow when offering and recognising MCs and ILA • Enforce or make changes to the legislation under which providers operate
Public funding for training providers and learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use targeted funding • Include core public funding and/or extended student loan schemes • Adopt individual learning accounts, it is important to ensure a significant amount and continuous source of funding for the ILA

Quality assurance mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate MCs and ILA in an existing quality assurance system or develop a quality assurance system dedicated to MCs and ILA • Quality assurance can be achieved through: Certification of adult training providers and training programmes; Evaluation of outcomes; Communication of information to the public
IT and information systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a national information portal to help learners make informed decisions • Create an easy-to-use online tool, a well-designed and functional single digital portal and apps, and an IT support system that maintains searchable records of MCs, gives access to ILA personal accounts, and operates a tracking and monitoring system • Create non-digital alternatives for those who are not 'internet-savvy'
Enabling framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information, guidance and counselling • Provide possibility for validation • Provide paid training leave
Campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch a comprehensive communication and marketing campaign to increase awareness of the MCs and ILA among potential beneficiaries and stakeholders • Provide clear information on the benefits, eligibility criteria, application process and available learning opportunities

Source: OECD, 2023; OECD, 2023a with additions by the author

Conclusions

The MCs and ILA represent a significantly different approach to current training and funding systems as they both focus on the individual and their targeted skills development. MCs combined with ILA can serve as an effective demand-side incentive for individuals and employers, establishing the way for a more inclusive and adaptable ALE ecosystem by promoting a culture of personalised skill development and reducing funding barriers. The MCs and ILA could put learners into the driver's seat both in terms of choice and responsibility. This enables learners to tailor their education and training programmes based on their individual needs. Adults should think consciously about their own career paths, which require access to appropriate information and qualified training provision, advice, sufficient time to learn, and targeted financial support. Therefore, the MCs and ILA should not be used as a stand-alone, new tool, but rather as part of a broader economic development and national skills strategy. Reforms should be undertaken in a way that ensures high-level employment and social cohesion while prioritising technological innovation. This means that not just employment and education as a system, but also individuals with their objectives, motivations, and respect for their abilities must be at the heart of the skills strategy.

References

- Cedefop. (2023). *Microcredentials for labour market education and training*. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5589_en.pdf
- Council of the European Union. (2022). *Council recommendation of 16 June 2022 on a European approach to microcredentials for lifelong learning and employability*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2022:243:FULL>
- Council of the European Union. (2022a). *Council recommendation of 16 June 2022 on individual learning accounts*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32022H0627%2803%29>
- Council of the European Union. (2017). *Council recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning*. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN)
- European Commission. (2022). *Study to support the Commission impact assessment on Individual Learning Accounts*. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8453&furtherPubs=yes>
- European Commission. (2021). *The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan*. <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/empl/european-pillar-of-social-rights/en/>
- European Commission. (2020). *European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0274>
- EUROSTAT. (2023). *Participation rate in education and training by sex*. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_aes_100/default/table?lang=en
- OECD. (2023). *Micro-credentials for Lifelong Learning and Employability: Uses and Possibilities*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9c4b7b68-en>
- OECD. (2023a). *Public Policies for Effective Micro-credential Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/a41f148b-en>
- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. (2022). *CONFINTEA VII Marrakech Framework for Action: harnessing the transformational power of adult learning and education*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382306>

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

Popular education as a counterforce in times of autocratization and democratic regression

Daniel Bladh | daniel.bladh@gmail.com

PhD in adult learning and education

Serhii Chumachenko | chumachenko.serhii@gmail.com

Chairman of the Folk High School “Vovchok”, professional business trainer and coach, member of the Council at Ukrainian Bildung Network

Mihail Krikunov | mihail.krikunov@yahoo.com

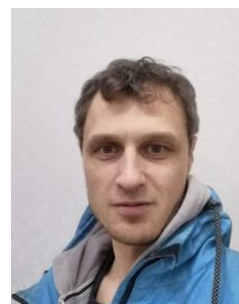
Senior Partner and Dean of the Kiev Business School, MSc, PhD, marketing professional, President of Ukrainian Bildung Network

Anastasia Nekrasova | Anastasia@intelligentmindsets.com

Developmental psychologist, adult learning designer, mentor at Ukrainian Bildung Network

Yurii Pyvovarenko | yurko.lisnyi@gmail.com

Head of the Council and operational manager at Ukrainian Bildung Network, IT professional



(Photos in order of the author list)

Introduction and background

It is sometimes said that we are living in the midst of a perfect storm of crises. The world is witnessing accelerating levels of climate change and global warming (IPCC, 2023), growing inequalities of wealth and income (Chancel et al., 2022) as well as a pungent tendency of countries on different continents to become more autocratic and repressive (Papada et al., 2023). One way to respond to the storm of crises and waves of multidimensional societal disruptions is to highlight the role that education can play.

The role of education may be understood in relation to its adaptive, resilience-building, and transformative potential. The transformative dimension concerns the transformation and overcoming of the root causes of the crises that are emerging. In the longer term, a transformational shift that overcomes the causes generating crises would also naturally reduce the pressure of the need for societal adaptation and resilience-building. These causes relate to various economic, political, and cultural structures and factors contributing to patterns of widespread unsustainable development on a planetary scale. In consideration of the scale and complexity of these crises, a report issued by UNESCO (2022a) states that despite “the urgency of action, and in conditions of great uncertainty, we have reason to be full of hope” (p. 7). One reason for this aspiration is that humanity at large is seen as having the greatest access to knowledge and tools enabling countries and communities to collaborate for a more hopeful trajectory. In order to renew education to better meet its transformational

potential, “pedagogies that foster cooperation and solidarity” (UNESCO, 2022a, p. 50) have been advocated. One reason why these educational strategies are construed as important is their potential in the promotion of active citizenship and broad democratic participation.

A strong call for the promotion of active citizenship and citizenship education was made in the last Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (UNESCO, 2022b). The section of the report that deals specifically with adult learning and education (ALE) calls on the adult learning community to generate “a new foundation for ALE as a paradigm of learner empowerment, and an ethically solid answer to the crises of civilization” (p. 157). One way to strengthen learner empowerment and active citizenship is to provide Global Citizenship Education (GCED). To enable these learning outcomes, teachers and educators are recommended to employ transformative and participatory teaching and learning approaches which according to UNESCO (2015) may include activities such as “project-based learning, participation projects, collaborative work, experiential learning” (p. 53). In this respect, ALE may have especially important roles to play for the attainment of different Sustainable Development Goals (Schreiber-Barsch & Mauch, 2019; Benavot et al, 2022). By promoting active citizenship and democratic participation through the provision of citizenship education, it may thus be possible to both strengthen societal resilience and to find paths towards overcoming current crises of civilization.

However, the grand rhetoric and aspirations of different policy documents stand in concerning contrast to the democratic regression that is sweeping around the planet. According to the latest Democracy Report by the V-Dem Institute (Papada et al., 2023), 72% of the world’s population today live in autocracies and the global level of democracy is back to 1986 levels. The process of autocratization is accompanied by increased media censorship, disinformation campaigns, the undermining of civil society, unhealthy levels of polarization, deteriorating rule of law as well as a decline in the quality of elections. It is not uncommon that processes of democratic regression are initiated by elected leaders themselves and that countries will find themselves on a slippery slope of gradual democratic degradation. In these processes, polarization and disinformation may be employed instrumentally by political forces and actors to reinforce the tendency of autocratization. An earlier Democracy Report from the V-Dem Institute (Boese-Schlosser et al., 2022) discussed how waves of autocratization can result in the outbreak of more wars. This democratic regression is both a distinct expression of a contemporary crisis and an acute threat to the construction of active citizenship and democratic participation which may aggravate, instead of overcoming, current crises.

Democratic regression may take different faces in different countries, also reflecting various historical, political, cultural, educational, and social factors. It may, however, be valuable to contrast experiences from different national contexts to get a more thorough and broader understanding of what is happening and how a democratic counteroffensive may be initiated. Given its longstanding experience of fostering active citizenship and broad democratic participation, popular education may have important roles to play in this process.

Threats against popular education in Sweden

Popular education has been closely intertwined with the emergence and continued evolution of a democratic system in Sweden. It has provided skills and knowledge about how to exercise an active citizenship, included new groups of people into democratic processes and constituted a meeting point in mobilization efforts for societal change (cf e.g., Eriksson et al., 2019; Runesdotter, 2010). Its pedagogy is characterized by its relational, democratic, and participatory approaches with a humane, compassionate, and holistic focus where participants construct knowledge and foster agency together (cf e.g., Flowers, 2009; Larsson, 2001; Maliszewski, 2014). In Sweden, popular education constitutes both a component of the democratic infrastructure in the country and a means for societal change.

Not so many years ago, it was asserted that the tradition of popular education still enjoyed a rather broad political support in Sweden (Nordvall & Fridolfsson, 2019). This support is not as manifest anymore. The last few years have demonstrated a political and medial discourse which has criticized different aspects of popular

education and called for radical changes of the current policy infrastructure and public funding of popular education. A substantial reduction of funding from the state budget to study associations has also been announced by the current government for the coming years (Folkbildningsrådet, 2023a). There are also calls from the government to increase control and state authority in how public funding is distributed and used by the popular education actors. The political discourse over the last few years has likely contributed to a delegitimization and general mistrust towards popular education in Sweden.

This change can also be witnessed in local educational practices and by popular educators. In a recent report (Folkbildningsrådet, 2023b), different examples of how this change can manifest itself are given, based on interviews with popular educators in Sweden. A common thread is how changes in society affect the work of popular educators and how this affect may undermine their work to promote democratic participation and active citizenship. The spread of populism and conspiracy theories threaten the epistemological practice of constructing knowledge and agency through dialogue. A toxic level of polarization complicates relational pedagogies and efforts to build mutual trust and understanding. A political discourse of “othering” and exclusion may contribute to feelings of frustration, anxiety, and passivity among some participants. However, it also pointed out in the report that popular education may act as a democratic counterforce. This counterforce is grounded in its role and work to strengthen inclusion and communities, to function as a place where different groups can meet, to offer and facilitate democratic conversations and to contribute to active citizenship and democratic participation. How this counterforce may be initiated and take form, in times of reduced funding, political delegitimization and general mistrust, may be of existential importance not only for the future of popular education but also for the democratic system as such.

Popular education in Ukraine in times of war

Ukraine only recently gained independence. The Ukrainian legislation from the period of independence, i.e., even before the actual invasion in February 2022, is permeated by the domination and hyper-control of the state. The war has had a significant impact on the functioning of both the state level and local institutions, affecting areas and sectors critical to the country's democratic development. Security issues came to the fore, pushing aside concerns about the democratic process in the public consciousness. Many Ukrainian citizens and experts fear the onset of autocracy, with concerning changes in the distribution of public power.

In an earlier period during the Soviet rule, Ukraine lost its tradition of non-formal adult education. The tradition, which was once very similar to the Scandinavian tradition, blossomed in the territories that were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. During the Soviet period, a rigid educational model of hierarchies and dominance was implemented. What is especially alarming in the current circumstances is that the culture of dominance from the Soviet period continues to permeate the entire formal education system. It thus deprives the participants of formative conditions in educational processes that would allow for their blossoming as independent, free, and responsible citizens.

The revival of the non-formal adult education movement in independent Ukraine can be attributed to the period of the second revolution (known as Euromaidan, or Revolution of Dignity, in 2014). In 2018, a group of actors interested in studying the Scandinavian experience emerged in Ukraine. They united in the group “Ukrainian folk high schools” on Facebook. Today this group has more than 700 members from 10 countries. The members of the group, who act on voluntary basis, engaged in translation of literature relating to the tradition of popular education based on the Nordic experience, including research papers and pedagogical materials for study circles and folk high schools.

Exactly one day before the full-scale invasion began, the civil organization “Ukrainian Bildung Network” was registered, with the purpose to study, implement the Nordic experience and strengthen a popular education infrastructure in Ukraine. Earlier, in 2021, a family of entrepreneurs had bought two old school buildings in the

Chernihiv region and began renovation on their own. In July 2022, Vovchok Folk high school, became the first of its kind in Ukraine, inspired by the Nordic experience of popular education.

The folk high school Vovchok is located in the community of Kipti in the Chernihiv region. With the help of partners, including the Swedish State Emergencies Agency (MSB), the school trains instructors and civilians in pre-medical care. Training sessions are conducted for local residents of de-occupied territories as well as for engineers in humanitarian demining, firefighters, and rescuers. Thus, the folk high school Vovchok, has already assumed the role of acting as an institution of non-formal education, becoming a methodological and educational hub that gathers and popularizes the experience of the Nordic countries in issues that support the resilience of communities in the face of war.

In an ongoing war, a society faces acute concerns of moral, emotional, and humane endurance. In the local community where the Vovchok Folk High School is located, there is a great demand for what can be called “Dialogues about the Future.” This simple title reveals a large set of topics that may relate to the development of communities through active citizenship, the creation of safe spaces for transformational change, and cooperation with partners from around the world. On the other hand, the war has also become a catalyst for civil society and movements of volunteers and activists, where groups of people and entire communities have united to support the military defense but also each other, which is a manifestation of civic responsibility and active citizenship. There is also a growing demand for social justice and sharp dissatisfaction with manifestations of corruption.

The war confirmed our anticipation and hope about the importance of a folk high school as a place that can enhance social, ethical, and psychological strength, thus reinforcing the resilience of local communities. One important lesson that we have drawn is the need for an infrastructure in the form of a fixed location and of a number of walls in combination with the accumulation of experience, dissemination of methodology and committed popular educators building and embodying the principles of popular education. In turn, building on these experiences, a growing infrastructure of popular education in Ukraine may turn out to be one of the pillars of national security and resilience in the future.

Concluding discussion

The transformational need to overcome structural causes and reasons of the perfect storm of wicked problems that are witnessed on a planetary scale point to the role and importance that popular education may play. This role is related to its adaptive, innovative, and participatory potential being able to respond to social and local needs, strengthening of communities and allowing for human growth. It is thus not surprising that different reports by UNESCO (2015; 2022a; 2022b) stress the importance of pedagogies and educational designs that are well anchored in the Nordic experience of popular education. One connecting link here is the provision of citizenship education as a key aspect of fostering human agency to overcome the crises of today.

However, the process toward autocratization and democratic regression is undermining and deforming the construction of active citizenship and civil society. The transformational potential of education is being lost and will likely be replaced by increased levels of top-down, dominating, disciplinary, and hierarchical forms of education. These changes that may occur gradually over time are part of the process of autocratization that can generate severe ramifications both inside and outside of a country. The most horrifying consequence of what such a change may imply is the everyday experience of Ukrainians having to endure the hardships of war.

Popular education may provide a ray of hope in these darkest of times. Its ideas, practices and vivid experience may be a part of a democratic counteroffensive against autocratization and war. It can provide civil and political knowledge, encourage democratic participation, and foster human agency for change. This importance relates back to the historical wording in the preamble to the constitution of UNESCO declaring that “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed” (2023). Through

shared and common efforts, both popular educators and researchers from around the world can be part of a transformational shift towards a better and brighter future.

References

- Benavot, A., Hoppers, C. O., Lockhart, A. S., & Hinzen, H. (2022). Reimagining adult education and lifelong learning for all: Historical and critical perspectives. *International Review of Education*, 68(2), 165–194.
- Boese-Schlosser, V. A., Alizada, N., Lundstedt, M., Morrison, K., Natsika, N., Sato, Y., ... & Lindberg, S. I. (2022). *Autocratization changing nature?* Democracy Report 2022. University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Institute.
- Chancel, L., Piketty, T., Saez, E., & Zucman, G. (Eds.). (2022). *World inequality report 2022*. Harvard University Press.
- Eriksson, L., Larsson, S., Lundberg, M., & Nordvall, H. (2019). *Folkbildning för förändring: Dilemman i politiskt mobiliserande didaktik*. Linköping University Electronic Press.
- Flowers, R. (2009). *Traditions of popular education*. REPORT-Zeitschrift für Weiterbildungsforschung, 32(2), 9–22.
- Folkbildningsrådet. (2023a). *Regeringen skär ner på anslagen till studieförbunden*. <https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/om-folkbildningsradet/aktuellt/nyheter/2023/regeringen-skar-ner-pa-anslagen-till-studieforbunden/>
- Folkbildningsrådet. (2023b). *När folkbildningen möter samhällets demokratiska utmaningar*. Folkbildningsrådet.
- IPCC. (2023). *Synthesis Report for the Sixth Assessment Report*. IPCC.
- KIIS. (2023). Ukrainian civil society under the war. Kiyv, KIIS.
- Larsson, S. (2001). Seven aspects of democracy as related to study circles. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20(3), 199–217.
- Maliszewski, T. (2014). Swedish Folk High Schools ("Folkhögskolor"): Past and Present. A Look from the Polish Perspective. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 2(4), 387–395.
- Nordvall, H., & Fridolfsson, C. (2019). The folk high school: A contemporary educational pathway for Swedish parliamentarians? *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 63(3), 347–362.
- Papada, E., Altman, D., Angiolillo, F., Gastaldi, L., Köhler, T., Lundstedt, M., ... & Lindberg, S. I. (2023). *Defiance in the Face of Autocratization*. Democracy Report 2023. University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Institute.
- Runesdotter, C. (2010). *I otakt med tiden? Folkhögskolorna i ett föränderligt fält*. (Avhandling, Institutionen för pedagogik och specialpedagogik). Göteborgs universitet.
- Schreiber-Barsch, S., & Mauch, W. (2019). Adult learning and education as a response to global challenges: fostering agents of social transformation and sustainability. *International Review of Education*, 65, 515–536.
- UNESCO. (2015). *Global citizenship education: Topics and learning objectives*. UN.
- UNESCO. (2022a). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. UN.

UNESCO. (2022b). *The fifth Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

UNESCO. (2023). *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/constitution>

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

Reflections on CONFINTEA VII results and the Marrakech Framework for Action: Findings from Armenia

Avetik Mejlumyan | aveti.mejlumyan@gmail.com



Avetik Mejlumyan is a PhD in Social Philosophy. He has MA and BA in Social Work. He was an Assistant Professor at the Chair of Social Work and Social Technologies (Department of Sociology), Yerevan State University from 2007 to 2017. He is the author of about 3 dozen research reports, policy papers and other publications, mostly related to the field of education. He is the co-founder and director of “Institute of Public Policy” think tank which has been active in the implementation of research and advocacy projects and non-formal educational programs for youth and adults.

This research paper was prepared by Armenia-based educational consultant Avetik Mejlumyan who worked closely together with and was selected by DVV International-Armenia (DVV Armenia). The methodological approach combines desk-research of relevant documents with semi-structured key informant interviews.

National legislation and strategies as well as research-analytical reports, policy briefs, media publications and other available data were analyzed.

Directed by the results of the desk-research, semi-structured interviews were conducted in person or via video call. Key informants were chosen based on their respective experience and current activity related to adult learning and education (ALE) or non-formal education.

Analyzed data is grouped in eight main questions/sections which were also parts of the questionnaire.

The series of discussions and reviews together with DVV-Armenia helped to improve research findings.

De-briefing

1. **Could you identify a de-briefing process after the Marrakech conference in your country?**

Zhanna Andreasyan, the deputy minister of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MoESCS) participated in the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII) in Marrakech, June 2022. In December, 2022, she took on the position of minister in the MoESCS.

Later, in 2023, the newly appointed minister Zhanna Andreasyan shared her thoughts and insights on the MFA and its relevance for Armenia. This is the only source available after the Conference where the representative of the Government declares some priorities related to the Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA). No other statements or actions have been carried out by officials regarding the MFA.

DVV Armenia, guided by the decisions and adopted documents of the Conference, through its regional and local offices and partners, took steps to raise awareness about the conference outcomes, and to localize and implement the adopted decisions. In this context, in 2022 DVV Armenia initiated the translation of the MFA into Armenian and shared it with the MoESCS and partner institutions.

In March – October 2023, DVV Armenia, in cooperation with the Center of Continuous Education of the Yerevan State University (YSU), implemented the “Research Based Conference on Adult Learning and Education” initiative, one of the goals of which was the popularization of the MFA among academia and students, ALE experts, and institutions specializing in ALE.

The initiative had two main components:

- Conducting research in the Armenian context on the directions highlighted in the MFA by university student groups under the guidance of professors/researchers.
- Holding a final conference based on the research results.

Besides DVV Armenia’s efforts no other action has been noticed in the civil society field in terms of reflection on the MFA.

2. Did your Government take any specific action in respect to ALE – related to CONFINTEA?

There was no direct significant evidence of Republic of Armenia (RA) Government actions after CONFINTEA. However, the Education Development State Program (Program) of the RA approved in November 2022 includes direct references to ALE and the Action Plan specifies the actions undertaken by the government in the ALE direction. This is believed to be the result of deputy minister’s attendance (supported by DVV Armenia) at CONFINTEA VII and intense advocacy by DVV Armenia in previous years.

While the term “Adult Education” occurs twice in the Education Development Program, it is not defined or interpreted in any way. The Program also lacks definitions of other terms related to ALE (for example, lifelong learning, additional and continuing education, non-formal learning, other).

Goal 1 of the “Non Formal Education” section of the Action Plan includes components of ALE: “Implementation of mechanisms for recognizing the results of non-formal education, providing environment and conditions for lifelong learning and continuous development of human capital of adults and youth”.

The document sets some actions to be taken towards the main goal: Reform the legislative framework regulating the non-formal education sector; Define terms related to non-formal education in accordance with international terminology; Create the grounds for recognizing and certifying the results of non-formal and informal learning by the state; Raise public awareness about the non-formal education sector, etc.

Now there is an ongoing process of development of amendments to the RA’s law on Education. These changes will ensure a more solid legal base for recognizing and certifying the results of non-formal learning. There are

some other new regulations related to non-formal education in the draft law on Vocational education which will go through the adoption process in the Parliament.

3. Which of the recommendations in the MFA seem to be of specific relevance to your country?

The five recommendations in the MFA (N 22, 24, 25, 29 and 32) seem to be relevant to Armenian current challenges and priorities (analysis based on desk research and key informants' opinions).

DVV Armenia's planning until 2027 addresses the second recommendation from the mentioned list: *"24. ... the importance of strengthening ALE at the local level..."*.

Another strategic goal of DVV Armenia for upcoming years fits other MFA recommendations as well. It sets two objectives: 1. Better ALE policy making is based on improved national statistics on ALE and increased public awareness regarding ALE; 2. The new education strategy includes elements of ALE in the action plan.

Here are other priorities of the ALE and the non-formal education field in Armenia suggested by key informants:

- Ensure the availability of ALE services in remote and rural areas. Special legislative regulation is needed to ensure equal access to educational services for everyone regardless of their actual residence or social characteristics.
- Promote a practice of paying for education (instead of participating only in free-of-charge programs).
- Promote the culture of ALE in the regions and among some vulnerable groups. Inform different social groups about education platforms and opportunities.
- Actively use ALE programs for re-integration and socialization purposes, for instance: engaging prisoners, migrants, refugees and other socially vulnerable groups.
- Expand state funding sources for civil society organisations (CSOs) that provide ALE. New transparent and competitive mechanisms are needed for delivering additional funding to SCOs. This can also stimulate delegation of some state educational programs and services to SCOs.

4. In your understanding – what could bring the SDG agenda and CONFINTEA VII closer?

While speaking about the link between SDGs and adult education, usually SDG four is mentioned ("Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"). As some of our respondents suggested, we need to rethink this traditional relationship.

They suggest to consider Goal 4 and its components as strategic and supportive base for achieving other SDGs, which can be integrated into educational programs as topics, principles and values.

For instance, the principles of sustainable development can be integrated into adult education programs. This includes promoting environmental awareness, social justice, and economic sustainability within the curriculum. ALE programs have to address not only traditional academic subjects but also skills needed for sustainable living and responsible citizenship.

Integrating skills development and vocational training into adult education programs will enhance participants' employability and contribute to economic empowerment, addressing SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

Recognizing and respecting diverse cultural contexts in ALE programs aligns with the principle of promoting cultural diversity and inclusion (SDG 10) and helps tailor education initiatives to local needs.

Integrating climate change education into ALE programs will address SDG 13 (Climate Action). This can empower adults to contribute to sustainability efforts and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Reflection

5. How do you see the role of civil society in implementing the MFA – beyond awareness rising?

Among CSOs working with ALE, the most active ones are the NGOs that regularly offer civic education opportunities in the form of small conferences, workshops, and training courses. Topics suggested to the trainees typically cover human rights, the fight against corruption, democracy, civic activism, and its toolkit, investigative journalism, media literacy, and others. This type of ALE mostly targets individuals and groups interested in civic and public activism, which to some extent narrows down the scope of its influence.

CSOs need to pay more attention to the inclusiveness of their educational activities, not limiting access to participation to only young people or to socially active individuals and/or groups with civic competences. ALE programs can serve as a good base for re-integration and socialization purposes, engaging prisoners, migrants, refugees and other socially vulnerable groups.

CSOs can also play an important role in expanding and ensuring availability of ALE services in the regions, and in remote and rural areas. Sometimes NGOs and civic networks have more flexibility to reach geographically and socially disadvantaged groups than state agencies.

CSOs have wider opportunities for promoting awareness and education on some specific or sensitive topics, than state agencies, which have some limitations in term of their capacities or traditional (outdated) approaches. For instance, CSOs can provide more quality services and educational products in the directions of media literacy, gender sensitivity, civic participation, anticorruption activities, etc.

CSOs can have a positive impact on adult educational programs offered by state agencies trying to integrate best ALE approaches, methods and experiences. CSOs' relevant experience are quite valuable and can serve as an example/source for improving state programs. It is important to integrate quality ALE methodological approaches in different educational programs regardless of their theme, direction, or sphere.

6. Can you identify areas where civil society advocacy could make the difference in the coming years?

Here are some priority areas of ALE in Armenia where the efforts of civil society can have an impact. They can be grouped in five main categories: policy, governance, funding, quality and networks.

Policy

1. The main educational laws and by-laws in the RA offer mostly inconsistent terminology for the field of ALE. The international policy vocabulary has long moved from AE to ALE and the government of Armenia, being a UN and UNESCO member state, needs to keep the relevance of its national documents choosing the definition that best explains the aims of ALE in Armenia.
2. Active citizenship skills should become a strategic priority for the MoESCS, focusing also on citizenship education and training of adults. Adult education centers (AECs) and community ALE provider NGOs should be provided with an opportunity to apply for program-based state funding.

Governance

3. There is a need to develop and implement institutional, credible mechanisms for collecting both statistical and qualitative data on ALE in Armenia. Inter-agency shared data collection and a unified database for the exchange of statistical information by all state stakeholders should be developed.

Funding

4. A separate program dedicated to ALE should be envisaged both in the state budget and in the Medium-Term Expenditure Programs. The use of the term ALE in the financial documents is important for indicating the state priorities for the development of the field.

Quality

5. Some of the challenges related to the QA system for ALE are posed by a lack of awareness and understanding of how the learning outcome-based assessment could be applied to recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning results. The Government should consider involving advisory bodies and other key stakeholders experienced in QA.

Networks

6. Effective advocacy efforts require establishment of representative stakeholder networks. Those can be created by engaging people from academic institutions, civil society and other ALE providers (including those in the private sector).

There can be two main levels of network operations: at the macro or national level and at the community level. A national network should focus on policy, legislation, infrastructure and funding improvement, while local networks can address the gaps of communication and cooperation among ALE providers in communities.

7. Do you see opportunities to get university and academic institutions involved in MFA follow-up?

The RA law “On Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education (HE) (2004) does not impose mandatory requirements for the higher educational institutions (HEIs) to execute supplementary educational programs. In particular, clause 5 of Article 6 (autonomy, competence and academic freedom of higher education institutions) establishes that “...the structural subdivisions of higher education institutions can execute general education, middle vocational, as well as supplementary education programs under the current legislation of the Republic of Armenia”. The above-mentioned definition suggests supplementary educational programs can be offered by universities on a voluntary basis.

There is no uniform model for HEIs to follow when organizing supplementary education programs. Some universities, for instance, organize supplementary and continuous education (SCE) through their faculties of humanities, where, on top of their major qualification, the students can study for two years and obtain a second degree with a different specialization. In other universities, structural subdivisions (e.g. YSU) or specially created learning center (e.g. American University of Armenia, Yerevan Brusov State University, etc.) take an active role in offering supplementary education for different interested parties. Armenian universities offer SCE programs to civil servants, academic staff, and other public personnel seeking opportunities for retraining and the development of their professional skills.

The main challenge of the situation described above is the narrow vision of universities toward ALE. They are acting as service providers, but do not target policy change or the overall development of the non-formal education field.

Another challenge is underestimation of ALE methodology and approaches by HEIs while providing educational programs. They don't pay sufficient attention to the issues such as how to adopt teaching and learning methods to current needs of adults. Methods of working with students (young adults) are usually determined by past practice.

8. Which of the experiences in the four countries may have relevance for partners beyond the region?

Respondents emphasized some Armenian practices which may be of interest to other countries:

- Attestation and professional accreditation systems are now widespread in Armenia especially in these fields: general or secondary education (for teachers), higher education system (for professors), military forces (for military servants). These systems are operating on both a voluntary and a mandatory basis. Specialists are motivated to participate in these processes to increase salaries and to receive privileges and other bonuses.
- Besides attestation and professional accreditation, training programs are very common especially in the state agencies (ministries, bodies, committees) and local self-governing bodies. Those are mandatory for civic and community servants to retain their positions or for career growth.
- Some non-formal educational programs offered by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society actors (CSOs) can be explored and designed as best models. For instance, there are some good experiences of social entrepreneurship education programs implemented in Armenia. Such programs often provide some small financial assistance and resources for beneficiaries to start their own projects. These are best illustrations of the learning-by-doing approach.

Other good examples are leadership and critical thinking schools for youth. Very often these training sessions lead to community projects and civic initiatives implemented by graduates.

References

Publications

CRRC Armenia. (2021). Adult Education Survey: Armenia, 2020-2021. DVV International. <https://cutt.ly/uwAQ8EL2> (link not work)

Khachatryan, S., Soghomonyan, E., Mejlumyan, A., & Hinzen, H. (2020). Adult education in Armenia: Study of policies and practices. DVV International Armenia. <https://cutt.ly/twAQ9LDx>

Mazhinyan, A., Pfanzelt, A., & Pfanzelt, H. (2021). Study on Adult Learning and Education in Armenia. DVV International Armenia. <https://cutt.ly/WwAQ9g7v>

Online Videos

DVV International Armenia. (2023, May 24). Opening speech and greetings by Zhanna Andreasyan, RA MoESCS [Video]. YouTube. <https://cutt.ly/TwAWwIK7>

Legal Acts

Action plan for "The state program for the development of RA education until 2030". (2023). <https://cutt.ly/owAWr0zp>

RA law on approving "The state program for the development of RA education until 2030". (2022). <https://cutt.ly/YwAWrIR3>

RA law on Education. (1999). <https://cutt.ly/kwAWtpGZ>

RA law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education. (2004). <https://cutt.ly/gwAWytt7>

RA draft law On Higher Education and Science. (2019). <https://cutt.ly/VwAWynhX>

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

Regional Findings from MFA Reflections in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine

Ravshan Baratov | baratov@dvv-international.md

Heribert Hinzen | Heribert.Hinzen@glasgow.ac.uk



Mr. Ravshan Baratov is active in the field of Adult Learning and Education since 2009, when he was starting out at the country office of DVV International in Uzbekistan. In 2019 he then moved to Kyrgyzstan to take over the position of the Regional programme manager for DVV International's regional office for Central Asia. Since July 2022 Ravshan Baratov joined the Regional office for 'Eastern Neighbours' (currently located in Chisinau, Moldova) and is now heading the European Continental exchange project of DVV International focusing on professional exchange on advocacy for ALE-

policies, capacity building and networking between ALE-Centres in six countries of the wider region: Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova and Ukraine.



Heribert Hinzen, Prof.(H) Dr. Dr. h.c. mult., is a senior consultant on adult education and lifelong learning for sustainable development. He worked for DVV International for almost four decades, both in headquarters and offices in Sierra Leone, Hungary and Lao PDR. He is an Honorary Professor of the Universities of Pecs, Bucharest and Iasi, Visiting Professor of the University of Glasgow and teaches international and comparative adult education at the University of Würzburg. He has served as Vice-President of ICAE and EAEA, now of PIMA, and as an Associate of PASCAL. He is an Honorary Fellow of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and a member of the Editorial Board of the International Review of Education. Journal of Lifelong Learning. In 2006 he was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame.

In 2022, DVV International through its Regional Office “Eastern Neighbours”, started a Continental Exchange Project covering six countries: Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine. The respective document stated: “Its main objective is to improve policy frameworks for Adult Learning and Education (ALE) based on best national and regional practices and experiences and to strengthen ALE-Centres' contribution to the implementation of the SDGs.” The work is financed by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

In July 2023 the “Reflection of CONFINTEA VII results from national perspectives and development of recommendations from civil society in four partner countries: Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and the Ukraine” was initiated. Four experts from the countries were selected and invited to work with an international expert on national reports to be integrated into a regional perspective.

The countries involved need and seek peace and sustainable development for all their people. They all suffer from war directly or indirectly, endure forced migration, constant instability, and personal insecurity. Whatever ALE can do to improve the situation and lessen the hardships for the individuals and communities should be done. Although this often goes beyond the direct possibilities of ALE, the indirect impact of ALE on helping to achieve higher levels of resilience should not be underestimated.

Participatory process

As a first step all relevant materials on CONFINTEA VII available in the four countries were collected and shared. The incoming documents allowed for an initial understanding of how partners and offices had been engaged in preparing before CONFINTEA VII, the level of participation in the conference on-site or on-line and the debriefing after the Marrakech Framework of Action (MFA) had been adopted. In addition, for some countries a deeper analysis of the situation of ALE policy and practice had been reached at through a set of studies in recent years (Avramovska et al. 2021a; Avramovska et al. 2021b; DVV International, 2020).

The desk study showed some diversity in approaches and achievements. A more systematic way towards CONFINTEA seemed to have been possible, especially in Armenia as the article in this PIMA Bulletin shows: the Armenian Education Minister provided a well- prepared speech which is now available as a video on YouTube. The Yerevan State University could involve staff and students in topical research projects like “Youth participation in non-formal courses in Armenia and adaptation to the labor market”, but also on the digital divide, or the importance of State funding, with a closing conference in March 2024. Georgia had consultations which identified initial and continuing vocational education and training as important building blocks. Moldova reported on a variety of activities of civil society and policy developments within Government. Civil society is closely monitoring the Strategy Education 2030 process in respect to ALE and non-formal education towards lifelong learning. The Russian war on Ukraine has obviously created a very critical situation for ALE in the country. Activities are limited, and the martial law has reduced governmental support for education in Ukraine at all levels drastically.

Following the desk study, guidelines and guiding questions for national experts to inform and facilitate the process of reflections were presented and discussed. They are related to the context of CONFINTEA and the MFA (UIL 2022) within the sustainable development agenda and reflections from civil society perspectives. As the next step the national experts invited state and non-state actors in their countries to a joint meeting or a bilateral discourse to discuss the potential ways of MFA implementation and collect respective suggestions from participants. From the feedback in the meeting it was getting clearer that in some cases it was easier to work through established frameworks like the ALE Platform in Moldova, the Ukrainian Adult Education Association, or the Adult Education Network (GAEN) in Georgia. In addition it was possible to have interviews with individuals or smaller groups. Then the national experts did reports and shared within the project. The international expert made use of them preparing the draft of the publication which was shared amongst all for comments before concluding a final version.

Country recommendations

All of the country reports include several findings and recommendations which may be taken up by partners in planning their work in the near future. Some may become part of the cooperation with European partners or the Country or Regional Offices of DVV International, and some may become aims, indicators or activities in the annual project plans for the upcoming years.

In this article only two of such pointers from each country have been selected, and they are often presented with the associated concerns. They are either taken as direct quotations or reformulated from the reports, within the document most of them are related to respective clauses of the MFA, or even to SDG goals beyond education (UN 2015). They are grouped by country in alphabetical order.

Armenia:

- The main educational laws and by-laws offer mostly inconsistent terminology for the field of ALE. The variety of terms in use is especially confusing when there is need to bridge the local and international contexts. The international policy vocabulary has long moved from AE to ALE and the government of Armenia, being a UN and UNESCO member state, needs to keep the relevance of its national documents choosing the definition that best explains the aims of ALE in Armenia.
- DVV International in Armenia has an institutional collaboration with Yerevan State University regarding ALE issues. One of the goals of this initiative was the popularization of MFA among academia and students, ALE experts, and institutions specialized in ALE. Besides this, the DVV International Country office in Armenia also has a strategic goal of modernization of Andragogy programs / curriculum at universities to reflect global developments and international best practice.

Georgia:

- Increasing the volume of funding and focusing more on the needs of vulnerable groups was highlighted as one of the important recommendations from the stakeholders. Emphasis was made on the limited funding and support mechanisms at the municipal and local levels of governance. The recommendation also concerns the further expansion of state funding in the direction of non-formal education, especially for courses focused on the development of key competencies.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on developing transferable skills such as planning, problem-solving, communication, foreign language proficiency, and digital competencies. It is crucial to foster the development of such cross-functional skills systematically, both within the program and through extracurricular activities, rather than being limited to courses that are solely dedicated to this purpose.

Moldova:

- While the SDG agenda and the Marrakech Framework for Action are distinct, they are interconnected, especially when it comes to the role of education and lifelong learning in achieving sustainable development. In Moldova, as in other countries, efforts to implement both agendas should be coordinated to maximize their impact on improving education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Establishing partnerships between universities, government bodies, NGOs, and industry stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness of ALE programs. These collaborations can facilitate knowledge exchange, provide practical learning opportunities, and align educational offerings with both opportunities and with the current labor market and societal needs.

Ukraine:

- It's essential to accumulate and implement the best international practices and experiences in the development of adult learning and education through the final adoption and implementation of the Law on Adult Education, taking into account the local context and the realities of war and post-war reconstruction.

- In general, within the European Education Area, the EU has set goals for 2030. Within their framework, the EU seeks to ensure that education helps in the transition to a digital and green economy, as well as helps people adapt to changes in the economy and acquire relevant skills, not only professional ones. LLL is an important component of European documents. That is why Ukraine's European integration will help to better implement the recommendations set out in the MFA.

Regional perspectives on recommendations

The reflections on the global and regional perspectives which could be found within UNESCO and UN frameworks, in the CONFINTEA process and the SDG agenda, and highlighted most recently in the MFA, as well as on EU level in the New European Agenda for Adult Learning were in strong support of the importance of ALE within a LLL perspective. Country reports indicate clearly that these global developments and recommendations through several targets of the SDG, clauses of the MFA reflect national priorities. At the same time there is evidence that the orientation and alignment towards European integration and a future membership in the EU provide important guidance for priorities in the field of education and lifelong learning strategies.

The country reports have shown a variety of findings which are due and conducive to the historical, political and cultural contexts. Putting a comparative lens on, then, one can identify and reflect on some communalities, similarities and differences which may lead to look at suggestions for joint efforts in light of the overall aim of professionalization and institutionalization of ALE centers. Some of those overarching findings are taken up in the regional perspectives below.

A preliminary selection points to some seven important areas which, in one way or another, are not only reflected in both the national reports and global documents but also have the potential for successful work and therefore deserve a certain follow-up:

- **Policy, legislation and financing:** Governance frameworks which make sure that for ALE similar recognition and support structures are in place as for any other sub-sector of education system seems to be a prerequisite. Countries and Governments are at different levels in achievements, but all need to do more and better.
- **Institutionalization, professionalization and digitalization:** ALE needs institutions, just like all the other education and training have their places for people to come together for learning. Planning and implementation of ALE needs professionals who are trained and re-trained. Both areas are subject to accelerated processes of digitalization which offer opportunities and challenges.
- **General, civic and vocational:** ALE has not yet reached the level of understanding and recognition that is needed for a holistic approach which fosters all areas of general and basic, civic and environmental, initial and continuing vocational education and training.
- **Inclusion – leave no one behind:** ALE is for every adult everywhere. However there are target groups which deserve special attention. Priorities for countries differ, but gender equality, adequate services for people with disabilities, for migrants and refugees, minorities and in rural areas are included.
- **Glossary and terminology:** There are still too many terms floating around and in use which reflect a certain historical flavor, but which at the same time make policy decisions and joint effort more difficult. To follow the recommended Adult Learning and Education (ALE) and provide a related glossary with necessary translations is suggested.
- **Government, civil society and academia:** Several examples from the countries show how strengthening this golden triangle can be improved. Governments cannot do it all alone. Universities can engage in

research benefitting the ALE sector, and thereby achieve its third mission. Civil society actors are relevant providers.

- **Networking and cooperation:** It is certainly an achievement to see ALE associations, networks and platforms getting established and growing in membership and reach. In as much as they are supporting joint advocacy efforts and capacity building – they also need to be strengthened to do their work better.

Conclusions

There is a diverse and wide range of opportunities to take up these challenges and recommendation in the next years to come. Fortunately there are a number of potential partners who have the SDG and MFA implementation high on their agendas. The UN and UNESCO related organizations are important, and so are those related to the EU like the LLL Platform, the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) or the European Training Foundation (ETF):

- The Education and Academia Stakeholder Group (EASG) brings together human rights-based education civil society as well as academia and their networks that work on the right to education with the aim to engage with the monitoring and review of the SDG. (The international Council for Adult Education (ICAE) and DVV International are members and could support advocacy and exchange.
- UIL has started initiatives on global and regional perspectives towards MFA implementation und monitoring. Partners from the four countries were invited to a first European online webinar, and contact for further follow-up is established which hopefully opens new dimensions for cooperation.

References

- Avramovska M., Hakobyan, E., Reichert E., Widany S. (Eds.) (2021a). Adult Education Survey: Armenia 2020-2021. DVV International. https://www.dvv-international.ge/fileadmin/files/caucasus-turkey/Armenia/Other/Survey_ENG_FINAL.pdf
- Avramovska M., Santeladze L., Reichert E., Widany S. (Eds.) (2021b). Study on Adult Learning and Education in Georgia. DVV International. https://www.dvv-international.ge/fileadmin/files/caucasus-turkey/Georgia/Resources/Tvisobrivi_kvleva_GEORGIA_-_English.pdf
- DVV International. (2020). Adult Education in Armenia – Study of Policies and Practices. Review of the State of Affairs and Developing Recommendations for Integration in Policy Framework and Practice. (Team of national experts: Khachatryan, S., Soghomonyan, E., Mejlumyan, A. / International expert: Hinzen, H.) DVV International. https://www.dvv-international.ge/fileadmin/files/caucasus-turkey/Armenia/Resources/ALE_Review_Eng.pdf
- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). (2022). *CONFINTEA VII Marrakech Framework for Action: harnessing the transformational power of adult learning and education*. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382306>
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

Remembering Chris Duke

Maria Lourdes Almazan Khan | maria.aspbae@gmail.com



Maria Lourdes Almazan Khan is the former Secretary General of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), a post she held from 1995 to December 2020. She is currently ASPBAE Consulting Director for Policy and Strategic Directions.

Maria Khan served on various Boards of global civil society networks, including the Global Campaign for Education and the International Council for Adult Education. She also represented civil society in the Board of the Global Partnership for Education, the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee, and in the Editorial/Advisory Board of the Global Monitoring

Report on EFA, among others.

Appointed Honorary Fellow by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in 2016, she was inducted to the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame in 2008.

Thank you to the ICAE Executive Committee for providing this space of remembrance and thanksgiving.

Movements are built from a shared experience of injustice. They forge a shared agenda for transformative change, promoted through collective action and leadership – not in one-off, short-term efforts but in strategic endeavours for lasting, transformations.

In this World Assembly, we celebrate 50 years of ICAE – 50 years of the global civil society movement advancing the right to adult education and learning.

And today we will remember Chris Duke – with our deepest gratitude – for his undeniable contributions to our movement's growth.

Chris Duke was a towering figure in the adult education movement.

He was a highly distinguished scholar for adult education and his contributions to the intellectual development of our field have been immense. He served in various academic and leadership roles in Australia, New Zealand and UK universities; wrote countless publications in monographs and academic journals, and served in numerous national and international journal editorial boards.

But he was particularly passionate about linking scholarship with policy and the advancement of ALE practice, contributing heavily to practice-oriented journals of ICAE members such as *Adults Learning* of the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) in the UK and DVV International's *Adult Education and Development (AED)* where he was co-editor of numerous issues themed on, for example, ALE monitoring, CONFINTEA and the public financing of ALE. One of my last substantive conversations with him was on ways to ensure that his editorship of the PIMA (Promoting, Interrogating, and Mobilizing Adult Learning and Education) Bulletin moved to able hands so that this important resource for ALE can endure.

A dedicated networker and advocate for ALE, he lent his rigorous research and analysis to offer evidence in influencing governments, donors, and other decision makers in policy platforms steered by UNESCO and UIL, the European Union, OECD, the World Bank, ILO, WHO as examples – making the case for ALE to be taken more seriously and to be accorded much needed resources.

But Chris belonged to a larger community of adult education, beyond his base in higher education. And it is perhaps this more direct association with ASPBAE and ICAE that we remember the most.

Chris was Secretary General of ASPBAE from 1972 to 1985. While serving as ASPBAE's Secretary General, Chris was also Associate Secretary General of ICAE from 1976 to 1985— extending the leadership role ASPBAE played in ICAE as one of the founding members.

Seeing ASPBAE today, it would be difficult to imagine the organisation Chris inherited. When he assumed office, the organisation was struggling to survive. The decades of the 70s-80s saw authoritarian regimes thriving and holding sway in many parts of the region, making it exceedingly difficult for civil society bodies to operate freely and cooperate transnationally. An innovator of partnership building, however, Chris sought allies and champions even in the most unlikely places – in government departments of adult education and in universities where the traditions of liberal education offered some spaces for critical thought and resistance. Chris worked creatively and revived the then dormant network, tirelessly seeking contacts across Asian countries to foster joint research, cross-country learning and the development of publications in comparative international learning and exchange in AE.

In time, under Chris' leadership, national adult education associations, involving adult education professionals from universities and governments, were formed. Several of them in India, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Sri Lanka, Korea for example, exist to date and have counted themselves proud members of ICAE.

ASPBAE flourished in no small measure from the long-standing international cooperation on adult education that Chris forged between ASPBAE and another ICAE member, DVV International – a partnership that began in 1977 and that persists to date. This partnership that has been honed in mutual trust and respect, co-equal leadership in shaping common actions promoting the right to ALE –strongly informed the culture of relating within the global ICAE which fostered meaningful South-South and North-South collaborations on adult education for capacity-development, advocacy and solidarity.

These partnerships of DVV International with ASPBAE and CSOs in other regions of the world, without doubt, were vital to the continued ability of ICAE's regional arms in the global South to thrive. And this in turn, helped nurture and mature ICAE into the respected global civil society movement that we celebrate today.

Chris remained active within ASPBAE and ICAE years after he stepped down from his leadership roles in both organisations. He continued to support ASPBAE and ICAE in subsequent CONFINTEA processes and his continued writings and analysis on adult education and equity, social justice, active citizenship and democracy, climate change and climate justice continued to enlighten, help clarify, inspire.

We will sorely miss Chris' presence in ASPBAE's 60th anniversary celebrations in 2024 as we do so now in ICAE's 50th.

In the coming days, we will be deliberating on our movement's future course. We will be mapping the policy spaces we will occupy, the partnerships we will forge, the campaigns we will run, the competencies we will need to further enhance.

It is only fitting therefore to have this moment to pause. To recall, honour and thank those who came before us; those whose who helped pave the way for us today to DARE dream, aspire, persist.

Thank you, dear Chris for all you have done.

Rest in peace. Rest in power.

We hope we can do ourselves and YOU, proud.

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

Reply to Maria's Tribute and Dedication to Chris

Liz Sommerlad | liz.sommerlad@gmail.com



Liz Sommerlad and Chris Duke

Liz Sommerlad met her lifelong partner and husband Chris Duke in Canberra, towards the end of her doctoral studies on the impact of residential schooling on indigenous students from remote traditional communities. Thus began a ten year period working together on research and advocacy in the changed policy arena from assimilation to self-determination for Australian indigenous peoples.

Moving to the U.K. in the mid 80s with their family of two boys, Liz was in the vanguard of the new ICT 'revolution', in the U.K. and the European Union. She joined a multi-country team evaluating large scale pilot initiatives in telehealth, transport, e-commerce, and education/training, bringing an end-user and learner perspective to the design process. In England, she and colleagues at the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations adopted participatory methods and concepts of the reflective practitioner and organisation learning in their evaluation of national programs exploring the use and embedding of new technologies. Domains included

university teaching and learning, transformation of public libraries as new information hubs, workplace learning, and community health.

Liz and Chris shared work interests and passions, were inspired by travel to many parts of the world, and enjoyed meeting up with scattered colleagues and friends. Their life was enriched by the experience of living in Australia, England and France. And a final return to Australia, to fully reconnect with their extended families.

Maria has spoken of Chris' significant contribution to ASPBAE and to the global community of adult education, over a period spanning fifty years. Thank you for that wonderful overview of his work and legacy.

I would like to complement Maria's words, talking about Chris on a more personal level. The kind of man that he was, his formative years, the choices and opportunities which shaped his career and lifelong commitment to all modes of adult learning and development.

Chris was born in 1938, in a working class area of London. His father left school at 14 years, going to night school to learn book-keeping. His mother was a primary school teacher and the only girl in her school to go on to further study. Chris' dad was a pacifist and when War broke out he refused the call-up to serve, as a conscientious objector. He avoided imprisonment by working in an area essential to the war effort, namely farming and food production. So the family moved to a farm in the Kent countryside, isolated, and lacking electricity. Under the shadow of bombs, the family would sleep together under a fortified metal table in the kitchen. When the threat was highest, he was evacuated to Wales, as were thousands of other children.

Chris' playmates were nearby gypsies, some still living in brightly coloured Romany caravans. Chris was a collector of all things natural - butterflies, moths, birds' eggs, fossils, stamps and coins. Very non PC now, though he claims to have collected in a sustainable way. He had a pet jackdaw that sat on his shoulder.

German prisoners of war in a nearby prison camp worked on the farm. On rainy days, they made toys from wooden fruit boxes for Chris and his two younger siblings. One of these was a toy dog with ears and tail that flapped when pulled along. It is now an exhibit in the Imperial War Museum in London, together with the story and a photo of Chris. When the war ended, the Duke family invited the still interned POWs for Christmas dinner. They arrived and left under guard.

So, humble beginnings, compassionate family, highly principled, and austerity as a way of life. These were his underpinning values. He was a modest man, despite his many achievements.

Chris won a place at a selective secondary school, and from there as an Exhibition scholar to Cambridge University to read History. He fell into Adult Education at the University of Leeds, somewhat by chance. But it turned out to be his natural home. And the rest, as we say, is history.

Reflecting back on his years of working in university AE, Chris came to see how its relatively low status within the hierarchy of disciplines, and marginality within the university, gave space for innovation, and certain bending of the rules. Running ASPBAE within the prestigious Australian National University, under the radar of the administration, was a prime example.

Chris and I met in Canberra, Australia, when we were both at ANU, fifty years ago. It sounds even longer if I say half a century! We to-ed and fro-ed between Australia and England, Chris working in ACE and senior university management roles, me following my own academic and research career. Chris was active in the various ALE international bodies, along with writing, editing, and above all networking.

Email was his life blood - he must have written many thousands. He was not tech savvy, frequently messing up, sending emails and files into the ether with a wrong press on the keyboard, never to be recovered. I can hear his voice now, from upstairs, *Liz, I need your help*. He never quite trusted technology, so there was always a paper copy of anything vaguely important. He was a two-finger typist on the keyboard, down to one finger in the last few weeks of his life, having broken his hand in a fall.

I think he probably wrote emails in his sleep, and would knock off around 30 before coming down to breakfast. Australia being up to eleven hours ahead in time, emailing his wide network round the world was a 24hr round clock activity, with Chris always one email ahead. I am sure there were groans among his recipients as another email from Chris popped up on their screens.

Gardening was his other love, and a shared passion of us both. Chris often did his intellectual thinking while digging, sorting out ideas in his head. Birdwatching, his other lifelong passion, was instinctive, and very disconcerting for the passenger when he was driving and spotted an unfamiliar bird out the window.

I have said enough about Chris, my soul mate and fellow traveller in life, to give you a sense of him as a person. Words echoed by Chris' elder son, at his funeral: 'you leave a legacy with roots impossible to map or measure. I

thank you for teaching me the value and joy of hard work, and how to live well, and above all how to appreciate the precious mystery of life’.

The ALE community has lost a ‘grandfather’ in Chris, but it is the guiding hands of three continuing grandfathers or elders of the ALE tribe – Alan Tuckett, Heribert Hinzen and Budd Hall. Robbie, can we all give a clap for these three elder heroes of ALE.

I would like to finish off with a comment and challenge to this Assembly, on my own behalf. And one which I know Chris would have fully endorsed, had he been here with us today.

Indigenous peoples have occupied the continent of Australia for 65,000 years, never ceding sovereignty. In a *Statement of the Heart*, they invited Australians to walk with them on a journey of reconciliation and recognition. All Australians voted recently in a referendum to recognise Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Australian constitution, and to give them a voice to Parliament.

We had hoped for reasoned discussion and respect shown for different views. Sadly, as the campaign rolled on, this was not to be. And the end vote count was decisively No.

The No campaign ran on the morally bankrupt slogan of If you don’t know, Vote No. Put simply, don’t bother to find out. Highly politicised, it was Trumpian in nature, characterised by misinformation, trolling, evidence discounted as fake news, attacks on expertise, conspiracy theories on social media, and words taken to mean their opposite. Yes became a vote for division, and No for unity.

I am ashamed and devastated at the result, as Chris would have been also. The nature of the debate represents a wider challenge to the community of adult and community educators and civic leaders across all regions and countries - those of you here at this Assembly.

It is a collective challenge if we value a liberal democracy over a Trumpian dystopia. We need to share experiences, find new ways of how to reinforce reasoned debate, to value hard knowledge over fake news, to confront hate speech and attacks on expertise, to break down misogyny, hierarchy and fundamentalism.

Thank you.

ICAE World Assembly

29 November 2023, Bali

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

Inputs on Movement-Building for ALE in Asia Pacific

Helen Dabu | helen.aspbae@gmail.com



Attorney Helen Dabu is the Secretary-General of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE). She is a lawyer with more than 20 years of track record in grant management, advocacy, capacity-building, institutional building and networking in the fields of human rights, migration and education. She has contributed in bringing the voices and concerns of civil society constituencies to global platforms including as a former representative of Southern civil society in the Board of the Global Partnership for Education, the SDG4 High Level Steering Committee Sherpa Group, the Advisory Committee of the 2022 Transforming Education Summit and the Consultative Committee for the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII).

Notes of the ASPBAE Secretary-General at Commemorative Panel for Chris Duke: Building the ALE Movement for a Learning Planet during the ICAE World Assembly Conference on 29th November 2023 in Bali.

1. What does the ALE movement look like in your region? What is needed to strengthen the ALE movement in your region?

ASPBAE SG Response:

On the first point, overall, the ALE movement in our region is strong, resilient and adaptive to current and emerging contexts. We have been quick to adapt our advocacy strategies and capacity-building efforts to pursue our ALE work even during the pandemic period and in the current contexts where pursuing the ALE agenda is faced with intersecting challenges ranging from shrinking and narrowing CSO space for engagement to low/weak priority according to ALE in various countries and within the UN system, and changes in the political leadership at various levels necessitating repeated processes of building connections/orientations to advance the ALE agenda.

Nevertheless, in the recent independent/external evaluation conducted on ASPBAE's work on ALE advocacy and capacity building for ALE advocacy, which involved interviewing our members and partners, there were significant affirmations conveyed about ASPBAE's ALE movement work in our region that I'd like to share/echo here as follows:

- ASPBAE has been instrumental in advocating for adult learning and education (ALE) in the Asia-Pacific region.
- It has strong regional alliance and extensive network of partnerships, as well as decades of experience and expertise in ALE advocacy.
- It has contributed significantly to global and regional platforms such as CONFINTEA and SDG processes - has been recognized for its inputs on draft recommendations and outcome documents.

- Members expressed that ASPBAE is very effective in facilitating the linkages between country and regional/global levels.
- ASPBAE members were able to learn and share experiences; train young people to become future leaders in ALE, and develop a better understanding of non-formal continuous education, especially for marginalized groups.

In terms of what is needed to strengthen the ALE movement, the discussions we have been having in the region the past few days here in Bali have been instructive in the sense that there's deep experience among our members in ALE practice and delivery of ALE programs, but more can be done in terms of optimising these rich experiences to inform and improve ALE policies or budgets. And at the same time, ALE advocates at the country and transnational levels can still do more to ensure the policy wins they secure at the regional and global levels are concretely translated into actual ALE practices and programmes that truly benefit the learners, with gender, equity and inclusion lenses. It also very important for us to bring in the voices of young people, to include them in our capacity-building efforts in order to reinforce our assertion that for ALE to advance, an inter-generational voice of advocates needs to be sustained to carry a strong message on the criticality of ALE as a right and as key to sustainable development.

2. From the perspective of your region, what should ICAE prioritise in the next four years?

ASPBAE SG Response:

The more specific points of my response will be conveyed by our ICAE Vice-President for the Asia Pacific, Nani, in the regional panel of ICAE EC representatives, but perhaps, to frame our recommendations, it would be good to appreciate the imperatives of our work in the Asia-Pacific region. These imperatives are informed by our reading of the regional and global contexts which I'd like to quickly summarise here. I'm sure a number of these points resonate well with ICAE's reading of its strategic priorities:

Imperative 1: Protect ALE amidst slow and continuing economic recovery from the pandemic and multiple contextual pressures

- Engage governments to fully re-open ALE learning institutions, with particular attention to community learning centres and non-formal education systems
- Influence government efforts in building resilient and transformative education systems – will entail strengthening CSO analysis around financing data for ALE.

Imperative 2: CONFINTEA VII follow-up on the commitments made in the Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA)

- Supporting CSO efforts for information dissemination on the MFA, including translating this in various country languages, deepening awareness on the commitments made, and strengthening accountability mechanisms for monitoring at all levels;

- Highlighting elements of the MFA which, if advanced well, can make a qualitative difference in ALE promotion: 1) ALE financing; 2) concretising the right to ALE in policies and programmes; 3) strongly promoting equitable, inclusive and gender- transformative ALE.
- Joint CSO analysis and advocacy strategising to protect the right to ALE within the right to LLL framework, including articulating and advocating for minimum benchmarks for the right to ALE.

Imperative 3: SDGs-SDG4 spaces remain effective processes to promote ALE

- Sustain the deepening of CSO capacities to advance ALE advocacies in the SDG4 architecture.
- Optimise related follow-up processes of the Transforming Education Summit (TES), inter-related UN Summits, the SDG follow up mechanisms (APFSD, HLPF etc.) and processes that relate to intersecting thematic and strategic priorities for ALE – climate, gender, financing and tax justice, digitalisation, humanitarian-development nexus.

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

Research findings “Study on Adult Learning and Education“: Report and recommendations from eight countries worldwide

Anke Grotlüschen | anke.grotlueschen@uni-hamburg.de

Alisa Belzer | alisa.belzer@gse.rutgers.edu

Keiko Yasukawa | Keiko.Yasukawa@uts.edu.au



Anke Grotlüschen is a Professor for Lifelong Learning at Hamburg University, Faculty of Education. She is the director of the Bachelor and Master programmes in Educational Sciences. She is in charge of the nation-wide Level-One Survey (LEO 2010 and 2018), and she is chair of the scientific committee of the National Literacy Decade.



Alisa Belzer is a Professor at the Rutgers University Graduate School of Education. She is the director of the EdM programme in Adult and Continuing Education and co-editor of Adult Literacy Education: The International Journal of Literacy, Language, and Numeracy. Her research focuses on adult basic education policy, professional development and learner experiences.



Keiko Yasukawa is an adult education researcher and teacher educator at the University of Technology Sydney. Keiko's research and teaching focuses on adult literacy and numeracy, and she is particularly interested in the tensions between policy, pedagogy and practice. Keiko has also taken leadership roles in the adult literacy and numeracy professional associations, and is currently the president of the NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council.

Adult education worldwide is a field within education that is challenged by very diverse societal and political conditions and is overall still much less acknowledged and structured than school education. A research project from Universität Hamburg (Germany), Rutgers University (USA) and University of Technology Sydney (Australia) has examined the state of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in eight selected countries: Australia, Brazil, India, Jordan, South Africa, Kyrgyzstan, Thailand and Ukraine through interviews with expert informants in each of these countries. The study was initiated in 2022 by DVV International (*Institut für Internationale Zusammenarbeit des Deutschen Volkshochschul-Verbandes e.V.*) and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The key findings are presented in a report published on 15.06.2023.

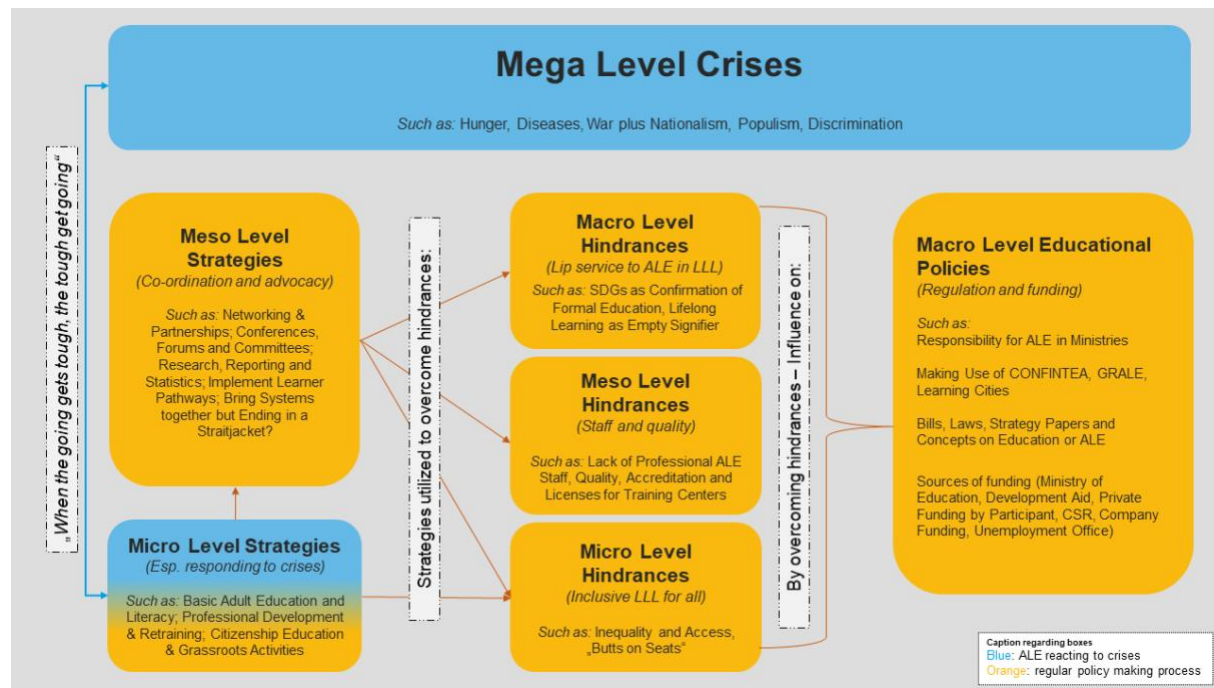
From August 2022 until October 2022, interviews with 25 experts from the selected countries were conducted and then analyzed through a Ground Theory approach. From this, a model emerged, showing how factors and actors at different societal levels - mega, macro, meso and micro - interact to shape adult learning and education in different contexts.

Mega level comparisons show that overarching issues such as war and conflict, historical and systemic discrimination, disease and extreme poverty as well as political authoritarianism act both as an impetus for and as barriers to ALE activities.

Comparative analysis shows that at the **macro level**, with a few exceptions, ALE features as a 'stepchild' or 'poor cousin' to the school education sector. Within ALE, formal credentialed programs focused on compensatory education or workforce development attract more policy interest and support while non-credentialed, informal and non-formal learning initiatives struggle to receive more than lip service. This makes the sustainability of ALE initiatives other than the credentialed programs highly vulnerable.

The **meso level** is where the key driving force for the implementation of ALE in the policy arena is found. Advice to government from democratically structured associations with elected chairs has greater gravitas than advice from less formally constituted groupings. However, these associations' effectiveness can be limited by factors such as lack of resources, funding and professional expertise.

At the **micro level**, informal and nonformal ALE activities are provided by companies as in-service training, and by commercial providers, governmental organisations or civil society organisations that run training centers. Activities at the micro level are highly flexible. This is complemented by grassroots activists mobilising community members in response to local issues and needs. ALE at the micro level includes responding to the localised impact of severe weather events, improving the quality of life for the elderly, and challenging the prevalence of sexual harassment as acceptable behaviour.



Graph: When the going gets tough, the tough get going. Findings from the study “Adult Learning and Education within the Framework of Lifelong Learning”, Grotlüschen, Belzer, Ertner, Yasukawa, 2023.

The graph summarizes the findings of the study. Key messages of the model are:

- Orange: Regular ALE policy process, where associations and researchers are influencing educational and labor market policies that are issued by their ministries. The associations and advisors use several strategies to overcome hinderances and they implement some quite effective structures on policy levels.
- Blue: Activism with ALE as answer to political crisis, with grassroots structures and self-help groups taking ownership of their resources and problems, trying to survive and overcome hunger, war and disease. This also seems an answer to populist and authoritarian political systems.
- Conclusion: As long as governance structures exist and prove flexible, the regular advocacy structures are adequate. But if food, water, energy and physical safety are affected, people don’t wait for the systems to protect them – they get going.

The report presents examples of successful, micro level and grassroots projects from each country. Many of these projects are carried out by DVV International, the main German organization fostering adult learning and education worldwide, together with local partners. The insights from the study led to **recommendations** about ways in which ALE could be strengthened within the framework of lifelong learning. The recommendations to associations and policy makers are:

- Build and support sustainable networks and associations

- Build coordination across stakeholders and within sectors that engage with ALE.
- Recognize and encourage grassroots efforts that support adult learning in ALE and other sectors
- Support the collection and use of high quality (quantitative and qualitative) data on ALE at both the national and cross-country levels to both advocate for and strengthen provision at the local, state, and national levels
- Highlight and strengthen the role of ALE in lifelong learning by reinforcing the importance of a lifelong and lifewide (across the full spectrum of adult learning needs and interests) approach to learning
- Leverage the flexibility and responsiveness of ALE to build on its strengths
- Ensure that ALE meets the wide range of educational, training, and civic needs that learners, employers, and governments have for learning in adulthood
- Provide meaningful support for ALE at the micro, meso, and macro levels

The research findings and recommendations will be presented for the different entities of DVV International in countries and thereby opened for influences on the macro and meso level in different countries all over the world. Within that, a direct influence on policy makers and practitioners is implied.

Findings have been launched online on 15.06.2023 as No. 81 in the Publication series International Perspectives in Adult Education (IPE).

<https://www.dvv-international.de/en/materials/publications/international-perspectives-in-adult-education-ipe>

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

Shifting Paradigms: Empowering Lifelong Learning through Vocational Education and Training (VET)

El Iza Mohamedou | el-iza.mohamedou@oecd.org



El Iza Mohamedou is the Head of the OECD Centre for Skills where she leads the Centre's strategic direction and oversees its research and provision of skills analysis and policy advice to countries. This is to help countries achieve high-quality learning & training, and design better skills policies for better lives, jobs, productivity, and growth. El Iza holds over 25 years of international experience working with international financial institutions, NGOs, communities, international institutions, governments, and the private sector.

The labour market and education sectors are undergoing significant transformations amidst the digital and green transitions. These transitions are reshaping how we produce energy, engage with technology, and prepare individuals for the workforce. Understanding this interplay is crucial as we navigate the complexities of these transitions and foster lifelong learning and adaptability.

The Changing Landscape

Renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power are poised to surpass coal-fired power stations and other fossil fuels, potentially becoming the world's largest single source of electricity by 2026 ([IEA/OECD, 2023](#)). Concurrently, advancements in technology are driving sectoral shifts in employment. While certain industries may experience declines, historical data from the United States suggests that new technologies have created more jobs than they displaced, albeit in different sectors ([Mindell & Reynolds, 2023](#)). However, it is important to acknowledge that these shifts may entail painful consequences for some workers, necessitating proactive measures to address the resulting skills mismatch.

Education in Response

Education is also evolving in response to these transitions. The interaction between digital and green transformations presents both opportunities and challenges. In response, educational and training systems are shifting to accommodate changing technological and environmental demands. However, despite widespread awareness of climate change among nearly 80% of young people in the EU and OECD countries, there is a hesitance to engage in collective environmental protection activities ([OECD, 2023c](#)). The demand for adaptability is further stressed with approximately 28% of employment across OECD countries at high risk of automation ([Lassebie & Quintini, 2022](#)). Hence, lifelong learning through upskilling and reskilling is essential to address this skills mismatch. However, data from the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) indicates that a significant portion of adults—nearly 60%—are not engaging in formal or non-formal learning opportunities ([OECD, 2021](#)).

The Focus on Skills

As jobs facing high automation risk persist, the rapid evolution of automation and artificial intelligence underscores the need to focus on evolving workforce skills rather than the disappearance of entire job categories ([Mindell & Reynolds, 2023](#)). This emphasizes the importance of “bottleneck” skills—harder to automate—as critical considerations ([Lassebie & Quintini, 2022](#)). A debate arises regarding the type of education and training necessary to cultivate a diverse skill set aligned with changing demands.

Learners must acquire initial skills and qualifications while also developing adaptability for lifelong career evolution. This requires integrating foundational skills like literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy, alongside transversal and meta-cognitive skills such as critical thinking and creative problem-solving, social-emotional skills like empathy and collaboration, and professional knowledge and technical skills ([OECD, 2019](#)). For instance, professional and technical knowledge rely on foundational skills, while social-emotional skills are vital and evolve lifelong. As such, the future of skills rests on lifelong learning, where these skill scales merge and evolve continuously throughout an individual's life.

The Importance of VET & Work-Based Learning

VET assumes paramount importance in the current context due to its unique role in preparing individuals for middle-skill jobs vulnerable to automation and affected by green and digital transitions. Traditionally, VET programmes have been tailored to equip individuals with the skills necessary for roles at high risk of automation. As new technologies and production methods emerge, there is a crucial need to align these advancements with the requisite skills, a task for which VET programmes are well-suited. Moreover, VET serves as a vital tool for both young people entering the labour market and adults seeking retraining opportunities ([OECD, 2023a](#)).

Interestingly, VET leads to similar employment rates as general education in most OECD countries among young adults, with an OECD average of 83% for VET compared to 85% for general education ([OECD, 2023b](#)). Despite suffering from a negative perception, VET demonstrates commendable employment outcomes. This underscores the effectiveness of VET programs in preparing individuals for successful entry into the workforce.

Moreover, countries with a higher proportion of students enrolled in VET programmes that combine school and work-based learning exhibit higher employment rates among VET graduates ([OECD, 2023b](#)). These programmes, which integrate practical work experience with classroom learning, offer several advantages. They enable students to apply their skills in real-world settings and facilitate a seamless transition from education to the workforce by providing invaluable practical experience.

Challenges and Opportunities

However, despite the evident advantages of work-based learning, combined school- and work-based programmes remain uncommon across many OECD countries. On average, only 45% of upper secondary VET students are enrolled in these comprehensive programmes ([OECD, 2023b](#)). This scarcity highlights a significant opportunity to enhance VET quality and effectiveness by broadening the availability of combined school- and work-based learning initiatives. Such endeavours can reinforce the role of VET in preparing individuals for the evolving demands of the labour market amid digital and green transitions.

Furthermore, as the importance of ensuring initial VET students acquire strong foundational skills becomes increasingly evident, challenges arise in striking the appropriate balance between general and vocational content within VET programmes. VET graduates may demonstrate weaker transversal skills compared to their counterparts from other educational streams. For instance, across OECD countries, an average of 15% of young adults with a vocational qualification lack basic literacy skills, compared to 12% among those with a general qualification at the same level, and only 5% among those with a tertiary qualification ([OECD, 2020](#)). These disparities underscore the necessity of equipping VET graduates with robust transversal skills.

As such, achieving a suitable balance between general and vocational content is paramount. In Sweden, for instance, 30% of the curriculum is shared between vocational and general programs, enhancing flexibility and ensuring that students graduate with a shared skills foundation ([OECD, 2023b](#)). Furthermore, proposals advocating for the integration of work-based learning in the curriculum aim to facilitate interdisciplinary studies, enabling students to merge knowledge from diverse disciplines to tackle intricate topics.

However, despite the recognized importance of VET in bridging skills gaps and preparing individuals for the workforce, a notable barrier exists for a subset of VET students. One in four VET students is enrolled in a programme that does not provide access to tertiary education ([OECD, 2023b](#)). This lack of flexibility restricts opportunities for VET students seeking to further their education beyond the vocational level. While arguments exist for limiting access to tertiary education to promote alternative pathways, it is essential to ensure that VET students have the option to pursue further education if desired, thereby fostering greater inclusivity and flexibility within the education system.

Moreover, addressing this barrier is crucial given the significance of professional programmes as a pathway from VET into academic programs. VET students must be well-prepared to progress successfully and pursue programmes that may be more theoretically oriented or research focused. Hence, ensuring these pathways are established and that bridges from VET to all types of tertiary programmes are implemented is paramount. Options to obtain an upper secondary qualification required for university studies are essential. Examples from countries like Switzerland, Belgium Flanders, and Austria demonstrate the importance of opening access to bachelor-level programmes ([OECD, 2022](#)). These initiatives not only enhance opportunities for VET graduates but also contribute to a more inclusive and adaptable education system.

Looking Forward & Policy Implications

Nonetheless, while VET programs play a crucial role in preparing individuals for the workforce, there is a pressing need for increased flexibility and structural changes to make these programmes more inclusive and responsive to evolving needs. Modularizing VET programs and introducing micro-credentials can enhance flexibility, allowing learners to acquire specific knowledge and skills flexibly. Recognition of prior learning further promotes accessibility by acknowledging and validating individuals' existing skills, thereby shortening training programmes and focusing on closing skill gaps (OECD, 2023a).

Practical changes, such as offering part-time and distance learning opportunities, providing preparatory courses, and increasing the flexibility of entry requirements, are essential to accommodate diverse learners and ensure equitable access to VET. Additionally, fostering more and better opportunities for work-based learning and providing comprehensive career guidance can enhance the effectiveness of VET programmes in preparing individuals for the labour market (OECD, 2023a).

Looking ahead, policymakers must consider these implications for the future of VET and skills. This includes incorporating new skills and knowledge, locally adjusting qualifications, and aligning programme delivery content with emerging technologies. Moreover, fostering collaboration between VET providers, employers, and students is essential to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of VET programmes in meeting the evolving demands of the labour market and promoting lifelong learning. By addressing these challenges and embracing innovative approaches, we can create a more inclusive and adaptive VET system that equips individuals with the skills they need to thrive in an ever-changing world.

References

- IEA/OECD. (2023). *Shares of global electricity generation by source in The net zero scenario, 2000-2030 – charts – Data & Statistics*. <https://www.iea.org/data-and-statistics/charts/shares-of-global-electricity-generation-by-source-in-the-net-zero-scenario-2000-2030-2>
- Lassébie, J. & Quintini, G. (2022). *What skills and abilities can automation technologies replicate and what does it mean for workers?: New evidence*. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 282. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/646aad77-en>.
- Mindell, D. A., & Reynolds, E. (2023). *The work of the future: building better jobs in an age of intelligent machines*. MIT Press.
- OECD. (2023a). "Building Future-Ready Vocational Education and Training Systems". *OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/28551a79-en>
- OECD. (2023b). *Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/e13bef63-en>
- OECD. (2023c). *OECD Skills Outlook 2023: Skills for a Resilient Green and Digital Transition*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/27452f29-en>.
- OECD. (2022). "Pathways to Professions: Understanding Higher Vocational and Professional Tertiary Education Systems", *OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/a81152f4-en>.
- OECD. (2021). *OECD Skills Outlook 2021: Learning for Life*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/0ae365b4-en>.

OECD. (2020). *OECD Employment Outlook 2020: Worker Security and the COVID-19 Crisis*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/1686c758-en>.

OECD. (2019). *OECD Skills Strategy 2019: Skills to Shape a Better Future*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264313835-en>.

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)

Raising Awareness of the MFA: Takeaways from a U.S. Webinar

Christy Rhodes | rhodesc14@ecu.edu



Dr. Christy Rhodes has been an adult educator for over 30 years. She worked with adult English language learners in the U.S. and abroad before joining the College of Education at East Carolina University, where she is currently an Associate Professor in the Adult Education MAEd program. In addition to adult literacy education, she is interested in culturally inclusive teaching and immigrant integration. She is President of the Coalition of Lifelong Learning Organizations (COLLO) and served as a member of the U.S. delegation to CONFINTEA VII.

On April 11, 2024, the Coalition of Lifelong Learning Organizations (COLLO) and the International Council on Adult Education (ICAE) co-hosted the webinar, *Marrakech Framework for Action: Connecting to Global Initiatives for Lifelong Learning and Education*. Designed to raise awareness among the U.S. adult education community, organizers were excited to welcome over 82 attendees from both formal and informal adult learning environments who represented not only the U.S., but also as far afield as Argentina, Austria, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Singapore, Uganda, the United Kingdom, and our neighbor to the north, Canada. Perhaps the warmest “shoutout” goes around the globe to Robbie Guevara, President of ICAE, who joined the event from Australia at midnight! A star-studded panel of ICAE Secretary General Katarina Popovic and the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) Deputy Secretary General and Head of Policy Raffaella Kihrer shared their thoughts about the following questions:

1. What are the MFA’s basic tenets and overall purpose?
2. Why does the field of adult education need the MFA?
3. What relevance does the MFA have to adult educators?

Introduction: Providing Context

Secretary General Popovic artfully laid the groundwork for the webinar by summarizing the history of international education conferences and reminded the group of how vital those gatherings have been to establish “a common global agenda in an otherwise divided world”. She also noted that in addition to the role of establishing benchmarks and offering mutual reference points, CONFINTEA VII and other international adult education conferences have fostered vital connections and allow the exchange of ideas on a global level. She

praised the MFA for its utility as a local, national, and global tool. The final point of her overview was in response to the question of, “For whom is the MFA?”. She eloquently explained that it is a document for all adult educators by stating, “Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world!”

Deputy Secretary General Kihrer then provided background to the six MFA action recommendations: establishing frameworks and governance arrangements, redesigning systems for Adult Learning and Education (ALE), ensuring quality of learning, increasing funding, promoting inclusion, and expanding learning domains (UNESCO, 2022). While some attendees were familiar with these areas, Kihrer offered illuminating explanations of each and strongly demonstrated their interconnectedness. Of particular interest was her framing of the ties between promoting inclusion, also understood as the need to increase participation in ALE, and the increase of funding of ALE. Having been asked to share the European perspective on the MFA, Kihrer noted that the EAEA often uses the MFA as a tool for their advocacy initiatives. She finds the framework useful to establish checks and systems of validation for ALE, as well as serving as a tool to encourage the community to “look at the root causes, perhaps issues of inequality” to work together to resolve those structural issues. To close, she encouraged attendees to contribute however possible, since no act is too small to affect change. As she said, “the MFA is about the joy of learning, the importance of being included, creating community, and empowering people.”

Summary: Questions, Answers, and Discussion

During the ensuing Q&A session, a question arose about the intransigence of the various barriers to adult learner participation. Popovic answered by reminding the group of the “poli-crises” that have occurred in recent years and the danger of the normalization of this constant state of crisis. She noted the progress made at CONFINTEA VII with the MFA’s acknowledgement of the dangers of climate change, gender inequity, persistent levels of low literacy, and growing civic unrest and violence around the world as support for the role of ALE in the resolution of these persistent problems. Specifically, she noted that signatories of the MFA were unanimous in their ratification of the document and joined with UNESCO to affirm the potential of ALE to be a transformative force. She challenged attendees to examine how civic education has been structured up to now and asserted that “teaching and preaching” has not been successful. Therefore, the ALE global community can and should play a role in its restructuring.

It was important to organizers that attendees had time to process information together. So, participants were asked to briefly discuss the alignment of their current work in ALE with the MFA and to brainstorm future activities to support the implementation of the MFA in small breakout groups. While time did not allow for a full debriefing, the overall impression was that the MFA clearly resonated with attendees, as they noted various examples in literacy education and higher education, in addition to some informal, community-based projects. One attendee offered that understanding the broad scope of adult learning the MFA encompasses helped her better understand the existing tension between focusing on the learning of utilitarian skills for employment and more holistic learning supported by a lifelong learning approach to ALE.

Pat Tyler, Executive Director of the National Association of State Directors of Adult Education (NASDAE), shared a few of her “takeaways” from the small group discussions. Of note was the uniqueness of “not reaching those who need adult education the most” across the globe. From her experience in adult basic education, she saw many points of intersection between the MFA and programming in the U.S. For example, the Career Pathways System, an integrated model of adult foundation education, career and technical training, postsecondary education, and counseling and support instituted in 2012 (U.S. Department of Education OCTAE, n.d.), has created and expanded partnerships among the aforementioned adult learning environments and has resulted in higher academic achievement for adult English language learners and individuals seeking secondary credentialing. She sees this effort as exemplifying many of the action areas of the MFA.

Another important theme emanating from this webinar has been present in other MFA awareness-raising settings. That is the growing realization that there is a global ALE community and that all benefit from engaging with colleagues from around the world. Can the blame for a diminished U.S. presence in international adult education be placed solely on the 2016 exit from UNESCO? Or do other factors such as the fractured and siloed nature of U.S. adult education need to be taken into account? Regardless of where the blame lies, it was encouraging to hear so many attendees note how much they enjoyed and learned from connecting with international colleagues. While the U.S. has rejoined UNESCO, it has yet to establish its National Commission for UNESCO, an action that would facilitate further international dialogue among the ALE community.

It was on this note that the North American Vice President for ICAE, Peter Waite, summarized the plethora of learning that occurred during the webinar. He noted the universal nature of the issues and challenges faced by the global ALE community, and echoed the importance of understanding that we are all members of a wider movement. He sees the MFA as that link to “identify and think of ourselves as part of a global movement.” However, he noted that due to the severity of the challenges facing the world today, the U.S. ALE community must act with urgency. Rather than expecting one organization or governmental agency to fix these problems, he encouraged attendees to “pass multiple batons out in the field”.

Conclusion and Acknowledgements

In closing, *Marrakech Framework for Action: Connecting to Global Initiatives for Lifelong Learning and Education* was the first of a four-part series offered by COLLO. While the specific content for future webinars is still to be determined, it is clear that the U.S. ALE community is eager to engage with our international colleagues and learn from each other.

On behalf of COLLO, I would like to thank Katarina Popovic, Raffaella Kihrer, Peter Waite, and Robbie Guevara for the support of ICAE in hosting this webinar. We look forward to continuing to share with and learn from our global partners.

References

- UNESCO. (2022). *CONFINTEA VII Marrakech framework for action: Harnessing the transformational power of adult learning and education*. <https://uil.unesco.org/adult-education/confintea/confintea-vii-marrakech-framework-action-harnessing-transformational-power>.
- U.S. Department of Education Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, Division of Academic and Technical Education. (n.d.). *Career Pathways Systems*. PCRN: Career Pathways Systems. <https://cte.ed.gov/initiatives/career-pathways-systems>.

[BACK TO CONTENT PAGE](#)



Join COLLO and
ICAE for a webinar!



Marrakech Framework for Action: Connecting to Global Initiatives for Lifelong Learning and Adult Education



APRIL 11, 2024
10:00-11:45 AM (EDT)



Did you know ?

This global framework will guide Adult Learning and Education for the next decade, emphasizing sustainability and a new social contract to provide quality adult education for all.

It includes a focus on:

- universal literacy,
- global citizenship,
- digital learning,
- climate education, and
- constant reskilling and upskilling for work.

Educators from 142 countries have adopted the MFA.

- MFA is an outcome of CONFINTEA VII, the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education, held June 2022 in Marrakech, Morocco.
- CONFINTEA VII's aim was to help achieve the 17 UN goals for sustainable development. It coalesced around perspectives, practices, and policies to enable adults to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

The U.S. contributed to conference preparations and dialogue and non-voting participation at CONFINTEA VII led by a government delegate from the Office of Career, Technical, and Career Education (OCTAE).



**JOIN US ON THE MARRAKESH EXPRESS
TO TRANSFORM ADULT EDUCATION!**

REGISTER NOW

Welcome new PIMA members

It gives great pleasure to welcome four new PIMA members who are all currently students on the award-winning, first collaborative online Masters in Adult Learning and Global Change, degree programme, established in 2000 by University of the Western Cape, South Africa, University of British Columbia, Canada, University of Linkoping, Sweden, University of Technology, Australia.

The new members:



Nomthandazo Biyela is an Education Specialist at UMfolozi Technical Vocational Training and Education (TVET) College, South Africa, where she supervises lecturers who teach on the part-time, evening classes. She is currently a student on the Masters in Adult Learning and Global Change through the University of Western Cape. Nomthi.biy@gmail.com



Jo-Anne Campbell is teaching at a Cape Town school in a working class area, which experiences widespread substance abuse and violence. Her experience with students in the community has led her to understand the need for adult learning and education. To deepen her understanding she is currently a student on the Masters in Adult Learning and Global Change through the University of Western Cape. Joannecampbell369@gmail.com



Junior Ramalapa is a lecturer at the North Link TVET College, Cape Town, South Africa. He specialises in apprenticeship/ skills programs and values the power of interdisciplinary approaches to tackle contemporary problems. He is currently a student on the Masters in Adult Learning and Global Change through the University of Western Cape. ramalapaj@gmail.com



Mmberegeni Samson Mabuli is a Lecturer at Vhembe TVET College, Limpopo, South Africa. He has over 10 years' experience as a Civil Engineering lecturer. He is currently a student on the Masters in Adult Learning and Global Change through the University of Western Cape. Mabulims123@gmail.com

CONFINTEA VII: Marrakech Framework for Action



GLOBAL ALE FACTS



1 out of 10 adults worldwide lack basic reading and writing skills

→ the majority are women



In 23% of 159 countries that submitted data for GRALE 5, **fewer than 1% of youth and adults** aged 15 and above participate in education and learning programmes



Higher-income countries are more likely to increase their investment in ALE than low-income countries



WHAT IS CONFINTEA?

CONFINTEA stands for the **International Conference on Adult Education**, organised every 12 years since 1949 by UNESCO. Every conference concludes with recommendations for further action to improve ALE. The last conference took place in Morocco in June 2022.

CONFINTEA is more than a conference: **it is a process**. The status of ALE in UNESCO member states is monitored regularly through **GRALE: the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education**. Leading up to CONFINTEA, national reports are drafted, and regional consultations take place.

In June 2022, 142 Member States of UNESCO signed the **Marrakech Framework for Action** which will guide global adult learning and education (ALE) strategies and policies for the next 12 years, leading up to CONFINTEA VIII.



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

we are



FOCAL AREAS OF THE FRAMEWORK



ALE FOR ALL

Reaffirming that adult learning and education is a key component of lifelong learning and in line with the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE) adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in 2015, the framework identifies **three key areas of ALE**: literacy and basic skills, continuing education and vocational skills, and liberal, popular and community education and civic skills.



GENDER

The framework calls for a **critical and sensitive understanding of the role of gender in relation to educational access and participation**. It promotes gender-transformative adult learning and education that is comprehensive, holistic and intergenerational, bringing together education actors with sectors such as health, protection, and justice.



SUSTAINABILITY

The Marrakech Framework for Action emphasises the key role of non-formal ALE for sustainability. It recalls the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and reaffirms the commitment to the 17 SDGs, especially SDG 4 to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.



GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

It reaffirms that ALE can constitute a powerful policy response to consolidate social cohesion, enhance socio-emotional skill development, secure peace, strengthen democracy, improve cultural understanding, eliminate all types of discrimination, and promote peaceful living together and **active and global citizenship**.



CLIMATE CHANGE

ALE can play an important role in empowering adults to become **role models for younger generations** and become **agents of change** at the local, national, and global levels. Raising awareness of the impacts of climate change, but also establishing ALE organisations as models for green transition and 'greening' organisational structures are central.



LEARNING IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS

The Marrakech Framework promotes **equal access to learning in digital environments**, emphasising that digital learning requires also the promotion of **wider transversal skills, such as critical thinking, communication, empathy and social skills**, to establish the transformative and emancipatory power of ALE.



FUTURE OF WORK

The framework promotes the equitable acquisition of relevant knowledge, competencies and skills throughout the life course, to provide **opportunities for reskilling and upskilling for decent work** in a changing world of work. It also highlights the need to include those who are not (anymore) participating in the labour market.



CULTURE OF LIFELONG LEARNING

A learning environment needs to be created whereby **inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning for young and old are established as a public endeavour** that serves not only the world of work, but also individual well-being and the common good.

ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS



Enactment and monitoring are key cornerstones of the implementation process of the Marrakech Framework for Action. Civil society will play a central role in giving feedback on the implementation process and developments in the ALE sector at the national and regional levels.

GET INVOLVED!

- Were you part of your **national delegation** in Morocco? Great! This means you probably have good access to your ministry/department in charge of ALE.
- Were you not part of your national delegation? Find out who was and try to get in contact with them! Show the support you have internationally by using **European documents and arguments**, such as the [EAEA Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century](#), or the [We Are ALE](#) campaign.
- If there is little interest in the implementation process at the policy level, **build up the momentum** yourself: an online campaign or an event might draw attention to the Marrakech Framework for Action.
- Would you like to be involved in webinars, actions, and communication on the progress of the **CONFINTEA process at the European and international levels**? Let us know and join our EAEA working group!

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

we are



PIMA Bulletin No 50, April 2024

CONFINTEA VII FOLLOW-UP

PIMA is incorporated in Victoria, Australia, as Friends of PASCAL International Association. It is an expanding global network of diverse individual adult and lifelong learning educators, activists, and scholars. It grew out of PASCAL.

We collaborate with PASCAL <http://pascalobservatory.org/> and many other bodies, towards greater social, economic, and ecological justice. We contribute to 'outside-of-the-box' thinking to address the contemporary local/global crises and issues. We encourage members to work together and in solidarity with one another to bring the expertise of adult learning and education (ALE), within a lifelong learning orientation, to the resolution of everyday issues and problems.

URL: www.pimanetwork.com