Influencing a Global Movement: Notes the founding of the Consejo de Educacion de adultos de America Latina (CEAAL)

In 1972, UNESCO held the 3'rd International Conference on Adult Education in Tokyo, Japan. One of the outcomes of the Tokyo conference was the creation of the International Council for Adult Education. Led by Dr. J. Roby Kidd, a Canadian adult educator with support from Helmuth Dolff of Germany, P.J. Mhaiki of Tanzania and Arthur Stock of England and Wales, the ICAE was born with Dr. Malcolm Adishehiah, former Deputy-Director General of India as as President and Roby Kidd as Secretary-General. The founding national members of the ICAE were drawn largely from Europe and countries of the British Commonwealth, but the vision of the ICAE founding leaders was to always to create a global network of adult educators with voices from every region of the world. The founding of the ICAE was supported by the UNESCO Adult Education Division which at the time of the Tokyo conference was led by Paul Bertelsen, a Danish adult educator with links to Europe, the United Kingdom, Ghana and Tanzania. The national country paper for the conference was written by P. J. Mhaiki of Tanzania and Budd Hall who at the time was working for the Institute of Adult Education in Tanzania.

Budd left Tanzania in 1975 to spend some time at the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Sussex. While there he met and became friends with Francisco Vio Grossi, a Chilean sociologist who had escaped from the stadium where the Dictator Pinochet had imprisoned opposition politicians at the time of the 1973 Coup de Etat. 'Pancho' had been in exile in Argentina and later obtained a Ford Foundation grant to move to England to do his PhD. Budd and Franciso found that they shared a common vision of the world, a vision that placed the knowledge of campesina/os and ordinary working people at the centre of social change. When Budd moved to Toronto, Canada to begin working with Roby Kidd to build the ICAE, he began working on the creation of an International Participatory Research Network. Vio Grossi by this time had finished his PhD and had got a job in Venezuela at the Simon Rodriguez University. Budd asked Franciso to take up the challenge of building a Latin American regional participatory research network. Pancho knew the work of Freire, had done participatory research during his political work with the Allende government of Chile and had a vision and an energy for networking which was to prove very effective in the coming years.

Meanwhile at the ICAE Secretariat, Roby had invited his long-time friend, Knute Buttedahl of British Colombia, Canada to serve as his deputy. Knute however had been studying for his PhD at Florida State University where he met the Chilean adult educator, Paz Goycoolea. Paz was excited about the creation of the ICAE and suggested that she and her new husband Knute spend a year building linkages in Latin America to fill in the global map of the ICAE. They both moved to Toronto where the ICAE headquarters was located, but obtained some funding and left for a year of networking in Latin America.

In 1978 Roby announced that he was stepping down from the Secretary-General position with the ICAE and recruitment began for his replacement. Paz Buttedahl showed an interest as did Chris Duke, of Australia. Vio Grossi encouraged Budd to apply saying that the work that they had done building the International Participatory Research Network had potential to mobilize

others who shared a vision of the role of knowledge creation and popular education building democracy. In 1979 Budd Hall was chosen by the ICAE Executive Committee to succeed Roby Kidd as Secretary-General. Paz and Knute Buttedahl remained responsible for the Latin American programme, but moved to British Colombia to work from there. Budd began to explore ways to support the creation of a formal legal structure for Latin American popular and adult educators. He worked closely with Vio Grossi in gathering ideas from many parts of the continent about what and how a Latin American structure could be created. At the 1979 Executive Committee meeting of the ICAE which took place in Helsinki, Finland, Paz Buttedahl has come to the meeting with a colleague from Uruguay who was working in adult education with the Organization of American States. Vio Grossi came to the same meeting in Helsinki with a Senior colleague from Simon Bolivar University. The idea was that Malcolm Adishehiah, the ICAE President and Roby Kidd, the ICAE Secretary-General would discuss the creation of a Latin American regional organization with this group. Informal discussions were held with both Paz Buttedahl and her colleague and with Francisco Vio Grossi and his colleague. The decision was to give Vio Grossi a chance to see if he could mobilize support to create CEAAL. The choice was very important politically. Paz and her network represented a more institutional and governmentally oriented formal adult education network. Franciso, with his experience in the Allende government, with the Latin American left and with the emerging popular education movements in Latin America represented the social movement organizations using education to reclaim democracy in a transparently political approach. The ICAE made two decisions in Helsinki that were to shape the next years. They chose Budd Hall with his background in the global participatory research movement and organizer of the 1976 Dar es Salaam World Assembly as the Secretary-General and supported Francisco Vio Grossi to lead the Latin American organizing efforts.

Following the 1979 Executive Committee meeting of the ICAE, Paz and her husband moved to Vancouver, British Colombia. They proposed to continue leading the ICAE programme from Vancouver, but with Vio Grossi now engaged in mobilising the popular adult education movement from his base in Venezuela, the decision was made to close the ICAE's Latin American office in Vancouver and concentrate on supporting the work being done from Caracas. Meanwhile Vio Grossi continued his work consulting with the popular education movements in various parts of Latin America. The Brazilian, Central American and Mexican movements were particularly vigorous during these years, but there were activist educators, participatory researchers and land-based social movement activists in all parts of Latin America. The Latin American popular education movement with its emphasis on building from the daily lives of excluded and marginalised people had become the dominant democratic movement of the region. Earlier Marxist organisations with their focus on elite sophisticated analysis and the creation of a vanguard movement either were transformed by popular education and participatory action research paradigms such as the Science of the Common People of Orlando Fals Borda or the dialogic practices of Freire's conscientization.

Once the proposal for creating CEAAL had gathered support, a critical meeting was held in Caracas Venezuela with the Latin American Vice-President of ICAE (who was that?) and other key individuals. Paulo Freire had been involved in this discussion and had been present in

several of the consultations. CEAAL was born in 1982 following the meeting in Caracas, Venezuela. It was not long after that Vio Grossi was able to return to Chile where he and others established the Centro El Canelo de Nos and worked to solidify the organizational structure of CEAAL. In 1984, a decision was made to organize the 1985 ICAE World Assembly of Adult Education in Buenos Aires. Argentina had with the election of President Alfonsin at last made the transition back to democracy. The dictatorship of the Generals was over and Latin America and the world wanted to be in Argentina to celebrate the defeat of the tragic era of death that had gone on so long. Vio Grossi played the leading role in organizing the 1985 ICAE World Assembly working with the Argentine activist adult educator Isabel Hernandez. He convened the first General Assembly of CEAAL in Buenos Aires at the same time. It was at this event, that in my memory, CEAAL consolidated its power to convene. At the Buenos Aires ICAE and CEAAL Assemblies, CEAAL was able to showcase the full range of theoretical, practical, poetic and emotional approaches that characterized the Latin American popular education movement of the time. CEAAL was responsible then and continues to this day to be the space that both deepens the Latin American movement and allows for influence and sharing of the movement with others throughout the world.

CEAAL eventually moved from a Secretariat in Chile to one in Mexico and in the last many year to Central America, where it remains an exciting and powerful regional movement for change. Others will have better knowledge of the achievements of CEAAL after 1990 than I, but I hope that these few reflections will help to fill in the early period which led to the creation of this most remarkable Latin American organization. CEAAL and the Latin American movement has played a permanent role in my own intellectual and political development. I feel very fortunate to have been able to support that generation of adult and popular educators as they found a powerful continental voice.