

Life Long Learning in Denmark

Denmark has a strong tradition for voluntary informal people education besides the formal educational system. Folk high schools, study circles and participation in popular movements and organizations was built up from the middle of the 1800-century.

The farmers- and later on the workers- movement used this as well in the fight for collective rights, democracy and education of the individual as a citizen. These patterns of lifelong learning are to a certain degree supported by the state and municipalities and include a large part of the population. In 2004 50.000 persons participated in a Folk high School course and 675.000 in informal voluntary education and 1/3 of the population do voluntary work.

This tradition for people education, "dannelse" like the German term "bildung", and democracy is very strong in the Danish self consciousness. It stands in some respects in contrast to the idea of LLL introduced in the EU from the 1990'es focusing on learning as an end for economic competition in the global society of knowledge. That idea is first later carried through in Denmark. Together with the new Nordic members of EU Sweden and Finland Denmark in 1996 tried define LLL as the possibility for education for all more than on economic growth.

Denmark established compensatory education for the least educated on the labor market from the 1970 is, but the Lissabon treaty in 2000 started a serious process for implementing LLL after EU goals. The Danish government published in 2007 a Strategy for Life long Learning.

The strategy includes initiatives for all ages and all sector of society to motivate for learning and participation for as many as possible and as quick, flexible and efficient as possible.

The Government will work for an educational system with connection between the deifferent levels and sectors. Plan for learning is introduced from the very start in the daycare institutions for children, to higher quality in the public school, increasing participation in youth education and further education, and increased possibilities for life long education in as well the formal sector, the non-formal sector supported by workers unions and employers associations, and the informal sector of people education.

The differences between the educational sectors are undermined and the strong value in the Danish welfare state on free formal education for all and state support for students are under pres. The educational institutions are sat in competition with its other both in Denmark and in an international context. Education is to a certain degree made to a commodity as the participants pay for. A special discussion in the Danish debate on educations policy in recent years is the governmental goals in youth and further education. It seems to be difficult to increase the part of birth cohort from 80% to 95% in the youth educations, and from 40% to 50% in the further education.

The conditions, especially in vocational education, and the motivation in the young population to participate more than the obligate public school don't seems to be large enough. The drop out frequency as well youth- and further education are also greater than expected when you consider education as both an individual and a collective good.

The Danish educational system has been standardized and centralized on all levels to fit into the common educational program in the EU and be able to be integrated in the global economy of knowledge. The quick and big changes for as well pupils, students and employed in the educational sector have done the politics of education a very important political issue in recent years.

The Danish School of Education have taken part in this processes with research in the changes and how it works, and also by building up new master educations. One of them is an European Master in LLL; policy and management.