

REPORT TO UNESCO

CONFINTEA Midterm Review 2003

by

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The following is not entirely a *national* report on trends and development in adult learning policies and practices since 1997. It is a report on research activities in which *Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitet* (DPU, The Danish University of Education) has been involved during the period 1997-2003. Therefore, after a short notice on a few important national initiatives during the period, the report will concentrate mainly on point 4 themes in “The Common Grid for Reporting”.

National initiatives

The Adult and Continuing Training Reform. In May 2000 the Danish Parliament adopted a number of acts, which tied together continuing training and further education programmes in a single coherent and transparent adult education system. The adult education reform has been drawn up in co-operation among ministries responsible for adult education in Denmark, i.e. primarily the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour (after a change of government in November 2001 all educational matters were unified in the Ministry of Education). Further information on the reform can be found in “The National Report of Denmark” prepared for the 46th International Conference on Education, Geneva, September 2001.

National Development of Competences. In 1997 the Ministry of Education launched the programme *National Development of Competences*. The main objective of the programme was to place the Danish educational system among the 10 most outstanding systems in the world – measured in relation to as well OECD analyses as to specific national targets.

The initiatives to reach the objective were divided into five areas:

1. The Danish educational system shall belong to the world elite
2. Personal qualifications shall be developed
3. The partnership between educational institutions and working life shall be strengthened
4. Lifelong learning and recurrent education shall be developed
5. The role of the teacher and of the participant shall be broadened and the introduction of ICT shall be intensified.

The National Competence Account. In 2000 was established an interministerial project – the national competence account – with participation from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry for Employment, the Ministry of Science and the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs. The aim for the account is to form a basis for locating strengths – and weaknesses – in national competences. At the same time it is to form a basis for political initiatives in the sphere of competences. In the longer term, the account will form a platform for benchmarking with other countries. The work of developing a national competence account will run until the end of 2003. For further information visit the homepage: www.nkr.dk.

Participation in adult learning

Participation in adult learning is decreasing in Denmark. From the absolute peak in 1998 the number of annual participants has decreased about 20%. The main reason for that is the change in the financing of education for the unemployed and low-skilled people. Mainly the non-residential day folk high schools and the vocational training institutions, but also the adult education centres, have

experienced a decrease in the number of participants. The sector with the highest increase in the number of participants is the teaching of Danish as a second language for adult immigrants – this is due to a change of legislation in 2001, where stronger regulations for immigrants were introduced.

The Danish Research and Development Centre for Adult Education – mentioned in the Hamburg Declaration as an outstanding example of good practice – was closed by 1 October 2001 due to the fact that the centre lost its state grant. As the adult education associations and other adult education activities at the same time were struggling very hard to survive, there were no possibility to continue the work.

The Danish University of Education

The Danish University of Education (DPU) was established 1 July 2000 after merging The Danish School for Educational Studies, The Danish College for the Education of Pedagogues and the Danish National Institute for Educational Research. The establishment was part of recent years' efforts to strengthen and enhance Danish research on education. It was and still is a vision to give the university a leading role in international research within education, learning theories and competence development.

With the creation of the DPU the aim was

- to secure coherence between research and education
- to be ponderous when it comes to research, meaning that it shall be assured the necessary freedom of research as well as independence in academic matters
- to ensure that DPU is an educational institution at master level, which implies a close co-operation with other universities
- to secure the research bonds for the centres for higher education (CVU's (University Colleges))
- to establish a research and development centre, Learning Lab Denmark (explained below), in order to secure that knowledge and experiences with ICT-supported learning becomes a central field for research, information and development.
- to secure that other and special fields within the area of education are considered.

Learning Lab Denmark - established in 2000 - is first of all a research-based hands-on science centre, which is carrying out experiments with learning and development of qualifications in companies (private and public), educational institutions and organisations. Through the experiments Learning Lab is supposed to develop science about how companies, institutions, organisations and people learn and develop their qualifications and competences. The experiments shall be systematic and research-based in such a way that practical experience on a continuous basis is converted into theoretical knowledge, principles, tools, materials and methods that again can be used for the improvement and development of practice itself. An important role for Learning Lab Denmark is to contribute to the creation of new partnerships and networks in co-operation with business, educational sectors and other institutions specialising in knowledge distribution.

Because of integration of the above mentioned three institutions in 2000, it makes sense also to make a distinction between research work done before and after 2000.

Activities 1997-2000

The Research Centre for Adult Education

a. Research work

Before 2000 there existed at the then Danish School for Educational Studies a *Research Centre for Adult Education* (Forskningscenter for Voksenuddannelse). The centre was formally established August 1992 and placed within the *Institute of General Education* (Institut for pædagogik og uddannelsesforskning). It was given the task “to create an organizational framework for the strengthening of research, developmental work and teaching within adult education and to offer the optimal conditions for external financing”. At the same time a “Programme for Research on Adult Education” (Program vedrørende voksenpædagogik og voksenuddannelsesforskning) was formulated. The programme was normative for the work of the centre till 1997. Central themes of the programme were: education for special target groups (people without or with very little post-compulsory education, long-term unemployed and related to that subthemes like job-rotation, cross-institutional co-operation, technology supported education and general/liberal education). Another important theme was related to non-formal education (folkeoplysning, i.e. general/liberal education).

During the period the centre undertook about 20 research projects. Internationally the centre was involved in the publishing of a yearbook for Nordic adult education: *Social Change and Adult Education Research*.

From 1997 the research work concentrated on four areas:

1. The relationship between adult education, non-formal education (folkeoplysning) and democracy.
2. Work place learning.
3. Education for teachers of adults.
4. Application of ICT in the adult teaching.

b. Education, courses etc.

Parallel to the research work activities a number of different courses were started, of which can be mentioned:

1. The teaching of adults. Open Education¹ (started 1991)
2. Supplementary teaching of immigrant teachers (started 1995).
3. Establishment of a course unit in the teaching of adults (Voksendidaktik, started 1996)
4. A one-year course for teachers of adults (started 1996)
5. An IT-based course for teachers of adults (started 1997)
6. Two diploma-level one-year courses in adult education related to educational planning and vocational training (started 1997)
7. A one-year course in guidance of adults (started 1998)
8. An IT- based version of one of the two diploma-level courses.

¹ “Open education” (vocationally oriented adult education) is not synonymous with “distance education”. “Open” stands for more flexibility compared with initial education programmes as to admission requirements and procedure, structure (modules from existing education programmes, specially planned courses etc.), organisation (must be organised part-time for adults in work, and may be organised full-time up to a year allowing for study support).

The Danish National Institute for Educational Research

During the period 1997-2000 the institute did research work in a number of areas, of which can be mentioned:

1. Adults' reading abilities
2. Education and training of mentally ill people
3. Adult education and society
4. Elderly people's learning
5. Lifelong Learning, Democracy and Civil Society – a comparative analysis of the lifelong learning reforms in the Nordic countries in relation to the development of a European Education Policy.
6. Development of methods for educational programmes for unadjusted (marginalized) young people

Activities at DPU 2000-2003

a. Research work.

The Competence Programme.

After 2000, the activities of the *Research Centre for Adult Education* were partly transferred to a new research programme, called “the Competence Programme”. At present, this programme involves 14 staff members (8 full-time members and 6 ph. d students). It is a cross-disciplinary programme, the purpose of which is “to develop and transmit new knowledge - based on research - of adult learning processes and competence development that take place in education systems, work places, and in every day life situations – and the interaction between them within existing societal and organisational frame conditions”.

The *future* main fields of the programme are described as:

- Organisational learning and workplace learning
- Vocational training and education
- Competence development in the education of selected professions
- Competence validation

Up till now the following categories have been used:

Projects/themes:

1. *Competence development in interaction with formal education.* Projects related to vocational training and to the education of nurses and bank clerks.
2. *Competence development and work place learning.* Projects on “the sustainable workplace”, “Reflection and Learning at work” (Competence development, workplace development and educational planning with employee participation, Joint programme for working life research in Europe), “Partnering as strategy for learning and development at construction sites”
3. *The concept of competence and competence validation.* Projects on “Simulation studies of competence and qualifications” and “The Competence Assessment Project 2001-2002: How to assess and validate adults' real competences?” The latter project comprised both the question of merit (how to credit informally acquired competencies in a formal system) and the question how to validate/measure growth in competence in relation to a sequence of learning events.

4. *International and national reports.* OECD-project on “The role of qualifications systems in promoting lifelong learning” and “Description of selected core competences” for The National Competence Account (The Ministry of Education).

The unit for comparative and international education

In September 2001 the University established a new *Unit of comparative and international education*. The background for the establishment was the actual changing of the national educational policies. Although formal decisions are still taken at the national level, the national economies are none the less increasingly connected in a state of dependence that cannot avoid having consequences for educational policy in general. If a distinction is being made between educational policy decisions at the

1. institutional level (the individual educational institution),
2. national level (state, counties, municipalities etc.),
3. international level (the international organisations),

then we are now witnessing on the one hand that an increasing number of decisions of a political character are submitted to the single, individual institution of education; on the other hand that essential educational concepts are coined through supranational and/or international organisations, and thereafter finding their way to decision makers at the two other levels. That was the case, for instance, with the concept of *lifelong learning* that was adopted by the OECD ministers in 1996 (and UNESCO in 1960). Since then the concept has become an important element in the educational policy of all OECD countries. In other words, we are now facing a development, where we not only learn from others – are inspired by them - but where we are also co-operating internationally, aiming at educational policy decisions that influence both our own and other countries’ educational policy. This is a new development, characterised by the following three traits:

1. Educational policy decisions are increasingly the result of a complicated interplay between the local, national and international levels.
2. Therefore, educational policy decisions cannot be restricted to national studies alone.
3. Fundamental comparative studies are necessary for the evaluation of the different national models that grow out of the interplay between the three levels.

Demands from globalisation, internationalisation, the new technology, and the knowledge economy are to be met by new forms of competence development, and by changes of the educational process. These new challenges were the background for the establishment of the Unit for Comparative and International Education at DPU. In 2004 the University has been appointed to host the XXI CESE (Comparative Education Society in Europe) conference.

Other important research work

Besides the Competence Programme and the establishment of the Unit for Comparative and International Education other research programmes are of importance:

1. Adult guidance: Adult educational guidance, vocational guidance for adults, workplace guidance, quality in carriers guidance etc.
2. Citizenship
3. The Adult teacher
4. Computer assisted learning
5. Drop-out rates in adult education
6. Numeracy – adults learning mathematics
7. Adult functional reading skills

b. Courses, education etc.

Development of a flexible masters degree at the DPU

The concept of lifelong learning has fundamental implications for educational provision. Education (learning) is no longer confined to a particular stage in life, namely youth, but a lifelong process and universities are thus facing the challenge of adapting to the needs of a new group of learners: adults. In this context, the role of universities – and of the educational system as a whole - is changing as they are transformed into *lifelong learning institutions*.

In response to these changes, the Danish University of Education launched an innovative educational initiative in the summer of 2002, in line with the concept of lifelong learning, with the aim of improving educational provision for adult professionals. This new initiative, the provision of a flexible Master of Education programme (MEd), has been developed with a view to the Danish government's decision to establish a professionally oriented qualifications system for adults.

A Master's degree is the highest level of qualification in the Danish adult education system. Master's degrees are one-year degree programmes (totalling 60 ECTS credits) provided as part-time open education, and admission to a programme requires a minimum of two years' relevant professional experience. Since programmes are aimed at adult professionals, they are designed to integrate theory and practice.

While institutionally regulated Master's degree programmes consist of three prescribed coursework modules and a final Master's project, the flexible Master's degree programme is based on an individually chosen topic of study and thus on the needs of individual adult learners.

Outlines of the model for the programme:

1. All students are interviewed as part of the admissions process
2. An individual education plan is signed upon registration
3. Learners are assigned an individual mentor
4. Continuous evaluation of individual modules

While the product here is a 'strategy' for a new means of provision, the ultimate 'product' that universities as transmitters of a learning culture can provide is lifelong learners: *authentic, autonomous, authoritative* individuals.

References

As background material for the report has been used:

Adult learning in Denmark. Worked out for CONFINTEA V by The Danish Ministry of Education, 1997.

The Development of Education – National Report of Denmark. Worked out for the 46th International Conference on Education in Geneva 2001. By the Danish Research and Development Centre for Adult Education for the Ministry of Education, 2001.

Furthermore has been used:

www.uvm.dk (website of The Danish Ministry of Education)

www.dpu.dk (website of The Danish University of Education)