

The Values Transmitted by Lifelong Education in Denmark: The Conditions of Social Inclusion

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Denmark is distinctive for its emphasis on lifelong education. In addition to education from the elementary to university levels, adult education is also provided for the jobless, the elderly, and others. Moreover, a wide variety of options are available to pupils and students in the elementary to university levels as well. After finishing compulsory education, students may also go on to attend various alternative schools, such as the *Folkehøjskole* (“people’s schools” or “peasants’ universities”) for the modern era, influenced by Nikolaj Frederik Severin (N. F. S.) Grundtvig (1783–1872) and Christen Kold (1816–1870), as well as the *Friskole* (“free schools”) that inherit the traditions of folk education, not to mention the *Efterskole* (“afterschools”) and *Lilleskole* (“little schools”).

This paper explores this diverse system of education and the goals underlying it, tracing the historical development of the idea. In doing so, I present practices and ideas based on fieldwork of *Folkehøjskole*, a characteristic form of adult education in Denmark. These efforts will lead to a consideration of the values being transmitted by lifelong education in that country.

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1. Introduction

Denmark, renowned for the advanced state of its social welfare system, has drawn attention in recent years for its high level of happiness (Takada 2005; Suzuki 2008; Chiba 2009). The British sociologist Adrian White has defined a “happy populace” as those “people living in a country where health and good education are guaranteed.” According to White’s ranking of (gross) national happiness, Denmark ranks first, followed by Switzerland¹⁾. Denmark has similarly drawn attention for its strong performance in the world governance indicators released by the World Bank, according to which Denmark and Finland have the most advanced democracies in the world. The indices used in the World Bank’s survey include (1) the existence of trustworthy, high-quality data regarding the running of the national government, and (2) the organization of a framework in which citizens can directly participate in the running of that government (Suzuki 2008: 42).

With everyone working and paying taxes, Denmark has sought the kind of society in which no one, including senior citizens and disabled persons, has to face barriers (Suzuki 2009). Forming the bedrock of that society is the trust that exists between the government and its citizens. Indeed, Denmark has realized a high-tax, high-welfare society (Suzuki 2008: 56). The funds supporting social welfare are provided by the revenue from income tax (with the maximum rate set at 59 percent) and indirect taxes, including the sales tax (set at 25 percent). The Danish government itself is currently running a surplus.

In contemporary Denmark, the minimum safety net to support the lives of the people is based on five pillars, as follows (Suzuki 2008: 168):

- (1) Subsidies for living expenses, including subsidized housing expenses, cash allowances, and so forth for the support of the needy.
- (2) Fully-subsidized medical expenses, with all individuals freed from the burden of having to pay any medical expenses, no matter what disease or injury they have, even if hospitalization is involved. Many kinds of subsidies have been arranged to meet the needs of people of all ages and conditions.

- (3) Subsidized nursing care costs for the disabled. Many support policies have been implemented, including fully-equipped housing for disabled persons, the installation of workplaces friendly to the disabled, and the arrangement of transportation and house refurbishment to support autonomous living.
- (4) Subsidized welfare expenses for senior citizens, taken to be the duty of the national government. A variety of facilities and support policies have been instituted, including a system of home care and fully-equipped nursing-care centers.
- (5) Subsidies for education, with the national government responsible for providing education in schools, including tuition expenses. Students who are 18 years and older are paid to attend school. A system has been set up by which educational expenses for the purpose of developing people's capacities are supported by the people of the whole nation.

Of these five, the last item—education—is perceived to be an investment in fostering the citizens of the future. Accordingly, children's education is free, with no qualitative difference between the education provided to the rich and that provided to the poor. One important goal of Danish education is to teach the value of a free spirit, equality, democracy, and autonomy. Those qualities are considered conducive to people's well-being, while simultaneously being perceived as a basic way to reliably foster the next generation who will make up the Danish nation in the future.

The first main characteristic of education in Denmark is its emphasis on enabling children's independence of mind, freedom of choice, and autonomy. This is also intended to foster the citizens who will become members of an equitable and sustainable society (Gulløv and Olwig 2003). For that purpose, the second characteristic of Danish education—the existence of a system whereby pupils and students can design their own education—allows them to choose how to use their time flexibly. This illuminates how the Danish people interpret the meaning of education. The third characteristic of Danish education is the way it has been used as a practice to support not just the self-reliance of children, but also that of the jobless and the elderly.

That means that lifelong education serves as the basis of society in Denmark. Previous research has already shed light on the way in which this practice has been achieved, as well as on the ideology that makes up its foundation and its development. However, the inherent danger remains that the kind of education that aims to foster and educate the Danish people may exclude those who do not necessarily share similar values. The issue now facing Denmark—which has welcomed immigrants in an effort, mainly, to secure a labor force—is something that many other countries are experiencing in our ever-globalizing world.

This paper explores Denmark's diverse system of education and the goals underlying it, tracing the historical development of the idea. In doing so, I present practices and ideas based on fieldwork in *Folkehøjskole*, a characteristic form of adult education in Denmark. These efforts will lead to a consideration of the values being transmitted by lifelong education in this country.

Amongst the various types of leisure-time activities (Suzuki 2007: 75–76) in Denmark, the so-called *folkehøjskole* (“folk high schools” or “people's universities”)²—

also described as “schools of life”—have come to play a unique role during their existence over more than a century and a half as distinctive venues for learning. Each folk high school is run according to its respective founder’s vision for places of learning, and each also broadcasts its ideals about living spaces and society to the outside world.

Such activities originated in the grassroots peasant education movement led by Nikolaj Frederik Severin (N. F. S.) Grundtvig (1783–1872), a Danish theologian and historian of the 19th century. Leisure-time activities have been utilized in Denmark in two ways: firstly, to provide people with the opportunity and place to take some time out from their ordinary lives and “re-learn” or re-educate themselves, and secondly, to pave the way for them to participate in the creation of their own places of living.

This paper, based on my field research³, explores the background of the founding and development of the practices carried out at a particular folk high school—the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole Bogense—envisaged as a place for people to live together and learn with mentally challenged persons, and also looks into the activities of other institutions with which it is affiliated. Through my exploration, I will deepen the consideration of ideas and practices aimed at creating a barrier-free society, based on the ideal of normalization being espoused by this folk high school.

2. The History of Folk Education in Denmark

Denmark has long emphasized the role of education. The roots of that trend harken back to the age of Pietism in the 18th century. Pietism, a Protestant religious tradition originating in the German city of Halle at the end of the 18th century, was a movement that tried to revive the faith and beliefs based on the thoughts and ideas of Martin Luther (1483–1546). It spread swiftly from Northern Germany to Scandinavia, and in Denmark, it spread out mainly from the royal court at the turn of the 18th century (Asano et al. 2006: 35). Missionary work (evangelism) and charity work were promoted as pious acts. King Frederick IV (who reigned from 1699 to 1730) promulgated the Poor Act in 1708, and promoted the relief of the poor and folk education in urban areas. In 1721, 240 schools were constructed on royal lands.

During the reign of King Christian VI (an enthusiastic Pietist) from 1730 to 1746, Danish Pietism reached its zenith. The order of confirmation was introduced in 1736, and in 1739, the school ordinance was passed, by which more schools were constructed and education made mandatory. During the subsequent reign of King Frederick V (1746–1766), Denmark opened up to foreign ideas as well, and during the reign of his successor King Christian VII (1766–1808), national politics were conducted based on the Enlightenment (Asano et al. 2006: 36–37).

The Danish Crown Prince Frederick (1768–1839), who established a reform government in 1784 and continued to preside over Denmark over the next 55 years (reigning as Frederick VI from 1808 to 1839), embarked on the greatest social reforms of the Enlightenment era by marshalling the forces of reform-minded aristocrats, who had started to become aware of the philanthropic spirit. Peasant and school reforms formed the basic pillars of his plan (Asano et al. 2006: 38). The efforts to reform schools led to

the launch of a compulsory education system in 1814. The system was introduced despite the bankruptcy of the national treasury in the previous year as a result of war, as it was considered important for the country for people to share values and participate in society through education (Suzuki 2008: 23–24).

Despite the chaos brought about by the Napoleonic wars in the early 19th century, Danish culture experienced what has been termed a “golden age.” Well-known figures from this period include Adam Oehlenschläger (1779–1850), said to be the earliest proponent of Romanticism, along with the philosopher, poet, educator, and pastor N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872), the fairy-tale author Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875), and the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855). Especially influential were the books of Danish Romanticism that spurred ethnic awakening and the consciousness of Scandinavian spirituality. Grundtvig was also influenced by those trends, and he conducted research on Scandinavian myths and history, as well as composing church hymns. These were deeply linked to the Danish national sentiment.

Denmark of the mid-19th century witnessed progressive urbanization as it modernized, with the deterioration of rural areas opening up a widening gap between the lives of rural and urban dwellers. Grundtvig conceived that the revitalization of rural areas would be one way to rectify that situation. For that to happen, he deemed it necessary for rural people to have the chance to get together and learn while they were still able to work their own land. He proposed that young people in rural areas, having secured a place to learn, would develop the power to think about the society and environment in which they lived. Grundtvig’s vision of adult education and lifelong learning—in the sense of an activity where working people continued to learn—can be regarded as the source of the distinctive idea of “leisure-time activities” that pervades all levels of contemporary Danish society.

Grundtvig’s way of thinking was also in accord with the advocacy of *folkoplysning*—that is, the *oplysning* (education, enlightenment, adult education) of the *folke* (people, ethnic group)—that was becoming popular in the Europe of his time. The idea of *folkoplysning* was grounded in 19th-century religious and social movements that espoused the importance of education and learning methods that lay outside formulaic education. Influenced by the revolutionary movements of central Europe in the 1830s, a libertarian movement arose among intellectuals and the middle class arguing for the rectification of feudalistic class discrimination and improvements in peasants’ lives. In the 19th century, Denmark, which had fought a war with Germany over the Duchy of Schleswig, had a heightened sense and increased expression of national consciousness and patriotism, emphasizing opportunities to respond to the social concerns of the youth (Korsgaard 1999: 142–161; Thaning 1987: 233–253). Grundtvig’s proposals were thus reflective of the trends of his era.

Grundtvig’s ideal was for everyone to have the opportunity to learn. What he meant by that was to discover the wonder and dignity of human beings. He stressed the usage of dialogue as the way to accomplish that. His wish was that people would awaken to living by joining their forces through repeated dialogue.

After losing the Second Schleswig War to Prussia in 1864, the Danish nation

struggled earnestly toward social development based on postwar recovery efforts. It was Christen Kold (1816–1870) who took Grundtvig’s vision and shaped it into an actual venue of practice. Grundtvig’s ideas took shape as “people’s universities” thanks to Kold, with organized places of learning for rural youth (Yuzawa 2001: 179). *Folkehøjskole* (folk high schools), formulated on the basis of Grundtvig’s ideas, proliferated after the country’s defeat in war (Asano et al. 2006: 42). By providing youth from rural areas—who until then had only been given the opportunity to receive primary education—with a venue for character development, they started to capture attention as folk education institutions embodying Grundtvig’s ideals.

In the education system that was disseminated in Denmark after 1841, the necessary infrastructure started to take shape, leading toward the improvement of ordinary peasants’ lives with the formation of a new intellectual class—namely, the training of teachers for rural schools and the development of savings banks for farmers so as to undergird their economic foundation. During the reign of King Christian VIII (1839–1848), municipalities nationwide were granted expanded autonomy, and were put in charge of the relief of the poor, the disabled, and the jobless (Suzuki 2008: 166). The public safety net of that era consisted of three elements. Firstly, children of the poorer classes were guaranteed the opportunity to receive sustenance and education, as a way to prevent them from ending up poor themselves. Secondly, relief measures were put into place for those people who continually fell back into poverty after having temporarily become able to support themselves, helping them to maintain their independence by organizing workplaces and setting up job-training centers for them, thus giving them a place to work and helping them master necessary job skills. Thirdly, public subsidies were extended to people to help them achieve independence: these included subsidizing workers’ salaries and helping failed business owners with their finances. Education was thus emphasized as the primary foundation supporting social welfare.

3. The Practice of Lifelong Folk Education in Denmark

Besides being envisioned as another space of learning divided by generations, Danish schools have also offered leisure-time activities (Suzuki 2007: 75–76) that target almost the entire population, from children to senior citizens.

Their first goal is to create an “alternate time-space” in which people of all generations can pursue their activities, so that spending a great deal of time at school or the workplace each day does not limit their range of activities, and so that one’s inability to participate fully in the activities of the place in which one lives does not restrict their association with others. Although the current trend is for people’s daily lives to be defined by the generation to which they belong, efforts are being made to open up the possibility for people of any generation to participate in various kinds of activities, from the perspective of the totality of human beings.

As of 1996, some 1.5 million adults in Denmark were participating in such learning activities annually (Danish Ministry of Education 2006), with some two-thirds of youths said to be participating in organized activities (Management and Coordination Agency

1993; Yuzawa 2001: 178).

This section looks at school and adult education in Denmark, particularly their characteristics and flexible application.

3.1 School Education in Denmark and its Goals

The system of school education in Denmark is as follows: compulsory education extends for 10 years, comprising kindergarten (six-year-olds), primary education (first through sixth grades) and middle-level education (seventh through ninth grades). High school education lasts for three years, with students either taking a science-mathematics course or languages (i.e., humanities) course. Universities are separated into those offering four-year courses (commerce, engineering, etc.) and those offering five-to-seven-year courses (medicine, law, economy, politics; all include a Master's course) (Suzuki 2008: 19). While there are a few private schools at the primary and middle levels, most are public schools run by local municipalities. Universities are all national (i.e., run by the country).

According to the first article of the Danish Education Act, Act on the *Folkeskole*, the following goals have been set forth as the goals of education (Danish Ministry of Education 1995). In paragraph one, the activities of a *folkeskole* are described as follows: total character development of the pupils and students, who are to gain knowledge, skills, established practices, and methods of self-expression, in cooperation with their parents/guardians. In paragraph two, *folkeskole* are expected to strive to give pupils and students the opportunity to develop their cognitive powers, creative abilities, and desire to learn, as well as to serve as places where students can obtain experience or complete on-the-job training enthusiastically. This is thought to enable pupils and students to discover their own possibilities, thereby gaining the power of making judgments and taking action themselves. The third paragraph of the Act says that *folkeskole* are to acquaint pupils and students more closely with Danish culture, as well as help them to understand other cultures as well as the mutual relationship between humans and nature, thus becoming able to contribute to them. The *folkeskole* are considered places where students learn about and prepare for active participation in society, collective responsibility, freedom, and the rights and responsibilities people have in a democratic society. For that reason, education and everyday living in schools are built upon the concepts of a free spirit, equality, and democracy.

As far as the goal of education in Denmark is concerned, it is first and foremost to give students the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, and methods of self-expression that enable them to have the power to make judgments and take action themselves, in a way that develops their total character as individuals. The fact that schools are seen as places where students can prepare themselves to participate in a free and democratic society is clearly shown in the second and third paragraphs of the Education Act. For that reason, it is confirmed that education and everyday lives at schools are built upon the concepts of a free spirit, equality, and democracy. In this way, the path has been set in Danish education for students to become familiar with Danish culture, to understand other cultures and the mutual relationship between humans and nature, and to contribute to them.

As a rule, such education is free of charge. While several cases exist in which individuals do foot some of their adult education bills, the Danish people have come to think that such expenses—just as with the case of medical expenses—ought to be borne by the nation as a whole. Underlying the choice to have educational expenses supported by the nation is the idea that its people are its assets, and that education is national activity that fosters those who will support the country in the future. In Denmark, it is believed that the fruits of education do not merely enrich the individuals in question, but society as a whole (Suzuki 2008: 19).

3.2 The Goals of School Education and Flexibility

In Danish education, flexibility can be seen in the practice of compulsory and high school education. This section will explore the characteristics of that flexibility as well as its significance.

3.2.1 Freedom of Choice in Compulsory Education

Turning first to compulsory education, Article 76 of the Danish constitution delineates the rights of children, saying that “all children of school age shall be entitled to free instruction in primary schools.” At the same time, however, it also says that “parents/guardians making their own arrangements for their children or wards to receive instruction equivalent to the general primary school standard shall not be obliged to have their children or wards taught in a publicly provided school.” It is thus permissible for parents/guardians to give their children a substitute form of education—a matter of individual choice (Suzuki 2008: 19–20).

Also, according to Article 2 of the Education Act, local municipalities are assigned the task of carrying out compulsory education, while the actual methods to fulfill the goals laid out in Article 1 are left up to each school. According to the Act, selecting textbooks and teaching materials is the top priority of the teachers in charge of instruction (Kold 2007: 192). Accordingly, teacher training is strongly emphasized; as will be explained later, it is necessary for elementary and middle-school teachers to study at a teachers’ training school after finishing high school and/or university (Photo 1).

In this fashion, parents and schools are urged to consider and select from various educational methods. One expression of this is the obligation to set up what are called school management committees, according to Article 42 of the Education Act. Each committee’s membership consists of five or seven representatives of the parents or guardians of the pupils at a school, along with two people from the school faculty or staff, and finally two representatives from among the pupils. One of the striking features of Danish education is that not only parents or guardians and school representatives, but also pupils—the other party to education—have an equal footing, and can get involved in education.

In Danish compulsory education, the activities of discussion and learning are emphasized, without any tests being given until the seventh grade (Suzuki 2008: 85). The existence of ethical or moral education is one typical characteristic of education in Denmark. According to Article 4 of the Danish Constitution, The Constitutional Act of



Photo 1 Discussion toward making reports on fieldwork is an important part of student learning in teachers' school (Photo taken by the author, Copenhagen).

Denmark. Evangelical Lutheran Church is to receive support from the national government as the “Danish national church.” During all levels of compulsory education, pupils must take courses instilling knowledge about Christianity. In the first and second grades, pupils learn where humans came from, as well as about communal society, isolation and loneliness, safety, and the differences between various types of people. From the third to sixth grades, they discuss the philosophy of living and ethics. Next, seventh-to ninth-graders learn about such subjects as fairness and unfairness, wealth and poverty, and trust and mistrust. Lastly, tenth-graders study the philosophy of living and ethics once again, as well as such topics as the reasons why people live, happy lifestyles, freedom, and human rights, among others. Through Christianity and religion, children are taught the ethics that are necessary for living as human beings.

3.2.2 The Existence of “0th grade” and 10th grade

Elementary schools in Denmark include a “0th grade.” Though it corresponds to nursery schools, they are not separate institutions, but are instead attached to the elementary schools. Their purpose is, in part, to give pupils the time to become accustomed to life in elementary school. 0th grade is not limited to six-year-olds, however, and certain pupils stay on for another year, depending on how their situation is viewed, after consultations with their parents and teachers (Kold 2007: 225).

There is also a system in Denmark offering a tenth grade to students after they

complete compulsory education. Children can move on to this grade, if they so choose, after completing middle school. There are many repeaters of this grade, and it is not considered dishonorable to do so, as it is recommended that students take as much time as they need.

One reason for this is that compulsory education in Denmark emphasizes the availability of a wide variety of courses for individuals to cultivate their talents and abilities, allowing children to find their particular areas of strength as early as possible. Though some students join the tenth grade classes that are set up in their own schools, there is also an increasing incidence of students going on to *Efterskole* instead (Kold 2007: 225).

3.2.3 *Efterskole* and Other Schools

After completing their compulsory education, many students do not go straight to high school, but instead advance to schools known as *Efterskole* (literally “afterschools”). Many *Efterskole* are boarding schools located in regional districts that are rich in nature, with students and teachers living together in an educational community. Besides the schools that have inherited the traditions of Grundtvig and Kold, there is a wide variety of *Efterskole* institutions offering distinctive education in such areas as the environment, nature, art and expression, and physical education (Kold 2007: 192).

Efterskole were first set up in 1879 by Anders Christian Poulsen Dahl (1826–1899), a friend of Christen Kold (the founder of *Friskole*). The etymology of the term *Friskole* (literally “free schools”) is “education free from [the control of] the national government.” Such schools emphasized independent curricula and education, avoiding textbooks designated by the nation or church, and did not give students tests as a matter of principle (Kold 2007: 192). *Friskole* developed as part of the Danish farmers’ movement and the folk education movement, in concert with *Folkehøjskole*, which were set up as alternative boarding schools for people past the age of 17 years and 6 months.

Originally, *Efterskole* were boarding schools for 14-to-18-year-olds, whose age prevented them from qualifying for admission into *Højskole* (folk high school) (Kold 2007: 192). They were places where apprentices would receive a farmers’ or folk education based on the ideas of Grundtvig and Kold. In the past 20 years, however, they have grown into another successful type of alternative school. According to interviews with parents of children studying at *Efterskole*, the schools are useful as places where children can have adequate time to think about their position and future, as their residential system gives children the opportunity to live away from their parents, and their curriculum gives them the freedom to learn about different things than what they did through tenth grade.

Currently, there are five kinds of alternative schools at the stage of compulsory education in Denmark, in addition to *Friskole*: the *Privatskole* (literally “private schools”), which stress subject curricula, as well as the *Lilleskole* (“little schools”), which have inherited the free education tradition of the 1968 generation, along with Catholic schools, Protestant schools, and schools for the German-speaking minority in Denmark (Kold 2007: 192).

3.2.4 Universities

Denmark does not have a system of university entrance examinations, as having graduated from high school is considered a sufficient qualification for entering university. The qualification for university entrance (high school graduation certificate) for a student is the average score of all courses taken during the three years of high school, which determines the university and department one can enter. Since the beginning of the 1970s, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have unified their school education systems, and all three countries share this university entrance qualification (Suzuki 2008: 25).

Denmark has arranged a system of school attendance subsidies for citizens aged 18 or older who are attending occupational schools or universities (Suzuki 2008: 29). Danish parents are only obligated to support their children until age 18, after which the national government has the duty to support its citizens. Once Danish children reach the age of 18, they leave home and start living in their own residences. In this country, it is rare to see three generations of one family living together, with some 99 percent of adult children living separately from their parents. That does not mean, however, that parents and children are estranged from one another, as 40 percent of them meet at least once a week, a frequency that is 40 percent greater than that of Japan (Yuzawa 2001: 205–207).

The government provides pensions (i.e., living expenses) to all those aged 18 or more who are mentally or physically unable to attend school or go to work. Nevertheless, it is rare to see a young person receiving a pension because he or she does not have a job or go to school. This is because, although Denmark has long had a saying that goes, “Give to those who want it,” there is also a view of society and life fostered during school education of using one’s individual abilities to make a contribution to society and live at a level above that of pension recipients (Suzuki 2008: 30).

3.2.5 Extracurricular Activities and The Emphasis on Moratorium

Insofar as young Danes are concerned, one aspect of the social-policy role of such leisure-time activities—as clearly perceived against such a background—has been the creation of places for locally-based activities aside from regular school, as a measure to prevent juvenile delinquency and crime. As for leisure-time activities designed for children, Denmark has instituted such practices as clubs for schoolchildren and youths. In order for the young people living in a particular area to fully participate in leisure-time activities, no club activities are carried out at Danish schools, nor are there after-hours tutoring schools. Children are expected to perform activities outside of school in the local areas in which they live, both to expand their range of activities and to emphasize the concept of inclusion in the places where they live.

Since the 1950s, with more women joining the workforce, Denmark has sought to create the type of local community in which seniors, particularly those living in cities, are not isolated, and in which sufficient attention is given to children. Since the latter 1960s, as districts have become progressively eliminated in line with the restructuring of administrative units, and as Denmark joined the European Community (EC) in 1973, the formation of local communities has emerged as an even greater issue than the fostering of people’s consciousness.

Denmark also emphasizes a moratorium system, a tradition whereby young persons of a certain age can gain social experience by wandering around. As long as one is qualified to enter university, one can do so at any time. Since it is believed important for a person to find what he or she wants to do, those having more social experience have a leg up when getting a job. *Folkehøjskole* are also utilized by such young persons. This way of thinking—one that puts high value on a person's deciding what to do and then acting upon it—is one of the factors supporting the Danish social system that emphasizes the ability to get a fresh start in one's life.

Compulsory education in Denmark has an explicit basic role of “citizenship education” to bring up Danes who will share such values of equality and democracy to firmly uphold Danish society. On the other hand, young people have opportunities to learn about various cultures other than the Danish culture in order to cultivate perspectives on their ways of life by experiencing alternative school such as *Efterskole*, as well as moratorium periods.

In the next section, we explore the purpose of social education and adult education, along with their histories.

4. Social Education and Adult Education in Denmark

One characteristic of education in Denmark is the way in which it occupies an important position throughout people's lives, and is not intended only for school-age children. A path has been clearly delineated for everyone—including the jobless, the old, and the disabled—to participate in society.

4.1 Education for the Jobless and for Older Adults

Activities also provide learning opportunities to jobless people, giving adults, too, the space to reeducate themselves. As for the jobless, the so-called “active labor market policy” instituted in Denmark in the 1990s has made participation in learning activities a condition for receiving unemployment insurance benefits. The policy's aim has been to get a grasp of the unemployed situation in a certain region, using “non-residential schools” as a base, and maintaining a situation in which the jobless can participate in the labor market and educational system.

Meanwhile, given the progressive graying of society, Denmark has also discussed ways to expand venues for seniors to carry out activities⁴). Since the 1980s, senior citizen welfare measures in Denmark have seen a large shift away from older people staying in facilities, instead allowing them to remain in their homes. Seniors are no longer seen as “subjects of care.” Instead, the emphasis has been on helping them to employ their own resources (i.e., their remaining abilities). “Senior day centers” have been organized with an emphasis on helping seniors who live at home to live independently and stay healthy, while serving as places for activities, encouraging them to interact with other local people.

At a “senior day center” in the eastern suburbs of Copenhagen (Photo 2), older adults conduct rehabilitation, dance to music, and paint under the direction of instructors.



Photo 2 A senior day center in the eastern suburbs of Copenhagen (Photo taken by the author, Copenhagen)

There is also a space for the older people to study using computers and to learn about the function of the brain by viewing exhibitions. However, there are older adults that stay alone, doing nothing. It seems that they migrated to live in this area that has a rather dense population of immigrants, and they understand neither Danish nor the English language. Such older adults that lack access to the languages of communication do not have an opportunity for social inclusion conducted in public education.

4.2 Social Education and Adult Education

In Denmark, efforts are made to give people of all generations a diversified range of venues and types of activities. One aim of this is to let people experience social inclusion and help support more fulfilling lives for them. In addition, all the citizens who make up society—from children to older people—are expected to choose their own ways of life as a basis for their autonomy, and to enhance and cultivate their own personal resources.

For school-age children and university students in Denmark, the goals of education are to discover the future path one should lead, and to prepare for participation in society. The idea underlying these goals is respect for the initiative and independence of young people. For this reason, personal choice and motivation are emphasized in the contents and methods of education. Consideration has also been given to making sure that schools are not the only venue used for activities, but to let children experience various kinds of places in local society, thereby securing for them the opportunity to mix with a variety of

cultures. The goal of this is to let them have enough time to think about their current circumstances and the future, and to give them the opportunity to have options.

Similarly, adults are also provided with the time and space to get away from their everyday lives and carry out alternative activities. Thanks to this, even people who belong to a generation in which one's occupation and way of life tend to become fixed are given the freedom to reflect on the way they live.

The fact that consideration is given in Denmark to letting people get a fresh start in life—as long as they are the ones making the choice—is grounded in the perception that people living in a way that suits them best forms the basis for their participation in society. This means that even in a country with enhanced social welfare, people of various generations and situations can clearly contribute to their own social welfare by harnessing their own resources. In such a case, the self-help and independence created by establishing such resources are important.

Folkehøjskole, which boast a variety of features, are used by recent high school graduates as well as adults. They serve as places in which people of several generations, coming from different areas, can come into contact with one another. It is possible to suggest that the role of a *Folkehøjskole* is to utilize the rich accumulation of intelligence and ideas for welfare throughout Denmark, making it an important place that serves as a medium for influence over a broader area.

4.3 *Folkehøjskole*

In Denmark, anyone above 17 years and 6 months old can board at a folk high school and learn there. One can say that such schools specifically arrange places that guarantee people the time and space to restructure their lives (in line with the first goal of leisure-time activities), letting them participate in cooperative tasks to reconsider the nature and ideal form of society (in line with the second goal). While activities at modern Danish folk high schools are regarded as leisure-time activities that provide a definite meeting point, in conformance with a society made up of individuals, they are also expected to function as venues maintaining the ideals of Danish leisure-time activities and transmitting them to the next generation.

Even today, folk high schools continue to exist as a space for alternative learning, also playing a role in leisure-time activities, with around 100 schools in Denmark alone, and some 400 schools established around Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden⁵, etc.) as a whole (Photo 3).

Folk high schools are not places for one to accumulate credits and then graduate, nor are they places that lead to students earning specific qualifications. Unlike vocational or technical schools, where basic knowledge is learned, no entrance or finishing examinations are given, nor are there report cards. Each school is able to set its own curriculum, but in general, one term stretches over a period of several months, such as three or six months.

The schools are residential, with emphasis placed on conversing and living with the instructors and the other students. Also, one condition is that the school principal and at least one faculty member must live together with the students at the boarding school.



Photo 3 People learning how to communicate with older adults suffering from Alzheimer's disease through drama with teachers (Photo taken by the author, Rimforsa)

Folk high schools, basically private schools based on the missions of their founders or principals, occupy an unorthodox position as educational institutions in Denmark. While people normally do not have to pay for their education in Denmark, students at folk high schools are charged for their accommodation expenses, since the schools are by definition boarding schools.

The operation of these schools is free from national policy interference, and is instead grounded in their respective founder's thinking. In this sense, one aspect of the practices of various folk high schools is their constant presentation of their founders' convictions and visions in a concrete form. The existence of folk high schools promoting various ideals mirrors what people gathering in Denmark from home and abroad are seeking. The fact that around 80 percent of the expenses are covered by government subsidies illustrates the awareness of Danish society of the necessity for different ways of learning. Common subjects in schools having distinctive curricula are Grundtvig's philosophy and Danish culture, music, and the like.

As the schools are open to anyone over 17 years and 6 months old, it is possible for people at any time of their lives to take a break from their daily routine and board in the schools' dormitories, getting the opportunity to study and think about any subject of their choice, and to encounter new things and people. There are some who join the schools before they enter university, while others quit or take time off work to do the same thing. Before university entrance, taking a trip or joining a folk high school is said to be recognized as an "experience" worthy of consideration. Those out of work often make use of such schools as a temporary place to stay until they find their next jobs. Folk high schools thus offer people an "alternate time-space" where they can take time off from their lives, not staying at work or at home, and have the chance to reevaluate their

current position in life and think about the future.

5. The Development of A Folk High School for Students to Live and Learn with Mentally Challenged Persons

The following sections will focus on the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole, an institution characterized by its policy of accepting everyone, including mentally challenged persons, as well as people from all over the world including Japanese students. I will trace the background of its establishment and the way in which it pursues its practice. I will also present the results of my field research at a facility for mentally challenged persons that is affiliated with that school's activities, as well as my field research at a teacher-training university for lifestyle-guidance counselors that trains people to support the practice of leisure-time activities. Based on these results, then, I will offer several conclusions.

5.1 A Barrier-free Society Based on the Mission of Normalization, and the Founding of the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole

The Nordfyns Folkehøjskole (also called “Nichio Bunka Gakuin” in Japanese) is located in the former village of Harritslev, now a southern suburb of the city of Bogense, which lies near the sea in the northern part of Funen (Fyn) Island, Denmark's third-largest island by area.

In 1967, at the age of 26, the founder of Nordfyns Folkehøjskole, Tadao Chiba of Japan, traveled to Scandinavia because he wanted to see for himself the reality of welfare societies. After venturing through Finland and Sweden, he finally settled in Denmark, where he came to dream of establishing a folk high school grounded in his own vision (Chiba 2009: 198–203).

One of his goals was to put the Danish ideal of “equality” into practice in the operation of a folk high school, and to hand down these values to young people from other countries by making the school a meeting point to communicate with one another. In Chiba's opinion, this idea of equality did not mean equally dividing public financial resources, but rather providing more generous support to those people who actually needed it. That is what he attempted to do when realizing the idea of normalization in Denmark.

As for his specific vision, Chiba wanted, first of all, to give mentally challenged persons the opportunity to learn at a folk high school, and moreover, in the second place, to create a facility where able-bodied persons could learn with them. This is what he meant by thinking about a barrier-free society and creating a place where it could be practiced.

In Denmark, disabilities are first approached as a condition that can happen to anyone in their lives, meaning that they are seen as involving all people. Accordingly, normalization—namely, organizing an environment that gives extra consideration to the well-being of people with disabilities—is regarded as an important practice that is indispensable for the creation of a society without barriers.

The concept of normalization, in the sense of purporting the welfare of disabled

persons as its basic ideal, was first proposed by Niels E. Bank-Mikkelsen (1919–1990) of Denmark. “Normalization” means creating an environment in which disabled persons can carry out any activities they desire in the same way that able-bodied persons can. As for the idea underlying normalization, Bank-Mikkelsen cited the fact that people are equal, asserting the right of everyone to be able to live normal lives, and not to be discriminated against as a result of disability.

The normal living conditions that Bank-Mikkelsen espoused as everyone’s right was the ability of ordinary citizens to live within a cultural, religious, and social framework, as well as the living condition targeted within such a framework. For example, it consists of people’s right to be free citizens without being segregated, and the right to participate in social life, among other things (Nomura 2010: 216). Therefore, one important theme is encouraging local people to constantly discuss their living conditions and continuously explore ways in which to realize them. Given that people, throughout their lives, experience various changes and disabilities in mind and body, the advocacy of normalization can be regarded as the promotion of a mutual understanding of the need to carry out continual discussions related to the expansion of the possibilities of everyone’s activities. Committees of older adults conducted by volunteers who are older citizens have played important roles in improving politics based on local communities by constantly sharing the opinions of older adults.

Deeply relevant to the idea of normalization is the second way in which disabilities are understood in Denmark, namely, the environmentally-based concept of disability, referring to the insufficiency of normalization efforts in society. According to this concept of disability, when disabilities are aggravated by social barriers, they are turned into handicaps that arise from social and environmental factors. Equal opportunity is achieved, then, by the extension of appropriate supplements and compensation. The word “handicap” in Denmark is thus taken to mean an environmental disability (Nomura 2010: 93). The concept of disabilities based on the environment is a manifestation of the important social issue of carrying out the practice of normalization by involving everyone. This means that it is not simply something carried out by certain professionals, but through the cooperation of everyone in their different situations.

While everyone aged 17-and-a-half years or older can stay and learn at a folk high school, Chiba’s institution was envisioned as a place where both able-bodied and mentally disabled persons could live together, giving them the chance to think and learn about a barrier-free society.

Chiba needed permission to create the environment to establish his folk high school, but to get it, he spent more time than is normally needed in Denmark (Chiba 2011). First of all, he had to secure a physical place. He bought a run-down elementary school building in Hårtslev originally built in 1914, remodeling it so that it could be used again. He also organized such necessary facilities as meeting rooms, classrooms, and living spaces. The main building contains classrooms, a dining hall, a kitchen, offices, a living room, a TV room, student bedrooms, common toilets, and showers. There is also a guesthouse, an exercise room, a music room, a hobby room, an exercise space, and accommodations for the school principal and faculty. Starting in 2005, moreover, he set

up a full-scale venue for able-bodied people to learn along with those who have mental disabilities. A new student dormitory was also built, accommodating a total of 50 people. There are also classrooms and facilities such as common toilets, showers (including wheelchair-accessible ones), and a small kitchen. Everyone with a disability also has a single bedroom in which to live.

5.2 Life at the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole

There are people of various generations who had experience living in the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole, and either continued to stay in Denmark or went back to Japan to live with the knowledge they acquired in the school.

In the hopes of encouraging Japanese people, especially young ones, to learn about Danish ideas of living, Chiba has accepted students from both Denmark and Japan at his school since 1997. As the school is one of the few folk high schools in Denmark to enroll Japanese students, many Japanese people have stayed there already, each subsequently paving his or her own future path. A certain Mr. K from Japan has used his experience at the school to become a *pådagog* (a local government employee who works to enable multiple levels of support at various facilities). Meanwhile, Mr. Z, who had spent many years traveling between the facility and Japan, and who used to report from around the world as a newspaper correspondent, has been employed as a faculty member of the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole since 2006, living on campus with his family. Meanwhile, as of November 2006, several students and school residents from Japan who had previously worked as professional caretakers in Japan, or who eventually planned to return to Japan someday to study to become social welfare specialists at universities—including Ms. T—enrolled at the school in order to take stock of their lives and explore new paths in the future.

Recently, furthermore, the school has been accepting many people from Denmark and abroad. Sometimes people ask to stay at the school who cannot participate in the common meals because of differences in dietary customs. Still, each of these “barriers” has been shared at the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole as a theme, giving many people food for thought about ideas and practices for aiming toward a barrier-free society.

The daily schedule at the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole begins with breakfast (7:30 a.m.), followed by an assembly (8:30), morning classes (9:00–11:45), lunch (12:00 p.m.), afternoon classes (13:30–16:00), and finally supper (18:00). In addition, the school holds various gatherings and seasonal events in the evening and at other times.

At this folk high school, three types of activities are considered central. First, lectures are given on Danish culture and social welfare theory, after which excursions are made to social welfare facilities, as well as to educational and medical institutions, letting participants observe the situation on-site and gain experience by associating with the people there. After that, students discuss what they saw, heard, and experienced. In the case of long-term courses, plenty of opportunities are provided for repeated on-site practice. Even if the students do not receive certificates of qualification for their work, the activities are regarded as a good way to prepare for entrance examinations to specialized universities.

Compulsory subjects include the following: (1) social welfare (Danish welfare, education, medical care, communication theory, personnel training education, facility visits and on-the-job training including nursing care, techniques, and ethics, and (2) liberal arts (Danish democracy, history, cultural comparisons with Japan, etc.), and so forth. Electives include creative subjects (ceramics, jewelry, silversmithing, woodworking), physical education (various sports, swimming, yoga), languages (English, Danish), and others (street performance, drama). The electives consist of skills that can later be utilized by people seeking jobs related to social welfare.

Every class at the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole emphasizes dialogue and practice, not adopting a unidirectional lecture style, but rather teaching the students through seminars and workshops (participation-experience learning). The faculty members are either Danish or Japanese, and conversations are carried out mostly in English, just as in normal high schools. By employing English as the school's common language, a more varied group of faculty and students can be attracted from Denmark and other countries, and there is a mutual understanding that knowing English is an important pursuit.

Besides classes, much emphasis is put on lifestyle and dialogue at the school. As the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole is residential, the dormitory residents spend a great deal of time together. The students are put in charge of various roles in their daily lives, such as preparing for meals and cleaning up afterward, washing dishes with the staff, and cleaning the residential areas and common spaces. The characteristics of daily life include (1) boarding (sleeping), (2) sharing the daily routine of serving the meals, with everyone eating at the same time, and cleaning up afterward, (3) taking the time every morning and evening after meals to carry out dialogues and discussions at the table, and (4) leaving plenty of time for discussion during all activities. The three meals and three tea times each day are emphasized as times for people to freely discuss various matters about all aspects of living. With students from Denmark and abroad frequently coming to stay at the school, the act of learning about a variety of cultures through face-to-face conversations is thought to lead to ways of self-realization while considering other people's situations: that is to say, the practice of multicultural coexistence.

The practice of having meals together is rather unusual at Danish schools and facilities. From an early age, children are taught that "deciding for oneself" is important—self-determination, in other words—so even children in daycare centers⁴ are urged to take their lunches, composed of sandwiches and other foods they bring in, whenever they want, also resting (taking naps, for instance) when they feel like it. At the Egebo Plejecenter for seniors, as well, the same thing can be observed. Simple kitchens have been set up in the seniors' rooms so they can prepare their own food, and those people who select the option of eating their meals in the cafeteria can go there freely, albeit in twos and threes. The practice of having everyone eat their meals at a fixed time—an efficient method for managers and caretakers—has not been adopted. In contrast, the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole is unusual among Danish schools in its emphasis on everyone sitting down at a long table to eat and converse with others.

During their free time in the late afternoon before dinner, students at the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole are at liberty to exercise or take walks in the setting sun. Most of the

grounds are covered by a lawn, with students often sunning themselves there, ensconced in the scents of dirt and grass.

Various activities, including discussions, are also scheduled during the evening at the school. These might include lectures on normalization and the idea of autonomy in Denmark, as well as presentations of research reports on the experiences of people from abroad (for example, Chinese people might report on Chinese regional cultures and their own experiences). All such reports take the form of presentations, but the goal is to present ideas and carry out discussions.

The daily life spaces outside of class, conducted in groups, are open to everyone, regardless of intellectual or emotional disability. During meetings after dinner, the custom of singing to the accompaniment of Mr. K's guitar-playing has gained quite a large repertoire, with everyone enjoying singing together.

Several times at the school each day, one runs across scenes of a mentally disabled person suddenly wringing his or her hands, or shouting out in a loud voice, or breaking into tears. Not everyone in the vicinity may understand the reasons for such actions. Staff members at the school explained to me that such things happen often. The more time people spend together at the school, the less they treat such kinds of expressive behaviors as problems; rather, they treat them as shared facets of everyday life.

In addition, careful consideration has been given to the assignment of roles played by each of the boarders. For example, it is the job of long-term student residents with intellectual disabilities to individually present shorter-term students from Japan with employment certificates at a ceremony and shake their hands. The action has been designed in a way that gives everyone the chance to receive applause in the spotlight.

At the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole, operated with the vision of supporting a barrier-free society, it is important for the faculty and other staff members to observe the students and support their activities, helping everyone have a fulfilling time in such a way that lets their talents bloom. These activities are not carried out by the school alone, but are supported by its affiliation with such outside organizations as educational institutions for training staff, and outpatient facilities for mentally challenged staff, which let people with intellectual disabilities carry out a broader variety of activities. In the next section, I will look at the activities of such facilities.

5.3 The Activities of the Institution Collaborating with the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole

One of the places affiliated with the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole, in the area of information exchange and student activities, is Otterupgården Otterup, an outpatient facility for mentally challenged persons established by Bent Lauresen. It is both an outpatient facility and a workshop for such people.

People in Denmark achieve legal independence at age 18, with children leaving their parents' homes and becoming independent between the ages of 18 and 20. Adults aged 18 and older who have disabilities receive an early pension⁶⁾, with residence and livelihood support also guaranteed, so that they can live on their own in regional group homes, apartments, and the like. In cases of more severe kinds of disabilities in which ordinary employment is impossible, disabled persons in Denmark are guaranteed free use

of workshops, day centers, day homes, short-stay services, and other day services, subsidized entirely by the national government, regardless of their family's incomes⁷). As everyone is covered by such policies, the emphasis is on enabling several different levels of activities at places of residence (Chiba 2009: 166–168).

Bank-Mikkelsen was involved in the concrete vision of Otterupgården Otterup as well (Chiba 2009: 155). While working in the Mental Retardation Section of the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs after World War II, he visited a residential facility for mentally challenged persons. There, he got the impression that the sole aim of the facility was to provide meals to the residents and pressure them to live in a well-regulated fashion, without any attention to making their lives meaningful or giving them an education. He thus proposed the creation of places that were not large-scale facilities, but where the residents could live as human beings. In 1954, a group was created for the parents of mentally-challenged persons, and in 1959, a law was passed in Denmark to support their livelihood. Between 1980 and 1985, with the country experiencing the ongoing process of decentralization, detailed deliberations were made about the lives of disabled persons, and improvements were made.

Otterupgården was one of the facilities for mentally challenged persons organized in this fashion. One of the activities for people using the facility is to create things with their own hands, and their handiwork—woodwork, woven fabrics, dyed goods, oil paintings, and other crafts—is sometimes made available for sale. Musical performances are also sometimes given. All such activities are not only aimed at mentally challenged persons, but provide the opportunity for people from other facilities and the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole to mix with them. Some of the classes offered by Chiba's folk high school are currently being held at this facility, with students discussing the meaning of promoting collaboration with disabled persons, along with the ideas and practices of normalization that underlie it, and thinking about autonomy and freedom.

6. Conclusion

In Denmark, people have access throughout their lives to alternative places of learning, as well as the time to spend in them. This paper traces the history of such a system of lifelong learning and the thought processes behind it, especially reflecting upon the meaning of such learning as a form of leisure, based upon fieldwork conducted at distinctive *Folkehøjskole*.

Such leisure allows people to use time at their own pace, letting them think, discuss, and learn about the goals of living and enhance their personal resources. The goal of this is to learn about the fundamental ideas constituting Danish society, such as equality. Also, people can acquire the methods that allow them to develop and make full use of their personal resources in order to participate in society. This, it is thought, is precisely how people can experience social inclusion and secure happiness in their lives.

The values that make up Denmark are defended by all citizens, and are believed to be worth spreading abroad. Accordingly, it is sometimes difficult for those not sharing such values to be included in such a society.

This paper has focused on folk high schools as a distinctive Danish venue for the integration of learning and living. Folk high schools, in the first place, give people the opportunity to create “multiple levels” in their lives from the perspective of the totality of human beings, in that they allow anyone to drop in at any point in life. Secondly, folk high schools offer a concrete venue to “give back” (i.e., realize in concrete form) the results of discussions and reflections on living spaces and the optimum condition of society.

First of all, various barriers to communication are encountered on a daily basis when people live together with those who have intellectual disabilities at a folk high school where students come from a variety of cultural and national backgrounds. The act of discussing and discovering methods, ideas, and approaches that help overcome those barriers to daily living allows people to experience specific normalization practices that aim at the realization of a barrier-free society. There are also opportunities created to discuss and reflect on these experiences at the school, as well as ways in which to realize them in daily living and culture.

Secondly, at the same time that the folk high school plays a role in creating multiple levels of living spaces for people with intellectual disabilities, it has explored and developed the concrete method of affiliating with institutions that bring together a wide range of knowledge and wisdom aiming at the creation of a barrier-free society. Through the repeated observations and discussions of the lifestyle of mentally challenged persons, who are engaged in a broad range of activities that a single institution would not be able to handle, it has been possible to share knowledge and wisdom about normalization practices that enable many different activities related to the well-being of mentally-challenged persons. That kind of knowledge is applicable to the consideration of everyone’s lives, not just the lives of disabled persons.

In this way, by participating at various times in one’s life in a place that gives one the time to communicate and think together with people of several generations, people can develop a vision, based on their own experiences, of a place of living that encompasses the lives of a diverse range of people. Folk high schools have paved the way for all people to participate in a venue for thinking continuously about places where human beings—each living his or her life in a different situation—can live.

Notes

- 1) “University of Leicester Produces the first ever ‘World Map of Happiness’.” http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2006-07/uol-uol072706.php (accessed 2013/12/13)
- 2) Folk high schools, without worldwide precedent at the time of their founding, were first established in 1844. In Japan, the term has been translated as “people’s high schools,” as its level corresponded to prewar Japanese *koto gakko* (“high schools” aimed at students aged 17 to 20). Tadao Chiba, who has been personally involved in running a folk high school in Denmark, suggests “people’s university” or “grassroots university” as more appropriate translations (Chiba 2009: 102).
- 3) As for the source materials used, I pursued field research at the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole

Bogense, both in August of 2005 and between November and December of 2006, also interviewing its staff members between February and March of 2009.

I also carried out field research at Otterupgården Otterup, an affiliated institution for mentally challenged persons, as well as a teacher-training university for lifestyle-guidance counselors in Odense on the island of Fyn (Funen), from November to December of 2006.

Further field research was conducted at the Hovedstadens Pædagogseminarium Vanløse in September 2006, in addition to the community of Egebo, at a high school in Funen as well as the senior citizens' center there (Egebo Plejecenter), and the seniors' committee in Bogense, from November to December of 2006. Other data were gleaned from a series of interview surveys and other methods.

I wish to express my deep appreciation to Tadao Chiba, who gave me valuable source materials through his lectures and interviews about his experiences of living and making efforts on creating the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole, where Japanese students as well as people from all over the world could live, communicate, and learn about diverse cultures of welfare. I would also like to thank the staff of the folkehøjskole and other institutions, who provided information about their work and the ways in which it changed their lives, especially Takayuki Zenimoto, now serving as the principal of the Nordfyns Folkehøjskole, and Yukio Kato, a pedago, who taught my students who attended the school in December of 2006.

- 4) Since the early 1980s, welfare services for seniors in Denmark have undergone a radical shift. Before then, large-scale facilities for seniors (special-care homes for the elderly) had been set up mainly in suburban areas. In 1983, however, a senior citizens' welfare evaluation committee was launched to pare the operational costs of such institutions, and to seek better ways of welfare. The main findings of the committee were encapsulated by the slogan, "turning old age into people's 'third age.'" Thereafter, no more new "old people's homes" were constructed in Denmark, but rather housing—known as senior centers (*plejecenter* in Danish)—was offered that enabled seniors to continue living at home, with welfare being carried out along those lines. Thanks to the revision of the law in 1980, seniors now live in housing units designed expressly for their needs, with an area of approximately 65m² each (Chiba 2009: 148–151).
- 5) There are also people's universities (*folkhögskola*) set up in Sweden, modeled after those in Denmark, with some 130 schools in the mid-1990s, and more than 140 in the early 2000s (Ito 2005: 35, Okazawa and Miyamoto 1997: 190). Those schools, too, have inherited the spirit of Grundtvig, with people able to board there, but the students also retain the flexibility of being able to continue their work while attending. People go to such schools for a variety of reasons, such as accumulating new knowledge that would be useful for their current work, or thinking about their future direction in life. Occasionally, some people go there to rehabilitate from drug habits.
- 6) "Early pension" refers to the system of receiving a pension from the government before the standard age of 65 years old.
- 7) There are no special laws for disabled persons in Denmark (unlike Japan's Services and Supports for Persons with Disabilities Act, etc.). Rather, disabled persons fall under the same social services laws as other people (Chiba 2009: 166–167).

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