

Developing Adult Educators as Professionals and Adult Education as a Profession: Experiences of DVV International throughout the World and within Several Decades

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Abstract:

In its first part, the article will concentrate on the period when Lalage and DVV International worked almost in parallel in a number of countries with partners in Africa from the 1960s onwards. Both were involved in the professionalisation of adult education and the capacity building of adult educators. The second part looks at recent developments in the DVV International's portfolio with a more global perspective, but with relevance for Africa or deriving from experiences with African partners.

Keywords: Cooperation; Curricula; Institutionalisation; Professionalisation; Research

Prologue – Remembering Professor Lalage Bown

Lalage Bown could be called a mentor, supporter and friend for Heribert Hinzen. In her last letter to him she reminded that she first came to Germany in 1947, at the age of 20, as a member of a group of British university students to meet other students from all over Europe to think about peaceful co-existence with other nations on the continent. One could imagine the twinkle in her eyes mentioning that they worked day and night in a half-ruined hotel in Bonn-Bad Godesberg – where a decade earlier Chamberlain and Hitler had met.

Actually the exchange in this letter was about comparing the UK 100th year celebrations for the Adult Education Report of 1919 by the Ministry of Reconstruction, and the Volkshochschulen (vhs), community learning centers in Ger-

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many that became a constitutional matter in 1919, when the Weimar Republic replaced the ousted emperor system (Field and Jenner 2019). Both had supported the anniversaries in their countries, she as a patron of the campaign in the UK speaking at many events, and while in Germany we had to combine it with the 50th anniversary of DVV International (Hinzen and Meilhammer 2022).

Lalage was an external examiner of the Department for Extra-Mural Studies when Heribert joined the University of Sierra Leone as Visiting Professor while he was Director of the DVV Office in Freetown in the 1980s. Paul Fordham followed on Lalage later, and it was a pleasure to work with both of them, drawing on their exceptional broad experiences dealing with students and the University administration, combining critical comments on dissertations with recommendations for further developments of the Department at large. Her experiences hailed back to the 1960s and 1970s, when Lalage served as Professor of Adult Education at several African Universities, including Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda. Together with Olu Tomori she edited *A Handbook of Adult Education for West Africa* (Bown and Tomori 1979), which certainly was a milestone for the adult education field. The wider dissemination was enabled by the DVV Africa Bureau in Accra.

Lalage was a close friend of Helmuth Dolff and DVV (Deutscher Volkshochschul Verband which is the German Adult Education Association). Helmuth served as Director General for 25 years and during that time, especially in the 1970s, they were most successful in building an international adult education movement. Together with Roby Kidd from Canada, Paul Mhaiki from Tanzania and Paul Bertelson from Denmark (seconded to UNESCO) they initiated the foundation of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) in 1973, and Lalage joined as Rapporteur General of the First ICAE World Assembly 1976 in Dar es Salaam (Bown 1976). At that time she was also Editor of *CONVERGENCE. An International Journal of Adult Education* which for many decades was the flagship publication for ICAE, and which is called to a new life by the UNESCO Chair on global adult education at the University of Malta in cooperation with ICAE in 2022 (Hinzen 2022).

Lalage continued to be an important partner for DVV – she joined a research consortium that looked into the university scholarship programme for universities in Africa (Fordham 1998) and she was an enlightening speaker at the BALID conferences (British Association for Literacy in Development) or the Uppingham Seminars which were welcome opportunities used by DVV International colleagues for professional exchange.

1. Early International Orientation of DVV

Reflections on the 100 years of vhs indicated that even as a local movement they were open to international contacts especially as cross-border exchanges or later within twin-city arrangements as part of reconciliation processes. Adult educators who had to emigrate during the Nazi-Regime came back after Second World War had ended. Dutch and Swedish folk high schools hosted the new gen-

eration of adult educators in Germany, and the Allies from the UK and US were engaged in intensive re-education programs, including for members of the vhs (Hinzen and Meilhammer 2022). Integration into an emerging European adult education was important. The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) was founded in 1953, and DVV became a strong supporter (Ebner 2019).

The early 1960s saw the end of colonialism in a number of African countries. Germany had lost its colonies already at the end of First World War while the Commonwealth of Nations kept Britain closer to the independence struggles and the new countries with their Governments. It was the time when different ways of international cooperation came up in the form of so-called development aid. In Germany a Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) was founded alongside the Foreign Office. Both Ministries invited DVV to help by providing professional services in adult education through literacy, community and rural development and the training of adult educators, facilitated through embassies and government officials (Hinzen 1994).

A major programme at the time was a joint initiative of the Ghörde residential vhs and DVV in the capacity building for more than 300 adult educators coming from some 20 African countries between 1962 and 1974. They joined a year-long diploma course which had a curriculum including language studies, methods and didactics, administration and management, study trips and placements at local centers (Hinzen and Thamm 2019). In parallel DVV had started country programmes in Ethiopia, Somalia and Zaire, later also Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia which engaged with governmental, civil society and university partners in policy development, production of teaching and learning materials, exchange of staff and infrastructural support. Planning conferences by DVV and its partners on the future of educational aid around 1975, guided by recommendations from several evaluations, were arguing for extensive changes (Hanf and Vierdag 1973). One of those was the closer cooperation with universities in Africa in the training of adult educators, and from 1985 onwards scholarship holders were supported at some ten universities.

2. Continuity and Innovation

The history of DVV International is well documented, especially through reflections when it came to anniversaries like the first 25 years (Hinzen 1994) or when 40 years had been reached (Samlowski 2009). An excellent overview on DVV International with many examples is provided in the commemorative book on *50 Years DVV International. Half a Century of Adult Education* (Hirsch et al. 2019)¹.

2.1 Countries and Projects

The African continent has been and continued to be a priority for cooperation of DVV International from the early 1960s till even today. The countries

¹ Available for free at <www.dvv-international.de> (2023-07-01).

changed and, in addition to those mentioned above, work was especially made in Angola, Madagascar, South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and also Guinea, Mali, Morocco and Malawi; these countries, in turn, were influential for DVV International and its development. Colleagues within DVV joined international debates on adult education for development. One such example was the article “Cooperating or Campaigning for Literacy: Let’s Remove Doubtful Promises and Cope with the Practicable” (Horn et al. 1983) in the journal *Adult Education and Development*; it received a controversial but substantial feedback and helped sharpen the view which later was more in depth reflected in looking at multiple expressions of literacies.

One could argue that some of the contacts and project work of DVV International with African countries and partners go back to the last five decades, and experiences gained in adult learning and education (ALE) remained influential even for the work today. An interesting example for this perspective is looking back to 50 years of contacts with Tanzania in an article on “Tanzanian and German Cooperation in Adult Learning and Education for Development: A Historical Legacy of 50 Years Told Through the Roles of Programmes, Personalities and DVV International” (Heinze and Hinzen 2021). Starting contacts and bilateral cooperation in the 1970s with the Institute of Adult Education in Dar es Salaam, support to the Ministry of Education and their literacy campaigns, followed a break for some time, re-opening channels via the Regional Office in Addis Ababa and a new turn when the Regional Office moved to Dar es Salaam. The broader perspective of those 50 years of adult education experiences in Tanzania in policy and practice was extensively presented and discussed during the conference *Revitalising Adult Education for Sustainable Development* at the University of Dar es Salaam (Bhalalusesa et al. 2021).

2.2 Evaluations and Studies

During the late 1990s up to 2005 some far-reaching evaluations were initiated by DVV International, like those on decentralisation in Guinea (Lamin and Salah 2003); HIV/AIDS, learners and poverty reduction in South Africa (Pandy 2004); or the cooperation of partners in Sierra Leone (Thompson et al. 2004).

Paul Fordham was invited to take the lead for an evaluation with a team built from African and international experts which studied the scholarship programme of DVV International and cooperation with universities – up to 1997 some 11.000 students had benefitted. The research team consisted of Clarice Davies and Christiane Kayser for Southern Africa, Paul Fordham and Tilahun Workineh for East and Central Africa, and Lalage Bown with Alice Owango for West Africa. The recommendations guided in linking training with the practice of educating adults, the development of teaching and learning materials, the relevance of curricula, the recognitions of qualifications, and the academic training and staff development (Fordham 1998). The evaluation helped to shape the future of cooperation with African universities, and the focused use of scholarships for short- and long-term studies (Hildebrand 2001).

Those years saw also a deeper cooperation of DVV International with the Human Development Sector of the World Bank. Two examples should be mentioned: John Oxenham led the team consisting of Abdul Hamid Diallo, Anne Ruhweza Katahoire, Anna Petkova-Mwangi and Oumar Sall for a study on “Skills and Literacy Training for Better Livelihoods. A Review of Approaches and Experiences” (Oxenham et al. 2002). The comparison looked at livelihood programmes which were enriched by literacy and numeracy, and in turn at literacy-led programmes where livelihood components were added.

2.3 Conferences on Poverty and Training

The other area of cooperation was related to adult education and poverty reduction. The World Bank was trying to find convincing arguments for their country poverty reduction strategies, and their Human Development Department was looking at adult education as a potential area as discussed in “Engaging with Adults – The Case for Increased Support to Basic Adult Education in Sub-Saharan Africa” (Lauglo 2001). DVV International published a number of case studies on “Adult Education and Combating Poverty – Experiences from Development Cooperation” (Hinzen and Pollinger 2003) and co-organized a theme-related workshop during the CONFINTEA Mid-term Review in Bangkok in 2003. In 2004 the University of Botswana convened the conference on *Adult Education and Poverty Reduction – A Global Priority* in Gaborone in which more than 200 participants from some 45 countries debated the potentials of adult education and whether there is any evidence and proof of a causal relationship between adult education and poverty reduction (Duke 2004).

Only a year later another major conference on *Capacity Building and the Training of Adult Educators* was held in Capetown in 2005 (Hinzen and Schindele 2006). Presentations on the research studies that had been commissioned were presented by colleagues like Bernard Hagnonnou, Anthony Okech and Stanley Mpofu for Africa as well as Uwe Gartenschlaeger, Mandakini Pant, Chia Mun Onn and Heide Arnaudon for Asia and Pacific; the general report was written by John Aitchison. Frank Youngman in his keynote “Making a Difference: Development Agendas and the Training of Adult Educators” (2006) provided a critical perspective on the slow progress in placing adult education higher on the development agendas and he drew attention to the need for more and better trained adult educators if the far reaching visions could be achieved.

2.4 Publications, Journals and Series

In the early years of the new millennium DVV International supported major publications on adult education in Africa. The University of Namibia was in the lead of the book *The State of Adult and Continuing Education in Africa* (Indabawa et al. 2000) with a total of 21 important chapters like “Setting the Tone of Adult and Continuing Education in Africa” (Omolewa 2000) or “From Adult Education to Lifelong Learning in Southern Africa over the Last Twenty

Years” (Walters and Watters 2000). Those contributions helped tremendously to understand the past decades and provide ideas for the future, and thus serve its purpose even when looking through a lens of today.

The journal *Adult Education and Development* which DVV International published from 1973 till 2018 played also an important role for information and communication, dissemination and discussion. At its peak the journal was produced on the level of 25.000 copies in the languages of English, French and Spanish, with more than 10.000 subscribers in African countries. Its advantage was the free availability, its orientation towards the practice of adult education and the relevance of experiences discussed by practitioners. The databank behind the journal allows interested colleagues till today to search for relevant articles following the indexes of authors, keywords and topics². The publication series International Perspectives in Adult Education was started by DVV International in 1990 and continues till today as a mechanism for global exchange like *Sharing the Fruits of Experience from Guinea and Mali. Adult Basic Education for Participatory and Sustainable Development* (Hildebrand 2009).

The development of the book series African Perspectives on Adult Learning was a joint venture of the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (UIL), DVV International and the University of Botswana with Pearson Education as publisher and a first volume in 2005. Frank Youngman served as the Series Managing Editor. The textbooks were written mainly by scholars from African universities and covered important themes like *Management of Adult Education Organisations in Africa* (Nafukho et al. 2011). The books are now available as an open resource³. It is an interesting notion and testimony that in the “Foreword” to the first issue the then Director of UIL Adama Ouane wrote:

The present textbook series, African Perspectives on Adult Learning, represents the outcome of a venture initiated three decades ago by the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (known by its German acronym as IIZ/DVV [now DVV International]). Bringing together non-governmental and civil society organisations, the DVV turned this venture into a creative partnership with academia, aimed at building the training and research capacities of African universities that serve the adult education community. It has become a means of fruitful cooperation with several leading African universities, all partners being concerned with providing textbooks for university departments and institutes of adult education relevant for the African context. The abiding interest, as well as growing financial support and substantive input of the IIZ/DVV, has provided a key ingredient for the success of this project, along with establishing its potential for expansion (2005, ix).

² <<https://www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions>> (2023-07-01).

³ <<https://uil.unesco.org/adult-education/foundations-adult-education-africa>> (2023-07-01).

3. Current Priorities and Challenges

We shall now turn to more recent approaches of DVV International and its partners in the training of adult educators in Africa, and in a number of countries on other continents. In as much as the history and contexts for institutionalisation and professionalisation, especially in capacity building and training of adult educators differ there are still similarities which led DVV International in cooperation with a variety of partners to the development of practice-oriented instruments. Institutionalisation of ALE leads eventually to a stronger support to adult education centres (Avramovska et al. 2017) or community learning centres (CLC) as more widely used (Belete et al. 2022).

Today these instruments are gathered and provided through the ALE Toolbox, available free of cost for everybody globally through the DVV International website. These tools include the Curriculum globALE for the training of adult educators, the Curriculum institutionALE for organisational development, Curriculum interculturALE for the work with migrants and refugees, Curriculum managerALE for directors and coordinators, and the Gender in ALE Toolkit. ALESBA as the Adult Learning and Education System Building Approach is used in several African countries interested in strengthening adult education to play a similar role as other sub-sectors of the education system, including respective ALE policy, legislation and financing from national to local level. The importance of research and studies which provide robust data and statistics is discussed as a necessary component of such ALE development. Beyond the large number of national and regional partners the cooperation with UIL and ICAE is essential.

3.1 Curriculum globALE

The experiences made with the development of the Curriculum globALE (CG) showed that the quite ambitious idea of creating a global curriculum for the pre- and in-service training of adult educators met a certain demand. CG has five modules which deal with different approaches to ALE: adult learning and teaching; communication and group dynamics; methods; planning, organisation and evaluation; some varying topics are mentioned as potential electives. After successful testing and implementation in several countries DVV International decided to continue working in three directions.

First, enriching the existing CG by adding additional modules and materials: according to its concept CG is a competency-oriented framework that leaves it up to the respective implementing team to decide which methods and materials they want to use to implement the curriculum. This seems appropriate for a global tool that is intended to be used in a variety of contexts and cultures, including e.g. higher education institutions as well as local adult education providers. Nevertheless, many partners, especially from Eastern Europe, articulated the wish for additional materials that could be helpful in implementing the curriculum. Responding to this demand, the country office in Bosnia and Herzegovina developed manuals for the five modules. They contain methodological advice

as well as some materials that can facilitate implementation. Other materials to support the implementation are videos that illustrate and comment on the implementation of selected parts from each module as examples. They were produced in Central Asia. Experiences from several regions of the world show that the topic of 'digital education' is chosen very often. By now an additional module has been created on this topic.

Second, by developing more curricula for other target groups within ALE: the success of the CG led to the consideration whether it would make sense to develop such formats for other subject areas as well. As a result, three further curricula were developed and tested:

- Curriculum institutionALE is a framework for analysis and consultation of adult education institutions, with the help of which to plan and implement the organisational development;
- Curriculum interculturALE is a tailor-made intercultural-didactical training course for instructors and volunteer learning guides who work with refugees in low-threshold language courses. The training opens up space where adult educators can reflect on and learn how to tackle challenges like the increasing diversity in the classroom, distress and trauma, language barriers and differences in educational backgrounds of learners;
- The latest member of the family is Curriculum managerALE. It is aimed at executives and coordinators in adult education institutions. The starting point was the observation that the qualification of teachers and trainers often encounters the problem that those entrusted with the leadership and management of institutions also – and perhaps even more urgently – need core competence in both adult education and management. This applies to both state and civil society institutions.

Third, by ensuring that the materials are widely known and used: a platform was created on which all tools, materials and supplements were made centrally accessible, and called the 'ALE Toolbox'⁴. It forms a central platform on which all instruments developed or co-developed by DVV International can be accessed freely. Additionally, the cooperation with UIL provided the opportunity to significantly increase the outreach of the CG. Coordinated by UIL, it was carried out an editorial revision in close cooperation with DVV International, the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) and ICAE. A group of adult education experts consisting of representatives from all continents provided technical support. As a result, the revised curriculum was recommended to member states for use as a recognised UNESCO instrument.

The achievements and impact of the various efforts in the field of global curriculum development are impressive. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, modules of CG are now being used in at least five universities for training in educational and

⁴ <<https://www.dvv-international.de/en/ale-toolbox>> (2023-07-01).

psycho-social courses. In Laos, a training cycle has given rise to a long-lasting community of practice that not only disseminates andragogical knowledge, but also proves to be very effective in lobbying for the interests of adult education. In Ukraine, and now also in Palestine, the key performance indicators from the Curriculum institution ALE are used to analyse adult education institutions and to define necessary next steps in their further development.

3.2 Adult Learning and Education System Building Approach (ALESBA)

The ALESBA was born and developed out of the frustration of a group of stakeholders involved with ALE programmes in East Africa. The DVV International regional office and partner organisations in Ethiopia and Uganda started to ask questions such as:

- Considering the number and variety of adult and non-formal education programmes offered by governments and civil society, why do the illiteracy and poverty rates remain high in many African countries?
- Why does the ALE system seem unable to deliver quality adult education services and capacity building programmes to youth and adults?
- What constitutes an ALE system? What are the components and how do they relate to each other?
- Does the current work of DVV International and its partners in the East/Horn of Africa region contribute to a sustainable system that can deliver quality services?

Through a series of consultative workshops, analytical processes and meetings conducted with initially mainly our government partners, we realized that our efforts to support the more technical components of adult education in the form of curriculum and material development, training and capacity building, certification, etc. are insufficient and do not address the root causes for poor ALE services and programmes. The same could be said for having a policy or strategy in place. It seemed that our efforts only addressed the symptoms of a poor functioning ALE system (Belete 2020).

This introspective and analytical process started in 2014 and during the course of five years the workshops, training, peer reviews between countries, think tanks and testing of tools and processes culminated through a participatory action learning and research process into what is now known as the ALESBA. The approach was developed jointly by DVV International and partners from all spheres and different sectors of government, universities and civil society. It emanated from the East/Horn of Africa region but as the region and countries started to share experiences with neighbouring regions/countries, interest grew and led to an introductory workshop of the approach to ten African countries in 2019. This workshop provided an opportunity to further test the conceptual framework, phases and selected tools of the ALESBA with African countries from West, North and Southern Africa. The response convinced the DVV In-

ternational headquarter that the approach has to be documented since it can guide stakeholders in the complex and time consuming task of system building. At the same time the approach is open to continuous learning, adaptation and modification. This led to the writing and publication of a series of six booklets that covers an introduction to the approach with its conceptual framework and each of the five recommended phases for ALE system building. The booklets are available online in English, French, Arabic and Swahili⁵.

A key challenge that many government and non-government adult education institutions face is the lack of a system to develop, fund, monitor and support ALE in the same way that primary, secondary, higher and sometime vocational education systems can. The ALESBA aims to ensure that different types and quality ALE services are delivered to youth and adults through relevant and accessible implementation modalities.

At the core of the approach is a conceptual framework that unpacks the ALE system. It identifies four system elements, each with five system building blocks which can be depicted as follows:

Table 1 – System elements.

Enabling Environment	Institutional Arrangements	Management Processes	Technical Processes
ALE Policy	ALE Implementation Structures	Participatory Planning Processes	Localised Curricula
ALE Strategy	Human Resources	Appropriate Budget and Resource Allocation	Clear ALE Programme Design & Methodology
ALE Programme Implementation Guidelines	Leadership & Management	M&E System	Capacity Development at all Implementation Levels
Qualifications Framework	Accountability Mechanisms	Management Information System	Material Development
Legal Framework	Partnership Structures between State/Non-state Actors	Coordination and Cooperation Processes	Learner Assessments

The conceptual framework is applied with practical and participatory tools through all the ALESBA implementation phases namely:

⁵ <www.dvv-international.de/en/ale-toolbox> and <www.mojaafrica.net> (2023-07-01).

- Phase One emphasises the importance of consensus building among ALE stakeholders to develop a shared vision and plan to strengthen the ALE system and services;
- Phase Two supports ALE stakeholders to conduct a system assessment from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective, ideally by using a peer review approach that strengthens consensus building among stakeholders. The practical tools and scoring mechanism in phase two form part of the ALESBA's monitoring and evaluation system and can be conducted in the form of a baseline study, mid-term and end evaluation, depending on the stage of development of the system;
- Phase Three uses the information collected during Phase Two, to assist stakeholders in the process of considering different alternatives to design an improved ALE system;
- Phase Four elaborates the steps to implement and test the newly designed system in the form of a pilot phase/project;
- Phase Five takes stakeholders through the process of reviewing the tested system (during Phase Four), making the necessary adjustments from the lessons learned and developing plans to up-scale the system and the services it delivers to a bigger target group and geographical area with the ultimate aim of national level service delivery (Belete 2020).

Like all approaches and methodologies, the ALESBA requires capacity building of stakeholders that are interested in using the approach. DVV International supports this process through an online training programme on the MOJA Adult Education Africa platform. The current course is for participants from five Anglophone African countries. They come from national and local governments, universities, local and international NGOs. Meanwhile the approach has received interest from universities and some included the ALESBA in their curriculum. A seminar series for universities is planned and the ALESBA online course will expand to other interested countries/regions. Countries like Morocco, Tunisia, Uganda and Ethiopia progressed far in using the ALESBA as a guiding tool to assist policy makers, decision-makers, experts and academics in the task of building a sustainable ALE system while other African countries are starting the journey with capacity building and applying the first phase of the approach.

3.3 Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation, Research and Studies

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) are integral parts of the work of DVV International in its development cooperation programs and projects in the field of adult learning and education. With support of the established M&E system DVV International and its partners worldwide can track and assess the performance and impact of the implemented program activities and initiatives. This systematic approach is essential to determine whether the programs and projects are achieving their intended results, whether they are relevant, effective, efficient, and contributing to establishing a sustainable adult learning and education system in the countries.

The programs of DVV International and its partners are developed with M&E frameworks which enable the measuring of the performance and progress towards the program and project goals and identifying areas for improvement. The M&E tools like monitoring system, baseline studies, logical frameworks, internal and external evaluations help DVV International and its partners to ensure that resources are being used effectively and transparently and enables them to track the outcomes and impact of the programs and measures. To be able to offer a high-quality M&E system that is constantly evolving, DVV International has an M&E unit at its headquarters in Bonn, which, together with employees of DVV International in the partner countries, ensures and continuously improves the quality of the system.

In addition to regularly conducting evaluations, baseline and feasibility studies, DVV International as part of its programs and projects conceives and conducts studies on ALE and lifelong learning topics. Very often, the results of such studies are used to create policies and strategies for the sector. Such an example is the regional project of DVV International in the region Caucasus and Southeast Europe, which carried out quantitative and qualitative studies in four countries of the region.

DVV International in cooperation with DIE started planning and implementing the project in 2019. The regional project aimed to analyse the state-of-the-art of ALE, and the participation of adults in education and training (formal, non-formal and informal learning) in four countries. The qualitative study was conducted in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and Kosovo (Avramovska et al. 2021a), and the quantitative study (AES – Adult Education Survey) was implemented in Armenia, Georgia, and Kosovo (Avramovska et al. 2021b).

The purpose of the complex project was to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the ALE sector, and to provide data that would be used when creating policy and legislation in ALE close to vocational education and training, employment, lifelong learning and other relevant areas. Closely following the AES which is a well-established international survey on adult learning, national specificities and information needs were identified in the coordination of the cooperation partners and through the involvement of national experts.

The AES-standard questionnaire was thus adapted to national circumstances and supplemented with additional questions on learning attitudes and motivation, as well as on educational and support needs in the face of massive changes on the labour market. Questions concerning access to education and (digital) learning during the pandemic were added at short notice in response to the Covid pandemic. The survey results answer a number of questions and provide information about the extent and quality of adult learning and education. How are learning and attitudes towards learning distributed in the adult population? Which groups are involved, and to what extent? Are particular forms of learning used by different groups? What role do socio-economic conditions play, e.g. the employment context or residence in rural or urban areas?

The qualitative country reports provide additional in-depth information on the specific national context of the education system, and on the position and

promotion of ALE, gathered in qualitative studies by a team of international and national experts according to a standard outline. Together, the two reports form an excellent basis for the participating countries to assess the current situation against the background of education policy objectives and to develop political strategies for improving the ALE and lifelong learning system. Since the studies were carried out in four countries according to a uniform scheme, the comparison offers additional possibilities for classifying the respective national situation. More and better comparative studies on ALE would further benefit our sub-sector (Egetenmeyer 2015).

The comprehensive analyses and studies and surveys in the ALE sector were conducted for the first time in all the countries involved in this project, and also with the intention that a number of governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations in these four countries and beyond will use the data and knowledge obtained. Immediately after the study was published, the results were shared with several organisations and institutions engaged in the field of education and adult education. During the preparation process of strategic documents in 2021 and 2022 in Georgia and Armenia, many of the results and findings of the qualitative and quantitative studies in the respective countries were used.

4. Some Preliminary Conclusions

The further regionalisation of DVV International led to the establishment and operation of regional offices for North, West, Southern and East Africa which are in 2023 based in Tunis, Bamako, Lilongwe and Dar es Salaam, and each of them working in two or three countries of the region. In addition there is a Continental Africa project which looks at joint opportunities for policy development and capacity building, information and communication. The virtual platform called MOJA is a component which runs webinars, a journal, and collects resources for a growing data bank.

If one wants to draw a first interim conclusion from the recent experiences of DVV International in the areas of capacity building, curriculum development, research and development, the following points are probably central:

- It makes a lot of sense to develop global formats for the education and training of adult educators or the organisational development of institutions. While it is true that the framework conditions and needs are very different, at the same time it has been shown that there is a clearly recognisable pool of commonalities that can be served;
- In developing appropriate tools, it is central to engage multinational and multicultural teams that are able to bring different perspectives on an equal footing;
- The present global tools require a strong and courageous adaptation to local needs in their implementation. To this end, it seems indispensable that the implementation of the trainings takes place with the involvement of local trainers, who should also be included in the preparation;

- The existence of recognised global instruments for capacity building also generates increased attention for adult education, which is still highly marginalised in many places;
- Finally, research and development, M&E embedded in planning and development can be essential tools in quality management.

The CONFINTEA VII process and especially the Marrakech Framework for Action as the relevant outcome document show that we seem to be moving in the right direction. Government delegates adopted:

We recognize the importance of strengthening ALE at the local level, as a strategic dimension for planning, design and implementation for learning programmes, and for supporting and (co)funding training and learning initiatives such as community learning centres to be well-resourced with qualified adult educators (UIL 2022, 6).

This understanding of the importance of institutionalisation and professionalisation was also in the statement *Adult Learning and Education – Because the Future Cannot Wait* of ICAE for the UNESCO Futures of Education initiative:

strengthening the institutional structures (like community learning centres, for delivering ALE) and securing the role of ALE staff, improving in-service and pre-service education, further education, training, capacity building and employment conditions of adult educators (ICAE 2022, 13).

In this respect the initiatives and activities of both – Lalage Bown as well as DVV International – can be seen as milestones in the professionalisation of adult education. However there is more to learn from them and further comparative research on ALE will help (Slowey 2015; Reischmann 2021).

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