

Adult Education and Integration in Finland

Since the beginning of this century the focal point in the integration effort has moved from work-oriented integration education towards a voluntary integration education. With that movement the effort has changed from integration through special efforts towards integration within the frames of the ordinary education system.

The integration efforts have furthermore become increasingly oriented towards work life, due to the economic expansion and the large demand for labour in the beginning of the century.

Immigrants constituted about 2.7 per cent of the total population in Finland in 2008. In the beginning of the century unemployment amongst immigrants was declining to a level around 20 per cent in 2008. Nevertheless, unemployment amongst immigrants was three times as high as unemployment in the population as a whole.

Until 2007 the integration effort was primarily a task undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Culture, emphasising vocational education, relevance for employability and validation. Since 2007 a larger part of the immigration has been work-related and the integration measures are undertaken in cooperation between several ministries.

The emphasis is on language education and a guidance system targeted at labour immigrants. The efforts are furthermore focusing on education of immigrants within specific occupational areas.

As is the case within the ordinary adult education field, the focus has shifted from development of professional skills through education to a focus on immediate relevance for the labour market. One consequence has been that educational studies and courses have been replaced by practical training and "learning-on-job".

In Finland integration through adult education is characterised by a wish to integrate the integration measures into the ordinary (adult) education system. Immigrants are to a large degree expected to being able to cope within the ordinary adult education offers. This is partly done by developing special measures aiming at the integration of immigrants within ordinary groups. The aim is that the integration educations form the start of a continuum through the adult education system directed towards the labour market.

Research Environments and Contact Persons

Department of Education, University of Tampere

Pirkko Pitkänen: pirkko.pitkainen@uta.fi

Faculty of Behavioral Sciences, University of Helsinki

Mirja Talib: mirja.talib@helsinki.fi

Faculty of Education, University of Jyväskylä

Kaija Matinheikki-Kokko: matinhei@edu.jyu.fi

Resources

Centre for Research on Ethnic Relations and Nationalism, CEREN:

<http://sockom.helsinki.fi/ceren/english/index.html>

Finnish Adult Education Association: <http://www.vsy.fi/en.php>

Finnish Adult Education Centre: <http://www.hel.fi/hki/sto/fi/Opiskelu/Immigrants>

Finnish Immigration Service: <http://www.migri.fi/netcomm/Default.asp?language=EN>

Ministry of Education and Culture: <http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/?lang=en>

Ministry of the Interior: http://www.intermin.fi/intermin/home.nsf/pages/index_eng

Research Centre on Migration, Transnationalism and Development (DeMi):

<http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=825>

The Society for the Study of Ethnic Relations and International Migration (ETMU):

http://www.etmu.fi/index_eng.html