

ICAE WORLD ASSEMBLY 2011

Lifelong Learning for sustainability in a climate changing world

CONCEPT NOTE

(14 January Version)

As we prepare for the coming ICAE World Assembly in June 2011, there is an organisational imperative to take stock and reflect on our thematic engagement with the field of adult and environmental education for sustainable societies. However, it is important to underscore that we do not have the luxury of time to sit back and reflect, as with each day the need to respond to the impact of climate change on humanity and the planetary systems that support life grows more and more urgent.

While by no means an exhaustive list of events, the following concept note is an attempt to collate the key events that ICAE has been engaged with in the field of adult and environmental education for sustainable societies. It is also an attempt to identify the key principles that have informed our practice and corresponding advocacy agenda of environmental education. We hope that this document will serve not just as an opportunity for recall but more importantly as a way to help build a confidence that as a global movement we have had a rather significant history of engagement, with the tools and the principles that can help us respond to the new challenges ahead.

Rio 1992: A Journey that culminated in a Treaty

In June 1992, ICAE (through its Learning for Environmental Action Program - LEAP) organised - with other institutions, the Journey of Environmental Education that culminated with the presentation of the Treaty of Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Responsibility during the International NGO Forum of the Rio Earth Summit. This was the outcome of an extensive series of consultative processes with educators across the five continents, as signatories of the Treaty where we acknowledged ...

*"... people from all parts of the globe, are devoted to protect life on Earth and recognize the central role of education in shaping values and social action. We commit ourselves to a process of educational transformation aimed at involving ourselves, our communities and nations in creating equitable and sustainable societies. In so doing we seek to bring new hope to our small, troubled, but still beautiful planet."*¹

Elements of the Treaty continue to be relevant, such as, that as educators, we "... consider that preparing ourselves for the required changes depends on advancing collective understanding of the systemic nature of the crisis that threatens the world's future.

Similarly, the principles of environmental education identified in the Treaty continue to inform our work, such as that "education is the right of all"; that environmental education "involves holistic approach", "values all different forms of knowledge", and "should empower all peoples."

¹ Treaty on Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Responsibility
http://www.stakeholderforum.org/fileadmin/files/Earth_Summit_2012/1992_treaties/Treaty_on_Environmental_Education_for_Sustainable_Societies_and_Global_Responsibility.pdf

In preparation for Rio + 20 which will be held in Rio 2012, ICAE will continue working as part of the 2nd International Journey on Environmental Education and this should constitute one of the key focus towards the Assembly, generating a debate around the major challenges and proposals for education and sustainability, drawing from the long experience already accumulated by ICAE as a global network and by its various members in different regions.

Hamburg 1997: Advocacy gains at CONFINTEA V

Informed by the Treaty, LEAP played an influential role in the lead-up and conduct of CONFINTEA V, where it hosted a thematic workshop and actively lobbied for elements of both the Agenda for the Future and the Hamburg Declaration. This is evident, for example, in the Declaration which stated that ...

“... education for environmental sustainability should be a lifelong learning process which recognizes that ecological problems that exist within a socio-economic, political and cultural context. A sustainable future cannot be achieved without addressing the relationship between environmental problems and current development paradigms. Adult environmental education can play an important role in sensitizing and mobilizing communities and decision-makers towards sustained environmental action.”²

ICAE should continue lobbying the adult education field so as to disseminate the idea that education for sustainability is not a separate field but part and parcel of lifelong learning. In this respect, ICAE's participation at the Advisory Group at UIL for the follow up of CONFINTEA is a privileged space for highlighting the importance of education for sustainability. The members of the International Journey wrote a final report after participation at CONFINTEA where they explicitly highlighted that little was introduced in the Belem Framework for Action in terms of environment, climate change and the challenges it poses for education. This will be a clear line of work towards the Assembly and beyond.

Gender Equality, Climate Change and Education for Sustainability

Since 1997, the Gender and Education Office (GEO) of the ICAE has continued to advance the advocacy for environmental education with a shaper understanding between gender equality, justice and sustainability.

More recently, GEO has been engaged with the UN processes on Climate Change with a strong voice which argued for the inclusion of social and gender considerations in the key negotiation text. It participated in the process as member of the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) which on world Environment Day 2009, while participating at the UNFCCC climate negotiations, specifically stated that...

“... gender inequality is a detrimental social and economic condition. These inequities not only result in women being disproportionately affected by climate change including a disaster-related mortality rate up to 14 times that of men but limit their capacity to contribute to solutions and mitigation efforts. But with equitable climate policies that build on women's strengths as individuals and collectively resiliency of entire populations can be enhanced and much more can change than the climate”.³

Another key dimension that has been in the sights of the GEO team engaged with the Climate Change processes has been the aspect of lifelong learning for sustainability. ICAE participated at COP 15 organizing – with the 2nd International Journey on Environmental Education, a workshop on Lifelong learning with a gender perspective and lobbied to include education with

² Hamburg Declaration, 1997, <http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/confintea/declaeng.htm>

³ On world environment day 2009: Gender equality is fundamental to complying with the Bali mandate, <http://www.icae2.org/?q=en/node/849>

a gender approach in mitigation and adaptation. While during COP 15 gender-sensitive text remained in the negotiating documents until the end, these texts do not really mean much unless there is an overall outcome that includes everyone's lives and livelihoods protection. The reality is that the outcome COP 15 text lacks reference to the links between education / capacity building and gender and governments give too little consideration to gender justice and women's rights in climate policies.

In the newsletter EQUALS (Issue 24, February 2010)⁴ Ana Agostino argued that the current emphasis of capacity-building in the document is primarily the *“technocratic capacity-building approaches for mitigation and adaptation processes and there is no reference to democratic lifelong learning for sustainable societies and global responsibility.”*

Lifelong learning for sustainable societies and global responsibility is needed to implement gender justice that will contribute to the achievement of the MDGs, and it should also be included in mitigation and adaptation policies. Capacity building in adaptation strategies need to take into account women and men's relative and different capacities, power and social resilience, vulnerabilities and resources, because gender norms, roles and relations can either enable or constrain adaptive capacities. Parallel studies on quality and quantity of adaptation with a gender lens are needed as studies currently available fail to address gender issues.

Equal involvement of woman and men in lifelong learning and capacity building is urgently needed and women should be recognized as powerful contributors of change and should be fully integrated into climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies at all levels.

ICAE and a number of its member organisations and networks will continue to advance our advocacy for the above positions by attending the coming Climate Change conference in Cancun, Mexico (COP 16) and conducting a side-event entitled, *Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Societies and global responsibility with a gender perspective*. This will constitute another line of work towards the assembly and beyond.

Opportunities within the horizon of the ICAE World Assembly

There are a number of related global initiatives that we can draw from and actively contribute to, such as the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UN DESD 2005 – 2014)⁵, the proposed Second Journey of Environmental Education to be conducted to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit in 2012, and the expected flurry of events in the lead up to the promised achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015.

The ICAE World Assembly 2011 provides us this timely opportunity to regroup as a movement, renew and recommit to our principles of practice, sharpen our tools, and map out a plan for immediate action, because we can no longer afford any further delay.

⁴ Agostino, Ana: “Gender Equality, climate Change and Education for sustainability”: <http://www.e4conference.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Equals24.pdf>

⁵ UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (<http://www.unesco.org/en/esd/>)