

Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII) Private Sector Forum: Engaging in Adult Learning and Education

Tuesday 14 June 2022
1 PM to 4 PM (CEST)



CONFINTEA VII overview

The **Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII)** will take place in a hybrid format from 15 to 17 June 2022, hosted by UNESCO in cooperation with the Government of Morocco. Under the theme of *'Adult learning and education for sustainable development – a transformative agenda'*, CONFINTEA VII brings together over 1,000 conference participants to examine and discuss the challenges and achievements that have taken place in adult learning and education (ALE) since CONFINTEA VI in 2009. The event will also be an opportunity to explore effective ALE policies within a lifelong learning perspective and within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In this context, the **Private Sector Forum** will take place **virtually** on **Tuesday 14 June 2022** from **1PM to 4PM CEST**, as a critical side event in advance of CONFINTEA VII. A one-hour virtual **'Marketplace'** will follow the Forum from **4:30PM to 5:30PM CEST**¹, which aims to showcase innovative private sector learning solutions and facilitate dialogue on partnership and collaboration opportunities.

¹ Separate Marketplace concept note available.

Objective

This session will reflect the current contributions of private actors in adult learning and education (ALE). It will also shed light on the future evolving role of the private sector in ALE with a view on responding to fast changing societies and economies. The session will examine best practices in ALE provision by private actors responding to wider societal issues, with the aim of identifying potential pathways to improve private sector engagement and establish a stronger ecosystem in the promotion of ALE and an entitlement to lifelong learning and skills.

Background

Adult Learning and Education (ALE) has a crucial role to play in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. ALE can help tackle pressing economic, social, and environmental challenges, yet too many adults still lack adequate learning opportunities. According to UNESCO's fourth Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 4), in almost one-third of countries, fewer than 5% of adults aged 15 and above participate in education and learning programs. This challenge is at the heart of UNESCO's global mandate, as reflected in the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

The private sector can play a significant role as a key partner in the provision of ALE and is already making strides towards reshaping the landscape of lifelong learning. This is especially the case in higher-income countries such as Sweden, for example, where private sector ALE activities increased from engaging 5.5% of the adult population in 1975 to 58% by 2012, according to PIAAC data. However, the world is changing drastically and quickly, and, as such, the educational challenges we face today are becoming increasingly complex. The rise of inequalities, aging populations, climate change, new technologies, and exogenous shocks (such as the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic) are transforming jobs and the necessary skills needed to be resilient in the face of such changes. The private sector has a responsibility to respond to these wider societal issues in a way that will empower adult learners to achieve their fullest potential, going beyond conventional skills development.

Within this framework of ALE for the changing world of work, the following thematic areas have been identified as priorities for this Private Sector Forum.

Future of work

New skills are constantly emerging, and uncertainty is becoming the norm, a phenomenon reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Globally, the labor market has been undergoing rapid **technological change**, driven by the expansion of artificial intelligence (AI), automation, the fifth generation of mobile communication technology (5G), which will both destroy and create jobs on a massive scale. The increased application of AI and automation, often termed the 'fourth industrial revolution' is transforming the workplace: reducing the need to human intervention in many work processes, and simultaneously creating a demand for lifelong learning as populations attempt to adapt to new technologies. The transformation towards digitalization is inevitably challenging formal employment and the associated worker benefits, as in the gig economy. Even prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the **informal economy** remains pervasive, representing 61% of total employment (including agriculture) in the world, 68% in Asia and the Pacific and in Arab States, and up to 86% in sub-Saharan Africa (ILO, 2018). Informal employment can no longer be considered a feature of a "traditional" sector that will be gradually replaced with a "modern" sector as economic development unfolds. Innovative approaches that can help extend skills development and social protection to informal workers are needed.

At the same time, the reality of the **climate crisis** is generating an increasing demand for green sectors and skills. Now impossible to ignore even in the wealthier parts of the world, climate change is pushing industries that have a detrimental impact on the environment towards obsolescence and driving innovation in agricultural production. Skills development and support will be needed for all, including for those who are formally employed, in the informal economy, self-employed, and workers in non-standard forms of employment. Current workers can expect to retrain and upskill multiple times throughout their lives, making lifelong learning a priority for adults.

Diversity and inclusive participation

Inclusive participation in adult lifelong learning and education has progressed in the previous years, largely due to the expansion of online distance learning, however, it remains insufficient in achieving SDG 4 for Agenda 2030. **Demographic transitions** necessitate adaptability and the ability to acquire new skills and competencies, especially in ageing societies. Many countries in Europe and East Asia have fast ageing populations, in which shrinking cohorts of working age support ever larger numbers of elderly people. As the retirement age rises with life expectancy, these countries need to develop skills development for senior workers. Simultaneously, most countries in sub-Saharan Africa and to a lesser extent South Asia are experiencing youth bulges, which call for a continued, rapid expansion of education and training systems — and for job creation on a massive scale. Workers are thus likely to experience non-linear transitions between the labor market and education, returning to education to prepare for career change or participating in learning programs while working. Thus, it is expected that most of those employed today will change jobs and careers multiple times throughout their lives, requiring reskilling, upskilling, and lifelong learning on an unprecedented scale.

Other **vulnerable groups**, including refugees, migrants, persons with disabilities, internally displaced people, minorities, and other disadvantaged segments of society are particularly under-represented and underserved in adult education programs and find themselves deprived of crucial access to lifelong learning opportunities. Over 60% of countries reported no improvement in participation by minorities and migrants, and 24% of countries reported that the participation of rural populations in ALE declined since 2018, according to GRALE 5. Institutional barriers such as a lack of access to courses and programs and/or high costs are big deterrents for vulnerable groups in participating in ALE. Furthermore, the lack of quality data is a barrier to tackling inequalities in ALE participation, with more than a third of countries (37%) reported not knowing the ALE participation rates of minority groups, refugees and migrants. **Women's participation** in learning and society is still heavily lacking compared to male peers in many parts of the world due to limited access to education and employment opportunities. While women's engagement in ALE is growing, they tend to be less involved in programs for professional development, constituting a concern for equality in the labor market.

Embracing active and global citizenship

Societies are facing challenges regarding political representation, institutions, and governance. Political disengagement, social unrest, tensions caused by hate speech, prejudice or discrimination are challenging existing political regimes. Recently, there is a growing call for education to enable individuals, as **agents of change**, to acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that lead to the sustainable green transition of our societies, as called for in the Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 framework as well as enshrined in SDG Target 4.7. While countries lack a common definition of **citizenship education**, it is broadly understood to reflect elements including civic education, critical thinking, environmental protection, human rights, and media literacy. **Global citizenship** goes a step further, creating another layer of support for active citizenship related to four areas: human rights, environmental issues, social and economic justice, and cultural diversity, that encompasses principles of liberty and equality for all, worldwide.

However, improvements in ALE have not been evenly spread across important subject areas. While countries reported significant progress in the quality of literacy and basic skills and continuing training and professional development, progress in citizenship education was negligible. Only 2% of 111 countries reported progress in developing quality criteria for curricula in citizenship education, according to GRALE 4. The survey found very low participation in ALE for citizenship education, despite its important role in promoting and protecting freedom, equality, democracy, human rights, tolerance, and solidarity. Considering this, the thematic part of the 5th GRALE – to be launched at CONFINTEA VII – places a significant emphasis on citizenship education and the need for a radical shift in how we perceive each other and our place in nature. The private sector has a central role to play in provision of ALE aimed at responding to the critical societal issues and enabling people to become active and responsible global citizens.

Ways forward

The COVID-19 crisis, technological change and the transition to sustainable development will lead to job destruction and creation, to the disruption of existing activity sectors and the emergence of new industries, in ways that are difficult to predict. Countries will need to work together to align their skills agenda with economic transitions and labor market needs. The **role of the private sector** is, thus, central in expressing skills needs, offering work-based learning, investing in skills, recognizing, certifying, and valuing the skills acquired. Most countries reported private-public partnerships as critical and effective means of funding and provision of ALE. This sub-session hopes to explore the various mechanisms and/or approaches in the private sector's ability to provide ALE to identify best practices. It will also include a discussion surrounding what cooperation is needed to advance this critical agenda for lifelong learning and propose key recommendations in moving forward, which will feed into the CONFINTEA VII Framework for Action.

Expected outcomes

The Private Sector Forum will:

- Enhance understanding of pre-existing ALE ecosystem by private actors.
- Envisage the private sector's evolving role in the given the changing nature of our world and transformation in the workplace.
- Examine the best practices of ALE provision and their concrete impact in fostering inclusion and wider societal needs.
- Identify potential pathways and partnerships to improve private sector engagement in the promotion of ALE.
- Establish a stronger private sector ecosystem in the promotion of ALE and an entitlement to lifelong learning and skills.
- Foster direct engagement with private sector actors and leverage existing private sector networks within UNESCO and its institutes.
- Produce a **summary report** identifying key takeaways, innovative solutions, and recommendations from the Private Sector Forum to feed into the CONFINTEA VII opening plenary and the Framework for Action.

Participants

Private sector representatives, governments, multilateral and regional organizations, civil society, NGOs, youth, researchers, and experts.

Agenda

The Private Sector Forum will be held in a **virtual format** using the **Zoom platform**. Translation will be offered in the following four languages: **Arabic, English, French, and Spanish**. Total: **3 hours (180 mins)**.

Private Sector Forum – Tuesday, 14 June 2022	
13:00 – 13:10	Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Daniel Baril, Director General, Institute for Cooperation for Adult Education; Chair of the UIL Governing Board• H.E. Mr. Younes Sekkouri, Minister of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills, Morocco• Mr Chakib Alj, President, Confederation General of Enterprises Morocco
13:10 – 13:50	Session 1: Future of Work <p><i>Moderator: Ms Sarah Elson-Rogers</i>, Team Leader for the Innovation and Future of TVET Programme, UNEVOC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Patrick Daru, Operation Manager, ILO Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning• Ms Serena Brown, Global Head of Corporate Citizenship, KMPG International• Mr Matt Sigelman, President, Burning Glass Institute Q&A
13:50 – 14:30	Session 2: Diversity & Inclusion <p><i>Moderator: Mr Ramon Iriarte</i>, Education Programme Specialist, UNESCO Santiago Office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Neil Butcher, Founder, Neil Butcher & Associates• Ms Reem Mansour, Jordan Country Manager, Kiron Campus• Mr Kishan Gopal Laddha, Head of Literacy Services, Tata Consultancy Services Q&A
14:30 – 15:10	Session 3: Active & Global Citizenship <p><i>Moderator: Mr Olivier Pieume</i>, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Dakar Office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Michael Fung, Advisor, Skills Future; Executive Director, Institute for the Future of Education at Tec de Monterrey• Mr Hernan Araneda, Manager, Human Development, Fundación Chile• Ms Sijtske Ouderkerken, Program Leader of the Green Hotspot Houten, Yuverta, and Regional Captain European Platform of Urban Greening Q&A
15:10 – 15:50	Session 4: Ways Forward <p><i>Moderator: Mr Friedrich Huebler</i>, Head, UNESCO-UNEVOC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Filipe Cassapo, President, Enrich in LAC; Director, LelloLab; Invited speaker for innovation, leadership, and entrepreneurship• Ms Jeanine Romano, CEO, Sharjah Education Academy• Ms Sesi Nombulelo Nxesi, CEO, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority Q&A
15:50 – 16:00	Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director of the Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning

