



Network Analysis for Finland

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this short report is to document and analyze what kind of networks exists in Finland in the field of University Adult Education (or University Lifelong Learning, ULLL). In practice that covers university continuing education, Open University and non-traditional adults in university programs. We cover the actor types which are selected for Dialogue project framework: **ULLL practitioners, ULLL researchers and ULLL policy makers.**

We have also divided networks into three different types: **formal, non-formal and informal.** Formal networks have formal structures, they are controlled as formal societies and have legal obligations concerning their management etc. Non-formal networks are less controlled by the law, but they have common agreements and democratic decision making procedures. These networks have a common interest. Informal networks are based on informal personal contacts between people, and they are based on “who knows who” and cooperate with whom on regular but informal basis.

KEY ACTORS IN FINNISH ULLL

The following table (Table 1.) summarise the types of key actors within Finnish ULLL.

Practitioners	Researchers	Policy makers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University continuing education centre (UCEC) directors • UCEC workers • Open University (OU) directors • OU workers • faculty Deans and financial managers • Heads of University Departments • University lecturers • directors, rectors and workers in cooperating training and work organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University researchers doing research on ULLL themes • Doctoral and Master’s students doing research on ULLL themes • Researchers working in private research organizations doing ULLL research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education and Culture (MINEDU) senior advisers & other civil servants • National Board of Education • Regional policy makers (Regional Councils and Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and Regional State Administrative Agencies) • University rectors and University Board

One potential policy and funding actor on ULLL sector is the Finnish Academy which gives the money for research on all research sectors. Through its research programmes, the Academy of Finland directs research and allocates research funding to fields that are considered of key importance in terms



of science and society. However, research on ULLL have traditionally received a minimal percentage of this highly competitive funding.

Other actors on this policy and funding sector are Tekes (the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation, <http://www.tekes.fi/en/community/Home/351/Home/473>), Finnish National Board of Education and Ministry of Education and Culture. These organisations discuss directly with the organisations and people who are active in practical educational life and their resources are mainly directed to more practical purposes. For instance these organisations have financed together research on LLL: Life as Learning, which tried e.g. find a way of managing the challenges of lifelong and life wide learning in order to avoid a new kind of exclusion and create a solid quality interdisciplinary research base for developing teaching and learning in different educational and working-life contexts; and anticipate future learning needs from the point of view of society, culture and the individual.

Tekes is the most important publicly funded expert organisation for financing research, development and innovation in Finland. Research projects are often prepared and implemented in close cooperation with potential exploiters and Tekes tries to help to commercialise research outcomes and create networks of actors. Tekes promotes a broad-based view on innovation: besides funding technological breakthroughs, Tekes emphasises the significance of service-related, design, business, and social innovations. It also has a programme on educational sector: Learning Solutions. The objective of the programme is to develop internationally important learning solutions in cooperation with participants in the sector, to develop new operating approaches, create new skills and develop products, services and comprehensive packages for international markets. However, none of the funded development and research programs are related to ULLL.

NETWORKS IN FINNISH ULLL

Formal research networks

Perhaps the most directly ULLL related research society is Consortium of Higher Education Researchers in Finland (<http://ktl.jyu.fi/ktl/cherif>).

There are two research societies in Finland which are directly related to ULLL. The Research Society for Adult Education (<http://www.aikuiskasvatuksentutkimusseura.fi/info/in-english/>) and The Finnish Educational Research Association (http://www.kasvatus.net/fera/tekstisivu.tmpl?navi_id=350). The aim of both organisations is to further educational research nationally and internationally, and take part in the policy discussion concerning education and adult education. In addition they both try to create international connections and networks on research sector. The Finnish Educational Research Association has several networks on different research areas. These are most relevant national networks on research sector and they are rather well politically and socially connected organisations.

These research societies have quite good cooperation, for example through common members. The focus of research in the other is however adult education, while the other one focus more on school education. However, in neither of these societies ULLL is not formally organized as a theme group or



a key topic. In practice ULLL is only one potential research area and topic, and rather few researchers actually work in this field.

There are some other research societies partly linked to ULLL themes like sociological research society Westermarck Society (<http://www.westermarck.fi/?language=en>).

Non-formal research networks

Some bigger universities have their own units or research networks that focus on research on higher education. For example the Helsinki University Centre for Research and Development of Higher Education (YTY) (<http://www.helsinki.fi/yty/english/index.htm>). There used to be also a Network for Higher Education and Innovation Research (<http://blogs.helsinki.fi/heineblog-en/>) but it has been disestablished on 31 December 2012. Research and education on higher education and innovation are continuing within the research areas involved in the network.

However, these higher education research networks focus almost solely on “regular university”, and ULLL research themes are rather marginal.

Most actively researched themes in ULLL are access (how different applicants survive in entrance exams and how adults can access universities), adults in universities, Open University students (retention, student types), and use of ICT in OU and CE courses.

Formal policy networks

The second group is other, more policy oriented associations on the field of adult education. Finnish Adult Education Association is an umbrella organisation for non-formal adult education in Finland. It is a non-governmental organisation founded in 1969. FAEA’s main responsibilities are promoting non-formal adult education and learning, international co-operation and further training for adult educators. In the Nordic context FAEA is a member of the Nordic network of adult learning (NVL). NVL aims at supporting adult education policy in the Nordic and Baltic countries and making the good practise and expertise of adult learning visible. FAEA is a member of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA).

FAEA is linked to ULLL through liberal adult education organizations, which organize OU studies for adults outside the university campus areas. For example Adult Education Centres and Summer Universities are key co-operators for OU.

FAEA has also strong connection to research and some universities, but only in the field of liberal adult education. It has organised research seminars, financed some research, and organized a common research initiative SVV (Freedom and responsibility in liberal adult education) with three universities (Tampere, Åbo Academy University and UEF, see <http://www.peda.net/veraia/vsy/frireslibaduedu>). One semi-direct link between FAEA and ULLL is



this SVV initiative, where one research project is currently studying the wider benefits of lifelong learning in Europe (BeLL project, see <http://bell-project.eu/>).

Non-formal policy networks

Key actors in university adult learning or lifelong learning sector are UCEF and Open University Forum. They are not formal associations but act almost similar way. University Continuing Education Network UCEF is a cooperative organisation for the UCE institutions in Finnish Universities. Every Finnish university is represented in the network, usually by their UCE director. UCEF tries to develop and promote lifelong learning in university level education. It also emphasises UCE in dissemination of university research and innovation and is active also on international level.

Open University Forum is a free network of Open universities of the universities in Finland. One of their strategically important aims is to further multidisciplinary research on the activities of open universities. Examples of topics for research are students of OU, demands of the heterogenous student groups for teachers, instruction and educational settings.

HOW CAN THE ACTORS AND NETWORKS CONTRIBUTE TO RESEARCH – PRACTICE DIALOGUE?

If we look at the ULLL actors in Finland, which is a small country, the relevant key actors on university adult education sector are: **policy actors** like ministry of education (Department for Higher Education and Science has its own sub organisation Policy Division for Adult Education and Training) and Finnish National Board of Education. In addition there are a lot of different political actors like Trade unions, political parties other adult education associations, but they are not very relevant in this context.

Actors on funding sector TEKES and Finnish Academy and actors on **research sector** universities, research societies. In practise sector networks are semi-formal organisations on ULLL like UCEF and Open University Forum.

This can be clarified by following table: (Table 2.)

Knowledge interests

Nature of organisation	Practical		Theoretical	
	Formal	Ministry of Education and Culture The National Board of Education Tekes CE centres at Universities OU Centres	Research Societies Adult Education Institutes at Universities Finnish Academy Other educational Institutes and research institutes at universities	
	Non-Formal	UCEF OU Forum	Non-Formal research networks	
	Informal	Individuals, who work at CE centres and OU	Individual researchers and lecturers (teachers in CE and OU) informal networks and social connections	

On the basis of this picture of the main actors on ULLL sector it is easy to discern the main relations from the point of view research and practitioner dialogue.

1. Relationship between CEC and OU units and those organisations which have primarily theoretical interests (not financing bodies).
2. Relationships between non-formal ULLL organisations and those organisations which have primarily theoretical interests (not financing bodies).
3. Relationship between Ministry of Education and CEC/OU and on the other hand Adult Education institutes (University research institutes) has produced many researches and fruitful dialogue between these organisations.

There are interesting other relations but they are not dealt with here.

Table 3. Dialogue between and within different actor groups

	Practice actors	Research actors	Policy actors
Practice actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good non-formal and informal networks • Good dialogue within own field (OU or CE), but less active between research actors • Common development tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue based mainly on informal networks • Individual researchers looking for research topics and data • Practitioners offering research ideas • Dialogue on research results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal or non-formal networks • Informal networks and separately organized seminars etc. • Funding applications • Policy recommendations and negotiations
Research actors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good formal and non-formal networks, but these are focused on separate themes and don't interact too actively. • ULLL is not a common and central research theme • Informal networks exist between individual researchers • Not too active dialogue between researchers doing research on different topics in ULLL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some dialogue through formal and non-formal research networks • Dialogue with individual researchers and research teams • Research ideas and funding
Policy actors			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inside MINEDU dialogue between units • Role of NBE in ULLL minimal, no active dialogue with MINEDU?

Some problems:

- at administration level (MINEDU) ULLL tasks are divided to different units, which may make networking and information flow more difficult.
- At Board of Education ULLL has no separate resources; the only link to ULLL is via liberal adult education policy implementation (mainly Summer Universities and Adult Education Centres cooperating with OU).
- Researchers specialize in specific ULLL research themes, and they don't interact too actively. For example researchers in the field of access don't cooperate with researchers in the field of ICT and new media in ULLL.

Appendix

SWOT analysis of networks within University Lifelong Learning in Finland

Topic assessed: cooperation between policy makers, practitioners and researchers in the field of ULL in Finland	
Helpful in achieving the objective	Harmful in achieving the objective
Internal Factors	Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + several formal and non-formal networks for researchers + good non-formal networks for Open University and Continuing education centres + OU and CE networks have good dialogue with policy makers + active ULL researchers have good dialogue with practitioners
	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there is no dialogue between the different networks - dialogue between researchers and policy makers is rather passive and based on actual practical needs on the policy makers side - dialogue between the three actor groups is based mainly on informal networks - dialogue between faculties and ULL organizations could be more active - ULL research themes are rather marginal in the educational research - there is no specific research network focusing on ULL research - informal networks are vulnerable, because these are based on personal contacts - at ministry level University and ULL are divided to several units?
External Factors	Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + existing formal and non-formal research networks may develop ULL research in the future as well + these research networks may develop better dialogue with policy makers
	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - informal networks cease to exist - ULL research remain marginal - Formal and non-formal research networks don't have dialogue between them, and therefore reduce the opportunities for ULL research to develop