

## A Summer Meeting with the World Bank on Adult Nonformal Education

Charles McGregor, BALID Executive Committee

---

1.1 Towards the end of 2002, BALID's executive committee became aware that the World Bank was reviewing its policies on ANFE (adult nonformal education) and on the status of ANFE in its education programmes. As part of this process, staff in the Bank's Human Development / Education Network wished to consult widely - with representatives of partner agencies, NGOs and interested countries. The committee considered how BALID might participate. I was asked to make contact with Bank staff and to arrange as BALID's contribution a small consultation conference between the Bank's staff and some British and overseas academics and NGOs.

1.2 The outcome was a two-day meeting in June 2003 (June 22-24) for 32 invited participants from S countries, including two Bank education specialists, Maman Sidikou and Aya Aoki, and a Bank ANFE consultant, Professor Peter Easton. The meeting was held in the London College of Fashion (the premises provided free by the Rector of its parent body, the University of the Arts London).

2. Immediately before the London meeting (June 18-20), Bank staff held a similar meeting in Hamburg under the auspices of the Unesco Institute for Education. There those consulted were agency and country representatives, not NGOs. The meetings were linked personally through Adama Ouane, the director of the Unesco Institute, who addressed the London meeting, and through my attending the Hamburg one; the meetings were linked conceptually through the working groups in London addressing the two chief questions which had emerged from the Hamburg meeting:

(1) How can ANFE programmes contribute more effectively to the achievement of EFA (Education for All) and MDG (Millennium Development Goals)? What needs to be done to provide learning opportunities which respond to what people really want from ANFE - what learning opportunities and what ways of helping people express and make known what they want?

(2) What should be the role of outside organisations such as donors, ministries and international and national NGOs in promoting ANFE?

3. Some of those invited to the London meeting had to be coaxed. One wrote: "In the past BALID has been renowned for its free thinking as an organisation. This link with the World Bank is an ominous one, and particularly the 'agenda setting' that the WB has been enabled to do. My view is that the WB work on ANFE is deeply suspect and I regret that there is now an increasing interest in ANFE by the bank". My answer ran: "How and where has BALID expressed collective thoughts (free or otherwise) on literacy? Three leading members (specified) have published their own ideas in this field but never as a series of BALID publications or a set of linked BALID seminars or of BALID field projects, which are the usual forms of collective expression. And

why should a wider discussion on Bank strategy as a prelude to its lending more money for ANFE be something to regret?" This correspondent agreed to attend.

4.1 The conference began on the Sunday evening with a presentation of literacy work in one country by Henner Hildebrand, entitled *Towards Self-Sustaining Local Learning Structures in Guinea-Conakry*. Spread over Monday and Tuesday were four addresses, whose speakers were asked to include various topics:

(1) *Outcomes* - to include: desirable outcomes — appropriate, of sufficient complexity and easily assessable; intended outcomes compared with actual needs assessments and impact studies; livelihood skills for economic development; functional knowledge for domestic, social and civic development. Speaker Adama Ouane, Director of the Unesco Institute of Education, Hamburg.

(2) *Methods and curricula* - to include: participatory methods in initial learning such as those of REFLECT; family learning; training of teachers / facilitators; learning materials produced by students and others; distance education, including by radio. Speaker Michael Brophy, African Educational Trust, England.

(3) *Managerial issues* — to include: specificities of contexts (social, political and economic); data collection and analysis (for monitoring and evaluation); data collection and research (for more effective research); programmes as continuous research. Speaker Anna Robinson-Pant, University of East Anglia, England.

(4) *Political issues* — to include: moving from pilot to full-scale; 'partnership'; roles for civic society and for government. Joint speakers: Veronica McKay and Elijah Sekgobela, UNISA, South Africa.

4.2 Each address was followed by (at times intense) discussion and animated group work. The groups worked on issues raised in the addresses and on providing answers to the two questions that emerged from the Hamburg meeting (see para2 above).

5.1 Brian Street, BALID's president, chaired the closing session. In his view, the meeting had seen the interplay of two theories of knowledge. In the positivist corner the World Bank: techno-rationalist, disciples of Durkheim, interested in prediction and explanation, and in assessment, surveys and targets (such as those of EFA and the MDG), and adherents of the autonomous theory of literacy. In the hermeneutic corner himself and others: humanistic, disciples of Weber, interested in interpretation and empathic understanding, and in mapping or measuring and in participative observation, and supporters of the ideological theory of literacy.

5.2 He believed that there were four areas where the two traditions could collaborate:

- (1) capacity building;
- (2) learning and the use of learning;
- (3) contextual assessment;
- (4) indigenous knowledge.

6. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to Laura Maynard, BALID's administrator whose efficient organisation underpinned the conference, and to the London College of Fashion for providing a venue.

7. The thank-you e-mails from Bank staff when they return to Washington referred to their expectation of "continuous partnerships", and of "a strengthened collaboration, a practical one to ensure capacity building of stakeholders in the field is not just rhetoric". But these hopes were disappointed. By late autumn 2003 the Bank had dissolved the ANFE group and deployed its members elsewhere, restoring the priority of formal education and consigning ANFE once more to the shadows.

8. What the Bank lost by that emerged from an e-mail exchange I had with Peter Easton in 2004. Before the 2003 meetings, the Cultural Cooperation, Education and Research Department of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent these comments on the Bank's background paper (Rethinking World Bank Policy and Practice in Support of ANFE):

"We welcome a discussion on ANFE, because we consider it essential for the achievement of the EFA goals. Dutch development policy on education is focussed on basic education in order 'to meet people's learning needs and to enable them to acquire the basic knowledge and the essential skills and values they need for their personal and social development, and to play a useful role in society'. This forms the basis for lifelong learning and can be reached through formal and nonformal education systems.

"Many education sector programmes prioritize formal primary education in order to reach (part of) the EFA goals and the MDG on free and compulsory primary education for all children in 2015. In many cases, focussing on formal education does not resolve the problem of the lack of access to education for the most marginalized groups. Thus (neither) the EFA goals nor relevant Universal Primary Education (can) be achieved through exclusively formal education systems.

"This implies that the formal system must no longer be seen as the standard and legitimate one and the nonformal system as something temporary. Both systems have their target groups and offer complementary types of services, ... (as) different parts of one system. A more holistic view is necessary, in which nonformal education as well as early childhood development and formal education form an integral part of education in the context of lifelong learning.

"The World Bank working paper, however, does not present the activities in the field of ANFE in an integrated way. Linkages with the formal education system are hardly developed. The paper affirms that both formal and nonformal education activities are relevant to meet the demands of the society to include an increasing number of poor people in the development process. But therefore a flexible system is necessary, which makes it possible to transfer easily from nonformal to formal and vice versa. To make this possible all different activities must form part of a national framework of creditation, with similar regulations and procedures. An issue that has not been taken

into account in this proposal. As a consequence the proposed ANFE programmes run the risk of being considered as separated, short-term and marginalized.

“Programmes on ANFE are context-specific. This means that their support needs must be analyzed at country level. (Emphasis on this) contextualization is missing”.

9. Peter Easton commented

“While firmly supporting the idea of fuller ANFE-schooling articulation (a better word than ‘integration’, I think, under the circumstances), I don’t believe that it is likely to happen on its own or that it is the first thing to push, particularly with respect to the World Bank

“More fundamentally, I tend to feel that EFA is a great goal but probably not achievable on its own, because of one fatal flaw to which educators seem congenitally blind: it is strictly a supply strategy... Re-establishing the balance between supply- and demand-side approaches means asking; ‘What is it that makes EFA - or adult literacy, for that matter - imperative for the actors and decision-makers in the situation (and what is it that broadens the set of decision-makers at the same time)? What creates the effective demand?’ The factors that get ANFE reliably funded have much to do with the critical role it plays in giving local actors the new competence they need in order to run things on their own in a variety of fields of civic endeavour and development.

“Those issues become imperative wherever decentralization and empowerment (in many domains of social and economic life, not just in education) are seriously inscribed on the agenda or rendered necessary by political and technical developments. This has begun to happen in multiple areas around the globe and so within the World Bank itself.

“To my mind, adult educators should by rights be those within the education camp who are most sensitive to these critical integration or articulation issues — articulation with other sectors of civil society and development even more than within the education sector itself. Which is why I get a tad frustrated when adult education goes down the same univocal supply-side route and simply apes current rhetoric about EFA, trying to use it — hoping against hope — to force recognition of its own worth and particularities.”

WB ANFE Policy Conference.doc