

# DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT LEARNERS' 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS IN GREENLAND: FIELD WORK ANALYSIS

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**Abstract.** *The expansion of adult education has been presented as an effective strategy to solve the issues in adult employment. The aim of the present research is to analyse the field work carried out in Nuuk (Greenland) on the development of adult learners' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in Greenland underpinning the elaboration of implications for adult education in Greenland. The methods of the present research comprise both theoretical and empirical methods. The empirical study was based on fieldwork. Two on-site visits in Nuuk between the 8-12<sup>th</sup> August 2022 were carried out. Observation and participant observation were implemented. A semi-structured interview with two interviewees was conducted. The literature review allows for a conclusion that adult education in Greenland is mentioned neither in Greenland educational policy documents or scientific publications. Despite that, the analysis of the implemented fieldwork allows drawing a conclusion that adult education has been established on a municipal level like the centre Majoriaq, and on a non-governmental level like Kofoeds Skole. Both theoretical and empirical analysis contribute to the conclusion that adult learners' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in Greenland are being developed. However, these skills would need more joint work from all the adult education stakeholders.*

**Keywords:** *adult education, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, employment, fieldwork, Greenland, Kofoeds Skole, Majoriaq.*

## Introduction

In Greenland, there is currently a development to a broader diversified economic base (Gjedssø Bertelsen et al., 2016). The labour market is being restructured from traditional occupations to modern ones (economics, management, security, etc) (Ahrens et al., 2021) in accordance with the current developments in society, economy, and technologies all over the world. The shifts in society and economy focus on greater social inclusion and economic sustainability of the country inhabitants. The country is interested to have knowledgeable and skilled citizens who are able to contribute effectively to the social and economic development of the country. The desired societal and economic changes rely on a positive

correlation between entrepreneurship and economic growth, particularly in high-income countries (Acs, Arenius, Hay & Minniti, 2004). Entrepreneurship includes also hybrid entrepreneurship (Ahrens, Andreeva, Bassus, & Zaščerinska, 2015). Entrepreneurship is regarded as a key driver of economic growth (Ahrens, Andreeva, Bassus, & Zaščerinska, 2015). Entrepreneurship is considered as a phase in the transition from a wage-job to self-employment (Giones, 2014). The transition proceeds from paid employment through entrepreneurship to full-time self-employment (Raffiee & Feng, 2014, p. 956) as depicted in Figure 1.

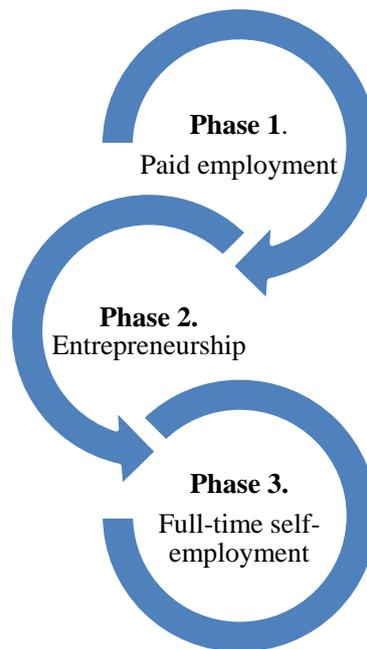


Figure 1 **Entrepreneurship as the transition phase from the transition from a wage-job to self-employment** (the authors)

Entrepreneurship is defined as the individual ability to establish social or commercial activity by turning ideas into action (Melnikova & Zaščerinska, 2016). Entrepreneurship makes employees more aware of the context of their work and better able to seize opportunities (European Commission, 2012, p. 7). Entrepreneurship, identified as the individual ability, encompasses individual's creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives (European Commission, 2012, p. 7). These skills are also known as the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The 21st century skills include analytical thinking, complex problem-solving and ideation, creativity, originality,

initiative, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, cultural awareness, active learning, ability to communicate in several languages (Luka, 2019).

The expansion of adult education has been presented as an effective strategy to solve the issues in adult employment. New developments such as globalisation, digitalisation and internalisation in the modern world of work require new skills adult learners have to demonstrate for their greater social integration and economic sustainability. The view on entrepreneurship as the transition from a wage-job to self-employment highlights the necessity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills adult learners need for a greater social inclusion and economic prosperity all over the world. However, the development of adult learners' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in Greenland was not addressed (Ahrens et al., 2021). The previously done research focused on the identification of challenges and opportunities in adult education in Greenland (Ahrens et al., 2021).

The aim of the present research is to analyse the field work carried out in Nuuk (Greenland) on the development of adult learners' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in Greenland underpinning the elaboration of implications for adult education in Greenland.

The methods of the present research comprise both theoretical and empirical methods. The theoretical methods imply analysis of scientific literature, theoretical analysis, theoretical modelling, systematisation, synthesis, comparison, and generalisation (Ahrens, & Zascerska, 2021). The empirical methods are based on fieldwork implementation and analysis, observation and participant observation, interviews for data collection. Data were processed through content analysis. Structuring and summarizing content analysis were carried out for data analysis.

## **Literature Review**

The present part of the paper intends to discuss findings on the development of adult learners' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in Greenland obtained through the literature review available on the Internet.

A large minority of Greenlanders is challenged by unemployment and lack of education (Gjedssø Bertelsen et al., 2016). Some of this is based in social and health problems, but this group also includes very competent, skilful and well-functioning people (Gjedssø Bertelsen et al., 2016). Their problem is, that their

skills are acquired in informal ways and for that reason invisible and unrecognized by the job market (Gjedssø Bertelsen et al., 2016). The lack of appreciation of the qualifications of this group constitutes a great loss of value to society and to the individual (Gjedssø Bertelsen et al., 2016).

Among the Greenlandic population aged 25-74, more men have achieved some level of education than women but more women than men achieve the highest level of education (Bennike, Faber, & Nielsen, 2016). Women indicated that they wanted to move to gain better access to education, to get access to more culture and leisure activities and to get away from social control in the smaller communities and provide increased opportunities for their children (Bennike, Faber, & Nielsen, 2016). The study showed that men in Greenland, in contrast, are more motivated by opportunities in the labour market (Bennike, Faber, & Nielsen, 2016). A reason for Greenlandic men to choose to move could be that they feel that there are better and more business opportunities for them and/or their partner elsewhere (Bennike, Faber, & Nielsen, 2016). Common for respondents from both sexes in the Mobility Study was that they wanted to reside in an area where the wages are higher, with increased opportunities for public transportation and a variety of other public benefits, for example, health and education facilities (Rasmussen, 2010).

The role of education in society is unquestionable: education is seen as a means to achieve better welfare, improvement of health and (political) power – also on a global level (Gjedssø Bertelsen et al., 2016). An improvement of the educational level of the labour force is a major challenge and a necessary step to ensure a more self-sustaining economy (Gjedssø Bertelsen et al., 2016).

Education is complex; it consists of problems that are influenced by many different factors at the same time (Gjedssø Bertelsen et al., 2016). There has been an increase in entry in recent years into the various forms of education (Gjedssø Bertelsen et al., 2016).

Adult education in Greenland tends to support the development of individual's sustainability (European Commission, 2014).

Language teaching is highly prioritised in the teaching plans. It is the intention of the teaching that the learners become functionally bilingual (Greenlandic and Danish) and able read, write, speak and understand English (European Commission, 2014). A lack of Greenlandic teachers still persists and

teachers have to be brought in from Denmark (The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Government of Iceland, 2020).

Providing access to education is a challenge in Greenland (Øgaard, 2019; Ahrens et al., 2021). With a very small population (56.000) and huge distances only a few cities provide possibilities, the capital of Nuuk with a university being the main hub for education (Øgaard, 2019). It should be pointed that the modern adult education, which is the focus of this research, has to be ensured to all the interested adult learners along the 4,700 kilometer habitable coast line, from Qaanaaq and Siorapaluk in the far north to Nanortalik and Narsaq Kujalleq in the south, to Ittoqqortoormiit in the East (Lennert, 2018).

Most Greenlanders have to leave family, work and their home area for longer periods of time to engage in education (Øgaard, 2019). Cultural and social ties can be serious impediments for this endeavor (Øgaard, 2019). Vulnerability coming from family ties and local devotion has to be taken into account in the educational system (Øgaard, 2019). For these reasons distance education seems an obvious solution in the Greenlandic educational system (Øgaard, 2019).

Distance learning barely exists in Greenland (The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Government of Iceland, 2020). Connectivity in the larger towns already is of sufficient quality to support distance learning (The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Government of Iceland, 2020). In addition, a highspeed revolution is expected in the imminent future (The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Government of Iceland, 2020). It will be based on an international system of low-altitude satellites that connect every Greenlander to a high-speed network, whether they live in the most remote settlements or are out at sea (The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Government of Iceland, 2020). This lays the groundwork for a revolution in education in Greenland (The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Government of Iceland, 2020). The speed of these developments depends on how readily knowledge on the development of distance learning can be shared with Greenlanders (The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Government of Iceland, 2020).

It should be noted that adult education in Greenland is not separately addressed in educational policy, scientific papers, and other documents, e.g. Lennert, 2018; Øgaard, 2019; The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Government of Iceland, 2020, etc.

## **Methodology**

The research question enabled the empirical study. The research question was formulated: How are adult learners' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills developed in Greenland? The purpose of the empirical study was to analyse the field work on the development of adult learners' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills implemented in Nuuk (Greenland).

The empirical study was implemented in Nuuk, Greenland, from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> August 2022.

The qualitative study was chosen. The qualitative method was selected due to a couple of factors. One of the reasons was that there some scientific literature on education in Greenland exist. However, adult education was not highlighted in these works. The researchers were interested to receive an impression on the existence, structure and processes in adult education in Greenland (Ahrens & Zaščerinska, 2014). Another factor was the researchers' resources, such as time, non-defined sample size and access to the sample, available for the empirical study implementation (Ahrens & Zaščerinska, 2014a; Ahrens, & Zaščerinska, 2014b).

According to Baczko and Dorronsoro (Baczko & Dorronsoro, 2020), the practice of fieldwork tends to empower researchers, lets them produce their own hypotheses, and puts distance between themselves and the sorts of Taylorism making a strong comeback. Consequently, fieldwork was determined for data collection. Fieldwork implies the collection of data in a real environment compared to a survey, for example. Fieldwork allows for observing adult educators in their real life conditions and cultural circumstances. Observation also included participant observation or, in other words, adult learners.

The collected data were processed within the interpretive paradigm. Interpretive paradigm is useful when the researcher(s) indicate their interest in a phenomenon (Zaščerinska, Aleksejeva, Zaščerinskis, Gukovica, & Aleksejeva, 2021). The researchers themselves interpreted the obtained data (Ahrens, Purvinis, Zaščerinska, Miceviciene, & Tautkus, 2018). Interpretation allows for a meaning to emerge (Zaščerinska, Aleksejeva, Zaščerinskis, Gukovica, & Aleksejeva, 2021).

## **Research Results**

The researchers' travel to Nuuk, the capital city of Greenland, has already helped discover life conditions of adult educators and learners in Greenland. First observation was about travelling between the cities in Greenland. Travelling is organised by the means of planes and boats which depend on weather conditions. The weather conditions even in summer can be difficult for travelling due to rainy periods, wind, fog and other. Passengers can spend a couple of days at the airport waiting for an appropriate weather to get a flight. Another observation was that there are no roads for travelling by car between the cities in Greenland.

The researchers visited the local job and up-qualification centre Majoriaq in Nuuk. The visit was divided into three parts:

- A short introduction from the Head of the Education Department.
- Observation of adult educators training, and
- Interviews with adult educators.

The researchers were met by the Head of the Education Department at the local job and up-qualification centre Majoriaq in Nuuk. She gave a short introduction into the structure of the Education Department of the local job and up-qualification centre Majoriaq in Nuuk. Along with adult learners training, the Department is also involved in various international projects including educational projects.

Observation was implemented in an adult educator training session. In total the training session lasted for about 6 hours. The researchers attended the last part of the training. This part of the training was planned for one hour and 30 minutes. The training was given in Greenlandic. The training session was devoted to give instructions to the adult educators about the use of classroom management system in their teaching. The classroom management system was in Greenlandic language, too. From six adult educators working in the local job and up-qualification centre Majoriaq, five adult educators took part in the training. One of the adult educators was the instructor. The instructor explained how to use the classroom management system for the organisation of adult learners' examination. The adult educators learnt how to use the system for introducing the exam results to the adult learners and the administration of the local job and up-qualification centre Majoriaq. Training of adult learners implies adult learners' testing, checking the test results, and a certificate issue. Interesting that adult

learners' exams are organized on the centre campus. Adult learners have to be present in the centre for taking part in the written exam. The certificate issued for adult learners can be used as the skill evidence when applying for a job.

After the observation of the training, the interview with two adult educators who participated in the training session was conducted. The interview lasted for about one hour. The interview was semi-structured as the researchers have a good knowledge in the field of adult education and extensive experience in teaching adults.

The interviewees pointed that they have in total eight adult learners in the centre. The adult learners do not have a professional education. The adult learners are from Nuuk as the local job and up-qualification centre Majoriaq works with adult learners who belong to the Nuuk area. Despite that adult learners live in Nuuk, some of them have problems with the centre attendance due to distances between their home and the centre. Also, their presence in the centre depends heavily on the weather conditions. The adult learners get training in Greenlandic, mathematics and digital skills. Digital communication is well established between adult educators and adult learners. One of the interviewees discussed that adult learners writing in Greenlandic could be improved. At the same time, the adult learners perfectly use emojis in digital communication with adult educators. Another important issue was raised. The issue referred to the production of teaching materials. The adult educator was curious to clarify the situation with the authorship and copyright on teaching materials created by the adult educators from the local job and up-qualification centre Majoriaq and financed by the local job and up-qualification centre Majoriaq.

For further clarification, the researchers searched the information about the local job and up-qualification centre Majoriaq on google. They discovered the information of the website: <https://www.norden.org/en/info-norden/rehabilitation-greenland>. The website disclosed that Majoriaq is an offer to the unemployed, and is available in all towns in Greenland. The Majoriaq centres are run by the local authority and assist unemployed citizens with case management and guidance in relation to education and the labour market. Majoriaq is in contact with the business community and can put job seekers in touch with workplaces. In addition, Majoriaq offers both academic and non-academic skills enhancement to job seekers who wish to improve their chances of getting a job or being admitted to a study programme. In this way, the centres function as a gateway for

the unemployed to education, the labour market and the business community. If an unemployed person requires special help to enter the labour market, the caseworker will draw up a rehabilitation plan in collaboration with the unemployed person that aims to produce the best solution for that person. The plan might for example include:

- Qualifications improvement or education,
- Other skills enhancement activities, and
- Enterprise rehabilitation.

Prior to rehabilitation, the unemployed person must take part in a clarification process, followed by a trial work period.

If all possibilities for employment under normal conditions have been exhausted, a person may be offered a flex job. In a flex job, a person can work reduced hours for normal wages, part of which is paid by the public authorities.

Another visit was planned for Kofoeds Skole in Nuuk. Kofoeds Skole is available on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/kofoedsskolenuuk/>. This is a non-profit organisation based on voluntary donations. The organisation implements day-time activities for adult learners. The Kofoeds Skole is open from 08:00am till 15:00pm. The working hours of the Kofoeds Skole depend on the available funding to support adult educators' work. The Kofoeds Skole is open for adult learners not only from Nuuk. Any adult learner can join. Kofoeds Skole in Nuuk is daily attended by around 30 adult learners. For more visitors, Kofoeds Skole has to enlarge the premises that is problematic due to the dependence on donations. Adult learners arrive in the morning. They start from a breakfast together. The breakfast and other breaks with food are provided from the received donations as adult learners do not always have enough money due to their unemployment or disability. Adult learners can also get a new clothing donated to Kofoeds Skole. After the breakfast, adult learners go to the Workshops of their interest: sewing, playing music instruments, painting, making wooden products and others. For example, no Christmas trees grow in Greenland. Adult learners create Christmas trees from other materials like wood. Each December the Kofoeds Skole offers these made Christmas trees for selling. They are very popular in Greenland and fast sold out. Participation of adult learners in the Workshops allows preparing different events, such as Christmas, Easter and others, to be celebrated together or even with a wider public. The Kofoeds Skole also has two-three computers for adult learners. But the demand on computers

among adult learners is much higher. Another issues that there is no special training for the development of adult learners' digital skills at Kofoeds Skole.

## **Conclusions**

The literature review allows for a conclusion that adult education in Greenland is mentioned neither in Greenland educational policy documents or scientific publications. Despite that, the analysis of the implemented fieldwork allows drawing a conclusion that adult education has been established

- On a municipal level like the centre Majoriaq, and
- On a non-governmental level like Kofoeds Skole.

The implemented fieldwork allows for a finding that the municipal centre Majoriaq has a well-established cooperation with business community.

Both theoretical and empirical analysis contribute to the conclusion that adult learners' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in Greenland are being developed. However, these skills would need more joint work from all the adult education stakeholders.

The research was limited by the fieldwork carried out only in the capital city Nuuk, Greenland. If the other cities in Greenland have been visited, the other findings could be reached.

Implications for adult education in Greenland imply the formulation of Adult Education Strategy for Greenland. This Adult Education Strategy for Greenland could be considered within the unity of the educational system in Greenland. Also, the concerted efforts of the state organisations, municipal establishments, and non-governmental institutions would be beneficial for all the economy sectors in Greenland as an aim of the adult education is to develop adult learners' skills, thereby increasing the employability of adult learners. Another implication for adult education in Greenland could be the improvement of digital skills of adult learners as in today's world digital skills have become of a high priority. This would require more modern computers with contemporary software to be obtained by adult education establishments in Greenland.

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