

Centre for Higher Education Greater Copenhagen, Denmark	
<b>EU Grundtvig programme: Supporting the development of New Learning Pathways for Adults</b>	
<b>4. New trends in raising demand for learning among adults at risk of exclusion</b>	30.9.2003

## Introduction

This case study deals with one – in a Danish perspective – important adult education initiative, the day folk high school, which addresses the problem of establishing adult education offers which are both accessible and attractive to adults – not least adult with limited educational background who are therefore threatened by social exclusion - and also contain necessary perspectives as far as further adult education and employment are concerned.

The paper presents first the background and context of the day folk high schools – and later the programme is presented according to the questions of the common guideline.

## Background and Context

### Widening participation and raising demand

For a number of years Danish educational policy has focused on establishing and allowing for establishment of various types of adult education offers aiming at laying out a number of paths and roads in order to create real routes of entrance to the education system for adults with different background and learning needs and various educational goals. The general aim of the policies was that multiplicity and variety could and would be the key that allowed much broader segments of the adult population to participate than before.

### Pedagogical movement

Originally the day folk high schools are rather an educational and pedagogical movement, initiated by local adult education associations and more or less grass-root groups of people with an different backgrounds in education and social work and almost an urge to create meaningful educational courses for unemployed people.

The “system” was at a certain time included in a legal framework, thus forming an educational programme proper, complete with state subsidy and rules and regulations of whatever.

Recently – in 2002 – the special legal framework has been abolished, and the schools have been transferred to a more general legal framework about support to general informal adult education – and are now in a sense close to their origins as a civil society initiative, working in and dependent on the local context of the 271 municipalities.

The general and common pedagogical and philosophical perspective of work in day folk high schools has been and still is – in short – that:

- Groups of people – often but not always with lower formal qualifications, to a wide extent but by no means exclusively women - threatened or already affected by unemployment and social exclusion can be guided back into educational activities and/or employment.
- This is done by offering educational courses which aim at personal development and general education, using a combination of different types of “subject-fields”, work methods etc. to obtain the goal.
- Thus the schools assist the participants to prepare themselves to engage in ordinary educational courses or employment – and to meet the requirements presented to them in this context, both socially and privately and in other connexions.
- The educational activities are therefore generally “teaching with the subjects” rather than “teaching the subjects”.

The practice of the more than 150 folk day high schools which have been in function during the years has of course varied very much – between schools and over time, but mostly as variations over the general theme described above.

From the description above it will have appeared that the folk day high schools have functioned as an important element in the Danish adult education context that served to enhance the possibilities of adults to have real educational offers and thus to raise demand for adult education. First the day folk school itself presents with its special curriculum an educational offer that addresses the educational needs of groups of participants, and secondly the school prepares participants for engagement in other educational systems.

### **Demand for adult education**

Since the late 1970'ies several initiatives to broaden the range of adult education in terms of attracting and giving opportunities to the wide groups of adults who – on one hand - have left school early after 7 compulsory years (which was the normal thing to do until the early 1970'ies) and – on the other – made little use of the educational offers of the adult education system.

Considering that almost one million adult Danes do not have formal educational qualifications beyond the level of compulsory school (7, since the 1970'ies 9 years) it is obvious that adult education could be in great demand. Compared to this participation, though relatively high, has been limited and in the perspective of the requirements in society and working life too small.

A number of factors have contributed to the limited demand. First and foremost most people have been able to establish themselves in good jobs in the labour market during the many years of full employment during the 1950'ies and 1960'ies. During this period large numbers of farm workers shifted to employment in industry and service – and a great number of women offered their labour as well. A large number have participated in labour market training, thus acquiring the necessary skills – although not formally qualifying beyond the level semi skilled worker. Secondly the need for people with more skills and qualifications has

been met to a wide extent by the large influx to the labour force from the big post-war generations of which growing proportions would and could gradually increase the level of education.

However as unemployment rose in the aftermath of the oil crises of the 1970'ies people were laid off in large numbers, bringing the unemployment rate from 1% of the work force in 1970 up to 5% in 1975 and 9% in 1985. All kinds of jobs were lost, but most of them were the least productive formerly held by workers with least qualifications.

In the following years both trade unions and political actors advocated for a policy which would exploit the situation with surplus labour force for a general update of qualifications among the large groups of un- and semiskilled workers – and others with insufficient qualifications.

A number of initiatives were taken, aiming at developing the existing educational system, at introducing new types of educational activities and at establishing systems of educational leave so that people participating in adult education could receive an income compensation while studying.

#### **Initiatives widening the scope of adult education after 1978**

1978	First day folk school
1978	Production schools
1985-1989	10 point programme for adult education – development programme
1986	Act on teaching Danish for adult immigrants
1988	Educational offers for unemployed
1989	General adult education – curriculum for adult education proper
1989	Adult education grants for employees and self-employed
1989	Job rotation schemes <sup>1</sup>
1985	“Open education” – single subject, vocationally oriented courses at higher education level
1990	Act on day folk high schools and productions schools <sup>2</sup>
1993	Educational leave for employed and unemployed (Act on active labour market policy)
1999	Act on teaching Danish as a second language

<sup>1</sup> Job rotation was an arrangement where employees were offered educational courses and their jobs were temporarily filled with unemployed who thus received job training and possibly would have better chances for employment. The arrangement was made possible by various kinds of income compensation, among others adult education grants.

<sup>2</sup> Production schools for young people (16-25 years) have in some ways developed parallel to the day folk high schools, some of them use the name production folk high schools. The schools have curricula which combine guidance and counselling, production work and teaching of basic skills. The schools are designed for young people who do not otherwise take up youth education (e.g. vocational education or training) and have the function of preparing participants either for education proper (“bridge building” ) or for employment. Production schools courses are not formally qualifying.

2000	Preparatory adult education <sup>3</sup>
2000	State Education Grant
2000	Further education system for adults (basic vocational and levels of higher education)
2002	Day folk high schools transferred to Act on 'Folkeoplysning' (liberal adult education)

### **The day folk high schools**

Among these initiatives were the day folk high schools, which basically applied principles of the “folk high school” on the work with unemployed adults with little prior education.

#### *The folk high school tradition*

The name and concept “daghøjskole” (day folk high school) refers/alludes to the “folkehøjskole” (folk high school), a traditional “free” further general education, supplementing the rather scarce compulsory school offered in 19<sup>th</sup> century Denmark, in the enlightenment tradition.

Below a short presentation of the folk high school is made in order to clarify the origins of the day folk high school.

The traditional folk high school aimed at “empowering”, i.e. changing common people and small peasants (Danish: “almuen”), into an enlightened “folk” (English: public/nation/people), doing this with a combination of basic general, religious, political, organizational and vocational education elements.

Thus the folk high school paved the way for Danish peasants to become a strong political movement and a very effective economic sector based among other things on cooperative enterprises – i.e. commonly owned enterprises in all important sectors of agricultural production, e.g. feedstuff companies, dairies, slaughterhouses etc. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century to role of the folk high school gradually changed concurrently with the with the Danish society developing from an agricultural into an industrial economy. Today folk high schools are to wide extent attended by young people who take a break in their formal education courses after upper secondary school (“gymnasium”) – deliberating what course to take, working with personal development, social skills besides tuition of general subjects and various creative activities.

The philosophical, pedagogical basis of the folk high school were school and education thoughts of the Danish priest, psalmist and philosopher NFS Grundtvig and folk high school founder K Kold. The first folk high school was founded 1844 in Southern Jutland (Northern Schleswig) – and after a few years the idea had spread all over the country.

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<sup>3</sup> New basic skills programme established 2000 as a formal, qualifying education aiming at improving literacy (reading and writing) and numeracy (basic calculation and arithmetic/mathematic) skills

The traditional folk high school was “free”, i.e. the schools were established as independent institutions and the content, curriculum etc. were not regulated by law. The schools were – and still are – very much focussed on their independence from outside regulation, and thus there are no exams and no formal qualification after a folk high school course. The schools were – and are - to a wide extent financed with subsidies from the state.

Folk high schools were and are boarding schools with mostly 16-20 week-courses – and therefore less accessible for adults with family obligations etc.

### **Development of day folk high schools**

The first day folk high school was founded in 1978, and in the following years a number of schools were established. Until the first Act on day folk high schools 1990 the activity of the schools was ad hoc projects financed in any way possible. From 1990 the Act on day folk high school regulated the field, adopting to a wide extent basic the philosophy and the contents established during the previous years and securing a certain financial basis of the schools.

In the following years the number of schools rose substantially and participation increased as well. At the end of the 1990'ies a number of restrictions and limitations were introduced in the act, aiming at curtailing the fast growing participation – and costs of the schools. The background was the rising costs as well as a certain scepticism on the side of both ministry and labour market authorities concerning the effect of the schools in terms of subsequent employment of participants.

Finally in 2002 the Act on day folk high schools was abolished and the schools were transferred to the Act on financial support to “folkeoplysning”, general liberal adult education, which implied primarily that the schools were to base their activity mainly on the will, support and education assignments of the local authorities, the municipalities.

### **Day folk high schools and the demand for adult education**

The day folk high schools grew out of the long standing tradition of independent general adult education, and in many cases the initiatives were taken by local branches of primarily the national Workers Education Association, WEA (Danish: AOF). What triggered the idea of the day folk high school was presumably the fact that a substantial proportion of the unemployed, mostly women, although conscious of their insufficient qualification, were not attracted to the offers of the formal adult education system and met difficult barriers when they applied for jobs. It appeared that educational attention should be directed primarily at developing personal and social skills in an educational environment with strong emphasis on counselling and creative activities. The ultimate goal of the learning activities should be “empowerment” of the participants, i.e. re-establishment and development of the participants’ self-confidence and self-reliance.

Although the circumstances have changed it is hopefully obvious that the day folk high school and the traditional folk high school had common goals and aim at reaching them in similar ways.

Thus the day folk high schools contribute twofold to the development of adult education and to raising demand: On one hand they represent a system of education which is attractive and accessible for groups otherwise not very keen on participating and on the other hand the result of their work prepare adults for participating by opening other types of educational activities for groups who have been unable or unwilling to participate without the preparation in the day folk high school.

It should be pointed out that especially during the first years the concept of day folk high school was realized in many different ways. Even after legislation was laid down over the schools there have been substantial differences between the ways they perform. On the other hand there has been - already from the start - important common characteristics, defining common denominators as mentioned above.

As mentioned briefly above in the overview of the history of the schools legislation was tightened during the 1990'ies in several turns. The result was that restrictions were imposed as to the participants who could be enrolled, that the aims and goals of the schools were narrowed somewhat and that basic formal adult education, especially the preparatory adult education (basic literacy and numeracy), was to play a more important role in the curricula of the schools.

During the years with the Act on day folk high schools the financial basis of the schools was provided with different combinations of local (municipality) and state subsidies and project funding from the labour market service, municipality social service, European Social Fund (ESF) etc. Generally the state subsidy has been most important and most of the time it was delivered as a taximeter-subsidy, i.e. subsidy according in principle to the number of participants. <sup>4</sup>

After the shift to the area of general adult education and almost total municipality- and project funding (which will be completed after a transition period until 31.12.2003) the schools will have fewer limitations as far as contents are concerned. On the other hand they will be completely dependent on their ability to provide education offers, which the local authorities are willing to pay for.

This development threatens a number of the schools, on one hand. Schools will inevitably have to close down. On the other hand, the viability of the programme, the day folk high schools, is clearly demonstrated by the fact that many schools appear to be able to cope with the new conditions and maintain and in many cases further develop their role in the education system.

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<sup>4</sup> Taximeter-subsidy has gradually developed to be the basic principle of distributing public funding and subsidies to all kinds of education.

## Guideline questions

### 1. Background

#### 1.1 What is the name of project or case study?

The day folk high schools

#### 1.2 Where is it based?

The schools are independent institutions based locally across the country

#### 1.3 When did it start?

The first day folk high school was established in 1978. The institution was formally “recognized” in 1990 when the schools got a legal framework.

#### 1.4 What are its aims and objectives?

In short the goal is to assist participants in acquiring personal, social and other skills necessary for engaging in education or employment.

#### 1.5 What is the context in which the case study has been developed?

The schools were established as unemployment increased and tended to become permanently high at the end of the 1970'ies. Groups of people with lower qualifications are still - after unemployment has been reduced substantially – much more affected by unstable employment or unemployment.

#### 1.6 Who is the target population?

Mainly unemployed with lower qualifications.

#### 1.7 What are the main activities?

The schools have – and have always had – extensive freedom to choose activities according to the actual needs of participants. Most schools combine practical, creative, and physical activities with intellectual work with various subjects. The activities are generally project organized with a great weight on participants' involvement.

#### 1.8 What is innovative about it?

Although the principles that form the basis of the day folk high school are to a wide extent imported from the “traditional” Danish folk high school the approach of the day folk high school may be regarded as innovative in relation with education for unemployed primarily because education activities – on one

hand – have a “holistic” perspective, including many types of activities aiming at personal and social skills, and on the other are organized on a relatively individual basis.

### *1.9 How and why was it set up?*

The day folk high schools were established by local adult education associations and rather grass-root-like groups of teachers etc. The aim was to improve educational offers for unemployed.

## **2. People**

### *2.1 What organizations are involved in managing the case study?*

The schools are local independent institutions, now based on subsidies from local government (municipalities). A number of schools are associated with national liberal adult education associations, but most are members of a special association of day folk high schools. Since the specific legal framework for the schools was abolished in 2002, the ministry of education has little competence in the field. During the years of legal framework 1990-2001 the ministry decided about both organizational and content-matters.

### *2.2 Are they working in partnerships? If so, with whom?*

The schools cooperate on a more or less ad hoc basis with other day folk high schools as well as formal education institutions. In many cases day folk high schools take part in local school cooperation-schemes, which are mandatory for formal education institutions. Cooperation with Adult Education Centres is relatively common in connection with e.g. Preparatory Adult Education.

### *2.3 How many staff work on the case study and what is their background?*

There is no central information about the number of staff and their background is not systematically recorded – and there are no formal qualification for work in the field.. The teaching staff have very different backgrounds - as school teachers, either in primary/lower secondary school or upper secondary, social workers etc.

### *2.4 How are the staff trained?*

The national umbrella associations and the schools perform various kinds of further training of teachers.

There is no mandatory education requirement for work in the day folk high schools and no national further education programmes aiming at this group.

### *2.5 Who is involved in its management?*

The schools are managed by a traditional “head” who is working under the auspices of a board of governors.

The board of governors include representatives of a number of local interests, in many cases including local government etc.

### **3. Needs**

#### *3.1 How is social exclusion being defined by the project?*

There is no general definition.

#### *3.2 Who made this definition?*

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#### *3.3 How were the needs of the participants decided? By whom?*

Since guidance and counselling is an important and integral element in the activities of the schools, the learning needs of each participant is carefully mapped at the beginning of a course, often in cooperation with other public agents having to do with the participant (social or labour market services).

### **4. Participation**

#### *4.1 How are the participants recruited to the case study?*

#### *4.2 What marketing activities are carried out?*

#### *4.3 What other “intermediate agencies” are involved in recruiting participants?*

The individual schools handle their own recruitment according to local needs and possibilities. The national Association of Day Folk High Schools has a web-site which refers to the sites of the individual schools. Furthermore the courses of the schools are in a national database of adult education offers, the VIDAR. A substantial part of the recruitment takes place in cooperation with local social service or labour market authorities.

#### *4.4 What initial guidance do potential participants receive? From whom?*

The schools have their own guidance and counselling service, which takes over from the public counselling which often precede the decision to participate in a day folk high school programme.

#### *4.5 How long does the programme last? Is it full time or part time?*

The “standard” programme is at least 12 weeks of full time (i.e. 30 lessons/week) tuition. Other types of programmes are carried out.

#### *4.6 Are participants funded to attend the programme? Are there any other forms of incentive (or disincentive if they do not attend!)?*

Most participants receive some kind of public support while participating. There are a number of support systems – e.g. unemployment or social benefits, rehabilitation benefits, special education grants in connection with unemployment. The possibilities are being reduced in connection with an ongoing narrowing of possibilities for unemployed for participating in educational courses.

## **5. Pedagogy**

*5.1 What are the main pedagogic approaches used in the case study?*

*5.2 What is innovative about the pedagogic approaches?*

The individual schools have – and have always had – specific pedagogical principles and features, depending on local conditions, the participants' and the staff's preferences.

Important common features are the individual orientation of the courses, an experience-based approach and a basic philosophy that it is always worth while to work with groups threatened by social exclusion.

*5.3 How are learning needs determined?*

Since the schools lay substantial weight on guidance and counselling functions, the learning needs are actually in focus – at the application and during the courses. Counselling and guidance are to a wide extent integrated in the courses.

*5.4 What are the major components and subjects of the curriculum?*

The schools have their own individual profiles as far as contents are concerned. There is a substantial focus in most schools on aiming at personal development through creative work and general subjects. A number of schools include Preparatory Adult Education in their programme, and it is possible to include formal adult education as a part of the programme.

*5.5 How is the curriculum designed and by whom?*

The curriculum of the individual school is decided by the school. – Besides ordinary day folk high school learning activities the schools may offer Preparatory adult education (basic literacy and numeracy skills) and the courses may include formal general adult education and a few other types of adult education .

*5.6 Does work experience form part of the curriculum? If so, how is it organized?*

Since the schools work systematically with experience-based learning work experience is an important element – together with all the other kinds of experience adults have.

*5.7 Are information and communication technologies (ICT) used for learning? If so, what is the approach, what technologies are deployed, and what is the pedagogic approach to the use of ICT?*

Learning ICT is an element in many courses, but it can't be said to be very prominent at the schools. – ICT-learning – using ICT as a means or aid in the learning process – is less widespread, due to the general

perspective and principles of the day folk high schools which has a strong focus on personal relations between students and teachers.

#### *5.8 Is the learning process assessed? Do participants receive accreditation? If so, what?*

The day folk high school is an informal educational programme, and there is no assessment by outside authorities. Individual assessment is a matter between the participant and the teachers/school.

### **6. Funding and evaluation**

#### *6.1 How is the case study funded?*

The folk day folk high school is funded by local government and by tuition fees, paid by labour market service etc., which refers participants to the schools. There is a very minor participants' fee as well.

#### *6.2 How is the case study evaluated?*

There have been various types of evaluations of the schools – not least trying to measure the so-called “effect” of the courses (how many continue in education or ordinary work after finalizing the courses). Until now there has been no general evaluation of the schools.

#### *6.3 Are there targets for achievement and if so, what are they?*

No general targets for achievement. The individual schools decide what types of activities of that kind they take up. – Presently a number of schools are making a pilot project about quality management and self evaluation, the Excellence-project. (See attachment below.)

### **7. The future**

#### *7.1 How is it determined whether or not the case study is a success?*

At the present time the viability of the schools is a question of the schools finding assignments that produce the necessary income for the activities.

#### *7.2 How do the staff see the case study developing in the future?*

After the abolishment of the specific legal framework for the schools a large part of the staffs of the schools have been highly challenged – and many schools have had to close down their activities. A number of schools are well functioning and will probably be able to continue their work in a foreseeable future – and some schools still face serious question marks as far as their future is concerned.

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Centre for Higher Education Greater Copenhagen, September 30<sup>th</sup> 2003

EU Grundtvig programme: Supporting the development of New Learning Pathways for Adults

**4. New trends in raising demand for learning among adults at risk of exclusion**

## **Attachment**

### **The Excellence-project**

A number of individual schools are presently - in cooperation with the national Association of Day Folk High Schools and a national quality development agency - working with a quality development project within the framework of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM).

The EFQM "Excellence-model" is an experience-based model, developed by EFQM on the basis of learning of behaviour, which characterizes and creates successful private companies and public institutions. It is a model for self-evaluation allowing an organization to assess its strengths and weaknesses in relation to what is defined as "Best Practice" on a European level.

"Excellence" is achieved when an organization reaches permanently excellent results through conscious efforts as far as staff- and customer satisfaction, effect in society and business outcome are concerned.

The participating schools have committed themselves to reach at least the level "Committed to excellence" of the EFQM-system, which is the third of three levels of recognition of excellence (the first being "European Quality Award", the most complete and thorough recognition, and the second being "Recognized for Excellence").

This project is presently being evaluated by CVU-Stork. Report will be finalized in early 2004.