

Becoming Adult Educators in the Nordic-Baltic Region

National Report: Sweden

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Foreword

The current report presents the national results for Sweden produced in the collaborative project *Becoming Adult Educators in the Baltic-Sea Region* (BABAR), a project granted financial support by the Nordic Council of Ministries, under the Nordplus Programme, Sub-programme Nordplus Adult.

The project team has included researchers and adult education practitioners from the following institutions (in alphabetical order): Brunnsvik Folk High School (Sweden); Danish School of Education, Aarhus University (Denmark); Estonian non-formal adult education association (Estonia); Linköping University (Sweden); SUHR'S - The Multidisciplinary University College of Copenhagen (Denmark); and Tallinn University (Estonia).

The research team from Linköping University was composed by associate professor Per Andersson and senior lecturer PhD Susanne Köpsén.

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Executive summary

Sweden has a long tradition in adult education, but formal education/training particularly for becoming an adult educator in Sweden is not very extensive. The general pattern, with some exceptions, is that adult educators have the same education as teachers on corresponding levels in primary and (particularly) secondary school, or/and that the vocational or subject knowledge is in focus rather than educational competence focusing on teaching adults. There is training for liberal adult educators, particularly a folk high school teacher programme, but the non-formal liberal adult education has no formal requirements on teachers, so even here a lot of teachers have other backgrounds. Furthermore, research on education/training of adult educators seems to be an empty field in Sweden.

The aim of the present report is to map the current initial education and training opportunities for adult educators in Sweden, and to examine key structural features and specific policy strategies that frame and characterize professionalization processes in Swedish adult education. The investigation draws on policy documents, public information, and available research of relevance for the topic.

The report initially gives an overview of the provision of Swedish adult education, including general adult education, vocational adult education, and liberal adult education (in Sweden “folkbildning”). The overview includes brief descriptions of the target groups of different types of adult education. After this overview, the development of strategies toward adult education in Sweden, with focus on the recent development, is presented. The specific focus is quality issues, adult education and training provision/supply, and the professional requirements and competence needs of adult educators acting in the different types of adult education.

Available opportunities for education/training for adult educators in Sweden are mapped, including both more extensive programmes that provide initial training, and the pattern concerning shorter courses. Most of these opportunities are situated in universities and university colleges. Initial education and training for adult educators in Sweden is mainly provided as formal education programmes in higher education, i.e. universities and university colleges. 26 universities and university colleges have the teacher education programme, which results in a teacher degree and formally qualifies teachers to teach adults on corresponding levels as they are trained for, even if adult education seems to be in the background in these programmes. The only programme dedicated to adult education is a folk high school teacher programme.

Further, we show that there is not much formal regulation that focuses particularly on the competence formation in adult education and among adult educators. Rather the regulations are the same as for other teachers. However, the present proposal of a new teacher education puts some new focus on adult education. The official report explicitly describes teachers for upper secondary school *and* adult education as a category of teachers. The consequence should or could be that these teachers will have an education that puts more focus on the role as an adult educator, as compared with present teacher education. However, the rationale for the need of adult educators is not analysed and discussed. As a consequence of all this the adult educator does not have a high status in Sweden, and particularly the adult education competence does not have much specific status. It is rather the status as a teacher in general that present policy tries to promote. And 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. The research on adult education and adult learning is relatively extensive, but there is little research focusing on the adult educator, and nothing focusing teacher education for adult educators.

The future opportunities for prospective adult educators in Sweden are unclear. Upper secondary school will be restructured, with consequences for general as well as vocational adult education on upper secondary level. New forms of vocational adult education are introduced. Liberal adult education is continuously changing, partly because it has a certain freedom as a non-formal sector of adult education. Parallel to these changes in the landscape of adult education, the teacher education will be restructured. A central question concerns what will happen in the new teacher education. The present official report puts some focus on adult education, but we do not know yet what policy concerning adult education that will be included in the final decisions. If there shall be any changes in practice, the policy concerning adult educators must be reflected in practice at universities, where teachers are trained, and in municipalities and among other providers of adult education. Further, we do not know 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 if pupils are teenagers or adults. 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, the result of the restructuring process could also be the opposite, depending on what policy decisions are made.

1. Introduction

Sweden has a long tradition in adult education, since the first folk high schools were established in the 19th century and the first study associations were organized in the early 20th century. This breadth of Swedish adult education will be shown in the next section of the report. However, formal education/training particularly for becoming an adult educator in Sweden is not very extensive. The general pattern, with some exceptions, is that adult educators have the same education as teachers on corresponding levels in primary and (particularly) secondary school, or/and that the vocational or subject knowledge is in focus rather than educational competence focusing on teaching adults. There is training for liberal adult educators, particularly a folk high school teacher programme, but the non-formal liberal adult education has no formal requirements on teachers, so even here a lot of teachers have other backgrounds. Furthermore, research on education/training of adult educators seems to be an empty field in Sweden. Therefore we want to start filling this gap in adult education research, to get to know more about present opportunity structures, and how it comes that prospective and present adult educators seem to be marginalised target groups in Swedish teacher education and training.

Aim of the study

The aim of the present report is to map the current initial education and training opportunities for adult educators in Sweden, and to examine key structural features and specific policy strategies that frame and characterize professionalization processes in the field(s) of Swedish general, vocational and liberal adult education.

Design of the study

The investigation draws on policy documents, public information, and available research of relevance for the topic. The policy documents covers the three different, but in Sweden somewhat overlapping, fields of adult education, and the official ideas concerning training of adult educators for these fields. Public information concerning adult education and training of adult educators has been collected primarily from websites for national agencies, education providers etc. We have also used the prior knowledge of the characteristics of the field we have as Swedish adult education researchers. In addition to this, supplementary information has been collected from representatives for some teacher education programmes via e-mail. Here it should be noted that we have not provided references to all facts presented in the descriptive parts of the report, but sources particularly in terms of websites are presented in the References/Sources section. Finally, we have conducted a thorough review of research on general, vocational, and liberal adult education, and searched for relevant Swedish research focusing on education/training for becoming an adult educator. However, as mentioned, it seems as if this is an empty research field in Sweden. Therefore, we have included some references to Swedish research on general, vocational, and liberal adult education focussing on teachers in these fields, even if this existing research only is of secondary relevance in relation to the project.

The adult educator

It should be noted that “adult educators” is a broad category including people involved in different ways in the provision of adult education opportunities. Here, however, some delimitations have been made in this study. Our focus is firstly on those who are or will be working as teachers and trainers, in direct contact with adult learners, bracketing those

involved in adult education in other ways. Secondly, we address acting and prospective adult educators who earn or intend to earn their living in the field of adult education. The extensive and important contributions on a voluntary basis, e.g. by many study circle leaders in the Swedish study associations, are beyond the scope of our study. Thirdly, our concern is particularly the initial education and training of adult educators for the fields of general, vocational and liberal adult education, i.e. the fields more or less regulated by the state and receiving public funding. Fourthly, we discuss the “prospective” adult educators who are preparing themselves to enter the field of adult education. However, in practice there is no clear-cut distinction between prospective and acting adult educators. Those participating in initial training often have more or less extensive experiences from the field of adult education. Therefore we often use the term “prospective” in brackets.

Structure of the report

After this introduction, the second chapter of the report will present the status and provision of adult education and training in Sweden, which will set the frame within which (prospective) adult educators work and/or will work in the near future. In Chapter 3 we give an overview of national policy strategies for adult learning/education. Chapter 4 presents the current opportunity structures for (prospective) adult educators to acquire competences and qualifications for working in varying adult education contexts. Chapter 5 addresses the regulation of competence formation among adult educators and the social status of adult educators in Sweden. Finally, in Chapter 6 we sum up the main results of the investigation and our conclusions from the study.

2. The status of adult education and adult education provision in Sweden

As a first part of this study of becoming an adult educator in Sweden, we give an overview of the provision of Swedish adult education, including the fields of general, vocational, and liberal adult education. The overview includes brief descriptions of the target groups of different types of adult education. Table 1 gives an initial overview of different parts of Swedish adult education, and how these parts could be related to basic (primary and lower-secondary) and upper-post-secondary levels. These different parts are described briefly in the rest of this section of the report.¹

Table 1. Adult education (AE) in Sweden.

	Basic	Upper secondary	Post-secondary*	Level-independent
General AE				
Municipal AE	x	x		
Swedish for immigrants				X
Special AE	x	x		
Vocational AE				
Vocational municipal AE		x		
Post-secondary vocational AE			x	
Supplementary education		x	x	
Advanced/Higher vocational education			x	
Labour market education		x		x
Vocational folk high school education			x	
Liberal AE				
Folk high school		x	x	x
Study circles				x

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

General adult education

There are different types of general adult education in Sweden, which mainly are organised on municipal level. The general adult education corresponds to the primary and secondary levels of the school system, except from the vocational education on upper secondary level, and has a compensatory function for those who did not get this education when they were young. Here an important group of students are those who lack eligibility for higher education. General adult education also includes measures targeted at immigrants, particularly Swedish for immigrants.

¹ See also the supplemented Terminology index for corresponding English and Swedish terms in adult education.

Municipal adult education

The main providers of general adult education are the municipalities, who are responsible for the formal adult education, named municipal adult education. Today, however, all providers are not municipally owned. On the contrary, many municipalities have commissioned different providers to arrange adult education. These providers could be private companies, but also study associations and folk high schools that provide these courses in addition to their liberal adult education. Studies in general adult education are normally flexible and course based rather than programme based, which means that students could study part time or full time, depending on choice of courses, and that students follow different, individual study plans. The general adult education is primarily covering the contents of primary and secondary school, and on upper secondary school level, municipal adult education also covers vocational adult education (see below). Primary and lower secondary level correspond to the compulsory school, and is called basic adult education.

The target group of general adult education is adults who need a second chance in relation to primary/secondary school. It could be a matter of returning to school if you have dropped out, or studying courses where you have failed, or re-orienting your career which could require courses not included in your prior upper secondary education but necessary to be eligible to enter higher education. An important target group is also immigrants who never had the first chance in their home countries, or whose foreign qualifications are not valid, or not possible to validate, in Sweden. Therefore, the target group is generally spoken everyone from 19 years and older. The prioritised target group is those who are lacking primary and/or secondary education. For those who are lacking education corresponding to the compulsory school, i.e. primary and lower secondary level, there is a right to get basic adult education.

The general adult education also includes two sub-categories, namely Swedish for immigrants and Special adult education, which will be described separately.

Swedish for immigrants

Swedish for immigrants (Sfi) is a responsibility for the municipalities, and is part of the municipal adult education. Also here other providers, e.g. folk high schools and study associations, are commissioned to organise courses.

The target group of Sfi is immigrants who have not reached a certain level in the Swedish language, and who are of post-compulsory education age, i.e. from 1 July the year you are 16. For those there is a right to participate in Sfi, which means that a course should be offered within 3 months from an application.

Special adult education

Special adult education is a part of the municipal adult education, and the contents correspond to the special education for persons up to 20.

The target group is adults who are developmentally disabled or are disabled in other respects concerning their mental capacity. The target group concerning age is from the autumn semester the year the persons are 20.

Vocational adult education

The vocational adult education also comprises a number of different types of education, which include some overlap both to municipal adult education and to liberal adult education.

Here the function is not mainly compensation. Rather, vocational adult education fulfils the needs in the labour market. On the one hand this means a focus on training for vocations with a labour shortage, on the other hand vocational adult education provides new opportunities in the labour market for those unemployed.

Vocational municipal adult education

The formal adult education includes not only general but also vocationally oriented adult education, as upper secondary school also includes vocationally oriented programmes. Presently this part of the formal adult education is limited. With few exceptions, the normal option is to participate in a programme in upper secondary school, according to supply (where young people come in the first place in the admission). However, the government has introduced an initiative to broaden the provision of vocational municipal adult education significantly in the near future.

The target groups are the same as for general formal adult education.

An alternative way of vocational education on upper secondary level is apprenticeship, which has been re-introduced recent years. But the supply is still limited here too.

Post-secondary vocational adult education

This is also part of the municipal adult education, but the target group is persons in the age from the autumn semester the year they are 20, or have finished an education on upper secondary level. There can also be some special demands for eligibility in relation to a certain vocational programme. However, post-secondary vocational adult education will soon disappear. No new students are admitted, but the programmes could be re-launched in the new “higher vocational education” (see below).

Supplementary education

Supplementary education comprises programmes organised by private providers (125 totally in Sweden as a whole) but partly supported economically by the state. They do not give any formal eligibility for further education, but are vocational educations or are preparing for higher education programmes where certain skills are demanded (e.g. art and handicraft). Some of the programmes are post-secondary in terms of having eligibility demands of a finished programme in upper secondary school, and some have demands of vocational experience. Supplementary education is now integrated in “higher vocational education” in the same way as post-secondary vocational adult education.

Vocationally oriented Swedish for immigrants

There are also some initiatives in Swedish for immigrants where the language courses are oriented not only to the general but also the vocational language, and integrated with measures like practicum, vocational education, and/or recognition of prior vocational learning.

Advanced/Higher vocational education

Another type of vocational adult education in the formal system has been the advanced vocational education (in Swedish “kvalificerad yrkesutbildning”, with the abbreviation KY). This comprises post-secondary education programmes that are initiated based on labour market needs. The contents is specialised in relation to certain vocational areas. The around 800 programmes comprise(d) 1-3 years full-time studies. One third of the study time is spent

in the work place. The programmes are arranged by varying providers (private companies, folk high schools, in a few cases universities, etc.), who in this respect are governed by a national agency for advanced vocational education. However, from mid 2009 there has been a change of this system, when KY was replaced by “higher vocational education”. Higher vocational education will also be provided by a variety of institutes and governed by a national agency – the main differences seem to be that the programmes will be monitored and governed more strictly, and that also post-secondary vocational adult education and some of the supplementary education (see above) will be included in the new system.

The target groups for these vocational programmes are partly those who want to enter a specialised vocation, partly those who have a vocation and want to be more specialised within their vocational area. However, the starting points for what programmes are offered are always the labour market needs.

Labour market education

Labour market education is vocational education that is commissioned by the Public Employment Office (PEO), and it is situated outside the formal education system. The providers are normally private education companies, but could also be higher education or municipal adult education.

The target group is those unemployed and at least 25 years old.

The PEO also provides “Preparation education” for the same target group, but these courses are preparing for labour market education (or other education, including theoretical education), or are focusing on assessment (validation) of vocational competence.

Vocationally oriented folk high school education

As is mentioned below, folk high schools also provide courses that are vocationally oriented. According to the proposal, such courses might also be included in the “higher vocational education” (see above).

Liberal adult education

Liberal adult education, in Swedish “folkbildning”, is arranged by folk high schools and study associations, as longer or shorter courses or study circles. “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 its NGOs that own many of the schools and study associations.

Folk high schools

The folk high schools are providing mainly full-time adult education, but also shorter courses of different types. Folk high schools in Sweden are “owned” by what is called “huvudmän” (trustees), and these are either the county council, or one or more non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with varying ideological backgrounds. The liberal adult education in folk high schools vary 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. However, a considerable number of folk high school courses are vocationally oriented (Landström, 2004). But it should be noted that these courses are not primarily based on labour

market needs, as in vocational adult education, but more often on individual interests in subjects like art, handicraft and music, or on the need of skilled employees in NGOs etc.

All courses are expected to apply pedagogy/methods that are typical for “folkbildning”, and there are also courses with “liberal” contents, i.e. courses with other contents than general and vocational subjects. Furthermore, some folk high schools have been commissioned to arrange advanced vocational education, in addition to the courses that are financed through the Swedish Council for Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet).

The target group for folk high schools is in general the same as for formal adult education – all adults over 18 years, but those with short prior education are normally prioritised.

Study associations

The study associations comprise the other main category of “folkbildning” or liberal adult education providers in Sweden. Most study associations are “owned” by different member associations, NGOs, ranging e.g. from religious to political organisations. The study associations mainly arrange different types of study circles, or “courses” in everyday language, 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).

The target group for study circles is in principle everyone, even if adults comprise the main target group. Study circles are offered not only to adults, but also to younger people, e.g. rock music circles with a target group from the age of 13 years.

The adult educators in study circles are called study circle leaders. The positions of the study circle leader vary. There is a range from the full-time employed leaders that run a lot of circles/courses, via paid leaders who run one or only few courses, to the voluntary and unpaid leaders. The latter are mainly leaders of so called “comrade circles” that often are arranged in close cooperation with an NGO that is associated to the study association.

3. National policy strategies for lifelong learning, adult learning, adult education

In this chapter we briefly describe the development of strategies toward adult education in Sweden, with focus on the recent development. The specific focus is quality issues, adult education and training provision/supply, and the professional requirements and competence needs of adult educators acting in the different types of general, vocational, and liberal adult education described in the previous chapter.

General adult education

General adult education in Sweden has its roots in liberal adult education. The evening schools started in the 1950s and were organised by study associations. However, in the 1960s this education was formalised, and the municipal adult education was founded in 1968. The full history of municipal adult education is beyond the scope of this report, but it could be mentioned that adult education had its own national curriculum from 1982 up to 1994. However, in 1994 new curricula were introduced for compulsory and formal voluntary education on primary and secondary level, and the curricula became the same independent of if pupils were young or adults.

The Adult Education Initiative (AEI), a huge national initiative to expand, develop, change and restructure adult education, was running 1997–2002. The initiative included 100,000 new study places in municipal adult education financed by the state, and this expansion was also motivated by high unemployment rates. The restructuring meant, among other things, that the municipalities themselves now not necessarily were the main providers of formal adult education. The municipalities became 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).

After the AEI the earmarked state subsidies for municipal adult education were reduced, but the restructuring in terms of commissioning etc. was here to stay. In 2008 an official report on a “free” formal adult education was presented (SOU 2008:17). The proposal was that any provider should be free to start formal adult education, if the National Agency of Education was assessing them as qualified providers, to recruit students, and to receive municipal subsidies, within the limits of the municipal budget. This would be different from the present system of commissioning adult education, but similar to the system for free schools on primary and secondary level for young people in Sweden today. However, these proposals have not been put into action yet.

Today, there are no earmarked subsidies for general adult education from the state to the municipalities. According to the law, the municipalities have to provide adult education on the level corresponding to the compulsory school, but the extension of adult education on upper secondary level is depending of decisions in the municipality. The upper secondary school will probably be restructured in 2011, which will have consequences also for adult education in terms of courses, programmes, grading system etc. (SOU 2008:27, Prop. 2008/09:199). A proposal of special interest for adult education is that vocational programmes in upper secondary school will be less comprehensive when it comes to general subjects, which means that these programmes will not give the basic eligibility for higher education,

unless the pupil choose certain general/theoretical courses. As a consequence of this, there is also a proposal (Ds 2009:20) that the municipal adult education will be obliged to provide not only basic adult education but also those courses on upper secondary level that give this basic eligibility. However, one alternative in the proposal says that municipalities should be obliged to provide these courses only to those over 25 years. Nevertheless, this might mean a higher demand on adult education – and adult educators – if/when previous students from vocational programmes want to go back to school to get the eligibility for higher education.

Here it should be mentioned that a significant part of the demand for municipal adult education in recent years has been based on a opportunity to improve your grades from upper secondary school. After studying a course in municipal adult education you could get a better grade, which means a better grade point average and better opportunities in the admission to higher education. However, present policy is to reduce these opportunities, which is part of the rationality behind the proposed 25-years-old limit mentioned in the previous paragraph.

The quality of schooling in Sweden is governed through objectives, goals etc. and the “Swedish Schools Inspectorate” (a new national agency) makes the regular control of the quality in the municipalities. The inspectorate also assesses applications to start free schools. Earlier the National Agency of Education did these assessments as well as the quality control in the municipalities.

The adult educator in general adult education

The qualifications for adult educators in general adult education are the same as those for teachers on the corresponding level, and in corresponding subjects, in primary/secondary school. There are no other specific requirements of education for teaching in general adult education. This means that the requirement is a degree from a relevant teacher education programme. The teacher education programme is provided in higher education, that is universities and university colleges. However, if there is a lack of teachers, a person without a teacher degree could be employed as a teacher for a limited period of time.

Vocational adult education

A main part of Swedish vocational adult education is the vocational part of the municipal adult education, with the history, quality control etc. described above. For example, vocational adult education was included in the AEI. In 2009 a special initiative was taken on national level to expand the vocational part of the municipal adult education (U2008/8186/SV, SFS 2009:43). The earmarked state subsidies came back, but earmarked for the vocational part. This is significant for the present policy of adult education, where the labour market and vocational education is in focus to a higher extent than earlier.

1997 was not only the starting year for the AEI, but also the year when advanced vocational education (KY) was initiated. First it was introduced on an experimental level (SOU 1999:119), but in the year 2000 it was formally established (Prop. 2000/01:63). The introduction of KY is another example of the focus on vocational adult education. The KY has been governed by a national agency, but the employers have also had an extensive influence on the contents and quality of the specific programmes. The varying providers have been commissioned to run a programme for a limited number of years. During these years there has been a control from the agency, and after this period they have had to apply anew to be commissioned, and these applications have been assessed in relation to the present needs in the labour market.

Post-secondary vocational education has been investigated (SOU 2006:115), and as mentioned KY has been replaced in mid 2009 by “higher vocational education”, with a stricter monitoring and control of the programmes from the new Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (Prop. 2008/09:68, Dir. 2008:153, Dir. 2009:26). The development of vocational higher education in practice is still to come.

The adult educator in vocational adult education

The requirements for teachers in vocational municipal adult education are the same as in corresponding courses in upper secondary school, which is vocational competence corresponding to 1,5 years in higher education (90 ECTS points), and a 1,5 years teacher education at a university or university college. Mentors in the work place are also acting as educators in the work-based parts of vocational education, and for these mentors there are no such formal requirements on educational competence.

Here it should be mentioned that there is a lack of vocational teachers. This means that persons without a teacher degree are employed in vocational education more frequently than in general education, and the expansion of vocational teacher education is a central policy issue in this area.

In advanced vocational education, there have not been any certain requirements on teachers. The provider applies for the right, and money, to arrange a programme for a limited number of years, and the main criteria are the labour market need and the provider’s competence to provide the programme, i.e. their vocational competence. In addition to teachers, the mentors in the work place have a role as educators, as a significant part of the programmes is situated in the work place. The situation will be the same in the higher vocational education.

When it comes to labour market education, this education is not part of the formal school system. Thus there are no formal requirements on teachers.

Liberal adult education – “folkbildning”

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 gives extensive subsidies to liberal adult education. Instead, the Swedish Council for Adult Education, which is an NGO with the two folk high school organisations (one organisation for the NGO-owned schools, and the organisation of Swedish municipalities and county councils representing county council owned schools) and the study association organisation as members, since 1991 is commissioned by the state to monitor the folk high schools and study associations, and to decide how the subsidies should be distributed to schools and study associations. Now the council is also commissioned to evaluate the liberal adult education.

In 1997 a new step was taken when governing by objectives was introduced. There have also been changes concerning conditions for state subsidies. There have been prioritised target groups among potential participants, but today the priorities are instead focusing on certain knowledge areas (Prop. 2005/06:192).

The AEI, as mentioned above, and the restructuring of formal adult education, meant that the folk high schools and study associations to some extent – depending on local decisions – became involved in formal education, as a complement to the non-formal education. A part of

the AEI was also that another 10,000 study places – in addition to the 100,000 in formal adult education – were earmarked for an expansion of the folk high school courses. However, after the AEI folk high schools, as well as municipal adult education, had some problems when the study places were reduced again. Folk high schools have also arranged programmes within the framework of advanced vocational education, and might also be involved in the “higher vocational education”.

The adult educator in liberal adult education

There are no formal requirements on folk high school teachers, as the education is non-formal and therefore not regulated in that sense. There is a folk high school teacher programme on university level that provides competence as a folk high school teacher, 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 particularly competences in specific vocations, arts, handicraft etc. The folk high school teacher programme is also offered as part-time in-service training for acting folk high school teachers. Thus, there are no general formal requirements, but what is required on the local school might vary.

Neither are there any formal requirements on the study circle leaders, who work as volunteers or are employed. The folk high school teacher programme at university level also target educators from study associations. However, in this case the participants in the university programme are not study circle leaders but rather organisers/administrators with an educational responsibility. The study associations arrange their own in-service training for the study circle leaders, and there could be requirements within the organisations.

4. Opportunity structures for (prospective) adult educators

In this chapter we will present the map of available opportunities for education/training for adult educators in Sweden. First we cover more extensive programmes that provide initial training, and then we present the pattern concerning shorter courses. As will be shown, most of these opportunities are situated in universities and university colleges.

Programmes for prospective adult educators

Initial education and training for adult educators in Sweden is mainly provided as formal education programmes in higher education, i.e. universities and university colleges. 26 universities and university colleges have the teacher education programme, which results in a teacher degree and formally qualifies teachers to teach adults on corresponding levels as they are trained for. Here it should be noted particularly that all teacher education in Sweden is provided by universities and university colleges, as compared to many other countries where often only secondary school teachers of special subjects are trained in universities, while primary and vocational teachers are trained in other institutions. The length of the teacher education programme is 180–330 ECTS points (3–5,5 years full time studies), depending on level and subject contents included. As an alternative, the specific subjects, including vocational subjects, could be studied before taking the teacher education programme as a shorter 90 ECTS points (1,5 years) study programme, but with the exception of vocational teachers the normal way is to take the longer programme including studying the teaching subjects.

Some universities mention in their programme descriptions that they prepare teachers to teach adults, but these opportunities are limited. Umeå University describes that the final thesis could be related to adult education, and Göteborg University mentions the opportunity of practicum in adult education. A more extensive opportunity to focus on adult education in teacher education, to some extent including compulsory parts of the educational courses, has been implemented at Linköping University. As part of this, an optional 30 ECTS points specialization course on Adult learning is offered.

The only programme dedicated to adult education is the 60 ECTS credit points folk high school teacher programme at Linköping University, including courses on adult learning and liberal adult education, and practicum in folk high schools. The programme could be studied full time in one year, or part time in two years. This programme was initiated in 1970, first as a branch of teacher education for upper secondary school but from 1977 as a separate programme. It corresponds to the shorter study programme mentioned above, as the students are expected to have studied their teaching subjects beforehand, but these studies are not included in the teacher degree.

One exception from the mainly university based opportunities is that Brunnsvik Folk High School offers a programme for liberal adult educators (Brunnsvik, 2008). The programme is equivalent to 10 weeks full-time studies but combines full-time studies at the school with part-time studies at distance during 6–7 months. The target groups are prospective adult educators and adult educators in NGOs such as study associations and trade unions, and particularly within the labour movement.² With this exception, it seems to be rare that adult

² As mentioned above, many folk high schools are owned by NGOs with different ideological backgrounds, and Brunnsvik Folk High School is owned by NGOs within the labour movement.

educators are trained outside universities. The other type of exception is in-service training targeted at for example study circle leaders in a study association. However, the latter case – in-service training organised by the adult education organisations – is beyond the scope of the present project.

Shorter courses for adult educators

However, the opportunities for prospective adult educators at university level (including university colleges) are not restricted to programmes that give a teacher degree. There are also more frequent single courses, mainly on the basic level. Most universities and university colleges have some course in Adult education or Adult learning, but with few exceptions these courses do not focus on developing teacher competence, but they have a broader focus on adult learning in different contexts, e.g. working life, and/or on more general aspects of adult learning.

The exceptions, focusing on the adult educator in some courses, are Linköping University, Göteborg University, Jönköping University College, and Malmö University College. For example, the 30 ECTS credit points course on Adult learning in Linköping mentioned above is offered as a single course as well as within the teacher education programme. Linköping University also offers a 30 ECTS credit points supplementary course for adult educators, where the requirement for eligibility is that you have a teacher degree.

Furthermore, there are few continuing courses that require more than the basic eligibility for university courses. On advanced level there is a course at Göteborg University, and a one-year master programme in Adult learning and global change at Linköping University. The courses are normally organised as distance courses with a half-time study pace.

Programmes and courses in Human resource development/management also provides training for a sort of prospective adult educators in working life, but this group is beyond the scope of the present study.

The in-service training organised by e.g. study associations are also more or less extensive part-time courses. In some cases study associations have also organised in-service training as contract education at the university, i.e. commissioned part-time university courses.

5. Regulation of competence formation among adult educators and the social status of adult educators

As we have seen above, there is not much formal regulation of the competence formation among adult educators in Sweden. Or, at least there is not much regulation that focuses particularly on adult education and adult educators. Rather the regulations are the same as for other teachers. The only teacher education programme dedicated to adult education is the folk high school teacher programme, and as folk high schools are part of the non-formal liberal adult education, there are no formal requirements on the competence of folk high school teachers.

Further, the only teacher union particularly for adult educators is SFHL, The Swedish Folk High School Teacher Union (Svenska Folkhögskolans Lärarförbund). In the formal school system, including adult education, there are two teacher unions with more or less overlapping member groups. The National Teacher Union (Lärarnas Riksförbund) are organizing teachers with a teacher degree working at all levels, though the union focuses on teachers in general subjects in lower and upper secondary school. The Teacher Union (Lärarförbundet) is the largest union organizing teachers at all levels, including teaching staff without a teacher degree. None of these unions have any particular focus on adult educators, even if they are included in their member groups.

However, the present proposal of a new teacher education (SOU 2008:109) puts some new focus on adult education. The official report, which will be followed by a governmental bill³, probably in November 2009, explicitly describes teachers for upper secondary school *and* adult education as a category of teachers. The consequence should or could be that these teachers will have an education that puts more focus on the role as an adult educator, as compared with present teacher education. However, it is not mentioned in the same way that also education on the compulsory school level could be provided for adult students (the municipalities are obliged to do this if there is a demand). Thus the role of compulsory-school teachers as adult educators is not highlighted in the proposal. Another part of the proposal is that the folk high school teacher programme should be put down and instead be integrated in the education for upper secondary school and adult education teachers. That is, a folk high school teacher profile could be offered within that programme, at universities with a research-based competence to do this. Here, Linköping University is mentioned as the present provider of the folk high school teacher programme, and as a possible provider of the adult educator profile to come. When it comes to the vocational teacher education, one part of the probable changes is that the admission requirements for the teacher education will be lowered according to the demands of higher education. Vocational competence not necessarily has to correspond to the present demand of 1,5 years in higher education (90 ECTS points), but could instead be assessed on its own vocational rather than academic terms (Dir. 2008:41, SOU 2008:112). However, there will still be the requirement of 1,5 years (90 ECTS points) teacher education to become a vocational teacher on upper secondary level, if the governmental bill takes up what is proposed in the official report (SOU 2008:109).

³ Swedish official reports are normally written by and presents 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 the official report and comments on this report from different actors in the country (e.g. municipalities, national agencies, universities). Cf. green papers and white papers.

As indicated by the investigation of national policies and the present policy of a new teacher education, the rationale for the need of adult educators is not analysed and discussed. It is so to say a non-existing question. As a consequence of this the adult educator does not have a high status in Sweden, and particularly the adult education competence does not have much specific status. It is rather the status as a teacher in general that present policy tries to promote. And when it comes to vocational adult education, the focus is on the educators' vocational rather than educational competence.

Research on the adult educator

This situation is reflected in research too. The research on adult education and adult learning is relatively extensive, but there is little research focusing on the adult educator, and nothing focusing teacher education for adult educators. The focus is on the adult learner and learning processes, conditions for learning, participation etc., but also on the organisation and policy of adult education in different contexts. It should also be noted that the extensive research mainly concerns general and liberal adult education. Vocational adult education is not very much in focus – in the vocational sector there is rather extensive research on learning in the work life, independent of formal education, an area beyond the scope of our study. There are few studies on vocational learning in the school context and none focuses on adult learners and learning.

When it comes to the adult educator, we can give a few examples from Swedish research. Abrandt Dahlgren (2007) has conducted empirical studies of adult education in three contexts, university, folk high school and municipal adult education in order to investigate the characterisation of adult education. Three characteristics of the practice of teaching adults were identified (“the Clinique”, “the Market” and “the Credit point office”). Features defining these characteristics were found in all three contexts and thus interpreted to be cross-contextual.

Håkansson (2007) has interviewed teachers in formal, general adult education. She shows how the main concerns of these teachers are the high degree of absence and many drop-outs among the adult students. This means that the teachers perform a lot of motivational work and try to find a balance between teaching and caring in their professional role. However, the needs of the students result in a situation where the caring dimension prevails. This means that there is a distance between the andragogical principles with its ideal, responsible and motivated, adult student, and the practice of adult education, where teachers have to take on both responsibility and motivational work (Håkansson, 2007). Assarsson and Sipos Zackrisson (2005) have conducted ethnographical studies of adult education in the contexts of general and liberal education. In their thesis it is shown how different participants' identities are staging in adult education. There are differences as well as similarities according to the diverse contexts. Teachers' expectations on students are related to the andragogical ideals here too, but the participants do not fulfil these ideals in their study strategies.

Analyses of teacher trajectories in municipal adult education have been conducted by Henning Loeb (2006). The development and change of general adult education, and the professionalization of adult educators, have been made visible through life histories and narratives of a number of experienced adult educators.

Paldanius (2007) presents a study based on interviews with folk high school teachers. The focus of the study is the folk high school – its “spirit” and what is typical or signifying for this

type of school, from the teachers' perspective. The results among other things show how a number of aspects of the teacher's work and pedagogy are important to identify the spirit and signifiers of the folk high school. A central aspect is the focus on the individual, but an individual in a collective context. This means a pedagogy where different individuals meet and learn together in groups. The pedagogy is based on a democratic perspective. Further, "playing" is described as important in the pedagogy, but also the connection to everyday life.

In research on vocational education, there are a few studies on advanced vocational education, but the fact that the participants are adults is not in focus. Lindell (2004) has analysed the effects of advanced vocational education from a labour market perspective, and Chaib (2007) and Olofsson (2002) have studied the relation between the school and the working life; in the latter case showing the high demands on students' in advanced vocational education concerning their own learning. A study of vocational education in folk high schools is focussing the contents of these courses (Landström, 2004). There are also studies on recognition of prior learning in vocational adult education (e.g. Andersson, 2006; Fejes & Andersson, 2009). The vocational adult educator has not been studied, but there are some studies of vocational teachers in upper secondary school. Göransson (2004) deals with the demands on vocational teachers to take into account that language is learnt in different contexts; Lindberg (2003) studies the pedagogical ideas of vocational teachers, and how these are expressed in teaching; and Lemar (2001) shows the divergent challenges inherent in invisible demands and heterogeneous student groups.

6. Conclusion

In this final chapter we will sum up the main results from the study. These are presented together with the central conclusions that could be drawn from the results concerning adult education and the adult educator in Sweden.

The adult educator is not in focus

It is shown in the investigation of the education and training opportunities for teachers in Sweden and the policies governing such processes of professionalization that the adult educator is not in focus. Neither have the field of research of teachers' professionalization and the research on adult education a specific focus on the adult educator.

The adult education and the adults' possibilities of taking part in different kinds of education are of high interest, both politically and in the field of research. There is an extensive structure of provision of adult education from basic to advanced level in the fields of general, vocational and liberal education. The access to and potentials for participating in adult education have been in focus, and strategies for supply and reduction of barrier for studies (e.g. the private financial situation) have been formulated and implemented. These attempts have been studied in the field of research; the adult learner, processes of learning, recruitment and conditions for participation have been investigated.

In all these different kind of efforts the adult educator has been seen as a part of the adult education system, not as an object for strategies or research. Our interpretation is that the adult educator has been shadowed by the political vision on making complementary education and life-long learning accessible to all the people. In relation to research it can be understood as an influence of the societal and political discourse concerning adult education – and the lack of researchers with personal experience, and competence, of teaching adults.

Contemporary changes in the structure of adult education and a forthcoming change of the Swedish teacher education might imply a shift of attention paid to the adult educators and their processes of professionalization.

Few formal opportunities for becoming an adult educator

Today there are few formal opportunities to become an adult educator. This can be interpreted as a consequence of the absence of specific requirements of formal education and demands of competence for teaching adults. The demands on qualification of adult teachers are the same as for other teachers, i.e. corresponding to level and subjects. Initial education and training for adult educators are primarily supplied in education programmes at universities and university colleges. The subject and level of future teaching is the base for structuring the learning trajectories, not the category of learners. Nevertheless some limited efforts are made at a few universities to prepare for teaching adults. An increasing interest can be identified especially at some universities, e.g. Linköping University, where there is a significant on-going adult education research.

The education for liberal adult educators an exception

There are no official requirements of formal competence for teachers in liberal education. But it is highly valued by the folk high schools if the teachers have the competence of understanding the specific values and conditions for being an educator in the context of

“folkbildning”, here particularly folk high schools. The expected competence is more related to the situated character of liberal education and adult learners than to levels and academic subjects. The folk high school teacher programme at Linköping University aims at developing that kind of competence. This programme is the only Swedish formal teacher programme targeted at adult educators.

According to contemporary changes in the context of folk high schools demands for teachers having the formal teacher competence in specific general subjects and for teaching at a level corresponding to the upper secondary school have occurred. A need for adult educators with “double” contextual competence is being discussed, i.e. competence as an upper secondary as well as folk high school teacher.

A new teacher education

The future opportunities for prospective adult educators in Sweden are unclear. Upper secondary school will be restructured, with consequences for general as well as vocational adult education on upper secondary level. New forms of vocational adult education are introduced. Liberal adult education is continuously changing, partly because it has a certain freedom as a non-formal sector of adult education. Parallel to these changes in the landscape of adult education, the teacher education will be restructured too.

A central question concerns what will happen in the new teacher education. Firstly, the present official report puts some focus on adult education, but we do not know yet what policy concerning adult education that will be included in the final governmental bill and in the decisions. Secondly, if there shall be any changes in practice, the official policy concerning adult educators (whatever this policy will be) must be reflected in practice at universities, where teachers are trained, and in municipalities and among other providers of adult education. Thirdly, we do not know how the education of liberal adult educators (primarily folk high school teachers) will be dealt with in the new teacher education. Fourthly: What will happen with teacher education for vocational education in the new teacher education? A central aspect here is if there will be any focus on adults, or if there will only be a focus on the vocational aspect independent of if pupils are teenagers or adults. 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, the result of the restructuring process could also be the opposite, depending on what policy decisions are made.

Restructured upper secondary education

As mentioned, the restructuring of upper secondary school could mean an expanding demand for adult education and educators. Large groups of young people no longer have the basic eligibility for higher education. Will they be satisfied with their upper secondary education and vocation, or will many of them become adult students who want to go to university later in life? In the latter case, the landscape of adult education will change, with a higher demand of courses giving the competencies required for eligibility. And, as a complementary alternative, the demand for recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes identifying these competencies might also be higher, putting focus on educators’ competence concerning RPL.

Higher(?) vocational education

In the area of vocational adult education, the development of the new higher vocational education is another interesting area. Will there be any demands on educational training for

adult educators in higher vocational education? This does not seem to be the case, which means that the educators in higher vocational education probably will be vocational specialists rather than adult educator. This policy does not reflect the focus on teacher competence and teacher education in the policy of neither compulsory and upper secondary education nor higher education. In the latter sector there is at least a demand on teachers to have educational competence corresponding to courses encompassing 15 ECTS points. Will the higher (earlier “advanced”) vocational education be “higher” or advanced if the educators lack educational competence?

The contents of adult teacher education

What will the contents be of the future adult teacher education? In the official report concerning a new teacher education (SOU 2008:109) it is clearly declared that Swedish teacher education should be research based. There is extensive research on adult education in Sweden and internationally. It is important that teacher education for adult educators will be based on this research. For example, we have shown how some studies have identified the difference between the ideal and practice of adult education. This is an example of knowledge that should be used in teacher education to problematize ideal ideas of how adult students and adult education should be.

Another interesting area is the balance and integration between subject/vocational and educational knowledge respectively. To what extent will the educational problems specifically related to the age group of adults be in focus, in relation to the subject/vocational contents of teachers’ future work?

There will be extensive development work in Swedish teacher education in the near future. Hopefully this study will contribute to this development, and put the needs of adult education and adult educators in focus.

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SOU 2008:27 *Framtidsvägen – en reformerad gymnasieskola*, Betänkande av gymnasieutredningen.

SOU 2008:109 *En hållbar lärarutbildning*, Betänkande av utredningen om en ny lärarutbildning.

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www.arbetsformedlingen.se (Public Employment Office)

www.folkbildning.se (Swedish Council for Adult Education)

www.ky.se (Swedish Agency for Advanced Vocational Education)⁴

www.regeringen.se (Swedish Government)

www.skolinspektionen.se (Swedish Schools Inspectorate)

www.skolverket.se (National Agency of Education)

www.yh.se (Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education)

Information on providers of opportunities for prospective adult educators

www.brunnsvik.se (Brunnsvik Folk High School)

www.gu.se (Göteborg University)

www.hj.se (Jönköping University College)

www.liu.se (Linköping University)

www.mah.se (Malmö University College)

www.umu.se (Umeå University)

Information on teacher unions

www.lararforbundet.se (The Teacher Union)

www.lr.se (The National Teacher Union)

www.sfh.se (The Swedish Folk High School Teacher Union)

⁴ This website is no longer available, as the former Swedish Agency for Advanced Vocational Education has been replaced by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education. See www.yh.se

Terminology index

The variation of adult education in Sweden – terms in English and Swedish.

English	Swedish
General adult education	Allmän vuxenutbildning
Municipal adult education	Kommunal vuxenutbildning
Basic adult education	Grundläggande vuxenutbildning
Upper secondary adult education	Gymnasial vuxenutbildning
Swedish for immigrants	Svenskundervisning för invandrare, Sfi
Special adult education	Särvux
Vocational adult education	Yrkesinriktad vuxenutbildning
Vocational municipal adult education	Yrkesinriktad kommunal vuxenutbildning
Post-secondary vocational adult education	Påbyggnadsutbildning
Supplementary education	Kompletterande utbildningar
Advanced vocational education	Kvalificerad yrkesutbildning, KY
Higher vocational education	Yrkeshögskolan
Labour market education	Arbetsmarknadsutbildning
Vocational folk high school education	Yrkesinriktade folkhögskolekurser
Liberal adult education	Folkbildning
Folk high school	Folkhögskola
Study circle	Studiecirkel
Study association	Studieförbund