The Global Revolution in Adult Education on the Seventh Decade of Israel

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The Term 'Adult Education and Learning'

The term 'adult education and learning' is one out of a range of terms, all similar with regards to vision, goals, populations, teaching and instructional methodology, outcomes, suitable educators and instructors; as well as the demands of the state and the civil society. Other terms used in this context are: Lifelong Learning; Learning for Life; Life-Wide and Life-Deep learning; Adult Literacy; and Continuing Education. The traditional term 'adult education' has been expended to the term 'adult education and learning'. The global revolution that will be addressed here encompasses all these terms. The reason for the use of the term 'adult education and learning' is that the component of education is currently at the center of the global revolution.

The Revolution

There are three signs that are found in this revolution: The first is Oppositional Ideology; the second is the desire for a comprehensive

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solution; and the third is the distinctiveness of the group that is leading the revolution.

A. **Oppositional Ideology** - The global view and ideology of the revolution stands in conflict with the existing reality. The reality is perceived as ineffective; it does not answer the pressing questions; and it is not demanding enough towards the authorities. A study conducted in Britain (*Learning through Life*, 2009) outlined all that 'is wrong with the current adult education system'. The 'seven sins' specified below are universal and are not only prevalent in England. However, they exist to a larger extent in states that are distracted from, or that remove themselves from their responsibility of providing education systems that are accessible to the weak and marginal populations.

The oppositional ideology righteously opposes them, and loud and clearly states that:

1. The elementary education does not establish solid foundations for lifelong education and learning. Meaning, that elementary education does not help instill the awareness that lifelong education and learning is continuous in all stages of life. Furthermore, elementary education does not prepare learners for continuous learning, which enables the individual to actualize his potential, and helps society advance its people.

2. The demographic challenge. There is an imbalance between the need to learn in the different stages of life, and the support provided for learning in each stage of life. Meaning, there is support for learning during one stage of life at the expense of other stages. The state supports the education and learning of the youth, while they are forming their personal and professional identity, at the expense of supporting the education and learning of middle-age adults or the elderly, who are at transitional stages towards redefining their identity, and in desperate need
of learning new skills that are required by their daily social and personal tasks.

3. The current adult education and learning system does not recognize the variety of transitions of entering and exiting the employment circle. There are opportunities for initial training, but there is no legislative or budgetary support for learning during the subsequent transitions of unemployment-reentry to employment- or career change; which reoccur several times throughout the adult life.

4. Accumulative inequality in lifelong education and learning is therefore created to an unbearable extent. The current learning systems do not compensate for the deficient and unsatisfactory education and learning of the early ages, yet it stops supporting the process of education and learning from the end of the first phase of life and until the end of life.

5. The lifelong education and learning systems are overly centralized; unstable; and put no trust in its professionals. The centralization is done on a national-institutional level, and in many cases it continues on the local level as well, particularly on the municipal level. The national systems are not stable due to changes in government and an unregulated learning field. The professionals do not retain their positions permanently, and the employers find that it is cheaper to hire 'transient workers' as teachers and directors.

6. The lifelong education and learning systems' infrastructures are not sufficient: the buildings, the technologies and the services do not operate in unison and are not on the same level. Apart from private and corporate education and learning agencies, most of adult education and learning is held in buildings which
are designated for another purpose; the teaching-learning technologies are designed for young audiences; the services are not independent, but rather supported by and rely upon partial services that do not enable continuity.

7. The system is not sufficiently intelligent: It is not innovative and it does not make use of accumulative information in order to renovate and advance. There is a shortage of well-funded and independent adult education and learning centers that attract professionals, who are trained to make ongoing conclusions and can create a repository of materials and technologies. The lack of proper and innovative training is the greatest drawback of the entire adult education and learning system.

B. The Passion for a Comprehensive Solution. This passion has been expressed through the written and spoken language, which was different from the languages that preceded it. In previous years, national or international adult education conferences were overloaded with reports about researches on issues that have already been discussed in the past; actually it was 'more of the same'. The professional elite of this field would gather every few years, and invite the founding fathers for a discussion to mark key events in the field of adult education in that particular country. The status of adult education was discussed in such national documents as the British The White Book or The Green Book (Department of Education, 1998, 1999), as well as in articles published in the professional literature. In the United States, for some 30 years there has been no federal policy document published; the national professional literature has refrained from making a loud statement against the sins of the State in the field of adult education and learning, not to mention the helplessness of the professionals.
Not so in the revolution. Throughout a long line of European transnational and global conferences, short, aggressively phrased summary documents have been written; presenting the outstanding aspects that must be rebelled against and changed. The general sense was that this was not the time for academic references to materials that have already been written, but for constructing uncompromising phrasings, here and now. The motto of these documents was an attempt to reach an all-inclusive solution for all the malfunctions of the adult education and learning system. We shall discuss this solution later. The written and spoken language was led by an identified group of leaders.

C. The uniqueness of the group leading the revolution. Unlike the past, nowadays there is an unfamiliar combination of scholars, leaders of civil societies, heads of global and national foundations, and worldwide leaders; all of whom have thus far remained silent (particularly in Africa and Latin America). All of them gather from time to time, compose similar documents, and are invited to regional and generously funded international conferences.

Let us therefore sum up the revolution: It has a unique ideology, an aggressive written and spoken language, and groundbreaking leadership (Fernandez, 2009; Hall, 1997; Duke, 2009).

At this point, we shall go on to discuss the revolution's global component.

The Revolution on the Global Level

The global revolution has been led by two international organizations: UNESCO- the educational-cultural parent organization of states worldwide, and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) - the global parent organization of the civil societies (NGO's) on the issue of adult education and learning. These two were occasionally
joined by various global organizations whose focus was different. Such organizations were The World Social Forum and the global environment organization. The recent key event organized by both UNESCO and ICAE was the Sixth World Conference on Adult Education, CONFINTEA VI, held in December 2009 in the city of Belém in Brazil and created a solid unity of the global revolution.

The declarations made at the World Social Forum and CONFINTEA VI were intertwined: they were expressed in similar ways; and both included central and well-focused points about the issues that ought to be addressed.

The most unifying global activity that was completed as a result of cooperation between various states, was the activity done by UNESCO. The general assembly of the member states decided what will be the development goals for the millennium's first 15 years, from the year 2000 to 2015 (MDG: Millennium Development Goals 2000-2015), with the focus being on education and learning, starting from elementary education, and emphasizing the population of young girls and women. 'The Development Goals for the new Millennium' were detailed and they bound the member states to implement them by an ongoing process of 15 years.

In the year of 2010, the UN Secretary General called all the member states to increase their efforts and minimize the gaps, until the goals are realized and completed. This declaration was made under the slogan: 'The World We Wait 2015'.

The International Council for Adult Education has prepared recommendations for the member states, to help them implement the 'Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs), which were:
1. Enhancing the participation of the civil society organizations in promoting education as a whole, and in particular education for women and girls. The civil society organizations have the legitimacy
to be directly involved in instilling education; a role which was considered the state's most prominent assignment.

The World Social Forum does indeed operate on a global scale and expresses its commitment to the promotion of the 'Millennium Goals'.

2. Diminishing inequality and discrimination by including women and excluded populations in the instilment of adult education and learning. This did not only refer to the developing countries but also to the developed countries, where weak and marginal populations have no access to adult education and learning establishments. This issue of inequality and discrimination connected to the other millennium goals, which were connected to financial issues and their repercussions in every stage of education.

3. Monitoring and taking responsibility for activities. Education worldwide is currently in a constant delay. UNESCO has created a surveillance mechanism, which will be addressed later on in this paper. Each state must take responsibility not only for its reports but also for the delay in the goal achieving process. Seen as there was no international means of enforcing the issue on the member states, it was recommended to generate within those states pressure from authorities, who might have interests in the matter, particularly organizations of the civil society.

4. Setting a mandatory timetable for achieving the goals. The global operation has begun in 2000, and in 2003 a convention was held in the city of Sophia, to present a progression report. As it turned out, there was a delay among more than half of the 150 states that signed the millennium document. Several years later, in 2008, another follow-up convention was held in Bangkok, and it was discovered that the delay has only grown. As a result, 2010 was set as the special motivation year. The 'binding time table' was to be discussed as part
of the worldwide UNESCO conference.

5. Determining a tax for monetary transfer. There has been a recurring demand around the world to allocate a special tax for adult education or to collect one or two percent from every state's total national produce for adult education. Academic economists and members of civil societies have created formulas and met often in special conferences to offer methods of funding adult education around the world. One such conference was the 2009 conference in Bonn (see: The Bonn Declaration on Financing Adult Education for Development). Thus far, there has been no indication that the suggestions have been implemented. In the past, the issue of funding adult education and learning, in its broader sense, was almost 'off limits'. The middle class always won the jackpot, due to its ability to fund its own learning, including the more expended type of education that was historically referred to as 'Liberal Adult Education'. Now, the question of funding, and especially government funding, was at the top of the agenda for those who were interested in adult education and learning.

6. Full funding for national programs. This recommendation completed the previous one. National programs were often defined as programs that realized each state's national goals, with the most common national goals being: Immigrant absorption; preparing the youth for a career and work life; social equality and justice; caring for the physical environment; and creating socio-economic welfare. These goals therefore were meant to support the entire adult education and learning system, since learning has been the most effective way of promoting individuals and communities. Nonetheless, many states tended to allocate resources to other programs. This recommendation, much like its predecessor, was generating much interest among the global leadership of the adult education revolution, and yet there
were still no practical solutions for its implementation.

7. Paving the road for productive employment. Productive employment has been the name of the game these days, attracting suggestions of both thinking and practice. The various regions of the world have their own suggestions. The European region however, has the most unified rationalization regarding this issue; much like it does about other issues concerning adult education. These rationalizations will be detailed later in the article.

8. An integrative approach. This recommendation derived from the perception of life-long, life-deep and life-wide education and learning, and from the programs of 'learning cities' and 'learning regions'. To promote adult education, it was necessary to pool all the resources in a given city or region; to produce previously unknown resources; and to plan and operate programs to such an extent as was never implemented before. The integrative approach was the realization of a new access to the resources and the funding sources of adult education; and of rejuvenating the approach of Judaism towards the learning man, the learning society, and the learning nation.

World-Global Conferences and their Impact

The millennium goals have created a mechanism of monitoring and assessment. An office in Canada was assigned to gather the information from all the states, analyze it and return to each state its own processed report. Each state is supposed to have its own government ministry; often it is the Ministry of Education that takes upon itself the responsibility for promoting the goals and reporting the progression. Every few years, a regional or global conference is to be held to present the results and discuss the difficulties in achieving them as well the possible solutions.
Here is a concise description of Global conferences which led the way for the current revolution. We already mentioned The Sixth Adult Education Conference (CONFINTEA VI), conducted in late 2009 in the city of Belem, Brazil. This was a global combination of forces, led by a recognized leadership of people and regions around the world; of dozens of men and women, both veterans and newcomers.

Those world conferences began in 1948, shortly after the end of World War Two, and gradually accumulated power, making a leap during the fifth conference that was held in the city of Hamburg in 1997. The Hamburg conference contained a universal presentation, and a global work program was specified ('The UNESCO Declaration', Hamburg 1997; 'Adult Education in Israel 1999'). The recent sixth, was in preparation for twelve years and it brought universality to a new record in terms of exposure, setting a new joint platform and points for activity. The preparation included an act that was never done before: each UN member state prepared and sent a report concerning its achievements in adult education and learning, according to a set framework of questions. This way, about 160 written reports were accumulated on the issue of adult education and learning; allowing teams, working on behalf of the universal conference and directed by the UNESCO Institute of Adult Education in Hamburg, to compose regional summaries on the issue. They even composed a global summary called GRALE: Global Report on Adult Learning and Education, 2010, which contains recommendations.

**Recommendations of Special Significance from the Conference**

The following are some of the recommendations from a short summary called: 'Harnessing the Power and Potential of Adult Learning and Education for a Viable Future – Belem Framework for Action, CONFINTEA VI, Belem, December 2009'.

*Adult Education in Israel and Around the World: Achievements and Outlining a Policy*
**Adult Education**

Education is a necessary element, and the right for an education is an inherent part of the right to learn. Therefore, we must double our efforts to decrease illiteracy by 50% between the years 2000 and 2015.

**Policy**

Policy guidelines and legislative means for adult education should be extensive, general and combined with the perspective of life-long and life-wide learning. For this reason, the policy guidelines that ought to be developed should contain full funding, focused programs and legislation.

**Administration**

Good administration will enable an efficient, transparent, responsible and fair assimilation of the adult education and learning policy. For that reason, a mechanism should be established that would integrate the following authorities: public authorities in all levels of administration; civil society organizations; social partners; representatives of the private sector; the community; and adult education and learning organizations in development.

**Funding**

Adult education and learning are defined as a valuable investment that will result in social benefits. For that reason, there ought to be encouragement for an investment of at least 6% of the national produce in education, and each state should increase the investment in adult education and learning.

From this point on, we should all look forward: countries all over the world have grown closer, the dialogue became unified, and adult education has been placed in the center of it.
The Revolution in Europe

From all regions of the world, Europe is the one leading the adult education and learning revolution. The story of Europe and adult learning is a story of love and commitment. From the very first stages of its formation, the European community has committed, via its commission (i.e. the European government), to position adult education as the central tool that would propel this area of the world to the heights of the economic market and create social stability and unity.

Who is supposed to benefit from the empowered learning systems? Those who roam around Europe undisturbed and who need to learn the native language of the country to which they immigrated; people who seek occupation in wealthier countries and are attending programs of initial and ongoing training; weaker regions that are being supported by the stronger regions. These and others are all intertwined in systems of adult learning that are funded, at least partially, by the member states and that receive the funds and scholarships provided by the European community.

A special division for adult learning has been operating in the European commission for the last thirty years, supported by parallel divisions that are also related to the issue of adult learning. These divisions formulate position documents that are being sent to each member state, binding them to fill out reports and prepare national policy documents. Furthermore, the representatives of member states are also invited to participate in transnational and all-European conferences.

The European declarations consider adult education to be an infrastructure for a good and engaging citizenship; occupational guidance; a successful absorption of immigrants; and the ability to provide aid to various regions, particularly to marginal and remote populations that have difficulty accessing central resources (European Commission, 1996, 2001, 2002).
The commission's documents outline and propose mechanisms of activity and accomplishment. The adult learning divisions propose funding of projects for a competition operated jointly by two states and at times even more (with each project lasting for two years). The projects deal with practical issues, and anyone proposing these projects must submit written materials, presentations, games, interactive materials, activity guides and photographs. The annual Gruntvig Award is given to the most successful projects, and the award ceremony is conducted during the annual meeting of the European Association for the Education of Adults (Przybylska, 2009; Rogers, 2009).

And still, the question of funding adult education remains unanswered, more so in Europe than in other areas of the world. This is in fact the Achilles heel of the European adult education revolution.

**Recommendations for Promoting the Revolution**

From a wide range of statements made on the subjects of the global revolution in adult education, we chose the most precise phrasing of the recommendation appearing in an English study by the name of: *Learning Through Life - Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning* (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2009).

All the recommendations for fields that go beyond adult education were adapted by us to suit adult education, and therefore our phrasing will be somewhat different than the original.

1. A new model of adult education must be constructed based on a new categorization of the different stages of life and the education and learning needs of adults at each stage: The up to 25 years stage; the 25-50 stage; the 50-75 stage; and the 75+ stage. Resources must be balanced fairly and wisely between the various stages of life.
2. A system of learning entitlements for adult education must be constructed. This means, providing credit for learning, even partially;
and adjust the learning to the learners' current state, whilst looking toward the near and far future of each and every one of them.

3. The sense of capability and responsibility among local accountable authorities must be enhanced, in an attempt to establish learning cities and learning regions.

4. The status of professionals dealing with the field of adult education must be expanded by building initial and ongoing training alignments and providing authorization and excellence diplomas.

5. The learning agency dealing with adult education must be reconstructed and empowered; their working conditions must be improved; and new and innovative enterprises must be developed.

Israel's Position with Relation to the Global Revolution

The Revolution Eludes Israel

Who in Israel knows about the debates, the decisions and the recommendations that were made in the global conferences? Perhaps it is the government ministries? Or maybe it is the local authorities? The private sector? The civil society? Or the providing agencies of adult learning? Where are the rationalization and activity mechanisms? Have there been any debates lately about the issue of adult education? Were any decision made? Were they budgeted? Have any interested parties been found that would contribute their resources to adult education?

A handful of people have participated in the international and global debates regarding the issues mentioned above. But are there any other interested parties who wish to learn from this handful of people about the new innovations in this field? There are many professionals in the field of adult learning, but they are not organized by the appropriate professional frameworks. The number of academic professionals shifts, and they are not involved in the international debates mentioned above.
The Global Revolution and the Israeli Education Orientation Progress in Opposite Directions

The state's funding of adult education was brutally reduced from the beginning of 2009, creating a chain reaction that led to funding reductions in the local authorities as well.

The professionals in the government ministries are not encouraged by their ministries to think about the issues mentioned above, or about any other issue for that matter. The government offers no recipient for all the suggestions and recommendations specified above. The state of Israel is not represented in the international and global forums mentioned above, nor is it active in any of them. Furthermore, the state of Israel doesn't even prepare reports on the issues specified above.

What to Do?

One possibility would be to establish the required mechanisms and receive government funding.

Another possibility would be to recruit the civil societies' funds and any other stakeholders for the activities required by the recommendations mentioned above and by any other recommendation.

What the author of this article believes should be done is:

1. Restore the budget of the Ministry of Education's Adult Education Division to its previous status, and expand it according to the action program guidelines that were stated above and according to other guidelines.

2. Establish a national adult education and learning council that would examine the policy document, which was formulated a few years ago in cooperation with the Israeli Association of Adult Education and the Ministry of Education's Adult Education Division; form a national action program; and initiate the establishment of monitoring
and assessment mechanisms for the progression of this field in Israel.

3. Recruit both the civil society and the private sector to a joint involvement in the development of adult education and learning in Israel.

In its 63rd year of existence the time has finally come for the state of Israel to renew that which is old, break down the wall of indifference and pain, unite forces, and place the adult education and learning systems among the top of the national list of priorities.

References


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