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LIFELONG LEARNING IDEOLOGIES IN ADULT LEARNERS' SELF- REFLECTIONS IN ESTONIA

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Saateks

Primuse toel võtsid Tallinna Ülikooli sotsioloogid Triin Roosalu, Auni Tamm ja Eve-Liis Roosmaa uuesti ette professor Ellu Saare poolt Euroopa Komisjoni 6. teadusprogrammis algatatud mahuka rahvusvahelise uuringuprojekti "Elukestev õpe 2010: tasemehariduse roll elukestval õppel põhineva ühiskonna tagamisel (vt http://LLL2010.tlu.ee/)" käigus kogutud andmed ja otsisid vastuseid küsimustele, mis algselt uurijate tähelepanu keskmest kõrvale jäid. SA Archimedese vahendusel Primuse programmi raames Euroopa Sotsiaalfondi ressurssidega kaasrahastatud üliõpilasgrandiga ette võetud uuringuprojekt "Täiskasvanud kõrgharidust omandamas: õpingute ühildamine töö ja eraeluga", lühemalt TAAS KOOLIS, kestis poolteist aastat ja jõudis äsja lõpule.

Miks see teema praegu oluline on?

Esiteks tuleb haridussüsteemil tänapäeva kiirestimuutuvas maailmas kujunevas õppivas ühiskonnas noorte esmase väljaõppe kõrval järjest enam orienteeruda kord juba haridussüsteemist lahkunud, ent sinna tagasi tulnud täiskasvanud õppijaile. Tuleb ka tõdeda, et mitmed ajalooliselt täiskasvanud õppijale omased jooned iseloomustavad tänapäeva Eestis suurt osa neist noortest, kes kõrgkoolist alles esmast väljaõpet taotlevad (nt paljud põhiõppe tudengid töötavad õppimise kõrval), niisiis võib täiskasvanud õppijate kohta kehtiv heita valgust kogu õppijakontingendile.

Meil olid kasutada nelja tüüpi andmed. 2007. aastal korraldati 13 riigis, sealhulgas Eestis mahukas küsitlusuuring, mis hõlmas Eestis enam kui tuhandet täiskasvanut, kes on kunagi jäänud õpingutest kõrvale vähemalt kaheks aastaks, kuid kes parajasti põhi-, kesk-, kutse- või kõrghariduse tasemel taas tasemeharidust omandavad. Samal ajal intervjueeriti nende koolide esindajaid, kus vastajad õppisid, et paremini mõista koolide hoiakut ja panust täiskasvanud õppijate õpingute sujumisel. Kolmandaks tehti süvaintervjuud seitsme väikese või keskmise suurusega eraettevõtte töötajatega, kes parajasti ise tööga samaaegselt koolis käivad. Neljandaks intervjueeriti nendes ettevõtetes mõnd juhtkonna esindajat, uurides lähemalt nende personali arendamise strateegiaid ja hoiakuid elukestva õppe suhtes. Mõistagi on nende andmete toel võimalik välja tuua terve hulk erinevate valdkondade jaoks olulisi tulemusi. Oleme projekti raames tehtud töid avaldanud eestikeelses kogumikus "Kolmekesi elukestvas õppes" (Roosalu 2010, kättesaadav ka elektrooniliselt www.andras.ee) ja ingliskeelses raamatus "Learning in Transition" (Kozlovskyi, Vöörmann, Roosalu 2010).

Käesolev artikkel on tööversioon analüüsist, mis mõeldud avaldamiseks viimatimainitud raamatus. Head kaasamõtlemist!

Triin Roosalu

Contents

Abstract

This paper takes as its starting point the ideology of lifelong learning. Education tends to be seen as means to better, more efficient work, and it therefore is of no surprise that adult learning is often understood in the framework of participating in (work-related) training or learning at workplace rather than in the contexts of formal education system. Person who has returned to formal education system has thus had to critically reflect on the reasons and personal goals to return to school. Our research question is: what motives do adults state as having brought them back to school; what attitudes towards lifelong do they claim to possess; and if and how do attitudes and motives of those employed differ from those not engaged in paid employment. In discussing our results, we reach to a conclusion on how does the adult learners' understanding of lifelong learning comply with or question the goals set in the agendas of lifelong learning policies and their underlying ideological groundings. We see it highly important to acknowledge and respect the alternative views of about a fifth to a quarter of sampled adult learners to the hegemonic understanding of lifelong learning, yet we must conclude that the dominant views tend to be in high correlation with the discoursive practices of the professionals in the field. The paper draws its conclusions on the data from the research project 'Lifelong learning in the formal education system through the lens of participants', coordinated by Rein Vöörmann in Tallinn University, which asked these questions from the 1121 adults in Estonia, studying at the time at the different formal education levels (from basic to tertiary). This survey was carried out as a part of the European Commission 6th Framework integrated project "Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: the Contribution of the Education System", coordinated by Prof Ellu Saar from Tallinn University, where survey 'Adult learners in formal education: experiences and perspectives' was conducted in 2007 in thirteen European countries.

Introduction: how can political agenda be relevant for adult learners' self-reflections on their learning motives?

In line with the post-modern approach to policy research, concerned with problem representation latter tradition, Bacchi (1999) comes up with a de-constructivist approach called 'what's the problem?'. Following her framework (Bacchi 1999), we aim at unveiling what the problem is represented to be, looking at it from the viewpoint of the participants in adult formal education as well as policymakers. '*Talking about something as a 'problem' has a whole range of implications which need to be thought about*' (Bacchi, 1999, p.5), and returning to formal education system as an adult may be seen as a solution to a number of different problems. The problems, however, do not exist *per se*, but are constructed by those who are looking for a solution, and we are here concerned with the framing of the policies and practices by the insiders – these adults, who are in the process of formal education – and outsiders – the policymakers, who create the learning environment and incentives for 'them', the potential adult learners, as well as public discourse on these. .

As Ahl (2002, p. 60) stated, "*people draw upon available discourses in their reality construction/.../. The people producing the different discourses /.../ make choices, but not all choices are available to all people at all times. Some things are not 'thinkable' in some cultures, whereas other things come more easily to mind.*" For our research topic we suggest that the individual learners do pick among the repertoirs available in public discourse. Following Ridgeway and Correll (2004), hegemonic cultural beliefs act as the rules of the system, and these beliefs have self-fulfilling effects on perceptions and behaviors that give them a remarkable ability to persist in the face of social change that might undermine them. Verloo and Lombardo (2007) add that processes shaping the meaning can be both intentional and unintentional. According to them, the implicit framing of issues may occur as actors can be driven to shape an issue in a particular way due to unintentional biases of which they often are unaware. Hegemonic discourses can thus be identified as the background where specific policy frames are articulated, by setting the borders within which frames can move. This is, for instance, the case of the labor market, which creates a horizon in which discourses on reconciliation and family policies are inserted, opening but, at the same time, limiting the possibilities of framing the issue in other directions (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007). For our

analysis, we take labour market being this horizon where adult formal education is being projected.

Inspired by the critical frame analysis of the concept of gender in/equality in policy discourses by Mieke Verloo and her colleagues (see Verloo, 2007), we attempt to apply the approach to the sphere of education policy and lifelong learning. Verloo and her colleagues state, that countries may share similarities in the framing of a certain policy issue and present differences in another, as each issue has a different institutional and political history, and may have been influenced by a different range of policy actors with different results. We do still think the case of Estonia might in this regard be quite a good example of a postsocialist Eastern European country, with which it shares to some extent the institutional and political history.

So, our starting point is the acknowledgement, that the purpose of learning as adult, as so many other things, is socially constructed (see Berger and Luckmann, 1966), and the claim made by Ahl (2002) that namely these assumptions that are taken for granted are the most important aspect of the discursive practices in upholding this discourse. Thus, we aim at comparing the framing practices in two levels – individual and policy-level – and see, how far these are complying or questioning each other. We distinguish between possible aims of (adult) education, which also resemble of policy choices across the European countries: neoliberal, very instrumental schooling for work and self actualisation through increased labour market competitiveness, on one hand; and communitarianist or social democratic aim of learning for one's community or society, without the current or future material rewards calculated, on the other. In the next sections of the paper, these dimensions will be opened and discussed on the policy-level as well as from the viewpoint of individual learners' motivation, illustrated with examples from existing policy-analysis and data on individual perceptions towards the meaning of learning in Estonia. Thereafter, the rationale for the choice of target group and sample for our purpose is explained and the research methods described. While presenting and discussing our results, we aim at pointing out how the findings reflect or influence the presented ideology of lifelong learning.

Background: education ideologies and framing the lifelong learning policies in Estonia

Katrin Aava with her colleagues has found (Aava, 2009) that collapse of communist regime in Estonia is reflected by the strong liberal discourse in educational curricula, neoliberalism being explicit in attempts to introduce notion of decentralisation, deregulation, market, rhetorics about choice, and service providing ideology. However, during the postsocialist time there has been increase in the visibility of conservative ideology in the relevant texts. Aava reminds us that this connection or bridging between liberal and conservative ideology, with neoconservatism being influenced by the liberal values, has been also recognised by others (see van Dijk, 2005; Giddens, 1998; Beck, 2005). Bill Jordan even labels the approach of the „Third Way", presented by Giddens (1998) as „the new orthodoxy" (Jordan, 1998), as opposed to two clear models: the liberal tradition of Anglo-Saxon countries and the continental tradition, including Christian democratic one. In liberalism individuals are supposed to be competent actors, responsible for their projects and commitments in competitive environment, seen to remain autonomous decision makers in a world of free exchanges between such actors. In continental tradition, „*individuals are conceived as embedded in an environment of binding social obligations and a culture of enduring collective solidarities"* (Jordan, 1998) whereas this "*embeddedness of the economic precludes a meaningful discussion of individual responsibilities outside these structures of interdependence and solidarity, through which each member is included in corprate unity*". According to Jordan (1998), in liberalism labour markets are seen primarily as markets, requiring citizens to take opportunities for economic self development and achieve the status of free and equal member of the polity, while in continental tradition the labor markets are embedded in the social relations, and government thus has responsibility for orderign their functions within the social system. Bo Rothstein even seems to claim there are quite different ways of interpreting liberalism in US/UK compared to the European mainstream (Rothstein, 1998): and as a result, the autonomy and actorship of the individual has quite different meaning in these contexts even within the overall framework of ideological liberalism.

However, the currently prevalent approach, then, in most of the (European) countries seems to be this „new orthodoxy", the main theses of „the new orthodoxy" on social justice and labor markets being (Jordan, 1998 p. 38-43):

1) National prosperity is crucially related to the skills of the workforce;
2) A string work ethic benefits the whole polity;
3) The principle of reciprocity applies to civic obligations.

The three theses have become widely accepted, writes Jordan (1998, p. 43), and not only among politicians but also academic social policy community and in the public at large. The notion of equality of opportunity can only be implemented trhough empowered workforce; the work ethic is the cultural capital that ensures that all benefit from the growth of productivity and output; and the reciprocity principle promotes the minimization of exploitation as well as maximization of participation. Of those main features especially the first is of importance to our current approach. In this view, flexible labour markets and adaptable workforce combined can provide both dynamic economic performance and social cohesion. Workers need to be empowered with the access to education and skills and thereafter to new jobs, as that could balance the power of employers. The policy implication of this view is that the government should invest in education and training, and workers need a good basic education and constant opportunities to add value through lifelong learning.

This „new orthodoxy" can be seen as dominant in Estonian as well as European Union level policies. Lifelong learning has become a key term in the EU lexicon, and in recent years, it has in some respects displaced and stood for "education and training", though it has had some success in drawing attention to a wider role for learning in the "learning society", researchers conclude when analysing European Union's lifelong learning policies (see Holford et al, 2007a). According to this analysis, EU policy in education has been constrained by a vocational orientation, while the economic orientation was reinforced by the Maastricht Treaty, and eventhough this did also itemise certain other issues (e.g., quality) and certainly did not prohibit developments in other directions, it did set EU educational policy on this particular economic and vocational course, which was further strengthened by the economic framing of lifelong learning discourse in the 1990s. Therefore the authors conclude that EU-level lifelong learning policy has been shaped by the demands of competitiveness, and the requirements of subsidiarity, while lifelong learning is seen as a key way of addressing social exclusion as well as being a key to economic competitiveness and employability.

Estonia, as other post-communist countries, tends to see lifelong learning as a way to enhance their economic development (see Holford et al, 2007 b). In Estonia a human capital model where lifelong learning connotes continuous work-related training and skill

development to meet the needs of the economy and employers for a qualified, flexible and adaptable workforce dominates (see Aava, 2009). This model sees primarily individual workers as responsible for acquiring and updating their skills or for acquiring new qualifications in order to enhance their employability and career chances. However, the usual dichotomy with social democratic values appears to be quite poorly represented in the education policy documents and curricula in Estonia (Aava, 2009). In practice, the neoliberal education policy would support the claims for competitiveness and economic efficiency and freedom to choose. In practical terms of education, social democratic values would rather educate people who value common interests of modern societies, while neoliberal would give ground to the development of individual strenghts.

High level officials in lifelong learning (see Jõgi et al, 2007) point out that in Estonia economical competition is the key issue that is forming the values of lifelong learning. They confirm that greatest expectation in society is economical development and growth therefore the relation of personal success and education is not widely seen as relevant to it. Govermental official stated in the interview (Jõgi et al, 2007): *"Economical competition is most important in Estonia and this is where the values of adult education are developing. The greatest expectations in society at the current moment are economical development, people value more success and their own life… Hopefully soon people will realize that successfulness goes hand in hand with education and education becomes equal to economical aspect of learning."* Another professional in the field (ibid) believes that Estonians have very good cultural premises for valuing lifelong learning as in personal level education is highly valued. *"I think that religion of education is a bit stronger in Estonia than Christian religion is. So I believe that culturally we have good presumptions for lifelong learning concept."* she stated. The professionals state that learning is not widely seen as a key issue for personal development, but is expected to be profitable in everyday life, especially work-life. Some of them pointed out that *"In Estonia understanding of education is related to liberal point of view. Education has got a very pragmatic meaning – it has to be very rational and effective, in other words utilitarian, something that can be used here and right now. In this point of view personal development is questionable, because it is time consuming and expensive"*.

According to another professional in lifelong learning, one of the obstacles to recognise other aspects to lifelong learning is that politicians have traditionally under estimated the importance of active citizenship and therefore also the concept of active citizenship. However,

it is also evident that at least in the level of policy documents, concept of learning citizen in Estonian policy documents (see Jõgi et al, 2007) is based on understanding that learning person is a person who has gained knowledge, skills, and values to manage outstandingly in personal, work and social life, so concept of active citizen assumes that an individual is participating in all spheres of society and community life – in cultural, economical and political/democratic sphere.

The views expressed in policy documents and by stakeholders may, or may not resonate with the views of the adult learners. According to a recent study (Jõgi et al, 2008) the views of Estonian adult learners and adult educators on the nature of lifelong learning are sharply different: speaking from the position of one's professional experience those repsonsible for adult education seem not to hear the learners' voices, while the apparent formation of disparate groups, the "we" – the adult education experts – and "they" – the adult learners – creates distance and tensions in understandings of learning. Prejudice is visible in the views of experts who ascribe to adults such comprehensions of learning which are not displayed in the research, state Jõgi and her colleagues (2008), and conclude that educator may see the learners unprepared for living, or, alternatively, see the main output of learning to be work related, even if they agree there should be dimensions for living and being a citizen. So it seems the professionals in the field tend to believe the subjects of lifelong learning as not fully ready for life, or for work, or for both, and their task is therefore to help them getting ready for the challenges life is offering. This approach seems to very clearly carry the message of empowering the weak, however, in order to do that the adult education professionals first have to disempower their (potential) students.

The main question seems to be how to motivate (some anonymous) people to participate in adult education, or even to consider participating in adult education, is clearly one of the relevant ones for the professionals in the field – as well as for the policymakers, who believe the economic growth is dependent on the level of preparation of the workforce.

However, it is worth reminding here that Jordan (1998) is very clear in his approach, claiming that „the new orthodoxy" is not bringing about social justice. According to him, while this widespread belief in the labour markets as the key of social justice is so prevalent, each of the three theses is easy to question, so they rather become to be in service of reproducing injustice. Jordan seems to believe empowering individuals with education and bargaining power is not enough to balance the power of employees; he sees as questionable

the very assumption that everyone should (want to) participate in labour market. Following him, we also question here the idea that everyone should (want to) participate in lifelong learning for the reasons related to labour market.

Evidence on Estonia shows that among the working adults, the (discoursive?) space for learning for other reasons than labour market competitiveness in general or one's current job in particular, has enormously decreased. When looking at Estonian adults' self reflections on their learning experience (see Tamm & Kazjulja, in this volume) we see that employed people who participated in any training were much less likely to study for personal reasons in 1997 than in 2007. In 1997, self education was main reason for participation in training for about 20% of blue-collar workers, and for about 30% of managers and professionals, with the rate for other white-collar workers in between those two. In 2007, this was stated as main reason for studying by about 10% of all the three groups. This indicates a major shift in society in either reasoning, or understanding the nature of lifelong learning as solely the tool for managing labour market success. The impression is furthermore exemplified by the extent to which those who participated in any educational activity considered what they had learned as not useful for their work whatsoever (ibid): in 1997, managers and professionals claimed that 12% of all their trainings, and 8% of professional trainings, offered no knowledge or skills to be used for their work; for white-collars the respective numbers were 15% and 10% and for blue-collars 36% and 22%. In 2007, the amount of those who felt they can hardly ever or never use the knowledge and skills acquired in trainings for their work had dimished to about 1 to 2% in each category. On the one hand, it may illustrate the efficiency of the companies providing their employees the training. On the other hand, it may also be reflecting the fact that in the society as a whole, much greater emphasis has been put to the ideals of lifelong learning at work sphere in order to remain or become competitive. Whatever the reason, these results seem to say that working adults in 2007 believed that participation in lifelong learning was likely than a decade ago solving mainly the work-related insecurities or aspirations, or that any individual goals were not set, or seen worthy to be set, if compared to the work-related ones. This development is further illustrated by the results of another analysis (see Karu 2007; Jõgi et al, 2008). Estonian adult learners, while speaking from the position of their own lifecourse experience, connect their learning with outputs for being and self-constructing, working and living (Jõgi et al, 2008). Those adult learners enrolled in formal education who themselves are professional educators distinguish between different ways of learning in their life (Karu, 2007) and according to their perception even in formal studies significant learning

experiences occur when connections are born with one's own work-related activities and options for transfer are found when studies offer the chance to discover unknown abilities. In both studies, the interviewees presented their learning experiences as beneficial to and actually often acquired through their professional identities: „*I discover myself often transferring the heard knowledge to the organisation that I'm leading. It's a constant dialogue with myself.*", „*Experience of working as a teacher has always given me opportunities for learning from students.*", „*The need to learn is very important when working as a teacher.*", „*Project didn't meet its objectives, but I became much wiser from this experience: I saw the bottleneck of being a manager, I saw what needed special attention, I saw the importance of leading skills and dividing responsibility*." (above examples taken from Karu, 2007).

How to conceptualise, and how to measure adult learner's motivation, is under our attention in the next section.

Adult learners' motivation: intrinsic or extrinsic or none?

Acknowledging that there are different competing ideologies at work in shaping lifelong learning policies and practices, we are interested, if the job-related and non-job-related motives are represented to a different extent in the adult learner's self-reflections of their beliefs and motives.

According to Keller (1987, 1999), there are four conditions that have to be fulfilled to motivate an adult to learn: attention, relevance, confidence and satisfaction. These conditions are derived from a synthesis of psychological and educational research (English, 2005). Ideally, they must be seen as a sequential process. First of all, the attention of the adult learner must be gained and the learning activity must be accessible, otherwise the adult learner will quit the educational activity. Further, the learner has to see the relevance or the value of the courses for his own life. Once relevance is achieved, the student has to gain confidence in his/her own abilities. When the adult learner experiences success, s/he will be more motivated to continue participation. Last of all, the feeling of satisfaction is also very important to take

part in educational activities. The adult has to evaluate the learning process and outcomes as positive.

Inspired by the literature, the following experiences and perspectives of the adult learners will be taken into account in this analysis: *general attitudes towards lifelong learning*; and *motives for (or the relevance of – or the expected benefits of) participation in formal education.*

Participation issues have always been, and still are, one of the major concerns in the field of adult education (see Boeren, Roosmaa, Saar and Nicaise, forthcoming; Boeren, Nicaise and Baert, 2010). In the past decades, two main research movements have emerged in participation research (Jung & Cervero, 2002): the *traditional studies;* and the *sociological perspective* on adult education. Both movements in sociology and psychology thus agree upon the idea that ”people are making their worlds at the same time as their worlds are making them” (Webber, 2004). In the sociology of education, the ”*life course perspective*”, based on structuration theory (Shilling, 1992), tries to overcome the dualism between the individual and the social context, or between ”agency” and ”structure”. It focuses on the interplay between individual change and the changing social context. When examining the behaviour of adults in relation to participation and persistence, it is important to take account not only of the broader socio-economic context, but also the more immediate social situation of individuals (such as family and work dynamics) and the way in which these social factors play out at the level of the individual’s experiences and perspectives (Davey & Jamieson, 2003). In educational psychology, the *social cognitive approach* towards human agency (Bandura, 1989) also emphasises the dynamic nature of engagement between learner and environment. Action, personal factors (cognitive, affective and other, e.g. motivation) and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants of human behaviour, in our case, participation and persistence in formal adult education.

In the literature, ”motivation” is generally defined as the reason why someone participates, and continues participating, in an educational programme (Gordon, 1993). It is a hypothetical construct, providing a possible concrete causal explanation of behaviour. Boshier (1991) states that important starting point for any adult education research is to understand the nature of the individual learner and learner’s reasons for participation. Understanding of participation reasons would ”*facilitate the growth of theory and models to explain participation, throw light on the conceptual desert that underpins adult education dropout*

research, and enhance efforts to increase the quantity and quality of learning experiences for adults" (Boshier, 1991).

The demand for participation in adult education is unequal. Different statistics over years show that adults having the highest need to participate – adults with low skills and knowledge, with a low educational attainment and a low literacy level –, participate less than more advantageous groups do. The human capital theory argues that the society can invest in people by means of adult education and training with a goal of increasing their productivity (Becker, 1964). Not only an increase of the productivity on the labour market, but also a growing knowledge and skill level within the personal life environment, can improve the quality of life. The rational choice theory, which is related to the human capital theory, assumes that individuals try to realise the maximum of profits and the minimum of costs within their behaviour (Allingham, 2002). Within these perspectives, the decision to participate in adult education is an analysis of the costs and benefits.

Costs of learning can be direct as well as indirect. Direct costs are directly incurred, for instance enrolment fee, purchase of books, etc. Indirect costs are related to the fact that one is participating in an educational activity. Examples of these indirect costs are the payment of child care, the loss in income because one is spending time on education instead of paid work, less time for household tasks, etc. On an overall level, indirect costs are more difficult to bear than the direct costs only. Examples of benefits are an increased productivity on the labour market, chance of making promotion, chance of getting a higher salary, more chances to find a job or being able to keep current one, etc. Within the personal life, a better health condition, more social contacts, a more fluent practice of hobbies, are profits of participation in adult education as well. We must admit though that these benefits are only visible after a certain amount of time and they are never completely guaranteed. The assessment between costs and benefits differs for every specific individual and leads to an increased or a reduced participation for some specific socio-economic and socio-cultural groups. Benefits are more visible for adults active on the labour market and costs can be reduced by their employer. Youngsters have still long perspectives and thus more time to profit from benefits and the costs (withdrawal from the labour market) are usually lower for them as their income is not yet as high as for older adults. Edwards, Sieminski and Zeldin (1996) indicated that retired adults participate less in adult education, Bélanger (1997) stated a decreased participation from the age of 55 with a significant decrease from the age of 65. Adults participating in adult

education run the risk that the benefits are not in proportion to the costs they would have to make. Those with a low educational attainment and a low economical position have fewer chances to succeed. The direct, but especially the indirect costs are of great inconvenience for them. Inactive and unemployed adults cannot receive financial support from an employer and their own financial resources are rather small. In addition, support from family and friends is lacking in a lot of cases. So one might reasonably see there is lot of reasons not to participate in lifelong learning.

Reasons for participation in adult education – motivation – can be intrinsic as well as extrinsic (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In the former case, the reason to participate in learning is inherent to the activity itself: adult education might give for example a lot of satisfaction. In the latter case, the reason to participate is based on something extrinsic to the activity, often in the form of a reward or punishment. In literature, intrinsic motivation is seen as ideal because it results in higher quality learning (deep learning, intense concentration, absence of fear of failure) (Lambert & McCombs, 1998) while extrinsic motivation can result in surface learning, fear of failure, and so on. However, for adult learners who are not intrinsically motivated, extrinsic motivation can be the first step to increase the intrinsic motivation and also the participation itself (Schön, 1987).

Sometimes also the concept “instrumental motivation” is used: learning because it is considered as ”useful” or because it is seen as a way to obtain socially valued rewards (e.g. on the labour market), regardless of whether the initial reason to participate was intrinsic or extrinsic. In the present day literature, psychologists involved in motivational research replaced the distinction between intrinsic, extrinsic and instrumental by autonomous and controlled motivation. Autonomous motivation can be translated by the words “willing to participate”, controlled motivation by “having to participate”.

Although we have made an attempt to measure one’s motivation to continue educational career, we are aware of the complicated nature of motivation as a concept. Most theories on motivation tend to take it for granted that humans have an intrinsic need – motivation – to learn (see overview by Ahl, 2006). So if barriers related to continuing educational path are identified and overcome and concrete benefits of learning are clear, then motivation will resurface and thus people proceed with learning. Yet some motivation scholars have argued that since motivation is a hypothetical construct, it is problematic that one can identify, describe and measure motivation (Siebert, 1985). Researchers should also be sensitised

towards construction of an adult learner and ”unmotivated” adult learner, as this evokes stigmatisation of those who are simply not interested in adult education or find other objectives in life more relevant.

In a recent comparative study across thirteen European countries the authors have developed a new typology of working adult learners in formal adult educational programmes (Hefler & Markowitch, 2010). Compared to other typologies, this approach is rather independent of participants' stated motives and information on previous education, actual work assignment and an outlook on the further steps planned in the educational and professional career are sufficient to classify a participation event in our typology, therefore within one type of participation pattern one can find individuals with different motives and at different positions in their life course. Such a typology, eventhough ignoring information on motives that the participant presents, does not only make visible the significance of an educational endeavour for the individual, but also informs significant other actors, who may not know their perceived motives, on the likely impact of participation on their individual interests. In this paper, however, we limit ourselves to consider the motives as presented in the course of the survey by the adult learners themselves on their participation in learning and therefore we can rather talk of the discoursive practices of the learners. Accordingly, we assume to reveal reflections on and dialogue with dominant values rather than individual life projects, even if reflections on these are inherent in individual views.

Non-traditional students in formal education: defining our target group and research method

With the societal change many of the adult education opportunities generously provided by the previous system, such as distance learning, evening courses and training courses for raising one's level of qualifications, were discontinued due to the institutional change. On the other hand, the opening of education system to the market brought about rapid increase in the number of private universities (Jõgi et al, 2007).

In Estonian formal education system, adult learners can obtain basic, secondary,

vocational and higher education (see further overview in Tamm and Roosmaa, 2010, and Helemäe, Murd, Roosmaa, Saar and Vöörmann, 2010):

1. General education can be acquired in **adult gymnasiums** in the form of evening study, distance learning or as an external student; it is also possible to attend evening and distance study programmes at general education schools. Adult gymnasiums and general education schools in Estonia are mostly municipal schools. In the academic year 2006/2007, there were altogether 43 educational institutions where adults could acquire general education. In 2006, a total of 6,391 students were enrolled in part-time general education. Students aged 30 and older constituted only a small percentage (6%). Most of the students (67%) were aged 15 to 20 (about the normal ages for completing upper secondary education). Significant proportion (23.5%) of students enrolled part-time was aged 21 to 25. This could reflect the need of students who have finished only compulsory education and may already be in the labour market (or seeking employment) to increase their knowledge and skills.
2. **Vocational schools** offer opportunities to acquire vocational education in the form of part-time study, and also professional training. State financing applies to part-time study on the same basis as to full-time study but implementation of part-time study is determined by the school. In general, vocational education institution organises work-related training of adults in the areas that they teach, according to the curricula, in the form of courses and individual study. Most vocational schools in Estonia (48 in total) are public schools (34) but there are also municipal (3) and private schools (11). Only the schools in Tallinn, Tartu and other major cities serve a significant number of students through means that are usually appropriate for adult learners – evening and correspondence programmes. Few institutions provide training at or in conjunction with the workplace and, therefore, they are likely to be inappropriate or inaccessible to adults seeking to upgrade their current skills.
3. Also **universities and professional higher educational institutions** enable adults to study part-time or as an external student. In addition, ever more faculties offer lectures during the evening hours (especially in masters programmes). In the academic year 2006/2007, there were 11 professional higher education institutions in private ownership, 9 in state ownership, 6 public universities and 5 private universities. In the middle of the 1990's 78.6% of those participating in part-time higher education were under 30 years of age. Now the age distribution of students

has changed: two fifths of part-time students and one third of full-time students are older than 30.

As Schuetze and Slowey (2002) have stated, the dramatic growth in student numbers associated with the shift from elite to mass systems across virtually all developed countries is central to current transformations in terms of structure, purpose, social and economic role of higher education. As part of this process of expansion and heterogenisation, new groups of students who for a complex range of social, economic and cultural reasons were traditionally excluded from or under-represented in higher education, might be expected to participate in increasing numbers. Although the term ”non-traditional” students might be used in this context, it is subject to differing interpretations, they claim, and thus two uses may be distinguished. Within the framework of the equality of opportunity discourse the term tends to refer mostly to socially or educationally disadvantaged sections of the population, for example, those from working class backgrounds, particular ethnic minority groups, immigrants, and, in the past, frequently women. On the other hand, in the framework of the life-cycle discourse, it tends to relate to older or adult students with a vocational training and work experience background, or other students with unconventional educational biographies. However, the term of ”non-traditional” then covers both different populations and different models of participation.

In this paper we are looking at experiences of adults in formal education, and since adults have traditionally been underrepresented group in these settings, we will consider our target group non-traditional. We are looking at those adults not in their initial education but having left educational system for at least two years and then returned to formal education at any level, and since formal education system has been targeted more to those in their initial education, the adults returned to the system should be considered non-traditional for their model of participation.

Our research question, however, is also related to another way of non-traditionalism in these students: we will compare those adult students who are working at the time of their studies with those who are not. There are many reasons to believe working students have different perspectives compared to the ones who are not working. One domain in which adult students are sometimes said to encounter problems is that of time management, despite the fact that many adult students have been successfully juggling a variety of domestic and occupational responsibilities for several years. However, some research suggests (see

Richardson and King, 1998), that students aged 25 or over at the time of their entry into the university report making more use of time-management strategies than either younger adult students aged between 21-24 at the time of entry, or traditional students in their initial education. So, one might also expect that due to the potentially more time-greediness in their everyday lives, working adult students are making more use of their respective time management strategies and are even more motivated than those currently out of labour market, as the former must overcome more barriers to their studies.

According to Eurostat Adult Education Suvrey (2007), in year 2007 5% of Estonian population aged 25-64 participated in formal education and training (total for EU-27 is 6,3%). There are significant gender differences in participation rates: among females participation rate is 6,9% while among males only 2,8%. There are remarkable differences between age groups as well. Among younger people (25-34) participation rate is 11,3%, drops to mere 3,5% for 35-54 year olds; and is almost nonexistent for those aged 55-64.

There is no official statistics on how many adult learners there are per each ISCED[1] level, but it is possible to give estimation according to students studying at high schools/gymnasiums for adults or at vocational schools and higher educational institutions in part-time, distance or evening programmes (see Table 1).

Table 1 Number of students in population by ISCED levels, academic year 2005/2006

Level	Students in population
ISCED 1-2	1650
ISCED 3	4150
ISCED 4	1030 + 4900*
ISCED 5-6	5662 + 24000*

* First number represents those participating in the form of part-time, distance or evening studies, second those in the form of daytime/full-time studies.

Source: Tamm and Roosmaa (2010)

[1] International Standard Classification of Education designed by UNESCO in the early 1970's.

However, for ISCED levels 4 and 5-6 we have here calculated daytime/full-time students as well by including those who started their studies at least 2 years later than students would if they continued studies right after completing previous level. Thus, most adult learners study at universities and professional higher educational institutions.

The distribution of students in higher education by age groups according to their mode of study is presented below (Table 2).

Table 2 Distribution of students of day-time, correspondence and evening courses in higher education institutions by age groups in 1996 and 2006, %

	1996		2006	
	Day-time courses	Evening and correspondence courses	Day-time courses	Evening and correspondence courses
-30	95,9	78,6	81,4	58,4
30-34	2,6	12,2	8,8	18,6
35-40*	1,5	9,2	5,3	11,8
40-49			3,9	9,3
Over 50			0,6	1,9

*In 1996 this group included everyone over 35 years of age

Source: Roosmaa and Saar (2010)

According to this, the proportion of those over 30 among the students was higher in evening- and correspondence courses than in day time courses both in 1996 as well as in 2006. However, their share among the overall student population had grewn in this period both for the evening/corresepondence courses and day-time courses.

Furthermore, it is of our interest to see, if working adult students differ from the non-working students. We do expect the attitudes and motives of these two groups – employed and not employed students – differ, since their expected benefits as well as costs would differ

and their immediate environments be either more or less supportive of the idea of engaging in studies due to the competing demands.

Overall, employed and inactive people participate to a similar degree in formal education, respective percentages are 5 and 5,3 (Eurostat, 2007). Yet unemployed people are participating significantly less – 1,4%. There is no information about labour market status of adult learners by the ISCED levels of their current studies. However, there is some information on the participation in formal education by occupational groups. As pointed out by Tamm and Kazjulja (this volume), participation in formal education has grown from 1997-2007 among all the occupational groups but blue-collar workers, for whom it remained the same (being the smallest among the occupational groups), and general managers of small scale enterprises, who participated much less in 2007 than in 1997.

For the purpose of this research, we have defined our population of ”non-traditional’” or adult students not by their age (often those 25 years of age and older) but by gap in their learning career: our sample consists of those currently engaged in formal education who have previously been away from formal education system for at least two years.

Within the International research project LLL2010 a survey of adult learners in formal education in thirteen European countries “Adult learners in formal education: experiences and perceptions” was carried out in 2007. The target sample consists of 1,000 (on average) completed questionnaires in 13 countries, altogether about 13,000 adult students in Europe, and a stratified sample by the level of education (ISCED) was drawn in each country. Current analysis, however, rests with only Estonian data.

The sample was intended as stratified by ISCED levels, enabling to pay attention to the similarities and differences in participation by the education level. Thus the sample is not representative to the whole population of adult learners. On the other hand, probability sample would be impossible to draw given that in the participating countries there is no information by socio-demographic or any other characteristics available for the sample frame on our target group.

Adults were contacted through institutions in the formal education system. Because of the diversity in the survey group of participants, different methods were used for different groups. Order of preference of different methods was: face-to-face interviews; assisted written

interviews; assisted written interviews in group; telephone interviews; postal or web-based questionnaires.

The questionnaire was designed in a way to enable answering to the research questions listed above, therefore the subsections of the questionnaire involve:

A. Questions regarding respondent's educational background
B. Participation in formal adult education

B.1. Characteristics of the institution in which the respondent attends courses

B.2. Costs of the entire course

B.3. Learning process during the entire course

C. Personal details
D. Questions regarding the respondent's day-to-day activities

In this paper, we rely on the questions on respondent's attitude towards lifelong learning and their motives to participate in the given educational programme (section A) and questions on their current employment status (section D). Thus, our Estonian sample of adult learners in formal education who declared their employment status consists of 1121 individuals (see Table 3

Table 3 Sample overview, employment status by ISCED level

	Employed	Not employed	Total %	Total N within ISCED level
ISCED 1-2 Basic education	31,6	68,4	100	341
ISCED 3 Upper secondary education	37,2	62,8	100	290
ISCED 4 Post-secondary education	57,4	42,6	100	249
ISCED 5-6 Tertiary education	67,9	32,1	100	244
Total %	53,3	46,7	100	

	Employed	Not employed	Total %	Total N within ISCED level
Total N	598	523	1121	1124

Source: "Adult learners in formal education: experiences and perceptions", own calculations

Here and throughout the following analysis it is important to have in mind that the sample was not probabilistic, and that the body of those currently employed does over-represent those enrolled at higher educational levels: while one third of students at ISCED level 1-2 were employed, over two thirds of those at ISCED level 5-6 were. 32% of those studying at ISCED level 1-2 are employed and 7% are unemployed/seeking job. At higher ISCED levels employment rate increases: ISCED 3 – 37%; ISCED 4 – 57%; ISCED 5-6 – 68%. There are also less unemployed among students at higher educational levels. This could be indication of the fact that studying at higher levels is often rather costly and has to be paid by learner or employer therefore one has to work to be able to study or those who have managed to continue their studies are pre-selected or find jobs just due to studying as it sends certain signals to employer about abilities and objectives of the employee. As a reminder, based on our data we do not claim this is representative to the adult learners at respective levels.

Further we outline some socio-demographic characteristics of the sample by the employment status, as this might facilitate further interpretations and explanations of the results. Table 4 indicates that in Estonian adult learner sample there are no gender differences in regard to employment status – about half of females and males are employed.

Table 4 Sample overview, gender, age and ethnicity by employment status

		Employed	Not employed	Total %	Total N
Gender	Female	47,8	52,2	100	694
	Male	46,6	53,4	100	408
Age	-20	24,9	75,1	100	389

groups	21-30	50,4	49,6	100	462
	31-40	74,0	26,0	100	181
	41+	84,1	15,9	100	69
Ethnicity	Estonian	50,9	49,1	100	846
	Other	35,5	64,5	100	256

Source: “Adult learners in formal education: experiences and perceptions”, own calculations

By age groups it is evident that there are less employed adult learners among younger age groups, hence only about 25% of those 20 years of age and younger are employed while twice as many are employed in age group 21-30. In following age groups majority of learners currently studying in formal education are employed. Hence, here it is older adult learners studying at higher educational levels (ISCED 4-6) who combine their employment and educational career. Older and more experienced people are more likely to find a job, but it is often also easier to combine work and learning at higher educational levels due to more flexible study forms offered. According to ethnicity, half of Estonians and only 36% of learners with other ethnical background (mostly Russians) are employed. Although this sample is not representative of adult learners, in general population employment rate of Estonians is only somewhat higher than that of non-Estonians.

One additional point to have in mind in interpreting and discussing the results of our analysis is the fact that the questions of motives, as well as the more general statements about lifelong learning, were posed to the respondent in the form of a theoretically justified but therefore predefined list, therefore the actual freedom of the respondents to express their motives or views were limited to this choice and it is still possible that the most suitable answers were missing from the list. Furthermore, the questions about motivation generally targeted the reasons to enrol in the current formal education programme of the given adult learner. However, the point in time that the survey took place the respondents had already started their studies, and they may have been already enrolled for more than one year. Therefore we are not fully capturing the motives at the moment of enrolment, even if the retrospective nature of the question would allow that kind of interpretation, but rather the *ex post* justification of their decision. By the time we asked these questions from our respondent s/he might have not only forgotten but also changed her initial thoughts about returning to

school, or learned socially more accepted answers to the question, as, being non-traditional students, they are likely to have met curiousity and perhaps misunderstanding from their peers in as well as outside of the school.

Findings and discussion: how do adult learners frame their participation decision

How do the adults back at school themselves evaluate the role of lifelong learning? It appears (Table 5) that the overall attitude towards lifelong learning is fairly positive in both groups, positive evaluations ranging from 65-93% of support. The difference based on one's employment status ranges from 4% to 11%, with however more agreements (and in case of negatively-formulated items, disagreements) on behalf of the employed in every regard.

Table 5 Agreement with statements about lifelong learning, by employment status, %

		Employed	Not employed	Total %	Total N
1. Adult/continuing education is mostly for people with little else to do	do not agree	93	87	90	990
2. Successful people do not need adult/ continuing education	do not agree	90	80	85	931
3. Continuing my education makes me feel better about myself	agree	89	82	85	939
4. Money spent on adult/continuing education for employees is money spent well	agree	84	76	80	878
5. I enjoy educational activities that allow me to learn with others	agree	82	78	80	877
6. Adult/continuing education is an important way to help people cope with changes in their lives	agree	82	76	79	869
7. Adult/continuing education helps people make better use of their lives	agree	81	74	78	853

8. I dislike studying	do not agree	76	65	70	771

Source: “Adult learners in formal education: experiences and perceptions”, own calculations

The vast majority does not agree with the assumption that ”*Adult/continuing education is mostly for people with little else to do*”, almost regardless of their employment status. We could assume that they also do not consider themselves as living especially low-pace lives but rather the opposite. It would be though interesting to know more about those 7% of working students and 13% of non-employed learners: do they think they personally are the exception to this general rule, or do they rather fall in the category who attends classes so to break the daily routine and meet new people?

A bit more of those working do not think that successful people don’t need adult education (90% *versus* 80%), and this may be also connected to their own status – having a job and being able to study may make them understand that success does not necessarily mean one does not need any more education. We might also detect an age effect here, as in general employed adult learners in the current sample are older and due to their life experience could be slightly more aware of the merits of adult education. For them, more time has passed since compulsory education as well, making them perhaps believe based on their experience that new knowledge is useful. However, if 20% of the non-employed students agree with that statement, then it means that every fifth currently enrolled considers at least the other non-traditional students, but perhaps also themselves not to be successful. If these are the views of the insider-group, who has their own, by nature legitimizing experience from the system, then one would perhaps expect those not enrolled even more stigmatizing.

Majority of adult students (more than 4 in each 5) feel continuing their education makes them feel better – result that is interesting to interpret, especially in the light of the demands that engaging into formal education programme actually presents to a student, and decoupling this to the needs from employment. This result seems to be supporting the point made earlier on the better time management skills of the adult (employed) students. Still, 11% of those employed and 18% not engaged in paid labour do not feel going to school makes them feel better about themselves. One could question here, in the first place, should one’s participation in formal education make them personally feel better; might the opposite not mean that the person was feeling sufficiently good already before starting the programme? Perhaps, if one rested with the idea that formal education provides the learners with some specific goals to be

met, learning does not necessarily need to affect the personality in holistic way. Maybe there are good reasons to believe that education is the solution to the problems of personal integrity, but these are then nevertheless ideologically driven reasons, perhaps emerging from the need to internalise flexibility, huge workloads, goal-oriented management, and short-term goals, and have people still happy and committed to those?

A bit more of those employed also agree, that "*Money spent on adult/continuing education for employees is money spent well*", while those not currently employed tend to be slightly more sceptical about it (84% *versus* 76%). Agreeing with this statement may mean that the respondent sees employees to benefit from the learning and therefore in general agrees with this; or it may mean that s/he thinks it is a rational idea on behalf of the employer since the increased productivity, efficiency and attachement of the employee concerned would be worth it as well as having spill-over effects to their immediate work environment, and sometimes even beyond. So one needs to admit the answers to this question do not reveal the leaning of the given respondents: do they actually prefer the employees to be trained because of their empowerment, or do they see any employee training is useful for the company. It is as difficult to interpret the negations of these statements: the 24% disagreeing with this may be feeling for the employers who send their employees to different trainings, benefits of which are difficult to measure and thus not clear. Alternatively, they may also feel that the employers who provide training to their employees tend to be also offering more greedy jobs which do not leave the employee enough discretionary time, as a result of their conscious or unconscious choice of internalising the needs of the employer as his or her own.

Both groups, the employed as well as the non-employed adult learners in formal education, still claim they enjoy learning with other people – 84% and 76% of them, respectively, agree with this. Taking the statement itself to be an expression of normative viewpoint, the learning is supposed to be more efficient if the emerging relationships and communication with other people in the group creates positive feelings, however – it is also possible that people-orientation does at some point prevent the learner from achieving some of the educational goals. The learner may also disagree with the statement when she clearly distinguishes between herself and the rest of the group based on motivation, ability and enjoyment to learn. Without knowing based on our current analysis any more specific details, we nevertheless note that every fourth of those students currently not employed do disagree with the statement of enjoying learning with other people. Again, if these are the view of the

insider-group, who have overcome the barriers of engaging in formal education programme as an adult, such as perhaps their lack of confidence to disclose of their current level of knowledge in front of the teachers and co-students, we may expect this to be an important subjective barrier to enroll for these currently not engaged in formal education.

Both of the statements about the meaning and use of adult education – "*Adult/continuing education is an important way to help people cope with changes in their lives*" and "*Adult/continuing education helps people make better use of their lives*" – were supported by 82% and 81% of the working students, and 76% and 74% of those not in paid employment, respectively. Majority of the sampled adult students, then, have experienced the changes in their lives to be smoothed by lifelong learning activities; or, they believe there are not many ways to help people cope with these kinds of changes, and education seems likely to be one of the important ones; or, they have otherwise internalised the dominant view that going to school is major tool in challenging – or adjusting to – the changes. The "changes in their lives", here, may include changing work environment and employment situation, among others, and there certainly is high visibility of the ideas that educated and therefore functionally flexible labour force is necessary and thus personal employability, but furthermore, competitiveness, is the precondition to cope with the changes and new challenges. There still is every fifth among the working students and every fourth among the non-employed who do not see adult education as useful for this regard. Perhaps they are sceptical towards this stretchment of the idea of the meaning of education and prefer to the more traditional point of learning as discovering new knowledge and mastering new skills. Or, alternatively, perhaps for them adult education is something rather secondary in their lives, so they do not see it as being able to fix their problems. Then again, they might believe people do indeed have many sources of help when they need to cope with the changes in their lives, so this role of educational institutions and processes becomes irrelevant and therefor they do not possess any expectations in that regard.

As to the statement that learning as adult helps people make better use of their lives, it entails the disempowering element in the first place, stating that people cannot make good enough use of their lives, if not for adult education. While it may be assumed that with more knowledge and skills people are supposed to be more useful to their surrounding communities and societies, it is a bit far-stretching from this to assume that their lives without this would be meaningful enough. There are certainly alternative ways to make good use of one's life, and

sometimes engagement in lifelong learning may jeopardise people's life projects rather than help enforcing them – perhaps especially, but not only in case of compulsory learning. However, as we witnessed earlier in regards to the views of professionals in the field of adult education, who seemed to be sure of people not being prepared for living – with all that it entails – whereas their role as educators is to offer this (see Jõgi et al, 2008), it seems majority of the sampled adults in formal education agree with this viewpoint. There may also be an idea of enriching one's life by spending spare time at the studies and with the home assignments rather than, say, in front of TV or being engaged in computer games, if she – or any of her significant others – is to consider this activity as not making good enough use of her life. In any case, majority of both groups of formal education participants would sign the statement that education helps people making better use of their lives, while there is also a significant minority who does not agree with the statement as strongly. Perhaps this view, again, would be even more widespread in the total population of those who are not engaged in studies.

There is the least support to the idea of disliking studying as such. While 76% of employees and 65% non-employed do not claim to be disliking studying, quite a big share of their fellow-students do agree that they do not like it. Here the difference between the employed and non-employed, although not very big, was the largest, therefore this statement seems to be among those with better explanatory power, having insight into the views of individuals at school. Every third of the non-employed and every fourth of the employed adults enrolled in formal studies do not see liking the studying as necessary condition to proceed with the studies, pointing to the fact that there is more to their going to school than studying. Perhaps their personal motives outside of these statements or some of the previous statements are behind that paradox. Or, perhaps, the understanding that studying does not need to be easy or pleasant is still quite spread in the society at large and in the education system in specific, so neither students nor their teachers actually expect this to be different, so no efforts are taken to make the studying process likeable. On the other hand, non-employed adult learners in Estonian sample are mostly aquireing lower level education (ISCED 1-3), which means they have returned to school with the aim to obtain compulsory level of education. Probably already their prior experience with schools and learning was not positive and might have lead to disrupting educational career. Alltoghether, it seems there is too many of those who are just getting by with the studies, and this group is especially noteworthy among those who currently also do not work. One might be tempted to rationalise it with the

view that those non-employed are so involuntarily, and perhaps also their being enrolled to the school is rather due to the factors outside their own wish, motivated by the hopes that education increases one's employability. Whatever the case, this rather big group in our sample – and therefore supposedly even bigger group in the adult population at large – feels studying is not likeable an activity. It is perhaps worth reminding here, that our understanding of lifelong learning as something inescapable in this society could actually be questioned based on the fact that this "inescapability" is mostly motivated with the market argument and ideas of individual competitiveness. It is one thing to learn to recognise that everyone is learning every day so studying may occur also without a huge effort. It is still a big leap from that to the claim that everyone enrolled in formal education should enjoy studying, and the system should try to accommodate the different learning needs. Perhaps it could be relevant to study this group more closely to see, how these differ from those who share the dominant views.

In the light of these overall views with not so much deviance according to employment status, we would proceed with comparing the stated personal motives of the two groups for engaging into the current studies. One question was posed in the questionnaire in a way that the respondent had to choose if their reason to enroll was mainly job-related or mainly personal, without the option of choosing both. Looking at the reasoning for starting the study programme by current employment status (Table 6), we see that a bit less than half of the presently employed declare having mainly personal reasons to start current programme, while 2/3 of those not employed do.

Table 6 Main stated reason to start current study programme, by employment status, %

	The main reason for starting this study programme	
	personal, non-job related	job related
Employed	47,1	52,9
Not employed	61,4	38,6
Total %	54,7	45,3
Total N	598	495

Source: "Adult learners in formal education: experiences and perceptions", own calculations

So, current engagement in paid employment does not mean a person will definitely join formal education programme for job-related reasons, though 53% of our sample claim they did so. This points to the fact that formal schooling tends not to be so clearly or only connected with the view to advance career-wise but considered to foster personal development. That may reflect, on the other hand, also the comparatively low financial or career development support by the employer organisations to their employees, seeing one's participation in adult education and individual project with the aim to improve individual competitiveness. Internalising personal responsibility for one's professional development may also lead the formal learners to internalise work-related reasons and see these as personal rather than job-related, especially if these are not strictly connected to their current job.

Still, engaging in formal studies while not being employed does mean higher likelihood to take on studies for personal rather than job-related reasons – in order to get a job, start a job, start a business, etc. Since in our sample majority of those not employed are studying at lower educational levels (ISCED 1-3), so they might not have an association with their (future) job yet, but would like to obtain an occupation or university degree.

What were then, more specifically, the stated reasons to start current educational programme? Based on the theoretical approaches to motivation considered above, we distinguish between controlled and autonomous motives (Table 7).

Table 7 Controlled and autonomous motives for starting current study programme, by employment status, % of agreement

	Employed	Not employed	Total %	Total N	Sig.
Controlled motives					
1. To obtain certificate	81,7	88,3	85,3	944	
2. To do my job better	69,0	63,4	66,0	730	
3. To earn more	60,6	58,5	59,5	660	ns
4. To be less likely to lose my current job	42,9	48,1	45,7	504	ns
5. To get a job	32,5	54,3	44,1	488	
6. Because someone advised me to do it	29,7	38,5	34,4	381	
7. Because my employer required me to enrol in the programme	11,5	9,1	10,2	112	ns

	Employed	Not employed	Total %	Total N	Sig.
8. Because I was obliged to do it, e.g. to claim benefits, to avoid redundancy	7,9	12,9	10,6	117	
Autonomous motives					
1. To learn more on a subject that interests me	82,1	73,7	77,6	866	
2. To learn knowledge/skills useful in my daily life	65,2	75,7	70,8	785	
3. To meet new people	56,6	61,6	59,3	657	ns
4. To gain awareness of myself and others	54,5	55,0	54,8	608	ns
5. To get a break from the routine of home and work	49,4	42,1	45,5	504	
6. To contribute more as a citizen	44,2	49,2	46,9	512	ns
7. To participate in group activities	33,8	37,2	35,6	395	ns
8. To start up my own business	28,7	35,8	32,5	359	
9. To contribute more to my community	27,1	28,7	27,9	311	ns
10. Because I was bored	14,8	19,8	17,5	194	

Source: “Adult learners in formal education: experiences and perceptions”, own calculations

One could not reveal any major differences by employment status in such motives like obtaining certificate; doing one’s job better; earning more; which were all quite popular as a reason. There were still some interesting results, namely, not only went half of those that are currently not employed to school because they wanted to get a job, but also one third of those currently employed had that in mind. Furthermore, 30% of those employed and almost 40% of those not admitted someone else had advised them to go back to school. However, just about 10% of those employed and those not alike say their (prospective) employer would require their enrolment in the programme, and 8% of those employed and 13% of those not said they were obliged to do it for other reasons, for example, to be able to avoid redundancy or claim benefits.

This analysis shows not only the high role that some extrinsic, externally controlled motives have in bringing adults back to school (some of them are common to 60-85% of adults at school), but also suggest that although the motives of those employed and those not

are different at statistically significant level, they do in fact not differ much, especially considering the argument that getting a job was important to those not working as well as (somewhat surprisingly) to a third of those currently employed.

In regard to autonomous, intrinsic motives, we see half of these are relevant for about a half of the sample or more (45-78%), with however notable differences by employment status: about 80% of employed learners said they wanted to learn more on a subject that interests them, whereas non-employed agreed with this same reason by ten percentage points less. Also, those currently employed feel less likely that their studies in formal education system would be useful in their daily life (65% compared to 75% of those not employed). Again we might assume that those employed and studying at higher educational level might feel rather confident in their knowledge/skills useful for daily life when compared to those acquiring secondary education. We still see interestingly enough that 28% of those employed and 36% of those not are currently engaged in the educational programme in order to be in better position to start up their own business. Just a bit more than a quarter of all those adult students feel they could contribute more to their community by finishing these studies, and – maybe also surprisingly – we can conclude, that just one in every seven working student and one in every five not employed did actually engage in the educational programme to cheer them up from the boredom of their daily life.

Conclusions: so is there any indication that learners' want what policies suggest?

We did expect the experiences of the two groups under question – employed and not employed adult learners in formal education – differ in regard to their stated beliefs about lifelong learning as well as in regard their stated personal motives to enrol in current learning programme.

We find, though, that non-traditional students do share, to a large extent, rather homogenous positive attitudes towards lifelong learning, almost regardless of their current employment status. Still, we do need to keep in mind that in this paper we analysed perceptions of those who already have made the decision to continue their educational path

whereas only few were obliged or required to do so. Therefore general positive attitude towards adult education is somewhat expected in this group and this may be not representative to those who are currently outsiders to the formal education system. Further examination of the groups who stated disagreement with the dominantly shared views – for example, not enjoying learning with others or disliking studying as such, to disagreement with the view that employers' investments in education are worthwhile, to disbelief in the power of lifelong learning to help people cope with changes in their lives or, furthermore, make better use of their life – who accounted to one fifth in case of the working students and to one fourth among those not employed might be very useful, to see if these groups are disadvantaged compared to others, or rather more empowered and therefore critical towards the dominant views.

Furthermore, we found that the adult learners who are currently also working, do differ by their motives for re-entering formal education, but to a far lesser extent than suggested. Those reasons, for example, like ”getting a job”, ”setting up own business”, etc that would strictly connect education with getting one (back) into employment, are also considered relevant by those already having a job, although these are more popular among those currently without job. However, there are some issues where we see important differences: those not employed are more likely to expect that their experience with school gives them better chances to cope with everyday life and learn skills and knowledge useful there. They also claim more likely to have externally controlled, extrinsic motives, although these are characteristic to only less than half of those enrolled. Still, they are also more likely to state they went back at school out of boredom – although just one in every seven confirms that to apply as a motive to enrol. As a main conclusion in regard to the extrinsic, often job related motives, as opposed to intrinsic motives, though, we would like to highlight that there was in general more disagreement with the former than with the latter, perhaps pointing to the fact that wider selection of intrinsic motives is regarded legitimate by the adult learners. Furthermore, they seem to be even more acceptable – or, admittable – for those currently out of employment.

Considering the tendency of adult students to also be employed and thus active in different spheres of their lives simultaneously, it is actually even not surprising they do not agree with statements ”*Adult/continuing education is mostly for people with little else to do*” and ”*Successful people do not need adult/continuing education*”. Therefore, we should

conclude: they most likely, and actually, do have other things to do, and they still decided to go back to school – and they claim continuing their education makes them feel better about themselves.

Then again, as pointed out earlier (Ahl, 2006; Siebert, 1985), is there any way to measure actual motives for adult learners, did our methodology allow it, and, furthermore, is there any need as such for the adults to be internally motivated to enrol in studies (see also Jordan, 1998), are the questions that remain open here. The typology of working adults in formal education (Hefler and Markowitsch, 2010) intentionally ignored the subjective motives of the adult learners themselves, including other, more solid characteristics to predict the role and meaning of these studies for the learners involved and also forecasting their further educational and career-related plans. We may though suggest that one's subjective representation of his or her motives and beliefs is intrinsic to these outcomes that Hefler and Markowitch (2010) suggest to distinguish, and it would be interesting but also relevant in the future to analyse more thoroughly if there is any merit to this suggestion. Current analysis did also not present types of adult learners based on their views and motives to be described then by their socialdemographic characteristics as well as their evaluation of the learning process and environment. We would definitely suggest that to be a way to take this analysis forward, to get better insight into the relevance of such subjective reflections of the adult learners to the self-assessment of their satisfaction.

We have to also conclude, that treating the stated motives as adult learners self-presentations, intended to construct them as individuals as well as them as members of the group of adults in formal studies gives us this opportunity to point out the dominant views and values, shared by this group. According to this dominant view among adult learners the following seems to apply in most cases: adult education is not only for people with little else to do and even successful people need it, to make them feel better about themselves, help them cope with changes in their lives and, perhaps, make better use of their lives, while the adult learner is in general to enjoy learning with others and to like studying, so money for one's employees' studies is well spent. It is widely understood that majority currently not employed enrol in formal studies for personal reasons, but is also acceptable that employed people do have other than job-related motives as driving force to engage in studies. Reasons to join study programme most likely involve obtaining ceritifcate, do one's job better and earn more, but also learn more on an interesting subject, learn knowledge and skills for everyday

life, meet new people and gain awareness of oneself and others. For those employed, breaking routine of home and work may be a legitimate reason to enrol in studies, while for those not employed, studies may lead to contributing more as a citizen. Boredom, on the other hand, is not likely to be felt as legitimate reasons for the majority to become adult students, although, generally speaking, disliking studying should also not prevent one from enrolling in formal education, as quite a many of adult learners do not like studying.

These views by effective adult students correspond with the views expressed by some professionals in the field of adult education, who are convinced that "they" should engage in lifelong learning in order to be effective citizens and employees. These views, also, are in sharp correspondence with the policy goals, stating that learning is crucial to be a good citizen, as making better use of one's life means engaging in paid employment and bringing as much added value via one's continuous education and training as to allow the economy grow, and if necessary, flexibly reorganise. These discourses seem to have been extremely successfully internalised by the sampled body of adult learners, that the underlying disempowerment discourse either goes unnoticed or is widely accepted. Alternatively, perhaps those in the field are required to learn and just happen to internalise those arguments during their studies; that was the weakness of our methodology in this regard that we could really measure these statements for those already in the formal education, so these may or may not reflect their views before enrolling.

Providing there are any useful measures to analyse one's motives to start an educational programme, it may be useful to design a longitudinal study for that regard, or compare in a cross-sectional survey those only planning to engage in the studies, those in the beginning of their studies, and those enrolled, and those who have decided to discontinue their studies without graduating. While European Adult Education Survey might be a good tool for such analysis, the proportion of adults currently in formal education may be, while with better representativeness than our sample, not numerous enough to allow for statistical comparisons of these groups. Across the countries comparison, however, may be interesting and worthwhile, as is also shown in the comparative papers in the current volume, but without the overall context of ideologies and values of the respective countries, the findings may remain difficult to interpret, as also suggested by Ahl (2006) who criticised motivation research for not taking cultural and social context in account.

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