ADULT EDUCATION IN DENMARK:
MODERN DISCOURSE OF LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT

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Abstract. Sustainable and rational adult education is now a crucial component of the European education system due to the demands of a modern, innovative workforce that must be highly educated and adaptable. This article provides a comparative examination of adult education contemporary situation in Denmark and Ukraine. The author’s research interests are in the sphere of the legal frameworks supporting the structural patterns, guiding principles, financing, and acknowledgement of Danish adult education. For the establishment of adult education policies in Ukraine, the Danish setting is essential because of Denmark’s unique experience in developing a democratic adult training system that is a part of lifelong learning. In data collection for this study, the author has analyzed multiple legislative sources in European and Danish educational environments at various time points from 2000 to 2023. The conducted research demonstrates that the legal framework in the modern Danish environment encourages adult education in a way that shapes it into a very effective system. On the other hand, significant legislative, structural, and technological changes are needed for adult education in Ukraine, particularly in light of the ongoing aggressive war. This comparative study will contribute to a better understanding of the educational situation with adults in advanced European countries and will help to justify new approaches to the training of adult citizens in Ukraine.

Key words: adult education, lifelong learning, Danish dimension, legislation, similarities and differences.

ОСВІТА ДОРОСЛИХ В ДАНІЇ:
СУЧАСНИЙ ДИСКУРС ЗАКОНОДАВЧОГО ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ

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Анотація. Оскільки сьогодні сучасне суспільство та інноваційне виробництво мають величезний попит на високоосвічену та гнучку робочу силу, таким чином, стійка та узгоджена освіта дорослих стає невід'ємною частиною європейської системи освіти. У статті пропонується порівняльний аналіз законодавчої бази, яка підтримує структурні моделі, принципи, фінансування та системи визнання кваліфікацій і дипломів дорослих у системах освіти України та Данії. Данський контекст є важливим для розвитку освіти дорослих в Україні, оскільки Данія отримала унікальний досвід у створенні демократичної системи навчання дорослих, яка існує як складова освіти впродовж життя. Під час збору даних для цього дослідження автор проаналізував численні законодавчі джерела в освітньому середовищі Європи та Данії в різні часові періоди з 2000 по 2023 рік. Наше дослідження доводить, що в сучасному данському контексті законодавче підтримує стимулює ста- лий розвиток освіти дорослих, формуючи її як високоекономічну та гнучку демократичну систему. Науковий аналіз показав, що українська освіта дорослих, особливо в період війни, потребує суттєвого корегування на законодавчому, структурному та технологічному рівнях. Це порівняльне дослідження сприятиме кращому розумінню ситуації з освітою до-
Introduction. Regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or philosophical background, the European Union’s new millennium lifelong learning policy encourages education for all people of the democratic world, enabling them to take an equal part in the advancement of democracy (Rasmussen, & Lolle, 2022). Adults are assigned a major role in this process. They are viewed as the bearers of the humanistic principles of a civilized society, and positive changes cannot occur without their active involvement. Furthermore, because adults possess high professional capabilities, adaptability, and the ability to make rational judgments, they may overcome the challenges associated with finding employment in the global labour market and strengthen the economy of an information-oriented society. Because of this, it is decisive to motivate and integrate adults into today’s educational system to address the current issues surrounding innovative production.

Moreover, as adult education fosters critical thinking, digital literacy, job success, personal development, lifelong learning, and active citizenship in the postmodern world, we view it as vital. It makes it possible for people to thrive in their endeavours, adjust to a world that is changing quickly, and positively impact society (Ogienko, & Rolyak, 2009).

The aim of the study. The subject matter of our study is twofold. On one hand, we are going to reveal the legislative foundation of Danish contemporary adult education in connection with historically formed categorial definitions. Since Denmark has long succeeded in developing and encouraging all types of adult citizens’ education, engaging them in new sustainable and coherent ways of life, we consider this focus significant.

On the other hand, we will analyze the Ukrainian dimension of adult education, emphasizing quite serious contradictions in this sphere that can be seen on a country-wide basis. It is really so, that before Russian aggression there was a clear tendency to reform the entire system of adult education in Ukraine. Unfortunately, due to war Ukrainian educational environment has suffered from limited access to information sources, lack of coordination, and internal resistance to innovations at local levels. All these factors prevent educational institutions from meeting their strategic goal to make high education equal, open, and accessible for all (Roliak, 2023).

Many Ukrainian adult employees having opportunities to renew their knowledge cannot change their professional trajectories because the Ukrainian labour market simply does not show the need for a lot of professionals in different spheres except the military one. Furthermore, if we speak about the international labour market we should define that Ukrainian adults find it difficult to compete in it (Roliak, 2023).

In order to overcome such contradictions, it is necessary to make a substantial upgrade of the entire education system in the country including the legal basis of adult teaching and learning. We consider that a comparative study will contribute to a better understanding of the educational situation with adults in advanced European countries and will help to justify new approaches to the training of adult citizens in Ukraine.
Theoretical basis and research methods. Our research is based on the analysis of the fundamental ideas of several contemporary scholars in Denmark who make inquiries in the sphere of adult education. Here are a few notable ones. Knud Illeris is a prominent Danish scholar known for his work in adult learning theory. His research focuses on competence development, and transformative learning. Lars Qvortrup is a Danish professor of education and digital media. His research interests include e-learning, and the impact of digital technologies on adult education. Brian Mikkelsen is a Danish politician and former Minister of Education. He has been involved in shaping adult education policies in Denmark and has contributed to research and discussions on adult learning. Helle Bjerg is a Danish professor of adult education and lifelong learning. Her research covers such topics as workplace adult learning theories.

Among Ukrainian scholars who have made significant contributions to the field of adult education, there are a few notable examples: Yaroslava Mykhailova, specializing in adult education and lifelong learning; Oleksandr Kryvenko has focused on training programs of adult workplace learning and human resource development; Larisa Shpakovska particularly emphasizes on the role of adult education in social development and lifelong learning; Nataliia Morze has conducted extensive research on adult literacy, transformative learning, and the integration of technology in adult education settings; Olena Ogiienko has made significant contributions to the field of profound research of adult education in Nordic countries.

Results. Our study testifies that adult education encompasses a wide range of definitions and interpretations depending on the context. Moreover, we must stress that there is a degree of uncertainty around adult education terminology (Illeris, 2004). However, very often these most popular definitions of adult education include one that belongs to the following major dimension:

1. Lifelong Learning. Adult education is often seen as a continuous process of learning and skill development throughout one's life, beyond the formal education years.
2. Non-Formal Education. Adult education can refer to any organized learning activity outside the traditional school system, typically tailored to meet the specific needs and interests of adults.
3. Continuing Education. Adult education involves the pursuit of further education and skill enhancement by individuals who have already completed their formal education. It may include courses, workshops, seminars, or professional development programs.
4. Vocational Training. Adult education can focus on providing practical skills and training necessary for specific occupations or industries, enabling adults to enter the workforce or enhance their career prospects.
5. Community Education. Adult education can involve educational opportunities and programs that are provided by or within local communities, addressing the diverse needs and interests of adults within those communities.
6. Adult literacy and Basic Education. Adult education can encompass programs aimed at addressing functional illiteracy and providing basic education skills to adults who missed out on formal education.
7. Distance Learning and Online Education. Adult education increasingly utilizes technology and online platforms to provide flexible learning opportunities, allowing individuals to pursue education remotely.

8. Personal Development and Enrichment. Adult education can cover a range of personal development activities, such as hobby classes, arts, music, fitness, and other recreational pursuits.

It's important to note that these definitions are not exhaustive, and the field of adult education continues to evolve as new approaches and perspectives emerge.

Danish origin of adult education meaning goes back to the XIX century humanistic traditions of “folkeoplysning” and “bildung” (Korsgaard, 2002). These terms are difficult to translate into English but most frequently they are used in the sense of “free and equal adult training” for “enlightenment” (Zøllner, 2000). So the abovementioned Danish notions combine three important and interrelated components: adults, democracy, and education with an emphasis that every citizen is of great value to Danish society and has equal rights to get an education to meet the needs of everybody in this community (Roliak, Matiienko, Koliadych, Yatsyshin, & Dakaliuk, 2020).

In the contemporary epoch, the notion and organization of Danish adult education are based on the following European regulatory documents and acts (Tröhler, Hörmann, Tveit, & Bostad, 2022).

1. European Qualifications Framework (EQF) provides a common reference framework for comparing qualifications across different European countries. It facilitates the recognition of skills and competencies acquired through formal, non-formal, or informal learning.

2. European Commission’s Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. This recommendation sets out the key competencies that individuals need for personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social cohesion, and employability. It provides guidance for the development of educational programs, including adult education.

3. European Agenda for Adult Learning. This document outlines the strategic objectives for adult learning in Europe. It focuses on improving the quality and accessibility of adult education and promoting adult learning as a means to address social, economic, and personal development challenges.

4. European Parliament and Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways. This recommendation encourages member states to establish national upskilling pathways to help adults with low skills acquire relevant qualifications and competencies.

5. The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is a system for the transfer, accumulation, and recognition of learning outcomes in vocational education and training. It aims to facilitate the mobility of learners and workers and supports the recognition of prior learning in adult education.

These documents offer a framework for the development, implementation, and recognition of adult education programs across Europe.

In Denmark, adult education is regulated by several acts and laws which were created taking into account European standards and recommendations in this sphere.

So the first and foremost is “The Adult Education Act (VoksenUddannelsesloven)”. This act sets the framework for adult education in Denmark. It outlines the right of adults to pursue further education and provides guidelines for the organization, financing, and content of adult education across the Danish educational system.
programs (Roliak, Matiienko, Koliadych, Yatsyshin, & Dakaliuk, 2020).

The second is “The Labour Market Training Act (Arbejdsmarkeds-suddannelsesloven)”. It focuses on providing skills development and vocational training for the unemployed and individuals seeking to improve their qualifications for the labor market. It regulates various training programs, including those offered by vocational schools and private providers (Rasmussen, Larson, & Cort, 2019).

The third is “The Danish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (DANAK)”. Although it is not a law itself, DANAK provides a national framework for organizing and recognizing qualifications obtained through lifelong learning, including adult education. It helps ensure the quality and comparability of adult education programs and qualifications (Tröhler, Hörmann, Tveit, & Bostad, 2022).

As our study has demonstrated all these laws and regulations aim to promote lifelong learning, enhance employability, and provide opportunities for personal and professional development for adults in Denmark.

So according to the above-mentioned regulatory documents, Danish adult education is primarily guided by the principle of lifelong learning, which emphasizes the importance of education and skills development throughout a person’s life. In Denmark, adult education is organized into various forms and institutions, including:

- Folk High Schools (Folkehøjskoler). These are non-formal adult education institutions where students can enrol in short-term courses and study a wide range of subjects, such as arts, culture, sports, and personal development.

- Adult Education Centers (Voksenundervisningscentre). These centres offer a variety of courses for adults, including general education, language courses, vocational training, and skills development programs.

- Vocational Education and Training (VET). Denmark has a well-developed vocational training system, which provides opportunities for adults to acquire practical skills and qualifications in various trades and professions.

- Open University (FernUniversitetet). This distance-learning institution offers higher education programs for adults who wish to pursue a degree or upgrade their qualifications while balancing work and other responsibilities.

- Continuing Education (Efteruddannelse). Many Danish universities, colleges, and private providers offer continuing education programs aimed at professionals who want to update their knowledge and skills in specific fields.

- Adult Education Associations (Folkeoplysningsforbund). These associations provide a wide range of non-formal educational activities, such as hobby courses, cultural events, and community programs, to promote lifelong learning and personal development (Rasmussen, & Staugaard, 2016).

As our study has investigated, in Denmark adult education is often flexible and tailored to individual needs, allowing adults to combine work, family, and education. The government and municipalities provide financial support and subsidies to make adult education more accessible and affordable for the population.

It is necessary here to clarify that Ukrainian and Danish adult education systems have some similarities but also key differences. First, we should analyze structure and organization. In Ukraine, adult education is divided into formal and non-formal sectors. Formal adult education includes higher education institutions, vocational schools, and
specialized courses. Non-formal education consists of training centres, courses, workshops, and seminars. Denmark has a well-developed and historically advanced adult education system. It includes adult education centres (Folkeuniversitetet), which provide various courses and programs for adults. Additionally, there are vocational schools and universities offering continuing education programs (Blossing, & Moos, 2014).

The second dimension we should consider is accessibility and funding. When we speak about Denmark, we must realize that this peaceful country places a strong emphasis on lifelong learning, and adult education is highly accessible (Papastamatis, & Panitsidou, 2009). Adult education centers are funded by the government, and many courses are subsidized or free for participants. This makes it easier for Danish adults to engage in learning activities.

Unfortunately, access to adult education in Ukraine can be limited due to financial constraints and regional disparities. Public funding for adult education is limited, and individuals often need to cover the costs themselves. It is especially crucial at this moment because Ukrainian adult education has been significantly impacted as a result of the Russian invasion (Roliak, 2023). The war has led to various changes in the educational system, and adult education is not an exception. Many adult education centres, vocational schools, and universities have been damaged or destroyed in the areas affected by the invasion. This has disrupted the availability and accessibility of adult education programs. The war has also caused a significant population displacement, with people forced to flee their homes. This has resulted in the displacement of teachers and learners, making it challenging to continue adult education programs. The ongoing Russian invasion has strained the resources available for education, including adult education. Budgets that were previously allocated for adult education may have been redirected towards addressing the urgent needs of displaced populations and rebuilding infrastructure. In many war-affected areas, the immediate focus has been on providing humanitarian aid and basic services, such as healthcare and shelter. All these factors have diminished the attention and resources available for adult education programs in Ukraine.

The third focus is on the curriculum. Adult education in Ukraine is often centered on vocational training and skills development. Many programs aim to provide adults with practical skills to improve their employability and career prospects. Danish adult education offers a wide range of courses and programs, including vocational training, personal development, language courses, and cultural studies. The focal point is on providing learners with opportunities for personal growth, social integration, and a well-rounded education (Telhaug, Mediås, & Aasen, 2006).

In addition, this research indicates that recognition of Certificates and Diplomas in adult education (especially in the international labor markets) can be considered one of the most important factors due to which this education may have an impact to develop (Andersson, Köpsén, Larson & Milana, 2013). In Ukraine, adult education certificates and qualifications are recognized nationally, but internationally their acknowledgment is very often described as extremely bureaucratic and long lasting process. Whereas Danish adult education certificates are generally well-recognized both nationally and internationally. The Danish Qualifications Framework ensures that qualifications obtained through adult education are comparable and
transferable (Andersson, Köpsén, Larson & Milana, 2013). Overall, while both Ukrainian and Danish adult education systems aim to provide learning opportunities for adults, the Danish system is generally considered more accessible, comprehensive, and well-funded.

**Conclusions.** Our investigation proves that in contemporary Danish context legislative background supports adult education in such a way as to form it as a highly efficient system in which its structure, curriculum content, and democratic principles of equality and accessibility correspond to the major goal: to give the right for everybody in the knowledge-based society to improve competences to meet the needs of the contemporary labour market. The results of this study indicate that:

- Denmark has a deep historical origin of education for adult citizens which goes back to the XIX century humanistic traditions of “folkeoplysning” and “bildung” used in the sense of “free and equal adult training” for “enlightenment”;
- an efficient legislative framework, based on European regulatory documents makes adult education in Denmark overwhelming, comprising the idea of democracy, accessibility and continuity;
- in the structure of adult education all its branches of formal, non-formal, vocational, and distance learning institutions can effectively cooperate, interrelating with each other through the system of credits and certificates validation;
- the European credit transfer system implies the possibility for adult students to change their educational trajectories, and further on to find their workplaces all over the world;
- contemporary Ukrainian adult education is not going through its best times as a result of the Russian invasion. But despite these challenges, efforts are being made to support and rebuild adult education in Ukraine. Non-governmental organizations, international agencies, and the Ukrainian government are working to restore educational infrastructure, provide support for displaced learners, and develop programs to address the specific needs of affected communities. It is important to note that the situation is dynamic, and the specific changes in Ukrainian adult education will bring results in future.

The study has come a long way towards enhancing our understanding of the fact that Ukraine and Denmark have both similar and different features in the adult education dimension. We anticipate that this specific study's outcomes will provide more clarity on the general prospects for adults to be guaranteed to change or continue their education thanks to the effective regulatory basis.

**REFERENCES**


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