



## FOLK SCHOOLS – CONTEMPORARY ASPECTS ON AN OLD FORM OF “NON-FORMAL ADULT EDUCATION”

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### Abstract:

"Non-formal adult education" comprises procedures of teaching and education that only to a limited degree are part of the formal, public educational system. Non-formal learning activities are frequently based on private initiatives by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Folk schools are a form of non-formal adult education and are based on fellowship/community and the philosophy of the individual providers. Folk schools were originally schools for adult men and women, which was given a teaching, which aimed to make them good citizens. Over time, the focus was more on personal development, and often specialize individual schools are particularly in parts of this. The main scope of voluntary non-formal adult learning in associations is, taking a starting point in the activity and the binding fellowship, to reinforce non-formal adult knowledge and thus the affiliates' skill and wish to take an obligation for their own lives and to play a dynamic and engaged part in society.

**Keywords:** non-formal adult education, folk schools, adult education, alternative education

### Introduction

The first folk high school was established in 1844 in Rødding in Jutland and the initiative came from NFS Grundtvig, considered folk high school father. Known as a writer, he exercised and still exercises a significant influence on the educational concepts in force in Denmark, where free schools and folk high schools represent his educational legacy. Grundtvig got the inspiration for the college from English boarding

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schools, and the purpose was to give farmers and others from the masses higher education, through personal training, "the living word". The idea became increasingly popular after 1864, after the Danish-Prussian War. In 1870, there were already 50 high schools in Denmark.

The main subjects of the early folk were the native language and history. The party policy was not part of the Grundtvig idea, neither folk, nor religious instruction, even if the Christian folk were widely imposed. Today, the so-called Independents rely on his inventor's folk heritage, including pluralism. By the end of the century the folk movement spread, especially in the Nordic countries and in Germany and Austria.

### **Main Principles**

Teaching on a folk school is characterised by competence and commitment. The learning methods are based on dialogue and mutual cooperation between teachers and students. The main focus is to realize and reinforce the unique abilities of each student in a stimulating yet helpful social environment.

The operators of the various folk schools obtained mostly private support from associations, foundations and organizations, in some cases including municipalities. Private non-formal adult education activity is based on fellowship/community and the philosophy of the individual providers.

As an alternative of succeeding an inflexible curriculum, the objective should be to stimulate scholars through self-confidence and "empowerment." These "schools for life," would not mold the crowds into predefined characters, but actively help students *"to grasp their own identity and look after their own affairs and interests."*

Grundtvig always considered that the folk school should not comprise vocational and professional education. He also thought that students should board at the school, like members of an extended family, and encouraged the free interactions and debates among teachers and students.

The activity can be divided into:

- a. voluntary non-formal adult education, and
- b. voluntary adult learning in associations

The private folk school education activity must be established by a non-formal adult education organization with a statute in order to be eligible for a grant and to be allocated facilities.

The local authorities decide the financial context and the procedures and techniques for how it is to be organized and administered. The local authorities can engage a non-formal adult education committee comprising of a minority elected by the

local authority from among its members of the municipal council and a majority consisting of a broadly composed representation of users. The committee carries out administrative tasks such as making concrete judgments regarding, for example, non-formal adult education associations and their activity, assigns facilities and distributes grants.

The main scope of folk school education is, by taking a point of departure in the courses and activities, to grow the individual's general and academic vision and skills and improve the aptitude and desire to take responsible decisions regarding their own life, as well as taking a dynamic and involved part in society. The activities that are characteristic of folk education comprises teaching, study circles, lectures, debate creating activities and flexibly organized activities. The teaching is generally offered at evening schools which, within the structure lay down in and pursuant to law; themselves create the frame for their choice of themes and activity. The overall grant to a non-formal liberal education activity may not exceed 1/3 of the associations' total payroll.

Voluntary learning in associations for children and young people encompasses sports, philosophically related, and socially engaged work with children and young people. Association work is offered by associations in such fields as sports, politics and religious activity, other philosophically related and socially engaged work with children and young people, and youth clubs, which, within the framework laid down in or pursuant to law, themselves make decisions regarding how they will make use of grants and organize their activity.

### **Contemporary folk schools**

As the folk school movement spread to other Scandinavian countries, it answered there to native and domestic demands, emerging its own specific national essence. For example, the Finnish association, which was encouraged by Swedish and Russian supremacy and the nation's desire to reinforce and preserve the Finnish native language, tradition and culture, become subsequently of its introduction a major educational enterprise to serve the essentials requests for traditional, inborn, knowledge of a population with a continuously improving conditions of life.

Nowadays, the folk schools have a multifaceted connection with social and educational institutions as they continue to express and redefine their purpose. Their role is no longer as easily recognized as when they were instruments of an oppressed minority but strongly developing groups integrated on society.

They are continuing to occupy the place they have always had on educational philosophy, but they did not become an integrated part of formal academic instruction for the adaptation and organization of labor, Their evolution remained distinct from the social wellbeing formation of the countries.

The folk schools as a whole form a grid of urban and suburban, adult educational establishments, which usually offer one- and two- year packages of training. They do not grant diplomas or degrees, which are reliable with the theoretical point of view that they pursue to instruct and edify, not “supply” students for industry, technology, bureaucracy or academia.

The folk schools are enthusiastic to be harbors for examination and regeneration and understand their assignment as one which stimulates, not compels. Their main characteristics are their advantages: they are autonomous, self-governing, and generally un-specialized, inspiring learning for life as an alternative of learning for an exam. They are allowed to arrange and implement their own curriculum, to accept and preserve students on its own terms and conditions, and to hire faculty and design assignments with little or no guidance or oversight from the state, which remarkably still provides around 75% of the their funds.

Scholars nowadays originate from all over the country, as well as internationally. Student’s origins may vary enormously in socioeconomic, educational and occupational background. That fact represents a cross-section of contemporary national culture, with all its desires, comforts, and difficulties reflected there. With their origins in small towns and rural zones, folk schools generally have a close connection with the nearby communities and perform as midpoints for cultural and educational activity.

Scholars interact with local inhabitants, thus contributing to the experience-based educational viewpoint of the schools. At the same time, they contribute to the emancipation of the local communities by offering local people the opportunity for information, debate and discussion. This structure has placed the folk schools among the most reformist and energetic learning frameworks in Europe. They help shape the concerns regarding a changing environment and motivate dynamic contribution in society, thus supporting a living democracy.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the national alterations in the folk schools, much of Grundtvig’s original theory persists at the center of this exceptional educational movement: the holistic view of the human being and society. As the world becomes smaller, diverse cultures and philosophies encounter one another, worldwide conflicts intensify, and the

environment evolve into a persistent crisis, the necessity for this type of adult education is continuously increasing. There is somewhat comforting about having the capability to build a shelter out of wood, bake bread that tastes better than store-bought, and craft warm clothing from basic materials. It's about construction of self-reliance in a world of highly specialized livelihoods. It's about the discovery the concealed art in the meeting of daily necessities. Thus, they remain schools for life.

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