



Adult Learning in Denmark

Denmark has a long-standing tradition of adult learning. A core function is to empower adults to participate equally in the Danish democratic society. Good adult education is therefore based on the learners' active involvement and on the teacher's ability to build on the learners' experiences.

The Danish government's lifelong learning policy provides education for all citizens at all ages, and there is a tradition in our country for a large proportion of the population to participate in adult education and the government ensures a certain financial basis for this.

However, serious budget cuts have since 2002 affected particularly the non-formal adult education while focus has grown on guidance and counseling, bridge building activities for young adults, one-step-up activities for the low-skilled and continuing training for the work force.

Non-formal and formal adult education

Danish adult education is divided into:

- **non-formal adult education:** building on the traditions of the educationist Nikolai Frederik Severin GRUNDTVIG (/Niels%20Frederik%20Severin%20GRUNDTVIG), focusing on individual choice and characterised by NGO-organisation and lack of grades and exams, and
- **formal adult education:** comprising both vocational and general adult education and concluding with formal exams. The learning styles in formal education are, however, also inspired by Grundtvig's ideas about an 'equal partnership' between teacher and learner.

Aims of adult learning in Denmark

The aims of adult learning are:

- to strengthen democracy through participation in free and open competence development
- to ensure personal development and quality of life for the citizens
- to ensure equality through education, with emphasis on participation by the low-skilled
- to develop professional competence and flexibility in a changing labour market.

Adult education programmes in Denmark

We have various types of adult education programmes, similar in size but with quite different objectives, structures and content:

1. Popular adult education institutions offering non-formal education
2. Adult Education Centres providing formal general competences up to upper-secondary level
3. Labour market education programmes providing vocational training up to skilled level
4. University level programmes tailor-made for adults. However, these are normally not regarded as adult education as such

Legal basis

Both formal and non-formal adult education are based on several different laws: the law on vocational training, the law on residential folk high schools, the law on study associations/evening classes etc., and they have different organizational structures and different financial aid opportunities.

Responsible public bodies

Jurisdiction is divided between five different ministries. The municipalities are responsible for part of non-formal adult education as well as special education of adults, while most adult education centers have become self-governing state institutions.



ish Adult Education Association - are an umbrella organisation catering for the interests of education.

The *VUC Leaders' Association* (<http://www.vuc.dk/lederforeningen/index.aspx>) is an umbrella organisation catering for the interests of formal general adult education (website only in Danish).

Social partners (trade unions and employers' associations) cater for vocational (adult) education.

Providers of adult education

Non-formal AE:

Study associations/evening classes (about 1,800) offer non-formal adult education to increase the individual's overall subject-related insight and skills. Provided by local private institutions. Most of them are part of five national adult education associations of which four are linked to political parties.

Danish University Extension courses offer educative instruction and lectures by the extramural departments of Danish universities. Provided by about 100 local committees.

Day Folk High Schools (about 50) offer teaching with an educative or job-promoting aim for adults with little formal education and people in a personally or socially vulnerable situation. DFHSs are private institutions.

Folk High Schools (about 80) offer residential short courses (less than two weeks) and residential long courses (more than 12 weeks). FHSs are private institutions. Some of them are linked to religious associations, trade unions or NGO's.

Formal AE:

VUC Adult Education Centres, Language Centres (Danish for foreigners), Labour Market Training Centres (AMU), technical schools, business schools, agricultural schools, basic social & health service schools and universities are all primarily for young people, but also offers adult education. Most of them are self-governing state institutions.

Finances

The self-governing state institutions are financed partly by the state and partly by tuition fees, which are either paid by a local public authority or by the participant her/himself. Participants may receive National Adult Education Support (SVU) under certain circumstances.

The finances of non-formal adult education institutions are based on tuition fees. However, evening schools are supported by the municipalities, which cover up to 1/3 of the expenses for teachers and free premises, and university extension are supported with the same percentage by the state.

Teaching costs for the individual participants of day folk high schools are mostly covered by the municipality.

Certified folk high schools receive a substantial government grant.

In most of both formal and non-formal adult education public funding has decreased over the last 10 years, leading to less activity in some areas and higher participants' fees in most areas.



- ➔ Adult education and continuing training - Ministry of Education's fact sheet (<http://eng.uvm.dk/Fact-Sheets/Adult-education-and-continuing-training>)
- ➔ EURYDICE - Denmark, Structures of Education and Training Systems (http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/structures/041_DK_EN.pdf)
- ➔ EAEA - Country presentation Denmark (<http://www.eaea.org/country/denmark>)
- ➔ Wikipedia - Denmark (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denmark>)
- ➔ Statistical Yearbook - useful knowledge about the Danes and the Danish society (<http://www.dst.dk/en/Statistik/Publikationer/VisPub.aspx?cid=16251>)
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 - Graph of Danish adult education (<https://www.daea.dk/themes/adult-learning-in-denmark/graph-of-danish-adult-education/>)
 - National vision on AE (<https://www.daea.dk/themes/adult-learning-in-denmark/national-vision-on-ae/>)
 - N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) (<https://www.daea.dk/themes/adult-learning-in-denmark/nfs-grundtvig-1783-1872/>)
 - Danish "folkeoplysning"* in seven minutes (<https://www.daea.dk/themes/adult-learning-in-denmark/danish-folkeoplysning-star-in-seven-minutes/>)
 - Prior Learning (<https://www.daea.dk/themes/prior-learning/>)
 - Young adults (<https://www.daea.dk/themes/young-adults/>)
 - Writing for Europe (<https://www.daea.dk/themes/writing-for-europe/>)
 - Other themes (<https://www.daea.dk/themes/other-themes/>)

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