

Workshop 1
The Flex School in Denmark Workshop
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Overview All 14 prison schools and one City Jail House in Denmark take part in a corporation and pay an annual fee to the community. We have 6 main initiatives to improve education in Danish Prison Schools and for a fee of 150 Euro a year the schools have stated the following activities:

1. The website 1.1. Articles with background information for a Danish audience. Most articles relate the Danish prison education system to the European Recommendations for Prison Education. 1.2. Sharing of teaching materials developed at the prison schools 1.3. Part for teachers with check lists and other useful information
2. Membership of the following databases: 2.1. Britannica Online 2.2. Online dictionaries 2.3. Library facts base 2.4. Author base 2.5. 9 million newspaper articles from most important Danish news papers 2.6. Largest Danish database with press photos (300.000 samples) 2.7. All data from Danish Meteorological Institute
3. Membership of Centre for Flexible Adult Learning (CFV) 3.1. Development of Flexible Learning Models 3.2. A database with fresh material for Adult Education on all levels 3.3. Courses to strengthen education and school development
4. Own training programmes for prison teachers 4.1. 3 courses in the use of the facilities of the Flex School
5. A Learning Management System for prisoners and teachers based on First Class.
6. The Flex School is involved in two Grundtvig 1 Applications. 6.1. Training Teachers 6.2. Develop use of Internet in Prison Schools
7. Publications 7.1. 2 CD's with materials for Adult Education 7.2. The web site www.flukes.dk with inspiration for teaching in Math and ITC

Background

Since the 70's the Danish Government has imposed new ideas in public administration, as it has been the case for many of the other OECD countries. The driving force behind the modernization has been to revitalize often stiff and old-fashioned public administration. Some of the leading ideas behind this renewal process are known as NPM, an acronym for New Public Management. NPM is a mix of classical business theories about competition, contractual leadership, outsourcing and evaluation founded on research and stimulation. Much of the theories behind NPM are contradictive in an academic view, but the soul of NPM is not to be cogent, but to bring virtues from the corporate world into public administration. Therefore critics often in a spicy way mention that there is nothing "New", nothing "Public" and no "Management" behind New Public Management.

Despite of the critic words the theory proved its usability in the structures of public administration. And it now has to stand its test in the Department of Probation and Prison Service of Denmark.

Some of the ways in which The Department of Probation and Prison Service in Denmark has adopted the theory are,

- Management must be on the basis of contracts, evaluation, statistic and control Key figures are now accessible on the Intranet for the prisons to compare with each other and see if the agreed initiatives are achieved. A comprehensive investment in new technology shall secure better control and higher levels of information.
- New methods of payments that allow to reward employees Under the slogan "New Salary" it is not possible to have a raise only depending on the years' employed, but also on the industrious behaviour.
- The prisons must have more responsibility and must therefore have full control over funds. Decisions will be made in the local prison according to the possibilities in the budget.
- The leadership must be one-stringed The Governor has the full responsibility for the functions of the prison. All other chief functions are consultants for the Governor.
- Decisions must be founded on valid data A large scale monitoring programme on work environment has been started to make conditions better for the employees.
- The Department must be output orientated One of the next contracts with the Ministry of Justice will focus on implementing and developing more correctional programs.

The benefit for Governments is to have a system that is easier for them to manage and control and to adapt with the policy they have with crime, and not exclusively, as it is often presumed, to control economy.

From 1999 the Danish Department of Probation and Prison Service had to adopt the new methods and The Department was given 5 years to implement the new ideas that were negotiated with The Agency for Governmental Management. This first phase of changes ended with 2003 and a new contract was negotiated for the years 2004 - 2007.

New times for the Prison Schools

The new management theory brought many structural changes to the institutions of The Department of Probation and Prison Service and also for the prison schools. First of all, the prison schools' role as a part of the leadership in the prison was given less importance. This was hard to swallow for many of the school leaders that saw their importance in the leadership disappear. The schools had to find a new role in the prison system and focus more on what they were good at.

A report on the general employment situation in the Danish prisons also addressed the situation of the prison schools. The report suggested more flexible education, more vocational training and short courses. The report also mentioned that a greater integration of databases with teaching materials would help specially closed prisons to overcome the disadvantage of not being able to use the Internet in their education practice. On the basis of this report, the prisons try to find the right

combination and mixture of education offers for the inmates that apply to local tradition and what is possible with the limited resources.

Flexskolen – The Flexible School

On the basis of the report the prison schools made a joint initiative according to the recommendations in the report and opened the web site www.flexskolen.dk in January 2003. "Flexskolen" is an abbreviation of the words The Flexible School. The Internet site provides background information for a Danish audience on prison education and has a closed area with material for practical use for both teachers and the inmates that take part in education.

The leaders of the prison schools highly felt that their work and efforts in educating the inmates needed more attention and appreciation, not only from the Department of Probation and Prison Service of Denmark due the degradation of their importance in the prison leadership, but also from the general public that regards the prison service as a problematic work place with society's most troublesome inhabitants. Actually the schools have over the years produced a lot of good and effective work for very little funds, and some of all this work must be presented for the public to show that the prison schools contribute to a much brighter and more positive view on the matter. Therefore the public part of www.flexskolen.dk consists of articles of all the good sides of prison education.

The Web Site: One example of an article on the home page of the Flex School

By now www.flexskolen.dk airs different articles, and many more are planned. The inspiration for articles is the Recommendation No. R (89) 12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on education in prisons. Of course the recommendation is translated into Danish and published on the web site with regards to the EPEA web site as well as reports and research that influence prison education are referred to from the site.

One article illustrates the use of art in prison with the Copenhagen Prisons as an example. The Western Prison (Vestre Faengsel) was erected in 1895 and considerably enlarged in 1918. The prison is a cross-shaped panoptic cell prison of four storeys and has a capacity of 433 inmates. The Western Prison contains a hospital with 36 beds, a women's unit with room for about 30 inmates and the entire administration of the Copenhagen Prisons. In April 2000 a special unit with room for 22 negatively strong inmates was opened.

The Western Prison also has a school. About 150 inmates take part in school activities daily – some on full time, others take individual courses, including physical education.

During the summer, outdoor sports are offered to the inmates, such as various forms of ball games. The individual wings also offer limited forms of leisure time activities, such as table tennis.

Educationalists working in a prison context are aware of the wealth of underdeveloped talent and creativity to be found in those in prison. The special task of the adult educator is primarily to help the prisoner-students to recognise and then to develop these untapped resources within themselves.

The long time prison teacher and potter Lennart Frandsen has understood this in a very essential way and with the inmates of his pottery class decorated the Western Prison in a remarkable way. As Lennart says: "It is all the works of the inmates. Their own inspiration is behind all the art work done"

The benefits of his work can be identified: creative activity has greatly helped in the inmates' emotional development, allowing a means of expressing and exploring feelings in an acceptable and non-threatening way. The works with arts are also a means by which individuals learn self-discipline and how to interact socially, learning to work together in a team. When the works of the pottery class of Western Prison is evaluated, it is very hard to argue against having an art class as an education offer in all modern prisons.

On www.flexskolen.dk/vf-kunst.htm more examples of the art work in The Western Prison can be studied. The article is written in Danish, but there are plenty pictures not only of the work of the pottery class, but also from the renovation of the Prison Church. It's worth a visit.

Databases

The purpose of www.flexskolen.dk has also been to provide better opportunities for students and teachers to access education material and improve the quality of education. From the start the flexskole.dk has chosen to lease a membership to the Danish ICT education system, Sektornet and SkoleKom with access to a bank of databases like Britannica Online, a database with 300.000 press photos, 9 million articles from the most important Danish newspapers written over the last 10 years, online dictionaries, literature and author bases, online fact books and more. All this information can be used by the teachers and students of the prison schools.

Corporation with the Centre for Flexible Adult Education (CFV)

Flexskolen has joined The Centre for Flexible Adult Education (CFV) a joint venture between Denmark's counties on development of education material for the adult education centres. Through the years CFV has developed a large base of material for use in the special field of adult education at all levels from basic education to high school and college levels. The access to this database is a good boost for all prison schools in their effort to base their teaching on the newest and most relevant material at a very affordable price. In the fields of ICT education the CFV materials are the best available in the country, as it with the structure of CFV is possible to update it to the always changing new versions of software. All materials are available in PDF and Word formats. The Word format secures that the teacher can change the materials to his personal teaching style. If requested the CFV will sell the materials to members only at an affordable price.

CFV operates within the field of adult education on the: Development of new pedagogical models within e-learning, development of flexible planning of education, development and distribution of specialized learning materials, development of and implementation of training for teachers and trainers within e-learning, propagation of knowledge on developments and experiences within e-learning and participating in national and international projects within the area. CFV started as a project, from 2002 permanently and is now established in the public sector, but under commercial conditions. CFV is involved in nationwide cooperation among Adult Education Centres focusing on collaborate networking, knowledge

sharing and common development of learning materials. CFV has for example developed a common base for learning materials to which all cooperating partners develop and contribute learning materials to be used for free by all members in the network. The web site www.flukes.dk is an example of the contributions given to the CFV from the Flex School.

Own training programs

It is important that the teachers know how to use and access the materials on the Flex School. Therefore the Flex School made courses for teachers and about 40% of the teachers in Danish Prisons have taken part in 3 one day courses to improve their knowledge to apply the use of the Flex School materials in their teaching. Other courses are in preparation. In one of the prison schools they have made good experience with use of ITC programs to teach foreign nationals. We make a course to show the use of the program and to discuss the experience with it to teachers in the same field. If a prison school has found a good practise we can help each other in the framework of the Flex School to present the practice for all prison schools and if the idea is suitable for it, to the public on our home page.

Learning Management Systems

The Flex School is leasing an affordable learning management system. It is based on the First Class system, Version 8, and is available through the Internet. The system is used for the teachers to communicate with each other, keeping a common memory of the different sub groups of the structure of the Flex School and some schools have their own area where they store information for teachers and students. First Class has not been substantial developed for many years and therefore the Flex School has been looking for a new affordable learning management system. The use and introduction of learning management systems is very complex and we are sure that we're not having the right model at the moment.

Project Participation

The Flex School needs to develop all the time and realizes that it is impossible to develop everything by ourselves and therefore the school is seeking partners in international projects that develop prison education. The flex school is at the moment a partner in two Grundtvig applications. One to develop teacher training programmes and one for development of the use of Internet in schools. Often it is not just one school taking responsibility in a Grundtvig project on behalf of the other schools, but two or three schools find together to form network. The benefit of the corporation is that more prison schools get involved in projects, work together and it does not take too many resources out of just one prison School. The involvement in projects is aimed to benefit all members of the Flex School and in general terms a project must be transferable to all prison schools before the Flex School will take part.

Products

Members of the Centre for Flexible Adult Learning have the obligation to produce material that reflects the number of students in their organization. The Flex School has the obligation to produce material for 50 hours a year. Until now two schools have been involved in the development of a web page that support teaching in Math

and ITC. The web page is provided not only for the Flex School's members but also for the rest of adult education centres in Denmark. In this way the flex school is having an incredible opportunity to promote Prison Education to the rest of Adult Education in Denmark; showing that we are capable of not only good teaching of the students but also to be innovative in fields of education. From the web site students can find assignments, get good ideas from a knowledge base, take part in discussions and deliver solutions and self produced problems to the community.

Production of CD's

The Flex School also produced a CD ROM with teaching materials, information about the cooperation, courses and access codes to all the Internet based products that we have access to in the Flex School. The teaching material is about 200 titles which are developed by the Centre for flexible Adult Learning. All prison teachers in Denmark have got a copy of the CDs. The CD ROMs have given a comprehensive boost to prison education in Denmark by bringing the material used in education up to a higher level.

Hope for the future

It is not only the hope that the Flex School will enforce the importance of prison education and show to decision makers and the public that it is worth spending money on prison education, but also attracts progressive staff to work in prison education.

