

A Holistic Approach to Adult and Continuing Education in Europe

Jorma Turunen
TSL-Finland

Workers' Education as a Global Challenge
8-9 October 2009
Rutgers – The State University of New Jersey



Työväen Sivistysliitto TSL

European Adult Education - A Diverse Phenomenon

- historical, political, economic and cultural differences
- various areas
- a legal basis for adult education
- funding of adult education
- an enormous variety of providers

Definitions (1)

- adult and continuing education
- adult education
- education of adults
- adult learning
- adult education and training
- recurrent education



Definitions (2)

- liberal adult education
- popular education
- non-vocational education
- socio-cultural education

Definitions (3)

- lifelong learning
- lifelong education
- non-formal learning
- informal learning

Tensions in relation to lifelong learning

Different generations of lifelong learning



Historical development of adult education in Finland

- voluntary popular education (1850 – 1917)
- liberal adult education (1920 – 1950)
- adult education (1950 – 1975)
- adult training (1975 – 1995)
- adult learning/lifelong learning (1996 -)



Current trends in the European adult education

- Lisbon strategy (2000): “The promotion of employability and social inclusion through investment in citizens’ knowledge and competence at all stages of their lives”
- adult education is recognized and protected only minimally, and variously, in national legislations
- major role of vocational adult education in national strategies
- market economy of adult education



Role of the European Union – European policy initiatives on adult learning:

- Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000)
- Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality (2001)
- First Communication specifically on adult learning “It is never too late to learn” (2006)
- Action Plan on Adult Learning “It is always a good time to learn”

Purpose: To help Member States of the EU develop an improved and efficient adult learning sector



Key messages of the Action Plan

- to remove barriers to participation
- to increase the quality and efficiency of the adult education sector
- to speed up the process of validation and recognition
- to ensure sufficient investment
- to monitor the adult education sector

Lifelong Learning Programmes of the EU – Budget distribution

- Erasmus (higher education) 40 %
- Leonardo da Vinci (vocational education and training) 25 %
- Comenius (school education) 13 %
- Grundtvig (adult education) 4 %

= 45.7 million euros



Grundtvig in 2008 – Activities

Decentralized actions:

- 1239 organisations involved in 251 Learning Partnerships
- 1298 grants to adult education staff for in-service training

Centralised action:

- 68 projects
- 2 networks
- 2 accompanying measures
- 3 studies related to the Action Plan on Adult Learning

EAEA (European Association for the Education of Adults)

- a European umbrella organisation within adult learning
- founded in 1953
- 120 affiliates from 41 European countries
- receiving core funding from the EU
- main roles of the EAEA:
 1. Policy advocacy for lifelong learning at the European level
 2. Provision of the information and services for its members
 3. Development of practice through projects, publications and training
 4. International cooperation with other international stakeholders



EUCIS-LLL

- a European Platform of the European umbrella organizations within lifelong learning
- 18 affiliates
- main objectives of the EUCIS-LLL:
 1. Structuring the network and strengthening the links between the members
 2. Reinforcing EUCIS ´ position as a source of proposals in Europe
 3. Setting up Lifelong Learning Weeks
 4. Participating in the promotion of European civil dialogue



Challenges of the European adult education

(1)

- To reduce labour shortages due to demographic changes by raising skill levels in the workforce generally and by upgrading low-skilled workers (more than 80 million in 2007). Adult learning can contribute both rapidly and effectively to doing so;
- To address the problem of persistent high number of early school leavers (more than 7 million in 2007), by offering a second chance to those who enter adult age without having a qualification;
- To reduce the persistent problem of poverty and social exclusion among marginalized groups. Adult learning can both improve people's skills and help them towards active citizenship and personal autonomy
- To increase the integration of migrants in society and labour market. Adult learning can offer tailor-made courses, including language learning, to contribute to this integration process;



Challenges of the European adult education

(2)

- To increase participation in lifelong learning and particularly to address the fact that participation decreases after age of 34. At a time of when the average working age is rising across Europe, there need to be a parallel increase in adult learning by older workers
- How to balance civic and social needs and values with those of the economy?
- How to secure that the costs of sustaining lifelong learning for adults are properly allocated and carried between different parties (state, employers, individuals)?
- How to change the highly unequal participation in adult education?
- The future of liberal adult education in Europe?
- The impact of the decline of the European left on adult education?

