

Mapping of research related to folkbildning in the Nordic countries



A collaboration project between umbrella organizations for folkbildning in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark.

The mapping covers the period from 1998-2018.

The publication is a result of a Nordic project involving these umbrella organizations for folkbildning:

Bildningsalliansen in Finland

Swedish Adult Education Association - Studieförbunden

Norwegian Association for Adult Learning - Voksenopplæringsforbundet

Danish Adult Education Association - Dansk Folkeoplysnings Samråd



The project also involved partnering universities:

Åbo Akademi University in Finland

Mimer - Swedish network for research on popular education at Linköping University

Norwegian University of Science and Technology - NTNU

Danish School of Education, Aarhus University



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Danish Adult Education Association has been the main author of the publication. All the involved project partners have contributed.

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Summary

Nordic folkbildning organizations have developed a database of active researchers conducting research within the field of folkbildning. The database covers the period from 1998-2018. The aim of the database is to support and enhance visibility of the research within the field of folkbildning for both researchers and practitioners, to strengthen the cooperation between research and folkbildning and hopefully motivate academia to increase their attention to the folkbildning sector.

Folkbildning, the non-formal adult education sector, is sometimes also called popular education or liberal adult education. In this project the term *folkbildning* is used as it emphasizes the core of this Nordic educational tradition; folk, meaning people, and bildning, meaning learning and formation. In all the different activities taking place within the framework of folkbildning, the common denominator is that people share knowledge, exchange views and discuss opinions¹.

Folkbildning does not have one explicit research field in any of the Nordic countries, nor does it have well defined research environments or subfields obvious to other academics or practitioners. Sweden seems to have the most well-established research environment. It includes an association, Föreningen för folkbildningsforskning, and an institute, Mimer, the Swedish network for research on popular education at Linköping University which has specific focus on research in folkbildning. As a research paper on a mapping of articles on general adult education and lifelong learning from 2008 remarks, adult education researchers have been struggling with defining a research territory of their own for years before arriving at where it is today (Andersson et al 2008²). To think there might be a visible subfield for Folkbildning within this field therefore might be aiming a little high. None the less, this is what the mapping part of the project aims to do - or at least is to take a few initial steps in that direction.

The mapping was carried out through systemized searches of published research in relevant research databases in the period 1998-2018. The project was led by Danish Adult Education Association, DAEA, in close correspondence with Mimer – a Swedish network for research on popular education at Linköping University, and included Studieförbunden in Sweden, Voksenopplæringsforbundet in Norway and Bildningsalliansen in Finland. Partnering universities also included Danish School of Education, Åbo Akademi and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology - NTNU.

Based on the searches, each organization sorted through and excluded irrelevant publications based on their individual knowledge of their national context. The results were a selected collection of research publications, which can be considered a suggestive indicator for the volume and variations of fields and activities characterizing research on folkbildning in each national context. Following the mapping exercise an online database was build. The database can be found at folkbildningresearch.com

¹ <https://studieforbunden.se/other-languages/>

² Paper at NERA/NFPF's 36th Congress, Copenhagen March 6-8, 2008: Adult Education and Lifelong Learning Research in the Nordic Countries - A mapping of recent articles in international journals

Method and process

The mapping was carried out by each umbrella organization nationally in collaboration with the national academic partner. The organizations had received guidelines on delimitations and types of search words with proposed examples but had the freedom to formulate the actual search words themselves and include / exclude perspectives as they saw fit with regards to their specific national context. A process of national consultations with the respective university partners was carried out to refine and define nationally specific search terms as well as identifying national data sources. This method provided collected data which is not directly comparable – only suggestive.

The method used involved the following steps:

- 1) Searching keywords of relevant terms in relevant research databases (and saving the searches as RIS-files (Research information systems).
- 2) Screening 1: Selecting publications to be included based on title and abstract.
- 3) Screening 2: Assigning tags to included items based on title and abstract, hereby categorizing the data into themes.
- 4) Removing duplicates and sorting through the results more closely, in order to exclude less relevant data.

The screening process was carried out using either EPPI-reviewer or Zotero by each of the four folkbildning organizations and assisted by their university contact.

Delimitations, method and data sources

The organizations were handed a guide made by DAEA in correspondence with Mimer to carry out the delimitations, searches and sorting the data.

The project group was instructed to limit searches as to follow the criteria:

- a. Year of publication: 1998-2018.
- b. Excluding items on a non-academic level and at master thesis level or lower.
- c. Researchers (author of the publication) is based in the specific country where the search is carried out – this meaning being affiliated with one or more universities in the Nordic countries.

The delimitations of search words related to folkbildning had to cover three chosen aspects:

1. Words identified as used for 'folkbildning' (in national language and in English conjoined with national terms).
2. Words identified as used for activities and organizational forms considered to be folkbildning.
3. Organisational names for folkbildning organisations.

The search words for each national context were to be chosen in correspondence with the affiliated university contact. The search words can be found in the Appendix.

The chosen search words varied between the national contexts. There can be several reasons for this. One reason is the national differences in organizational structures, forms and activities considered to be folkbildning which affects the possibility for actual relevant fields.

Another is the words used to describe folkbildning understood as non-formal adult education which can vary depending on the national history of formal and non-formal learning, mobilization and discursive use of terms.

Another reason is the amount of hits generated. Sweden was screened to be the most voluminous partner in regard to mapping results, and in order to keep the workdays within reasonable amounts in relation to the funding of the project, the search was limited to fewer central words. This has also limited the Finnish search to only be in the two major national languages and not in English.

Another variable making data vary from each country was the availability of research data. The different countries had different searchable databases available. Finland for example had two metadatabases at hand but found the hits to miss important contributions known already to the project group.

The research databases included is shown in table 1.1

Table 1.1 The research databases used

	Denmark	Sweden	Norway	Finland
Research databases	Forskningsdatabasen (E and DA) Scopus (E) OECD iLibrary (E) REX (DA) ProQuest (E and DA) JSTOR, (DA and E) Education Database (DA and E) EBSCO (DA and E)	Unisearch (LiU) (E and SE)	ERIC (E and NO) ORIA (BIBSYS) (E and NO) Norart (NO) Scopus (E) Web of Science (E)	finna.fi (FI) doria.fi (FI)

The different available databases had different functionalities in limiting the search results. Therefore, some of the limitations had to be done manually in the process of sorting through the data for relevance.

Sorting through the data, there will also have been different interpretations of what is relevant to folkbildning.

The different national umbrella organizations cover different types of organizations considered to be active in the field of folkbildning. The Norwegian organization also covers parts of formal adult education. The Swedish organization representing study associations – covering a greater amount of non-formal learning activities than of those in Denmark. The Finnish organization covers all five sectors within folkbildning as defined in national legislation. The Danish organizations having various organizational forms covering different groups of participants correlating to age, employment status, education level, etc. Each person working with the screening process might also have different interpretations of folkbildning and what is to be considered relevant.

The results

The total amounts of hits and the number of included items is shown in table 1.2.

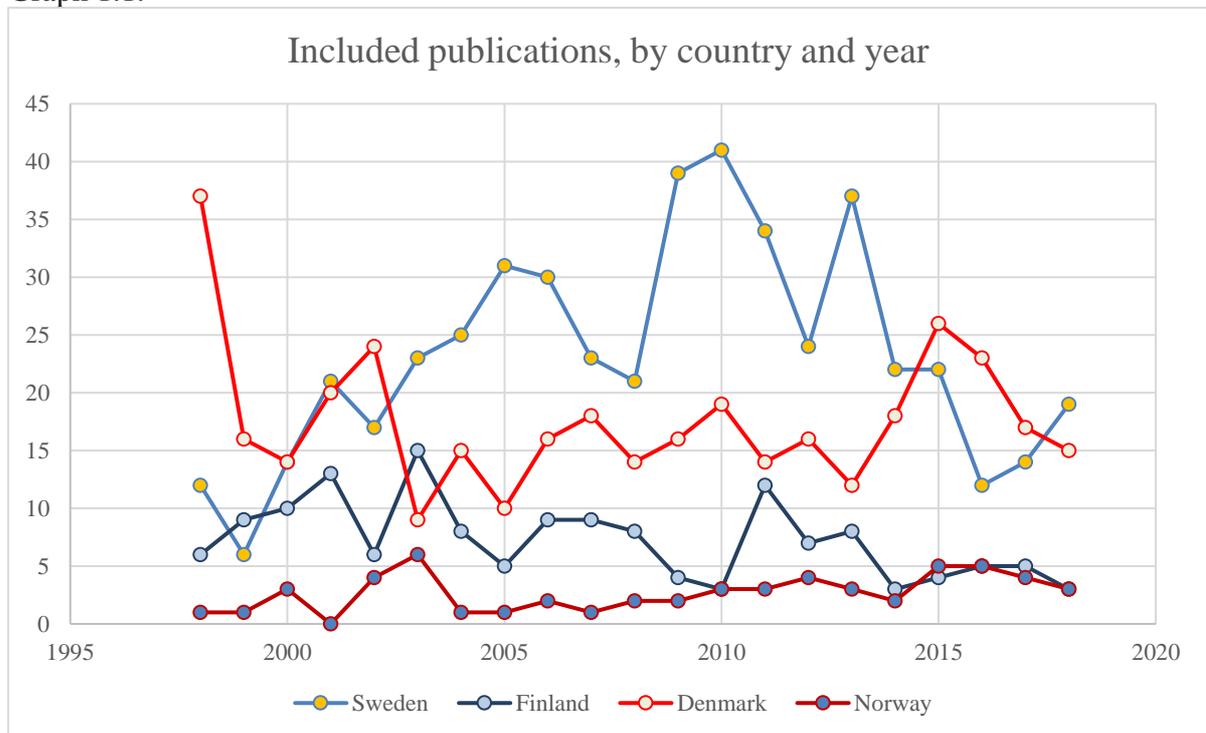
Table 1.2. Total and included number of items per country

	Denmark	Sweden	Norway	Finland
Items found total - including duplicates	3701	3583	1747	7033
- excl. duplicates	3306	3336	1557	6342
Items included	370	487	60	157

As anticipated Sweden had the most hits and Norway the least. The unexpectedly high number of hits in Finland is in part due to a new extensive online meta database covering a very wide area of research institutions. The mapping done in this project can only be seen as suggestive as it cannot be considered to be systematically carried out.

As suggested Sweden had the most hits - even though the Swedish search used a limited amount of search words in their mapping. As the graph shows the number of published items for Sweden suggest a rise in relevant publications over the last 20 years. In comparison Denmark had a national research center dedicated to adult education which was closed down after 1998, which can be seen in the massive decrease in hits followed by a rise in the later years.

Graph 1.1.



Looking into the results

A closer look at the data reveals several fields and subjects already visible in the titles and abstracts within the collected material. Most of the research articles documents and analyses folkbildning practices: the different participant groups and forms of activities found within the sector. Others look into the ideas and policies driving and forming the sector; the interplay with other sectors of society; and how folkbildning affects society. A few research publications spread across the mapping countries even looked into the field of research on folkbildning from a meta perspective. Examples of this is the review from 2008 mentioned in the beginning of the publication³.

Identified themes in the included publications are commented in the following categories. A more detailed analysis of the different categories is not pursued here.

- a. Ideas, thinkers and influencers
- b. History and the different organisation forms
- c. Society, democracy and inclusion
- d. Labour market, work life and vocational training
- e. Education and competences
- f. Pedagogy and didactics
- g. Culture and bildung
- h. Migration and integration
- i. Minorities and interculturalism
- j. Other subjects worth mentioning

Ideas, thinkers and influencers

A common focus for all the countries is looking into specific thinkers, influencers and ideas of folkbildning. It is worth noting that the mapping has searched for key terms for folkbildning and not searched for specific names of thinkers such as N. F. S. Grundtvig or Oscar Olsson. The fact that they occur none the less can be seen as emphasizing folkbildning as a recognized and referred to historical field of specific practices, values and culture.

The history and different forms of folkbildning organizations

The included material clearly shows how the sector and societal role have held a significant meaning in the national histories in various ways. An example is the case of the Swedish and Finnish history of having a strong affiliation between folkbildning and the labour movement. This is often specifically linked to the different forms of folkbildning organizations, which can take on many forms - with the two largest common denominators being the folk high schools and study circles (in link to the study associations) in Denmark, Sweden and Finland. In the case of Denmark and Sweden the interplay between folkbildning and libraries is also a small but present research focus.

³ Paper at NERA/NFPF's 36th Congress, Copenhagen March 6-8, 2008:
Adult Education and Lifelong Learning Research in the Nordic Countries - A mapping of recent articles in international journals

Society, democracy and inclusion

Not surprisingly one of the largest perspectives is on society and democracy. With popular adult education being a part of the vast Nordic tradition of a large voluntary sector, every aspect is covered – from a micro perspective looking at citizenship learning with individuals; making informed life choices and agency building; to a macro perspective of the democratic development of society and nation building. This includes research articles focusing on specific activities with specific participant groups with aims of including, empowering and voicing marginalized groups like ethnic minorities, the elderly, people with disabilities, diagnose or chronic disease, long term unemployment, fighting poverty, etc.

In the Swedish articles we also found items focusing on the direct interlink with political parties with courses teaching and preparing party members. In the Danish and to some extent the Norwegian research there is a found focus on associationalism and the role of “foreninger” in civil society and democratic processes.

We have also found a subject of what can be called “the good life” or “better life”: the inclusion and thriving of citizens. This is interpreted in various ways in the research but is none the less present in terms of highlighting the right and opportunity to realize individuals’ potential and self-defined interests.

Labour market, work life and vocational training

Looking at the included items across the countries the perspective of working life is found in relatively few of the publications – with Norway having relatively most hits. Why is that? One suggestion is that there might be a tradition growing from the 1970’s for folkbildning as being outside of work life as a democratic and leisure time-based form of self-realization, which has (at least) been noted within Danish research (Korsgaard).

In the introductory notes we referred to the systematic review from 2008 of adult education and lifelong learning research in the Nordic countries. This review found that the research from 2000-2007 is focused mainly on the connection between adult learning and work. A specific Nordic model of adult education is not commented on in their findings, nor does the relatively large sectors of popular adult education seem to be of interest to the Nordic adult education research, they remark (Andersson et al 2008: 19f)⁴.

Education and competences

Despite this, labour market perspectives can still in some ways be interpreted as an indirect aspect of a larger amount of the included research items when taking formal education into account. The field of research investigating competence outcomes and the interplay between folkbildning as non-formal learning in relation to formal education often cater to political labour market policies without always mentioning it.

The collected findings show a very big variety of subcategories within the sector, e.g. democratic education, bridgebuilding, motivation, community and personal skills.

⁴ Paper at NERA/NFPF’s 36th Congress, Copenhagen March 6-8, 2008:
Adult Education and Lifelong Learning Research in the Nordic Countries - A mapping of recent articles in international journals

Pedagogy and didactics

Studies of adult education teachers and teachings is also a given subject in all countries except the Norwegian mapping. Here we find items focusing specifically on non-formal and informal learning for adults in third sector settings.

The subject of information and communication technology is also a returning subject – both as in how to implement this in adult education, for instance using flexible learning and how to teach adults in the subject.

Culture and bildung

The link between culture and folkbildning is found studied in various ways in all countries: as a facilitator for engaging with culture and arts in various ways, as spaces for creating cultural outputs and identity, and as mentioned under ‘Minorities and interculturalism’ as a preserving and developing factor for specific cultures. The theme of engaging in cultural productions like crafts, amateur radio and theater is present in the included publications.

Migration and integration

A substantially represented theme is on migration and learning for inclusion and integration. In all countries, folkbildning has had a role in facilitating learning and inclusion activities for newly arrived refugees and immigrants. According to the search Sweden is the largest contributor. The findings in many cases also overlaps with activities for minorities, covering for example ‘not newly arrived’-immigrants in need of language training, leisure activities mainly for seasonal workers and interested others, or activities focused in specific urban communities and spaces.

Minorities and interculturalism

As mentioned above activities focused in specific urban areas is also a recurring theme. This includes making space for and developing minority cultures for the youth and activating marginalized individuals that might be socially isolated in leisure activities. As mentioned under “society and democracy”, inclusion is a well-represented theme.

This theme also involves the historical and geographical differences covered by the various Nordic countries. Especially Finland has detected articles focusing on local cultural minorities and differences like the Finnish Swedes; Norway; the Sami. Denmark; the Greenlandic.

Other subjects worth mentioning

We can see that minor research areas than the above mentioned are present in the data. For instance, health is present in Finland, Sweden and Denmark and there are also few items on sustainable development in Sweden, Finland and Denmark. Digital skills are seen in Finland and Sweden, but not in the other countries. From the mapping we see that for instance areas such as fake news and populism (1 hit in Sweden) are not active research fields within the folkbildning research.

The database: folkbildningresearch.com

Based on the mapping results, the researchers listed as authors of the research publications have been contacted and asked for permission to be included in an online database:

Folkbildningresearch.com

The numbers of researchers present from each country are (May 2019):

Norway: 12
Finland: 15
Denmark: 80
Sweden: 63

The Tags

Starting from the categorizing used in the mapping tags have been constructed in a collaboration work among the partners. The aim was to have an amount of tags to be broad enough to cover the field, but also specific enough to be precise. The tags also had to work across the 4 countries and to cover national research contexts. Looking through the data it became obvious that some of the specific schools/courses were a subject of research and were hence given a tag as well: Folk high schools, Study associations (*studieförbund* (SE), *aftenskoler* (DK)) and Study circles and courses (*studiecirkler* (SE)). Other national specific schools and courses are included in the tag Education and competences (*Produktionsskoler, daghøjskoler* etc. (DK))

The tags are:

- Culture and bildung
- Democracy and society
- Digitalization and information technology
- Documentation and evaluation
- Education and competences
- Folk high schools
- Financial focus and economy (Only SE)
- Health
- History
- Inclusion
- Ideas
- Labour market
- Methods and development
- Migration and integration
- Minorities and interculturalism
- Older adults
- Organizational focus
- Pedagogy and didactics
- Study associations
- Study circles and courses
- Sustainable development
- Thinkers and influencers
- Voluntary work

Not surprisingly the tags with the largest number of hits are:

- Pedagogy and didactics
- Education and competences
- Democracy and society

- Culture and bildung

Even though these tags are very broad, and the fact that the numbers of researchers tagged cannot be seen as an exact reflection of the volume of research, as not all researchers have replied and as a not systematically use of the tags must be taken into account, we do get a *picture* of the research fields involving the most researchers.

Besides Financial focus and economy, the tags with a small number of researchers in the database are:

- Health
- Digitalization and information technology
- Sustainable development

The use of the database

The database is a dynamic product and the researchers' information will be updated every year. It is also an ambition to include new researchers from 2019 and further on.

The purpose is for practitioners and fellow researchers to be able to find researchers in search for relevant research or future research and collaboration possibilities. The hope is that associations, organizations, schools and local initiatives within folkbildning in all of the Nordic countries will use the database when in need of research materials, knowledge, inspiration, speakers etc. It is our hope that the use of the database will strengthen the cooperation between research and folkbildning.

Future perspectives

Through the mapping different research areas have been identified as well as the numbers of researchers from each of the 4 countries within the years 1998-2018. As anticipated Sweden had the most hits and Norway the least.

The included items show the many different aspects of the sector. To get a more in-depth description and analyses of the subcategories in the overall themes, such as Society and democracy and Education and competences, and to be able to compare the subcategories across the countries more time is needed. A future project could deepen that aspect, as well as look more thoroughly at potentially overlooked areas.

As mentioned earlier, the project objective was to strengthen the cooperation between research and folkbildning, and ultimately motivating academia to increase their attention to the folkbildning sector. The database is a supporting tool for finding researchers within the field and an aim is also to use the database as a basis for creating networks of researchers. More concrete initiatives on how to support the collaboration between the sectors could be a focus for future activities, both in the different national contexts, but also across the countries. An important aspect of this is also how and by whom the research should be funded.

Appendix: National reports

	Denmark	Sweden	Norway	Finland
Research databases	<p>Forskningsdatabasen (E and DA)</p> <p>Scopus (E) OECD iLibrary (E) REX (DA) ProQuest (E and DA) JSTOR, (DA and E) Education Database, (DA and E) EBSCO (DA and E)</p>	<p>Unisearch (LiU) (E and SE)</p>	<p>ERIC (E and NO) ORIA (BIBSYS) (E and NO) Norart (NO) Scopus (E) Web of Science (E)</p>	<p>finna.fi (FI) doria.fi (FI)</p>
Search words nordic language - Hits	<p><u>Group 1: Folkbildning</u> folkeoplysning OR "folkelig oplysning" OR livsoplysning OR "ikke-formel voksenlæring" OR folkeoplysende OR folkeoplys*</p> <p><u>Group 2 and 3: Organisations</u> højskol* OR folkehøjskol* OR daghøjskole* OR aftenskole* OR oplysningsforbund OR "oplysnings forbund" OR brugsforening* OR kulturhus* OR "dansk amatør orkester</p>	<p>Folkbildning* Studieförbund* Folkhögskol* Studiecirkel*</p> <p>Hits total: 2532 hits (including duplicates)</p>	<p><u>Group 1 (Terms for folkbildning)</u> Folkeopplysning folkelig opplysning livslang læring/ opplysning livsopplysning selvvalgt læring interessebasert læring ikke-formell læring uformell læring fritidskurs studieringer studiesirkel voksenopplæring vaksenopplæring frivillig læring liberal voksenopplæring ideelle kursarrangører</p>	<p>Vapaa* AND Sivistystyö*) AND (Aikuiskasvatus) Aikuiskasvatuksen kasvatusseura Folkbildning Fri AND bildning kansalaisopisto kansanopisto Opintokeskus Setlementti Työväenopisto Studiecentraler Medborgarinstitut Kesäyliopisto* Sommaruniversitet* Vuxeninstitut Arbetarinstitut arbis Medis</p>

	<p>samvirke” OR amatørkultur OR amatørteater OR lokalarkiv* OR produksjonsskole* OR efterskol* OR “frie fagskoler” OR “fri fagskole” OR ungdomsskole* OR “Folkekirkens ungdomskor” OR “Netværket for folkeoplysning” OR FN-forbundet OR folkeuniversitet* OR ”Dansk Kvindesamfund” OR Folkevirke OR ”Grundtvigsk Forum” OR ”Forening Norden” OR “Fritid og samfund” OR europabevægelsen OR grænseforeningen OR ”Folk og sikkerhed” OR ”mellempøkeligt samvirke” OR ”grøn hverdag” OR atlantsammenslutningen OR ”Kvindernes U- landsudvalg”OR ”netværket for økologisk folkeoplysning og praksis”</p>		<p><u>Group 2 (Terms for folkbildning organizations)</u> Folkehøgskoler Folkehøgskoler Friundervisning Opplysningsforbund Studieforbund Studiering studiesirkel</p> <p><u>Group 3 (Names of folkbildning organizations)</u> Studieforbund Voksenopplæringsforbundet VOFO Akademisk Studieforbund Studieforbundet AOF Norge Studieforbundet FUNKIS Idrettens Studieforbund Kristelig Studieforbund Musikkens studieforbund Samisk Studieforbund Sámi oahppolávdegoddi Senterpartiets Studieforbund Studieforbundet Solidaritet Studieforbundet Folkeuniversitetet Studieforbundet kultur og tradisjon Studieforbundet natur og miljø Studieforbundet næring og samfunn Venstres Studieforbund Venstres opplysnings- og studieforbund</p> <p>Hits total: 1747</p>	<p>Urheiluoopisto (Searches made both combined and individually)</p>
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Search words english	"non-formal adult education" OR "civic education" OR "non-formal adult learning" OR "popular education" OR "non-formal lifelong learning" AND (danish OR Denmark)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Popular education AND Sweden English: 1051 hits (including duplicates)	English search around the following concepts: Voluntary education Voluntary learning adult education adult learning lifelong learning non-formal education non-formal learning nonformal education nonformal learning civic education popular education AND (Norwegian OR Norway)	
Hits all in all	3701 3306	3583 (2477+859) = 3336	1747 1557	13375 6342
Hits included	370	487	60	157

