

Theme: Validation and personal development

Folkbildning and validation in Finland, a model in development

Making competences gained in various contexts visible – and validating them - are an integral part of the continuous learning policy. In Finland validation has a 28-year history in VET, slightly shorter in other forms of formal education. This has not been the case regarding liberal adult education or Folkbildning, which for most part is non-formal learning. However, since August 2021, amendments in existing legislation made it feasible to validate and make learning gained in liberal adult education visible as well.

Liberal adult education in Finland is structured under several types of education providers, each having a special focus in the society. Over a million Finns participate in liberal adult education annually. The general purpose of these studies is to promote equality, democratisation, and active citizenship. The learning aims at multifaceted development and well-being of individuals as well as promoting values such as cultural pluralism, sustainable development, multiculturalism, and internationalisation. Liberal adult education highlights self-motivated learning, social inclusion, and relations.

Competences gained in Liberal adult education (or anywhere else) can be identified and recognized for the benefit of the individual and the society. It is imperative that the entire education system works towards developing the competence level and employability of individuals of all ages. It is not always necessary to study a whole qualification, but smaller units can be enough to promote a person's opportunities in society. For example, courses carried out in Liberal adult education can be utilised in further formal studies, getting a promotion or a new job, inventing new business ideas, or just for personal development.

The potential of Liberal adult education is in strengthening the basic skills of underrepresented groups. Liberal adult education also embraces a holistic pedagogical approach to training, in which individual needs (also other than subject related) can be met, which in part can lower the threshold for participation in further studies.

To be able to get the underrepresented target groups to participate in competence development activities, it is of paramount importance to strengthen the students' motivation and self-efficacy. Non-participation in education can be caused by lack of motivation, information, or resources. It can be caused by learning disorders, previous negative learning experiences and social or health problems.

The know-how of Liberal adult education should be further utilised as part of the validation system in Finland, especially when developing education and training for the underrepresented or in the field of fine arts teaching. Let us develop validation further to its full potential!