

WIDER BENEFITS OF NON-VOCATIONAL ADULT LEARNING

- Working paper, do not quote -

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Abstract

This working paper is based on a large-scale comparative European research project “Benefits of Lifelong Learning” (BeLL). The aim of the project is to analyze the wider benefits of liberal (non-vocational) adult learning in 10 European countries, using both qualitative and quantitative data based on a survey (n = 8.646, both structured questions on a Likert scale and open questions) and on qualitative theme interviews (n = 80). The paper describes (1) the theoretical background and the construction of the questionnaire and (2) some preliminary results of both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The first preliminary results indicate that participation in liberal adult education generates many benefits, especially those related to learning motivation. The relationships between the learning situations and generation of benefits is complex, and different background variables like gender, age, educational level and types of courses attended act as intervening variables in the process as well. The aim of the deeper analysis of BeLL data is to analyze these complex relationships, as well as the processes how these benefits develop during the courses.

Key words: wider benefits of learning, liberal adult education, wellbeing, Lifelong Learning, social capital, individual capital, mixed methods

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Liberal adult education

EU (2013) state that “Adult learning is a vital component of EU education policies, as it is essential to competitiveness and employability, social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development across Europe”. In the same context adult learning is divided into (1) vocationally oriented “formal, non-formal and informal learning for improving basics skills, obtaining new qualifications, up-skilling or re-skilling for employment” and into (2) non-vocational learning activities which are defined as “participating in social, cultural, artistic and societal learning for personal development and fulfilment”.

The purpose of this working paper is to describe the theoretical background and first preliminary results of a large scale comparative research project “Benefits of Lifelong Learning” (BeLL, www.bell-project.eu). Aim of the project is to analyze how non-vocational adult learning – the “second type of learning” in the EU policy – benefits the individuals and society. This kind of adult education is usually labelled as liberal adult education, and this term is therefore used in the project. Common to these liberal adult education activities is that adults participate voluntarily, on their own spare time, and based on their own personal interests. The courses are usually non-credited and they are not (at least directly) aiming at development of labour market related skills and employability. In earlier studies this kind of adult learning is defined as “learning activities taken for personal interest-related reasons” (Desjardins, 2003, p. 11) or “general curricula” (Feinstein & Budge, 2007, p. 20).

These kind of liberal adult education activities are less researched from the benefits point of view, mainly because non-formal liberal learning activities are often less systematically – if at all – recorded into national statistics and databases, and therefore it is difficult to get large scale data that could enable correlative analysis of participation and various benefits of learning. However, if the importance of adult learning is “vital” as EU (2013) claims, we need more research about the wider benefits of liberal adult education as well. There is a lack of relevant research on the benefits of liberal adult education, especially on the non-monetary outcomes (Desjardins, 2003, p. 13 & p. 16; Hammond, 2005, p. 241; Feinstein & Budge, 2007, p. 21).

1.2 Wider benefits of learning

The so-called wider benefits approach in educational studies (see Motschilnig, 2012; Desjardins, 2008a) is used to analyze how individuals, groups, organisations and society benefit from education. The main idea is to have a look at the “wider” outcomes and benefits than just immediate learning outcomes and formal degrees obtained in educational system. The following example from BeLL theme interviews describes what kind of wider benefits one respondent (a 70 year old woman) have experienced after having participated liberal adult education courses:

Question: And the courses you were doing, in terms of thinking about the outcomes - what have you noticed?

Answer: In technical terms if you like, all the courses I have taken, which are liberal arts, cultural sorts of things, they have all honed by writing skills, including the Open University course and the Spanish because you still have to write essays and things, so they have definitely honed my skills and in personal terms they have given me much more self-confidence. [...] And they have also given me new social outlets; I have made really good friends - really good friends, lasting friendships. And other things have come out of them [...]

This small piece of data illustrates several wider benefits. In addition to improved **writing skills**, the courses have boosted her **self-confidence** and widened her **social networks**. In the BeLL study this same question was asked from 8.646 survey respondents (as open questions and as change statements on a Likert scale) and from 80 adult learners in theme interviews. The aim is to analyze, what kind of benefits people experience when they participate adult learning courses which are voluntary and non-vocational by nature.

The benefits mentioned in the interview example above correlate very well with benefits found in the earlier studies (eg. Feinstein & Budge, 2007; Feinstein et al., 2008; Manninen 2010; Feinstein & Hammond, 2004; Schuller et al., 2002; Hammond, 2002). There is empirical evidence that there is a connection between education and several benefits, such as physical and mental well-being, civic and social engagement, networks, self-confidence, learning

skills and learning motivation. Participation in adult education also appears to play an important role in promoting health, parental abilities and civic competencies, as well as certain psycho-social qualities, such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, sense of identity and purpose, and the ability to cope effectively with change. Education may also have a positive influence on societal cohesion and on active citizenship as it appears to promote trust, tolerance, civic cooperation and likelihood of voting. Adult education impacts on changes in behaviour and attitudes, on several health-related issues such as health behaviour (smoking, alcohol use). Adult learning also helps adults develop communication and social skills, general skills, attitudes related to citizenship, creates a sense of group membership, and improves learning skills and learner self-image. For good summaries see Desjardins & Schuller (2007), Motschilnig (2012) or Feinstein et al. (2008).

While there are well-founded studies of the benefits of formal education (schooling, further and higher education), relatively little attention has been paid to the benefits of learning within non-vocational education in adult life. Accordingly, empirical evidence on the potential of liberal adult education to create personal, economic and social value is scarce (Motschilnig, 2012). Furthermore, the research conducted so far has focused mainly on the economic returns of education, but the social and personal returns of learning has been relatively under-researched. Some exceptions are OECD projects on wider benefits (OECD 2007a; 2010), and research conducted at University of London Centre for Wider Benefits of learning (eg. Feinstein et al., 2008).

The Benefits of Lifelong Learning -project (BeLL), is a comparative research project analysing wider benefits of liberal adult education in peoples' life's in 10 European countries¹. It is the first comparative study on benefits of liberal adult education. It focuses primarily on social and individual benefits of learning such as well-being, rather than on economic or vocational benefits. In other words it is looking for private, external, public and non-monetary benefits of education and learning (compare OECD, 2007a; Desjardins, 2008b). Another aim of the study is to validate the benefit-construct within the European context, and to obtain empirical results about the nature and development process of the benefits in non-vocational learning.

¹ Spain, England, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Finland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Romania, and Serbia.

2 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

2.1 From benefits to forms of “capital”

Kil, Motschilnig & Thöne-Geyer (2012) summarize that the term 'wider benefits of learning' is not based on any standard theories or research approaches. The research field is characterised by various theoretical strands and a range of methodological approaches (Schuller, Bynner, Green, Blackwell, Hammond, Preston & Gough, 2001, 1). One basic difference is whether the focus is in the analysis of social or individual benefits. Another difference is whether it is based on large register data and statistical analysis of correlations between aggregate variables like regional or national educational level and income, employment rate, costs of health and social care etc., or on a more qualitative oriented analysis of individual experiences. Kil et al. (2012) point out that despite the various theoretical and methodological approaches, research work in this field intersects at two points: firstly, they share the same central question and secondly, they believe that the analysis of the wider benefits of learning is only possible via a multi-dimensional research approach.

Because wider benefits research has been “multi-dimensional” and lacking common theoretical framework, the empirical evidence so far is fragmented. The empirical findings have been usually interpreted using socio-psychological, medical or sociological concepts and theories.

Examples of socio-psychological explanations and findings are Schuller (2002) and Feinstein & Hammond (2004; also Manninen & Luukannel, 2008) who show that self-efficacy and self-confidence can develop positively, become clearer and grow through the process of learning itself. Dench & Regan (2000) show that adults between the age of 50 and 71 perceived that they had a higher level of self-confidence following participation. There is also evidence that participants in continuing education are less at risk of adopting extremist attitudes and develop a more tolerant behaviour (Preston & Feinstein, 2004). Older people improve their learning experiences by adopting fewer age stereotypes and by being able to participate in decision-making processes and incorporate their ideas (Simone & Sculli, 2006).

Sociological perspective includes studies like Preston (2003), which show that people involved in adult education activities become politically active, vote and are on the whole politically motivated. Social networks create trust in others and in decision makers. Field (2005) shows that participation in adult education is closely linked to further involvement in social and community activities. In a qualitative study, Brasset-Grundy (2004) shows that parents not only pay more attention to how their own children are raised but that they can also provide more support and communication when interacting with their children.

Studies made from the perspective of health sciences prove that improvements can be seen in the areas of physical health, health behaviour, and wellbeing. There is concrete proof of lower consumption of cigarettes and alcohol (Feinstein & Hammond, 2004). Participation in adult education can also lead to a generally positive attitude to life (Tuijnman, 1990). The term "well-being" (both mental and general) is widely used and deals with a psychosocial quality that comprises an individual's own optimistic attitude and opportunities to influence one's own life (Field, 2009, 9), or well-being in general (Desjardins, 2008b).

At a more theoretical level benefits are often categorized using different forms of "capital" (for definitions of different capitals see Bourdieu, 1986 and Putnam, 1995). This kind of benefit studies (eg. Côté, 2005; Schuller, 2007; Manninen, 2010) assume that through participation in learning people acquire different types of capital from which both the individual and the society as a whole can profit. Schuller et al. (2004, 20) summarize these capitals in the following way:

- 'Human capital' is based on know-how and qualifications that enable an individual to participate in the economy and in society.
- 'Social capital' results from networks in which people actively participate, so that when they face a challenge they can fall back upon their social relations.
- 'Identity capital' comprises individual features such as self-confidence and internal control to support personal development

Especially social capital has been quite widely used in literature when outcomes and wider benefits of learning are discussed. For example Schuller et al. (2002) analyse their results using the concepts of social and human capital and social cohesion. Education cultivates social capital and social cohesion since participation leads to developing certain meta-

competencies, such as becoming aware of the importance of active citizenship and gaining the actual skills needed in it (Schuller et al., 2002). Participation in education also helps to generate and maintain trust and social networks, which are (according to Putnam, 1995) the building blocks of social capital.

2.2 Construction of the BeLL questionnaire

The theoretical basis of BeLL study builds on previous studies (eg. Feinstein et al., 2008; Manninen, 2010) and literature (Desjardins, 2008; OECD, 2007a; Feinstein, Budge, Vorhaus, & Duckworth, 2008; Motschilnig, 2012). One of the aims is to get a comprehensive picture about all potential benefits of adult learning in liberal adult education in 10 European countries. Therefore the survey questions were defined using the list of all potential benefits (except lower crime level) found in the previous studies, and by defining these as theoretical concepts. These were operationalized into respective statements. In addition to theory driven survey analysis and data also qualitative data is collected and analyzed using content analysis. Qualitative data is collected using three open questions in the questionnaire and by making additional theme interviews.

The BeLL-questionnaire contains 39 statements, each of them representing one of the following concepts:

- Psychological benefits based on concepts *Locus of Control* (Rotter, 1966) and *Self-efficacy* (Schwartz & Jerusalem, 1995)
- Benefit-concepts *Tolerance, Trust, Social Networks, Sense of Purpose in Life, Civic and Social Engagement, Civic Competence, Mental Well-being, Work-related Benefits, Physical Health, Health Behaviour, Family, and Changes in Educational Experience*.

In addition, *Skills and Competencies* is used as one benefit concept in the analysis of qualitative data, but it is not included in the structured survey questions.

The theoretical definitions of the concepts and related statements in BeLL survey questionnaire are described below. The English version of the web questionnaire is available online in <https://elomake.uef.fi/lomakkeet/4562/lomake.html>

Table 1. Definitions of the theoretical concepts and related statements in the questionnaire

CONCEPT	DEFINITION	STATEMENTS / ITEMS
Locus of Control	Individuals with a high <i>internal locus of control</i> believe that events result primarily from their own behaviour and actions. Those with a high <i>external locus of control</i> believe that powerful others, fate, or chance primarily determine events. (Rotter 1966; Zimbardo 1985, 275)	31. <i>I feel that I have influence over the things that happen to me</i> 28. <i>When I make plans, I am certain that I can make them work</i> 30. <i>I am convinced that what happens to me is my own doing</i>
Self-efficacy	People's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives (Schwarzer & Jerusalem 1995; Bandura 1994; Scholz, Gutierrez, Sud & Schwarzer, 2002).	34. <i>If someone opposes me, I am able to find the means and ways to get what I want</i> 32. <i>It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals</i> 33. <i>I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events</i>
Tolerance	A fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward opinions and practices that differ from one's own.	9. <i>I have respect for other people's points of view</i> 11. <i>I have respect for other people's cultures</i>
Trust	An attitude or a mindset related to trustworthiness of other people, politicians, institutions etc. (OECD, 2007b, 80; Newton & Zmerli, 2011).	20. <i>I have trust in other people generally</i> 14. <i>I have trust in decision makers</i>
Social Network	A network of friends, colleagues, and other personal contacts .	22. <i>I meet other people</i> 3. <i>I am involved in social networks (friends, colleagues etc.)</i>
Sense of Purpose in Life	A feeling that there is meaning to present and past life, having aims and objectives for living (Ryff, 1989).	29. <i>I know what I want from my life</i> 35. <i>I am positive about life</i>
Civic and Social Engagement	Joining associations, volunteering, more active role in community (OECD, 2007a, 67). Also Active Citizenship, which is defined as "Political participation and participation in associations" (Weerd, Gemmeke, Rigter & Rij, 2005).	4. <i>I am engaged in my local community</i> 21. <i>I am likely to take part in voluntary activity</i>

Civic Competence	Equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation (EU, 2006)	18. <i>I know how to make myself heard in a group</i> 16. <i>I am interested in politics</i>
Mental Well-being	A state of wellbeing in which individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community (WHO).	6. <i>Taking all things together, I am happy</i> 15. <i>I am satisfied with my life</i>
Work-related Benefits	Benefits and outcomes which help the individual to get, keep or advance in his/her job, get better income or any other benefits which are related to employment.	10. <i>I have opportunities to increase my income</i> 13. <i>have alternative job or career opportunities</i> 7. <i>I am willing to move in order to get a new job</i> 1. <i>I feel good at work nowadays</i>
Physical Health	A subjective perception of the relative state in which one is able to function well physically.	17. <i>I am satisfied with my physical health</i>
Health Behaviour	Healthy habits, such as giving up smoking, increasing exercise, positive changes in behaviour and attitudes, and more healthy living (Feinstein & Hammond, 2004)	23. <i>I pay attention to my health</i> 5. <i>I try to lead a healthy lifestyle</i> 26. <i>I smoke...</i> 27. <i>I drink alcohol...</i>
Family	Becoming a better parent, more patient, understanding and better supporting their children (Wolfe & Haveman, 2002).	24. <i>I have confidence in my ability as a parent</i> 25. <i>I am supportive of my children's learning</i>
Changes in the Educational Experiences	Learning motivation, learner self confidence, learner efficacy control and outcome beliefs, task value, and expectancy for success (Pintrich, 1988; Ruohotie, 2000, 8; also expectancy-valence –model of participation, Rubenson, 1979).	2. <i>I am motivated to learn</i> 12. <i>I feel confident as a learner</i> 8. <i>I see adult learning as an important opportunity</i> 19. <i>I am encouraging others to learn too</i>
Competencies	Knowledge, skills, attitudes and personal qualities for the performance of specific tasks (Nab, Pilot, Brinkkemper & Ten Berge, 2010, 22).	(Used only in the analysis of qualitative data)

Figure 1 describes how the theoretical concepts used in BeLL study relate to three forms of capital.

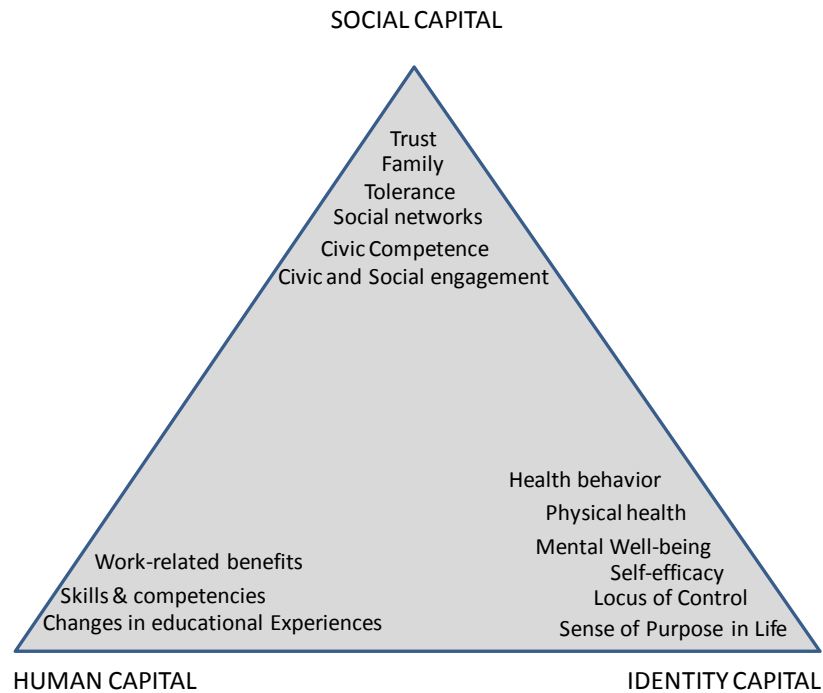


Figure 1. BeLL benefit concepts grouped as forms of “capital” (based on Schuller et al., 2004)

Benefit studies often face dangers related to selection bias, based on the fact that more active adult learners are usually healthier, socially active etc. than no-participants. It is therefore difficult to verify any causality in benefit studies (Desjardins, 2008b). In BeLL questionnaire this problem is tried to minimize by asking about the *changes* caused by the participation in liberal adult education courses. The wording in the questionnaire was formulated in the following way:

2.3.1 Now, please assess whether these liberal adult education courses have caused the following changes in your life. Use the following scale:
Much less (- - -) Less (- -) Slightly less (-) No change (0) Slightly more (+) More (+ +) Much more (+ + +)

3 DATA

The study is based on the experiences of adult learners who have participated during the past 12 month’s period in courses and study groups offered by liberal adult education organisations.

The challenge for BeLL project data collection was that liberal adult education provision is organized differently in European countries. One general framework for data collection is the forms of adult education programs (Rogers, 1996, p. 21). Out of the five forms of programs the following three are relevant for BeLL project:

- Programs aimed at personal growth (covering a wide range of subjects, such as handicraft, arts, sports, professional orientation, preventive medicine, history and so on).
- Programs aimed at social growth (targeted at specific population groups with the aim of enhancing their social role, for instance, parental counselling, women counselling, counselling of union trades members etc.).
- Programs leading to acquisition of basic skills (targeted at culturally disadvantaged social groups; they offer basic training).

The BeLL study is based on use of mixed methods (see Hammond, 2005, and Desjardins, 2008b for a description of its advantages in benefits research). Survey data (n = 8.646) is combined with theme interviews (eight interviews per country, a total of 80 interviews). The survey questionnaire included also open questions (two about outcomes and benefits, one about the learning situations), which are analyzed using qualitative content analysis.

4 FIRST BASIC RESULTS

This working paper describes only the very first and basic results, because the data collection was completed just in July 2013. The following frequencies and descriptive statistics give the first overview of the data and the general results concerning the benefits of liberal adult education.

4.1 Respondent profiles

Out of the 8.646 respondents 62 % had participated one liberal adult education course during the past 12 month period, and rest of them two or more courses. The profile of respondents follows the general profile of active adult learners familiar from participation statistics: 71 % are female, majority have a rather high educational level, and are active in working life or retired. Age range varies from 15 to 92. (See Appendix 1).

There are some differences between the 10 countries on respondent profiles. In Finland and Slovenia the respondents are relatively older than in other countries, and Romania has more male and young respondents. These differences need to be taken into account in the comparative analysis.

4.2 Course types

Table 2 describes the main types of courses the respondents have participated. A more detailed content analysis of course types is available in Appendix 2. The categorization of course types is based on the name and topic of the course(s) the respondent have attended (max. 3 courses; question 1.2).

Table 2. Main categories of course types

Type of course	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Health & sports	941	10,9	11,0
ICT & skills	1210	14,0	14,2
Languages	1290	14,9	15,1
Creative activities	1135	13,1	13,3
Society & culture	914	10,6	10,7
Work related and vocational topics	958	11,1	11,2
Several courses attended	2099	24,3	24,6
Total	8547	98,9	100,0
Missing	99	1,1	
Total	8646	100,0	

* This category includes participants, who have participated more than only one type of courses

Note that the numbers in Table 2 indicates the numbers of course topics (not the number of courses) the respondents have mentioned. For example the number 941 indicates, that so many respondents have participated *one or more* courses, which have all been Health & sports related.

Course type information is important for the analysis of benefits, because different types of courses generate different types of benefits. Tentative analysis indicates that for example health & sports related courses generate – obviously – more health related benefits. Learning motivation increases more in ICT & skills courses, in courses with work related and vocational topics, and also for those who have attended several types of courses. That group of

participants are the “heavy users” of adult education, and they also seem to report more benefits than other participants. Interestingly, language courses seem to generate statistically ($p = .000$) relatively less benefits than other types of courses. Language learners report smaller positive changes especially in social networks (mean 4,94 versus 5,51 for participants who have attended several types of courses) and in engagement in local community (4,09 versus 4,72).²

4.3 Quantitative analysis of survey data

The statistical analysis of BeLL data will be based on the experienced changes measured with 27 benefit statements (measuring the 12 benefit concepts) and in 8 psychological statements (measuring the two psychological concepts). An example of four statements measuring the concept “Changes in Educational Experiences” is given in Table 3, which show the frequencies of answers given in the statements. Appendix 3 shows the frequencies of all statements.

Table 3. Statements measuring “Changes in the Educational Experiences”

2.3.1 Now, please assess whether these liberal adult education courses have caused the following changes in your life. Use the following scale: Much less (- - -) Less (- -) Slightly less (-) No change (0) Slightly more (+) More (+ +) Much more (+ + +)								
	---	--	-	0	+	++	+++	Total
2. I am motivated to learn	57	54	96	751	1824	2902	2621	8305
	0,7%	0,7%	1,2%	9,0%	22,0%	34,9%	31,6%	100,0%
8. I see adult learning as an important opportunity	50	32	66	682	1451	2450	3531	8262
	0,6%	0,4%	0,8%	8,3%	17,6%	29,7%	42,7%	100,0%
12. I feel confident as a learner	50	44	142	1048	2179	2688	2025	8176
	0,6%	0,5%	1,7%	12,8%	26,7%	32,9%	24,8%	100,0%
19. I am encouraging others to learn too	82	72	127	1238	2127	2503	2078	8227
	1,0%	0,9%	1,5%	15,0%	25,9%	30,4%	25,3%	100,0%

As Table 3 and Appendix 3 shows, changes in educational experiences are the top changes experienced by adult learners participating liberal adult education courses. Over 80% or respondents recognize a positive change of some degree in these statements.

² Values in scale: 1 = much less, 4 = no change and 7 = much more

Later in the analysis these statements (items) will be used to calculate a sum score measuring the concept “Changes in Educational Experiences” (see Table 1). Reliability of this sum score is good (Cronbach’s Alpha .804).

These results indicate that liberal adult education plays an important role in the learning society, because the motivation to learn is the basic requisite for lifelong learning. Another important outcome is that participants feel more confident as learners, which is likely to support future participation. Statements measuring Changes in Educational Experiences are based on Pintrich’s (1988) motivational expectancy model which include several components of motivation, such as learner efficacy control and outcome beliefs, task value, and expectancy for success (compare expectancy-valence –model of participation, Rubenson, 1979). Value of learning is the rather permanent meaning something has for an individual, an ‘ideal’ which affects the individual’s choices and actions (Ruohotie, 2000, p. 8). Last statement measures whether learning experience is shared with others as part of change in “habitus” or “social milieus” which dictate whether learning experiences are socially shared with reference group members (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009, p. 197; Hippel & Tippelt, 2010; Manninen, 2003).

Preliminary analysis of the BeLL data indicate, that the lower educational background the respondent have, the more they have experienced positive changes in motivation, see adult education as a more important opportunity, feel more confident as learners, and also more often encourage others to learn as well. These changes are biggest in the group, where educational background is at ISCED 1 or lower level (primary education, or first stage of basic education, or less).

4.4 Qualitative analysis of open survey questions

Table 4 describes the two open questions used in the survey questionnaire and one example of answers on these questions.

Table 4. Open questions and examples of answers

2.1 What immediate outcomes, if any, have you noticed from your participation in learning?	2.2 What other outcomes, long term effects or changes have you noticed?
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<i>Gave me a [1]reason to go out after the death of my husband; [2]social interaction with fellow learners; [3]introduction to previously unknown or unsampled authors; [4]wider reading</i>	<i>Helps me to view my [5]life more positively; greater [3]understanding of the development of English literature; greater [6]interest in recent history; greater [3]knowledge of and understanding of the effect of recent history on fellow learners;</i>
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The codes in the data example indicate qualitative themes, which have been defined using data driven content analysis. In this example the themes are *structure in daily life* [1], *social interaction* [2], *general or new knowledge* [3], *increased reading practices* [4], *good spirit* [5], and *motivation to learn* [6]. The coding template includes a total of 66 themes.

In addition the themes have been categorized under 15 main categories, which are the same as the theoretical concepts used in BeLL survey (see Table 1). This enables later the comparison of qualitative and quantitative results. Table 5 describe, what kind of qualitative themes were found in the data under main category “Sense and Purpose in Life”.

Table 5. Example of qualitative analysis of open questions (preliminary results based on analysis of 2628 cases)

Main category: Sense of Purpose in Life (mentioned 257 times, by 15,1% of respondents)		
Theme:	Frequency of theme:	Theme mentioned by % of respondents (n = 2628):
New inspiration	134	5,1
Structure in daily life	58	2,2
Sense of belonging to a community	34	1,3
Self fulfilment & joy of doing	85	3,2
New hobbies	39	1,5
Wider life circles	80	3,0
Respect	11	0,4

Figure 2 show the frequencies of main categories, based on the qualitative analysis of open questions so far. Appendix 4 include a more detailed frequency listing of Top28 themes.

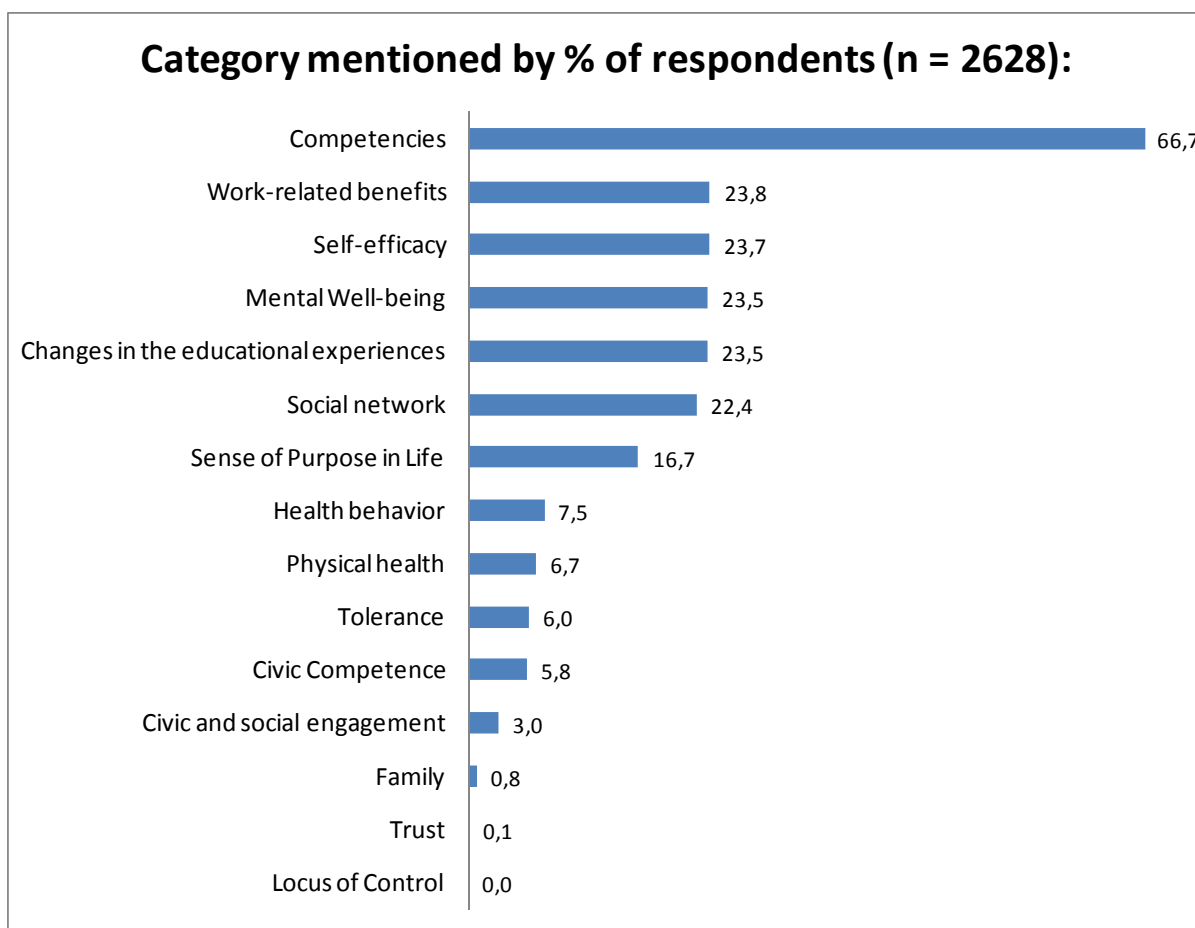


Figure 2. Preliminary results of the qualitative analysis of open questions: frequencies of main benefit categories

It seems that respondents are more likely to mention various skills and competencies as outcomes. The result can also be explained by the great variety of different courses: that main category includes 19 themes for skills and competencies, ranging from language skills (mentioned 323 times) to environmental awareness (mentioned 13 times). On the other hand this result indicates an increase of subjectively perceived competencies in various fields as one of the major benefits of liberal adult education.

5 NEXT STEPS

Next steps in the BeLL project are deeper analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data, including also the analysis of theme interview data. Mixed method approach gives opportunity to analyze deeper how the benefits develop within the courses and in what kind of circumstances. Use of both qualitative and quantitative data to spot the benefits also enables a

deeper analysis of wider benefits of adult learning. Earlier Finnish study (Manninen & Luukannel 2008; Manninen 2010) showed that benefits found in interviews, in open questions and in survey statements are almost identical. The qualitative data give deeper understanding and also a “natural voice” to results. It is also used for a deeper analysis of possible connections between the benefits, for finding observable external criteria of the benefits and for a deeper analysis of the development of the benefits depending on course related aspects like the teacher, the group, the teaching methods, etc. .

Earlier studies (eg. Hammond, 2005; Desjardins, 2003; 2008b) have indicated that the relationship of learning processes and wider benefits is a complex one. For example Hammond (2005, p. 250) write that different types of education have different effects for learners with different backgrounds, and Desjardins (2003, p. 27) report findings that job-related learning have positive effect on economic outcomes, but personal interest related learning have an negative effect. In terms of social outcomes the effects are reversed. There are also differences between the men and women on how they experience the benefits (Nummela, Sulander, Rahkonen & Uutela, 2008).

One interesting point will be the analysis of negative outcomes of learning. As the preliminary BeLL results indicate, learning can also cause negative changes in adult’s life. In the previous Finnish study (Manninen & Luukannel, 2008; Manninen, 2010) the respondents reported only a few negative outcomes, such as being busy with courses and reduced opportunities to spend time with the family. OECD (2007, 31; see also Feinstein et al., 2008, 20) mention as negative potential outcome at society level the increased inequalities for example in income and employment opportunities, and at individual level increased stress level and cynicism regarding political system and politicians, if courses raise critical questions about functioning of the society. In BeLL interviews one respondent mentioned divorce when she was asked about negative outcomes of learning, but she felt this was actually a positive outcome since it enabled her to better fulfil her potential instead of being in a depressing relationship. Preliminary BeLL survey results indicate also negative changes albeit in a much lower percentage than the positive perceived benefits. These results will be analysed depending on various background variables like course themes, age, educational background etc. In addition, the results will be discussed in forthcoming institutional survey feedback processes with various staff members and adult learners from adult education organisations.

There is a need to deepen educational perspective of development of benefits with other frameworks, for example that of health sciences. For example Hyyppä, Mäki, Impivaara & Aromaa (2006) found a relationship between participation in leisure activities and mortality of Finnish middle-aged men. In a similar way Nummela et al. (2008) verified that going to art exhibitions, theatre, movies, and concerts among women and studying and self-development among men were significantly positively related to self-rated health of the ageing people. The same data indicate that these health benefits develop through increased social capital (Nummela, Sulander, Karisto & Uutela, 2009). Active social participation and easy access to help from others were associated with good self-rated health. Trust was a particularly important correlate of subjective health. Social participation and access to help as indicators of social capital seem to be important resources for wellbeing.

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Appendix 1. Respondent profiles

Gender	Fre- quency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male	2443	28,3	28,8
Female	6031	69,8	71,2
Total	8474	98,0	100,0
Missing	172	2,0	
Total	8646	100,0	
3.3 education			
Primary education, or first stage of basic education, or less, ISCED 1 or less	324	3,7	3,8
Lower secondary education, or second stage of basic education, ISCED 2	825	9,5	9,7
Upper secondary education, ISCED 3	2724	31,5	32,2
Post secondary education, ISCED 4	1383	16,0	16,3
First or second stage of tertiary education, ISCED 5 and 6	3180	36,8	37,6
Other	29	,3	,3
Total	8465	97,9	100,0
Missing	181	2,1	
Total	8646	100,0	
3.4 employment status			
Employed full time	2744	31,7	32,5
Employed part time	723	8,4	8,6
Self-employed or freelancer	657	7,6	7,8
Doing housework at home	252	2,9	3,0
Student full time	662	7,7	7,8
Student part time	176	2,0	2,1
Retired/early retirement	2191	25,3	26,0
Unemployed	1009	11,7	12,0
Other	23	,3	,3
Total	8437	97,6	100,0
Missing	209	2,4	
Total	8646	100,0	
Age group			
15-24	1065	12,3	12,9
25-36	1938	22,4	23,6
37-49	1727	20,0	21,0
50-64	2160	25,0	26,3
65-92	1338	15,5	16,3
Total	8228	95,2	100,0
Missing	418	4,8	
Total	8646	100,0	

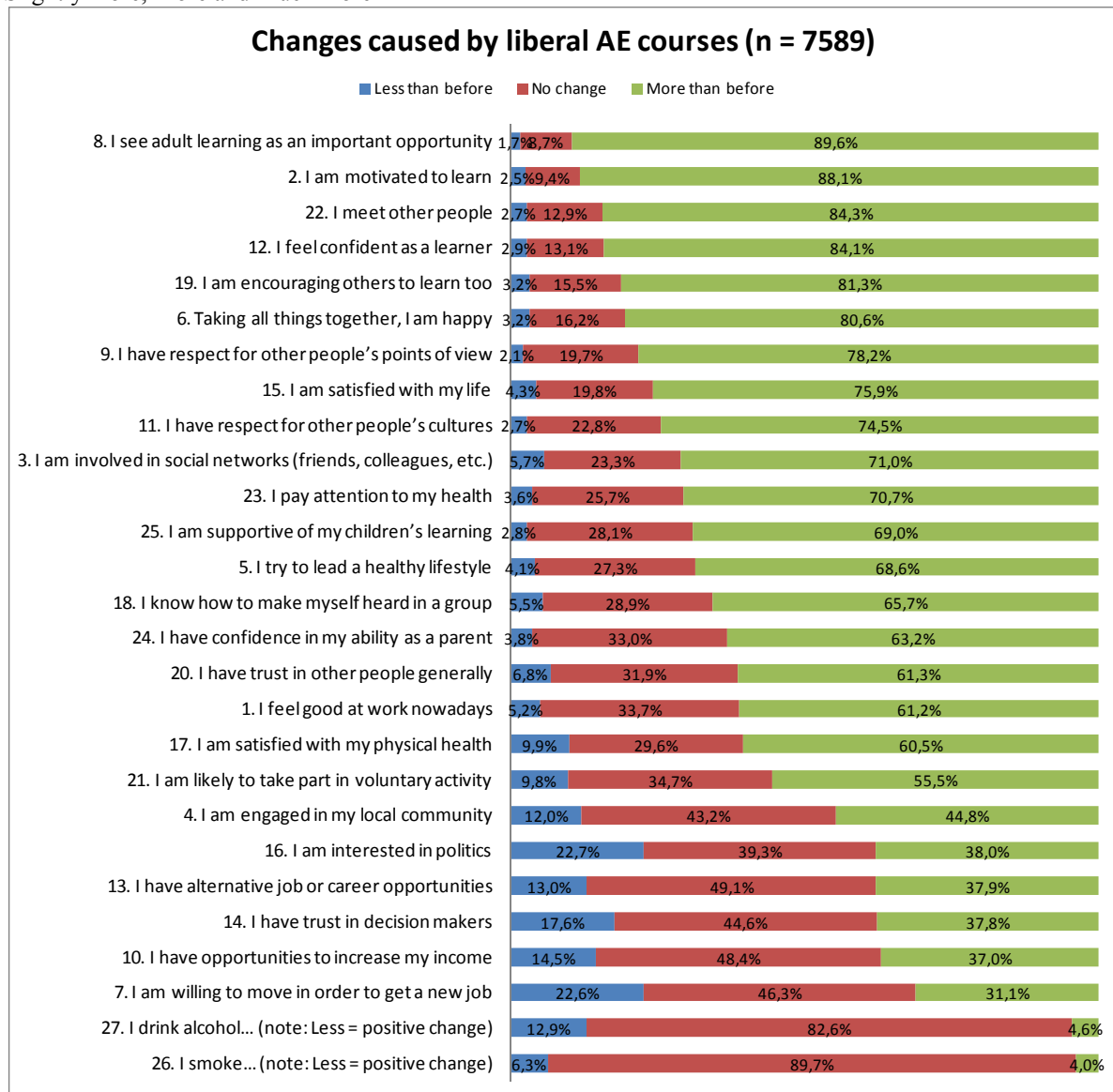
Appendix 2. Course topics

Course topic	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Several course types attended *	2099	24,3	24,6
Languages	1290	14,9	15,1
Work related and vocational topics	958	11,1	11,2
Sports	735	8,5	8,6
Basic ICT skills	544	6,3	6,4
Social education	465	5,4	5,4
Handicrafts	341	3,9	4,0
ICT	316	3,7	3,7
Arts	258	3,0	3,0
Singing	238	2,8	2,8
Culture	217	2,5	2,5
Health related courses	206	2,4	2,4
Basic competencies	155	1,8	1,8
Political education	147	1,7	1,7
Music	76	,9	,9
Basic literacy skills	69	,8	,8
Baking and food	64	,7	,7
History	61	,7	,7
Special skills	61	,7	,7
Basic language skills	57	,7	,7
Creative writing	55	,6	,6
Nature	55	,6	,6
Animals	48	,6	,6
Science courses	24	,3	,3
Basic numeracy skills	8	,1	,1
Total	8547	98,9	100,0
Missing	99	1,1	
Total	8646	100,0	

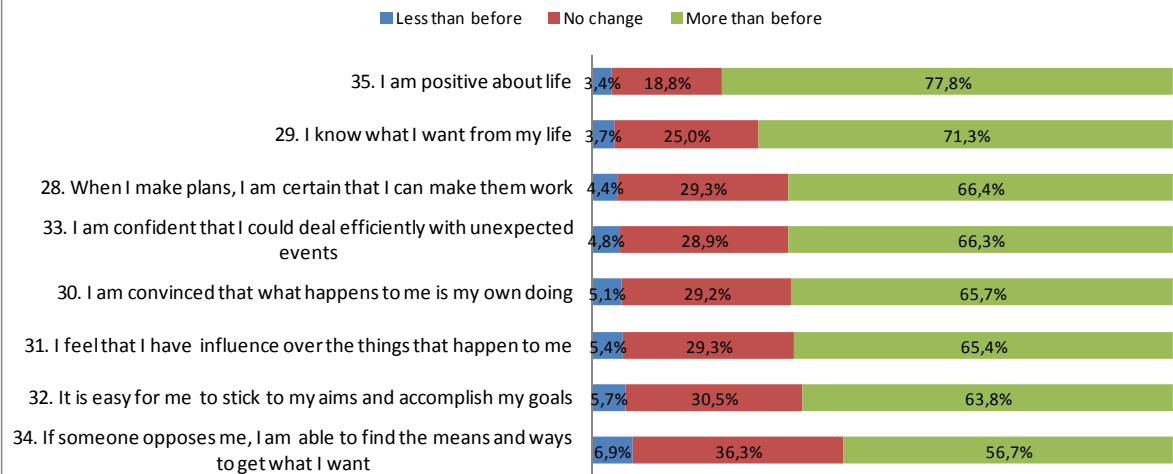
* This category includes participants, who have participated more than only one type of courses

Appendix 3. Frequencies of benefits (respondents who have studied liberal AE topics)

Note: “Less than before” include answers Much less, Less and Slightly less, “More than before” answers Slightly more, More and Much more



Changes in psychological statements (n = 7589)



Appendix 4. Preliminary results of the qualitative analysis of open questions (2628 cases analyzed so far)

