



UNIVERSITY of VAASA  
LEVON INSTITUTE

**murikka**

## National report – Finland

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#### 1. Overview

Education is highly valued in Finland, and the high standard of education forms one of the cornerstones of the Finnish national strategy. In Finland there is a strong political commitment to creating conditions of equal opportunities and outcomes in adult education. Finland is among those countries which have high participating rates in lifelong learning. According to Finnish Ministry of Education the key words in Finnish education policy are **quality, efficiency, equity and internationalisation**. Education is a factor for competitiveness. About 6 % of GNP of Finland is invested in Education and Training annually. ([www.minedu.fi/english](http://www.minedu.fi/english))

The Finnish education system consists of preschool education, comprehensive school, post-comprehensive general and vocational education, higher education and adult education. The comprehensive school provides a nine-year educational programme (with a voluntary 10th year) for all children of school age, beginning at the age of seven. Post-comprehensive education is provided

by general upper secondary schools (approximately three years, ending in the national matriculation examination) and vocational institutions (three years, leading to upper secondary vocational qualifications).

The learning outcomes of Finnish comprehensive schools have been found to be excellent in international comparisons in the PISA (Programme for International Students Assessment) studies carried out by OECD member states. PISA gathers information on the state and results of education, and on learning that takes place outside of the school. The PISA programme tests the skills of 15-year-old students in mathematics, science, reading and problem solving. (<http://www.pisa2006.helsinki.fi/>)

The objective of the higher education system is to offer a student place to two thirds of each age group. Higher education is provided by 20 universities and 29 polytechnics. Continuing education centres at the universities provide professional education for university graduates and also organise open university instruction and work place training. (<http://www.avoinyliopisto.fi/en-GB/>)

## **2. Adult Education**

According to the Finnish Adult Education Committee the strategy of adult education and training should be built on four principles in the future.

1. Self-improvement will form part of the lives of a growing number of citizens, as work communities evolve towards learning organisations.
2. Adult education and training will provide trained work force for all job categories and all vocations and professions.
3. Adult education and training will develop teaching and learning methods and content, providing quality opportunities for people to develop themselves both in qualifying and liberal education.
4. Adult education and training will maintain and strengthen participatory democracy, prevent exclusion and support active citizenship.

Participatory citizenship and entrepreneurship in the national core curriculum are to be manifested as extensive, integrated education encompassing all instruction, in cross-curricular themes, in joint events and in the whole learning culture. Idea is to develop adult students own abilities so that they become active, initiative-taking, responsible and independent citizens. As Kester and Pinaud (1997) note in their analysis of Trade Union challenges: Democracy is a learning process and a dynamic phenomenon which requires a permanent support structure to monitor and evaluate. This note is one of the reason behind a Finnish Case in TULIP-project: to strengthen business economy skills among shop stewards. Economy is at workplace a shared matter not just declaration made by employers representative.

The annual number of participates in adult education and training is 1.7 million, which makes half of the working age population. This is a very high figure in international terms. At workplaces the

education generates more education. According to the generally seen accumulation phenomenon of adult education those employees with longer basic education receive more education paid by the employer (Erkkilä 2001). Vocational training seems to accumulate along with the commitment to the employer; the more committed the employees are to their employer, the more vocational training they have received (Antila, 2002).

Still there is wide differences among population in participating adult education. By occupation, managers, professionals and technicians receive much more training than the rest: the levels of training are particularly low in skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled industrial and service occupations. By employment and part-time status there are significant differences as well: part-time and temporary workers are less likely to have received training than their full-time, permanent colleagues. (EIRO 2007).

Adult education and training is provided by some 800 institutions in Finland; some of them are specialised adult education providers. Adult education is available within the official education system in adult upper secondary schools and vocational institutions and vocational adult training centres, national and private vocational institutions, polytechnics and universities all of which have a continuing education centre. Adult education is also provided by special adult education institutions.

In the field of liberal adult education adult education centres, folk high schools, summer universities, study centres, and sports institutes organize a wide range of education and training. Finnish folk movements, ie labour movement, have been essential actors on this field. This education is as well formal as nonformal and it can build a path for learner to vocational or university exams. Adult education also includes staff-development and other training provided or purchased by employers. Labour market training is financed by the labour administration and mainly intended for unemployed persons and those aged 20 or over who are threatened by unemployment.

Interaction and partnerships are built at all levels of education. There is co-operation for the development of education between various levels of administration, between schools and between other social actors and schools. Cooperation between universities and Trade Union movement is one part of this national development.

### **3. Some future trends**

According to Ministry of Education challenges facing adult education in the future will be to respond to the constant ageing of population and to growing multiculturalism, to motivate adults to study, to improve the learning-to-learn skills among the poorly educated and trained, and especially to ensure equity and equality.

In the near future there is a aim to build better and more flexible opportunities for adults to study parts of high degrees without going for the whole degree. It should be possible for students to study for parts of university or polytechnics degrees as non-degree students at the open university and

polytechnic system. In addition, continuing further education could include courses in contents equivalent to degree modules as personnel training. After implementation this can help educational co-operation between trade union education and higher education. It also help people in working life to make continuing studies in her/his own suitable rhythm.

As part of the overall reform of adult education and training, the working group (2008) appointed by Ministry of Education proposes a creation of an *apprenticeship-type* further education scheme at university level for those who already have a higher education degree. On-the-job training and learning would be at the centre of this education. The financing of apprenticeship-type continuing education should be arranged in the same way as that of apprenticeship training in continuing secondary-level training.

Graduate workforce participate extensively in short-term continuing education, but do not have adequate opportunities for gaining new competences during their careers or for demonstrating their knowledge and skills in degree or continuing further education.

#### **4. Education and Training in Working life**

Since 1992 the annually published *Working Life Barometer* is a follow-up study about quality of the Finnish working life. According to Working Life Barometer 2008 over half of the wage earners have been participating job related training paid by their employers. Women are more active in receiving job related training than men but men can get little more time to training paid by employers. The average time of training is typically short in duration, c.a. 5,4 days /wage earner. ([http://www.tem.fi/files/21367/Tyoolobarometri2008\\_ennakkotiedot.pdf](http://www.tem.fi/files/21367/Tyoolobarometri2008_ennakkotiedot.pdf)) .

Funding for research and development (R&D) on working life in Finland is faring well. Percentage-wise, it has increased more rapidly than the overall public funding for R&D in recent years. This can be interpreted as a reflection of the increased priority of R&D on working life in Finnish public policy. In fact, Finland has obtained international recognition for its increased efforts in workplace and work organization development in recent year (Alasoini et.al. 2008).

Social innovation in the field of working life development is *The Finnish Workplace Development Programme* (Tykes 2004–2009). It supports the development of working practices in workplaces in Finland. In projects financed under the Programme, management and staff develop the work jointly. Trade Union Movement is involved to programme as well national as workplace levels. The programme has a scientific forum of experts, that is made up of experts from 31 R&D units. The forum monitors the implementation of the programme, acts as an advisory body for decision-making in the programme, makes development proposals for the programme, and acts as a national network for experts in research-assisted workplace development. ([http://www.mol.fi/mol/en/01\\_ministry/05\\_tykes/index.jsp](http://www.mol.fi/mol/en/01_ministry/05_tykes/index.jsp))

On regional level it is worth of mention a network based development programme *Promotion of Worklife Ability in Pirkanmaa*. (<http://www.worklifeability.fi/hankeen.shtml>). It is a diversified, interdisciplinary network based in region Pirkanmaa. It is exceptionally large in the Finnish context and focuses on

proactive improvement of worklife ability in work organisations. The network organisation is in its present form divided into a Learning Network and a Business network. There are over 80 actors in this network representing business firms, industry plants, universities, polytechnics, development consults, working life authorities and social partners. Programme is funded by actors and national Work place development programme.

In the context of this programme worklife ability refers to the ability and willingness of persons to learn, apply and combine new knowledge and skills related to the product, work, fitness for work, work organisation, work environment, and the business operations of the company (and their interconnections) in creative ways that are useful for the individual, enterprise and society” (prof.Olavi Manninen 2004).

The general objective of the network organisation is to find and test development models which link the functionality of working communities and organisations closely to the development of the work itself, which encourages the personnel to take initiative and assume responsibility for development. This enable full utilisation of the abilities of the organisation, learning and the creation of a new positive, encouraging and confidential working culture in work organisations.

## **5 Trade Union education and training**

The trade union movement has responded to the employers’ human resources management (HRM) policy by new openings which emphasize co-operation and participation in the development of the company (Kalliola 2005; Legge 1995). This development requires profound know-how in business economics and production development. Trade Union training has a strong role to strengthen economic know- how among union members.

The structure, the contents and the practice of the trade union education and training (TUET) are tied to the union strategies concerning members, employers and the government. In different social circumstances the trade union movement follows different strategies when defending the interests of its members, and the ways of action are influenced for instance by the historical development and the position of the individual trade union.

The impact of the TUET is directed outwards on employers and the government, and inwards on its internal strengthening and development (Taylor 2001; Tuomisto1996). The education has thus a double nature both in regard to the organisation and the individual as well as to the movement and the powers outside it.

The trade union education is also effected by the fact that the culture of manual workers traditionally has looked askance at intellectual work, and that there has been cultural borders in that direction (Alasuutari, 1997; Willis, 1977). The trade union education must overcome even this hindrance which is partly dimming but has still an effect. The low participation of rank and file members (in education) has also been regarded as a fact that differs culturally the active and the rank and file members (Tuomisto, 1996).

Education and training has a very important role to play as maintainer of social cohesion of movement and as combiner of different social realities. This is the reason, why Trade Union Movement emphasizes the fact, that different learning environments should support solidarity, co-operation, direct interaction and development of social skills. Education and Training in Trade Union Movement has a role as maintainer and facilitator for vertical and horizontal connections for union members.

Trade union education seems to produce so called metacompetences. These competences don't have a limited area of usage, but they support the development of the employer's and the employees' cooperation on various arenas. The entity becomes a process with tensions, in which emphasises on different strategies are melted together into educational contents and the workers' professional and cultural competence. (Ojakangas 2003)

About 15% of the members of Central Organisation SAK have participated to the trade union education. That means that about 150.000 members have in some point taken part to the education organised by the SAK-related trade union movement. Participating follows the educational offerings which mainly concentrate on active members who are taking care of different kind of tasks. The education directed towards passive or so called rank and file members is a small part of the education offerings. Education is organised nationally with TU-schools, locally and regionally. Murikka-institute ([www.murikka-opisto.fi](http://www.murikka-opisto.fi)) has annually about 3000 students mainly on short courses.

## **6 Co-operation between University and Trade Union in lifelong learning at workplace**

The Finnish committee for lifelong learning (1997) stressed that lifelong learning is a multilevel principle which takes into consideration, not only individuals, but also the communities guiding the learning career of individuals, active citizenship, activities of communities and the promotion of broad and continuous learning in society. The goals of lifelong learning can be divided in three categories:

- *for the individual*: a sustainable competitiveness in changing labour markets, rich life chances both inside and outside one's work and increasing capability to learn.
- *for enterprises*: a new kind of competitive strategy, new work and learn structures, development co-operation, better use of employees skills.
- *for organisations and states* (e.g. EU, national states and their regions, trade unions): new knowledge based competition strategies, LLL-integrated education systems, social cohesion and welfare strategy. (compare Tikkanen et al. 2008).

Education and research are important means of influencing development in society and in the workplace. The ever accelerating changes in the operational environment entail further enhancing interaction between education, research and the world of work (Kester & Pinault 1997). Educational institutions clearly need to intensify their contacts with employers and the world of work including Trade Union movement. Cooperation is needed both in the anticipation of educational needs and in

the planning, implementation and evaluation of education. Trade Unions can be core players on this field in order to promote their members learning skills and to support their facilities to study in an adult age. Unions can built a bridge between their members and universities. It is noteworthy here that the role of educational institutions as working life developers has grown in Finland during last fifteen years.

The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions ([www.sak.fi](http://www.sak.fi)) has under last three decades strongly driven development of Workers rights to education and training, development of financing adult learning, demands for Expanding the supply of education for adults. SAK:s Educational guidelines emphasize also Education and training as a tool for strenghten Democracy and participation in Society. This traditional goal setting has also get new aspects beside: impotence of vocational growth and competitiveness. Guidelines of Educational Policy of SAK has nicely changed from structure centered demands to emphasize of learning individual and his/her´s possibilities to learn.

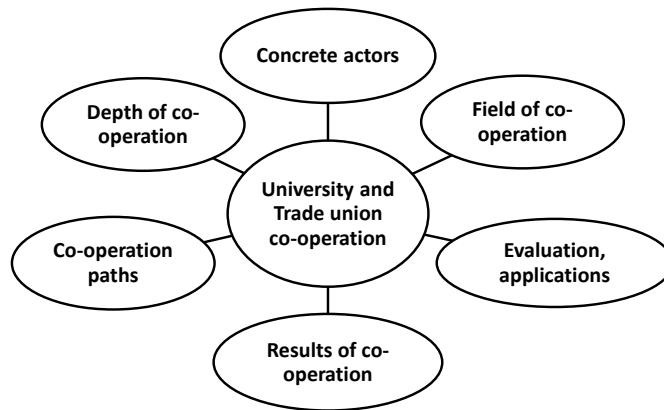
When regarding role of research and training on Trade Union level it is obvious, that research and training are the most important sources in developing the working life and the supervision of the union members´ interests. In a survey on Metal Workers union decision makers (Kalliola 2000; 2005) the Research Department of the Metalworkers´ Union was singled out as the most important source of information on industrial change in the metal industry. The Union Research Department is acknowledged as a unit which gathers and analyzes information on the metal industry and on the changes in the surrounding world. The Murikka-Institute was considered the second most important channel of information providing development related co-operational training for enterprises undergoing changes. It also issues topical messages concerning the situation of different companies to the teaching staff who communicate this information further in their teaching and the organization at large.

On the University level we can see that The Levón Institute of Vaasa university (<http://www.uwasa.fi/levon/english>) is very well organized research and development organisation which provides extensive practical competence, applied research services and an ability to recognize the needs in education, research and development. In it´s services the scientific knowledge is combined with practical approach. It´s strongest fields of know-how are management and development of organizations, entrepreneurship, public management, multilingualism and communication, evaluation research, regional development and energy and environment. The Levón Institute co-operates closely with private sector and the municipality and regional officials in the Vaasa area. Institute is an active national and international actor with continually developing network of contacts.

## **7 Conclusions**

Cooperation between universities and trade unions is now considered more urgent than ever because of the rapid change and instability in society, industry and the workplace. In Finnish metal industry sector university- trade union co-operation has mostly based on thematic concrete subjects like workplace development projects dealing with training co-operation and action research.(see

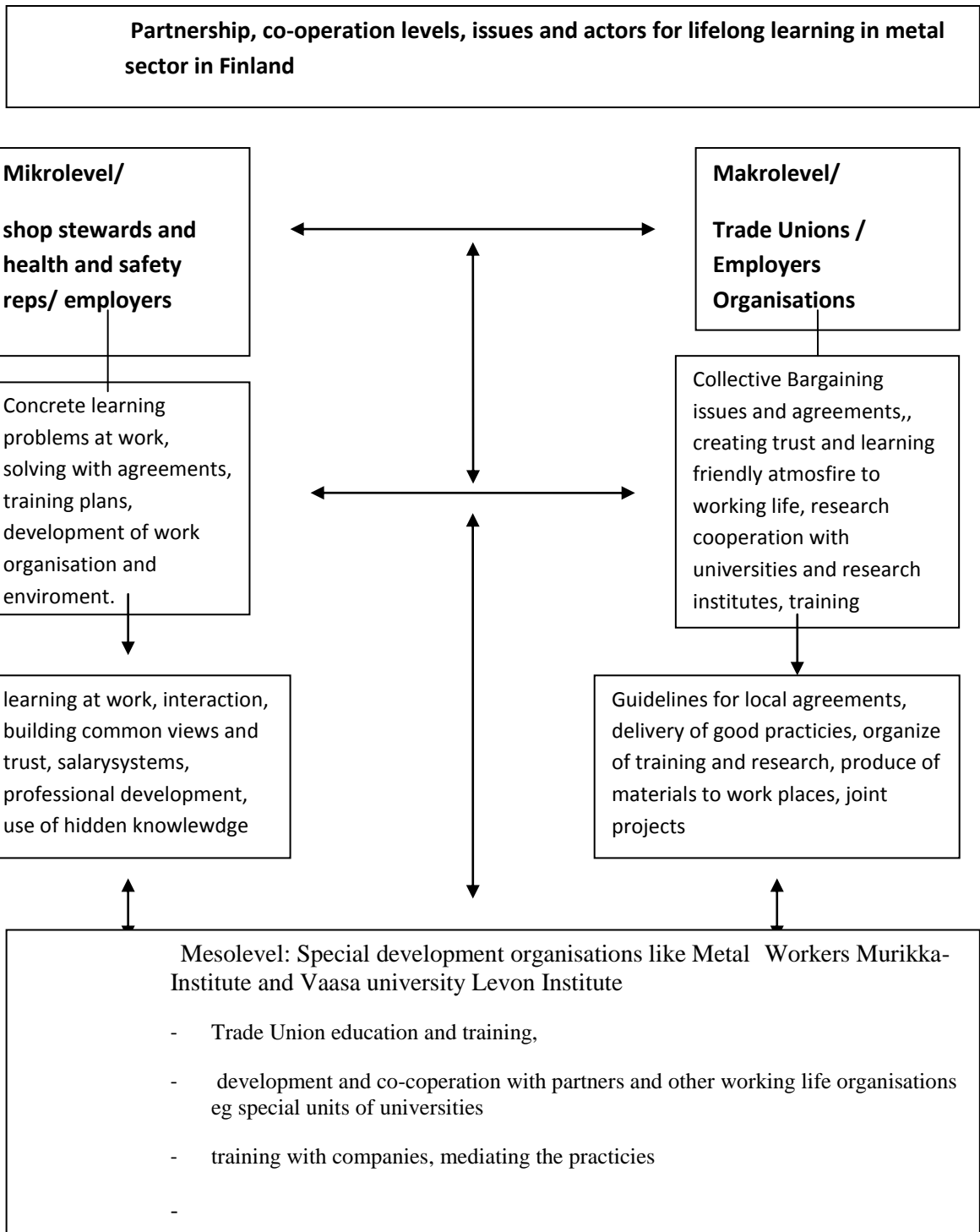
Reijonen 1997; Koivisto1997). It can also be based on change of information, rising up new research topics. In following picture university and trade union co-operation is theoretically modelled to illustrate different aspects of this co-operation:



Our development and co-operation experience tells that there are some basic human conditions which promote this co-operation. First academic educated specialist inside of Trade Union Movement can act as a resource in building up a bridge to university and research world. Personal contacts are in important role here as well as their experience about academic study and research. On the other hand we emphasize the role of those university specialists, who have some working life experience outside of universities. We have experience that co-operation with them is easier than with those, who's working life orientation is only from university world.

Third precondition is to find those arenas which can connect Trade Unions and Universities. European projects are one path to find European and also National co-operation arenas. Concrete connections are also created during working life research projects and conferences.

From the perspective of Trade Unions this training and research cooperation must be connected to normal union work. This work can be divided to three levels: workplace level (microlevel), union level (macrolevel) and mesolevel organisations, like trade union schools, research organisations, consults. Co-operation between Trade Unions and Universities can build a bridge from national level to workplace level and vice versa. Mutual Know-how and trust can lead to work place development projects, which promote as well organisational as individual learning. Mesolevel organisations also are in mediating positions and can deliver good practices from case to case. Case-reports to national level can help Unions to reformulate their working life attitudes and working agendas. At the same time mesolevel organisations can support Employers organisations to search co-operation with Unions and work place reps.



(Ojakangas 2008)

As conclusion relations, roles and co-operation of these organisations in promoting lifelong learning at workplace are crucial. In this co-operation they can build bridges between different working life levels and bind actors to same development processes still without losing their own positions and goals. Trade Unions and Universities together.

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