



3. Case Study Denmark 2009: 3rd Sector involvement in preparing for VPL- training of “sparring partners”

<p>The context</p> <p>The Danish Ministry of Education has provided tools for clarification and documentation of competences acquired in 3rd sector activities.</p> <p>The background was a wish to facilitate cross sector transfer of competences and help the individual in providing evidence for prior learning from the 3rd sector within the new possibilities for VPL at the formal educational institutions.</p> <p>The tools were developed in 2006/2007 by Knowledge Lab at the University of Southern Denmark.</p> <p>A steering committee with representatives from the 3rd sector organisations, the formal educational institutions and the social partners was established.</p> <p>The task was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A standard without standardising” • A systematic reflection, description and documentation of non-formal and informal competencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific or formal standards of levels - since the learning is non-formal and informal - and is supposed to remain so! 	<p>Evidence, material, content</p> <p>The tools are available at the internet in three versions for respectively : non-formal adult education, association work or voluntary work and are free of charge.</p> <p>http://www.realkompetence-folkeoplysning.dk/ http://www.realkompetence-forening.dk/ http://www.realkompetence-frivillig.dk/</p> <p>The tools are questionnaires on the following general 3. sector relevant competences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social competences • Learning competences • Communicative competences • Creative-innovative competences • ICT competences • Self management competences • Intercultural competences • Organizational competences

This is how the tool was presented when launched:

“The prior learning instrument now allows you to describe and document the unique skills and competencies you have developed in adult education , e.g. at an evening school, folk high school, home economics school, handcrafts school, day folk high school, production college or continuation school. You do so by filling out the questionnaire specifically dealing with what you have learned in adult education. You can either fill out the questionnaire on your own or together with a sparring partner. The end result is a description of your prior learning. This description can be used when you apply for work or when applying for admission to an education programme. Prior learning includes everything you are able to do, regardless of how you have learned it. Some of your abilities are certified, others are just things that you are able to do. This description of prior learning is a contribution to cast light on your total prior learning and therefore becomes a supplement to your CV.”

The aim was to provide a tool for self assessment that would be recognized by both the formal educational institutions and [the] enterprises. In the work process of the steering committee it became clear that a function of “sparring” was desirable to improve the reliability and the quality of the clarification of the individual. The tools could scaffold a reflection that was better supported via a dialogue with a sparring partner.

The challenge: an infrastructure for 3rd sector support to VPL

How could one establish a network of local sparring partners all over the country? And who should be responsible for and finance the establishing of a body of sparring partners in the 3rd sector?

In Denmark we have one of the highest ratios for voluntary association pr. habitant.

Conceptually the developers of the tools made a point that the clarification

The last one – organizational competences – is omitted in relation to non-formal adult education as learning here is intentional and facilitated/organized by teachers.

Each competence is described with key words and examples.

Social competence is for example defined this way:

“Having social competences means that you can be a part of social contexts in a constructive way.

Keywords are

- Openness
- Personal relations
- Empathy
- Problem solving
- Interplay”

The questionnaire consists of 10 statements pr. competence. The individual rates him- or herself on a 5-step scale going from to a very high degree to a lesser degree.

The statements are intended to be easily understood e.g. “I contribute to everybody feeling at ease”, I like working with other people” or “I am a part of groups with people with a different back ground than my own”.

In relation to each competence the individual is asked to give some examples of how he or she has demonstrated the competence, eg social competence or intercultural competence.

The answers are accumulated automatically in a graphic format that presents a competence profile also featuring the examples of the individual.

The individual prints the format out and signs it. If a sparring partner has been involved he or she signs as well.

and documentation should be related to a specific context, e.g. a sports organisation or an educational programme at a day folk high school. So one needed in effect a “sparring partner” available in each and every association in DK.

For the associations the challenge is that they have no professional experience in counselling and guidance in a more formalized way. DGI (The national Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations) establishes short introductory courses of local leaders and board members to prepare them for supporting their members in using the tools.

The voluntary work sector has been very hesitant in accepting the tools and the whole concept of documenting competences developed via voluntary work. No training of sparring partners has been established yet. The same is the case for DUF (the Danish Youth Council) though they have VPL on their agenda.

One of the ways to meet the challenge is to encourage local cooperation between the various types of organisations in the 3rd sector, e.g. having counsellors from the schools providing non-formal adult education assist the associations with no experience in working with the tools and with no explicit pedagogical and learning approach to their activities. One answer to the challenge is to educate VPL-guides for sparring partners.

The case: Training of guides for sparring partners in the non-formal adult education

The Danish Association of Adult Education (DAEA) has made training courses available for teachers and counsellors from the non-formal adult educational schools to become sparring partners themselves and VPL-guides for future sparring partners across 3rd sector.

As a part of the international “Hopkins Comparative Non profit Sector Project”, (see: <http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/index.php?section=content&view=9&sub=3>) figures from 2004 state that we in Denmark have 83.000 voluntary organisation in the 3. Sector – State and market being the other two sectors. We are 5,5 millions inhabitants in DK.

The Danish part of the research project is described in Danish at :<http://www.frivillighedsus.dk/>

Homepage in English on DGI
<http://www.dgi.dk/English.aspx>

Homepage in English on the voluntary sector:
<http://www.frivillighed.dk/Webnodes/English/296>

Homepage in English on DUF
<http://www.duf.dk/home/>

The homepage of DAEA in an English version:
<http://www.dfs.dk/inenglish.aspx>

DAEA is the national umbrella organisation for non-formal adult learning in Denmark. The 33 members are national organisations representing a broad variety of interests and providing lifelong learning via a broad range of activities, themes and subject matters.

DAEA advocates politically the common interests of the members, and has chosen VPL to be high priority in the funding and consultative support of development projects. A high profiled forum for updating on legislation, research and exchange of experience has been a core activity.

The first course was established in 2007, and will be repeated as long as there is a demand.

The participants in the DAEA courses are from the local schools and the national organisations for the above mentioned schools, e.g.: day folk high schools, folk high schools, adult education associations and University extensions.

Number of student pr. course: 25-27

The format of the course is 3 modules: 2 x 1 day and 1 x 2 days.

In between the modules the participants must try out working with the tools and concepts. First in their own organisation, next in relation to other local 3rd sector organizations. The participants are divided into working groups based on geography – it must be possible for them to meet in between the modules.

The courses are taught with a mix of presentations, critical reflections, exercises and role playing under the supervision of a professional actor. The instructors are experts in their field from organisations, university colleges and universities.

Special educational material has been developed for the courses, as well as materials for the guides to use when they are going to train future sparring partners

The outcome

A group of very competent people are ready to act as ambassadors for the VPL-possibilities at local level, and the local 3rd sector associations become aware of the tools and the advantages of using them.

The tools of the Ministry of education are used in a more competent and reliable way.

The associations become more aware of the learning taking place in their daily activities – and can promote the ideas of their work.

A little step is better than no step – and the training courses work as ripples spread across the water.

The training of sparring partners is partly financed by DAEA, partly by participant's fees.

English version of DAEA's homepage on validation:
<http://www.dfs.dk/inenglish/priorlearning.aspx>

The announcement of the training course in 2009/2010:
<http://www.dfs.dk/netavisen/undervisningoguddannelse/blivfrontloerberforarbejdetmedrealkompetence.aspx>

Course materials available in Danish:
<http://www.dfs.dk/realkompetence/materialertilsparringspartnere.aspx>

Main source: Interview with Randi Jensen, Head of The national organisation of Day folk High Schools in Denmark

Contact info:

+45 33 33 06 66

rj@daghojskoler.dk