

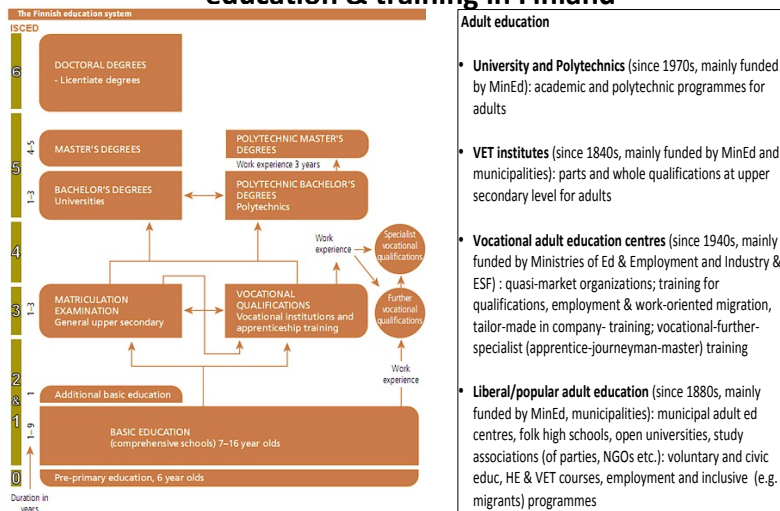
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# The Responsibility of Nordic Popular Adult Education – in Practice, Politics and Research

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## 1 The Finnish education system & main providers of adult education & training in Finland



0 = Pre-primary education. 1 = Primary education or 1st stage of basic education. 2 = Lower secondary education or 2nd stage of basic education. 3 = Upper secondary education. 4 = Post-secondary non-tertiary education. 5 = 1st stage of tertiary education. 6 = 2nd stage of tertiary education.

## Main providers of adult education & training in Finland (5,5 million inhabitants)

	Number of institutions
<b>Liberal adult education</b>	
Adult education centres	188
Folk high schools	79
Study centres	11
Summer universities	20
Physical education centres	11
<b>General adult education</b>	
Upper secondary schools for adults	49
<b>Vocational training (upper secondary level)</b>	
Initial vocational education providers	131
Specialised vocational institutions	28
Vocational adult education centres	ca 10
<b>Tertiary education</b>	
Polytechnics	24
Universities	14

= 358

## 2 Theoretical & methodological starting points

### 2.1 Conceptual framework

- **Denmark:** *Folkelig oplysning* (“folkish enlightenment”, N.F.S. Grundtvig 1830s-40s)
  - Ideal of peasant community; learning for life, not for exams; shared experiences, wisdom and culture of folk; oral, bodily, affective interaction and democratic encounter among students and teachers → collective, self-directed self-enlightenment and edification.
  - Integration of folkelig and vocational aspects of education → folk high schools, early vocational schools: public institutions (state, municipalities); **Norway** – influence from Denmark.
- **Sweden:** (*Fritt folkbildning* (“folk education”) → study associations, folk high schools; progressive role of state and public sector.
- **Finland:** *vapaa sivistystyö* (“free edification work”) → folk high schools (1880s), workers’/people’s institutes (1890s), study associations (1910s); rural edification work ↔ workers’ edification work.

## 2.2 Turning points in the Finnish PAE research

- The Finnish discipline of adult education referred mainly to PAE (popular adult education) **until the 1960s**.
- Studies started in the **1920s** in the Helsinki School of Social Sciences (originally a Folk High School/Civic College in **1925**).
- The 1<sup>st</sup> Finnish and Nordic professorship in PAE in **1946**.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> doctoral thesis on PAE in **1955**, took till the 1960s with the next.
- In **1960** the school relocated to Tampere, renamed **1966** as University of Tampere. In 1966 the discipline was renamed as adult education, due to 'international examples' and the expansion of vocational adult education.
- During the **1980s** adult education started to expand to other Finnish universities and discipline started increasingly focus on work-related and higher education.

## 2.3 Methodological starting points

### Historicizing and power-critical framework

- Emergence of research fields (Latour 1994, Narotzky 2007)
- Genealogy (Foucault 1980)
- Actor-networks and spheres of reality (Latour 2005)
- Joint research (Vähämäki 2010)

### Human and social-centred assumptions about the meaning and aims of adult education / Bildung / edification (Heikkinen 2014)

#### Background

- Research – practice – policy relations in adult education project (AITURI) (<http://www.aikiskasvatustutkimusseura.fi/info/eng/>)
- Freedom and Responsibility of Liberal Adult Education Programme (SVV) (<http://www.vapausjavastuu.fi/in-english/>)
- Fields and Layers of Finnish Adult Education research project (SAKKE)

### 3 Research data & findings

#### 3.1 Empirical, processual & historical material

- Key actor interviews (11), discussion sessions (7) and questionnaire (79) of different adult education actors, memos and notes from meetings and study circles with practitioners and policymakers (Teräsahde - AITURI)
- Selection of dissertations and theses produced since the 1930s (422 theses, Pätäri)
- Documents and secondary literature about organization of the field and actors (Heikkinen, Pätäri, Teräsahde)
- Compared with mainstream interpretations of the distinctiveness of adult education in Finnish and transnational context (e.g. SAKKE)

#### 3.2 Conceptions of different actors about the nature & function of adult education research (Teräsahde)

##### PAE

##### *Functions of research*

- to *defend* the field against budget cuts ¾.
- other functions ¼: to *serve* society, practice etc.

##### *Needs and expectations towards research*

- research to help effective *lobbying*.
- an increase in *volume* of research -> an increase in appreciation of the field.
- plenty of themes for research, *quality and effectiveness* in front.
- plenty of ideas for research *collaboration*.

##### *Attitudes towards research*

+ research is valued, if defends the field.

- the experienced distance and the lack of resources have reduced interests towards research.

##### **Responsibility for what?**

Poor economical situation → securing resources → support from research → lack of other prospects towards research

## Vocational adult education

### *Functions of research*

- to provide knowledge for *evidence-based policymaking* ½.
- other functions ½: e.g. to research the societal change and its impacts.

### *Needs and expectations towards research*

- few expectations for research.
- a couple of themes for research identified related to *adoption of new policies*.
- no actual need for research *collaboration*, but researchers are welcome to try to sell their ideas and work.

### *Attitudes*

+ would be valuable, if there would be some focusing on the field.

- no interests, separate worlds, attitudinal blocks, annoyed at university's autonomy.

### **Responsibility for what?**

Europeanization of educational policymaking, proactive adjustment to societal change

## Policymakers

### *Functions of research*

- to inform policymakers the main results of research for *evidence-based policy* ½.
- other functions ¼: e.g. to provide knowledge for different actors to support lifelong learning of citizens.

### *Needs and expectations*

- a couple of themes for research related to *effective policymaking*.

### *Attitudes*

+ the value is similar to other research fields; significant to some, but the use of research as evidence in policymaking depends on a single policymaker.

- researchers' lack of knowledge on practice.

### **Responsibility for what?**

Effective implementation of lifelong learning policies during economic recession

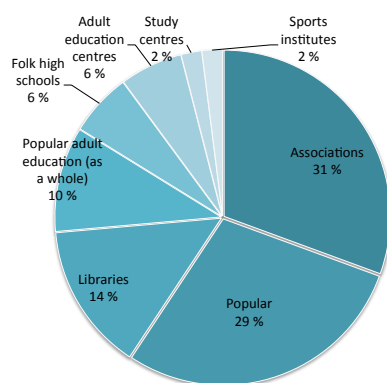
### 3.3 How the Finnish PAE thesis research connects with the question of responsibility? (Pätäri)

#### A case of two samples

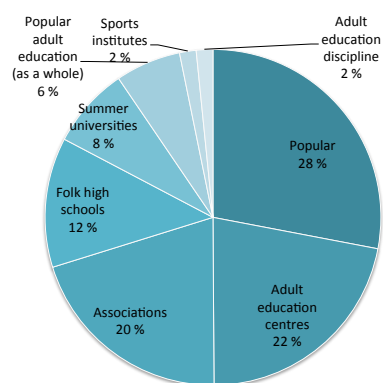
- 1<sup>st</sup> sample: 1940-1959. 48 MA theses + 1 dissertation (49/180, 27 %). Six disciplines including adult education.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> sample: 2000-2014. 50 MA theses + 14 dissertations (64/277, 23 %) from general and adult education disciplines.
- Random selection, weighting educational sciences.
- Main themes, based on titles and keywords, provide an overview of thesis research.

#### Charts 1-2. Institutional orientation of the Finnish PAE thesis research

Sample 1940-59 (% , n = 49)



Sample 2000-2014 (% , n = 64)



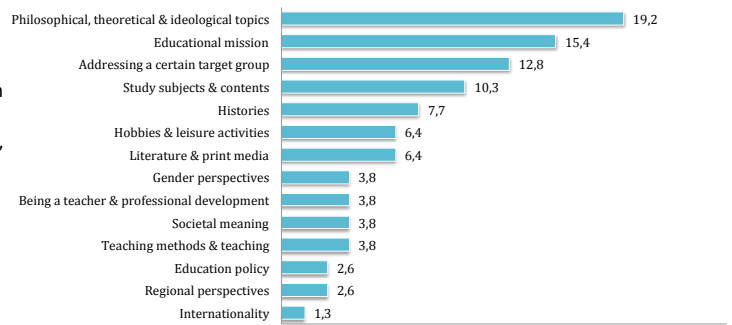
- Provider-oriented research: 61 % → 64 %.
- **Conclusion:** PAE research responds to the developmental needs of a certain organization or organization type.

**Table 1. Examples of theses & themes**

Theme	Thesis
Hobbies and leisure activities	A research on educative hobbies and leisure activities in the Savio factory colony (Erich von Denffer 1952, Helsinki: School of Social Sciences, sociology and social psychology).
Addressing a certain target group	Sports and physical activities as an international language. Immigrants' relationship with physical education and its impact on acculturating. (Rachel Lehtosaari 2010. University of Turku, general education).
Societal meaning	The societal mission of folk high school (Kauko Honkala 1957. Helsinki: School of Social Sciences, societal studies).
Internationality	1. From Nordic roots towards global agency? Cultural practices and their internationality in Finnish folk high schools at the beginning of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century (Helena Koskinen 2003, University of Tampere, adult education. Dissertation). 2. Conditions of countryside libraries in Germany (Anja Seppä 1955. Helsinki: School of Social Sciences, library studies).
Gender perspectives	1. Studying in more ways than one. Aged women at the University of the Third Age in Finland (Hanna Ojala 2011, University of Tampere, adult education. Dissertation). 2. Finnish literature concerning women's gymnastics (Anneli Vakkari 1948. Helsinki: School of Social Sciences, library studies).
Literature and print media	The relationship between libraries and censorship (Irmeli Ekelund 1958. Helsinki: School of Social Sciences, library studies).
Regional perspectives	Migrants' adaptation to new circumstances and their educative hobbies and leisure activities in the Loimaa region. (Laila Rauta 1949. Helsinki: School of Social Sciences, societal studies).
Education policy	Municipalities' popular adult education and state aid system (Pentti Karppinen 1957. Helsinki: School of Social Sciences, municipal studies).
Active citizenship	Can you change the world by thumbs upping? Social media in civic activity – a place for learning in civic associations (Soile Honkala & Katja Nissinen 2013. University of Tampere, general education).
Communality, peeriness	"It really shows that we are alike and like belong to the same group." Peeriness in the ICT studies of the elderly (Milla Saajanaho 2008, University of Jyväskylä, adult education).

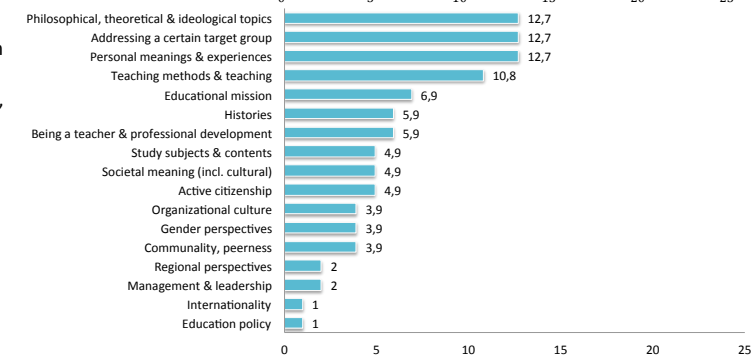
**Chart 3.**

Main themes in Finnish PAE thesis research, 1940-50s (% of themes = 78).



**Chart 4.**

Main themes in Finnish PAE thesis research, early 2000s (% of themes = 102).



### Conclusions on theme analysis

- Thematic orientation seems to follow institutional orientation: theses respond to the needs of organizations and the people involved in them.
- Also to adult education policy and political agendas (e.g. *target group theme* focuses often on special groups like elderly people or immigrants).  
→ A transfer from contents towards people.
- The growing tendency to serve PAE organizations cf. Teräsahde's findings, where respondents argue that research and practice have diverged.
  - Samples indicate that they have converged.
  - Researchers' practical orientation is stronger than practitioners' research orientation?
- Responsibility, or the "response ability", seem to connect rather inward than with the wider context of society and environment.

### 3.4 Responsibilities in the context of **disciplinization & closures** of PAE (SAKKE)

- Folk enlightenment: ethical and political consensus  $\leftrightarrow$  Scientification through substance/subjects in adult education (- 1950s)  $\rightarrow$  **building of nation (folk) and nation-state.**
- Adult education (discipline) as legitimizer and defender of adult education institutions: participation and impact  $\leftrightarrow$  Scientification of adult education activities (1960s-)  $\rightarrow$  **self-defense of institutions and actors.**
- Vocational education (discipline) for adaptation and effectiveness of human machinery  $\leftrightarrow$  Distinctive knowledge and research based on "own field and interests" (1980s-)  $\rightarrow$  **competitiveness of industry and companies.**
- Scientific expertise (in adult education) as one competence among hundred others in the toolbox of adult learning professionals (2000-)  $\rightarrow$  **professionals and promotion of adult learning.**



#### 4 Tackling with the closure of Nordic adult education as practice, politics & research

- Escalation of economic, social and environmental crises: the human and non-human price of 'edification' and self-fulfilment of humans.
- Planetary condition for sustainability of life and wellbeing of humankind → radical critique of the (Nordic) concept for Bildung/edification:
  - 'Edification' as a programme for promotion and expansion of Nordic (European) culture.
  - 'Culture' as use of nature and inferior representatives of humankind as servants for superior humans.
- Challenging dichotomies between 'popular', 'academic' and 'vocational' adult education.

#### Out of the closure

- Our research as part of research – practice – politics collaboration: **SVV** - Freedom and Responsibility of PAE, <http://www.vapausjavastuu.fi>.
- Universities of Tampere, Eastern Finland and Åbo Akademi; Finnish Association for Education of Adults (VST, national umbrella organization); regional practitioners and policy-makers.

#### Objectives

- Critical reflection of transforming mission, methods, agency and implications in PAE in socio-historical change, such as quality, efficiency and competence-politics, conditioned by structural and financial reforms.
- From closure towards socially, culturally and environmentally responsible activity.

#### Main activities

- Joint research meetings, thesis collaboration, researching study circles, Studia Generalia lectures, joint publications.
- Researchers and practitioners as equal actors jointly identify research problems, collect data and produce knowledge.
- Development of new practices for long-term joint research and academic education in PAE.
- Regional, national and international collaboration (EquJust research group).

#### Challenges

- Competition and marketization among research and practitioner communities.
- Lack of space or time for freedom and responsibility.
- Hegemony of national and European research, development and innovation policies and programmes.
- Search for justification at any costs, compliancy, conformism.
- Fear of self-critical, genealogical analysis and revision of PAE in front of vital challenges: lack of planetary vision and collaboration.