

REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ADULT EDUCATION (ICAE)
AND THE AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR LITERACY AND ADULT EDUCATION
(AALAE) CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF ADULT EDUCATION IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA.

PREAMBLE

At the beginning of February 1989 at the invitation of AALAE twelve adult educators from the fields of trade union education, literacy and language, women's education, community education and university-based adult education in South Africa had the opportunity to participate with compatriots-in-exile. with adult educators from the rest of Africa, from parts of Latin America, Asia, Europe and North America, in a three day conference which focused on THE FUTURE OF ADULT EDUCATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

This was one of the rare occasions where South African adult educators _from a spectrum of adult education activity were able to meet as 'adult educators' themselves. Most often we meet as 'literacy workers', 'trade. union educators', 'university-based adult educators' etc. 'In addition it was the first time that we were able formally to meet compatriots-in-exile who are involved in adult education. In addition, it was the first time that we were able to meet officially with other African adult educators, along with colleagues from other parts of the world.

During a very hectic three days most of the South Africans present managed to meet informally under the trees of the University of Zimbabwe. It was during these meetings that we decided to write and distribute a report on the conference to as many adult educators who are part of our networks as possible. We felt that there were several areas of common concern amongst us and that there were many possibilities for sharing resources, training opportunities, information etc. In the long term we felt that the possibilities for the formation of some more permanent structure, through which adult educators could communicate and work with one another and with other adult educators from around the world, should be explored.

We felt that there are many exciting possibilities opening up for adult educators and learners to gain from interaction and exchange with adult education activities particularly in Latin America, Asia and Africa. We hope that through this report and through informal meetings in different regions of the country we are able to share our experiences and use these as a basis for taking the discussion of 'The Future of Adult Education in Southern Africa' further within our organisations.

BACKGROUND

Last year the ICAE and AALAE changed their policy towards South African adult educators who are part of the struggle for a democratic, nonracial future for the country. Previously, and in line with the ANC policy of total academic boycott, they had implemented a total boycott of adult educators in South Africa and Namibia. Now, in line with recent policy changes within the liberation movements to a selective rather than total boycott position, ICAE and AALAE have adjusted their policy.

With this change in policy AALAE decided to have the focus of their 1989 Conference The Future of Adult Education in Southern Africa. They set about organising the conference in close consultation with the liberation movements, SWAPO, PAC and ANC. They also consulted with people inside the country. Because of various constraints they could only invite a limited number of adult educators from inside the country. In the invitations they attempted to get a cross section of adult educators from the different sectors and from different regions of the country i.e. trade union education, literacy, women, university-based adult education, non-formal education institutions, community education. There were equal numbers of representatives invited from the liberation movements. Decisions as to whom should be invited were made by the AALAE conference organising committee. The Conference was one of several consecutive events which occurred at the time on the University of Zimbabwe campus. The events included meetings of the AALAE Executive Council, the ICAE Executive Council and the Women's Program of the ICAE. The conference was the culmination of the events.

The 200 participants at the conference came from 50 countries of the world - Africa (virtually every country of Africa was represented, with the Ambassador of the OAU also in attendance), Latin America (Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Mexico), Caribbean, Asia (India, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia), Europe (Denmark, Finland, Britain, Holland, West Germany, France), North America (Canada, U.S.A.)

The South Africans from inside the country who were there were from Learn and Teach, SACHED, Speak Collective, English Literacy Project, USWE, iEnglish Resource Unit, COSATU Education, COBERT, Adult Literacy and Advice Centre (Umtata), and CACE at the University of Western Cape. South Africans in exile were from Zambia, Angola, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Finland. There were some problems with visas, tickets etc, which meant that not all those invited actually arrived.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Tuesday 31 January 1989 :

Theme - The Adult Education Movement in Africa

Panelists spoke from Anglophone, Francophone, Arabophone and Lusophone Africa. A panel of speakers also spoke specifically on 'The Situation in the SADCC Countries'.

The keynote address was given by Vice-President of Zimbabwe, Comrade Simon Muzende.

Wednesday 1 February 1989

Theme - Adult Education in South Africa and Namibia

One of the main speakers, Vusi Khanyile, was not able to attend.

The South African presentation then became a collective effort with a panel speaking about University-based Adult Education, Trade Union Education, Community Education, and Literacy.

Namibian speakers addressed Adult Education Provision inside Namibia and amongst Namibian exiles in SWAPO Centres in Zambia and Angola.

Interest Group Discussions were held around the four areas addressed by the South African panel. The discussions had as part of their focus, ideas for a Draft Plan of Action in relation to Adult Education in South Africa and Namibia.

Thursday 2 February 1989 .

Theme - The Global Adult Education Movement

Panelists spoke from the perspectives of Asia, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, and North America.

Before the closing of the Conference a Draft Plan of Action was discussed that was a synthesis of the ideas for action coming out of the Discussion Groups. The final address by Dr Budd Hall, General Secretary of the ICAE, focused on 'The contribution of the Global Adult Education Movement to the support of South Africa and Namibia'.

A Cultural Show on Thursday evening with cultural groups from Zimbabwe, the PAC, ANC and Mexico completed the event. One important dimension of the conference was the participation of a Mexican popular education group, Los Leones de la Sierra de Xichu. They had been on a tour of countries of Southern Africa where they shared with peasant communities and cultural workers their music and their solidarity in their struggles against the South African regime. Each day they performed new songs which reflected their perceptions and their growing understanding of conditions in Southern Africa.

TENTATIVE PLAN OF ACTION

The conference produced a number of perspectives and action possibilities which emerged from the working groups and which were synthesised by the Conference Task Force. These will form the basis of ongoing discussions in AALAE and ICAE and by participants with their constituencies back home.

A. Implications of the policy of selective boycott :

1. There was clear acknowledgement of the problems which the shift from total to selective boycott will have for several countries and institutions in Africa. There is still a policy of total boycott in several governments of Africa. Participants recognised that together with the liberation movements they will have to work to persuade colleagues etc of the correctness of AALAE's position. ,
2. Mechanisms for the implementation of the selective boycott were discussed and the feeling was that the 'flood gates should not be opened' i.e. there needs to be careful control of the contact with South Africans and Namibians - it was agreed that contact should happen only with adult educators from inside after consultation with the liberation movements and/or their allies.

B. Actions of Solidarity :

1. 'Disclosure of Foreign Funding Bill' - A pending bill in South Africa relates to control of funds from outside the country. The conference saw the bill as an attempt to limit or silence oppositional activity. Most of the current adult educational practice is dependent on private funding. The conference rejected the bill and resolved to bring it to the attention of the OAU, U.N. and any other relevant body in 'an attempt to have it withdrawn. Donor agencies would be asked to take stands of solidarity with their projects inside the country.
2. The conference expressed solidarity with adult educators suffering under repressive conditions and resolved to highlight the plight of these adult educators when necessary.

C. Building the Adult Education Movement

1. The conference agreed that exchange programmes should be developed with adult learners and adult educators from inside the countries of South Africa and Namibia and other African countries, Latin America and elsewhere.
2. The meeting felt that the 1990 Year of Literacy could be used by the South African and Namibians to connect into a global action around a common cause. It was also agreed that the Year should expose conditions in South Africa and Namibia which hamper the promotion of literacy work.
3. Possible joint training programmes should be explored where appropriate.
4. The meeting acknowledged that AALAE is an appropriate pan-African organisation to bring adult educators of all of Africa together.

SOME KEY IDEAS AND CONCERNS TO EEMERGE THROUGH THE PROGRAMME

Introduction:

It is very difficult to capture the richness of the formal and informal discussions that took place during the conference. All we can do is select some insights and ideas that were expressed and which we found interesting. There were few formal papers available and some of these were in French, Portuguese or Spanish. If people are keen to find out more detail about the programme content you could contact one of the participants whose names and addresses are enclosed at the end of the report. We have selected to focus on some issues arising out of presentations on Africa, Latin America and North America.

1. Adult Education in Africa :

a) The Context of Africa was ever present in the conference.

Adult Education activity is influenced and often a response to one of many social, economic, political or cultural conditions. Speakers referred to conditions, for example, of war, famine, refugees, poverty, national debt, apartheid, neo-colonialism, military dictatorships, one-party and multi-party governments, mass illiteracy, multiple languages, religions i.e. Islam, Christianity, traditional beliefs, multiple cultures, migrant labour practices, inferior position of women, and multiple forms of resistance to the various practices of authoritarian control. The questions that underlay much discussion were - of what relevance is adult education? How can adult education link up with social and political movements to assist with 'the liberation of Africa'? What will the challenges be for adult education in 'post-apartheid' South Africa and Namibia? Several speakers mentioned that the enthusiasm for adult education which was linked to forms of national development in the 1960s and 1970s had waned. The fight against illiteracy has relaxed. The energy in Non-Government-Organisations (NGOs) has lessened. The training of adult educators has also fallen off. A number of the programmes are disappearing. What went wrong? A speaker from Mozambique partially answered the question by talking about their experience:

"Since independence there has been a joint effort at building the nations of Mozambique and Angola, but these efforts have been undermined by national and international economic crises and the war of aggression supported by South Africa. There has been no peace since independence. The effects of the destabilisation is that many people are in a desperate situation, with the war having destroyed much of the countries' infra-structures. The role of adult education in this is to raise people's consciousness to understand and act in the situation. The emphasis has been on adult basic education and formal education.

Efforts have still to be made with regard to other forms of Adult Education. Basic skills to meet basic needs specifically in rural areas are necessary. There is a need for survival skills. Education for peace and development is needed. Women need to have key roles in this. There must be encouragement of south-south exchanges. The Mexican group of musicians highlighted for many that Adult Education is not only about reading and writing - different sectors must work jointly if we are to succeed.

The government departments are involved in adult education and it was easy to mobilise people soon after independence. With all the constraints the enthusiasm has waned. There had been massive literacy campaigns in Angola and Mozambique. There is a lack of books, lack of audio-visual aids and there is war. There needs to be an integration of literacy campaigns into the national development effort. There need to be regional training programmes for training adult educators and international solidarity to highlight what is happening in our region

b) Namibia and South Africa : Adult Education in the liberation movements and inside Namibia.

The ANC has adult education programmes in various camps in Angola and elsewhere. They have the Solomon Mahlangu College in Tanzania which is now 10 years old. The issue of literacy and school equivalent certificates seems paramount. The PAC has what they call 'extension units'. Swapo has also concentrated on compensatory adult education - they developed programmes for adults using the distance education model. They also developed materials that were relevant for adult learners. The Namibian Extension Unit was set up in 1982 - it offers courses for refugees in Study Skills, English, Basic Maths, Primary Health, Basic Agriculture. Since 1983 there has been an ongoing campaign to eliminate illiteracy among cadres, the elderly and women. Other courses to teach people English after literacy in their mother tongue are also run.

Inside Namibia there are a number of adult education programmes coordinated by business foundations, by the mines, by the Council of Churches, and by the government. There are Basic Education Programmes run by the government; there is the National Literacy Programme which is a non-profit NGO; in-house training schemes by the mines; continuing education by the Rossing Foundation e.g. language courses, commercial courses, vocational courses. The Council of Churches provides correspondence opportunity for school level courses. There is also a project called the Vocational Training Centre Namibia - this is for semi-skilled technical qualifications, general education till std. 7 - semi-skilled artisans are enabled to set up their own small enterprises.

In South Africa : South African participants sketched the adult education scene and spoke in some depth about trade union education, literacy, community education, university-based adult education, and noted the importance also of industrial training,

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income-generation projects, school equivalency adult education.
health etc.

2) Adult Education in Latin America

The General-Secretary, Francisco Vio Grossi, of CEEAL, the Latin American Association for Adult Education, highlighted what he saw as important issues for adult education in his region.

Important issues for adult educators in Latin America are -:

- # the struggle for democracy
- # the defence of democracy, and
- t the deepening of democracy.

There is economic crisis despite various development projects.

The foreign debt dominates. The struggles of the poor, women and ethnic minorities continue. Some conclusions, that Vio Grossi presented were

1. The main task of Adult Education in Latin America is to collaborate in overcoming rampant authoritarianism - democratise civil society. The purpose is to create new democratic societies.

2. The struggles of South Africa and Namibia are their own. The success with democratising their own countries would mean taking away some of the staunchest supporters of the S.A. regime.

He felt that there was much reciprocal learning that could and should take place between Latin America and Southern Africa and to this end there should be an exchange of popular educators and materials between SA/Namibia and Latin America.

3. Adult Education in North America

A brief sketch of Adult Education in North America was given which highlighted some current concerns. Adult Education occurs in the trade unions, with women, in the churches, in solidarity movements etc. Factors in that context include unemployment which is assisted by free trade from SE Asia. With the ascendancy of the ,conservatives to government office, the state has withdrawn certain social programmes. The adult education movement finds that it has to fight to protect what has been won previously. An important concern for adult educators is the power of the television and radio. There are few educational and cultural contributions. Adult Educators are trying to create community radio and TV where a different vision of the world (other than business and show business) can be shown. The speaker argued that a critical analysis of the TV is needed. Other trends that were impacting on forms of adult education were

- t the aging population, which meant that more programmes were being developed for the elderly,
- # the immigration of economic refugees who are swelling the numbers within marginalised groups. There is racism and thus the need for education for integration.
- t the position of women has changed so that there are now many more women as single parents where there are limited finances.

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There is a major economic crisis for women.

I there is a global movement concerned with the protection of environment.

IN CONCLUSION

The conference has given a group of South Africans from both within and outside the country the opportunity to begin to think about the challenges of adult education in Southern Africa both now and in a future, democratic society. It has put on the agenda the possibilities of connecting with adult educators in the rest of Africa, Latin America, Asia and other parts of the world. It has opened up the possibilities for South African adult educators to engage more actively with the development of the theory and practice of adult education both in Africa and more globally. The possible impact of South African voices joining the adult education debates in Africa was recognised by the secretary-general of AALAE. Mr Paul Wangoola. He said

"There are many adult educators in Africa who have a 'technocratic' approach. The South Africans and Namibians are far more 'political'. In Southern Africa adult education is a mobilising and organising tool to bring about fundamental change. For many adult educators in Africa there will be a range of motives which they bring to their adult education work - part of a professional job, part of a social welfare function, part of the building of particular values and orientations in the society, and also mobilising for change." He went on to say in his address that

"We do not engage in literacy and adult education for its sake, but as a vehicle to address and find solutions to the development needs of the African peoples It is accordingly imperative for adult education to address the major development issues of the African continent..... these include

t the independence and integrity of the African continent as a whole.

war and violence

t the debt

t the participation of women in decision-making in all levels and in all processes of development

t authoritarianism

political, economic, social, cultural, institutional and environmental decay

t generalised pauperisation whereby the middle class is being proletarianised.

All the above development challenges call for social action, for peoples, institution building, and capacity building within communities."

Coming out of the conference are questions for progressive adult educators in South Africa about how we wish to build on and develop the discussion on the future of adult education in SA?

Names and Addresses of South African Organisation. Present

1. SACHED, P.O. Box 8451, Cumberwood 3235
2. Adult Literacy, P.O. Box 85, Umtata, Transkei
3. USWE, P.O. Box 1290, Highlands North, Johannesburg
4. SACHED, Box 6043, Durban 4000
5. Learn and Teach, Box 11074. johannesburg 2000
6. English Literacy Project, 314 Dunwell House, 35 Jorissen Street Braamfontein 2017
7. COBERT, P.O. Box 19. Langa 7455
8. English Resource Unit, CIC, 36 Ecumenical Centre, 20 St Andrews Street, Durban
9. Speak Collective, Durban
10. COSATU, P.O. Box 1019, Johannesburg 2000
11. Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE), University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17, Bellville 7530