

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP STUDIES

**RECOMMENDATION FOR
A CURRICULUM PLAN**

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Antero Airos

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▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ 1. Background information

The Finnish Parliamentary Committee on Adult Education (Parlamentaarinen aikuiskoulutustyöryhmä PAT) identified the studies aimed at strengthening civil society and supporting social participation as one of the key focus areas in the field of adult education in the near future (OPM 3:2002).

The Committee also wanted to *promote citizenship skills and the civil society, social equality and democracy and prevent exclusion by means of adult education and training*. Here eyes turn to non-formal adult education institutions, which arise from civil society and have a strong tradition in promoting democracy and empowerment. Wishing to support empowerment, the development of adults' learning skills and the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed in everyday life (e.g. IT skills), the Committee proposes that part of the current public funding for non-formal education be reallocated according to lines to be jointly determined by the Ministry of Education and education providers.

The foundations of Active Citizenship Studies were developed at the initiative of the Finnish Adult Education Association (VSY) in cooperation with actors in non-formal adult education. At the turn of the century, several discussions and debates focused on active citizenship. The core themes and terms were: active citizenship, democracy, social capital and communality. There is a feeling that all of these have weakened both in Finland and in other western countries, which some even see as a threat to democratic systems.

Active Citizenship Studies are based on the act on non-formal adult education, which sets out to support the development of the personality of individuals on the basis of lifelong learning, enable

them to act in communities, and promote democracy, equality and pluralism in Finnish society. A further goal is that those who are involved in non-formal adult education can, if they so wish, get public recognition for their competence.

Active Citizenship Studies are designed to

- promote social involvement and participation
- strengthen communality and increase social capital
- diversify civic activity
- strengthen democracy and civil society
- support lifelong learning among citizens

Active Citizenship Studies are targeted at those who are interested in studying and in performing actively in society. As the target groups are different, Citizenship Studies is designed to accommodate organiser or group-specific variation in implementing the recommendation.



▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ 2. Active Citizenship Studies

General aims of Active Citizenship Studies are:

- to strengthen the learning and realisation of active citizenship
- to help to evaluate knowledge and skills acquired through civic activity
- to make visible learners' existing knowledge and skills and their needs for further learning
- to help learners to perceive and understand what fields are available for civic activity and what civic skills include
- to give tools and encourage to learn civic skills, and to find new ways for social participation and influence
- to support the building of learners' own identities, and the building of a lasting foundation for values

An active citizenship presupposes competences and the recognition of values. Important skills are, for example, the ability for communication and dialogue, the ability to live with others, negotiate, take part in public debate, recognise diversity and the ability to use information and communication technology. Necessary skills are also critical thinking, participation, conflict solving and conceptual analysis and argumentation techniques.

2.1. Structure

Active Citizenship Studies is a programme of studying no fewer than 7.5 credits in scope. Citizenship Studies may also be of more extensive scope. 1.5 credits correspond to 40 hours of work by the student.

Active Citizenship Studies are divided into five main modules: Personal Action Plan or a Group Plan , Me as a citizen, Me learn-

ing to be an active member of society, Me as an active member of society and module of Self-assessment of the learning outcome. Educational institutes may name the modules differently from the above. What is essential is the content of the modules. All students are required to complete the modules ‘Me as a citizen’ and ‘My assessment of what I have learned’.

Learners may be given credit for their former studies and activities and be exempted from doing the following modules: ‘Me learning to be an active member of society’ and ‘Me as an active member of society’. By recognizing the pre-learning of an adult learner one of the objectives of the program may be reached.

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP STUDIES (7.5 credits)		
PERSONAL ACTION PLAN and GROUP PLAN (0.75 credits)	<p>ME AS A CITIZEN (1.5 credits)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - terms of reference for the studies - key concepts <p>ME LEARNING TO BE AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF SOCIETY (3-7.5 credits) <i>a minimum of two themes need to be chosen</i></p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - choices of life and identity - interaction and communication - exercising influence as a citizen - creative expression - project management and development methods <p>ME AS AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF SOCIETY (1.5. credits)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - project activity - participation in civic activity 	<p>SELF -ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOME (0.75 credits)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interim assessment - overall assessment of the learning process

2.2. Objectives

2.2.1. Personal Action Plan or Group Plan

The students draw up Personal Action Plans, in which they identify their former knowledge, experience and competences and define their goals for studying. It is possible to draw up one and the same action plan for the whole group of students.

2.2.2. Me as a citizen

The students learn to know the terms of reference for the studies, the basic concepts related to citizenship, the rights and responsibilities of a citizen, how a citizen can act, participate and exercise influence, as well as the most important institutions of Finnish society and their powers. The learning methods in use are studying the essential concepts and themes by analytical reasoning and group discussions.

The core content of the module is:

- terms of reference for the studies and the main themes (citizen and citizenship, society, public, private and the third sector, etc.)
- key concepts related to civic activity (active citizen, civil society, democracy, social capital and communality)
- acting and exercising influence as a citizen in organisations, non-governmental organisations, in the workplace, in the municipality, at national or global level
- the rights and responsibilities of a citizen (civil rights, consumer protection, legal protection)
- municipal democracy, and the role and the most important prerogatives of the Finnish Parliament, Government, President, and the Legal System

- depending on the interest of learners, other forms of civic activity (work in the local community, voluntary activities, different forms of exercising influence, etc.)

2.2.3. Me learning to be an active member of society

In this module the ways and methods of learning may vary, honouring the learners' needs and initial levels. In accordance with their their Personal Action Plan / Group Plan, learners choose studies that best suit their needs and interests from at least two of the following theme areas:

Choices of life and identity

A student learns to know his needs and possibilities for personal development. Student will acquire skills with which he may lead and control his own life. Progress is achieved by attending a course or by means of other study activity.

The core contents are self-development, learning to learn, problem solving skills, communication skills, responsibility of an individual, critical thinking, values, the concept of identity, tolerance for diversity, competence for facing change, perception of humanity etc.

Interaction

A student learns to know the meaning of cooperation, team work and group work in civic activity. The forms of learning may include studying various interaction skills in combination with practical interaction activities.

The core content of the courses in the theme area may include basic skills in interaction, listening, speaking and writing, public performance skills, negotiation skills, meeting technique, communication skills, argumentation, and group dynamics.

Exercising influence as a citizen

A student learns how to investigate different ways in which citizens can have an influence on their communities and the wider world. They know the forms and methods of social participation and influence at national, organisational and municipal level. They are aware of using consuming as a way of exercising influence. The forms of learning may include studying various ways of exercising influence in combination with practical involvement in social activity groups.

The core content of the courses in the theme area may include the exercise of influence in the local community and local organisations, consuming as a way of exercising influence, the exercise of influence at municipal, national and global level, alternative ways of exercising influence, civic movements, civil disobedience, political literacy, internet networks.

Creative expression

A student learns to recognise art and culture as possible ways of social participation and influence, and also as a support to community activity. The forms of learning may include courses or other guided creative activity.

The core content of the courses in the theme area may include visual expression, performing arts (drama, theatre, dancing), music, or literary art (creative writing, oral expression).

Project management and development methods

A student learns to understand the main principles and forms of project work in a modern society of networking. Learners plan and organise different events, meetings and activities. The forms of learning may include studying different project management skills and development methods and, if needed, in practical work.

The core content of the courses in the theme area may include

planning and managing a project, a financial plan, the life span of a project, quality assessment and reporting, and different development methods.

2.2.4. Me as an active member of society

A student learns how to carry out or take part in carrying out a practical project, or to take part in some practical civic activity. The activities in which the learner is involved must form a coherent entity of 1.5 credits at the minimum. The student will write a report to describe his input in the activity and an analysis of what he has learnt.

The core content of the course is that the learner carries out or takes part in carrying out a practical project.

2.2.5. Self-assessment

A student learns to evaluate what he has learned both during and before the studies, and compare the learning outcome with the goals set at the beginning of the studies.

The core content of the module is an overall assessment of the citizenship studies by the learner and / or by the group. Learners evaluate the results of the learning process in relation to the goals they set at the beginning of the process. The assessment may take the form of a citizen's portfolio, which is constructed in the course of the study programme.

▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ 3. Assessment

3.1. The function of assessment and its implementation

Before the studies commence, assessment methods are to be agreed together with the learner, and recorded in the Personal / Group Action Plan. The function of assessment is to give learners feedback on the progress of their learning, both during and at the end of Active Citizenship Studies. Assessment should support the development of a positive self-image.

The assessment of Citizenship Studies is, to a large extent, based on self-assessment, which supports self-directed learning and learner-oriented teaching.

The assessment relies on the Personal Action Plan / Group Action Plan, drawn up by learners themselves, who determine the learning objectives, acquire and process information to attain them, develop and assess their own decisions and activity.

3.2. Certificate of the studies

On request, learners may be awarded a certificate on successful completion of the studies. The certificate includes a description of what Citizenship Studies are.

The certificate should show:

- the learner's name and date of birth
- the title of the programme of study
- the name of the institution awarding the certificate
- the dates of study
- completed studies and their content (with module headings and number of credits earned)
- any project or practical civic activity undertaken

- any validated prior learning, the names of the institutions that organised the learning, and the dates of study
- any validated practical civic activity (the content of the activity and the dates)

3.3. Recognition and validation of prior learning

The active citizenship programme is designed to make visible and more easily recognisable activities and studies, undertaken in non-formal adult education. Learners may request the validation of their prior learning or experimental learning.

In case a learner requests credit transfer towards the module 'Me learning to be an active member of society', the credits must have been achieved within the previous five years, and they must be evidenced by a course certificate or a similar written document, detailing the content and scope of learning. Credits towards a vocational degree cannot be accredited in the Active Citizenship Studies programme.

Learners may request the validation of their previous experimental learning (practical activity), related to the module 'Me as an active member of society'. The learning may be validated providing it was undertaken within the previous five years. The recognition and validation of any experimental learning requires written certification from a supporting organisation (such as an association, municipality, church).

In the module 'Self-assessment', learners reflect on the skills and knowledge gained through prior validated and / or experimental learning. They assess their learning using methods agreed together with the tutor. 'Me as an active member of society' and 'Self-assessment of the learning outcome' are always compulsory modules in the Active Citizenship Studies programme.

▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ 4. Applications of the Curriculum

Categories of aims

The planning of the Active Citizenship Studies should include

- cognitive aims: knowing, understanding
- skill-related aims: doing, using, implementing and realising
- social aims: interaction, sharing experiences

Active Citizenship Studies should be planned in such a way as to enable learners to acquire further knowledge and skills on all these aspiration levels, thus allowing them to develop themselves holistically: as knowing, skilful, and feeling human beings and active, informed citizens.

Types of citizenship

Active Citizenship Studies may be based on different types of citizenship. Ruud Velthuis (LLine 4/2002) divides society into four areas of activity: political, social, cultural and economic. From this perspective, there is four different types of citizenship:

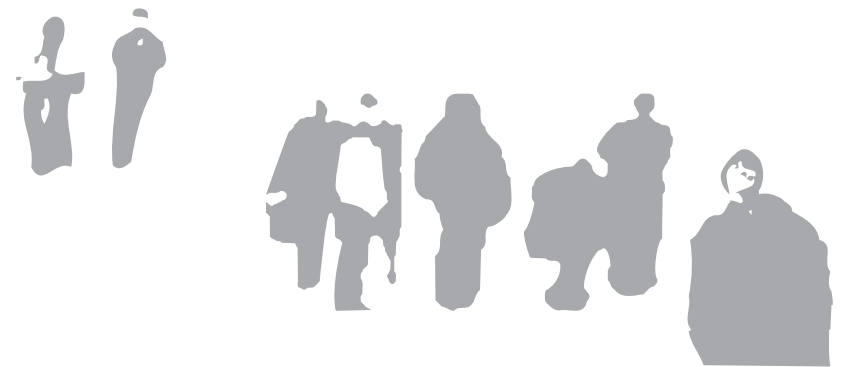
- political citizenship (influence on political decision-making)
- social citizenship (interpersonal relationships in society)
- cultural citizenship (shared norms and values, identity)
- economic citizenship (participation in economic systems)

Drawing up an application plan

A non-formal education institution draws up a curriculum, which is based on the objectives and core content of the curriculum plan, as presented in this Recommendation for Active Citizenship Studies. The curriculum for the Active Citizenship Studies programme should include at least the following information:

- the aims of the programme
- the target group(s) of the programme
- the content and scope of the programme (by modules)
- teaching arrangements

- the sequencing of modules and timetable
- methods
- the basics of preparing an Personal Action Plan / Group Plan
- how the programme links with other educational programmes
- assessment plans for learning and instruction
- recognition and validation of prior learning
- names of possible learning partnerships



▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ 5. Action plans and guidance

5.1. Personal Action Plan and Group Plan

The core content and the objectives of Active Citizenship Studies are determined in the learner's Personal Action Plan, which is based on the institution's curriculum. The Personal Action Plan should be based on learners' previously acquired skills and knowledge, the level of their preparedness, and their own goals. A Group Plan may be drawn up to supplement a Personal Action Plan when citizenship studies are studied in communities or groups.

For the modules of the programme which the learner is going to take, the Personal Action Plan / Group Plan is to define:

- the goals
- core content
- scope
- methods of assessment
- previous studies and activities

5.2. Guidance and tutoring

In Active Citizenship Studies tutoring and supporting the learner is important, not only in the learning process but also in formulating the Personal Action Plan / Group Plans and in assessment. The implementation of an action plan can be monitored and supported by means of tutoring and mentoring.

▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ 6. Learning partnerships

In Active Citizenship Studies, the role of the instructor is to bring together learners and learning opportunities, organise forums for participation and learning civic activity. Collaboration and networking with local actors is essential. Learning partnerships are a natural part of the idea of Active Citizenship Studies, i.e. interaction, networking, and making the best use of local resources.

▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ 7. Underlying principles

Active Citizenship Studies draw on the following general principles of learning:

1. Through Active Citizenship Studies learners acquire skills and knowledge that enable them to actively participate in social and working life, leisure time activities, and social situations. Learners learn how to shape and influence the reality of their own lives. Learners are active, goal-conscious, self-directed, social human beings. Active Citizenship Studies develop these innate human tendencies.
2. A human being is a holistic entity, whose cognitive functions and will (motivation) control his external activity and whose personal touch provides an important additional dimension to activity.
3. Active Citizenship Studies create favourable opportunities for continuous development and learning.
4. Active Citizenship Studies are a process-centred learning process, whose core is the active involvement of learners in creating their own learning experiences. The experiences of learners are used in teaching and enriched in a way best suited to reaching the set goals.
5. All human beings are valuable and unique and they have the right to develop themselves and strive for a good, rich life.