

Non-formal adult education in the Nordic countries

Non-formal adult education in Nordic countries is supported in various ways by the national states. The overall aim is to further lifelong learning on individual, group and societal level. Further it aims at promoting human development by self-motivated learning and thereby strengthening individuals' possibilities, ability and lust to take responsibility of and affect their own lives. Non-formal adult education is regarded an arena for realization of active citizenship and strengthening of the development of civil society and the society at large. The national policies aim at enhancing the understanding and development of democracy. The opportunities for human development and active citizenship are to be equal and accessible for all, and especially for those with disabilities and low levels of education.

Besides these overall aims non-formal adult education can complement formal education by furthering general and vocational knowledge and skills that is meeting also the needs of working life. Additionally it can be used for promoting wellbeing and public health, sustainable development, multiculturalism, internationalization and global justice.

The laws on non-formal adult education have been recently revised in Denmark (2011) Iceland (2010) Norway (2006 and 2009) and Finland (2009). In Sweden the law from 1991 was slightly revised in 2007. In Sweden, Finland and Denmark non-formal adult education (folkbildning/folkeoplysning) is regulated by a specific juridical framework separate from the laws regulating adult educational programs for working life and the formal adult education. Norway and Denmark has separate laws that cover non-formal adult education and folk high schools. In addition Norway as Iceland applies a more general framework for adult education as a whole.

In recent years the traditional aims and tasks of non formal-adult education, still expressed on the laws, has been challenged by the ideology characteristic to globalized knowledge economy. On national and level this has resulted in enhanced decentralization, embracing differentiated strategies for survival and development, and an emphasis on the utility and effects of the various forms of learning activities.

Institutions that are characteristic for the Nordic non-formal adult education are folk high schools and non-governmental study associations that organize a significant amount of study circles, evening classes and public lectures. In Sweden for instance, these institutions are those who by law are defined as the only legitimate receivers of state subsidies for IFAE/ popular education. However, there are significant differences between the Nordic countries. Folk high schools and day-folk high schools are of major importance particular in Sweden and Denmark, and to some extent in Finland and Norway. In Iceland, where there are no folk high schools, the non-formal adult education is significantly more integrated into adult education initiatives aimed at increasing employability or promoting study participation for poorly educated citizens.

Continuing education is also quite active within the network of the universities in Iceland where the focus is more specialized and targeted at more educated groups within the job market.

Table 1. An overview of non-formal adult education organizations in Nordic countries

Finland	Sweden	Denmark	Norway	Iceland
Folk high schools	Folk high schools	Folk high schools <i>Day folk high schools</i> Home economic & crafts schools	Folk high schools	
Study centres/ associations	Study associations	Non formal AE (voluntary learning in) associations	Adult learning associations	
Adult education centres		<i>Day folk high schools</i>		Local government adult education evening schools
Summer universities		University extra mural department		Centres for Continuing Education
Physical education institutes				

In Sweden the government and the parliament have delegated to the National Council of Adult Education, which is a non-profit organization founded by three member organizations representing the folk high schools and the study associations, to distribute subsidies to and evaluate NFAE/popular education.

In Norway the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning administers governmental subsidies for study associations, distance learning institutions, folk high schools and study centres. It belongs to the Ministry of Education and Research. The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning functions as an advocate and lobbyist for the adult learning NGOs. The umbrella organization for folk high schools is the Folk high school counsel.

In Finland the coordinating organizations, one for the field as a whole (Finnish Adult Education Association) and one for each of the five organizational forms, have a more of a lobbying role and a task. Ministry of Education administrates and allocates the financing while the Finnish Council of Evaluation is responsible for the evaluations. Also Denmark has one national umbrella organization (Danish Adult Education association) with an overall responsibility for lobbying and information. Most of the non-formal adult education on local level is financed via the local authorities. Folk high schools are financed directly from the government. All organizations have their own umbrella organizations. In Iceland where non-formal adult education is amalgamated in formal adult education the responsibility is divided between several ministries. Still the Ministry of Education functions as the overall supervisor. Participation in adult education is not directly funded by the state or municipalities. Participants pay themselves for their studies and apply thereafter for refund from a vocational training fund.

Relevant and present research on non-formal adult education

The conditions and infrastructure for conducting research on non-formal adult education vary a lot in the five countries. Sweden has since 1990 a national interdisciplinary network for promoting research (MIMER), and the Swedish Research council quite recently funded quite extensive multidisciplinary research projects. A strong research tradition on the history of ideas within non-formal adult education has been complemented with themes enlightening the various functions and aims of non-formal adult education in relation to civil society (e.g. social utilities of NFAE, pedagogical design for political mobilization, democratic learning processes). In Denmark the research used to be quite viable, focusing on the relationship between non-formal adult education, democracy and active citizenship, from both a historical perspective and from the viewpoint of current challenges. The relationship between non-formal adult education and working life has mainly been studied on local level, from the viewpoint of community, administration and municipal policies.

Both in Norway and Finland the research has been scarce since the beginning of 1990's. In Norway there is some multidisciplinary research on the establishment of relevant learning conditions in varied non-formal and informal arenas, with regard to participation, democracy, social interplay, power, identity, citizenship and the benefits of learning. In Finland the research focuses on the identity and self-understanding of non-formal adult education, related especially to the tasks, function and legitimacy of the organizations. Research on the evaluation of the function of non-formal adult education has at least partly been replaced by research on the effects and outcomes. In Iceland the research is influenced by the challenges and needs within the formal education. It has focused on drop-out, adults with learning difficulties, recognition of prior learning, career counselling and the quality of education provided within non-formal adult education.

Relevant research environments and research organizations

Norway

Department of Adult Learning and Counselling - <http://www.ntnu.no/ivr>

Contact person: Jorun M. Stenøien

Folk high school project - Folkehøgskoleprosjektet -

<http://www.ntnu.no/plu/forskning/prosjekter/folkehogskole>

Contact person: Geir Karlsen, PLU

Civil society and voluntary organization -

<http://www.samfunnsforskning.no/Forskning/Politikk-demokrati-sivilsamfunn>

Contact person: Håkon Lorentzen

Finland

University of Tampere, School of Education,
professor Anja Heikkinen, anja.heikkinen@uta.fi

<http://www.uta.fi/edu/yhteystiedot/henkilokunta/heikkinen.html>

University of Eastern Finland, School of Educational Sciences and Psychology, professor Jyri Manninen, jyri.manninen@uef.fi

Åbo Akademi University, Faculty of Education,
professor Petri Salo, psalo@abo.fi

Sweden

Research organisations

Mimer: the national network for research on popular education

Webpage: <http://www.liu.se/mimer>

Contact: Coordinator, Associate professor Ann-Marie Laginder, ann-marie.laginder@liu.se

The association for research on popular education

Webpage: <http://www.folkbildning.net/fb-forskning> ,

Contact: Chairman Mats Bernerstedt, mats.bernerstedt@live.se

Encell: National Centre for Lifelong Learning, Jönköping University Foundation

Webpage: <http://center.hj.se/encell> ,

Contact : Director, PhD Cecilia Bjursell, cecilia.bjursell@hjk.hj.se

The Grundtvig Institute at the University of Gothenburg

<http://www.ufn.gu.se/samverkan/Grundtviginstitutet>

Contact: Principal, PhD Eva Mark, Eva.Mark@ped.gu.se

Research environments

Studies in Adult, Popular and Higher Education at the Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning, Linköping University. Contact: professor Staffan Larsson, staffan.larsson@liu.se

Webpage: <http://www.ibl.liu.se/vufo?l=en&sc=true>

The Institute for Civil Society Studies at Ersta Sköndal University College. Contact: professor Lars Svedberg, lars.svedberg@esh.se

Webpage: <http://www.esh.se/en/research/institute-for-civil-society-studies.html>

Department of Archive, Library and Museum Studies at Uppsala university, Contact: professor Kerstin Rydbeck, Kerstin.rydbeck@abm.uu.se , Webpage: <http://www.abm.uu.se/>

Tema Q/Culture Studies at the Department for Studies of Social Change and Culture, Linköping university. Contact: professor Erling Bjurström, erling.bjurstrom@liu.se

Webpage: <http://www.isak.liu.se/temaq?l=en&sc=true>

Democracy and Education at the School of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences, Örebro university. Contact: professor Bernt Gustavsson, bernt.gustavsson@oru.se

Webpage: <http://www.oru.se/Forskning/Forskningsmiljoer/miljo/Utbildning-och-Demokrati/>

Denmark

Research environments

Department of Psychology and Educational Studies (PAES), Roskilde University. Contact: Leif Emil Hansen (leifh@ruc.dk); Henning Salling Olesen (hso@ruc.dk)

Danish School of Education, Århus University, Contact: Ove Korsgård ove@dpu.dk

National Center for Competence Development, Danish School of education, Århus University <http://ncfk.dpu.dk/> Contact: Bjarne Wahlgren, wahlgren@dpu.dk

Iceland

University of Iceland

<http://www.hi.is/>
hi@hi.is

University of Akureyri

<http://www.unak.is>
unak@unak.is

Statistics Iceland

<http://www.hagstofan.is/>
upplysingar@hagstofan.is

Education and Training Service Centre

<http://frae.is/forsida/>
fraedslumidstod@fraedslumidstod.is

Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

<http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/>
postur@mrn.is

National umbrella organizations**Norway**

Vox - <http://www.vox.no/>

The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (NAAL) - <http://www.vofo.no/>

Norwegian Association for Distance Education - <http://www.nade-nff.no/>

Folk high school counsel

<http://www.folkehogskole.no/fhsr/heleomfhsr.htm>

Association of NGOs in Norway - <http://www.frivillighetnorge.no/>

Sweden

The Swedish National Council of Adult Education, <http://www.folkbildning.se>

The Swedish National Federation of Study Associations, <http://www.studieforbunden.se>

The Interest Organization for Popular Movement Folk High Schools, <http://www.rio-org.se>

Finland

Finnish Adult Education Association,

<http://www.vsy.fi/en.php>

Leena Saloheimo, [leena.saloheimo\(at\)vsy.fi](mailto:leena.saloheimo(at)vsy.fi)

Bildningsforum

Ulrica Taylor, [ulrica.taylor\(at\)bildningsforum.fi](mailto:ulrica.taylor(at)bildningsforum.fi)

The Finnish Association of Adult Education Centres <http://www.ktol.fi/index.php?k=21768>
Jaana Nuottanen, jaana.nuottanen(at)ktol.fi

Finnish Folk High School Association,
http://www.kansanopistot.fi/index_eng.html
info(at)kansanopistot.fi

Summer universities in Finland
http://www.kesayliopistot.fi/koulutustarjonta/in_english
info(at)kesayliopistot.fi

Association of Study Centers
Satu Kantola, satu.kantola (at) kkgagricola.fi

Association of Physical Education Institutes
Nina Luukkainen, nina.luukkainen[at]urheiluopistot.net

Denmark

AOF Denmark – Arbejdernes Oplysningsforbund, The Workers Educational Association
(party-political affiliation: Socialdemocratic / Labour): www.aof-danmark.dk

Daghøjskoleforeningen, The Association of Day Folk High Schools in Denmark:
www.daghojskoler.dk

Danmarks Lærerforening, Danish Union of Teachers within the public basic school, relevant
in relation to AE regarding Special Education of Adults: <http://www.dlf.org/english>

Danmarks Vejlederforening – DVF, The Danish Association of guidance practitioners:
www.dvf.dk ;
www.vejlederen.org

Danske Erhvervsskoler – National Association of Vocational Schools:
<http://www.danskeerhvervsskoler.dk>

DFS - Dansk Folkeoplysnings Samråd, Danish Adult Education Association: www.dfs.dk

Dansk for Udlændinge, Danish language Courses for Adult Foreigners: Service of The Danish
Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, incl. total list of providers:
http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-us/Integration/informationguide/learning_danish/learning_danish.htm

De danske Sprogcentre, The national organization of providers of Danish language Courses
for Adult Foreigners: <http://www.dedanskesprogcentre.dk>

DLI - Danske lærerorganisationers International, Danish teachers Trade Unions:
<http://www.dlint.org>

DOF - Dansk Oplysningsforbund, Non-formal Adult Education Association (party-political
affiliation: none): www.danskoplysning.dk

FFD – Folkehøjskolernes Forening i Danmark, The Association of Folk High Schools in Denmark: www.ffd.dk

FIU – Fagbevægelsens Interne Uddannelser, The Unions Internal Education, www.fiu.dk

FOF - Folkeligt Oplysnings Forbund - Non-formal Adult Education Association (party-political affiliation: Conservative): www.fof.dk

Folkeuniversitetet – University Extension Courses: www.folkeuniversitetet.dk

Lederforeningen for VUC – The Association of Heads of General Adult Education Centres: <http://www.vuc.dk/lederforeningen/index.aspx>

LOF – Liberalt Oplysnings Forbund - Non-formal Adult Education Association (party-political affiliation: Liberal): www.-lof.dk

NETOP - Netværk for oplysning - Non-formal Adult Education Association (party-political affiliation: Social-Liberal): www.netoplysning.dk

Produktionsskoleforeningen – The Association of Production Schools in Denmark: <http://www.fpp.dk>

Uddannelsesforbundet – Trade Union of teachers within the various sectors of the formal and non-formal basic and adult educational system: <http://www.uddannelsesforbundet.dk/>

VEU-centre – Voksen og efteruddannelsescentre – Centres of cooperation between general and vocational Adult Education. Total number 13:
<http://www.uvm.dk/Uddannelse/Uddannelse%20og%20undervisning%20for%20voksne/Om%20uddannelse%20og%20undervisning%20for%20voksne/VEU-centre/De%2013%20centre.aspx>

VUC – Voksen Uddannelses Centre, Formal Adult Education Centres:
<http://www.uvm.dk/For%20institutioner/Struktur%20og%20udbud/Institutioner/Institutioner%20for%20uddannelse%20og%20undervisning%20for%20voksne/VUC.aspx>

Iceland

Education and Training Service Centre
<http://frae.is/forsida/>
fraedslumidstod@fraedslumidstod.is

Kvasir
<http://www.fraedslumidstodvar.is>
kvasir@fraedslumidstodvar.is

Leikn
<http://leikn.is>
leikn@leikn.is

Continuing Education - University of Iceland

<http://ehi.is/>

endurmenntun@hi.is

Continuing Education - University of Akureyri

<http://unak.is/simenntun/>

simennt@unak.is

Continuing Education - University of Bifröst

<http://bifrost.is/islenska/namsleidir/simenntun-haskolans-a-bifrost/>

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Open University - Reykjavik University

<http://www.opnihaskolinn.is/>

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