



**Recommendation
On
Adult
Learning
and
Education**

2015 (UNESCO)

Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) 2015 (UNESCO)

Background

For a long time, the 1976 “Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education” was the only normative and standard-setting document on adult learning and education (ALE)¹. Although not a binding document, it exerts nonetheless political influence. This UNESCO recommendation provided guiding principles for adult education policy and practice in UNESCO Member States, encouraging and inviting Member States to take appropriate legislative steps, in conformity with their constitutional practice and to better implement adequate policies on ALE.

Since 2009, a revision of the 1976 Recommendation has been put into motion by UNESCO Institute for lifelong learning (UIL) based of the recommendations of the last two International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V in 1997 and CONFINTEA VI in 2009). UNESCO’s General Conference ultimately agreed on the revision in 2013. The process of revision was done in consultation with the Member States and other stakeholders through various measures, and to some extent overlapped with the debate on the international “Development agenda beyond 2015”. The latter had an impact in the updated recommendation in the sense of reiterating the significant role of ALE in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The new RALE

In November 2015, the UNESCO General Conference adopted the new Recommendation (RALE), which provides a detailed definition of adult learning and education, distinguishing core areas of skills and learning.

RALE proposes a comprehensive and systematic approach to ALE, defining three key domains of learning and skills:

1. literacy and basic skills
2. continuing education and vocational skills
3. liberal, popular and community education and citizenship skills

According to RALE, the aim of ALE is:

- to equip people with the necessary capabilities to exercise and realize their rights and take control of their destinies.
- to promote personal and professional development, thereby supporting more active engagement by adults with their societies, communities and environments.
- to foster sustainable and inclusive economic growth and decent work prospects for individuals.
- It is therefore a crucial tool in alleviating poverty, improving health and well-being and contributing to sustainable learning societies.

¹ See: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13096&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html

RALE defines six objectives for ALE

- **to develop the capacity of individuals to think critically and to act with autonomy and a sense of responsibility;**
- **to reinforce the capacity to deal with and shape the developments taking place in the economy and the world of work;**
- **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;**
- **to promote peaceful coexistence and human rights;**
- **to foster resilience in young and older adults;**
- **to enhance awareness for the protection of the environment.**



*Adult
Learning Society*

RALE calls upon governments to take action in five transversal areas:

- **policy,**
- **governance,**
- **financing,**
- **participation, inclusion and equity,**
- **quality.**

Governments and the international communities already know these areas of action, as they were already defined in the Belem Framework for Action (BFA), adopted at CONFINTEA VI in 2009. Therefore RALE provides a consistent and integrative approach with the BFA, as well as other international documents on education.

Links with other international documents (SDGs, Education 2030, BFA, GRALE)

RALE can be seen as an additional tool and international policy document that shall help member states and civil society organizations to ensure the implementation of ALE commitments and goals.

The year 2015 marked a new international education agenda for the next 15 years, with the adoption of the UN declaration '*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*', which includes the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education, and the Incheon Declaration and Education 2030 Framework for Action from the World Education Forum. Both documents refer to Adult Learning and Education, as well as to Lifelong Learning.

1) Sustainable Development Goals

It took a lot of efforts from national, regional and international civil society organization and networks, UN agencies such as UIL, and champion governments, to secure ALE and LLL in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Even so, for many, the results weren't as ambitious as expected. Nevertheless the 2030 Agenda provides, specific targets for ALE and a space for leverage.

The „Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4” and aims at²: “ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, in further detail committing to these targets:

- 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
- 4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and **a substantial proportion*** of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

***As civil society organizations we have to challenge the idea of having differentiated achievement targets for youth and adult literacy. Literacy is an indispensable foundation to exercise the human right to education and our goal should be that all youth and adults achieve literacy and numeracy.**

² See: Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development“, agreed by the UN on August 2015
(http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E)

- 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

Adult literacy, skills for life and work and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities are integral to the SDG 4. Moreover, there is recognition of the key role of adult education to the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals³. Also the „Education 2030 Framework for action“ is based on a vision fully captured by the SDG 4.



2) The Belem Framework for Action (BFA)

The already mentioned Belem Framework for Action (BFA) as outcome from the sixth CONFINTEA (International conference in Adult Education) in 2009, provides a set of recommendations for further developing adult learning and education (ALE) in UNESCO Member States from a global perspective. BFA committed to develop ALE in the perspective of lifelong learning through five areas of action:

³ International Council for Adult Education (ICEA) (2015) „Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - Response from the International Council for Adult Education.“

1. Policy

- (a) implementing an integrated adult learning and education policy within a framework of lifelong learning;
- b) designing specific and concrete action plans for adult learning and education which are integrated with EFA, UNLD, MDG as well as other national and regional development plans, and with LIFE activities where those exist;
- (c) ensuring that adult learning and education are included in the “ONE United Nations” initiative;
- (d) establishing appropriate coordination mechanisms, which could include monitoring committees involving all stakeholders active in adult learning and education;
- (e) developing or improving structures and mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of all forms of learning, by establishing equivalency frameworks such as frameworks for qualifications that encompass informal and non-formal learning.



2. Governance

- (a) creating and maintaining mechanisms for the involvement of public authorities at all administrative levels, civil society organizations, social partners, the private sector, community and adult learners’ organizations in the development, implementation and evaluation of adult learning and education policies and programmes;
- (b) undertaking capacity-building measures to support the constructive and informed involvement of civil society organizations, community and adult learners’ organizations in policy and programme development, implementation and evaluation;
- (c) promoting and supporting inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation.

3. Financing

- (a) implementing the CONFINTEA V agreement to allocate at least 6% of GNP to education, and increasing the allocation to adult learning and education;
- (b) pooling and applying existing educational resources and budgets across all government departments to meet the objectives of an integrated adult learning and education strategy;
- (c) creating incentives to promote new sources of funding, such as from the private sector, NGOs, communities and individuals, without prejudicing the principles of equity and inclusion;
- (d) prioritizing investment for women and rural populations in lifelong learning



4. Participation, inclusion and equity

- a) promoting and supporting more equitable access to, and participation in, adult learning and education through well-designed targeting activities and programmes such as Adult Learners' Weeks and learning festivals;
- (b) anticipating and responding to identifiable groups entering trajectories of multiple disadvantage, in particular in early adulthood;
- (c) developing materials and teaching and learning methods which recognize and value indigenous and local knowledge, methodologies and mother-tongues in adult learning and education programmes;
- (d) improving access to and participation in the full range of adult learning and education programmes for women, taking account of their particular demands the gender-specific life course;
- (e) supporting financially a systematic focus on disadvantaged groups (for example indigenous peoples, migrants, people with special needs and those living in rural areas) in all educational policies and approaches, and ensuring that such programmes are provided free of charge or subsidised by our governments, with incentives for learning such as bursaries, fee remission and paid study leave.

5. Quality

- (a) developing quality criteria for curricula, learning materials and teaching methodologies in adult education programmes, taking account of outcomes and impact measures;
- (b) improving training, capacity-building and professionalization of adult educators, including through partnership with higher education institutions;
- (c) lending greater support to systematic interdisciplinary research in adult learning and education, complemented by knowledge management systems for collection, analysis and dissemination of data and good practice.

3. Comparing SDG 4 and BFA commitments

The following table compares ALE provisions in SDG 4 with the commitments of BFA.

	SDG4	CONFINTEA-BFA
Literacy	4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional literacy • Literacy as a continuum. • Calls for countries to redouble efforts to achieve 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy
TVET	4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university	Recognizes that most programs on ALE nowadays have a primary focus TVET, and calls for more integrated approaches to ALE to address development in all its aspects (economic, sustainable, community and personal)
Gral. provisions on ALE	4.4 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university	Develops recommendations and strategies on policies towards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifelong Learning • Governance • Financing • Participation, inclusion and equity • Adult literacy • Quality • Monitoring and implementation
GCED, Education for HR and ESD	4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development	Adult learning and education cover a broad range of content including vocational matters, family literacy and family education, citizenship and many other areas... Also, the BFA recognizes that the provision of non-formal education covers topics such as human rights, citizenship, democracy, women's empowerment, HIV prevention, health, environmental protection and sustainable development.

4. GRALE

RALE is complementing the Global Reports on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE), which are part of the CONFINTEA processes and are monitoring the implementation the Belém Framework for Action. Through all these mechanisms it is possible to track the achievements and progress of implementing the BFA by UNESCO members states.

Need for coherence and coordination!

ICAE underlines the need for coherence and coordination of the RALE with the 2030 agenda and the Belem Framework for Action in order to ensure efficient and effective advocacy for a right-based approach of education for all. An integrative and coordinated approach of the documents and agendas furthermore permits a better use of the international monitoring tools of ALE, the SDGs and Education 2030.

These tools include:

- the Global Report of Adult Learning and Education,
- the Global Education Monitoring Report,
- the Voluntary National Reviews to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and
- other National and Regional Consultations on Education 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Recommendation on **Adult Learning and Education**

We wish to emphasise the importance of documents such as the RALE and the GRALE in showing the contribution of ALE to achieve sustainable development. Like BFA, the Sustainable Development Agenda and CONFINTEA V and VI commitments, RALE is a crucial document regarding the promoting for the right-based approach on education.

Official key reference documents

- UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015)
- CONFINTEA VI - Belém Framework for Action (2009)
- Global Education Report on Adult Learning and Education III (2016)
- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- World Education Forum's Incheon Declaration and Education 2030 Framework for Action (2015)

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