
CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review
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Plenary Session 4: Perspectives towards 2030: ALE, LLL and SDG4, and the broader SDG agenda

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Adult Learning and Education is an integral part of the **human right to education**, and as such, enables and promotes the accomplishment **of all other social, economic, cultural, civil, and political rights**.

It is therefore **pivotal for the accomplishment of the entire Sustainable Development Agenda**, considering its full range of goals, from those that refer to the promotion of peace and justice, gender equality, decent work, good health and well-being, responsible consumption and production, to those that tackle the overcoming of poverty, inequalities, hunger and exploitative relations with nature.

In this sense, we can affirm that ALE has a structural, enabling, and pivotal role in promoting the implementation of the entire 2030 SDG Agenda.

Both the Belem Framework for Action (2009) and the Recommendation for Adult Learning and Education (2015) clearly articulate this perspective.

For example, the Belem FFA reminds us that ALE equips people with the necessary knowledge, capabilities, skills, competences, and values to exercise and advance their rights and take control of their destinies. It also underlines that it is an imperative for the achievement of equity and inclusion, for alleviating poverty and for building equitable, tolerant, sustainable and knowledge-based societies. On the other hand, RALE takes a comprehensive and **systematic approach to ALE**, defining three key domains: literacy and basic skills; continuing education and vocational skills; as well as liberal, popular and community education and citizenship skills. It builds on the idea of literacy presented in the Belem FFA, that portrays literacy as an indispensable foundation of ALE, thus equally part of the right to education and a prerequisite for the development of personal, social, economic and political empowerment.

Acknowledging popular and citizen education as one domain of ALE is more relevant than ever in the current context of severe environmental crisis and weakening of democracies. Promoting critical thinking and reading of our world, awareness raising, dialogue and connectedness with our environment fosters active engagement in the political, economic, cultural, social and environmental aspects of life, but also seeks transformation towards increased justice, equality and dignity.

Not only does RALE determine the domains of ALE, **but it also determines in a very comprehensive manner, its objectives:**

- (a) to develop the capacity of individuals to think critically and to act with autonomy and a sense of responsibility;
- (b) to reinforce the capacity to deal with and shape the developments taking place in the economy and the world of work;
- (c) to contribute to the creation of a learning society where every individual has an opportunity to learn and fully participate in sustainable development processes and to enhance solidarity among people and communities;
- (d) to promote peaceful coexistence and human rights;
- (e) to foster resilience in young and older adults;
- (f) to enhance awareness for the protection of the environment.

This comprehensive perspective of ALE and the detail seen in both the Belem FFA and RALE, is not equally articulated in the SDG4/ Education 2030 FFA.

While the narrative of the Education 2030 Framework for Action establishes LLL as one of its pillars, which was explicitly named in Goal 4 and highlighted it the introductory paragraphs, the goals and indicators themselves do not reflect the breadth and depth of ALE as presented in the Belem FFA and RALE.

There are three goals that explicitly mention youth and adults, two of which focus on access to technical, vocational and tertiary education and so called relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. This clearly falls short of the above-mentioned objectives of ALE stated in RALE. Furthermore, target 4.6 looks at ensuring all youth but only a *substantial*

proportion of adults, achieve literacy and numeracy- a very vague narrative for a concrete target. Nevertheless, although adults are not specifically mentioned in target 4.7, the latter does refer to *all learners*, and here other crucial dimensions, including citizenship, peace, human rights and sustainable development, are highlighted.

Although the process of negotiation of the SDG 4 did not directly dialogue with the Belem FFA or with the development of the RALE, approved just a day after the Education 2030 FFA, **we must make all efforts to articulate these initiatives, identifying all their respective potential**, and placing ALE in a much more CenterStage position in the processes and architectures of SDG implementation.

A serious shortfall for the promotion of ALE is that global structures/ initiatives / or conferences that relate to financing do not acknowledge ALE at all. This is the case of the 2015 Financing for Development Conference, whose paragraph 78 refers to all levels and modalities of education, except Adult Literacy and Education. It furthermore only mentions children, there being no reference to youth or adults. Similarly, neither the Global Partnership for Education nor the Education Commission, whose main mandate is to establish recommendations for the financing of education worldwide, refer to ALE.

- Considering the historic debt with the 750 million adults and 100 million youth who are not literate, most of whom are women;
- Considering adults play a multiple role in achieving all human rights and SDGs: as right holders, as caretakers, as advocates, as workers; as citizens;
- Considering the abundant evidence of the pivotal role ALE plays in the implementation of the whole SDG agenda and in the direct positive impact of educated adults in the education of their children;
- Considering the impact of ALE in promoting gender equality;

It is very difficult to understand why such little priority is given to ALE at both national and international levels.

To finalize, I would like to point out some recommendations:

Regarding the prioritization and implementation of ALE at national level

1. ALE must be taken forward as a State policy, acknowledging it as an integral part of the right to education, sustained over time and with a consolidated institutionality. It must also be embraced by all actors who advocate for the right to education.
2. The broad and humanistic conception of ALE that underpins the Belem FFA and RALE must inform legislation, public policies and educational practices, with an intersectoral perspective. Furthermore, the ethical, political and pedagogical dimension of popular education, referred to in RALE, must gain increased visibility and presence in the public domain.
3. Political will must be translated into increased and improved financing at national level and international level, considering the international cooperation broadly speaking.
4. Prioritising ALE implies valuing its subjects: educators and learners. This implies ensuring their right to participate in policy debates and decision-making processes. It also implies acknowledging the richness of their life experiences, skills and knowledges.
5. Special attention must be given to youth and adults who suffer discrimination: women, older adults, people in context of prison, persons with disabilities, those living in rural areas, the indigenous populations, migrants and refugees, among others.

Regarding processes that can foster the prioritization of Adult Learning and Education

6. RALE must be more popularized, and articulated to the SDG 4 implementation process & architecture, such as in the Global Education Meeting and Education 2030 SC, as well as UN structures. In relation to the latter, it must be used as a reference, along with SDG4/Education 2030, for National Voluntary Reviews and High Level Political Forum yearly meetings, as well as for guiding the Global Alliance on Literacy. Furthermore, the CONFINTEA gatherings and review processes must help ensure momentum is maintained.
7. The revision of SDG 4 indicators must be taken as an opportunity to continuously fine tune the latter to the word and spirit of the SDG agenda, bearing in mind also the word and spirit of the Belem FAA and RALE.
8. The Role of UIL is of great importance for asserting the fundamental importance of ALE, articulating efforts with other UN agencies, so that the intersectoral approach that is inherent to ALE can be tapped into. The Global Education Meeting and Education 2030 SC are spaces with which UIL can seek to establish a more ongoing relation with.