

Non-formal adult education

Non-formal adult education consists of forms of teaching and education that only to a limited degree are part of the formal, public educational system.

The concept of Non-formal adult education is associated with the Danish philosopher, poet, educational thinker and clergyman, N.F.S. Grundtvig, and his thoughts concerning free educational opportunities. The concept first arose in the 19th century and is one of the special features of the Danish education system.

Non-formal learning activities are frequently based on private initiatives by non governmental organisations (NGOs). Non-formal adult education comprises:

- Independent non-formal educational activity: evening schools and voluntary activity in associations
- University extension courses
- Day folk high schools
- Private independent boarding schools (folk high schools, home economics schools, arts and crafts schools, and continuation schools)

No particular school or professional qualifications are required for participating in liberal adult education.

For further information please refer to the website of the Danish Adult Education Association.

Independent non-formal adult education activity

Private non-formal adult education activity is based on fellowship/community and the philosophy of the individual providers.



This activity can be divided into:

1. voluntary non-formal adult education
2. voluntary adult learning in associations

The private non-formal education activity must be established by a non-formal adult education association with a statute in order to be eligible for a grant and to be allocated facilities. In 2008 there were approximately 16,500 associations, of which approximately 1,500 were in the field of non-formal adult education and 15,000 were voluntary associations.

The local authority sets the financial framework and the rules for how it is to be administered.

The local authority can appoint a non-formal adult education committee consisting of a minority elected by the local authority from among its members of the municipal council and a majority consisting of a broadly composed representation of users. The committee carries out administrative tasks such as making concrete decisions regarding, for example, non-formal adult education associations and their activity, assigns facilities and distributes grants.

The objective of non-formal adult education is, by taking a point of departure in the courses and activities, to increase the individual's general and academic insight and skills and enhance the ability and desire to take responsibility for their own life, as well as taking an active and engaged part in society.

Non-formal adult education comprises teaching, study circles, lectures, debatecreating activities and flexibly organised activities, and fees are charged for participation. The teaching is usually offered at evening schools which, within the framework laid down in and pursuant to law, themselves create the frame for their choice of subjects and activity. The overall grant to a non-formal liberal education activity may not exceed 1/3 of the associations' total payroll.

There are approximately 700.000 participants each year.

The objective of voluntary non-formal adult learning in associations is, taking a starting point in the activity and the binding fellowship, to strengthen non-formal adult learning and thus the members' skill and wish to take a responsibility for their own lives and to play an active and engaged part in society.

Voluntary learning in associations for children and young people encompasses sports and philosophically related and socially engaged work with children and young people, and fees are charged for participation.

Association work is offered by associations in such fields as sports, politics and religious activity, other philosophically related and socially engaged work with children and young people, and youth clubs, which, within the framework laid down in or pursuant to law, themselves make decisions regarding how they will make use of

grants and organise their activity. In 2008 approximately 2.1 million people took part in association activity.

The Act on Non-formal Adult Education Activity also includes the University Extramural Department and the day high schools.

University extramural department

The objective of the University Extramural Department is to disseminate knowledge of the methods and outcomes of research through non-formal adult education teaching and lectures.

The University Extramural Department is nationwide with a regional structure consisting of four divisions in the university cities of Copenhagen, Aarhus, Odense and Aalborg. There are, moreover, approximately 100 university extramural committees working with this activity outside of the university cities. Each branch designs its own programmes, which also offer courses by the committees of the region in question.

The state gives grants for costs involved in payroll etc. for lecturers and teachers, travel allowances and administration of the university extramural departments' activities. The size of the grant is laid down in the annual Appropriations Act and in 2010 was DKK 14.5 million. The Council for the University Extramural Department distributes the grant for the activity both in and outside of the university cities.

The overall fees must constitute a minimum of ¼ of the expenditure for remuneration etc, of teachers and 1/3 of the expenditure for remuneration of lecturers. In 2009 there were approximately 95,000 participants in extramural courses.

Day folk high schools

The objective of the day folk high schools is to offer teaching that has an adult education or employment-creating aim and is organised for

adults. The courses normally run for 4 to 18 weeks, and as a rule the teaching is full time.

Many day high schools offer FVU (Preparatory Adult Education).

The local authority can decide to give a grant to the non-formal adult education or employment-creating activity of the day high school when the school is organised as an independent, self-governing institution with its own board and own statute. The local authority decides the form that the municipal support is to take and may lay down further conditions for the grant. The local authority supervises the day high schools to which it awards grants.

In 2010 there were approximately 40 day high schools.

Private independent boarding schools

Private independent boarding schools include:

- Folk high schools
- Home economics and arts and crafts schools
- Continuation schools

The main objectives of courses at private independent boarding schools are the interpretation and meaning of life, adult education and general democratic education.

The teaching must be of a broad, general nature. While individual subjects and groups of subjects may predominate, this must never be at the expense of the general. The schools organise their activity on the basis of their chosen core values.

The pupils live at the school and the courses include both teaching and social interaction. The teachers live close to the school and take part in social life outside of class hours, and pupils and teachers also eat several of the fixed meals together. Pupils at many of the schools take part in the practical work such as cleaning and cooking.

The state supports courses at private independent boarding schools by means of taximeter funding per pupil per week.

There is a tuition fees for all courses, which can vary according to type of school and length of course. Typical tuition fees for a lengthy course are DKK 900-1700 a week, while the shorter week-long courses typically cost around DKK 3,800.

Folk high schools

The folk high schools have a high degree of freedom to choose the subjects, content and methods of their teaching, which means that there are great differences between the schools in this respect. The subjects must be of a broad, general nature for half of the time, but the rest of the time can be spent on going into depth with special subjects and skills. Some high schools, for instance, concentrate on music and theatre while in others the emphasis is on sports, art, politics or philosophy. General discussions about important topics are common to all the teaching.

The courses vary in length from four days to typically 36 weeks. Short courses are most frequently held during the summer with participants of all ages. The longer courses are held during the winter and the participants are normally in their early 20s. About 45,000 people a year take part in one of the short courses while the longer courses have approximately 8,000 participants.

The minimum age is 17½. Three folk high schools are only for young people between the ages of 16½ and 19, and four folk high schools are for pensioners.

There are 74 folk high schools located all around the country.

For further information about folk high schools, please refer to the website of the Association of Folk High Schools in Denmark.

Home economics and arts and crafts schools

Home economics and arts and crafts schools concentrate on practical, creative and academic teaching in subjects within home economics and arts and crafts. As part of the tradition of liberal adult education, the schools stress the subjects' cultural, historical and social perspectives. The subjects are in the areas of home, body, ethics and aesthetics.

Most home economics and arts and crafts schools offer the 10th form.

The students are both adults and young people (starting at 16½ years of age).

The majority of the courses are of 20 or 40 weeks' duration, but some schools also offer short 1-2 week courses. About 1,000 persons participate in the schools' long courses.

There are 14 home economics and arts and crafts schools.

Continuation schools

Continuation schools offer courses to young pupils with a view to their human development and maturation as well as their general upbringing and education. The pupils are between the ages of 14 and 18.

Pupils can fulfil their compulsory education at a continuation school, and the great majority of these schools offer the Leaving Examination of the Folkeskole (primary and lower secondary school) after completion of 9th class. Approximately 1/3 of the pupils are in the compulsory education bracket and attend 8th or 9th class. In addition, most of the continuation schools offer 10th class with the examinations that follow.

The courses cover a whole school year.

There are approximately 265 continuation schools, and approximately 28,000 continuation school pupils. While the average number of pupils per schools is around 100, this figures covers a variation in size from 28 pupils at the smallest continuation school to more than 450 at the biggest. New schools are opened every year and sometimes a school closes down. In recent decades this form of school has shown constant growth.

About 40 of the continuation schools are for special needs education. These schools have been approved for grants on the basis of an overall special teaching programme for those with reading or writing disabilities or other pupils with general learning difficulties. The other continuation schools can also offer special needs education and other special educational assistance.