



Civic education in Finnish Adult Education

- Discussions of Adult Educators

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My backgrounds

- Finnish Association of Adult Education Centres, KVS Foundation
- Webmagazine Sivistys www.sivistys.net
- Project Linba (Learning insights in Nordic-Baltic Area) 2008 -2010

My standpoint:

- Discussions in Sivistys, inspired by two cases:
 - The governmental programme 2011
 - The presidential elections 2012

Finland

- Sovereign parliamentary republic since 1917
- 1809-1917 autonomous Grand Duchy within the Russian empire; before that part of the Kingdom of Sweden
- Member of EU 1995
- Election of 12. president in January/February 2012



Active citizenship -

Promoted by the authorities

- The Law 2009: non-formal adult education is lifelong learning that promotes the cohesion of the society, equality and active citizenship.
- The development programme for non-formal adult education for 2008 -2012
- The governmental project for active citizenship 2003-2007

Case 1:

The governmental programme 2011

- in all education, to increase :
 - teaching on civic skills and learning for democracy
- in non-formal adult education, to increase:
 - civic abilities, skills and competence for all
 - highlighting immigrants, school drop-outs and others in danger for marginalization

The amount of civic education courses

(Percent of the lessons)

- Study centres 16%
- Folk high schools 5 %
- Adult education centres less than 4 %
- Summer universities less than 4%

(The Finnish Education Evaluation Council, 2009)

Examples of on-going courses:

- Helsinki:
 - national and European economics
 - different ways being an active citizen
 - taxation
 - alcohol and drug abuse
 - courses for the helpers of the handicap, for voluntary workers, job seekers.
- Lempäälä:
 - philosophy club
 - course on writing local village histories

Response of the adult educators ⁽¹⁾

- Critics:
 - No patronizing, please! The message should rise from the bottom up, not from above down.
 - Civic courses do not attract people > more concrete themes, local cases
 - The statistics are misleading - Active citizenship is a general drift in all adult education.

Response of adult educators ⁽²⁾

- All non-formal learning promotes active citizenship:
 - Sharing your knowledge and opinions is active citizenship.
 - Dialogue is a learning method and a goal of adult learning.
 - Non-formal learning promotes involvement and integration in the community.

Response of adult educators ⁽³⁾

- Positive feedback:
 - We need to increase concrete actions for tolerance, cultural dialogue and actions against racism.
 - We will increase courses on decision-making processes on local, national, European and global level...
 - ...and studies for university level social studies.

Responses of adult educators ⁽⁴⁾

- In future:
 - Growing demand on courses on global economy & politics and on finance crises
 - Courses to absorb new roles than consumers or employees, e.g. the ideas of degrowth.
 - New methods of learning, e.g. learning cafés.

Case 2: The presidential elections 2012



Characterics of the election

- active discussion on the economic and social values
- values of tolerance, global viewpoints
- social media (the youth, Facebook)
- openness: the break of the personal secret ballot
- the voter rate on the first round 73, the second 69

Reflections on the election (1)

- Critical opinions on the role of social media:
 - empty-headed discussion!
 - active citizenship remains "liking" or "disliking"
- Positive opinions on the role of social media:
 - reaches young generations,
 - low threshold to discuss, encourages actions, increases openness.

Reflections on the election (2)

- Realistic point:
 - Interest in active citizenship is difficult to keep, but there is potential to be active
- Northern Finland:
 - the low rate of voting is not a sign of passivity
 - civic discussion is encouraged in all learning groups

Summary

- The civic education is emphasized by the government and authorities.
- The adult educators believe that the supply of civic will grow because of the growing demand.
- The definition of civic education and active citizenship needs further developing.
- Civic education will bring new methods of learning supplemented with social media.