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Permaculture Education: Kolding Folk High School Model

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[Presentation Report]

The Folk High School model has its roots in conditions and developments of social need in the mid 1800's. The system gradually built up through development of teaching home-based technologies. It now attracts an audience from the age of 18 upwards. The activities are geared towards age groups: for example, from dynamic activities for the younger age groups to maintenance activities for the older groups.

The Danish permaculture environment is in four areas: the Folk High Schools (Kolding and Rodkilde), Eco-villages, Eco-Communities and through Urban and Rural Interaction. (Address: Permaculture Denmark, Istedgade 79, DK 1650 Kobenhavn V, Denmark.)

The permaculture principles are: action learning, co-operation, flexibility, and the alternation of theory and practice. The objectives are to train and practice in holistic permaculture thinking, planning, management and co-operation, and to organize observations and transfer experience to others.

The overall pattern is: I – me – myself – values and preferences, my local community, my bio-region, my climatic zone, the continent, the Earth. The idea is to be clear about issues close to oneself before attempting to solve problems of much greater magnitude. The method assists in clarifying motives etc.

The education program goes for a period of usually around 18 months, but can be longer depending on the duration of projects undertaken as part of the course. The programme is divided into 10 phases, gradually building up responsibility and initiative as the course progresses. Theory and practical projects alternate. The students are encouraged to travel and work, bringing with them a log book with all details of previous work undertaken. When the work is completed the book is signed for the student who submits it for final examination.

Teachable moments and each student's learning are aspects of the teaching ethic.