Adult educators’ competences. The principals’ view.

A comparative study of Komvux and Folk high schools in Sweden

Sofia Antera
Adult educators’ competences. The principals’ view.

A comparative study of Komvux and Folk high schools in Sweden
Author’s name

Abstract

Due to the growing importance of lifelong learning, country examples of good practices are attracting more and more attention. Characterized by high participation rates and enjoying long tradition, the Swedish adult education is considered a thriving education system. Nevertheless, with regards to adult educators’ qualifications, low regulation is detected turning the Swedish case in an intriguing topic of investigation.

In this context the current study attempts to explore the competences of adult educators. More specifically, it constitutes an effort to detect the most significant among them, by examining the perspective of adult education centers principals, actors with major influence in recruiting and further training adult educators.

The study engages a qualitative approach, collecting data through semi-structured interviews with adult education centers principals. The findings are analyzed and compared based on predetermined units of comparison, consisting of municipal adult education centers (komvux) and folk high schools, two different types of education providers.

On the basis of the findings of this research study, it can be concluded that the locus was on competences related to teamwork and organizational learning. On the other hand, teaching competences, especially in the form of formal qualifications were not prioritized or set in the center of discussion.

Nevertheless, the lack of initial education programs specialized in adult learning affects the professionalization of adult educators in various unexplored ways and thus requires more research.

Keywords
Keywords: adult educators, competences, principals, Sweden, Municipal Adult Education (MAE), Folk high schools (Folkhogskolor)
Contents
List of tables ................................................................................................................. 3
List of figures .................................................................................................................. 4
List of Abbreviations ..................................................................................................... 5
Chapter One: Introduction ............................................................................................. 7
  1.1 Background ............................................................................................................ 7
  1.2 Aims and objectives .............................................................................................. 10
  1.3 Significance of the study ...................................................................................... 10
  1.4 Limitations and delimitations .............................................................................. 12
  1.5 Structure of the study ......................................................................................... 13
Chapter Two: Conceptual framework of the study ....................................................... 14
  2.1 Competences ....................................................................................................... 14
      2.1.1 Competence: A wide variety of different definitions ...................................... 14
      2.1.2 Competences in the European arena ............................................................. 15
      2.1.3 Competences as fundamental elements of professionalization .................... 17
  2.2 Professionalism and adult educators .................................................................... 17
  2.3 The adult educator: defined through an international perspective ....................... 18
      2.3.1 Adult learning theories: an international dimension ....................................... 19
      2.3.2 Adult educators’ competences: the existing frameworks ......................... 24
Chapter Three: Methodology ......................................................................................... 30
  3.1 Research Strategy and Design ............................................................................. 30
  3.2 Research Methods ............................................................................................... 31
  3.3 Sampling Design and Selection Process ............................................................... 33
  3.4 Analytical Framework ......................................................................................... 35
  3.5 Trustworthiness Criteria ..................................................................................... 37
  3.6 Ethical Consideration ......................................................................................... 37
Chapter Four: Data analysis and findings ..................................................................... 39
  4.1 The Swedish adult education system ................................................................... 39
      4.1.1 Historical review or towards decentralization ............................................. 39
      4.1.2 Lifelong Learning in Sweden ...................................................................... 40
      4.1.3 Adult learners ............................................................................................. 42
      4.1.4 Formal adult education .............................................................................. 42
      4.1.5 Non formal adult education ...................................................................... 44
      4.1.6 Labor market and workplace training ....................................................... 46
  4.2 Presentation of the findings .................................................................................. 46
Case 1. Health for all .................................................................................................... 46
Case 2. Lillenhamnen komvux center ........................................................................... 49
Case 3. Bjorn folkhögskola ................................................................. 52
Case 4. St Bernards folk high school .................................................. 55
Case 5. Stockholm’s United folk high school ....................................... 61
Chapter Five: Discussion of findings ................................................. 66
  5.1 Comparing the cases of Komvux centers ..................................... 66
  5.2 Comparing the cases of folk high schools .................................... 67
  5.3 Discussion .............................................................................. 68
Chapter Six: Conclusion .................................................................... 70
  Suggestions for future research ....................................................... 72
References ....................................................................................... 73
Online resources .............................................................................. 80
Appendices ....................................................................................... 82
  Appendix A. Competence areas addressed in adult educators’ competences frameworks. 82
  Appendix B. Interview guide for principals ....................................... 85

List of tables
Table 1: Differences between Komvux and Folk high schools ............... 33
Table 2: Number of participants from each type of educational provider ... 34
Table 3: Types of education in Swedish adult education ....................... 41
Table 4: Providers of adult education ............................................... 42
Table 5: Important adult educators’ competences in Health for All komvux center... 49
Table 6: Important adult educators’ competences in Lillenhamnen komvux center... 51
Table 7: Important adult educators’ competences in Bjorn folk high school ... 55
Table 8: Important adult educators’ competences in St Bernards folk high school .... 60
Table 9: Important adult educators’ competences in Stockholm’s United Folk high school ................................................................. 65
List of figures

Figure 1: Components of competences according to EU…………………………….16
Figure 2: Kolb’s learning circle………………………………………………………21
Figure 3: Kolb’s learning styles………………………………………………………22
Figure 4: Knowledge related competences for adult educators…………………26
Figure 5: Bereday’s model for undertaking comparative studies…………………35
Figure 6: Model for comparing interviews’ findings……………………………36
Figure 7: Conceptual framework for lifelong and lifewide learning……………40
Figure 8: Competence description…………………………………………………59
### List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEI</td>
<td>Adult Education Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIR</td>
<td>American Institutes for Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGADE</td>
<td>A Good Adult Educator in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMS</td>
<td>National Labor Market Board (AMS in Swedish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALPINE</td>
<td>Adult Learning Practitioners in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEC</td>
<td>Commission of the European Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTVET</td>
<td>Continuing Technical and Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVT</td>
<td>Continuous Vocational training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAEA</td>
<td>European Association for the Education of Adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECTS</td>
<td>European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMAE</td>
<td>European Master in Adult Education”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IREA</td>
<td>Romanian Institute for Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komvux</td>
<td>Municipal Adult Education Centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KY</td>
<td>Advanced vocational education and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAE</td>
<td>Municipal Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDEF</td>
<td>Movement of the Enterprises of France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO-NET</td>
<td>Building Professional Development Partnerships in Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QF2Teach</td>
<td>Qualified to Teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIO</td>
<td>Rörelsefolkhögskolornas intresseorganisation (Interest Organization for Popular Movement Folk High Schools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCB</td>
<td>Statistiska CentralByrå (Statistics Sweden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEK</td>
<td>Swedish Krona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFI</td>
<td>Swedish For Immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKL</td>
<td>Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skolverket</td>
<td>Swedish National Agency for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSV</td>
<td>National Schools for Adults (abbreviation in Swedish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL</td>
<td>Transformative Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VINEPACK</td>
<td>Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Psycho-Pedagogical Competencies of Adult Educators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One: Introduction

Setting lifelong learning as the 4th Goal in the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 (United Nations, 2016), turned it to the carrier of the responsibility of cultivating key competences in various groups of citizens, like immigrants, young unemployed people or adults that dropped out from basic education. Combined with a transition from qualifications to competences, detected the last decades, competences and lifelong learning are currently being under discussion not only among policy makers but also in the scientific discourse (Barros, 2012). Adult education, having embraced lifelong learning more than other fields, is in the center of attention as well. However, the locus remains solely on students and participation (Milana, Andersson, Farinelli et al. 2010) and adult educators, although the main actors of this process, still lie in the shadow with their professional profile being unexplored (CEC, 2007).

In an effort to improve the quality of national adult education systems, policy makers quite often turn to successful examples of countries, aiming to identify some elements of success. Sweden is a well-known example of a thriving education system even regarding adult education. This success is accompanied by some unique traits, namely the existence of municipal adult education in parallel to the system of liberal education (folk high schools) (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013) and the low regulation with regards to recruitment of adult educators (Milana, Andersson, Gross et al. 2010). While Sweden allocates great authority to principals with reference to the choice of their instructors (Statistics Sweden, 2009), the existence of two types of education providers offering often the same form of education, evinces the need for more research on the profile of adult educators and the competences they acquire, in order to fulfill the demanding task of educating other adults.

1.1 Background

Adult education and Lifelong learning: what is the difference?

Lifelong Learning refers to a process of continuous learning, “from the cradle to the grave”. Having received various interpretations over the years, its lifewide dimension has though always remained untouched. The EU Memorandum of Lifelong Learning offers the most updated definition, accepted by most of the EU member states, approaching lifelong learning as “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective” (CEC, 2001, p.9).

Lifelong learning is characterized by duration (lifelong) and amplitude (lifewide). Although lifelong clearly refers to a process taking place throughout lifetime, the lifewide dimension encompasses learning occurring in a variety of settings, namely formal (formal education system), non-formal (organized learning outside the education system) and informal (learning in everyday life) (CEC, 2000; 2001; McNab, 2016). Finally, the concept of learning indicates a process that exceeds education (Desjardins, Rubenson, Milana, 2006).

Lifelong learning serves as an umbrella term, encompassing adult education, which is more specific. The two terms have been used interchangeably, since adult education embraced lifelong learning faster than other education sectors (Öhidy, Sauer-Schiffer & Györrfy, 2008).
Adult education is the “systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training” (McCauley, 2000, p.12), thus it includes “continuing technical and vocational education and training (CTVET), remedial adult education, adult higher education and popular/liberal adult education” (Desjardins, Rubenson, Milana, 2006, p. 21). In particular, CTVET policy aims to the development of competent workforce, remedial and higher adult education’s goals are “employability, citizenship and inclusiveness”, whereas liberal adult education supports culture and popular movements, in order to educate individuals (Desjardins, Rubenson, Milana, 2006, p. 22).

Adult education is often approached through the lens of formal and non-formal learning but in many cases the boundaries are not clear. Sweden is a characteristic case of such an overlapping between the provision of formal and non-formal learning activities.

**Competences: the descendants of qualifications?**

In recent times and especially in the European arena there is a growing tendency of preoccupation with competences, a term introduced to describe what earlier was referred to as qualifications. This trend has affected teaching professions too, including adult education field.

More specifically, Barros (2012) refers to the transition from the qualification model to competence model around the end of the twentieth century, introducing the concept of competence. Besides the several efforts, defining competence has not reached yet a consensus (Ellström & Kock, 2008). However, scholars agree that it brings an instrumental approach in education and it is deeply related to educational results. Most of OECD and EU countries had adopted the competence model and promoted it through their policy by 2009 (Barros, 2012).

Distinguishing competences and qualification we may briefly assume that competence is an employee’s attribute, which will potentially be translated into performance of a specific level, since it is another form of human resource. Described as the capacity to deal successfully with certain situations or tasks, competence is defined in terms of “perceptual motor skills (e.g. dexterity); cognitive factors (different types of knowledge and intellectual skills); affective factors (e.g. attitudes, values, motivations); personality traits (e.g. self-confidence); and social skills (e.g. communicative and cooperative skills)” (Ellström & Kock, 2008, p. 6). With this definition as a starting point, qualification is approached as the competence, needed for a task that is prescribed by the employer. Therefore, an individual may possess competences that are not actually qualifications, since they are not required for a job or task. In this sense, the qualification is used to describe competences with an exchange value, in other words competences that are considered valuable by the labor market (Ellström & Kock, 2008).

Although competences and qualification can be distinct, when referring to competence and qualification models both terms acquire a different meaning. Briefly, qualification model focuses on the forms of learning and the ways to standardize assess and certify these forms (OECD, 2007). Regarding employees, the model perceives skills and knowledge as the outcome of vocational training; in terms of job, it sets the standards in addition to classifying employees in professional categories, based on salary and social status differences (Bellier as cited in Barros, 2012). Qualification model supports the feeling of belonging and creates some security that the acquisition of specific qualifications reassures employment.
At the end of 20th century, this social structure came to a crisis, allowing uncertainty to grow. The qualification model was criticized as “inadequate”, leading to the arousal of the competence model, which drew a connection between competences and experience gained through action. As a model directly rooted to management studies and human capital theory, competence model has gradually become dominant in the education field, affecting among others the profession of adult educators (Barros, 2012).

Although slight differences justify the existence of both terms, it is common that they are used interchangeably, especially in the workplace. Comparing competences and qualifications as terms, we detect the move of the locus from what is needed to perform a profession (qualifications) to what an individual is capable of doing (competence). Setting the human potential in the center of attention it is interesting to further investigate what is defined as competence, how it is measured and what competences are needed in specific professions. The present study attempts to answer some of these questions with relation to adult educators, a group of professional with vaguely defined identity and major impact on facilitating adults’ learning (Buiskool et al., 2010).

**Previous research**

Over the last decades adult education has attracted a lot of attention and research concerning the profession of adult educators has been initiated in national and international level. The locus has mainly been on developing international frameworks of adult educators’ competences and investigating their paths to professionalization. Several studies also referred to assessment issues and adult educators’ role in the learning process. Although all the aspects mentioned above constitute vital issues to be investigated, the present study focuses on competences of adult educators’, thus reviewing already existing frameworks enables better understanding of the current situation.

Reviewing the research activity linked to adult educators’ competences, it is concluded that although research has been realized in different contexts, namely European and North American, the areas of focus still remain the same. Reviewing and comparing the frameworks appearing on PRO-NET - Building Professional Development Partnerships in Adult Education (Sherman et al. 1999), Adult education teacher competencies (AIR, 2015), VINEPACK (IREA, 2008), QF2TEACH - Qualified to Teach (Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009) and Key competences for adult learning professionals (Buiskool et al., 2010), it is concluded that there are six areas of interest with reference to adult educators’ competences. Knowledge, professional development, assessment, design and implementation of the learning process, counseling and support and finally motivation constitute the areas that adult educators are expected to develop competences at, in order to be able to successfully perform their profession.

Acquiring competences in all the areas is characteristic only of a “super human” (European Commission, 2013) and it is utopian to expect adult educators to turn into such creatures. Consequently, it is assumed that some competences or competence areas are prioritized over others. In a profession that is not yet defined and is characterized by variety such prioritization has a crucial impact on shaping it in all the five dimensions that Ekholm (as cited in Gougoulakis & Bron, 2011) suggests as vital, namely knowledge base of the profession, responsibility for the profession,
existence of professional ethics, control of who is eligible to exercise the profession and professional autonomy.

Under these circumstances, frameworks with international amplitude are helpful but not exhaustive. Further research on national level is needed to explore which of these competences are desirable in specific contexts. Why are they important and which of them are prioritized over others? The diversity of adult education allows the assumptions that no country constitutes a same case with another one.

1.2 Aims and objectives
The aim of the study is to explore the competences of adult educators that are perceived as important and are prioritized by principals of adult education institutions in the Swedish context. In other words, the study attempts to underline the most desired competences for adult educators and the reasons behind their importance through the lens of adult education organizations’ principals. More specifically, the study intents to answer the following research questions:

- Which competences do principals perceive as necessary for an adult educator?
- Which adult educators’ competences are considered most important by the principals?
- What is the significance of these competences? Why are some competences preferred over others?

In order to answer the above mentioned questions the objectives set include:

- Unveiling principals’ views on which competences they require from an adult educator during the recruitment process,
- Detecting the competences that in-service training programs are mostly aimed at,
- Examining and understanding the reasons behind the preference for the specific competences.

1.3 Significance of the study
Over the last decades, adult education has received considerable attention. Emerging policies on lifelong learning, which encompasses adult education, proliferate and international entities, like EU and OECD continue to highlight its vital contribution to economic development, the conservation of democracy and social cohesion. Since lifelong learning has acquired this international dimension (Hodgson, 2000), reinforced by defining it as the 4th Goal in the Sustainable Developments Goals for 2030 (United Nations, 2016), a relevant study on adult education as the major component of lifelong learning is regarded as beneficial to the awareness of any global citizen.

More specifically, the present study concerns the requisite competences for adult educators in the Swedish adult education system, with a focus on core competences as they are addressed in the process of recruitment and in-service training programs. In terms of adult educators’ professionalization, referring to their initial education and career trajectories, important gaps are detected in research activity (Fejes et al., 2015; Lattke & Jütte, 2015; CEC, 2007). Thus, shedding light on this partially researched
aspect of adult education is regarded as necessary, especially in a time when staff skills are vital to quality assurance.

Reviewing the literature, adult education, and more specifically the background of those designing and implementing it, is neglected. Over the centuries, education policy has placed the focus on youth training, whereas “teacher training” almost always alluded to regular school system teachers, placing adult educators and youth teachers in the same category, even if their vocation has been characterized by special difficulties (Ministry of Education and Research, 2008; Andersson, Köpsén, Larson, & Milana, 2013). Furthermore, even after lifelong learning turned to the center of attention, it was access to education that has been the locus and less attention was addressed to the training of adult education staff (CEC, 2007). Therefore, the competences of adult educators are still an unexplored area.

The Scandinavian countries have always been a reference point, with regards to lifelong education, known for the core values of their systems, the organization and the efficiency of their adult education systems. They have been perceived as role models in adult education development and served as inspiration point for other countries (Gougoulakis, 2012). Traits that recommended Sweden as a unique case include the high participation rates it demonstrates (Boström, Boudard & Siminou, 2001), even with reference to students with low formal education level (Desjardins, Rubenson, & Milana, 2006). Furthermore, the shift from a centralized education system to a decentralized one, characterized as market oriented, has set Sweden in the center of attention, rising doubts on the impact of such a transition. The high degree of decentralization, especially in comparison to other OECD countries, renders Sweden as an intriguing case study (Lundahl, Arreman, Holm & Lundström, 2013).

In this context, quality of adult education has been advocated quite often, with all the governments over power agreeing on the fact that adult educators are crucial factors of it (Ministry of Education and Research, 2014). Despite their importance, though, adult educators usually “lack formal preparation for teaching adults prior to entering the profession” (Andersson, Köpsén, Larson, & Milana, 2013, p. 2). The lack of training programs specialized on adult education, not only in Sweden but in various European countries (Andersson, Köpsén, Larson, & Milana, 2013), further supports the significance of the study. Although a country with long tradition in adult education, Sweden still indulges in low regulation of adult educators’ profession (Milana, Andersson, Farinelli et al. 2010; Milana, Andersson, Gross et al. 2010; Milana & Larson, 2011).

Formal and non-formal adult education is designed and implemented by a broad range of education providers, which allows for a variety of different approaches (Statistics Sweden, 2009). Nevertheless, quality education is guaranteed also by improving adult educators’ competences. Formal regulation for the competence formation of adult educators is low and restricted in the same requirements as the rest of the teachers and more specifically secondary teachers (Ministry of Education and Research, 2008), although it is proved that specialized teacher education for adults and certification contribute to their success (Kennedy et al. as cited in Kunter et al., 2013). Especially non-formal education is regarded as the least regulated with reference to the same topic (Milana, Andersson, Gross et al. 2010). Low regulation allows education providers to deeply influence the competence development of their staff, since big part of their training takes place in the workplace (Statistics Sweden, 2009). Hence,
education providers have the right to shape the “new” profession of adult educators and mark their path towards professionalization.

Gaps related to adult educators, their competences on initial and continuing education, are not detected only in Sweden. European Commission recently financed a study attempting to define a framework of key competences for adult education sector professionals, which will serve as a reference point for further development of adult education sector. Carried out in 32 countries, the study was initiated by the diversity characterizing adult education as a field, a diversity that hampers the establishment of specialized training programs for adult educators, impeding the development of their profession (Buiskool et al., 2010). This increasing interest on the field combined with the unexplored aspects of it makes a comparative study a small, but contributory step in defining adult educators’ profession.

1.4 Limitations and delimitations

The current study is conducted within the context of a master course in International and Comparative Education and it serves as the master course dissertation. The research study is constituted of a conceptual and an empirical part. Consequently, the following limitations and delimitations should be acknowledged.

Firstly, Swedish adult education, although characterized by a long tradition, is still lowly regulated, especially in terms of adult educators and their desired competences. Therefore, the lack of a detailed legal framework for adult educators’ competences combined with the limited research done in the field in international level (Fejes et al., 2015) explains the relatively small availability of data for this study. The gap in theoretical approaches on the issue is covered by an international and comparative overview of the existing competence frameworks for the adult educators.

Secondly, among the basic traits of adult education sector in the European arena, diversity and variety are detected. Sweden constitutes a representative example too. While the responsibility of adult education is assigned to the municipalities, its provision is realized by numerous education providers, public or private, resulting in a non-homogenous education form. Swedish adult education is provided both in formal (Komvux, Särvx, SFI) and non-formal level (folkbildning) (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013). Nevertheless, the boundaries between them are blurring. Defined as structured and systematic form of learning, occurring in an organized environment, formal education aims to satisfy predetermined learning needs (OECD, 2000). In the case of Sweden though, non-formal adult education is realized in the same way and often covers the same learning needs and courses. What differentiates the two types of learning is the type of the education provider. While MAE (Komvux) was established in 1968 (Gougoulakis & Bron, 2011), Folkbildning (folkhögskolor) has a longer tradition, dating back to 1800, and is related to liberal education and popular movements (EAEA, 2011). As the main providers of the biggest part of adult education, which corresponds to basic and secondary education level, Komvux and Folkhögskolor have a considerable impact in defining adult educators’ profile and thus examining them is vital. The comparison of the study is constructed between these two different types of providers with aim to explore approaches for the professional profile of adult educators, whether through similarities or differences.

Thirdly, restricted access to resources is regarded as a vital limitation of the study. The time framework for the completion of the assignment was restricted to a period of
4 months. Moreover, the study targeted a specific group of stakeholders, namely Komvux and Folkhägskolor principals, and unfortunately very few potential participants were available to be interviewed, due to heavy workload. Consequently, the amount of participants is limited to 5, two principals of Komvux and three of Folk high schools. Finally, the author’s low level skills in the Swedish language constitutes an additional limitation, resulting in conducting the interviews in English. Participants not skilled in English were excluded. Despite of the language barrier, there were also participants that were not able to communicate clearly their thoughts or have not reflected on the topic under discussion.

Additionally, due to the voluntary work of adult educators work in some countries, it ought to be acknowledged that the current research study focuses on employed or to be employed adult educators and does not refer to volunteers (Buiskol et al, 2010). Moreover, the exploration of adult educators’ competences is limited to recruitment process and in-service training and other activities are not discussed by the participants.

Finally, with reference to methodological issues, by adopting a qualitative approach, the research findings cannot be generalized, since they only refer to the specific sample, especially considering the diversity of the adult education sector. According to Bryman (2012), interviews as a tool of a qualitative research are not expected to represent the entire population. On the contrary, the purpose of this study is to underline desired competences for adult educators contributing in creating the professional profile of Swedish adult educators.

The subjectivity of the researcher is another limitation, especially with regards to the analysis of the findings.

1.5 Structure of the study
This study is structured in six chapters, which complement each other, with aim to explore adult educators’ competence and present them through the eyes of principals’ of adult education institutions. While Chapter One is introductory, Chapter Two provides the reader with a conceptual framework, describing relevant concepts, like competences and professionalism, and followed by a presentation of the existing competences frameworks for adult educators and a comparison of them. Chapter Three informs about the methodological foundations of this study and Chapter Four presents and analyzes the data gathered through semi-structured interviews. Chapter Five includes a discussion of the findings adopting a critical perspective while comparing them in an attempt to identify similarities and differences of interest between the units of comparison. Finally, in Chapter Six there are the conclusions along with suggestions for future research.
Chapter Two: Conceptual framework of the study

In Chapter Two basic concepts related to the study are discussed with aim to offer deeper insight on the topic under investigation and full-fledged understanding. Consequently, competences are approached through various lenses in an attempt to be defined and adult educators’ role and professional profile are discussed through adult learning theory and previous literature.

2.1 Competences

Competence is a concept not originated in the education field. It has been used in many sciences, defined in various ways and always in relationship with the scientific locus of a specific field, but yet no single conceptual framework has been developed (Willbergh, 2015). Interpreting competence as “a roughly specialized system of abilities, proficiencies or skills that are necessary or sufficient to reach a specific goal” (Weinert, 2001, p. 45), we can assume that besides, the conceptual confusion, it is acknowledged that competence is a useful term, filling the existing gap between education and job requirements (Boon & var de Klink, 2000).

2.1.1 Competence: A wide variety of different definitions

The introduction of the term competence in the scientific discourse is credited to White (1959). In his article competence is used to describe performance motivation and it is perceived as an effective interaction between the individual and his environment. In “Testing for Competence Rather Than for Intelligence” (1973), McClelland attempted to develop tests aiming to predict competence, using competence as the characteristic trait that underlies superior performance. Measuring competence as better predictor of job performance, gradually replaced tests of cognitive intelligence (Pottinger and Goldsmith, 1979). Therefore, observing and comparing job performance was used to reveal characteristics that are related to successful performance and are described as competencies (Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist & Stringfellow, 2006).

In the forefront of competence-performance approach was Chomsky (1980), describing linguistic competence as the inherent ability to acquire the native language, distinguishing it from performance. This model was modified by Overton (1985), who added moderating variables, like cognitive style. Later on, developmental psychologists suggested conceptual competence, procedural competence and performance competency as the vital components of competence (Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist & Stringfellow, 2006). Management as an upcoming field introduced action competence, including “intellectual abilities, content-specific knowledge, cognitive skills, domain-specific strategies, routines and sub-routines, motivational tendencies, volitional control systems, personal value orientations, and social behaviours” (Boyatzis as cited in Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist & Stringfellow, 2006, p. 33). By adding competencies related to specific vocations or institutions, the focus moved from the psychological prerequisites leading to successful individual action to specific roles related conditions that ensure success in institutions or social groups. In that sense, competences are organized in a network that serves as a resource for achieving institution’s aims (Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist & Stringfellow, 2006)
In 1992, Walker suggested that competence is a set of “attributes (knowledge, skills and attitudes) which enable[s] an individual or group to perform a role or set of tasks to an appropriate level or grade of quality or achievement (i.e. an appropriate standard) and thus make the individual or group competent in that role” (as cited in Shukla, 2014). Gonzales and Wagenaar (2005 p. 9) defined competence as “a dynamic combination of cognitive and metacognitive skills, knowledge and understanding, interpersonal, intellectual and practical skills, and ethical values” highlighting the multifaceted nature of the term and creating a connection to professionalism. According to this approach, competence shares the essential elements of a profession, namely a clearly defined knowledge base, moral and ethical commitment as well as trend for continuous development (Pantić, 2011). Gonzales and Wagenaar’s definition stretch the same elements by referring to knowledge, ethical values and metacognitive skills respectively.

2.1.2 Competences in the European arena

The various historical paths that education systems have followed through years, along with different economic and other traditions, lead to subjective definitions of competence in different countries and consequently the adoption of different approaches (Robotham & Jubb, 1996; Cseh, 2003).

The UK is the pioneer in adopting the competent-based approach in vocational education, creating vocational qualifications, based on standards of competences as results of occupational analyses conducted in various contexts (Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist & Stringfellow, 2006). Hence, in the 1980s competence was discussed as the “ability to do a particular activity to a prescribed standard” (Working Group on Vocational Qualifications, 1986. p. 59 as cited in Tight, 1996) focusing on what individuals are capable of doing rather than on what they know. Competences were, thus, understood as performance criteria set by the employers (Hyland, 1994).

In the 2000s, France launched The Objectif competences initiative (MEDEF as cited in Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist & Stringfellow, 2006) providing detailed guidelines about the use of competences in enterprises. The French perspective is regarded as more comprehensive compared to the British, since it included knowledge, practical, social and behavioral competences. In Germany, the concept of qualifications, introduced in 1980s, referred to the ability of mastering concrete requirements and is still dominant in the working field (Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist & Stringfellow, 2006). Competence was further differentiated later, though, stylizing all aspects of training into independent competences. In 1960, Germany moved to an action competence approach, focusing on outcomes (competences) and curricula, rather than inputs (subjects) and skills content (Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist & Stringfellow, 2006).

Competence and competence development has been the locus of European Union’s policy making the last years, since the term has gradually replaced skills in various educational policy documents. In recent decades, many initiatives were supported in the effort to map competences and form frameworks that would clearly describe the competences of teaching professionals, like the Research voor Beleid report on adult education professionals (Buiskool et al., 2010) and European Commission’s Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes (2013). In addition, competence based occupational profiles have been promoted greatly among
EU member-states, often adopted by them (Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist & Stringfellow, 2006). This organized and purposeful attempt, combined with the strong influence of European Union’s policy constitute enough reasons to get a deeper insight in how EU defines and frames competences.

According to the European Commission, competence is a compound of skills, knowledge and attitudes (Buiskol et al., 2010) “which lead to effective, embodied human action in the world, in a particular domain” (Crick as cited in European Commission, 2013). Competences are perceived as a compound of “series of discrete tasks” and generic attributes, performed in a specific professional context (Buiskool & Broek, 2011, p. 42). Although this approach has been criticized as unilateral and simplistic (Jütte, Nicoll & Salling Olesen, 2011), examining the components of competences, as presented in the following figure may offer a complete view of the term.

![Figure 1. Components of competences according to EU](image)

Starting with knowledge, although hard to measure (Sveiby as cited in Hunt, 2003), it is perceived as an organized unit of information on a specific field, that includes “facts, concepts, ideas, principles, theories and practices” (Buiskool et al., 2010, p.10). Nevertheless, this definition can be regarded as oversimplified, since other EU bodies, define knowledge as something superior to intelligence or a body of information. Consequently, knowledge is the interaction between intelligence (the ability to learn) and situation (the chance to learn). Learning and knowledge, in this sense, are the outcomes of primary mental abilities combined with learning transfer capacity leading and the ability of knowledge acquisition (Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist, & Stringfellow, 2006). The interaction taking place between knowledge and skills increases the proceduralisation of knowledge, converting knowledge to skills (Klieme et al. as cited in Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist, & Stringfellow, 2006).

Secondly, skills are regarded as part of competences, defined as abilities “to perform complex acts with ease, precision and adaptability” (European Commission, 2013, p. 9), applying knowledge when needed (Buiskol et al., 2010). Skills are usually related to performance and more specifically accuracy and speed (skilled performance) (Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist, & Stringfellow, 2006). Proctor and Dutta (1995) provide us with the most authoritative definition of skill, describing it as goal-oriented and well-organized behavior, achieved through practice with thrift of effort. As goal oriented, skill corresponds to demands of external environment, it is acquired when behavior turns into structured patterns, while cognitive demands are gradually diminished, during the skill development process. The distinction between skills and competences is, therefore, clear when approaching skills as specific learned activities,
which focus on what an individual can do, while competences focus on how (Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist, & Stringfellow, 2006).

Finally, attitudes defined as “predisposition[s] or a tendenc[ies] to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation” (BusinessDictionary.com, 2017) are approached by European Commission as emotional and mental capacities, contributing to the successful performance of a task (Buiskool et al., 2010). The major components that attitudes are constituted of include emotions (affective), consciously made beliefs (cognitive), tendency for action (conative) and responses, whether positive or negative (evaluative) (BusinessDictionary.com, 2017).

2.1.3 Competences as fundamental elements of professionalization
Reflecting on competences in general, it is assumed that this new term serves as a bridge in the transition from education to the labor market. It is a term that attempts to cover this gap and simultaneously describe skills and knowledge acquired through education as well as indicate what is needed in the workplace. Therefore, competences become a vital component of the profile of a vocation and the path towards professional fulfillment.

Profession is a concept that has acquired different meanings in different contexts, thus defining professionalization and professionalism is a crucial part of this study. The process of originating a profession is called professionalization (Egetenmeyer & Käpplinger, 2011), whereas professionalism “focuses on the internal quality of a profession” (Gougoulakis & Bron, 2011, p. 6). In another perspective, “professionalism represents the precondition for a competent, specialized practice that takes place in a work context” (Milana et al., 2010, p. 9). Consequently, professionalization is the way to achieve professionalism. What constitutes this process, however, varies based on what is defined as a profession (Whitehead, 1933; West, 2003).

2.2 Professionalism and adult educators
Adult educators’ professionalism is currently under discussion, although it has not received the attention that other educational fields, like compulsory education, have. Lack of deep and broad investigation in the field is attributed to difficulties in defining the occupational borders of adult education, since there are still numerous adult educators that are volunteers or employed part time (Milana et al., 2010). Going through the literature on professionalization in adult education, it becomes clear that the locus is on people earning their living working in adult education and on ongoing professionalization processes in various countries, including professional paths of educators, research on certification systems or assessment of initial education preparing professionals for adult education. Therefore, literature recognizes and addresses professionalism, but it is rare that professionalism is defined or questioned. The reason behind this phenomenon is highly possible to be the fact that adult education as a professional field is connected with other occupations, like formal education or community service. Thus, it is crucial to examine it with reference to its historical path and current development stage (Milana & Skrypnyk, 2010).

According to Merriam and Brockett (2007), professionalism in adult education is a fact, since there are graduate programs ensuring high level study in adult education, there is relevant literature, and associations that introduce newcomers to the field and
offer opportunities for professional development. Although specific training, a knowledge base and participation in professional communities are considered traditional criteria to define the existence and development of a profession, the framework of Merriam and Brockett still raises issues critical to be discussed. In the first place, attention is drawn to professional development of adult educators through institutionalized adult education. Secondly, the existing specialized programs that have a focus on traditional adult education theories, risk to demote the need for non-conventional practices. This issue is also addressed. The same applies to literature, which often favors codified knowledge, rather than informal one when improvement is discussed. Finally, the role of professional associations is doubted, because although they are important socializing means, they entail the danger of creating elitist circles, when membership is low.

Similarly, in the European area adult education is spread far beyond full time employers’ activities, characterized by deregulation and diversity of providers and structures. Nuissl and Lattkle (2008) adopted an approach to professionalism of adult educators that emphasizes on performed activities and functions and not on occupational status. Their viewpoint highlighted the processes taking place during an activity, rather than contexts in which performances occur. This approach risks creating closed categorizations that may neglect cultural and geographical differences.

On the other hand, Bron and Jarvis (2008) do not recognize adult education practitioners as a profession in the traditional sense, but they suggest their addressing as role professionals. Through this approach adult educators can be related to other occupational groups in adult education field; however, they do not constitute a united group with reference to the specific profession of adult educator. According to Bron and Jarvis (2008), adult educators actually develop different identities related to the field of studies they are specialized in and the field of adult education, which serves as a common point of reference for them. This is not enough though to support professionalism in adult education, since the deep connection to the other occupational field may imply professional development through that profession.

Adult educators follow multiple paths in search for their professional identity and development. Thus, professional development is a slow, continuous process of personal improvement in order to serve efficiently a professional role (Berliner, 2001). For adult educators this process requires the “the acquisition of a specialised body of knowledge; the formation of personal teaching-learning theories grounded on both theoretical principles and the self-interpretation of one’s own practice; the construction of a professional identity” (Milana et al., 2010, p. 12), that are regarded as the basic qualities of their professionalism.

### 2.3 The adult educator: defined through an international perspective

The vocation of adult educator is neither constituted nor regulated in various European countries (Buiskool et al., 2010). Nevertheless, distinguishing adult educators from other professionals in the adult education field is vital, as their responsibilities and characteristics are different. In policy documents, numerous titles have appeared to describe the professional identity of adult educators, including trainers, mentors, instructors, training providers or teachers) (Kutsekinda, n.d.).
Despite of this plurality, the current study adopts adult educator in purpose as the valid term. Adults are individuals characterized by their organized interests, their different background and the potential and mentality that each one has. On the other hand, educator as a term is directly linked to education and thus some form of learning activity. However, since learning is not a quality transferable to others, individuals become subjects in determining their own learning path. Hence, adults cannot be educated by other individuals (Eesmaa, 2010). Thus, adult educators, in this case, are the “one[s] who help[s] adults learn” (Gougoulakis & Bron, 2011, p. 11).

Nowadays, adult educators’ role is no longer limited in teaching and teacher centered approach has been abandoned long ago. Adult educators’ role has been reshaped including their contribution in additional tasks, and more specifically educational planning, needs assessment, evaluation and learners’ support (Buiskool et al., 2010). Therefore, researching how their profile has been built over the years is of major importance.

2.3.1 Adult learning theories: an international dimension
Lifelong learning reflects the idea that learning happens throughout lifetime. However, does learning occur under the same circumstances and conditions during different age stages or considerable differences exist between different age groups? Although traditional learning psychology would argue “that there is nothing distinctive about the kind of learning undertaken by adults” (Rogers, 2003, p.7), part of the research community acknowledges important differences between adults’ and children’s learning (Illeris, 2010).

Social and emotional situations experienced by adults along with the biological capacity of learning, maturing from childhood to adulthood, constitute the sources of these differences (Illeris, 2010). Therefore, adults’ learning is self-directed and selective, in comparison to children’s learning that is confident and uncensored. More specifically, adults tend to learn only what they regard as meaningful, always relating the new information to prior knowledge or experience. Furthermore, they assume high responsibility on their education, while they struggle to learn things that they are not interested in (Illeris, 2007). Finally, learning takes places in multidisciplinary level, because they prefer general subjects rather than narrow topics (Clawson & Haskins, 2006).

The above mentioned characteristics combined with the harshening of differences among individuals accompanying aging (Clawson & Haskins, 2006) offer an explanation on why a single theory, applicable in every adult’s learning, does not exist (US Department of Education, 2011). For this reason, the present study reviews three major theories, aiming to adumbrate the profile of adult educators.

Andragogy – Malcolm Knowles
Andragogy defined as “the art and science of helping adults learn” compared to pedagogy or else “the art and science of teaching children”, was introduced by Malcolm Knowles and used to describe adult learning (Knowles 1984, as cited by US Department of Education, 2011, p. 19).

Knowles claimed that adult learners have a growing reservoir of experience, which serves as a resource for learning, while their motivation to learn is mainly internal. Among other characteristics, Knowles referred to self-concept, which describes the transition from dependency to self-directedness and volition towards learning when
one is assigned with new roles. Finally, another important shift is the transition from subject to problem centeredness, while knowledge application needs to be immediate (Knowles, 1980). Reflecting these principals, it is argued that adults are independent learners, who need to be aware of the purpose of learning. Adult learning effectiveness increases when problem-solving approach is adopted, while recognizing immediately the value of the acquired skill or knowledge also leads to successful learning (Knowles, 1980).

The mentioned traits indicate a special role for the adult educator, the role of a facilitator. Firstly, adult educators are expected to create a friendly climate, which promotes cooperation and facilitates learning. In addition, assessing the needs and interests based on the background of individual learners is also part of their responsibilities. Developing goals and objectives is the task that follows and constitutes important part of adult educator’s work, since it should derive from learners’ needs and occur in collaboration with them. Finally, adult educators are assigned with the task of designing activities, selecting methods and materials for the learning process, as well as evaluating it (Knowles, 1980; US Department of Education, 2011).

The theory of andragogy was criticized as oversimplified. Knowles had to revise his view and instead of presenting pedagogy and andragogy as diametrically opposite, approach them as “complementary poles on a continuum” (Brookfield, 2004, p.366). Moreover, andragogy received criticism for being culturally blind, because it neglects cultures and environments, where learning is approached differently than the average American (Brookfield, 2004). In this sense, the role of an adult educator may be approached from various perspectives, since a considerable part of the learning circumstances differs. For instance, cultures that respect teachers’ authority or favor silence, are highly possible to allocate more responsibilities on the teacher and less freedom on the learners (Brookfield, 2004). Besides the negative critique, though, andragogy is still used as a concept.

**Experiential Learning – David Kolb**

Experiential theory focuses on true experiences, which are set in the center of the learning process. With regards to experiential learning, two major views are expressed. According to the first school of thought, experiential learning as the key that allows individuals to apply newly acquired knowledge in relevant situations. Instructors are the guides of this process. On the other hand, there are scholars that approach experiential learning as a form of education which derives from individuals’ participation in everyday incidents (Houle as cited in Smith, 2001, 2010). Therefore, learning is through individual learners’ reflection on their own experiences (Smith, 2001, 2010). Kolb stood in favor of the later view and based his model on it.

Published in 1984, the experiential learning theory introduced a four-stages learning cycle, describing four distinct learning styles (US Department of Education, 2011). The four stages consist of concrete experience (learning by experiencing), reflective observation (critical thinking), abstract conceptualization (relating experience and theory) and finally active experimentation (testing new knowledge and skills).
The cycle starts at any stage, with the learners acting and observing the results of their actions. Through reflection and analysis of the situation, learners try to detect patterns and comprehend the principle under a specific instance (Kolb & Fry, 1975). Repeating actions in various circumstances, aiming to generalization, allows the construction of a general principle by the learner, which although not expressed abstractly, enhances the development of correlations between actions and consequences (Coleman as cited in Smith, 2001.2010). This newly acquired knowledge constitutes a new experience, which serves as a point of further reflection. This learning process repeatedly occurs throughout our lifetime (Clawson & Haskins, 2006).

Individuals have a specific preference regarding learning styles. The preference is based on how they respond, when approaching a task. According to Kolb (1983), the results are either responding by “doing” or “watching” or by “thinking” or “feeling”.

Combining the above mentioned reactions, the learning styles that emerge include:

- **Convergers** (Abstract conceptualization and active experimentation): Convergers react by thinking and doing. They are capable of practically applying ideas and act mostly unemotionally. Moreover, hypo-deductive reasoning and narrow interests are among their traits.

- **Divergers** (Concrete experience and reflective observation): Divergers respond by feeling and watching. Strong imagination and interest in other people as well as cultural issues characterize them. They have the ability of approaching a topic form different angles and generate ideas without difficulties.

- **Assimilators** (Abstract conceptualization and reflective observation): Assimilators focus on thinking and watching. They can easily form theories, since they are comfortable with inductive reasoning. They are interested in abstract ideas.
Accomodators (Concrete experience and active experimentation): Accomodator are the ones who act, thus doing rather than thinking. They usually take risks and can be efficient in emergencies, while their problem solving is instinct based (Kolb as cited in McLeod, 2013).

![Kolb's Learning Styles](http://www.learningexperience.org.uk/what-is-learning-from-experience/)

Learning styles are adult educators’ tool in the process of needs assessment and the development of further learning opportunities for individuals (McLeod, 2013). In this sense, adult educators are primarily designers and facilitators. They hold responsibility for designing activities applicable either for learning through experience or for testing new theory models. Moreover, their role includes the guidance of learners in detecting pertinent experiences, which should be used as reflection material, ensuring that learners have adequate time to process the information as well as prompting questions to support their reflection. Finally, adult educators present theory models to learners, with aim to stimulate comparisons and deduction of conclusions (Glaser & Roadcap, 2007).

Kolb’s learning theory was criticized, because the learning stages he suggested are argued to be more complex than Kolb’s neat presentation (Smith, 2001, 2010). Furthermore, processes are highly possible to occur simultaneously, while some stages may be missed (Forrest, 2004). According to Forrest (2004), the model is applicable only in Western context, since it is developed there, rising doubts about its applicability to other contexts. Additionally, Kelly (1997) argues that the results in Kolb’s inventory are limited. Learning style preferences are solely rated by the learners themselves and not through predefined standards. Finally, the model received severe critique about its weak empirical support (Jarvis, 1994).
Transformative learning - Jack Mezirow

“Learning can transform being”, according to Webster-Wright (2010, p. 189). Transformative learning, often described as a learning stimulus that provokes changes on learners’ perception of the world, refers to a shift of consciousness (Mezirow, 1996). However, many scholars have approached it from different perspectives. For instance, Freire (2000) highlighted its emancipating power. Due to plurality of definition, in this study transformative learning (TL) is approached as a critical reflection process focused on individuals’ beliefs and values, leading to changes in the way of thinking (Mezirow, 1996).

Transformative learning claims that individuals build frames of reference or in other words “structures of assumptions and expectations” (Taylor, 2008, p. 5) that are used to describe their view for the world. When a new incompatible experience appears and it does not fit in the existing frames, it is either rejected or the frame undergoes some transformation to espouse the new experience. Therefore, a new frame of reference is constructed. “It is the revision of a frame of reference in concert with reflection on experience that is addressed by the theory of perspective transformation—a paradigmatic shift.” (Taylor, 2008, p. 5).

Transformative learning, the most researched theory in the field of adult education, has also received criticism. As the rest learning theories for adults, it was characterized hyper-rational (Silver-Pacuilla as cited in US Department of Education, 2011) and was deprecated for neglecting the impact of race, gender and social status on teach (Taylor, 1998). Finally, emotions, culture and relationships were also not thoroughly examined since the locus was in cognitive learning (Taylor, 1997). Hence, TL has had a considerable effect on adult educators’ role and profile.

According to TL theory, adult educators should construct an environment where learning is promoted. In other words, their role is to motivate and encourage active participation, support and promote diversity, cooperation and autonomous critical thinking, additionally to stimulating learners’ critical reflection. Adult educator in the role of the facilitator or provocateur “models the critical reflective role expected of learners” and attempts transferring leadership to the group by decreasing his/her authority (Mezirow, 1997, p. 11). Furthermore, educators are expected to know their students’ background and be able to identify their special needs and learning styles (US Department of Education, 2011). This can enhance the design of learning activities that would be attractive and meaningful for them. Needs assessment and designing discovery learning are vital. Along with setting objectives and providing equal opportunities for learning constitute the main tasks allocated to adult educators (Mezirow, 1997). Finally, educators are assigned with the responsibility to select materials and methods, while during the learning process, they ought to guide learners from recognizing and comprehending an experience till the full creation and test of a new frame (Mezirow, 1997). In other words, “the educator’s responsibility is to help learners reach their objectives in such a way that they will function as more autonomous, socially responsible thinkers.” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 8).

Critical Discussion

According to human capital theory, the human potential can be both developed and possessed, thus individuals have a crucial role on their own development (Mohorcic Špolar & Holford, 2014). Adult learning theories reinforce this idea and set the learner in the center of the learning process, redefining the authority and the role of the adult educator. From an actor with major authority, adult educator has gradually
turned to a facilitator and designer of the learning process. From being the main source of information, adult educator was transformed into a supporter and provocateur of the learning process, assisting and leading learners to learning rather than plainly delivering new knowledge. However, this gain of authority by learners, instead of decreasing adult educators’ responsibilities, actually increased them. Nevertheless, the focus was moved from teaching to providing an environment that fosters learning.

Reflecting on the adult learning theories, the role of adult educator is approached in a similar way by all three of them, while no clear reference on the necessary competences is made. The theories adopt a task-oriented and a learner-centered approach, which with regards to adult educators, fails to define a set of formal qualification framework. The necessity of a formal framework is vital for the development of training modules, though, in order to educate prospective educators in adult learning and, thus, raise the quality of their skills, leading to a higher level of professionalism.

The need to address the role of adult educators is highlighted by the multiple attempts to formulate a competence framework for these professionals. These modern frameworks create a theoretical basis for further researching adult educators’ competences and are indicative of the trends in the field.

2.3.2 Adult educators’ competences: the existing frameworks

The importance of competences frameworks has been acknowledged both in the European context as well as in the American one, judging by the funding support that related projects have received. Competences frameworks have various implications in national level, institutional and individual level. Setting the locus on national level, the use of competences frameworks assists the development of professional standards or serves as a basis for certification of professional adult educators. In institutional level and with reference to principals’ role and obligations, frameworks of competences allow the development of job descriptions and may serve as an agenda for making the final hiring decisions. In terms of internal evaluation, competences can be applied as an assessment tool, evaluating the current situation and assessing the need for further professional development. Finally, as a common framework of reference competences can facilitate better communication between different adult education professionals, always aiming to development of more efficient and apt programs (Sherman et al., 1999).

Reviewing the relevant research activity, the following projects have been selected as massive impact studies that resulted in competence frameworks for adult educators. They include:

- **PRO-NET - Building Professional Development Partnerships in Adult Education**: Founded by the United States Department of Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, this project constitutes a multi-year procedure towards the development of adult educators’ competences and indicators for assessing the effectiveness of adult education programs. The framework of competences created is a result of field-based process that took into consideration the input of over 300 adult educators and program administrators from all over the United States, while adult learners were also involved (Sherman et al., 1999).
• **Adult education teacher competencies:** Developed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), in collaboration with the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education of the U.S. Department of Education, Adult education teacher competencies is part of the Promoting Teacher Effectiveness in Adult Education Project. It constitutes a structured approach, which determines knowledge and skills that are expected of adult educators and suggests activities aimed at their professional development (AIR, 2015).

• **VINEPACK:** The VINEPAC project aims at designing instruments for validating competences of adult educators in European countries. Part of it is Validpack, an instrument developed in 2008, which includes various validation instruments and introduces a framework for documenting and evaluating the competences of adult educators (IREA, 2008).

• **QF2TEACH - Qualified to Teach:** University departments and other research bodies specialized in adult education collaborated in QF2Teach project aiming to define the core competencies of adult learning facilitators. Representatives of eight European countries realized a Delphi study that was based on the evaluation and the views of a selected group of experts. An additional aim was the determination of a set of measurable qualifications that would enable cross-national comparisons (Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009).

• **Key competences for adult learning professionals** (research voor Beleid report): Founded by the European Commission this report was the result of an attempt to develop a framework of key competencies of professionals in adult education. Going through competence identification, modeling and assessment the study resulted in generic and specific competences (Buiskool et al., 2010).

**Comparing the frameworks**

There is small number of research studies realized in adult education sector, especially with reference to adult educators and their competences. However, the development of the field and the importance it is gradually gaining highlights the necessity for more and deeper research (Research voor Beleid, Plato, 2008).

Reviewing the literature, there are different ways of approaching the same issue, the professionalization of adult educators. Some studies discuss the improvement of the profession through initial or further education (AGADE, EMAE, VINEPAC), whereas some others put the locus in careers paths and working conditions (ALPINE). Another approach, though, includes investigation of the necessary competences in the field and coincides with the research questions of the present study.

The five projects mentioned above have adopted this later approach and investigated extensively the competences of adult educators. It is, thus, assumed that they all share the same purpose, to create a framework of visible and transferable competences that will contribute in quality enhancement of adult education, through enabling the professionalization of adult educators (Shanahan, Meehan, & Mogge, 1994). Either through presenting the “ideal adult educator” or by trying to identify the existing competences in the arena of adult education, they all result in a coherent framework that describes the knowledge, skills and attitudes of adult educators as professionals. What differentiate them is the classification of competences and the group of professionals that is apt to use them.

Regarding the broader categorization of competences, all five frameworks include assessment and monitoring the learning process, design and implementing learning
activities and motivating and guiding learners in various stages and issues. In addition, continuous professional development of adult educators is vital part in every of them, while knowledge involves awareness of the learning needs of adults, characteristics of the group of learners and of course content knowledge in the specialized area. Knowledge is not clearly stated as a competence in the Research voor Beleid report, nevertheless it is mentioned as requirement of achieving other competences. Finally, despite the Research voor Beleid report, the rest are detailed, suggesting important competences, indicators and sample illustration for the competences they describe.

**Knowledge**

Under the title of knowledge different frameworks list different competences. Content area knowledge is, though, included in all of them. Content area knowledge is related to the creation of a knowledge base on the subject, while an adult educator should be capable not only of acquiring this knowledge but also of applying any specialized teaching method. Nearly all frameworks refer to acquisition of adult learning theory, while although implied in adult learning theory they stress even more the importance of being aware of the psychosocial profile and background of the group of learners. In addition, according to PRO-NET framework, methods of instruction for adults with learning disabilities or other special needs is a vital competence. Furthermore, knowledge on integrating technological system and the ability to access information about the learning institution is regarded as need by the same framework (Sherman et al., 1999).

![Knowledge](image)

**Figure 4. Knowledge related competences for adult educators**

In PRO-NET (Sherman et al., 1999) and Adult education teacher competencies (AIR, 2015) framework knowledge constitutes part of one category, which involves knowledge maintenance and development along with professional development. That reveals a slight differentiation between the American and the European approach.

**Personal professional development**

Personal professional development is indisputably part of each framework. With reference to this field, adult educators are expected to be able to assess their learning needs and the existing opportunities for further learning, including involvement in professional networks and learning communities. Based on these needs, their personal experience and their self-reflection and evaluation, they should proceed to their development actions that can either take place in individual or collegial level, always monitoring the whole process. Incorporating new skills and knowledge as well as
being involved in the improvement of the educational programs are suggested as significant competences of this field. Finally, there are some competences that serve mostly as prerequisites for achieving professional development. More specifically, interest in further development and personal commitment, along with creativity, flexibility, self-assurance and accepting criticism are valued and desired too (Sherman et al., 1999; IREA, 2008; Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009; Buiskol et al., 2010; AIR, 2015).

Assessment

Assessment is a major task of adult educators and it includes a variety of subtasks that are necessary during the learning process. Besides, evaluation of any stage or overall evaluation indicates success or need for improvement. Needs assessment is highlighted in all frameworks. In other words, detecting learners’ needs and prior knowledge is vital, especially in designing a learning path attractive for them. Moreover, continuous monitoring through assessment data, which derives from various assessment strategies, is a complex and vital competence for adult educators (Sherman et al., 1999; IREA, 2008; Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009; Buiskol et al., 2010; AIR, 2015). Suggested in exactly the same way by two frameworks, namely VALIDPACK and PRO-NET, in order for adult educators to be competent as evaluators, they need to engage the learners in reflection and self-assessment and collaborate with them aiming to identify their strengths, to set their goals and to review their educational plans. Furthermore, assessment should be both summative and formative and always data based, so the instruction undergoes changes if needed (Sherman et al., 1999; IREA, 2008).

A striking similarity, with reference to assessment, is that VALIDPACK and PRO-NET approach this competence with the exact same way, while VALIDPACK adds qualitative methods in learners’ progress valorization. On the other hand, QF2Teach refers to the competence as “Learning process analysis” (Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009, p.41), which although composed by monitoring, evaluation and needs assessment, it does not provide further details on how this should be achieved.

Design and implementation of the learning process

As already mentioned design is closely related to evaluating and identifying learners’ needs. Based on these, all frameworks agree in the necessity of establishing a learning environment characterized by diverse learning styles and various learning opportunities that respect diversity and correspond to a wide needs spectrum. A learner-centered approach is quite often addressed as another trait of this environment, along with flexibility between individual and group learning. Regarding aims, adult educators should reassure that they include technological literacy, development of higher-order thinking and problem solving as well as communication skills. Furthermore, lesson or individual study plans should be consistent with the general aims and mission of the program too (Sherman et al., 1999; IREA, 2008; Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009; Buiskol et al., 2010; AIR, 2015). Teaching methods should be in agreement with the way adults learn, sequencing and pacing the lessons appropriately, whereas technological resources should be involved in the learning process, according to some frameworks (Sherman et al., 1999; IREA, 2008; AIR, 2015).

In this field, PRO-NET and Adult education teacher competencies seem to be more detailed once more, breaking down what other frameworks present as “prepare the
training” (IREA, 2008, p. 36) and “deliver formation program” (IREA, 2008, p. 38) or “tailor teaching” (Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009, p. 40).

**Counseling and support**
The “competence in advising on career, life, further development and, if necessary, the use of professional help” describes the role of an adult educator as a counselor or advisor (Buiskol et al., 2010, p. 13). Other frameworks additionally suggest the provision of multiple educational resources, the support of informal learning and the guidance in developing and reviewing learners’ study plans (Sherman et al., 1999; IREA, 2008; Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009; AIR, 2015).

Once more VALIDPACK and PRO-NET have the same approach on the competences related to this area.

**Motivation**
Motivation is an area that is part of all frameworks but listed under different categories. Sometimes it is included in support and counseling and, thus, approached in the same way as them. Nevertheless, QF2Teach and *Adult education teacher competencies* add clear and effective communication as well as communication of high expectations and motivation towards their achievement as competences related to motivation. Furthermore, engagement in active listening, dialogue and questioning, along with inspiring learners are regarded as parts of adult educators’ competence to motivate and engage learners (Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009; AIR, 2015).

Besides the common themes detected in the frameworks, there is also some interesting dissimilarity noticed. Beginning with *Promoting Teacher Effectiveness in Adult Education Project*, it describes the “ideal” adult educator, while PRO-NET constitutes an attempt to set some national standards that would apply in all the American states, since the activity of developing frameworks on different states has been increasing. In addition, PRO-NET is the only project that refers to the management of instruction resources as a distinguished category of competences. That category involves all kind of resources, like time, humans and print material, but also refers to the use of technology in the teaching process. The choice of categorizing these competences separately indicates the distinct importance they receive.

Furthermore, the QF2Teach framework demonstrates some interesting variations. By introducing two categories that do not exist apart in other frameworks, namely, *Group Management and Communication* and *Self-competence*, it sets the locus on the teaching role of the adult educator. A general focus on personal values and development is noticed, since categories like *Self-Competence* and *Personal Professional Development* are detailed and precise, while skills or attitudes in the form of *be*, like “be attentive” or “be empathetic” are included in the 9th key competence, named as *Assistance of Learners* too (Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009, p. 41). Hence, the whole approach seems to perceive the educator more as a teacher and learning facilitator, rather than a program developer, a competence that is lacking from the framework at least in the degree and intensity it appears in other frameworks. For instance, the Research voor Beleid report stretches this role by the B6 “Competence in designing and constructing study programmes: being a programme developer” (Buiskol et al, 2010, p.13). On the other hand, Validpack is more focused on the role of adult educator as a guide.
Reflecting on the frameworks, it should be acknowledged that each study has contributed in adult educators’ profession in a considerable degree. Differences detected are probably linked to variation of aims or contexts that the studies took place in. However, it is their similarities that are of importance at this stage. As part of the literature they underline some areas that adult educators are expected to be competent no matter the circumstances. These consist of assessing and monitoring of the learning process, design and implementation of learning programs, support, motivating and counseling for learners, as well as pursuing professional development and acquiring the necessary knowledge. But since an individual competent in all of them would rather be a “super human” (European Commission, 2013), it is vital to investigate how they are prioritized in different setting. In the current study this setting is the Swedish reality of adult education.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter Three offers a detailed presentation about the methodology that was applied in the study with reference to research strategy and design, research methods, sampling design and selection process, analytical framework, trustworthiness criteria and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Strategy and Design

The current study constitutes an attempt to highlight the “complexity of reality” (Strauss, 1987), by particularizing the object under discussion, namely adult educators’ competences. Taking into consideration the research questions along with the objectives set for this study, the research strategy chosen is a qualitative one. Offering the advantage of flexibility, qualitative research is suggested for investigating topics characterized by diversity and interdisciplinarity, which in this case refers to education overlapping with human resources (Cars, 2006).

Furthermore, examining the rationales behind preference over some competences demands a qualitative approach. Consequently, semi-structured interviews have been selected. Qualitative strategy is regarded as appropriate to provide with a deeper insight of the reasons behind selection of specific competences, correlating competences’ significance with the overall philosophy of the institution. The advantage of qualitative research to set the locus on social processes (Bryman 2012), gives prominence to the emergence of fostered competences.

Theory and findings are related through an inductive perspective in the present study. The inductive approach is initiated with observations or findings, leading to the formulation of theories as the outcome of the research process (Goddard and Melville, 2004). In this case, the trailhead of the research path is the detection of the key competences, whereas the findings would be used in an attempt to construct part of adult educators’ professional profile, through defining the most desired competences among them in Swedish adult education. The absence of a legal framework combined with the low regulation of the profession and the provision of limited higher education programs, which qualify adult educators (Milana et al., 2010), renders the deductive approach less congruent.

Since “social reality has a meaning for human beings and therefore human action is meaningful”, individuals “act on the basis of the meanings that they attribute to their acts and to the acts of others” (Bryman, 2012, p. 30). Therefore, the role of the researcher is to access the views of individuals, in our case principals, and attempt to interpret their actions. The researcher adopts an interpretivist and constructionist epistemology, due to aiming at critically analyzing social reality as interpreted and constructed by the individuals involved in it.

The research design regarded as appropriate for the topic is the comparative study. The scientific method defined as comparison is a research approach, “in which two or more cases are explicitly contrasted to each other regards to a specific phenomenon or along a certain dimension, in order to explore parallels and differences among the cases” (Azarian, 2011, p. 113). By contrasting different cases, better understanding of social phenomena is guaranteed (Bray et al., 2007; Bryman, 2012).

Having a deeper insight is the case of Sweden, a pioneer in adult education, and more specifically in the variety of competences that may be regarded as preferable among...
different types of education providers is needed, especially because of the lack of regulatory framework in relation to adult educators’ competences. Deriving from the Bray cube, the units of comparison are adult education organizations (Bray et al., 2007). Regarding the aspects of education, the focus is set on adult educators’ competences and the rationale of particularly fostering some of them. In the end, adult educators are selected as the non-locational demographic group, since their profile is under investigation.

Comparative design offers the advantage of revealing and “explain[ing] differences across apparently similar units” (Azarian, 2011, p. 118). In other words, a micro level comparison, between two different types of educational providers, allows an emphasis on the role they display in the fostering of specific competences of adult educators (Dimmock, 2007). The current study attempts to perform a variation finding comparison, (Tilly, 1984), by seeking for systematic differences between the units of comparisons. The overall aim is to establish a variation principle.

Notwithstanding, the outcome of comparison cannot be generalized, neither in other countries nor types of educational providers. Therefore, the study is characterized by low external validity, due to the fact that the findings cannot be regarded as valid in any other context. In addition, the relatively small size of the sample is a further argument for limited transferability (Bryman, 2012).

3.2 Research Methods

Having adopted a qualitative approach, the research methods applied to meet the objectives are summarized in literature review, document analysis and interviews.

In the first place, literature review is performed in order to “specify[ing] what is already known in connection with the research topic, so that research questions can be identified that the reviewer will then examine” (Bryman, 2012, p.111). In addition, the method offers the chance to acquire a complete view of the existing research findings, adding an international dimension to the topic. In a previous stage the researcher conducted a systematic review, in search for what is known in the field of adult education. That served as the basis for this master dissertation. Consequently, literature review on this study refers to the international discourse for adult education and is narrative, because it tries “to arrive at an overview of a field of study through a reasonably comprehensive assessment and critical reading of the literature” (Bryman, 2012, p. 102). The literature used consists of books, journal articles, reports and policy documents.

Secondly, document analysis is engaged with aim to formulate the background of the study offering reliable information about the framework for adult educators’ competences from an international perspective. These documents include official publications of international organizations (UNESCO, OECD, Commission of European Communities, Council of European Union, US Department of Education) that in some cases serve as guidelines for adult education institutions and their development. Moreover, legislative official documents of the Swedish state are analyzed trying to define adult education and adult educators’ competences in Sweden.

Part of the document analysis constitutes the review of the previous research in relation to adult educators’ competences and the comparison among the existing competence frameworks, which include PRO-NET - Building Professional
Development Partnerships in Adult Education (Sherman et al., 1999), Adult education teacher competencies (AIR, 2015), VINEPACK (IREA, 2008), QF2TEACH - Qualified to Teach (Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009) and Key competences for adult learning professionals (Buiskol et al., 2010). These studies were analyzed and compared leading to six competence areas that appear in all of them and compose the professional profile of an adult educator.

For the collection of data presented at the empirical part of the study, semi-structured interviews, with principals of adult education institutions have been chosen. Data deriving from interviews is considered as “the product of a dynamic dialogue through the constructive collaboration of interviewer and interviewees concerning the topic in which the interviewer is interested” (Cars, 2006, p. 77). In that sense, interviews are used to explore desired adult educators’ competences, along with the rationale behind the preference over them. Semi-structured interviews are selected, because the less structured an interview is, the greater flexibility it offers, contributing to highlighting the complexity of the situation (Cars, 2006). Developing an interview guide is among the first steps while preparing for conducting interviews (Bryman, 2012). As estimated while designing the guide the interviews mainly lasted 30 minutes.

Semi-structured interviews include different kinds of questions, namely descriptive, structural and contrast, mainly open ended questions, with aim to capture the principals’ views and the rationale behind them (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Interviews are considered an appropriate tool for indicating what the interviewees perceive as important, drawing the attention on these themes (Bryman, 2012). This function of interviews perfectly applies to the current study, due to the topic under research, the impact of major stakeholders, like adult education institutions principals, in the formation of competence profile of adult educators. The themes used in the semi-structured interviews are desired competences of adult educators during the recruitment process and the in-service training. The processes are chosen as vital points in the procedure of the determining the professional identity of adult educators, firstly due to the legislative ambiguity on adult educators’ eligibility (Ministry of Education and Research, 1977) and secondly to the significance of in-service training in professional development.

Moreover, the interviews are conducted in English, since the researcher is not able to speak Swedish with proficiency. Although English is a language widely spoken and an international means of communication, the fact that it is the mother tongue neither of the researcher nor the interviewees should be taken into consideration. In order to overcome the language barrier, the researcher had thoroughly informed the interviewees for the interviews’ topics in advance, allowing reflection and preparation for expression. Moreover, interviewees were informed that if they wanted to add something that could not express in English, they could send written information in Swedish with anonymity reassured.

Last but not least, the interviews have been recorded and transcribed, and they served as the basis of a deep and full-fledged analysis.
3.3 Sampling Design and Selection Process

Based on the comparative design selected for the study, two levels of sampling are required, namely sampling of context and sampling of participants. As Bryman points out (2012), sampling of context takes place prior to the sampling of participants as a qualitative strategy widely used.

Investigating adult educators’ profile and the competences it is constructed of, it is crucial to select a unit of analysis with a considerable impact on its formation. In the Swedish case, the legal framework for adult educators is not strictly defined (Milana et al., 2010), thus education providers have freedom on making decisions about the competences adult educators should have. Hence, institutions that provide education are the units of comparison selected and they compose the context sample of the study. More specifically, the two types of education providers chosen are Komvux, municipal adult education centers, and Folk high schools, institutions with long tradition that offer formal and non-formal adult education respectively. While both providing free of charge general courses for compulsory and upper secondary education level, these education providers differ in the form of education they offer and the degree of freedom they enjoy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Komvux (Municipal adult education)</th>
<th>Folk high school (Popular adult education)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funded by the municipalities</td>
<td>Funded by the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated by the municipalities</td>
<td>Regulated by county councils or regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrally established curricula</td>
<td>Freedom in curriculum development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal teacher qualifications</td>
<td>Formal teacher qualification not required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specialized university programs (teacher training for secondary education level)</td>
<td>Specialized folk high school teacher training (60 ECTS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal learning</td>
<td>Combination of formal and non-formal learning activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management in collaboration with the municipalities</td>
<td>Self-management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In short, Komvux is a formal education provider, strictly regulated in terms of curricula and eligibility criteria for their students, while they are funded by the municipalities. Formal teaching qualifications are required for educators to be employed in these institutions. However, formal teacher training for adult educators does not exist and teachers get qualified by attending general teacher programs in higher education. On the other hand, folk high schools with a long tradition in Swedish adult education are related to popular movements and country councils or regions are responsible for them. State funded, the folk high schools do not follow centrally established curricula and eligibility criteria are broader. Folk high school
pedagogical approach combines formal learning with non-formal social activities, focusing both in learning outcomes and learners’ personal development. Furthermore, this approach suggests different learning speed, thus folk high schools’ general courses last longer than the same ones offered in Komvux. Finally, formal teacher qualifications are not required for employment, although there is specialized folk high school teacher program offered by Linkoping University (Milana et al., 2010).

The comparison hopes to either detect differences between them, or to use their similarities in an attempt to form a general model of competences for adult educators. Regarding the sampling of participants, principals of the institutions or other employees with high influence in the processes of recruitment or in-service training are recruited for the research.

The units of comparison have been selected through generic purposive sampling, according to which sampling occurs “in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed” (Bryman, 2012, p. 418). Therefore, selection criteria precede the data collection, resulting in the purposive sample consisting of principals of adult education centers. Principals are selected because of their role in fostering competences through decision making. In addition, they are able to offer explanations on the reasons behind competences preference, answering the third research question. Selection criteria for this sample include employment in Komvux or Folk high school, holding the position of principal or general manager.

In terms of feasibility, the size of the sample is small with aim to be manageable regarding the time limits for conducting the study and offering the chance for a thorough view of both and the reasons for their preference (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, as cited in Bryman, 2012). During the designing of the study the researcher planned to involve 12 adult education centers (6 Komvux and 6 Folk high schools). However, recruiting participants proved very hard. Therefore, 5 adult education institutions are finally included in the study, 2 Komvux center and 3 Folk high schools. The schools operate in Stockholm, however, the areas they are located vary in purpose, aiming to achieve both homogeneity (urban centers) and heterogeneity (mix of different areas with different socio cultural population background). The interviews conducted with principals are 5 in total, one per institution. The following table presents the participants for each education provider.

Table 2. Number of participants from each type of education provider

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of provider</th>
<th>Number of principals interviewed</th>
<th>Gender of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Komvux</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk high schools</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Analytical Framework
The analysis varies in the different stages of data collection. In the first place, document analysis takes place, analyzing previous research studies related to adult educators’ competences. In this stage, the research performs a quantitative content analysis, seeking “to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner” (Bryman, 2012, p. 289). In our case, these refer to a variety of competences.

Previous research projects on adult educators’ competences are not only analyzed but also compared. Based on Bereday’s (as cited in Manzon, 2007, pp. 86-87) comparative analysis, which is a four-step analysis method (see figure), description, interpretation, juxtaposition and comparison of the frameworks is performed.

Therefore, a short description of each framework is presented, followed by a juxtaposition and comparison of the competences suggested by them. In our case, interpretation of each framework separately is not regarded as necessary, since this occurs in the studies that provide the frameworks. Convergences and divergences between the frameworks are detected and highlighted preparing the reader for the nature of the findings of the present study.

![Figure 5. Bereday’s Model for Undertaking Comparative Studies](image)

Reprinted from *Comparative Education Research: Approaches and Methods* (p.86) by Bray M., Adamson B. & Mason M., 2007, Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong.

With reference to the data deriving from the semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis is applied. Offering the advantage of identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data, thematic analysis is commonly engaged in qualitative research, since it facilitates detailed organization of the data and full-fledged interpretation of topic aspects (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Hence, it is a suitable method that assists the transition from the general picture of the data to the detection of themes among it.
A theme is defined as a category identified by the analysts “that provides the researcher with the basis for a theoretical understanding of his or her data that can make a theoretical contribution to the literature relating to the research focus.” (Bryman, 2012, p. 580). The themes deriving from the data can be summarized on desired competences during the recruitment phase and desired competences during the designing and implementation of in-service training. Subthemes include necessary and preferred competences in one hand and the reasons behind this preference or necessity on the other. The above mentioned themes and subthemes have served as the basis for the formulation of the interview guide and are they are in absolute agreement with the research questions.

Although the analysis is thematic, the presentation of the findings takes place through providing the “portraits” of the interviewees in the first place, followed by internal comparison of the various cases among the units of comparison, and completed by a final comparison between the units of comparison which are different types of educational providers or else Komvux or Folk high schools. The overall aim is to highlight the principals’ view on adult educators’ competences by seeking for similarities and differences within their views. Bereday’s model for undertaking comparative studies is, thus, applied again, this time with all its four-steps as shown in the figure below.

---

**Figure 6. Model for comparing interviews’ findings**

Inspired from *Comparative Education Research: Approaches and Methods* (p.86) by Bray M., Adamson B. & Mason M., 2007, Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong.
3.5 Trustworthiness Criteria

According to Bryman (2012), validity and reliability are vital components of quality research. Defined as a “concern with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research” (Bryman, 2012, p.717), validity in the present study mostly focuses on internal validity, perceived as a fundamental element in qualitative research approach (LeCompte & Goetz 1982 as cited in Bryman, 2012).

Internal validity, reassured when researcher’s observations and theoretical ideas developed by them match (LeCompte & Goetz 1982 as cited in Bryman, 2012), is supported in the current study by the selection of open questions and face to face interviews. The researcher’s intent is to improve the possibilities of understanding the interviewees’ answers. Unfortunately, external validity or transferability is regarded as low, since the findings are valid only in the context of the study and cannot be generalized (Bryman, 2012). Furthermore, the restricted amount of interviews (5) constitutes an additional hinder to higher external validity.

With aim to cover this inadequacy, the researcher has performed extensive research on previous studies related to the topic and was lead to a comparison of the preexisted frameworks of adult educators’ competences. Gathering and comparing five major projects the researcher attempted to find competence areas that may emerge from the findings. Moreover, in case the findings are not considered adequate to provide the reader with a full picture of adult educators’ profile, the outcome of the framework comparison can compensate for this lacuna.

In addition, more than one method, namely document analysis and semi-structured interviews, have been engaged in order to raise the quality of the findings. Nevertheless, replicating the study and observing the same findings is unlikely to happen resulting to low external reliability. This is an issue faced in many qualitative studies according to LeCompte and Goetz because “it is impossible to ‘freeze’ a social setting and the circumstances of an initial study to make it replicable” (as cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 390).

With reference to internal reliability, the researcher intended to use job descriptions formed by the adult education institutions to crosscheck the findings from the interviews, however, they were not available in any of the cases. Besides this, the interview guide is included in the appendix.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

Ethics, defined as the intent to avoid harming the people involved in a research study (Cars, 2006) consist of four main areas of consideration. Thus, harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception are discussed in relation to the current study (Bryman, 2012, p. 135).

Beginning with, confidentiality and anonymity are regarded as highly important (Bryman, 2012). Although all the interviewees have been positive in allowing the researcher use both their names and the names of their institutions in the dissertation, they have been assured that personal information will not be accessible to others than the researcher or presented in public. Hence, neither the names of the participants nor of the organizations are stated, whereas the researcher will put the highest effort to reassure confidentiality. Instead of the real names pseudonyms are used for the interviewees and their schools. In addition, information for the institutions derives
mostly by their websites, which are not included in the references for reassuring anonymity.

Moreover, the informed consent of the participants is vital. Even “[i]n voluntary inquires, subjects should not be under the impression that they are required to participate” (Bryman, 2012, p.138). Thus their consent must be a free choice. In order to avoid deception, potential participants should have complete information about the study. This information consists of the significance of the study for the participants, the researcher’s background, the research study content and the data collection methods (Bryman, 2012) and is send via email. More specifically along the above mentioned information the researcher has provided the interviewees with the interview guide to encourage reflection on the topic in advance and have more input to discuss during the interviews. Due to the various interpretations that “fully informed” can acquire (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012), the researcher has been eager to provide more information after request. Finally, signing of consent forms has not been necessary since the participants did not consider it necessary.
Chapter Four: Data analysis and findings

Chapter Four constitute the empirical part of the study. It starts with a review of the Swedish adult education system, with aim to provide the reader with the contextual framework of the research and the findings of the interviews conducted follow, highlighting the principals’ views on adult educators’ competences and answering the research questions.

4.1 The Swedish adult education system

4.1.1 Historical review or towards decentralization

Despite Sweden’s long tradition in lifelong learning, including the introduction of notions like popular education (folkbildning) or study circles (Gougoulakis & Christie, 2012), adult education raised discussion in Swedish political scene around 1960s. As a new concept, adult education was approached as the means to offer a second chance to adults, who had not completed their basic education. The “educational reserve” of adults as named by Rubenson (2001, p.330), had this second chance through Municipal Adult Education (MAE), which was established in the 1967 and was part of the public sector.

The 1960s reforms were deeply influenced from human capital theory (Rubenson, 2001). The Swedish population displayed low level of educational attainment, which in comparison to the rapidly increasing needs of the labor market, raised concerns on the quality of education. By that time, adult education’s role was principally compensatory to the various inequalities the formal school system provoked. However, the existing school system was characterized as insufficient, thus a new provider should be found to achieve this aspiration (Rubenson, 2001; Jelenc Krašovec, 2010). Consequently, authority started being transferred from the state to municipalities, presaging decentralization and signifying the beginning of a different era in adult education in Sweden.

The education policy and governing in Sweden were highly centralized until the late 1970s, since national curricula and state defined syllabi regulated the learning process (Loeb, 2007). Around the early 1980s, though, various governing mechanism begun to forfeit authority (Loeb, 2007). At the same time, governance based on results was introduced in an attempt to overcome state’s monopoly in provision of education (Lundahl, Arreman, Holm & Lundström, 2013). By establishing Civialdepartementet in 1982, an entity that promoted devolution and deregulation, the decentralization process had started. Learners along with teachers were allowed to negotiate for the learning content, according to the new MAE curriculum, but MAE retained some of its past traits until 1991 (e.g. state funding and detailed curricula) (Loeb, 2007).

From 1990 to 1997 Sweden experienced the actual transition from a centralized to a decentralized system, whilst the country’s affiliation in the EU (1995) emphasized the role of lifelong learning (Abrahamsson, 2001; Lundahl et al., 2013). The problem of increasing unemployment in the beginning of the 1990s (Forslund, 1995; Holmlund, 2003) demanded immediate action, so adult education was assigned with this millstone. The government bill of 1990/91 ended state regulation over education. By restricting state’s role to the provision of educational goals and frameworks, the responsibility for implementation was allotted to municipalities (Prop., 1990/91: 18, p.17), leading to decentralization. The “school development agreement” of 1995,
extended teachers’ responsibilities and appraised autonomy of schools in local level (Carlgren & Klette, 2008).

The following period was characterized by the Adult Education Initiative (AEI) (1997). This five-year national program supported financially the municipalities with SEK 3 billion (EUR 345.502.706) (Boström, Boudard & Siminou, 2001), in order to engage 100,000 students in full time study programs per year (Loeb, 2007). The program aimed at reducing unemployment and educational divisions, improving adult education in general and facilitating economic growth.

Nevertheless, many perceive this transition as a direct impact of neoliberal ideas that were suggested and promoted through European Commission’s Memorandum on Lifelong Learning. Municipalities’ constant rising authority, along with the consolidation of multiple educational providers on adult education, further supported this argument. According to Loeb (2007), multiple providers’ presence was underpinned by apprising the municipalities who achieved it. The financial investment on AE led to “municipal government meso-arenas”, facilitating the proliferation of quasi markets with many providers (Loeb, 2007, p.471). Market principles prevailed, shaping adult education in Sweden as we know it today.

4.1.2 Lifelong Learning in Sweden
The Swedish lifelong learning strategy aims to transform Sweden in a “leading knowledge-based nation characterized by high quality lifelong learning for economic growth and justice” (GHK and Research voor Beleid, 2011, p.6). Schooling, thus, is entitled to provide individuals with opportunities to develop an active role as citizens, participating in a democratic society. Notwithstanding, individuals have responsibility over their personal development, while the state is committed to support them in all earning stages. In this context adult education, besides its compensatory role, should offer further opportunities to adults for leveraging their competences (GHK and Research voor Beleid, 2011).

The National Agency for Education defined lifelong learning as (Skolverket, 2000, p.7):

![Figure 7. Conceptual framework for lifelong and lifewide learning](image-url)

“a holistic view of education [that] recognises learning from a number of different environments. The concept consists of two dimensions. The lifelong dimension indicating that the individual learns throughout a life-span. The lifewide dimension recognises formal, non-formal and informal learning”.

Since knowledge requires continuous updating nowadays, its acquisition turns to a lifelong process, which is highlighted by the lifelong dimension. On the other hand, the lifewide dimension indicates a broad range of available learning environments, from formal education (regular school system) to non-formal (education outside the education system) and finally informal learning, which refers to not systematic learning situations (GHK and Research voor Beleid, 2011). The following table summarizes the types of adult education offered in Sweden.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Formal Education</th>
<th>Non-formal Education / Labor market and Workplace</th>
<th>Informal Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adult Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Labor Market Training</td>
<td>Voluntary Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Workplace Training</td>
<td>Learning Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upper Education</strong></td>
<td><strong>Secondary</strong></td>
<td>In-service training</td>
<td>Learning Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compulsory Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Competence Development</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Care</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Popular Adult Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This definition leads us to some assumptions about the Swedish lifelong learning system that are of much interest. Firstly, lifelong learning’s inter-disciplinary nature become obvious as boundaries between policy sectors are dissolved, highlighting that education, labor market, industry and societal needs should be all taken into consideration when it gets to lifelong learning. The same approach is applied regarding the partners involved in the process, including from municipalities to the government, and from employers to employees.

Secondly, a shift in responsibility for education is noticed, moving the center of education provision from the public to the private sphere. Multiple providers combined with freedom in assigning the realization of education programs lead to a less controlled educational form for adults with high flexibility.
Table 4. Providers of adult education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Providers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Popular Adult Education Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk High Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish tuition for immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal education for adults with learning disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Schools for Adults (SSV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor market training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University colleges and universities (undergraduate education)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, shifting the responsibility from the State to the individual is detected. Individuals have the right and the responsibility to create their own learning path based on their needs. Therefore, the system is allocated with the task of providing guidance and support as well as tools for learning.

4.1.3 Adult learners
In Sweden adult education has mainly been defined by the perspective of the provider. Adult students or adult learners are the terms used for those individuals who undergo organized adult learning, like municipal adult education or folk high school, irrespective of age. While in some cases learners under the age of 20 can participate in adult education, the dividing line between school system students and adult education ones is the age of 20. University students, individuals studying on their own or in the workplace are excluded from adult education statistics. (OECD, 2000)

Comparing Komvux and Folk high schools the age limit for students is set at 20 years old for the first and 18 for the latter. However, there are some folk high school courses that younger learners can also attend (OECD, 2000).

Boundaries between vocational and general education are not clear in the Swedish reality. Consequently, Swedish adult education consists of the formal and the non-formal learning activities provided by multiple actors.

4.1.4 Formal adult education

*Municipal Adult Education (MAE)*
Established in 1968, MAE aims at assisting adult learners to acquire knowledge and skills needed to participate in society and working life, or pursue further studies. Formal Adult Education consists of municipal adult education (MAE - Komvux), adult education targeting the intellectually disabled (Särvux) and Swedish classes for immigrants (SFI). Advanced vocational education and training (KY) is also included. Subjects in formal adult education include mathematics, language, natural sciences
and vocational training, covering basic skills (Gougoulakis & Bron, 2011; Sommer, 2017).

Formal education stakeholders include both the state and the municipalities. Nevertheless, it is common for municipalities to purchase education for adults from private providers or popular adult education institutions. Advanced vocational training, though, is mainly organized by the municipalities, higher education institutions and enterprises (GHK and Research voor Beleid, 2011, Gougoulakis & Bron, 2011).

Komvux includes basic and upper secondary adult education provision. Basic adult education constitutes a right for all the individuals and refers to education equivalent to compulsory school level. Upper secondary adult education is education with a level equivalent to skills and knowledge provided at upper secondary level of regular schooling (OECD, 2000). This consistency with the regular school system requires MAE to apply the same curricula and syllabi for the same level of studies. Thus, the same courses are also provided. MAE does not offer aesthetic and sports subjects but orientation courses are available. Orientation courses are shorter courses deriving from participants’ needs aiming to direct them to later vocational training (Boström, Boudard & Siminou, 2001). Studies in Komvux lead to attainment of formal qualifications or certificates of the respective school level.

Supplementary adult education offers vocational courses, which combined with practical training leads to professional qualifications. The content areas covered include subjects like economics, computing and tourism (Boström, Boudard & Siminou, 2001; Statistics Sweden, 2009).

Särvux targets individuals with learning disabilities and the level of education it covers corresponds to compulsory and upper secondary school. Teaching in Särvux is usually performed through informal learning processes. Furthermore, it is part-time.

Finally, Swedish tuition for immigrants (SFI) offer the chance to acquire basic knowledge of the Swedish language and society to newly arrived adult immigrants. The individualized instruction allows for flexibility and corresponds to learners’ needs (OECD, 2000; Boström, Boudard & Siminou, 2001; Statistics Sweden, 2009).

Universities and colleges
Completing education of upper secondary level, passing 90 % of the core subjects is the basic admission requirements for entering Swedish tertiary education. In the case of adults, they may either have successfully completed upper secondary school for adults, or be above 24 years old and have at least four years half time employment (Boström, Boudard & Siminou, 2001). In tertiary education system the Bologna structure has been adopted. Consequently, first cycle and second cycle programs are offered as well as PhD programs (GHK and Research voor Beleid, 2011).

Advanced vocational training
Advanced vocational education was established in 2001 as a regular form of post-secondary education. The programs have been arranged by municipalities, training enterprises and post-secondary institutions in collaboration with employers. Their aim is the employment of students, while with reference to the working approaches, they combine school education and training in enterprises. In other words, at least one third of the training period takes place in workplace. The employers’ role is active in developing the training programs and financing the trainings. In 2009, the Local Authority Adult Education Programmes (Yrkesvux) was introduced, with aim to
support VET for adults provided through public municipal adult education (Komvux) (GHK and Research voor Beleid, 2011; Gougoulakis & Bron, 2011).

The establishment of the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education in 2009 served the same purpose. This is an agency allocated with the responsibility of organizing post-secondary education and training that takes place outside of the universities. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education operates within an umbrella organization, namely Vocational University College (Yrkeshögskola). Programs in higher vocational education aim to correspond to the needs of the labor market and cover many knowledge areas like IT, economics or health (Statistics Sweden, 2009; GHK and Research voor Beleid, 2011).

The initiative is an effort to provide the student with the opportunity to leverage professional skills, which cannot be achieved in the school environment. Higher vocational education programs had been attended by almost 40,000 students by 2011 (GHK and Research voor Beleid, 2011).

4.1.5 Non formal adult education

Non formal adult Education or Folkbildning in Swedish is constituted of Folk High Schools and Study Associations. Swedish Non Formal education is sometimes translated as liberal or popular adult education in English, however, *folkbildning* is a concept strictly related to adult education. Folkbildning is available for every individual, but it primarily aims at adults with limited formal education (EAEA, 2011). Major stakeholders of non-formal adult education are the Swedish National Council for Adult Education (folk high schools and study associations), NGOs and churches, education companies and enterprises (GHK and Research voor Beleid, 2011).

Non formal adult education has been the ground of adult education in Sweden for many years. After the first study circle late in 1800, people started to gather voluntarily to challenge and leverage their knowledge together. Folkbildning introduced tolerance for difference, respect for commonly made decisions and solidarity, serving as a vital democratic force. Study associations nowadays still offer study circles mostly centered around esthetical subjects, media and democracy aiming to correspond to participants’ needs. In addition, folk high schools offer a wider variety of courses regarding many topics (e.g. craftsmanship, theatre, tourism, languages, preventative healthcare) (EAEA, 2011; Gougoulakis, 2016).

**Study associations and Study circles**

Study associations have their own profile deriving from the popular movements they came from. Study circles constitute the most common activity of adult education associations, while they are often affiliated with a political party. Based on an inner wish to improve their knowledge in an area, adults get voluntarily together to study towards it. The leader is among the participants. The small amount of participants allows for influence over content and learning approaches (OECD, 2000; EAEA, 2011).

Additionally to study circles, study associations offer a variety of cultural activities, supporting importantly municipalities that lack state cultural institutions. The associations are usually members of a popular movement or NGO (Folkbildningsradet, 2008; Rooth as cited in EAEA, 2011).
Folk high schools
Folk high school is a nationwide type of educational provider, numbering 150 organizations. Most of them (107) are under the RIO framework, translated as the Interest Organization for Popular Movement Folk High Schools, while the rest are regulated by country councils or regions.

Folk high schools offer a unique type of education due to the different nature of activities, pedagogical approach and organization. In other words, formal education and more specifically general subjects in compulsory and secondary level are combined with enlightenment activities, like arts and music, while vocational training is also offered in many cases (Boström, Boudard & Siminou, 2001; EAEA, 2011).

Although founded by the state, the folk high schools enjoy special freedom, since they do not follow centrally defined curricula and, thus, can be flexible in meeting new educational needs. Furthermore, they are entitled to provide formal certification in some of their courses. Moreover, folk high schools have a self-management system, a separate quota for higher education applicants and an admission system that prioritizes applicants in greater need of. In addition, teacher training specialized in folk high school education is offered in higher education in Linkoping University education (Folkbildnings forbundet, RIO, SKL & Folkbildningsrådet, 2013).

Education in folk high schools remains popular in Sweden. In 2008, approximately 26,500 people participated in extended courses and nearly 80,000 in short courses per term (Folkbildningsrådet, 2017). Based on the following figure the participation in folk high schools courses remains stable accrediting high status in the institutions and folkbildning (popular education) in general.

Education at folk high schools is organized around thematic studies and project, the main source of which is the participants’ work experience and social life. Focus is placed on inter-disciplinary studies and problem solving approaches. According to Swedish National council of Adult education (Folkbildningsrådet, 2008), folkbildning (popular education) principles are obvious in folk high school pedagogy as well advocating that:

- Participation in folkbildning is always voluntary
- Learners can influence the content of the activities in a considerable degree.
- The experiences of learners are used to build an environment where learning and social interaction occur simultaneously.
- Folkbildning aims to strengthen civil society through wide networks and collaboration with volunteer associations and organizations.

Freedom is the distinctive characteristic of folk high schools and that allows them to be flexible and cover the learning needs that emerge. What is different with regards to their pedagogical approach is the fact that formal and non-formal learning coexist in an environment that promotes both learning objectives and social activities. This social dimension of education has been developed in folk high schools system, which has been parallel to regular adult education system and it is even nowadays what makes folk high schools and folkbildning unique.
4.1.6 Labor market and workplace training

**Labor market training**
This is a type of vocational education targeting the unemployed with the aim to enhance their work opportunities. As a labor market policy, it is decided by the National Labor Market Board (AMS) and it also includes some general theoretical courses on vocational education (OECD, 2000). Continuing vocational training (CVT) is provided by public institutions, private enterprises, trade unions and employers' associations (Boström, Boudard & Siminou, 2001).

**In-service training**
Quite common in the Swedish working arena, in-service training aims at developing employees’ knowledge and experience or improving individuals’ position on the labor market. Providers of in-service training are companies themselves, public administration bodies or even the regular education system (OECD, 2000).

4.2 Presentation of the findings
In this chapter the interviews’ findings are presented along with a short overview of the learning institution’s background to support better understanding. The names used are pseudonyms both for schools and for principals.

**Case 1. Health for all**

**Overview of the school**
Health for all [pseudonym] adult education center is located in a municipality on the south part of Stockholm and has been operating since 2016. Central in the ideology of the institution is the idea that everyone can succeed. Cornerstones include mentoring, which is based on a trusting relationship, individualized study plan and assigning responsibility on the individuals for their study path, offering counseling and support. Finally, health is a highly rated value as a vital trait of people working in the health care filed.

Reaching the top in Health for all schools is approached as becoming an exemplar of quality, innovation and learning outcomes. Core value of the institution is that every person can succeed. Commitment to the individual and effective leadership are the driven forces to success.

Courses are provided in two directions, namely health care education and child and recreation education. Distant learning courses are offered while students can decide on their own study pace. Infrastructure and materials are available to the students as well as free breakfast and fruit snack. Moreover, previous experience of students is taken into consideration and needs assessment takes place. Workplace based learning is also offered.

Based on the call for the vacancies for adult educators, there are not prerequisites to be met but only some desirable traits of the potential candidates. These are concluded in commitment and passion, as well as personal interest. Positive attitude and creativity are also mentioned, while team working is a clearly stated skill.
**Participant’s profile**

Carol [pseudonym] is the principal of the new komvux of Health for all schools, which is recently established. While being in the first year of operation for the institution, according to Carol the goal is to offer “the best education in health care, not only in Stockholm maybe in Norden or in Europe”. Carol has an educational and working background as a physical education teacher in secondary level. After realizing her interest to be a principal, she followed studies in Leadership and Pedagogy and worked as a principal in high schools (Gymnasium) for ten years. Facing the challenge of moving to adult education, she has gathered 12-13 years of working experience in the field.

Reflecting on her work as a principal, her studies have been of much help but according to her it has also been the personality and the passion that motivated and helped her deal with issues. Discussing about the vision of the school that everyone can succeed, which can be achieved through effective leadership, Carol explained that effective leadership is closely related to the ability of recognizing individual learners’ needs and designing an education appropriate for them. In her own words, “everyone is unique”, we “try to make an education for each one”, “that’s success”.

**Synopsis of the discussion**

With reference to the recruitment process, Carol mentioned that it is of high importance for the principals to have clear, predetermined standards for the needed employees, in other words to “know what you look for”, and communicate them in a clear way in order to attract candidates that fit the needs of the institution. Among wanted competences, Carol listed education, curiosity, open-mindedness, passion and commitment, ability for teamwork and evaluation of needs, knowledge of adults’ background and lives and knowing oneself.

“…because first you have to know yourself and you have also to know about what kind of person you are and also you have to understand everyone especially adults can have a very heavy life. And you have to understand that before they come to school in the morning maybe they have to leave their kids after school, they have to clean, so you understand what people need when you have good heart.”

Based on her explanation for education, it is composed by teaching related skills, subject area knowledge and the skill of being a “natural teacher”. Education, defined in this way, is regarded as the group of competences prioritized by Carol. The reason behind this prioritization is the fact that the teacher union demands komvux employees to have formal teaching qualifications. Thus, candidates with no education can be employed but only for one year during which they should obtain it. Formal teaching qualification are not, though, mentioned on the vacancy add on the website. That’s indicative of the necessity as reasons for prioritizing these competences.

Competences more important than education, according to Carol, include passion and commitment to work, “leadership by heart” or a “feeling for human being”. Passion is approached as enthusiasm to teach, combined with the belief of developing learners’ potential. Passion and commitment have been chosen as vital since they are regarded as necessary to achieve the vision of the school, “everyone can succeed”. When Carol
was describing the term passion, her body posture and gestures became more intense indicating how important educators’ motivation is for their success.

Moving to in-service training, this Komvux center is relatively new so no organized in-service training takes place. However, the group of employed teachers is going through some training to develop their competences. Carol described this process, which involves discovery of educators’ learning style, which is related to evaluating their needs and learning methods, as well as coaching each other, which is related to the competence of guiding, counseling and supporting learners. Raising awareness of the vision, setting goal and designing a path to success is also included in the knowledge that this training aims at. Carol extensively mentioned the need for communication among people working in the same organization. Sharing the “same language” is vital to proceed in further training, while it is a precondition to becoming aware and comfortable with the context of the workplace. This type of training starts with the individual self-reflection continues with the team, referring to the development of teamwork competences, while the final stage is related to the organization and a focus on raising awareness for the vision as the driving force behind all the choices made.

Finally, describing competence as a term was confusing for Carol. She used the words “important”, “democracy” and “freedom”, in the sense of the importance of competence for a democratic way of life. Furthermore, the discussion was completed with an interesting comment of Carol about the role of principals. It is “more important than people know”, she said.

**Analysis of the preferred adult educators’ competences**

Reflecting on the discussion, the locus was set on the recruitment process since, not systematized in-service training is offered in this adult education institution.

Competences desired for a new candidate include “curiosity” which in frameworks may be detected as interest for self-development, open-mindedness, ability for working in teams, evaluation of learners’ needs, knowledge of group characteristics and knowing oneself, which implies self-reflection and can be linked to personal professional development competence as suggested by QF2Teach (Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009).

Among them passion and commitment were prioritized as strongly related to the vision and teaching skills and subject knowledge, named as “education” by the interviewee, as necessary competence according to teachers’ union regulations. Teaching skills in this case refer to all the process of preparing and delivering the training to adults. However, although passion and teamwork are mentioned as desirable in the vacancy description, teaching skills and subject knowledge are omitted leading to a discrepancy between the principal’s views and the website’s information.

The following table summarizes the competences discussed. The competences in bold are prioritized as the most important and necessary by the interviewee.
Table 5. Important adult educators’ competences in Health for all Komvux center

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment process</th>
<th>In-service training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passion and commitment</td>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching skills (incl. formal qualifications) and Subject area knowledge</td>
<td>Clear communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>Awareness of the vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability for teamwork</td>
<td>Assessment of educators’ learning needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs assessment</td>
<td>Coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group characteristics knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With reference to in-service training the focus moves to competences like provision of support and guidance, group management and communication and professional development. Self-reflection along with recognizing learning needs are associated with professional development. Speaking the “same language” and understanding the vision are included in group management and communication competence, while coaching refers to the competence of supporting and guiding learning. The priorities are set based on what is needed to happen first, thus personal professional development comes first and then group management follows. However, the importance of vision is repeated extensively related to the necessity of nearly all the competences and having completely comprehend and embraced it is vital part of the knowledge an adult educator should have in this organization.

Case 2. Lillenhamnen komvux center

Overview of the school
Lillenhamnen komvux center [pseudonym] is located in Stockholm and as part of the Municipal Adult Education it offers training in basic and secondary level. It thus targets adults that miss part of their basic or high school education and want to complete their studies aiming at employment or further studies. The school has no special vision but operates in line with the national curriculum for adult education.

The courses include Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), upper secondary level subjects, health and social care as well as children and leisure time training. Some of the courses are provided by the adult education center, while other are offered in collaboration with other education providers.

Participant’s profile
Helena [pseudonym] completed her studies in Economics and Socionomics, before she started working for a big political party in Sweden. During that time, she attended the course for folk high school teachers and later on she was employed in a folk high school as a teacher. Moreover, she worked for a study center as the principal and she attended the principals’ education program (Rektors utbildning) for 3 years. Her next job was as a principal in Lillenhamnen komvux center, a position that she holds since 2010.
Synopsis of the discussion

In our discussion about adult educators’ competences, Helena mentioned that necessary for recruitment of new teachers is that they have formal teaching qualifications. These qualifications do not include folk high school teachers’ degree, which according to Helene is strange and she is critical about this point in the legislation. Besides the necessary teaching competences, Helena thinks of working experience with adults as a vital competence. Analyzing working experience further, she explained that educators that have worked with adults acquire knowledge about how adult learns, and are able to use their life experiences into teaching involving them in the process of learning.

"If they have experience form adult education it is very good, because it is very different to work with adult education and to work with children"

"You have to see that this is a person that has experience. he hasn't been to school but he has experience as adult, from work, they maybe are parents so you know they get a lot of life experience and that’s important, that you as a teacher take care of this and you can involve the whole student in the education"

Moreover, awareness of the profile of the adult students and their background is helpful as well as establishing a relationship between equals and showing respect to their students.

While these are the prioritized competences for Helena, the ability to use more languages is appreciated. Due to the fact that many students are not fluent in Swedish, speaking Arabic or Russian or other languages, is considered an extra competence that she takes into consideration when recruiting new educators. Overcoming the language barriers allows for better communication and thus creates a basis where all the above mentioned competences can be applied efficiently.

In-service training is based on individual teachers’ needs. Areas targeted are often the raising of awareness on teaching techniques for students with cultural background other than Swedish. These usually short courses aim at improving the teaching methods and target students with other cultural background as they constitute a big part of the students’ population. Moreover, educators realize trips related to seminars on the subject they teaching in order to enhance their competences in their own subject area. Finally, a five-day period at the end of every ten-week course is allocated to reflection on the teaching process, discussion with colleagues and suggestions over changes for the improvement of the course in general. According to Helena, it is time for “reflection for yourself and together with your colleagues”.

Consequently, competences engaged in this process include refining of instructional practices through reflection (AIR, 2015) and initiating changes in the teaching methods applied to improve quality (Sherman et al., 1999).

Going through a comparison of folk highs schools and komvux centers, Helena made a clear point on adult educators’ attitude. While educators in folk high schools are engaged in all aspects of the school life, establish a close relationship with their students, educators employed in komvux are strictly professional teachers that are concerned mostly about the delivery of the course inside the classroom. More specifically, Helena mentions that "here you are more professional. You have the class and then the class is done and then it is over".
Finally, when Helena was asked about defining competence as a term, she related it with democracy and the contribution of individuals to the maintenance of democratic societies. Competence for her includes the awareness of both rights and obligations and practicing them with aim to contribute to the democracy of this country.

**Analysis of the discussion**

Helena is a principal with long experience in adult education that seemed to be determined and very clear on what she expected by the educators in her school. Although she mentioned that English was a barrier for her to communicate her ideas, the tone of her voice along with the structure of her thought indicated a professional that had reflected on the profile of potential candidate that she looks for.

Regarding the recruitment process, she prioritized formal teaching qualifications that are in agreement with the relevant legislation. This is a set of competence that are required by the law, thus there are prioritized as necessity. Secondly, Helena set the working experience with adults, which with further explanation includes knowledge on adult learning, ability to use learners’ experience and skills as a resource in learning, awareness of the psychological profile and the background of the adult students as well as establishing a respectful relationship with them. All these competences contribute to efficient learning. Furthermore, language skills in minority languages are welcome. Since languages are not mentioned in any existing framework we can assume that this competence is related to establishing clear and successful communication.

Moving to in-service training, Helena referred to leverage of knowledge about educators’ own subject area, about teaching methods in non-Swedish students, refining of instructional practices through reflection (AIR, 2015) and initiating changes in the teaching methods applied to improve quality (Sherman et al., 1999). The first two competences come as a choice of teachers and in relationship to the institution needs. However, the last ones constitute part of a process that is predetermined and is an ongoing process of development for both educators and their courses. The following table presents the competences preferred by the participant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment process</th>
<th>In-service training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal teaching qualifications</td>
<td>Teaching methods in non-Swedish students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working experience with adults (knowledge on adult learning, ability to use learners’ experience and skills as a resource in learning, awareness of the psychological profile and the background of the adult students, establishing a respectful relationship with them.)</td>
<td>Refining of instructional practices through reflection and initiating changes in the teaching methods applied to improve quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of language of minority groups of students (e.g. Arabic and Russian)</td>
<td>Subject area knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case 3. Bjorn folkhögskola

Overview of the school
Bjorn folkhögskola [pseudonym] was founded in 1916/1917. The school moved to the city center in 1961, where it still operates. Today Bjorn folkhögskola offers general courses, establishment courses and basic education courses covered by folk high schools. Furthermore, Bjorn folkhögskola operates a classical music program, senior line courses and the rock music courses. The organization is politically and religiously independent.

Bjorn folkhögskola aims to reduce education gaps, by investing a considerable part of resources on that purpose. It targets older and younger people, both born in Sweden and newly arrived individuals. Furthermore, the school has a clear profile towards artistic activities. However, civic education is also present aiming at developing critical judgment, independence and interpersonal skills as well as creativity. Successful integration of newcomers is also among its goals, while eliminating barriers for students with disabilities is also an important objective.

Regarding the adult educators, the website of the organization offers a lot of information on the background of its employed teachers. This is mostly focused on their studies and previous working experience, especially highlighting the acquired knowledge and skills related to the content they teach. While this is the case with music teaching professionals, with reference to general courses’ educators their worldviews are also presented along with the long working experience most of them hold in the institution.

According to students’ views being an outstanding professional in the field of music makes the educators “competent” as it reassures knowledge and contacts within the music arena. No relevant comments are presented on the website for educators teaching other subjects.

Participant’s profile
Leo is the principal of a folk high school, located in the center of Stockholm. Having an educational background in art studies and more specifically, painting, he worked as an arts teacher in another folk high school before he became a principal in that institution. After receiving this position, he continued his studies, joining the principal program in Uppsala University. He holds his position as a principal of Bjorn folkhögskola for three years now.

Synopsis of the discussion
From the beginning of our discussion, Leo made it clear that there are important differences between Komvux and folk high school education, even when they are provided by the same institution. These differences include the fact that formal teaching license is required for teachers to be employed in Komvux courses, while in the case of folk high schools, the principal has the right to decide who is eligible for the position.

“Well it is actually quite a big difference between komvux and folk high schools, because in komvux it’s very important, I think you have to have formal teaching license, and to be an educated teacher in folk high schools it is up to the principal and he can decide who can teach.”
Based on this comment of the interviewee, his answer about competences was split in three parts, with reference to general courses (Allmän kurs), music classes and senior citizens courses.

For the recruitment of new educators, the first competence discussed was knowledge on a specific content area, in other words, the idea of educators being well educated in the subject that they teach. In addition, this knowledge should be preferable in multiple subjects involved in general courses, since the school is of a small size (around 120 students) and prefers educators that can offer multiple courses. For the general courses the school currently employs 16 teachers.

For the same category of courses, Leo referred to the background of students and their prior issues in gymnasium. The reasons that they left school, according to Leo, are centered on lack of communication with the teachers and not feeling part of the school community. In order to prevent these issues of happening again, Leo thinks it is important for adult educators to be aware of any social issues and difficulties their students had in the past. Thus, he refers to knowledge of psychosocial profile of the adult and knowledge about the group characteristics as vital competences for an adult educator. At the same part, he mentions ADHD and dyslexia as special learning conditions that the educators should be aware of their existence and informed of teaching approaches on them. However, the focus remains only in knowledge to the above mentioned issues.

Another important aspect is social skills. The interviewee found hard to define them very clearly, but through discussion it was concluded that they refer to building a relationship with students. Consequently, they correspond with “be[ing] available and accessible to learners”, which is part of Key competence 9 Assistance of learners (Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009). Moreover, social skills include the competence of communication both with students and colleagues and the support of learning through informal learning (Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009). The latest is achieved through being engaged in other activities of the institution, while teamwork is also included.

“It’s also very important with social skills. Usually when we asked the students why it didn’t work out in the gymnasium, the usual answer is that well there nobody knows my name, they didn’t say hello, i was, i didn’t have any friends, I was last student. We’re trying to work a lot with that, be like a small school society and everybody knows their names and they go like picnics and drink coffee together.

Formal qualifications for teaching are not vital, according to Leo.

“Like i said it is not an absolute requirement to have formal competence if they can show that. That’s a big luxury in working in folk high school that you don’t have to have the precise exam. You can prove it in your work career or in other ways that you are qualified to teach”

What is significant is that the educator is present not only in, but also outside the class, drawing a direct line to the informal side of adult learning, as the basis for achieving formal learning too. In the end of the discussion, Leo adds the knowledge for folk high school, acquired either by being an employee or a learner. This experience is regarded as very useful and preferable competence, because it implies that the candidate is familiar with the ideology and the pedagogy behind folk high
school, which is special. These popular education values of Swedish tradition are important qualifications for Leo, because they are related to knowledge on how adults experience a learning “journey”.

Moving to in-service training, the discussion was in a hypothetical level, since although the school supports continuous professional development of the adult educators, there are no organized in-service training activities and it remains individuals’ responsibility to further educate themselves. However, Leo stated that he would like to develop such activities in the future, mainly to cultivate competences related to the diversity of the student population that is increasing. Considering the fact that more and more students with special needs as well as students with Swedish as their second language join the school courses, Leo thinks it is vital for the teachers to have knowledge on the characteristics of these two groups and be able to teach them, no matter what type of courses they attend.

When the discussion turns around students with special needs, it is actually the first time that Leo relates knowing the traits and thus needs of a group with the ability to teach effectively:

“Like I mentioned the students with special needs are getting more bigger and bigger part of the students, so I think that’s very important competence to have, to be able to understand people, with special needs, even if you want to study music if you have dyslexia or something, it’s important that you have a teacher that can help you with that.”

Until that point, teaching competences have probably been implied as part of the subject knowledge, thus there was not further need to be discussed. In general no teaching competences, designing and implementing a teaching process, or evaluation have been discussed. Using technology resources is also left outside as well as monitoring of the learning process.

Finally, reflecting on the term of competence, Leo characterizes it as broad and highlights that:

“a lot of people make the mistake to think that to get a competence they have to go to an education, they have to take a course, they have to do something. But the competence is a whole person, can be different sides of yourself you have to develop or competence is pretty much everything.”

His approach is indicative of the ideology of popular education. Formal education is not the only way to development.

**Analysis of the preferred adult educators’ competences**

Although Leo seemed to distinguish the three types of courses in the beginning, in the end he mentioned the same competences as preferable, prioritizing them by starting from social skills, moving to subject related knowledge and finishing with knowledge about folk high school pedagogy. Nevertheless, subject knowledge and social competences are not always required for the same purposes. Social competences, actually referring to support of informal learning, clear communication and engagement in the general school life, serve to create a pleasant learning environment and thus motivate and engage learners with reference to general courses. In the case of EU courses, though, social competences facilitate a more improved socialization process that the students expect to experience in these courses. While in the first case,
social competences are necessary for the students to learn, in the second they are needed to satisfy their high expectations.

On the other hand, subject knowledge is extensively discussed as a major competence. In the case of general courses, it should be acquired in multiple subjects, so it serves the purpose of not hiring many educators. With regards to music education it is considered a prerequisite for the educators to be able to teach and meet the high level and expectations of students. Finally, in senior citizens courses, Leo seems to believe that the student population, consisting of highly educated individuals demands for educators with thorough knowledge of the subject area the course is organized around. Consequently, this competence is prioritized for both practical and ideological reasons, with the latest referring to offering quality education and meeting learners’ demands.

All in all, the most important competence is what named as “social skills” indicate that adult educators should be accessible and friendly, support informal learning and establish clear communication especially with their students. In the second place is subject area knowledge, while awareness of the special pedagogy of folkbildning comes third. In terms of in-service training, knowledge on students with Swedish as their second language and students with disabilities should be further cultivated to meet the needs of new coming group of students.

Table 7. Important adult educators’ competences in Bjorn folkhögskola

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment process</th>
<th>In-service training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social skills (clear communication, support of informal learning, friendly attitude)</td>
<td>Awareness of needs of students with Swedish as their second language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject area knowledge</td>
<td>Awareness of needs of students with learning disabilities and special needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge on folkbildning pedagogy</td>
<td>Personal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability for teamwork</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group characteristics knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge on the characteristics of students with learning disabilities and special needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case 4. St Bernards folk high school

Overview of the school
St Bernards folk high school [pseudonym] is located in the center of Stockholm, while there is also a branch in the southern part of the city. The school dates back to 1988 and nowadays, it offers general courses (Allman kurs gymnasium) for those who want high school eligibility and general courses (basic) (allman kurs grund) for those who need to cover knowledge and language gaps before moving to secondary school level.

The school classes are small and besides individualized study plans, there is an effort to ensure personal support to the students. Cornerstone of the school’s educational approach is the Catholic tradition, with reference to the vision of human dignity and
the Catholic Church's social doctrine, which stands as the philosophical base behind teaching. The aim of this education is the development of free individuals that take greater responsibility for themselves, their environment and society.

According to the school’s website, catholic social teaching constitutes of four basic principles:

- **Personal principle** highlights that humans are both individual and social beings. Thus, humans need to freely understand their true nature and this freedom can be reached when humans perform good deeds. Free choices constitute humans’ deepest and inviolable dignity.

- **The common good** (bonum commune) is defined as anything that benefits the social structure. It is primarily the government's responsibility to ensure and protect the common good.

- **The principle of subsidiarity** suggests that a higher authority, such as the state, municipality or public authority should not take over the responsibility to do things that a lower court or a family or individual should be responsible for performing.

- **The solidarity principle** encompasses the instilling of the notion that as social beings we have the responsibility to do help each other, by allocating resources to ease others’ suffer and offer health care and support.

This special characteristics of the school were further discussed during the interview.

**Participant’s profile**

Bjorn [pseudonym] studied Philosophy of Theology and his PhD was a comparative study between medieval and modern theology. He was employed as CEO in the church that the school is housed and later worked in Student Förbundet (Students’ Association) as responsible for the catholic education in Sweden. The last two years he holds the position of principal in St Bernards Folkhögskolan, with additional responsibility for the sister school in Gothenburg. The school collaborates with two more schools in Södertälje and Malmö and in total its employees are up to 12. Moreover, he has attended courses in leadership, which is obligatory for principals in Sweden.

**Synopsis of the discussion**

Inspired by the emphasis on the catholic social teaching on the school’s website, the conversation started with describing this pedagogical approach and its relationship with the vision of St. Bernards folkhögskolan. According to Bjorn, catholic social teaching is a set of principles present in a series of documents, published by the Pope in relation to human rights. Dating back to *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, these principles refer to various aspects of human life, like dignity, and have been applied in different situations. For St. Bernards folkhögskolan, this teaching is a philosophy answering questions like “what is the human person, what is the human dignity” and which is the purpose of the existence of a school embracing this philosophy. As Bjorn claims the schools offers a second chance to its students, a chance “build new lives, to empower them[ selves], to grow in freedom and grow on how they [are] engaged in the society in order to carry democracy”. This is the mission of the school and the catholic social teaching is its basis.

In terms of teaching, the catholic social doctrine is applied in relation to the school’s mission. It does not refer to teachers or students with catholic beliefs, but it is a pedagogy that educators are expected to identify themselves with, in order to fit the
school’s vision. Bjorn points out that the catholic social teaching principles are in agreement with *folkbildning* that adopts a holistic approach in teaching.

“In the way that this is implemented in the teaching is that we work with the teachers, [on] this is what this schools is about and although they are not Catholics, the teachers most of them are not Catholics, they sort of say this is something we can identify with and sort of goes hand and hand with the whole idea of folkbildning.”

Incorporated in the curriculum of the general courses (Allmans kurs), issues like human dignity, gender equality and non-violent communication, are approached through non-formal learning activities of various forms (e.g. child stories, exhibitions, mediation). These activities are meant only for the students who attend the main courses as part of their education. Additionally, the school offers a specific person that helps students to deal with problems in their everyday lives. According to Bjorn this is a trait of the school that differentiates it from other institutions, its holistic approach.

With reference to recruitment process Bjorn mentioned that teacher training is important for him. “So what I am looking for first is the formal [teaching qualifications]”. Whether specialized in folk high school pedagogy or general teaching training formal qualifications are needed with only few exceptions. Even in this case, though, further training with focus on teaching skills should take place after employment. Strongly related to teaching competences is subject knowledge; a fundamental competence for all the adult educators. Teaching competences and subject knowledge are the most important for Bjorn.

The second requirement is if the candidate teacher would fit in the group of educators already employed. In present, this group consists of 4 women and 3 men, while the youngest teacher is around 45, and the rest reach an average age of 60. Thus, Bjorn would like to equalize the gender representation of the teachers, employ more men. Aiming to balance, younger people are preferred too. Age was further discussed as candidates’ characteristic, with Bjorn mentioning that the new teacher should be young “but not too young” in order to feel confident and equal among with older and experienced teachers. As he mentions “if they are too young, you need to be very stable and secure in yourself to sit together with these older and experienced people, without being threatened [for] your freedom.”

As next requirement, the catholic social teaching was discussed. Based on Bjorn, this philosophy should be perceived as an opportunity rather than a problem by a new educator. Referring to opportunity, Bjorn approaches the catholic social teaching as a motivational force for teachers, while he also relates it with personality and values of new the new teachers, drawing attention to the importance of the match between the vision of the learning institution and the educator employed.

Folk high schools pedagogical model and atmosphere is special. What is unique about this system is the freedom that characterizes it. According to Bjorn, educators work less compared to high schools and collaborate with students in a different way, more interactive, since students are adults. Furthermore, students are involved in designing their own learning, which is a process focused on the learning subject and the learner involved, rather than the teacher as the center of it.
“… the students are adult, they are much more interactive, the students are supposed to be part of the planning of the teaching and so on. [It is] much more subject oriented than transcendental teaching, where teacher has the knowledge and brings it down.”

Comparing this philosophy with Komvux and the learning that takes place there, Bjorn refers to the comments of one of his teachers that had worked in a Komvux center teaching the same subject as now. Komvux is, thus, described as “a fabrik, an industry” that focuses on products, in other words in the learning outcomes. According to Bjorn, in a komvux the case is:

“We have a class of people and we say the next time you read this and this and then we have a test, and I will not tell you what is there. You are not able to sort of interact, this interactive teaching is not possible because the speed of the courses are so high”

The high speed does not allow for interaction, or for the inclusion of non-formal activities. Bjorn uses the example of teaching Swedish as a second language. “For example, for those who are born outside Sweden, we integrate Swedish with social science, history, natural knowledge and all these is Swedish learning”

In-service training is not systematically organized yet but since Bjorn was employed as principal, he has started developing aspects of it in collaboration with the educators. So far in-service training includes one meeting per week when each educator can discuss the needs and he/she has related to the subject they teach and think of suggestions to cover these needs. Moreover, there are group meetings where the catholic pedagogical model is discussed, with aim to raise awareness over it and how it can be applied in teaching. Lastly, educators undergo individual training in tertiary education, based on their needs and choices. However, Bjorn refuses to pay for these courses’ expenses, because in the field of adult education a competent teacher may have a lot of jobs offers. He actually commented that “I don’t wanna pay that, because when they do that they will learn, there would be such a demand for them in the labor market”, thus “I prevent them from leaving”.

Reflecting on prioritization of the competences for in-service training, Bjorn firstly refers to catholic pedagogical model and the awareness of it along with the competences related to teamwork. Objectives of this initiative include answering questions like “how do we implement that here? What does it mean for us?” referring to catholic pedagogical model. The competence is approached in the PRONET framework as suggesting and collaborating in modifying the program organization and in developing program alternatives, which is part of the management of program responsibilities and enhancement of program organization category (Sherman et al., 1999). Individual teachers’ needs are mentioned again, while IT knowledge is also discussed. Introducing the use of computers in learning in comparison to the age of the majority of the teachers creates a gap that in-service training has to cover. IT system knowledge need to be developed both to engage these means in teaching and help the educators with the administrative part of their job, namely answering emails, registering students, taking attendance or using tools like share point. Thus, technical knowledge is also needed.

Finally, in an attempt to define competence as a term Bjorn decided that visualizing the concept describes his view more holistically. Hence, he drew the following scheme:
This circle was explained to be constituted of the catholic teaching approach, named as Cora personalis, IT system knowledge and subject area knowledge. Starting with the Cora personalis, Bjorn highlighted that it refers to educators being supportive simultaneously with setting boundaries, dealing with problems along with making “the students feel that they are treated like subjects with dignity”. It also includes the ability for collaboration and group work potential, because “in this rather small group of teachers they need to be able to work together and not to have prestige”. Secondly, subject area knowledge includes both knowledge and teaching methods to offer this knowledge. Thirdly, knowledge on IT systems refers both to the use of technology in administrative tasks as well as awareness of the school environment encompassing rules and regulations too. “They need to able to work with this computer system; they need to able to work with the rooms, the regulation and all that”. Vision is the leading line in all these fields that according to Bjorn constitute a distinct competence of his educators, since “they need to be carrying the idea of the school”.

Analysis of the findings

Bjorn had a clear picture about what is expected by the current and the new adult educators in the school and communicated it very effectively throughout the interview, numbering the prioritized competences in the end of every theme discussed. This security was detected in the clear structure of his sentences, along with the summarizing of what was said before finishing each one of his answers.

The special characteristic of the school is the catholic social teaching, which influences both the vision and the pedagogical approach. Consequently, it is also related to adult educators’ competences and actually underlies in every aspect of the school. That was obvious in both themes, namely the recruitment process and the in-service training.

Starting with the recruitment process, the most important competence is formal teaching qualifications, which are not required by law in the case of folk high schools, but for this participant they are vital. This is further supported by the fact that the only teacher with no formal qualifications underwent teacher training after employed. For Bjorn, these qualifications include teaching approaches and skills, and thus involve all the competences in the competence area of designing and implementing the learning process, along with knowledge on the subject taught. This combination is prioritized as necessary for teachers to be able to perform their job. In this part there has been
reference on some preference of folk high school teachers’ formal qualifications. This explained in the third most important competence, which is awareness and agreement with the social catholic teaching approach that coincides with folkbildning too.

Second competence in Bjorn’s list is the matching of the new educator with the already existing group of teachers. In this case, Bjorn looks for an educator with a very specific profile, namely male, confident and quite young but professionally mature. These traits are not though related to the ability to teach, but are expected to bring a balance in the educators group and allow the new comer to perform his/her job as efficiently as possible. While self-assurance and coping with criticism are competences required in this case, the focus is more on the group dynamics rather than the individual’s potential.

In the third position lies the catholic social teaching approach. As mentioned Bjorn looks for an educator that faces this approach as a challenge and an opportunity to work with it. Therefore, being open-minded, flexible and motivated is appreciated. Such attitudes are needed for the educator to embrace the schools vision and work towards its realization. In this case, social catholic teaching includes also the folkbildning idea, which highlights the importance of combining formal and informal learning as an additional competence.

Moving to in-service training the discussion remains again around the social catholic teaching, but this time with a distinct focus on reflecting on educators’ own work and suggesting ways to improve it. Personal professional development combined with evaluation of the learning process are the competence areas that Bjorn is referring to, prioritizing them for the existing in-service training structure. What was interesting in this point was the principal’s reluctance to financially support university training that would make teachers more competent and thus wanted in the labor market.

Finally, IT systems knowledge mentioned in the third place, referring to technical skills that are needed both in teaching and performing administrative tasks. This competence corresponds to acquirement, access and use of technology for effective adult learning, which is related to time, space, material and human resources as presented in the PRO-NET framework (Sherman et al.). This competence is stressed especially because of the age of the employed adult educators and the necessity to catch up on with modern societies’ demands.

All in all, the competences preferred and prioritized are summarized in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment process</th>
<th>In-service training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal teaching qualifications (teachings skills and knowledge area)</td>
<td>Awareness of catholic social teaching and personal professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork (self-assurance, coping with criticism, male, young but professionally mature)</td>
<td>Knowledge of IT systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of catholic social teaching (open-minded, flexible and motivated)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Important adult educators’ competences in St Bernards folkhögskola
Case 5. Stockholm’s United folk high school

Overview of the school
Established in 1981, Stockholm’s United folk high school [pseudonym] developed a locus on outdoor recreation activities and leadership, while music and theater were also included. Nowadays, among the 150 folk high schools of Sweden, Stockholm’s United folk high school is a non-formal adult education institution, financed by the Swedish government to offer courses of various levels. From an international perspective, exchange of students with Africa, Latin America and Asia have been realized. Based on Christian faith, the school attempts to offer a learning environment for personal development. Reassuring access to everyone, equality and aiming to democratic citizens is the main principles of the school’s philosophy.

Stockholm’s United folk high school offers a wide variety of long and short term courses, with a focus on culture, leadership and development. Among the 200 students, some choose vocational education. Other courses options include preparation for university studies and the third branch is related to theatre, arts and music. More specifically, courses include general courses (for university admission), youth leader/community worker program, deacon education, music (basic course, Afro ensemble, classic music, church music), arts, theater and youth exchanges.

Inspired by Paulo Freire’s liberating pedagogy, X-pedagogy is experience-based learning that is infused in the teaching philosophy of the school. X-pedagogy is shortly described through 4 axes:

- eXperience - experience as a source for reflection and analysis,
- eXistenti – fundamental questioning of life and its role as a driving force towards learning,
- eXperimental – risk taking and innovation, crossing the borders and trailing errors in search for truth,
- eXpressive - the need to express our knowledge and perception of life in many possible ways.

X-pedagogy is a detailed teaching method, in which innovation is welcomed, while spontaneity and impulses have a vital part in the reflection process. Emotions are also important.

Participants profile
Tomas [pseudonym] is the principal of Stockholm’s United folk high school located in the eastern part of the city. His background comes with studies in Theology, while he has worked as a local minister of the United Church of Sweden. From that position he was engaged with international issues, travelled abroad and worked in Burkina Faso for some time. Because of his international experience and his connection to the church he was recruited in Stockholm’s United folk high school in 1994 as an educator for a course on international studies and church related development, although he did not have any professional pedagogical training. For a short time, he taught missiology in the Stockholm School of Theology and worked for a development organization, before he returned back to Stockholm’s United folk high school in his current position.
Synopsis of the discussion

A special characteristic of Stockholm’s United folk high school is the application of X pedagogy that is presented in the website of the institution. According to Tomas, X pedagogy

“...is important basis for us that we think that knowledge and competences is something that grow up form experience, from doing things together, exploring, try to experiment and don’t be afraid of failing. It is not the skill of your hand that is the most important thing, but your intention to express”.

As an approach that emerged from the art classes, X pedagogy is now a set of approaches and values that appears in all the courses offered. Sharing the idea that “everyone has the right and possibility to express themselves” adult educators enjoy the freedom to decide on the teaching method that best corresponds to their students’ needs. Students, on the other hand, are allowed time to experiment and find the subject that “touches their inside” and really express them. Although the school is not confessional issues of identity and faith are often discussed.

Even if X pedagogy is more obvious in art, music and drama classes, yet it influences general education courses too. However, the experimental and exploratory dimension of the X pedagogy is not applied in general courses (allmäns kurs) in a great degree.

Discussing about the recruitment process and the necessary competences for an adult educator to be selected, Tomas prioritized ability to work in groups and collaborate along with teaching related competences. Teamwork spirit and ability is analyzed first and explained as necessary, since the current institution is a new body resulted by the merging of 3 different schools. Due to the last school joining the rest in 2015, there is a profound need for developing the institution as a unit, where all teachers feel part of a whole and sub teams do not exist.

“So three quite different groups working in a different way and what we are working with very hard is to create a unity, that we see that there is no three schools living in the same campus. It is one school.”

For this purpose, adult educators in Stockholm’s United folk high school always work in groups and cover each other’s absence when needed, something that according to Tomas does not happen in other folk high schools.

Before moving to teaching related competences, Tomas made a short parenthesis and discussed the four criteria, which are the basis for claiming and evaluating raise of salary. These include willingness to do extra work when needed, ability to adapt in new situations, being a “good teacher” and using time wisely. Explaining them a little further, the competences fostered by these criteria are commitment, adaptability, teaching skills and managing instructional resources. The “good teacher” in this case is perceived as the

“… pedagogue in the Greek society that was the slave that was following the student and carry the books. I think this is a good teacher, somebody that can walk beside a student and follow that student forward and walk together.”

Thus, patience, passion and humility are also part of the teaching competences. More specifically, Tomas states that a teacher is “somebody with patience and passion and also doesn’t need to be a star, but to be somebody following”.

62
Returning to teaching skills, Tomas discussed general courses teachers separately than other folk high school teachers. With regards to the first, he pointed out that formal pedagogical skills are required, whether secondary education or folk high school teacher training, combined with thorough and complete knowledge of the subject taught. On the contrary, other folk high school educators are not required to have professional pedagogical training. However, university degrees in arts, music or drama are preferred as well as working experience in other folk high schools. Tomas claims that aesthetic education is not solely for students’ personal development, but also prepares them for entering higher education. Therefore, educators who have studied themselves in tertiary education are preferred, in order to better prepare the students. All in all, all the teachers are expected to build “tight relations to the students” to be able to “follow” and support them successfully in their learning trip.

Next, in-service training was brought up. According to Tomas, in-service training takes place with various forms. The most common is providing educators with time out of teaching service, during which they can decide what field they want to pursue personal professional development in. The choices vary in duration and are based on individual teachers’ needs. The process followed starts with a personal development plan, where the educator applies for in-service training based on his/her needs and interests. However, this is not final, since new needs and interests may appear. Then the principal along with two more colleagues revise and evaluate these applications with main criteria the contribution of such training in the course development and the agenda of the school.

Another method applied in in-service training is some kind of peer review. In other words, two teachers observe a course while a third one teaches. The process is repeated for every teacher. Then reflection and discussion follows. This peer review takes place between teachers of different courses, in order to share good practices and teaching methods.

“here we try to do also, we mix, so it’s not the music teachers that listen to other music teachers. Also, it could be interesting for Swedish lessons [teachers] to see what kind of pedagogical methods are used in music.”

Finally, Tomas and the assistant principal participate in this process sometimes.

As mentioned above, in-service training is not organized in a strategic way and fields of development are addressed by the educators’ individual needs. Tomas mentioned that

“where we are not reaching yet is to have a kind of strategic discussion in our leadership at school on where are we heading what kind of teachers do we want and which teacher do we want to say well you must go on this course.”

This organized dimension of in-service training puzzles Tomas, since he fluctuates between targeting a specific goal with organized in-service training or allowing the teachers decide about it, creating meaningful learning opportunities for them. He surely believes that sending teachers to training, when they are not interested in it is not effective.

In the end, Tomas added that around the year, 1 to 3 days seminars are organized for the whole teachers group with various topics like cooperation, innovation, creativity,
teaching methods and professional development. This is actually part of the
determined in-service training of Stockholm’s United folk high school.

Trying to describe competence as a term, Tomas mentioned that “to be competent is
to be able to help the student to reach the students’ goals” and since students come
with different levels of knowledge and skills acquired, it is important to be able “to
work and discuss, so there is some learning even for these people”, referring those
who may be experts compared to the educator itself. This notion is related to
“challenge by choice”, according to which the educator should be able to meet each
one of the students, even in different levels and reassures that each of them has been
developed somehow. Wise use of resources is included in the needed competences for
facing this challenge along with self-esteem.

Comparing folk high schools with Komvux, Tomas referred to the freedom that folk
high schools enjoy and to the fact that they remain untouched by the changes in
political decisions. He finishes his point with the idea that “In folk high schools, the
whole system relies on that the competence [of teachers] is there. So give freedom to
teachers.”

**Analysis of the discussion**

Reflecting on our discussion with Tomas, there have been points where he made a
distinction between general education courses (allmän kurs) and other folk high
school courses, not only in relation to the educators, but also in a more general sense.
The different nature of the courses clarifies such distinction, which at the same time
seems to be present and absent. It is present when legislation is involved and absent
since the school’s philosophy and vision applies to all its members.

With reference to fostered competences during recruitment, Tomas seems to prioritize
ability for teamwork, since an effort is made for teachers to perceive a school as a
unit, and teaching skills. Teaching skills are approached differently for general
courses educators, involving formal teaching qualifications as the legislation indicates
and focusing on subject knowledge area. With regards to the rest of the school’s
teachers, formal qualifications in the subject area are required, while pedagogical
skills are not a requirement. In general though, based on the description of a good
teacher, competences like passion and patience, humility and monitoring skills are
mentioned along with flexibility and wise allocating on time resources.

In-service training, on the other hand, focuses on a list of competences, namely
cooperation, creativity, innovation, new teaching methods and of course professional
development. These are shortly discussed by Tomas, but they are actually
competences that organized in-service addresses one per year and they are set and not
influenced by individual educators’ needs. The evaluation of educators’ own learning
needs is also discussed but not as a goal of in-service training, rather than as part of
the process. Moreover, engaging in collegial professional activities and incorporating
new knowledge into learning environment to improve instruction quality (Sherman et
al., 1999) is the competence targeted by the peer review activity and it is related to
professional development and quality assurance.

Other competence discussed but not with reference to recruitment process or in-
service training include students’ needs assessment and self-confidence as
components of a competent educator. The following table summarizes the above
mentioned competences.
Table 9. Preferred competences in Stockholm’s United folk high school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment process</th>
<th>In-service training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork skills</td>
<td>Teamwork skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching skills (incl. formal qualifications for general courses educators only) and Subject area knowledge (certified by university studies for art, music and drama teachers only)</td>
<td>Engaging in collegial professional activities and incorporating new knowledge into learning environment to improve instruction quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Creativity and innovation (as part of personal professional development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>Assessment of educators’ learning needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to monitor learning process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of time resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other competences discussed</strong>: students’ needs assessment and self-confidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Five: Discussion of findings

Chapter Five discusses the findings of the present study. As presented in Chapter Three, the first comparison is realized between the two cases of Komvux centers with aim to detect similarities. Later a comparison between the cases of folk high schools is performed. Finally, the chapter ends with a comparison between the two types of education providers in a general discussion about the findings of the empirical part.

5.1 Comparing the cases of Komvux centers

Comparing the interviews from the two komvux centers it becomes clear that the principals although both with long experience in adult education have two different approaches with regards to desired competences for their adult educators. Carol focuses on personal characteristics and traits that create the potential of a good adult educator and can be further developed. On the other hand, Helena seeks for specific clearly defined competences, with aim to reassure efficient learning for the students in her institution. Both include the necessary teaching qualifications of course, which are required by the respective legislation.

While recruiting new educators both principals check formal teaching qualifications. However, when they were asked to prioritize competences during the recruitment process, they both mentioned formal teaching qualifications first because they are required by the law. This raises some doubts about the balance of teaching skills being both a desired and a necessary set of competences. In formal teaching qualifications, the principals include subject knowledge and design and implementation of the learning process with all the competences involved.

Besides the common basis of needed competences, the two principals adopted a different approach. Carol referred to passion, commitment and motivation on new teachers along with curiosity and open mindedness, while teamwork and knowing their own self was regarded as helpful. All these competences combined describe a well-rounded individual, but not necessary an educator. They would be appreciated in any job and they constitute transferable competences in many other professions. This approach indicates that in this center self-awareness and motivation to succeed are the entry requirements, while teaching related skills come slightly after that.

On the other hand, Helena set the working experience in the locus. Helena mentioned that she does not agree with the legislation not allowing teachers with folk high school training to be employed in municipal adult education. For this reason, we can assume that formal teaching qualifications are prioritized by her only by necessity and the next set of competences, “working experience” as she named it are the most desired ones. Including knowledge on adult learning, ability to use learners’ experience and skills as a resource in learning, awareness of the psychological profile and the background of the adult students as well as establishing a respectful relationship with them, working experience equips adult educators with a set of competences that are directly linked to adults’ successful learning. Thus, Helena focuses on already developed competences to reassure that the new educator is ready to contribute in the institution. Moreover, minority languages are mentioned as desired competence. This competence is not mentioned in any other case, although nearly all principals talk about the issues raised due to low level of some students in Swedish.
Differences are mainly detected in in-service training too. Reflection on educators’ own practices the common point for both institutions. Still in Carol’s school this is focused on the person, while in Helena’s case it is focused on the teaching techniques applied in the classroom. This can be explained by the fact that Health for All is a new center. They begin with the teacher and then move from the individual to the group and then to the school. Lillenhamnen Komvux on the contrary, operates for some years and it is already in the next stage, where reflection practice focuses on the school and the teaching. In addition, another difference constitutes the importance of the vision in Carol’s school, whereas in Helena’s teachers are more concerned about improving competences on teaching non-Swedish students.

All in all, common competences include skills related to the design and implementation of teaching, reflection and evaluation of educators’ own practices along with communication whether this is implied in group work, thus communication among colleagues or in use of minority languages, thus between students and teachers.

### 5.2 Comparing the cases of folk high schools

Reflecting on the discussions with principals of 3 different folk high schools, all located in the city of Stockholm, similarities and difference have been detected with regards to competences fostered in the two process under research, namely recruitment process an in-service training. The two processes are used as themes for analyzing the competences mentioned.

Beginning with the recruitment process, it was common among all the interviewees to require the new educators to be able to collaborate with other colleagues and generally be able to work in groups, as this is the way teachers work in all three cases. Whether described intensively or shortly, teamwork was mentioned by all three interviewees among the first and most important characteristics of a new adult educator and as necessary trait, in order to remain in their position. In an attempt to better phrase this competence we could list it under “Group management and communication” as the QF2Teach framework suggests (Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009). Besides clear communication, managing of group dynamics and handling conflicts, we should add sharing and exchanging of good practices or knowledge among colleagues (Sherman et al., 1999), coping with criticism and being open-minded (Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2009). Hence, being a team player is expected by new adult educators both as an attitude and as a skill, although it is not clearly mentioned in any of the existing frameworks.

Subject area knowledge is also discussed by all the interviewees among the most wanted competences. Although in some cases it is related to teaching skills or included in them, it is always mentioned separately as well, highlighting its importance. Subject area knowledge is not always proved by formal qualifications. For some principals working experience or a career on the field, especially with reference to arts, is considered adequate proof. Formal qualification is though appreciated. All in all, subject knowledge is a competence desired in all the cases.

Teaching skills are also prioritized but vaguely defined. In the case of Stockholm’s United folk high school, they were defined through the description of the good teacher characterized by passion, humility, patience and the ability to monitor progress. In Bjorn folkhögskola, supporting informal learning was of major importance combined
with being available and accessible to students and establishing clear communication with them. The same was also discussed by another principal, who also added the significance of being aware of the concept of folkbildning, relating teaching skills with experience from folk high schools and their philosophy. In all cases, the role of an adult educator was discussed besides teaching. The focus on informal learning and the development of tight personal relationship with the students was regarded as vital.

With reference to in-service training, personal professional development is the only area targeted by all institutions, since in-service training is mostly based on individual educators’ needs and it does not occur in a systematic way. However, in all institutions there are short trainings that are already set, but they target different competences. In Stockholm’s United folk high school, the focus is on the development of teamwork related skills, in the case of St Bernards folk high school raising awareness about the vision of the school and its meaning is the goal, while in Bjorn folkhögskola the locus is on knowledge regarding special learning characteristics of students with disabilities and students with Swedish as their second language.

If we could summarize the preferred competences as a type of education provider, during the recruitment process folk high school principals look for adult educators with teamwork related skills, subject area knowledge and teaching skills, including involvement in informal learning of students and establishing close relationships with them. On the contrary in-service training aims at covering numerous needs emerging and corresponds to a wide variety of competences, like development of team spirit, raising awareness on schools’ vision, knowledge for characteristics of special group of students or IT related skills.

5.3 Discussion

Comparing komvux and folk high schools in a more general sense, similarities are detected with reference to adult educators’ competences. Nevertheless, the reasons lying behind the preference for these competences are diverse. Furthermore, it is of interest that the findings include competences not distinctly mentioned in the already existing frameworks, namely teamwork and the importance of vision awareness.

During the recruitment process, subject area knowledge and teaching skills were the first topic to be discussed. Although all the participants brought this topic up, while explaining it further, various perspectives were revealed. In the first place, for some teaching skills and subject area knowledge were a “pack” of competences bond together, while others referred to them separately, implying that one can be acquired without the other. In this second case, principals focused more on validating the subject area knowledge through formal degrees or professional career, rather than validating teaching skills. This was the view of folk high school principals and it can be explained by the fact that the legislation is flexible, allowing candidates that lack formal teaching qualifications to be employed, providing freedom on the principals to prioritize what they consider as more important.

Furthermore, all the participants stressed the importance of teamwork and group prosperity. The necessity for the newcomer to be able to fit in the group and collaborate effectively with the rest educators valuing the development of the team as a whole equally with his/her personal progress introduces a group of competences that are prioritized among the first three most important competences, teamwork
competences. However, being a team player is quite general to cover the variety of the answers included in this study’s findings. Interesting case constitutes the St Bernards folk high school, where being able to fit the team is translated as be younger than the rest but self-assured and preferably male, in order to bring a balance in the synthesis of the group population. In the case of Health for All, teamwork is centered around clear communication and having the same goals, while finally in Stockholm’s United folk high school offering help between colleagues in practicalities, like absence, is vital. In the end, in the example of Lillenhamnen komvux center the team of teachers is approached more as an environment where educators should share their teaching practices and reflect on them individually and collectively. Consequently, different institutions perceive teamwork as something different, whereas it is needed to fulfill different purposes.

Besides the variation among the units of analysis related to the teaching skills, the notion of folkbildning constitutes an additional difference between komvux and folk high schools. Folkbildning, defined as a teaching approach where formal and non-formal learning activities are combined, is part of the desired knowledge for adult educators that seek employment in folk high schools. According to principals, prospective teachers are expected to be aware of this notion, agree with it and be ready to implement it in their teaching and their involvement in the organization. This approach is not present in municipal adult education, where the educators are more “professional” and thus limit their teaching practices inside the classroom.

In-service training is the next process under discussion. All the institutions agreed on competences addressed during this process, while the most discussed was individual teachers’ professional development with a focus on knowledge and teaching skills related to the subject of teaching. This form of in-service training is official, since time from the working hours of educators is allocated on it, but it is also flexible and can be directed in various fields. However, a field quite often mentioned is teaching skills related to non-Swedish speaking students, a population that is increasing the last years. Other forms of organized in-service training include group meetings, where reflection of teaching practices takes place assisting the process of self-evaluation. Although part of the evaluation process too, many participants reported it as “training” because they regarded it as a procedure during which their educators are further educated.

All in all, similarities are dominant between the two education providers, nevertheless the reasons behind the preference of specific competences indicates that the two types of providers could not be one. Comparing the special case of folk high schools with municipal adult education (Komvux) offered a holistic view of two adult education systems running parallel, demanding for educators with different profiles.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

By interviewing principals of adult education centers about the desired competences of adult educators during the recruitment and in-service training process, this research study attempted to define part of the adult educators’ professional profile, focusing on competences that they are highly possible to possess or develop in their career. The findings underlined some competences that international frameworks already include along with some that are not present in them supporting the argument of wide variety in adult education field. Furthermore, by critically analyzing the findings, conclusions and points of interest have been reached, especially in relation to the reasons behind preferring specific competences.

One of the most discussed set of competences congruent with the nature of the profession is the teaching competences, including all the competences related to the design and implementation of the learning process. Teaching related competences are prioritized by Komvux adult education centers, but as a necessity. The fact that they are required by the legislation makes it hard to investigate their importance for the principals in other circumstances. Under “formal teaching qualifications” principals referred to teaching skills without details, probably because they consider them predetermined. Do they really trust the educational system and its degrees as valid knowledge testimony, or teaching skills are expected to be developed in the workplace? Whether a certificate is enough or teaching skills are not vital requirements for being recruited, teaching competences come in the first place as necessity based on the finding deriving from this research.

Investigating the same set of competences in a context where they are not required by the law offers another perspective. In folk high schools, formal teaching qualifications are not prerequisite for employing an adult educator and according to the findings teaching skills are desired, but with a very specific meaning. Because of non-formal learning holding an important role in the learning process of folk high schools, adult educators are expected to be aware of non-formal learning activities and actively participate in them. Consequently, the competence of supporting informal learning approached as a skill that was practiced and developed, when educators experience folk high schools either as teachers or as students, is what folk high schools’ principals describe when they are further asked about teaching skills. This prior experience is also needed, in order for the educators to be able to teach in agreement with folkbildning, where formal and non-formal learning are combined. Of course subject knowledge is also part of the set of teaching skills and it is mentioned by every single participant. While in folk high schools folkbildning is the cornerstone of teaching, in Komvux the teachers have a more professional approach, meaning that although the system is student centered and individualized the focus on non–formal learning is low, thus support of informal learning activities is not prioritized by Komvux principals.

Teamwork skills are of great importance and constituted part of all the interviews. In general, in Sweden teamwork is promoted (Sohrevardi, 2013) and educators are expected to help each other, be prepared to work together and share practices aiming to development. Although not directly related to teaching in the classroom, teamwork skills enhance the opportunities for development for an educator and are in agreement with the general culture of the Swedish workplace. Hence, the fact that all the
participants discussed this competence as vital comes as no surprise. Teamwork, either reinforcing the unity of the school or allowing exchange of practices, is desired and remains vital for adult educators both as a skill and an attitude in Komvux centers and folk high schools.

Another competence thoroughly discussed is the awareness of the vision. Determining the vision of the school and using all the resources to achieve this vision is the notion behind the importance of the vision and it is a basic idea in Leadership Training in Sweden that all the participants have attended due to their job position (Johansson, 2001). Although more prevalent in folk high school cases, awareness of the vision is important for all the participants, both as a philosophy infused in all the aspects of the institution’s life and as requirement for prospective adult educators. Additionally, awareness of the vision is required in both processes, namely recruitment and in-service training, in the first as information that teachers need to have and be in agreement with and in the latter as knowledge that further needs to be developed. Therefore, thorough knowledge of the vision is of major importance.

Reflecting on the importance that teamwork and vision awareness receive, we can assume that the context of Sweden sets its own boundaries on what is important and what it not. Since both constitute vital elements of the Swedish educational culture, their significance is easily explained and should be taken into consideration when competence discussion moves from an international to a national level. This difference detected in the study highlights that variations in adult education can be that wide that prioritized competences in the Swedish context are negligible in international level. Hence, international frameworks although advantageous are not adequate to describe the situation of adult educators in country level.

With regards to in-service training, competences of importance for both education providers include self-reflection and evaluation of educators’ own practices as well as competences related to group of students with special learning needs, like non Swedish speaking students or students with special needs. All the participants mentioned already organized sessions for reflecting on teachers’ practices, both individually and in groups. In most of them discussing problems and difficulties with colleagues is addressed and educators are expected to initiate change after the reflection if they consider it necessary. Although this can be considered part of the evaluation process, principals discussed it as part of in-service training, because they consider it part of educating their educators. This reflection process is of much importance. The reason for this is the fact that it is already set and time is allocated from the working hours on this activity. Thus, refining of instructional practices through reflection (AIR, 2015) and initiating changes in the teaching methods applied to improve quality (Sherman et al., 1999) is of value, because it constitutes development of competences for educators and improvement of the learning process for the institution and can be easily understood considering the importance of teamwork as well.

Furthermore, a knowledge approach is detected when discussing about the vision. The awareness of the vision is related to being informed of that and understanding it rather than translating it into teaching practices. This argument is further supported by the fact that principals recognize value in experience in folk high schools not only as teachers but also as students, setting the focus on being aware of the idea of folkbildning and how it is implemented in teaching, but not necessarily having tried it themselves.
All in all, the case of Sweden has been proved interesting highlighting aspects of adult educators’ profile that are important in this context but maybe trivial in other settings. In this unique environment adult educators’ competences are approached mostly through the enhancement of the team and the progress of the learning organization rather than as individual units. Competences are always defined and justified with reference to the institution and the ability of the educator to contribute in the proliferation on this entity. This perspective indicates a demand for educators that acquire the need for contributing to a bigger entity and are part of a bigger aim.

**Suggestions for future research**

This study attempted to explore the competences of adult educators in the Swedish context by comparing two types of education providers, municipal adult education centers and folk high schools. Nevertheless, a broader understanding of how the professional profile of adult educators is constructed would mean considering more aspects of their professional identity as well as investigating the perceptions of other actors influencing it. For instance, teachers’ associations constitute major actors in the professionalization process of any profession, adult educators included.

A greater focus on teaching competences may also be of interest. While this study set the locus generally in adult educators’ competences, the results indicated divergence and variation regarding teaching competences, which were expected to be core in the discussion. This issue demands further research, especially in the context of Sweden, a country whose educational practices have been perceived as promising and successful. Many sides of the Swedish education system remain unknown and need to further research is needed in order for other countries to learn from the Swedish paradigm. More specifically, defining and exploring teaching competences of adult educators in non-formal Swedish education could be further explored, since major stakeholders, like principals, have expressed contradictory views about their importance. Such research can serve as a knowledge basis for the design and development of teacher training programs specialized in adult education, which for the time being are in scarcity.

Involving all the stakeholders and possible actors in adult educators’ professionalization in a discussion about the future of this profession and the quality of adult education can serve as a starting point for developing related policy or initial education programs specialized on adult learning. Researching adult educators’ competences is only a small step towards the development of tertiary or vocational education programs. Therefore, more research and action is needed in an attempt to succeed the required quality in the field.

Finally, since adult education displays wide variety between countries, more research is expected to be conducted in the national level, in order to reveal traits and trends. With regard to international discourse, more comparative studies can allow for safer conclusions about functional systems and the ingredients of their success.
References


Kutsekoda, (n.d.). PROFESSIONAL STANDARD. The adult educator, level 6. ESF Programme “Development of occupational qualifications system”. Retrieved 12 December, from https://www.google.se/search?q=ESF+programme+%E2%80%9CDevelopment+of+occupational+qualifications+system%E2%80%9D+level+6+a+ verge=chrome..69i57.105234j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#q=ESF+programme+%E2%80%9CDevelopment+of+occupational+qualifications+system%E2%80%9D+level+6&aq=-integrals&aqi=0&uact=5&bih=828&biw=1280&prmd=imvnsis


**Online resources**


Appendices

Appendix A. Competence areas addressed in adult educators’ competences frameworks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Personal professional development</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Designing and implementation of the learning process</th>
<th>Support and Guidance</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QF2TEACH - Qualified to Teach</td>
<td>Subject competence</td>
<td>Personal professional development</td>
<td>Learning process analysis</td>
<td>Stimulating learning</td>
<td>Efficient Teaching</td>
<td>Supporting learning/Assistance of learners</td>
<td>Group Management and Communication/ Self Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VINEPACK</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Personal professional development</td>
<td>Assessment and valorization of learning</td>
<td>Motivation and counseling</td>
<td>Training management</td>
<td>Motivation and counseling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education teacher competencies</td>
<td>Pursues professionalism and continually builds knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Monitors and manages student learning and performance through data</td>
<td>Effectively communicates to motivate and engage learners</td>
<td>Plans and delivers high-quality, evidence-based instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO-NET - Building Professional Development Partnership in Adult Education</td>
<td>Maintains Knowledge and Pursues Professional Development</td>
<td>Maintains Knowledge and Pursues Professional Development</td>
<td>Continually Assesses and Monitors Learning</td>
<td>Organizes and Delivers Instruction/Manages Instructional Resources/Manages Program Responsibilities and Enhances Program Organization</td>
<td>Provides learner guidance and referral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Key competences for adult learning professional | Competence in facilitating the learning process for adult learners: being a facilitator of knowledge (practical and/or theoretical) and a stimulator of adult learners' own development. | Competence in assessment of prior experience, learning needs, demands, motivations and wishes of adult learners: being capable of assessment of adult learners’ own learning needs. | Competence in facilitating the learning process for adult learners: being a facilitator of knowledge (practical and/or theoretical) and a stimulator of adult learners’ own development. | Competence in selecting appropriate learning styles, didactical methods and content for the adult learning process: being capable of designing the learning process. | Competence in advising on career, life, further development and, if necessary, the use of professional help: being an advisor/counselor.
| | Competence to continuously monitor and evaluate the adult learning process | | | | |
| in order to improve it: being an evaluator of the learning process | being a programme developer. |
## Semi-structured interview theme questions

### Introduction

- Would you like to tell me some things about yourself and how you decided to be involved in adult education?
- Do you think your studies are helpful and related to your everyday work as the head of an adult education organization?
- What do you think of your experience? Is it more important source of solutions for you than your studies?

### Recruitment process

- One of the main responsibilities you have is to hire new candidates for the position of adult educator whenever this is needed. How does the recruitment process take place?
- What competences you would like candidates to acquire in order to be eligible for the job?
- Among the competences you have mentioned above, which do you consider more important?
- Why do you regard these competences more important than others?
- If I would ask you to prioritize the competences you referred to as the most important, how would you list them starting from the most important?

### In-service training

- Moving to another field for which you make the final decision, in-service training, would you mind briefly telling me how often you offer it to your adult educators and who is providing it?
- What are the most common competences you train you staff in?
- Why do you support/design training that enhances the above mentioned competences?
- Are there any further competences that you would like to develop in the future through in-service training? Which?

### Defining competences

- Reflecting on the above discussion how do you perceive competences? What does this term mean for you?

### Closing the interview

- Thank you! Is there something else you would like to add?