

Chapter 6

Adult Education as a Means to Social Inclusion in Nordic Welfare States: Denmark, Finland and Sweden



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Introduction

Denmark, Sweden and Finland represent the Nordic welfare state model that in a historical perspective has put a heavy emphasis on the role of education in enhancing active societal participation of its citizens. In particular, the folk high schools have marked a particular “Nordic” phenomenon and aspiration to bring all citizens within the range of post-compulsory education. What later became known as a universal right to life-long learning can be traced back to the initiatives of folk edification as early as the nineteenth century’s national movements in predominantly agrarian societies.

In the Nordic countries, the role of adult education in building the modern state welfare systems refers above all to developments of 1950s and 1960s after the Second World War (WWII), the decades of rapid industrialisation and the enactment of comprehensive legislation to secure the citizens’ well-being and social security. Even today, adult education is considered as an essential means to enhance social inclusion (EC 2018; OECD 2019; de Greef et al. 2015). Simultaneously the social outcomes of the liberal market economy during the past few decades have put the continuity of this model in question. Globalisation and ubiquitous digital technology, humanitarian migration (Mouritsen et al. 2019) and immediateness of ecological threats (Shapiro Ledley et al. 2017) have introduced remarkably new kinds of challenges for education. The complex challenges of preventing social exclusion and identifying diverse vulnerabilities should be addressed and attended by various society actors and means, including adult education.

This chapter scrutinizes the role of adult education in the Nordic countries as the means of social inclusion of young adults living in vulnerable situations and at risk of marginalization. Social inclusion is fundamentally linked to participation in

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societal activities on local and global levels. We define social inclusion here as active participatory citizenship (APC) encompassing its social, political and economic dimensions (Pitkänen 2017; see Chap. 1 in this volume). This definition was used in the following analysis of three adult education cases in Denmark, Sweden and Finland during 2016–2019. Two of the selected cases dealt with education of newcomer young adults and one with national basic education offered online for students with special needs. We collected the data during 2017 by interviewing policy makers, practitioners and students. Most interviews were conducted face-to-face individually some via skype or by email. In Denmark, some students participated in a focus-group interview. In total we interviewed fifteen policymakers and fifteen practitioners that had participated in design or provision of the programmes, and twenty-eight students that had participated these studies in Denmark, Sweden and Finland. The findings pertain to *the possibilities, challenges and contradictions of adult education in enhancing the social inclusion and active societal participation of young adults who are recognised as living in vulnerable life situations in contemporary Nordic societies*.

History of Social Inclusion Through Adult Education

Although adult education has evolved in the societal and national contexts of each country, there are historical features that underpin the “Nordic” model associated to the democratization of societies and to social inclusion requested in different times. The following historical reviews of adult education in Denmark (Olesen 2014), Sweden (Fejes et al. 2016; see also Laginder et al. 2013) and Finland (Pantzar 2007; Koski and Filander 2013) illuminate the country-specific phases during the past approximately two centuries.

In Denmark, three main types of adult education have developed as educational traditions in their own right as Olesen (2014) points out. The first type includes basic literacy education, such as reading, writing and numeracy. An agricultural reform in the second half of the eighteenth century and a general school legislation in 1814 were landmarks of this period although, in practice, basic schooling remained very limited in the rural areas. The second type of adult education was represented by community and popular education, learning within, from and for a community or a social movement. The first folk high school established in 1844, was based on the education concept developed by the Danish philosopher and pastor Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783–1872). Grundtvig identified a growing democratic need in society – a need of enlightening the often uneducated and poor peasantry. The aim of the folk high school was to help people to become qualified as active and engaged members of society, to give them means to change the political situation from below and unify across social borders. The movement based on popular culture became one of the leading forces in the Danish democracy. The third type was education and training for work, such as continuing education, retraining and upskilling. In the beginning of the twentieth century, class

movements secured the implementation of the constitution. A committee that drafted a new framework of adult education synthesized the education traditions of folk high schools and the working class evening schools in a national ideology of “popular education”.

After the WWII training of workers developed as an essential part of welfare state policies in Nordic countries. In order to facilitate the transition from agriculture to urban employments, a completely new adult education and training system was initiated with a tri-partite governance, and was mainly funded by the state. In the period of crisis and stagflation in the 1970s, continuing education was redirected towards a more long-term competence development for the more vulnerable segments of the labour force, e.g., women and young people without vocational qualification. (Olesen 2014). Presently, researchers have directed attention to the changing status of adult education. Adult education has a long history as part of state policy for enhancing public enlightenment and leisure, continuing study and vocational and professional competence development, whereas the focus today is increasingly on vocational education and, as the researchers discuss, the state-driven policy has been replaced and relocated by networks linking the state and the social partners (Rasmussen et al. 2019).

Sweden’s history of adult education was summarized by Fejes et al. (2016) when they analysed the marketization development. In Sweden, the institutionalised adult education dates back to the foundation of the first folk high school in 1868. The main forms of the popular adult education stem from this period covering public lectures, study associations, study circles, correspondence courses, and libraries. After the WWII there was a remarkable need to supply industry with competent workers. As a consequence, in 1953, the government created possibilities for adults to participate in evening courses, and then take exams for a school qualification (on compulsory and/or upper secondary level). In 1968 formal adult education became institutionalised in Sweden, as municipal adult education (MAE, *Komvux*) was established to study for acquiring a qualification at compulsory and upper secondary school level. The basis was on individual motivation but due to political pressure from the Swedish trade union confederation, MAE emphasis was directed towards those who were furthest away from the labour market, as well as towards those with the lowest level of education. A statutory right to have a study leave from work and study loans allowed the workers real opportunities for daytime studies; MAE took a form very similar to upper secondary school.

Later, the 1990s reforms were labelled by the trends of new public management and marketization. On the initiative of the social democratic government in 1991, there was a shift from the state to the municipalities as the funder of education. A procurement system was introduced in MAE in the mid-1990s, further supported through the Adult Education Initiative (AEI) between the years 1997–2002 targeting those who had the lowest level of education. The initiative brought 15% of the labour force into adult education and new providers were encouraged to offer adult education. Fejes et al. (2016) consider these market-like solutions as a means to create tighter couplings between policy, management and teaching practices. In many Swedish municipalities MAE is currently organized as franchises for the

public sector. The transactions are regulated by the Purchase Act, which is used to establish procurement processes. In adult education, marketization means municipalities purchasing education from either public (municipal) or private providers through a procurement system, on short-term contracts. The number of students enrolled with non-public providers had increased, from 14.7% in 1997 to 45.7% in 2014 (SNAE statistics 2015 according to Fejes et al. 2016).

Following a similar pattern Finland's history of institutional adult education started from the development of popular adult education in the second half of the nineteenth century. The milestones and promoters of liberal adult education of this period were the Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation (Kansanvalistusseura, founded in 1874), folk high schools (1889) and adult education centres (työväenopisto, kansalaisopisto, arbetarinstitut, 1899), and the associations of popular education. Characterized by modernization, national romanticism and national awakening, the general intentions were the improvement of the educational level of population coupled with the enhancement of the ideological-political interests under the rule of Russian Empire, and the awakening of national (Finnish) culture. When Finland declared independence in 1917, national ideology was in many ways the leading force until the 1920s (Pantzar 2007; Koski and Filander 2013.) On institutional level the period from independence to WWII marked the expansion of adult education. The target group extended from those deprived of education to the whole population; emphasis was on general and civil subjects. (Pantzar 2007; Koski and Filander 2013.)

The basic structures and forms of the present adult education in Finland were created during the 1960s and 1970s social and education policy reforms. The development of the welfare state in the 1960s is according to Koski and Filander (2013) the second turning point in the relations between adult education, individuals and society. The term 'adult education' was stabilised as the main subject area where the former liberal civic education was one sub-category among others. The Parliamentary Committee of Adult Education established in 1971 defined adults as persons who 'usually act or have acted in the working life' (Koski and Filander 2013: 591), which, besides representing a notably narrow concept of adults, reflected the tendency to match adult education with the needs of labour market and material production in contrast to the former national-spirited ideals of personal growth. Resulting not only from the vocational emphasis but also from the rise of neo-liberal politics the status of liberal adult education remained relatively weak compared to vocational adult education in the turn of millennium (Koski and Filander 2013).

Recent increase in immigration and a growing number of asylum seekers has assigned novel tasks to adult education providers. Concluding from the historical analysis, Finland's adult education has always targeted sub-populations that in a given time have been considered to be in need of academic improvement. Inclusion of minorities and groups under the risk of marginalization, for instance the national minorities, Samí and the Roma, have been addressed through education (e.g. Tarkiainen 2016). Currently the increasing transnational migration and globalisation have challenged the idea of a uniform population, thus transforming these ideals towards diversity. As a consequence, expectation to adult education has become

to target most variable groups and subcultures. In fact, the concept of active citizenship in a wider sense may capture this challenge better than the traditional terms ‘popular education’ or ‘folk edification’ (Heikkinen et al. 2019), even though critical voices deem active citizenship under the more narrow conditions of politico-economic liberalism to represent a new mode of hegemony (Brunila et al. 2018; on citizenship, see Helve 2015).

In all Nordic countries under investigation, adult education traditions have significantly contributed to the building of the countries’ welfare systems. In all cases, the transition from traditional agricultural monarchy to modern industrialized democracy was enhanced and inspired by awakening of humanistic thoughts and idea of the *folkbildning* influenced by enlightenment and connected to nation building (Andersen and Björkman 2017, 179; Salo 2007). The historical reviews above show that although the practices of liberal adult education movements have varied according to the socio-political demands of each society, some strands can be traced back to the Grundtvigian humanistic ideas of personal development of educationally deprived population and the democratisation of society. This adult education tradition was born in the second half of the nineteenth century and still prevails having presumed new educational tasks and roles, as will be discussed later in this chapter. In this discussion adult education is contextualised in other societal conditions of the Nordic countries. Olesen (2014) emphasises “the combination of a long lasting and comprehensive influence of the free adult education – based in popular education and liberal school pedagogy – and the welfare security systems which are necessary to support a ‘quality social demand’ in a capitalist labour market” – based on a broad view on employees’ needs in various life spheres.

The post-WWII adult education development in the Nordic countries has leaned towards state-regulated and publicly funded policies with the focus on the vocational and work-related training and employment of various population groups. In addition, the current trend referred to as neo-liberal, or market-driven policy is manifested in the policy documents of the European Union and OECD. These international actors affect the predominantly national education systems of the member states, Denmark, Sweden and Finland, among others.

New Needs for Adult Education

Both Denmark, Sweden and Finland have high scores in adult participation in learning compared to many other countries. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES), over 50% of respondents in these countries reported participation in adult education during the past 12 months, hence demonstrating that the adult education programmes have been successful in engaging adult learners (Eurostat 2016b). Thus, it seems that the Nordic adult education and training system is relatively well prepared to meet various educational needs (Hovdhaugen and Opheim 2018). However, closer exploration reveals that the learners regarded as “vulnerable”, with low motivation, lacking opportunity or resources, are not among those, who are

likely to participate in adult education nor to respond to surveys concerning participation.

In the current global migration (Eurostat 2019) young people form a high number of those who are forced to leave their homes and seek decent living in another country. Young adults with refugee background have often suffered from war and ignorance and may have fled persecution and terror. These newcomers and their needs challenge the reception policies and the acquisition of active citizenship in the democratic destination countries. This was especially visible in the case studies we conducted in Denmark and Sweden. These countries are well-known of their principles of equality, but nevertheless many newcomers are faced with barriers to active societal participation. The discrepancy exists between the expectations towards the skills level of foreign arrivals and opportunities to skill development provided within the national education systems. When entering a new country the newcomers are often faced with demands of upgrading their achieved or interrupted education. Our findings suggest that the competences that had sufficed in the country of origin seem to remain widely unrecognised in the destination countries (on Recognition of Prior Learning, RPL, see ILO 2017). In addition, as the population education level has risen in the Nordic countries (and in Europe in general), the general policy interest has moved to higher education levels. This is reflected in EU strategy, that has currently set the minimum education level for entering labour market to upper secondary level (ISCED 3). However, due to increasing immigration from countries with lower education level and the various educational backgrounds of refugees, the need for provision of basic level education, including literacy studies has simultaneously increased (e.g., Støren and Børing 2018).

In addition, there is a need to pay attention to the specific needs of those young adults who have not succeeded in their initial education but have interrupted education due to multiple reasons. Even if these young people may become defined in statistics as “early school leavers” or “school-drop-outs” by the indicators that are used in policy-making, the system does not identify or specify their often manifold life-situations that have caused interrupting education (Kuusipalo and Alastalo 2019). As a complex phenomenon, early school leaving is not well enough understood; and thus despite multiple policies and programmes tackling the problem it is not easily solved (Smyth and Hattam 2004). Particularly in Finland, the lack of basic and secondary education has been identified as one of the major risk factors of marginalization of youth (Toiviainen et al. 2020).

Upgrading and recognising education attained in another country and remedying early school leaving are cases that represent challenging situations for those who seek social inclusion through education – particularly so in the countries of overall high level and quality of education. Somewhat paradoxically education paves the way to participation in society, but even accessing the education system requires mastery of defined norms and regulation, which entails learning of certain civic skills. Uncertainty of the future employment is diminishing motivation to participate in lengthy education programmes, however necessary they seem for admission to working life, since education alone is not a guarantee to getting job.

In assessing the possibilities, challenges and contradictions of social inclusion we used three dimensions of active participatory citizenship (APC) in the studies conducted. We explored to what extent and how these dimensions became materialised in the adult education programmes under analysis. At best, we wanted to discover novel practices that enrich the adult educational legacy appearing along (1) the social dimension referring to the development of communication and social competences (2) the political dimension encouraging civic and political participation and neighbourhood activities, and (3) the economic dimension relating to employment, employability skills and access to social benefits.

Emerging Practices

The following section presents the three case studies under investigation in this chapter. They were among the 40 “good practices” identified in EU (20 countries were investigated in this part of the EduMAP research 2016–2019) and Turkey. The findings reflect the challenges of adult education in the face of the emerging educational needs of young adults discussed above. The presentation of concrete cases of newcomers (Denmark, Sweden) and low-educated (below ISCED3) young adults (Finland) provides a lens to the conditions of social inclusion in Nordic welfare states and the potentially meaningful common history and tradition of “folkbildning” in these countries in face of present challenges. The findings imply that regarding the refugee integration programmes, the societal needs as well as national politics are in flux. The programmes analysed reflect the exceptional situation in the aftermath of 2015 reception of high number of asylum seekers in Europe. We recognized these cases as good practices that still exist in a modified form and scrutinized them in broader socio-historical contexts of adult education. The case descriptions are based on the EduMAP reports on Denmark (Kuusipalo et al. 2018a), Sweden (Kuusipalo et al. 2018b), and Finland (Niiranen and Hyttiä 2018).

Refugee Integration in Denmark

In Denmark we examined a refugee integration programme for young adults. The organiser, a municipal language centre, negotiated with local authorities and tailored the programme to meet the diverse learning needs of young refugees. The organiser also cooperated with a local activist network that strived to connect them with the local community.

The programme was tailored for young refugees (18–25) or family members to support them to get necessary skills for entering Danish labour market and further studies. An application of a national integration programme combines work and language training; the weekly programme consists of three days of studies at the language centre and of two days at a workplace (internship). The programme includes mathematics, IT, English and

job/education directed activities alongside Danish language. The language centre has focused on encouraging students' authentic language use by inviting the volunteers (Venligboerne) in the activities and allowing them to organise a language café at the school premises.

Students are allotted to the integration programme as soon as they register at the municipality. The municipality caseworker receives information from the national immigration service about the persons that will be placed in the municipality. An individual integration plan ("contract") is made with each person. The refugees' placements in courses and the design of the integration contract are administered and monitored by the municipality office. Internships and placements in the language centre are negotiated by a municipality worker ("mentor") that works with the employers, the language centre and the students. The language centre accepts new students non-stop.

APC-related goals: Gaining basic Danish skills and knowledge about the society is necessary for the citizenship exam required to get a permanent residence status in Denmark. Learning about Danish citizenship is included in the curriculum, covering many aspects of citizenship from practical living matters, healthcare and education to duties and rights. Gender equality protected by legislation is emphasised.

Teachers explained the society's systems and its basis on participation, taking responsibility and being active, and encouraged students in pursuing their own goals and becoming self-supportive. Supportive counselling and mentoring services are provided as well as municipality allowance to cover the living costs during training and internship.

A learner from the programme (translator explains):

...his focus is on the Danish, but all is connected. When he's studying Danish, he's also studying [Danish] in math and in computer science, and all that. Danish is beneficial to those other subjects. And that he sees as a good thing. [And he sees] that the school gives you the foundation for the rest of your life in Denmark, [like for] social interactions. And all the places where language is used, that school is the foundation for that. (Kuusipalo et al. 2018a)

The programme emphasised the importance of learning Danish language and culture and enhancing employment. The structure of the programme was based on language skills testing and guidance to language learning modules at different skills levels. Economic support from public resources was provided both for education organisers (funding for activities) and participants (free education and financial support to cover living expenses). The analyses revealed that the public spending is closely monitored based on contracts, constant assessment of the activities, and daily follow-up reports of students' attendance in the programme. Moreover, the students are obliged to seek work and accept work offers as part of the "activity policy" that concerns all registered unemployed in Denmark.

The perspectives of the leadership and the teachers further opened up the intentions and outcomes of the programme. It became evident that the aim of young refugees' integration programme was to implement the integration objectives established by the state authorities, and to provide a curriculum that would enable the students to improve their academic skills for entering the Danish education system. The overarching vision that guided the school instruction was to work holistically with the young refugees by discussing their individual goals and engaging them with

local actors. The school leadership encouraged the teachers to take a stand in empowering the students and supporting them in pursuing their individual goals. The educators' job was considered to "*prepare them to become able to manage by themselves in different arenas and have responsibility and to know what to do*". The educators described their way of thinking of education with the Danish concept "*dannelse*", referring to a holistic view of education as a way to develop as a human being, to become a person and a member of the society. They claimed that this philosophy, originating from N.F.S. Grundtvig's thinking and ideals of folk high school movement still affects the whole Danish education system.

The underlying principle for educational activities, that of promoting equal opportunities, unfolded similarly in the educators' and policy makers' accounts of their policy and actions. For instance, the educators and policy makers declared no gender differences in the way they treated students. The local activists, on the other hand, pointed out that gender issues were dealt with regularly. Thus, the education organiser following the official state policy and the activists who had personal contacts with the refugees expressed different views. The conceptual difference was evident in the contradicting interpretation of equality as sameness vs. equality as sensitivity to difference, and as gender neutral vs. gender specific approach. These observations echo the critical studies pointing out that by highlighting "sameness" and equal opportunities, the multicultural positions are excluded from the public educational policies. The dominant culture perspective was taken for granted as the basis of knowledge and socialization and the dominant language as the preferable medium for learning and communication (Horst and Gitz-Johansen 2010).

The educators expressed their concern of the strong emphasis of employment as the prior aim of integration. They tended to think that high quality education in youth, as such, is the key to self-realisation and membership in the society and referred again to the Grundtvigian ideal of "*dannelse*". In practice, the municipality and government involvement were strong in the programme implementation stretching as far as to the choosing the work placements for refugees. For students this caused confusion and even frustration; the students were instructed to take responsibility for their learning process, but simultaneously lacked autonomy to choose internship. This kind of dilemmas are often discussed related to the welfare system: how to balance providing support and protection without removing agency and autonomy from the individuals.

Integration Education, SFI in Sweden

Sweden has a long history of active and welcoming migration policy. During 2015 the EU Member States received a record number of over 1.2 million first time asylum seekers (Eurostat 2016a). Related to the size of population, Sweden was among the countries that received the highest number of asylum seekers. Those arrivals who were granted residence, participated in integration education programmes.

The work-oriented integration training is intended for persons who wish to learn Swedish and work simultaneously. It is organised under the umbrella and coordination of the regional administration in cooperation with the job centre and the regional branch of the National Board of Forestry. The education is provided by a folk high school (FHS). The full-time course combines (1) practical work in nature reserves, supervised by a forestry professional, (2) vocation-oriented language learning, (3) developing of facilities for applying and keeping a job, and (4) Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) at individual level and track. The FHS has a steering document for equality principles that is regularly updated by staff and practiced in daily work.

The programme is targeted at newcomers with refugee backgrounds who are entitled to participate in the integration programme. Recruiting criteria are not only academic but also linked to the student's former work experience and interest to work within the park and forestry field. The National Board of Forestry cooperates with the job centre nationwide to also engage other groups than newcomers with refugee backgrounds in internship training organised in cooperation with local education providers. The students are recruited or guided to integration courses by caseworkers at the job centre. The students meet a counseling teacher to make an individual study plan.

APC-related goals: Linking practical work to classroom studies, developing Swedish language skills and knowledge of the society naturally in conversations and encounters, and respectful interaction in school and work were important factors. Participants got practical lessons of employer and employee's responsibilities at the workplace. During the internship, they were paid a salary. Depending on students' skills, the training could also provide formal qualifications and lead to shortened paths to work and being self-supported. Students also attend "society studies" focusing on social and societal issues of a democratic society. Mother tongue teachers were involved in language learning and in supporting understanding of course contents. The teachers worked in and outside the classrooms, providing help for students in their practical problems.

Learners from the programme:

...it's not just theory but also practical. And there one learns how to work in the forest, how to work with wood, how to trim and you learn a lot.

...I came into contact with other people, the Swedes who work there. It encouraged me to speak Swedish and to listen. I liked a lot this forestry education. (Kuusipalo et al. 2018b)

The integration programme that we examined was combined to traineeship in branches suffering from labour shortage. The case under study was run by a folk high school that was specialised in low-educated migrants. The school had some interesting features from the point of view of social inclusion. First of all the organiser had adopted a multi-lingual approach in all its activities and was recruiting staff that could teach both in Swedish and in the students' mother tongues. The programme was designed in cooperation with various social partners and employers in the branches that were suffering from recruitment problems. The aim was to find a match between students and employers already during the initial phase of integration.

In Sweden, the public actors have statutory obligations to enhance the newcomers' chance to become active participative citizens and getting integrated in the Swedish society. The policy makers interviewed expressed the main issues of migrant integration in Sweden as "to understand and practice their rights as citizens and to have a job". It seemed that the definition of integration, or being an active citizen, was not unanimous but had been debated among the actors. For instance, one of the policy makers was asking, "is it enough to have job, even if you

never use the language, nor meet Swedish people, nor have a contact with the society? Does activity mean that you are busy doing anything?" The respondents elaborated further that in Sweden, the society is understood as an entity of many involved players that need to work together to enhance a successful future for Sweden and all its residents. Cooperation between actors was seen as a key in enabling to steer society's development in the right direction and having the newcomers to see their role in this development.

Because of a record number of asylum seekers, the organisers had been given a considerable amount of resources for integration education. According to the education provider the challenge of competing for recruiting competent teachers was one consequence of the record-high newcomer population and exceptionally wide offering of integration programmes. The organiser reported that the staff policy of recruiting from immigrant communities and supporting their professional teacher qualification was a good solution in this situation. They had even recruited from their student population and supported the assistant teachers to qualify and get more permanent positions. Because of the strong commitment to diverse staff, the school management emphasised multicultural atmosphere and respect for each other in the school activities.

Another interesting feature was, that the programme included on-the-job learning at workplace combined with classroom learning. The students moving constantly between school and work required close teacher-employer cooperation which had challenged customary teaching methods. As teaching and language support expanded from the classroom to the fieldwork, language tuition had to be adjusted to the specific vocabulary and authentic situations of and at the workplace. For instance, the students used their mobile phones for recording and taking pictures and brought material to classroom encounters. They used mobile phone apps that supported language learning. At the workplace migrant students and local peers worked together in small groups, which enabled language use in everyday situations. This case is considered a concrete example of a popularized idea of "learning by doing", which in the folk high school tradition includes the interpretation of teachers as learners – an interpretation that emerges in the practices of liberal adult education, but challenges teaching in formal settings in major periods of change.

The programme aimed at getting workforce in the fields that suffered from labour shortage in the region. Nevertheless, after finishing the education only few students got a job. Those who did not, were naturally disappointed but for some the attendance in the programme was the way to realise the need for further studies. Regardless of the outcome and unfulfilled expectations, the students interviewed seemed to value the social aspect of participation. They connected with local people and experienced affection and belongingness in relationship with their fellow students. This social dimensions echoes Grunttdvig's ideal of a folk high school as a place for experiences through which "students gain personal familiarity with greater or smaller parts of the country, the people and the daily life of its citizens" (Knudsen 1976: 155).

Online Basic Education in Finland

In Finland, the online basic education programme exemplified adjusting the national curriculum on the lowest education level for specific student needs to enable attendees: to achieve basic formal education and eventually enter the labour market.

The programme is designed to enable the completion of basic education for adults and to qualify for entering upper secondary education. AE practitioners include teachers, student counsellors, product owners and other technical staff. Courses and communication are provided through a tailor-made virtual learning environment. The students follow individualised study plans. The student counsellors monitor and encourage the students' progress throughout the programme. A student can participate in the Virtual School either for the entire curriculum or choose to take courses one at a time.

Anyone over the age of 16 and without a comprehensive school diploma can enrol. The students enrol independently through the programme's web page. At least one face-to-face or phone call meeting with a study counsellor in the beginning is advised. Separate programmes for students under 16 act against early social exclusion of those not able to physically attend school. The staff aims to improve the programme to better serve dyslexics, visually impaired and non-native Finnish speakers.

APC-related goals: Failing compulsory school often leads to unemployment and dependence of benefits. Resuming basic education is seen as the first and necessary step towards inclusion and active citizenship in the Finnish society. Focusing on independence, critical reflection and information retrieval skills as natural aspects of operating in a virtual learning environment simultaneously develop APC competences. Students are encouraged to increase their chances of societal participation through group work and phenomenon-based courses.

Learner after finishing basic education:

And to get myself a professional degree, like before it wasn't possible no matter how I tried. To get it different ways. ...now, finally, you get a profession and you can really move on in life towards something you want and not just to accept choices you've been given by chance. (Niiranen and Hyytiä 2018)

The programme under investigation was a tailored online course for those young adults who had dropped out of school before finishing the compulsory lower secondary education level. School dropout is a rare phenomenon in Finland; during the last two decades only 0.17 to 0.75% of each cohort have failed to finish the compulsory school (Official Statistics of Finland 2019). From this vantage point the Finnish school seems to be efficient in meeting different pupils' learning needs and supporting them in studies. On the other hand, those who are unable to finish schooling, even if proportionally a small group, have notably difficult life situations; they are young people who may suffer for instance from social isolation, mental health problems or addictions, thus being unreachable by traditional recruiting and education methods (Järvinen and Vanttaja 2013: 518). In a society of high value on education the school dropouts may become stigmatised.

In Finland, national legislation guarantees free basic education for adults and it is possible to finish school by independent studies and taking exams. Since the absolute number of such students is quite low, organised studies are not widely available nor easy to access. The online comprehensive school (also online upper

secondary school) that we studied was a solution for this marginal student group. The folk high school had developed the platform and provided the virtual basic education programme which allowed anyone and anywhere to get instruction and support for finishing interrupted schooling. The application allowed studies that are not tied to a strict timeframe or a set place and space.

According to the tutoring teachers, for many of the students their unfinished school had caused feelings of shame, and their previous discouraging school experiences were linked to low self-esteem and unwillingness to return to studies. Some of the students interviewed reported that for them it was safe to attend school at home through personal computer. The students reported other benefits of the online course, for instance, they had a chance to regulate the rhythm of study and avoid stressful social interaction. Those students who suffered a severe physical condition or had care duties also reported benefitting from this kind of arrangements. The virtual school was claimed to be more than just an ordinary “online course”. The teachers were available for instruction and personal guidance via a study platform or other media. Moreover, a professional team of teachers and technical staff constantly developed both the platform, application and online pedagogy.

The policy makers and educators interviewed pointed out that the support and growth towards active participatory citizenship entails learning of both the curricular content of the basic education and generic ideas of participation, communication and responsibility for one’s studies. They suggested other support services, for example rehabilitation and education be combined to the virtual school studies to provide information of education opportunities and encourage students’ learning in various life situations. It was expected that the regained student identity would enhance the students’ expressed need to be recognised as a person and not as a member of a group of “low-educated” or a “carrier of a condition”.

Conclusion

Our discussion on adult education as a means to social inclusion in Nordic welfare states is a contribution to the overarching thematic of this book – what is the potential of adult education to address young people at risk of exclusion? Does adult education play a role in enhancing active participatory citizenship among young adults? The cases from Denmark, Sweden and Finland demonstrate, first, how practices in the emergence of new needs can be built on existing structures of legislation, educational provision and resources. Secondly, integration programmes and second-chance education potentially implement the ideal and policy of equal opportunities in society. New programmes draw on the cooperation between policy makers, educational practitioners and social partners, who may readily embrace education as a forum of developing the various dimensions of active participatory citizenship. In addition, there may be small-scale innovations in place in recruiting multilingual staff, matching course offering with local labour needs, and exposing the trainees to the contacts with local population and everyday experience.

The challenges of practical implementation of educational initiatives are nevertheless significant. Education for “migrants” or for “drop-outs” without holistic integration and inclusion policies can still leave the students outside the recognition as “young adults” of society. Our findings imply that educational goals coupled with the needs of quick employment reveal the discrepancies between education policy and integration policy; migrants seen solely as workforce challenge the role of educators in a marketized situation. The research conducted revealed several challenges. Among them are the economy pressures from EU and national policies, urgency of students’ individual needs, and the tacit knowledge of those working with students, facing their needs and realising that more could be done to answer the needs. Evaluation of the social inclusion programmes revealed underlying contradictions of democratic societies. The following questions arose: Is the ideal of equality leading to the requirement of “sameness”? How can a learner’s or citizen’s autonomy be respected when setting conditions for accepting any study course or job opportunity available? Education is introduced as the way to full membership of society, but for individual students in a vulnerable life situation participation in education is often taking place parallel and simultaneous when struggling with uncertainty and experience of powerlessness.

The current possibilities, challenges and contradictions of the Nordic welfare states, in particular their adult education systems, in enhancing social inclusion and active societal participation of young adults at risk of marginalization are entangled with the historic development and humanistic values of the adult education tradition, enlargement of the market-driven economy to areas that have been at the core of welfare system (such as education), and challenges of citizenship in the era of migration. Many academics like Castels and Davidson (2000) have highlighted the importance of granting cultural citizenship for foreign newcomers, which is access to language and cultural inheritance of hosting society while maintaining original language and culture, right to different lifestyles, educational equality and intercultural communication.

In many instances cultural, social, economic and political citizenry overlap, linguistic skills being a good example. Integration programmes tend to emphasise the importance of learning language as a precondition of employment and citizenship; but without access and participation the restricted learning possibilities are rare. Horst and Gitz-Johansen (2010) talk about the deprivation paradigm, namely, the way of presenting ethnic diversity and underachievement in education as a case of minorities lacking cultural, linguistic and social resources. This kind of interpretation and placing the problem within ethnic minority communities is a way to protect educational institutions and mainstream dominant society from criticism, and furthermore provide legitimacy for political interventions that seek remedies, in this case mastering the Danish language and achieving qualifications from the Danish schooling system, for persons who represent minorities, they argue. Grundtvig in the nineteenth century Denmark formulated the goal of popular education as “thinking and speaking in Danish, to love and know their country and its fundamental laws as well as the best among their peers” (in Knudsen 1976: 155). The idea of social

inclusion is clear, however, the current adult education agencies struggle to reformulate the message in the age of globalisation and cultural diversity.

The aspect of cooperation was evident in all the different cases. In complex societal situations the organisers will have to take up multiple tasks to succeed in their basic task: organising quality education. They should constantly develop and market their expertise, be on top of the changing legislation and, at least in Nordic countries, often participate in the very process of law amendments and policy development. In addition, they expressed concern for the increasing demands to network with various authorities who make decisions concerning the students' access to studies, their livelihood, health or family issues, and with employers who provide practice and eventually jobs for the students. In all of the studied cases, the tradition of popular education was present: the organisers in both Sweden and Finland were folk high schools and in Denmark the educator representatives brought up the values of Grundtvig's 'dannelse' when they discussed the role of municipal language centre contra the private language schools as competitors. Both the policy makers and educators were carriers of these humanistic values but also aware of and tied to the market-driven system. It seemed that by developing their "product", a quality programme addressing the specific learning needs of a minority group within larger framework (migration integration or basic education programmes), they had been successful in competing their more market-driven rivals. This was also due to the conscientious policy-makers who valued quality over low price.

In the EU the high educational level of population and the rising requirements for skills standards in working life are highest on the policy agenda. Our research shows how marginal groups with lower levels of education and less "value" for the market-oriented policies need a lot of advocating to become heard. Teachers and policy makers are promoting these students' needs, but in instances where individuals are only valued as a quick cure for labour shortage or a reservoir of fully capable workforce for economy, the potential of many individuals is left unnoticed. Thus, other aspects are needed for policy guidance to secure quality education for all. The ethos of the adult education research is to bring to general awareness and remind the policy makers of the universal right to education. It is an underlying rationale highlighting that skills that are provided by education system are not only for benefit of labour market but also to protect individuals from social evils and exploitation (Arajärvi 2006).

In the Nordic countries individuals' autonomy is generally respected; educators tend to build on and encourage the learners' self-directness and independence. This may form a challenge for students who have a background of strong family-ties and other community belonging, and for those who have over-generational experiences of living dependent of social security in margins of the society. This and other points of view discussed here call for a need to create alliances between professionals in different service sectors as well as having the students' own voice heard for continuous improvement and renewal of the role of adult education. For instance, studying and engaging in education could be promoted as a way to integration and ordinary life despite of sickness, imprisonment, parenthood or whatever the situation in young person's life. Formal learning opportunities and resources for guidance could

be promoted as ways to support youth *while* in difficult situations, not as something that becomes possible only after recovering, release from prison, or raising the children. Education should not be considered as a reward after proving one's motivation but as a necessity for all those who have been denied access to or have dropped out from school. These aspirations reflect the primary tasks of adult education rather than that of being a policy instrument of economy. Many actors in the field still strive, as Grundtvig in his time, for adult education "open to all, helping to solve life's problems and promote purposeful living" (in Knudsen 1976: 153–154).

In the light of our findings, today's adult education providers face competing expectations and interests that shape educational practices. The work takes place under conflicting pressures of the European and national policies, the market economy and the diverse students' needs. The demands of the state and market colliding with humanistic tradition of adult education can be further analysed through the themes of employment, language, cultural norms, and activism. This leads us in our future study to scrutinise the narratives of mediation and communicative practices in the intersection of the values and aspirations of official policies, funding agencies, social partners, teaching staff and students themselves (see Kersh et al. 2019; Toiviainen et al. 2019).

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