



REGERINGSKANSLIET

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## **6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI)**

National Report on the Development and State of the Art of Adult Learning and Education (ALE)

### **Sweden**

#### **I. General Overview**

The Riksdag (Parliament) is the highest decision-making body in Sweden consisting of one chamber, whose 349 members are elected for four years by proportional representation. After the elections in September 2006, a coalition of centre-right parties has formed the Government. Local government is exercised through the 18 county councils and 290 municipalities.

#### **Population**

Sweden's land area is about 450 000 km<sup>2</sup> with a distance between the extreme northern and southern points of almost 1 600 km. In December 2007 the total population in Sweden amounted to 9.2 million with an approximate density of 22 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. The population is unevenly distributed over the country with most of the people aggregated to the southern third of the country. The number of Swedes living in densely populated areas has increased steadily. Around 84 per cent of the Swedish population live in urban areas.

Sweden is an ageing society. More than 17 per cent of the population is over 65 years of age. In the table below the Swedish population distributed by age and gender is presented.

**Table 1: Proportion (%) of population aged 0-17, 18-64 and 65+ in 2007**

Age	Total population	of whom (prop. (%))	
		Women	Men
<b>Total 2007</b>	<b>9 200 000</b>	<b>50.3</b>	<b>49.7</b>
<i>of which aged (prop.(%))</i>			
0-17	21.0		
18-64	61.5		
65+	17.5		

The number of births per woman is currently increasing. In 2007 the birth rate was 11.7 per 1000 inhabitants and the mortality rate 10.0. Life expectancy in Sweden was 78.9 years for men and 83 years for women and is slowly increasing.

### **Education level**

The level of educational attainment of the population is relatively high, with less than 25 per cent of adults having below upper secondary level education and almost one third of the population having tertiary education.

**Table 2 : Educational background of the total population in 2006, aged 16-74**

Age group	Educational background						Total
	Elementary school	Compulsory school	Upper sec. max 2 years	Upper sec. 2 years +	Higher education	No data	
16-19	0%	77%	1%	16%	3%	5%	490 271
20-24	1%	11%	5%	54%	24%	4%	541 577
25-34	1%	8%	13%	31%	43%	3%	1 149 779
35-44	2%	9%	35%	16%	35%	1%	1 287 709
45-54	3%	14%	36%	12%	32%	1%	1 165 740
55-64	17%	10%	31%	13%	28%	1%	1 217 706
65-74	36%	7%	27%	10%	18%	2%	781 348
<b>Total 16-74 yrs</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>6 634 130</b>

### **Language and ethnic groups**

The share of students born abroad has nearly doubled during the last decade. 40 per cent of the students in municipal adult education in 2006 were immigrants. The 20 largest language and ethnic groups in Sweden are shown in the table below.

**Table 3: Students, place of origin school year 2006/07**

Place of origin	Number of pupils	Prop. (%)
<b>All</b>	<b>205 080</b>	<b>100,0</b>
<i>of which born in</i>		
SWEDEN	126 208	61.5
IRAQ	12 376	6.0
IRAN	5 615	2.7
YUGOSLAVIA	3 333	1.6
SOMALIA	3 198	1.6
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA	2 933	1.4
POLAND	2 803	1.4
THAILAND	2 461	1.2
TURKEY	2 459	1.2
LEBANON	2 113	1.0
CHILE	2 046	1.0
FINLAND	2 013	1.0
SYRIA	1 881	0.9
AFGHANISTAN	1 856	0.9
RUSSIA	1 795	0.9
ETHIOPIA	1 181	0.6
SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO	1 178	0.6
GERMANY	1 028	0.5
PHILIPPINES	1 006	0.5
CHINA	993	0.5
OTHER	26 604	13.0

**Standard of living**

Sweden has one of the lowest poverty rates of all the OECD countries, with less than 5.3 per cent of the population below the poverty level (as opposed to an OECD average of 10.2 per cent) and has also one of the lowest levels of income inequality in OECD countries. In 2008, the unemployment rate was estimated at 6.1 per cent of the population aged 16-64.

**The management system**

Characteristic of the Swedish education system is management by goals and results, as well as decentralisation of responsibility for implementing education. This is not unique to the education system as in the last few decades the whole of the public sector has moved from a rule-oriented approach towards management by goals and results. This means that the framework laying down what should be achieved and within which work should be carried out is determined at the central (national) level. However, the local level makes decisions on how it should act, and the measures to be implemented in order to achieve the specified goals.

## **II. Adult Learning and Education**

### **1. Policy, Legislation and Financing**

#### **1.1 Policy, legislative and administrative frameworks of ALE**

##### ***Policy***

The aim of Swedish education policy is to make Sweden a leading knowledge-based nation characterised by high quality lifelong learning for economic growth and justice. Education and continuing professional development are of central importance for democracy and the participation of citizens in society.

The goals of adult education cover both social and individual perspectives. They promote economic development and growth and at the same time contribute to the development of democracy. Adult education should also contribute to providing the individual with opportunities for growth and development and reducing gaps between different groups in society.

Instruments used to promote adult education include:

- Setting up overall goals for publicly funded adult education,
- Regulating the rights of adults to education and the obligations of educational providers,
- Wide-ranging financial support to municipalities, folk high schools and adult study associations and other educational organisers,
- A generous system for study support to adults.

The Swedish Government actively promotes opportunities for adults to participate in learning in a variety of ways. Flexibility and lifelong learning are key issues in adult educational development policy. Adult education should serve to support flexible and lifelong learning and fulfil people's need for learning on the basis of individual wishes, needs and abilities. Modern technology and teaching methods enable considerable individualisation and geographic spread. This flexibility should give both men and women the opportunity to combine continued learning with their working and private lives. The role of the state is to create the opportunities for versatile learning and the national strategy to support both organised and non-organised learning situations. The establishment of forms for cooperation between different political spheres of activity is important for the development of support for lifelong learning.

The Government bill on Adult Learning<sup>1</sup> presented in 2001 laid out a strategy for central and local government-financed support for adult learning, based on the

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<sup>1</sup> Vuxnas lärande och utvecklingen av vuxenutbildningen, prop. 2000/01:72

needs of the individual. The focus shifts here from education in more school-like forms to a more flexible support for individual learning. In order to achieve learning objectives within a reasonable time, it is crucial that the individual is able to study at different levels and in different subject areas at the same time. The use of modern technology to support learning and to disseminate knowledge is an important aspect of the infrastructure for lifelong learning, as it helps to reach entire target groups and to further develop teaching methods. Outreach activities, guidance, validation, accessibility and financial study support may be said to constitute the cornerstones of an infrastructure for lifelong learning.

The lifelong learning policy implies that the state is responsible for supporting the individual's needs for learning. It implies that the state and municipalities should offer the right learning opportunities for the individual. Its realisation is dependent on the individual, how motivated he is and his ability to search for and make the most of all the opportunities presented by learning. The state and the municipalities are responsible for providing good conditions and opportunities for learning. A system for lifelong learning presupposes flexible educational alternatives and that the individual is aware of the different opportunities and of the requirements for various educational programmes. Lifelong learning requires coordination, a well-developed infrastructure for flexible learning and a coherent national strategy.

#### **Description of the Swedish system for adult education and learning**

The Swedish system for adult education and learning can be described through six more or less inter-related strands of education, training and learning. Each "strand" is described in more detail further on in the study.

*The first strand* of adult education provides municipal adult education up to and including the level of upper secondary school, consisting of Basic municipal education for adults, which corresponds to education provided in the nine-year compulsory school, Upper secondary adult education, based on the same curriculum and syllabuses as those offered in the regular upper secondary school programmes for young people; and supplementary education.

Included in this strand, as a type of education within the public system and provided by the municipality, is Education for adults with learning disabilities. On the basis of previous education, experience and abilities, this type of education is intended to supplement earlier education.

Swedish Tuition for Immigrants (SFI), another part of the public adult education system of its own within municipal education, is a special type of education intended to provide immigrants with Swedish language skills and knowledge about Swedish society.

Each municipality is responsible for ensuring that municipal adult education is available. Municipalities and county councils may commission other educational bodies to provide adult education.

*The second strand* comprises Independent Supplementary education, a post-secondary education focusing on specialist areas like art, handicraft, dance etc. arranged by private principal organisers.

*The third strand* consists of adult education at higher education level; Advanced Vocational Education and training. This education is carried out in close cooperation with representatives of working life, who participate directly in devising the training programmes and finance the workplace training scheme “Learning in Working Life”, which represents one-third of the total training period of adult education as well as supplementary education and labour market training. What is of particular interest is the dual approach introduced, using a combination of education in school and training in enterprises.

*The fourth strand*, Liberal adult education includes folk high schools and educational associations (study circles). Folk high school courses, study circles and cultural activities offered by the educational associations are targeted at people from all groups in society and cover a broad range of subjects at various levels.

*The fifth strand*, labour market training, is a labour market policy tool that targets the unemployed. The purpose of labour market training is to provide unemployed people with basic or supplementary vocational training. According to parliamentary decisions, the National Labour Market Board allocates funding which, in turn, is distributed to county labour boards and employment offices. The local institutions then purchase various training programmes from different education organisers.

*The sixth strand* is in-service training, focusing on the particular learning needs of working life. Many workplaces provide comprehensive in-service training for personnel at all levels of the organisation. This type of training can involve everything from practical vocational skills to extensive theoretical study. The training can be carried out in cooperation with universities and institutions of higher education, commissioned municipal education, or other training companies.

As described above, there is no single system of adult education, training and learning in Sweden but rather a number of sub-systems fulfilling different roles and functions that provide adults with broad possibilities for learning. Pursuing different roles and functions does not mean, however, that these sub-systems can, or indeed should, operate in isolation from each other.

This study does not include the two strands of higher education at universities and university colleges.

### **Gender equality**

The gender aspect has been of great importance in the development of adult education. In working life there is inequality between men and women. Breaking traditions in the students' choices of courses and educational tracks is a continuous challenge and many studies show that results of efforts of improvement have been relatively weak.

For many years the number of women in municipal adult education has been higher than that of men. 67 per cent of the students were women in 2006/07. Women and men make traditional, gender-related choices within municipal adult education. There are, for example, more women on nursing and care-oriented upper secondary programmes, while men dominate on technically oriented supplementary courses. Women achieve slightly better results than men in municipal adult education.<sup>2</sup>

A report from the Swedish Trade Union Confederation<sup>3</sup> shows a difference between men and women in finding jobs after completed vocational and training education. Women don't reach the same successful positions with good conditions as men do despite attending male-dominated upper secondary school programmes.

Gender equality is a long-term project and changing gender traditions has to start at an early age. Within the ENCELL programme (National Centre of Lifelong Learning 2008)<sup>4</sup> research on gender identities in pre-schools has been performed. The proposal of a reformed upper secondary school which also covers secondary adult education presented on 1 April 2008, "Path to the future- a reformed upper secondary school",<sup>5</sup> states that the upper secondary school is a reflection of the labour market and that clear commitment from labour market parties is required in order to come to terms with the lack of gender equality.

### **Validation**

A distinction between formal and non-formal education is often made. Formal learning may be regarded as that which takes place in an environment that is organised and structured to systematically satisfy a need for learning, whilst informal learning mainly takes place in connection with activities in daily life, inside and outside work. However these different types of learning seldom exist in a pure form. Liberal adult education is usually regarded as non-formal education. Since it is not subject to centrally determined curricula and syllabi it encompasses a large measure of informal learning.

Validation is one means of using and recognising the formal, informal and non-formal knowledge an individual has acquired. This competence covers not only knowledge acquired through formal education but also arising from informal learning. The Adult Education Initiative (see page 19) was the first major initiative in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning. In 2004 the Government appointed a National Commission of Validation for a period of four years to initiate and organise different actions, aimed at increasing the credibility of the validation process for the adult population. Another purpose was to facilitate discussions

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<sup>2</sup> Gender differences in goal fulfilment and education choices. Report 287, 2006, Skolverket

<sup>3</sup> Vågar till arbetslivet, Slutrapport av LO:s förbundsgemensamma projekt om de yrkesförberedande programmen i gymnasiet, 2006

<sup>4</sup> Children's construction of gender-identities in imposed "ethical" practices of being thoughtful and considerate, Christian Eidevald, 2008

<sup>5</sup> Framtidsvägen – en reformerad gymnasieskola, SOU 2008:27

between the different actors and implement the development of, for example, the “merit portfolio” system. The delegation also aimed at a systematic development of methods and systems.

The development work has meant cooperation with partners from different sectors and the benefits of cross-border cooperation. Regional actors are the Swedish Association of Local Authorities, the Federation of Swedish County Councils, the trade unions and the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise. Together they represent governmental, professional and employer-related interests and the responsibility for developing validation is thus shared between the education system and the business community.

The final report, “Towards a national structure”, that the National Commission of Validation presented in January 2008, stresses for example the importance of cooperation between different stakeholders and at different local and regional levels.

The Agency for School Improvement has been instructed by the Government to continue working with, and disseminating results from the Commission. The agency is initiating, organising and carrying out developmental efforts in order to improve quality, strengthen legitimacy and increase equality concerning the validation of adults’ skills and knowledge

## **Legislation and framework**

Education is organised by the state, the county councils, the municipalities and private education organisers.

For all education except for liberal adult education, goals and regulations are defined by the state. For adult liberal education, the state defines the purpose of governmental grants while objectives and regulations are set independently by the liberal education provider. The state exercises control by means of reviews, assessments and development efforts carried out by the national inspectorate agency.

State regulations for the education system are set out in the Education Act and in a number of ordinances. Legislation is passed by the Riksdag while ordinances are issued by the Government. In addition, regulations are issued by the central authorities (who are the executive organs while the Ministries provide guidelines).

The Swedish education system is decentralised. The division of responsibilities is based on the main principle that the Riksdag and the Government should control educational activities by defining national goals, while central authorities, municipalities and the organisers of the different institutions are responsible for ensuring that educational activities are implemented in line with the legislative framework and that the national goals for the education are achieved.

### **The Education Act**

According to the Education Act the state provides education for adults in the form of municipal adult education, education for adults with learning disabilities, and Swedish Tuition for Immigrants (SFI). Adult education, education for adults



with learning disabilities and Swedish Tuition for Immigrants constitute the national adult education system. There are also special types of education provided by the state as a supplement to adult education within the national adult education system.

The Education Act Chapter 1 § 9 states, *“The national adult education system shall give adults an opportunity, in accordance with their individual wishes, to supplement their education. Primarily those who have received the least education shall here be given an opportunity to strengthen their position in working life and in cultural and political life. The education shall be equivalent within each type of school wherever in the country it is provided. The activities within the national adult education system shall be structured in accordance with fundamental democratic values. Each and every person who is active within that school system shall promote respect for the intrinsic value of every human being and for our common environment.*

*Persons active within the school system shall in particular*

- 1. promote equality between the genders and*
- 2. actively counteract all forms of insulting treatment such as bullying or racist behaviour.”*

### **Municipal adult education**

Municipal Adult Education consists of basic adult education, upper secondary adult education and supplementary education. Education in Municipal Adult Education shall be provided in the form of courses.

Basic Adult Education aims at giving adults the knowledge and skills they need in order to participate in community and working life. It shall also be aimed at making further studies possible. Upper secondary adult education aims at giving adults the knowledge and skills corresponding to those that young people may acquire through upper secondary school. Supplementary education aims at giving adults an education that brings them to a new level within their occupation or that leads to a new occupation.

Municipalities and county councils may contract other organisers to provide municipal adult education.

#### *Basic adult education*

Each municipality shall be responsible for residents of the municipality, who are entitled to the education and wish to participate in it, being able to do so. Each municipality shall actively strive towards reaching those in the municipality who are entitled to adult comprehensive education and to motivate them to participate in the education. Each resident of a municipality shall be entitled to participate in adult comprehensive education as from the second six calendar months of the year of his or her 20th birthday, if he or she lacks such skills as are normally achieved in compulsory school and he or she is resident in the country.

### *Upper secondary adult education and supplementary education*

Municipalities shall offer adult upper secondary education. They shall in this connection strive towards offering education that satisfies demand and needs. Each municipality shall provide information about the opportunities of adult upper secondary education and shall work towards adults participating in such education. Every resident of a municipality shall be entitled to participate in adult upper secondary education if he or she is resident in the country and otherwise fulfils the prescribed conditions (as from the second calendar six months of the year of his or her 20th birthday, or when he or she has completed education in a national programme or equivalent education in Upper Secondary School.)

Supplementary education based on completed upper secondary schooling is part of the municipal education. Supplementary education has close links with working life and usually incorporates work practice modules.

### **Education for adults with learning disabilities**

Education for adults with learning disabilities is aimed at giving adults who have learning disabilities knowledge and skills corresponding to those that young people may acquire in the compulsory school for children with learning disabilities and in national or specially designed programmes in the upper secondary school for children with learning disabilities. Education for adults with learning disabilities shall be provided in the form of courses. A county council may by special agreement with a municipality provide education for adults with learning disabilities.

### **Swedish Tuition for Immigrants**

Swedish Tuition for Immigrants aims at giving newly arrived adult immigrants basic knowledge of the Swedish language. The education is provided as courses. The pupils shall have influence over how their education is structured.

Every municipality is obliged to ensure that Swedish for Immigrants is offered to every person entitled to participate.

Courses shall be available as soon as possible after a right to Swedish Tuition for Immigrants has been established. Unless there are special reasons, it should be possible to start courses within three months. Every municipality shall actively work towards reaching those in the municipality who are entitled to Swedish Tuition for Immigrants and to motivate them to participate in courses. The municipality shall consult with the relevant employer and local employees' organisation with whom the employer is bound by collective agreement concerning an employee's participation in the courses and the scheduling of the courses.

The following persons shall have a right to participate in Swedish Tuition for Immigrants as from the second six calendar months of the year of their 16th birthday:

1. A person resident in the municipality, who lacks the basic knowledge of the Swedish language that the tuition aims to provide.

2. Finnish nationals who permanently work in the municipality, but who are resident in Finland close to the Swedish border and who lack the basic knowledge of the Swedish language that the education aims to provide. A person who has such knowledge of the Danish or Norwegian language that tuition in basic Swedish cannot be deemed necessary, shall not be entitled to participate.

Municipalities may contract others to provide courses in Swedish for Immigrants. The Government may issue regulations as to whom may be awarded such contracts and the terms and conditions.

### **Liberal adult education**

Government-supported liberal adult education is carried out in study associations, mainly in the form of study circles and different cultural activities, and in folk high schools. A major part of liberal education is closely connected with popular movements and other organisations that are either members of study associations or connected with folk high schools.

Unlike other educational institutions, folk high schools and study associations are not required to follow centrally established curricula. The freedom to determine its own activities and educational profile affords each folk high school and study association considerable scope to design and tailor its courses to suit a range of target groups.

The Riksdag has laid down the aims and conditions for granting government support to liberal adult education: People are to be given the opportunity to influence their situation in life and take part in social development. Democracy is to be strengthened and developed. Interest in culture is to be broadened and participation and the individual's own creativity is to be furthered.

Liberal adult education is supposed to give priority to activities that aim at bridging educational gaps and that are geared towards people who are disadvantaged educationally, socially and culturally. Particularly important target groups are people of foreign descent, physically or mentally disabled people and the unemployed.

The freedom allotted to the folk high schools to shape their courses according to the special profile and direction of the school, allows course participants ample opportunities to influence the aims and contents of their course, according to their current knowledge, interests and needs. Characteristic for folk high school teaching is that it often uses theme studies and project work.

Folk high schools have courses at different levels and with differing aims and directions. Every school has long courses qualifying for university studies. There are also a large number of special courses – studies in music, media, theatre and health, etc.

Of the 148 folk high schools, over 100 are run by popular movements, NGOs, non-profit bodies and support associations. Some 40 are the responsibility of county councils and regions, and one comes under municipal management.

### **State-supported post-secondary vocational education and training**

#### *Independent supplementary education*

Independent supplementary education provides education at upper secondary and post-upper secondary levels. The education focuses on specialist areas of expertise and the length of programmes varies from short courses to three-year courses.

Independent supplementary education may receive state grants if it is seen as being particularly valuable to the national interest, e.g. by helping to preserve the Swedish national heritage

#### *Advanced vocational education*

In 2001, the Riksdag decided to establish advanced vocational education and training as a regular post-secondary form of education in the Swedish education system. Advanced vocational education and training is designed to lead to employment and is carried out in cooperation with workplaces. The programme is an alternative to other post-secondary education and falls under national jurisdiction with respect to supervision. One third of the training period, which can vary from 1-3 years, is carried out in a workplace. Advanced vocational education and training programmes are run by municipalities, training companies and post-secondary institutions in cooperation with a workplace.

Advanced vocational education and training is a collective term for vocational training in a range of subject areas. Such training is distinguished by close cooperation with representatives of working life who take part in designing the training programmes and fund the workplace training scheme Learning in Working Life, which covers about one-third of the total training period. Training programmes are developed on the basis of local and regional initiatives and are thus also important for regional development. Courses of between one and three years' duration leading to an advanced vocational qualification in the trainee's chosen occupational area are aimed at students who have completed upper secondary school and people with a professional background.

#### *A Vocational University College?*

As part of efforts to improve vocational education and training in Sweden and with the purpose of concentrating and strengthening capacity and resources, the Government appointed in March this year a committee to investigate these matters. The committee has proposed the establishment of a new independent national organiser of all post-secondary education and training outside the universities under an umbrella organisation called Yrkeshögskola, Vocational University College. This organisation will contribute to efficiency, equivalence and high quality. In the proposal the reform introduces three distinct forms of upper secondary education focusing on: 1) academic, 2) vocational, and 3) upper secondary apprenticeship

training leading to high quality and recognised skills – in the form of a qualification.

### **Leave of absence**

Since 1975 all employees are entitled by law to unpaid leave of absence for studying, provided they have had the same employer for the last six months or for a total of 12 months in the previous two years. An employee is also entitled to attend courses arranged by the trade unions, irrespective of employment status. Each person has the right to choose the orientation of his or her studies. Neither the employer nor the union can give priority to persons opting for study programmes considered important from the viewpoint of the company or union. Nor are there any restrictions on the duration of studies. Self-tuition is not regulated in the law. The unemployed are obliged to take part in education stipulated by the National Employment Service. This obligation is regulated in the ordinance on labour market training programmes.

## **1.2 Financing of ALE**

### **Municipal adult education, education for students with learning disabilities and Swedish for Immigrants**

All education in the public school system is free of charge for students and is funded by the public authorities. The municipalities have the overall responsibility for financing and implementation. The state finances adult education through state grants. Funding is provided through resources contributed by the municipalities themselves out of local tax revenues plus a general government grant to municipalities, which is linked to a special equalisation system intended to create equal financial conditions for all municipalities and county councils. In addition to this, there are special funds in the form of targeted grants for special initiatives on the part of the state.

### **Government grants for particular purposes**

Through the Government's special initiative for upper secondary adult education for the unemployed, the municipalities received extra state grants during school years 1993/94–1996/97 to provide upper secondary education and supplementary education. Between 1 July 1997 and 31 December 2002, extra state grants have been paid for basic and upper secondary education in accordance with the regulations relating to the Government's five year education initiative for the unemployed and those with short education, known as the Adult Education Initiative (see page 19). The Adult Education Initiative meant that the Government paid state grants for education equivalent to approximately 100 000 yearly fulltime places. The Adult Education Initiative ended in 2002 and during the final years the state grant was gradually reduced to the equivalent of 70 000 places in 2002. In the period 2003–2005 a new targeted state grant was provided for municipal adult education. The targeted state grant was prolonged for yet another period and since 2007 is part of the targeted state grant included in the general grant to municipalities.

Apart from the general government grant, there are also government grants for particular purposes that are paid for a limited period of time and under their own regulatory frameworks. These grants are paid when the Government and the Riksdag wish to stimulate development in certain areas. One example of this is the government grant for financing continued professional development for teachers which the Government introduced in 2007 as part of the 'Boost for Teachers' initiative.

### **Independent supplementary education**

As mentioned above, independent supplementary education is not part of the public municipal adult education but arranged by private principal organisers and fees are usually asked of the students.

### **Advanced vocational education and training**

Advanced vocational education and training is financed by the state.

### **Liberal adult education**

Liberal adult education is largely financed by grants from government, regional governments and local councils. As is described above, the Riksdag has laid down the aims and conditions for granting government support to liberal adult education. For participation in study circles, students usually pay a fee.

## **Expenditure**

**Table 5. Total expenditure for adult education in 2006.**

<b>Formal Adult Education</b>	<b>Total expenditure (SEK million)</b>
Municipal adult education	4 820
Education for adults with learning disabilities	168
Swedish Tuition for Immigrants	1 023
Independent supplementary education	334
Advanced vocational education and training	1200
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 545</b>
<b>Non-formal Education</b>	
Study associations	1400
Folk high schools	1300
<b>Total</b>	<b>2700</b>

Source: Statistics from the Swedish National Agency for Education 2006

**Table 6. Total cost per student in 2006**

Municipal adult education	29 400 SEK
Education for adults with learning disabilities	34 200 SEK
Independent supplementary education	96 500 SEK
Swedish Tuition for Immigrants	30 700 SEK
Advanced vocational education	55 000 SEK

Source: Statistics from the Swedish National Agency for Education 2006

### **Tuition Fees**

Municipal adult education, education for adults with learning disabilities, Swedish Tuition for Immigrants and Advanced vocational education is free of charge. The organiser can decide to charge a limited sum for learning aids. Some independent supplementary education programmes charge tuition fees; under certain circumstances these can be financed through study assistance. In liberal adult education a certain sum is charged for participation in most study circles. A few private education organisers charge fees. In some cases students can obtain study assistance to cover these costs.

### **Financial support for students**

Adult students studying at compulsory school or upper secondary school level are eligible for study support from the second half of the calendar year in which they turn 20. Study support is made up of a grant and a voluntary loan.

The Swedish study support system is equal for all and is granted independently of parents' or family's financial situation. To be entitled to study support the student must fulfil certain basic requirements and be attending a school/higher education institution or course that qualifies him or her for study support.

The length of time for which you may receive study support is limited. Study support for studies at upper secondary level can be granted for a maximum of 120 weeks. At post-secondary level the maximum period for study support is 240 weeks. You may be awarded study support no later than in the year of your 54th birthday. After the age of 45, you do not have the same opportunity to take out a loan.

People who receive study support and have children are eligible for an extra child allowance.

This extra child allowance is intended as extra support and the amount paid depends on how many children the student has. Students can also receive a supplementary loan if they have previously been in gainful employment.

Supplementary loans can also be granted to cover certain additional costs, such as tuition fees and dual residence.

## **2. Quality of Adult Learning and Education**

### **2.1 Provision of ALE and institutional frameworks**

#### **Admission and requirements**

The municipality is obliged to offer *basic adult education* corresponding to the compulsory school (up to ninth grade) for everybody over 20 who does not have the proficiency normally gained in the compulsory school.

For *upper secondary adult education* including *supplementary education*, municipalities must strive to offer courses that meet the demands and needs. If the number of places is fewer than the number of eligible applicants for a course, priority must be given to those who need it most. According to the particular criteria for eligibility, applicants should 1) have limited education, 2) be in need of the course for a planned or current occupation, to supplement an incomplete programme from the upper secondary school or to supplement their qualifications, 3) be able to complete the studies in accordance with the agreed study plan.

Every resident of the municipality shall be eligible to participate in *Education for Adults with learning disabilities* if he or she is resident in the country and otherwise fulfils the prescribed conditions: 1) as from the second six calendar months of the year of his or her 20th birthday, or 2) when he or she has completed education in Upper Secondary School for children with learning disabilities. The Government may order that also persons not resident in the country shall be eligible to participate.

January 2007 marked the introduction of the right to Basic Education for Adults with learning disabilities who do not have the skills that compulsory special schools are designed to provide but who are capable of benefiting from such an education.

*Swedish Tuition for Immigrants* is offered to all immigrants from the age of 16. The Government decides on exemptions to the conditions for eligibility.

The organiser of *independent supplementary education* decides on admission requirements. The education either complements upper secondary school or equivalent education or has as its lowest admission requirement at least upper secondary education.

A completed upper secondary education programme or the equivalent knowledge is required for admission to *Advanced Vocational Education and Training*. General eligibility for tertiary education is required for admission to all advanced vocational education programmes and specific eligibility requirements are necessary for many study paths.

*Liberal adult education* is supposed to give priority to such activities aiming at bridging educational gaps and geared towards disadvantaged people educationally, socially and culturally. Particularly important target groups are people of foreign descent, physically or mentally challenged participants and the unemployed.



### **Certification Learner Assessment/ Progression**

Anyone who wishes to receive a grade from adult municipal education is entitled to examination in all courses and the project work offered in municipal adult education – whether a previous grade is held or not. A student attending regular upper secondary school however may not sit for examination in a course or project for which he/she has received a passing grade. Students are not obliged to complete their studies within a prescribed period, however the study support system sets a limitation to the duration of studies. Courses can be taken individually full-time or part-time.

Assessment may be oral or written and is carried out continuously. Pupil progress is measured qualitatively. The grading system used in municipal upper secondary adult education is related to the goals of each course as laid down in the syllabi. Grading criteria stipulate the knowledge required for each grade. The grades awarded are: Pass with Special Distinction, Pass with Distinction, Pass and Not passed. If the teacher lacks a basis for assessing student achievement due to student absence, no grade is given. For basic adult education and supplementary education programmes Pass with Special Distinction is not awarded. Within Liberal adult education a certificate is normally issued on completion of studies.

## **2.2 Participation in ALE**

### **Municipal adult education, education for students with learning disabilities and Swedish for Immigrants**

The proportion of inhabitants between 20 and 64 years of age taking part in municipal adult education increased significantly during the 1990s. The number culminated in the late 1990s due to the Adult Education Initiative (see page 19). In 1997/98 almost 7 per cent of those between 20 and 64 participated in education. Since then the number of students has decreased to 3.5 per cent in 2006/07 with a variety between municipalities from 0.8 to 9.7 per cent. The decrease has been largest amongst men under the age of 30.

In the school year 2006/07 there were almost 5000 students in Education for adults with learning disabilities. The number of students at Upper secondary level had increased by 19 per cent compared with the year before while the number at Primary and Secondary level had diminished by 6 per cent. Education is individualised and given in very small groups. Most students are born in Sweden but a slight increase of students born abroad has been observed.

In 2005/06 Swedish for Immigrants could be studied in 251 out of Sweden's 290 municipalities. 25 000 students of a total of 52 500 were beginners. The students represented 135 different languages of which 109 were spoken by less than 10 people. 61 per cent of those studying Swedish for Immigrants had at least a ten-year long education from their native countries. 40 per cent of the students were men but there is a large variation between different language study groups concerning gender.

**Independent supplementary education**

38 municipalities organised independent supplementary education in 2007. Around 5400 students participated in some of the 230 programmes offered.

**Advanced vocational education**

Out of a range of 760 advanced vocational education programmes pursued in 2007 more than 38 000 students participated.

**Liberal adult education**

The study circle is the most common study format concerned with any number of subjects, depending on the wishes of the participants, etc. Every year almost 300 000 study circles are arranged all over the country, with a total of nearly two million participants. Since many people take part in more than one circle per year, the actual number of participants is estimated at one and a quarter to one and a half million per annum. (The whole population of Sweden is just above nine million.)

**Table 7 Participation in different types of education in 2006/07.**

	Number of participants 2006/07	Proportion men/women <	
		Men	Women
<b>Formal Adult Education</b>			
Municipal adult education	205 080	33	67
- basic education	36 848	36	64
- upper secondary education	166 043	32	68
- supplementary education	2 189	41	59
Municipal education for adults with learning disabilities	4 941	51	49
Swedish Tuition for Immigrants (2005/06)	65 200	43	57
Independent Supplementary education	5 631	31	69
Advanced Vocational Education and Training	32 600	46	54
Distance education provided by The Swedish Agency for Flexible learning	456	44	56

<b>Total</b>	<b>518988</b>		
<b>Non-formal Education</b>			
Folk high schools	102 500	41	59
Study circles arranged through adult education organisations	1 500 000	43	57

### **The Adult Education Initiative**

In a bill on employment in 1995, "Halving unemployment by 2000"<sup>6</sup>, the Government stated the reasons for promoting adult knowledge nation-wide. For Sweden to be able to compete with other countries, a labour force with a high level of competence was needed. A special state initiative in adult education over a five-year period was launched – the Adult Education Initiative – to bring about a considerable increase in knowledge for those groups of adults who had the greatest need for education, and who had hitherto received minimal educational resources from society.

The Adult Education Initiative, which started on 1 July 1997, has developed tremendously over the past few years. Sweden had quite a high unemployment rate during this period. The aim of the state and municipalities was to achieve an overall boost in national knowledge by providing those with lower levels of education the opportunity to obtain a job and continue their learning. Around 800 000 people have raised their educational level to an average level corresponding to one year of upper secondary level.

The five-year Adult Education Initiative was the largest ever investment in adult education in Sweden. The initiative has had four vital perspectives – the renewal of labour market and education policies, more equitable distribution and increased economic growth. The initiative has mainly applied to municipal adult education, but folk high schools have also been affected. During the years of the Adult Education Initiative, the Government annually financed an average of 100 000 places in municipal adult education and 10 000 places at folk high schools. In addition the municipalities have used their own funds to finance some 37 000 places per year.

The Adult Education Initiative has primarily been targeted at unemployed people who completely or partly lack three-year upper secondary school qualifications. The aim was to provide those in greatest need with an opportunity to gain new skills and knowledge. The Adult Education Initiative was concluded as a specific project at the turn of the year 2002/2003.

As a consequence of the ambitions of the Adult Education Initiative on expanding cooperation between different adult educational providers and creating education

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<sup>6</sup> "Halving unemployment by 2000", 1995/96:222

that is increasingly relevant to the needs of adults, emphasis was put on the need to identify and clarify the goals of publicly funded adult education. The following issues were prioritised:

- Active recruitment of prioritised participants.
- Expanding counselling and municipal counselling centres.
- Flexibility and increased accessibility.
- Validating adult knowledge and competence.
- Improving accessibility to adult education for those with functional impairments and other disadvantaged groups.

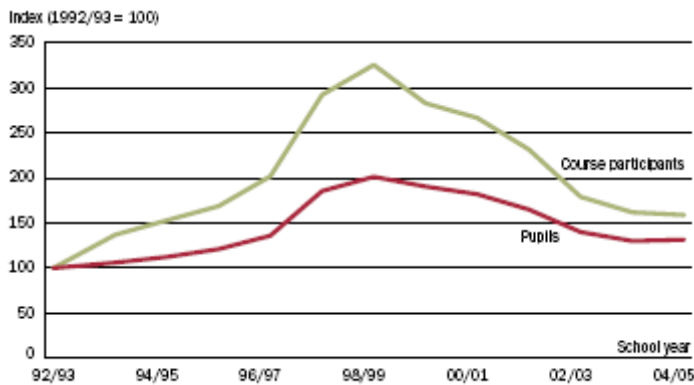
An important objective of the Adult Education Initiative was to promote better cooperation and a more efficient division of labour between actors at the local level. This is not only important from a ‘top-down’ point of view where the most efficient use of existing resources must be a priority, but also from a ‘bottom-up’ point of view where transparent as well as coherent provisions are crucial, for individuals as well as enterprises.

The Adult Education Initiative has also led to a development in the distribution of adult learning. The distribution of education has shifted from being steered by the supply of education to be steered by the demand for learning.

The substantial increase in municipal adult education is shown in the diagram below. The number of pupils nearly doubled and the number of course participants more than tripled during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The statistics for municipal adult education use two terms with different meanings: ‘pupil’ and ‘course participant’. A pupil is a person taking one or more courses in municipal adult education and can thus study at several different levels during the school year. In the diagram these pupils are shown at the level where they have the largest number of lessons

**Diagram 2. Indexed change in the number of pupils and course participants in municipal adult education during the 1992/93 – 2004/05 school years**



### **2.3 Monitoring and evaluating programmes and assessing learning outcomes**

The National Agency for Education audits education in many different ways. Regardless of the method, however, the focus is always on asserting the right of each individual to knowledge and personal development. Reviewing to effect improvements can involve:

- establishing, by way of educational inspections, whether – and how well an educational activity is functioning in relation to the regulations set out in the Education Act and school curriculum, and drawing attention to areas where a municipality or board of an independent school need to invest more efforts in their own development work.
- focusing on, by way of national evaluations, areas where development is needed at the national level, as well as providing the underlying basis for this development, e.g., to help school principals and supervisors in their efforts to lead and rejuvenate activities at the local level.
- participating in international evaluations in order to gain more indepth knowledge on comparable education systems and on how other countries have dealt with areas similar to those needing improvement in the Swedish education system.

An increase in autonomy has meant an increase in accountability. In 2003 the National Agency for Education began to inspect municipal and independent schools throughout the country. This initiative was based on a government mandate stating that all activities for which local and independent school authorities are responsible will be reviewed over a six-year period. The new Government has announced that inspections will be carried out more often. The task of the Educational Inspectorate is to determine whether and how well a school or activity is functioning in relation to the regulations set out in the Education Act, school ordinances and national curricula. This involves auditing and assessment at both municipal and school level, focusing on both quality and legal aspects of the operation. The results of the inspections are provided in written reports.

Apart from national inspection, most local authorities have developed follow-up systems of their own using municipal inspectors, peer groups, critical friends etc.

Municipalities and individual schools are obliged by law to annually report to what extent the national goals are achieved and what measures will be taken to improve the results. In these quality reports the pupils' results on national tests, compilations of grades etc. as well as results from surveys on norms and values, work environment and participation are presented and analysed. The reports are made public.

Systematically carried out quality work means increased responsibility for teachers to participate in assessments, evaluations and the development of their schools.

### **Liberal adult education**

The Swedish National Council of Adult Education, which distributes the government grants to non-formal adult education is charged by the Government with following up and evaluating the activities in folk high schools and study associations. This task has been made more stringent in recent years, and intensified efforts on securing and developing quality in adult study activities are made both in the Council, the study associations and folk high schools and their interest organisations. The Council's evaluation activities primarily focus on the activity's nature and effects, on individual participants and on society in general.

### **Improving the quality of adult learning and education**

Quality improvement at a local level is a continuous activity of great importance. The Swedish National Agency for School Improvement is responsible for general support to schools within nationally prioritised areas. The Agency supports local development of work quality and improvement of learning environments and stimulates the development of professional competence among educators. It is also responsible for the national programme for school leader education and supports the widened use of ICT in education. The dissemination of knowledge, experiences and research among professional educators and cooperation with municipalities, schools, universities and professional unions are part of their assignment.

A useful instrument, BRUK,<sup>7</sup> for assessing quality in a local organisation was produced by the school authorities in 2001 with an enlarged and improved version in 2008. This tool for assessing quality is an aid to all school organisers in their own processes of describing objectives and assignments, of follow-ups and evaluations of activities, of making analyses and judging the development and results of efforts. BRUK is based on the national steering documents – the Education Act, regulations and curricula.

### **The National Agency for Flexible Learning**

The National Agency for Flexible Learning (CFL) was established on 1 January 2002 in order to encourage and stimulate the local authorities to make decisions in the direction wanted by the Government. As part of the Adult Education Initiative, the CFL has played an important role in supporting the development of flexible learning in municipal adult education, folk high schools, study associations and workplaces.

The CFL has complemented the municipalities by providing courses that could not be arranged through municipal adult education with sufficient geographical spread or regularity and has also provided education on a subcontracting basis by selling places in courses to municipalities.

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<sup>7</sup> BRUK= Bedömning, Reflektion, Utveckling, Kvalitet ( Assessment, Reflection, Development, Quality)

Besides providing distance education corresponding to municipal adult education, the CFL has developed methods and teaching materials and has cooperated with municipalities on a consulting basis to support them in their efforts to create flexible courses using distance-learning methods. Distance education provides the opportunity for flexibility in commencement of courses, structure of courses, pace of studies and methods.

### **Agency reforms**

In order to boost development and strengthen quality in schools, the Government has decided that inspection, now part of the National Agency for Education, will constitute an agency of its own. The National Agency for Flexible Learning and the Agency for School Improvement will close down and parts of each of their assignments will be incorporated into the National Agency for Education. The reforms will come into force in October this year.

## **2.4. Adult educators/facilitators' status and training**

According to the Education Act "*Municipalities and county councils are obliged to use teachers... in the education who have training appropriate to the teaching that they will mainly be undertaking. Exceptions may be made only if persons with such training are not available or if there are other special reasons with regard to the pupils.*

*Every municipality or county council shall further strive towards appointing teachers with post-graduate training to teach in upper secondary schools, upper secondary adult education and supplementary education.*" The proportion of teachers in municipal adult education with higher education teaching qualifications varies between municipalities. In the school year 2006/07 an average of 21.8 per cent of the annual teaching work force lacked the prescribed qualifications and 30 per cent in Swedish Tuition for Immigrants. For teachers in vocational education, the percentage was even higher. The shortage of supply of vocational teachers and workplace supervisors is regarded as a critical factor.

The Education Act states that "*Each municipality shall ensure that teachers have the necessary knowledge of the regulations applicable to the national school system, in particular the regulations setting out the aims of the education, and that each municipality shall ensure that further training is arranged for personnel and endeavour to plan the further training.*" The state thus stipulates that teacher skills development be implemented but gives no details about the contents.

With "A boost for teachers" the state encourages municipalities and individual teachers to take part in supplementary education. In the four year period 2007-2010, the Government will be offering 30 000 fully qualified teachers, i.e. around 25 per cent of all primary, secondary and upper secondary school teachers in Sweden, an education focusing on reinforcing teachers' knowledge of their subjects and enhancing their teaching ability. The Government spends SEK 2.9 billion on in-depth education. Another SEK 500 million will be provided for research studies.

In February this year the Government presented an initiative to boost Swedish for Immigrant teaching in order to better students' achievements. Skills enhancement for teachers teaching Swedish for Immigrants is one of the measures taken.

A continually broader and more complex assignment indicates the importance of guaranteeing high levels of teaching skills. The inquiry on a new teacher-training programme focused on in-depth subject knowledge, knowledge of pupils with special needs and improved connections between teacher education and research and its report will be presented in September 2008.

The inquiry "Inquiry on teachers – on qualifications and authorisation" has been appointed by the Government to review the regulation in the Education Act on teachers' qualifications in order to strengthen quality and improve pupils' goal attainment. The Inquiry will submit proposals on qualification rules for teachers, and proposals for developing a national authorisation system for teachers.

According to the Education Act, management of education in schools shall be undertaken by school heads. School heads shall keep themselves informed about daily work in the school. It is incumbent on the school head particularly to work towards development of the education. Only persons who through training and experience have acquired knowledge about education may be appointed school heads. The National Agency for School Improvement is responsible for the national programme for school head education. The Government has recently decided to strengthen this programme by doubling its subsidy and making the programme more focused on issues that are important for fulfilment of the national objectives.

### **3. Research, Innovation and Good Practices**

#### **3.1 Research and key studies in the field of adult learning**

The relatively broad extent of adult education in Sweden and the major public investments of recent years have made adult education an interesting area of research. Increasing competence and qualification requirements in working life have helped to generate great interest in adult learning on the part of both politicians and researchers.

Below are some examples of Swedish research projects and programmes. To what extent research has had a direct influence on practice is hard to assess. The Swedish education system is highly decentralised and the main responsibility for using scientific knowledge for improvement initiatives and for in-service training is decided by principals and teachers. This means that the use of research results varies but evidence largely indicates that the use of evidence-based knowledge is limited. The Swedish National Agency for School Improvement as well as universities, public research foundations, national centres and some private companies try to develop strategies for making research more widely known to principals and teachers. However, the different initiatives have not been systematically evaluated which means



that it is impossible to tell how different kinds of strategies have influenced in practice.

a) National Centre of Lifelong Learning (ENCELL)

In 2001 the School of Education and Communication was commissioned by the Government to develop a unique centre for adult learning and lifelong learning.

The centre has launched a research programme on lifelong learning. The principal aim of the programme Learning in Life is to conduct research on the manifestations and dimensions of lifelong learning.

The programme is currently based on three main research themes: Discourse analyses of lifelong learning, Conditions for learning in formal educational environments and Workplace-related learning.

Learning in Life seeks to enhance and encourage a critical and scientific study of lifelong learning. The programme is structured on representation of learning, within formal and non-formal educational environments and contexts, and the learning of the individual; i.e. the human ability to learn, relearn and acquire new learning during all stages of development in life, from childhood to old age.

b) Workplace-related competence development

Workplace-related competence development is another field of interest and importance in the present adult education.

The ENCELL group has during the last 5 years conceptualised and tested a workplace related and workplace situated learning model. Learning at Work – a conceptual framework for workplace related competence development is the outcome model (Prof. Mohamed Chaib, head of the centre). This model has been implemented in 24 different schools in Sweden. At these schools the teachers were engaged in developing their ICT competencies, using the concept. In 2005 and 2006 the same model has been transferred and tested in the business sector at different firms, two manufacturing companies and one hotel.

The concept itself is based on five criteria for competence development. The learning has to take place at the workplace. It has also to be conducted in work teams and focused on problem solving (problem based learning). The learning of the work team is coached by a mentor. Finally the whole competence development is supported by some kind of incentive that is negotiated in and between work teams.

By conceptualising, testing and researching the workplace learning model the researcher has been able to gather unique data that depicts the differences between the form of competence development that occurs in formal learning contexts and the one that is situated at the work place. The data emphasizes the particular importance played by the mentor or the coach in the learning process. The mentor is shown to be able to raise the level of learning of the work team to unpredicted limits.

### c) Advanced Vocational Education and Training

In order to respond to the increasing demands from the labour market for employees with qualified practical skills, advanced vocational education and training AVET has grown up as an expanding field of professional formation and training. At the core of AVET is the requirement for a closer connection between training programmes and practical field training. AVET is characterised by being initiated by the social partners themselves, employers as well as trade unions. The trade organisations are responsible for providing trainee places as well as mentors for the students. They are furthermore expected to actively participate in both designing and conducting parts of the theoretical programme.

*Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice – Experiences from Advanced Vocational Education and Training is a thesis by Christina Chaib, PhD, School of Education and Communication, Jönköping University and National Centre for Lifelong Learning, ENCELL.*

In my research on AVET I have identified some confusing interactions related to the relationship between subject-specific content and practical vocational skills and knowledge in some AVET training courses. One of these confusions has to do with the unclear role played by the educational institutions and the workplaces where the apprenticeship is taken place. Both are responsible for the conduct of the training but are sometimes in conflicting stances with each other about the role the theoretical and practical content of the programs should play. Criticism has also been directed towards the lack of pedagogical competency among the teachers both at the educational institutions which provide the theoretical formation and also regarding the low pedagogical competency among the mentors during the students' apprenticeship in the field. Too much emphasis on adjusting the training programs to the practical demands from the trade organizations brings about the development of a shallow content of the training. All the problems are related to the Achilles' heel in AVET course and are dealing with "gaps" between theory and practice, school and work place and vocational and pedagogical competence.

### d) Distance education

The demand for distance learning is gradually increasing in a flexible environment of adult studies. In this field, the research to be mentioned includes

*Studies at Distance – An Additional Gain of Computer Know-how – Popular Adult Education, ICT and Society, a thesis by Ann-Marie Laginder and Eva Andersson, Linköping University*

The research project *Distance, ICT, popular adult education and everyday life* (Folklikt) is aimed at studying the interplay between distance studies and everyday life. We have recently done an investigation of the significance that distance studies have for participants, motives for choosing studies at distance and the significance of the computer in their everyday life. Different kinds of distance organised study programs have been arranged within popular adult education for people who have difficulties to participate regularly in face-to-face studies. This could be the case for persons working shift or persons with disability problems. 22 persons were interviewed from these target groups. In this paper we formulate two main issues: In what ways is distance organised and ICT-supported popular

adult education supporting the participants' relation to the information society? And, what kind of significance can the participation in these activities have for the society?

Our results point out that the relevance of distance studies is related to the two latter aspects i.e digital skills and continuity in usage. Though our results in some sense are contradictory they show that distance organised and ICT-supported popular adult education could play the role of a socio-technological praxis on an individual basis. In other words, the studies give the participants the opportunity and the occasion to use the computer, update their know-how and become a member in a digital network. According to this interpretation the access to digital technology could be seen as an additional gain beyond the learning of the actual subject in the ICT-supported courses. On the societal level, the limited amount of distance activities within popular adult education has to be considered.

#### e) How to motivate adults to take part in continued education

Motivating adults seems to be a problem. *The report "How do you motivate adults to take part in continued education?" by H.Abl at the National Centre for Lifelong Learning 2004 originates in an attempt to find an answer to this question.*

The review gives reason for a critical look at the motivation concept. The final chapter argues that most of the motivation theories privilege a western, androcentric and individualistic outlook on people, while marginalizing women and community values. The theories hold a power dimension. They stigmatize those held "unmotivated" as for example adults who desire to do other things than continue their education. It is all too easy for those who formulate problems of various kinds, as "the problem with adults unwilling to study", to locate the problem to the individual, while taking the grounds on which the problem is formulated for granted and making those who formulate the problem invisible.

The conclusion is that motivation is better seen as a relational concept that as something situated within the person. Adults' motivation, or lack there-of, is best understood in relation to those who formulate the problem. This means that the question put forward above also holds a power dimension. Instead of asking what motivates adults to continue their education one should ask who says that this is a problem, why and on which grounds.

#### f) Study circles as a Swedish model of adult education

*"Seven aspects of democracy as related to study circles" is a study by Staffan Larsson, Linköping University 2001.*

It is estimated that between 1,2-1,6 million Swedes take part each year in various study circles. These are considered to be significant for democracy. The empirical evidence for this claim is scrutinised in this text. The theoretical basis for the interpretation is meanings given to the concept of democracy in the discourse on democracy. Seven qualitatively different aspects of democracy are thus highlighted: equal participation, horizontal relations, deliberations, knowledge that informs stand-points, recognition of diverse identities, internal democratic decision-making, and action to form society. It is argued that the seven aspects can be looked upon as a chain, since they, to some extent, focus on different phases in a democratic process.

g) Pedagogies for adult learners in the international literature.

*Another study by Staffan Larsson, Linköping University 2006 is a report for the Swedish Research Council (VR) - a review of contemporary thoughts on pedagogies for adult learners in the international literature.*

A number of international research journals have been investigated in order to identify relevant articles. The selection of articles covers the period 2000 - 2004. Some other key texts are also analysed. The work has focussed on identifying patterns in the constructions of pedagogies (didactics in a Nordic and continental tradition) and how they are legitimised. Texts were chosen, which answered certain classical key questions in didactics, i.e. about the construction of ways to actively promote adult learning: What should qualify as knowledge? How should the process be designed? This paper is focused on a third question: the why-question. This question is about legitimating the answers on the questions of what should count as knowledge and how the process should be designed. What are the reasons for the choices? 15 lines of reasoning have been identified. The ways the authors are legitimating their conclusions or positions have also been examined.

h) Regional development of adult education

Adult education is one of the essential factors in regional development and growth. Regions have initiated network-building for improving infrastructures and the co-ordination and collaboration of adult learning.

An inquiry by the Swedish National Rural Development Agency in 2004 of the 290 municipalities proved that 86 per cent had established learning centre activities at the time.

The development of learning centres has been studied by Erik Jakobsson in his thesis

*Research on regional development as policy and practice, Towards a New Adult Education Policy, Linköping University 2007. He describes and analyses a regional network of municipal learning centres in the county of Örebro.*

The research questions are expressed as follows: What is the potential for developing adult learning policies, planning and organisation by means of regional collaboration, entailing a horizontal organisation in network form, and what theoretical and methodological perspectives can we apply to understand both the problems and the opportunities?

i) Learning in local trade unions concerns the Swedish Trade Union movement as a whole.

The prerequisites for local trade unions have changed in recent years. Contemporary changes in working life raise new and important questions for the local boards to deal with. Changes of labour legislation and decentralisation within the Swedish trade union movement have led to new tasks and greater responsibilities for the local trade unions.

*The role of learning in the local trade union's attempts to deal with contemporary challenges is the focus of a thesis by S. Köpsén, Linköping University 2003.*

The presented case-study aims at understanding the conditions and circumstances that shape the kind of learning that takes place in the board of a local branch of a Swedish trade union. The importance of the everyday context for learning is a fundamental approach to the study. Theories stressing the situated character of learning have been used for understanding the activities of the shop stewards participating in the social practice of local trade union work.

The shop-stewards' attempts to deal with the challenges have been interpreted as problem-solving. A pattern of three qualitatively different ways of solving problems has been identified. The shop stewards manage well problems concerning the traditional trade union work, i. e. interpreting the legal framework in laws, agreements and instructions. There is no need for change. The second kind of problem-solving is about new problems within an area familiar to the shop-stewards. The shop-stewards also manage to solve this kind of problems. The shop-stewards do not manage the third kind, the new and complex questions where the legal framework is missing, e.g. outsourcing, competence development and bad working conditions as an effect of lean production. This third kind of problems can be seen as questions for destiny to the trade union and its members.

Learning in local trade unions is not just a local matter. In order to understand the local trade union board's difficulties to deal with the contemporary challenges one must consider the aspects of power and relations to the counterpart, the employer. Decentralisation of trade union-work has changed the prerequisites for the local trade unions. New technique, ways of organising work and globalisation of production and ownership are examples of new and important questions for trade unions to deal with. These changed prerequisites concern the Swedish trade union movement as a whole.

#### **4. Adult Literacy**

The Swedish population is highly literate. According to the International Adult Literacy Survey conducted in late 1994, Sweden had the highest average score out of 22 countries, and also one of the lowest spreads, with high literacy levels even for those adults who had not reached upper secondary education. Factors contributing to these results might be that Sweden promotes adult learning among people with a low initial level of education (see Policy) and that literacy skills are maintained and upgraded throughout life – lifelong learning.

Literacy – basic reading and writing skills – is studied within Basic adult education. For immigrants, literacy has been transferred from Basic adult education to Swedish Tuition for Immigrants from 1 January 2007. The syllabus now in use is based on proposed changes detailed in a Government bill *Issues relating to adults' learning*<sup>8</sup>. Literacy may be taught in a student's mother tongue or in another language.

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<sup>8</sup> Vissa frågor om vuxnas lärande, 2005/06:148

## **5. Expectations of CONFINTEA VI and Future perspectives of ALE**

### **5.1. Expected outcomes from CONFINTEA VI**

1. The Conference should contribute to the strengthening of adult education and its importance among the Member States and become a means to give adult education – both formal and non-formal – recognition as a fundamental power for development of the Member States' democracy, civil society and economy. The Conference can make visible the power that education and learning have when combined with the organisations of civil society and their activities.
2. The Conference should focus on all humans' right to knowledge. Adult learning is a success factor also for the learning of children. The right of adults to knowledge is a condition for the creation of sustainable economic growth and development.
3. The Conference should contribute to knowledge about how education can help meet the new needs a country faces when its demography and the structure of its economy and companies change.
4. The Conference should also focus on the crucial role adult education can play regarding public health and related issues.

### **5.2. Future perspectives**

- **Vocational education**

Development of vocational education and training for adults is crucial for the regional process of economic and social growth. Cooperation between organisers of education and trade and industry must develop. Like many countries, Sweden is facing the problem of an ageing population and a subsequent large wave of retirements from the labour force, particularly in many vocational trades which have a high proportion of older workers. Society's emphasis on university education, combined with the relatively low number of entrants to vocational education and training, have intensified this challenge in recent decades. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the link between education outputs and labour market needs. It is important to raise the status of vocational education and training, and increase the number of young people entering trades facing skills shortages. Another challenge in this area is to research and investigate the barriers – real and perceived – to non-traditional groups entering vocational education and training. There is also a need in Sweden, as in many countries, to investigate how to improve access to vocational education and training for people currently outside the education system. A critical issue is improving the access of adults to post-secondary vocational education and training – an issue that is likely to become increasingly urgent as many industries (e.g. construction and resource extraction) face shortages of skilled labour. Although vocationally oriented upper secondary education in Sweden provides a broad education, there are increasing demands for the training to be better aligned with labour market needs in the country.

- **Immigration**

Around **12** per cent of the Swedish population is foreign born, representing more than 203 countries around the world. Over 60 per cent of those who have migrated have Swedish citizenship. Immigration will continue. National plans and cooperation at a national level will facilitate a process for higher quality in integration of immigrants containing information, health care, aids for people with disabilities and education among administrators and teachers.

Good language proficiency significantly increases immigrants' chances of obtaining jobs. The National Agency for Education has recently noted that 60 per cent of the students in Swedish Tuition for Immigrants courses do not achieve the goals and this is why the Government is now investing in an initiative to boost education for immigrants through a number of measures for improvement. Focus is being given to skills enhancement for teachers, national tests, clearer goals and time limits for Swedish for Immigrant education.

- **Flexibility**

New and non-traditional forms of learning in a flexible education system well connected to working life will be necessary in regions in which economic growth is weakening.

Flexibility in the availability of adult education and training adapted to supply and demand in the regions will have to develop together with greater regional influence for a better balance between municipalities and equality in provision and conditions among citizens. Adult education needs to increase its access and flexibility vis-à-vis disabled students in order to increase their employability.

- **International solidarity and sustainable development**

Since the Rio conference, educational issues have become increasingly important. The awareness that learning is central to sustainable development has emerged, a fact that has been underlined both at the World Summit in Johannesburg 2002 which ascribed education a fundamental role as well as with the launching of the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable development (2005-2014).

Education for sustainable development (ESD) is about learning to respect, value and preserve the achievements of the past, to appreciate the wonders and the peoples of the Earth living in a world where everyone has sufficient food for a healthy and productive life; it is also about assessing, caring for and restoring the state of our planet, creating and enjoying a better, safer, more just world by caring citizens who exercise their rights and responsibilities locally, nationally and globally.

Sweden has formulated a cohesive policy for fair and sustainable global development and a national strategy for sustainable development, where education has a

prominent role. Sweden has also been active in the development of international ESD efforts, such as the process of developing the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) strategy for education for sustainable development, a strategy that was approved by the high level meeting in Vilnius in March 2005, and is currently being implemented.

- **Gender equality – Equal opportunities**

Equal opportunities is very important when it comes to building democracy and sustainable development. Equal opportunities also contribute to a fair division of the world's resources.