

## **New Learning Pathways: Widening participation Denmark**

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## *0. Generally: Participation in Denmark*

Participation in adult education in Denmark is normally considered relatively high - in 1990'ies almost every second adult took part in some kind of adult education activity every year. All age groups are represented in one or more of the main types of education. Thus appr. 1 million adults participated in general non-formal adult education, 50.000 in general, qualifying adult education, ??? in courses in the comprehensive programme of labour market training courses, 15.000 in courses in folk day high schools, 15.000 in folk high school courses ...

Participation rates are the result of a number of factors, among them: Adult education provisions are geographically well distributed over the country in many institutions, education opportunities comprise almost any subject matter taught at different levels and with different orientations. Furthermore conditions of participation are in many cases favourable. Public subsidies alleviate the costs of participation in classes - and in many cases participants receive some kind of wage compensation while attending.

Last but not least high participation rates in adult education has been the result of an extensive use of adult education in the struggle against unemployment during a long period from the 1980'ies. In this context it has been extremely important that the social partners have important roles in the planning of adult education provision and in the labour market authorities responsible for employment policies and activities.

### **Life long learning**

The present approach of the Danish government and parliament to LLL is predominantly based on educational thinking, aiming at establishing new or reforming old educational provisions and at creating a "parallel system of competence", a platform for establishing educational opportunities for adults which - on the one hand - are built on the professional experience of the participants and - on the other hand - give the participants a formal competence comparable to exams etc. acquired in the ordinary education system.

The parallel system of competence reaches in principle from vocational training and up to academic level.

The Ministry of Education initiated in 1999 the project "LIVA" which was intended to establish a description of the various kinds of learning that occur in different "fora of learning": In every day life, in the institutions, in the virtual scene and in the work place.

This work was intended to develop a platform for the ministry to policy initiatives aiming at life long learning. Until now this work has not resulted in any policy measures.

Below we present Danish experience, which is relevant to the theme Widening participation. The presentation follows the questions posed in the paper from ERGON KEK. We have chosen to (try to)

answer the questions relatively extensively. Since we have used our ration of pages for this exercise we have had cut away some elaborated remarks at the end in the appendix. They are of course at the disposal of the project if needed.

In the appendix there is furthermore information on the Danish education system etc.

## *1. Lifelong Learning Policy and Practice*

The idea of adults participating in education several times during their life is quite common place in Denmark. Adult *education* is comprehensive. As far as adult *learning* is concerned it is fair to say that this concept represents a perspective which until now has been very much in the background.

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*What are the major policy discourses around lifelong learning?* - I believe it is fair to identify the following themes in the current policy discourses:

I The actual implementation of the recognition - both in relation to education and in relation to professional activities and work - of real qualifications and competencies acquired in non-formal settings

II Development of flexible learning provisions

III Development of learning opportunities for groups of adult who are little inclined and motivated to make use of existing opportunities

IV Quality assurance

*Who are involved in these discourses?* - Life long learning discourses involve almost all levels of policy and decision makers: politicians, ministries, labour market organizations, scholars in the field, education organizers, teachers. Since important parts of the discourses are directly linked to political decisions ministerial and parliamentary actors play an important role.

*What are the major research discourses around lifelong learning?* - I The balancing of the perspectives employability, social coherence, active citizenship and personal development

II Development of the concept of learning in non-educational settings, e.g. learning at the workplace, learning in voluntary organizations etc.

III Development of learning opportunities for groups of adult who are little inclined and motivated to make use of existing opportunities

*What major policy initiatives have been introduced to promote lifelong learning?* - As far as adult *education* is concerned there is a long tradition to make gateways to education for adults at any time of their life. The latest initiative is the introduction in an adult education reform of 2001 of a framework for further education for adults, comprising all levels from vocational education up to university (long cycle further education) level. Furthermore the reform comprised a new programme - preparatory adult education - which offers opportunities to improve skills in Danish reading and

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writing and in numeracy. The reform also introduced a new system of adult education grant to the students (which substitutes other arrangements introduced in the 1980'ies).

In the field of the wider and broader concept of *learning* there are hardly any promoting policy initiatives. On the contrary: Recent government initiatives seem to be aiming at deteriorating conditions for participation in informal adult education activities and thus reducing participation.

*To what extent have these initiatives been successful? What has their impact been?* - There is little experience with the latest initiatives since they are still underway. There are early indications that participation in preparatory adult education is rising to a higher level than that of the 'reading-courses' which it substitutes. Similarly parts of the further education scheme for adults appear to be very attractive to certain groups of professionals (e.g. teachers, nurses).

More generally, however, there is lot of experience indicating that initiatives aiming at making education more accessible, including by making conditions of participation favourable, influence demand and participation.

*To what extent have these measures involved the supply of education and training or have they focused on demand for adult learning?* - The two aspects are closely interrelated. On the *supply* side the measures are designed to organize existing provision differently and to build as many provisions as possible into a system formal qualification and competence, thus promoting *demand* in the sense that the practical use of education is more visible. The adult education grant scheme (Statens Voksenuddannelsesstøtte) is of course an important element on the demand side since it gives people with a job the possibility of taking leave (part time or full time) from their job in order to attend educational activities.

*Is there evidence of widening participation in learning?* - The aim of the reform initiatives is rather to *change* participation than to widen it.

*Have there been changes in funding to encourage participation in lifelong learning?* - In very general terms funding based on participation (demand) and completion is the standard method in the Danish system so that the system supports institutions which develop educational offers which are attractive to potential participants - and thus the system of funding influences participation.

## ***2. Participation in learning in work***

In Denmark work place learning in the sense of education taking place at the work place in close connexion with work place activities is not very common. The institutional system is so accessible that the need is not very big. And the Danish trades and industries are dominated by small and medium sized companies where it is normally not possible to establish education courses.

Work place learning in the more general sense that people learn when they work is in many cases not seen as learning at all - and in any case this field has been little elaborated.

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*Have there been policy measures to promote work-based learning? If so, what are these measures?*

- Apart from the initiatives of recognizing qualifications acquired in the work place in connexion with further education there are hardly any measures. Extra-institutional learning is in general not prominent on the policy agenda. When the new Preparatory adult education in Danish reading and writing and numeracy was introduced the act explicitly mentioned the possibility of establishing educational courses at work places. This was seen as a means of making access to the courses easier for the participants.

The government has announced a similar initiative in the field of teaching Danish as a second language which will put substantial weight on establishing a framework for employers to integrate language teaching in the work situation.

*How much work based learning takes place?* - There is no reliable information which allows an estimate of the volume of learning activities in the work place.

*Who organises work-based learning? - ???*

*Who participates in work-based learning? - ???*

*How much attention are large organisations paying to participation in learning at work? - ??*

*What opportunities are there for work based learning in Small and Medium enterprises? - ??*

*Do workers have an entitlement to learning at work?* - In the Danish labour market almost all aspects of work are regulated by agreements between the social partners. In most agreements there are sections regulating educational activities for the employees.

*What role do trade unions and social partners play in work based learning?* - Especially the The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions, LO, has for some years made an effort to bring concepts like “The learning organization” and “The developing work place” into effect thus promoting the broad concept of learning in the work place.

### ***3. Providing access to formal education***

In Denmark focus in the adult education policy is to a very high extent on formal education. In fact so much that adult education which is not related to a system of qualification is often seen as superfluous luxury to which there should be no public funding.

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*What measures have been introduced to encourage participation in formal education and training?*

- Encouragement for participation through organizing educational offers in a way that make them accessible for adults has long traditions in the Danish adult education system. For quite some years it has been possible for adults to attend special adult classes preparing for lower and upper secondary qualifications. Similarly there have been certain possibilities to reach medium cycle educational qualifications - e.g. as a teacher - in educational courses organized especially for adults.

The "Further Education System for Adults" of the adult education reform of 2000 is at this moment the key measure for encouraging adult to participate in adult education. The perspective of acquiring formal qualification is supposed to encourage adults to participate. The system establishes a framework for supplementary, further education to give a recognized formal qualification, comparable to the qualification acquired in the ordinary system in an educational as well as a professional perspective.

Besides these educational pathways there have been different systems of subsistence, making it easier for adults to participate. For quite some years adult studying have been entitled to the same study grants as young students. Furthermore it has been possible for unemployed adults to maintain their unemployment allowance (which is somewhat higher than students' grants) while studying at a basic level. During the last 15 years there have been different types of adult education grants (comparable to unemployment allowances) for adults who take leave from work while studying.

*Have these measures involved changes in the institutional structures?* - Though not directly connected with the adult education reform institutional changes are taking place which play a role in the system. In the field of medium cycle further education an institutional reform is being carried through so that many smaller institutions are working closely together (aiming at merging) - among other things to give them institutional strength to take care of parts of the tasks in the "Further education system for adults". Similarly in the field of vocational training and education the vocational schools and the labour market training centres are induced to cooperate very closely across the former borderlines between them (when vocational schools took care of education of skilled workers and labour market training centres took care of un- and semiskilled workers).

*Have these changes involved encouraging demand for adult learning?* -

*Have new routes to education been developed?* -

*Are there new opportunities for 'second chance' learning?* -

*Are there new apprenticeship programmes for adults?* - Adults may qualify as skilled workers in one of two ways: Adult vocational education (for some trades) or Basic adult education (in any trade).

It should be added that the system of labour market training provides training/education opportunities at many levels and with different scopes - in some cases almost similar to qualifications as skilled workers.

#### *4. Promoting basic skills*

Basic skills have high priority in the Danish education system at this time. A large number of adults who are active in the labour force have rather poor basic skills which limits their possibility to fill a place in the labour force not least because it limits their possibility to participate in further education.

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*How much attention is paid at policy level to the issue of literacy and numeracy?* - For a couple of years a great deal of interest has been given to these issues. Both the Second International Adult Literacy Survey, SIALS, and results in the Programme for international student assessment, PISA, produce a picture of a huge problem as far as basic skills are concerned in the Danish society. Almost one million adults have insufficient reading and writing skills - nearly one in every five leave the Folkeskolen after nine years, unable to read and write - these are frequent punchlines in statements of politicians.

Consequently a lot of attention is given to measures dealing with the problem - not least in adult education.

*What opportunities are there for participation in learning by adults lacking basic skills?* - The Danish system offers primarily Preparatory adult education which is designed to making up for lacking skills in Danish reading and writing and numeracy. Reading and writing-courses consist of four modules, numeracy of two modules á 50 lessons. Participants enter at the level corresponding their skills - and leave according to their learning needs. After completion of courses and exams the Preparatory adult education give formal qualification.

On the level of lower secondary education General adult education offers education aiming at basic skills on a level over that of Preparatory adult education.

Participants for whom skills deficiencies are connected with a handicap there is an offer of special education. This offer is in principle completely individually organized.

Outside the formal education system both day folk high schools and evening classes (community education) may offer opportunities to cope with basic skills on an informal basis and with a personal development perspective. These offers give no formal qualification.

*Have measures been taken to encourage learning to learn?* - **???**In my view the basic perspective of learning to learn has fallen beside the latest education initiatives which focus and concentrate very much on the practical skills.

*What measures have been taken to encourage digital literacy?* - At the basic level indicated by the concept literacy little is taking place in Denmark in relation to adults. More generally a lot of education in computer skills has taken place during the past ten years - to large extent within the framework of a computer license scheme. These courses have been so attractive that the rising costs of carrying them through have lead to various restrictions that are meant to reduce demand.

*What has been done to encourage participation by non-traditional learners in computer literacy programmes?* - The most prominent initiatives are with the Preparatory adult education programme which is per definition aimed at groups who do not participate much in education. The outreaching activities concerning this field are carried through in very close cooperation with the trade unions of the target group which have been strong advocates for the programme. One particular aspect which is designed to make the programme attractive and accessible is that the courses may take place at the work place or in the accommodations of the trade unions. Setting up education in a familiar well known environment is expected to contribute both to participants entering the course and completing it with good results.

### ***5. New curricula and pedagogies***

Adult education as an academic field is a rather new thing in Denmark and consequently teachers are very much obliged to develop their own methods etc. in a rather ad hoc manner.

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*What measures have been undertaken to provide more flexible education and training provision for adults?* - In my judgment the most important initiatives in this context is the organization of many educational provisions on a single subject basis, i.e. in manageable elements which may be studied alone (for their own purpose so to speak) and can be pieced together to a full qualification. This system has long traditions in Denmark and is used more and more in adult education.

Besides this there are currently many initiatives to create virtual learning provisions in different areas by means of ICT.

*What measures have been taken to encourage adults to access **this** provision?* -

*What pedagogic changes have been undertaken?* - It is not meaningful to try to characterize the pedagogics, far less the *changes* in pedagogy of adult education as a whole.

*Are there new courses to encourage adults to participate? Where are these courses based? Who are the providers?* - Day folk high school courses are directly aimed at encouraging people to participate. They are regular courses, lasting appr. 12 weeks, aimed very much at "reviving" unemployed students who are threatened by exclusion from the labour market - and thus at bringing them back into either education or in some cases employment.

Another initiative which appears promising is the establishment of combined guidance, education and work-practice programmes in so called production schools. This provision is specifically designed for young unemployed participants under the age of 25 who will or can not take up any other kind of (upper secondary) youth education. The specific contents of the courses vary substantially from school to school - but always as variation over the general theme of combination of guidance, basic general education and practical "production" or work (in fact many schools produce for sale - be it iron or wood work or computer design).

Besides various kinds "clarification-activities" take place in different settings, e.g. in the employment service.

*Have there been changes in institutional structures?* - Day folk high schools are established as independent institutions (with public subsidies). Production schools are generally run as independent institutions in a municipality setting and with state- and municipality subsidies. Both school types are situated out- or beside the formal system which on one hand gives them the possibility for designing and organizing their educational activities within a very broad and general framework - according to the needs of the participants - and on the other hand presents them with certain difficulties as far as recognition of their activities is concerned.

(It should be noted that the conditions for day folk high schools have recently been changed very unfavourably, threatening to reduce the number of schools substantially, whereas there is a much more positive attitude in the political system to production schools.)

*Are there new delivery systems for education and training for adults?* - ???

*Are there new accreditation systems? Are there moves to recognise non formal learning?* - New accreditation systems are presently on the way in Denmark. The Danish system used to be based on the principle that you could qualify for something by passing an exam (without needing to attend education). Now initiatives have been taken to establish accreditation and merits more systematically and not only with respect to educational purposes but also in relation to job qualifications. In this context non-formal learning will also be dealt with.

## ***6. Widening participation to socially excluded***

The concept of social exclusion has a rather special status in Denmark. There is a strong tendency to think that the welfare state takes care of everyone and therefore the concept is useless. On the other hand it is quite clear that a substantial number of people are in fact pushed aside because modern production requires very good skills and capabilities.

We have to say that the efforts done in Denmark in relation social exclusion are less than heartfelt.

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*How important is the issue of social exclusion at a policy level?* - It is extremely difficult to judge the importance of social exclusion in Denmark - especially in a policy context. As far as political

discussion is concerned there appears to be a lot of focus on the problem, but when it come to actual policies measures turn out to be rather sparse.

*How important is the issue of social exclusion at a societal level?* - Most observers would probably see Denmark as a community with relatively little social exclusion. There is a high rate of employment, the subsistence of the labour force and of those dependent on social security is relatively favourable and there is not much visible poverty. On the other hand: During the past 20-30 years substantial numbers of people have been peeled off the labour force - people who for some reason or another did not quite fit into the demands on the labour market - and they have gradually been marginalized and socially excluded in some sense. It is of course a very complex group with many, many different problems that contribute to their marginalization and exclusion.

*What measures are being taken to combat discrimination in access to education and training?* - I believe that few in Denmark would recognize the concepts of discrimination in connexion with education. Actually a lot is done to get everyone on board - and to keep them there until they have finished at least a secondary education. On the other hand it is clear to everyone that a certain percentage are unable or unwilling to accept the "offer" presented to them with such persistence.

*What measures are being taken to overcome social exclusion through the provision of education and training?* - As indicated above there have been - and are - taken a number of different measures, many of them including educational activities, attempting to cope with or to prevent exclusion. Among them day folk high schools and productions schools mentioned above can be characterized as relatively systematic and lasting and they are therefore important contributions in this context.

It should be added that - as far as educational measures are concerned - many of the different ordinary educational offers - in many cases with special orientation or organization - are brought into use and tried out with varying success.

*To which social groups is this provision directed?* - The day folk high schools have - because of their general, personally oriented approach - especially attracted female participants, unemployed, often (but far from always) with little formal education. The production schools are - per definition - for young unemployed people and their activities are in most cases composed so that both female and male participants will find meaningful learning opportunities.

## ***7. Training the trainers***

Even though adult education has a substantiable extent there has until recently not been any education specifically for workers in this field. So many teachers have worked for many years on the

basis of some other qualification - in many cases they are teachers educated to work with children. Consequently the concept of a profession as adult educator is a bit difficult.

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*Have there been measures to increase the professionalism of teachers and trainers?* - (Note ad professionalism: In Denmark there is hardly any voluntary activity in the field of adult education. Teachers are almost all working on a professional basis, employed by schools, organizations etc.) The establishment of the Danish University of Education and centres for further education (with teacher training colleges) are both aiming at a qualification of teacher training in general - and of education of adult teachers. Not least in connexion with adult education there has been a great need for formal educational opportunities of high quality.

*Have new initial training the trainer programmes been introduced?* - No.

*Are there programmes to train work-based trainers?* - No.

*Are there professional development opportunities for teachers and trainers?* - The University of Education and the centres for further education offer a series of educational programmes for adult educators, thus inspiring development. Furthermore - and maybe more important: The professional work in adult education requires development capability from the teachers and trainers - and much development work takes place more or less informally in the institutions.

*What measures are being undertaken to train teachers and trainers in supporting those who do not traditionally participate in education and training?* - Since much attention is directed towards groups of participants who are not used to education and training much of the general educational effort is actually aimed at this task.

*What research is taking place into the changing roles of teachers and trainers?* - ?????

## **8. ICT and eLearning**

There are a lot of initiatives in this field - but very few have passed the stadium of pilot preoject.

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*What measures are being taken to widen access to adults to education and training through the use of ICT?* - Under the auspices of the CTU, the national information centre for technology-supported learning, important development work took place in the period 1996-2000 within a number of educational institutions in different sectors of the system. This led among other things to a further development of various adult education portals, e.g. to general qualifying adult education and vocational traing and education (in the latter mainly education about computer and ICT). The

universities have also been active in development - and there is now an embryo of a university level portal, The virtual university ([www.uvm.dk/inst/vu](http://www.uvm.dk/inst/vu)).

Furthermore a number of large companies have activities in the field, but there is little information about the work.

*Who is involved in these measures?* - As mentioned above the ministry and a variety of educational institutions are working with development in the field. Few seem to have passed from the pilot phase of development.

*Are they supply or demand side initiatives?* - The initiatives seem predominantly to be taken in the educational institutions.

*Who are the major providers of ICT based training for adults?* - It would be misleading to pronounce any one type of providers as “major” since activities are rather sparse in all sectors.

*What is being done to train teachers and trainers in the use of ICT?* - There is a general programme for “school-ICT” aimed at teachers, primarily for the primary and lower secondary school.

*What is being done to ensure access to ICT based education and training for adults?* -

## **9. Educational guidance**

The Danish system for guidance and counselling for adults is extensive og broad ranging. Adults may seek both career and educational counselling both at the labour market service and in the education institutions..

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*Do adults have access to educational guidance?* - The Danish system of guidance and counselling for adults consists different branches. Young adults (until the age of 25) are still “covered” by the primary guidance system of the school and municipality, i.e. the school counselling monitors the transition into further (secondary) education (which has its own guidance and counselling systems). More generally the guidance opportunities for adults lie in the employment service of the labour market authorities. They have guidance which is open to anybody.

Adults who consider entering an educational provision will furthermore consult educational guidance at an educational institution. The institutionally based guidance offers counselling at the entry at, during and at the exit from a given educational course. Counselling at the institutions may be either educational or professional, concerning future work and career.

*Who provides this service and how is it funded?* - As it will have appeared guidance is provided by the labour market authorities and by the educational institutions. Guidance is an integral part of the function of the respective institutions and funded as an ordinary part of the institutions’ costs.

Furthermore guidance is offered for members by unemployment funds and also by the social security system of the municipalities.

In the educational institutions guidance is now performed by teachers as a part of their job. In connexion with a reform of the guidance system there will be considerations of professionalizing the job as a counsellor.

*What new initiatives are there to provide educational guidance to adults?* - The most important new initiatives in the field of guidance and counselling seem to be cross sectional cooperation between counselling in the labour market authorities and educational institutions. Such initiatives make it possible to present to guidance seekers coherent and non-partial sets of opportunities. As mentioned the minister of education is presently introducing a reform of the Danish guidance system which involves important changes, including a professionalization of the guidance staffs.

*What provision is there for the training of adult guidance professionals and to continuing professional development?* - A second important initiative is the education of counsellors - more or less general for counsellors from different sectors. Until only a few years ago the education of counsellors was very different - and some groups rather scarce. With the rising importance of the guidance function in the educational system steps have been taken to give counsellors a more solid background for their work in the form of real educational activities.

*What opportunities are there to support adults in the development of personal learning plans?* - The concept of "learning plan" is not commonly used in the Danish system. On the other hand, all students who participate in education in connexion with an unemployment situation do so according to an "action plan" which covers educational activities as well as other initiatives which may improve a person's employment possibilities.

## Appendix

### References

The web site of the Danish ministry of education - [www.uvm.dk](http://www.uvm.dk) has an English version which has several documents about adult education.

The entry: “*Adult Education and Continuing Training*” has the following contents:

- Folkeoplysning. Factsheet.
- Open education (Vocationally Oriented Adult Education). Factsheet.
- The Danish “Folkehøjskole”
- Adult Education and Continuing Training in Denmark
- Adult learning in Denmark (Adobe Acrobat)
- Chapter 7 in EURYBASE
- The production schools in Denmark A Summary
- Publications available in English
- Consolidated Act on Teaching Danish as a Second Language for Adult Foreigners and others, and Language Centres

***Better Education*** - education policy action areas - Ministry of Education June 2002

***Information and Communication Technologies in the Education System*** - Action plan for 1998-2003.

The Ministry of Education 1998

## The Danish education system

### 1) Adult education provision and institutions

General	
General non-formal adult education	Folk high schools Day folk high schools Evening schools
Preparatory adult education	Adult Education Centres (Other institutions and providers may provide, too)
General formal adult education (secondary level)	Adult Education Centres
Danish as a second language for immigrants	Language centres
Vocational	
Combined counselling, general education and work training for young people (18-25)	Production schools
Adult basic education and Adult vocational training	Vocational schools and Labour market training centres
Labour market training	Labour market training centres
In service-training (at the workplace)	

### 2) Professional education for adult educators

General education	
Teacher training (primary and lower secondary)	
In-service supplementary education (general upper secondary, vocational)	
Educational studies (long cycle further education)	
Adult education	
Diploma-studies (bachelor-level - medium cycle further education)	
Master studies (master-level - long cycle further education)	
Educational studies (long cycle further education)	

### 3) Danish Education System

#### Ordinary education system

18 Professional further education

13/14

Vocational

12/13 General upper  
secondary

10/11

9/10 Lower secondary school

0 Primary school

#### Adult education system

Adult further education

Master-level

Diploma (bachelor) level

Advanced further education

Formal upper  
secondary

Formal vocation:

Adult Basic

Education

Non form vocat:

Production school

#### Formal :

General adult education

Preparatory adult education

Danish as a second language

#### Non-formal:

Folk high school

Day folk high school

Evening classes