Wider Benefits of Adult Learning

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Aim of the study

• What are the wider benefits of participation in liberal adult education?
  - What people study and learn? What kind of impact participation has? What wider benefits people experience? What is the meaning of adult learning in general?
  - Outcomes and benefits...
    (1) as an individual
    (2) as a citizen
    (3) as an employee.

Wider benefits - approach

• Participation → Learning → **wider benefits**
  – For individual ("human, cultural, economical capital")
  – For family, community… ("social capital, social cohesion")
  – For labour markets ("economical growth")
  – For society in general ("active citizenship, learning society")

• How individuals, groups, organisations and society benefit from education?
Liberal adult education in Finland

• Non-vocational courses

• Organisational structure:
  – Adult education centres
  – Folk High Schools
  – Summer Universities
  – Study Centres
  – Physical Education Centres

• 1,066,932 adults participated in 2005
  (population is 5,3 million)

• State support 192 million € (2008) + municipalities + participation fees

For more details see http://www.opintoluotsi.fi/flash/en/index.html
Data

• Two types of data:
  – Qualitative ➔ understanding (“what happens and how?”)
  – Quantitative ➔ generalisation (“for how many?”)

• n = 1840 adult learners
  – Individual theme interviews (n = 19)
  – Focus group interviews (12 study groups, 77 adult learners)
  – Survey (n = 1744)
    • Open questions ➔ qualitative content analysis
    • Structured questions (scale 1-5) ➔ statistical analysis
Key questions (interviews and open questions in survey)

1. What direct benefits learning have provided?
I work in a voluntary organisation where language skills are useful and related to my tasks and role as a active citizen.

2. What wider benefits there have been?
Joint actions of people who have similar values and common objectives help me to feel better both mentally and physically. At home I am able to make use of the skills I have learned on the course.

3. What other outcomes there have been in your life?
My hobby gives me strength for daily life. In Spring I was unemployed, and singing course gave me feelings that I am succeeding in something.
Examples from data:

- When I started in the poem circle, I had just moved into the village as a new resident. The group welcomed me very cordially, which made it easier to create other social contacts in the village. Learning new presentation skills and gaining new contacts have helped and motivated me to join other local societies as well.

- After I was widowed, I was able to focus myself on new activities.

- I have got a lot from course gatherings, joy and positive things to think about. Funny and hearty group have helped me to manage my stressful life.
Analysis of qualitative data

- **DATA**
  - (interviews, open answers on survey)

- **Statements**
  - (2521)

- **Main themes**
  - (35)

- **Categories**
  - (5)

- "New language skills have made it possible to travel and communicate with aboriginals"
- "internationalisation skills"
- "Skills & competences"
Summary of the qualitative content analyses
(2521 statements → 35 main themes → 5 Categories)

Participation in liberal adult education courses

BENEFITS RELATED TO LEARNING PROCESSES
Sense of community, social interaction, self fulfilment & joy of doing

DIRECT BENEFITS
Concrete benefits
Joy of learning
Travel & foreign cultures
Further education
Staying updated
Instrumental benefits
New inspiration
Changes in attitudes
New networks
Job hunting

SKILLS & COMPETENCES
Practical skills
Internationalisation skills
ICT skills
New attitudes
General knowledge
Self-expression and creativity
Information seeking skills

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS
Self-confidence
Wider life circles
New friends
Motivation to learn
Confidence in own skills
Good spirit
Learning skills
Shared expertise
Motivating others to learn

FURTHER BENEFITS
Mental well-being, physical well-being, quality of life, well-being at work, well-being in daily life, participation in society
Hard data for politicians & decision makers

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA (N = 1744)
Has participation made better your...?

### MENTAL WELLBEING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N of persons</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
<th>Weighted N of all participants (1,066,932)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>6,4 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Quite) a lot</td>
<td>1214</td>
<td>93,6 %</td>
<td>998,648</td>
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</table>

- Especially courses including self-expression, music, dance, handicrafts, + regular learners

### PHYSICAL WELLBEING

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>N of persons</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
<th>Weighted N of all participants (1,066,932)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>56,8 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Quite) a lot</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>43,2 %</td>
<td>460,914</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Especially courses including self-expression, music, dance, sports, + regular learners

* Older, lower educated participants benefit more
Factor analysis

• **Active citizenship**
  – Sense of responsibility
  – Societal involvement
  – Social skills
  – Social networks
  – Critical thinking
  – Self-confidence

• **Wellbeing**
  – Endurance
  – Physical health
  – Mental health
  – Creativity
  – Self-esteem

• **Skills & competencies**
  – Knowledge
  – Skills
  – General knowledge

• **Work & income**
  – Earning opportunities
  – Career development

• **Learning motivation**
How much participation have had impact on the following factors...

- Work and income
- Active citizenship
- Wellbeing
- Skills and competencies
- Learning motivation
- Learning motivation

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

- not at all
- to some degree
- quite a lot
- a lot
Next project:

BeLL – Benefits of Lifelong Learning

• Funding: EU LLL-programme
• Based on Finnish data collection procedure and analytical tools
  – Interviews + survey in 9 European countries → national profiles + comparative analysis
• Coordinator DIE (German Institute for Adult Education)
• Partners include EAEA (European Association for the Education of Adults); UEF (Finland); SIAE (Slovenian Institute for Adult Education); ATHENA (Association for Education and Development of Women, Czech Republic); NIACE (UK)….
• 2012-2013
Definitions for “Lifelong learning”

1960’s (UNESCO):
• culture
• learning
• personal growth
• humanistic ideals
• “human being”
• life situation


2000 (EU):
• competitiveness
• training
• employability
• economical rationale
• “active citizenship”
• labour market

Commission 2000: Memorandum on Lifelong Learning
2. HUMAN BEING
Offer of learning opportunities based on individual needs, “second chance”; learning as an right, opportunity and value in itself
* 1960’s Unesco LLL-policy

3. POSTMODERN CAREER
Offer of career opportunities in risk society for self-directed learners; critical awareness, management of own life; learning as a tool for individual career development
* Finnish Ministry of Education 1990’s policy

4. EMPLOYABILITY & COMPETITION
Economy, employability and ability to compete on global markets, knowledge economy; learning as a tool for economical growth
* Current EU LLL-policy

1. CIVIL SOCIETY
Adult education as a builder of civic competences and civic society, civilized citizens; learning as a tool for creating a civilized nation
* 1890 – 1920 policy in Finland

Personal development
CIVILIZATION, HUMANISTIC IDEALS

ARTES SERVILES
ECONOMICAL COMPETITIVENESS
Labour market, employability

ARTES LIBERALES

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Thank you!

Where are you going?
To Summer University

How was it?
Comfortable chairs
Some references


