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Vandra Lea Masemann

OISE, University of Toronto, vandra.masemann@gmail.com

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The Lead-up to the Education for All Conference in 1990: Framing the “Global Consensus” La prélude à la Conférence d’Éducation pour Tous en 1990 : Encadrer le « Consensus Global »

Vandra Lea Masemann, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Abstract

This paper gives an account of the author's experience on the Steering Group of the Education for All Conference from 1989 to 1990. The main purpose is to give a firsthand account, based on primary sources, of the discussions that took place in the meetings and the editing of the documents leading up to the EFA Conference in Jomtien. This participant-observer account is based on draft documents circulated and verbatim notes taken during the preparation stage and the conference itself. The conclusion is that the original neo-liberal economic approach to improving basic education was retained in the final documents because alternative approaches were largely discouraged or reduced to small editorial changes. The main mechanisms for ensuring this result were the drafting and publicizing of the original documents as the basis for building a “global consensus” with little time or opportunity for changing the basic assumptions underlying the suggestions for research and reform.

Résumé

Cet article offre un compte-rendu de l'expérience de l'auteur dans le Groupe de Direction de la Conférence d'Éducation pour Tous de 1989 à 1990. Le but principal est de fournir un rapport de première main, basé sur des sources primaires, des discussions qui se sont tenues lors des réunions et de l'édition des documents menant à la Conférence d'ÉPT à Jomtien. Ce compte-rendu participant-observateur est basé sur des documents préliminaires distribués et des notes verbatim prises pendant la phase de préparation et la conférence elle-même. La conclusion est que l'approche originale économique néo-libérale pour améliorer l'éducation de base a été retenue dans les documents finaux parce que les approches alternatives ont largement été découragées ou réduites à de minimes changements éditoriaux. Les principaux mécanismes visant à assurer ce résultat furent la rédaction et la publication des documents originaux comme étant la base en vue de construire un « consensus global » en peu de temps ou avec peu d'opportunité pour modifier les assumptions de base qui sous-tendent les suggestions pour la recherche et la réforme.

Keywords: Education for All, Jomtien, global consensus, participant-observer

Mots-clés : Éducation pour Tous ; Jomtien ; consensus global ; participant-observateur

Introduction

One of the themes for this special issue of the CIE published in honour of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Comparative and International Education Society of Canada is the value of an historical perspective on our work as comparative and international education scholars. This paper presents my version of an historical perspective on the Education for All Conference in Thailand in March 1990. This conference has led to many years of research, policy development, and advocacy. However, the origins of the exercise have been lost in the mists of time, and now the shape of the discourse has been firmed up so that newer scholars in the field do not know what the original debates were all about. I think that participating in the lead-up to Jomtien was one of the most interesting phases of my professional life as a Canadian academic in an international context. This paper shows the very involved role that Canadian scholars, NGO members, government officials, and diplomats played at various levels.

This paper touches on several themes of this CIE issue. With reference to history and historical perspectives, this paper demonstrates the value of recording the past events in which CIESC members and other Canadians in related fields have participated so that readers may understand what important debates have taken place in the field. It is also intended to illustrate the past contributions of CIESC members in engaging with issues of equity and inclusion, particularly in regard to making great efforts

to counter the core discourse of the EFA documents. The processes described in this paper make it clear whose voices were heard and whose were excluded in this international debate, even though the final message from the EFA organizers was that a “global consensus” had been reached about how to attain the goal of universal basic education by the year 2000.

The goal of this paper is to reprise my experience as a member of the Steering Committee from March 1989 to March 1990 and beyond, in examining the process of consultation of the conference documents. I was originally asked by Nat Colletta from the World Bank to be the CIES representative on the organizing committee for the World Conference on Education for All. That invitation led to participation at all the committee meetings and access to all of the planning documents for the EFA Conference. It was clear to me at the time that this conference was going to be one of historic importance. Therefore, I kept verbatim handwritten notes of all of the discussion, and saved all of the printed matter distributed at the meetings from April 1989 to June 1990 and beyond.

The organization of this paper will be essentially chronological, in order to trace the development of the discourse concerning Education for All as a concept and the EFA Conference as an event, as each meeting carried on with revisions from the previous one. Some of the details may prove tiresome for some readers, but this will be my only opportunity to place these meetings into the historical record, afforded me by the publication of the CIESC's 50th anniversary issue. I attended all of the meetings of what was eventually termed the Steering Group, as well as the North American Regional Forum and the NGO Forum. The attendees at each meeting varied, but the discussion always focused on the latest iteration of the Background Document, the EFA Charter (later renamed the Declaration) and the Framework for Action.

Recent Literature

It is not my goal in this paper to review all the literature published since 1990, but a few brief words may be helpful. There have been literally tons of research reports and scholarly analyses published in the intervening 27 years since the Jomtien conference, enough to provide ample data for a lengthy Ph.D. thesis. In 1998, Karen Mundy wrote about the growth of educational multilateralism and the different forms it has taken since 1945. It is possible to see in her summary the main themes of the arguments that are the focus of this paper (Mundy, 1998). Many speakers in 1989 and 1990 still adhered to the multiple nation-state version of participation in UNESCO, and voted clearly for the individual nations and the formally established Ministries of Education and trained teachers as the loci for educational reform.

Since the EFA conference was not a formally accredited United Nations conference, there was no pressure on states to agree to a Charter or to sign any binding agreements. Indeed, there had not been enough time to draft the formal documents for such an undertaking. On the other hand, the creation of the WCEFA Inter-Agency Commission and the invitation to international agencies to be sponsors of the conference, and the presence of governmental representatives from the North and South, as well as the involvement of many international NGOs, roundtable speakers and exhibitors who had financial interests in the production of non-formal modes of curriculum or the use of the new technologies, led to a multiplicity of viewpoints being expressed but not really being listened to. This was a new marketplace of ideas, with seemingly endless possibilities for choice, but the neo-liberal, apolitical, market-driven model that was on offer was based on the World Bank's paradigm, and it was the paradigm that prevailed.

A recent article on Education for All by Leonard Tikly gives a review of the years since 1990, in which its future is “understood as a global regime of educational governance.” “Central to this view is a consideration of the effects of different kinds of power that are linked to global interests and the struggle for hegemony within a changing world order.” (Tikly, 2017, p. 22). This present discussion of my Jomtien experience is a review of the details of the conversations, position papers and public speeches that were part of this struggle in 1989 and 1990. Tikly notes that understanding EFA in this

way “allows for a consideration of the relative power of different discourses, governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and networks in shaping EFA” (p. 23). Although the dynamics of this struggle have changed and become more complex since 1990, participating in the Steering Group for the EFA conference allowed one to observe this very cogent moment of history. That is why I wish to record this experience for posterity.

The EFA Project

The first draft of the document on the EFA initiative was dated March 24, 1989 and contained information on the proposed schedule, organization and planning of the EFA project (WCEFA, 1989a). The schedule was tight – Steering Committee meetings and regional consultative forums were all to take place in a one year period leading up to the conference. The organization was to be handled by the Secretariat of an Inter-Agency Commission drawn from sponsors UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank, headed by Dr. Wadi Haddad as Executive Secretary. A wide range of educators, officials and representatives of many NGOs and other organizations were to be consulted about the content of the Background Document which was to serve as a reference document, before the draft Charter and draft Action Plan were created. The goal of the entire project was to create a global consensus and an action plan about the need to provide education for all children, through formal schooling of equivalent out-of-school programs, and to provide literacy and basic skills training for youth and adults. A call was also sent out at that time for the submission to the Secretariat of all relevant research papers and reports as well as comparative analyses of original and recent data (WCEFA, 1989a).

The draft document consisted in the first section of an overview of the perceived global crisis in the growing inequalities worldwide, efforts to improve the situation by the UN, “the potential contribution of education to socio-economic development and the resolution of global problems”, and the necessity of meeting basic learning needs for all (WCEFA, 1989a, p.3). The second section gave an historical review of the post-independence educational targets in various regional and international forums such as the Karachi Conference and the Addis Ababa and Tripoli Conferences in 1960, and the various national calls for Universal Primary Education by 1990. The aim was to give a summary of achievements in education and an analysis of variables associated with success in reaching targets. However, an implicit criticism was made of the perceived zealous efforts made in the preceding decades to increase enrolment without enough attention being paid to deteriorating quality or social dissatisfaction. Efforts were to be made to gather better statistics on primary school-age population and enrolments, enrolments and retention rates, literacy numbers and rates, teacher supply, classroom requirements, and financial resource requirements (WCEFA, 1989a, p. 6).

The third section was to provide a vision for effective learning for all: primary education via formal schooling or out-of-school program, which would not be dead-end, and basic education leading to literacy for youth and adults, supported by the mobilization of public and private resources. There was a call specifically aimed at increased mobilization of non-governmental organizations, both national and international. The targets for Education for All in this first draft were summarized as follows, but these changed during the succeeding discussions:

Primary education – Each country was to strive to ensure that at least 80 per cent of all 14 year old boys and girls attained a common level of learning achievement for primary education, set by the respective national authorities.

Adult education – Access to basic skills and knowledge for all.

Literacy – Massive reduction of illiteracy, with targets to be set by each country and prioritized by age and sex (WCEFA, 1989a, p. 8).

The fourth section gave a detailed outline of various policies and programs related to the provision of and demand for ways to meet the above basic learning needs. Finally, the fifth section addressed the strategies for country-specific programs and creating alliances and possibilities for

developing global and regional solidarity and co-operation to support country-level efforts.

The Neo-Liberal Agenda

The basic reference for the discussion in the first meeting was the report by Lockheed and Verspoor, entitled *Improving Primary Education in Developing Countries: A Review of the Policy Options* (1990). It was rooted in an economic approach, which saw education as an investment in the development of human capital. The basic assumption was that if countries could expand their education systems and improve their national literacy rates, either through government or in partnership with the private sector, their people could get enough education to enable them to get jobs or proceed to higher education. This process would result in higher levels of economic development overall, with increasing levels of prosperity, health, and well-being. The authors noted,

A diverse body of literature demonstrates that, in developing countries, adults with higher levels of educational attainment have higher individual earnings, more frequent employment in the urban labour markets, greater agricultural productivity, lower fertility, better health and nutritional status, more 'modern' attitudes and in turn are more likely to send their own children to school – all dimensions of development (p.1).

Education was seen as the motor of economic development. The approach was essentially apolitical and market-oriented. There was no reference in the WEFA documents to political, military or trade influences on the national economy of any countries, or to the impact of colonialism or neo-colonialism, or indeed revolution, on education systems, national language usage, or economic well-being. The growing reality of external debt was also not mentioned. Solutions were envisaged to be a matter of choice, with private agencies and other organizations welcome to suggest initiatives that might compete with formal education systems.

The North American Planning Meeting – Ottawa June 16, 1989

The first stage of consultation was scheduled to take place in the regions, and the preliminary North American planning meeting was in Ottawa, hosted by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. The goal was to introduce the idea of Education for All to prospective partner representatives, and to solicit their help in preparing for a North American Regional Forum in the latter part of 1989. The invitation stressed specifically that current problems in education affected all countries alike, regardless of the political system or level of socio-economic development. This distinction between industrialized/donor and newly-industrializing/recipient countries became a matter which continued to be an issue.

Those in attendance represented a variety of Canadian and US governmental and educational agencies and organizations. Among the Canadians were those representing the Council of Ministers of Education, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, the Canadian Teachers' Federation, the Canadian UNICEF Committee, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Secretary of State, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and various NGOs dealing with literacy and adult education. I was on the Canadian list although strictly speaking I was representing a US-based group (CIES) and later on was listed as representing an international NGO (the World Council of Comparative Education Societies).

The US representatives represented a similar panel to the Canadians – the Executive Director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Director of the International Department of the American Federation of Teachers, the Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Development Program, an observer from UNICEF's head office in New York, the Washington representative of the International Reading Association, and a representative from InterAction (a then five year old group of NGOs which has now grown to an alliance group of 180 NGOs). There were also three executive secretarial staff members of the Inter-Agency Commission: Wadi Haddad, with deputy Nigel Fisher and deputy Nat Colletta. The composition of the group was interesting in two

respects: in both countries education is not a federal responsibility but is that of the provinces or states, and also Education for All was being considered a project that would affect not so much the population of these two industrialized countries but the people in “the rest of the world”, or those who were the recipients of foreign aid. A local Ottawa group was there, however, that dealt with illiteracy in Canada (CCUNESCO, 1989a).

The agenda for this meeting had seven goals – an overview of the activities planned or underway for the EFA, a review of the Background Document, mobilization of support and debate in North America and linkage with ongoing global activities, promoting a “one-world” view of EFA, planning the North American presence at the conference, preparing for the North American Forum in the fall of 1989, and creating a planning group for the above activities.

My notes from the discussion at the meeting show several themes that were to be of ongoing importance (Masemann, 1989a). Wadi Haddad made it clear that this was not to be an official United Nations conference but would include both governmental and non-governmental organizations. The four lead sponsors of the conference wished to attract as many other agencies as possible to be co-sponsors and associate sponsors. The basic needs approach would be central, in that it would be from the bottom up and client-centred, focusing on individuals - children, youth or adults. (This focus opened up the possibility of bypassing national formal education systems and led to a receptivity to ideas from NGOs about specific client-centred programs.) It was hoped that the EFA conference would not consist of a collection of member country statements. When asked where the idea of EFA came from, Haddad stressed the importance of human resources for development, such as development banks. He also referred to the contribution from the UNDP and UNICEF. The financing for the conference would be US\$3.5 million, with US\$2 from the four sponsors and the rest from the co-sponsors and associate sponsors. A travel fund would also be set up for those from least developed countries.

As for the participants, he stated that each country would be invited to send 3-4 official delegates, not only Ministers, as well as delegates from the private sector. They were planning for 1500 participants strictly by invitation. When Budd Hall of the International Task Force on Literacy asked why there was no reference to International Literacy year in the document and stated that there was to be an international congress on adult education in Bangkok just six weeks prior to the EFA conference, Dr. Haddad replied that there was no organic relationship between ILY and EFA. Stating further that EFA was an “ad hoc conference” in UN terminology, he referred to the front page of the meeting document where it is stated that “the initiative will focus on creating an international debate towards a convergence of thinking on the problems and opportunities in meeting the basic learning needs of all” (WCEFA, 1989b, p.1). The discussion proceeded about modes of using the mass media, the role of NGOs, and travel expenses. Questions were raised about the place of pre-school education, education for girls and women, the role of mothers in education, and the representation of women at the conference. Discussion ensued about ways of improving the flow of information from the bottom through the basic learning needs approach and the activities of NGOs.

Nigel Fisher opened the second session of planning the conference for North America by emphasizing that the aim was to develop a consensus on the document (i.e. Charter) at the World Congress. Tom Keehn of InterAction stated that it was impossible to avoid the discussion of whether we were talking about global or development education. Budd Hall said that in North America one constituency that was missing in the discussion was labour and asked what the expectations were for the goals of this meeting – was it a North American perspective or our perspective on the general theme? Wadi Haddad replied that it was to bring as many groups as possible together to discuss the Charter – what experiences at different levels can we bring from North America to the conference? A general discussion followed about many aspects of the particular role North America would play, with a clear delineation of the donor-recipient divide. Frank Dall (of UNICEF) noted that it was not clear the extent to which the rest of the world could provide answers for North America. A discussion of the

commonalities (and lack thereof) of the North American situation and that of other countries ensued.

The afternoon was taken up with sharing many ideas about technicalities of planning the next conference and ways of getting media attention. The gap still existed between thinking about focusing on the Canadian and US situation in regard to inequalities in education and modes of delivering development aid. This lengthy discussion was followed by one focused on how to respond to the draft documents. Concern was expressed about the envisaged timeline and the difficulty of responding to a Charter, which would be predetermined. Wadi Haddad stated that the document would be produced ahead of the consultations *with the idea that the final document might look very different* (italics mine). The representative of the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education, George Molloy, cautioned that both political and non-political groups could not come up with a consensus on the Charter. This comment presaged a theme that ran through the preparation stage and the EFA Conference itself. Another final comment was made regarding what was to happen after the EFA Conference was over. The Charter was to be endorsed by governments and by NGOs. The session ended with more talk of the technicalities and dates of the next meetings.

International Steering Group Meeting in Paris October 12-14, 1989

During the summer of 1989, planning began apace for the regional forums and the first International Steering Group Meeting. In September, the members were sent the second draft (B) of the *World Charter on Education for All* and the *Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs*, as well as the Conference background document, now entitled *Meeting Basic Learning Needs: A New Vision for the 1990s*. The two documents had been approved with minor modifications by the heads of the four sponsoring agencies. The two documents were to be revised again after the nine regional forums and the first Steering Committee meeting.

I received a letter dated 31 August 1989 from Wadi Haddad to attend the meeting in Paris. Interestingly, I was now designated in that letter as the representative of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies, so both the US and Canadian identity has been superseded. The list of those attending made it clear that I was now listed with NGOs, Intergovernmental Agencies etc., while regional representatives were designated by nationality. In attendance at this meeting were representatives from the Asia, Africa, Arab, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe regions. The September 1989 *WCEFA Bulletin* had announced the formation of the Steering Committee as follows:

A Steering Group of 60 cabinet ministers, leading educators, representatives of international and non-governmental organizations and the private sector from all regions of the world was recently set up by the Executive Committee for the Conference. The Group will provide technical advice on Conference documents, format and program...[and] will also be called upon to mobilize support for Education for All in general, and for the Conference in particular, in their respective regions (WCEFA, 1989d, p. 2). Only a few high-ranking Cabinet Ministers attended the Paris meeting. Stephen Lewis (Canada's former ambassador to the United Nations), who was designated to represent Canada, and the two USA representatives from the Children's Defence Fund and the Committee for Economic Development did not attend the meeting.

The opening remarks to the Steering Committee made it clear that the members were to provide "technical advice" and specific answers to some questions, such as how to measure achievement, how to define the meaning of equal educational opportunity, and how to get data on educational deficit country by country for children and adults. These goals were consistent with the framework of discourse that was in place, namely that of a neo-liberal approach to education as an investment, aided by the gathering of quantitative data on educational achievement and the setting of goals which could be measured in future years (Masemann, 1989b).

However, there was also a great deal of discussion of the documents that did not stay within the terms of reference of "technical advice", but instead came from other frames of reference and which revealed what the members perceived to be the underlying assumptions of the Education for All

project. Probably one of the most important from a diplomatic point of view was the objection to the term "Charter". Pierre Beemans from CIDA noted that United Nations charters needed to go through a complex process, which involved binding agreements from the member governments. Since this conference was not a formal United Nations conference, the procedures to approve the Charter were not in place.

There was also considerable concern about the lack of context for the development of the documents. Sheldon Shaeffer (Masemann, 1989b) from the International Development Research Centre in Canada noted the inadequate analysis of the social, political, and economic factors that had led to underdevelopment, as well as North/South factors. He stated that education was treated in the documents as a panacea to underdevelopment, and that indigenous knowledge was not enough recognized. He noted the need for more participation to create a new vision and to develop new ownership. There was inadequate attention paid to teachers, in his view. He recommended that the possible prescriptiveness of the documents be looked at.

Representatives from Africa and Latin America also noted the lack of clarity in the documents about the great disparities between countries, whether Less Developing or Developing Countries (in the parlance of that time). Other questions raised were that of external debt and the reality of military spending for war which cut down the possibility for spending on EFA. Graça Machel from Mozambique noted that EFA might produce the same differences that have existed all along, although she thought that transferring science and technology to the LDCs would be the bridge. There was also extensive discussion about how the EFA conference would be felt in the individual countries and regions, and what the possibility for alliances would be. One speaker noted the silence on cultural or technological co-operation among countries. The need to consider pre-school education and the importance of teacher education was again noted.

The very definition of the phrase "basic education" was questioned by several speakers, in that it seemed to mean transmission of knowledge only, rather than the creation of new knowledge, or knowledge coming from indigenous cultures. Ryokichi Hirono of UNDP stated that EFA was based on the expression of individual rights and was a Western-oriented approach. He noted the need to look at EFA from a social point of view with a concept of one's obligation to society.

Working groups met to discuss how to strengthen the documents, but several speakers continued to speak about the context of the project more generally. The speaker from China who had been absent and unable to present his statement in the morning said that the goal was excellent but that "to reach it is a very heavy task". He stated that the promotion of economic development would take priority over giving students educational opportunity. He noted that 222 million students were in school on China, and the same number were illiterate. There was also a need to think about the needs of adult learners.

Numerous comments were then made about editorial suggestion for the document. On behalf of the World Council, I suggested that there needed to be an analysis of educational equality and the links made between policy and practice. I suggested that the language of the document needed to be made more international. In addition, I asked for an analysis of gender inequality and a vision that was hung on a larger concept than the concept of human capital development. I was referring to universal human rights or social justice as the foundation for arguing in favour of Education for All. Several other speakers emphasized the need for women's equality. Anil Bordia from the Ministry of Education in India stressed the need to take tradition and folk forms of learning into account, and not to equate illiteracy with ignorance. He thought that the new vision would not permeate the consciousness of donor countries unless new coalitions and new attitudes were created. His final question was whether the EFA was going to become a big machine.

Pierre Beemans from CIDA brought some definitive answers to the table. He stated that the Council of Ministers of Canada were going to decline to participate because of the specificity of the Framework and that they were also disturbed by the lack of time for consultation. He relayed Canada's

objections to the name of Charter for the document. He saw the Framework as being pointed at developing countries and not the industrial ones. His concrete suggestions for the Background Document were that the ethnic, national and community identities be strengthened, that the role of the media in education be mentioned, and that ethical values and belief systems be included, as opposed to the main perspective of the document which he described as Western, secular, materialistic and economic, and which ignored the importance of belief systems. Lastly, he said that UNESCO should not be let “ off the hook” and that UNESCO “expectations should be stated” (Masemann, 1989b).

Yves Brunswick (of the IBE Council and Secretary General of the French National Commission for UNESCO)) spoke of the need for “formation” rather than just “éducation” and for “savoir-vivre” as well as “savoir-faire”, referring to cultural differences in the meaning of the word “education”, taking into account a wider perspective on becoming socialized into cultural norms and into enjoying life in a wider sense than just knowing how to do a trade or earning a living. His thoughts on these matters were not picked up. He stressed the need for adaptability and differentiated strategies for each part of the world. Budd Hall spoke of the role of NGOs in the conference and the need for simultaneous translation. He thought the role of the NGOs could be strengthened or clarified in the Charter, and that NGOs had been in advance of UNESCO in terms of sharing information. The representative from the French-speaking Council of Ministers of Education, Mr. Mohamed Fadel Dia, noted that the document was only in English, that the LDCs were under-represented at the Paris meeting, and that the proponents of the EFA were “selling an assimilationist point of view from outside the culture ” (Masemann, 1989b). There was some disquiet expressed that the contradictory issues were not being discussed enough, and they needed to be aired. The time factor was raised as a subject of great concern, and the question was raised about delaying the conference, but Nigel Fisher said that it would go ahead on the date planned.

In the afternoon, the Working Groups reported on their discussions. Some of the recommendations were very specific, such as making the language of the document simpler and more accessible. Others referred to issues mentioned above, such as the need for including values or culture, or topics that were controversial. Others were new, such as the difficulty of paying teachers in various parts of the world and the implications of EFA for governments that would have to increase their financial support for education. There was also the expectation that the regional meetings to follow would provide more topics for discussion, and a discussion of whether the Steering Committee's report would be forwarded to the regional meetings.. The day concluded with some focus on technical details about the organization of the conference, without a seeming resolution of many of the important issues raised.

The following day's discussion focused on aspects of preparation for and follow-up to the EFA conference. Colin Power (UNESCO Assistant Director General, Education) noted that education was ultimately a national responsibility and that follow-up must be owned ultimately by countries and agencies. UNESCO was deemed to be the lead agency for co-coordinating follow-up. However, views were expressed about new forms of co-operation among NGOs and there was some discussion of a new meta-agency of all four of the sponsors. There was no firm conclusion on this point. This ambiguity was to continue throughout the preparation period right until the end of the conference and afterwards.

A few weeks after the Paris meeting, I received a file copy of the report by Sheldon Shaeffer who had attended it as a representative of the Population, Education and Society Program of the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC). His summary remarks affirmed my impressions of the Paris meeting: “While general support was expressed for the crisis of education and for the Conference goal of raising the profile of, and support for, more and better basic education (from donors and NGOS), there was considerable criticism of the language, style and content of the documents” (Shaeffer, 1989a, p 1). He then listed many of the specific points already summarized above, particularly and tellingly in the first point: “The documents treat 'underdevelopment' and the role of education within it quite separately from international and national political, economic and

social relations ... Development is therefore treated quite apart from North/South relations, and blame for underdevelopment is placed more on national than on international factors (Shaeffer, 1989a, p.2).

At the end of the Paris meeting, Wadi Haddad had agreed to allow the Committee to synthesize the responses of the ten regional meetings planned for November and December, although he had wished at the outset to have as few revisions to the documents as possible. Nevertheless, Shaeffer reported that IDRC would support the examination of the documents by the research networks that it supported in Latin America, East Africa and Southeast Asia as well as several other organizations. IDRC would also have a representative at the meetings in East and West Africa (Shaeffer, 1989a, p. 5).

Another draft document written in this same time period was by Daniel Morales-Gómez, a Senior Program Officer at IDRC as his personal view. In his introduction, he stated: "People and institutions involved in the preparatory process for the Conference ought to take steps to re-shape the philosophical premises on which the initiative rests, and in so doing make sure their voices are fully heard" (Morales-Gómez, 1989, p.2). Further on he wrote, "The thrust in the role assigned to education is driven by the pursuit of a mechanistic view of human resource development and formal education prevailing in the industrialized world...The driving force of the new vision is the ideology of efficiency with heavy technocratic overtones" (p.5). He concluded that, "To allow the ideas of this 'new vision' of the WCEFA to remain unchallenged is to contribute to the consolidation of the power of the North over the South" (p.8).

This divergence of the vision presented in the documents and as they were received by the Steering Group members and some others was the foundational gap between the two forms of discourse that emerged at this stage in the consultative process. The lack of encouragement for revisions in the documents, the calls to "technical" solutions to proposed problems, such as suggestions to put them in a display in the Exhibits space at the Conference or for small group discussion at a Roundtable, and the repeated calls for haste in what was a too-short preparation period led to a heavy pressure to pretend that there was no disagreement, since the often-expressed goal was a world consensus about the Charter and the Action Plan. As noted above, there had even been a request at the Steering Group meeting to delay the conference because of lack of time to prepare, but it was not considered possible. My memories here are of some passionate and at times irate exchanges during this meeting in Paris. (Even the very act of writing in an academic style forces one to suppress the emotional component of the interchanges. This kind of resistance, expressed in anger and high tension was also very evident at the regional meetings and the NGO meetings at the EFA conference itself.)

As an addendum to this section, I note that the EFA Conference was on the agenda at the UNESCO General Conference in October 1989, which I was unable to attend. What was notable about the reports about this conference is that the same process of avoiding any serious consideration of editing the documents occurred even at a meeting of many countries' delegations (CCUNESCO, 1989b). There would be no other opportunity before the EFA Conference for so many delegations to meet. Many member states made reference to the importance of the World Conference on Education for All during the sessions of Commission II and "unfortunately, time did not allow for the study of the documents and only two interventions on WCEFA were made during a late final evening session" (Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 1989b, p.2). Thus the generally worded resolution that was passed was not based on any lengthy discussion of the contents of the documents, and revisions were left to the Director General.

The North American Regional Forum Meeting in Boston November 6-7, 1989

I attended the regional meeting in Boston, one of the nine arranged throughout the world. At this point, I can no longer claim to have an inside track on all of the consultations as the preparations for the conference spread out to so many venues. Sheldon Shaeffer gave an interesting comment on the atmosphere at the North American Regional Forum:

A constant tension of the meeting was between the overwhelming presence and often enthusiastic support of the American participants and the somewhat more cautious support of the small (15 or so) Canadian contingent. Despite earlier fears to the contrary, however, it appears that Canada will be represented among the roundtables (a Secretary of State presentation on workplace literacy) and the exhibits (by the Ottawa Board of Education and Frontier College) (Shaeffer, 1989b, p. 2).

These latter presentations were to be focused on literacy in Canada as an industrialized country. However, CIDA was named as the lead Canadian agency of the delegation to the Conference, as EFA was considered to be mainly an effort to improve literacy rates in the countries that were the recipients of overseas aid. CIDA and IDRC were among the associate sponsors of the conference. (For the historical record, Professor Douglas Ray (CIESC President from 1973-1975) also attended this meeting as a member of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.)

My memory of the forum is of a very large and enthusiastic group of representatives from mainly US NGOs who had not usually had the opportunity to meet in such a large group. It was hosted by the United States/Canada Committee on the WCEFA, with the address noted on the letterhead as the Canadian Commission for UNESCO in Ottawa and the WCEFA/USA at the Hall of States in Washington. This listing served to obscure the fact that the US organizers had no link with UNESCO or the US federal government, although various US agencies were present. There were also many exhibitors there in the hopes of being chosen to exhibit at the conference in Thailand. These exhibits were open for the duration of the meeting. Roundtable discussions were also held, similar to those that would be held at the WCEFA.

The time slots allocated to examine the WCEFA documents were just over one hour on each of the two days, and a final hour for discussion and synthesis. In the brochure for the NA Regional Forum, it was stated that:

Participants will have the unique opportunity to review and critique the World Charter on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, two key documents that will help guide worldwide education policy to the year 2000. The Secretariat will consider the recommendations from all regional forums in creating the final draft of these documents to be adopted in March 1990 at the World Conference" (WCEFA, 1989e).

There was in reality scant opportunity for participants to discuss the documents in depth publicly in the allocated time, although they had been sent Draft B of the documents before the meeting.

Meanwhile many other panels and talks were being given on many aspects of education, some of them very US-based, others more global. It had the atmosphere of a market-place of education, very unlike the formal atmosphere of the Steering Group meeting in Paris. The opening speech was given by James Grant of UNICEF, whose task was to motivate this group to support the EFA initiative. He gave many examples of initiatives that had improved the lives of children worldwide, such as vaccination campaigns. He ended with the call to "write an important part of the next chapter in the history of human progress: the 'Education for All' chapter" (UNICEF, 1989, p.7).

My notes of the summary of the meeting overall show several main themes: 1) technology, 2) equity, 3) research, evaluation and assessment, and 4) building alliances and political will. The audience members were quite outspoken in their remarks, not being constrained by international diplomatic protocol as in a UNESCO-type meeting. In regard to technology, it was stated that the documents should give a greater role to technology in support of direct instruction. Technology should also be sustainable, empower the teacher, and be under the control of each country. A video demonstration was given of the role of interactive radio, electronic learning aids and computers.

As for equity, there was a strongly expressed argument for more equity in the consultative process itself - "Who is involved in the meeting and who isn't? Where are the powerless and the powerful?". Questions were raised about the inclusion of minorities, women and girls, displaced

persons, refugees and prisoners. A discussion ensued about how we name things: e.g. “The problem is the victims' [problem] or the problem is the victim.” There was a desire expressed to balance the needs of diverse client populations by beginning to disaggregate the data in the large collections of statistics, and to have early identification of target groups in a participatory process that included teachers.

In regard to research, evaluation and assessment, questions were raised about why and how these were to be carried out and how they were to be facilitated. Questions of accountability (and to whom), improvement, equity, and resource allocations were discussed. Multiple outcomes were to be addressed through multiple measures; no one view should prevail, and the processes should involve people at all levels. How to facilitate this process would involve strengthening networks and developing development strategies that were politically, culturally, and socially sound. There was a need to add provisions for pilot projects and include teachers, parents and the community at large.

It was considered that the rationale for building alliances and political would be needed to be made. The absence of mention of teachers in the documents was noted. Questions were asked about the forthcoming meeting in Nice (the European Regional Forum) and who the participants there would be. Who is going to adopt the Charter? Do they reflect a multi-sectoral alliance? The tone of the documents was thought to be too prescriptive and needed to reflect enthusiasm. Another comment was made that health organizations needed to be involved at every level. It was suggested that new networks be established for North America at this regional meeting.

My notes also refer to a session on Basic Education and Literacy in which several trenchant criticism were made of the documents. It was noted that it was not clear exactly what Basic Education referred to in the documents. It was suggested that “learning” needed to be emphasized rather than “education”. Lack of reference to pre-school education was noted. The role of mothers and parents needed to be included. A lengthy discussion was held about the importance of child health and the quality of life for young children. Learning for All must include family. It was pointed out that there was no literal or conceptual reference to literacy in the documents. The discussion veered back to perhaps incorporating the idea of literacy into basic education. Then it was noted that there was no mention of the word “library” in the documents. The discussion ended with the suggestion to make the documents more teacher friendly and to empower teachers (Masemann, 1989c).

The above paragraphs are just glimpses of the discussions held at the North American Regional Forum. Many concurrent discussions were held in the 14 breakout groups on both days, each containing about 15-20 participants. There was a very high level of energy present throughout, with the US organizations being predominant. I met a leading official from USAID at the end of the meeting who was highly enthusiastic and committed. While many of the participating groups were community-based with grass-roots type analyses of the issues, I doubt that their alternative analyses made a difference to the documents because they did not occupy any positions in the hierarchy who were going to revise the drafts. Even the alternative views on the Steering Group were in the minority, except when certain groups were able to lobby for editorial changes (in regard to pre-school education, adult education, and libraries/books, for example). However, the fact that so many groups were keen to offer suggestions and imagine new solutions was very consistent with the market-driven ethos, and there was a great deal of competition in applications for the spots in the Exhibit Hall at the conference. At this point, it was not really clear to the participants that alternative solutions would constitute a threat to formal education itself.

WCEFA Steering Group Meeting in Nice, December 14-16, 1989

I was unable to attend this meeting, but will give an overview here of its goals. The meeting in Nice was convened to hear the reports from the nine regional consultations and the impressions of the Steering Group members who had attended them, and to discuss the issues relating to the Charter and the Framework for Action. The Rapporteurs from each meeting were asked remain on the last afternoon to assist the Secretariat to “translate the consensus of the Steering Group into suggested

revisions or additions that may be required to the text of these two working documents (WCEFA, 1989f, p.1). This aim of consensus was repeated in the same letter as an important reason for members to attend. In addition, the agenda specifically listed two sessions on building consensus, for the Charter and the Framework respectively. A summary was given in point form of the issues raised at the previous Paris meeting, which clearly did not form a consensus; and recommendations were made for editing the documents. For the first time, there was a written suggestion to change the word "Charter" to "Declaration" which would not require signatures. My own experience at the North American regional meeting had not left any impression of even a North American consensus. One was still left with the impression that consensus was meant to be achieved in the editing process.

The NGO Consultation in New York January 30-31, 1990

In January 1990, information about travel arrangements to Jomtien was sent out to all Steering Group members along with Draft C of the World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs. The English version was also to be translated into French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese (WCEFA, 1990a).

This meeting was hosted by UNICEF as part of their contribution to the development of the World Conference, to provide an opportunity for their member NGOs to assess its relevance for their organization and for NGOs as a whole, and to shape responses to the recommendations in the documents for the World Conference. They were also to analyze the revised "C" versions of the documents. The participants were a large group of NGO representatives from North America, the Caribbean and South America, who would also be hearing the feedback from the regional forums in North and South America.

The general discussion and presentations raised many of the same points that have been outlined above, but the NGO consultation had a stronger emphasis on three points: the role of external debt in cutting down on provisions for children's health and education, the concern for children's welfare, and the possible role of NGOs in implementing Education for All. There was a clear message that NGOs were willing to cooperate with governments to bring about success in improving education for children. In the final report of the meeting, 17 recommendations were listed for ways in which the NGO community could play a useful role in the follow-up activities to the WCEFA (UNICEF1990a, pp.14-15); WCEFA, 1990b, pp.2-3).

Canada Prepares for Jomtien

As academics and practitioners became increasingly aware of the upcoming conference, there was discussion in many quarters. The Canadian Commission for UNESCO also consulted with their member organizations for responses to the documents and organized a consultative meeting in Ottawa in early February to prepare for the Canadian presence at the conference. Responses to Draft B from some who had attended the North American Regional Meeting of the EFA Declaration and Framework were circulated. By this point, various objections to the wording and substance of the conference documents were being more clearly expressed in various NGOs and at the official level in Canadian aid organizations

Sheldon Shaeffer spoke about the points he had raised in his report (1989c) on the meeting in Nice in the previous December, similar to those he had made at the Paris meeting. There was also a letter in French and English from Lorraine Pagé, President of the *Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec*, (now the *Centrale des syndicats québécois (CSQ)*), who had attended the North American Regional Meeting in November 1989. She had circulated the documents to her members of this large teachers' union for comment. This letter is very interesting because it stated that "we believe that a reaffirmation of the universal right to education is certainly appropriate, although this right is already

fully recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)” (Pagé, 1990, p.2).

She then discussed the union's view of the shortcomings of the Charter and Framework “especially since the new charter, as proposed, is a substantial retreat from the provisions of the other two documents” (p.2)). She also wrote of her concern in the absence of a clear statement “that governments have the prime responsibility for a nation's educational mission” (p.3) and her anxiety that some participants will be interested only in developing new methods for “delivering” alternative methods for education to the new markets that will emerge, methods which will bear the imprint of the North in materials and values. She affirmed their support for the school as the place for education, with properly trained teachers and appropriate educational materials. She called for the keynotes of the charter to be co-operation and development, and supported the general mobilization to ensure access to primary education for all the world's children, with the rider that secondary education should also become compulsory. In contrast to the discourse of the previous discussion at the consultations, “ we feel that international trade-union action is necessary” (p. 4).

Then in February 1990, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the Chair of the Sub-Committee on Education for the Canadian Commission for UNESCO Professor Joe Farrell chaired an Open Forum on Education for All for interested colleagues. The members of the Sub-Committee had been encouraged to send their thoughts to the Commission for the information of the Canadian colleagues who would be attending the EFA Conference. The audience was also briefed on the composition of the Canadian delegation to the WCEFA. In addition to Lawrence Smith, Ambassador to Thailand as the Head of the Delegation, Pierre Beemans (from CIDA) was the Deputy Head, accompanied by Dr. Kazim Bacchus of the University of Alberta, Mariette Hogue from the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, Paul McGinnis also from CIDA, and Francis Whyte, Secretary General of the Council of Ministers of Education. Other Canadians would be found representing six international NGOs and staffing three exhibits (Ottawa Board of Education, Frontier College and the Canadian Organization for Development Education (CODE). Roundtable presenters were Joanne Lindzey from the National Literacy Secretariat, Jean Unda from the Ontario Federation of Labour, and David Stevenson from Youth Employment Services (YES-Canada). This delegation represented the issues of literacy among adults in Canada as well as basic education in the global South (CCUNESCO 1990a).

The comments at this briefing were more skeptical and free-ranging than those at the formal consultations, and also focused on the implications for Canada. One participant stated that the World Bank had been criticized for not spending money on primary or alternative education, so this proposal “comes in a package of multinational free enterprise” (Masemann, 1990, p.4). The role of “consensus” was questioned, and one student from the USA asked “who Canada would be against”. The two different conceptions of the “EFA Vision” were clearly understood by those at this meeting, and it was generally agreed that it would be important for Canada to participate in follow-up activities, although these had not yet been clearly specified.

The Education for All Conference in Jomtien, Thailand March 5-9 1990

The conference was held at the Ambassador City Hotel, then the largest hotel in Asia, in a setting of fabulous luxury. At the airport in Bangkok, delegates were received in the VIP line and escorted onto shuttle buses that took them to Jomtien. It did not escape the attention of some delegates that we were to discuss alleviating poverty through education in a setting of such opulence. The official reason for the location was the ease of providing security for the many national leaders in attendance.

The conference program opened with a very impressive plenary session in which all of the official government delegations were seated together and all of the NGO delegations were seated together. Considering how often the disadvantaged position of girls and women had been mentioned in regard to basic education, it was quite remarkable to see how relatively few female delegates there

were. At the time, I counted that the government delegations had about 10 per cent women, and the NGO delegations had about 33 per cent women. It was announced that 150 countries had sent delegations.

The official program had several plenaries in which the heads of delegation gave their formal statement. The statement given by Canada's ambassador to Thailand, Lawrence Smith, emphasized the concern over the ability of countries to see education as an investment in a period of structural adjustment of their economy and not to see education purely in terms of economic rates of return but as a human activity for individuals to enrich their intellectual, spiritual and social lives as persons. Thirdly, as recognition and support for women in development was a cornerstone of Canadian foreign aid policy, the discussion of basic education must address the pressing needs of their education, particularly those who were single or abandoned mothers or refugees. Support was expressed for a diversity of approaches and the validity of traditional knowledge. Lack of schooling was not to be confused with ignorance. The promotion of partnerships in education was not to be seen as undermining the role and responsibility of government. The statement expressed support for the role of teachers and improving their training, supervision and working conditions. Attention was drawn to the need for improvements in secondary and post-secondary education. It concluded by referring to the follow-up activities, which would be played by individual countries. While support was expressed for the guiding principles of the Declaration and Framework, they were accepted as "a statement of principles sufficiently flexible to adapt to ongoing change inherent in education" (CCUNESCO, 1990b).

The NGOs also gave statements, which were focused on their particular area. Some NGOs were grouped together to save time. We met to devise a statement based on a set of common concerns. On March 6, I spoke at a plenary on behalf of the WCCES, the International Federation of University Women, and the International Reading Association as time was so short. Our common concerns were the under-representation of gender in the documents, the issue of instruction in the mother tongue, the importance of libraries and books, the importance of teachers and improved working conditions, the rights of disabled learners, and the position of refugees (CCUNESCO, 1990b).

The conference was far too large for a complete account to be rendered here. At the Steering Committee meeting at 10:00 a.m. on the first day, Wadi Haddad noted that there were two tasks for the members: to carry out consultations with the official delegations from our respective regions so as to bring consensus on regional involvement, and to find a vice-president for the conference from each region. There were also to be candidates from each region who were to be regional rapporteurs. He also noted the time constraints on the Plenary Commission, with 3-4 speakers from each region. He stated that the pattern was to be the same for NGO involvement – one vice-president, three members on the Drafting Committee and several speakers. He then outlined the severe constraints on the total time that would be allocated for speaking during the whole conference – for example, just one-hour spread over several days for regional speakers. One member asked, "Is there any chance for a real debate?" The reply was "No." However, it was hoped that the substantive discussion would go on in the roundtables, but it later emerged that that discussion would not feed into the plenaries, although the Minutes would be recorded (Masemann, 1990b).

An example of the regional schedule for speaking (either consecutively or spread during several sessions) was that for the North American Region: Canada had a total of 5-6 minutes for the government delegation, IDRC (a co-sponsor) had 8-10 minutes, USAID (a co-sponsor) had 8-10 minutes, and the United States official delegation had 8-10 minutes. That left 24 minutes for all North American NGOs or INGOs.

The whole reporting function was to be in the hands of the Drafting Committee. It would be composed of the following members: nine times two (18) from the regions (including the rapporteurs), four core sponsors (*ex officio*), 2-3 co-sponsors, and 3 NGOs. A Chair and Rapporteur General were to be elected from among this group. When the question was asked if any other product would be coming from this Conference, the reply was the Declaration and Framework, the Inter-Agency Secretariat

Report, and a one hour video of the conference. All suggested amendments to the documents were to be submitted to the Drafting Committee by Wednesday noon. Other material gathered during the conference would make its way into the Background Document. It can be seen that the input of NGOs was to be severely limited.

Members of the Steering Group were also asked to help in an informal way by “tapping the sense” of the conference to gather ideas that would help with follow-up, and then feeding the information back. It was clear even at this point that the follow-up strategy after the conference was not yet fully formed.

Later on March 4, the NGOs met as a group. They then learned that there were to be only three NGO spots on the Drafting Committee. The comments made in this meeting were rather more skeptical than in the Steering Group - “It seems that the conference may be somewhat Utopian.” “There is no way that governments and donors agencies had planned to make it real.” “Is there an assumption that consensus will be reached?” “Will minority opinions be reflected?” “Did the persons drawing up the preamble think of prevention, e.g. immunization?” “Will there be a new edition of the Background Document?” It was interesting to note that the only two NGO delegations that were publicly outspoken against their own government's policies were those of Great Britain and the United States. An NGO Jomtien Committee was set up with three NGO delegates from each region. They were to choose the NGO Vice-President of the Bureau of the conference and the NGO members of the Drafting Committee (Masemann, 1990c).

At a later NGO meeting, several major areas of concern were expressed about the Declaration. Firstly, if there was no consensus, Draft C (the January 1990 version) would represent a medium level of consensus. Major issues were identified as: economic relationships among countries, primary education and how to achieve it, the precise formulation of the role of guarantors to protect teachers' rights, and population policies. Other areas in the documents that were identified as needing strengthening were the preservation of traditional education and heritage, education for the disabled, libraries, ecology, gender, refugees, youth, role of NGOs, the local dimension of education, and fertility awareness.

Several NGO representatives made comments concerning the process of the conference: “It is a document of the World Bank.” “There was a pressure to finish the amendments as soon as possible.” “The interpreters from the Plenaries had already left.” “Any issues that were substantive were avoided.” “There were no links between education and debt.” “NGOs need to put pressure on our own governments.” “Many governments and others outside [this room] are happy with the documents as they are...” They discussed whether they should put out a statement of the NGO vision themselves (Masemann, 1990c).

The NGO group then discussed a statement of their proposals for the follow-up to the Jomtien Conference, that would be called *A Statement of Principles of NGO Involvement in WCEFA Follow-up Activities with non-NGO Bodies*. They determined that they should be part of all formal structures for follow-up. There should be explicit policies designed to provide political space for NGOs, and concrete action should be adopted by both governments and agencies. There should be NGO members of such structures in the same proportion as other sectoral representatives. NGOs should choose their own representatives through the most democratic and consultative process possible. They should follow guidelines for the representatives as follows: involvement in and sustained commitment to basic education; ethnic, geographical and sectoral representivity; established UN mechanisms but not limited by any specialized agencies or non-NGO bodies; special preference given to indigenous NGOs balanced gender representation at all levels, especially international; and full delegate status for all NGOs at subsequent major international EFA-related conferences. Many of these aspirations were never realized in reality.

The meeting ended with the comment that, “The document does not represent a limitation on what we will aspire to” (Masemann, 1990d). It was clear by this point that the NGOs had felt that the

procedures of this conference had not allowed their voices to be fully heard. However, their statement expressed their commitment to basic education and their desire to play their part. These discussions laid the foundation for the later establishment of the Global Campaign for Education.

In the closing plenary session, the Declaration and Framework for Action, as approved by the Plenary Commission, was formally adopted by the Conference. The audience had been tutored to sing the *World Education for All* song in English and French, which they did slightly haltingly. Individual countries were to be responsible for follow-up, and UNESCO was voted by a large majority as the lead agency for the international follow-up activities. The major sponsors, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank, all agreed to increase support to basic education within each of their own planning frameworks, structures and resource allocation mechanisms, and to meet at their headquarters and at the field level to coordinate their activities in the educational field. They also indicated their willingness to join in any “Education for All” group that might be convened (UNICEF, 1990b, p.4). In their final speeches, officials were already mentioning future United Nations and other related conferences to be held in 1990 and beyond.

Beyond Jomtien

The Steering Group had a last meeting on March 10, 1990. The main focus was follow-up at the national level of meeting in which sponsors, governments and NGOs would be involved to look at plans of action. The focus was defined as to where to find the best example of learning achievement with subsidiary questions of reaching the marginalized, monitoring the learning achievement issues, education for early childhood, adult literacy, especially for women, all involving data that could be gathered statistically and compared cross-nationally. The means of getting the WCEFA “message” out to a wider audience was discussed, as well as getting the WCEFA Declaration adopted as a recommendation in various future meetings. The national commissions of UNESCO were also seen as a useful vehicle. It was stated that some countries might even adopt the Declaration in future legislation. There was even a suggestion to adopt a “brand name”, and scarves and shopping bags had been given to all delegates with the WCEFA logo on them. It was thought that the Jomtien Conference would have a catalytic effect in regard to establishing learning alliances, setting targets, addressing the issues of debt, and improving education for indigenous peoples. There was a need for the heads of the four leading agencies to appear together, and for the Declaration and Framework to be translated into other languages, spoken about, and publicized with an emphasis on the quality of education.

An interesting point is that there was still an emphasis on identifying “focal points” in various countries rather than formal organizations such as public education systems. This was very much at odds with all the presentations by governments and teachers' organizations about the importance of trained teachers and formal education systems. This approach was summed up as the need to “hit a multitude of targets, not only Ministries of Education”(Masemann, 1990e, p.7). The meeting concluded with various suggestions about creating networks of researchers, trainers and other professionals.

The immediate follow-up to the conference was speedy. The last copy of the *WCEFA Bulletin* was issued in April 1990, as the Inter-Agency Commission was to be disbanded at the end of that month. It gave an optimistic summary of the results of the conference, noting that the participants had verbally affirmed their agreement with the Declaration and the Framework for Action and that UNESCO would provide “appropriate services to support follow-up at the international level” (WCEFA 1990c). By 1991, it had re-appeared in a similar format as the *EFA 2000 Bulletin*, produced by the Secretariat for the follow-up of the WCEFA and published by UNESCO. It contained a wide range of news on follow-up initiatives and a calendar of upcoming EFA-related regional conference. By 1992 it had developed into an eight page quarterly news bulletin in English, French, Spanish and Arabic (and later Chinese) for the Secretariat for the International Consultative Forum on Education for All with photographs and news about follow-up initiatives. In all, 39 issues were published, ending

with the Summer 2000 issue. (Developments after the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000 are beyond the scope of this paper.)

Following the conference, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO issued a report containing a full copy of the Declaration and Framework annotated with revisions dated March 9 1990, a list of all the Canadians attending, the text of all the speeches from representatives from Canada, a list of other documents distributed at the Conference, and a single press release from the Plenary Session III entitled "Redefining Illiteracy: It does not mean Ignorance." (CCUNESCO, 1990b). It contained quotations from both Swedish and Canadian representatives, which questioned the assumptions of the conference concerning the narrow definition of primary education and the meaning of knowledge, especially in relation to language, culture and traditional knowledge. More attention, it was stated, should be paid to the education of girls, and the unique needs of children of displaced families and refugees. It was clear that there was not an international consensus on the documents.

In April 1990, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO held its annual meeting in Ottawa at which half a day was scheduled in the Sub-Commission on Education for the debriefing on Canadian participation at the Jomtien Conference. The main meeting also dealt with International Literacy Year and the UNESCO General Conference. The main speaker was Federico Mayor, the UNESCO Director-General. The program officer for the Canadian Commission was to be the main liaison for follow-up to the Jomtien conference, and also the means for disseminating the documents from the conference to the wider Canadian audience.

Conclusion

The focus of this paper is the discussion of the EFA documents during the one year period when I was present at the EFA Steering Group meetings and the Jomtien conference. The creation of a global consensus was the goal of the consultative process and the conference. The original conference documents were presented as nearly the final version. The short advance planning time for the conference did not allow for any radical reformulation of the underlying assumptions of the strategy for bringing about greater educational progress in providing basic education. Moreover, the scheduling of the regional consultative forums allowed for little editorial input into the documents. While at the Jomtien conference there was a great flurry of daily submission of ideas for the documents' final text, the general framework was not put into question. In addition, several factors such as growing external debt, excessive military spending, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic were not part of the overall picture. It was not until the Dakar conference that these and other contextual realities were taken into account.

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Vandra Lea Masemann is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, and the Comparative, International and Development Education Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. She is an anthropologist of education and former president of the CIESC (Comparative and International Education Society of Canada), CIES (Comparative and International Education Society) and WCCES (World Council of Comparative Education Societies).