Adult education, educational policy and sustainable development

Adult education promoting sustainable development – Module 2

Content:

1. Education for a sustainable future
2. Introduction to Module 2
3. Core concepts
4. Current adult education policy
5. Adult education policy in Finland
6. Need for sustainable development 1 & 2
7. Adult education for sustainability 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5
8. Links to sustainable development: Goals 4 & 10
9. Promoting inclusion and equality 1 & 2
10. Questions
11. Optional video bank
12. References

Education for a sustainable future

"Adult learning contributes to the achievement of all SDGs by building the foundations of change in the **social, political, economic**, **ecological** and **cultural** spheres."

(European Comission 2021).

"Thinking more carefully about pedagogy and how under global and postcolonial conditions, theory can and should inform the practice of education for a sustainable future."

(Matthews 2011).

Introduction to Module 2

The core concepts of this module are **adult education, education policy and sustainable development**.

To complete this module you have to:

1. Study this presentation
2. Explore the additional video bank and literature (optional)
3. Complete a quiz based on the material (learning task)

Core concepts

- **Sustainability =** described by the United Nations (1987) as: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."
  - ➤ The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) =** plan of actions that aim to achieve economic, social, and environmental development (European Association for the Education of Adults 2018).

- **Adult Learning and Education (ALE) =** a core component of lifelong learning. It includes every form of education and learning to ensure that all adults can participate in their societies and working life. (European Commission 2021.)

- **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) =** a way to incorporate all environmental challenges into learning processes. The aim is to create a sustainable future, promote citizen and participatory action, raise awareness and influence decision-makers. (European Commission 2015.)

- **Education Policy =** Strategic, strong governance, systemic and long-term action that aims to improve national basic skills. Educational policy has a strong connection with broad range of policy areas that benefit each other. (European Commission 2015.)

Current adult education policy 1/2

- Lifelong learning is strongly connected to adult education and due to that it guides adult education policies as well.

- Especially, education for sustainable development (ESD) is currently relevant topic in various international organizations and national contexts.

- Political decisions, projects and activities aim to raise awareness of the issues and promote changes in citizens behavior and attitudes.

- In recent years, several policy tools have been developed to promote adult learning and development. For example (links open to a new tab):
    - → The **European Green Deal**
    - → The **Agenda 2030 - SDG4**
    - → The **Education 2030 Framework for Action**
    - → The **European Skills Agenda**

(European Commission 2021.)
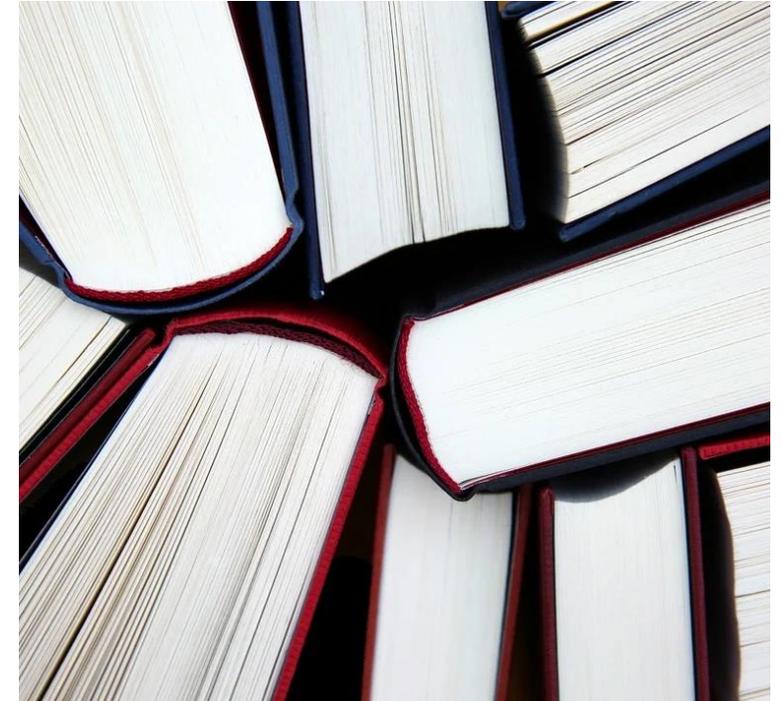
Current adult education policy 2/2

- Government, private sector and third sector organizations share the responsibility of learning policies. Several ministers, agencies, national organizations, civil society organizations, and social movements take part in promoting ESD.
  - ➤ Therefore, failed coordination between several stakeholders can lead to insufficient political acts.
  - ➤ On the other hand, successfully improved basic skills among citizens will bring significant benefits in many policy areas.

- In addition to that, adult learning has a significant effect to many other policies (e.g. economy, health, family) which makes it a complex policy field. (European Commission 2015.)

- It is particularly essential to provide stable opportunities for sustainable adult education with political acts since the field of adult education is generally the least institutionalized sector compered to other educational systems (e.g. secondary and higher education)
  - ➤ Importance of forming specific structures and institutions for adult education, run by professional adult educators, and getting lifelong learning internalized as meaningful part of the educational system (Milana, Rasmussen & Holford 2014).

Adult education policy in Finland

- Adult education has a significant role in Finland.
    - For example, in 2018 every other 18-64 years old citizen did someway participate in adult education. (Tilastokeskus 2018.)

- Today, neoliberalism has a significant effect to education policy.
    - Overall, the connection between adult education and politics has become more meaningful.
    - Adult education is strongly connected to economics and labor markets.
    - Adult education has become more degree centered, whereas, before it was commonly seen just as non-formal learning practiced during leisure time. (Silvennoinen & Kinnari 2019.)

- Currently, the principles and goals of the Agenda2030-project guides strongly all the political practices (Valtioneuvosto 2020).
    - OECD and European Union are two most important influencers to education policy in Finland (Silvennoinen & Kinnari 2019).

Need for sustainable development (1/2)

- Human impact upon our environment is growing and sustainability has advanced to response this challenge (Griswold 2016).
  - ➤ Which appears as (e.g.) **environmental uncertainties, global neoliberal markets and rapid technology innovations** (Hentz 2015).

- Sustainability is becoming an increasing issue all around the world.
  - ➤ Global challenges set a need for (e.g.) environmentally friendly consumption and energy efficiency. (European Association for the Education of Adults 2018.)

- Sustainability is an extensive phenomenon and has different dimensions: **economic, political, social, cultural and environmental** (European Commission 2021).

- Due to wide range of challenges citizens require a lot of knowledge to promote new more environmentally friendly lifestyles.
  - ➤ Adult education is a way to guarantee that citizens gain the knowledge needed. (European Commission 2021.)
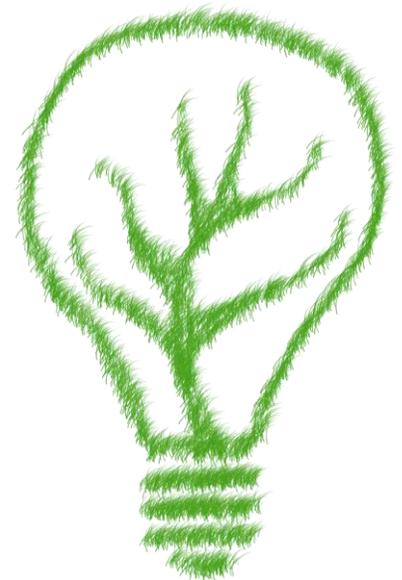
Need for sustainable development (2/2)

- United Nations has formed 17 global sustainable development goals for the Agenda2030-project. These goals are meant to be achieved by 2030.
- **Sustainable development goals are:**
    1) End of poverty
    2) End of hunger and improved nutrition and food security
    3) Well-being and health in every age group
    4) Equal and quality education
    5) Gender equality
    6) Available and sustainable water and sanitation management
    7) Affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern source of energy
    8) Economic growth, productive employment, and decent work
    9) Resilient infrastructure, inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and innovations
    10) Equality among countries
    11) Inclusive, safe, and sustainable human settlements
    12) Sustainable consumption and production patterns
    13) Combat climate change and its impacts
    14) Conserve and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources
    15) Sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystem
    16) Peaceful and inclusive societies
    17) Strengthened and revitalized global partnership

(European Association
for the Education of Adults 2018.)

Adult education for sustainability (1/5)

- Global challenges have set an urgent need for sustainable adult education (Milana, Holford & Rasmussen 2016).

- Adult education has a meaningful connection with all the dimensions of sustainable development.

- Sustainable adult education gives us the opportunity to address current and future challenges by learning about new solutions and new ways of being (Griswold 2016).

- Adult education is a way to effect citizens **skills, knowledge, competences, behavior and attitudes** (European Commission 2021).

Adult education for sustainability (2/5)

Adult learning programmes help to raise awareness about society, promote active citizenship and evolve citizens abilities which encourages living more environmentally friendly way.

➢ e.g. forwards employment in more environmentally friendly businesses

➢ Especially, non-formal education is very effective

Eight key competences for sustainable growth are:

1. Literacy competence
2. Multilingual competence
3. STEAM competence (science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics)
4. Digital competence
5. Personal, social and learning to learn competence
6. Citizenship competence
7. Entrepreneurship competence
8. Cultural awareness and expression competence.

(European Commission 2021.)

Adult education for sustainability (3/5)

- Transformative perspective to adult learning has been perceived as one way to create critical awareness on sustainability issues and to develop sustainability competences

- **Transformative learning theory** (Mezirow 1997, 5)

  - Transformative learning is described as "the process of effecting change in a frame of reference." Frames of reference are the "lens" through which we see the world and make meaning of our experiences
  - Adult education's goal is to develop autonomous thinking

- Watch the video in next slide to learn more about transformative learning (Note! The video is originally made for another course)

Adult education for sustainability (4/5): video about transformational learning theory

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sOKPhdGl3o

Adult education for sustainability (5/5)

Adult learning benefits widely at the micro, mezzo and macro levels.

Benefits for learners:
➢ Economic: improved employability, higher wages and income
➢ Wellbeing: improved general wellbeing and health
➢ Social: improved disposition to voluntary and community activity and improved civic attitudes

Benefits for employers:
➢ Improved innovation performance
➢ More motivated workforce
➢ Economic benefits such as increased productivity and profitability

Benefits for the community:
➢ Economic: increased economic competitiveness and higher levels of GDP
➢ Social: positive effect on behavior in relation to health and environment.

(European Commission 2015.)

Links to sustainable development: Goals 4 & 10

Goal 4

- "**4.7** By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development."

Goal 10

- "**10.2** By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status."

- "**10.3** Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard."

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

(kestäväkehitys.fi.)

Promoting inclusion and equality (1/2)

Inclusivity:

- Inclusivity means an intention to include people that would be otherwise excluded or marginalised.
  In the context of adult education there is a variety of reasons that could lead to adult learners disengagement from the learning process.

  (European Comission 2019.)

- Transnational migration and globalisation have set a challenge to the idea of a uniform population. Due to this change one important goal for adult education is to target most variable groups and subcultures. For example, Finnish adult education has always had an aim to addressed the inclusion of
  minorities or other particular groups under a risk of marginalisation.

  (Kersh et al 2021.)

Intersectionality:

- Aims to prevent inequalities, disadvantaged positions and oppression of specific groups.

- This development work also has a connection to adult education and adult students.

- Lately, adult education has addressed the intersectionality of class, gender and race and other forms of inequality like age and disability.

- It is also relevant to ponder how these inequalities impact the experiences of adult learners.

- On the other hand, class, gender and ethnicity can be seen as a privilege and can position some individual over others in our society.

  (Merill & Fejes 2018.)

- **Equality:** Equality means that everyone has equal opportunities to make the most out of their lives. Often in research regarding equality or inequality it is split into social, political and economic equality or inequality.
    - Social equality is a fundamental role of education. This in practice means offering opportunities that foster social equality e.g special programs for those at a socio-economic disadvantage. (Cameron 1987.)

- **Equity:** "Equity in education has two dimensions. The first is **fairness**, which implies ensuring that personal and social circumstances – for example gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin – should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential. The second is **inclusion**, which implies ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all – for example that everyone should be able to read, write and do simple arithmetic. The two dimensions are closely intertwined: tackling school failure helps to overcome the effects of social deprivation which often causes school failure."

(OECD 2007, 11.)

Equality   Equity   Equity for All
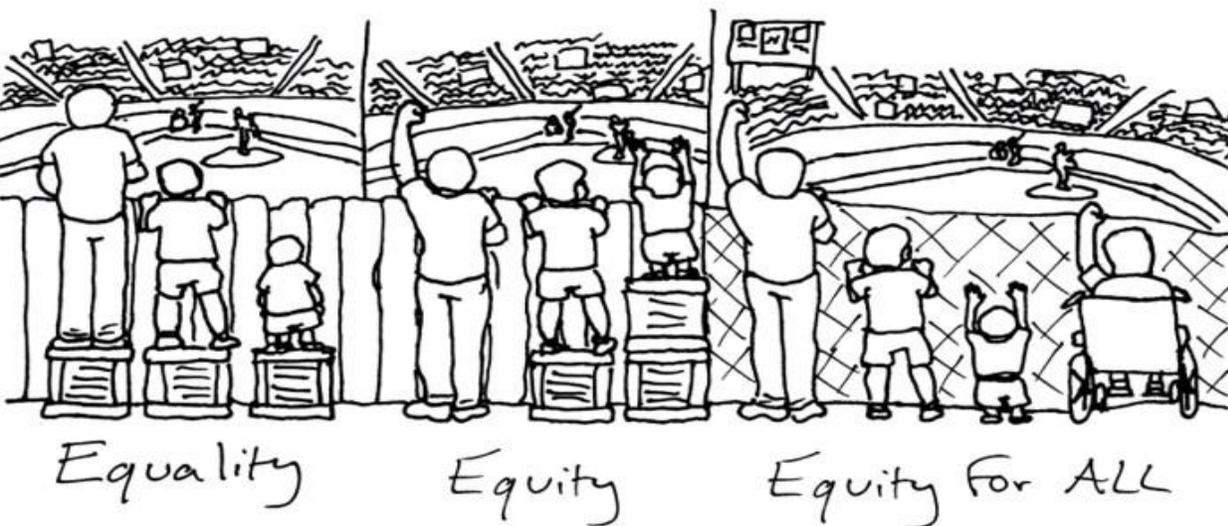
Questions

Based on your experiences and what you have learned so far, ponder shortly the following questions:

- **How has promoting sustainability been integrated to your previous studies?**

- **What kind of role does educational policy play in your country of residence?**

- **How could adult education or education policy promote sustainability more effectively in the future?**

- **How do inclusivity, intersectionality, equality and equity promote sustainability?**

- **Who is responsible for solving global challenges?**

Optional videobank (links open in a new tab):

- simpleshow foundation 2018. **Benefits of Continuing Education for Working Adults**. Youtube-video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efmTIoIvnUU&t=23s

- simpleshow foundation 2021. **Equal Access to Education**. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ekBEXU_s1E

- OUVM 2016. The main practices within education for sustainable development. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKUp1egLWrk
  - Please note that this educational video is originally made for another course, so, the reading list or tasks suggested in the video are not linked to this course! Link opens to a new tab.

- World Economic Forum 2019. **Accessibility & Inclusion For All**. Youtube-video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAxnE2XzL0k

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