

## Discursive turns from 'Bildung' to managerialism

### Memory-work of the Finnish adult education generations

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#### Abstract

*The article focuses on the struggles over ethos in academic adult education tradition that grows from the frameworks of student generations in Finnish adult education. It brings together elements of present-day analysis and historically sensitizing memory data on generations of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. My interest here lies in how the rhetoric of lifelong learning and education has revised the basic assumptions of adult education. The data suggest that the dominant narrative of adult education is increasingly the discourse of marketization. Finnish present-day student generations seem to have lost their intrinsic connections with the Scandinavian traditions of popular enlightenment and the values of equality and basic logics enabling 'second chances' for all adult citizens within the Nordic welfare state. One of the results of the analysis was the following question: Should we reinvent adult education again from the standpoint of sustainable development of 'ordinary people'?*

**Keywords:** adult education; student generations; memory-work; moral codes; ideals

#### Introduction

My intention in this article is to argue that we need to analyse history in order to understand the present struggles of meaning making in adult education. In the analysis, the standpoint in these struggles over definitions grows from the frameworks of earlier student generations in Finnish adult education. Here I bring together elements of present-day analysis and historically sensitizing memory data on adult education generations. The aim is to explore how different student generations of adult education of the 1960s to the 2000s understand the central meaning of their studies and how the stories of adult education they have maintained during the different decades, function as a framework for their own identity as practitioners of adult education. My research question in this article is: How do the former and the present-day students define adult education and understand this field of study? I intend to use their own conceptual

choices, catch-phrases and symbols to inform the theoretical and practical turns in the studies of adult education. In the background of this narrative analysis lies a historical analysis of the turning points and changing causal logics in Finnish adult education as a narrative construction (Koski & Filander, 2009; Koski & Filander, forthcoming).

As one of the students of the 1970s and now one of the academics of Finnish adult education I also had a personal interest in analysing the narrative turns of my own field of study. Our 1970s student generations had a strong 'key generation experience' (Mannheim, 1923/1952) because we were involved in such a generation experience that activated and mobilized us students to engage in the emancipative practices of the student movement. We wanted to emancipate ourselves and all human beings from the limits and chains of capital, manipulation and institutional rules of education. We also had a strong experience of 'being different', a somehow unique clan of students who from the margins of the social sciences and the educational sciences had to find their own way and interpretation of adult education. An analysis of students before and after my own generation identifies diverse culturally shared vocabularies and narratives in making sense of adult education.

### **The conceptual debate surrounding adult education**

Replacing the concept of adult education with that of lifelong learning is usually seen as hugely expanding adult education. Adult education as lifelong learning has moved from the margins, or shadows, of traditional educational institutions and marginal social and cultural movements to the mainstream of the education policy of the globalized world and to the European economy and development. It has been re-configured as more 'relevant' to the world of work and more 'flexible' to better support the desire for economic competitiveness (e.g. Edwards & Usher, 1996, p. 221). This expansion broadens the scope of professional action of adult educators and challenges the traditional definitions and discourses of adult education as well as general education. The concept of lifelong learning removes the boundaries and clear-cut divisions of labour that earlier separated the different sectors of education (Edwards & Usher, 1997, p. 164).

Still, there are good reasons to pose also the following question: Is being everywhere being nowhere? The process of boundary-crossing with lifelong learning has during the last decades been a process in which adult educators have lost the sense of their own traditions as the field of study. Peter Jarvis (1997, p. 157) argues that adult education as a separate educational entity appears to be under threat. According to him, adult education is already 'an almost outdated concept' in the global and neoliberal economy. He argues that 'there is almost certainly no future for it as a separate form of educational provision' mainly because it has lost its connections to the radical social movements that earlier have espoused good causes and purposes for it (*ibid.*, p. 155). Also, according to Michael Welton (2005), adult educators, practitioners and theorists, who traditionally have become accustomed to speaking on behalf of the empowerment of neglected adult learners from the margins of social and intellectual space, are now facing the demands of the mainstream of the global economy.

The word 'empowerment' has become a kind of management's pet, but at the same time it has lost its former meaning (Welton, 2005, p. 132; see also Ingles, 1997, pp. 6-11). In the educational markets of human resource management, empowerment has become a development-oriented discourse, fashion and personnel policy created and carried on by management consultants as a competitive advantage of the workforce

(Legge, 1995, pp. 62-66; see also Filander, 2003, pp. 41-49). The rhetoricians of change management who often produce unthought-through 'visions' of innovation empowerment and joined-up e-governance also produce new self-images and identities for the field of adult education. They are the ones who want to erase the past and kick-start the future. These rhetoricians of development insist that the past should play only a minor part in progressive policy making that should be focused on the latest dawn of managerialism and consumerism. Alongside this downgrading of the past sits an impatience for the future (Pollitt, 2008, p. 2; Filander, 2009).

It is argued that adult education researchers should look for the origins of adult and continuing education and explain why adult education is in trouble today (Finger, Jansen & Wildemeersch, 1998). Adult education has become part of the strategic discourse employing the concepts of management and productivity. It has lost its links to its history with the state, to social movements as well as to the historical and ideological roots of progressive and radical adult education. It is also assessed that the critical tradition in the field of adult and continuing education will have difficulty surviving if adult educators respond to societal challenges without reflection and mainly adapt themselves to the demands and needs of the global markets (*ibid.*, pp. 16-17). Learning has been accepted as an effective and 'value-neutral' concept to represent and contribute social and cultural changes to several fields of practice, in which adult educators, or rather human resource developers now, work as forerunners of change.

Research and discussion in adult education is at a crossroad (Salling Olesen & Rasmussen, 1996, p. 18; see also Finger & Asun, 2001; also Suoranta, Kauppila, Rekola, Salo & Vanhalakka-Ruoho, 2008). Shared discussion between such practical cultures like popular enlightenment and vocational and work-related education and learning is missing. There is mutual suspicion in relation to the academic environment and a need to develop an all-round linguistic and cultural and internationally oriented theoretical framework that could create new conceptualizations and reorientation for the fragmented field. Also practitioners seek understanding and legitimation for their work from scientific discourses that could help them to understand their pedagogical work not only as an instrumental activity, but also in regard to processes of cultural criticism and democratization of knowledge (Salling Olesen & Rasmussen, 1996, pp. 20-21).

### **Memory-work data on student generations**

The storytelling data on memory-work was gathered from different student generations in the University of Tampere in 2009. The University of Tampere is a special place for the Finnish tradition of adult education, because it was for a long time the only university in Finland where it was possible to pursue academic studies on adult education. Adult education was first taught at the Civic College which was originally founded in 1925 in Helsinki and which later became the University of Tampere in 1966. From 1928 to 1965 the subject was called 'the study of popular enlightenment' (Rasila, 1973, p. 47); in 1965, it was renamed adult education. The whole subject was transformed from the Department of Social Studies to the new Department of Education in 1974. From 1980 onwards, seven other Finnish universities also started to teach and conduct research on adult education in their Departments of Education; this expansion, however, is not included in the data of this analysis.

The data used here were collected from the participants in the Paideia<sup>1</sup> seminar in October 2009. Paideia was the student organization of adult education in the University of Tampere, which was founded in 1964 for students of adult education. In Finnish

universities, student organizations have been important autonomous spaces for the students to act and influence and socialize themselves into their main subjects of study. Almost 400 former students of adult education at the University of Tampere received our invitation to participate in a ‘class reunion’; eventually, 53 former students from 1950 to 1990 accepted our invitation. Of these participants, 27 wrote their memory story about their relationship to adult education and sent it to me by e-mail before or after this seminar day. After reading the stories I realized that these former students, mostly of the 1960s, 1970s and the 1980s, who after all these years decided to answer our call, were a highly self-selected group. They were the ones who found their period of studying adult education in one way or another also important for their life history. In that respect, they represented the key informants of their generation. Highly probably they were also the ones who already were the most active during their student years, taking part on the discussions on the future of their own discipline.

In addition to my storytelling data, I also use recently collected interviews (20) in my analysis as a comparative data for the memory-work. The interviews were conducted by twenty students of lifelong learning and education at the University of Tampere, each of whom interviewed one fellow student of either adult education or general education in 2009 and asked the interviewee to tell what kinds of images and characteristics they link to students of adult education and adult education as a field of study at the present-day university. The students currently pursuing their studies represent here the existing understanding and reality within the framework of lifelong learning and education. The interview data are not ‘representative’ in the same sense as the memory-work data that self-selectively gathered together the most active students of their own time. The interviews were collected more or less sporadically and randomly from any student interviewed by their fellow students. Still, they may work here as a kind of comparative mirror for the memory-work of former students of adult education.

What originally motivated me to analyse my memory-work data was the idea of memory-work developed by Frigga Haug and others (Haug et al. 1987; Haug, 1992). I found it interesting to develop spaces for memory-work, where we could collectively examine and seek new meanings for our memories of studying adult education. ‘Everything remembered constitutes a relevant trace – precisely because it is remembered for the formation of identity’ (Haug et al., 1987, p. 50 as cited in Onyx & Small, 2001, p. 774). This approach to organizing data makes it possible to work on memory and experience in both a constructive and a destructive way (Haug, 1992, pp. ix-x). The idea is to work in a process in which narratives for the past and present and future could ‘grasp together’ bits and pieces of episodic memories into a narrative that could construct for us a shared understanding of the historicity, of which as such we are not yet aware (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 8).

During Paidea’s seminar 2009, we were able to create for ourselves a shared space where we had a chance to recall the common meanings and memories of events, which we collectively reappraised from the time of studying adult education together. We did not, however, follow any of the procedural steps<sup>5</sup> of memory-work developed by Crawford et al. (as cited in Onyx & Small 2001, p. 776). Half of the participants (27) wrote 1 to 3 pages<sup>3</sup> about particular episodes, actions or events that would work as a trigger or cue for the next step to a more thorough collective analysis of memories. When we divided the participants into smaller generation groups, each group of former students was free to discuss the concrete memories of their own generation in smaller groups in the way which they themselves found agreeable. One way to find a shared and familiar atmosphere was to recall the past and the ‘spirit of age’ (Zeitgeist) of their generation.

Among the recollections was a memory of us students of the 1970s generation finding a lot of joy in making statements during our student years. We all also shared a memory of being active for various important purposes, so we decided to make a statement again for fun. The roles played by the participants in this process were amazingly clear from the beginning. Despite these kinds of humoristic episodes during the seminar, the shared generation experience of different student generations still remained very diffuse and episodic. This is one of the reasons why I decided to conduct a thorough qualitative content analysis of the individual written memory-work episodes that I had collected before this meeting. In addition, I found it interesting to compare this memory data with the interviews conducted with present-day students.

### Generation as a theoretical concept

As a theoretical framework I employ here Karl Mannheim's (1923/1952) concept of generations, which he used to understand the structure and intellectual movements of social change characteristic of his time. The social phenomenon of generations, as a fact of belonging or as a common location in the social and historical process, represents here a particular kind of key experience of adult education generations embedded in special student periods of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. I asked the former students of adult education to tell me about their experiences, to look back to the ethos of adult education that they used to know and to recall typical practices and memories from the time they were students. I also wanted to find out if they felt that adult education as a field of study had something critically important to give to them or to their own time and the 'spirit of age' (*Zeitgeist*) they lived in.

According to Karl Mannheim, shared consciousness and group solidarity are characteristic of key experiences and can in certain historical circumstances also produce potential and preconditions for social action which in certain circumstances can have influence on the events of history. The generation of people of the same age who feel a sense of solidarity and togetherness can be called the experiential generation (Mannheim, 1923/1952). In the circumstances of social change, this experiential generation can share a kind of key experience that shapes the tastes, preferences and habitus of the same generation (Virtanen, 2001, pp. 22-23; see also Alanen, 2001, p. 103).

In this analysis, the concept of generation is used to represent contemporaries who in a way share a common destiny and the same ideas and concepts of adult education of their own time (cf. Mannheim, 1923/1952, p. 306). The influence of a certain generation experience can be detected from similar positionings that stay relatively alike throughout their lives. According to Timo Toivonen, there are no such empirical studies that could detect the influence of a generation experience from youth to adulthood and old age. In this analysis, the method used is retrospective analysis that tells us about the most central ideas, concepts and things that former students felt important and shared among themselves in their studies even after so many years. These opinions and memories are things that they subjectively considered central in adult education. In this analysis I argue that these subjective memories are as such worth researching (Toivonen, 2003, pp. 117-118). However, it is important to remember that these memories are told from the present-day understanding. Some of the participants in this storytelling have behind them a long career in the field or they have already retired from their posts. Therefore, the memories of their studies in adult education are more or less part of their whole life history. Participation in the same historical and social

circumstances and common experiences in adult education may here work as a background for the same generation experience. It is also possible to detect some distinctive patterns of interpreting adult education in the interviews with present-day students of lifelong learning and education.

### Students of the 1960s as 'seekers of core humanity'

Some former students of adult education (9) told me that in their studies in popular enlightenment and adult education in the 1960s<sup>4</sup> they had learned mainly basic wisdom of human growth. They had also learned how to take part in discussions and how to ask totally new kinds of questions. It was not always easy. One recollection starts like this: 'Now there is just the same kind of chilliness of autumn in the air as there was when I started my first year of study in Tampere. (...) It is not easy to start telling about things that you really never totally understood' (F6<sup>5</sup>). She adds that she will tell about some scattered events and memories of the time when Urpo Harva, the first professor of adult education, a philosopher and a well-known debater, acted as a guide for his students, teaching them all kinds of things in the 'light of scientific spirit and without political agitation' (see e.g. Castrén, 1929/1991). She still does not know what the values of the professor really were. Those who agreed with Harva somehow seemed to be politically on the left. On the one hand, Harva was considered an arch-reactionary but, on the other hand, an 'endless provocator with good arguments' (M8). In the 1960s, studying adult education seemed to be for students a choice that had its own special flavour and character: 'At Paideia's first pre-Christmas party we got raisins and nuts, when warm beer was offered in other parties' (F6).

At the beginning of the 1960s, the subject was still called popular enlightenment; in 1965, it was renamed adult education. This was experienced as an ideological change moving from the old enlightenment to a more modern and democratic adult education. Still, adult education was not considered a very good concept by the students of adult education either. The Finnish-language term equivalent to 'education' is usually used in connection with school children and young people only. Adults are not supposed to want to be 'educated' because of their mature adulthood and their own free will and their adult dignity. According to the students of adult education, both enlightenment and education of adults were concepts that referred to something that was given from above. In the 1960s, it was a key thing in adult education to emphasize responsibility and respect for the adult student. It was experienced as a core of the whole subject of study but, according to a former student, it was not articulated clearly enough through the name 'adult education' (F1). Another former student described the same standpoint by using Finnish literature as an example:

I felt that popular enlightenment was quite a strange ideal, meaning that there are some civilized persons who are able to enlighten uncivilized ones. My ideal on adult education is best phrased by Juhani Jukola, a character in Aleksis Kivi's 'Seven brothers'<sup>6</sup>: 'You educate me, because I want you to, and you will keep your mouth shut because I want you to, and I read before you always according to my own will'. (M8)

Adult education was also considered an easy subject compared to, for example, sociology, because of its clear relationship to ordinary people. However, in light of future employment possibilities, adult education was still considered a better choice. Later on 'sociology almost turned into statistics, mathematics and mechanics and that's

why adult education was definitely a better choice' (F1). Another former student had similar preferences in her studies, but she calculated her choices more carefully:

As a student, I think that I thought like this: I wanted to do something that was close to social work but, as a subject of study, social policy was so dull, it meant only counting money. I found sociology very arousing, but it was so unconcrete. Popular enlightenment [the name of the subject of adult education before 1965], on the other hand, was considered a slightly antiquated subject, also easy perhaps, but gradually it started to exist also as a profession, although 'WE REALLY DID NOT THINK ABOUT WORK AT THAT TIME' [capital letters from the memory-work of the student]—on the other hand, [Professor] Harva stated in some of his books that folk high schools were built on very beautiful places in order to develop students' aesthetic senses—and I wanted to live in the countryside. (F6)

The former students of adult education felt that they were the critical opponents of their time. In liberal adult education, the central emphasis was on freedom and independence in studies, not on producing economical benefits (F6). The fight for equality and respect for student dignity was present in, for example, the key story of one passionate librarian who told how she was convinced about the importance of public libraries and the idea of the Open University. Her enthusiasm and the ideal of adult education that was important to her directed her towards development work done for the public libraries. 'Only after retiring have I realized that there are perhaps also other more important things to spend our tax money on than the libraries' (F1). A critical standpoint towards adult education was not very visible for the students. 'You just knew that adult education was not the favourite of the media' (F6). Civic or liberal adult education institutions represented something other than financial profit makers. It did not support the consumerist values of society or easy entertainment either.

Adult education was a choice that challenged students to find their own way against the mainstream. Among the important phrases and philosophical key words in almost every memory story of the 1960s were phrases like 'growth as a person', 'education as facilitation', 'learning for life', 'become what you are', and 'the whole person'. These were some kinds of guiding stars for the writers of memory stories. In these phrases they summed up their basic experience in adult education. Many students of the 1960s referred in their answers to their old textbooks. 'Today when I look at Jaeger's *Paideia*, a relic of the past, on my bookshelf, I can think that young people are indeed really smart' (F4). The aspiration of growing up as a human being helped another one to find in her mind a book by Overstreet called 'The Mature Mind' and Dostoyevsky's 'theme of a good human being'. This person says that 'this pattern of thought has been in my mind all these decades, and I still work on it at some point' (F2) and talks about continuing a lifelong project in a way linked to promoting equality. Along with adult education also this issue became important. Likewise 'a kind of spark was ignited in the form of growing interest in philosophy, which I haven't been able to study because I haven't had time, not yet!!!' (F2). A third person reveals how he 'already as a student read a book by Teilhard de Chardin *Le phénomène humain* [The Human Phenomenon]', which had a lasting impact on his view of the world and how he shapes it (M8).

The institutional context of adult education for former students was popular and liberal adult education that offered a possibility to study like adults, not like children at school. 'The institution of popular adult education works in the middle of people and with people' (F4). It meant that 'you offer people new possibilities for mental and

spiritual growth' (F4). The central message of adult education was understood as an antithesis to traditional learning at schools.

### **The 1970s generation as 'planners and actors for equality in working life'**

When the students of the 1970s started studying adult education at the University of Tampere, they arrived in the middle of transition and strong student movements. Some stories from the 1970s (12) tell us about demonstrations and protests against the administrative transition that transferred adult educators against their own will from the Department of Social Studies to a new Department of Education. Students came actively out to protest against these reforms and transformations. This fight for adult education as a social science became a 'shared task' and a key question to many students of adult education. In one story a former student told me how 'it is difficult for me to analyse what I actually learned in the studies of adult education curricula and what I learned taking part in Paideia's activities' (F9).

Best in the studies were the things that we did in groups, in collectivities (...). We did not try to learn things alone but considered them together in groups. Above and beyond that we took initiative ourselves—we demanded, we organized and really participated and examined different kinds of alternatives and extra courses and studies. (F19)

At the beginning of the 1970s, the professor of the field was in the process of retiring. In one story a former student recalled that when he went to see the student adviser, she told him that 'The professor of adult education is Urpo Harva. But don't worry, he will retire soon' (M15). This was a sign of a generally shared belief that the adult education of the early 1970s represented something old-fashioned that should soon be re-evaluated and changed. The field of study started to turn away from liberal adult education and 'Bildung' to vocational training; the vocational turn culminated in 1973 and 1975 when the Committee Reports on Adult Education were published (Koski & Filander, 2009, p. 134).

In the field of adult education the discourse of research on working life was becoming a new vocabulary of the new era. Work invaded all areas of life and defined its values. Adult education was more and more defined as learning at work. According to one person's story, adult education was defined only as 'planning of education, planning of education, planning of education' (...) (F17). Studies in adult education in the 1970s focused on 'the general characteristics of adult learning and developing the system of adult education in the Finnish welfare state' (M18). Some former students criticized the methods the teachers were using; they missed real connections to theory and practice—teaching was more or less a general declaration of lifelong learning (M17). One former student recalls, however, how one of the teachers of adult education was a real exception to the rule. She was able to teach real project skills in the course of didactics, where she made students responsible for implementing a real course of 'the pedagogy for lone parents'. This former student was grateful to Ritva Jakku-Sihvonen [the teacher] for encouraging her in her dislike towards 'pedagogical tricks' which did not arise from the contents (F19).

Aulis Alanen, a substitute professor in the 1970s, advanced the vocational turn of adult education, still opposing the tendency to replace the concept of adult education with that of adult training. According to one former student, there was a strong will to defend the concept of adult education (M18). Educational equality in working life was the main target now. There was a strong belief that it was possible to create shared



societal rules and legislation concerning working life in the Finnish welfare state to defend the educational equality of workers. There was a lot of talk on that employers should pay their share of the costs of employees' further education and thus create for adult population a chance to further educate themselves and to complete vocational degrees.

Among the important phrases in almost every memory story of the 1970s were core sentences like 'A Finnish employee will work on average in five different professions or jobs during his or her working life', 'Everybody can learn or improve his or her position', 'Belief in that every age is a good age to learn new things'. Above all, adult education was considered to improve the equality of life of ordinary adults in their working life practices. Still, all former students wanted more than just to plan and do practical things. They missed the glory of philosophical reflection on adult education, practical benefits of development at work were not enough. 'I am still allergic to the phrases like 'ordinary, small people', 'the ordinary man in the street' or 'the common people'. There are no such things as ordinary people. There is no need to limit research to such things that so-called ordinary people can understand.' (F19). The core idea of 'Bildung' and human growth was to some extent still present among the generation of the 1970s.

Memories of shared opposition in the 1970s were strong. Some adult students considered odd all the political activities that invaded into all activities and studies in the university (M11). However, many students experienced insights that referred more or less to the 'general buzz' of the mobilized generation. They learned to act in the immediate democracy within the administrative practices of the university; they learned to be active persons able to influence their own destiny as active citizens. As a former teacher of adult education in the 1970s, one storyteller, Kari Rantalaiho, summarized his analysis of the student generation of the 1970s in adult education in his storytelling:

I considered students in Paideia like small hobbits who stubbornly held onto the light of life and the traditions in the middle of transitions where soulless and cold intruders [the representatives of general education] tried to repress adult education. (...). For me, the student organization of Paideia was an important educator in immediate democracy.

### **The 1980s and the 1990s generations in an alienation process from the ethos of the welfare state**

In the 1980s, the shared ideals, fights and politics of student movement escaped from the universities.

The triumph of marketization of adult education had started and somehow our generation thought that we just had to get along with it. But the ideals were still there, each person had slightly different ideals, for example, within the peace movement. Submission to the markets took place later on in the 1990s. (M21)

In the studies of adult education, the strong ideals of educational equality, the ideology of the Open University and 'Bildung' were still present. One storyteller remembered someone telling her recently that 'you are still going strong and you have still power to talk with eyes burning with passion about 'Bildung' like twenty-thirty years ago'. She herself has some doubts about her coping strategies now. She talks on the basis of her present job, in which work is sometimes brutal and often means hard decisions

concerning personnel and keeping the eye on finances. According to her, it is difficult to keep up the high spirit when the wider content and larger meaning of work appears to be lost in hard everyday life in the workplace (F23).

The memories of students of the 1980s (6)<sup>7</sup> imply that at that time adult education as a major subject lost ground to certain minor subjects that became more important to them. Very few considered adult education as their own thing. One storyteller told me that in the beginning he felt that adult education could offer him a many-sided degree that could provide him professionally with a very wide area of social activities and practices. He liked the idea that it was not possible to predict what the future contents of the degree would be (M21). At that point, adult education was already interpreted from the wider perspective of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning was everywhere. Feelings of strangeness developed stronger and stronger, although he later on got a job in projects in the field of adult education. Although he had always had clear connections to projects in the field of adult education through his work career, he could not consider this field as his own (M21). Similar experiences and feelings were also present when another storyteller said that social psychology finally was the subject that really struck a cord in her. First she thought that she would change her main subject but, for some reason, she did not. Later on social psychology and adult education have always been part of her work practice, although she still does not know what she will become when she grows up (F 23).

The ideology of lifelong learning was present in the talk, also with a person who identified herself as a journalist, not as an adult educator:

Adult education gave me faith in lifelong learning and continuous development of oneself. Study of adult education also created critical mind and ability to look situations from the standpoint of the uncomprehending and disadvantaged: "You have to tell things in such a way that everyone, even your grannie, will be able to understand your message. (M25)

In the 1980s, adult education was a difficult context in which to identify oneself. According to one storyteller, the teachers of the subject were more or less only looking into the past and into the glorious 1970s. However, some students found a new spirit and passion from the works of developmental work research conducted by Yrjö Engeström. 'I don't remember what ideals the adult educators in Tampere represented. Rather it was this Engeström's bunch who were critical and forerunners of change in Helsinki' (F13). The only storyteller of the 1990s in this data continues the same story of incoherence. Studying lifelong learning and education meant for her more or less running after study attainments. It was not possible for her to find her identity as an adult educator during her studies of lifelong learning and education. Later on, when she worked as a teacher for unemployed adults to improve their basic abilities to work and cope with their lives, she felt that she had at last identified herself as an adult educator (F26).

### **Students of the year 2009 facing careerism and customerization**

In the year 1993, the two separate programmes of adult education and general education were joined into one programme of lifelong learning and education. Students entered the joint study programme with only some special courses in adult education. The first-year students did not identify themselves as adult educators but educationalist who studied in the programme of lifelong learning and education. The main subject was

usually chosen during the second year of studies; one had to choose either general education or adult education. Out of 20 interviewed students, seven had chosen adult education as their main subject, 13 were students of general education. For the purposes of this comparative analysis, I focus only on the data in which adult education is the main subject of discussion. For some students, it was almost impossible to distinguish between adult education and general education.

I have chosen general education, because I was told that it is a subject that does not exclude anything, but I am a bit confused in this situation, because I still don't feel that I'm only an educationalist, I feel that I'm also an adult educator. I think that this is very confusing (...), I don't see it as a different area (...) I don't have such a division in my head. (1B/2009, p. 3)<sup>8</sup>

Some students of general education have broken away from adult education. One student said that it is more or less part of an orientation that she could never consider. Adult education appears to be like economics or management sciences (1B/2009, p. 15). Instead, she did commit to multicultural issues, development co-operation and education of media in the curricula, to which adult education was almost an antithesis according to her understanding. This same 'prejudice' appeared to be a very shared one among the students of general education: '(...) Yes, there is a certain difference whether one works with children or young people, somehow I feel that the motivation of adult educators appears to be so centred around career' (2B/2009, p. 12).

From the standpoint of general education, the students of adult education appeared to be

people who play it safe: (...) Those who choose adult education are the ones who perhaps think economically wiser, they think that money is moving in the practices of working life (...), but when I made my choice, I didn't really know what adult education is or what adult educators do. I chose general education because I had some work experience in the kindergarten. (4B/2009, pp. 26-27)

On the other hand, adult education was interpreted as a 'risky business' compared to general education: 'General education excludes nothing (...) so general education is considered a safe choice (laughing)' (5B/2009, p. 37).

As educationalists all students suffered from the same misunderstanding: 'When you tell your friends and parents that you will become an educationalist, everybody thinks that you will become a school teacher or teacher in the kindergarten.' (HB9/2009, p. 5) Still, being an adult educator did not fascinate as a special alternative, because nobody seemed to know what adult education was about. When you become something that is close to the images of real professions like teachers, you feel safer with all that uncertainty that present-day students of lifelong learning and education have to tolerate (For 'the experts of uncertainty', see Filander, 2005).

Those students who had chosen adult education did not express such uncertainties as the students of general education. Adult education appears to be a subject often chosen by the older students (HB9/2009, p. 2). Many students had experience of working life that made them more self-confident compared with younger students. Because of their life situation, they usually also wanted to graduate in a very short time (6B/2009, p. 43). Sometimes their orientation changed during the studies: 'I at least had a very practical approach in the beginning, to get support for my own work' (3B/2009, p. 17). Later on, his relationship to the studies changed into more theoretical one: 'I think that a student who is more interested in the relationship between education and

society and dimensions of sociology of education will choose adult education as his or her main subject' (3B/2009, p. 18).

For a group of students who identify themselves as 'typical human resource developers', adult education appears to be a very clear and self-evident choice. They do not 'feel comfortable with images of 'educators' who as pedagogues shake their finger at students out there' (7B/2009, p. 44). Yes, it was a very clear choice (...) I did not even think about general education (...) I feel that educationalists have to have a kind of 'passion for development work'. She or he must be very open and be very interested in the environment and world around them (7B/2009, p. 48). They want to work with adults and they feel that humanistic values and business are not two different things (7B/2009, p. 50).

Those who have chosen adult education usually also know where they want to be employed. They are interested in human resource development work and recruitment. Business studies and economics are their main interests (HB8/2009, p. 56). They think that the central core concepts and research subjects in adult education could be, for example, quality of working life and change in working life as well as demands that those changes set for people. In the Department of Education they do not feel at home: 'I don't belong to those educationalists (...), it is not my thing. I am one of the students of adult education who consider changing their main subject into economics or administration (...) we are quite many' (HB8/2009, pp. 59-61).

Some students missed a more careful classification between the concepts of adult education and adult training. The following statement summarizes the three alternatives that clear up the identity crisis among the students of lifelong learning and education:

If we talk about adult education, we talk about humanistic educators; it is something that is more part of social [frameworks]. But when we speak about the work of an adult trainer, it slightly resembles the work of a consultant, but more that of a trainer in an organization—so-called human resource trainer (...) I think that many students who are more oriented towards the children choose that area [of general education]... Then the others could be clearly adult trainers. And then there are those that represent the golden middle ground who think that their approach is considered more social-scientific. If one has chosen adult education, I think that they are clearly oriented to training—general education is more like education, education of children and adult education is clearly more like training.—I don't think that I am a real educationalist, because I've chosen adult education that in a way separates you from the masses, from the most of the students. (9B/2009, p. 13)

### **Comparative analysis of the memories and interviews of generations**

The idea in this analysis was to work in a process in which narratives for the past and present and future can 'grasp together' bits and pieces of episodic memories into a narrative that constructs for us a shared understanding of the historicity, of which as such we are not yet aware (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 8). The main interest here was to identify on the level of agents and subjects the differences and similarities of subjective meaning making processes of experiential generations of students in adult education. With a thematic and comparative reading of the conceptions of former and present-day students, it was possible to construct a transgenerational comparison of how their particular kind of key experiences, catch-phrases and symbols construct discursive turns in the narrative history of Finnish<sup>9</sup> adult education. The narrative turns were conceptualized as a process from 'seeking of core humanity' to the search of 'equal

ethos of working life' to the 'alienation' from the values of welfare state and to the careerism and customerization of the present-day students of adult education.

This narrative history of transitions in the ethos of adult education is in no way especially surprising. In fact, it confirms the analysis conducted by Aulis Alanen (1992), who has proposed central turns in the Finnish adult education policy from the conformist policy of civilization and 'Bildung' (from the 1920s to the 1960s) to the planning-based period of the welfare state and adult education (from the 1970s to the mid-1980s) and to the market-based adult education (from the mid-1980s to the 1990s) (Alanen, 1992, pp. 10-15). However, the narrative history of my analysis provides empirical data on the subjective experiences and basic value assumptions of these turns and exposes the norms and ideals that have been present on the academic adult education curricula of each generation.

The next summary shows how different generations have framed their 'generalized others' and how these 'others' have changed during the decades (Table 1).

What was important for the 1960s representatives was the relationship to the equal ethos of the Nordic welfare state and the basic logics of universalistic rights for all citizens (e.g. Kosonen, 1998, p. 37). The rights of the so-called 'ordinary people' and respect towards them as students were considered the most central aim and emphasis of the field. Among the former students, adult education was considered to represent cultural criticism, and even some kind of critical tradition, in relation to the dominant economic and consumerist values of society. However, moral grounds and ideals of civilizing people and commoners for full citizenship and individually enlightened humanity and spiritual growth were already in the 1960s turning in a more instrumental direction (see also Koski & Filander, 2009; Koski & Filander, forthcoming).

In the 1970s, students were living in the middle of the reforms of the higher education system and the welfare state, at the time when the first and second Committee Reports of Adult Education (Komiteamietintö [KM] 1971; KM 1975) were published and the vocational turn in adult education took place (Koski & Filander, 2009, p. 134). In the rapidly industrialized and urbanized Finland of the 1970s, society was facing great structural changes. People were moving from the countryside to suburbs and from agricultural to industrial work. At the same time, wage labour was becoming the dominant social sphere of life. Instead of being 'seekers of core humanity', the generation of adult education became a vital promoter of material production as 'planners and actors for equality in working life'. In the societal context of the welfare state, the general declaration of the positive discourse of lifelong learning embodied the moral values of human equality along with the increase in industrial production. Economic production turned out to be understood again as the very basis of human growth (Koski & Filander, 2009; see also Koski & Filander, forthcoming). Talk on 'ordinary, small people' was present to the extent that one of the former students felt still allergic to that phrase in her memory-work.

In the 1980s, the mainstreaming of lifelong learning produced many significant changes in the orientation of adult education. It became more difficult for students to consider the field of adult education as their own, because lifelong learning was everywhere without any clear socio-cultural or institutional connections. Although their identity as adult educators was diminishing, the former students argued that the values and ideals of educational equality, the ideology of the Open University and 'Bildung' still created a critical mind and ability to look at the situation from the standpoint of the uncomprehending and disadvantaged 'ordinary people'. However, the 1980s student generation lived already in the middle of the alienation process from the ethos of the welfare state and in the middle of increasing marketization of adult education.

Table 1. Summary of generations

Experiential generation	The generalized other /institutional connections	Shared content in adult education	Ideals / key words
The 1960s generation	Other social studies, especially sociology and social policy  Liberal and popular adult education/popular enlightenment	Adult education as a practical and philosophical subject of study  Ordinary people and enlightenment work  Unmodern orientation  The central message of adult education as an antithesis to traditional learning at schools	The fight for equality and respect for the adult student dignity  Critical opponents of their time; criticism to financial profit makers, consumerist values of society and easy entertainment  Key ideals: 'growth as a person', 'the whole person', 'education as facilitation', 'learning for life', 'become what you are'
The 1970s generation	Fight for adult education as a social science  Invasion of general education  Vocational turn of adult education and research on working life	General characteristics of adult learning  A general declaration of lifelong learning  Developing the system of adult education in the Finnish welfare state  Instruments for planning of education	Educational equality in working life was the main target now  Educational equality of workers–'the common people'  The glory of philosophical reflection was absent, but still in the level of ideals present  Collective activities of students as a central place for learning
The 1980s and 1990s generations	Lifelong learning perspective; institutional connections become more unclear–the need for lifelong learning is everywhere  The triumph of marketization	Students did not succeed in considering this field of lifelong learning as their own  Faith in lifelong learning and continuous development of oneself  Some students found a new spirit and passion from the works of developmental work research	The ideals were still there; ideals of educational equality, the ideology of the open university and 'Bildung'  Adult education created a critical mind and ability to look situations from the standpoint of the uncomprehending and disadvantaged/ ordinary people were still there.
The 2009 generation	A joint programme of lifelong learning and education for adult education and general education  General education excludes nothing and it starts to have a more progressive image than adult education  Images that link adult education to enterprises, economics or management sciences and practical training	Different groups of students make their own interpretations–confusion and 'prejudices' against adult education are more common  Knowledge in the field of economics and business sciences is understood as the core of adult education	Key concepts for adult training ; quality of working life, change in working life, demands that the changes set for people  Human resource development-oriented students do not feel comfortable with images of 'educators'  Humanistic values and business are not two different things  You have a kind of 'passion for development work'. She or he must be very open and very interested in everything  Adult education separates you from the masses, from the most of the students of education

Source: Author

According to the former students of the 1980s, the real triumph of marketization did not start until the 1990s. Marketization meant a transition from the ethos of the welfare state and liberal adult education and 'learning for living' into compulsory 'learning for a living' (Martin, 2001; see also Crowther, 2004, p. 134). According to Pekka Kosonen (1998, p. 43), the problems faced by the welfare state and thus by the public sector in Finland in the 1990s stem from changes in the economy, the labour market and political institutions, which were leading to a reassessment of the roles of welfare systems and to changes between the public and the private. The discursive shift in public debate was evident also in the ideals, goals and expectations concerning the discourses and languages of adult education (cf. Filander, 2003, p. 15). Students and voluntary participants in the multiple fields of adult education became more often paying customers. Financial profit-making, profitable benefits and consumerism were no more values against which future practitioners of adult education and lifelong learning could fight. On the contrary, adult education was considered to be more like economics or management sciences, largely focused on human resource management, career, business and administration.

When we compare the memory-work of the former students with the interviews of the present-day students, we can see a clear break in the ideals, goals and expectations concerning adult education. Adult education is no longer mainly considered as a field of study that fights for equal rights for small or 'ordinary people', for wider and equal 'Bildung' for all, or tries to look at situations from the standpoint of the uncomprehending and disadvantaged people. Rather, the present generation of adult educators is more interested in separating from the 'masses'. The present-day students of adult education seem to have narrative approaches very much similar to the ethos of the enterprising self with values of excellence (see Rose, 1992). Knowledge in the field of economics and business sciences is understood by them as the core of adult education. Although some students of adult education are still considered more like a humanistic and social-scientific clan of students, the majority of them identified themselves as future leaders of human resource development, as 'typical human resource developers' or adult trainers who try to combine business with well-being at work.

## Conclusions

My original aim was initially to find some shared grounds for a continuation narrative of adult education from generation to generation. Nevertheless, based on my analysis, I ended up writing a story of narrative transitions and even of a break in the discourses of adult education from the standpoint of earlier and present-day students. In order to understand what is really said and remembered, we need to proceed to analytical reading of the memories to reach culturally and socially shared scripts of these stories and memories being told (e.g. Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, pp. 21-22). We have to ask what kind of socially and culturally shared vocabularies or 'voices' these former and present-day students of adult education use as their resources when making sense of adult education.

Vocabularies of human dignity and growth as well as talk on 'ordinary people' have changed into talk on human resource management and making distinctions to the 'masses'. The moral narrative of liberal adult education has changed into the utilitarian and impassioned talk on development work in enterprises. For adult education, adaptation to the learning paradigm within the educational department has been a

process of alienating from the basic equality values and moral codes of the Nordic welfare state and traditional paradigms of adult education with 'second chances', dignity and human growth for so-called 'ordinary people'. The social pedagogical orientation of adult education has changed into the orientation of business sciences aiming to combine humanistic values and quality of working life with business. However, impassioned work for human resource management may also represent the values and practices of 'cold intimacy' and 'emotional capitalism', a culture where emotional, psychological and economic discourses and practices mutually shape each other (Illouz, 2007, p. 108; see also Brinkmann, 2008, p. 96).

The managerial change is evident in this case study of adult education generations. It is part of the larger process that has in recent years been occurring in Western European universities, where adult education departments have gradually changed from adult education into lifelong education and adult learning (see *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 2010). Adult education has expanded beyond its traditional boundaries and become part of the general paradigm of learning and education without clear institutional connections to adult education. Richard Edwards and Robin Usher (1996, 1997) see this change mainly as a positive challenge for adult educators to move themselves from their marginality to the boundless field of lifelong learning and multiplicity of purposes. According to them, there is, however, a real danger of managerialism becoming the only universal imperative and a new metanarrative of reading the multiple discourses of lifelong learning and education (Edwards & Usher, 1996, pp. 227-228).

Nevertheless, the socio-cultural and historical roots of adult education with social movements and the less privileged common people who need to have a 'second chance' in life are still with us with a new emphasis and talk on 'ordinary people'. John Clarke suggests that this new interest in 'ordinary people' is part of their assumed a-political character and potentiality of 'ordinary people' becoming important in the process of finding a new locus for governing the social. When excluded and marginalized 'ordinary people' become both the object and the means of modernizing society, they represent important moral and social or civic virtues as partners or participants to co-producers of welfare, care, community and the 'social fabric'. Ordinary people thus represent the members of the public, service users, residents, citizens, or bearers of the 'lay perspective' (Clarke, 2012, p. 25). I argue that revitalizing and rethinking the traditional talk and interest in 'ordinary people' may in the new future also revitalize a new interest in adult education.

Invited to the present, memories may have consequences for the future as well. Research can also be seen as a critical activity aiming to change and influence the world in which the researcher is conducting research (Usher, 1996, p. 9). As one of the students of the 1970s and a representative of the equal ethos of the welfare state, I found the alternative discourses of former student generations with cultural criticism and even a critical tradition to dominant consumption and the guiding stars of the 1960s like 'learning for life', 'become what you are' and 'the whole person' very inviting. I argue that these memories and images of adult education are worth considering anew from the present-day perspective. The demands for permanent flexibility, willingness to change and develop and increase mobility have too often become things that instead of positive 'emancipation' produce a widespread overburden. People start to lack the energy, drive and desire to keep up with the pervasive demands to be flexible lifelong learners interested in permanent change and (self) development (Brinkmann, 2008). This situation creates a serious need to reinvent traditional adult education with the idea of 'Bildung' and 'core humanity' to increase the real meaning of life (Lindeman, 1926).



In his time, Eduard Lindeman (1926), one of the classics in adult education, attempted to create an adult education movement to revivify adult education, so that it would become again an adventure which could help people see the meaning of the whole of life. According to him, 'Art, its appreciation and enjoyment, belongs to those who have or are capable of having 'intrinsic sensibility' and the highest function of adult education may well be the discovery and release of these qualities of sensibility among the many'. Also in this respect, 'ordinary people' and traditions of adult education may become important again in modern society where too many people are marginalized, left outside and lack positive expressions of respect and recognition for others (Sennett, 2003).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Paideia was founded in 1964. At the beginning of the 1990s, it was renamed Mentor. This organization was then intended for students of both adult education and general education. Both also shared almost the same study programme of lifelong learning and education.

<sup>2</sup> In Phase 1, the individual's reflections indicate the processes of constructions. Phase 2 involves a collective examination of the memories, in which the memories are theorized and new meanings are created. In Phase 3, the material provided from both the written memories and the collective discussion of them is further theorized (see Onyx & Small, 2001, pp. 775-777).

<sup>3</sup> Two persons wrote much longer narratives; they were more like autobiographies covering their whole lives.

<sup>4</sup> One former student of this generation started her studies already in the 1950s.

<sup>5</sup> The codes for the data: F means a female person and M means a male person.

<sup>6</sup> This reference originates from a novel written by the Finnish national author, Aleksis Kivi, called 'Seven brothers' (1870/1969). Juhani Jukola was the oldest and most stubborn of the brothers, who did not learn as easily as the youngest one did. This novel is considered the greatest and most outstanding work of Finnish literature and it has crucially influenced the self-image of the Finnish national spirit.

<sup>7</sup> Only one person among my storytellers belonged to the 1990s generation.

<sup>8</sup> The passages in quotations are from the transcript. They are followed, in parentheses, by the code number of the interview, year and page reference to the transcript. In the longer extracts from the transcripts, which I call episodes, three full stops ... indicate a pause, (...) shows that passages not essential for the purposes of the interpretations or words serving to fill out a sentence have been deleted. Square brackets [ ] are used when words have been added to the text for the sake of clarity or when original words have been replaced by words which, while they carry similar meanings, make it more difficult to identify the speaker.

<sup>9</sup> It is important to remember that this analysis is based on the academic tradition of adult education that was until the 1980s in Finland concentrated only in the University of Tampere. This tradition represents in this respect the tradition of Finnish academic adult education.

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