CHAPTER 6

Advocacy, Adult Learning and the Pursuit of Social Justice

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Abstract:

The chapter highlights the centrality of advocacy work for adult learners, particularly from marginalised and excluded communities, as a key feature of the work of Lalage Bown and its scope nationally and internationally. It explores effective work in representing the experience and demands of adult learners, and those who work with them, undertaken by adult learning associations at a national, regional and global level. The three examples considered are the work of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) in England and Wales, notably around the creation of Adult Learners' Week as festival and advocacy tool; the work of the Asian South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), in combining research-based policy work and advocacy, regionally and globally alongside developing advocacy skills among its members; and the work of The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), the global non-governmental association for adult learning, and the work of its International Academy for Lifelong Learning Advocacy in strengthening practitioners' capacity to engage with global decision making processes affecting adult learning. The chapter concludes with reflections on the key skills needed for successful advocacy.

Keywords: Adult Learning; Advocacy; Associations; Equity

Lalage Bown was a passionate educator, dedicated for more than seventy years to securing education as a right for everyone, to ending gender inequality, and to securing a voice for under-represented groups. She understood that a life worth living needs health, sufficient wealth and learning, and that adult learning and education is a fundamental tool in the struggle for social justice, and in making those needs accessible to all. She also understood that it was possible (though not easy) to persuade policy makers to sign up to broad commitments to lifelong learning for all, but that turning those broad commitments into practical policies affecting poor and marginalised adults, and particularly poor and marginalised women was infinitely harder (Bown 2000). She recognised that policy makers at local, national and international levels regularly fail to see its significance without sustained, passionate and evidence-based advocacy. In part this is, as she knew, because adult learning and education, for all their importance are seldom visible in wider public debates. Lalage's response to this was to take every possible opportunity to assert the right to education, to insist that

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the curriculum for structured education for adults must reflect the experience and voices, the lived experience of learners, and to push policy makers and practitioners to do more and better on behalf of those who have benefited least, and that debates in a privileged country like Britain should never lose sight of the experience of adults in the global South. Because she was a serious educator she used her formidable talents, and her unmatched determination in advocacy for an Adult Education and wider learning environment that matched the rhetoric of lifelong, life-wide learning for all.

My first encounter with Lalage illustrated this. When she had returned from her ground breaking work in West Africa, to work for a year at The Institute of Development Studies based at Sussex University, she visited the voluntary sector adult education centre where I worked at a time when our adult literacy work had survived enquiries from three government departments into potential political bias in our literacy materials (happily leading to the national publication of our materials as the best of good practice), and at a time the local authority was planning to cut adult education. She was, of course, supportive of our campaigns on behalf of learners, which included a week-long day and night teach-in which mobilised media support for the work. Nevertheless, Lalage saw this as no reason not to demand more and better of our work on behalf of women's education – always pushing us to outdo our best. My last substantial encounter was similar. It came when she was invited as a witness to an initial meeting of the Centenary Commission for Lifelong Learning in 2019, where her contribution was learned, politically sophisticated and clearly forward looking. Never someone to be slow to come forward, Lalage invited herself to all the subsequent meetings of the Commission, making incisive rights-based contributions to its findings (Centenary Commission 2019).

It is then, entirely fitting that in a celebration of Lalage's work and contribution, the centrality of advocacy for rights-based education and learning opportunities for adults should be explored. This chapter explores how adult learning associations at a national, regional and global level undertake that work, both in representing the experience and demands of adult learners, and those who work with them, and in developing the skills needed to be effective advocates among their members. It describes work in the UK, co-ordinated by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, NIACE, to create a national festival, Adult Learners' Week, connecting broadcasters, policy makers, and the wide range of providers in celebrating existing learners in order to encourage others to participate, and as a showcase for pressing for policy change to strengthen services. It also explores how that initiative was taken up in some fifty-five countries. At a regional level it explores the work of the Asian South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education, ASPBAE, in combining research-based policy work and advocacy, regionally and globally with its practical strategies for developing advocacy skills among its members to develop effective strategies for promoting the right to education for young people and adults. The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), the recognised global non-governmental organisation representing adult education, established an International Academy for

Lifelong Learning Advocacy, recognising that many of its regional and national members were almost wholly engaged in national or regional work, and seeking to develop a cohort of practitioners able to combine working locally with global advocacy work on behalf of adult learning. In each case, the organisations highlighted through their work the vital importance of including participants from under-represented groups, recognised the importance of securing effective succession planning, and the importance of celebration and festival as advocacy tools. The chapter concludes with reflections on the key skills needed for successful advocacy.

Harbans Bhola, the distinguished Indian adult educator argued that adult education is both structure and culture. It is a distinction Lalage would recognise:

> We must recognize that adult education in all societies of the world, whether developed or developing, is first a culture, and then a sector. Within the adult education culture, adults educate other adults, by beating drums for attention, singing folk songs, and shouting messages over loudspeakers, by putting posters on walls, and organising exhibits; by organising political and religious functions on street corners or in city parks; and by spreading the message over the radio and television. On the other hand, the adult education sector is made up of the adult education establishment comprising governmental and non-governmental institutions; ministries, enterprises, research bureaus, night schools, and adult learning centres (Bhola 1997, 47).

1. NIACE

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, NIACE (now renamed the Learning and Work Institute) was created in 1921 as the British Institute of Adult Education. For its first half century it was primarily a professional network, fostering communication and development among professionals in university adult education, the WEA and local government. NIACE published an authoritative journal for its field and mounted an annual residential conference and an autumn meeting – broadly supportive of Bhola's «adult education as sector» (Bhola 1997, 47). However, early in its life it housed initiatives that led to the creation of the British Film Institute and to the national Arts Council, and during the Second World War its full-time Secretary was seconded to run a mass adult education initiative, the Army Bureau of Current Affairs – each with a visibility and reach far greater than adult education itself. In the post-war era adult education attracted relatively little public policy attention, though the 1973 government commissioned Russell report recognized that adult education services were less effective at engaging 'disadvantaged' communities, and a number of initiatives followed, hosted by NIACE, supported adult literacy, English as a Second Language, educational guidance for adults, and provision for unemployed people (Gilbert and Prew 2001).

At the end of the 1980s the government proposed legislation that would end local authority responsibility for adult education, and limit public funding solely

to provision leading directly to qualifications for work. Approaches to government to modify the policy were brushed off. As NIACE's Director I was told by the lead civil servant that there is no such thing as adult education, it is just further education. The Institute members decided that it needed robust and public campaigning to affect the legislation. Briefings for provider institutions were issued. Local authorities agreed to collect a petition against the proposals, securing more than 500,000 signatures in less than a month. Perhaps most significantly, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, a NIACE member organization with a formidable organizational capacity mobilized its 9,000 branches in a letter writing campaign to MPs. The Department of Education had to take on significant numbers of extra staff just to respond to the correspondence. NIACE then supported sympathetic Members of Parliament and peers to create an All Party Parliamentary Adult Education Group to foster informed debate on adult learning and education policy. Newspapers and the broadcast media offered sympathetic coverage. One striking story in *The Independent* covered the experience of a merchant banker, who had gone to local authority evening classes in flower arranging as preparation for a career change, prior to opening a glorious florist's shop in Brixton, London (the site of riots in the 1980s) and hiring several fellow class members to work in the shop. The florist was clear that for him flower arranging was industrial training, and that you cannot tell students' purposes from the title of a class.

Within a remarkably short time the government 'clarified' its position – reversing proposals to exclude wider liberal education from public funding. There was a perhaps unsurprising but relatively short-lived cooling of government relations with NIACE, which it part-funded through grant aid (Tuckett 1996, 54-55).

The Institute, despite considerable initial scepticism, recognized the breadth of institutional and media support its campaign had generated, and agreed to set about creating new alliances to promote a national festival of adult learning and education, Adult Learners' Week, in 1992. In part this was to demonstrate the wide range of settings and the extraordinary diversity and richness of studies adult undertake, in part to celebrate existing adult learners and to give them a voice as an encouragement to others to join in. Its third purpose was to help decision makers to understand and respond to the rich variety of demand. The Week built upon an earlier American initiative but on a significantly larger scale. NIACE was lucky that the BBC had decided, with the support of the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) to make short advert like programmes to promote adult participation in learning, and agreed to align timings. Independent television companies also agreed to feature outstanding adult learners' stories in regional news shows, and Channel 4 commissioned a major drama focusing on an autodidact. NIACE co-ordinated awards ceremonies, supported the thousands of local events, published research on adult participation for the week, supported news organisations in searching out stories, liaised with the MSC in creating a free telephone adult guidance helpline for the Week. The European Social Fund supported those aspects of the Week targeting unemployed adults. The impact was impressive. 55,000 people phoned the helpline, and then more than a half

were long term unemployed. Within three months more than a third had taken up a course. A key to the Week's success was its permissiveness – anyone could organise their own activities under its umbrella – and its success also consolidated NIACE's own voice as an advocate for adult learning of all sorts (Yarnit 2010).

The success of the Week was marked, and agreement with the major partners was secured to repeat it on an annual basis. During the second Week, agreement was secured to insert an advert into every unemployed person's benefits cheque encouraging them to phone the helpline – incidentally a perfect way to demonstrate the evidence of the successful targeting to beneficiaries required for funding support from the European Social Fund. *The Guardian* carried a 22-page supplement highlighting a combination of policy issues and personal learning journeys. NIACE was invited to host a Parliamentary Reception for the Week, and close relations with government were re-established, helped by the enthusiasm of a new Minister, Tim Boswell. Each year new dimensions were added – the oldest learner in the country was found, women returners were highlighted, a sustained focus on learners' voices was developed, supermarkets opened learning centres for the Week, Government Ministers hosted the major national ceremonies, and international colleagues visited to see how it all worked (Tuckett 2021). Comparable initiatives were developed in Switzerland, South Africa, Jamaica, and a raft of European countries. In 1997-98 UNESCO adopted an International Adult Learners' week and the initiative spread to some 55 countries (Bochynek 2007).

One key lesson NIACE took from the Parliamentary campaign, and Adult Learners' Week was the importance of accessible and easily digested data, to enable decision makers to make better informed policies and programmes. NIACE instigated an annual market research driven and representative survey of participation in adult learning of all sorts, and a complementary research programme in a wide range of studies, but particularly on the barriers faced by under-represented groups and how these might be overcome. It made the findings of this work available to policy makers, funding bodies and to politicians of all the major parties. Indeed, in 2008-09 it spent a million pounds on commissioning research to identify a lifelong learning strategy given the absence of a government one (Schuller and Watson 2009). The work was effective. Leisha Fullick noted that the extent to which NIACE established itself as an indispensable tool for busy politicians was demonstrated in 2004 when a Liberal MP complained:

> The Honourable Member [...] (for Daventry) [Tim Boswell-Tory] has gone through virtually the whole of the NIACE briefing notes, leaving me somewhat bereft of comment (Fullick 2010, 206-7).

The Institute was successful in helping to shape the new Labour government's thinking, and helped administer national development programmes through more than a decade, but still maintained a sharp critique when it saw the interests of learners being damaged by developments – perhaps notably when funding for programmes of English for Speakers of other Languages was cut radically (Grover 2006). Managing the role of partner to governments of all persuasions

whilst maintaining effective advocacy for adult learning and education needed diplomacy and trust, with government and funders, but also in relations with providers, practitioners and learners. In its work with government, NIACE secured a voluntary sector compact, renewed annually alongside its rolling three year funding, that recognized the balance of risk in cooperative relationships between the state and voluntary bodies. Government recognized the benefit to be gained from NIACE's robust critique of public policy as a critical friend, and NIACE offered 'no surprises' – a guarantee that when it disagreed publicly, or planned to campaign against proposals, it would inform government in advance. It was also important that the Institute remained fiscally independent by earning 90 percent of its turnover apart from government grant (Tuckett 2009; Fullick 2010).

Despite the success of its advocacy till the mid 2000s, however, NIACE and its renamed successor has spent much of the last fifteen years fighting campaigns to minimize the reductions in opportunity for adult learners that flowed from neo-liberal austerity programmes, and from a new narrow utilitarianism in policy. To date some 4 million fewer adults are engaged in publicly supported programmes than in the mid 2000s.

2. ASPBAE

ASPBAE, the Asian South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education is a regional association of almost 300 members, working across in excess of thirty countries in the Asia-South Pacific region, dedicated to

> building a movement committed to advancing equitable access to relevant, quality and empowering education and learning opportunities for all people, especially the most marginalized groups. Its overall goal is to secure equal access of all citizens to basic and Adult Education of good quality, thereby contributing to poverty eradication, sustainable development and lasting peace (Castillo 2012, 43).

Its members include non-government organisations, national education campaign coalitions, national federations of Adult Education, community groups, indigenous people and women's organisations, popular education groups and university departments. It is a values driven association, with a powerful commitment to human rights, and especially education as a human right. Its staff and members combine passion, rigour, a strategic understanding of how to promote change, and how to hold governments and funders to account in achieving the promises they make about basic and adult education. It recognizes that in many of the states in its region, the policy commitments and funding available through development partners is as critical as the decisions of governments, and has as a result developed a combination of strategies that seek to help shape global as well as regional policy and funding. To achieve this, ASPBAE is highly effective at creating and sustaining partnerships at the different levels of its activity, and by concentrating on four areas of focus – policy advocacy, leadership and capac-

ity building, strategic partnerships, and institutional capacity building, each of which is elaborated on below, and all of which are key elements in advocacy at a regional and global level (ASPBAE 2014). It is held in the highest regard by partners, governments and the UN process, not least because of the exceptional leadership skills Maria Almanaz Khan demonstrated during her twenty-five years leading the association.

ASPBAE was formed in 1964 as the Asian Pacific Bureau for Adult Education (the name changed in 2005), with 33 founding members (overwhelmingly academics and the national adult education officers of states), who were seeking to foster co-operation and development among adult educators in its region. In their first decade they met where possible in the interstices of other funded organisations' events, unable to fund independent meetings. ASPBAE's initial fragility was exacerbated when its first General Secretary died suddenly in 1967 (Morris 2011). The second, Chris Duke described ASPBAE when he first encountered it:

> It was a small, shallow-rooted club of people in universities, government departments and in a few cases national associations. My first encounter was in a Stiftung-funded regional workshop in New Delhi in 1972. Here I learned (too late!) that the price of participation was to agree to take on the secretarial work and fan life into what had become a shell organisation. In the next two years the main sign that ASPBAE existed was a Newsletter, the Courier (2003, 83).

Three events contribute significantly to its transformation from small beginnings to its present status. The first was its role in the formation of the International Council for Adult Education in 1973, and in ICAE's first Assembly in Dar es Salaam in 1976. Through its role as ICAE regional vice-president for Asia Pacific ASPBAE contributed actively to drafts of UNESCO policy documents. The second key development resulted from the agreement of ASPBAE and the German Adult Education Association's Institute for International Cooperation, DVV International, to sign a formal partnership in 1977 which has lasted more than forty years. DVV International played a critical role in funding national co-ordination offices for adult education in the member countries of ASPBAE, securing a robust organizational base for its work. Following an initial joint meeting at Chiangmai, Thailand ASPBAE embarked on a vibrant decade of shared meetings, regional training, travel fellowships, and shared advocacy, with ASPBAE members playing a full role lobbying hard, (albeit like all other ngos from outside the formal conference hall), at the fourth World Conference on the Education of Adults, CONFINTEA IV.

The third transformative act followed a 1990 report of ASPBAE's General Secretary, W.M.K. Wijetunga which noted a crisis in ASPBAE, which worked overwhelmingly with the region's university based adult education, whilst a major expansion had taken place in NGOs and civil society organisations working actively, and innovatively in the field. The ASPBAE Executive Council decided, on receipt of the report to recommend strongly that the Association should «convene an assembly of all potential new members of ASPBAE to better root ASPBAE's work in the realities of the region and to redefine its structures and

priorities in this regard» (Khan 2014). The resultant First ASPBAE General Assembly, in Tagatay, Philippines in December 1991 moved from accepting single representatives of countries to accepting direct membership of individual organisations, and the focus shifted from academic to popular education, and to effective network building (Khan 2014).

This shift of focus was given added impetus from 1995 when Maria Lourdes Alamanaz Khan was appointed Secretary General. By 2000, and the third General Assembly, ASPBAE had built a robust network, helped members to strengthen their own organizational base, had adopted transparent governance processes, and as a review of its work noted:

> The values and philosophy of a transformative Adult Education are now more entrenched in the organization. The commitments to social justice, gender justice, sustainable human development, equity and peace are explicit in the organisation's philosophy (ASPBAE quoted in Khan 2014).

However, the Assembly also noted that the network's strength had not led to influence education policy reform or challenged dominant paradigms of thinking about education and learning. The 2000 UNESCO World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, recognised that the goal set a decade earlier, to halve illiteracy by 2000 had not been met, and set a new process Education for All in place, with targets to be achieved by 2015. ASPBAE was active in Dakar, but the EFA follow up process, which expanded opportunities for NGO and CSO participation, gave it a mechanism both to have an impact on global policy, and through UNESCO and development partner funding, could impact on the region's governments (Khan 2000). As a result ASPBAE focused its policy work and advocacy firmly on EFA. Globally, it joined the Global Campaign for Education, and the UNESCO Collective Consultation of NGOs on EFA, whilst maintaining its role in ICAE and its partnership with DVV International. Over the next decade ASPBAE became convinced that to make gains for adult education in the wider policy environment it needed to argue the indivisibility of education for all, and in 2008 changed its name and constitution again to become the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education, reflecting the all-age focus of many of its grass roots member associations.

ASPBAE built on the successful Education Watch model developed by its member, the Campaign for Popular Education in Bangladesh, to create an independent citizen based assessment of the state of basic education at regional, national and local levels, focusing on disadvantaged groups, and designed to highlight the magnitude of the gap between global targets agreed by governments and the current scale of the shortfall in meeting them. Change is monitored over time and analysis undertaken to identify problems and identify solutions. Periodic Report Cards are published by ASPBAE, among them *Failing the Midterms: Half measures won't do! An Asia Pacific Citizens' Report Card rating governments' efforts to achieve Education for All,* and *Gender, Equality and Education: A Report Card on South Asia* (ASPBAE 2009). External global conferences stimulate further research. The sixth World Conference on Adult Education planned for

2009 prompted an ASPBAE study analysing the financial requirements needed to meet the Education for All adult literacy targets by 2015. A Literacy Cost-Benefit Study and literature review undertook cost benefit analysis of adult education and learning, particularly for developing countries, and these studies are then complemented by policy briefs for practitioner advocates and policy makers alike. As education privatization was introduced in the region, ASPBAE studied its impact and implications for under-represented groups. Studies on the comparative performance of different countries were particularly effective. As EFA and the Millennium Development Goals were replaced in 2015 by Sustainable Development Goals, ASPBAE was active and effective in influencing the language and focus of global preparatory papers, and in monitoring subsequent progress (ASPBAE 2010; Khan 2014).

This externally focused advocacy work is complemented by leadership and capacity building programmes. A Basic Leadership Development Course introduces participants to the ASPBAE network, the principles of emancipatory adult education, and policy advocacy. The course is residential, lasts 6 days, and includes dynamic strategies for engaging and enthusing groups. This is partnered by a programme aimed at developing trainer facilitators in the region. The third key element in advocacy work focuses on strengthening the National Education Campaign coalitions in the region, where ASPBAE works in partnership with the Global Campaign for Education and partners in other global regains to strengthen coalition members capacity to campaign for education as a human right (ASPBAE 2010; Castillo 2012).

An important dimension of advocacy work by umbrella bodies like ASPBAE is the ability to secure funding from a sufficiently broad range of sources to secure and develop the work. This has been less easy since global development partners moved to a large extent from funding infrastructure to programmes with quantifiable outcomes, but ASPBAE has been extremely successful in this, aided in part by its shift to being a network for learning across the age span. However, it is the skill of the network to make and sustain dynamic partnerships that make it such a successful advocate on behalf of the right for all to quality education.

3. ICAE

The International Council for Adult Education, the only global non-government organization representing adult education and the adult learners' movement, was founded by a group of non-state actors following the third UNESCO World Conference on Adult Education in Tokyo in 1972. Inspired by the Canadian J. Roby Kidd, they were determined that civil society needed a voice in global discussions affecting the interests of adult learners. At first, as with ASPBAE «it was the combination of contacts in the national adult education associations with those in university adult education that provided the strongest base for the early development of the Council» (Hall 1995, 191). ICAE's first General Assembly, which met in Dar es Salaam in 1976 attracted 700 participants from more than a hundred countries, and was addressed by Julius Nyerere,

President of Tanzania and ICAE's first Honorary President. Nyerere argued that «the first function of adult education is to inspire both the desire for change, and an understanding that change is possible», and that adult education «is the key to the development of free men and free societies. Its function is to help men to think for themselves to make their own decisions, and to execute these decisions for themselves» (quoted in Hinzen 2006, 69).

In response, ICAE developed a distinctive blend of advocacy, combining evidence-based policy analysis with celebration of popular education, and negotiating hard to secure the realization of education as a human right. To that end ICAE developed a close working relationship with the work of the UNESCO Institute for Learning (UIL), which became later the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

Its own organization was shaped by work through its regions and national organization members to facilitate links with practitioners and local bodies. The regions comprised the European Bureau of Adult Education (founded in 1953 and like ASPBAE in existence before the creation of ICAE, evolved in the early 1990s to the EAEA); the African Adult Education Association, ASPBAE, and later CARCAE in the Caribbean, CEEAL (the popular education network in Latin America, and a network in North America. From the late 1970s it worked most effectively through thematic networks, linking activists across the globe to share experience and initiatives, and to build an evidence base. The key networks were women's education (Ellis 1995); education for environmental awareness (Clover 1995), adult literacy (Rodney 1995), and adult education for peace (Kekkonen 1995). The Council also played an important role in fostering participatory research, ensuring the voice of learners were fully represented in the design and content of research activity. Through the 1980s the Council strengthened partnership with a range of social movements – seeking change by aligning its work with actors, particularly in the global south seeking to overcome the marginalization and poverty affecting communities.

Its impact on global policy making came through its role as a partner of UNESCO and in particular UIL. Perhaps the relationship between ICAE and UNESCO has been best expressed at the twelve yearly world conferences on adult education. At CONFINTEA V in Hamburg in particular, the conclusions strongly reflected ICAE's vision, its commitment to education as a human right for all and to life-wide learning. ICAE played a pivotal role at the conference in securing UNESCO commitment to develop learning festivals and Adult Learners' Weeks, and greater centrality for gender equality (UNESCO 1997).

However, soon after CONFINTEA V, ICAE hit difficult times. It established a Renewal Task Force, paralleled by a review instigated by its development aid partners. The review report was clear that ICAE seemed trapped in a 1980s agenda and needed urgently to change. However, the report was emphatic that a global learning organization representing adult education and the adult learners' movement in global debates was needed (DANIDA 1999, 4).

At a Special General Assembly held in Manila in 1999 to respond to the report, ICAE shifted the balance of its partnership work and its formal member-

ship towards bodies representing community-based adult education practices, whilst keeping a central commitment to policy advocacy. It sought to align itself with other global social movements, and to seek a stronger voice for agencies in the global south, and from 2001 the office moved from Toronto to Montevideo in Uruguay.

ICAE's advocacy work has focused since on four distinct but overlapping interests, alongside effective communication with its members through its online newsletter Voices Rising, and listening to them through its inclusive online seminars and consultative debates. The first involved advocacy in relation to UNESCO's agenda. UNESCO's Dakar World Education Forum in 2000 provided an arena for the revitalised ICAE (including ASPBAE as seen above) to forge partnerships to advocate for adult education as the Education for All (EFA) agenda was established. However, whilst the partnerships proved robust during the fifteen-year period of the Education for All agenda adopted at Dakar, the commitments secured in the EFA agenda for adults were modest. The commitment to halve illiteracy among adults, adopted first in 1990, was restated, a commitment was made to secure gender equality in participation, and a vaguer goal was agreed to ensure «[…] that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes» (Global Education Monitoring Report Team 2015, 2).

Whilst progress on the EFA goals was monitored annually, the failure to agree robust data sets that could measure the goal relating to youth and adult participation meant despite advocates' best efforts this goal never received adequate attention. No sooner had the EFA agreement between agreed between governments than the UN agreed eight Millennium Development Goals, including only universal primary school from the EFA agenda, which, since the MDGs garnered the overwhelming bulk of development finance, had the effect of further marginalising the right to adult education for all.

ICAE had more impact in the follow up process to CONFINTEA V, preparing an evidence based Shadow Report in time for the Mid Term Review in 2004, taking 20 countries representing different stages of development and monitoring progress on countries' implementation of the CONFINTEA V agreements (ICAE 2003). The paper was the key document debated at the Review, and led at CONFINTEA VI to the adoption by UNESCO of a 3 yearly progress report cycle (GRALE) from 2009. Similarly, in the preparation for the 2009 CONFINTEA VI in Belem, Brazil ICAE mobilised organisations and social movements to create a Preparatory event, FISC, that met immediately prior to the full conference, attracting 1200 participants to a creative, innovative and celebratory festival that offered a sharp critique of the state of adult education provision in 2009. Its outcome document offered a more confident and forward looking agenda than the formal conference (International Civil Society Forum 2010; Tuckett 2015). Its role was even more central once the CONFINTEA VI Mid Term Review was held in Korea, with members playing key roles as speakers, moderators, and drafting committee members, and in influencing its findings.

Given the impact of the MDGs, ICAE concluded that work with UNESCO needed to be complemented by advocacy at the UN itself as a second main strand of its activity, and that more progress was likely as part of other social policy agendas than for adult education directly. From this point it was active in the UN Women's Major Group, one of nine coalitions of non-state actors formally recognized by the UN, through the ICAE Education Office and also through the Voluntary Sector Group. This proved prescient, when following the Earth Summit at Rio in 2012, the commitment to create Sustainable Development Goals from 2015 was developed. From 2011, ICAE's work brought these two strands together in its advocacy related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and secured a key place in the High Level Monitoring Group reviewing progress towards the SDGs after 2015 (United Nations 2015; Tuckett 2015).

A third dynamic dimension of the work came when ICAE participated as a founding partner in the World Social Forum (WSF), which met annually to explore alternatives to the dominant international discourse, and the role education could play in bringing other possible worlds into existence. The Forum offered a massive festival of ideas, theatrical performances, marches, music performances and dances all dedicated to the creation of a world worth living in. Shaped by popular movements in the global South the WSF offered a markedly different site for the development of global dialogue than the committee rooms of the UN.

The final focus of ICAE's advocacy activity was through its International Academy for Lifelong learning Advocates – run annually from 2004 as a three week seminar for emerging leaders in the field and introducing them to the global policy context, debates and advocacy strategies. It proved transformative for ICAE itself as new young leaders increasingly took roles in shaping its agendas, and its graduates have gone on to take senior roles in a wide variety of agencies.

As ICAE arrives at its fiftieth anniversary the vibrancy of its message remains intact, despite recurring funding challenges, as development partners' priorities changed. However, despite the commitment governments make to lifelong learning for all, there remains a huge task to match rhetoric with practice, and the need for evidence based advocacy is as strong as ever.

4. Making the Case for Adult Learning

As the three networks highlighted here demonstrate advocacy work needs a combination of Bhola's distinction between structure and culture. Effective advocates make arguments grounded in evidence, often using the declared intentions of the agencies that need to be convinced as a benchmark to highlight present gaps. Often they will know more than the responsible officers (civil servants or politicians) with whom they negotiate. They focus attention on groups under-served by current policies, and give voice to under-represented groups. They combine the personal illustration with social trends. They speak in the language of those they wish to influence. They make strategic decisions on when their case is best pursued through co-operation, and when to use conflict. They secure broad alliances with other agencies, mobilise learners, and articulate values and aspirations

clearly. Advocates need patience, and to combine short term compromise with long term intransigence. Where possible they become invaluable to the agencies with which they work – as 'critical friends'. But as Lalage Bown well understood the advocate benefits too from innovative forms of provision, and from organising events that catch the eye, that engage participants in vibrant festivals of learning – banging drums for attention as Bhola would have it. They recognize the importance of generosity to allies, but need firmly to maintain attention on the communities they represent. In their own work, too, they need mechanisms to share skills and experience and to create ladders of opportunity. NIACE, ASPBAE and ICAE each make clear that none of this is a short term task – again something Lalage Bown recognized in a long life making the case for adult learners.

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