



OBSERVAL

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Mustel, Kerstin (2007). *Concept of Validation of General Competencies in Liberal Adult Education and Informal Learning* (Koncept för validering av generella kompetenser i folkbildning och informellt lärande. Published by The Delegation of Validation (Valideringsdelegationen). Dnr 2007/56 (Ref. http://www.folkbildning.se/download/744/folkbildningsrapport_2007.pdf)

The Validation Authority, existed during the years 2004 to 2007.

To better understand what Liberal Adult Education stands for, I give two short texts, in italics, from other sources:

The Swedish term folkbildning "refers to the folk high schools and the study associations, i. e. the organisations that constitute the liberal non-formal and voluntary educational system in Sweden. The term 'folkbildning' is difficult to translate into English. It is sometimes translated as liberal or popular adult education. However the specific conceptual foundation of 'folkbildning' extends beyond the term adult education' ..."

(<http://www.folkbildning.se/page/491/translationsoversattningar.htm>).

Liberal adult education (folkbildning), which has a long history in Swedish social life, is provided by folk high schools (folkhögskolor) and adult education associations (studieförbund). The hallmark of Liberal adult education is that it is "free and voluntary", i.e. free from central government control and voluntary for its participants.

(Fact sheet from Ministry of Education and research. U07.006. April 2007)

The purpose of the report, of totally 47 pages, is to create a perspective on validation that unite different sectors in the field of Liberal Adult Education and suggest a way of working that contributes to the development of the society through the characteristics that are unique for Liberal Adult Education. This way of working is based on the pedagogy and values that Liberal Adult Education stands for, in addition to the competences acquired from contexts outside Liberal Adult Education.

The learning achieved in non-profit associations, so called general competencies, is seldom estimated/valued and remains invisible. For the participants in the courses an essential aim of the validation process is the possibility to develop awareness about their own competencies. One reason is that the awareness of ones competencies may increase both self-esteem and self-confidence. Moreover self-esteem and enhanced self-confidence may result in a clearer way to describe and present ones personal competencies. Another reason why validation is valuable to the participants appears when they change work and need a document of required competencies that can be used and recognized in different contexts, for example a future employer.

The model presented in the report concerns investigation and estimation of general competencies acquired in Liberal Adult Education and non-profit organisations, but also through other forms of learning like non-formal and informal learning. The model can later on be extended and be useful in

validation of even other competencies within the same field. Another aspect is that validation also is seen as a possible tool to “give” quality assurance to vocational training programmes.

The Liberal Adult Education has other duties in the educational landscape than the official educational system. The task in focus, due to Liberal Adult Education, is to strengthen and develop democracy and participation in the development of the society as well as in the cultural life.

The teachers in Liberal Adult Education have experiences to develop, and to give focus to specific core competencies. They are working with something they mention as “value based” learning (in Swedish: värderingsbaserat lärande). The learning situation is described as reflecting and concentrated on the process of learning (not the outcomes; my comment). The education is not steered by curriculums.

Due to the author of the report it is of special interest to use a model for validation that is adapted to the current conditions. Among other things the experiences of the teachers are of high value when assessing the different competencies that are typical for Liberal Adult Education.

An ordinary way of validating is to compare the competence of the candidate with the demands, from either a work place or a formal educational program or study course. In the formal Educational system, there are no criteria expressed for the general competencies that are in focus here. As a consequence teachers in Liberal Adult Education have to decide and formulate criteria, with reference to their own values.

The model presented in the report, constitutes of a combination of different levels of achievement from the taxonomy of Bloom, and a description of factors that emanate from the different areas of competencies and qualifications that were developed in Liberal Adult Education and in non-profit organisations.

The general core competencies are:

1. Democratic civil competence
2. Social competence
3. Inter-cultural competence
4. Cultural competence
5. Learning competence
6. Communicational competence
7. Organisational and management competence

Each of these different areas of competences has to be grouped within four levels according to the taxonomy of Bloom. The four levels used are:

- Knowledge and skills
- Ability to apply and act
- Ability to analyse, relate and estimate
- Initiative and achieved results

Each area of competence is divided into four factors, one for each level, which means that totally 28 factors are described.

This model created for validation of general competencies is, according to the author, possible to develop even for validation of vocational disciplines within the Liberal Adult Education as well as in other forms of post-secondary vocational education.