

**The art of being present in a
changing context -
qualification needs for adult
educators meeting new challenges**

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Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL)

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Perspectives, challenges and opportunities

- Background for the Nordic experiences
- Perspectives related to the professionalization of adult educators from 2 Nordic studies
- Recommendations and ideas

NVL – quality development of adult education through professionalization of the adult educators

NVL is initiated by the Nordic Council of Ministers (governmental cooperation)

- a network with national coordinators in all the Nordic countries
- **working at all levels of adult education, cross-national and cross-sectorial**
- working with the priority areas set by the Nordic Council of Ministers
- creates meeting place, facilitates development and dissemination of new knowledge, formulates policy suggestions

Competence development has for several years been a priority area

- Educator professionalization a crucial part of competence development
- **Education of teachers and adult educators is not keeping up with workplace demands and changes in the society**
- Similar problematic characteristics in all the Nordic countries
- Few and indistinctly described qualification demands in adult pedagogy /didactics
- **Tendency to more academic teacher training – which means less possibility for the training part of education**

Quality and professionalisation



a **Nordic mapping study** (2010-2011) initiated by the Advisory Group for Nordic Co-operation on Adult Education (SVL), Nordic Council of Ministers.

Carried out by the National Center of Competence Development in Denmark (NCK) in cooperation with NVL

Formal professional requirements for adult educators

Education / further training opportunities within adult learning

a development project carried out by NVL Taskforce on Adult Learning 2006-2010 - ” **Innovative Best Practice**”

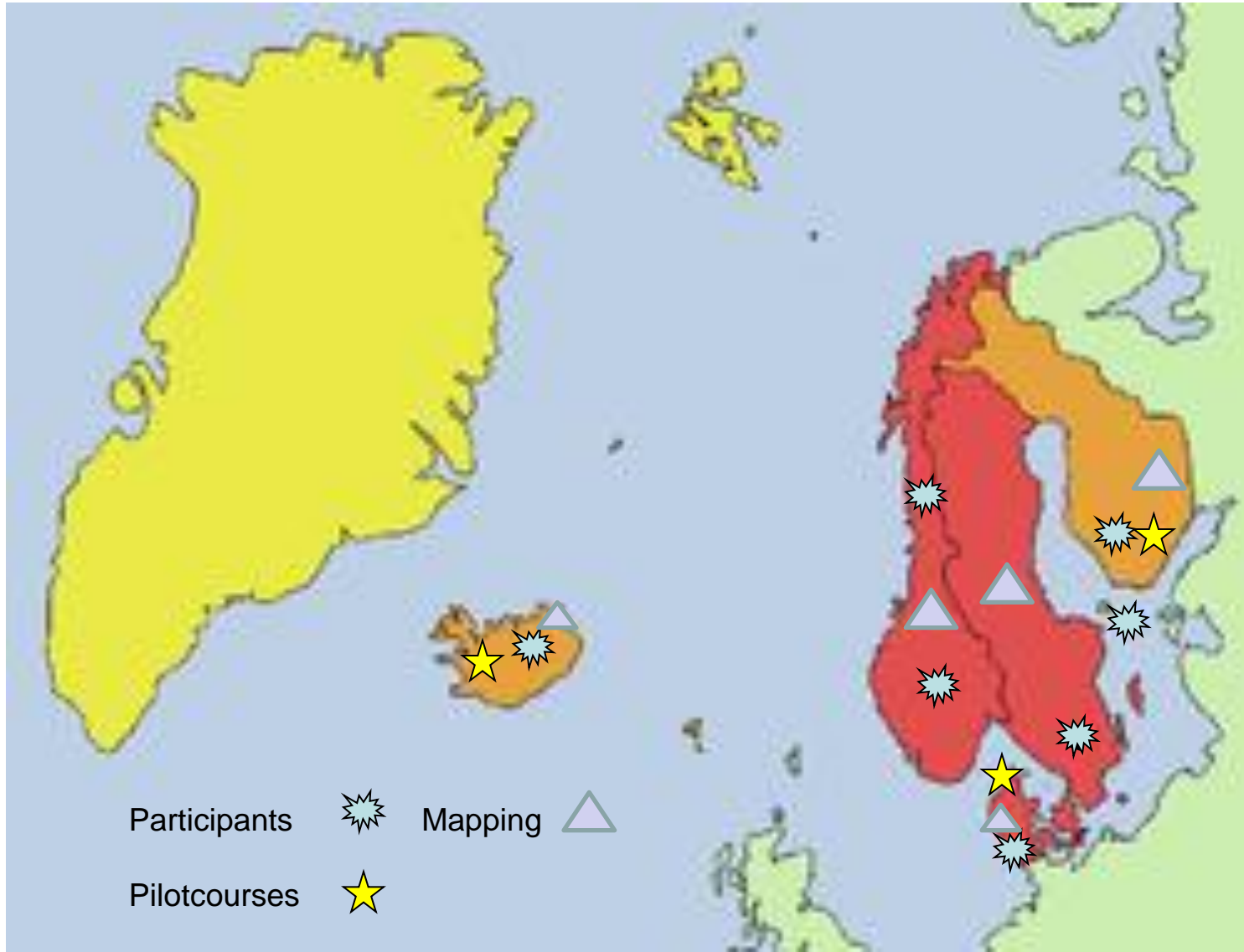


NVL Taskforce 2006-2010

- **Map and investigate new competence requirements** that adult educators face in innovative practice
- **Map “innovative best practice”** and experiences within creative and innovative continuing education for adult educators in the Nordic region, and investigate the competence requirements
- **Prepare, carry out and evaluate a developmental project** including pilot courses with an innovative content for Nordic adult educators
- **Recommend and formulate suggestions** for in-service training courses for adult educators, initiate the mapping study
- **Disseminate** the results from the pilots to the training institutions and other stakeholders who would be interested in carrying on the activities

NVL Nordic Taskforce

Taskforce participants, pilot courses, countries involved in the mapping



Key points from the pilot evaluation

- “**The teacher as a Coach**” (FI) - to challenge and convey the change of the teacher’s role in a very different and innovative learning environment
- “**The teacher on the stage**” (DK) - to realise and work with the ability to stay present –professional and personal - in changeable contexts (disturbance competence)
- “**Needs assessment - the teacher as a course designer**” (IS) - to train the ability to identify the company needs and develop tailor-made education activities

The **encounter with differences and similarities** between various Nordic perspectives encourages constructive, innovative thinking and the **cross sectoral perspective** is a source of inspiration and provides new perspectives

The most “innovative” and valuable element was that the **instruction took place in authentic, innovative and different learning environments and that the approach was experience-oriented** (vs lectures and teacher steered tasks). This gave inspiration and courage to change own practice

Adult educator competences required



- Strong **professional knowledge** was regarded as a **prerequisite** and was hardly mentioned.

Professional knowledge must be complemented with an ability to be present and in contact

- with the students
- with the subject and the context

- Skills to **adapt the subject to concrete contexts and demands**
- **Ability to remain present** in a changeable context
- Well developed communication skills
- Dialogical and analytical competences
- Ability to facilitate cultural meetings
- Process leading competence

Nordic mapping study 2010-2011



- **Mapping of the formal competence requirements** for adult educators
- An interview study – interviews with 29 leaders having responsibility for the recruitment of staff.
- 6 interviews in each country: non-formal, and formal adult education institutions and vocational schools
- **A mapping of initial education and further training opportunities within adult learning / staff development**

Formal requirements for adult educators. Particular adult pedagogy?

- For almost all adult educators, regardless of the sector and institution, there are high requirements for formal subject-knowledge.
- In most cases formal general pedagogical knowledge is also required.
- **There are almost no formal requirements on adult pedagogical skills and competences for adult educators.**
- FI – highest and most formalised competence demands.

AE-or initial training available in FI, SE (partly), NO (autumn 2011)

Possibilities for AE-or further training in NO and DK as paid offers

Formal MA-level demand for teaching Danish as foreign language (DK)

Formal requirements for adult educators. Particular adult pedagogy?

- The lack of requirements on adult pedagogical competence is noteworthy compared to the general tendency for the Nordic teacher educations to become more specialized on subjects and certain age-groups.
- **Staff recruitment:** clearly expressed demand for special didactic and pedagogical competences for working with adults
- **The organisation leaders** find that adult learners have characteristics, which require a particular pedagogy and didactics. Many of their arguments are also supported by the professional literature (e.g. Larsson 2006; Wahlgren 2010)

Particular adult pedagogical requirements

- including and using adult learners' life- and work experiences
- respecting adult learners as adults and creating an equal relation
- creating a learning environment where everybody learns from each other
- using experience- and dialogue-based teaching methods

- working with groups of **heterogeneous learners** and using learners' diversity as a resource
- recognizing and **relating to adult learners' barriers for learning**
- understanding **the situation in the labour market**
- using **validation for prior learning**
- being flexible towards **different settings for the learning activities**
- being able to **develop teaching materials** targeted at adult learners

Personal characteristics are also seen as important; like authenticity, hardiness, enthusiasm, assertiveness, suitable communication style



Key points related to ” to being present” and ” to improving the effect of education”

- **To ensure**
 - training possibilities within the education offers
 - relation between the theory and practice within the education offers and between own practice and education (TRANSFER)
 - meeting differences: among sectors, cross-nationally, and across professions
- **To experience** different:
 - methods,
 - ways of acting in classrooms,
 - learning environments

Recommendations

– at a content, organisational level



- Developing activities, which promote **mutual employment of strengths** in different countries and sectors, and among educators, modular approach
- **Use authentic learning environments** for teacher training e.g. workplaces, innovative / alternative institutions
- **Inspiration** from and **cooperation** with other professions such as drama, business etc.
- Strengthen the relation between **theory and practice** in education and training opportunities
- **Transfer** process: “before – during – after” education

Recommendations

– at a political, structural level



- Establishment of **network** between different institutions / operator initiatives working with developing education and training opportunities for adult educators.
- Develop AE-or initial training and increase the **competence demands** of AE-ors
- Extend the **formal requirements** for adult educators to having knowledge of adult pedagogy and didactics (both in theory and practice)
- Extend and strengthen **the range of available opportunities** for continuing education for adult educators. (academic, practical, training)
- Develop training and education opportunities which are targeted at adult educators **employed part-time**

Current and future work



The mapping study recommendations linked to NCM Innovation strategy and **taken up by several NVL networks**, discussed and specified according to their target groups and educator competence demands:

Guidance Counsellors Network

Nordic Alfa-Council – basic skills

Nordic Prison Educators' Network – prison educators

Expert Network on Validation



Thoughts, ideas, suggestions:



Benefits of cooperation (local, national, regional)?

How to ensure and enhance TRANSFER?