

The Mail and Guardian, 5-11 February 2010 report “*NGO uses donor funds to fight legal battles*” went some way towards exposing bad governance by the majority of the Adult Learning Network (ALN) board members that currently plagues the organisation. The undersigned, all long standing activists and/or supporters of the field of adult education, are appalled at the threat of collapse facing the ALN.

It is our understanding that it is the ALN Board’s mandate to work towards achieving the organisation’s objective of advancing the cause of adult education for social change and ensuring that the resources of the organisation, i.e., public money destined for the poor, is appropriately utilized. However, it appears that the “errant” board members continue to use expensive legal means to delay bringing the matters with which they are charged, to finality.

It is the task of civil society and indeed all of us in the country to work unselfishly for social justice in our quest to realise a fully transformed and democratic society. The majority of the ALN board members have lost focus of the role that adult education needs to play in realizing this vision.

The ALN’s former finance officer and national manager both have cases pending at the CCMA, and should these go in favour of the staff members, the organisation’s limited resources will be further compromised.

It is unacceptable that people who occupy positions of trust in NGOs misuse funds and foster a culture of bad governance. Quick and easy solutions are provided for in the organisation’s Trust Deed Document for board members to address their disputes. If, as the M&G reported, the ALN board spent more than R1-million on legal fees, it suggests a serious lack of leadership.

In the adult education sector we’ve witnessed the collapse of two national organisations and shudder at the thought of a third about to experience a similar fate. Since it appears that the rift among board members runs too deep to expect any resolution, the Master of the High Court (as regulator of Trust organisations) must act decisively and in the public interest to ensure that the ALN is saved from board members who are clearly incapable of “managing the affairs of others” as prescribed in terms of the Trust Property Control Act.

Signed:

Adult Learning Forum (W. Cape); Initiative for Participatory Development (E. Cape); Tembaletu Trust; KZN; Provincial Coordinators of the ALN Educators Desk – (W. Cape, E. Cape and N. Cape); Centre for Education Rights and Transformation – Univ. of Jhb; Centre for Adult and Continuing Education – UWC; S.A. NGO Coalition (Western Cape); Trust for Community Outreach In Education (TCOE); ALN Board Members (W. Cape & E. Cape); Popular Education Network (PEN); Public Participation in Education Network (PPEN); Paulo Freire Institute – SA; Centre for Adult Education (UKZN); Sonya Keyser New Readers Publishers, Sandra Land, Centre for Adult Education, (UKZN), Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC)