



SYNTHESIS
REPORT

Becoming Adult Educators in the Baltic-Sea Region

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BABAR: Becoming Adult Educators in the Baltic-Sea Region

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Index

Executive summary	5
Chapter 1 Introduction	7
1.1. Background	7
<i>Marcella Milana & Anne Larson</i>	
1.2. Conceptual considerations	9
<i>Marcella Milana, Larissa Jögi & Marin Gross</i>	
1.2.1. Research questions and focus of the investigation	12
1.3. Methodological considerations	13
<i>Per Andersson & Susanne Köpsén</i>	
Chapter 2 Country overviews	15
2.1. Denmark	15
<i>Marcella Milana & Anne Larson</i>	
2.1.1. Policy discourse on adult education and training	15
2.1.2. Field of practice for adult educators	16
2.1.3. Education and training of adult educators	17
2.1.4. National specificity	20
2.1.5. Concluding remarks	21
2.2. Estonia	22
<i>Larissa Jögi & Marin Gross</i>	
2.2.1. Policy discourse on adult education and training	22
2.2.2. Field of practice for adult educators	23
2.2.3. Education and training of adult educators	25
2.2.4. National specificity	26
2.2.5. Concluding remarks	27

Index

2.3. Sweden	28
<i>Per Andersson & Susanne Köpsén</i>	
2.3.1. Policy discourse on adult education and training	28
2.3.2. Field of practice for adult educators	29
2.3.3. Education and training of adult educators	32
2.3.4. National specificity	35
2.3.5. Concluding remarks	36
Chapter 3 Cross-country analysis	37
3.1. National policy strategies	37
<i>Anne Larson & Marcella Milana</i>	
3.2. Initial education and training and competence development	40
<i>Larissa Jögi & Marin Gross</i>	
3.3. Concluding remarks	41
<i>Per Andersson & Susanne Köpsén</i>	
Chapter 4 Conclusions	47
References	51

Executive summary

This report presents the results from a comparative study of the qualification of adult educators in the Nordic-Baltic region. The study involved Denmark, Estonia and Sweden. The rationale behind the study is a growing interest in adult education resulting from a focus on lifelong learning in the public and political agendas, internationally and nationally. According to the authors of the report, an increased interest in adult education generates an increased interest in the professionalisation of the adult education sector, and thereby in the qualification of those teaching adults: adult educators.

Based on this belief, the study and hence the report looks into the role that the qualification of adult educators plays in policy, learning opportunities for those interested in qualifying as adult educators as well as adult educators' status as professionals. Besides the formation of personal teaching, which is grounded in learning theory, theoretical principles and experiences from practice, the development of a professional identity plays a role in adult educators becoming professionals. Similarly, so does the recognition of adult educators as professionals by society at large.

Methodologically, the study is based on document analysis. The documents selected for analysis have been: national and international research reports and articles; official descriptions of national education systems; and policy papers, laws and other legal documents dealing with adult education and/or the qualification of adult educators.

The study shows that in all three countries, there has been an increase in the political interest in adult education and training. In 1993, an act on adult education and training was accepted in Estonia and updated in 2001 (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, 1993). Four years later, in 1997, a huge reform of the adult education and training system was carried out in Sweden, and in 2000, a reform of adult and continuing education was launched in Denmark. The main drivers for the increased focus on adult education and training in all three countries seem to be the needs of the labour market, in light of globalisation and international competition as well as the Lisbon strategy. The study also shows that in spite of the increased focus on adult education and training and its importance, through-

out policy papers, there seems to be a lack of interest in the quality of the provision, in terms of education and learning processes, including the qualification of adult educators in Denmark and Sweden. In Estonia, a professional qualification standard for adult educators was accepted in 2004. Except for Estonia, thus, the question of qualification of adult educators is practically absent in ongoing national, political debates with respect to adult education and training.

In relation to the options for those interested in qualifying as adult educators, it is difficult to find courses or education programmes offering initial education and training. Instead, most courses and education programmes either offer in-service or a combination of initial and in-service education and training. Thus, there are few opportunities for adult educators to acquire the professional knowledge and identity as adult educators, before entering the field. In addition, adult educators, to a high degree, develop their competencies as adult educators through their work. Further, qualification requirements for teaching within adult education and training vary a lot, and are linked to the specific field of adult education. Within general adult education, in all three countries, the requirements are similar to those for teachers in primary and secondary schools with no demands on specific competences in teaching adults. Within vocationally oriented adult education and training, the situation is very similar to that within general adult education, as demands for pedagogical qualifications do not include specific competences in teaching adults. Liberal adult education in all three countries stands out as the least regulated sector in relation to required pedagogical qualifications for educators. Requirements within this sector are set by each employer. Being that an individual's professional development is tantamount to a society's recognition of his/her occupation as a professional one, it can be discussed whether adult educators today are considered as being part of a real profession in the three countries.

Based on the study, it can be concluded, that:

- Adult educators are absent within the policy discourse of adult education and training.
- Adult educators stand on the edge of a profession.
- Adult educators are self-taught professionals.

These issues are worth further attention within both policy and research circles.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Background

With an increased focus on lifelong learning, at both national and international levels, comes a renovated interest in adult education as an important domain offering intentional learning opportunities for the adult population. Consequently, professionalism in the field of adult education is attracting the attention of the European Union and the Nordic-Baltic region.

Addressing professionalism in adult education, however, is not an easy matter. Several scholars have tackled the inner problematic that characterises any attempt to define adult educators as a professional group (see in recent times Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Nuissl & Lattke, 2008). This group is differently addressed as adult educators, professional adult educators (Brockett, 1991) and, more recently, adult learning professionals, at least within the European context (Commission of the European Communities, 2006; Osborne, 2009b).

Against this background we acknowledge an increased concern on the need to qualify adult educators in order to increase efficiency and quality in adult education. This concern is testified, for instance, by the abundance of national and cross-national developmental projects, aimed at creating training modules for adult educators, who operate in both formal and non-formal sectors (cf. Carlsen & Irons 2003; Jääger & Irons, 2006). At the same time, several studies have been devoted, in recent years, to a close investigation of professionalisation processes among adult educators within and between countries (cf. Osborne, 2009a; Research von Beleid & PLATO, 2008; Nuissl & Egetenmeyer, exp. 2010). These studies have been often supported by existing ad hoc research networks, namely Network 3, which focuses on the professionalisation of teachers and trainers in lifelong learning, working within the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (see www.dpu.dk/asem), and the ESREA Network on

Adult Educators, Trainers and their Professional Development, established within the European Society for research in relations to the education of adults (see www.esrea.org).

Initial education and training of prospective adult educators, however, is still a relatively unexplored area of research, when compared to other fields of education and training, e.g. primary and secondary school teacher training, initial vocational training, etc., at both national and regional levels (Nuisl & Lattke, 2008), also within Nordic-Baltic countries.

In order to start filling in this gap, the authors of the present report set up a cross-national investigation, including Denmark, Sweden and Estonia, aimed at:

- Mapping out current initial education and training pathways for adult educators-to-be as well as the different understandings of professionalisation processes;
- Providing deeper insights into what governs the formation of initial competences and qualifications in the field of adult education (general, vocationally oriented and liberal);
- Developing policy recommendations to equip adult educators with better chances for qualification (thus, improving the quality of future adult education).

In the proceedings of this report, the results of such an investigation are presented. In particular, Chapter 2 outlines, for each of the countries involved in the study, the national context in which adult educators operate. Furthermore, it maps out the current opportunity structures that exist for prospective adult educators insofar as acquiring the body of knowledge, skills, competences and qualifications, which are considered necessary for working with adults in a variety of educational settings. In doing so, this chapter provides the background for the cross-country analysis presented in Chapter 3. There, special attention is paid, on the one hand, to both governmental and non-governmental policy strategies dealing with the professional development of adult educators and, on the other hand, to the challenges faced by current opportunity structures in responding to the needs that prospective adult educators have with respect to qualifying for the profession. Finally, in Chapter 4, the authors unfold and discuss critical issues in the professionalisation of adult educators, which emerge from the interplay between existing policy strategies and educational practices.

Before presenting the findings of our investigation, we introduce the reader to the conceptual and methodological framework that guided our work.

1.2. Conceptual considerations

Professionalism represents the precondition for a competent, specialised practice that takes place in a work context. Professionalisation is thus the process leading to professionalism. What characterises this process, however, depends on how a profession is defined (Whitehead, 1933; West, 2003).

Since the beginning of the 20th century, systematic attempts to studying professionalism pointed at two main features that characterise a profession: the altruistic nature of an occupation aimed at serving the public good (Tawney, 1920) and the theoretical knowledge base needed to perform such an occupation. This led to the development of so-called static, trait-based or attributes models (Cervero, 1988; West, 2003; Cook, 2008), which identify a set of qualities that define any profession. These qualities make reference to:

- A systematised body of core knowledge, generally acquired through higher education programmes;
- A set of guiding norms and ethics, i.e. codes of conduct;
- The social recognition assigned to a determinate profession;
- A certification system that authenticates the recognition of individuals as members of a given professional group;
- Other organisational features such as community sanctions (Greenwood, 1966) and/or systems of rewards (Barber, 1963).

Static models have been criticised for not taking into account historical, social, cultural and political dynamics that influence professionalisation processes. The criticisms led to the emergence of so-called structural-functional models (Wilensky, 1964; Elliot, 1972), which illustrate these processes rather than juxtaposing professions against a predefined set of characteristics (Cook, 2008). Hence “person professions” (i.e. teachers, nurses, and social workers), also received attention, in order to capture their struggles for higher professional statuses in industrialising societies (Etzioni, 1969). Within this new perspective, key generating qualities of a

profession, derived from static models, were reconsidered as a continuum, rather than fixed, close-ended categories (Goode, 1969). Special attention was hence paid to core qualities such as:

- The systematised body of core knowledge possessed by a professional;
- The collective orientation towards the public good that guides a professional practice;
- The degree of autonomy granted that results from the social recognition granted to a profession.

In today's studies on professionalism, in spite of divergent views and approaches (cf. Cunningham, 2008), there exists a certain degree of consensus that: "Professionalism is neither inevitable, universal, nor of any single type" (Crompton, 1987:106).

On this premise, it must be acknowledged that within the realm of adult education, professionalism is still under debate and has not been investigated to such a degree of breath and depth, as is the case in other educational fields, e.g. compulsory education. This may be partly due to the difficulties embedded in defining the borders of adult education as an occupational field, particularly since adult educators earning their living solely or primarily by working in adult education institutions are just a minority. In spite of this, Merriam and Brockett (2007) argue that professionalisation in adult education is a reality, by addressing the existence of:

- Graduate programmes that ensure advanced study in the field of adult education;
- Literature and sources of information that enable adult educators to critically review their practices;
- Professional associations that socialise the 'newcomers' and guarantee professional development.

Albeit, Merriam and Brockett's analysis is framed within the traditional definition of a profession, with its emphases on traits, i.e. special training at a higher level, specialised knowledge base, and memberships of a professional community; hence is not free from criticism (cf. Milana & Skrypyk, exp. 2010), their analysis also raises critical issues that are worth attention. Firstly, Merriam and Brockett highlight that professional advancement via specialised studies primarily addresses prospective and current workers in institutionalised adult education provision. Secondly,

existing graduate studies, with their focus on conventional adult education practices risk to downplay the need for professional advancement in less conventional adult education practices. Thirdly, existing literature and information sources often privilege codified versus less codified knowledge that contributes to the improvement of professional practices. Lastly, professional associations, although important socialising agencies that strengthen a sense of belonging, and therefore a professional identity, among professionals, also risk becoming elitist circles, especially when membership is stumpy.

Similarly in Europe, adult education practices go well beyond professional performance of full-time employees. Nuissl and Lattkle's (2008) approach to professionalism in adult education considers different fields of activity/functions people perform, rather than occupational status. By doing so, they essentially focus on the processes involved in carrying out an activity, rather than on specific contexts within which performances occur. Conceptualising professionalism by generalisations based on pre-defined fields of activity/functions people perform, however, still risks producing closed categorisations that, far from being exhaustive, are geographically and culturally contingent. This being said, it does take into due account that certain activities/functions are also influenced by historical, social, cultural and political contexts.

Several studies shed light on the influence of societal, educational and occupational contexts within which professional development among adult educators occurs; hence draw attention to the existence of a multitude of educational paths leading to professionalisation among adult educators (Sabatini et al., 2000; Pryzbylska, 2008; Research von Beleid & PLATO, 2008; Jögi & Gross, 2009a; Milana & Larson 2009; Andersson & Köpsén, 2009; Buiskool, Lakerveld & Broek, 2009). Professional development is thus understood as a complex, slow process, a non linear continuum and a continuous process of systematic maintenance and improvements made to broaden the professional growth and development of personal qualities, necessary for the execution of professional roles that take place in society (Berliner, 2001; McAuliffe, 2006). In other words, it is a lifelong and life wide learning process that involves planning, managing and benefiting one's own personal and professional development and it is influenced by an individual's self-awareness (Winter, 1995). Eraut (1994) uses the term 'self-

knowledge' to address self-awareness and the capacity to use knowledge towards understanding and constructing the self in a professional context. In line with this argument, we understand the professional development of adult educators as a process involving:

- The acquisition of a specialised body of knowledge;
- The formation of personal teaching-learning theories grounded on both theoretical principles and the self-interpretation of one's own practice;
- The construction of a professional identity.

1.2.1. Research questions and focus of the investigation

Our understanding of professionalism among adult educators led to the following research questions:

- Which social and cultural factors influence the formation of professional qualifications among prospective adult educators in the field of general adult education, vocationally oriented adult education and liberal education?
- How do adult education policies affect professionalisation processes in the field of general adult education, vocationally oriented adult education and liberal education?

Given the extensiveness of the field under study, we had to make some choices in order to delimit the area of our investigation. Firstly, although with the term 'adult educators' we include all people involved in the design, management and implementation of adult education opportunities, in our investigation we paid special attention to teachers and trainers in short, medium and long courses and programmes – those working in direct contact with adult learners. Secondly, although we recognise the important contributions made by people practicing adult education on a voluntary basis, in our investigation we only addressed people who earn their living educating adults – irrespective of the fact that they may or may not be recognised as adult educators

Within this group, however, our main interest focused on people teaching in the adult education and training supply that is regulated by the state and offered by either public or private institutions. Thirdly, although our origi-

nal interest was on ‘prospective’ adult educators, i.e. people preparing themselves to enter the field of adult education as professionals, we had to acknowledge that a clear cut distinction among those who will enter the profession and those already working as adult educators was not always possible. In spite of the above limitations, however, we preserved the complexity of the field by addressing different adult education contexts, i.e. general adult education, vocationally oriented education and liberal education, rather than limiting our attention to one of them.

1.3. Methodological considerations

The premise of our methodological approach is that individuals exist in multiple, multi-layered and interacting contexts. The focus of our investigation was on the structural conditions characterising these wider socio-cultural contexts. The investigation was conceived as a comparative study that was qualitative in its approach and multi-disciplinary by design.

The point of departure of our investigation is to be found in existing data. Desk research within Denmark, Estonia and Sweden was conducted, following shared guidelines for document analysis, in order to map the existing information on initial education and training opportunities for adult educators-to-be within general, vocational and liberal adult education, as well as to identify specific strategies put forward towards improving quality in the field of adult education. The focus of the desk research was on national documents, reports and research as well as international/comparative research of each country, primarily covering the last decade. The national desk research included three different kinds of documents. Firstly, research reports and articles were analysed so to map out different understandings of processes of professionalisation within general, vocational and liberal adult education and the influence of social and cultural factors. The focus of the analysis was on how adult educators qualify for the profession. We also looked for whether there were any research reports and/or articles discussing the needs of competence and qualification among adult educators. Secondly, official descriptions of national education systems were investigated in order to map out existing education and training pathways for those interested in becoming adult educators, as well as the

education and training systems for adults they are expected to work in. Thirdly, an analysis of policy papers was carried out with the aim to identify policy strategies put forward towards enhancing the quality in the field of adult education and training. The policy papers scrutinized included national reports on the implementation of the European lifelong learning strategy as well as policy documents in the field of adult education produced at a national level, i.e. policy statements, laws, bylaws, reports etc. For the selection of papers, our centre of attention was on strategies mentioning education and training for adult educators, although strategies as well as new laws and regulations dealing with adult education in general were also included.

According to our common guidelines agreement for desk research, a set of key concepts were used in the search for relevant documents. This included concepts relating to ‘adult education and training’, ‘andragogy’, ‘adult educators’, ‘qualifications’ and ‘competence’. Documents describing the national education systems were located by conducting a search for a similar set of concepts, though the words ‘general’, ‘vocational’, ‘liberal’, ‘formal’, and ‘informal’ were also used. For the search of relevant policy documents, a set of similar concepts were used, though the concept ‘lifelong learning’ was also used.

Policy documents and public information were examined in order to find explicit strategies and actual situations, but also to find the reigning approach to adult education, competences related to adult educators and the professionalisation of adult educators. This has not always clearly outspoken in policy documents but was interpreted through a textual analysis of words and expressions (Bergström & Boréus, 2005) – what is not mentioned can be as informative as what actually is explicitly stated.

Findings from the national desk research, which are presented in detail in single country reports available at www.dpu.dk/babar, were presented in partner meetings held during the project’s lifecycle. In critical discussions, the national maps of adult education systems and the existing provision of ET opportunities for prospective adult educators were jointly analysed in order to bring out a deeper understanding of the specific national conditions. Furthermore, a cross-national comparison between national conditions was jointly made, in order to investigate significant themes of policy stances, existing practices for adult education and opportunity structures for sustaining professionalism among prospective adult educators.

Chapter 2

Country overviews

This chapter shortly introduces the reader to the specific contexts within which adult educators work in Denmark, Estonia and Sweden. It does so by presenting the provision of adult education and training that is regulated by the state as well as by critically reviewing governmental policy in the field of adult learning. Furthermore, it presents the existing opportunity structures for (prospective) adult educators and highlights distinctive features that influence professionalisation processes among adult educators at national levels. For further information and additional references, please see: Andersson, P. & Köpsén, S. (2009). *Becoming Adult Educators in the Nordic Baltic Region. National Report: Sweden*. Linköping: Authors.; Jögi, L. & Gross, M. (2009b). *Becoming Adult Educators in the Nordic Baltic Region. National Report: Estonia*. Tallinn: Authors.; as well as Milana, M. & Larson, A. (2009). *Becoming Adult Educators in the Nordic Baltic Region. National Report: Denmark*. Copenhagen: Authors.

2.1. Denmark

2.1.1. Policy discourse on adult education and training

Although Denmark has a long tradition for adult education and training, which dates back to the 17th century, the years following the EU's Lisbon summit (2000) saw a huge surge in the number of strategies dealing with adult education and training in Denmark, also within areas other than traditional education policy (Danish Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs, 2002). Consequently, the Danish Government set up a tripartite committee on lifelong skills upgrading in 2004, which highlighted the need to strengthen the adult education and training supply through an enhanced co-operation between the public sector, the private sector and individuals (Danish Ministry of Finance, 2006a, 2006b). In particular, in the *Strategy for Denmark in the global economy* (Danish Government, 2006a), the Government

addressed education, lifelong skills upgrading, as well as research and innovation as the primary means for Denmark to become a leading knowledge society with strong competitiveness and strong cohesion.

As a follow-up to this strategy, *Denmark's strategy for lifelong learning* (Danish Ministry of Education, 2007) addressed the need to increase the workforce's skill levels, not least via adult education and training. The political will expressed in the report by the tripartite committee and in the two strategic documents by the Danish Government partially concretised in an increased supply of adult education and training opportunities.

2.1.2. Field of practice for adult educators

Since the 17th century, the adult education and training supply has grown extensively in quantity, as has the degree of regulation and organisation within the field; hence it is possible to speak today of a publicly funded 'system' of adult education and training that distinguishes between three streams of specialisation, regulated by laws: liberal adult education, general adult education and vocationally oriented adult education.

General adult education comprises a variety of provisions always leading to a final test or examination, hence to formal qualifications. More particularly, *General education for adults* – corresponding to grades 8 to 10 in primary and lower secondary school – has as its goal, increasing the possibilities of adults enrolling in further education. *Higher preparatory examination* aims at providing knowledge at an upper secondary school level, in a single subject or discipline, not least to enable a (re)entry into the labour market. *Special education* targets individuals who, due to a physical or psychological handicap, need pedagogical support to better their everyday life conditions. *Education for adults with dyslexia* targets individuals who experience difficulties with the basic acquisition of written information and complications in expressing themselves in the written form. *Danish as second language* addresses young and adult immigrants, refugees and other foreigners temporarily residing in Denmark for studying or working reasons. *Preparatory adult education* aims at giving adults the possibility of improving or supplementing their basic literacy and numeracy skills. The main providers of general adult education are Adult Education Centres, followed by public and private enterprises, trade unions, professional organisations and prisons.

Vocationally oriented adult education includes six typologies of learning provision. *Labour market training* as well as *Vocational education and training for adults* have the intended purpose of enhancing the active workforce's professional qualifications. Alternately, *Basic adult education*, *Further education and training*, *Diploma education* and *Master education*, aim at providing adults with possibilities for bettering both their personal and professional qualifications. Accordingly, there is a progression among these four typologies, which are officially referred to as the 'adult education and training system', possessing its own regulatory statute. The total supply is offered by different providers, each with specific responsibilities, i.e. Vocational Education and Training Colleges¹, Vocational Training Centres for adults, University Colleges and Universities.

Liberal adult education aims at increasing adults' general and specific knowledge and skills in order to support the desire and an ability to take responsibility for their own lives and actively participate in society. Public funding policies in this field, distinguish among a typology of providers, i.e. Day High Schools, Folk High Schools and University Extensions, rather than on a typology of learning supply.

2.1.3. Education and training of adult educators

Laws, acts and executive orders regulating the provision of adult education and training do not only define the corresponding aims, target groups and recognised providers but also the official qualification requirements for prospective teachers. In the field of general adult education, only special education, including education for dyslectics and Danish as second language, requires teachers to have both subject-specific qualifications and specialised qualifications in teaching adults. In contrast, teachers of general education for adults and higher preparatory examination courses are required, besides subject-specific knowledge and qualifications, the same pedagogical qualifications as teachers in primary and secondary school.

¹ These include Technical Schools, Commercial Schools, Agricultural Schools and Social and Healthcare Training Schools.

In the field of vocationally oriented adult education, only subject-specific qualifications and professional experience are formally requested before entering the profession. Newly appointed teachers with no prior teaching experience, however, have to complete a postgraduate vocational teacher training programme within the first two years of employment². The same qualification criteria apply to basic adult education teachers.

In the field of liberal adult education, qualification criteria for teachers depend upon specific employment criteria set by each provider.

Against this background, Danes willing to acquire specialised competences in teaching adults can enrol in a variety of courses and programmes corresponding to short-, medium- and long-cycle higher education (cf. Figure 1).

People with no prior pedagogical qualifications can enrol in short-cycle education, i.e. basic education in adult education-course, run by Adult Education Resource Centres or Educational Resource Centres c/o University Colleges. Basic education in adult education-attestation is often considered an entry criterion for further enrolment in available short-cycle learning opportunities, with the newly established Academy profession programme being the only exception.

For those who did not yet complete short-cycle higher education, but already possess a minimum of two years of professional experience, it is now possible to enrol in the Academy profession programme, run by the University College VIA (Aarhus), which enables further study at the diploma level.

Those with a special interest in teaching adults in vocationally oriented adult education can acquire pedagogical qualifications by enrolling in the Academy profession programme or in a special edition of Teachers of adults, run by Adult Education Resource Centres as well as University Colleges or Educational Resource Centres. Alternatively, they can enter

² Here it has to be mentioned that according to recent legislation (Act no. 190/2008, §13), the Ministry of Education, in agreement with the Council for Vocationally Oriented Adults and Continuing Education, is expected to revise the qualification requirements for teachers within the field of Labour market training. At the time we wrote this report however, no further information was available on the directions that these revisions may take.

postgraduate vocational teacher training, after employment, run by University Colleges.

People with a relevant short-cycle education and at least two years of professional experience can acquire specialised qualification at either medium- or long-cycle levels, i.e. diploma programmes run at University Colleges, or master programmes managed by Universities.

Figure 1 – The Danish provision of adult education and training for (prospective) adult educators³

Adult education and training system					Mainstream education	
				Teachers of Danish as second language (1 year)	Master programmes (1 year)	Long-cycle higher education
				Diploma programmes (1 year)		Medium-cycle higher education
Further education in adult education (5 weeks)	Teachers of dyslectics (8 weeks)	Post graduate vocational teacher training (18 weeks)	Teachers of adults (1 year)	Academy profession programme (1 year)		Short-cycle higher education
Basic education in adult education (3-4 weeks)						

Source: Milana, M. & Larson, A. (2009). *Becoming Adult Educators in the Nordic-Baltic Region*. National report: Denmark, Copenhagen: Authors, p. 20.

³ The range of available opportunities, depicted in Figure 1, only takes into consideration publicly-funded courses and programmes running on a regular basis and distinguishes between courses with a duration of between 3 and 18 weeks, and programmes that last 1-year, full-time. There is no official progression between the different courses and programmes presented; however, the discontinuous line indicates the possibility for an educational provider, which is offering a course or programme positioned above the line, to identify the completion of a course or programme positioned below the line as an entry criterion for applicants. The continuous lines distinguish between the courses and programmes corresponding to short-, medium- and long-cycle higher education programmes, respectively.

2.1.4. National specificity

In spite of the extensive reform undergone by the adult education and training system in the last decade (Danish Ministry of Finance, 1999), the issue of how prospective teachers of adults acquire their competences before entering the profession has been rarely addressed (Danish Ministry of Education & Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, 2004). When the tripartite committee (cf. 2.1.1.) presented its strategy in 2006, the qualification of prospective teachers in adult education and training was hardly discussed, though it was mentioned in relation to teaching adults with low basic skills (Danish Ministry of Finance, 2006a). Further, qualification of teachers is mentioned as an aspect of quality assurance for the providers of adult education and training; however, this specific topic was not on the agenda for follow-up meetings between the Government and its social partners (Danish Government, 2007; Danish Ministry of Finance, 2006b). Neither was qualification of prospective adult educators part of the agreement that the Danish Government and the three parties from the opposition⁴ entered into, in June, 2006: to secure future wealth, welfare and investments (Danish Government, 2006b). This is especially striking, since the agreements involved funding for the qualification of teachers within vocational education and training and within medium range higher education (Danish Government, 2006c; 2006d; 2008). Finally, how to qualify adult educators was not mentioned in the Danish strategy for lifelong learning by 2007. In short, although adult education and training has gained much attention in Danish education policy, and some policy papers even stress the need for high quality adult education and training, the qualification of those teaching in the adult education and training system is not very often on the political agenda, neither in relation to those who already teach or those who would like to do so.

⁴ The Social Democrats, the Danish Peoples' Party and the Social Liberal Party.

2.1.5. Concluding remarks

Danes are among the most active when it comes to participation in adult education and training. In 2008, 30.2 % of the Danish labour force aged 25-63 years had participated in adult education and training activities within the previous four weeks (EUROSTAT, 2009). This makes the incidence of participation in adult education and training in Denmark three times higher than the European average, which is hardly a surprise in a country with a publically-funded system of adult education and training, and with a rich variety and volume of learning provisions.

Today, the Danish adult education and training system not only offers opportunities for adults to engage in learning activities but it also offers ad hoc courses and programmes for prospective and current adult educators. This, at first glance, may partially explain why qualification within the field of adult education is a non-issue in the Danish policy discourse on quality in adult education and training. In taking a closer look, however, it is possible to highlight that:

- There exist no specialised provisions in the mainstream education system that provide specialised knowledge in teaching adults; hence entering into a career as an adult educator is not an option for young Danes.
- All programmes for adult educators are open to practitioners in both youth and adult education; accordingly these programmes primarily address people already working within the field of adult education and training, rather than prospective teachers of adults.
- Teaching adults is often perceived as an opportunity for a career shift at a later stage in life, rather than a profession one qualifies for before entering the labour market.
- Notwithstanding an increased political concern of the quality of the adult education and training provisions, equipping people with the required qualifications needed to enter the 'teaching-learning transaction' is seldom considered a necessary step forward.

2.2. Estonia

2.2.1. Policy discourse on adult education and training

Estonian educational policy, with its focus on lifelong learning, has been subjected to a continual, systematic process of strategic renewal. The *Adult Education Act* was first approved in 1993 and updated in 1998, 1999 and 2002. The Act defines the principles of the legislative framework for adult education and learning as follows:

- Creating a model of adult education which is based on the developmental needs of society and on the actual possibility of ensuring adults' access to lifelong learning.
- Guaranteeing a period of paid educational leave for every adult person to participate in education and training.
- Supporting local initiatives and bringing learning closer to home, advocating the co-operation of public, private and non-governmental adult education institutions.
- Allocating grants for in-service training for teachers and public administrators in the state budget.

National priorities of adult education for the years 2003-2004 focused on providing opportunities for adults to enter into lifelong learning, as well as formal education (Vöörmann et al., 2003). It also created opportunities for dropouts to return to the education system. Other priorities focused on ensuring the quality of adult training, including vocational training, and developing an adult education financing model, which consisted of motivating companies to invest in training their employees.

The *Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy for the years 2005–2008* (Estonian Ministry of Education and Science, 2005) describes the principles of, and need for lifelong learning on a wider scale. However, its goals, measures and activity plans focus on adult education. The general goal of the strategy is to motivate Estonians and increase their opportunities to participate both in formal and informal education in order to improve their knowledge and skills in line with their own needs and those related to citizenship, society and the labour market.

In short, there is an increased concern about the need to qualify adult education practitioners in Estonia, so as to enhance quality in the provi-

sion of adult education and training. However, research as to prerequisites for adult educators' professional development is negligible, as compared to other fields of education and training.

2.2.2. Field of practice for adult educators

During the last 15 years, Estonia has experienced political, ideological, economical, cultural and social changes. At the same time, globalisation processes have been influencing the development of information and communication technology, the global market and labour force mobility.

Since 2004, EU memberships ensured a more stable social, cultural, political and economic environment in Estonia. Good infrastructure, geographical location and a skilled, adaptable workforce created a good base for economical, political, cultural and educational development.

Adult education and lifelong learning are priorities for development in Estonia. In 1993, the Adult Education Act was established by the Estonian Parliament, and this Act changed the role of adult education in society, significantly (Märja, 2000:30).

Depending on its objectives, education is, according to the Act, one of the following:

- 1) Formal education acquired within the adult education system;
- 2) Professional education and training;
- 3) Non-formal education.

Figure 2 - Providers of adult education opportunities in Estonia by typology of provision

Formal education	Professional education and training	Non-formal education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities • Open Universities • Adult Gymnasiums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing education departments in Universities • Training Enterprises • Non-formal Training Centres • Folk High Schools • Continuing education departments in vocational schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Folk High Schools • Non-formal Training Centres • Libraries • Clubs, Learning Circles

Since 2006, one of the most important strategic documents in Estonia is the *Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2005-2008* (Estonian Ministry of Education and Science, 2005), which aims: at giving equal opportunities for learning; at assuring quality of education and training as well as information of learning opportunities and counselling for adults; at developing a professional qualification system; and at active participation in policy development at all levels. A weakness of the strategy, however, can be found in the unsteady financing.

The *Adult Education Act (consolidated in 2002)* establishes legal guarantees and stipulates the right of every person to lifelong learning through-out his/her life cycle, the obligations of both central and local government and of employers in the coordination and implementation of adult education, and the financing of adult education from the national budget. In particular:

- *The Government of the Republic* approves national priorities for adult education and, on the basis of these priorities, allocates the necessary resources for adult training in the state budget.
- *Local governments* guarantee the opportunity to acquire basic and secondary education to permanent residents in their territory and promote work-related education and popular education in co-opera-

tion with other local governments if necessary; they also support participation in courses for the unemployed, job seekers, the disabled and other socially disadvantaged persons.

- *Employers* grant study leaves to persons employed under employment contracts, for participation in training.

It is possible that in light of the *Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2005-2008* (Estonian Ministry of Education and Science, 2005) and current economic trends, the EU policy of Lifelong Learning (European Commission, 2001) will be put into practice. As such, the then to be outdated, regulations like Estonia's *Adult Education Act* will be modified according to EU Lifelong Learning policy aims and all required steps needed to implement this new EU education policy will be taken.

2.2.3. Education and training of adult educators

The professional choices and the formation of the professional identity of adult educators and specialists working in the field of adult education and training have been influenced by changes in Estonia's society, as the 1990s saw political, economic and social changes, the rise of a neoliberal economy and very intensive changes in the socio-economic and cultural environment.

According to research, adult educators are in a unique position among professionals as they have acquired a speciality in the course of their studies, but often lack formal preparation and initial training for teaching adults. Their studies have not necessarily included education for training and teaching adults (Jarvis, 2004; Karm, 2007).

At some stage of their career they might undertake further studies but the general tendency seems to be that the skills, knowledge and identity of educators are developed through experience and reflection on their own practice. The quality of preparation and professional activity among adult educators can vary greatly. Adult educators can have different perceptions of their professional identity, personal theories on teaching and their needs for personal training and development. While the responsibility for professional growth and development falls on the adult educator him/herself, it is important to figure out what his/her perceptions of a professional identity, professional growth and development are.

Research related to adult educators focuses primarily on describing the necessary competences and requirements for adult educators, and on establishing norms and standards. With regard to professionalism, however, it is essential to also understand how an adult educator him/herself understands and interprets his/her becoming an adult educator, and how his/her professional identity is constructed.

Becoming an adult educator in Estonia in the context of one's career is more a case of using possibilities, as they come, rather than a conscious and planned process.

Initial education and training of adult educators in Estonia has not been regulated; hence there is not a system for it. There are two main providers for adult educators' qualification courses – the Association of Estonian Adult Educators (Andras) and The Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association. Participants of these courses are expected to have gained at least some prior experience in the field of adult education, thus, people having an interest in entering the field of adult education but have no prior experience might not be able to enrol in the course. The courses are organised in various regions of Estonia and therefore provide learning opportunities for a wider audience. Participants can also apply for professional qualification after having completed the course. Many adult educators use this as a means towards applying for the professional qualification.

The Department of Adult Education at Tallinn University provides a curriculum for adult educators/andragogues. The curriculum is worth 45 ECTS and can be studied as part of an undergraduate programme or as a separate curriculum through an open university system. The latter is not a degree course on its own, but the curriculum aims at creating opportunities for obtaining knowledge and skills to work in the area of adult learning, teaching and training. A completed curriculum allows one to then apply for the professional qualification.

2.2.4. National specificity

'Adult educator' as a profession, has been recognised and regulated by the Professional Qualification Standard in Estonia since 2004. According to the definition, an adult educator is a specialist intermediating skills and/or

knowledge to adult people, directing their formation of comprehension and attitudes, and supporting the self-development of adults in adult general education, job-related and/or continuing professional training, popular education courses, study circles and other circumstances related to a purposeful learning situation. He/she creates a positive and motivating learning environment that assists the learners in accomplishing the goals of their learning in the best possible manner. In order to reach better results, he/she includes additional resources (other instructors, specialists, learners, etc.), if the need arises.

Applying for qualification is voluntary and depends on an applicant's wish to formalise his/her professional skills. An adult educator/andragogue's professional qualification can be applied for at four levels (levels II, III, IV, V)⁵. Since 2007, the professional standard has become competence-based, and this has significantly influenced the preparation of applicants for qualification.

The professional qualification of an adult educator is defined as an additional/partial qualification, the basic qualification being the profession or speciality acquired either at a University or in a Vocational Educational Institution (in the subject he/she is teaching).

Most adult educators are working with part-time agreements and are usually teaching simultaneously in several adult Training Centres and/or University departments.

2.2.5. Concluding remarks

Since the 1990s, the role and possibilities of adult education and adult professional training have rapidly grown. The importance of adult education in lifelong learning, as well as the value brought by adult educators making lifelong learning a reality, is being widely recognised and discussed in adult education practices. The development of adult education, the profession of adult educators, and their status in society is part of a broader social change.

⁵ Detailed information about the different levels can be found at www.andras.ee.

Adult educators are working in a rapidly changing environment, which implies a demand for professional development and professional identity. Prerequisites for the professionalisation of adult educators in Estonia lie in the economic, political, social and educational contexts: educational policy and the recognition of the profession and its status (regulations at national level, professional qualification standards, the status of the profession); personal and professional identity; learning opportunities (at all levels) and professional organisations.

Focus on adult educators' profession and existing opportunities for professional development are quite weak in Estonian regulations and educational policy documents. 'Adult educator', as a profession, has been recognised since 2004. Holding a qualification confirms an educator's level of professional competence and could be regarded as a means for enhancing an educator's competitiveness on the educational market. It could also serve as a guarantee for users, including learners, persons ordering an adult educator's services and employers.

2.3. Sweden

2.3.1. Policy discourse on adult education and training

Sweden has a long tradition in adult education, and particularly in liberal adult education. However, formal education and training for becoming an adult educator in Sweden is not very extensive. The general pattern is that adult educators have the same education as teachers in primary and secondary schools, and/or that the vocational or subject knowledge is in focus rather than the educational competence of teaching adults. Training exists for adult educators in the field of liberal adult education, particularly Folk High School teachers, however, non-formal liberal adult education has no formal requirements of teachers, creating a situation where a lot of teachers have significantly varied backgrounds.

Presently, the focus in adult education policy is to strengthen vocational adult education, partly through the extension of the vocational part of municipal upper secondary adult education, and partly through the establishment of 'higher vocational education' at the post-secondary level. There

is also a strong emphasis in education policy on the status of the teacher in general (particularly school teachers), but little specificity with respect to adult educators. A forthcoming teacher education reform should contribute to the development of the profession of adult educators; however, the upcoming role of these adult educators in teacher education is still unclear.

2.3.2. Field of practice for adult educators

Formal adult education at the primary and secondary levels in Sweden is a municipal responsibility. *General adult education* has a compensatory function for those who did not get this education when they were young. An important group of students are those who lack eligibility for higher education. Studies are normally flexible and course-based rather than programme-based, which means that students can study either part-time or full-time, depending on their choice of courses and their individual study plans. Courses are governed through a national curriculum, which corresponds to the equivalent education being taught to young persons. Adult education at the primary and lower secondary levels corresponds to compulsory school, and is called basic adult education. According to the law, municipalities must provide basic adult education, while extending adult education to the upper secondary level, depends on the municipality's decisions. It should be noted that municipalities, themselves, are not necessarily the main providers of formal adult education, but are free to commission other providers to arrange formal adult education (general and vocational). This means that municipal adult education can be arranged by private companies, but also by e.g. liberal adult education organisations (Folk High Schools and Study Associations).

Further, general municipal adult education includes *Swedish for immigrants* and *Special adult education*. Swedish for immigrants could also be provided by e.g. Folk High Schools and Study Associations that are commissioned to organise courses. *Special adult education* corresponds to the special education for persons up to 20 years of age. The target group includes adults who are developmentally disabled or are disabled in other respects, concerning their mental capacity.

Swedish *Vocational adult education* is partly included in municipal adult

education, in instances where it has the same curriculum as vocational courses in upper secondary school. In 2009, a special initiative was taken at the national level to expand the vocational part of municipal adult education (Swedish Ministry of Education, 2008b; SFS, 2009), with state subsidies earmarked for vocational education. This is significant for the present policy of adult education, where the labour market and vocational education are in focus to a higher extent. In vocational adult education, the function is not mainly to increase compensation. Rather, vocational education fulfils needs in the labour market. On the one hand, this means there is a focus on training for vocations with a labour shortage, while on the other hand, vocational adult education provides new opportunities in the labour market for the unemployed.

The introduction of *Advanced vocational education* ('kvalificerad yrkesutbildning') in the late 1990s is an example of the existing focus on vocational adult education. Advanced vocational education has been governed by a national agency, but employers have also had an extensive influence on the contents and quality of specific programmes, i.e. the curriculum of a programme is developed locally. Various providers were commissioned to run specific programmes for a limited number of years, and during these years, they operated under the control of the central agency. Following this period, providers had to re-apply to the national agency in order to be commissioned, and these applications were assessed in relation to the existing needs in the labour market. In the middle of 2009, advanced vocational education was replaced by the similar *Higher vocational education*, under the new Swedish National Agency of Higher Vocational Education (Swedish Ministry of Education, 2008c; Dir. 2008:153; Dir. 2009:26).

Labour market education is vocational education that is commissioned by the Public Employment Office, and is situated outside the formal education system. Providers are normally private education companies, but could also be higher education or municipal adult education organisations. The target group includes the unemployed who are at least 25 years old. The Public Employment Office also provides Preparation education for the same target group, which include courses that prepare individuals for labour market education (or other education, including theoretical education), or are focus on assessment (validation) of vocational competence.

The first Swedish Folk High Schools were established in the 19th century,

and the first Study Associations were organised in the early 20th century. *Liberal adult education* or ‘folkbildning’ in Sweden, is non-formal and has no formal relation to the state in terms of a governing agency, etc., even if the state provides extensive subsidies. Instead, the Swedish Council for adult education⁶, since 1991, has been commissioned by the state to monitor Folk High Schools and Study Associations, and to decide how state subsidies should be distributed to them. ‘Folkbildning’, which could be seen as the Swedish branch of liberal adult education, is defined as non-formal education, which is ‘free and voluntary’. Courses should start from the needs of the individual and of the democratic society, including the ‘third sector’ and non-governmental organisations own many of the schools and Study Associations.

Folk High Schools mainly provide full-time adult education, but also shorter courses. Folk High Schools in Sweden are ‘owned’ by what is called ‘huvudmän’ (trustees), and these are either one or more non-governmental organisations, with varying ideological backgrounds, or the county council. Liberal adult education in Folk High Schools varies regarding contents; actually, it covers all the three fields of general, vocational, and liberal education. All Folk High Schools are expected to have a general course, and a considerable number of Folk High School courses that are vocationally-oriented (Landström, 2004). But these courses are not primarily based on labour market needs, as in vocational adult education. More often, they are based on individual interests in subjects like art, handicraft and music, or on the needs of skilled employees in non-governmental organisations, etc. All courses should apply pedagogy/methods that are typical for ‘folkbildning’, and there are also courses with ‘liberal’ contents, i.e. courses with contents other than general and vocational subjects.

Study Associations make up the other main category of ‘folkbildning’ or liberal adult education providers in Sweden. Most Study Associations are ‘owned’ by different member associations, non-governmental organisations, ranging e.g. from religious to political organisations. Study Associations

⁶ An non-governmental organisation with three members: two Folk High School organisations (one represents the non-governmental organisation-owned schools, and the second is an organisation of Swedish municipalities and county councils representing county council-owned schools), and the third is an umbrella organisation, representing Study Associations.

mainly arrange different types of study circles, or ‘courses’, where people study part-time. The contents of circles vary and include liberal, as well as general and vocationally-oriented subjects. In addition to study circles, the Associations also arrange cultural events, ‘other liberal adult education’, and some also provide formal adult education commissioned by a municipality (see above). Figure 3 summarises the main types of adult education in Sweden.

Figure 3 - Adult education opportunities in Sweden by typology of provision

	Basic	Upper secondary	Post-secondary*	Level-independent
General adult education				
Municipal adult education	X	X		
Swedish for immigrants				X
Special adult education	X	X		
Vocational adult education				
Vocational municipal adult education		X		
Advanced/Higher vocational education			X	
Labour market education		X		X
Vocational Folk High School education			X	
Liberal adult education				
Folk High School	X	X	X	X
Study Circles	X			X

* Post-secondary here does not include tertiary (higher) education.

2.3.3. Education and training of adult educators

There is not much formal regulation that focuses particularly on the competence formation in adult education and among adult educators in Sweden. Rather, regulations are similar to those for other teachers, and cover formal – general and vocational – adult education within primary

and secondary levels. Qualifications for these adult educators are the same as those for teachers who teach corresponding levels of education for young people, as well as those teaching corresponding subjects/vocations, in primary and secondary schools. This indicates that the requirement is the obtainment of a degree from a relevant teacher education programme. Teacher education programmes are provided through higher education available at Universities and University Colleges. However, if there is a lack of teachers, a person without a teaching degree could be employed as a teacher. Mentors in the workplace are also acting as educators in the work-based parts of vocational education, and for these mentors, there are no formal requirements with respect to educational competence.

In advanced vocational education, there are no certain requirements imposed on teachers. Providers apply for the right, and money, to arrange a programme for a limited number of years. The main criteria are labour market needs and the provider's competence in providing the programme, i.e. their vocational competence. In addition to teachers, mentors in the workplace also have roles as educators, as a significant part of the programmes is situated in the workplace. The situation would be the same in the higher vocational education. When it comes to labour market education, adult education is not considered as part of the formal school system. Thus, there are no formal requirements of adult educators.

Similarly, there are no formal requirements of Folk High School teachers, as liberal adult education is non-formal and therefore not regulated in this area. There is a Folk High School teacher programme at the university level that provides competence in teaching Folk High School, but Folk High Schools also employ upper secondary school teachers and teachers with specific subject competence but without teacher education. In the latter group, it should be noted that "subject competence" includes not only general subjects but particular competences in specific vocations, such as arts, handicraft, etc. Folk High School teacher programmes are also offered as part-time in-service training for acting Folk High School teachers. Thus, there are no general formal requirements, and what is required at individual local schools, might vary.

Adult educators in Study circles are called study circle leaders. The position of study circle leader varies and ranges from that of full-time employed leader who runs a lot of circles/courses, to paid leaders who only run one

or few courses, to voluntary and unpaid leaders. The latter are mainly leaders of so called ‘comrade circles’ that are often arranged in close co-operation with a non-governmental organisation that is associated to a Study Association. There are no formal requirements imposed on study circle leaders who work as volunteers or are employed. Folk High School teacher programmes ran at the university level, target educators from Study Associations too, but in this case, participants in the university programme are not study circle leaders but rather organisers/administrators with an educational responsibility. Study Associations arrange their own in-service training for study circle leaders, and there could be requirements within each organisation.

Available education/training opportunities for adult educators in Sweden include both more extensive programmes that provide initial training and shorter courses. Most of these are situated in higher education. Initial education for adult educators is mainly provided through teacher programmes in higher education, i.e. Universities and University Colleges. 26 Universities and University Colleges have the teacher programme (180-330 ECTS, depending on the level and teaching subjects), which results in a teaching degree and formally qualifies teachers to teach adults, even if adult education competence is in the background in these programmes. The only programme dedicated to adult education is a 60 ECTS Folk High School teacher programme, which includes courses on adult learning and liberal adult education, and practicums undertaken at Folk High Schools. The programmes can be undertaken at a full-time basis for 1 year, or part-time, for 2 years, and is provided by Linköping University.

In addition to this, there are frequent separate courses, mainly available at a basic level. Universities and University Colleges have courses in adult education or adult learning, which but with few exceptions, do not focus on developing teacher competence. Rather, they have a broader focus on adult learning in different contexts, e.g. working life, and/or on more general aspects of adult learning. There are also a few continuing courses at advanced levels. These courses are normally organised as distance courses with a half-time study pace. Programmes and courses in human resource development/management also provide training for prospective adult educators in working life, but this is beyond the scope of the present study.

Thus, in Sweden, there is no formal education for adult teachers/educators outside Universities or University Colleges. One exception from

these university-based opportunities is the one offered at Brunnsvik Folk High School, which has offered a programme for liberal adult educators (Brunnsvik, 2008). The programme is equivalent to 10 weeks of full-time studies and combines full-time studies within the school with part-time distance studies, lasting 6-7 months. This programme targets prospective adult educators and adult educators in non-governmental organisations such as Study Associations and trade unions, and those involved in the labour movement⁷. With this exception, it is rare that adult educators are trained outside Universities. The other type of exception is part-time in-service training targeted at, for example, study circle leaders in a Study Association. However, the latter case is also beyond the scope of the present project.

2.3.4. National specificity

Here, it should be noted that the present proposal of a new teacher education (SOU, 2008:109) puts some new focus on adult education, even if the rationale for the need of adult educators is neither analysed nor discussed in the proposal. The official report, which will be followed by a governmental bill⁸, will probably come into effect in February 2010, and explicitly differentiates teachers of upper secondary school and adult education as categories. The consequence should or could be that these teachers will have an education that puts more focus on their role as adult educators, as compared to present teacher education. However, it is not mentioned in the same way that education on the compulsory school level could also be provided for adult students (as mentioned, municipalities are obliged to do this if there is a demand). Thus, the role of compulsory school teachers as

⁷ As mentioned above, many Folk High Schools are owned by non-governmental organisations with different ideological backgrounds, and Brunnsvik Folk High School is owned by non-governmental organisations within the labour movement.

⁸ Swedish official reports are normally written by, and present proposals from, an external investigator, while the official proposal from e.g. the Ministry of Education is presented in a governmental bill, which is based on official reports and comments on this report from different actors in the country, e.g. municipalities, national agencies, Universities (cf. green papers and white papers).

adult educators is not highlighted in the proposal. Another part of the proposal denotes that Folk High School teacher programmes should be put down and instead merged into programmes of education for general upper secondary school and adult education teachers. That is, a Folk High School teacher's profile could be offered within such a programme, at Universities with a research-based competence to do so.

2.3.5. Concluding remarks

As a consequence of all this, adult educators do not hold a high status in Sweden, and more particularly, the adult education competence is not known in specificity. It is rather the general teacher status that present policy tries to promote. When it comes to vocational adult education, the focus is on the educators' vocational rather than educational competence. This situation is reflected in research too. Research on adult education and adult learning is relatively extensive, but there is not much research focusing on the adult educator, and nothing focusing on teacher education for adult educators.

Future opportunities for prospective adult educators in Sweden are unclear. A central question concerns what will happen in the new teacher education. The present official report puts some focus on adult education, but it is not yet known what policy concerning adult education will be included in the final decisions. Should there be any changes in practice, the policy concerning adult educators must be reflected in practice at Universities, where teachers are trained, and in municipalities, as well as among other providers of adult education. Further, it is not yet known how the education of liberal adult educators (primarily, Folk High School teachers) will be dealt with in the new teacher education, and the education for vocational teachers will probably also be changed. A central aspect concerning vocational teachers is if there will be any focus on adults, or if there will only be a focus on the vocational aspect independent of pupils' age. Our conclusion, based on all these different factors, is that presently, there are significant opportunities to strengthen the role of adult education and the position of the adult educator in Swedish teacher education. However, results from the restructuring process could also be the opposite, depending on what policy decisions are made.

Chapter 3

Cross-country analysis

3.1. National policy strategies

For all the three countries studied, the political interest in and focus on adult education and training has increased during at least the last 20 years. Both Denmark and Sweden have an especially long tradition in liberal adult education. However, in both countries, the political interest in adult education and training was intensified in the years just before and following the Lisbon Summit in 2000, when lifelong learning was made the main educational aim of the European Union. In Sweden a huge reform of the adult education and training system was carried out in the years 1997 to 2002 (Andersson & Köpsén, 2009), while a reform of adult and continuing ET was launched in Denmark in 2000 (Milana & Larson, 2009). In Estonia, an act on adult education and training was passed by the parliament in 1993, a few years after the country gained independence. The act governs all three sectors of adult education and training, i.e. formal/general adult education, adult professional training/vocational training, and non-formal/liberal adult education (Jõgi & Gross, 2009b).

In both Denmark and Sweden, the renewed interest in adult education and training seems related to developments and needs of the labour market. The same is the case for the Estonian adult education and training policy. In Sweden, the reform involved an increase in adult education driven partly by high unemployment rates (Andersson & Köpsén, 2009). In Denmark, one of the two aims of the reform was to improve vocational competences (Milana & Larson, 2009).

The tendency to base adult education and training policy on the needs and developments of the labour market in Denmark and Sweden has become even clearer after year 2000. Danish reforms of adult education and training since 2000 have been linked to globalisation and international competition. The main driver in the Danish adult education policy since year 2000, thus, seems to have been a wish to strengthen the competitiveness of the Danish economy in a situation characterised with global economic

competition (Ibid.). In Sweden, labour market and vocational education is given high priority and in 2009, an initiative was taken to expand the vocational part of municipal adult education. In addition, vocational adult education is provided within the framework of advanced vocational education and is now expanding 'higher vocational education' (Andersson & Köpsén, 2009). In Estonia, the policy in relation to lifelong learning is related to labour market policy, e.g. the act on the social protection of the unemployed and the act on labour market services. Although the lifelong learning strategy for 2005-2008 deals with lifelong learning in general, the main focus is on adult education and training (Jõgi & Gross, 2009b).

The needs of the labour market in light of globalisation and international competition, thus, seems to be the main driver for the increased focus on adult education and training in all the three countries studied. Adult education and training is seen as a way towards increasing a national economy's competitiveness in the global economic competition. Another important driver for a national political interest in adult education and training in these three countries, related to the focus on economic competition and labour markets, has been the launching of the EU Lisbon strategy for lifelong learning in 2000 (Estonia became a member of the EU in 2004). In the case of Estonia, a wish to create a democratic civil society and strengthen national identity has further worked as a driver (Ibid.), while for the two old, well-established democracies of Denmark and Sweden, the focus on adult education as a democratic tool seems to have become secondary to economic aims.

Interestingly, in light of an increased interest in adult education and training in all three countries, there is an apparent lack of interest in qualification of the adult educators in Denmark and Sweden. In this case, Estonia is the exception. In Estonia, professional qualification standards for adult educators were introduced in 2004. Since 2007, qualification standards for adult educators have been based on specific competences (Ibid.). Though it is voluntary for current and potential adult educators to apply for recognition based on these standards, the existence of such standards indicates an awareness of the need to qualify adult educators – this currently remains invisible in Danish and Swedish policy on adult education and training. Several Danish policy papers related to adult education and training since 2000 mention the need for high quality adult education and training.

Quality, however, is mainly described in terms of output, i.e. fulfilling the needs of the labour market, and not in terms of what goes on within adult education and training, including the qualification of adult educators (Milana & Larson, 2009). Neither in Sweden is the adult educator in focus, though adult education and training as such is high priority. According to Andersson and Köpsén (2009:22), "... the adult educator has been shadowed by the political vision on making complementary education and lifelong learning accessible to all people". This might be changed following a coming reform of teacher education in general. However, at the time of writing this report, it is not yet known what will be the policy for teacher training in relation to adult education and training (Andersson & Köpsén, 2009).

Except for Estonia, thus, the question of qualification of adult educators is practically absent from ongoing political debates on adult education and training. The lack of interest in the qualification of adult educators is also striking, in light of the importance it is ascribed by transnational organisations like the EU and the Nordic Council. In 2006, the Commission of the EU presented a Communication on Adult Learning in which they urged member states to introduce both initial and further professional development measures in order to qualify those working with adults (Commission of the European Communities, 2006). Furthermore, in 2007 this communication was followed by an Action Plan on Adult Learning, where the qualification of adult learning staff was one of the actions identified (Commission of the European Communities, 2007). In addition, in 2006, the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), in a report on adult education trends and issues in Europe, stressed the need for professional development of adult education staff, including those teaching adults (EAEA, 2006). Also, through the Grundtvig Programme, the EU has supported research and development projects on qualifying adult educators, e.g. Jääger & Irons, 2006; Research von Beleid & PLATO, 2008).

Summing up, in relation to national policy strategies in the three countries studied, it can be concluded that in spite of a significant and increased interest in adult education and training in the political debate, the qualification of those delivering adult education and training, i.e. adult educators, are more or less invisible on policy agendas. The main drivers for adult education policy in all three countries are global competition and

the Lisbon strategy, launched by the EU in 2000. The primary focus of policy agendas, thus, is put on adult education and training as a means of economic and labour market policy. Adult education and training is seen as a way towards enhancing the competitiveness of a national economy in global competition. Only in Estonia there seems to be an awareness of the need to qualify those educating adults, as indicated by the introduction of professional qualification standards for adult educators.

3.2. Initial education and training and competence development

Attention to initial education and pre-service training of prospective adult educators in Europe has been narrow although the need to qualify adult educators has become a focus of current policy discussions (Commission of the European Communities, 2006, 2007). By our analysis of initial education and training opportunities in Denmark, Estonia and Sweden, it can be stated that there are limited opportunities for initial education and pre-service training aimed at adult educators-to-be, those who are interested and motivated to acquire competencies for working in the field of adult education.

Initial education and training of adult educators has been the interest and obligation of adult educators themselves. At the national level of these three countries, there are no general regulations or requirements for adult educators' initial education. Qualification requirements for adult educators are linked to the areas in which they are working e.g. general, vocational, or liberal adult education. General adult education demands the same requirements as those existing for teachers in primary and secondary schools, which means that people working in the area have no specific formal qualification in teaching adults. Vocationally oriented adult education is rather similar to general adult education, as required qualification includes subject-specific knowledge and teaching experience or pedagogical training. Liberal education stands out, as it is the area that is the least regulated within these countries. Qualification requirements depend on the specific area of work and are set by each provider.

There are a variety of courses offered to adult educators but it is rather difficult to distinguish whether these are pre-service or in-service trainings. Courses offered to adult educators are sometimes targeted to beginners but are also open to experienced educators. Prior experience of teaching or working in the area might be a prerequisite to being accepted into a course in the first place.

Existing opportunities for initial education and training vary greatly in terms of education provider, content of the course, length, and final outcomes. Providers of initial education and training for adult educators are mainly Universities or Higher Education Institutions. The programmes offered in Higher Education Institutions tend to be either full degree courses (Sweden, Denmark and Estonia) or part of a wider programme (Estonia and Sweden). Another range of providers are umbrella organisations for non-formal adult education (Estonia) or Study Associations (Sweden), which organise courses aimed at practitioners in the field of adult education. In Estonia, these courses are named qualification courses, as participants have an opportunity to apply for adult educators' professional qualification upon completion. Various Adult Education Centres might be providers as well for training courses aimed at either prospective or experienced adult educators.

In short, initial education and training for prospective adult educators is fragmented in all three countries. There are no clear requirements for people interested in entering the field of practice, or the requirements are linked to a specific area of work, i.e. general, vocational or liberal education, thus it differs greatly. Training opportunities vary by content, length, final outcomes and mostly, by provider of education.

3.3. Concluding remarks

In this section we will turn back to the policy strategies and discuss these in relation to ET opportunities for adult educators.

- **Stance of policy**

EU strategies for lifelong learning have more or less influence on the policy strategies of different countries. Such a variation in influence is visible when we compare current policies in Denmark, Estonia and Sweden.

The general trend is that lifelong learning national policies, and more particularly, adult education policies in the studied countries, focus on labour market needs mainly in Denmark and Sweden. There is also a democratic aim of lifelong learning and adult education, but this aim is presently in the background, in these two countries. On the contrary, there is greater focus with respect to these aims, on democracy in Estonia – a relatively new democratic state.

- **Adult educator**

There are policy strategies at the EU level focusing on adult educators, related to educators' role in the quality of provision of adult education. However, in Danish, Estonian, and Swedish policy, this aspect of policy strategies and quality of provision is not discussed. An adult educator is more or less invisible in national policy strategies for adult education in the three countries studied. Strategies focus on the need of adult education without pronouncing specific plans for conducting adult education. Strategies targeting adult educators are rare, and there are no formal demands on adult educators in terms of specific formal competence in the field of adult education. Here, Estonia is partly an exception, as it maintains a national qualification for adult educators, but this qualification is not compulsory.

National strategies for adult education, as interpreted by us, are more focused on the need of competence and employability among adult learners than on the processes of achieving this competence. The possibilities for adults participating in adult education are discussed in terms of financial support, but not in terms of learning support. What kind of teachers or adult educators do the policy makers have in mind? Being critically suspicious, do they pay any attention to this question at all? Do they consider there are no specific aspects of teaching and learning in relation to adult education and adult learners?

- **Providers**

We can see that there are a limited number of explicit policies addressing education for adult educators, which also means there are limited opportunities for such an education. Further, there is no clear pattern concerning the existing opportunities. Opportunities vary, concerning type of providers, comprehension and content.

Even if there are differences in types and levels of these opportunities, there are different types of education on the university level in all three countries. In Denmark, there are also rather extensive opportunities in the adult education system, while the most comprehensive opportunities in Estonia are situated in non-formal adult education organisations. In Sweden, opportunities outside Universities and University Colleges are rare. There are exceptions, but mainly arranged as in-service training, e.g. in Study Associations.

- **Comprehension and content**

There are no extended programmes specified for becoming an adult educator. Rather, there is, in all three countries studied and regardless of the type of provider, more focus on shorter courses. Though there are shorter supplementary programmes available at Universities, such as the Danish master programme and the Swedish Folk High School teacher programme, which grants formal qualification to teachers in Folk High Schools. In Estonia, there are courses in non-formal adult education as well as at the university level that could provide the foundation for those seeking an adult educator qualification.

It shall also be noted that Sweden will have a new teacher education programme in a few years that might provide opportunities for becoming an adult educator. It is explicitly expressed in the present official report (green paper), that a teaching degree at the upper secondary level will provide competence for teachers of upper secondary school and adult education (Swedish Ministry of Education, 2008a).

Finally, the general pattern for adult educators' education is that there is a mix between the functions of preparatory pre-service training and in-service training. Students who undertake training in these different functions are often mixed in the same courses or programmes.

The lack of strategies and regulations of ET for adult educators implies differences in professional competence of adult educators in service, in all three countries. We consider the limited opportunities and differences in patterns of education as having an impact on the quality of the provided adult education, although formal competence not necessarily means high quality of actual competence.

- **Linking policy and practice**

Linking policy and practice in this field, we can draw some central conclusions. When there are no policy strategies targeting adult educators, there are no obvious incentives to develop programmes for adult educators. Furthermore, if there are no demands of specific qualifications for adult educators, there is limited motivation for future teachers of adults to enter the existing opportunity structures. The supply for and demand of opportunities for becoming a professional adult educator are inseparable – and also dependent on policy. The lack of strategies results in a lack of demand for extensive programmes, and without demand, there will not be any supply.

The main existing opportunities for becoming an adult educator could be seen as reflective of the discourse on lifelong learning, as they consist of a mix of informal learning from experience and recurrent education rather than only initial education. Available opportunities mainly take the form of in-service training for (un-qualified) acting adult educators. And as long as there are no specific, formal demands on adult education competence, this type of competence development becomes an individual's responsibility, which is normally used or put in practice later in life – contrasting initial training for teachers/educators in general. Internal motivation and building on one's own experiences as an adult educator, seem to be the main driving forces for participation in present opportunities.

However, is an individual's sense of responsibility enough to be the driving force towards developing the quality of adult education in terms of competence development of adult educators? A more explicit policy concerning adult educators and their competence would indicate some political responsibility for this aspect of the quality of adult education, which could lead to the potential of further developing adult education to areas beyond an individual's initiative. It should be noted that there are exceptions from this pattern, in terms of local policies that encompass formal demands, but a central policy initiative concerning the professionalisation of adult educators is lacking.

What are the consequences of maintaining the current opportunity structures in relation to those becoming adult educators? What is, for example, the age of prospective adult educators? As we have seen, there is almost no initial training, but rather supplementary education that builds

on prior education and/or experiences. This makes it difficult to become an adult educator as a 'young' person, which is something that should be considered. Does one have to be 'old', holding extensive experience prior to becoming an adult educator? On the other hand, in some countries (i.e. Sweden and Denmark) younger students who become teachers are also qualified to teach adult education, even if they lack, to a large extent, the training to become adult educators. To develop the quality of adult education, it could be argued that all potential adult educators should get some training that would prepare them for teaching adults.

It seems that as a part of the 'profession' as adult educator, one must also become or develop one's identity as adult educator. The competence of adult educators is normally developed through 'learning by doing' and in-service training. Though this might be an efficient, and in many ways, a highly valued means of becoming an adult educator, it highlights the incompleteness of the studied national policies in the area of adult education.

Strategies of adult education comprising only of reciprocal dependence situations are not good enough. Adult learners and adult educators are both significant parts of the learning process and hence, have an important impact on the quality of adult education and its outcomes. Considering the need and quality of adult education, there should be demands for an explicit policy concerning the qualification and professionalisation of adult educators, not only at the EU level but also at national levels.

Chapter 4

Conclusions

Adult education has historically played a unique role in facilitating citizens' participation in different spheres of life. Its function today is not diminished. On the contrary, the high degree of complexity that characterises modern society reinforces the centrality of adult education for all. Against this background, adult educators are in a central position, as they implement public policy by assisting teaching-learning processes of adult citizens in a large spectrum of educational contexts and learning activities. The extent to which contextual conditions support or hamper professionalism among adult educators in the Nordic-Baltic countries was presented and discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Following this analysis, we now turn our attention to some substantive issues that are worth further consideration by policy makers, researchers and those teaching prospective adult educators.

- **Adult educators are absent within the policy discourse on adult education**

From a public policy perspective, adult education represents the primary means towards including all those at risk of political, economic and social exclusion. Thus, when looking at recent reforms of publicly funded adult education provision in the countries covered by our study, they are especially concerned with increasing adult education activities that address sensitive groups, whose active participation in societal matters is hampered by new economic and social demands, i.e. minimally/modestly educated and/or low skilled adults, immigrants and refugees and old age adults.

In spite of a clear characterisation of the targets to be addressed by publicly funded adult education, adult educators are almost never mentioned in public policies on adult education. Hence, it is not at all clear how governments expect adult educators to prepare themselves for their chosen profession, prior to entering their vocational field, so to adequately assist teaching-learning processes of sensitive groups from the outset of their careers.

- **Adult educators stand at the edge of a ‘profession’**

The possession of professional knowledge, so to say, a body of abstract and organised knowledge that has a potential for action, represents one of the main qualities that characterise a profession. It is superfluous to advocate that adult educators inherited a core, professional knowledge base in pedagogy, which represents a pre-requisite to the occupation. This is, however, not sufficient in order to perform in a variety of contexts in which adults learn. A solid amount of adult educators’ base knowledge is also rooted in educational psychology, which describes the ways in which adults think, process and approach new information. Further to this, adult educators’ knowledge base is also rooted in educational sociology, which depicts the social contexts in which adults live, work and learn. In brief, the professional knowledge of an adult educator results in a mix of adult learning theories and consequent pedagogies of working with adults in different educational settings. Few opportunities exist for adult educators to acquire such a body of abstract and organised knowledge before entering their vocation. As such, people already employed as adult educators in a variety of contexts often return to education and training, so to compensate for the lack of professional knowledge at the time they entered the profession.

The collective orientation that people enact by performing a job is another quality that characterises a profession. It represents the criterion securing that a professional, when performing his/her job, applies the best course of action, based on the beneficiaries’ interests. The collective orientation adult educators endorse should contribute to the making of citizens as active participants in society. Today’s adult education provision, however, embeds contradicting values as it aims, on the one hand, at enriching individuals, and on the other hand, at controlling the type of knowledge adults acquire. Thus, adult educators find themselves in working environments that embed opposite values and may not always be prepared to perform according to a collective orientation based on learners’ interests.

The degree of autonomy in performing one’s own tasks and roles is an additional element that characterises a profession. This is highly dependent on the recognition and value assigned to the possession of professional knowledge and a collective orientation by employers, professional organisations and society at large. There is limited convergence in defining what

characterises the professional knowledge adult educators should possess as a pre-requisite to performing in a variety of educational contexts. There exists diverse views on when, where and how adult educators should acquire such knowledge. Also, the diversity of educational providers and learning provisions in which adult educators work, all have important implications in the degree of autonomy adult educators are granted in different arenas, at national level and in local contexts.

Today, as they enter their chosen careers, adult educators seem to be standing on the 'edge' of a profession rather than holding full membership of a professional group. Full recognition of an adult educator as a worker holding professional knowledge, enacting a collective orientation and possessing a certain degree of autonomy will eventually come through a lifelong and life wide learning process of planning and managing one's own personal and professional development.

- **Adult educators are self-taught professionals**

The lack of policy strategies targeting the professionalisation of adult educators, combined with limited pre-service education and training opportunities for prospective adult educators, and partial demands for specific qualifications in teaching adults, hampers professionalisation among prospective adult educators. Existing hindrances are generally compensated, at the individual level, by learning that occur on-the-job and in in-service education and training. These learning processes become the prevailing means of professionalisation in the field of adult education. As such, personal backgrounds, day-to-day work experience and individual motivation towards improving the self, still constitute the primary resources to professionalise as adult educators. This, however, has significant implications on the teaching-learning processes adult educators support at the outset of their career.

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This report presents the results from a comparative study of the qualification of adult educators in the Nordic-Baltic region. The study involved Denmark, Estonia and Sweden. The rationale behind the study is a growing interest in adult education resulting from a focus on lifelong learning in the public and political agendas, internationally and nationally. According to the authors of the report, an increased interest in adult education generates an increased interest in the professionalization of the adult education sector, and thereby in the qualification of those teaching adults: adult educators. Based on this belief, the study and hence the report looks into the role that the qualification of adult educators plays in policy, learning opportunities for those interested in qualifying as adult educators as well as adult educators' status as professionals.



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