Finland has a long history of participation and promotion of adult education. Adult education is also very popular, and the participation rate is high in international terms.

The Finnish education system supports life-long learning in multiple ways. First and foremost, the education system has no dead-ends. Therefore, learners can always continue their studies on an upper level of education not depending on their previous choices. The practice of recognition of prior learning aims to avoid unnecessary overlapping studies. In addition, legislation concerning upper secondary education and higher education stipulates educational providers to promote life-long learning.

The main objectives of adult education policy are ensuring the availability and competence of the labour force, providing educational opportunities for the entire adult population and strengthening social cohesion and equity. The objectives should support efforts to extend working life, raise the employment rate, improve productivity, implement the conditions for lifelong learning and enhance multiculturalism.

Adult education comprises education and training leading to a degree or certificate, liberal adult education and staff-development and other training provided or purchased by employers. In addition, it includes labour market training, which is mainly targeted at unemployed people. Provision is intended to be flexible as possible in order to enable adults to study alongside work. [1]

General and vocational adult education

• Provides a degree or qualification.
• Separate educational paths for adults.
• It is organised at all levels of education.
• In vocational education and training competence-based qualifications are emphasised and recommended.

Liberal adult education

• Offers non-formal studies and therefore does not provide a degree or qualification, and its contents are not governed by legislation.
• Promotes personal growth, health and well-being.
• Offers, for instance, courses relating to citizenship skills and society, and different crafts and subjects on a recreational basis.
• It is organised by adult education centres, folk high schools, learning centres, sports training centres (sports institutes) and summer universities.

Continuous learning reform

Finnish government has launched reform concerning lifelong learning. It is called continuous learning reform. Reform will focus on the skills of working age people. In Finland skills and competence requirements are increasing rapidly in all sectors but at the same time sectors are suffering from a major shortage of skilled workers.

The reform policy will be published during 2020 and will respond to the educational needs arising from changes in the world of work. New LLL policy aims to find solutions to better combine work and study. Measures include increasing opportunities for retraining, continuing professional development and professional specialisation education throughout working life. Developing apprenticeship training as a way for acquire new skills and providing flexible opportunities to study in higher education institutions. Study leave and financial aid for adult students will be developed, and the opportunities for people to study while looking for work will be improved.

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