



## Case Study Denmark 2009

### The involvement of the union 3F in VPL

The case study, the story	Evidence, material, content
<p><u>The context:</u></p> <p>3F is the largest union in Denmark with 352,588 members. The full name of the union is The United Federation of Danish Workers.</p> <p>The members are both skilled and unskilled workers from many sectors and industries as well as in the public sector though with a majority of unskilled members.</p> <p>After the national congress in 2007 3F has made it a special effort to tell the members about the possibilities of VPL. 3F has a well developed tradition of advice and guidance in relation to education.</p> <p>3F is organized with national head office in Copenhagen and 75 local branches. The backbone of the work of 3F is the 5.260 shop stewards, the 7.421 safety representatives and the 2.142 union representatives in boards and the like.</p> <p>The involvement of 3F in VPL is both at national level and at local level. The local branches have wide degrees of freedom in implementing the national policy and decisions.</p> <p>RPL is viewed as a “teaser” to motivate the members to education. 3F wants a wider perspective on the VPL-process than the one only related to specific learning outcomes of a specific educational program. The clarification should also be related to the job possibilities in the companies. And both an individual and a collective approach – with a group of co-workers in a company – are supported by 3F.</p>	<p>The union 3F webpage in English:  <a href="http://forsiden.3f.dk/apps/pbcs.dll/artikkel?Dato=20070904&amp;Kategori=ENGLISH&amp;Lopenr=70904022&amp;Ref=AR&amp;profile=2725">http://forsiden.3f.dk/apps/pbcs.dll/artikkel?Dato=20070904&amp;Kategori=ENGLISH&amp;Lopenr=70904022&amp;Ref=AR&amp;profile=2725</a></p> <p>The statutes of 3F in English:  <a href="http://forsiden.3f.dk/assets/pdf/SD386494825.PDF">http://forsiden.3f.dk/assets/pdf/SD386494825.PDF</a></p>

### **The national level**

In some collective agreements the right to education explicitly also covers participation in a VPL- process. As an example the text of the agreement between 3F – the private service group and COOP Denmark regarding pay- and working conditions of March 2007 says: “The freedom (to education) can for example be used to education at both basic and advanced level, general as well as vocational further education and training and to participation in VPL either in public educational settings or in private settings”.

The financing is via the so called “Competence development fund”, which is a joint economical scheme set up in connection with the tripartite negotiations between the government and the labour market organisations.

3F has in its newsletters to the members and via the homepage informed about the possibilities for VPL.

The head line says “Competence clarification” and informs this way:

“3F can help you to get paper on your qualifications.

Since you left school you probably have had different jobs, or you have had different functions at work. All this means that you know a lot. On a daily basis you do not reflect much on this. You just do your job...

But it is a huge advantage for you to have a piece of paper telling what you know and can do, both if you have to change jobs – with or without your wish , and when you are to negotiate wages.

3F can help you with a personal educational plan, in which we clarify your possibilities for further education and training. The result is improved job content and it improves your chances for finding a new job, if e.g. your company moves the production abroad.

How to start:

All you have to do is going to your local 3F branch. 3F will contact the vocational school or labour market training centre, where you can get a certificate on your qualifications as a result of a process of VPL.

Contact your local 3F branch [here](#).”

The Danish version of a agreement:

<http://mediacontent.sd.publicus.com/pdf/SD38037012.PDF>

“We will support you in your reflections on why you want VPL. You are more than welcome to contact us to a conversation with one of the competent staff members of 3F”

3F has intended to make the info material easily accessible for the members – of whom many have difficulties reading.

Late 2009 3F will introduce a new set of materials called “jobtjek” addressing both the employees and the employers. It is meant to be used for clarification of the competencies of the individual in relation to specific jobs. It consists of a toolbox with a handbook, cards with questions and statements in a non-academic language, fact sheets etc.

The new materials are a supplement to the CV-format developed by the Ministry of Education, which by 3F is being criticized for being counterproductive for the members of 3F. “It scares them away” and “the vocabulary has to be introduced in a much more down to earth fashion”, tells Mette Lyshøj, Consultant with 3F head office.

In the campaign material a FQA is set up for the members. It is basically a 3F form of dissemination of the possibilities for VPL as presented by Ministry of Education. But 3F emphasises the economic conditions and encourage the members “to check out the agreement in their field (...) or ask the shop steward, the local branch or the immediate leader at work about the possibilities”

As a part of the national campaign 3F provides some case stories as well.

The Danish version of the info:

<http://forsiden.3f.dk/apps/pbcs.dll/artikkel?Dato=20070824&Kategori=MEDLEMSSERVICE&Lopenr=70824014&Ref=AR&profile=2748>

Danish version of “How to prepare for VPL:

<http://forsiden.3f.dk/apps/pbcs.dll/artikkel?Avis=SD&Dato=20080327&Kategori=MEDLEMSSERVICE&Lopenr=488819388&Ref=AR&profile=2877>

The Danish short version of which fields are covered by the possibility of VPL:

<http://mediacontent.sd.publicus.com/pdf/SD3802011219.PDF>

Link will be added when available

The Danish version of FQA regarding VPL:

<http://forsiden.3f.dk/apps/pbcs.dll/artikkel?Avis=SD&Dato=20080327&Kategori=MEDLEMSSERVICE&Lopenr=488819388&Ref=AR&profile=2877>

The Danish version of the case stories about Kirsten, Sabine and others:

<http://forsiden.3f.dk/article/20080619/TILLIDNYHEDER/351284353/2748>  
<http://forsiden.3f.dk/article/20070608/FAGBLADET/70608040/2748>

### **The local level**

Many different models for implementation are being developed. Union learning representatives/ “education ambassadors”/ “learning angels” are being trained to be active in the work places. 3F works together with the local educational guidance centres and 3F inform the staff of the job centres about their approach to VPL. At local level 3F operates as unemployment insurance fund and thereby has the contact with unemployed members on a regular basis.

A number of local/ regional projects have been carried through. A number of them relating to the overarching “Competence clarification Project” aiming at both employed and unemployed members.

A midterm evaluation has these main conclusions:

- In spite of difficulties in the beginning the local branches support the effort of motivating the members for education. “tough”, “uphill”, “unclear which expectations we shall meet”, “frustrating” and “too top-down” are some of the words used by the local staff to describe the effort
- 60 of the 75 local branches are in one way or the other involved in the project. “Lack of time and resources” is the explanation used for not being a part of the project
- Through a wide range of activities the members are motivated for education; e.g. Personal interview, info meetings and educational fairs, interviews with companies and shop stewards, dissemination of materials and PR
- The members are positive towards the personal “chat” about education and competences. They see it as a good and constructive service
- In the future the project must be more concrete and systematic and PR must be prioritized.

Major challenges:

To secure local ownership to the work for motivating for VPL and education. The local boards must make action plans (1/3 all ready have, 2/3 have not).

Source: unpublished report by Consultant Mette Lyshøj of 3F Head office, July 20 2009: Kompetenceafklaringsprojektet, Fagpolitisk Center for Arbejdsliv. Ref: Mly

The report is based on 71 interviews with contact persons in the local 3F branches

Source: Interview with Mette Lyshøj, Consultant with the national head office of 3F.

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To harmonize expectation between the national and the local level of 3F (top-down/ bottom-up)

To harmonize expectations between the educational institutions and 3F. Which part can the union play and how can the wider approach of 3F be integrated in the more narrow approach of the educational system

To make sure the local staff of 3F is prepared and upgraded for the task of clarification of competences and guidance.

To establish administrative procedures for a systematized way of member contact and follow-up.

Major advantages:

- Visibility of 3F with a relevant, individualized and unique service for the members
- Societal visibility and acceptance of the role of 3F - thanks to 3F the low skilled or unskilled get upskilled.

The mid term evaluation of “The Competence Clarification Project” has a few figures on the results regarding VPL. In total 4.000 members have been referred to formal education from 3F and 5.600 has been through a VPL.

### **The local 3F branch in Holstebro/Herning (in Jutland)**

From the perspective of a local educational consultant reach-out activities are the most important. Every single day she visits the local enterprises to inform in general about education: which possibilities exist where, how is the economy in education for the enterprise and for the individual, which educational programs would be relevant for the enterprise and the individuals. VPL is not known by many, so it is important to tell about the possibilities.

Her experience is that the information has to be targeted and VPL is only one element in the strategy for competence development.

“VPL does not make sense out in the clear blue. It has to be in relation to a

<p>specific educational program, and when that is the case the possibilities for VPL have a highly motivating effect on our unskilled members”.</p> <p>The reach-out activities normally start with the general information to a group of employees and the employer. Via questions and individual guidance in “the mobile guidance corner” at the shop floor she helps the individual figuring out which educational course to take in the future. On the basis on an agreement with the individual she then contacts the relevant educational institution to arrange for education and maybe a VPL process.</p> <p>In the light of recession more 3F members are interested in up skilling and many educational plans are made, both within vocational and general adult education. Both short term courses and full educational programs are possible, as State educational support for adults makes it possible to follow full time education.</p> <p>VPL has proven relevant especially in the fields of transportation, storing and gardening, and the 3F consultant reports of many cases of reduced education time on the basis of prior learning.</p> <p>The union has the task of statutory contact meetings with the unemployed. This means that time is becoming a critical resource for the staff in the local 3F branches when the unemployment rate is going up. It can be frustrating that there isn’t enough time to supply the members with “thorough guidance and enough individual attention”. For example are the “jobtjek” materials developed by the head office “great, but we do not have the time to use it though it would be ideal”.</p> <p>In Holstebro/ Herning 3F is the only union active with reach-out activities. Anni Svinth finds it crucial to be out there where the unskilled and low skilled are. “We have to nurse our members, and we also get new members because we are visible and can supply a relevant guidance”.</p>	<p>Source: Anni Svinth, Educational consultant, 3F local branch in Holstebro/ Herning</p> <p>Contact info:</p> <p>+45 88 924 318</p> <p>anni.svinth@3f.dk</p>
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