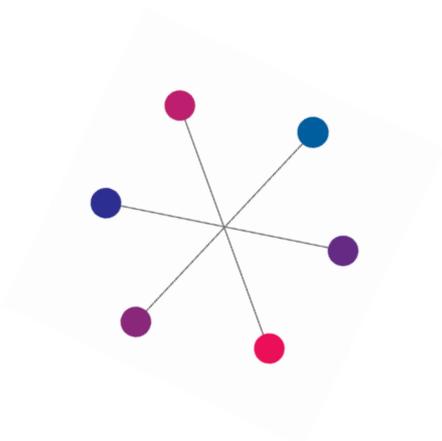




Quality in non-formal adult education

Tools for improving quality

Process instructions:
This is how you do it



**Danish Adult Education Association
2018**

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Introduction

This guide is for those of you who are about to complete a self-evaluation process with a focus on quality improvement and guide others through it. In this booklet you will get some good advice and work templates.



All materials can be found on **dfs.dk/kvalitet** and are available for downloading.

The method itself - the self-evaluation tool - widely address both the non-formal adult education associations and schools. It can be used by anyone who wishes to initiate a development process focused on improving the practice within six different quality parameters. To support the process, we have made two short films (The films are only available in Danish): "*Hvorfor arbejde med selvevaluering?*" ("*Why work with self-evaluation?*") and "*Sådan arbejder I med selvevaluering*" ("*This is how you work with self-evaluation*").

For the participants, we have prepared a smaller booklet that contains the six quality parameters and a brief introduction to the process itself. We recommend that the participants are given that booklet in advance.

There is also a third booklet that contains specific examples of how quality parameters might look in the world of non-formal adult education. Here you will find 12 cases that each bring the parameter to life. Perhaps it might be a source of inspiration to read through the examples before you start the self-evaluation process itself.

The material was created with contributions from the following of the Danish Adult Education Association's members:

DATS - the national association for drama activities, DOF, Fora, LOF, SFOF, The Association of Day Folk High Schools, The Association of Danish Production Schools, Danish Youth Schools Association, Danish Atlantic Treaty Association, The United Nations Association, The People & Security Association and The organisation for National Church's Youth Choirs.

Danish Evaluation Institute, EVA, w / Senior Consultant Michael Andersen and Senior Consultant Christina Laugesen has assisted with knowledge and coaching throughout the process.

We hope you get on well with your work.

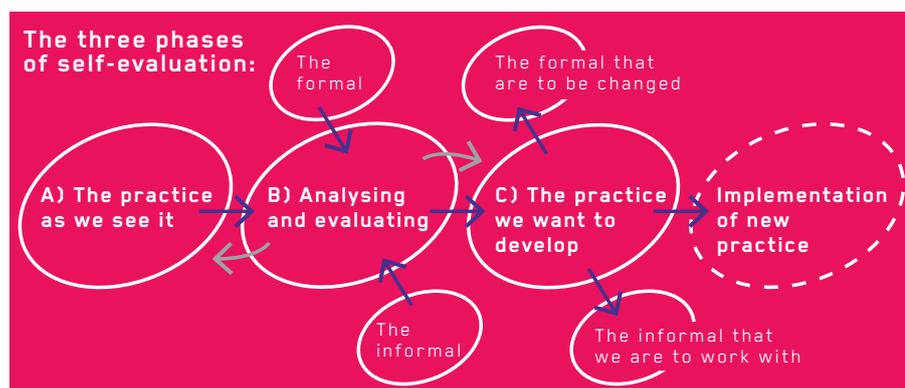
Danish Adult Education Association 2018

Why work with self-evaluation?

Self-evaluation can be used to “achieve a shared understanding of what you are doing, how your activities work in practice, and how you want to develop your practices”¹.

By working with this self-evaluation tool and the discussions that arise during the process, you can highlight the parts of your practices that already work well in addition to getting an overview of what changes you can make to improve them even further. To conclude the process, you can use an action plan to specify how the new changes can be implemented.

This approach is inspired by the Danish Evaluation Institute’s model for self-evaluation which involves three phases as illustrated here in the model. The phases are: **describing the practice**, **analysing and evaluating the practice**, and finally, **developing the practice**.

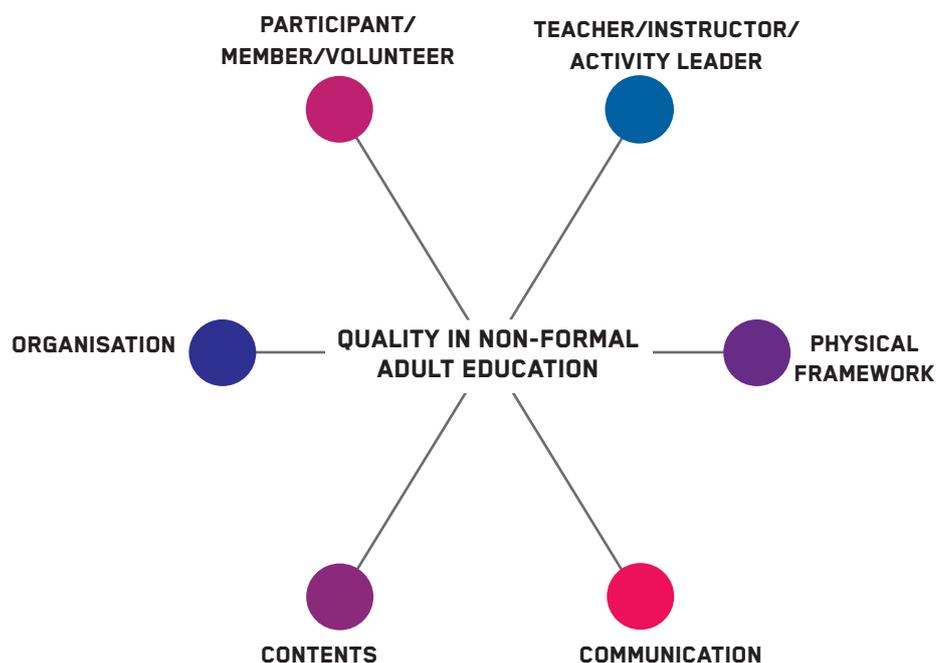


Source: *Hvad er det gode skolelederliv (What is the life of a good school principal)*, The Danish Evaluation Institute and Skolelederforeningen (The School Principal’s Association), 2010, p.4

Original source in Danish: 1 *Styrk jeres realkompetencevurderinger – en guide til selvevaluering (Strengthen your real competencies - a guide for self-evaluation)*, The Danish Evaluation Institute, 2017 p.4

Quality parameters and aspects

The tool is based on six quality parameters and their associated aspects. Since they are aimed at both non-formal adult education associations and various types of non-formal adult education schools, we will be using terms such as, teacher, instructor and activity leader.



The parameters are core elements of working with non-formal adult educational activities. The descriptions are based on non-formal adult education values such as **democracy, freedom, diversity** and **community**¹. In essence, the values provide the direction for the parameters and the descriptions say something about how good quality in non-formal adult education might look like.

Every parameter has a few quality aspects associated with it. These aspects are specific examples of how quality can be expressed. We have selected 4-6 core aspects for each parameter.

You are more than welcome to supplement this with your own parameters or aspects if that would make sense to you. The guidelines are based on the parameters outlined above.

The descriptions of the parameters and their associated aspects can be viewed at the end of this booklet.

¹ For a more detailed description of the values, see page 17.

Why work with self-evaluation?

This is a presentation of an overall framework for how the work with self-evaluation can be approached. The framework leaves room for local variations such as, in relation to specific questions to work with and exercises that you are free to use during the process.

We recommend that you set aside 3-5 hours for this, depending on how many are participating in the process and how much experience you have with making self-evaluations. It is difficult to get a workable process completed in less than three hours. It is important that you give yourself plenty of time to work with the three phases in the self-evaluation work: **description**, **evaluation** and **development**, as it is through these phases that you will gain insight into your strengths and weaknesses - and therefore, where there is room for improvement.

Preparation and management decisions

Prior to carrying out the exercise, you need to address the questions below:

Are we prepared to change our practices?

The process will have an impact on your practices, and it may lead to changes both large and small. This requires time and resources devoted to this task, are you prepared to do so?

How much time do we want to devote to this?

Are we going to complete the entire process (the self-evaluation plan and the action plan) in one meeting, or should we spread it across two or more meetings?

Who is going to guide us through the process?

It is good to select an experienced moderator/teacher/facilitator who is not too involved in the area (parameter) that is to be assessed.

Who should participate in the process?

The board, daily manager, volunteers, members, teachers... ?

Should we select the parameters in advance, or is the selection part of the process?

It might be a management decision to work on a specific area if, for example, it is already a strategic focus area or if it might be more open-ended and left to the participants of the meeting to select the area that makes the most sense to examine.

Execution

When the initial decisions on choosing a process manager, participants and parameter have been taken, you are ready to complete the self-evaluation. The next section describes what the process manager's task is in addition to how the plan for the self-evaluation might appear. The text in italics are suggestions for what the process manager might say under each individual item.

The process manager's Tasks

It is your job as a process manager to prepare for the job by thoroughly reviewing this material and using it to make an agenda so that the time that has been allotted matches the content.

It is also your job to ensure that the participants receive the necessary materials prior to the meeting.

Among other things, the process manager is responsible for ensuring that:

- The process moves forward
- Everyone gets to state their views
- The schedule is adhered to
- The three phases are worked with (description, evaluation and development)
- An action plan is prepared and it is agreed upon when it is to be followed up on

Materials

On dfs.dk/kvalitet you will, among other things, find:

- This booklet
- The booklet for the participants is called *Quality in non-formal adult education - What is it?* Here is a brief introduction to self-evaluation, work templates and a description of the six quality parameters and their associated aspects.
- *Examples of inspirational cases*, a booklet with cases demonstrating good quality in non-formal adult education
- Work templates for printing: Self-evaluation and action plan (Only available in Danish).
- Two short films: *Hvorfor arbejde med selvevaluering? (Why work with self-evaluation?)* (approximately 2 minutes long) and *Sådan arbejder I med selvevaluering (This is how you work with self-evaluation)* (approximately 2 minutes long – Only available in Danish).
- A Power Point template that can support the process (Only available in Danish).
- Links to publications on the topic of self-evaluation (Only available in Danish).

A plan for self-evaluation

We recommend that you set aside at least 3 hours for this. The times listed here are based on the assumption that a total of 3-5 hours will be spent on completing the self-evaluation process, including the action plan.

Whether you choose to complete the self-evaluation process and fill out the action plan in one go, as outlined here, or if you want to do this over two days is completely up to you and depends on the time you have available. You should schedule the breaks yourselves. The text in italics are suggestions for what the process manager might say.



1. Welcome (15 minutes)

1. Welcome (15 minutes)

2. Selection of quality parameter and aspect (20-40 minutes)

3. Self-evaluation (a total of 90-170 minutes)

A. Describe the practice

B. Assess the practice

C. Develop the practice

4. Action plan (40-60 minutes)

5. Conclusion (15 minutes)

What do we need to get done today?

Presentation of the schedule and the individual items on the agenda. A brief introduction of the participants.

Why do we need to work on self-evaluation?

Self-evaluation is a method that can help us achieve a shared understanding of what we do. At the same time, we will be able to spot the strong and weak points in what we do. We can become aware of what we can improve a certain area - that is, in one of the six quality parameters. This is a joint process where all contributions matter.

Feel free to show the **film** "*Hvorfor arbejde med selvevaluering?*" ("*Why work with self-evaluation?*")

You can find it on dfs.dk/kvalitet. (Only available in Danish).

What can we expect to learn from this?

We will gain shared insights into our practice and a new development goal that will help us do what we are already doing even better. We will also be preparing a concrete action plan for the development goal.

2. Selection of quality parameter and aspect (20 - 40 minutes)

The starting point for the self-evaluation is one of the six quality parameters:

- Teacher/instructor/activity leader
- Physical framework
- Communication
- Contents
- Organisation
- Participant/member/volunteer

Justify why the selection has been made if it has already been done

The selection of a quality parameter can, if necessary, be justified based on a management-level desire to further develop this area or because it fits into other strategic initiatives. The same applies to the selection of an aspect. Here you should also explain the justification for why it was selected.

Always make the choice as a group if this is the approach you are taking. Set aside sufficient time for working with the process

The process manager must ensure that you all interpret the selected parameter in the same way. It might be a good idea to read the text out loud and discuss how it is to be interpreted in relation to your work. You should also discuss why that specific aspect is important to work on for you.

Brief introduction to the three phases (10 minutes)

Make a brief **introduction** to the self-evaluation part of the process by explaining the three steps: description, evaluation and development that you will now be working with.

Feel free to show the **film** “*Sådan arbejder i med selvevaluering*” (“*This is how you work with self-evaluation*” – Only available in Danish). You can find it on dfs.dk/kvalitet

It might be difficult to keep the phases separate, but it is important that we spend time on the description part before we move on to the evaluation. It is important that everyone gets the opportunity to say something and that we listen to each other and accept that there may well be different opinions on how things should be done. In terms of the time we have available for this today, the process will be somewhat tightly managed so that we can deal with all three phases.

As you begin the self-evaluation, hand out the **work template** so that the participants can write directly on the paper. You should start by writing what quality parameter you have selected and then what aspect you have selected. If the aspect has been chosen in advance, it might be a good idea to have made a few specific questions for the description beforehand so that it matches the work you do in relation to the individual aspect.

You can find the work template on page 14 and in the participant booklet *Quality in non-formal adult education - What is it?*

A. Describe the practice (30 - 60 minutes)

- Start by taking a short time to pause and reflect, allowing the participants to think about the topic and write some examples of their own on the worksheet.
- Then take a round where you each have a turn to talk about some of your own examples and experiences.
- Conclude by having a group discussion about the examples/experiences and try to only describe what it is you do without really thinking about whether it is good or bad.



3. Self-evaluation

A. Describe practice -continued

We have learned from experience that “describe the practice” can be a difficult step for the participants and that most would rather jump straight to the development part. However, it is important to spend time on this phase - this is where the group creates a shared basis and understanding of what is actually being currently done in practice. This is where the different aspects of practice can supplement each other and provide insights that are important to have in order to identify the common challenges. By taking the time to work with this phase, the risk of misunderstandings occurring later are diminished and the participants gain a greater sense of ownership of the process.

If it is your assessment that it is too hard to delve into the specific aspects at this early stage, then let the

participants describe the practices under the parameter in more general terms.

B. Evaluate the practice (30 - 60 minutes)

Based on your examples/experiences, you should now analyse and evaluate what parts of your practice works well and what would make it work even better.

- Start with a group discussion on your strengths. What are you doing really well in relation to achieving the selected quality aspect?
- Discuss what you might be able to do differently in order to work with the aspect better. Are there things that need to be changed? Are there conditions you can change - both formal and informal ones? Formal conditions include legislation, for example, and informal conditions include habits, culture, attitudes, etc.

C. Develop the practice (20 - 40 minutes)

On the basis of the discussions and the evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, you should proceed as a group to formulate one or more development-related questions that you would like to work on to be able to realise the selected quality aspect. Development questions can have different degrees of complexity. Often, it is a more complicated process - if it is even possible at all - to change formal conditions rather than informal ones.

- Formulate some development questions as a group based on the discussion you had about the changes that need to be implemented in order to realise the selected quality aspect.
- If you have more than one development question, then list them in order of their priority. It might be the case that you choose to work on what is easiest to change in the here and now or what you are most eager to work with or what creates the most long-term changes, etc.

Examples of development questions:

- Get more young people involved in the activities
- Formulate a clear recruitment strategy that is to ensure 2-3 new board members
- Plan the production in the workshop so that everyone has a good job and everyone has something to do most of the time



4. Action plan (40-60 minutes)

If you choose to divide the process into two parts, then end the day here by reviewing the new development goal(s). Next time you meet, you should start working on the action plan.

You should now make an action plan for how you achieve your new development goal. If you have several that you are keen on working with, then make an action plan for each one. We do not recommend that you start working on too many development goals all at once.

You can find the template for the action plan on page 15 and in the participant booklet *Quality in non-formal adult education - What is it?*

Start by presenting the development goal that you have selected.

Have a group discussion about what you need to do to achieve it. It is important that you have a shared understanding of how to solve the task and what changes it will require. Be aware of the fact that there can be huge differences in how many work tasks are necessary to initiate in order to realise the individual development goal. Write them all down so that you have a good overview of all the sub-tasks that the individual development goal brings with it.

When you agree on how to proceed, then fill in the remaining areas on the action plan so that you have specific names, dates, etc. on it.

When concluding, you should agree on when to follow up on the action plan. Here it is about assessing whether you have achieved the development goal in a satisfactory manner. Take a look at whether or not the various sub-tasks have been completed/implemented?



5. Conclusion (15 minutes)

If you want to work with several development goals, then you can perhaps split the participants into groups so that each group has one development goal to work on. Subsequently, the groups can present their answers to how the concrete development goal can be realised and you can fill in the remaining parts as a group.

Summary of the day's events

We have described and analysed our practice based on the selected parameter.

By examining the strengths and weaknesses, we have come up with one or more development goals that are to ensure that we become even better at expressing the quality aspect related to ...

What are the next steps in the process?

We have prepared an action plan and must ensure that it is initiated and followed up on so that we achieve our goal. We have agreed on who will initiate it and who will follow up on it. We need to decide if/when we should meet again to follow up on the action plan and the new development goal.

Thank you for all your great work today.

Sample exercises



Exercise for the selection of a quality parameter p.10

The participants sit around a table together and take turns to take a card/sheet where one of the parameters has been written. There needs to be a card for each parameter.

When the card is drawn, there should be a brief discussion about the individual parameter based on the text that describes it. Also discuss whether this is an area that you want to become better at working with and developing your skills in.

When all parameters have been presented, select one of them as a group.

You can do the same exercise for the selection of a quality parameter, except in this case it will be the aspects associated with the selected parameter that will be written on the cards/sheets.



Exercise for prioritising development goals p.11

The participants will each write the suggestions for a development goal on a post-it note and put them up on a large sheet of paper/board.

When everyone has put their ideas up on the sheet of paper/board, the individual goals should be presented by those that have written them so that everyone is clear on what is meant by each suggestion. Remember to explain how the development goal can be part of realising the selected quality parameter.

Subsequently, the participants will have the opportunity to move the ideas that they don't like on to another sheet of paper/board.

Now there will only be the development goals that everyone thinks are relevant.

Take the post-it notes down again and put them on the table. Discuss how they should be prioritised.

If needed, return to the moved post-its and ask those who moved them why they did so. As a group, evaluate whether the idea is actually good enough. If it is, then move it back to the sheet of paper/board with the good development goals.

Work template for self-evaluation



The selected quality parameter: _____

The selected quality aspect: _____

A Describe how you are working with the selected quality parameter/aspect today. Base your description on specific examples/experiences from your work.

What do you do? How do you do it? Who does it?

B Evaluate and analyse the way you work with this aspect. Based on the examples/experiences you have described, try to evaluate:

What works well in relation to getting the selected aspect in play?

What can be done differently in order to work better with the aspect?

C Develop your practice in relation to the selected aspect. Based on the evaluation and the analysis above, formulate one or more specific development goals.

"In order to realise the selected quality aspect, our goal is..."

Work template for the action plan



Quality aspect: _____

Development goal: _____

When does the overall action plan need to be followed up on: _____

Should sub-elements be followed up on continually / in a different way?: _____

Action plan for: _____

Filled in by: _____ Date: _____

What needs to be done?	How should it be done?	When should it be done?	Who would be involved?	Who is responsible for initiating the process / following up on it?

Background

The quality project brief overview

The project was launched in the autumn of 2016 and completed in March 2018. The project is run by DAEA and supported financially by the Ministry of Culture's fund for supporting interdisciplinary development projects at folk high schools and in the non-formal adult education area.

The aim of the project was to define quality parameters, develop a tool for the work with quality and to collect success stories on what quality in non-formal adult education practice looks like.

12 DAEA member organisations have been participating actively in the project, and their representatives have acted as an advisory group for the project during this period. At the first meeting, ideas and thoughts were brought forward concerning what quality parameters the project should work with and how a tool might end up looking. It has been important to consistently get feedback from the local non-formal adult education schools and associations as to whether the materials were recognisable in both substance and expression. Therefore, there have been several periods of testing during the process. Initially, it was about collecting "signs of quality" from the project participant's local schools/associations. This left us with a great deal of materials that was since condensed into the various quality aspects. Next, the tool itself was tested and the test results were incorporated into the material. Two consultants from EVA (The Danish Evaluation Institute) contributed with their knowledge and provided feedback and advice to the advisory group and DAEA's secretariat throughout the process, particularly in relation to the development of the self-evaluation tool and how it would turn out.

We would like to thank everyone who made useful contributions, took the time to test the materials and made themselves available for interviews about success stories in the work on improving quality.



The non-formal adult education values

Here we will once again list the four values that the quality parameters are based on. The text is from DAEA's strategy for 2017-2019 *Vi har brug for hinanden* (We need each other)

Non-formal adult education in Denmark is based on a shared set of values that can trace their roots to a shared democratic and educational tradition, and it is a set of values that is closely linked to the other associations and the everyday democratic life in Denmark.

Democracy

Democratic values are fundamental to non-formal adult education: freedom of speech, intellectual liberty, freedom of assembly, equality, active citizenship, co-determination and democratic education. We gain inspiration from the ideas of N.F.S Grundtvig and Hal Koch. It is about the democratic conversation, about strong, independent and capable citizens and the active, participatory life based on democratic values.

Freedom

Freedom is an essential value in and for non-formal adult education. Freedom of the type that involves the rights of minorities to together make and choose their own schools and their own ideas. The freedom to think, believe and live as you want. The freedom to get involved in activities and learn based on your interests and desires for self-development without having to need prior qualifications or competencies.

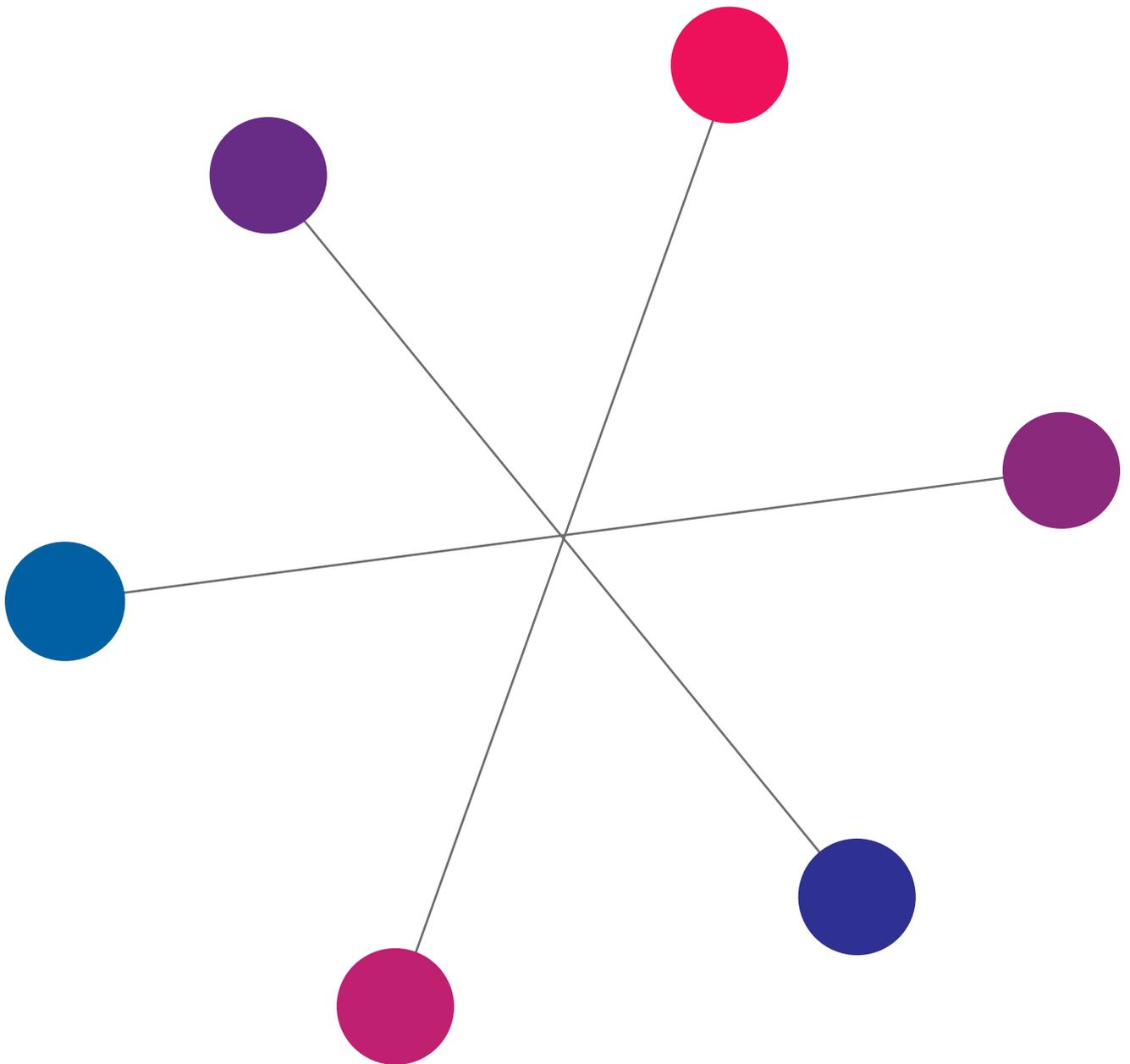
Diversity

Diversity is a value that should characterise non-formal adult education. It is a value that relates to equality and inclusiveness. It is important that non-formal adult education is a space where everyone can interact regardless of their differences. To interact across social divides, generations, ethnic origins, educational backgrounds, etc. You get together to participate in a shared activity, the "common third".

Community

The obligating community is a framework based on a set of values that non-formal adult education is to be based on. Without the community aspect, we would "merely" be talking about education, training or random hobby activities. It is about the very specific sense of community that brings people together. However, it is also about larger obligating communities, in the local area, in Denmark at large, across the countryside and cities, and throughout Europe, across national borders, and even across the world.

Presentation of quality parameters and aspects





Teacher/instructor/activity leader

Quality parameter

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 great 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 through 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.

Quality aspects

The good teacher/instructor/activity leader:

- Is aware of the values that one's own organisation and/or non-formal adult education institution 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 on 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

Quality parameter

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.

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

Quality parameter

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.

Quality aspects

Good communication is:

- Precise, clear and simple
- Uses different communications channels and language for each target group
- Reflects that the organisation is taking part in an open and respectful dialogue with its surroundings
- Provides space to state your opinions and express disagreement
- Counteracts the creation of myths and prejudices and supports the non-formal adult education sector's commitment to educate



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.

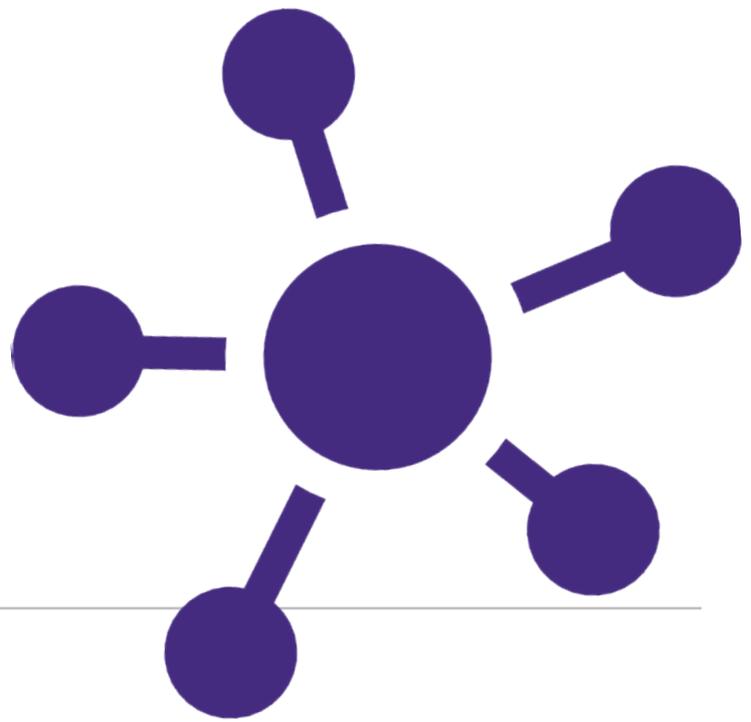
Quality aspects



The good content:

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





Organisation

Quality parameter

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.

Quality aspects

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/professional background, etc.

Participant/member/volunteer

Quality parameter

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 is offered as a whole.

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

Quality aspects

The good participants/volunteers/members:

- 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

