

ICAE Virtual Seminar Towards the World Assembly:

A world worth living in. Adult learning and education: a key for transformation

Introduction to Theme 1:

Adult education as a right and a profession. Follow-up to the international agreements as the MDGs, the EFA Goals, and the CONFINTEA Agenda

The learning needs for all people across the globe are growing. This holds true for children, youth and adults in coping with their individual life, the societies they live in, the world they want to see worth living in.

Lifelong learning is a continuous process that involves all kinds and contents of education and training. Learning can be formal, non-formal or informal. It may happen in kindergarten, school, university, community learning centers, at adult education providers, or within vocational and technical colleges. The new media and blended learning play an increasing role.

However, the dire need of a quality education for all is not sufficiently on the agenda for most governments, nor is it within the international development discourse. It may not be unrealistic to state that there are still one billion people denied the right to learn to read and right, and around a hundred million children that do not have a place in school. It is especially the marginalized people who are further marginalized with less learning opportunities.

There is no doubt that learning, education, and training support the development of skills for young and older people that are needed to live, to lead a healthy life, and to earn in employment or self-employment. However, it is not only what we see and experience around us, but all major documents like the series of the

Education for All Global Monitoring Report show that we are light years away of what the **Education for All** (EFA) goal 3 calls for

- “ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs”,

and in goal 4

- “achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults (EFA GMR, 2005: 29).

We clearly can see from all the statistics provided that the **right to learn** is denied to too many youth and adults around the world, for literacy, for vocational or for continuing education and training.

It has been said again and again that the fulfillment of many MDGs will only be possible if on top of universal primary schooling “the learning needs of all young people and adults are met” – as they are the ones who are in the final analysis the implementers of all projects and programs related to the **MDGs**: be it in respect to gender equality and the empowerment of women, the improvement in maternal health, or in environmental sustainability.

And even for universal primary education there is evidence that parents who have been to school or are involved in other kinds of learning and training see more positively to it that the schooling process of their children is successful. We should therefore continue our advocacy towards the full integration of youth and adults and their related education and training throughout life into the MDGs. The results of the MDG Summit last autumn could have been much better for youth and adult learning.

The **Belem Framework of Action** is just a year old by now. Again, commitments have been made, and the process of monitoring the outcomes of CONFINTEA has started. We should get closely involved in this monitoring – on national, regional and global level. In this process we have at the same time to strengthen adult

education itself as a profession that creates programs, develops a research agenda, trains the facilitators and trainers, and contributes to structures that lead to a lifelong learning system and society.

At this very moment we are eagerly looking out for the results of the EFA end of decade assessments, and whether we are on track achieving especially goal 3 as the **EFA GMR 2012 is on Skills Development**. We should show our clear interest in covering the full content – as stated above “all young people and adults” and the perspective of life-skills” which of course include vocational skills, but not getting reduced to it.

The next major point in time is the year **2015**. Then we will have reached the

- **End of MDG**
- **End of EFA**
- **Midterm of CONFINTEA**

These three processes will be key elements of the ICAE advocacy work in the next years to come. Whether the results and outcomes are anywhere close to the objectives and aims that were expected at the start have to be closely monitored.

However, we should be aware that in between there are two other important dates that we should pay attention to:

- **2012 End of UNLD** – the United Nations Literacy Decade
- **2014 End of DESD** – the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

It is only too obvious that these two processes are of great importance for the work of ICAE as well. Especially ESD is to be mainstreamed and to be woven into all our policies and activities, and at the time it is the bridge to the thematic area dealing with climate change and environmental education.

In all these processes **UNESCO** plays a key role. There are many singled out and specialized Institutes, Headquarter Units, or Regional Offices that share in the implementation. Additionally, ICAE is aware and searching for ways to get and stay involved in those important areas for youth and adults education and

training within lifelong learning where skills training or health education are featured more strongly, like in the agendas of **FAO, ILO or WHO**.

This Virtual Seminar towards the ICAE World Assembly is timely and an important introductory pointing to the global commitments of the members of ICAE, and preparing all of for the next challenges to come. The week dealing with **Theme 1: Adult education as a right and a profession** will cover contributions towards the interrelationship and the full realization of EFA and CONFINTEA with the MDGs. We are fortunate that several of those who shall be in Sweden for the Assembly in the different plenary and workshops are now with us in this seminar giving their arguments. In the subsequent follow-up there will be **three workshops**:

1. MDGs, EFA goals, CONFINTEA agenda: What do they have in common for education as a human right, and the right to learn?
2. CONFINTEA VI: Literacy, migration, financing, poverty as ICAEs four priorities – what are options for implementation and active monitoring?
3. EFA Goals 3 + 4 + 5 +6: How can ICAE get better involved monitoring youth and skills, literacy and continuing education, gender equality and quality?

The deliberations during this Virtual Seminar will be most important to go deep and wide, and it is hoped that they can be incorporated in a **declaration** of the World Assembly which can lead the ICAE and its membership through the next years to come towards 2015.

Please see the conference website for

- Resources
- Documents
- Links

related to the theme and the associated issues.