

CONVERGENCE AND ICAE IN THE CONTEXT OF CONFINTEA and UNESCO - memories, reflections and perspectives

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The early years

My own link to CONVERGENCE hails back to the time when I was writing my doctoral dissertation in comparative studies on *Adult Education and Development in Tanzania* at the University of Heidelberg in the 1970s. I could make use of the library of the German Adult Education Association (DVV, Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband) in Bonn which is close to the village where we live. The Department for Adult Education in Developing Countries of DVV, today well established as DVV International, had a good collection of documents and materials related to the work of projects and partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and one of the journals they had subscribed was CONVERGENCE. It became an eye-opener for me in understanding more about international and comparative adult education.

Another important resource in the DVV library was the journal of the International Congress of University Adult Education (ICUAE). The Congress was formed after CONFINTEA II in 1960 in Montreal, and the journal started in 1964. Though there was a difference in themes related to their institutional backings – associations and civil society on the one hand and universities on the other – there was some overlapping in their purpose to support the development of adult education as a field of study for policy and practice. Strengthening ALE as the just emerging sub-sector of the education system through professionalization and institutionalization of adult education called for stronger information and exchange on international level.

A key person at the time in German, European and international adult education was Helmuth Dolff, then Director General of DVV and Treasurer of EAEA, the European Association for Education of Adults. EAEA as well as

DVV were founded in 1953. Wearing these two hats Dolff participated in an international seminar in Australia in 1964 alongside which the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) was founded. Later Dolff became the Treasurer and Vice President of ICAE. He represented DVV on the German Commission for UNESCO, and in all those capacities he got deeply engaged in CONFINTEA III in Tokyo in 1972, together with other important figures like Roby Kidd from Canada, Paul Mhaiki from Tanzania and Paul Bertelson from Denmark, but on secondment to the Adult Education Section of UNESCO in Paris (Heinze and Hinzen 2021). Those four heavyweights pulled their energy and wisdom together and were in the forefront of discussions on the potential for a non-governmental adult education association on the global level. Those conference side-meetings led to founding ICAE a year after Tokyo, and Helmuth Dolff invited to the first meeting of the Executive Committee to the local adult education center (Volkshochschule) of the city of Cologne in 1974 (Hinzen, 2019, p. 18).

Budd Hall wrote an important chapter on *Building a Global Learning Network: The International Council for Adult Education* (Hall 1995) in the book *Adult education through world collaboration* (Cassara 1995). He had worked in the Research and Planning Department of the Institute of Adult Education in Dar es Salaam from 1970 to 1974 where Paul Mhaiki served as Director. They together wrote a highly interesting paper on *The integration of adult education in Tanzania* (Mhaiki and Hall 1972). After his term in Tanzania Budd Hall was then invited to join the secretariat of ICAE in Toronto from 1975 on and there he himself and a number of network colleagues developed the concept of participatory research further. CONVERGENCE (2/1975) had a *Special Feature: Participatory Research* with several articles.

1976: First World Assembly of ICAE

We are living in a world of anniversaries and many of them for us in ALE have the functions of being milestones or signposts. While writing this article the UNESCO Chair on Global Adult Education celebrated virtually for three days a festivity for Paulo Freire and his 100 birthday. In June 2021 the University of Dar es Salaam invited to the *International Conference. 50 Years of Adult Education in Tanzania*. Julius K. Nyerere, the leader into independence and first President of the United Republic of Tanzania (Mayo 2001) had given adult education a top priority in his New Year's Eve speeches in 1969 and 1970, and these were later published jointly as *Education Never Ends* (Nyerere 1979). Advancing the celebrations the Tanzanian journal *Papers in Education and Development* published several articles including a reflective piece on *Elimu Haina Mwisho: Mwalimu Nyerere's Vision of Adult Education* (Hall, 2022).

This strong position in Tanzania on the importance of adult education was one of the reasons why in 1975 the idea within ICAE to hold its First World Assembly in Dar es Salaam found firm acceptance. On a personal level there was of course the closeness of Mhaiki and Hall from their common years at the Institute of Adult Education which laid a solid foundation for the success of the Assembly. More than 400 delegates and participants came from around 80 countries, and they shared their experiences in plenaries and working groups. Whereas the speech by Nyerere on *Liberated Man – the Purpose of Development* was taken as the *Declaration of Dar es Salaam*, the participants adopted also the *Dar es Salaam Design for Action* which was described as "... an inventory of the essential steps that must be taken to give substance to the decisions of planners, politicians, and educators. It is put forward by the adult education community as a compact of commitment to the urgent needs for adult education all over the world." Nyerere stayed on to support ICAE as Honorary President. CONVERGENCE documented the proceedings (4, 1976, pp. 9-68).

The Rapporteur-General of the World Assembly was Lalage Bown; she was a Professor of Adult Education at the University of Lagos at that time. While writing this article we received the information that Lalage Bown had just died at the age of 94. She had been my external examiner in 1984 while teaching adult education students in the diploma and certificate courses at the University of Sierra Leone. In 2019 we exchanged experiences on the 100 years celebrations we were both involved in: She in the UK and the 1919 Adult Education Report by the Ministry of Reconstruction, and me in commemorating that the Volkshochschulen in Germany became a constitutional matter 100 years back.

Lalage Bown started her Report on the World Assembly with the following statements: "This Conference affirms its whole-hearted support for the speech of His Excellency Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, on Adult Education and Development, delivered 21 June, 1976; and with permission adopted the text of that speech as the Conference's own basic statement on the objectives and strategies for adult education and development.

With regard to Adult Education in general, the Conference declares its support for the principles, lines of approach and proposals of the UNESCO Draft Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education." (Bown, 1976, p. 42)

Companions and colleagues

In 1979 there was the transition between Budd Hall and Roby Kidd: Hall took over as ICAE Secretary General, together with Chris Duke as Associate Secretary General. Kidd stayed on as ICAE treasurer till his untimely death already in 1982 at the age of 65. Hall served ICAE in this capacity till 1991. He moved on and is now at the University of Victoria in Canada and a Co-Chair, together with Rajesh Tandon of PRIA (Society of Participatory Research in Asia) in Dehli of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education.

There are those things in life where you only later see connecting strands. It was in 1975 that I participated in the UNESCO International Seminar on *Comparative Structures of Adult Education in Developing Countries* in Kenya. This is where I met Roby Kidd and Budd Hall for the first time, and afterwards wrote a report on the seminar for the DVV journal *Adult Education and Development*. In 1977 already I joined DVV, and in the same year submitted my first article to CONVERGENCE (3, 1977) on the *Development Education Initiative by the German Adult Education Association*. At that time Jakob Horn was Director of the Department, and in 1978 my term as editor of the journal *Adult Education and Development* started lasting for the next three decades while joining the leadership as Deputy Director.

In 1982 we planned a Special Issue commemorating 25 years of Helmuth Dolff as Director General of DVV. It had several key figures of the time as authors, including Nyerere, Freire, Adisehesiah, Duke, Udagama, Kassam, Mahai, Omolewa, Sunanchai, Ahmed, Bhasin, Vio Grossi, and Mhaiki. The longtime editor of CONVERGENCE Margaret Gayfer wrote on ICAE, and I had invited Kidd to write the dedication which he did - just-in-time before he died. He wrote: "In 1972 I took a train down the Rhine to Bonn to ask Helmuth Dolff one question... I wanted his opinion... (on a new association). And he gave it, gravely, thoughtfully, positively... He also promised to do what he could in support... (He) was the Chairman of the decisive meeting in Tokyo where the idea for an ICAE was considered and debated..." (Kidd, 1982, p. 3) Dolff died at the age of 57 in 1983, only shortly after this dedication of his friend Roby and contributions of colleagues in the commemorative issue had appeared.

CONVERGENCE - practice, policy and theory

Back to CONVERGENCE in the 1970s. The front inside cover announced and invited:

“CONVERGENCE is the only world-wide journal of adult education that addresses itself to issues, practices and developments in the broad field of international adult education.

Founded in 1968, CONVERGENCE forms a unique and continuing record of what’s happening in adult education that makes it the essential journal for practitioners, decision-takers, researchers, administrators, teachers and students.

Since CONVERGENCE is a network of information, experiences, and free opinions, letters of comment and information-sharing are welcome. Although the activities and members of the Council are located in every region of the world, its headquarters and small Secretariat are located in Canada, Toronto...”

From Toronto the Secretariat later moved on to Montevideo, Uruguay for almost two decades and is now situated in Belgrade, Serbia.

It is a fascinating journey to browse through the earlier issues of CONVERGENCE and read about the ideas and experiences in our field and their relevance for today, like *The system of values and adult education: goals and objectives* (Krajnc, 4, 1974); *Continuity in Adult Education and Political Struggle* (Hall, 1, 1978); *The dialectics of education* (Galtung, 1, 1975); *Aspects of legislation for Adult Education* (Dolff, 2, 1978); *What Can Non-formal Education Do About Income Generation* (Wijetunga, 2, 1979). Challenging were also those articles and reports related to adult education in countries where little was known about, like China and Vietnam, or the Democratic Republic of Korea. A Special Issue (3, 1980) was published to present the findings of the ICAE Commission on *Adult Education, International Aid and Poverty* which was guest-edited by Chris Duke.

A spin-off effect of CONFINTEA III in Tokyo were the efforts of UNESCO towards a document framing the field of adult education looking at purpose, structure, legislation, financing, administration, management, content, methods, materials, media and the training of adult educators (Knoll 2014). Within UNESCO it was colleagues around Paul Bertelson who worked for this. Outside it was seen as a great opportunity for the field to develop further, and ICAE advocated strongly via CONVERGENCE. Under the heading *International Instrument on the Development of Adult Education* the draft document appeared and the following steps suggested:

- “Adult educationists in every country should become familiar with the *Instrument*;
- Delegates who will represent countries at the General Conference should be informed about the importance of the *Instrument*;
- Those responsible for education in each country should be informed about the *Instrument* so that means of implementing it in the respective countries are initiated.” (3, 1975, pp. 1-2)

We know that this advocacy was successful. The UNESCO General Conference in 1976 adopted the *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education*. It was an excellent document, and only in 2009 during CONFINTEA VI a revision was asked for. In 2015 the UNESCO General Conference adopted the new *Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education* (UNESCO 2015) which integrated policy areas of the Bélem Framework for Action (UIL 2010) and the SDG Education 2030 Agenda (UN 2015).

ICAE and UNESCO Reports

There are numerous examples on the cooperation between UNESCO and ICAE. One such experience concerns the comments and statements which were related to the UNESCO Reports initiated to review the field and provide orientation for the future. The first of this kind was *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow* (Faure et al. 1972). In general the report was well received as it was seen providing answers to the crisis in education globally. However it was Martin Carnoy who discussed the report at the US Commission of UNESCO meeting in 1973 and subsequently wrote for CONVERGENCE (3, 1974) a very critical discussion on *Learning to Be – consensus and contradictions*. Two decades later in preparation of *Learning: the treasure within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century* (Delors et al. 1996) ICAE received an invitation to provide a submission. We met as a small group, including Rosa Maria Torres, former Education Minister in Ecuador, in Toronto and wrote *Adult education and lifelong learning: Issues, concerns and recommendations* (ICAE 1994); the impact on the report could have been stronger.

Even more systematic was the follow-up on the invitation of the UNESCO Futures of Education initiative in 2019. Here Robbie Guevara as the ICAE President called colleagues to a writers group which due to COVID-19 met digitally several times and discussed sections covering ALE as a civil society movement and a sub-sector of the education system, as a field of study, policy and practice, and ALE as related to gender, climate justice and sustainable

development to result in the document *Adult Learning and Education (ALE) – Because the Future Cannot Wait. Contribution of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) to the UNESCO’s Futures of Education Initiative* (ICAE 2020). UIL had called for a transdisciplinary expert consultation for *Embracing a culture of lifelong learning. Contribution to the Futures of Education Initiative* (UIL 2020). The UNESCO Report has come out by now as *Reimagining our futures together. A new social contract for education* (Zewde 2021). In its analysis and perspectives it seems much stronger on ALE than the two previous reports. This can also be said about the new Global Education Monitoring Report on *Non-state actors in education: Who chooses? Who loses?* Here are three quotations closely related to our field which show the recognition of civil society and the importance of community-based institutions: “NGO and community organisations are the main providers in adult learning and education... Non-state actors are a driving force in adult learning and education... Community learning centers (CLC) are increasingly recognized as playing an important role in providing education opportunities meetings local communities’ needs.” (GEM 2021, pp. 179, 191, 259)

It may be good place to at least mention two very relevant reports contributed from civil society to the topic of financing which will most probably be a hot topic at CONFINTEA VII. A broader perspective was taken by ICAE in *Financing adult learning and education. The way forward: what works, how and why* (Popović 2021). DVV International also invited a research team to look into *Public Financing of Popular Adult Learning and Education (ALE). Experience, lessons and recommendations from 14 country and case studies* (Duke et al. 2021).

CONVERGENCE and CONFINTEA VI

For more than 40 years CONVERGENCE supported the development of ALE globally. It continued its service through difficult periods. It accompanied ICAE in times of growth and decline. It survived a number of evaluations, and received special support and funding through partners like the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE), the organisation for adult learning in England and Wales. Alan Tuckett was the successful director of a strong NIACE for more than almost 25 years and he also served as Treasurer and later President of ICAE during which time NIACE published CONVERGENCE on behalf of ICAE.

Back in 2007 CONVERGENCE published *CONFINTEA VI. Key Issues at Stake. International Council for Adult Education. Public Paper* (ICAE 2007b). The ICAE Executive Council took the preparations towards CONFINTEA VI in 2009 very serious, and we invited all member organisations, networks and regional

organisations for a virtual seminar. The *Public Paper* was the outcome document which was then used for global and regional consultations. Part of the process was the ICAE Seventh World Assembly in Nairobi in January 2007 advocating towards *Adults' Right to Learn: Convergence, Solidarity and Action* (ICAE 2007a). Intensive work before and during the assembly was done in commissions on important themes like HIV/AIDS, Health and Poverty; Environment, Ecology and Sustainable Development; Full and Active Citizenship; Migration and Cultural Diversity; Solidarity Economy; Adult Learner's Movement and Mobilization; Organisation and Financing; Conflict Resolutions, Peace and Human Rights; Adult Literacy: A Fundamental Right (ICAE, 2006, pp. 65-68).

Paul Belanger played a key role as ICAE President. He had been Director of UIL during CONFINTEA V, and actually maybe the only person who participated in all consecutive CONFINTEAs ever since Montreal in 1960. He had researched into *Adult Education and the Changing Role of UNESCO and the UN Organisations* (Belanger 1995). He supported the idea of having a CONFINTEA VI Special Edition of CONVERGENCE which was published in between the ICAE World Assembly and the regional preparatory conferences for CONFINTEA in 2008. The Special Edition had triple the size of a regular issue and therefore provided enough space for the Guest Editors (Agostino et al. 2007) to invite for original articles as well as print documents and discussions on the history of UNESCO conferences; country reports from Brazil, England, Germany, Hungary and Germany; regional and sub-regional perspectives from Africa, Latin America and Southeastern Europe; policy, legislation, and financing; sexual minority rights; gender and empowerment. Unfortunately the difficult financial situation of ICAE at the time suggested that shortly after CONFINTEA VI in 2009 the publication of CONVERGENCE had to be stopped. Discussions to have an e-version did not materialize.

The funding of ICAE did not really improve, but even then it was possible that ICAE contributed to the advancement of ALE and LLL from the very reductionist position in der Millennium Development Goals and in the Education for All agenda where former Vice President Maria Khan asked *Does EFA stand for „Except for Adults“?* (Khan 2020), and the now Secretary General Katarina Popović wrote *MDG and EFA – from the mud to the stars and back: What went wrong? A reminder* (Popović 2015). However ICAE stayed actively involved in the advocacy efforts and published *On the Eve of EFA and MDG – Shaping the Post 2015 Education and Development Agendas: Contributions to the Debate and a Collection of Documents* (Fernandez et. al 2014).

Which way for the new CONVERGENCE?

The UNESCO Chair on Global Adult Education has been established at the University of Malta in 2022. Professor Peter Mayo was close to CONVERGENCE earlier and served as a member of the Editorial Advisory Committee. He announced that the UNESCO Chair plans to bring CONVERGENCE back to life in cooperation with ICAE. The negotiations on a publication strategy may be going on, but the invitation to provide manuscripts for a first issue was sent around. This article is an attempt to answer to that call, and support it actively as we feel that more and better information and communication on ALE is needed.

However within that decade when CONVERGENCE stopped and where we are now the world and the world of ALE as changed considerably. Forced digitalization in the past years due to COVID-19 has contributed further. It will be important that the new CONVERGENCE will find its place in the midst of all other efforts around.

There are several journals in our field like *Adult Education Quarterly*, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, *International Education Review*, *Journal of Lifelong Learning* to name but a few. They are well established in the academic world with systems of peer review, supported by publishers and / or institutions within the field of ALE. They are in different stages to come closer to open access and publishing (additionally) on-line.

There are a number of bulletins and newsletters covering aspects of ALE globally or more regionally: ICAE itself started early with a regular newsletter called *voices rising*. *ICAE Electronic Bulletin*. The Center for Research and Development of Adult Learning of the University of Glasgow sends *CR&DALL News* weekly to an e-mail-list-serve. The *PIMA Bulletin* appears five times per year, close on ALE, gender, climate change, inviting to think out of the box. UIL had *NEXUS* and now *UIL Bulletin* which are closely connected to their website. *ALADIN Online Alert* uses the UIL library and sends links around on ALE and LLL. Being closely connected to a website is also the approach which the *Newsletter* of DVV International, three to four times per year, has taken. *Ed-lines* is the newsletter of ASPBAE published triennially. And there are many more. Websites of all the organisations mentioned play an increasing role. Several of them are also on facebook or twitter. Fairly new is MOJA (Swahili for together) as a platform and online resource for ALE professionals and practitioners especially in Africa. EPAL is the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe.

Some fifteen organizations are backing the *we are ale* campaign with ICAE in the lead. The campaign is planned for a five year period, and will be a major instrument in preparation for CONFINTEA VII, and especially afterwards. ICAE is advancing its 50 years anniversary in 2023. It will be a time to look back while moving forward. By then – if all plans go well – CONFINTEA VII will have concluded in 2022 with the Marrakesh Framework for Action. And maybe the earlier slogan of UIL “from rhetoric to action” will become more of a reality. No doubt there is the need and opportunity for an ALE journal where civil society and university are closely cooperating. But which is the niche for a sustainable future of such publication?

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CONVERGENCE and ICAE in the context of CONFINTEA and UNESCO – memories, reflections and perspectives

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Abstract

For those who are in adult learning and education (ALE) longer than the past decade the journal CONVERGENCE will have played a certain role, more so if you were closer connected to the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). The journal was started in 1968 by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto before taken on by ICAE after its foundation in 1973, and published till 2009. UNESCO was founded in 1945, and in 1949 held its first World Conference on Adult Education, later called CONFINTEA following the French abbreviation of Conférence Internationale sur l'Éducation des Adultes. We are now heading towards CONFINTEA VII in Marrakesh in 2022, and the UNESCO Chair on Global Adult Education at the University of Malta and ICAE are planning a new life for CONVERGENCE. The article will look at some of the interconnections between the respective organisations, conferences and publications through an institutional and personal lens. A special attention is placed on the beginning and ending phases of my professional career in the field of international ALE for development.

Keywords

Adult learning and education; comparative studies; biographical lens; civil society contributions; Julius Nyerere

CONVERGENCE et le Conseil international pour l'éducation des adultes (ICAE) dans le contexte de CONFINTEA et de l'UNESCO - souvenirs, réflexions et perspectives

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Résumé

Pour ceux qui s'intéressent à l'apprentissage et à l'éducation des adultes (ALE) depuis plus de dix ans, la revue CONVERGENCE aura joué un certain rôle, surtout si vous étiez plus étroitement lié au Conseil international d'éducation des adultes (ICAE). La revue a été lancée en 1968 par l'Institut d'études pédagogiques de l'Ontario de l'Université de Toronto avant d'être reprise par ICAE après sa fondation en 1973, et publiée jusqu'en 2009. L'UNESCO a été fondée en 1945 et a organisé en 1949 sa première conférence mondiale sur l'éducation des adultes, appelée plus tard CONFINTEA, selon l'abréviation française de Conférence Internationale sur l'Éducation des Adultes (CONFINTEA). Nous nous dirigeons maintenant vers la CONFINTEA VII qui se tiendra à Marrakech en 2022, et, en conséquence, la chaire UNESCO sur l'éducation globale des adultes de l'université de Malte et ICAE prévoient une nouvelle vie pour CONVERGENCE. L'article examinera certaines des interconnexions entre les organisations, conférences et publications respectives à travers un prisme institutionnel et personnel. Une attention particulière est accordée aux phases de début et de fin de ma carrière professionnelle dans le domaine de l'éducation des adultes et pour le développement au niveau international.

Mots clés

Apprentissage et éducation des adultes ; études comparatives ; perspective biographique ; contributions de la société civile ; Julius Nyerere

CONVERGENCE y el ICAE en el contexto de CONFINTEA y la UNESCO - Memorias reflexiones y perspectivas

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Resumen

Para quienes se han interesado por el aprendizaje y la educación de adultos (AEA) durante más de una década, la revista CONVERGENCE debe haber desempeñado algún papel importante, especialmente si se estaba vinculado más estrechamente con

el Consejo Internacional de Educación de Adultos (CIEA). La revista fue lanzada en 1968 por el Instituto de Estudios de Educación de Ontario de la Universidad de Toronto antes de ser integrada al ICAEW tras su fundación en 1973, y publicada hasta 2009. La UNESCO se fundó en 1945 y celebró su primera conferencia mundial sobre la educación de adultos en 1949, denominada posteriormente CONFINTEA, por la abreviatura francesa de Conférence Internationale sur l'Éducation des Adultes. Ahora estamos avanzando hacia CONFINTEA VII en Marrakech en 2022, y la Cátedra UNESCO de Educación Global de Adultos de la Universidad de Malta y el ICAE están planeando una nueva vida para CONVERGENCE. El documento examinará algunas de las interconexiones entre ambas organizaciones, conferencias y publicaciones a través de una perspectiva institucional y personal. Se presta especial atención a la fase inicial y final de mi carrera profesional en la educación internacional para el Desarrollo en el área de adultos.

Palabras clave

Aprendizaje y educación de adultos; estudios comparativos; perspectiva biográfica; contribuciones de la sociedad civil; Julius Nyerere