

FINLAND

CHAPTER 1: BUILDING UP STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS: POLICIES, LEGAL PROVISIONS, DELIVERY SYSTEM AND INNOVATIONS

Policies

Parliamentary elections were held in Finland in March 2003. The government was formed by the Centre Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Swedish People's Party. The main objectives in the Government Programme are to develop the welfare state and promote economic growth. The Government pursues these goals by raising the employment rate, enhancing the prerequisites of entrepreneurship, balancing the development in different regional areas and preventing social exclusion and poverty. The whole of the Government Programme is permeated by the principle of equality – between citizens, areas and genders. It includes four specific policy programmes: for information society, employment, entrepreneurship and active citizenship.

Unemployment has been perhaps the single most significant social problem in Finland in the 1990s and attempts to reduce unemployment have naturally had an effect on adult education policies. The Government Programmes of both 1995 and 1999 emphasised the importance of education and training for the unemployed. Cutting unemployment by half in the period 1995-1999 was a special goal in the programmes, which called for increasing vocational education and especially for adult education. One of the central goals in the Government Programmes has been to increase the rate of employment to over 70%.

The principles of lifelong learning have had a strong impact on adult education. The national strategy was published under the name *The Joy of Learning - A National Strategy for Lifelong Learning* (Ministry of Education 1997). Together with the strategy outlines and international development, reforms are increasingly seen as a whole and making lifelong learning a concrete reality is a common goal.

In 2001 the Ministry of Education appointed an Adult Education and Training Committee. The initiative for setting up the committee was taken by Parliament. The chairman came from Ministry of Education and the members were represented the six major parliamentary groupings. The Committee's work was supported by a great variety of players in the field, including representatives of the education and labour administrations, social partners, and education and training providers. According to the Adult Education Committee, the future strategy of adult education and training should be built on four principles:

- Self-improvement will form part of the lives of a growing number of citizens, as work communities evolve towards learning organisations.
- Adult education and training will provide trained work force for all job categories and all vocations and professions.
- Adult education and training will develop teaching and learning methods and content, providing quality opportunities for people to develop themselves both in qualifying and liberal adult education.
- Adult education and training will maintain and strengthen participatory democracy, prevent exclusion and support active citizenship.

The idea underpinning this line of action is a policy built on the principle of lifelong learning and designed to offer opportunities for all adults to study according to their life situations and needs.

On the other hand, the strategy also recognises the value of non-formal education and stresses the need to make informal learning visible. The concrete proposals of the committee fall into an adult education development programme; measures improving conditions for adult learning; and the development of adult education financing and steering. (See below.)

According to the Government, the development of adult education policy will continue as proposed by the Adult Education Committee. There are also concrete goals concerning adult education and training. Later in 2003 the Government will adopt a new Development Plan for Education and Research (2003-2008), which will define the policies and goals for education policy, including adult education policy, in more detail.

Forms of adult education and training, main providers and institutions

Adult education is provided at all levels. It is on offer in some 1000 schools, higher education institutions and other educational establishments. Adult education includes initial education leading to a qualification or a degree at all levels; parts of a qualification or a degree; education preparing for competence-based qualifications; apprenticeship training; further and continuing education for refreshing and expanding vocational skills; and social and recreational studies related to citizenship and labour market skills.

In the OECD thematic review of Finnish adult education policy, adult learning was defined as follows: "Adult learning covers vocational training and general education as well as formal and non-formal learning, including higher education." Until recently, adult education is understood only as education which has been organised and arranged specifically for adults. Recently the stress has been on the learner's own profile, whatever the learning environment. In practice an adult learner is one who is aged 25 or over, whether in a formal, non-formal or informal learning and whether or not specifically meant for mature students. Adult learners study at all levels, from primary to tertiary education.

The reform in 1999 replaced the former numerous and fragmentary regulations, which were based on different types of educational institutions, with more decentralised legislation based on the objectives and content of education. Because adult students can study at all levels, the overall education and training legislation also applies to adult education and training.

Basic Education Act (628/1998) and Decree (852/1998)	Govern all basic education, regardless of the provider
Upper Secondary Schools Act (629/1998) and Decree (810/1998)	Govern all general upper secondary education
Vocational Education Act (630/1998) and Decree (811/1998)	Govern all initial vocational education and training provided in institutions and as apprenticeship training
Vocational Adult Education Act (631/1998) and Decree (812/1998)	Govern additional vocational training leading to competence-based examinations
Polytechnics Act (351/2003) and Decree (352/2003)	Govern the provision of polytechnic education

Act (635/1998) and Decree (806/1998) on the Financing of Education and Culture	Include regulations concerning statutory state subsidies for education
Universities Act (645/1997) and Decree (115/1998)	Govern the operations of all universities
Liberal Adult Education Act (632/1998) and Decree (805/1998)	Govern non-formal, non-certificate-oriented education provided by liberal adult education institutions, also regulations on financing
Act on Public Employment Services (1295/2002)	Govern labour market training

Since 1999 educational legislation has mainly been built on the form of education, not the institutions providing it. The following presents educational opportunities available to adults in Finland and the institutions mainly providing the form and level of education concerned. Providers need a licence to arrange education, which provides for the statutory duties and rights, notably the right to state subsidy. The licence is granted by the Ministry of Education. A prerequisite is that the education and training is deemed necessary and that the applicant has the professional and financial capacity to arrange education in an appropriate way. The licence may be granted to local authorities, joint municipal authorities, registered associations or foundations; a limited company is also possible. All providers are treated equally in terms of legislation, administration and educational funding.

Liberal adult education

Liberal adult education is provided by a network of educational institutions that has emerged in the course of a long historical development. A common feature is that their objectives and contents are not set from outside or top-down, but are determined by the organisation behind each institution. These sponsor organisations may represent different ideological or religious views or base their operations on local or regional educational or cultural needs. Liberal adult education thus includes both activities based on different value systems and those that are neutral in this respect.

Liberal adult education is provided by adult education centres, folk high schools, study centres, sports institutes and summer universities. Liberal adult education institutions mainly arrange non-certificate-oriented education and training aiming at self-improvement. In particular, they offer general, social and hobby-based studies. Some also organise vocational training, labour market training and in-service training paid for by private companies.

An essential feature is the voluntary nature of participation. The operating licence allows extensive autonomy and latitude in educational arrangements in relation to the government, but the providers are responsible for finding their own niche in the educational field and for developing their own operations.

The government also allocates subsidies for the basic tasks of liberal adult education institutions. Financing liberal adult education is not statutory for local authorities. There is a 'provision

ceiling', which means that the state budget determines a maximum for the supply of education. Institutions can arrange more education but do not get additional state subsidy for the purpose.

Adult education centres (258) are usually maintained by local authorities and cater for the educational needs of adults in particular. Instruction is given mainly in the evenings, according to the needs of local target groups. The most common operating method is a study group convening once or twice a week. There are adult education centres in all municipalities, which also provide activities in suburbs and villages. In many municipalities they are the only adult education institutes. The most popular subjects are languages, music, other art forms and crafts. Adult education centres provide a great deal of open university instruction. In many places they arrange basic art education for children and young people. Then again, pensioners often study in them.

Folk high schools (90) are boarding schools serving the whole country; 43 have a Christian ideology and 11 are maintained by political movements, trade unions or non-governmental organisations. Approximately one third have no political or ideological orientation. Three folk high schools concentrate on special-needs education and many others have study lines geared to the disabled. Folk high schools set their objectives independently. Folk high schools organise courses of varying duration, including one-year courses. The most popular programmes are those concentrating on languages, the arts, social subjects and humanities. The range of subjects is extensive. About three-quarters of the schools' overall provision consists of non-formal studies. Folk high schools also provide a great deal of open university instruction.

All study centres (11) are national institutions maintained by educational and cultural organisations, whose members are e.g. most political parties and trade unions, major non-governmental organisations, youth and old people's organisations, organisations in the social sector and Christian associations. Many large non-governmental organisations are members in some study centre. Study centres organise their activities independently or cooperate with their member organisations (about 350 in all). They mainly offer evening and weekend courses of varying lengths. The oldest form of operation is a study circle, formed by adults with a common interest. The circle selects its topics, working methods and instructor. Study centres have no permanent facilities, but operate throughout the country, often assisted by their regional centres. Owing to the nature of their sponsor organisations, the most popular studies are related to society and the labour union movement.

Sport institutes (14) are boarding schools which provide education and training relating to sport and coaching. They organise a great deal of in-service training commissioned by employers. They also cater for children and young people and function as training and coaching centres for athletes.

Despite their name, summer universities (20) are not universities. They are maintained by regional associations and Regional Councils. They mainly provide summer courses. Summer universities organise a great deal of open university instruction and vocational continuing education. Language courses are popular. Some organise third-age university courses. Summer universities also function without fixed facilities.

General adult education

In adult education, mature students can complete their primary education or study the general upper secondary curriculum and take the matriculation examination. Students can also study

individual subjects (often languages) without completing the entire curriculum. The allocation of classroom hours is different for general upper secondary education targeted at adults than in ordinary schools intended for young people. The National Board of Education decides on the national core curriculum. The educational arrangements in adult education are not rigorously regulated, which makes, for instance, distant teaching possible. Those who start general upper secondary education when they are over 18, can be exempted from certain subjects. General upper secondary schools for adults (and adult education lines in some schools, 54 in all) are mainly municipal educational institutions. General upper secondary schools for adults are the most important form of "second chance" education for adults. Also some folk high schools are authorised to give basic and general upper secondary education.

Initial and further vocational education and training for adults

Adults may study the same *initial vocational qualifications* as young people. Vocational upper secondary education is divided into seven sectors and over 30 fields of study. The duration of education is three years, including a half-year period of on-the-job-training. Vocational education can also be taken in the form of *apprenticeship training*. A track to qualification particularly suited for adults is the competence-based-examination. (cf. Chapter 6)

In the licence to provide initial vocational training, the Ministry defines the educational task of the provider, determining the level of education, fields of education and student numbers. Within this scope the education provider is free to decide how to target its provision to young people and adults.

Adults may study together with young people, but usually study in specific adult study programmes or multiform study programmes. In all adult education and training, an individual learning plan must be drawn up for each student, taking into account his or her prior knowledge and competencies.

Vocational institutions (220) are maintained by a municipality, a joint municipal authority, the government or a private enterprise. *Special-needs education* is provided in vocational institutions both in special groups and integrated into regular instruction, and in vocational special institutions. Vocational adult education centres (45), which formerly specialised in training for the unemployed, have expanded their operations so that they now provide all kinds of vocational education and training. The government subsidy system provides part of the operating costs for initial and additional vocational training, but a great deal of the income comes from the sale of education and training services. The largest purchaser is the labour administration. Vocational adult education centres are an important provider of adult vocational training in Finland. They organise over 40% of all self-motivated additional vocational education (Ministry of Education 2000a) and nearly 60% of labour market training. (Source: Statistics Finland, Ministry of Labour 2000).

Operating alongside vocational institutions, there are 54 specialised vocational institutions maintained by the business community. Most of the education and training provided by them is further and continuing training for those already active in working life. Their courses and programmes are usually shorter than those provided by vocational adult education centres.

Continuing vocational training (additional vocational training) is self-motivated training intended to upgrade vocational competence. It is post-secondary further and supplementary

training intended for adults. This training can be long or short courses or apprenticeship training. Moreover, it can also be arranged in cooperation with companies with a view to upgrading its personnel's knowledge and skills. The system of further and specialist vocational qualifications forms an important part of additional vocational training. These qualifications, which are specifically designed for adults, testify to advanced vocational competence (cf. Chapter 6). Vocational institutions and vocational adult education centres are the main providers of additional vocational training.

Higher education

A dual system of institutions of higher education was introduced in Finland in the early 1990s. As an experiment, a network of polytechnics was established to complement the universities and have subsequently worked on a permanent basis. Polytechnics are mainly run by local authorities and receive government subsidies for initial and continuing education.

The polytechnics have adult education as one of their basic tasks. Today approximately one fifth of degree education in polytechnics is targeted at adult students. The polytechnics organise professional studies of 20-40 credit units for adults and open polytechnic studies. Currently there is a pilot on a new form of adult education in polytechnics, postgraduate polytechnic degrees. Polytechnic postgraduate degrees are markedly different from university postgraduate licentiate and doctorate degrees, as they are professionally oriented, designed to deepen and expand the student's competencies. These degrees are intended for people with a basic polytechnic degree and solid work experience and organised in close cooperation with business and industry.

All the 20 universities in Finland offer adult education. The universities have autonomous administration and large latitude in organising their education and research. Each university has a continuing education centre providing additional and specialisation education, intended in particular for people holding academic degrees. The continuing education centres primarily finance their operations by selling education services. They also sell in-service training to companies and public corporations.

Universities also provide open university education, which has become well-established and extensive. There is no separate open university structure in Finland. Open university courses are arranged by universities (67%) and other institutions, such as adult education centres, summer universities and folk high schools. Connected with open university, there are also third-age university courses, which attracted approximately 9,500 students in 2001.

Labour market training

The aim of labour market training is to promote and maintain the matching of supply and demand in the labour market and to prevent both unemployment and labour shortages. Those who participate in labour market training are usually unemployed and contact job centres when seeking training. The purchase of education and training is based on forecasts of local labour market development as well as educational needs. The job centres select applicants for training on the basis of the applicant's educational needs in relation to regional labour market needs and requirements concerning educational level. Consequently, the duration, contents and aims of labour market training vary. It is currently mainly qualification-oriented education. In this case, the content of labour market training is similar to other adult vocational education. The labour

administration may purchase labour market training in cooperation with companies for their current or prospective employees. In this case, the employer contributes to the financing. Labour market training is arranged in adult vocational education centres, in other vocational institutions and higher education institutions. Private education providers may also arrange labour market training. Those participating in labour market training receive a training allowance corresponding to the amount of daily unemployment benefit.

In-service training

In-service training is paid by the employer and mainly takes place during working hours. The employee is usually compensated for loss of income during the training period. In-service training usually lasts for a limited period and is continuing education in nature, but it may also be certificate-oriented training. In-service training is geared to the company's needs. Although its main aim is to enhance productivity and profitability, it also motivates the participants. The employer chooses the people to be trained and the training content. The law prescribes that in companies with more than 30 employees the annual in-service training plan must be discussed with the personnel. The employer may arrange in-service training either by purchasing training from education providers and educational enterprises or by arranging in-house training. The majority of purchased in-service training is organised by vocational institutions, adult education centres and specialised vocational institutions. In addition, companies also buy training from the university continuing education centres and liberal education institutions.

Private education

Commercial education services are marginal in Finland, compared to the mainstream of education. They are mainly driving schools, language schools and private music or art schools. The proportion of private vocational training was less than one percent. Companies in the private education sector are small. They cooperate to some extent with educational institutions. Educational institutions may buy education and training courses from private companies. (Statistics Finland 1998.)

Counselling activities

Crafts and home economics counselling organisations also offer adult education and training. Their activities rely largely on the voluntary input of their members. Their activities comprise guidance, consultancy and training directed to adults, young people and enterprises.

Administration of adult education and training

Legislation governing adult education and training is passed by the Finnish Parliament, which also decides on the appropriations allocated to adult education and training from the state budget. The Government issues decrees complementing the acts of parliament and adopts the Development Plan for Education and University Research. It may also issue Decisions-in-Principle and Resolutions concerning education and training.

The overall responsibility for developing adult education and training rests with the Ministry of Education. Matters concerning education and research are handled by the Department for Education and Science Policy, which has a Division for Adult Education and Training. Since adult education and training are intertwined with other educational activities, the Division cooperates closely with the Ministry's other educational units. The Ministry prepares legislation and the budget and functions as a central executive authority. It makes decisions concerning the qualifications structure in vocational education and training and grants most of the licences to organise education and training.

The Development Plan for Education and Research addresses education policy by sectors, one of which is adult education. The Division for Adult Education and Training and key cooperation partners prepare the implementation of the policies within the framework of available resources. The other major document governing adult education is the Ministry's Economic and Action Plan. The plan contains sector-specific expenditure calculations, which are used to prepare decisions on the expenditure framework for the following year.

The steering instruments for adult education vary according to the form of education. The Ministry of Education decides on the government subsidies for education. Furthermore, in forms of education which conclude performance agreements (e.g. polytechnics), the Ministry negotiates the performance targets with the education provider. Annual maximums for performance targets are determined in the budget. University core funding is determined in the performance negotiations between the Ministry of Education and the universities.

The National Board of Education operating under the Ministry of Education draws up the national core curricula for certificate-oriented education and training and performs various other expert and development tasks.

For the purposes of regional administration, Finland is divided into six provinces administered by the Provincial State Offices. In issues concerning education and training, they operate under the Ministry of Education. In recent years, the tasks of the Provincial State Offices have been reduced, as decision-making has been devolved on local authorities and other education providers, including the institutions themselves.

The Adult Education Council is a Ministry of Education expert body appointed by the Government for three years at a time. The mandate of the Adult Education Council encompasses all adult education organisations which receive public funding. The Council members represent labour market and other organisations; all major political parties are represented. The Adult Education Council takes initiatives and puts forward proposals to authorities and other bodies concerning the development of adult education and follows domestic and international developments in and research on adult education.

Other ministries besides the Ministry of Education have duties relating to education and training, notably the Ministry of Labour, which is responsible for labour market training. Similarly matters relating to immigrants belong to the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry issues general guidelines for targeting labour market training, based on various data and forecasts. These guidelines are rather general in nature, because labour market development varies greatly from region to region in Finland. The Ministry of Labour also develops and maintains a national monitoring system for training.

Employment and Economic Development Centres (T&E Centres) house the regional units of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The labour market departments of the Centres have a crucial role in arranging labour market training for adults. Job centres participate by guiding and selecting people for training. The T&E labour market departments draw up a plan for the purchase of education and training and invite tenders for education and training from providers of education and training. On the basis of the tenders and possible negotiations, the labour market departments purchase education and sign the necessary contracts. About half of the applications for labour market training have been accepted in recent years. Job centres bring prospective students and training together.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health cooperates with the education administration and with educational institutions in developing the content of education and training, notably in the health sector. Health professions are often regulated by laws and relevant education must provide and upgrade knowledge and skills necessary for each profession.

Continuing and further education on business management is administered by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and arranged for entrepreneurs and the management and personnel of SMEs. Education and training is also arranged for those planning to set up a business.

The Regional Development Act led to the establishment of the Regional Councils, which are cooperation bodies for the local authorities responsible for regional development. The Regional Councils have an important role in education and training, notably in questions relating to EU Structural Fund programmes.

Educational institutions are mostly maintained by the local authorities or joint municipal bodies. These handle education and training provided by upper secondary schools, polytechnics, vocational institutions and adult education centres. In accordance with municipal self-government, decisions are taken by the elected municipal council and executed by the local board. Educational questions come under one or more specialised local boards. Decisions concerning education and training provision are taken at the local level. These include organisation of education and training and, in certificate-oriented education, curriculum design within the framework of the national core curricula. Since government subsidies are not earmarked, but allocated as a lump sum, local authorities have an important role in educational funding.

All universities are government institutions but enjoy extensive autonomy.

Private educational institutions have their own administrative bodies and decision-making practices. Educational legislation provides that they must have a board, a rector responsible for the operations and regulations determining their operating methods.

Democracy, Peace and Critical Citizenship (1.1.)

In adult education, questions of democracy, peace and citizenship are closely related to liberal adult education. The development of Finnish society into a modern democracy has been the aim of liberal education organisations and institutions from the outset. The statistics available provide no data to what extent they are discussed in educational institutions. Young people's current interest and activity in issues relating to globalisation also concern Finland. Membership in

political parties is not as prevalent as earlier. Themes relating to critical citizenship are, however, taken up in a great variety of contexts: consumer rights, environmental questions, etc.

Literacy (1.3)

Finland took part in the OECD Second International Adult Literacy Survey; the data was collected in 1998. In the international comparison of 20 countries, Finland reached literacy levels of a good Nordic standard. The literacy survey measured the capability of understanding and using prose, documents and quantitative texts. All the Nordic countries were clearly above the international average in all the three domains. Only a fraction of their populations were at the lowest performance level, while many reached the highest level. In the prose domain, adult Finns proved to be top-level readers internationally and achieved a high international standard also on the document domain. Their quantitative literacy skills were only average. In Finland, the differences in reading proficiency between those with higher and low levels of education are fairly small compared with other countries.

Literacy skills seem to be dependent on formal education and age. The more formal education one has, the higher the performance level in literacy tests. Young people's literacy is better than that of the aged, even if the difference in educational level is standardised. Gender-based differences in literacy levels proved to be fairly small in Finland. (OECD 2000b)

However, approximately one third of the Finnish population had low literacy levels in at least one of the above categories. About 10% of population is at level one in prose literacy, about 13% in document literacy and about 11% in quantitative literacy, which is considered to weaken the possibilities of the individual to cope with the demands of information society.

Empowerment of women (1. 4)

In the Parliament elections of March 2003, 42.6% of all votes were given to women, who took 37.5% (75) of the 200 seats. The new Government has 8 women and 10 men ministers. In local councils 34.3% of all the members are women.

Women are active in self-motivated adult education, and the difference between the genders seems to remain constant. Today, Finnish women aged under 55 are more highly educated on average than men of the same age. Women have traditionally participated more actively in general adult education than men, but now their share has also grown in vocational education and training. Women made up 59 % of both matriculated students and university graduates, and as much as 65 % of polytechnic graduates. In 2000 32.4% of Finnish women and 25.3% of men aged 20-64 had tertiary level education. Gender still largely determines career choices and thereby placement in employment. Girls/women are less likely than boys to opt for mathematical and technical studies, whereas boys/men are underrepresented in for instance health care and teaching professions.

Equality between men and women has been an important focus in Finland. The share of women in the labour force has increased significantly in recent decades. The constantly rising level of education among women increases the economic benefit of work and enhances women's motivation to work outside the home. Women now make up almost half of the Finnish labour

force (in 2002 48.3% of labour force aged 15-64). The unemployment rate of women and men was the same in 2002 (9.1%). Long-term unemployed are more often men than women. Women live longer than men: 18% of women are over 65, as compared to 11.8% of men. *Statistics in Finland*

Despite women's activity in education, men are more often appointed to managerial positions. Although equality issues are taken up in curricula, teacher education, learning materials and many projects, education alone cannot change conceptions deeply rooted in our society. The share of women in high posts is small both in the public and private sectors. One possible explanation is that even though the majority of university students are women, they choose postgraduate studies less often than men (Tasa-arvo valtaviirtaan 1999, 30-31).

Employment (Changing World of Work 1.5)

The European Council of November 1997 (Essen) adopted the first employment policy guidelines. This EU body also called upon each member state to draft a National Action Plan for Employment. In Finland, the first Action Plan was prepared by a working group consisting of officials from several administrative sectors. The group cooperated closely with central labour market organisations and entrepreneur organisations.

According to the Action Plans, which are geared to decrease the unemployment rate, measures will be taken to increase work-based training for older unemployed persons, intensify training orientating to working life for the unemployed, and prepare foresights. The unemployment rate was at its highest in 1994 16.6% and was 12.2% in 1997 and 9.1% in 2002. (Statistics Finland) The Ministry of Labour issues guidelines for the targeting and development of labour market training. These guidelines ensure that the training is targeted according to labour market policies. The guidelines also focus on the education of immigrants.

In the first Action Plan 1998, in-service training was seen as a factor promoting personnel's capability for responding to changes in competence requirements, thus bringing stability to the employment relationship. One objective of in-service training is organisational learning, which benefits the whole working community. The Action Plan also aimed at increasing intakes in vocational adult education. In 1997-1999, approximately 10,000 additional annual study places were made available to adults. The target groups in Action Plan 2000 were the middle-aged, those with poor education and those at risk of exclusion. The emphasis was on securing the availability of skilled labour and effecting closer interaction between education and working life. (NAP 2000). As the employment situation has improved, attention has increasingly been directed at the availability of labour force, retraining and further training in fields suffering from labour shortages and at efficient employment services.

In Finland, the risk of unemployment is essentially linked to educational level. The groups threatened by unemployment are those with little or no vocational training, whereas those with higher education are usually able to find jobs more easily. This phenomenon is true both in times of economic boom and during economic recession, although a slump tends to increase the number of the unemployed irrespective of education. (cf. Silvennoinen 1999)

The primary form of education and training for the unemployed is labour market training. Appropriations have been allocated to it accordingly. The funding was at its highest in 1996 and 1997 and has since gradually declined, so that in 2001 it had again reached almost the early-

1990s level. The rise in employment in the mid 1990s benefited those whose unemployment had been periodical and short, while the number of long-term unemployed (unemployed for one year or longer) remained extremely high. It was not until 1999 that the share of long-term unemployed started to fall. In the early 1990s, long-term unemployment had rapidly risen to approximately one third of all the unemployed. Source: Ministry of Labour

There was an extensive labour policy reform in 1998. The aim was to promote activity in the Finnish labour policy system, that is, to target more funding at active labour policy measures such as education, instead of doling out passivising unemployment benefit payments. The reform has progressed in stages and an extensive series of follow-up studies was implemented immediately after the reform. The second stage of the reform was implemented in 2001.

In the first year of the reform, in 1998, the long-term unemployed in particular seemed to have no access to the open labour market. It appeared that for those who had been unemployed for over a year, the only way to meaningful activity was labour market training or a subsidised job. Among the long-term unemployed, exit from the labour force was also common. (Aho et al. 2000, 97.) One measure in the labour policy reform was to increase short-term job-search training, i.e. to increase the job-seeking skills among the long-term unemployed. Over 50% of those whose unemployment had lasted for a very long time have had job-search training and slightly less than one third of all the long-term unemployed took part in vocational training. As regards other jobless groups, some 46% participate in vocational training and almost 40% in job-search training (ibid.).

Environment (1.6)

In January 2002, the Ministers of Education in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) approved a programme of education for sustainable development entitled "An Agenda 21 for Education in the Baltic Sea Region – Baltic 21E". This programme aims at making sustainable development considerations a natural and permanent part of education systems in the BSR. The programme is committed to changing education systems permanently. It defines the overall goal for the education sector as: "All individuals should have competence to support a sustainable development that meets the needs of the present without compromising on the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Education for sustainable development should be based on an integrated approach to economic, societal and environmental development." The programme furthermore defines the goals for the three sectors of education: schools (pre-school, secondary and vocational education); higher education, including research; and non-formal education. The Baltic 21E action programme is divided into five action areas: policies and strategies; competence development within the education sector; continuing education; teaching and learning resources; and research on and development of education for sustainable development (ESD). These areas are common to the whole education sector. Within these areas are joint action headings and specific actions to achieve the goals of the programme in accordance with their role in the education system. Within the Baltic 21E programme, Finland has taken it upon herself to ensure that ESD is clearly included in legal or other normative provisions relating to the education sector.

The Ministry of Education appointed an ESD committee in 2002 to carry out the Baltic 21E programme. The committee drew up a proposal for a starting-up plan. According to it, clear note will be taken of ESD in different agreements between the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education and in future performance agreements with universities and polytechnics.

The new core curricula and the new development plan for education and research should include ESD. According to the plan, joint projects for the Baltic 21E programme will be initiated in the Baltic Sea Region in 2003. The funds required for the purpose will be allocated by the Ministry of Education.

To achieve the aims proposed in the starting-up plan in the non-formal education sector, the Ministry of Education has encouraged both central organisations and the regional and local liberal adult education institutions to promote sustainable development. A call for proposals has been sent to liberal adult education organisations, which should contribute to the drafting of an action programme on sustainable development within their own fields for the period 2004-2006. The regional and local adult education institutes are encouraged to network with both official and NGO partners. Together they should work out study programmes for 2003-2005 on different themes supporting sustainable development in society. Pedagogical vehicles suited for adult students should be developed. The Ministry of Education will support the projects.

The media and Culture (1.7)

In accordance with the Act on the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE (1994), one aspect in the public service of YLE is to promote educational objectives in its programming. YLE transmits a wide range of adult education programmes on television and radio. YLE is the largest producer of AV learning materials for adults. The national strategy for education, training and research in information society 2000 -2004 and its implementation plan assigns YLE a specific task of promoting in information society citizenship skills.

Educational programming:

- liberal education for the general public
- language programming for the general public
- distance education relating to upper secondary school
- open university
- citizenship skills and hobby and crafts programmes for the general public
- regional study radio

YLE is also a significant producer of teaching content in virtual environments. Language programming is supplemented by virtual language schools which are learning environments on the internet. All programming services have related web pages. Besides information related to the programme, the pages offer background material.

The utilisation of information and communications technologies in teaching and study is part of the distance teaching tradition. The utilisation of information networks and multimedia and, consequently, the increase in the supply of virtual learning environments are typical of modern distance learning. (Matikainen & Manninen 2000, 15-18). Several computer-based forms of learning and virtual learning environments have been introduced in Finland. Better opportunities for using computers in libraries and the growing number of computers in homes facilitate the independent use of internet-based learning environments. Informal studies are facilitated by interactive learning environments and other learning opportunities on the internet. The National Board of Education has collected information about learning opportunities and learning materials on its web site at www.edu.fi (partially in English). internetix (www.internetix.fi/english) is an example of an internet-based learning environment also available in English.

Besides virtual networks, digital television and radio provide a new significant channel for distance studies. The audience can receive nine new Finnish television channels in addition to the existing four. The new channels include two with an emphasis on educational programming.

Libraries and cultural institutions

Public libraries have an important role in supporting studies. Finnish libraries form part of the national and international information service networks. Both municipal libraries and university libraries are open to all citizens. Public libraries are governed by national law and follow a national library policy. There are 936 public libraries and 220 bookmobiles in Finland. Libraries are the most frequently used cultural service in Finland. About 80% of Finns use public libraries. The number of loans is over 100 million annually, which makes some 20 loans per inhabitant. Libraries are also known for their wide use of computer technology and the net facilities they offer to the public. About 95% of municipal libraries provide access to the internet. Finnish public libraries charge no fee for the use and lending of their collections. Public libraries are run by local authorities and receive statutory state aid.

Different cultural institutions have an important educational function with regard children, young people and adults. The participants in various cultural activities are largely the same adults who also participate in adult education. The majority of the cultural publics are women, often middle-aged and well-educated. The liberal adult education institutions are important providers of art and cultural education. Especially adult education centres offer a wide range of art subjects, both for adults and young people. In smaller towns, orchestras, choirs, drama societies often work in connection with adult education centres. Basic art education, which is mainly intended for children, is also available to adults.

Development of information society

In summer 1999, the Finnish Government reappointed the Information Society Advisory Board to follow and anticipate information society developments and to report on them. The 2000 Report, *Finland as an Information Society*, emphasises the inequitable nature of information society development. On the one hand, information and communications technologies create new opportunities and facilitate people's activities in the workplace and in their leisure time. On the other hand, the development does not benefit the whole population equally, but selectively, the young urban well-educated being in the spearhead of the development (ibid. 43-53).

Since the early 1990s, the Finnish government has planned and implemented information society programmes and strategies. The new Government also has an information society policy programme; the Prime Minister's Office is responsible for coordinating and implementing it. The foremost goal of the programme is to improve the equality between citizens and regions by means of information society policy. Another important goal is full use of information technologies in public services.

Since 1995 the Ministry of Education has devised a national strategy for education, training and research in information society, the first for the period 1995-1999. This strategy focused on networking educational establishments and creating a national infrastructure. Considerable attention was also given to students' and teachers' ICT skills, but there is still a great deal to do in this respect. (Nevgi 2000, 50) The strategy for 2000-2004 is based on the following vision: "By

the year 2004 Finland will be one of the leading knowledge and interaction societies. Success will be based on citizens' equal opportunities to study and develop their own knowledge and extensively utilise information resources and educational services. A high-quality, ethically and economically sustainable mode of operation in network-based teaching and research will have been established."

The focal areas of the action programme include:

- Information society skills for all
- Versatile use of networks in studying and teaching
- Accumulating digital information capital
- Strengthening information society structures in education, training and research.

The "information society skills for all" project ensures that citizens have opportunities to gain information society skills (technical skills, communication skills, skills to acquire and use information, consumer skills and general understanding of the impact of information society) they need in their life situations. A concrete goal is that by the year 2004 at least half of people lacking those skills have acquired them and in principle all the target group have had an opportunity of gaining the skills. The foremost target groups are the middle-aged and older populations, adult population not actively employed and special-needs groups such as immigrants and the disabled.

The programme is implemented by adult education institutions (especially adult education centres and other liberal adult education institutions), libraries, civic organisations and social partners, local authorities, ministries, the Finnish Broadcasting Company and other media, business enterprises in the field etc. The programme is mainly funded by means of normal state aid to education providers and investments by partners. There is a separate appropriation of about 4 –5 million euros for the programme.

Important methods and means:

- Activating citizens for instance by means of the Adult Learner's Week and production of learning materials
- A programme for training a nationwide network of guidance and counselling personnel
- the study voucher system (see below)
- An action plan (2003-2007) for upgrading the qualifications of the adult population (see below)
- A programme for improving the information skills of SME employees
- Development of the driving licence system (notably the citizen's @-card).

The theme of the 2000 Adult Learners Week was "information society for all". The most visible result was a computer manual and a www-portal for the ageing and people who have hardly ever used a computer. Since 2000, many Finnish public libraries have organised Seniors' Communications Days, offering personal instruction to ageing people with little experience of computers or wireless communications. In summer 2000 support began to be available to approximately 40 non-governmental organisations (associations for the unemployed, rural village associations, ethnic minorities and organisations for the disabled and the elderly) for education for information society citizenship skills. The purpose was to promote cooperation between different organisations and to highlight citizens' own activity in developing their information society skills.

Adult education and training is an important element in the new Government's information society policy. In addition to skills development, Finland has to tackle the problem of equitable distribution of internet connections throughout the country. This is of the utmost importance for e-learning, public services, web commerce, etc. The development of information society is also a challenge for teachers' competences, calling for continuing training of adult educators.

Non-governmental organisations and social partners

In the Finnish society association activity and registered associations in particular play a central role. The Register of Associations contained 159 000 associations in 2002. Over 90 % of all associations carry on social activities.

The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities is the central organisation for local authorities and has traditionally had a strong position. Local authorities maintain schools, and with the introduction of new legislation in the 1990s, have more latitude in organising education and training. The central organisation directs, advises and supports local authorities in executing their duties, thus strengthening municipal self-government. The ministries hear the Association in preparing matters which concern municipal finances and administration, planning municipal economy, reconciling municipal and national economy, and dividing of costs between the government and the local authorities (Ryynänen 1999, 20-25).

All education and training providers have organisations or associations of their own, for instance all institutions of liberal adult education have their respective associations and an umbrella organisation, the Finnish Adult Education Association FAEA. These organisations look after the financial and other interests of educational institutions, improve teaching in institutions, and further general ideas of learning.

Educational issues are addressed in labour market agreements. Following the tripartite model, labour market organisations participate in committees on education and training and examination boards appointed by the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education. Sector-specific committees on education and training are tripartite bodies, which follow vocational and professional education and training in the sector at all levels, contribute to curricular design and submit proposals and initiatives for developing education. Examination boards are responsible for organising and monitoring vocational qualifications for adults as well as directing and steering activities aiming at qualifications. The majority of the members are appointed by labour market organisations in the sector concerned. The social partners are also represented on the administrative bodies of vocational institutions and often also on preparatory bodies set up by the education administration, which develop vocational education and training and relevant legislation. As one of the administrators of the Education Fund, the social partners have their say in various aid systems.

Different organisations and associations have close links with liberal adult education, which has its roots in non-governmental organisations. Through member organisations, a notable part of Finnish associations are involved in liberal adult education. Recently the focus has once more been on activating citizens' participation and improving their knowledge and citizenship skills. The FAEA has issued guidelines to "citizenship studies" and is starting a relevant pilot.

Groups with special needs (1.8)

Education geared to senior citizens and pensioners is mainly provided by liberal adult education institutions. These groups sometimes work in groups of their own, but mostly study with others. Pensioners have actively formed study circles. The third-age university offers courses and lectures for pensioners within the open university system.

Adult education for the Roma in Finland has mainly been labour market training, but there is also other provision geared to the Roma. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has an Advisory Committee on Roma Affairs to monitor developments and make proposals for improving also the educational and cultural opportunities of the Roma.

There are comprehensive or upper secondary school courses and vocational training available for prisoners, although the supply does not meet the demand.

In Finland the number immigrants has grown substantially over the past decade. In 2000 there were five times as many immigrants as in 1990; the current figure is 105,000. They can participate in all forms of adult education. The foremost form of training targeted at immigrants is integration training, which mainly aims at enabling the immigrant to enter the labour market. This training also includes instruction of Finnish (or Swedish) and orientation to Finnish culture and society. This form of education is financed by the government and administered by the Ministry of Labour. Annually 7,000 adult immigrants start in labour market training programmes. Every school-aged immigrant has the right (and duty) to basic education.

Finland has two official languages: 92% of the population speak Finnish and 6% Swedish as their native language. Both language groups have an equal right to education in their own language. The indigenous Saami minority (0.03% of the population) have the right to education in their own language in their home area in Lapland. There is one state-owned adult education institution for the Saami minority.

Education in the Finnish development cooperation (1.10)

Finland supports education by means of projects and programmes in 11 countries. Large sectoral programmes are being supported in Nepal, Tanzania, Mozambique and Zambia. The bulk of the activities is targeted to African countries, but there are cooperation programmes in other continents as well. Education and training constitute an important component in reconstruction aid in the western Balkans. In Latin America, the focus is on the development of bilingual and multicultural education for the indigenous peoples. Finland supports the development of inclusive special-needs education in South Africa, Zambia and West-Balkan countries. Curriculum reform is supported in Palestine and Nepal.

The education sector represents about eight per cent of the whole bilateral cooperation budget. In addition, a substantial part of financial support given to NGOs involves the education and training sector.

According to a Government Decision-in-Principle (2001), the primary aim in Finnish development cooperation is to eradicate poverty. The education sector plays an important part in

achieving this aim. Input into improving educational opportunities especially at the primary level not only helps to reduce poverty but also promotes equality in the partner countries.

Especially two of the goals set in the UN Millennium Declaration – to ensure that children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education – are also key goals in the Education-for-All (EFA) process. Finland is one of the Signatories of the Declaration. These aims and the six detailed goals set in the EFA process guide Finnish financing and participation in international development cooperation in the field of education.

The modern concept of partnership entails long-term action and commitment from the partners. Finland has in EFA process committed to support national EFA plans and their implementation in countries where education and training form part of the cooperation programme. The point of departure is that national plans are closely linked with the overall development plans and especially with national poverty eradication plans.

Finland has distinguished itself in many countries and organisation in emphasising and supporting inclusive special-needs education. This specialised expertise should be strengthened and developed.

In the EFA Plan Finland

- systematically encourages poverty eradication in its partner countries by supporting relevant education sector development programmes
- the share of basic education in education-sector development cooperation will be further increased
- for the Millennium Declaration goals to be achieved, the relative share of the education sector should be increased from the present level
- will continue its active role at different levels of the EFA process and will explore means of accelerating development in partner countries, for example by means of the Fast Track initiative
- will continue to emphasise equality and equity issues, especially education for girls and the disabled, in the EFA process.

With a view to achieving these aims, measures will be taken to intensify cooperation between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education. The expertise and experience of other education authorities and other sectors will be utilised in the preparation, follow-up and evaluation of educational projects, especially sectoral programmes. Finnish universities and polytechnics are encouraged to strengthen their education and research in development questions. (*The EFA Plan Finland*)

CHAPTER 2: INCREASING INVESTMENT IN ADULT LEARNING

Funding

Since a decision taken by the Government in 1988, vocational education and training provided for adults in Finland has been divided into self-motivated training, labour market training and in-service training. Later non-vocational education was included in them. Self-motivated adult education is financed by the education administration and the students themselves (to a

reasonable extent), whereas the labour administration finances labour market training and the employer finances in-service training. Some in-service training is subsidised by the government.

Adult education and training are financed through government subsidies and through direct funding to universities (allocated by the Ministry of Education) and through the sale of education in labour market training (purchased by the Ministry of Labour). The education administration allocates statutory state aid towards the financing of primary and general upper secondary education, initial vocational education and polytechnic education. In these forms of education, financing is based on computational unit prices and the local authorities have a statutory obligation to participate in covering education expenses. The government finances institutions of liberal adult education and additional vocational training in same way. Although local authorities have no statutory obligation to contribute, their voluntary input plays an important role in the financing of adult education centres. The government allocates funding directly to education and training providers.

Approximately 70% of the university budgets comes directly from the government. The rest is mainly external funding for research, e.g. through the Academy of Finland and from private companies. An increasing part of financing comes from abroad. Income from contracted services of universities is also on the increase.

In addition to statutory government aid, the state budget also includes appropriations for supporting piloting and development in adult education and training, which are allocated on application. Each year there are some priority areas defined for development and piloting. Discretionary subsidies have been granted to liberal adult education institutions in particular. Part of the funds has been allocated for the development of information technology in institutions.

The table below presents forms of funding, the sources of financing and typical providers of the type of education concerned.

Table 1. Funding mechanisms in adult education and training and typical organisers

	The share of government financing of accepted operational costs	Financing sources in addition to government funding	Municipal financing: statutory yes/no	The main financial basis	Decision on allocation
General education - upper secondary schools	57%	- Local authorities - In separate subject studies, students	Yes	Statutory state aid	Ministry of Education as the competent authority
Initial vocational education - vocational institutions - vocational adult education centres	57%	- Local authorities	Yes	Statutory state aid	Ministry of Education as the competent authority; maximum student numbers based on the educational task
Additional vocational education - vocational institutions	90% and 50%	- Students - Employees	No	Statutory state aid	Ministry of Education as the competent authority

- vocational adult education centres					
Polytechnic education - polytechnics	57%	- Local authorities - Students in open polytechnic and on short professional courses	Yes	Statutory state aid	Ministry of Education as the competent authority, the scope of operations determined in performance agreements
University education - universities	100%	- Tuition fees in open universities and continuing education - External funding	No	Direct government funding	Performance agreements between the Ministry of Education and each university
Liberal adult education - adult education centres - folk high schools - study centres - summer universities - sport institutes	57% and 65%	- Local authorities - Students	No	Statutory state aid	Ministry of Education as the competent authority decides on the amounts
Labour market training - vocational institutions - vocational adult education centres - other providers of education	100%	- Employers in joint purchases	No	Customer-producer model	Employment and Economic Development Centres purchase education and training in accordance with EEDC guidelines

Almost one billion (1,000 million) euros is annually allocated as public funding of adult education and training in Finland. Approximately 850 million euros is reserved for direct provisions for adult education and training the state budget in 2003. The Ministry of Education is the main source, in total 550 million euros (9.4% of the Ministry budget). The budget of the Ministry of Labour includes 280 million euros for labour market training and related costs. The Ministry Social and Health Care has budgeted 15 million euros for financial aid to adult students. In addition, local authorities allocate annually approximately 115-140 million euros to adult education and training.

In the Finnish report for the Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS2) it is estimated that Finnish private enterprises of 10 or more employees expended a total of 770 million euros on in-service training in 1999. However, only 51% of all employed people were included in the study – the public sector and SMEs with fewer than 10 employees were not included. On the other hand, almost half of the training costs in the survey, 47%, were of salary costs.

Table 2. Adult education funding and institutions in the Ministry of Education sector 2003

Providers (Number of institutions) Form of provision	Million €
Universities (20)	
- Open University	13.0
- Subsidies for continuing education (max.)	8.0
- Adult Students (est.) *	(126.6)
Polytechnics (29)	
- Degree programmes for adults (est.)	54.0
- Specialisation and postgraduate (est.)	13.9
- Open polytechnic (est.)	3.2
General Education (54)	
- Adult students (est.)	18.7
Initial vocational education and training	
- Training for competence-based examinations (est.)	33.9
- Adult students (est.) *	(50.7)
Apprenticeship training	
- ...for basic vocational qualification (est.)	28.2
- ...for further and special vocational qualification (est.)	62.1
Vocational adult education**	
- Additional vocational training	109.1
- Specialised vocational institutes	15.7
- Programme for raising qualification level	12.0
Liberal adult education	
- Adult education centres (258)	72.8
- Folk high schools (90)	44.1
- Study centres (11)	12.3
- Summer universities (20)	3.9
- Sport institutes, 14	15.5
Other Provisions	25.0
Total	544.3

*) Almost 25% of university students and over 10% vocational education students were 25 or older when starting their degree studies. There is no separate programmes for these students. The costs can be estimated on the basis of their share of all students (€26.7 mill. in universities and €50.7 mill. in vocational education).

**) Almost all providers of initial vocation education are licensed to provide vocational adult education. The figure here only covers specialised adult education institutes, which usually do not have a significant provision of initial training: vocational adult education centres (45), specialised vocational institutes (54) and state vocational education institutes (6).

CHAPTER 3: INCREASING PARTICIPATION

Data on participation in adult education come from two major sources: the National Adult Education Survey (2000, Statistics Finland) and the Second International Adult Literacy Survey

(1998). In 2000 approximately 1.75 million people (54% of the 18–64 age bracket) attended adult education. Internationally, this is a high rate.

Table 3. Participation in adult education in the past 12 months, age 18-64

	2000		1995		1990	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age						
18-24	225 413	49	183 534	42	204 552	43
25-29	194 811	63	178 231	51	206 900	55
30-34	214 716	61	203 635	54	209 127	55
35-44	474 888	62	425 144	54	481 846	57
45-54	463 366	56	404 908	54	291 068	48
55-64	180 863	33	160 102	31	132 963	25
Gender						
Male	798 731	49	705 958	43	697 519	43
Female	955 326	59	849 596	53	828 938	52
Socio-economic status						
Agricultural entrepreneur	43 153	45	53 667	44	47 471	30
Entrepreneur (other than agricultural)	94 745	42	91 009	37	76 000	40
Upper white-collar employees	485 627	84	329 791	78	332 761	83
Lower white-collar employees	435 025	68	494 612	66	574 184	68
Blue-collar workers	361 911	45	301 307	37	290 427	34
Students	184 670	57	159 059	51	110 335	45
Pensioners	82 555	21	68 296	20	69 569	17
Others / unknown	66 371	34	57 814	27	25 709	23
Work status						
Employed	1 330 843	60	1 164 313	60	1 306 690	54
Unemployed	112 862	37	128 274	27	14 895	21
Not in labour force	310 352	36	262 967	33	204 872	27
Degree of urbanisation						
Urban	1 102 510	56	990 538	52	967 939	51
Semi-urban	289 667	53	251 538	45	229 611	46
Rural	361 880	49	313 479	42	328 906	40
All	1 754 057	54	1 555 554	48	1 526 457	47

Source: Statistics Finland, adult education survey

Finns are active adult learners. However, there are significant differences in participation rates between different population groups and different parts of the country. Women are more active than men and white-collar workers more active than other socio-economic groups. Young people are more interested in education than the older generations and the difference is growing. In 2000 37% of people with only compulsory schooling pursued adult studies, while the corresponding figure among the graduate population was 76%. And similarly, 60% of employed persons and only 37% of the unemployed participated in adult education and training. The average annual number of study days was 13. In Finland, informal learning is a significant form of study. Approximately 20% of those aged between 18 and 64 improved their knowledge by studying independently outside regular education organisations.

Most adult education arises from needs relating to work or career development. In 2000 nearly 1.3 million people participated in adult education for work-related or vocational reasons (41% of those aged 18-64), and 56% of the employed (aged 18-64) received in-service training. Over half a million Finns (18%) studied general education or hobby subjects. Women participate more often (24%) than men (12%). As many as 12% of those aged 65-79 still participated in adult education.

One explanation for the accumulation of adult education to certain groups is probably attitudes towards education, which influence the propensity for in-service education and self-motivated adult education. The differences between the well and less educated were the same when respondents were asked whether they felt they needed education or training.

The numbers of classroom hours in each type of educational institution were following in 2001:

Institutions of general adult education	3 651 688
Institutions of vocational adult education	5 721 297
Polytechnics	947 562
Universities	313 791
Total	10 664 338

(Educational establishments, Statistics Finland 2002)

Measured by the number of students, adult education centres are significant providers of adult education. There were nearly 1.1 million instances of participation in 1998, which is higher than in any other type of institution (Statistics Finland). The high participation rate is partly explained by the fact that many students participate in more than one course during one year. Vocational adult education centres provide over 3 million and vocational institutions 1.6 million classroom hours.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH STUDIES IN THE FIELD OF ADULT LEARNING

Research on adult education is conducted by universities and research institutes. From the 1990s onwards, the Ministry of Education has encouraged the Academy of Finland to initiate and finance research programmes on education and education policy. The Ministry does not finance extensive scientific study projects itself, but sometimes contributes to some Academy research programmes, as, for instance, to programmes on the impact of education and training and the ageing of the population.

The Ministry of Education finances research by commissioning studies on educational reforms, such as:

- Prerequisites of lifelong learning, everyday learning (Universities of Jyväskylä and Turku)
- Adult participation and lack of participation/obstacles to studies (Universities of Jyväskylä, Joensuu and Turku)
- Changes in working life and adults' competencies (Universities of Lappeenranta and Turku)

- Function of and demand for liberal adult education (University of Turku, the VSY research network)
- Adult participation in higher education (Universities of Joensuu)
- Follow-up studies of certain teacher training programmes (University of Tampere).

The foremost research institutes in adult education are the Institute for Educational Research and Faculty of Education at the University of Jyväskylä; the Research Unit for the Sociology of Education and the Department of Education at the University of Turku; the Department of Sociology at the University of Joensuu; the Faculties of Social Sciences and Education at the University of Lapland; and the Faculty of Education of the University of Tampere and its Hämeenlinna Unit.

The research network attached to the liberal education knowledge and competencies programme has especially sought to increase research on liberal adult education, which has been scarce in recent years, when the focus in has been on different sectors of adult vocational training.

CHAPTER 5: ADULT EDUCATORS/FACILITATORS' STATUS AND TRAINING

In 1998 and 1999 there were approximately 80,000 staff in major educational institutions. The majority worked in general education: in comprehensive or general upper secondary schools. Liberal adult education institutions have 1,700 full-time teachers. Most teachers in liberal adult education are paid by the hour. They often have another job in another educational institution or elsewhere. The number of full-time teachers in vocational adult education centres is 2,200. The teaching staff is predominantly female.

Qualification requirements for teachers in adult education are the same as for other teachers. Initial teacher education is mainly provided by 11 universities and vocational teacher education by 5 colleges attached to polytechnics. Teacher education is funded as a part of university and polytechnic education.

Teachers' qualification requirements are (a) a degree in the subject(s) taught and (b) 35 credit units of pedagogic studies. One credit corresponds roughly to 40 hours of work. Vocational teachers need an appropriate vocational qualification, pedagogic studies and work experience of at least 3 years in the field. Most qualified teachers have a Master's degree (160-180 credit units). One of the foremost guarantees of educational quality is stringent competence requirements for teachers.

All teachers working in adult education are not formally qualified. The proportion of formally qualified teachers varies between 95% in general upper secondary education, 75% in vocational education and training and 70% in liberal adult education institutions. *Source: Attracting, Developing and Retraining Effective Teachers*)

It is possible to study for vocational teacher qualifications both as a full-time student and alongside work. Open and distance learning gained ground throughout the 1990s, and today two thirds of the vocational teacher trainees complete their studies while working as teachers.

Several national and local foresights have been carried out and they have influenced the volumes of teacher education and training. A large number of teachers will retire within the next ten years. A working group set up by the Ministry of Education estimated in spring 2003 that the total need

for teacher training in 2003-2008 will be 25,400. Measures have already been taken to effect necessary increases in teacher training.

According to the Trade Union of Education in Finland, the average teacher salary was 2,180 euros a month in 2002. Trade union membership is very common among teachers (95% of employed teachers). The teaching profession is highly valued in Finland, the number of applicants for teacher training continues to be very high.

Continuing professional training

On average, Finnish teachers participate in continuing professional training for 13 days a year. Local authorities and other teachers' employers are responsible for in-service training and its funding, but the state budget contains an appropriation of about 12 million euros for teachers' continuing education in education policy priority areas, such as subject contents, evaluation and assessment, social issues in education, pedagogical use of ICT, on-the-job learning, and education and training for heads of educational institutions. Approximately 15,000-20,000 teachers (nearly 30%) participate in state-funded continuing professional education.

Rapid changes in society, changes in teachers' work, the age structure in the teaching profession and education policy reforms require large input into upgrading teachers' competencies. In the late 1990s the Ministry of Education launched three training and development programmes for teaching and counselling staff in adult education. National organisations coordinate the programmes, which are financed by the Ministry of Education or jointly financed by the Ministry and the ESF.

TUKEVA is a five-year programme for teaching and other staff in vocational adult education. This programme has enabled 1,500 persons to upgrade their pedagogical and professional qualifications in polytechnics and universities.

VSOP (Knowledge and Competence in Liberal Adult Education) is intended for those working in folk high schools, adult education centres, summer universities and counselling organisations. It is implemented in collaboration with universities, polytechnics and the Finnish Adult Education Association, which represents adult education institutions. The five-year programme will enable 1,000 teachers and counsellors to improve their pedagogical and professional knowledge.

JONEVA is a training and development programme for personnel in counselling organisations for rural women and those in the field of household management and arts and crafts. The programme is especially designed to improve organisational leadership. The programme is coordinated by the counselling organisations.

CHAPTER 6: EMPOWERING ADULT LEARNERS

Assessment system

In Finland the obligation to assure and monitor the quality of education and training is determined in legislation. Educational legislation was overhauled in 1999. The new legislation devolved decisions on education providers and highlighted the importance of evaluation. Education and training providers must carry out self-evaluations and constantly develop their activities.

In Finland, the national evaluation of education has been assigned to the National Board of Education, which is also responsible for the development of education. In 2003, the Ministry of Education established an Education Evaluation Council to carry out external evaluation of general, vocational and adult education. The Council assists the Ministry of Education and education providers in matters relating to evaluation and organises external evaluations of education providers' operations and education policy. The Council is composed of representatives of the educational administration, education providers, staff in the educational sector, students and working life and is appointed for four years at a time.

The Education Evaluation Council has a Secretariat, located at the University of Jyväskylä, to prepare matters and implement decisions.

The establishment of the Education Evaluation Council has ensured the coordination and development of evaluation. Local evaluation, the evaluation of basic services, which is the task of the Provincial State Offices, and international evaluation projects are also taken into account in the Council's evaluation programme. The Council and networking, together with higher education evaluation units and the evaluation unit of the National Board of Education, have facilitated and intensified the use of evaluation expertise in the country.

The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) carries out evaluations relating to polytechnics and universities. It assists higher education institutions and the Ministry of Education in matters relating to evaluation and organises evaluations of higher education, units and institutions, and higher education policy.

Information about the implementation of adult education policy is also gathered by means of international studies, such as the OECD thematic review of adult learning and adult literacy survey. The OECD also reviewed Finnish polytechnic policy, including adult learning in polytechnics. The EU is launching an adult education survey, which is projected to be carried out periodically. Finland has been active in this work.

In the field of adult education, there have been several thematic assessments (e.g. further vocational training, language instruction geared to adults) and overall evaluations of educational establishments, the most recent concerned folk high schools.

Competence-based examinations

Since 1994 it has been possible for adults to gain a formal qualification in competence-based examinations, irrespective of the way in which the knowledge and skills have been acquired. The foremost difference from ordinary vocational qualifications is that anyone who feels he or she has the required knowledge and skills, can take the examination. However, ordinary institutional studies are still the prevalent track to qualifications.

Competence-based examinations are set on ISCED levels 3 (further vocational qualification) and 4 (specialist vocational qualification). While the system is a way to recognise competencies acquired outside education or training organisations, it is also a way to guarantee the quality of examinations. The vocational competence required is separately determined for each qualification by the National Board of Education. The National Board also appoints the examination committees responsible for setting and supervising the examinations. There are 165 examination

committees with over 1,200 members nominated by employer and employee organisations, entrepreneurs, and teachers. The majority of members represent the world of work.

The present competence-based examinations are governed by the Adult Vocational Education Act. There are some 350 different vocational qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications in all.

Although it is possible to take the examination without participating in education, in practice most examinees have attended some courses or programmes preparing for the examination. The duration of studies varies, but 6-12 month is common. Each educational institution which provides education and training leading to a qualification must offer the opportunity to obtain competence-based qualifications. Thus, the costs for the examinations are included in the overall expenditure. Educational institutions which do not arrange competence-based qualifications themselves are obliged to purchase the service from some other institution. Between 1997 and 1999, over 26,000 adults obtained a competence-based qualification.

The system of National Certificate of Language Proficiency is similar to that of competence-based examinations. The test is intended for adults and measures language skills in practical situations. At the moment test is available in nine languages.

Pedagogy in adult education

Under legislation pertaining to vocational education, the providers themselves decide when education takes place, that is, when teaching begins and ends. They can thus take account of their students' life situations and other demands on their time. The Vocational Education Act emphasises the obligation of the education provider to see to it that students can make individual choices within the framework of the national curriculum. If necessary, students should be able to choose courses from the provision of other education providers.

In qualification-oriented adult vocational education, the education providers have to make personal study plans (PSP) for students. This obligation is recorded in the Adult Vocational Education Decree and intended to ensure flexible and individual studies for adults. The PSP takes account of prior work experience and studies. Students commit themselves to following the plan. The aim is to make learning a conscious, goal-oriented and self-directed process. A personal study plan is an important element in learning assessment and enables students to monitor their own learning. In practice, the PSP has many uses: to ensure the recognition of earlier learning and credit transfer, to cater for individual needs and adults' interests in the content of education. Other individual educational models in adult vocational education are also being launched in a project coordinated by the National Board of Education.

Financial aid for studies

As a rule, certificate-oriented education and training is provided free of charge in Finland. Basic education is totally free. Students in upper secondary education get one free meal a day but have to pay for study materials and transport. In liberal adult education and additional vocational training, there usually are moderate fees.

An important factor ensuring that adult learners can study is financial aid securing student's income during studies. The different forms available to adult students are following:

Employed persons. For self-motivated full-time studies, employed persons can get a training grant which is based on their working years and wage level and ensures a higher level of income than the general financial aid for students. It is intended for persons who have a work history of at least 10 years. The aid is cumulative in nature, every working month adding 0.8 days to the available aid. For instance 10 years in working life would entitle the applicant to aid for 4.5 months of study. The allowance comprises a basic sum and an earnings-related amount and can be taken in one or several periods.

Adult students can also apply for the same financial aid for studies as young students (study grant, a housing supplement and state-guaranteed loan).

The Study Leave Act makes it possible for employed persons to take part in full-time studies. Since 1980, employees have had the option to apply for study leave when they want to upgrade their training or competencies. To be entitled to study leave, the employee has to have been in full-time employment with the same employer for a minimum of one year. The maximum extent of study leave is two years in the course of five years. It can be granted for studies in publicly supervised education and training and, on certain conditions, for trade union training or training intended for agricultural entrepreneurs.

One way for the employed to study is to apply for a "rotation" leave (first included in the income policy agreement 1996-1997). The basic idea in the system is to rotate work: for the duration of the employee's leave (90-359 days), a registered unemployed job seeker is hired through a job centre. The person on leave receives a sum corresponding to 70% of the daily unemployment benefit to which he/she would be entitled during unemployment. Employees have a right to a partial vocational training aid if they use the leave for studies. This form of leave can be taken for any reason, and those who use it to study are mostly major consumers of adult education anyway. Women use this form of leave for studies more often than men, higher white-collar workers more often than blue-collar workers. As a form of financing studies this option is negligible. (Työvuorottelun seurantatyöryhmä 2000).

The unemployed get an allowance corresponding to their unemployment benefit during labour market training. Furthermore, the participants are paid a small per diem. Those who participate in training outside their own region may also receive a small allowance for board and lodgings if the training causes extra costs. In addition, those who have lost their job may apply for an adult education supplement from the Education Fund.

Since 1997, the unemployed have been able to apply for financial aid for self-motivated training. The system was first intended for the long-term unemployed but was soon extended to all unemployed persons who have received unemployment benefit for a minimum of 86 days (four months) during the previous 12 months. In order to get this training allowance, the person must have worked for 10 years in the previous 15 years.

CHAPTER 7: EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE AND INNOVATIONS

Opintoluotsi

The aim of the *Opintoluotsi* (study guide) project is to develop a comprehensive, open information service on education in Finland. The service covers post-compulsory education, complete with regard to publicly supervised education, selective with regard to private education. It contains all essential information in a clear and concise form and thousands of commented links to websites. The versatile, abundant content is organised on a clear, user-friendly interface. The service offers an overall picture of education supply, its forms and providers leading the reader to detailed information on other websites. *Opintoluotsi* services are available both in Finnish and Swedish. The English content is geared to immigrants and foreigners.

The service provides citizens with an easy access to information about education, helping people discover and use education and training opportunities suited to their individual needs. *Opintoluotsi* is intended for independent information retrieval, browsing, comparison and decision-making, also generating ideas and interaction. There is personal support available in Finnish and Swedish.

Opintoluotsi (2000– 2006) was initiated by the Ministry of Education with co-financing from the European Social Fund. The project is managed and coordinated by the University of Helsinki, but several other universities and companies contribute to the planning, design, research, production and communication. The service has been available since April 2002. It is strongly based on research, statistical analyses and user feedback. Linking the service to other websites is permitted as long as the source is acknowledged.

Study voucher pilot

In the context of "Information society skills for all", the Ministry of Education is piloting a study voucher system from 2000 to 2004. The voucher is intended to enable those over 60 years of age, the unemployed and immigrants to acquire the basic skills they need as citizens in information society. Another aim is to gather information about the possibility to use a study voucher more widely as a form of financing adult learning and adult education supply.

The Ministry of Education invited local authorities to apply for trial use of the study voucher (€ 100) in spring 2002 and 2003. Of the 448 municipalities in Finland, 216 submitted their applications. The Ministry chose 75 local authorities (35 in 2002 and 40 in 2003) from all over Finland, which received between 10 and 400 vouchers. All in all, over 6,000 vouchers were granted. The study voucher can be used to pay the fees of education in whole or in part. Another pilot will start in autumn 2003. It is intended for language studies for immigrants who are not on the labour market (women at home and old people). Decisions about the study voucher system will be made in 2004.

Distance general upper secondary school (Etälukio)

In 1997 the National Board of Education and YLE launched a distance general upper secondary school project, which is funded through the European Structural Fund. The aim is to develop, by means of television and virtual networks, a flexible, open opportunity for adults to study either separate courses or the whole general upper secondary school curriculum or to gain entrepreneurial skills. In autumn 2000 a total of 85 general upper secondary schools throughout

Finland provided distance studies for 2,500 students. About 100,000 people on average watched the TV programming related to the distance general upper secondary schools every week. In order to make recording easier, the series are also shown in their entirety at night time.

Computer Driving Licence

In 1994, the Finnish Information Technology Development Centre (TIEKE), together with the education and labour administrations and labour market organisations, developed a level-A Computer Driving Licence (CDL) for users of information technology. To get the CDL, the student takes an examination after completing all the required modules. The aim is to guide the information technology studies to respond to the needs of the labour market and individual citizens. CDL holders have information technology skills commonly needed in information society.

Courses and hands-on tests for the CDL are given by approximately 400 educational establishments from upper stage comprehensive school to universities. The examination is the same for all candidates. Later, the CDL system was expanded to comprise an AB-level Computer Driving Licence. The AB-level testifies to more advanced skills in their use of information technology, and relevant courses provide the students with a wide range of skills. The new addition to the CDL system was a citizen's @-card, introduced in 2000. The @-card consists of the three level A modules and gives beginners a good starting point. The latest CDL-card was developed for wireless communication skills.

The Computer Driving Licence has become an acknowledged proof of information technology skills. It is very popular – over 100,000 people have already obtained it. Information in English about the CDL can be found at <http://www.tieke.fi/index2.nsf/subarea2>.

National Programme on Ageing Workers

In the late 1990s, Finland awoke to the problems and challenges arising from current demographic trends. The proportion of the active working population keeps decreasing and the retired population increasing. Increased productivity of work will probably compensate to some extent the economic and social repercussions of the negative demographic development, although estimates of its effect vary. The large number of people who exit from the labour market before actual retirement age adds to the problem. In the late 1990s, over 80% of 60-64 employees retired before actual pension age.

In 1997, the Government adopted a National Programme on Ageing Workers, emphasising the importance of working capacity, working conditions and education and training for ageing workers. The Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health have the main administrative responsibility for the programme.

The Ministry of Education adopted a policy to include the principles of the Programme in different documents governing the activities of educational institutions and in its information-based guidance. The policy of lifelong learning is a key element in the implementation of the National Programme for Ageing Workers. The foremost aim is to cater for the training needs of the middle-aged, especially those with poor basic education and training and poor study skills.

In the field of adult education, the Ministry of Education has launched major development programmes, e.g. *Information skills for all* and *Personalisation of adult education and training*. With a view to age-relevant targeting of education, self-motivated further vocational training is developed in response to the needs of ageing workers. The virtual information and advisory service *Opintoluotsi* (see above) helps people to find training opportunities, courses and programmes according to their individual needs. New legislation on financial aid for adult students (see end of Chapter 6) also concerns ageing workers. The educational needs of ageing workers were also a special focus in the 2001 Adult Learners' Week, which was geared to help the middle-aged adult population to cope at work and to strengthen ties between adult education and the working life.

CHAPTER 8: FUTURE ACTIONS AND CONCRETE TARGETS FOR 2009

Finnish society is facing a major structural change. Like many European countries, Finland has a rapidly greying population, owing to the relative growth in the number of people over 55 years of age. The reason for this is that the post-war age groups are much larger than the subsequent age groups. In the labour market, this greying will mean difficulties in compensating for the exit of the large age groups.

Another important factor for the structural change is that, although the level of education has been constantly growing among the Finnish adult population, the increase in education and training provision has not been evenly distributed among all population groups. This has resulted in a significant difference in the level of education between older and younger generations. As regards secondary qualifications, the difference between the age brackets 55-64 and 45-54 is particularly large. About half of the 55+ population are untrained but only one third in the 45-54 age bracket. In younger age groups, 84% of men and 87% of women have at least upper secondary qualifications. This disparity is seen in the labour market as larger jobless rates in the older, less trained age groups. In addition, these are the very same people who got the worst rating in the OECD international adult education survey made.

In Finland – as elsewhere in Europe – there will be clear changes in labour demand over the next ten years. Demand will grow e.g. in knowledge-intensive fields. This change makes special demands on the education and training provision, including adult education. It is likely that higher and more versatile training will be required of the person replacing a retiring person; in other words, competence requirements are rising.

Growing use of information and communications technologies and the provision of many services on the internet require new kinds of skills from citizens, which will add to training pressures. In the case of young people, this can be remedied through ordinary educational development, but in the case of adults, a number of special measures will be required, notably in adult education and training, which will also have to enhance citizenship skills, social cohesion and learning capabilities more widely. Liberal adult education in particular has an important role to play in preventing various social problems and exclusion.

The most important new guidelines in adult education and training are those proposed by the Adult Education Committee in 2002 (see above). Understanding its mandate broadly, the Committee outlined an adult education and training strategy and major actions up to 2010. In its

work the Committee used various sources of information, notably the OECD Thematic Review on Finnish Adult Education Policy.

I Adult education strategy and major policy lines

Finnish adult education policy is built on the principle of lifelong learning and aims to offer opportunities for all adults to study according to their life situations and needs. On the other hand, the strategy recognises the value of non-formal education and stresses the need to make informal learning visible.

Adult education development programme

The impetus for maintaining and upgrading the adult population's knowledge level comes from changes in the society described above. The level of education among the adult population will rise significantly with the exit of the large, poorly trained age groups by 2010. This is why adult education and training will increasingly be targeted at further training and higher education. On the other hand, it is seen that employees need more upgrading and updating. To this end, the Committee proposed that all adults should have opportunities for exhaustive upgrading every 10 to 15 years, as well as for 1-2 weeks of self-development every year. Since these quantitative targets require an increase in the overall volume of adult education and training, it is proposed that adult education funding be raised by 20-25% from the 2002 level.

Action Plan 2003-2007 for rising the qualifications of the adult population

Young Finns have a fairly high level of education, whereas the older generations clearly have less education. But there is also a fairly large group of younger adults who lack upper secondary training. In order to raise the level of education of poorly trained adults, the Committee proposed a separate action programme geared to offer people aged between 30 and 54 better opportunities to study for vocational qualifications. This programme is planned for the period 2003-2007 and will offer 16,000-24,000 study places annually. Part of the resources will be allocated to education for information society skills.

The measures to improve adults' educational attainment is targeted at those who have completed compulsory education. Their opportunities for participating in vocational training and information technology training will improve with better financial support.

In the Ministry of Education sector, the programme is especially targeted at employed persons aged between 30 and 54, some 330,000 altogether. There is a special appropriation in the budget which will be used to finance not only training, but also communications, guidance and other supportive measures, as well as study counselling during education and training, individually tailored studies and other measures promoting the completion of studies. The special appropriation can also be used to support people wanting to finish their discontinued studies in the comprehensive or general upper secondary schools. This is intended for people between 25 and 54 years of age.

In the Ministry of Labour sector, the programme is specifically targeted at the unemployed. Altogether 42% of unemployed job seekers lack post-compulsory school education. Inadequate training is a major obstacle to employment. Labour market training is provided in sectors suffering from labour shortages and planned to respond to the labour needs of business and

industry. The labour market administration uses information, guidance and steering to implement the programme and cooperates with the social partners.

The state budget of 2003 contained an appropriation of 12 million euros for the implementation of the programme.

It is estimated that one fifth of the labour force with only compulsory schooling will participate in the programme during its entire duration.

Steering and funding of adult education and training

Finland has the network of adult education institutions is comprehensive because adult education and training can be provided by all institutions, including those that do not specialise in adult education. According to the Adult Education Committee, a decentralised system like this is a good basis for further development. At the same time, the Committee stressed the special nature of adult learning and the importance of a stable resource base for specialised adult education institutions. The provision and steering of adult education can be seen to constitute an entity which can be examined separately from young people's education and training.

The proposals put forward by the Adult Education Committee are extensive. The report approaches Finnish adult education and training from a new angle. The foremost objective is to translate lifelong learning into concrete action and to secure opportunities for all adults to learn and study, irrespective of their basic education, their employment status, their place of residence or their age. This objective is ambitious, on the one hand requiring significant increases in adult education and training resources, on the other, innovative openings in the development of virtual learning and in the recognition of prior learning. One major challenge is to develop a new kind of system for quantifying and steering adult education and training provision. The cost effects are also considerable. The Committee proposes an increase of 146 million euros in adult education financing by 2010. To make these financing targets possible, the Committee proposes a broader financing base and a clearer division of financing responsibilities in adult education and training.

Other recommendations

With a view to motivating adults to study and to improving their learning capabilities, the programme will include various supportive measures, such as various blocks of general education in support of vocational studies. Similarly, the financial aid scheme for adult students had to be developed. Another measure in support of the programme is to facilitate studies during unemployment with an increase in labour market training resources and more opportunities for people receiving unemployment benefits to get financial aid for studies. In Finland, the latter used to be possible only within a special system of training allowance intended for the unemployed, in which the terms were rigorous. The Committee proposed a more inclusive scheme.

The Ministry of Education appointed an official to make further proposals in following themes (as proposed by the Adult Education Committee):

- Actions needed to keep education and training fees at a moderate level and thus to ensure that citizens have equal possibilities to participate in education and training.
- Actions needed to keep study grants and social security at a level which will not hinder participation.

- Actions needed to clarify the taxation of long-term training financed by employers to ensure that they are treated equally and that students do not have to pay taxes for training.

The Committee also wanted to promote citizenship skills and the civil society, social equality and democracy and prevent exclusion by means of adult education and training. In this, eyes turn to liberal adult education institutions, which arose from civil society and have a strong tradition in promoting democracy and empowerment. Wishing to support empowerment, the development of adults' learning skills and the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed in everyday life (e.g. IT skills), the Committee proposed that part of the current liberal adult education supply be retargeted along lines to be jointly determined by the Ministry of Education and education providers.

With a view to creating favourable conditions for adult learning, the Committee paid special attention to information and advisory services, new learning environments and virtual learning, teachers' and educators' competence, and the recognition of knowledge and competence. These are particularly important for encouraging the least motivated people and those with poor learning skills to participate in adult education and training. The purpose is to develop advisory services in close cooperation between educational and labour authorities and education providers. The Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE also has an important part in this work. Virtual learning will be promoted through the development of virtual teaching and virtual pedagogy. The aim is to make quality provision geared to the learners' life situations comprehensively available at all educational levels and in all fields.

In order to ensure the recognition of prior learning and competencies, Finland has developed an effective system of competence-based examinations. The Committee proposed a project for developing the assessment and recognition of prior knowledge and competence in the Finnish education system as a whole.

II Social exclusion

As a result of the high unemployment in the early nineties, exclusion has risen to the fore as a major social policy concern. Social exclusion does not need to be related to unemployment and all unemployed are not excluded. Social exclusion can be found in all population groups. The Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Environment set up an informal coordination group in spring 1997 to coordinate joint actions to combat social exclusion. Its final report emphasised the selective nature of social exclusion on the individual level, noting that different people tackle the threat of exclusion in different ways. Exclusion is partly caused by economic and technological change and partly the result of life style choices.

According to the Development Plan for Education and Research, exclusion and other unwanted consequences can be prevented and alleviated especially by means of diversified liberal education and through closer cooperation with the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE, libraries and non-governmental organisations. The education provided by liberal adult education institutions is not usually targeted at a specific group of people, except in some study centres catering for the needs of their background organisation, the unemployed or at-risk groups. Such activities are often co-organised with NGOs (such as associations for the unemployed). Several adult education centres offer significantly reduced prices for the unemployed.

The Government wants to *promote citizenship skills and the civil society, social equality and democracy and prevent exclusion by means of adult education and training*. In this purpose, the Ministry of Education has, together with the liberal adult education providers, started to prepare a new steering system which would make possible to reallocate part of the current liberal education supply according to lines to be jointly determined by the Ministry of Education and education providers.

Educational policies prevent social exclusion and provide the means to respond to the challenges posed by an ageing population. The means include: stressing the significance of all-round education in the prevention of social exclusion; producing adult education services tailored to those threatened by exclusion and with a low level of education; and ensuring a diverse provision in general education institutions.

The Finnish welfare state has been traditionally based on a model in which social security is used to prevent extreme poverty. During the recession, the Finnish model achieved its goals relatively well and income distribution remained fairly even. Afterwards income differences have grown and the relative poverty rate has increased (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 1999).

A new threat was revealed by the comparative OECD survey on adult literacy. Although literacy among the adult population in Finland is fairly good, great many adults score low in the quality of literacy. Responding to this challenge is difficult; some find it hard to learn the skills required at work.

III Changing society, changing definitions of learning

As a result of the ageing of the Finnish labour force and the structural change in industry towards information work, vocational adult training is even more important than before. A challenging task for adult training is to ensure a capable and highly qualified labour force in the circumstances facing Finland. The retirement of the large age groups within the next ten years will mean major changes in the qualification structure of the labour force. Retirement means that a certain amount of knowledge and skills based on experience are lost. Correspondingly, the average educational level of the labour force will rise with the exit of the less educated generation from the labour market. Growing internationalisation in Finnish society will have various effects on adult education. Finns will increasingly acquire education abroad. In order to respond to labour demands, Finland will have to rely on the competencies and vocational skills of immigrants.

The situation is double-edged. There are almost 300,000 unemployed job seekers, but in the very near future labour shortage will be more and more common. Current large-scale unemployment is ousting people from the labour market and undermining their chances to return. This will cause difficulties when more jobs are available again. So far, the labour reserves in Finland have been growing. The only group whose number will be growing after 2010 is people aged over 65, while younger generations will decrease. The working population will continue to grow during this decade, but the growth will mainly take place in the 55+ age group, i.e. those about to exit from the labour market. Only about 10% of people retire at the age of 65; the average retirement age in 2001 was 59.3 years.

Between 2000 and 2015 about one million people will leave the labour market, which is almost half of those employed in 2000. By 2010, the exit will be around 600,000. Most severely affected

by ageing are entrepreneurs. Ageing is most pronounced in the public sector. Halfway this decade, the age group leaving the labour market will be bigger than the one entering it.

The need for new labour will be marked in occupations requiring special skills and in nursing and services. Decreases in the working-age population would not be a problem if there were readily available labour reserves to fill the vacancies. The biggest economically inactive groups are unemployed job seekers (in 2001 8.5% of working-age population), pensioners and students. Traditionally new labour force has been recruited straight from schools. This will change completely. In the future, vacancies must increasingly be filled from the current labour force and from the labour reserves.

Several working groups have proposed solutions to this problem. What they share is two important conclusions: We need to lower the number of working-age people unnecessarily leaving the labour market and improve unemployed people's capabilities and readiness for work. The most effective response to the problem of labour supply is to get the domestic labour reserves on the job market without delay. In addition, we also need to increase work-based immigration. Labour policy needs to provide more incentive for work and activate people. Periods of unemployment must be used to upgrade skills and prepare people for the labour market. Labour market training and adult education and training are important means to this end.

In 2001 there were 32,500 foreign job seekers registered in the job centres. The unemployment rate among immigrants has clearly gone down, but was still as high as 28% at the end of 2002. The three main ways to improve immigrants' chances in the labour market are language instruction; vocational training, and continuing or qualifying education and training. The most common obstacle to their employment is inadequate skills in Finnish and/or Swedish. The Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education will work together to meet these challenges. (Source: Preparing for the Labour Market Change caused by the Baby Boom Generation)

The greying of the Finnish population also increases the need for general and liberal adult education especially geared to pensioners. It is important to offer opportunities for education and self-development to the growing number of retired people in order to keep them active.

Over the recent years, educational policies have emphasised the significance of learning in other environments besides the formal school system. Institutional education is not flexible enough to respond to the diverse learning needs in an ever more rapidly changing society. It is important to recognise learning which takes place at work, in civic activities, hobbies and other leisure time pursuits. Information society development will inevitably create new ways and forms of learning. The eLearning initiative in the eEurope Action Plan will undoubtedly create new guidelines for the development of citizens' information society skills and for the use of the new media in teaching and learning.

It is evident that new forms of cooperation and coordination will be needed between formal and non-formal education, and informal learning. People should be able to plan and combine different forms of learning in a conscious way to achieve their own personal goals. It should be possible to have access to the resources of all learning environment. As regards policies, however, it may prove problematic that different ministries and some interest groups outside the public administration are responsible for different parts of adult education provision. New, more effective coordination is needed.

The high participation rate in in-service training will continue to be characteristic of Finnish adult education. In the international perspective, participation rates among those not employed are not similarly high. The public education system has an important role in this respect in the future.

New ways of learning, possibilities to demonstrate one's skills and measures facilitating participation in education and training have resulted in high-quality competencies and satisfied students. The participation rates in the new programmes are, however, small compared to the total number of participants in adult education. Besides, these students are usually those who already more than average education and training. The effective use of available learning environments in different life situations and at different stages of life entails that attention is paid to learning-to-learn skills. In the future, attention must be paid not only to securing the educational opportunities for adults, but also to making sure that adults appreciate education and training as a real alternative, know how to find education and training which benefits them and are able to put what they have learnt into practice.

Implementation of recommendations of Hamburg

As the foregoing shows, Finland has taken extensive action to implement the recommendations of the Hamburg Declaration and the Agenda for the Future adopted by the Fifth International Conference on Adult Learning (CONFINTEA V). On the whole, adult education was well organised even in 1997, but has since been developed in many ways, with particular emphasis on comprehensive development of all its sectors.

The recommendation for an Adult Learner's Week (ALW) was accepted with enthusiasm. It has become an important event all over Finland. Since 1998, it has been organised every autumn. The aim is to motivate adults to learn by raising the public profile of adult education and the teachers and organisations providing it. Since 2000 there has been a specific ALW theme every year, in 2000 "information society for all" (see above).

In 2001 the focus was on education and training responding to the needs of working life. In 2002 the ALW theme was "Education – an investment in future". The ALW in April 2004 will centre round the theme of active citizenship. One association is always in charge of the overall organisation of ALW, but many other organisations, institutions, local authorities are also actively involved. The Ministry of Education grants financial support to the responsible association. From the outset, the Finnish ALW has awarded Adult Learner of the Year. Also companies representing best practises in the field of adult education have been awarded.

The education system of Finland

The education system in Finland comprises primary education (comprehensive school), upper secondary education (general and vocational), and tertiary education (polytechnics and universities).

Primary education is free general education for the entire age group. All children have the right to early education. Preschool is education given to children aged six according to a national core curriculum either in day-care centres or in comprehensive schools. Since August 2001 all six-year-old children have been entitled to one year of preschool education free of charge. At present 97.6% of the six-year age group participate. Children under six are entitled to day-care in kindergartens or in private child care. In 2001, 48% of children aged between 0 and 6 were in day-care.

Education is provided in comprehensive schools near the pupils' homes. School starts in the year when the child turns seven and takes 9 years or until the basic education curriculum has been completed. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide compulsory basic education. They organise these services independently or together with other local authorities. Comprehensive school does not lead to a qualification but gives eligibility for all secondary education. Basic education is free of charge to all school-age children. Schoolchildren also have the right to a free daily school meal and free transportation to and from school if the distance is over five kilometres (in year-classes 1-6 over three kilometres). Only 0.5% of each age group do not complete compulsory schooling in Finland.

Secondary education comprises general upper secondary schools and initial vocational training. The upper secondary school provides general education and prepares for national matriculation examinations. The aim of vocational training is to provide vocational competence and skills. About 95% of the age group continues in upper secondary education and training, over 50% of them in upper secondary schools. About 85% complete their upper secondary studies. Post-secondary, non-tertiary specialist vocational qualifications are specifically targeted at adults. Local authorities have no statutory obligation to provide other than basic education. Nevertheless, most general upper secondary schools for adults, adult education centres, vocational adult education centres, vocational institutions and polytechnics are run by local authorities.

The tertiary system consists of universities and polytechnics, which complement each other with their particular strengths and profiles. Universities conduct scientific research and provide education based on it. Finland has an extensive supply of higher education: 20 universities and 29 polytechnics. In 1999, the potential student intake represented 66% of the average youth age group.

In Finland, there are no tuition fees in secondary and tertiary education. In addition, secondary-level students get free meals. The national student financial aid scheme was devised to make it possible for everyone to study.

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Finland in Brief

Population: approximately 5.2 million, foreigners: around 103 700 (2002)
Population structure (2002): 0-14 years 17.8%, 15-64 years 66.9%, 65- years 15.3%
Life expectancy (2000): males 74,1 years, females 81,0 years

Capital: Helsinki, approximately 560,000 inhabitants (2002)

Surface area: 338 145 km², population density 17 inhabitants/km²

Official languages: Finnish (92.1%) and Swedish (5.6%), in the Sami area of Lapland, Sami (0.03%)

Religion: Evangelical Lutheran 84.6%, Finnish Orthodox 1.1%, other 1.1%, unaffiliated 13%

Labour force: about 2.6 million; population aged 25-64: some 2.8 million

Major sectors of the economy: agriculture and forestry 3.4%, industry and construction 32.6%, trade 10.2%, services 53.8%

Gross domestic product (2002): approximately 26 800 euros per capita

Main trading partners: Germany, Sweden, Russia, USA, United Kingdom

Central state budget (2003): 35 722 million euros, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 8 471 million euros (23.7%), Ministry of Education 5 878 million euros (16.2%)

Students in education leading to qualifications (2001): 1 165 000

Statistics Finland: Finland in Figures 2003