

The Confintea Mid-Term Review (Mtr) – The Power of Adult Learning: Vision 2030¹

Reviewing achievements and challenges in implementing the CONFINTEA VI commitments

25–27 October 2017, Suwon City, South Korea

The global community of adult education practitioners, policy advocates, civil society, academicians, researchers, and national government representatives from 144 member States of UNESCO gathered in Suwon City to review the progress of the achievements and challenges, since the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education – CONFINTEA VI – held in Belem, Brazil, in 2009.

The CONFINTEA Mid-Term Review (MTR) – entitled *The Power of Adult Learning: Vision 2030* – was organised by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Education (UIL) in cooperation with the Korean Ministry of Education, the Korean National Commission of UNESCO, and the National Institute for Lifelong Learning (NILE), and co-hosted by the Municipalities of Suwon and Osan cities.

The main objectives of the CONFINTEA MTR were to:

- Take stock of the progress made in implementing the Belém Framework for Action (BFA) and the regional action plans put into place following regional CONFINTEA VI follow-up meetings.
- Present ideas, good practices, success stories, and research findings on adult learning and education, its inter-sectoral benefits, and how it can fit into broader policy reforms.
- Identify powerful new arguments to raise awareness of and advocate for adult learning and education (ALE) and support the case of greater investments in this subsector of education.
- Establish strategies and measures to enhance full implementation and sound monitoring of the BFA and the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE) towards CONFINTEA VII in 2021.

¹ Izveštaj je pripremljen na osnovu ASPBE Newsletter-a, oktobar 2017. <http://www.aspbae.org/node/71>.

- Examine the implications of the 2030 Agenda (Education 2030 and SDG4 in particular) on ALE to ascertain how it can contribute to the achievement of SDG4 and the other SDGs.
- Explore ways to reinforce existing partnerships and create new ones at global, regional, national, and local levels to develop joint actions on ALE up to CONFINTEA VII and beyond.

Deliberations at the CONFINTEA VI MTR were guided by the 5 areas of the Belem Framework for Action (BFA):

1. Policy
2. Governance
3. Financing
4. Participation, inclusion, and equity
5. Quality

Discussions also focussed on the domains of learning and skills as defined in the Recommendations on Adult Learning and Education (RALE); continuing education and vocational skills; community education and active citizenship skills, and; the importance of adult learning and education for achieving the SDGs, and SDG4 in particular.

The other reference documents for the CONFINTEA VI MTR were GRALE III (Global Report on Adult Learning and Education), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Education 2030: Framework for Action.

The three plenary sessions on the first day of the CONFINTEA VI MTR focussed on the key achievements made in implementing the BFA recommendations since 2009 and the RALE since 2015; the presentation of the status of ALE through the five regional reports and, the insights and the lessons learnt from implementing effective and innovative practices at the country level.

The second day's plenary focussed on the effective practices that were successful in addressing challenges in the three fields of learning as defined in the RALE and those that exemplified the links between ALE and the SDGs. The first plenary highlighted the inter-sectoral character of ALE and its crucial role for realisation of the international frameworks and development agendas, including the BFA, RALE, Education 2030, and the SDGs.

This plenary was followed by two five parallel group sessions. The first parallel group session focussed on the specific theme of the inter-sectoral dimension of ALE – basic skills; vocational skills; active citizenship skills; ALE for health and environmental sustainability; and ALE in conflict and post-conflict situations. The second parallel group session focussed on the implications of the SDG4 in the view of the five areas of action of the BFA and; identify ways in which the new

education agenda impacts on the implementation of the BFA at the country level with recommendations for follow up action.

Side events organised on the second day included the one on Community Learning Centres (CLC) as key structures for lifelong learning which was organised by DVV International.

The plenary session on the third day focussed on the tools and instruments available for measuring and monitoring ALE, especially adult literacy as a key component of ALE, at the national and global level. The focus of another plenary session was to generate recommendations, emerging from the deliberations in the CONFINTEA VI MTR, to emphasise and promote the five areas of action of the BFA at the country level.

In the final session of the Conference, participants endorsed a draft outcomes document, the '*Suwon-Osan CONFINTEA VI Mid-term Review Statement, The Power of adult learning and education – a Vision towards 2030*'. The statement:

- Affirmed the structural, enabling, and pivotal role of adult education and learning in promoting the implementation of the entire 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and SDG4.
- Acknowledged other policy platforms and frameworks since Belem (2009) which reinforce adult education and learning, notably the revised Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE) adopted by UNESCO's General Conference in 2015; the creation of the Global Alliance for Literacy in the Framework of Lifelong Learning (GAL) to advance the literacy agenda (SDG4.6) and ALE in a lifelong learning perspective; and the UNESCO Guidelines for the Recognition, Validation, and Accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning.
- Recognised the progress made and ongoing challenges. Some positive developments noted include an increase in the number of countries adopting ALE policies, new partnerships forged at various levels and useful instruments to improve quality have been set in place. However, of the many challenges, some worth citing include: funding in the sector remains woefully inadequate (less than 1% of education budgets on average; very low participation especially of marginalised groups including women; and the lack of training and support for AE personnel and trainers.
- Offered several recommendations to address the ongoing challenges and respond to the changed context and opportunities for ALE. These were identified along the core elements of the Belem Framework for Action, the UNESCO RALE and other cross-cutting areas

for ALE deemed essential: Policy, Governance, Participation, Financing, Quality, Literacy and Basic Skills, ALE and Vocational Skills, Active Citizenship through Community, Popular and Liberal Education, Health, Well-being and environmental sustainability and ALE in conflict, post conflict and disaster situations.

- Called for a greater articulation of ALE within the SDGs and in SDG4 – recognising it remains the weakest link in the lifelong learning chain.

The participants called for a number of actions to include the following:

- Member states to urgently implement the Belem Framework for Action and RALE.
- Prepare for CONFINTEA VII in 2021.
- Member States to work intersectorally and increase policy dialogue that includes all stakeholders, including civil society and learners to create lifelong learning systems and societies.
- Member States to reinforce UNESCO and its institutes, particularly the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning so that appropriate monitoring of organized learning activities in relation to the targets of SDG 4.
- Member States to work intersectorally and increase policy dialogue that includes all stakeholders, including civil society and learners to create lifelong learning systems and societies.
- Adult literacy should be reinstated in the Human Development Index.
- Education Commission, the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait, and other development partners as well as national and sub-national governments to restore attention to and provide adequate funding to adult literacy.
- UNESCO to popularise and articulate RALE and BFA with the SDG4 implementation processes and architecture such as the Global Education Meeting, SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee, and regional SDG4 coordination mechanisms, as well as within the wider United Nations structures. It must be used as a reference for National Voluntary Review and High Level Political Forums yearly meetings as well as guiding the work of the Global Alliance on Literacy.

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