

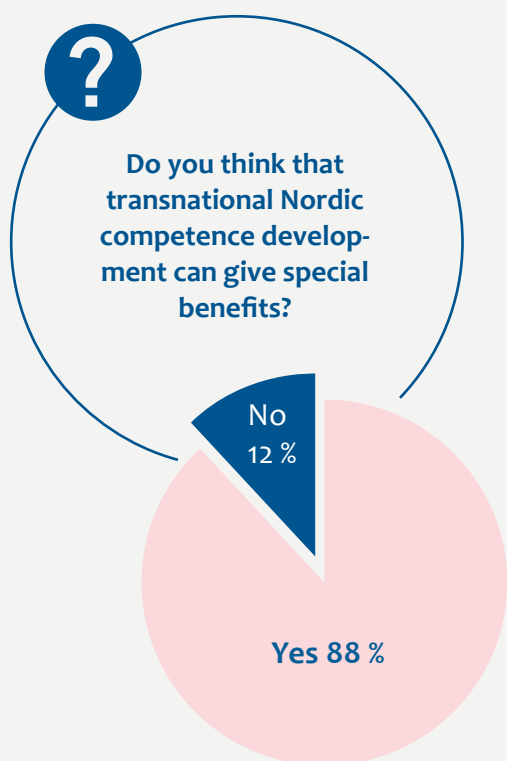
Dialog

SPECIAL



**The competent
adult educator**

THE REPORT ENQUIRES:



In the qualitative responses, the benefits of joint Nordic competence development are mostly justified in general terms, e.g. in terms of increased exchange of experience, knowledge sharing, more nuances and perspectives between participants, etc., while certain statements have more concrete content, e.g. increased networking and access to research.

In relation to the inclusion of 'the Nordic aspect' in a common competence development, both uniformity and diversity can be used actively in marketing, organising, selection of content, structure, etc.

Content

3	Preface – Nordic cooperation – Developing the competences of adult educators
5	ValiGuide – What is it?
8	Support, understanding and acceptance – result in more students completing school
11	Open Badges – the key to teacher training?
14	A bridge between students
16	Tough demands on leadership – the answer is competence development
20	Online Education is the Future

Preface – Nordic cooperation – Developing the competences of adult educators

The Nordic region, regarded as one of the most innovative and able regions in Europe, is now experiencing great pressure on its social institutions.

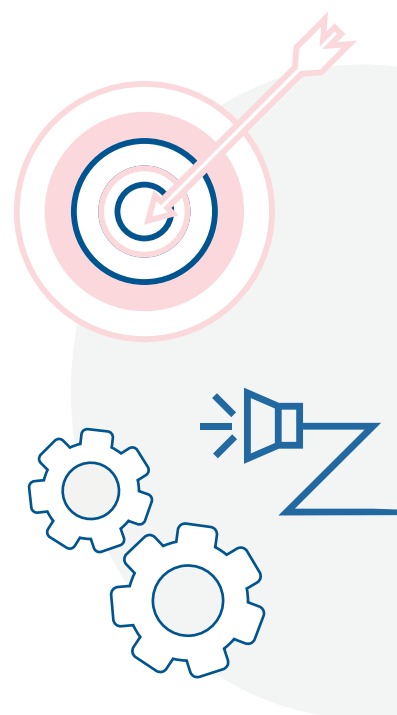
The educational systems are among the organisations that must adapt and adjust to new efforts towards inclusiveness, to increased digitalisation, and to an uncertain and rapidly changing labour market. Because of this, the teachers have new competence requirements, they must navigate and take part in very different learning settings and act in diverse roles, as educators, facilitators, counsellors and consultants.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has initiated a strategic effort towards renewed and strengthened educational cooperation to provide answers to present and future challenges and contribute to a continuing functional welfare society.

In the field of adult learning, both **Nordplus Adult** and **Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL)** are working with actual and concrete problem solving through the cross-disciplinary exchange of experience and development. Both programs have been, in their respective contexts, consistently concerned with the role of the teacher, and this has, among other things, resulted in a series of reports which all stress the importance of developing and organising high quality education. These same reports point out that the education and competence development of adult teachers is an area that is generally underprioritized and neglected both nationally and internationally.

This was the basis for initiating a joint NVL/Nordplus action during the fall of 2016, which was to address specifically the competence development of the adult teacher from a Nordic perspective.

The mapping project was documented in the report *Voksenlæreren kompetencer og kompetenceudvikling* (The Adult Educators Competences and Competence Development), which examines needs for competences according to adult educators' own experience, and assesses what adult educators' find to be the most important competences in their work. Together, these should provide the basis for recommendations for further work on Nordic adult educators' competence development. Adult educators' opportunities to participate in joint Nordic education initiatives and competence development are also highlighted. →





The mapping and the concrete examples supplement each other in many ways.

This journal is intended as a qualitative supplement to the mapping, by presenting concrete and current cases from Nordplus Adult projects, focusing on the role of the teacher.

The different cases represent many different institutions, target groups and areas of adult education, and thereby provide many perspectives on the theme; *development of mentorship for immigrants in the workplace, competence development of validation professionals who manage validation of non-formal and informal competences, the development of professional skills of teachers and staff members working with distance education, strengthening the capacity of leaders of adult learning institutions, competence development and recognition of teachers in the non-formal adult educational system by applying open badges, and the documentation and development of tools that enhance and activate teachers' possibilities to assist young adults returning to work or education.*

Both the report and journal give a clear picture of the different contexts where adult learning is practised, facilitated and organised. They also give an insight into the various roles the adult teacher must deal with, a role in very different target groups and with different goals.

The mapping and the concrete examples supplement each other in many ways. To demonstrate the connection between the mapping and the daily practice which are presented in the projects, quotes and facts from the mapping are included in some articles. The intention is partly to concretise and exemplify the result of the mapping, and partly to provide a broader and more general perspective.

We hope that the chosen facts and quotes will enhance the desire to read the report and that both the articles and the report will inspire readers to further development of "the adult teacher" competences in their own organisations and their own work – for example in new cooperation's, new mapping projects and surveys, or more concrete cooperation and exchange of experiences on a Nordic level.

This could contribute to, among other things, an increased interest and understanding of competence needs, as expressed by adult teachers in the mapping project on a Nordic level:

- Enhancement of adult pedagogic and adult didactic competences
- Strengthening of the understanding of adult learning processes
- Strengthening of administration, organisation and planning of education.

Both in the report and the articles, emphasis is on the theme "adult teacher", described from a cross sectorial and Nordic perspective. The resulting variety and diversity can provide special inspiration and a nuanced understanding of a theme as broad, complex and still dynamic as that of "adult teacher".

We hope you enjoy reading this.

*Malene Vangdrup, Nordplus Adult
Maria Marquard, NVL coordinator in Denmark*

By Sigrún Kristín Magnúsdóttir

ValiGuide – What is it?

In past years, the validation of prior learning or adults' non-formal and informal learning has been developing rapidly, and the need for professionalism has increased at the same rate.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING / VALIDATION OF REAL COMPETENCIES

Validation of adults' non-formal and informal learning to strengthen the interaction between adult education and working life is highly prioritized in all the Nordic countries. For historical reasons, there is a long-standing tradition of adult learning in the Nordic region, a robust tripartite cooperation and, crucially in today's world, a political focus on social inclusion. There are indications that people who have neither vocational nor upper secondary education, or who are immigrants or newcomers, are those who make the most of the validation process. There may be differences in how validation of prior learning is practised in each Nordic country, but validation is practised in all countries mainly in relation to access to education, customising of education, and to enhancing opportunities on the labour market. The individual is at the heart of the validation process, which is also considered to be a learning process that promotes empowerment and social inclusion.

TRILOGY OF PROJECTS

Ever since NVL was established in 2005, the network has worked on developing the practice of validation of prior learning through the Nordic Expert Network for Validation. The Expert Network has, with the support of Nordplus Adult, conducted a trilogy of projects in the field of validation. **Haukur Harðarson** is the Icelandic representative in the Expert Network. →



The article talks about the competence development of those who perform validation and ValiGuide, which supports competence mapping and methodology development.



Project partners

Competence profiles and competence mapping of validation professionals

Coordinating organisation:
Via University College
in Denmark

Other partners:
Savon koulutuskuntayhtymä
– Savo Consortium for Education

Vox, The Norwegian
Organisation for
Competence policy

Swedish National Agency for
Higher Vocational Education

Education and Training
Service Centre in Iceland

– It all started with "Quality in Validation in the Nordic Countries – a mapping project". Instead of just comparing the practice in the five countries in the report, we chose to emphasize good examples, common challenges and barriers to working with quality in validation. The second project was implemented considering common interests in ensuring the quality of validation in the Nordic countries. There are major differences in the Nordic countries as to how validation is organized and implemented, and in the way individual validation of prior learning or recognition of real competence is practised. The report on the project has the title: "Quality Model for Validation in the Nordic Countries". During the development of the quality model, it became clear how important it is for validation practitioners to perform in a professional way, and it was for this reason that the third and last project was initiated, says Haukur.

ONE PROJECT, TWO PRODUCTS

The project entitled Competence Profiles and Competence Development for Validation Practitioners – a mapping project 2014 – 15, led to two products. The first is a report with the same title as the project and the second is an online platform named ValiGuide.

The report contains the results of the project, describing the most important activities:

- Mapping of tasks, roles and competence profiles of validation practitioners in the validation process.
- Identifying the need for competence development for validation practitioners, and
- outlining challenges and recommendations for competence development activities at a national and Nordic level.

ENHANCES THE PRACTICE OF VALIDATION

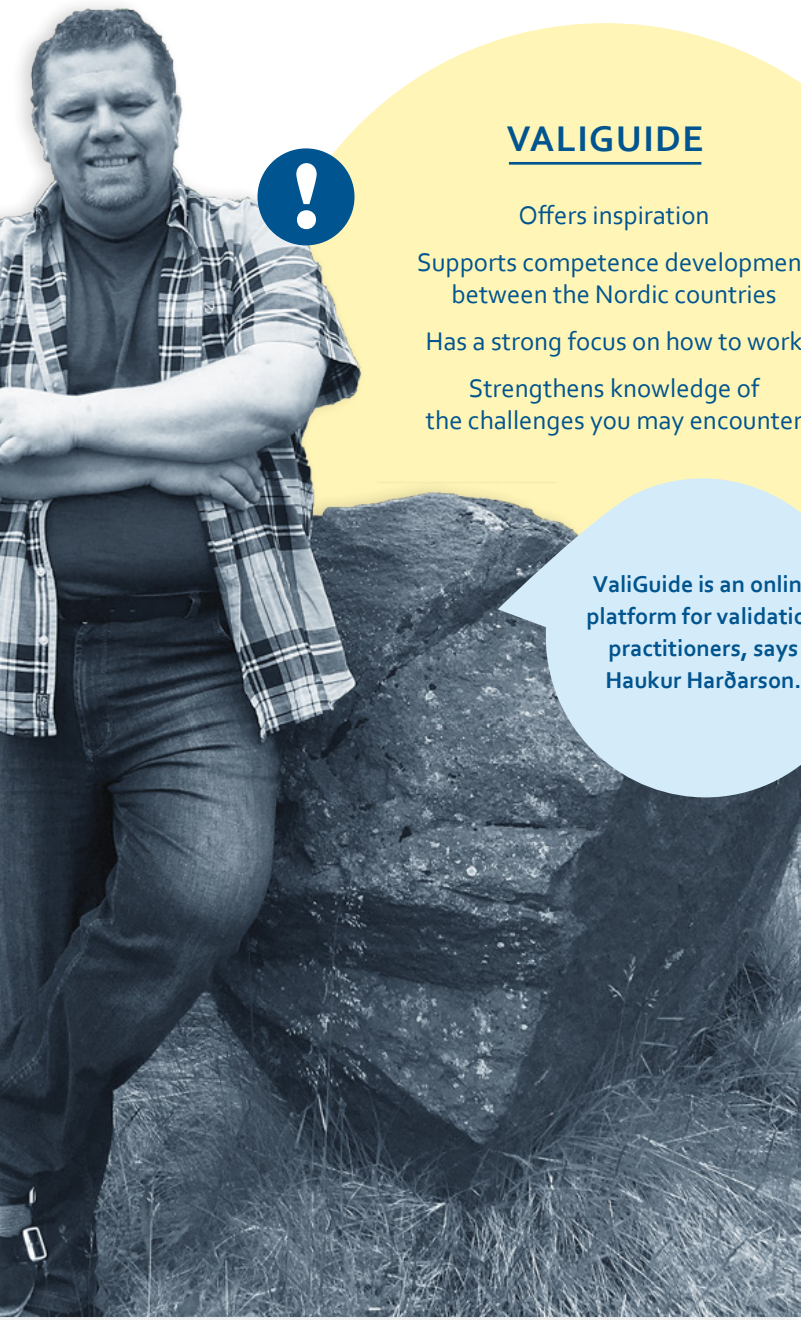
– The project has, overall, enhanced the practice of validation both on a Nordic level and at a national level in each of the countries. It also maps the tasks for people working with validation, or those who are interested in working with validation, the role of documents and competence profiles, and it identifies the need for competence development. That's why we created ValiGuide, says Haukur.

VALIGUIDE, THE PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO VALIDATION

– ValiGuide is an online platform for validation practitioners, says Haukur Harðarson, who in cooperation with **Svante Sandell**, Sweden's coordinator in NVL, edits the platform.

– The aim for ValiGuide is to contribute not only to the professionalization of the entire validation process, but also to each step of the process, thus contributing to the validation of adult non-formal and informal skills. ValiGuide offers a wide range of materials, guidance and recommendations for practitioners working with validation. We want to inspire and to share knowledge and experience, and in that way to contribute to competence development throughout the Nordic region.





VALIGUIDE

- Offers inspiration
- Supports competence development between the Nordic countries
- Has a strong focus on how to work
- Strengthens knowledge of the challenges you may encounter

ValiGuide is an online platform for validation practitioners, says Haukur Harðarson.

We hold a strong focus on "how to", with a description of the entire process – identification, documentation, evaluation and certification, says Haukur.

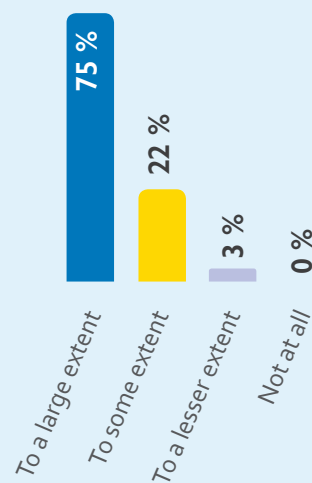
WANT TO LEARN MORE?

The platform includes an overview of useful articles, reports and guidelines, both Nordic, European and national from each of the Nordic countries.

– ValiGuide can be highly recommended for everyone interested in validation. The platform is user friendly and helpful, and can be used both by experienced validation practitioners and by those who might be interested in working in the field of validation, says Haukur Harðarson.



The importance of updated subject specific knowledge



Up-to-date subject specific knowledge and practice experiences are 'to a large extent' considered to enhance the work with adult learning processes. In this case, it is the more specific competences that are in demand.

www.nvl.org/valiguide

By Torhild Slåtto

Support, understanding and acceptance – result in more students completing school

Students who drop out from upper secondary schools are a challenge. Norwegian ministers of education have spent billions on measures to get the students to complete.

The present minister for education and research, **Torbjørn Røe Isaksen**, has found a solution by setting a firm limit for unexplained absence. If unexplained absence is above 10 percent in one subject, the main rule is that the student does not get graded. The numbers of those completing have improved, but still there are many students at risk of being marginalised. In the Nordic project STAR ATLAS (n. STJERNEKART), the participating schools have an "empathic supporting practice", where one works directly, providing support over time. The results are promising and mainly applied to youngsters with special disabilities. The Norwegian school, Kongsskogen upper secondary school in Oslo, AOF Center for Adult learning Norway, The Academy for Untamed Creativity in Denmark, and the Production School in Piorsaavik in Nuuk, Greenland are partners in the project.

– We try to get the youngsters through great support systems. We regard marginalisation as a substantial challenge, and the groups we are working with, youngsters with psychological and social difficulties, are often marginalised, says **Hilde Melby**, the leader of the Star Atlas project and teacher at the upper secondary school Kongsskogen.

PULL THEMSELVES TOGETHER

During the last decade, we have experienced how support actions we provide for the youngsters during difficult times in their lives have had a positive effect. Many of the youngsters get a grip on their lives, they move on and develop life-mastering skills that enhance their learning capabilities for the rest of their lives. They can solve problems related to work, family and other relations. At the same time, we understand that the time perspective we are working within is often extensive. It is a great advantage to be able to cooperate with other Nordic countries, because the countries have many things in common. They have a strong official sector aiming at everybody. Moreover, those who are unable to follow typical careers can take part.

PLENTY OF CARE AND UNDERSTANDING

This is not "a quick fix" method. The partners have a feature in common – their work supports the students' progress long term. The focus is



The project documents experience and creates tools that help teachers and organizers to improve, enable or in other ways assist their learners in re-entering work or education.



The Nordplus Adult Program

Title:

STJERNEKART – creating tools and methodology in working with young adults

Project period: 2016–2018

Project leader:

Hilde Melby, Kongsskogen, upper secondary school, Oslo



The partners in the project met in Greenland in May. They represent: Kongsskogen upper secondary school in Oslo, AOF Center for Adult learning Norway, The Academy of Untamed Creativity in Denmark, and the Production School in Piorsaavik in Nuuk.

on extensive support – much greater support, understanding and acceptance than might be considered normal.

– Indeed, it is the rather vague idea of treating someone with care and understanding that is the basis of our pedagogy. Through the project, we wish to chart how this caring and understanding manifests itself, and what we have in common in our way of working, says Melby in an interview with Dialog.

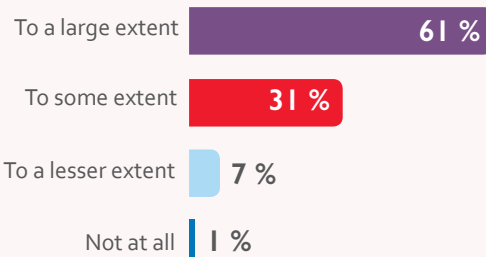
CONNECTS POINTS OF LIGHT

– The name of the project – Star Atlas – is a metaphor, originating in our experience of our work as being like a star atlas. While looking at the sky at night, almost all of what you see is darkness, but with many bright spots. The number of bright spots you see depends on where the person looking is located, and also on whether they are looking up and paying attention. We imagine that that is our job in the project. We look up, notice and connect the bright spots to form meaningful entities, and then share that understanding with others.

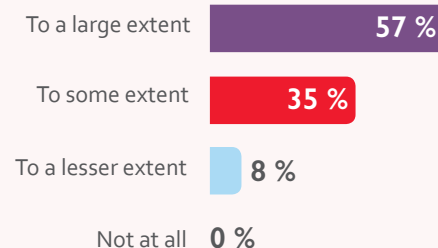
The plan for the project states that the goal is "to document the effect of a structured and empathic approach while working with young adults who have dropped out of school, or are in danger of being marginalised in their school and working life". →



The importance of being able to relate constructively to the resistance of adults



The importance of being able to give guidance to adults



The respondents attach importance to adult educational and didactic skills, such as being able to use activating working methods, being able to disseminate, being able to relate to the resistance of adults and having knowledge about adult learning and learning processes. Relational skills such as being able to treat adults as adults and to give guidance to adults are also considered important.



Hilde Melby, Kongsskogen, upper secondary school, Oslo, is the project leader for the Nordplus-project Star Atlas.

How do you work on documenting the effect?

- The documentation so far is mainly a compilation of observation reports. We know that the pedagogy we apply is effective, so that through our organisations we get youngsters who would usually be marginalised to complete their education. We also know that what we do has an effect. The problem is that we do not know exactly what it is that we are doing. In the phase we are in now, we start by mapping the actual working method. The next goal is to shed light on how this enhances the students' learning, emphasises Melby, who also sketches possible ways to measure the effect:
 - reports from students
 - presence/the student completion rate

The project is only half way and much work is still to be done. The plan is to show best practice and this will be shared on their own website.

LOGGING AND PLANNING TOOLS

The project also has a goal to "document and create tools that enable teachers and organizers to improve, enable or in other ways help their learners re-enter education or work". To what extent are you finding tools you will apply or also develop?

- For now, we approach our work in two ways, says Melby. One is developing a log and planning tool applied, in cooperation with the teacher as the student progresses. This needs to be tested as a part of the development project. The other way is by concretising what empathic support is. This we do through the observation projects we are already working on in the different organisations.

THE NORDIC VALUE

What do you, as a coordinator, perceive to be the most valuable aspect of Nordplus projects such as this one?

- The most valuable aspect is that people are brought together across cultural backgrounds and borders. Here we cooperate with organisations that have some things in common, but are still different, and that also creates an increased relevance. This, to me, is extremely important, because the goal and theme of the project is "softness". The theme is vague, but if we succeed in documenting the incidence of this in several different societies and cultures, and at the same time agree on this, I think we will have strengthened our argument. We work to care for, support and foster people, says Melby. She points out that this is a long-term process. The result might be that there will be more people working, if not in a fulltime job, then at least more than they were able to before.
- In a world of quarterly reports, we must somehow document that when "I" meet a given person with care, understanding and acceptance, but also with expectations and ambitions on their behalf, that student will have a better chance of success because of us.

This is the strength of the cooperative nature of the project, says Melby:

- To know that people are facing similar challenges and experiences across national and linguistic borders, and that the ways in which these challenges are met will enhance their prospects of leading a life where they are able to contribute to society, is one of the greatest benefits of this project. And, in addition, to be able to exchange experiences in the professional milieu of each organisation.

The Star Atlas project continues for another year.

By Johanni Larjanko

Open Badges – the key to teacher training?

A new method of visualizing skills and competences is becoming increasingly popular. Until now, Open Badges have frequently been used to motivate participants, but a Nordplus project is now building the framework for further education of teachers.

Modern technology development can be applied in many ways in the education sector. One truly innovative example concerns how we can visualize competences, knowledge and skills. Open Badges is the collective name for a range of actors' efforts to renew and develop a frequently unnoticed part of the learning process – documenting and visualizing. All formal education leads to some form of certificate, confirming that the education has been completed, and this may contain a description of the learning and the level of learning completed.

Open Badges brings this one step further by making the process completely transparent. An Open Badge includes a knowledge goal, a description of the knowledge, how it is measured, and everything that the learner has done to attain the goal.

Knowledge should here be viewed from a very wide perspective. It can be a skill, a competence, factual knowledge, or a combination. This makes it possible to recognise tacit knowledge, things learned in working life, and experienced through life. Because of its structure, an Open Badge is very suitable for non-formal and informal learning situations. That is why, with its partner organizations in Finland, Sweden and Lithuania, Bildningsalliansen is working with Open Badges in a Nordplus project.

A GOOD TEACHER SHOULD...

We have chosen to focus on teacher competences. Within liberal adult education and the third sector, there are many good supervisors, volunteers, circle leaders and part time teachers who lack pedagogical education. They may be very good at teaching, but have no paperwork to document this. Providing training for this →

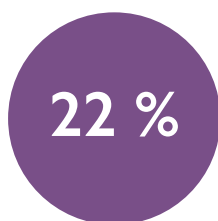


The project deals with competence mapping of adult educators in non-formal adult education, and estimates which competences can be recognized using Open Badges.

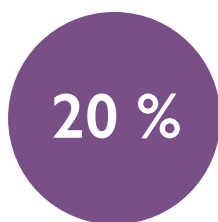
The Report shows in which sectors adult educators work:



Public educational institutions



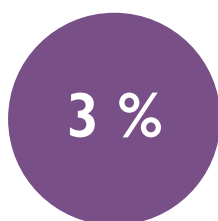
Adult learning in NGOs or non-formal adult education



Work places (private/public)



Organisations (employer/employee organisations)



Other

group can therefore be rather complicated. It is difficult to know what level to assume, and difficult to motivate the target group to progress. A significant part of this group does not necessarily see themselves as teachers, and with a couple of hours of teaching a week, they may not see the need to develop their educational talents.

This is why the project on Open Badges for popular adult education began with an open questionnaire about the most important competences needed by educators within liberal adult education. To our great pleasure, we received over 200 responses, which have enabled us to create a matrix with 9 different Open Badges in three categories. We compared several different matrices describing competences and deciding at what level they should be positioned. In the end, we decided to apply the EQF system (the European Qualifications Framework). Among other considerations, we thought that EQFs classification and levels were most appropriate, because EQF is being implemented in all EU member states.

ONLY THE BEGINNING

The factual work begins when we have reached this stage. It is one matter to record that a good teacher is communicative and adjusts his pedagogy to the group, even to the individual. It is another to describe and to prove this to any extent. We have been engaged in long and very intensive discussions, where our perception of knowledge, our perception of learning and various learning situations have been thoroughly and passionately discussed. It has been wonderful! We are in the middle of a process where much of what each one of us has taken for granted is questioned, challenged or confirmed. It is rare to sit down and reflect on what it is all about. We are now half way through the project and the first results are emerging. Our ecosystem with 9 different Open Badges is almost fully sketched out. We will be offering three different Open Badges, each of them at a different level, more or less corresponding to EQF 3, 4 and 5. One group is about what a good liberal educator needs, one about methodological competences, and one about evaluation competences. The system builds on self-assessments and can be adjusted to various organisational needs. Anyone applying for an Open Badge always does so without charge. Providers who make use of Open Badges in their organisation will be charged a small fee, which will cover the costs of the system.



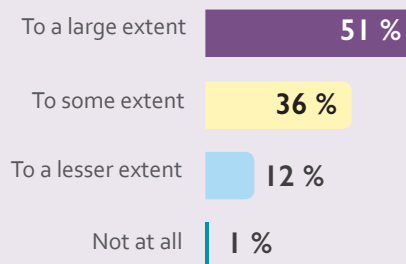
More about
Open badges:
Openbadge.blog

THE NORDIC LEVER

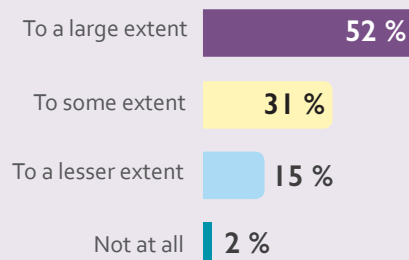
During the first project year (2016–2017) we have also participated in national and Nordic events, informing people about Open Badges and listening to reactions and suggestions. In most cases, the response has been very positive. I think there are many who see the opportunities presented by a flexible system like this. After the initial enthusiasm, the problems appear. Describing competences, and understanding how these can be verified, is not an easy task. We need help in creating something permanent, and in the course of the project, we have clearly noticed that there is a demand for what we are doing. On the one hand, there is a need in various parts of the education sector for methods that encourage and speed up the education/training of pedagogical educators, and on the other, matrices and methods are needed that enable Open Badges to be applied in different contexts. This is not something an individual school or association can achieve. Thanks to Nordplus we have been able to identify a need, and been able to ask those involved about orientation and focus, and built a model that can be easily adapted and applied. We do not think Open Badges is the answer to all challenges, but we regard it as a welcome addition to the toolbox. And we know that our work has just started.



Interest in knowing more about adult learning and learning processes



Interest in improving communicative competences



More than 50% of the respondents state that it 'to a large extent' will strengthen their work if they gain more knowledge about adult learning and learning processes. Dissemination skills and being able to apply activating working methods, are also considered important. The same competences were considered highly important among the respondents, which indicate that competence development in adult education and didactics is in demand.

A bridge between students

– I wish we could have continued this, comments a teacher on the Nordplus project, The Bridge, which financed training in which more experienced students became mentors for the less experienced. Nowadays, inclusive thinking permeates the whole programme, according to the headmaster for adult learning at Kungälv.

From autumn 2014 to autumn 2015, Adult Education in Kungälv aimed at defining what mentorship means, and how it could function. Information was gathered, using literature and discussions from the project group, but also through three workshops arranged in collaboration with IVUC in Aalborg, Denmark and Molde Adult Education in Norway. One workshop was organized in each country. The project was funded by Nordplus, and was an outgrowth from another Nordplus project, Initiative Me, which was about motivating young adults.

The aims of the mentoring mentions were to give the students new contacts (grow their network) and to show that it is sometimes easier to talk with someone who is on the same level as yourself, that is, also a student. In addition, the student mentors had the task of being spokespersons to the teachers in their subjects.

Isabel Reyes Villalobos, who teaches literacy in Kungälv, was very pleased with the mentoring project. The students who were mentors had the same background as the novices. Two years earlier, they had been newcomers and illiterate. Now they were able to show and tell their novices how they had learned to read and write. It was also an advantage to be able to match persons with the same mother tongue.

– It was also cheaper for the school to have the students as mentors. They felt "uplifted", and there was an excellent atmosphere in the group. I wish we could have continued this, says Isabel Reyes Villalobos.

At the SFI-education (Swedish for Immigrants), the students were helped to build networks and to adjust to the community.

– When I came here, the perception was that adult education consisted of SFI education and other educational programs. Now the SFI education is better integrated into the activity. The greatest benefit of the Bridge project was that it initiated new thoughts on inclusion and integration, and all the teachers realise the importance of that, says **Lars-Gunnar Hermansson**, headmaster of Adult Education in Kungälv municipality.

Although the mentor project no longer exists, the municipality continues to work with integration issues. In cooperation with Employment Service, students can be offered language practice, for example in care of the elderly and childcare.

– Getting a job under SFI means that newcomers will become a part of society early on, says Lars-Gunnar Hermansson.



The Bridge project deals with creating the conditions for mentoring for the target group of immigrants in adult education.



The leaders of the Bridge Project from Sweden, Denmark and Norway
Picture: The Bridge

FACTS



The Bridge was a project under Nordplus Adult from September 2014 to February 2016.

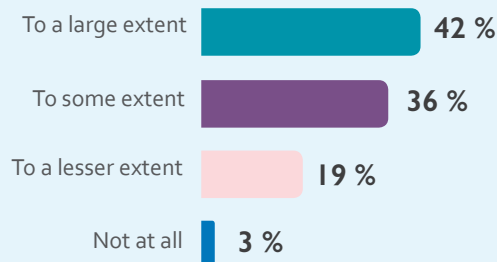
Partners in the project were The Adult Education in Kungälv, Sweden, the Adult Education Centre in Fredrikshavn, Denmark, and Molde Adult Learning in Norway.

The goal was to create conditions for mentorship for the target group – immigrants in adult education.



To what extent does the adult educator work in intercultural contexts and how important is culture considered in the teaching situation – and does it require special skills to teach in intercultural contexts?

Interest in improving the ability to work in intercultural contexts



Being able to work in intercultural contexts is given a relatively low importance. 36% say that it is 'to some extent' important and as much as 14% that it is 'to a lesser extent' important. One explanation may be that most respondents work in relatively culturally homogeneous contexts, and thus do not consider it an important competence. It can also be because culture is considered an important factor in relation to adult learning processes, and the competence to cope with cultural diversity is therefore not considered valuable.

By Torhild Slåtto

Tough demands on leadership – the answer is competence development


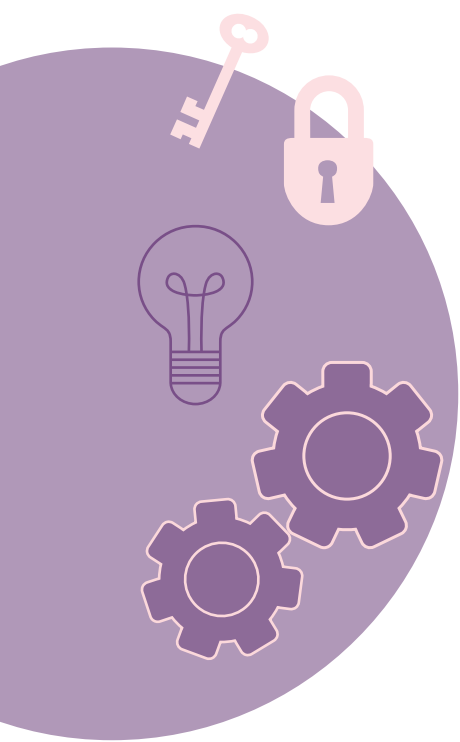
Administrators of schools and adult learning centres need more and more competences to run and develop adult learning offers. One of this year's Nordplus projects does indeed address competence and leadership in adult learning. The title of the project is *Leadership Capacity Building*.

The leader of the project is **Peter Müller**, Principal of East Himmerland Folk University in Denmark. He believes that there are now greater demands on financial management and administration of the content of education than before, which means that leaders must strengthen their competences relentlessly. But what does the somewhat ambiguous term 'capacity building' mean?

– It might be snobbish to use English, when you can say that the project is about providing leaders with insight that makes them good and competent leaders. In our project, we are concerned that leaders should be able to communicate clear goals to employees. They must administer strategic resources. Furthermore, they have to ensure the quality of the education, and finally they have to develop a supportive environment, says Peter Müller.

There are extensive requirements for both directors and middle managers – a lot to deal with in a small network project with five partners, but the partners have taken advantage of the possibilities of visiting each other. There have been four project meetings with 10–12 regular participants, plus local leaders.

Sharing experience is one half of the project. Peter points out that the partner institutions are different, but have a shared attitude towards management and competence development. Thus, they can learn from each other. Among other things, they show each other how they administrate their own institutions.



The primary target group for this project is managers. Leaders' understanding of their management task – to manage competence development.

NEW KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH TEAMS

The other half of the project concerns new knowledge. By inviting researchers to present current topics at the meetings, the partners get access to new knowledge. They have held presentations on topics such as leadership and management, professional leadership and pedagogic leadership. In the Faroe Islands, they also presented an anthropological survey of a school fusion.

Can you tell us about the background for the project?

– The project assumes that the teacher is the one factor that primarily influences the students' learning. Therefore, the adult teacher should have relationship and didactic competences, in addition to their specific professional competence. In turn, the director must ensure safe and trustworthy frameworks for a strong professional and developing environment, says Peter. – We have worked on these themes for one year, and the project is close to completion. Participants in the project are both senior administrators and middle managers, and academics as well as managers participate in the project. The partners represent vocational education and basic education in the Faroe Islands, Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

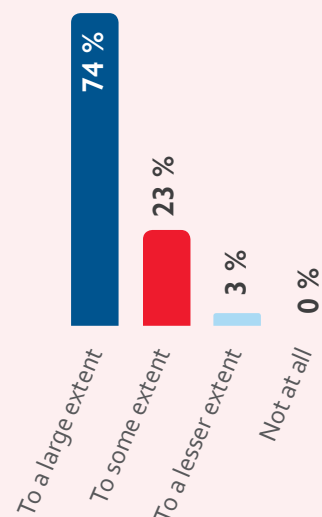
VICTIMS OF POLITICS

What common challenges do you think adult education centres face today?

– Previously, the centres had a higher degree of autonomy. Today, it is more evident that we are part of the political system. One can almost say that we are victims of politics. The leaders must therefore be able to relate to political demands. For example, in Denmark we had a finance bill →



The importance of having knowledge about adult learning and learning processes



The respondents indicate that they want to know more or to improve in the category Management, organisation and planning of education. There are also a number of statements that point out the importance of cooperation with businesses and relationship between education and work life, for example: "Better contact with businesses", "On the job learning" and "Transfer".



Peter Müller leads the Nordplus-project Leadership Capacity Building. He has worked in various positions in the field of adult learning for 44 years.

Program: Nordplus Adult

Partners:

East Himmerland Folk University,
Denmark (coordinator)
Tórshavn College, Faroe Islands
Åsö Upper Secondary Education, Sweden
Adult Education Centre, Northern Jutland, Denmark
Sinsen Upper Secondary School, Norway

Project leader:

Peter Müller, Principal of Østhimmerlands
Folk University.

Project duration:

July 2016 – September 2017

which required that educational institutions cut back two per cent a year. Over time, this will be challenging.

Peter is concerned with the state of the general framework conditions, and what skills it requires of managers and teachers. Adult teachers are hard-pressed. Educational politics are mixing with social politics. – New groups of adult students come to the centres, and this is demanding for the teachers, he says. What is the solution? Peter believes that the way to go is to work in a team.

TEACHER TEAMS

– When teachers work in teams, they are not left to themselves. We must let the teachers' experiences be reflected in cooperation. Then we can bring in professionals who can help the team where there may be a need.

Have you found useful themes, subjects and methods to enhance the competence development you want?

– It is known that leaders in adult education institutions have very different backgrounds. Some come from outside, while others have "worked their way" through the system. Thus, the skills development of the administrators has also been very different. However, what those who participate in the project have in common is that they place great emphasis on communication and cooperation.

Have you considered competence development through online courses or moocs?

– We have not discussed that. But it has been our experience in the project that the director should be surrounded by middle managers who are competent in their respective areas of responsibility.

MIDDLE MANAGERS MUST INTERPRET

We asked the project leader if he has a concrete example of something he has learned in the project.

– It was at one of the research talks we had in the project that I realized how important the middle manager is. The middle manager stands at a crossroads. The director expresses himself guided by vision, numbers and graphs, and it is the middle manager who must construe and translate strategic goals and overall measures into professional and pedagogical solutions that support and develop educators' teaching. It is also the middle manager who reports the results to the director and makes recommendations on future actions.

What do you consider to be the greatest value Nordic projects in general have for your own institution?

– I think the most important of all is what the individual manager has experienced in the project, how curious they have become and what has been established. It is important, as a leader, to be aware of the responsibility one has in leading people. The manager influences the employees not only in the workplace, but also in their private life.

Online Education is the Future

– We believe that distance learning is the learning method of the future. In a constantly changing world, it is important to apply modern technology. Besides, individual needs and wishes are very different from what they were 20 years ago.



The aim of the project is to increase the qualification of teachers and administration in distance adult education.

Some people are born with disabilities that hinder them from attending regular school, while others have experienced things in life that have prevented them from completing their education. For these individuals, distance learning or online education is a golden opportunity for them to complete their education. This is the conclusion of the final report of the Nordplus Adult-project Improvement of professional skills of teachers and administration as a result of best practice and the acquiring of methods from other countries in distance adult learning.

The project coordinator is **Laura Kalnina** at the Europe Distance Education Secondary School in Latvia. Dialog interviewed her about the project and about cooperation with schools in Finland, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

What was the idea behind the project?

– Our intention was to cooperate with other distance schools in Northern Europe, exchanging teaching methods and tools. We are developing rapidly and would like to capture teaching methods and learning techniques, such as apps and other tools. By brainstorming with four distance schools, we gathered several new, outstanding ideas.

The project was financed by the Nordplus Adult program. Nevertheless, the modest sum of 16000 euros enabled us to pay for all four partner schools' study visits, with workshops, cultural experiences and meetings.





Happy participants
on partner visits.

TEACHERS' COMMUNITY

The goal of the project was to enhance the qualifications of teachers and administrators. Did you succeed?

Laura Kalnina is in no doubt.

– Yes! We faced challenges with teachers who are located in many different parts of their countries, and may therefore feel that they are not members of the community. It takes extra effort to make them feel like a team. We have observed that it is of great importance for the teachers to cooperate. There is a need to cooperate in supporting adult learners who might need more motivation to complete their education than youngsters. Now our teachers have an online teachers' lounge, where they can meet and discuss common problems. →



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The coordinator of the project Laura Kalina, Europe Distance Education Secondary School, Latvia



While visiting partners one has both great and small experiences!

TO BUILD UP TRUST

You compiled good examples, the so called «best practices»?

– We do not have many examples, but instead we have gathered many fine ideas and compiled them in their entirety. It is about how we can establish trust. Trust between the school administration, the teachers and the learners, and it is about relying on the teachers to do their best and relying on them to let us know what tools they need. They spend a lot of time online, so that the learners feel that they are supervised in a one-to-one relationship and are not just one in a hundred. Every learner receives individual feedback on tests and exams. It is all about creating and maintaining a mutually happy connection.

Laura Kalina does also see some problems. – We also struggle with cheating and drop-outs. But we believe in an individual approach for every learner and we believe in building relations based on trust.

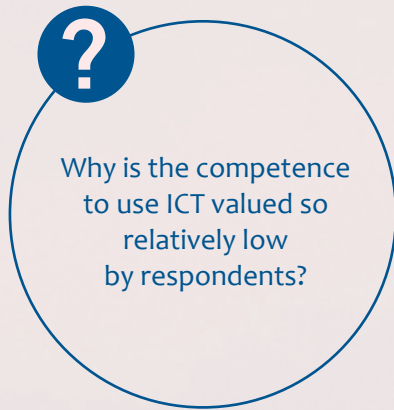
COOPERATION

It was also one of the project's aims to establish 'a sustainable, practical and methodically oriented cooperation between the partners'. Has the cooperation continued after the project was completed?

– Unfortunately, we have been busy working with accreditation at the school this year, and we do not have the capacity to participate in any projects. I do hope the partners keep good contact. In any case, we continue to develop some of the ideas from the project. It always takes longer than expected to implement new ideas.

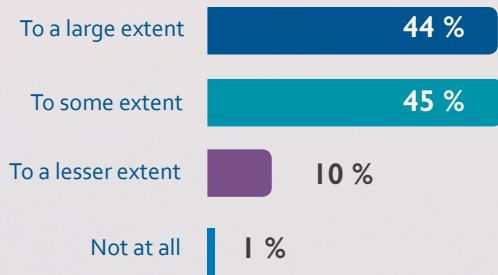
What do you, as a project coordinator, perceive to be the principal benefit of a Nordplus-project of this kind?

– Being a coordinator is a huge bonus! Small projects are flexible. We have been able to discuss new themes as we have progressed, and by working in this way, we have achieved a more productive result. By visiting each other, we did not only gain insight into institutions in other countries, but we also learned a lot about those countries, their way of organising communities, and some of their cultural expressions.

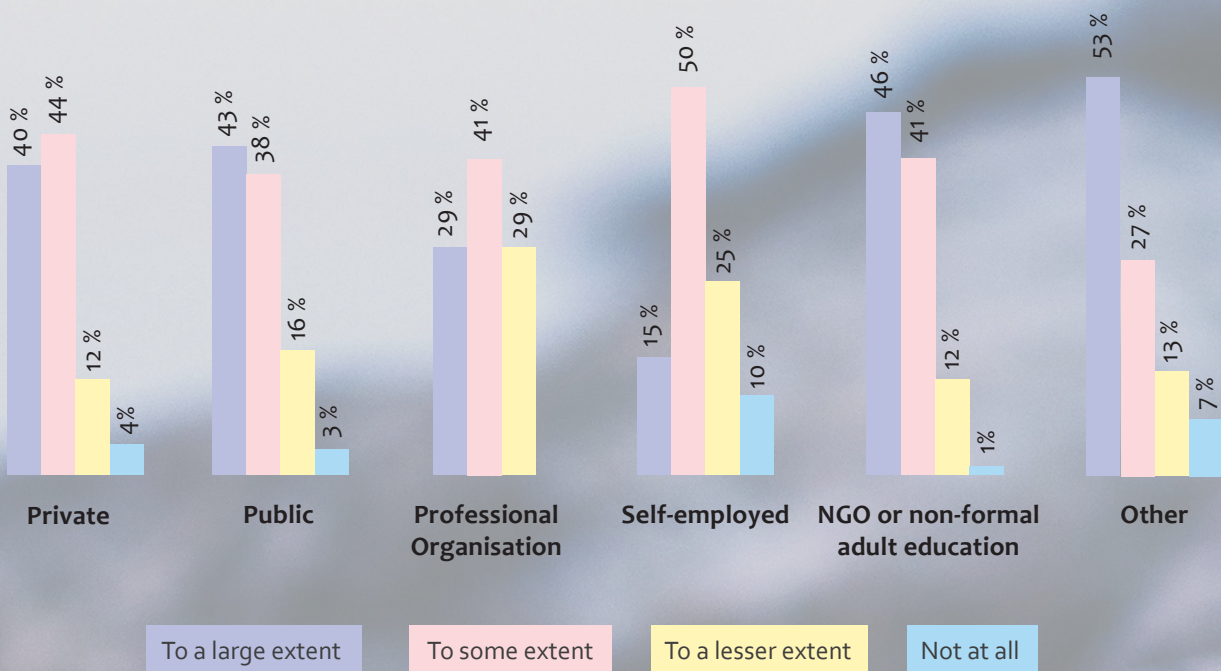


45% of respondents answer ‘to some extent’ to the question outlining the importance of using information and communication technology. This indicates that ICT competences are considered less important than several of the other competences. A possible explanation can be the respondents’ high average age for whom ICT is not perceived a natural tool in teaching. Alternatively, it may reflect that people experience that traditional pedagogical and didactic skills such as using activating working methods, having updated proficiency and dissemination skills are more central to teaching than being able to use ‘tools’ such as ICT. Nevertheless, the qualitative statements indicate that several respondents want more competences in IT and digital learning.

The importance of being able to use information and communication technology



Responses according to the sectors – the importance of being able to use information and communication technology



Can and should there
be joint Nordic work with
competence development
for adult educators?

Both uniformity and diversity can inspire and can be used actively in Nordic competence development in relation to learning and organizing education. The outcome of joint Nordic competence development is, for example, increased experience sharing, knowledge sharing, more nuances and perspectives between participants, as well as increased networking and access to research.



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