ADULT EDUCATION IN THE FAROE ISLANDS

Until relatively recently, the Faroese education sector fell under the jurisdiction of the Danish Ministry of Education and was thus subject to strong Danish influence. At the moment, education in the Faroes is governed by the Faroese Ministry of Culture, Mentamálaráðið, in compliance with a Danish Act of Parliament. Due to the constitutional relationship between Denmark and the Faroes, Denmark still retains the final legislative power over a large part of the education sector. The Faroese Home Rule government, Lógtting, legislates on and regulates education in the Faroes within the scope of framework laws. On a general note, it could be said that the entire Faroese education sector is currently undergoing a revision.

Considering the population size – less than 50,000 inhabitants – a relatively wide range of education opportunities is available in the Faroe Islands:

- The Folkeskole (compulsory primary and lower secondary education, duration 9 years), upper secondary education (general and vocational), HF (Higher Preparatory Examination).
- Apprenticeships and basic vocational education in the fields of business and commerce, office and administrative skills, and technology, as well as a ship’s cook training programme.
- Maritime education and training (e.g. Master Mariner and Chief Engineer), electrician and technician training, diploma in specialised business studies (merkonom), nursing qualifications, social and health care assistant, social educator and teacher training as well as academic education including general studies programmes, preparatory programmes, intermediate degrees (exam.art), and BA, BSc, and MA programmes.
- Other types of education such as folk high school courses, home economics courses, music institutes, supplementary or continuing training and education, leisure-time education, and various courses organised by public and private education providers.

A significant number of Faroese adults study outside the islands, mainly in Denmark but in recent years increasingly in other countries, such as Scotland and England. The government of the Faroes pays the tuition fees of Faroese people who travel outside the Nordic countries to pursue an education. Many Faroese take advantage of online study opportunities.

Until 1988, the Faroes and Denmark had an agreement on cost exemption for all education forms classified as fællesanliggender, matters of common interest. In 1988, this exemption policy was replaced by a block subsidy paid to the Faroese government. The government now assumed full responsibility for financing the education sector, including student grants, within the scope of the Faroese budget.

Under the Home Rule Act the Faroese Løgting is the legislative authority in matters of local interest, særanliggender, while other areas are administrated by the Danish national authorities as matters of common interest, fællesanliggender. Education-related issues have mainly been classified as matters of common interest, which has often led to unclear administrative processes and has a detrimental effect on innovation. As often as not, Faroese educational policies are based on obsolete Danish legislation that has long since been repealed in Denmark. In the late 1990s, administration of the entire Faroese education sector was finally transferred to the Faroese government.
The formal education system

Basic vocational education and training
As well as general upper secondary education and Higher Preparatory Examination, Faroese students can choose to take a basic qualification in fisheries (SIF), which gives students professional skills and qualifies them for higher education particularly in the areas of fishery and aquaculture.

A year-long basic programme in administrative, commercial and office skills (FHS) can be used as year one in the Higher Commercial Examination, or it can form the second half of an apprenticeship training programme.

The two-year-long basic technical programme (SIT) is divided into subject areas (electricity, metalwork, woodwork) and equips students for further technological studies. The first year qualifies students for vocational studies in their chosen subject area. Completing the second year gives students access to higher education, such as Academies of professional education and the Chief Engineer education.

The following apprenticeship training programmes are offered in the Faroes: machinery, sheet metal work, construction, design, shipsmith, plumber, car mechanic, electrician, joiner, carpenter, and hairdresser. Apprenticeship students can complete the theoretical part of their studies in Danish business colleges if no training is available in their chosen trade in the Faroes.

In the field of business and commerce, a basic vocational qualification (FHS) is available in the Faroes.

Technical and commercial upper secondary education
The Higher Fisheries programme (HIF), the Higher Commercial programme (HH) and The Higher Technical programme (HT) all last 3 years. They start with a year-long initial basic programme. The Higher Commercial programme is available online, too.

Formal continuing and supplementary education
Vocational colleges offer some supplementary education for skilled professionals. Business colleges offer IT qualifications (datamatiker, datanom), Graduate Diploma in Business Administration (HD), training for the banking sector, and other types of shorter vocational training programmes. Qualifications can be complemented with state controlled single subject examinations, which take a year to complete. The Akademimerkonom degree in specialised business studies consists of several six-month modules which can be assembled into a single qualification after three to four years’ studies.

In Tórshavn, a wide range of leadership courses at basic and advanced levels is offered jointly by the Technical College and Business College, often in collaboration with foreign educational institutions.
Post-secondary education

The Maritime College, the Marine School and the Fire-fighting Training Centre
The Maritime College (Maskinmeistaraskúlin), the Marine School (Føroya Sjómansskúli), and the Fire-fighting Training Centre form a single administrative unit. As well as full-time study programmes, they organise short courses. For instance, the college regularly offers training for people wishing to obtain mandatory certificates of competence for yachtsmen and VHF radio operators, as well as other radio operating courses (Telex, GMDSS). In addition, the Safety Centre organises marine security courses for maritime professionals and issues Certificates of Proficiency in motor operation.

Faroe Islands' School of Nursing
Sjúkrarøktarfrøðiskúli Føroya, the School of Nursing in Tórshavn, was founded in 1960 and is recognised by the Danish health authorities. Since 2000, the school includes a section for social and health care assistant training.

Faroe Islands’ Teacher Training College
The Faroe Islands’ teacher training college, which is one of the oldest educational institutions in the islands, offers programmes that qualify students to work as school teachers and social educators. The teacher training programme is 4 years in duration, and graduates are qualified to teach in primary and secondary schools. The social educator programme takes 3.5 years and qualifies graduates for work in children’s day care centres, after school clubs, and institutions for people with social, physical or psychological disabilities.

Higher education

University of the Faroe Islands
Fróðskaparsetur Føroya, the University of the Faroe Islands, was founded in 1965 as an independent institution. According to the current legislation, the university’s task is to conduct research, to provide higher education, and to disseminate information about academic research methods and results. The University is an independent administrative unit functioning directly under the Faroese Ministry of Education and Culture, and its operating costs are covered with annual allocation from the Faroese National Budget.

In line with the latest regulation issued in 2003, all bachelor’s degree programmes now take three years to complete, while Master’s degrees take a further two years. Thus, all degrees offered at Fróðskaparsetur Føroya comply with the objectives of the Bologna process.

The University has three faculties: Faculty of Faroese Language and Literature, Faculty of History and Social Sciences, and Faculty of Science and Technology. In addition, the University offers training courses in English which are open to anyone, and organises public lectures on topics of general interest. In the near future, the Teacher Training College and the Nursery School will probably be merged with the University.
Non-formal adult education

As stated above, the Faroese education sector has been strongly influenced by Denmark. Despite close contacts with Denmark and the rest of the Nordic region, the Faroes do not share the strong Nordic tradition of liberal adult education.

Adult education associations in the Faroes are all but invisible and appear to be in hibernation. The early 1900s were a period of enlightenment in the Faroes, which led to the establishment of many youth associations that engaged actively in liberal adult education. However, these educational activities have ceased altogether. Some youth associations survive as dancing associations, which have played a crucial role in preserving the vital Faroese tradition of chain dancing. Another important institution, the Faroe Islands’ Folk High School, was established in the late 1800s and came to play an important role in the liberal adult education movement.

The first ever evening classes in the Faroes were started in 1904 at the initiative of a priest from Sandur, who received a grant of 200 kroner from the Løgting (Faroese parliament) and another 200 from the Danish parliament for the purpose.

In the early days, evening school was particularly popular among adults with little or no formal education. They used this opportunity to learn reading, writing and arithmetic. However, until 1930, when the first legislation on evening schools was enacted, students had to pay most of the tuition fees themselves, and teachers frequently received only a meagre compensation for their work.

The Act of 1930 decreed that tuition at evening schools was free of charge. Evening schools began offering courses in most subjects taught in the Folkeskole, as well as foreign languages, accounting, shorthand, typing, health education, basic farming and gardening, household chores and handicrafts, woodwork, home economics, gymnastics, and singing.

Evening schools were particularly important in rural areas, where people could use the winter months to improve their skills in basic school subjects. Evening classes were also a form of recreation in the countryside, where people had few diversions from their daily chores. The only other form of entertainment available was Norwegian radio, which was audible in most areas and had a huge significance for the Faroese population.

In many cases, evening schools – often combined with a folk high school course – enabled people to continue studying towards a formal qualification. Particularly Faroese men used the evening school as an access route to studies leading to maritime qualifications such as fishing vessel captain or motorman. A look at the statistics gives us an understanding of how popular evening schools were: During the winter of 1936/37, altogether 1673 students (865 women and 808 men) were studying at the 41 evening schools of the Faroe islands – this at a time when the total population of the islands was about 25 000.

Folk high school

As well as the long courses traditionally offered by folk high schools, the Faroes Folk High School offers a range of other courses that are becoming an increasingly important part of the school’s activities. These include some very popular courses for pensioners, mentally disabled and families.
**Efterskole**
The efterskole is an independent residential school for students aged 14–18. There are plans to establish an efterskole in the Faroe Islands. Each year some Faroese young people travel to Denmark to study at an efterskole, and for a number of years there was a Faroese efterskole in Denmark. Recent legislation has opened the way for the re-establishment of a Faroese efterskole.

**School of Home Economics**
In Klaksvik there is a school of home economics where it is also possible to take a ship’s cook qualification. As well as the home economics courses traditionally offered in schools like this, the school organises courses in arts and crafts and health issues each spring.

**ALV-skúlin – school for people with disabilities**
The ALV School forms part of an independently owned institution which helps people with impaired functional capacity to improve their chances of working. Students can take the final Folkeskole examinations and complete the first year of an upper secondary level commercial examination. Prospective students need a referral from the Social Services, but it is also possible to apply for a place.

**Music institutes**
There is a network of music institutes around the island. They are municipally governed, and 50 % of their operating costs are covered by the government of the Faroes. The great majority of the students are children and young people. Many people also participate in private music instruction, and there are some amateur music and drama activities.

**Evening schools**
The Faroese government passed an Act on leisure-time education in 1983. The Act, which has been revised, stipulates that inhabitants over 14 years of age must be offered leisure-time education in whichever subjects they wish to be taught. Leisure-time education is the responsibility of municipalities.

There are many evening schools and youth schools around the Faroes. They usually function in the premises of the local Folkeskole, with the exception of Tórshavn’s evening and youth school, which is an independent institution. Leisure-time education can be divided into the following categories:

- **General leisure-time education.** Each course must comprise between 20 and 120 lessons in any single subject. The participant fee must be 200–600 kroner; the remaining costs are divided equally by the municipality and the government.
- **Leisure-time activities for children and young people up to 25 years of age.** The participant fee must not exceed 200 kroner, and the remaining costs are divided equally between the government and the municipality.
- **Leisure-time education for people with disabilities;** all costs are covered by the government.
- **“Special education”, or qualification-oriented/preparatory education,** such as preparatory courses for people aiming for the Higher Preparatory Examination (HF). A test or examination can be organised at the end of these courses. These courses are more academically oriented. The participant fee is 500 kroner, and the government covers the remaining costs.
General leisure-time education is quite popular. In Tórshavn, which has a population of 18,000, as many as 3,224 people participate in this type of education. Evening schools mostly offer courses in arts and other creative subjects, although a smaller number of language courses and other courses is available, too. The number of “special education” courses offered is relatively small: they only comprise 685 lessons per year compared to the 11,844 lessons of general leisure-time education offered yearly. Sadly, single-subject courses for students aiming to take the Higher Preparatory Examination (HF) have not been offered since the early 1990s due to economic reasons.

The qualification-oriented courses have remained an almost exclusively male domain. They include courses in maritime skills – such as sailing, motor maintenance – and as a fresh addition, a farming course.

Trade Union Movement
Up until now, trade unions in the Faroes have not fulfilled their potential as education providers, perhaps because the movement is not particularly unified. At the moment, the trade unions’ principal educational activities consist of organising training for board and committee representatives and shop stewards/workplace representatives. However, trade unions have been known to organise other kinds of training, too, and there is a huge development potential here that could gain much from Nordic inspiration.

The Vocational Education Board
New legislation on courses organised within technical apprenticeship training was passed in 2004. The aim of these courses is to increase the individual’s chances of employment, and they should primarily focus on subject areas connected to existing apprenticeship training programmes. A Vocational Education Board (Yrkisútbúgvingarráðið) consisting of employers and public authorities can authorise the establishment of new training courses when required. However, the Board itself cannot establish new courses. On completion of the course, participants can receive a certificate which will help them qualify for a higher-level education programme. One of the Board’s first tasks was to authorise a training programme for tourist guides.

Education for adults with special needs
Some adult special education is available in the Faroes. The ALV School is a special education institution which provides primary and secondary education for people who find it difficult to take advantage of other educational opportunities.

Other educational activities
Many sports clubs offer training connected to their activities, as do religious communities and some village associations. Some private educational providers have recently entered the education market. Many Faroese people take advantage of educational opportunities available on the internet. Several upper secondary and higher education qualifications can now be taken via distance learning. For instance, Danish social educator colleges have a significant number of online students.

The Unemployment Insurance Fund organises some training, but since unemployment is low at the moment, there is not much demand for this.