

FOLKBILDNING I NORDEN

Nordic-Baltic Meeting 30.5.2016, Helsinki

FINNISH COUNTRY REPORT

Finnish liberal education system and organizations

There is a total of 313 Finnish liberal adult education institutions: 187 are adult education centres, 80 folk high schools, 12 study centres, 20 summer universities and 14 physical education centres.

There is a structural development going on in the field of liberal adult education institutions. Many institutions have already merged, above all among liberal adult education centres. The discussion on the need and possibilities of merging is continuing. Some liberal adult education institutions have merged with vocational institutions.

The Finnish Adult Education Association (FAEA) is an umbrella organization for eight member organizations which are Bildningsalliansen r.f., Finnish Association of Adult Education Centres KOL, Finnish Folk High School Association, Association of Study Centres (Opintokeskukset), KVS Foundation, Svenska Folkskolans vänner SFV, Summer Universities in Finland and the Association of Physical Education Centres.

Chair Aaro Harju is working part-time in the FAEA office. Planning officer Leena Saloheimo works full time. The office is located in Helsinki at Annankatu, where the national organizations for adult education centres, folk high schools and SFV have their offices. The number of the personnel of the organizations of the field is diminishing - some 20 persons work for FAEA's member associations all together.

Presently the board of FAEA is discussing the different options of organizing the work of FAEA: what are its goals, what kind of personnel is needed, and what is its relationship with the member organizations. The planning officer retires during the summer, and Aaro Harju's chairmanship ends by the end of the year.

Bildningsalliansen acts as an interest organization for non-formal adult education in the Swedish speaking parts of Finland. Its affiliates are all adult education centres with Swedish as their working language, most Swedish language folk high schools, the SFV Bildning (study centre), the Vasa and Hangö summer universities and institutes for physical education. Henrika Nordin is the director after Ulrica Taylor, who has moved to work elsewhere. Johanni Larjanko works as coordinator in Bildningsalliansen. The office has moved from Vasa to Helsinki, and the address is Bildningsalliansen, Georgsgatan 18, 00120 Helsingfors.

Political situation

The Finnish government has decided to make significant cuts in funding in all sectors excluding the defence. Along with cuts and savings the government strives to enhance particular target areas to which it directs funding.

Savings in the educational field have upset people in Finland as they have been used to placing confidence in the power of education, and to having sufficient resources allocated for this. By now nothing is "sacred". The whole educational field is the target of structural and functional change as well as an object for saving. The coming years will show how the changes will succeed and what gains or damages will follow from the government's measures.

The Finnish National Board of Education will be going through changes, too, when it along with the Centre for International Mobility CIMO, and the Finnish Matriculation Examination Board are going to be merged into one government office in 2017. At this stage it is still uncertain whether there will be one officer solely assigned for adult education. If not, this would be a further weakening of the conditions for liberal adult education.

More structural changes concerning the liberal adult education are expected, when the reform of vocational education (upper secondary education) develops. The very first guidelines have been given by Ministry of Education and Culture. What the reform is going to be like is still unknown. It is going to touch severely upon the folk high schools, and also the physical education institutions, which offer vocational education, too.

New knowledge in the field of Folkbiling

Some new studies on liberal adult education have become available during the first months of the year.

Emilia Valkonen defended her doctoral dissertation on **the features of market orientation in adult education centres** in January at the University of Eastern Finland. She argued that the centres were guided towards market-oriented organisational culture which could be seen as an entrepreneurial culture that emphasized quantitative measures of success, results and economic language and values. In addition to this performativity-based organisational culture, there seemed to exist traces of the traditional organisational culture that is based on the idea of students' comprehensive personal growth. This traditional culture seemed contradictory in terms of the reactive market orientation and performativity-based organisational culture. Due to the market-based adult education policy, the activities of adult education centres had shifted from tradition to result orientation and performativity. This could be seen in the work of the personnel as an increased pressure for results. Additionally, this change was evident in a shift from student orientation to customer orientation.

Jyri Manninen (University of Eastern Finland) has made a feasibility study on calculating **the financial benefits of studying at liberal adult education centres**. He describes and assesses different methods of valuing financially non-fiscal benefits. He also applies the Social Return of Investment (SROI) method in estimating the financial benefits of adult education centre studies, and thus shows that the social productivity of adult education centres is estimated to be 348 %. His conclusion is though that calculating the financial value of liberal adult education is very problematic, and is based on estimates as its best. The study was commissioned by the Finnish Association of Adult Education Centres.

The publication of the 6th Nordic Conference for Adult Education and Learning held in Tampere in 2015 will be published this year.

The Finnish Adult Education Association (Vapaa Sivistystyo ry), promotes and coordinates cooperation among agents involved in liberal adult education research in Finland. An agreement has been made among three universities (Itä-Suomen yliopisto / University of Eastern Finland, Tampereen yliopisto / University of Tampere and Åbo Akademi / Åbo Akademi University). The practical research work is done in the universities. The researchers are students preparing a PhD in liberal adult education, involving university students as well as teachers and rectors of liberal adult education institutions.

Common themes: education of Immigrants and asylum seekers

The amount of immigrants arriving in Finland has been 30 000 yearly during the last years. Most of immigrants have come from European countries, especially from Estonia and Russia, but also from Sweden, and from China, Somalia, Thailand, and Iraq.

Some 32 000 asylum seekers arrived in Finland in 2015. The number is significant as there were only some 3 500 persons seeking asylum in 2014. The biggest groups are from Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia (2 000–20 000 refugees), and from Syria, Albania and Iran (600–900 refugees). It has been estimated that approximately 35 % of all asylum-seekers, and up to 90 % of children arriving in the country alone, are granted resident permits.

Associations and many liberal adult education institutions have reacted swiftly to the new situation. They have assisted authorities in receiving asylum seekers, as well as launched education for them.

Integration education of immigrants is being reformed

Immigrant's route to the labor market is considered to be far too long as it is now. The increasing number of immigrants challenges the customary methods of integrating immigrants into the Finnish society. The Ministry of Employment and the Economy is responsible for the integration procedures, and it also finances the labor policy integration education and training (15 000 participants in 2014). The Ministry of Education and Culture is liable for the voluntary integration education (6 000 participants in 2014) and other kind of education and training organized for immigrants.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has formed a steering group of different stakeholders tasked with preparing and fitting together short and long-term procedures resulting from the situation concerning the asylum-seekers and growing immigration. In its first report ([The educational tracks and integration of immigrants – problematic areas and proposals for actions](#)). Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland 2016:1) the steering group listed 56 procedures, where a special action should take place. These include renewal of the basic education for adults, lowering the threshold for integration training and the training following it, better possibilities for improving the language skills in Finnish and in Swedish, support for the participation of immigrants in arts, cultural, and sports activities, and recruitment of more teachers with immigrant backgrounds.

A report on education and training for immigrants organized by liberal adult education institutions

The Finnish Board of Education commissioned [a report on education and training provided for immigrants by liberal adult education institutions](#). The survey was executed by Leena Saloheimo of the Finnish Adult Education Association, and the report was published in April, 2016.

According to the survey results, immigrants participate in education and training in 83 % of the liberal adult education institutions all over the country in 2014. The numbers of immigrant students vary considerably regionally, and 50 percent of them studied in the Helsinki Capital Area.

The total number of immigrant students attending education organized by liberal adult education institutions was more than 50 000. Among them 30 000 participated in liberal adult education organized especially for immigrants, and of those more than 3 000 applied their studies as voluntary integration studies. Another 3 000 participated in labor policy integration studies, and some 5 000 students participated in general and vocational education and training organized by liberal adult education institutions. On top of that, at least

17 000 immigrants participated in general liberal adult education, and studied in same groups with the Finnish peers.

The language and culture education of adult immigrants has been established as the task of the liberal adult education field. According to the survey, most of the lessons or 74 % comprised language instruction. The second most common type with 15 % of the lessons was education that develops general knowledge and ability, learning capabilities and motivation. The shares of other fields of education were no more than 1–3 %.

There is a separate abstract available on the main results of the survey.

The Swedish-speaking actors within liberal adult education consider that integration and inclusion in Swedish is important in bilingual regions and in areas with a significant Swedish speaking population. It is vital for somebody who has recently arrived in a bilingual region to know both national languages, as this will enhance their possibilities for employment.

Education of asylum seekers

The number of minor asylum seekers travelling alone was 2 800 in 2015. Twenty one folk high schools have made an agreement with the Ministry of Interior about **a scheme to support minor asylum seekers (aged 16–17) who have arrived on their own**. A program called “NUTUKKA” has been developed in cooperation between the Ministry of Interior, the Finnish Folk High School Association, and several folk high schools. It comprises supported housing and education. 550 asylum seekers are now enrolled in this education. Three folk high schools keep up a reception centre and/or group housing for an average of 400 asylum seekers.