

CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review
The Power of Adult Learning: Vision 2030
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Adult Learning and Education in Asia-Pacific Region

Implementing Belém Framework for Action

Rangachar Govinda
India

Asia-Pacific Region

The Context

- More than half of the world's population, including nearly 900 million of the world's poor
- Host to several fast growing economies
- Increasing focus on the educational needs of the youth and the working age population.
- Around 16 million children of primary school age and around 34 million of lower secondary age adolescents are still out-of-school; two-thirds of these are in South Asia.
- Attention to Issues of quality, learning outcomes and inequality within the education system

Basic Literacy: Foundation for Lifelong Learning

Uneven Progress across Subregions

- *Adult Literacy*: Reduction in absolute numbers; But, around 63 % of 758 million adult illiterates in the world are in Asia – 52% in Southern Asia (around 390 million) adults.
- *Female Literacy*: Significant reduction in absolute numbers but ten countries have female literacy rate below the world average of 82.6%.
- *Gender Parity*: Central Asia has already achieved gender parity; East Asia and the Pacific - 0.96; South and West Asia at 0.76; high gender disparity even among youth in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- *Youth Literacy*: Around 102 million youth lack basic skills of literacy of which 46% are in Asia-Pacific Region; South Asia continues to lag behind in this indicator also.
- *Measurement of Literacy as a continuum*: Not much progress

Policy Initiatives

In a Transformative Flux

- *Official ALE Policy*: Integral part of the education system in almost all countries
 - Continuing emphasis on reducing adult illiteracy but expectations vary
 - Emphasis on linking ALE with income generation activities, employment and entrepreneurship skills, and poverty reduction strategies.
 - Imparting productive skills linked to expanding demands of the market economy
- *Recognition of ALE Outcomes*: Most have policy framework for
 - Recognizing outcomes of ALE programmes by establishing equivalence with specified grades in formal schools and colleges.
 - Have developed national level skill/qualification framework for assessing and certifying outcomes through non-formal education programmes
- *ALE and Lifelong Learning*: Lifelong learning is gradually emerging, in principle, as the overall policy paradigm in education. But in practice, it remains isolated from the mainstream efforts in the education sector.

Governance of ALE

Towards Convergence and Coordination

- *Convergence Efforts*: With the lifelong learning framework, countries are gradually moving towards a more stable programmatic approach with convergence across ministries – need new capacities and attitudinal shifts.
- *Stake-holder Consultation*: 65% countries reported in the affirmative – critical as implementation through local Government institutions and/or through local NGOs
- *Recognition of Prior Learning and Certification of Equivalence*: Several countries have now established necessary procedures through issue of equivalence certificates and develop a National qualification framework.
- *Improving Governance* Increased recognition of the need to revamp and strengthen ALE governance systems – yet a slow process
 - Increased attention to creating a systematic information base on ALE programmes and participants.
 - Some have prepared action plans for implementing the recommendations of the BFA
 - Report increased attention to capacity building activities, post-2009.

Financing

Need to Arrest the Decline

- *Wide Variation in Financing of Education*
 - ranks low among different regions in terms of share of GDP spent on Education with an average value is around 4.3%
 - ASEAN countries clearly outperform the South Asian countries.
- *Investment in ALE – Difficult to assess – ranges from 0.4 to >4% of public expenditure*
- *Integrating ALE with Mainstream Budget:* Continues to depend on project financing and extra-budgetary resources
- *Alternate means of Financing:* Involving NGOs and private corporate sector and funding through fees – difficult to find genuine innovative measures
- *Competing for Resources from Decreasing External Support – education sector funding in low income countries is of particular concern*

Participation in ALE Programmes

Focus on Inclusion and Equity

- *Responding to Diversity*: ALE spans a large range of age groups and target population - overlapping trends
 - linked to higher/tertiary education initiatives in countries with universal secondary education - Australia, New Zealand, Korea and Japan
 - basic literacy and numeracy skills in countries with large non-literate adult population – South Asia
 - Some emerging economies – focus on building skills for the market and on digital processing skills.
- *Responding to Demographic Changes*:
 - learning needs of young unemployed persons.
 - focus more on persons in the limited age range of 15 to 35 or 45 years
 - programmes for senior citizens
- *Need to Focus on Rural Areas and Vulnerable Sections* - 63 per cent of women and 56 per cent of men in the region were in vulnerable employment
- *Improving Participation of Women* – contrasting pattern in literacy and vocational programmes
- *Use of ICT is emerging as a major pivot for transforming ALE programmes*
- *Strengthening Institutions of Delivery* – Expanding space for community involvement through CLCs

Meeting Quality Concerns

Multiple Challenges

- *Curriculum and Teaching in ALE- Local Relevance and National Standards*
- *Standardisation through National Qualification Frameworks* – danger of over- formalisation
- *Professionalization of adult educators* - sporadic efforts – need more innovative approaches
- *Professional Development Opportunities and Employment Conditions* – still inadequate – some efforts are being made
- *Focus on Outcomes*: Improved programme monitoring but objective assessment of ALE outcomes in a nationally comparable form may be difficult
- *Poor Research Support* – need for involvement of higher education sector

Regional and International Cooperation

Moving towards a New Paradigm

- *Role of UNESCO and lateral infusion of innovative ideas* - advocacy, dissemination and technical support
- *Expanding Role of Regional Development Blocks*: SEAMEO has been playing a central role - establishment of SEAMEO Centre for Lifelong Learning in Viet Nam – such efforts are missing in South Asia.
- *Non-Governmental Actors* - Pan-Asian and Cross country platforms
- *South-South Collaboration* - calculus of funding that dominated the relationship has to be replaced with a system built on the plank of mutual support and assistance in financial as well as knowledge sharing.
- *Cooperation for capacity building and knowledge generation*: Governments and other knowledge and research centres, particularly universities and higher education institutions in the Region should get actively involved in trans-national knowledge generation and management in ALE supported by sufficient financial and human resources

Concluding Observation

- *Regional Variation and Emerging Convergence*
 - Skill development, market demand and employability take centre stage
- *Converging Trend across the Region* - Cause for Celebration and a Point of Caution
- *Prospects - Capitalising on*
 - Economic Growth Prospects
 - Demographic Shifts
 - Regional Cooperation – emerging new institutions
 - Community groundswell in favour of education