

Bedford-Copenhagen Learning Exchange

B1 Group Visit: 2nd- 6th February 2014

AFUK

In the centre of Copenhagen we visited a refurbished warehouse, once as used as a store for the city's rail stock, which had been transformed in to a venue called AFUK. This was an educational provision for learners aged 16-25 (funded by the local authority) who had 'dropped out' of mainstream education and had achieved very little during their time at school. The individual running the school referred to his pupils as 'losers' - he did not intend to disrespect the young people he worked with but merely recognised that so far they had not been successful in education. This was the criteria for determining if the provision was suitable for the young people who attended this venue, and possibly reflected a difference in approach and culture to the UK, in meeting the needs of a group of young people who we would refer to as NEET.

On entering the venue, we were immediately struck by the relaxed and nurturing atmosphere where young people attending really seemed to own the space in which they worked. All of the learners we observed were positively engaged in a range of creative projects; some working together in groups and others working individually on projects. Of particular note was how self-motivated the learners appeared to be and how deeply involved in the projects they were working on. We saw no evidence of any off task or poor behaviour and expectations were high that learners would come to the venue, work on their projects and where possible produce goods and services which they would later market and sell.

Learners attending AFUK benefitted from an impressive range of what we would call alternative and creative curriculums. We saw learners working on the following projects:

- Circus school - pupils were taught by professionals from the **Cirque du Soleil** in a fully equipped circus gym and developed skills and experience in juggling, trapeze, trampoline, dance, fire eating and gymnastics.
- Construction project - pupils worked at AFUK planning, building and then playing on skateboarding parks which they built on wasteland around Copenhagen.
- Fashion and design workshop - learners were working on a fashion show project, casing their own designs. In addition, learners also worked on individually commissioned pieces including a bridal dress.
- Art and design - including sculptural projects which were later showcased in exhibitions open to the public.
- Catering - including running the catering for training days for various organisations providing further income for AFUK.
- Music Media - including DJ skills workshop.
- Theatre school - creating and performing.

The essence of the project was to provide real, meaningful learning experiences around alternative and creative curriculums for learners who had not been able to succeed or access mainstream learning to ensure they were not NEET on leaving this provision and with the challenges of RPA in the UK, provided real inspiration on ways we can reduce the number of hard to reach learners who are NEET post 16.

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