



En route vers Confintéa VI

*Pour rendre effectif
le droit d'apprendre*

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Towards CONFINTEA VI

Declaration of the ICÉA/FCAF Francophone Consultative Forum on the Right to Learn for Adults.



Montreal,
October 24, 2008



**Declaration of the ICÉA/FCAF Francophone Consultative Forum
on the Right to Learn for Adults,
held on Thursday, October 23 and Friday, October 24, 2008
in preparation for CONFINTEA VI**

This declaration is supported by the Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes (ICÉA; co-operative institute for adult education) and the Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français (FCAF; Canadian federation for French-language literacy). ICÉA has over 200 members representing all facets of French-language adult education and continuing education in Quebec and the rest of Canada. The FCAF represents over 400 literacy organizations offering French-language literacy services in all of Canada's provinces and two of its three territories. The FCAF is the only organization that promotes French-language literacy throughout Canada.

Over 150 people participated in the ICÉA/FCAF Francophone Consultative Forum. They came from all levels of the public education system, as well as from literacy organizations, community education organizations, cultural organizations, community action groups, labour unions, research institutions, and various government departments, ministries, and agencies. All regions of Canada were represented. The present declaration was adopted unanimously by the Forum participants.

Making the right to learn effective: Quebec and Francophone Canada speak out

Right now, conferences and meetings in preparation for the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) are being held all around the world. As part of these preparations, Canada will have to set out its position on adult education as early as December 2008, when UNESCO will be holding the CONFINTEA VI Regional Preparatory Conference for Europe, North America and Israel.

That is why we, the members of civil society in Quebec and Francophone Canada, have decided to play a part in the preparations for CONFINTEA VI. For this purpose, we met at the Francophone Consultative Forum organized jointly by the Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français (FCAF) and the Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes (ICÉA). At this Forum, we identified a consensus within Quebec and French-speaking Canada regarding the challenges and priorities for adult education and continuing education. We believe that the Canadian delegation should take these priorities to CONFINTEA VI. We believe that the Canadian delegation should not only act as the spokespersons for the points on which we have

achieved consensus, but also present our experiences and share them with the other participants, so as to have a positive influence on the international agenda.

Most of all, it is crucial to recall the importance of the *Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning* at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), in 1997. CONFINTEA V defined, in extensive detail, a great many commitments to foster the development of adult education and lifelong learning. The challenges identified in Hamburg remain just as pressing today, and the objectives that the participants set there remain far from achieved. We therefore reaffirm here the urgency of carrying out the *Agenda for the Future* adopted in 1997.

Given the historic work that was accomplished at CONFINTEA V, it seems obvious that what is needed now is to develop action strategies for achieving objectives that have been known for many years.

Participation of Canadian civil society in CONFINTEA VI

We also wish to express our disappointment in the Canadian and provincial governments, whose preparations for CONFINTEA VI did not include broad consultations with adult and continuing education stakeholders from Canadian civil society. On October 30 and 31, 2008, a limited number of organizations were invited to meet with the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. We regret this fact, and we reiterate our request that these bodies broaden their consultations and invite representatives of civil society to participate as members of the Canadian delegation to CONFINTEA VI. From now until then, we hereby give ICÉA and the FCAF the mandate to present our priorities as expressed in the present declaration.

Key messages: a call to action for the provinces and Canada

Acknowledging the complexity of the challenges and issues involved in adult and continuing education, we met in Montreal on October 23 and 24, 2008 at the ICÉA/FCAF Francophone Consultative Forum on the Right to Learn. Our discussions at this forum focused on the themes of CONFINTEA VI, and at the end of this forum, we reached a major consensus on the key messages that we believe Canada must convey on the world stage.

The Montreal Forum proposes some key messages

1) The Canadian delegation to UNESCO must convey that it is essential for the Member States to commit **to ensure that all citizens receive literacy and basic skills training.**

To this end, the delegation must urge the Member States to:

- provide adequate long-term funding for literacy and basic skills training;
- ensure that the policies of the Member States in all areas (such as education, the economy, health, culture, and regional development) contribute to their shared literacy objectives;
- make literacy and basic skills training a priority for the governments, and one that enlists the efforts of all stakeholders in society.

We also recommend that to achieve these literacy and basic skills training objectives, the Canadian delegation to UNESCO communicate how important it is for the Member States to apply community approaches to promotion, recruitment and service delivery that involve all of the settings in which adults live their lives (the family, the workplace, the community, and so on).

2) The Canadian delegation to UNESCO must convey that it is essential for the Member States to commit **to promoting accessibility to high-quality adult education and continuing education for all adults**.

To this end, the delegation must urge the Member States to:

- remove the obstacles that interfere with adults' participation and limit stakeholders' ability to intervene (raise awareness, inform, orient, meet needs, guide, support, motivate);
- establish a learning culture and enable all adults to express their aspirations and their educational needs;
- develop equitable training programs that target adult populations at risk of exclusion (such as immigrants, women, handicapped persons, unskilled workers, older workers, Aboriginal persons, adults with low literacy skills, seniors, migrants, and unemployed persons).

To achieve these accessibility objectives, we recommend that the Canadian delegation to UNESCO communicate how important it is for the Member States and for all stakeholders in the world of adult education to provide adult learners with adequate guidance and financial support.

3) The Canadian delegation to UNESCO must convey that it is essential for the Member States to commit **to adopting policies and legislation and to establishing and supporting structures that ensure the development of adult education and continuing education**.

To this end, the delegation must urge the Member States to:

- entrench the right of adults to learn throughout their lifetimes in existing and future legislation and incorporate an adult education/continuing education component into all government policies;
- recognize the contributions of all stakeholders in the adult and continuing education community (the formal, non-formal, and informal sectors; community education; distance learning; labour force training; and so on) and broaden the scope of policies accordingly.

For us, **these messages are of paramount importance and must be central to the arguments that Canada sets out at CONFINTEA VI and at the associated preparatory conferences**. More specifically, the Canadian delegation must exert all its influence to strengthen French-language adult education throughout the world. To this end, in addition to being universally applicable, **each of the key messages in this declaration must serve as a guiding principle for strengthening and developing the right to adult education and continuing education in French in Canada and in all other French-speaking countries**.

Lastly, we are appending to this declaration all of the proposals discussed at the Forum. They are the product of public deliberations by civil society over the past few years and accurately express our broadest concerns regarding adult education and training.

The Canadian delegation can contribute to the success of CONFINTEA VI by helping the other participating countries to move forward in their thinking and their commitments and by taking a proactive approach to several of the issues to be discussed. In this spirit, we hope that the delegation will embrace as its own the key messages set out in this declaration.

Declaration adopted unanimously by ICÉA, FCAF, and the 150 participants in the Francophone Consultative Forum held in Montreal on October 23 and 24, 2008.

Some concerns that must not be forgotten

In addition to the major items of consensus presented in this Declaration of the ICÉA/FCAF Francophone Consultative Forum in preparation for CONFINTEA VI, several other proposals received attention from the forum participants. These proposals express important concerns. They therefore constitute an integral part of the present declaration. We invite the Canadian delegation to UNESCO to consider these proposals that were discussed at the Francophone Consultative Forum. **They represent steps that can be taken at the structural level to advance the right to learn for adults.**

1) With regard to literacy training and basic skills training, the Canadian delegation to UNESCO must invite the Member States to commit to do the following:

- identify the basic skills necessary to live in society, so as to better define the obligations of the State with respect to the right to education;
- develop better definitions of common concepts such as literacy training, basic skills training, literacy, and essential skills, and thus facilitate consultation, co-ordination, and action;
- measure the effects of literacy and basic skills training programs by developing indicators for long-term social progress;
- use every available means of facilitating the development, updating, collection, and distribution of training tools;
- prevent illiteracy by fostering a global, holistic, long-term approach;
- increase research while also encouraging the sharing of knowledge and the production of new studies.

2) With regard to accessibility, participation, and inclusion, the Canadian delegation to UNESCO must invite the Member States to commit to do the following:

- develop a balanced supply of training programs that satisfy both the educational aspirations of adults (individual demand) and the educational priorities of society (social and economic demand, as expressed by the stakeholders);
- help learners to reconcile their family, work, and educational obligations, in particular by introducing measures that give them the time they need to pursue their studies (training-time banks, work/study programs, vouchers, and so on);
- use all available communication media to promote the importance of lifelong learning to the general public;
- contribute to the development of theoretical and field-based research on participation and encourage the sharing of knowledge.

3) With regard to policies, legislation, and structures, the Canadian delegation to UNESCO must invite the Member States to commit to do the following:

- harmonize the various government policies that affect adult education and continuing education;
- encourage the stakeholders in the adult and continuing education communities to co-ordinate their activities more effectively and articulate their respective contributions more clearly;
- increase investment in adult education and continuing education by both the public sector and the private sector (employers);
- prevent dropping out, encourage drop-outs to return to school, and prepare young people to continue learning throughout their lives;
- adapt adult and lifelong learning policies to a community-based approach that involves all of the settings in which adults live their lives (the family, the workplace, the community, and so on);
- enhance the adult-oriented teaching skills of trainers and educators who work with adults;
- increase funding for research, for the dissemination of research results, and for the production of relevant data on adult and continuing education;
- strengthen and harmonize the various systems and tools for recognizing prior learning and skills;
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various levels of government (federal, provincial) with regard to adult and continuing education;
- introduce innovative mechanisms for providing financial support to adult learners and increase access to existing programs (financial assistance for education, employment insurance, tax credits).

Montreal, October 24, 2008

To know more about the Francophone Consultative Forum on the Right to Learn for Adults and the Declaration :

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