**Teaching, Learning and Assessment
for Adults
Improving Foundation Skills**

Case Study: Denmark

Danielle Colardyn and Kirsten Baltzer

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation

OECD

TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT FOR ADULTS IMPROVING FOUNDATION SKILLS

Case Study: Denmark

Danielle Colardyn and Kirsten Baltzer

Table of Contents

In recent years, Denmark has taken a number of steps to improve access to adult foundation skill learning. But Ministry of Education officials are increasingly concerned with the need to improve learner progression and certification rates. Formative assessment is seen as an important means to achieving these goals.

This case study examines how three exemplary programmes use formative assessment to track learner progress and to individualise teaching. They include a work-based programme in Southern Jutland, a secondary school programmes in Frederikssund, and a secondary school programme specifically targeted to younger learners in Århus.

The OECD case study visits were conducted at the end of the school year, in late April and early May, so the authors found strong emphasis on preparing learners to take final examinations for certification. Formative assessment strategies to build learners' test taking skills were also evident. A number of learners choose not to participate in the optional test for certification, and instructors find this challenging. Instructors are also concerned that those who do not earn certificates will continue to face barriers to employment and further education. The case study authors suggest that formative assessment could play an even stronger role in helping to strengthen the quality of provision in Danish adult foundation skill programmes, and in helping more learners to attain certification.

Improving teaching and learning for adults with basic skill needs through formative assessment

This report is part of the international study, carried out by OECD-Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), of exemplary teaching and assessment for adults with basic skill needs. The report describes educational policies and programmes for adults with basic skills needs, and examines examples and practices of formative assessments in Denmark. Section 1 presents the general methodology followed for the study. Section 2 describes the target population of adults with basic skills needs and the education and training policies implemented to serve them. Section 3 describes the concept of formative assessment as defined by OECD (2005a) with reference to Bloom's view, and its application in Denmark. Section 4 presents the classroom observations and interviews. Section 5 outlines and debates a number of questions that arise in the preceding sections.

1. Introduction and methodology

The section below introduces the OECD-CERI international study, the motives for Denmark to join, the review process and the review team. It also provides details on several practical aspects of the study: the Protocol agreed by countries for the study; the institutions selected for visits; and the methodology for observations and interviews.

1.1. The OECD-CERI international study

A two-year project

The OECD–CERI international study "Improving Teaching and Learning for Adults with Basic Skill Needs through Formative Assessment" is a two-year project aiming to address significant gaps in understanding of "what works", for whom and under what circumstances and to identify policy levers to improve the quality of provision for this population. In the context of CERI's What Works in Innovation programme,[1] the case studies in the participating countries will help to describe the qualities of effective teaching, learning and formative assessment practices; to learn more about the history of innovation; to learn about the incentives and disincentives of formative assessment and innovative teaching; to examine evidence of effectiveness; and to share lessons with an audience of policy-makers, practitioners, researchers and the general public. Classroom observations and interviews are central to documenting and exploring **formative assessment** practices defined by OECD-CERI as "*frequent interactive assessment of student progress and understanding to identify learning needs and adjust teaching appropriately*".

Danish participation

Denmark's participation reflects the priority given to adult education and the strong focus on the basic levels (for this reason, vocational education was deliberately not included). Issues of social inclusion and cohesion along with the 2003 OECD PISA results call for improvements in the education system (OECD, 2004a). In particular, Denmark's participation in this study on improvement of teaching and learning for adults with basic skills could help further understanding of assessment practices and exchanges of best practices concerning these adult publics. The Danish Ministry of Education was also motivated to join the CERI Study because of

---

[1] See OECD (2005a) concerning initial secondary education.

concerns related to how to diagnose the level of proficiency of adult students; whether or not to recognise acquired competences in working life or elsewhere; motivation of adults with basic skills for training; and, by a general interest for better understanding formative assessment practices used in basic education courses and their linkages with certification (summative assessment). Some of these specific issues raised by the Ministry will be discussed in the Section 5, following the description of practices in the classroom and the interview with teachers, head masters and students.

Review process and review team

The review process was organised by the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (MOE). Mr Michael Andersen, Chief Adviser at the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) selected and prepared the visits for the case study. He was responsible for the Danish Background report and accompanied the Review Team on the sites. The review team was included of two examiners: Ms Kirsten Baltzer, Associate Professor, the Danish University of Education, Denmark and Ms Danielle Colardyn, consultant and international expert, France.

The Danish *Country Background Report* prepared for this study (see *www.oecd.org/edu/whatworks*) describes education and training programmes and policies of the Adult Education Centres (CVU), and policy measures to raise adults' qualifications, skills and competences. It also describes the assessment policies and implications of formative assessment for the adults with basic skills at the lower secondary education level. Finally, the report presents the profile of the instructional workforce and describes the challenges of improving the literacy levels of certain targeted adult populations.

The review team was invited to observe innovative formative assessment practices and to interview the main actors. The corresponding case studies document these practices, and review evidence of their effectiveness as well as the satisfaction of teachers and learners in the programmes visited. Where possible, information has been included on initial education and training of instructors and their professional development. The case studies also analyse the impacts of the formative assessment methods, including on the numbers of learners earning school-leaving certificates. The review team also examines the more or less systematic use of formative assessment and dissemination of good practices to increase adults' basic skills.

1.2. Methodology

The protocol

In July 2005, CERI held a meeting of national representatives and international experts, to shape the protocol for this study. (EDU/CERI/CD(2005)12). According to said protocol, the case studies were to include classroom observations, interviews with the instructors, individual or focus groups interviews with the learners; interviews with programme and policy officials and other stakeholders as well as any relevant documentation related to learners' needs, assessment tools, programme effectiveness, independent evaluations and/ or quality control.

The visits

The sites visited were the Adult Education Centres (VUC) located in Frederikssund, Århus and Sonderjutland. These centres organise either Preparatory Adult Education (FVU) or General Adult Education (AVU) for adults with basic skill needs. One site provides FVU literacy courses for adults. Those courses do not lead to a formal qualification: after successfully passing levels organised in modules, participants can access the AVU programmes and take the school leaving examination at the lower secondary level. The two other sites visited for this study provided AVU courses. These courses enable students to take this optional school-leaving examination and lead to formal qualification. More information on each site is presented in Section 4 on classroom observations and interviews.

In addition, the review team met with two officials in the Ministry of Education; Mr. Erik Nexelman, Head of Office and Ms. Susan Moller, Pedagogical Adviser for FVU. This meeting aimed to better understand the importance given by the Danish authorities to the review and to know more "what works" with formative assessment in Denmark.

A visit was also organised at the CVU Funen (University College Funen) where the newly created Centre of Evaluation is located. The review team was thus able to ensure that the observations, while based on a selected and limited number of visits, were reflecting a broader reality in the area of formative and summative assessment for young children, teenagers and adults.

Observations and interviews

Courses observed included English, Danish, mathematics and FVU-reading – which are basically Danish literacy courses (in reading, writing,

speaking). Most of the courses observed took place in Danish, while interviews with the teachers and head masters used both Danish and English, and interviews with students were mainly in Danish. With three observers (the review team and the EVA representative), it was always possible to talk and take notes in Danish while at the same time, the non-Danish observer could have an "on the spot" translation, ask questions in English and take notes in English. The use of two languages was not a barrier either for the observers or for the teachers and students.

A system of "double-noting" enabled the members of the review team to have a complete overview of information in that they exchanged and analysed the observations, interviews and notes transmitted by teachers and students after each visit. For each of the VUC visits, several interviews took place: with the teacher(s) in charge of the class observed; with a group of teachers working at the centre, with the principal or person responsible for the course; and with the students, as a group and/or individually.

It is worth noting these visits were conducted at the end of the school year, in late April and early May. Central to the issues of formative assessment is that observations took place two weeks to a month before the school leaving examination, which is optional for AVU students. All the observations of formative assessments explicitly related to the preparation of this optional examination: it is clear that the timing for the observations amplify that link. Earlier in the school year formative assessment would sometimes aim at identifying levels and steps for progression rather than concentrating on the final examination.

2. Adults with basic skills and relevant educational policies

Some main characterisations of the adults in Denmark with basic skill needs will be presented below, followed by a discussion on group heterogeneity. Finally, recent policies will be noted in order to provide the framework for the formative assessment practices observed by the review team.

2.1. General characteristics

In Denmark, adults with basic skills include those with no education beyond 9th or the 10th grade of the Danish *Folkeskole,* meaning they have neither reached the end of lower secondary education nor the corresponding minimum proficiency levels as defined by the MOE.

Danish *Folkeskole* comprises nine years of compulsory schooling with an optional tenth year. The school leaving examination takes place at the

end of 9th grade. In 2002/2003, 61 % of the pupils in 9th grade continued to10th grade (*Education Indicators*, Denmark, 2005). Some of those who did not enter the 10th grade either directly enrolled in upper secondary education, or vocational education and the labour market.[2, 3]

As indicated in the Danish Background report, the population not having completed the ninth grade (early school leavers), account for approximately 16% of the adult population (age group 20 to 64). As in all OECD countries, as average educational attainments levels have increased, the percentage of the 25-64 years olds having attained lower secondary as their highest level of education has decreased (See Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of the population 25 to 64 years old of age that has attained less than lower secondary education

Lower secondary education	1992	1998	2002	2003
Denmark	41	21.4	20	17

Source: OECD, 1995, 2000a, 2004b, 2005b.

Nevertheless, results from PISA 2000 and 2003 demonstrate that a substantial proportion of 15-year-olds encounter literacy problems (OECD, 2001; 2004a). The OECD Review on "Denmark: lessons from PISA" (2004) reported that 17.9 % of 15-year-olds had reading proficiency corresponding to level 1 on the PISA reading literacy scale.[4] Level 1 indicates individuals who are having "serious difficulties in using reading literacy as an effective tool to advance and extend their knowledge and skills in other areas" (OECD, 2001, p.48).

Furthermore, PISA results (OECD, 2004a) also suggest that for mathematics, the variance in student performance within schools in

---

[2] More information can be found on page 21 of *Education Indicators*, Denmark 2005. It examines the situation at the end of grades 9 and 10 considered together.

[3] The linkages between compulsory schooling (grade 9), the end of lower secondary (grade 9 or grade 10) and the entrance in upper secondary, vocational education, the labour market are very difficult to clearly identify. One can wonder if part of the drop out or apparent disappearance of pupils between lower and upper secondary could be partly due to a blurred representation of children and their families, especially for non-natives of Denmark. This would raise questions on the relation between the demands on lower secondary pupils and the dropout rates later on in the education system.

[4] OECD PISA-2003, 2004, table 2.1a, page 246.

Denmark is high compared to the OECD average.[5] This pattern, shared with the other Nordic countries, is only partly explained by students' economic, social and cultural status (9.8% in the case of Denmark).

A sizable group of 15-year-old pupils is at risk of becoming "future candidates" for one of the several programmes for adults with basic skills needs. Thus, another issue that deserves the attention of actors and stakeholders of Danish society is the perpetuation of some components of the adult education as a "repair system". [6]

2.2. A heterogeneous group

Generally, one can note that adults with basic skills needs have specific challenges, such as lower achievement in literacy and numeracy. Nevertheless, adults with basic skills needs do not form a homogeneous group: some problems encountered may be identical but the reasons differ. Broadly speaking, several categories can be distinguished:

- "Older adults" who left school many years ago, in the early stages of their life, before finishing lower secondary school.

- Non-native Danes (refugees and immigrants) now living permanently in Denmark.

- Dropouts. In 1995, an OECD Review of Educational Policies in Denmark explicitly addressed at the request of the Danish Authorities, "the issues of student drop-out and failure to gain vocationally useful qualification" (OECD, 1995a, p. 93). Since that time, the situation has only marginally improved. Most young dropouts leave after compulsory schooling (9th grade, age 15): either during the transition phase to upper secondary education (see note 2) or during the upper secondary studies itself. Drop out issues were raised again in the OECD Thematic Review on Adult Learning (OECD, 2002). For adults (at least those of Danish origin), the roots can be found in the formal education system as it functioned decades ago, today, for young people, the problem persists. There is a "social acceptance" of certain parts of the adult education as being

---

[5] 84.2% of average variance in student performance across OECD countries compared to 67% for the OECD average (OECD, 2004a, table 4.1.a, page 383).

[6] Danes do not define the "repair system" as a "second chance" system. For example, until the 2006-07 academic year, the school leaving examination was not compulsory. Subsequently, pupils leaving school before summer 2007 may enrol in the adult education system in order to prepare for the school leaving examination. In that case, participants may eventually decide not to sit for the exam. As illustrated in Annex 1, the education system is comprehensive: there is no track leading to the lower secondary examination.

a "repair system" for problems emerging in initial education. Moreover, it is important to note that final tests (in FVU) or the school leaving examination (in AVU) are not compulsory. For adults, there may be a "vicious cycle" between dropping out and avoidance of the final test (FVU) or examination (AVU). This will be further discussed in Section 5.

- Young adults, aged 16 and older. During the visits, it was noted several times that the good economic situation and low unemployment rates (4.3% first quarter 2006[7]) tend to attract teenagers into the labour market before they have passed the school leaving examination at the end of lower secondary school. Employers are legally required to increase salaries to the adult rate at the age of 18. Young people without the school leaving examination can thus be "at risk" as the employer may hire younger people to replace them. Hence, it is quite important to attract early school leavers who are over 18 into some form of educational programme, so that they may prepare the school leaving examination, access vocational education and training programmes and have better preparation for their working life.

In 2000, the OECD Economic Survey on Denmark included a recommendation "to aim for a faster passage through the education system" (OECD, 2000b, p. 84). While concerned primarily with the transition from upper secondary to higher education, this point may also apply to adults in foundation skill training leading to the school leaving examination. FVU and AVU programmes may consider ways to help learners to complete education more quickly.

In its recent 2006 Economic Survey of Denmark, OECD underlines the slow progress in human capital. "Among the 25-34 year-olds, only 86% have at least upper secondary education – the lowest level among the Nordics. The share of the youth cohort participating in tertiary education is fairly high, but with a typical starting age of 23 and prolonged study times, there are too few years left during which the fruits of qualifications can be reaped in the labour market." This has been described as a growing "culture of delay".

Formative assessment is a key strategy to help "culture of delay". It is a useful and powerful tool to improve or change the culture of learner progression and certification. This particular issue will be further debated in the final section on Questions.

---

[7] OECD 2006, Standardised unemployment rates, 2006, *www.oecd.org/dataoecd/41/13/18595359.pdf*

2.3. Recent trends in policies: a context for formative assessment practices

Several aspects of national policies influence formative assessment practices, as observed during the visits of the programmes for adult with basic skills needs. These are discussed below.

Policies promoting adult education are a tradition in Denmark, and recent policies focus directly on adults with foundation skills needs.[8] Several education programmes, with specific attention to Danish (reading and writing) and mathematics, are available for adults with foundation skill needs. Adult Education Centres (VUC) are responsible for providing adult education ranging from foundation skill to higher level preparatory courses. The VUCs propose what is called "preparatory adult education" (FVU) and "general adult education" (AVU). A description of the main organisational characteristics is provided in the *Danish Country Background Report* (2006, *www.oecd.org/edu/whatworks*). The diagram in Annex 1 of this case study illustrates the situation of FVU and AVU in the education system.

The recent Danish Report to the European Commission (European Commission, 2005), "Implementing the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme", provides an overview of top priority policies for adults with foundation skills needs. For adult education, the 2005 Appropriation Act provides a supplemental DKK 500 million extra to further training of the low-educated to improve basic reading and arithmetic skills. The group of 60 to 64-year-olds also benefits from the scheme with a view to staying in the labour market (*ibid*., p. 7). These measures complement the 2003 Reform of initial vocational education and training, aiming to provide more flexibility, to reduce dropout, to improve access to vocational education and training programmes and to offer programmes increasingly directed towards the labour market. The purpose of the 2003 Action Plan for adults with low skills is "to initiate a new education offer that combined general and vocationally oriented adult education" (European Commission, 2005, p. 15).

Until now, most reforms attempted to open access to programmes, to ensure equity of access, and to reduce various barriers (distance, child care, leisure time versus working hours, etc). These exceptional efforts to improve "access" were not complemented by efforts to promote a "certification policy".[9] This recent and explicit emphasis on *completion* of the programme

---

[8] Over the past several years, there has been a movement away from the Folk High School and the enlightenment tradition, based on goals for personal development with freedom for choice, and no examinations.

[9] Certification policy refers to policy promoting and/or supporting passing the certificate or diploma at the end of an education and/or training.

and on summative assessment (certification) could be an interesting starting point for discussion as to their certain affect on formative assessment practices. Practices will need to focus directly on what learners needs to achieve to pass an examination (which may differ from what to achieve for personal development).[10] This could alter the degree of divergence between formative and summative assessments. Given that the school leaving examination after grade 9 remains optional, a stronger focus on certification policy could help to achieve better completion rates.

The aforementioned Danish Report to the EU also underlines explicit efforts to strengthen educational standards and further develop evaluation of learning outcomes for example, by introducing mandatory tests in several subjects. "It is expected that a documentation and evaluation culture will keep the focus on the core tasks of schools and ensure that action is taken in time if specific support or more challenges are required for individual pupils" (European Commission, 2005, p. 6). This documentation and evaluation culture is at the core of the observations on formative assessment undertaken by the review team. Refugees, immigrants and bilingual young adults and adults are part of the groups expected to benefit from these programmes (*e.g.*, basic reading and writing as well as Danish as a second language).

2.4. Preparatory (FVU) and General (AVU) adult education

Both the preparatory adult education (FVU) and the general adult education (AVU) schemes are of a general, not vocational, nature.

FVU

Recently created, the FVU proposes courses for basic education, replacing the former literacy courses for adults. It is composed of several levels, or modules, of FVU reading (Danish courses) and FVU mathematics: 4 for the FVU Danish[11] and 2 for FVU mathematics.[12]

Each module culminates in a voluntary written test, which indicates "passed" or "not passed". The EVA evaluation of FVU (EVA, 2005) indicates that this test appears to have a very motivating effect as strong links are observed between the course and the content of the test. The

---

[10] The assumption is: first, if people decide to enrol in the education system, then, they would find the motivation to complete the courses or programmes and they may end up presenting themselves for final examinations or tests. This has not necessarily been the case.

[11] Each of 40 to 60 lessons or hours.

[12] The first of 40 to 60 lessons and the second of 60 to 80 lessons or hours.

formative assessment taking place during the courses as well as the final written test are regulated by a Ministerial Order on FVU (15.12.2000 and amendments). Only 39% of the adults in the training choose to take the final test.[13] For students who participated in 85% of the lessons, a "certificate of participation" can be issued.[14]

Section 4 on classroom observations and interviews will detail the organisation of formative assessment and its use in relation to the final "tests". Finally, Section 5 will raise a number of questions illustrated by the observations of the review team.

AVU

AVU courses provided by adult education centres (VUC), target adults (18+ years of age) who have not completed lower secondary education though grade 9. These students either dropped out or did not pass the non-compulsory school leaving examination. In the AVU courses, individuals have an opportunity to prepare for the lower secondary examination (school leaving examination). The AVU courses constitute a special adult education programme in that they follow the standards of the MOE,[15] although subjects taught are adapted to adult learners and thus not necessarily identical to basic school subjects.

Furthermore, the content and teaching methods differ from those in basic education at the compulsory level; for this reason, certificates are never identical to school leaving certificates for young people. In the words of the legislation, the certificate (obtained by successfully passing the school leaving examination) "gives identical right of access to further education" (OECD Thematic Review on Adult Learning, 2002).

For adults, the school leaving examination is organised as follows. For the 9th grade examination, the jury is composed of a "censor"[16] (a teacher from another school) and the actual teacher of the students. This teacher is responsible for preparing the questions for the school leaving examination. Subjects tested are selected at random from among those studied during the year (see Observation, case 2). The teachers ("censor" or other) do not have

---

[13]   Background report, 2006, page 19 (*www.oecd.org/edu/whatworks*)

[14]   *Ibid*.

[15]   The standards defined by the Ministry of Education are called: "aims and central knowledge and proficiency areas (final objectives). They cover the 42 subjects and compulsory topics. This follows the *Folkeskole* Act of 30/4-03. In this report, it is referred to as the "aims".

[16]   "Censor": this is a direct translation from Danish. It indicates that the person is a teacher from another school, not the actual teacher of the student. It could be seen as equivalent to an "outside assessor" in other systems. It respects the notion of external parties.

any specific training related to assessment. For the 10th grade examination, the MOE is responsible for preparing the questions.

The certification rate as well as the completion rate (completing the training without taking the exam) remains very low (see in Section 3.2.). A recent EVA evaluation[17] noted that the instructors found this problematic, and believe that it is important that students take the final test for the school leaving examination. Often, that certificate may be required to enrol in further vocational training and, more generally, it provides an opportunity to have an overview of the complete programme.

Formative assessment practices take place in a context where some students aim at passing the school leaving examination (or parts of it) and some do not. Approaches to formative assessment may differ as aims and objectives of the teaching and learning process so fundamentally differ. The final section on Questions will discuss these issues.

3. Formative assessment

As previously noted, the OECD/CERI defines formative assessment as "frequent interactive assessment of student progress and understanding to identify learning needs and adjust teaching appropriately".[18]

During the review in Denmark, many teachers revealed they do not know what a formative assessment is or could be.[19] They ensure the student progression by what they referred to as "the traditional way". As the review team discovered, this "traditional way" is usually exactly what is meant by formative assessment. Daily formative assessment is a regular practice in all the courses observed. In addition, the follow-up of students is also ensured through guidance and counselling, which is required by law for students up to age 25. In Denmark, formative assessment includes several specific components (dialogue, oral aspects) that will be presented below in the detailed discussion of the classroom observations and interviews conducted for this study. Areas for progress will be suggested through questions on formative assessment practices in the section on questions.

This section does not intend to provide any other definition of formative assessment**.** Rather, it proposes to briefly recall how formative and summative assessments were defined in the view of Bloom, Hastings and

---

[17]   Background report, 2006, p. 20 (*www.oecd.org/edu/whatworks*)

[18]   More detailed information is provided in "Improving Learning in Secondary Classrooms" (OECD, 2005a, pp. 43 to 45).

[19]   See also OECD, 2005a.

Madaus (1971). It then identifies some general characteristics of formative assessment in Denmark.

3.1. Concept: Bloom's view

In the "*Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning*", Bloom, Hasting and Madaus (1971) established the basis for what became the common distinction between formative and summative assessments.

> *.... evaluation should be both formative and summative in its scope. This distinction has been introduced primarily in hopes of bringing the evaluation process closer to the teaching and learning processes. Too often in the past, evaluation has been entirely* **summative** *in nature,* **taking place only at the end of the unit, chapter, course, or semester**, *when it is too late, at least for that particular group of students, to modify either process. Summative evaluation has as its primary goals grading or certifying students, judging the effectiveness of the teacher, and comparing curricula. Some teachers perform summative evaluation rather frequently. They may wish to grade student performance every few weeks or at the end of each chapter or unit of instruction. This intermediate assessment can be distinguished from evaluation that* **takes place at the end of a much longer period of time, such as a course or semester***. Longer-term summative evaluation infers by sampling from the model, the extent to which a student has realised the entire range of outcomes contained in the model. Intermediate summative evaluation, on the other hand, is concerned with more direct, less generalisable, and less transferable outcomes.*
>
> *Both intermediate and longer-range summative evaluations are important and should be minimized.* **However, if evaluation is to aid both the teaching and learning processes, it must take place not only at the termination of these processes but while they are still fluid and susceptible to modification.** <u>**Formative evaluation**</u>*, as the name implies,* **intervenes during the formation of the student, not when the process is thought to be completed. It points to areas of needed remediation** *so that immediately subsequent instruction and study can be made more pertinent and beneficial. Formative evaluation impinges on smal1er comparatively independent units of the curriculum ....*

Bloom, Hastings and Madaus (1971) insist on the crucial role of the objectives or "standards". Stating meaningful, unambiguous objectives of intended educational outcomes is a condition for formative assessment as

well as for summative evaluation. In the Danish context, the objectives or "standards" are the aims set up by the MOE.

3.2. Formative and summative assessment in Denmark

Formative assessment is a continuous process that is vital for the instructor as well as for the participant.[20] For the instructor, it is the basis for the adaptation of his/her planning and the adjustment of the educational approaches to any particular needs "revealed" through the process. This method was observed in the various visits: the precise descriptions are to be found in the following part of this section.

A Ministerial Order stipulates a framework for formative assessment in FVU. The Legal Act on FVU (act n° 487 of 31.05.2000) and the Ministerial Order on FVU of 15.12.2000 indicate that "teachers and participants evaluate continuously the form, the content and the planning implementation of the teaching and the learning process" (with the "learning process" referring to formative assessment). Centrally set tests exist for each level, or module, of the FVU provision so that a FVU test can be taken at the end of each module. The test is not compulsory. If a participant chooses not to register, the head of the VUC can attest that the person attained the level required for enrolment in the next FVU module or level.

For **AVU**, the summative assessment is the optional school leaving examination (Grade 9). The school leaving examination takes the form of a written or oral test aligned with the aims of the MOE (as for initial education). The certification rate increased from 40% in 2001 (Background Report, Denmark 2001) to 58% of students who took the final test in one or more subjects in 2005 (EVA, 2005). Considering the collective effort carried out by the Danish educational authorities for this training, as well as the instructors' efforts to closely follow courses for certification and to articulate formative assessment with final examinations, the rate of certification neither matches the efforts nor fulfills the society's needs for a competent workforce at all levels. This will be illustrated in Section 4 on observations and interviews and further discussed in Section 5 on Questions.

It should be noted that a certificate for participation can be granted if the adult participated in the module for 85% of the time. The same principles are followed for the courses of Danish as a second language or Danish for foreign adult.

---

[20] Background report, 2006, p. 20 (*www.oecd.org/edu/whatworks*).

3.3. User satisfaction

It is mandatory for Adult Education Centres to conduct "surveys of user satisfaction". This feedback can be requested several times during a programme, especially if a participant is at risk of dropping out. These "user satisfaction surveys" should not be confused with formative assessment: the focus is not the learning process of individuals but rather the general condition and context for the participants in a programme (access to the facilities, the centre, the teacher, etc.).

4. Classrooms observations and interviews

During the visits, the review team observed that formative assessment is a well-known practice amongst instructors in adult education in both FVU and AVU settings. In Denmark, formative assessments are frequent, usually on small units of learning, and later with documents in which progressions and difficulties are recorded orally and individually. Formative and summative assessments are in some ways linked.

The teachers design most of the formative assessments. They either create their own tools or they adapt those proposed at national level. In general, a "typical" formative assessment in these Danish programmes has several characteristics:

1. dialogue based;

2. an oral dimension including the openness of the process (the students are not afraid to ask questions);

3. a "position-test" or "diagnostic-test" is usually practiced at the start of a course to define levels and to plan the courses and lessons according;

4. formative assessment is viewed as a continuous process;

5. teachers see formative assessment as part of their daily practice;

6. written recording occurs but is not systematic, as spoken dialogue is the rule;

7. school management is welcome to support the teacher in doing these regular assessments;

8. generally, "diagnostic-tests" are not repeated during and/or at the end of the course.[21]

The three visits (classroom observation and interview) are described below. Detailed information is given on the classroom observed; the objectives of the course observed; the organisation; the formative assessment practices observed and discussed during the interviews; information on particular assessment tools, an overview on formative assessment by the team of teachers, and any other relevant aspects.

The case studies are presented in the following order:

- an FVU-Danish course, the Trailer Mobile Teaching Unit – Danfoss, Nordborg, Als;

- an AVU-English course, VUC Nord-sjælland, Frederikssund;

- an AVU-Danish and an AVU-Math courses in the Youth Class (UngeKlassen), at VUC Århus.

This order starts with the basic education courses in FVU and is then followed by the AVU, aiming at the end of lower secondary education level.

4.1. Case 1 – FVU-Reading course, The Trailer Mobile Teaching Unit – Danfoss, Nordborg, Als

The Trailer Project started as a teaching experiment designed to meet the requirements of local companies for a competent workforce, as well as the educational needs of unskilled workers. The history and background is described in Box 1 below.

The review team observed an FVU Danish course organised within the *trailer mobile teaching unit* located at the Danfoss Company, Nordborg, Als. Before the observations, the review team met with the Head of Adult Learning Centre Sonderjylland (VUC Sønderjylland), the Head of the Department for VUC Industry and Trade, Southern Jutland, Branch Sønderborg and three VUC teachers (Danish and mathematics in the trailer units).

---

21 To schematise, one could say that "learning needs are diagnosed at the beginning of courses or programmes but learning progresses are not measured at the end". This schematic view is used to underline that importance is given to the diagnostic of personal needs rather than to a focus on progression towards the aims (standards) set by the Ministry of Education for the particular course or programme.

Box 1: History and Background of the Trailer Unit
The Trailer Mobile Teaching Unit in Southern Jutland

Several years ago, a study known as The Competence Account in Sønderjylland (2001) indicated that Southern Jutland suffered from a basic skills problem: there were a majority of persons aged over the mean country level, as well as an over-representation of unskilled workers. Therefore, the county of Southern Jutland launched a project funded in part by the European Social Fund. The study revealed that the target groups did not tend to participate in education and training proposed by the local learning centres, often during leisure time, the VUC proposed that the classroom would come to the enterprises and take place during work hours.

Two trailers were equipped as classrooms with excellent IT facilities to form "*trailer mobile teaching units*". Consultants from the Adult Learning Centres raised awareness of enterprises in the catchment areas. The outcomes of the project were positive and the county decided to finance the activity.

Many unskilled workers attended the courses and sat for the school leaving examination. External evaluation (through a questionnaire) revealed satisfaction amongst participants as enterprises. Working climate and skills improved. Enterprises noticed progress in attitudes towards flexibility, with workers accepting changing functions as they became able to fulfil jobs demanding reading skills. A general experience is that education leads to more education.

Today, half of the FVU training courses proposed by the VUC take place in enterprises, and are organised according to their needs. Some prefer periods with decreasing workloads and other set time aside for the training, which is included in working hours. These courses are free of charge for the enterprise and typically, there are no fees for participants. This is a central feature of this training. In addition, the enterprise also runs its own vocational training, relevant to their specific developments, though this training does not focus on general and /or basic skills domains of the FVU curricula.

The *Danfoss Company*[22] has a decentralised structure with many autonomous sections. Certain categories of employees (section head and the shop steward) have an urgent need to improve skills in reading/writing, mathematics and English. The enterprise has its own training facilities; however, for the adult basic skills programmes and literacy (FVU), the employees follow courses in the *Trailer* located within the enterprise compound.

Classroom

This course in Danish was part of the four consecutive lessons proposed by the *Trailer mobile teaching unit* to 10 participants – eight male and two female – aged from 25-50, half of whom are foreigners. The trailer is present for 10 weeks within the factory compound. The course is run on work days from 11am to 2pm. The participants work individually on computers, except and in paris when working with questions and answers.

---

[22]   The *Danfoss group* is a leader in development and production of mechanical and electronic products and control; to heat and cool homes and offices; refrigerate food and control production. *Danfoss* count 18 000 employees globally out of what 6 000 are located in Denmark.

The objective of the course and of each lesson is to practice written Danish. The teaching material is part of the equipment of the *Trailer*: computer software, FVU Danish assignments provided by the MOE, and documents prepared locally by the county for flexible FVU studies. Hardcopies of written texts are available, *e.g.* magazines, advertisements, newspapers as well as dictionaries. The classroom is set up with one large table, which participants sit around, and whiteboards. The teacher and each participant have a laptop computer connected to the classroom network.

Objectives of the Danish course

The teacher describes the course as very structured, and the participants are aware of the objectives. Informally, the teacher assesses each step towards the objectives. The diagnostic test does not catch all the differences and nuances within the group nor does it highlight the various motives for participation. It was revealed to the review team that some participants are dyslexic, while some are non-native speakers seeking to improve their language skills.

For all the courses, the students take a diagnostic test (spelling, reading, discussion) on the basis of which they are placed at FVU-Danish level 1 or 2, as defined by the MOE. After the oral and written entrance tests, the teacher prepares individual programmes for each student in an effort to match their needs, demands and motives. The teacher takes notes during the course, which are computerised and accessible to participants. The groups show great interest in history and the teacher provides information about books adapted to their reading skills for leisure time reading.

Organisation of the course

The courses are fully individualised: objectives and programmes are specific to each adult. The teacher goes from one student to the next, helping each to complete the activity undertaken. An adult who has trouble in Danish works on a particular exercise proposed by the teacher especially for him. He appreciates the opportunity to study at his own pace. Another student is focusing on improving skills in written Danish: the first activity was on spelling and the following on punctuation. During the observation, two adults were involved in a question and answer activity. Questions based on information from magazines and answers could be found by looking for information in the same magazines. They communicate via the Internet. One of the two students comments that the teacher is perceived as "not just

teaching for getting the participants to pass a final test". A dyslexic participant's objective is to improve reading and writing skills.[23]

This course is appreciated because each adult can organise his/her studies, while the teacher checks his work. Young foreign engineers attend with the aim to improve oral and written skills in Danish, as the course enables students to practice the language in a Danish language environment. The activities concerned Danish grammar and required using dictionaries. The individualisation of the courses is maximal: each adult enjoys a teaching totally dedicated to his or her level and difficulties, way of learning, speed of learning, etc.

Formative assessment practices

Observed Danish reading course

During the observation by the review team, the teacher and a student did an informal assessment on level 1 skill in written Danish as defined by the MOE. Results were positive so the participant moved to level 2. The teacher tracks individual progress during the course, and course, advice and exercises, by moving learners to the next level of challenge.

The Danish course is launched with a "diagnostic test" or "entry level test" provided by the MOE for each of the 4 levels of the FVU programme. Based on the results of this test, the teacher plans and organises the learning activities, while tracking individual progress. Tests to move on to the next unit or level are set when a participant is expected to be able to meet its demands. This is repeated each time a participant appears ready for the next test. Each participant establishes his or her collection of tests, which is considered a portfolio documenting scope and progress of learning.

Mathematics course

Whilst the review team did not observe a mathematics class within the *trailer mobile training unit*, the interview with the math teacher discusses formative assessment in the mobile training context. The examples are not related to the *Danfoss* enterprise but to several other enterprises where the *trailer mobile teaching unit* offers courses.

---

23   In cases of dyslexia, the teacher seeks advice from the Special Needs section or/and establishes collaborates with a teacher trained to cope with dyslexia The Special Needs section diagnoses, and provides special courses or help to regular teachers confronted with isolated dyslexia adult.

The teacher conducts an initial interview with the participants about their objectives and needs and proposes appropriate exercises. For example, social workers at residential homes need to know about household accounts; farmers need to know about calculating chemicals for spraying crops, and forestry workers need to know about mathematics related to their work, and so on.

The teacher establishes equilibrium between these needs and the official curriculum. At the end of each lesson, the teacher sums up and rehearses assignments. At the beginning of the programme, the teacher teaches to the whole group and progressively individualises the assignments. The students take their assignments with them as many use them for practical matters in their daily work. Assignments are corrected one-on-one, in collaboration with the teacher. Correction takes places individually in collaboration with the teacher. The teacher provides his/her assessment once the goals are fulfilled.

Examples of evaluation tools[24]

Following the Ministerial order 1200 of 15/12/2000 the VUCs are required to track learner attendance. The VUC Southern Jutland uses different tools such as "checklists" and registration of progress (see Table 2 below).[25]

Checklist for individual learning progresses

This sample checklist is from FVU-Math, level 1. It indicates the minimum level necessary to fulfil the aims set by the MOE. Local and regional teachers adapt the national aims, for example, to the enterprises' needs. The Danish course structure has four levels and the mathematics course two. Within each level, the curriculum divides into topics; for each topic a percentage of the 60 lessons are allocated.

This is an individual checklist. The checklist indicates the title and content of the course; the percentage of teaching time spent per subject during the 60 hours of the programme; it indicates if the outcomes of the assessments are positive or not and it specify when the content learned in actually known.

---

24   To be consistent with terminology in OECD (2005a): "Assessment" is used for individuals and "Evaluation" for courses, programmes or systems.

25   See Section 5, point 5.4 for a more complete presentation on questions related to formative assessment and lifelong learning.

Table 2. Evaluation tool used by individual students: checklist

Name of participant					
No.	Title	Content	% of teaching time on 60 hours course	Assessed	Date
1	Numbers	Estimate, counting, calculator	10	Ok	xx-xx-2005
2	The four basic arithmetical operations	Plus, minus, multiply, divide, commercial calculation	10	Ok	xx-xx-2005
3	Fractions	Double, halve, receipts, calculation of prices	10	Ok	xx-xx-2005
4	Percentage	Discount	10	Ok	xx-xx-2005
5	Wages and salaries	Wage fixing, taxes and fees	10	Ok	xx-xx-2005
6	Negative numbers	Numbers, weather, graphics	10	Ok	xx-xx-2005
7	Measurement	Maps, units of measurement and scales	10	Ok	xx-xx-2005
8	Weight	units of measurement, postal calculations	10	Ok	xx-xx-2006
9	Time	Conversion of days, weeks and hours, the clock	10	Ok	xx-xx-2006
10	Formula	Completion, reading, giro form, postal orders, timetables	10	Ok	xx-xx-2006
11					

Recognition by the CVU of the level achieved in different courses of a programme

Programmes in Danish, mathematics and other subjects are always composed of several modules, depending on the level of the FVU courses. Modules are composed by a variable number of lessons.[26]

In the course observed, the teacher progressively filled up such a list by class or group of students. The table provides an overview of the progression for the entire class. At every point of the course period, it is possible to see how much of the course is completed. The teacher completes the checklist and the participants receive a copy for their personal documentation.

---

[26] Background report, 2006, page 12, Table 2 (*www.oecd.org/edu/whatworks*).

Table 3. Evaluation tool used by teacher on modules follow by the students

Class and period :											
Name/number /class	M1	M2	M3	M4	......	M17	M18	M19	M20	Done	Number of lessons
Participant 1											
Participant 2											
Participant 3											
Participant 4											
Participant 5											
Participant 6											
Participant 7											
Participant 8											
Participant 9											
Participant 10											

Overview on formative assessment practices within the trailer mobile training unit

The VUC has a clear position and practice concerning formative assessment: the individualised lessons are based on systematic and regular formative assessments. The team of teachers interviewed by the review team all use this approach. This makes it possible for the teacher to adapt the levels, the progression, and the speed of the individual lessons throughout the course.

The regular and systematic use of (oral and written) formative assessments enables the teacher to ensure a particular participant has acquired the knowledge and abilities related to a topic, and that he/she is ready to move to the next level. These formative assessments can be informal and on an ad hoc basis. Therefore, the classroom reality may quickly change. The progression of each participant as well as the speed of that progression requires teachers to be flexible in changing the planning of the "individual" lessons. An assessment sheet (see Table 2) is used as a checklist for each participant. The MOE demands this type of documentation, which can be adapted to the local needs and ways of proceeding of the teacher (see Table 3). Additionally, teachers take notes about participants' progress throughout the course, which are accessible electronically to participants.

Outcomes of formative and summative evaluations remain confidential, as they concern the individual participant. When the enterprise requests access to attendance rates and examination results, the course participant must give their permission. A final and overall evaluation marks the end of the programme: this takes place with the students, the teachers and a representative of the enterprise.

The discussion with the teachers and the observations highlight several additional aspects concerning formative assessment:

1. Informal ways to assess students are dominant, although students are not necessarily aware that the assessment is taking place.

2. Transfer from one internal course level to the next can be done in a very informal manner (as moving on to a more challenging material).

3. Written checklists are prepared for official use, but they are also used as informal, internal tools to document participants' progress.

4. Portfolios are organised as collections of corrected assignments to which learners can refer.

5. Computer files with saved assignments serve much like a portfolio.

6. Teacher's computerized notes are an informal formative assessment method.

7. The pre- and post-test practice links formative and summative evaluation together.

8. The county of Southern Jutland has established an e-learning system named Net-VUC. The activity checklists and the questionnaire are accessible on a national web based communication system.[27]

4.2. Case 2 – AVU English course, VUC Nord-sjælland, Heimdalsvej 1A, Frederikssund

The review team observed an AVU-English course; followed by a meeting with the main teacher and then a meeting with the class team of teachers.

Classroom

The complete group of students consists of 20 adults enrolled in an English course equivalent to Grade 9 in a *Folkeskole*. The day of the observation, 11 adults participated as well as two teachers, the main teacher and a co-teacher whose participation depends on the learning activities planned. The age of the adult students range from the early twenties to the late fifties or early sixties. The classroom was organised with the chairs in a square, planned so that everybody should be able to see each other. ICT material is available and used.

---

[27] See: *www.vucsyd.dk*

The AVU-English course prepares adults to present the grade 9 oral examination at the end of the school year. The observation took place eight months into the course. New enrolments can take place any time during the school year (one student arrived 6 months after the start of the course). The AVU-English course is 2h50 minutes and includes several breaks. During the observed course, the students were asked to do short oral presentation (7 minutes minimum) on American or English culture, and to have a conversation on a subject defined by series of pictures – also in relation to American or English culture.

Objective of the course

The objective of the assignment given by the teacher is to practice for the final summative examination for the school-leaving certificate level at the end of grade 9. For that examination, students must be able to make an English oral presentation in the form of a conversation (around 5 minutes) that includes cultural aspects in the United States and in the United Kingdom. During the visit of the review team, the teacher proposed different exercises to achieve these objectives and to help prepare students for the oral examination (see point 3 below).

As the final school-leaving certificate is not compulsory, some of the adults in the group decided against taking it. Often the youngest students will take the exam to eventually pursue grade 10 or, vocational education and training.

Organisation of the course

To achieve the objective of the course observed, two types of exercises were requested by the teacher: presentation and conversation based on a general subject and accompanying photos.

The oral presentation

Students had 3 weeks before the visit to work in groups of 3 to 5 people. Presentations covered several subjects on the United States: history; legal organisation; sub-groups in the population; well-known American presidents, etc. Acceptable sources of information included their textbook[28] as well as the Internet.

The oral presentation was an individual exercise. Typically, students wrote their report and then presented it orally without reading directly from the paper. Some of the older students had never had the experience of making an oral presentation.

---

[28]   These textbooks are designed for adults.

The main teacher would interrupt with various remarks (on pronunciation, grammatical mistakes, etc.), as well as to ask about additional information related to the substance of the presentation. After the presentation, the students give their own comments based on an "assessment form" (see Box 2) prepared by the teacher. This form is regularly used by the students in the classroom to assess themselves and the other students during the various exercises. The teachers can adapt evaluation tools and criteria to particular classroom circumstances. Box 3 provides an example from a booklet: *Foreign languages. A programme guideline for general adult education (AV).*

Box 2. Assessment tool on learning style, used by teachers and students

The discussion covers questions such as:
- How is it to be a student (rank from 1 to 6)
- How do you feel about and experience the teacher?
- How do you evaluate your work as a student?
- What about absences?
- Overview of how the student learns
- Use of the study plan
- What about the learning environment in the VUC?
- What about the learning environment in the group?
- What can I do as a teacher to help you (the student)?
- What does the student do to take responsibility of his/her own learning process?

Box 3. Assessment tool used by teachers and students

Criteria for evaluation – ORAL	Level 1 English/ German/ French	Level 2 English	Level 2 German/ French
Communication skills -understanding of an unfamiliar text - etc…	---	X	X
Use of language - be able to make oneself understood - be able to express oneself with a good variety of words and with precision - etc….	X ---	--- X	--- ---
Language acquisition -use of time set aside for preparation reading strategy, use of dictionaries, etc… - use of communication strategies	--- X	X X	--- X
Culture and society -to be able to form a personal view on an unfamiliar text - etc …	X	X	X

The conversation

The basic material to support the conversation would, for example, consist of six pictures on one page about a general theme. This would be the starting point of the conversation exercise and/or test. Groups of five to six adults receive the set of pictures with approximately 15 minutes to prepare themselves for a conversation. At the final school leaving examination, the same exercise is undertaken on an individual basis, not as a group.

Formative assessment practices

Formative assessments during the course

During the presentation, the main teacher frequently interrupted the student's presentation to correct elements such as pronunciation and grammatical mistakes; to ask questions on content; and to suggest alternate ways of presenting. The teacher's intervention might also draw attention to the progress made since the previous presentation. Other students are welcome to give their own assessments as well as to offer suggestions on grammar and/or pronunciation.

The co-teacher has a different role and intervenes with questions on the cultural aspects. The opportunity arose to begin a debate on "how to master anxiety when speaking in public". Students and teachers gave suggestions: practicing in front of a mirror, playing a sport, or having a good night's sleep, etc. In general, the students made positive comments and the teacher used a checklist of criteria or "assessment form" adapted from a tool proposed by the MOE[29] (see Box 2) for critiquing (grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, etc.) presentations by other students as well as their own presentations.

After the presentations, time was devoted to a general evaluation of the course[30] to place the presentations in a "larger perspective" including the aspect of "personal development". The objective is to improve linkages with cultural and historical questions and to develop "thinking capacities" of the students. "Personal development" is a general aim of the AVU courses and as such, it is always included in the courses on English, Danish, Mathematics and Science.

---

[29] *Fremmedsprog. Undervisningsvejledning til almen voksenuddannelse*, Ministry of Education 1999, *http://pub.uvm.dk/1999/fremmed2/* in the Chapter "*Prøven*".

[30] Not an assessment of individuals progresses or learning.

Formative assessments during the year

Students can start these adult basic courses at different points during the school year. Those starting late one year may follow several months of courses the following year. This organisation implies an individualised teaching approach. The teacher assesses the English level of each student by a paper and pencil test (grammar, translation, etc, taken from an English schoolbook). The teacher has learned that students demonstrating difficulties on this test will also have difficulties during the course. The teacher has used this test 30 to 50 times at enrolment as a tool to measure a level of proficiency, which enables the teacher to organise the class into subgroups by levels.

In general, the teacher prepares different subjects during a single session, typically including a variety of grammar, reading, writing, oral and conversational exercises, followed by exercises and tests. In accordance with MOE decisions, "cultural dimensions" are now included in the curriculum, and each school decides how to implement this, in view of its inclusion on the final test.

Throughout the course formative assessments and practice tests are directly linked to the final summative examination. The students are aware of what will be assessed, and the exercises and formative assessments are conceived as training for this exam (even if not all students will take the non-compulsory exam).

The English teacher has designed four different types of documents to follow students during the school year:

1. Portfolio
2. Inquiry on material aspects
3. Context of learning
4. Learning styles

Portfolio is a computerised tool. After students are trained to use the computer this tool serves to keep their "best productions". It proposes self-assessment on items such as "the targets one sets for oneself; their importance, their pride; how much reading and writing on new learning; learning new things".

Context of learning. A document to record various life elements that can affect learning (family problems, friends, etc.) serves as a guideline for individual interviews. These take place six weeks into the course. The objective is to prevent dropping out: if a difficulty arises, the teacher and the school can be proactive in attempting to prevent the drop out. Questions

cover the teaching process; the responsibilities of the teacher and the student(s) in the social climate; the meaning of learning; whether it is pleasant or boring; what is next?

Learning styles. The teacher conducts individual interviews six weeks after the course starts (see Box 3 above). The discussion aims to encourage the student taking responsibility for his/her own learning.

For the school leaving examination at the end of grade 9, the jury is composed of a teacher from another school (called the "censor") and the present teachers of the students (as described in 2.4.). For the observed course, the current teacher, who is responsible for the school leaving examination questions, prepares a conversation-subject illustrated by pictures. The candidate learns of the random selection from material studied in the course at the time of the examination.

An inquiry on material aspects enables the teacher to ensure that practical material questions such as availability of parking spaces, good functioning of the coffee machine, etc., will not interfere with time and/or concentration needed to learn;

Overview of formative assessment practices by the team of teachers

The discussion with a group of subject teachers underlines several aspects concerning formative assessment:

1. The school leaving examination for grade 9 is the clear priority for the team of teachers.

2. In all courses, work is organised by projects, two individualised general discussions with each student during the year. This does not include shorter discussions after tests and exercises.

3. It was explained that: "*The concept of class goes away and now, the learner is central*". The teacher is still at the front of the class but the learner learns anywhere, whether it be in and/or out of the classrooms. The attendance of students is not formally checked; there are no strict rules on specifying motives for absence. Courses are organised around projects, which can be fulfilled in school or elsewhere. This was mentioned as a "complicated situation for the teachers" (see Section 5.4. for a detailed discussion).

4. Informal ways to assess students exist, where teachers know a student is assessed but the student does not. This allows the teacher to reorganise teaching if needed.

5. The Log Book is mentioned though not used. It encountered a high resistance from the students ("*I don't want to participate*") because it is a tool too different from what the adult students expect as a teaching method.

6. Teacher meetings on student progress are perceived as being more relevant when organised by domain instead of when the entire team of teachers meets.

4.3. Case 3 – AVU-Danish and AVU-Math courses in the Youth Class (UngeKlassen), VUC Århus, Sct. Joseph, Bülowsgade 3, 8000 Århus C

The review team observed the youth class through Danish and mathematics lessons. The "youth class" is an educational experiment especially designed to meet the needs of young adults, who left the mandatory lower secondary education without an examination or with results insufficient of the demands for upper secondary education or vocational training. The youth class thus differs from ordinary AVU classes that mix all various adult ages. It is a one-year programme which culminates in taking one or more examinations. After the observations the review team had a meeting with the youth class teacher team.

Classroom

The group of students consists of 17 young adults (age 17-30) enrolled in a programme equivalent to grade 9 in *"The Folkeskole"* which is adapted to adults. The principles for knowledge and proficiency areas are the same as for the grade 9 and the school leaving examination; but the curriculum content and organisation are adapted to the life of young adults. The programme includes Danish (mother tongue) including cultural subjects and arts, mathematics, English, and ICT. Each school day includes subject classes, guidance and homework.

The classroom observed was organised with the chairs and tables in rows facing the blackboard. ICT material was available in the neighbouring room, which also functioned as room available for group as well as individual activities.

This AVU programme package prepares young adults to sit for an examination equivalent to the grade 9 school leaving examination. The examination in Danish and mathematics includes written and oral components. The programme runs from August through June, and the

observation took place in late April 2006. New enrolments take place during the school year.

Objective of the Danish course

The objective of the assignment given by the teacher was to practice for the final summative examination. The examination (in May and June) takes the form of a written assignment and a conversation during which the students must be able to perform a text analysis. During the observed Danish lessons students did oral presentations on texts from the course curriculum and received comments from the class and the teacher. The criteria for assessments (formative and summative) were shared, with three days set aside for the practice.

Some of the students had prepared individual text presentations following a specific model for analysis provided by the teacher. This model includes an account of several issues related to the text: the theme, the author, student's arguments for choice of text, abstract, themes and issues included in the text, genre, and structure of text. During the visit of the review team, the fellow students and teacher evaluated the presentation as well as proposed themes and arguments for themes.

Although the school leaving examination is not compulsory, the resulting certificate is a pre-condition for enrolment in many training programmes and certified courses. The courses may demand minimum grades in some subjects as enrolment criteria. Some of the youth class students attended the class to improve their results to meet these enrolment criteria.

Organisation of the Danish course

To achieve the objective of the course observed, two types of exercises were requested by the teacher: presentation and conversation based on a text.

The oral presentation and conversation

The assignment is a review of selected texts included in the work of the year. The aims for the review are manifold: to go over the curriculum, to practice text analysis, to establish a synthesis of the work of the year, and to practice individual presentations and examination techniques. All students are requested to do an individual presentation; a type of simulation of the oral part of the school leaving examination.

For some of the oral presentations the students had written a text for the issues by which they introduced their topic. Other students did it without support from notes; the teacher supported them by asking questions for the presenting student as for the class. During the presentation, the teacher and the students use a model agreed upon as basis for questions and comments. They help each other to extract important themes and relate to their personal views.

Some of the students revealed problems with grammar and conjugation. The difficulties were diagnosed by the teacher and the students, which the teacher took the opportunity to discuss after the module.

Formative assessments during the course

During the presentation, the teacher requested comments from the class and provided his own feedback. The model set up a natural framework for dividing the presentation into smaller parts. At the beginning of each part, the teacher made an intervention of the student presentation summing what the student has presented and bringing in evaluative comments. Later on, the course turned into a more open conversation, while relating ideas, comments and criticism to the text and the curriculum. These courses and practices aim at the development of students' analytical capacities and relating issues from literature to human existence, issues and problems. In fact, formative assessment is integrated in the discussions when teachers question their students.

Organisation of the mathematics course

Objectives

The objective of the assignment given by the teacher is to practice for the written part of the summative examination at the end of the school year. For the three hour long examination, students must be able to answer a set of mathematics problems presented as assignments about a theme such as "Golf" or "Dog – Man's Best Friend". The day before the observation there is a practice test on written mathematics.

Organisation

During the mathematics lesson, the students initially receive a class-wide feedback on an assignment, followed by individual guidance conversations by the teacher in a separate room. The co-teacher provides

individual and group assistance to help solve a new set of assignments, correcting mistakes and explaining misunderstandings.

Formative assessment practice: class-wide feedback and conversation

The mathematics teacher begins the lesson with a general discussion about the assignment set from the "practice test" the day before, marking the assignments that could pass the examination with a grade and those that would not pass. Not many students succeeded on the test, claiming it was a difficult assignment. The teachers and students discuss how to improve outcomes, as all the students in that group want to pass the school leaving examination.

The teacher's advice is to practice in a strategic manner. The teacher and students have prepared some papers in collaboration named "The Pearls". This is a collection of solutions to mathematics problems. The idea is that when a student encounters a mathematics problem he/she can consult "The Pearls" and use the model from a compatible problem to guide the solution of the particular problem. Students are permitted to use this type of individual aids during the examination. Many students reveal difficulties with calculations concerning space and volume as well as solving a simple equation.

The mathematics teacher prepares solutions to the typical problems mentioned above in collaboration with the students for "The Pearls" collection. By asking questions, she guides the students to the proper solutions, and encourages the students to share how she can be most supportive. The steps in the solutions are written on the blackboard. The co-teacher moves around and provides additional support. Then the class continues with individual work on the assignment to correct mistakes and misunderstandings and to solve remaining problems from the "practice test" lessons. In addition, the class receives a similar set to continue to practice in the class and at home.

Then the teachers divide the work between them. The co-teacher stays in the class and continues to support the students' individual work and the mathematics teacher goes to the neighbouring room and calls the students for individual conversations about their achievements and problems. At the end of each conversation the mathematics teacher makes an agreement on what to do before next lessons.

Formative assessment practices

The review team observed formative assessment practices during the course and the practices during the year were explained during the interviews.

Formative assessments during the course

During the class conversation, the mathematics teacher encourages the students to speak up about problems and keeps the class positive about passing, encouraging activities the students can initiate to improve their skills. The teacher clarifies problems and focuses on explicit strategies to pass the upcoming examination. During the individual conversations, the focus is narrowed to the individual student's problems and strategies for improvement. Within a few minutes of conversation the student obtains a personalised assignment and – if necessary – a promise of a "pearl" as a personal support tool.

Formative assessments in Danish and mathematics during the year

The mathematics teacher provides extensive written feedback and individual oral feedback when correcting written assignments. The Danish and mathematics teachers encourage their students to take notes, which serve as individual tools for studying. Mostly this ability is practiced by copying from the blackboard. Writing a collection of "pearls" is another method. The teacher provides some of them; while the students themselves are invited to add their own.

General counselling and guidance are important components of the youth class. The Youth Counselling Institution, in charge of transition from lower secondary to upper secondary education or vocational training, encourages youth with no set plans to visit the Adult Education Centre, where they can have conversations to help to clarify knowledge and proficiency levels without formal testing. Each young person also explains the personal aims and targets for the one year programme. Each student has a contact teacher and they meet regularly, as needed. The class has a "joint evaluation" meetings weekly: in which card games; focus on social competencies and study abilities, and collective work aiming at moving away from stressful experiences is proposed. The class has also taken up work on conflict coping strategies.

The Youth Class teaching team

The four teachers working in the youth class form a team. One of them teaches Danish as well as ICT technology, and combines assignments. In the youth class, the FVU is integrated into AVU. English lessons are streamed at two different levels. One of the team members runs the preparatory education, and the content is chosen based on information about unresolved issues–often revealed in written Danish assignments.

These teachers – like all staff members at the VUC – are trained in conflict resolution according to the mediation approach. Additionally, they have taken different relevant courses *e.g.* about youth, bilingualism, counselling and guidance. The team collaborates on establishing a social framework around the class. The participants have many different backgrounds, but they share similar experiences on being a student and going to school even if they participate in this programme by choice. Working to create motivation for studies and positive self-efficacy is as necessary for these youngsters as are the studies themselves. The needs are met through a close collaboration among the teachers and by easy access to personal meetings with the teachers about issues and problems as soon as they arise. Information and educational needs are shared, and the team takes joint responsibility to address them.

When solicited, students all give positive feedback about the class and programme. The discussion with the students underlines three major aspects. First, the positive relationship with the teachers is strongly enjoyed. Second, these young adults have learned to be responsible in areas such as regular attendance and punctuality. Finally, the courses have enabled them to document their own capacity to have good or even high grades, to envisage pursuing a vocationally oriented education and training and to get a job.

Overview on formative assessment practices within the team

The discussion with the class team of teachers underlines several aspects concerning formative assessment:

1. The school leaving examination after grade 9 is the clear priority for the team of teachers and for the students. Most of the young adults will apply to a vocational education and training institution, which requires the certificate of the examination.

2. Informal ways to assess students are dominant, meaning that while the teachers know that students are assessed, the students themselves may not. This allows the teacher to reorganise teaching if needed.

3. Written assessments are not kept by the students.

4. For the first semester, teachers prepared an overall evaluation format for more formalised meetings among student, family and the contact teacher. This proved very time consuming and family members did not often attend. Subsequently teachers cancelled this type of assessment and meetings.

5. For the student follow-up, the regular team meetings are perceived as being much more relevant than the formal meetings.

6. Group conversations with students reveal great appreciation of the easy access to teachers.

To conclude, the indirect assessment procedures communicate knowledge to the students about their development.

5. Selected questions

This section analyses formative assessment based on the practices observed in the classroom and the information collected by interviews. It takes into account the background report and the previous sections of this case study. It also relies on in-depth discussion with the officials of the MOE and the Centre of Evaluation in CVU-Funen.

The section focuses on six questions, concentrating on how formative assessment functions and is eventually affected by aspects of adult education provision. Some are general and apply to many countries; some are specific to the Danish situation. The questions are:

1. What value for certification of elementary and lower secondary education?

2. Specific issues concerning certification in Denmark and how this affects formative assessment?

3. Formative assessment is about measuring steps and progression. Would there be any areas where practice could be improved?

4. How is formative assessment influenced by lifelong learning?

5. Oral tradition is heavily present in formative assessment practices: what could a stronger emphasis on written dimensions contribute?

6. What, in the future, could be proposed to the teachers to improve practices – would the Centre of evaluation have a particular role and how would the MOE lead, manage and implement the priority given to education for adults with basic skills needs?

5.1. The value for certification at elementary and lower secondary education

A first general remark applying to most OECD countries, concerns the issue of certification at elementary and lower secondary education levels (for pupils in school as well as those in adult education).

How does the certification issue affect formative assessment?

- Would it change (self) perception if during the hiring process employers systematically request the presentation of FVU certificates, AVU certificates or the compulsory school certificate?
- Would it help to motive adults with basic skills?
- Would an information campaign help to value the school leaving examination as well as the tests (FVU)? Would a social partner campaign directed at pupils who complete or almost completed lower secondary education without sitting for the examination, help to value the effort needed for achieving the certificate?
- When, at the early stage of a course, students decide not to sit for the final tests or exams, they will not participate in certain formative assessments. This creates problems both for following their learning progression and for planning of the courses by the teacher (this was actually observed in a visit).

5.2. Certification issues in Danish society

The Danish education for adults with basic skills needs presents several major positive elements:

1. There is a large and diversified supply of education for adults with basic skills needs.

2. Provision of education relates directly to the aims or standards defined by the MOE for the appropriate levels.

3. Diplomas are seen as important for self-esteem, and not for selection.[31]

4. There are strong policies to ensure open access to education and training.

5. Guidance, counselling and diagnostic tests are commonly used to ensure that adults are enrolled in the appropriate course and at the appropriate level.

6. Within the courses observed, there is genuine dialogue between adult students and the instructors or staff. Difficulties are debated; ways to progress are discussed between teachers and students. Nobody is afraid to talk; there is a widely shared belief that learning should be a pleasure.

---

[31]   This was explained by teachers as well as by officials in the Ministry of Education.

Amongst the difficulties that keep coming back in reports and studies as well as in the study visits, one can note:

1. A "culture of delay" described as a tendency of young adults to postpone their studies. Characteristic of the transition from upper secondary to higher education studies, it also concerns lower secondary education as pupils either drop out or enter the labour market for a period before ending in adult education courses.

2. The "social acceptance" of the "repair function" of (certain parts) of the adult education. As seen in the previous sections, the repair system exists because adults (younger and older) are in need of it. Considering the results of recent literacy surveys of 15-year-olds (OECD, 2001; 2004a), one might be concerned that this "repair function" will continue to be necessary.

3. The exceptional efforts "for access policies" have not been complemented by sufficient efforts to promote completion of studies through a "certification policy" in particular at the basic levels examined here. The low certification rates reflect high levels of dropping out before completion within the group of 16-18 year-olds (in initial education), and partial completion in adult education. The choice to sit or not to sit for the school leaving examination is deeply anchored in basic (initial) as well as adult education.

4. Culturally, most of the teachers do not connect the final tests and exams to the aims, standards and objectives defined by the MOE.[32] The reason lies in the Danish tradition of *enlightenment*.[33] It carries the idea that learning is for self-development, and is not necessarily associated with a culture of evaluation, assessment, testing and certification. Certification (exams and tests) is considered as only one possible result of education, amongst many others.

---

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] See: OECD, Thematic Review on Adult Learning, Denmark Country note, 2002, page 13. *"The Grundtvig philosophy has deeply marked education, teaching and learning in Denmark. Some of the underlining principles have broad application in education and training in general. He developed the concept of "enlightenment" and was concerned with "what does it imply to be a person, a member of society and of the world?" (Korsgaard, 2000, p. 237). The connection between the individual, the nation and mankind forms the basic structure of his educational idea. As underlined by Korsgaard (p. 248), a strong emphasis is placed on the individual and his relationship with various collective dimensions (culture and society, mankind)".*

The implication for formative assessment could be as follows:

- Typically, adults in a course are divided between those who intend to sit for the final test or exam (the summative assessment) and those who do not. This split in objectives *complicate*s formative assessments. Concretely, some students will not participate in certain formative assessment; others will participate in all of them. The sub-group that will sit for the final summative assessment needs "special preparation", sort of "practice for the final test". This is done using formative assessments all year - round.

- For the teacher, this situation is complex and has implications for the management of formative assessments. It means that the full potential of formative assessment as a tool to prepare for summative assessment cannot be achieved. This is not positive either for the sub-group that will take the summative test or for the sub-group that will not.

For the sub-group not taking the test, a level of integration of knowledge will not be practiced and their progression will not be monitored as fully. There is also the possibility that there would be no progression to monitor or to record. In the Danish context, this could be viewed as raising particular questions: why document learning when there is no progression? Who wants to take the risk of not passing an examination?

From the perspective of an observer external to the Danish system, it seems important that these issues be debated. Clearly, sitting for an examination includes the possibility of not passing. For adults with basic skills needs, this may be a very negative experience reinforcing a previous such experiences. "To fight for success" may be the reason to develop strong formative assessment tools ensuring that progression takes place. For adults with basic skills needs, this could include learning and progression to reduce apprehension about the final summative assessment, such as through frequent use of "intermediate formative assessment" and by the development of a written aspect enabling adults to "keep track" of learning and to practice (see Section 5.3 below). For the adults with basic skills needs, it is of paramount importance to take the time to establish that progression (including by repeating courses, as observed) with the understanding that the end of the course will be the summative assessment.

As mentioned, certification has no role in the Danish *enlightenment* tradition. In fact, that tradition may explain a general scepticism (if not misconception) about summative assessment, which could affect adults' motivation to learn in today's society. In addition, there are some contradictions related to summative assessment built into the FVU system. For example, it was explained to the review team that for the FVU modules, while a person could "pass" the final test with 51% success; yet this result could be challenged. Even having successfully passed a test, the adult with basic skills needs and no certification of any kind, can be asked to repeat the

module. This demonstrates that the system itself is not clear on the value attributed to the tests and it also challenges the policy on not repeating courses.

Formative assessment is a core issue to help solving the problems raised by "culture of delay", "repair system" and low certification rates. It is a useful and powerful tool to improve or change the culture around the meaning of progression in learning. In addition, it would be useful to clarify the role of certification in society: for example, what does it mean <u>not to</u> <u>have</u> a certificate or a diploma in today's society?[34] Certification is not accepted as a selection process. However, care should be taken so that the absence of certification is not accepted as a criterion for exclusion.

5.3. *Formative assessment: measuring steps and progression*

Denmark is known for its exceptional policies and efforts to open access. Guidance, counselling and diagnostic tests are well-developed. Typically and certainly in the courses visited by the review team, a *diagnostic test* was requested by the teachers at the early stages of the course. It provides indication of levels of proficiency of participants in the subject of the course.

Diagnostic test and proficiency levels

The **diagnostic test** is a useful tool due to the existence of aims formulated by the MOE.[35] These standards are a pre-condition for formative as well as for summative assessments. Nevertheless, the diagnostic test does not lead to "homogeneous" grouping of students.

At the very beginning of the course, the diagnostic test helps the teacher to confirm that participants are enrolled in the appropriate course at the right level, to group students by "levels", and to organise "individual teaching" for each participant. The diagnostic test is the "starting point" of the learning progression that will take place all along the course. Steps in the learning progression will be captured by the regular and systematic formative assessments.

The learning progression is always specific to the person, especially in the case of adults with a variety of life and work experiences. In the Danish context, very different levels of proficiency can be accepted within a group of students and consequently, learning progressions vary. For example, in an

---

[34] Danish *Country Background Report*, 2006, section 6 (*www.oecd.org/edu/whatworks*).

[35] "Stating meaningful, unambiguous objectives of intended educational outcomes" in the terminology of Bloom, Hastings and Madaus, 1971.

FVU reading-course, non-Danish higher education graduates may sit next to dyslexic adults with low qualifications.

To summarise, the *diagnostic test* does not provide the teacher a class with "homogenous" levels as considerable variations in level of proficiency amongst students. Nor does the initial process sort out those learners who want to sit for the final exam, and those who do not. The learning progressions (from "point zero" to the attainment of the aims) will differ from student to student, and the teacher essentially organises "individual courses" – which adults greatly appreciate.

Formative assessment and progression

As observed during this review, formative assessment is seen as a way to check learner progress and understanding for separate "steps of knowledge". However, what about measuring the coherence and progress between steps? None of the teachers interviewed expressed a need for "intermediate assessments" (sorts of "*formative diagnostic tests*") to be passed two or three times during the module to "capture" progression in the learning process.

Would *"intermediate formative assessments"* to assess learner progress and understanding and adjust teaching help to learners to practice for and to succeed in the final test?

While assessing larger areas of knowledge, these intermediate assessments would remain in the formative domain. They could be like "practices tests" for summative assessments. It could possibly affect the actual policy of not repeating the courses, except if the organisation of the summative assessments (test and exams) allows several sessions during a school year.

5.4. Formative assessment and lifelong learning

If a decade of debates on lifelong learning[36] lead to agreement on anything, it is that the learner is central. Part of the logic is that the learner learns in various settings (formal, non-formal and informal[37]) and throughout one's life. It was explained to the review team that: "*the concept of class goes away and now, the learner is central*". However, there are contradictions between these broad ideals and their concrete application.

Of course, lifelong learning concepts are interpreted and implemented according to particular countries' education and training traditions. During the visits, the review team could see several practical impacts of the lifelong learning principles in the organisation of classrooms. For example, AVU courses were organised around projects (see p. 22), which might be

---

[36]   OECD, 1996; UNESCO, 1996; European Commission, 1996.

[37]   Real competences, in Denmark.

conducted in the classroom setting or elsewhere In line with a lifelong learning approach, it is said that projects can be fulfilled <u>in the classroom as well as elsewhere.</u>

Nevertheless, for reasons specific to adult education in Denmark, this could lead to complex situations for the teachers. "Attendance" is a very tricky question in Denmark: the legislation[38] and practices are unclear, and the lifelong learning perspective complicates the picture further. For example, in the courses observed by the review team, the attendance of students was not formally checked. What does this mean for formative assessment and for the learning progression? Indirectly, the lack of attendance registration may signal that the system does not take student attendance seriously.

According to another principle leading adult education, an adult who participates in a module or a course for 85% of the time can be granted a *certificate of participation (see Note 12)*. It applies also to FVU courses, Danish, and Danish as a second language. The attribution of the certificate is based on the judgement made by the head of the VUC. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how this can have any meaning (for the individual, for an employer, for society), as the attendance is not formally checked.

Finally, one striking feature of the FVU and CVU is the fact that though they both embrace lifelong learning in theory, it is difficult to see how they encourage and support it in fact. The optional nature of summative assessment means that there is no official way of determining whether learners have indeed learned anything within the classroom or in daily life. The experimental youth class has a different approach, as attendance was considered essential for social inclusion. The trailer unit did not experience difficulties in attendance either, as training takes place on-site during working hours.

Programmes may use checklists which document the learners' activities. These documents may be requested by the MOE.[39] These checklists are used as to determine *whether and what learning has taken place*. Instead of checking "attendance <u>plus</u> learning", what is checked is if the learning indicated in established "checklists" is achieved.

---

[38]   For the FVU, Ministerial Order 1200 of 15/12/2000 is in function until 1 January 2007. The VUCs have to register attendance (to be able to provide "the attendance diploma").

For the AVU, Ministerial Order, chapter 4 says that provision of attendance certificate is possible if the student has participated *or otherwise carried* through at least 85% of the programme for the subject/level.

[39]   The "checklists" makes it possible to meet the demand specified as "otherwise carried out".

How would formative assessment be affected?

- The flexibility concerning the "learning setting" would probably affect formative assessment practices. When learning does not take place in a formal setting, assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning involve specific quality principles ensuring external control. This is different from the assessment of learning and progression in a classroom setting.
- In the case of adults enrolled in courses (basic skills as others), learning may take place anywhere, *including in the classroom*. Courses organised "by project" entail learning within the structure of the course: the outside activities may be related to the course and elements of learning may be captured by the regular formative assessments. If this is not possible, for example, if one can not check what is learnt, then, the cost of "repair education" to the Danish society runs the risk of being prohibitively expensive. In addition, and as expressed by the Ministry, it makes formative assessment quite complex to manage for the teacher as well as for the learners.
- The flexibility is highly valued as validation of all types of learning. Therefore, quality principles should apply to both dimensions. Documentation of active participation and progress could be included as mandatory elements of formative assessment procedures. It could be part of a general strategy to implement quality principles.

5.5. *Oral and written culture: influence on formative assessment*

To make learning more effective, formative and summative assessments should go hand in hand (Bloom, Hastings and Madaus, 1971). Formative assessments should be designed to provide information to the student and the teacher should learn from it. The summative assessment has no role in the classroom and is not a tool for progress in teaching and/or learning. It constitutes a signal for both educational institutions and the labour market.

In Denmark, the MOE is responsible for the development of summative tests, and also contributes the development of tools for formative assessment (diagnostic tests; tools for counsellors; the Log Book[40]). These tools can be adapted to regional and local needs. They are used by teachers in compulsory as well as adult education. It is worth noting that the training for AVU teachers does not incorporate formative assessment practice, the more recently created FVU teacher training does.

The review team noted that oral feedback is dominant. For example, in the math course of the Youth Programme, the teacher gave extensive oral feedback (explanations of calculations, reason for the mistakes, etc.), but students. Another example of the absence of "written feedback" was observed in the youth class: the team of teachers prepared an "overall evaluation format" (see case 2, point 7). The format was never used and the

---

[40] See: Annex 2.

teachers returned to the daily formative assessment, with a major oral component. These adults do not have strong practice of written exercises. The absence of written tracking was typical in the review team's observations.

It might be worth considering whether the lack of use of the log book in the adult courses is related, in part, to the dominance of the oral tradition in the Danish classroom, as well as to the writing difficulties of the adults with foundation skills. When compounded by student's [possibly] negative experiences in initial education, and even dyslexia in some cases, as well as a system that favours dialogue and oral expression, the log book may represent a step that is too big and too fast.

Some teachers reported adaptations of the portfolio concept to the FVU and AVU learners. Portfolios could be used to collect assignments (including teacher's corrections and comments), reports and student products. Such portfolios might constitute a first step toward recording feedback learner progress.

Would better balance between oral and written be consequential for formative assessments?

- Would adults with basic skills be better reached through assessment focused on "small steps"? Would the learning progression be favoured by the co-existence of "small steps formative assessments" plus recurrent "intermediate formative assessments" to ease familiarity with written approaches? In a lifelong learning perspective, the crucial value attached to written material comes in part from it acting as a "footprint": it is always there and can be referred to for further practice (in mathematics, in English as well as in the native language).

In a way, the strong influence of the oral approach should be balanced with written components. Writing is a necessary basis for all subjects. In a lifelong learning perspective, mastering writing facilitates all aspects of learning.

5.6. Future for formative assessment: teachers, Centre of Evaluation, Ministry of Education (MOE)

Adult education teachers use formative assessment as part of their regular practice in Denmark. Nevertheless, it can be very constraining and time consuming. Formative assessment must be adapted to the needs of different groups, especially in adult education. Nevertheless, teachers may benefit from exchange of practices as well as reflection and analyses. Teachers may then be better prepared to meet the demands of formative assessment, and to improve the quality of assessment tools.

Formative assessment is a powerful approach that teachers can share with students. As observed by the review team, active engagement of students in formative assessment exercises keeps trust amongst students and teachers high, and also helps prepare students for the final summative

assessment Unpredicted and informal assessments may also occur. In the daily experience of teaching, an unexpected question or a remark of a student can provide information on where students are having difficulties. These exchanges also provide opportunities for formative assessment.

> - Would it be valuable to formalise the information in some form of a written file? This comes back to the concept of keeping track of the outcomes of an assessment: not for the sake of writing but because documentation in a portfolio serves as an easy reference.
> - Should teacher training on issues of formative and summative assessment be considered? This could include an exchange and dissemination of good practices for formative and summative assessments, and address relevant questions, such as: what are the different types of assessment? How can teachers manage assessment? What methodologies might help to improve assessment?
> The newly-created Centre of Evaluation has yet to define its aims and objectives: it would perhaps have a role to play, especially in promoting innovative programmes focused on formative assessment, and on how to move on from oral into written practices as well as on exchange of good practices.

The MOE could ensure a stronger focus of formative assessment and its linkages with the preparation for final summative assessment. Without excessive formalisation, portfolios adapted to the adults with basic skills needs would be one action at national level to implement the priority given to adult education policy.

6. Conclusion

Evidence from the analysis and the case studies suggest that certification is a major issue in education in Denmark. During the visits, the team observed that formative assessment practices in adult courses are well developed. Nevertheless, the relationship between oral and written culture and, the linkages between formative assessments and certification are still unresolved.

The motivation and creativity of the teachers are important factors behind the progress observed. From diagnostic to formative and summative assessments, teachers discover and create tools that are best adapted to the characteristics of learners. The level of investment of the teachers underpins the quality of practices observed by the team.

Concerning the future, it seems clear that the newly created Centre of Evaluation could have a major role in dissemination of good assessment practices; helping teachers to design tools; improving quality and relevance of the assessment; etc. Initially, the newly created Centre could assume responsibilities for dissemination of results.

The new Centre could collect tools used for assessment practices. Similarities and differences could be studied and a "bank of assessments tools used" could be created. Teachers could consult this "information bank"

(as they already do with booklets) and find ways to improve daily practice. The evidence from experience could help the Danish society change the terms of the debate on assessment and certification.

References

Background Report, Denmark 2001, *Contribution to the OECD Thematic Review on Adult Learning,* Ministry of Education, Copenhagen.

Bloom, B.S., J.T. Hasting and G.F. Madaus (1971), *Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York.

Danish Evaluation Institute/EVA (2008), *Country Background Report on Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy Provision in Denmark,* Danish Evaluation Institute and OECD, Paris (*www.oecd.org/edu/whatworks*).

Education Indicators, Denmark (2005), *Facts and Figures*, Danish Ministry of Education, Copenhagen.

European Commission (1996), *Teaching and Learning. Towards the Learning Society*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

European Commission (2005), *Danish Report to the European Commission, Implementing the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme, Progress Report.*

EVA (2005), *Evaluation of VUC*, Copenhagen.

Korsgaard, O. (2000), "Grundtvig's Educational Ideas", *Reforms and Policy – Adult Education Research in Nordic Countries*, Tapir Academic Press, Trondheim, pp. 237-254.

OECD (1995a), *Reviews of National Policies for Education. Denmark. Educating Youth*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (1995b), *Education at the Glance. OECD Indicators*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (1996), *Lifelong Learning for All*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2000a), *Education at the Glance. OECD Indicators*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2000b), *Economic Surveys – Denmark*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2001), *Knowledge and Skills for Life. First Results from PISA 2000*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2002), *Thematic Review on Adult Learning – Denmark. Country Note*, *www.oecd.org/edu/whatworks*.

OECD (2004a), *Learning for Tomorrow's World. First Results from PISA 2003*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2004b), *Education at a Glance. OECD Indicators*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2004c), *Denmark: Lessons from PISA 2000*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2005a), *Formative Assessment: Improving Learning in Secondary Classrooms*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2005b), *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators*, OECD, Paris.

"The Competence Account in Sønderjylland- taking care of talents, partnership and attraction of the region", Sønderjyllands kompetenceregnskab 2001- talentpleje, partnerskab og tiltrækningskraft i regionen*, Mandag Morgen* A/S (ISBN 87-90275-51-9), 2001.

UNESCO (1996), *L'Éducation : un trésor est caché dedans*, Éditions Odile Jacob, Paris.

Annex 1: The mainstream education system compared to the further education system for adults, 2004
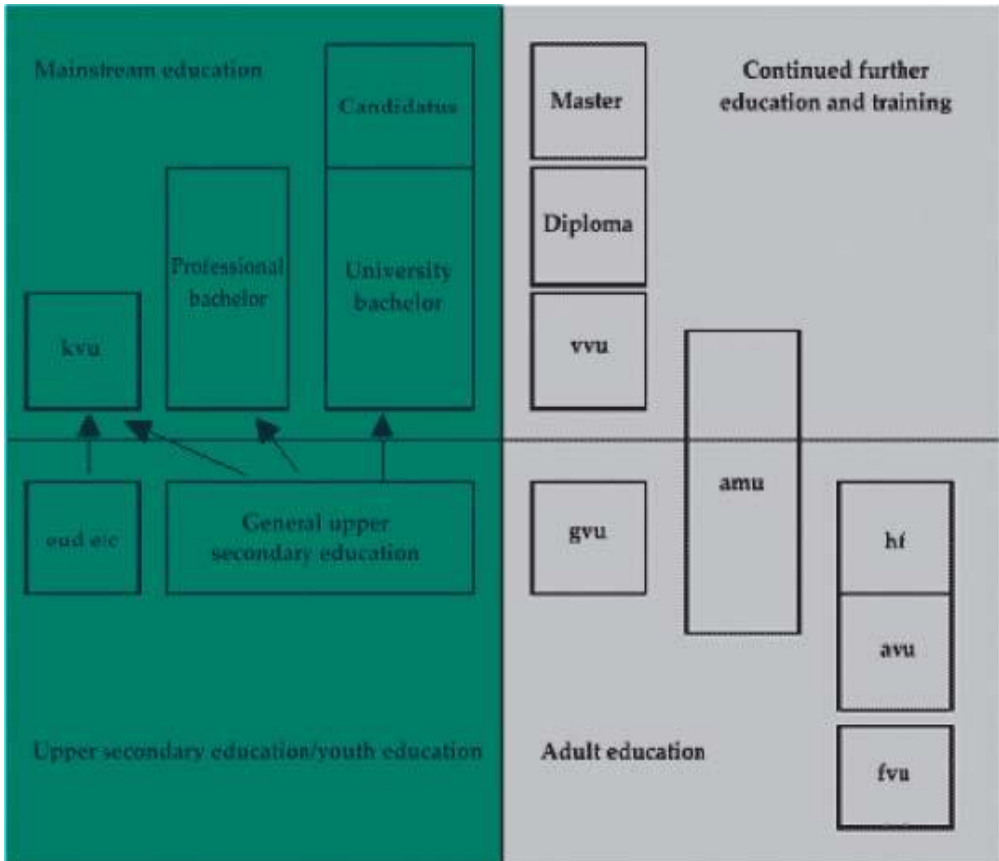
Abbreviations:
kvu: Short-cycle higher education.
mvu: Medium-cycle higher education.
eud: Vocational education and training.
vvu: Further adult education.
gvu: Basic adult education.
amu: Labour market training.
hf: Higher preparatory examination course.
avu: General adult education.
fvu: Preparatory adult education.

Source: Education Indicators, Denmark 2005.

Annex 2 – The Log Book

The Log Book[41] is a tool designed for formative assessment. In Danish, formative assessment is considered synonymous with formative or continuous evaluation. The Log Book applies to the *Folkeskole* level which concerns many parts of the Danish Education System from primary and lower secondary education through further adult education. The Log Book facilitates a continuing evaluation done by both the teacher and the pupils.

The Log Book reviews the several aspects of teaching and learning in the *Folkeskole*. For each individual student, the teacher indicates the positive aspects, the remaining problems and important remarks. The student writes about his/her learning strategy (reading, writing, concentrating, needs for changes and improvement, etc.). The use of language in everyday life is a self-assessment based on the pupil's experiences. Targets or levels of courses are set up in agreement between the pupil and the teacher.[42]

The Log Book offers a possibility to assess the use of lessons in everyday experience; it evaluates the relations between students and sets a "contract" for the following lessons. Its use in a continuous way makes it possible to assess "steps" in the learning progress and pupil's progression. It requires a good amount of written work for the pupil (it is not an oral assessment).

---

[41] See: *www.uvm.dk*

[42] See: *www.Godskole.dk*