# 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.

Manninen, J. 2010. Wider Benefits of Learning within Liberal Adult Education System in Finland. In: Horsdal, M. (ed.) Communication, Collaboration and Creativity: Researching Adult learning. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag.



# 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





## Data

- Two types of data:
  - Qualitative → understanding ("what happens and how?")
  - Quantitative → generalisation ("for how many?")
- n = 1840 adult learners
  - Individual <u>theme interviews</u> (n = 19)
  - Focus group interviews (12 study groups, 77 adult learners)
  - $\underline{Survey} (n = 1744)$ 
    - •Open questions → qualitative content analysis
    - •Structured questions (scale 1-5)  $\rightarrow$  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.

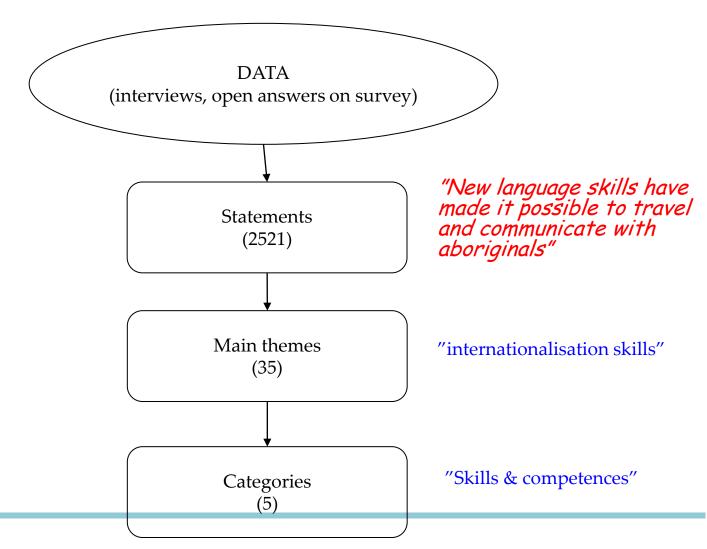


## **Examples from data:**

- 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





# 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 wellbeing, quality of life, well-being at work, well-being in daily life, participation in society

Hard data for for politicians & decision makers

# STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA (N = 1744)



# Has participation made better your...

	MENTAL WELLBEING			
	N of persons	% of respondents	Weighted N of all participants (1,066,932)	
Not at all	83	6,4 %		
(Quite) a lot	1214	93,6 %	998,648	

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

	PHYSICAL WELLBEING			
	N of persons	% of respondents	Weighted N of all participants (1,066,932)	
Not at all	686	56,8 %		
(Quite) a lot	521	43,2 %	460,914	

<sup>-</sup> Especially courses including self-expression, music, dance, sports, + regular learners

<sup>\*</sup> Older, lower educated participants benefit more



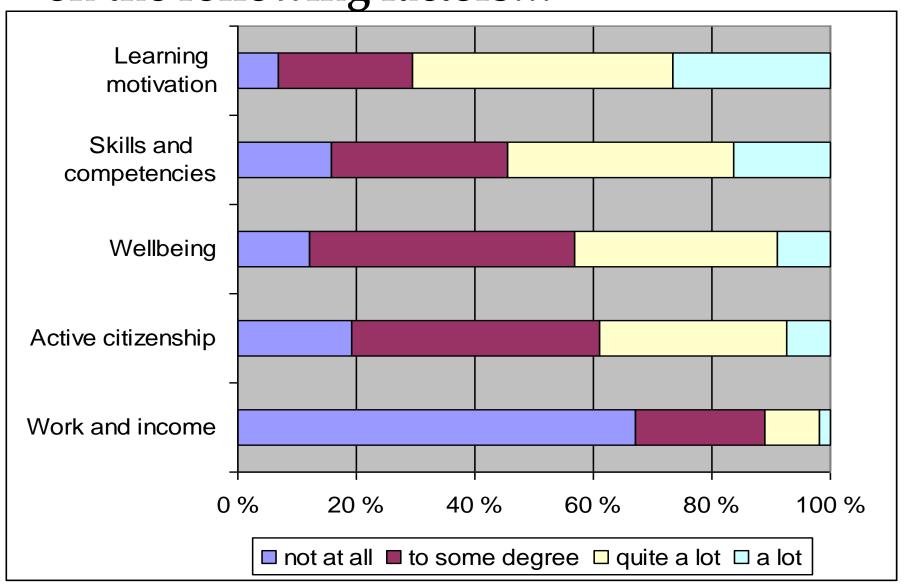
# **Factor analysis**

- 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...



## 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

Faure 1970: Learning to be. Unesco.



### 2000 (EU):

- competitiveness
- training
- employability
- economical rationale
- "active citizenship"
- labour market

Commission 2000: Memorandum on Lifelong Learning





### ARTES SERVILES

### **ECONOMICAL COMPETITIVENESS** Labour market, employability

3. POSTMODERN CAREER Learning as a civil right and opportunity Offer of career opportunities in risk society for self-directed learners; critical awareness, management of own life; learning as a tool for INDIVIDUAL NEEDS 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

#### 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

#### 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

Learning as a citizen's responsibility **NEEDS** OF THE SOCIETY

Personal development CIVILIZATION, HUMANISTIC IDEALS



# Thank you!









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