



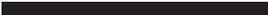
# Quality in non-formal adult education

## Examples of inspirational cases

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Twelve cases concerning  
good-quality non-formal  
adult education





**Danish Adult Education Association  
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# Introduction

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This booklet presents 12 success stories. 12 examples of good-quality non-formal adult education and how schools and associations focus on quality.

"It's important to spot the strengths of the students and to highlight them," says Ida List from the production school Sydfyns Erhvervsskole (South Funen Technical and Vocation School).

Carsten Mørch-Bentzen from Rytmask Center (Rhythmic Centre) has gotten rid of the insider jargon in the course descriptions: "It's about communication directed towards the course participants, and not just sticking to the organisational logic.

"We're all equals here, and if you take on a job, you will automatically be given responsibility. This also applies to when the volunteers go out to the schools in pairs," says Hans Peter Christensen from the United Nations Association's school service.

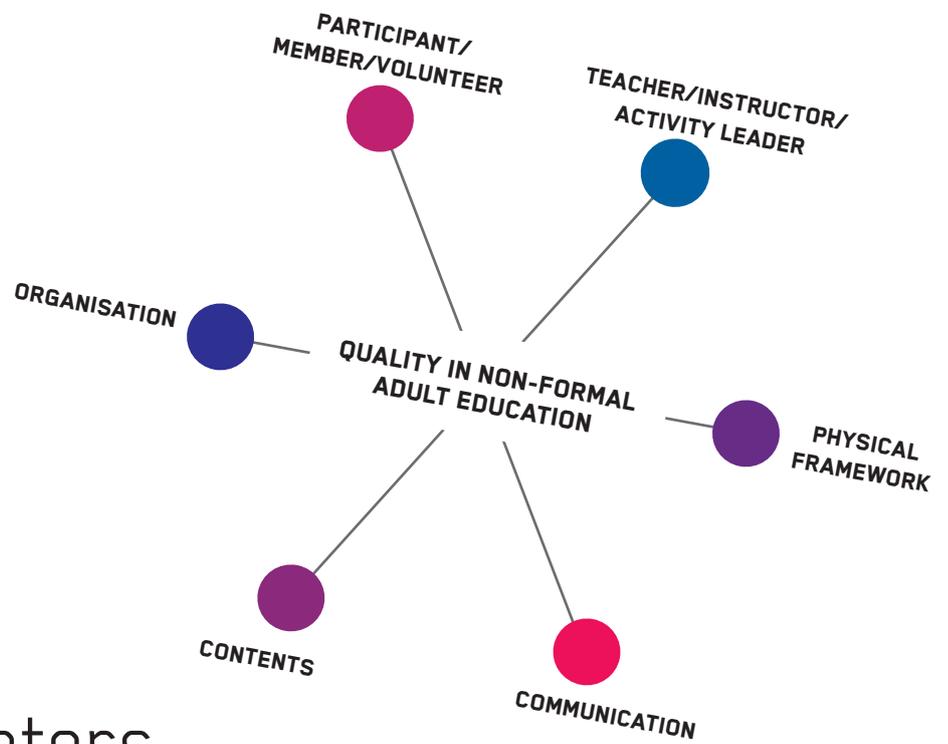
The cases show how quality comes from working with a focus on values such as diversity, democracy, community and freedom.

This booklet illustrates the results of the project called "Kvalitetsudvikning i folkeoplysning" (Improving quality in non-formal adult education) that DAEA has completed in collaboration with a number of the member organisations.

In addition to this booklet, we have, through feedback and advice from the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA), also made a tool that non-formal adult educators and others can use to improve the quality of their activities. This booklet and the improvement tool can be downloaded at [dfs.dk/kvalitet](https://dfs.dk/kvalitet).

We hope that these 12 success stories will inspire you in your work with non-formal adult education in national organisations, schools and associations.

*Danish Adult Education Association, 2018*



# Quality parameters

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The 12 stories in this booklet highlight six different quality parameters, i.e. six different areas where quality can be expressed. The six parameters are outlined in the figure above.

We have described what quality entails in a non-formal adult educational context for each of the six headlines. The descriptions are based on values in non-formal adult education such as democracy, freedom, diversity and community.

We have outlined quality aspects for each parameter which are specific examples of how quality is reflected in practice. The individual stories will make it clear how leaders, educators and volunteers make use of these aspects and how they thereby become meaningful for each activity.

Below, you can read two stories about each quality parameter, a description of the quality parameter and the associated quality aspects.

This conceptual framework has been developed as part of the DAEA project "Quality in non-formal adult education" ("Kvalitetsudvikling i folkeoplysningen").



## Teacher/instructor/activity leader

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### Quality parameter

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The teacher/instructor/activity leader is a representative of his/her own organisation and works based on a non-formal adult education set of values which is brought into play in the activity/instruction he or she is in charge of.

The teacher/instructor/activity leader has a significant amount of freedom to choose the contents and has the courage to challenge both him or herself and the participants by selecting modern and innovative methods.

The teacher/instructor/activity leader motivates the participants to learn by getting them involved, strengthening the sense of community and generating interest in the academic/technical content.

The starting point is the experiences, resources and needs of each individual participant in a safe learning environment where there is room to express yourself and try new things.

The teacher/instructor/activity leader is responsible for making room for academic/technical pursuits and social and personal development.



*Ida List, Nico, Sophie and Simone do the measurements for a new rhododendron-patch at SydFyns ErhvervsForskole.*

## “I BRING THE SCHOOL’S VALUES TO LIFE”

*At SydFyns Erhvervsforskole’s study line for nature and open-air activities, the school’s values are not just gathering dust in a filing cabinet somewhere. The head of the study line, Ida List, makes sure of that. Here, the students use both their hands and minds when they make garden patches and discuss down-to-earth issues such as “growing together”.*

Ida List runs the South Funen production school’s study line for nature and open-air activities. Among other things, she teaches the students to nurture the school’s outdoor areas. However, it is not just about acquiring specific competencies aimed at bringing the students one step closer to completing a youth education programme. It is also important for Ida List that the school’s values are felt by the students. Therefore, she articulates that the study line’s daily morning assembly is not just about getting some breakfast, but also about growing together, which is one of the school’s three core values.

### **Everyone wants to feel like they are part of a community**

“Some students roll their eyes when I use the term ‘growing as a community’. But as we discuss it more deeply, everyone agrees that they want to feel like part of a community and that it is a good thing that students can use their knowledge at our morning assemblies. So in the end, they’ll end up saying: Ahhh, so that’s what it’s all about,” Ida List explains.

### **Authenticity is key**

Authenticity is the production school’s second core value, and, in particular, it is directed towards how teachers and students interact, as the school principal, Kjeld Rommedahl, explains.

“It’s important that our staff is authentic when they interact with the young people. If the staff have a uniform agenda imposed upon them, the young people will sense that the staff members have been instructed to use a certain way of speaking or a specific way of handling the issues,” says Kjeld Rommedahl who gives his teachers considerable freedom, precisely to preserve their authenticity.

### **Focus on spotting competencies**

Ida Frist has taken advantage of this freedom to ensure that her study line holds its own morning assembly. Here the young people practice participating in a group conversation so that they become comfortable giving their own opinions:

“It’s important to spot the strengths of the students and to highlight them,” says Ida List, and explains how the morning assemblies serve to unite the school’s values with her own efforts to interact with each individual student on their own terms.

### **SYDFYNS ERHVERVSFORSKOLE**

is a production school that helps young people progress to either getting a job or starting a course. The learning mainly takes place at the school’s workshops where the students produce real materials for either internal or external use



Annette Bonavent helps her course participants to make their sewing dreams come true.

## ANNETTE'S TEACHING IS TAILORMADE WITH A HIGH DEGREE OF PROFESSIONALISM

*The sewing enthusiasts from the island of Funen no longer need to get worked up and curse when the sewing machine annoys them. Midtfyns Husflid and Kerteminde Husflid now offer courses with the sewing machine savvy Annette Bonavent. Her ten years of experience as an arts and crafts teacher and a previous job with a sewing machine manufacturer makes her an extremely competent teacher who is always up to date with developments in her field.*

**FORA** is an association for non-formal adult education which focuses on the pursuit of learning and creativity as a community. It consists of both large and small associations in addition to day folk high schools distributed across the country.

"Annette Bonavent is really good in her field, and she is constantly improving her skills and expanding her knowledge," says Marlene Berth Nielsen, Deputy Manager and Development Consultant at Fora. For Annette Bonavent, it is important to stay up to date: "I use YouTube, Pinterest and my large network in arts and crafts. It's important to keep up with new developments. Then you can offer courses that match what interests people have," she explains.

### **Feel free to make mistakes**

In addition to up to date knowledge of the field, Annette Bonavent finds it important to plan for courses so that they accommodate every participant. When you sign up for one of her sewing courses, you have to state what sewing machine you use at home. If she is not already familiar with the model, she will find a manual for it. She wants to be sure that she can provide the right guidance

to every single participant.

"People come here with all sorts of skill levels. Some are uncertain as to how to use their machines while others are almost too confident. I always start by saying that making mistakes is a good thing, because we all learn from doing so," she says.

### **Takes a flight home from a course**

It is important for Marlene Berth Nielsen that Fora's teachers have didactic competencies. She highlights the fact that Annette Bonavent keeps both eyes on the community aspect and manages to work with the dynamics in the team so that the room is full of energy when she teaches. It is precisely that high energy that motivates the teacher from Funen: "I love it when my course participants leave on an emotional high and feel totally ready to start new sewing projects. Then I feel that sense of professional pride," she says.

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“The teacher/instructor/activity leader motivates the participants to learn by getting them involved, strengthening the sense of community and generating interest in the academic/technical content. The starting point is the experiences, resources and needs of each individual participant in a safe learning environment where there is room to express yourself and try new things.”



## Quality aspects

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### **THE GOOD TEACHER/INSTRUCTOR/ACTIVITY LEADER:**

- Is aware of the values that one's own organisation and/or non-formal adult education institutions are built on and integrates these into the teaching/activity
- Creates room for a diverse community that is characterised by values such as respect, equality and trust
- Is well-prepared, enterprising, and has the courage to break new ground
- Has up to date professional competencies/knowledge in their area which he or she integrates into the teaching
- Is good at planning, completing and structuring the teaching/activity
- Makes use of the participant's competencies and experiences



## The physical framework

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### Quality parameter

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The physical framework consists of the rooms and surroundings where the activity takes place and the tools (including digital tools), materials and any potential food and drink that are used in connection with the activity.

The teacher/instructor/activity leader is responsible for creating the best possible physical framework for the activity together with the participants/members/volunteers.

The framework makes all the participants want to get actively involved and be part of the community. It does this by, for example, letting participants/members/volunteers take part in decorating the rooms whenever possible.

The framework is inclusive and encourages activity and learning.

There is enough space and enough of the necessary tools and materials for everyone.

The kitchen is bustling at Næstved Ungdomsklub (Næstved Youth Club). No matter what is on the menu, the kitchen is a natural place to gather.



## “THE KITCHEN IS THE BEATING HEART OF THE CLUB. THIS IS WHERE WE INTERACT WITH ONE ANOTHER.”

*The physical framework at Næstved’s youth club supports both the sense of community and ensures that there is a space for intimate conversations. The young people themselves are also part of decorating the rooms. This provides them with a sense of ownership and new competencies.*

At Næstveds Ungdomskole’s club, Klubben i Fuglebjerg, they meet in the kitchen. A large kitchen island is at the centre of both pancake and bead plate production, good discussions and whatever else the youths and club employees can come up with. There is plenty of space around the table, and this strengthens the sense of community, explains Mette Madsen, a department head at Næstved Ungdomsskole: “Here is where you spend time together, even if several different activities are going on. We meet all over the place instead of sitting in our own corners with our own individual projects. The kitchen works in the same way as the dining table at home. It’s the focal point, and it is an inclusive space.”

### **Tear down the wall**

It was the youths themselves that wanted to have a kitchen that would allow for open conversations rather than the old bar setup that many clubs use. The club employees were in full agreement with the youths, because the bar did not promote the pedagogical work: “The bar acted like a barrier between the young people and us adults, and made it seem more natural to serve them food like one would in a café,” Mette Madsen explains. A group of young people were involved throughout the entire process

of creating the new kitchen. They gained specific construction skills and endured the trials of an IKEA shopping run. And that gives you a sense of ownership, when you have made the sink that you’re washing your hands in yourself.

### **Room to speak in peace and quiet**

Even though the communal aspects are the first priority, it is critical that the club also allows for more intimate conversations. The club at Fuglebjerg therefore has a room for both girls and boys. “The boys might, for example, get together to play FIFA, but often playing the game leads to talks with club employees about both minor stuff and more serious issues. It’s important that we create a framework that encourages conversations about what the young people are dealing with,” says Mette Madsen.

### **Values in the physical sense**

For Mette Madsen, the physical framework is closely linked to the youth school’s values and visions: “We want to ensure an unbiased and equal interaction between people and to promote a healthy ‘us’-culture mindset. Here the design of our rooms is an important element, and we are very aware of this.”

**NÆSTVED UNGDOMSSKOLE** provides the young people of Næstved Municipality with lots of activities, including ones in their clubs. Here it is all about becoming *someone*, and not merely becoming *something*.

Vesterbro Parish's chamber choir fills the Enghave church with song. They are familiar with the acoustics and they know how to make the best use of their singing voices inside the church.



## “THEY MAY NOT MAKE US SING BETTER, BUT THE ROOMS ARE VERY IMPORTANT.”

*Every room has its own acoustics. Choirmaster Lotte Smith-Petersen is good at detecting the differences. The physical framework, however, is not only important for sound and vocal techniques, but also for the planning of the training for the choir.*

### **VESTERBRO SOGNS BØRNE- OG UNGDOMSKOR (VESTERBRO PARISH'S CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH CHOIR)**

rehearses in Enghave Kirke on Vesterbro. The four choirs bring together residents of Vesterbro from the ages of 5-25 who are singing enthusiasts. The choir is a member of the national organisation, Folkekirken's Ungdomkor (FUK).

As an experienced choir director, Lotte Smith-Petersen can quickly determine if any given room has a more clear articulation of consonants or not. She leads four children's and youth choirs, and they all practice in Enghave Church on Vesterbro in Copenhagen. The church's interior is not something that is easy to alter, so Lotte Smith-Petersen has become good at taking advantage of the various rooms so that they support the choir activities in the best way possible.

#### **Lack of space is a challenge**

“The church is being renovated, and right now we are challenged by the lack of space in our rehearsal rooms. This means that I need to carefully consider what exercises it makes sense to do. For example, we have to skip the movement exercises for now,” says Lotte Smith-Petersen, who is looking forward to the end of the renovations and the better conditions they will then have. The church space itself is made for singing and music, but it is not really suitable as a rehearsal room. It is too difficult to create a shared focus in the large room.

#### **Room for breaks**

Lotte Smith-Petersen can sense that the choir singers become tired and unfocused more quickly when they rehearse in the small rooms, where the noise levels quickly become too great. The choir director takes this into account by, for example, by going into the church hall and having a break: “It's good to move into another learning environment where the focus is on social interaction, relaxation and having a laugh. The church hall's acoustics are designed for talking, and that is the right environment to have a break in. Afterwards, we'll go to the work room and concentrate on the singing.”

#### **Every room has a sound of its own**

A successful concert requires the choir to adapt their singing to the acoustics of their surroundings. When Vesterbro Parish's choir is giving a concert, they therefore always do a rehearsal on site first: “Every room affects you in some way, and it's important that the singers get a feel for the place. There may be technical issues related to the singing, and then we have to find the best setup and familiarise ourselves with the room,” Lotte Smith-Petersen tells us.

“The framework is inclusive and encourages activity and learning. There is enough space and enough of the necessary tools and materials for everyone.”

Quality aspects



#### **THE GOOD PHYSICAL FRAMEWORK:**

- Supports the creation of a sense of community and the building of relationships between participants/members/volunteers
- Ensures that there is access and room for everyone
- Supports the aim of the activity
- Is welcoming and pleasant to spend time in, as it relates to indoor climate, light, air, heat, etc.



# Communication

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## Quality parameter

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Communication in a non-formal adult education context provides fertile ground for debate and reflection. Words, sounds, images and actions invite to an open and inquisitive dialogue both in one's own organisation and society at large.

The communication supports the organisation's aims. Good communication builds relationships and respects the freedom to take an opposing view.

Communication is adapted to the target group in terms of both content and style, and it provides relevant and timely information. Communication in a non-formal adult education context works to counter prejudices and it supports the creation of diverse communities.



At Rytmisk Center (Rhythmic Centre) the communication with the course participants takes place at eye level. This applies to both the teaching and the communication that takes place via text message, e-mail, the homepage, etc.  
Photo: Benjamin Andresen

## “WE SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE COURSE PARTICIPANTS”

*Rytmisk Center focuses on having good communication with the participants, and their needs always come first. It is about creating a positive experience and meeting people where they are.*

Rytmisk Center has facilities in four areas across Copenhagen and the centre’s 180 instructors offer a wide range of courses to the 6,000 course participants who each year have a go at sound design, Big Band, ukulele, song-writing, and much more. There is a great deal of diversity, but a common communications strategy ensures that everything is moving in the same direction.

### **We use the same tone**

Carsten Mørch-Bentzen, a communications consultant at Rytmisk Center, explains: “We use the same tone in our communications across all platforms. We use an active and welcoming tone and we speak directly to the course participants in a positive manner.”

This user-oriented approach is used across the board, from the homepage to the introductory meeting between the teacher and course participant.

### **The course participants are front and centre**

Previously, it was the case that the course descriptions were full of insider musical jargon. The technical concepts seemed intimidating and were not conducive to the desire to embrace all users. Those technical concepts have now been removed, and Rytmisk Center ensures the quality

of their communications by putting the focus on the user experience:

“It’s about communicating on behalf of the participants. You can easily find yourself sticking to the organisational logic, but then it all becomes too far removed from the real world,” says Carsten Mørch-Bentzen.

### **Playing with all the keys**

The organisation’s shared focus on good communication is critical, since the communication work involves a lot of people besides Carsten Mørch-Bentzen. The teachers and secretariat are in charge of the day to day communication with the course participants. It takes place via text message and e-mails, and the text messages are playing an increasingly important role since the younger target group do not check their e-mails as frequently as the older ones.

“We use several channels to ensure that we reach everyone. We often send out text messages to remind the participants to check their e-mails,” says Carsten Mørch-Bentzen.

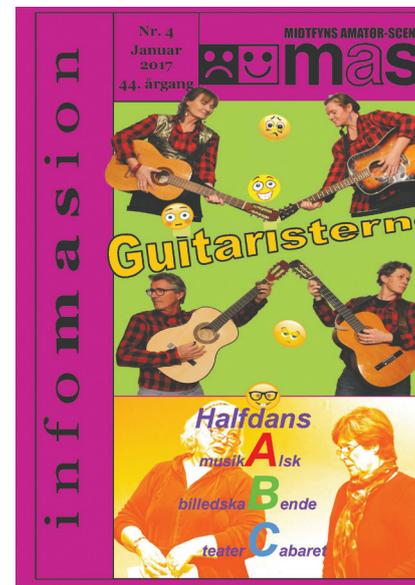
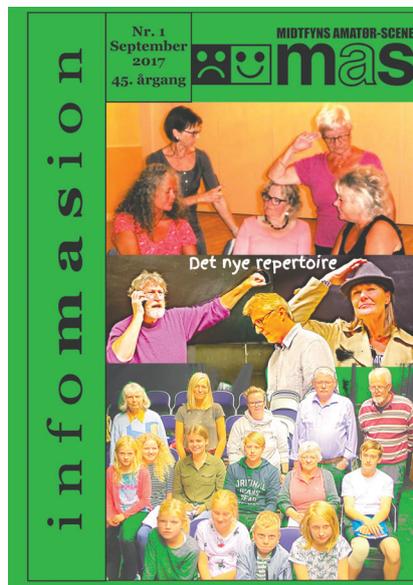
These days he gets more enquiries via Facebook than e-mail, and if that is the channel that the recipients use, then Rytmisk Center uses it as well in order to meet the course participants where they are.

**RYTMISK CENTER** is a cultural and educational institution in Copenhagen. The centre offers adult education in music and movement in addition to cultural activities for children and young people. Rytmisk Center is a part of Dansk Oplysnings Forbund (DOF).

DOF is the national organisation that wants to advance non-formal adult education in a free and neutral manner - independent of party politics.



In the colourful magazine published for Midtfyns Amatør Scene (Central Funen's Amateur Scene) you can, among other things, read about how the work on the season's shows is progressing.



## THE MEMBERS' MAGAZINE BINDS THE ASSOCIATION TOGETHER

The theatre association, MAS, members' magazine has been published for more than 50 years but it still has an important function: To create unity. The general tone is humorous, and everyone can contribute articles to the magazine.

*We are never bored here!* This is one of the headlines in *Infomasion*, the magazine that keeps the members of Midtfyns Amatør Scene (MAS) updated on the association's many activities. For example, you can read about how the actors who are rehearsing the show called *Lev menneske* (Live your life, people) are starting to crack from dealing with the many little linguistic details in the script. Spirits are still high, however: "And we sweat and have fun with the VERY funny lines!!! - and Ester and Bastian bring cake and beers when they've made a mistake. Thanks for that, you amazing young people," Allan Thomsen writes in the magazine.

### The organisation is strengthened

*Infomasion* is an entrenched part of the theatre organisation in Funen, and since the beginning of 1965, the members' magazine has been the primary channel for the internal communication. Today, it is supplemented by e-mails. However, it is still in the magazine that the members find the minutes of board meetings, invitations to events and the selection committee's suggestions for future performances. The members themselves choose whether they want the magazine on paper or digitally. Allan Thomsen has been the editor of the magazine for almost 20 years, and even though many new communications platforms have appeared since then,

*Information* still has an important role to play: "The magazine helps to keep the organisation alive and strengthens the sense of being part of an association. You can stay updated on what is going on even if you may be a bit inactive for a period of time," Allan Thomsen explains.

### Everyone can contribute with an article

The magazine's tone is humorous and light, and therefore also reflects the association's general tone, says Allan Thomsen: "Humour is an ice-breaker and helps to relax people. We laugh with each other." Even though he is the editor, all members can contribute with their input, whether it is an invitation to a birthday party or a critical article.

"It's as simple as sending me an e-mail. I would never censor anything. We know that we are different, and we need to make room for everyone. It shouldn't just be a promotional magazine, it should reflect the association," he says.

### Not just for the initiated

*Infomasion* is delivered to the libraries in central Funen, certain media outlets and amateur scenes on Funen and also to DATS. The magazine therefore serves to supplement the marketing of the performances and lets everyone who might be interested look into the association's activities.

**MIDTFYNS AMATØR SCENE (MAS)** is an amateur theatre association with two permanent stages in Ryslinge on the island of Funen. The association's members work with child, youth and adult theatre. MAS is a member of **DATS, THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR DRAMA ACTIVITIES**, and it supports amateur theatre throughout Denmark.

“Good communication builds relationships and respects the freedom to take an opposing view. Communication in a non-formal adult education context works to counter prejudices and supports the creation of diverse communities.”



## Quality aspects

### **GOOD COMMUNICATION IS:**

- Precise, clear and simple
- Using different communications channels and language for each target group
- A reflection of the fact that the organisation is taking part in an open and respectful dialogue with its surrounding environment
- Providing space to state your opinions and express disagreement
- Counteracting the creation of myths and prejudices and supports the non-formal adult education sector's commitment to teaching



# Contents



## Quality parameter



The content is “the common third” that we gather around. This means that the activity is neither about you or me, but about the common interest.

The activity is performed in a community that one is committed to, where the participants interact with each other and the activity leader/ instructor/teacher and the participants actively influence what the content is.

Through the content and the way it is being worked with, there is a professional, social and personal development of the participants.

Teaching about the professional aspects of the activity is based on the competencies and experiences of the participants and the goal is to make people reflect and talk to each other. This highlights the changing and formative perspective that characterises the non-formal adult education activities.



Inge Strandby Jensen and two course participants loosen up their calf muscles.

## THE COMMUNITY MOTIVATES YOU WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE TRAINING

*The course participants at DOF Paarup's Fascial Flow team meet to heal their sore bodies and tense muscles. The social interaction is an important bonus that keeps people motivated and it also improves the quality of the instruction.*

It is Friday morning in the old warehouse in Odense, where DOF Paarup Aftenskole is located. On the first floor, the participants in the *Fascial Flow* course have almost finished the day's exercises. Now that they have loosened up their tense muscles and given their entire body a workout, it is time for a cup of tea.

### A good start to the weekend

The end of the session where they all sit and talk over a cup of tea is a permanent part of the programme, as the instructor Inge Strandby Jensen explains:

"It's not something that I have to do. But it increases the sense of community, and the social aspect is important even though the participants mostly show up to get a workout." She also explains that she has prioritised having this shared time together at the end instead of during a break in the middle of the programme. And Inge Strandby Jensen enjoys sharing her spare time with the team:

"It only takes a few tea bags and ensuring that everyone is involved in the conversations."

### The community motivates you

Inge Strandby Jensen finds that her teaching improves when she gets to know the participants. It makes her better at planning the exercises so that they benefit the individual course participants. On top of that, it also creates a good atmosphere.

"With an exercise team, you don't talk a lot while you're working out. But the social aspect is a motivator when you don't feel like heading off to a workout session. And in fact, the participants almost always sign up for the next season," she says.

### Hearts beating in unison

The team has been to a lecture on health together, and among other things, this led to a good discussion on the various types of therapies. Even though it is mainly the conversations that enhance the sense of community, Inge Strandby Jensen is also keeping an eye on the effects of doing exercise together:

"We'll be doing some breathing exercises together, and then there will be some kind of shared energy and non-verbal connections with each other popping up. This is where you stop thinking and focus on feeling your body. It's about being present, and not about performance for yourself or others," she explains.

**DANSK OPLYSNINGS FORBUND (DOF)** is a national association for 250 local schools in addition to a few day folk high schools and language schools spread across the entire country. Together, they advance non-formal adult education in a free and neutral manner - independent of party politics.

Christian Overholt (left) is a volunteer that manages the internships at Folk & Sikkerheds (People & Security's) annual security policy conference at Christiansborg.



## “I AM USED TO THOSE IN THE SENIOR POSITIONS BEING RIGHT BY DEFAULT, BUT IT’S NOT LIKE THAT HERE.”

*Folk & Sikkerhed bring together members from around the country who share an interest in defence, emergency response and security policy. For Christian Overholt, working as a volunteer in the association has given him insights into how politics works in addition to getting an opportunity to influence matters.*

Folk & Sikkerhed is an umbrella organisation for 36 organisations who share the goal of strengthening the public debate on matters related to defence, emergency response and security policy. This is because there is a need for this, as Adam Sonnich Meinertz, the head of the secretariat for the association explains: “These are issues that have a very direct impact on Danes, for example, in terms of cyber security and protection against terrorism, but they are still mostly dealt with in a closed political space. When the public gets engaged, this will strengthen the debate surrounding the issues and lend more legitimacy to the political decisions,” he notes.

### **No one can pull rank here**

One of Folk & Sikkerhed’s core activities is the annual security conference on Christiansborg that brings together politicians, civil servants, professionals and citizens from 23 different nations to discuss current security policy issues. The conference requires the volunteers of the association to assume an active role. One of the people that ensures the security conference runs smoothly is Christian Overholt, who has a history in the Danish Defence and is now studying to be a disaster and risk manager.

“I have gained a lot of valuable experience

through my volunteer work. I’ve been a soldier for six years, and it’s a new experience for me to work in a flat organisational structure where everyone is heard and free to bring their ideas to the table,” Christian Overholt explains.

“I’ve become accustomed to working in places where those in the senior positions are right by default, but it’s not like that here. And that’s been a healthy experience for me.”

Christian Overholt has some suggestions for next year’s conference and he knows that they will be taken seriously by the board. This is because here, commitment and good ideas outrank everything else.

### **Inside the political machine**

The tasks surrounding the conference have given Christian Overholt insight into the political machine:

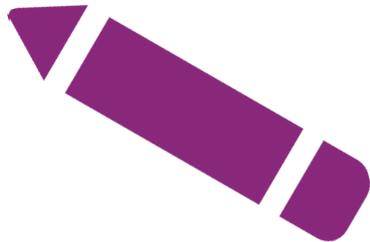
“It’s been exciting to have a concrete insight into the political work, and it’s made me more interested in politics,” he says.

For Adam Sonnich Meinertz, it is important to point out that the association is a forum for political discussions, and not a certain-members-only club where everyone agrees:

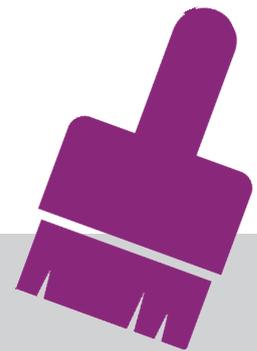
“You are free to state pacifist views. We don’t have to agree on everything, the aim is to talk to each other and maybe change a few opinions along the way.

**FOLK & SIKKERHED** is an umbrella organisation for 36 organisations working with the defence and emergency response area. Under the motto *Peace in freedom*, Folk & Sikkerhed works to strengthen the police, emergency response capabilities, the defence and the civilian sector. The association is apolitical.

“The content is ‘the common third’ that we gather around. This means that the activity is neither about you or me, but about our shared interest.”

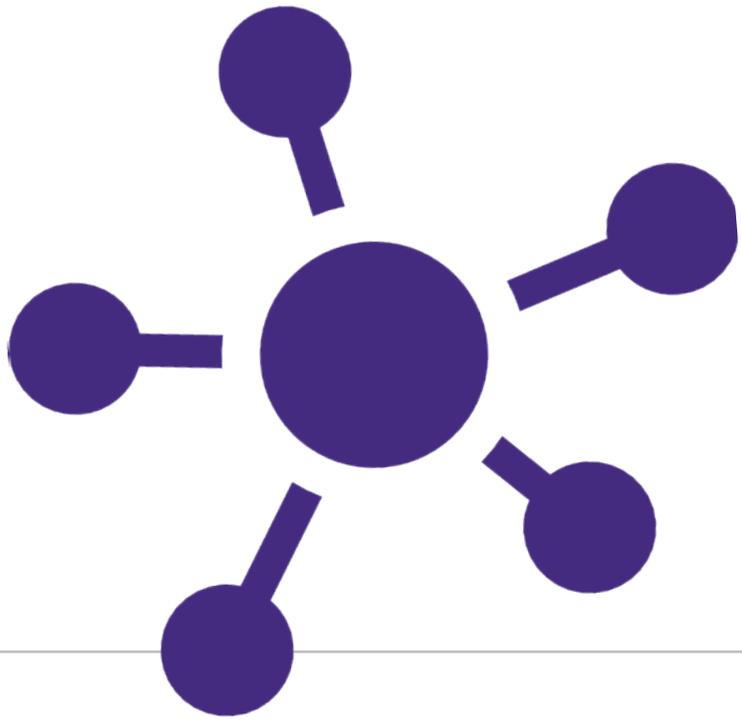


## Quality aspects



### THE GOOD CONTENT:

- It is based on the needs of the individual (their background and perspectives)
- It develops individuals on a professional, social and personal level in terms of how they interact with others
- It puts competencies into play that are not merely purely professional
- It takes a personal growth perspective and creates room for reflection
- It is put together so that it supports community-building
- It is set up so as to motivate the participant and get them interested



# Organisation

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## Quality parameter

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The organisation is structured democratically, and the work is intentionally carried out through the involvement of participants/members/volunteers under a clear set of values that reflect the organisation's social relevance. This is also reflected in the organisation's formal structure and in the management culture.

The organisation is a reflection of the non-formal adult education values, in both its internal work and in relation to the target group and society at large. This is expressed in the form of a diverse community wherein the organisation continually develops its own structure and activities.

The organisation is also open to external influences and takes an active part in impacting the society that they are a part of, whether it be on a local, national or global level.

The organisation is a part of civil society and enters into relevant partnerships with other organisations, both public and private, in addition to other civil society organisations.



Anders Jessen heads LOF Syd's school board and was nominated for the prize "Aftenskolens Ildsjæl" (The Fiery Spirit of the Night School) in 2017.

## HERE IS THE RECIPE FOR A SUCCESSFUL LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD

*How does a well-functioning and effective night school board look? Anders Jessen, chairman of the board for LOF Syd offers his opinions on the topic.*

Trust, a good mix of age groups, gender and backgrounds in addition to successfully delegating specific work to each individual board member. These are some of the ingredients that are needed to create a good school board, says Anders Jessen, chairman of LOF Syd.

### Room for visions

In LOF Syd's board, all members have specific areas of responsibility. This creates commitment and ensures that the school's principal or chairman do not end up having to do all the work themselves. Even if the board members are sometimes the ones holding the rope for specific events, it is important that they are not merely seen as workhorses:

"It is crucial that we deal with the overall visions and strategies and not just the day to day operations. Our highly competent school principal makes sure that this is the case."

### Cooperating with external parties strengthens the school

Anders Jessen is also of the opinion that creating new partnerships is an important element in the board's work. The South

Jutland school has several partnerships, in particular when it relates to health issues and lectures. The partnerships are with both private and public entities. For example, Sønderborg Municipality examines the residents who attends LOF Syd's activities for those with brain damage.

"The partnership activities enhance the quality and extent of the activities, generate new ideas and improve our image. Also, together with our partners we are able to reach more potential course participants," says Anders Jessen and adds that there can also be financial gains from working with external parties.

### Variable costs lead to predictability

The basis for a successful school is of course sound finances, and in this respect, LOF Syd has in recent times taken some important decisions that make them more flexible in dealing with fluctuations in the number of course participants.

"We've focused on keeping the fixed costs for facilities down, and then we review the accounts on a monthly basis at every board meeting so that we remain on top of things," Anders Jessen explains.

**LOF** is a national liberal non-formal education association with 60 local branches and a national organisation. LOF offers non-formal adult education courses, arranges debates and lectures, and it also teaches students with dyslexia and offers preparatory adult education courses.



The volunteers that are in charge of SFOF's summer folk high school work year-round to ensure that the weeks spent at Livø are pleasant and rewarding. They are responsible for everything from planning the programme, managing the home page, arranging childcare and setting up the camp.

## FOR SFOF'S VOLUNTEERS, IT IS SUMMER ALL YEAR

SFOF's annual summer folk high school, LivøFerie, plays a central role in the entire organisation. On this little island in the Limfjord, SFOF's values are put into practice. Ole Kristiansen has been a volunteer for 25 years, because the community keeps drawing him in.

There is no guarantee of great summer weather at SFOF's summer folk high school on Livø. However, they do guarantee that there will be a sense of community and togetherness for both children and adults. There is communal dining each day, and the cleaning chores are shared between all.

### Providing a sense of community and challenges is crucial

LivøFerie is completely reliant on volunteers. Ole Kristiansen has been a volunteer coordinator of the week's activities for 25 years, and it is especially the sense of community that has led him to sticking to it.

"It's incredibly satisfying to plan a week that people will enjoy and return to experience year after year. Feeling like I'm part of a community is a huge part of my life, and on Livø, it's all about togetherness, togetherness, togetherness," Ole Kristiansen explains. At the same time, it is a fun challenge to put together a programme that attracts new participants:

"We need to maintain the traditions of course, but we also need to ensure a gradual renewal. It shouldn't all get too convenient, and we are very aware of the fact that something new needs to be happening all the time, whether it be kayaking, tree climbing or something else entirely," says Ole Kristiansen.

### Experiences from working with volunteers

A lot of different models for working with volunteers have been tested since Livøferie first started in 1976, and it has given them

valuable experiences, says Jane Bruslund Jensen, the head of the secretariat for SFOF:

"We have learned that the best results appear when there are only a few volunteer coordinators who hold it all together and who work year-round. They will then bring in more volunteers when the need arises."

### Engagement on many levels

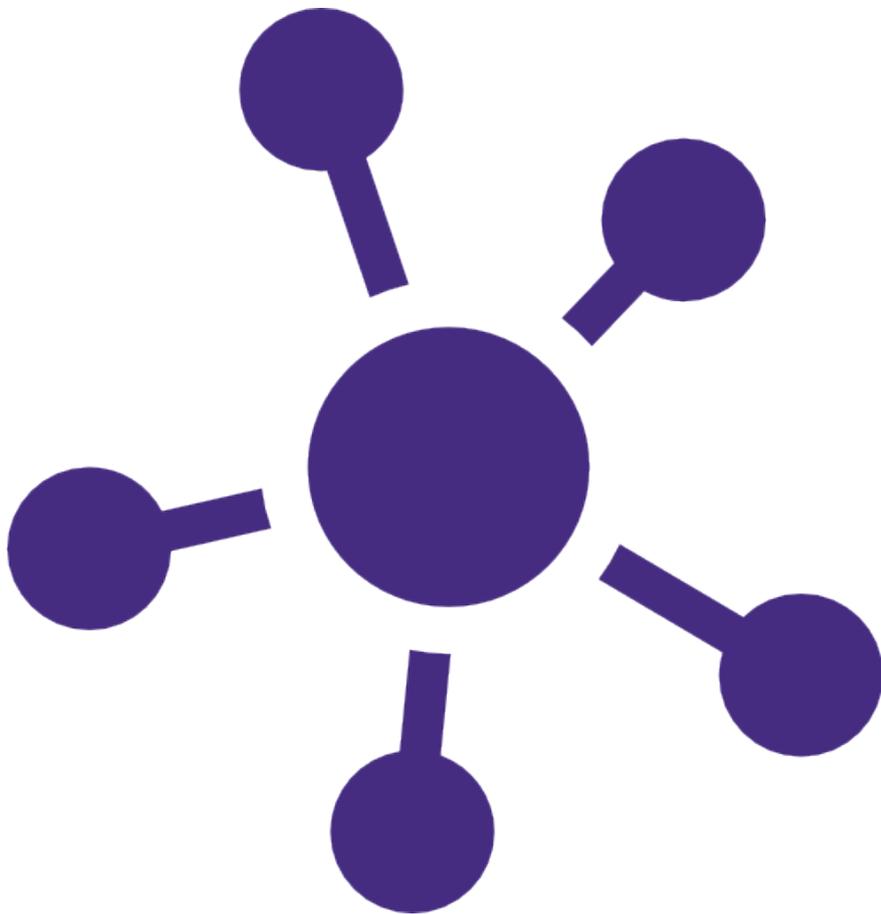
It is not just through volunteers coordinating the week's activities such as Ole Kristiansen who ensures that LivøFerie is based on actively involving people. The participants from the summer folk high schools also contribute. They aren't looking for a passive relaxing holiday, they are looking for a week full of activities where everyone does the dishes together and has a say in what goes on. This year, the coordinators of the week's activities are working on making a programme for the week that focuses on sustainability. The idea came to them during a vision workshop with LivøFerie's participants. The board subsequently prepared a proposal that the coordinators of the week's activities now need to flesh out with the assistance of the head of the secretariat. That way, the entire organisation is being involved and SFOF's set of values are brought to life.

"Our goal is to work with non-formal education based on a democratic and inclusive approach and get people involved as a community, and that's what we do on Livø. Everyone needs to be active participants in making it all happen," says Jane Bruslund Jensen.

SFOF is a nationwide green-red non-formal education association that actively contributes towards promoting active citizenship and new skills through participatory activities.

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“The organisation is structured democratically, and the work is intentionally carried out through the involvement of participants/members/volunteers under a clear set of values that reflect the organisation’s social relevance.”



## Quality aspects

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### **THE GOOD ORGANISATION:**

- Is structured democratically and it is inclusive
- Is an attractive cooperation partner
- Takes an active part in society and can explain the association’s values and social relevance
- Ensures an active involvement of the participants/members/volunteers
- Has a deliberate recruitment policy that encourages diversity in terms of age/ethnicity/gender, professional background, etc.

# Participant/member/volunteer

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## Quality parameter

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The participants/members/volunteers should be seen as those who are involved in the organisation and its activities in various ways: For example, course participants, those who show up for meetings, those active in the association, etc. Non-formal adult education is created when people are interested in getting involved and improving themselves. It is created from within by the participants, members and volunteers.

All non-formal adult education activities are based on the interaction between people, including the interests, goals, resources and needs of each individual. We work with people in obligating communities, where the participants/members/volunteers contribute towards solving tasks, taking responsibility and improving themselves on a personal, professional and social level.

Diversity is seen as a strength. Therefore, it is important to be able to reach a diverse target group in terms of gender, age and cultural background. Not necessarily as it relates to the individual activity, but rather in terms of what we offer as a whole.

The participants bring their resources and competencies to the table so that the content and sense of community is strengthened.



*At Kursustrappen (The Course Stairway), Simon Petersen is acquiring a number of tools that can help him move on after a period of sick leave due to severe stress and burnout.*

## I'VE LEFT MY PREJUDICES BEHIND

*In the spacious villa in Copenhagen, where Kursustrappen is based, Simon Petersen has met people that he would otherwise never have come into contact with, and it has been a real eye-opener for him.*

### KURSUSTRAPPEN

provides day folk high school courses for the unemployed who need a little push to move on with their lives. The courses include things such as mindfulness meditation, yoga, discussion groups and one-on-one talks based on a cognitive approach. The school is a member of DAGHØJSKOLE-FORENINGEN (The Day Folk High School Association) which organises and represents individual day folk high schools and similar local courses aimed at adults.

For many years, Simon Petersen had a life in the fast lane with a job abroad, his own company and a busy family life. After struggling with severe stress for several years, his body finally retaliated. Simon Petersen went on sick leave and had to say goodbye to his job, his company and his house. Today, he is a course participant at the day folk high school Kursustrappen where he is focussing on returning to work.

### Prejudices have been broken down

Initially, Simon Petersen was skeptical about Kursustrappen, but he has been positively surprised:

"I've become far more accepting of people who are in a different situation than I. Before I started here, I had quite a few prejudices about people on benefits. However, I have now experienced how each of them have their own issues to deal with, and everyone here is working to get their lives back on track," says Simon Petersen. Even though the course participants are all very different, he has found that there is one thing that they all have in common:

"We are all facing health issues, and then we have issues with the fact that we find ourselves living a life that we would never

have imagined we could end up in," explains Simon Petersen and adds that it has been very rewarding to be able to see himself in the other course participants.

### Wisdom of the crowd

The strength of the day folk high school's community is described by Kursustrappen's leader, Helle Bøtcher with the concept of the *Wisdom of the crowd*:

"It describes the user-driven aspect of what we do; participants take part in moving things in the right direction. If you create a non-prejudiced and safe space, they are able to contribute with their insights to the situations of others, and that is very valuable," she says.

According to Simon Petersen, the course requires that you give space to other people and show that you understand them. Additionally, you also need to get involved to take full advantage of the professional content:

"The best piano teacher in the world cannot teach you to play the piano if you don't feel like learning, and that applies here too," he says, and he is glad that he is feeling more energised since he started coming to the day folk high school.



Volunteers from the school service (skoletjenesten) have come together to develop the activities they offer to students around the country. Everyone contributes with their suggestions and ideas, including Hans Peter Christensen (3rd from the left in the back row) who has been part of starting up a local chapter in Aalborg.

## THE VOLUNTEERS FROM THE SCHOOL SERVICE SHARE THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND COMMITMENT

*The United Nations Association's school service moves the United Nations into the classroom and helps Danish students to learn about international politics. Hans Peter Christensen is one of the school service's volunteers. The work provides him with valuable experience in teaching and working within an organisation.*

A secondary school class from Aalborg is to be turned into the UN's Security Council on a normal Wednesday morning. The students will be assigned roles as the Council's member countries, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is on the agenda. The secondary school class from North Jutland has visitors from the United Nations Association's school service. It sets up roleplays and presentations for public schools, continuation high schools, secondary schools, and folk high schools in order to help the students understand how the UN and international relations work.

service has chapters in Aarhus, Aalborg, Odense and Copenhagen, and the volunteers work back and forth between those cities several times a year. Here they assign responsibility for the various tasks between them. Everyone contributes towards developing the shared materials that they use when visiting the schools.

"We're all equals here, and if you take on a job, you will automatically be given responsibility. That also applies when we go out to the schools in pairs. That's where we depend on each other and on having a good cooperation," Hans Peter Christensen says.

**THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION** is a member association that works to increase interest in the United Nations among the Danish public. The nationwide association collaborates with United Nations Associations around the world, in addition to politicians, organisations and NGOs on the local, national and global level.

### **New competencies**

Hans Peter Christensen is one of the school service's volunteers, and it is his job to make sure that the roleplay flows smoothly. He is studying Politics and Administration at Aalborg University, so he is well-prepared academically. With the school service, he gets to test his professional competencies and acquire new ones:

"My motivation for starting as a volunteer was that I wanted to gain some teaching experience, and I'm definitely getting that here. I have also been part of starting up our local chapter in Aalborg. That's given me a lot of experience working with organisation," Hans Peter Christensen tells us.

### **Diversity is important**

The United Nations Association has many activities besides the school service. For example, the association's local branches arrange lectures and other events. This results in the association reaching out to more target groups, Torleif Jonasson, the General Secretary explains:

"We can do more when we have both young students and older members among our volunteers. We'll have more diversity in our events, and we'll have a wider audience for our message on taking global responsibility."

He emphasises that the association's non-formal adult education work can only be carried out through the work of the local volunteers.

### **Everyone contributes to the community**

The United Nations Association's school

“Non-formal adult education is created when people are interested in getting involved and improving themselves. It is created from within by the participants, members and volunteers.”



## Quality aspects

### **THE GOOD PARTICIPANTS/MEMBERS/VOLUNTEERS:**

- Bring their resources, competencies and opportunities for development to the table
- Get actively involved and exert influence on the activity
- Takes their share of the responsibility for the community
- Respects the diversity that they encounter





