English

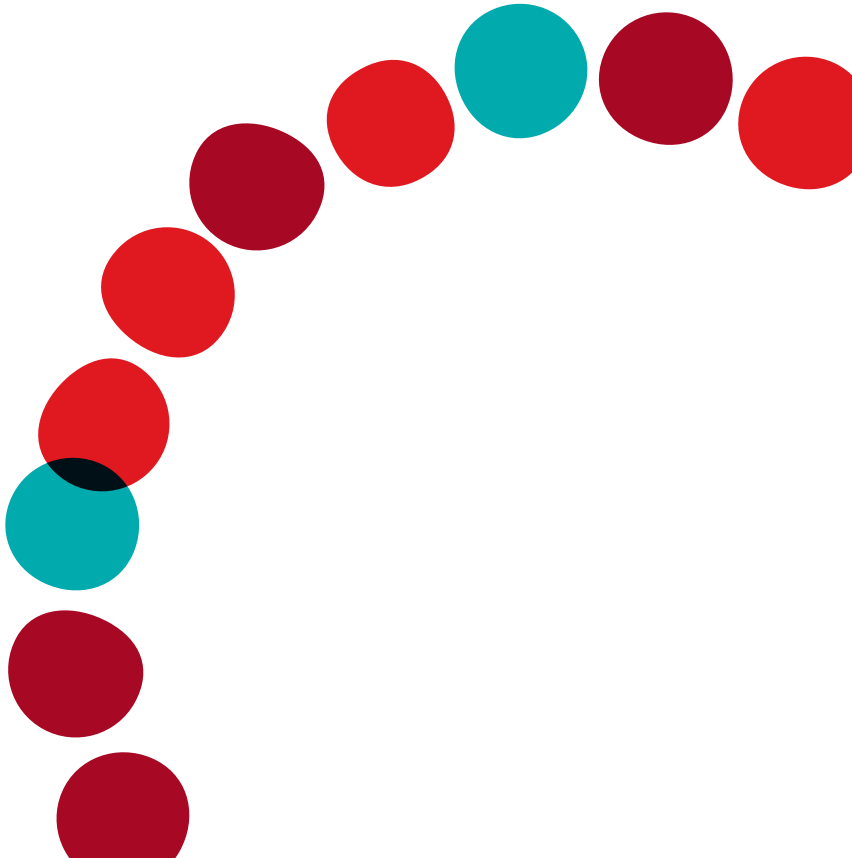
BASIC

– Leadership training for study circle leaders within ABF

MAKE ANOTHER WORLD POSSIBLE

Basic study circle leadership training

The training is targeting all active study circle leaders/facilitators within ABF, the Worker's Educational Association of Sweden. ABF aims to, through the training provide the study circle leader with an insight into our values, the pedagogics behind non-formal education as well as what the role as a leader entail. This constitutes the first step in our training module. After completion of step one and to gain additional knowledge, you have the opportunity to engage in further courses. To know what courses that are available where you are, contact your local ABF branch.



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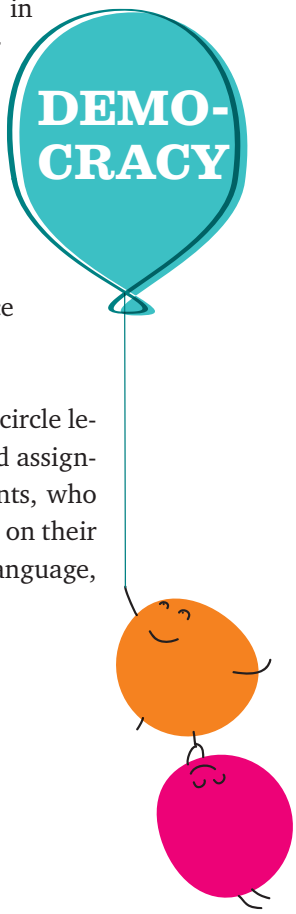
The emergence of non-formal education

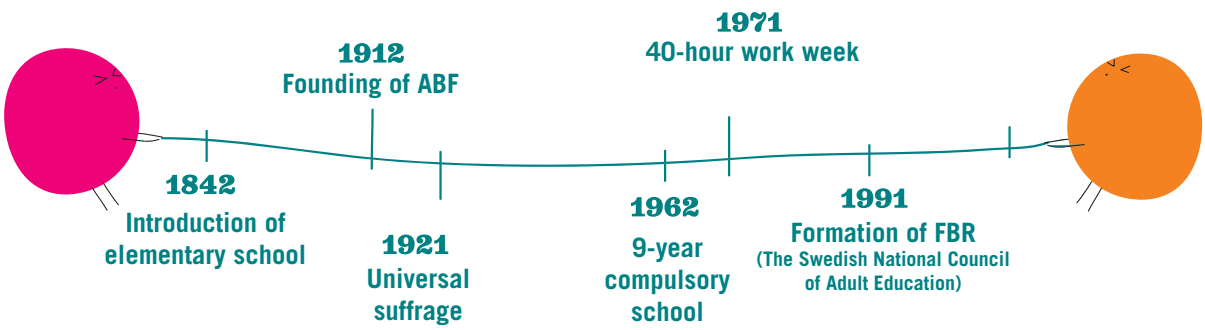
Democracy is a keyword that permeates the pedagogical approach of non-formal education and has resulted in a study format that has survived for more than a hundred years – the study circle. Non-formal education has a fine tradition, and ever-present main mission, of safe-guarding and strengthening democracy.

The study circle came into use in the early 20th century as a method of learning and educating people (not least in rural areas). During the latter part of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, new broad popular movements emerged. The three leading popular movements were the labour movement, the temperance movement, and the free church movement. They became decisive drivers for the democratisation of Sweden. In popular movements, an alternative tradition of education took shape – non-formal education. The temperance movement lead by Oscar Olsson is considered the pioneer. The characteristic feature of non-formal education was that it was "free and voluntary", meaning participation was voluntary, and the state had no say in its content. Knowledge was formed and disseminated "by the people and through the people". The idea was that the participants in non-formal education would gain tools to influence their own situation as well as society at large. Within the study associations, the study circle is the main method of learning.



Non-formal education still works in the same way. It is participatory. This means, for example, that leaders and participants in a study circle have equal rights to influence the content and working methods of the group.

It is the participants in the study group, together with the circle leader, that drives the group forward towards new goals and assignments. The learning process is based on active participants, who reflect, analyze, and take a stand. Participants learn based on their own needs and their own wishes, whether it is to learn a language, crafts, or the rules that apply in the labour market.



The founding of ABF

The Workers' Educational Association was founded in 1912 by the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (Landsorganisationen, LO), the Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokraterna, SAP) and the Swedish Cooperative Union (Kooperativa förbundet, KF). One important reason to form an educational association was the need of the emerging workers' movement for education and knowledge. Sweden was an unequal country, poverty was widespread, working days were long, and schooling was short. Most of Sweden's population only went to a six-year elementary school. The mission of the educational institutions were to convey comprehensive education to the elite, while the elementary school taught the most basic education and christian morality.

The growing labour movement shaped non-formal education based on the needs of the workers. An important difference in the view of education can be seen between the view of the labour movement and the then general liberal view of education. The view of the labour movement has always been characterized by allowing the individual; participant and group; the study circle, to formulate their own needs and decide the objectives of the learning process. This can be compared to the formal view on education where someone else has pre-determined and formulated goals that the participant cannot influence.

Non-formal education provided an opportunity for a major change, mainly in rural areas. Now more people had the opportunity to read, discuss and learn things that had previously been reserved for a few. Suddenly, due the participatory approach and possibility to share knowledge and experiences with each others people were able to shape the content of the educational activities themselves – which meant it directly responded to the their real needs.

The ten study associations

Today there are ten study associations in Sweden. They have different mandator, different profiles, and each work from their own values. But we all believe in free adult education as an opportunity for development, both personally and for the society as a whole.

ABF

ABF is party politically independent but with values that coincide with the labour movement and wants to counteract the class society. Today, ABF consists of multiple member organisations in addition to the founders SAP, LO and KF. For example the Left Party (Vänsterpartiet), PRO (The Swedish Pensioners National Organisation) as as several disability, cultural and ethnic organisations.

Bilda

The profile of the association Bilda is the interpretation of life in the broadest sense. At Bilda, ancient church traditions, Swedish popular movements, cultures with roots in different parts of the world, and free creation meet. Examples of member organisations are several of the free churches.

Folkuniversitetet

Folkuniversitet is an study association cooperating closely with universities; they operate with a scientific approach and international perspective. Folkuniversitet does not have any member organisations.

Ibn Rushd

Ibn Rushd is a Muslim study association with diversity, rights, and philosophy at its heart. The focus is on ensuring human rights and organising marginalised groups. The member organisations consists of a number of Muslim organisations.

Kulturens

Kulturens is an study association for cultural practitioners. The founders include the National Association for Folk Music and Dance (Riksförbundet för folkmusik och dans), the Swedish Choir Association (Sveriges Körförbund) and the Association of Swedish Orchestras (Sveriges Orkesterförbund).

Medborgarskolan

Medborgarskolan was founded on humanistic values with an emphasis on the individual. Member organisations include the Conservative party (Moderaterna) and Active Seniors (Aktiva seniorer).

NBV

NBV, Temperence movement Educational Activities (Nykterhetsrörelsens Bildningsverksamhet), works with issues related to sobriety, democracy, and association activities. NBV is the oldest informal education association, IOGT-NTO and Prison Fellowship (KRIS) are examples of member organisations.

Sensus

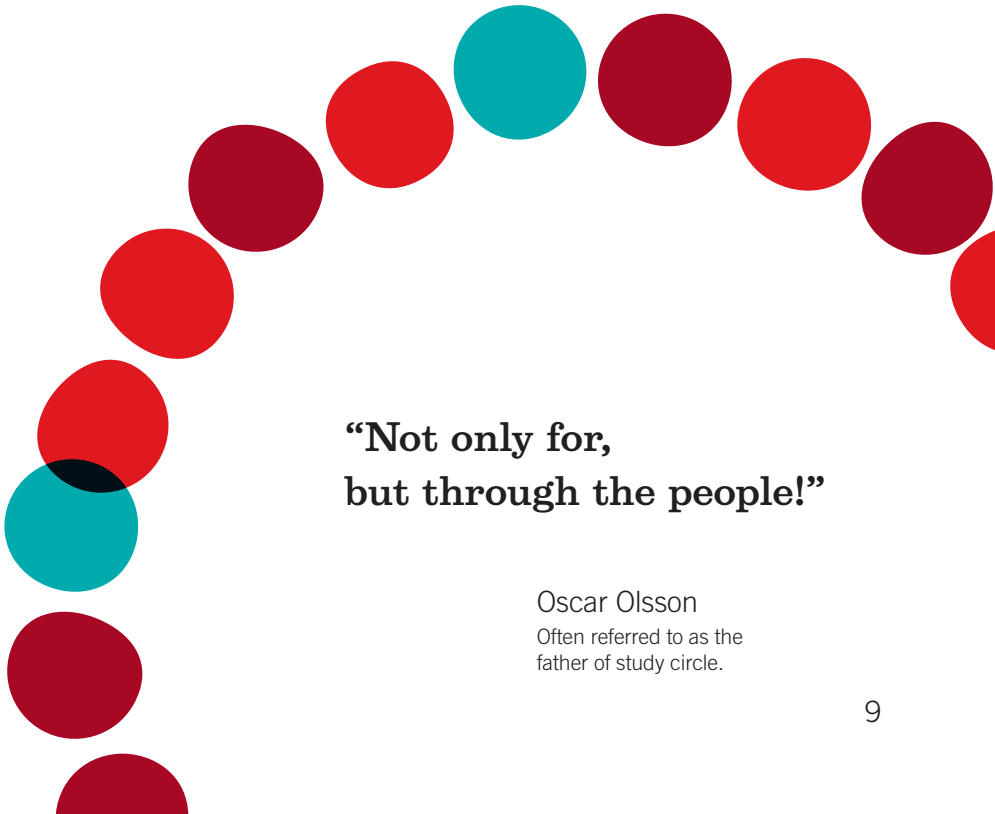
Sensus study association highlights life issues, diversity, and global issues. Sensus uses a rights-based approach and works actively with sustainable development. The Swedish Church is the largest member organisation, but a number of the civil servants' unions and the Guides and Scouts of Sweden are included.

Studiefrämjandet

The focus of Studiefrämjandet is increased knowledge of nature, animals, the environment and culture. The main area of activity is music and culture. Examples of member organisations are the Swedish Hunters' Association (Svenska Jägarförbundet) and Swedish Outdoor Association (Friluftsfrämjandet).

Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan

Swedish Adult Education Association (Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan or SV). SV's vision is a world characterised by sustainable development: the interplay between ecological, economic and social sustainability. Examples of member organizations are the Centre Party, the Liberals, LRF, and local community associations.



"Not only for, but through the people!"

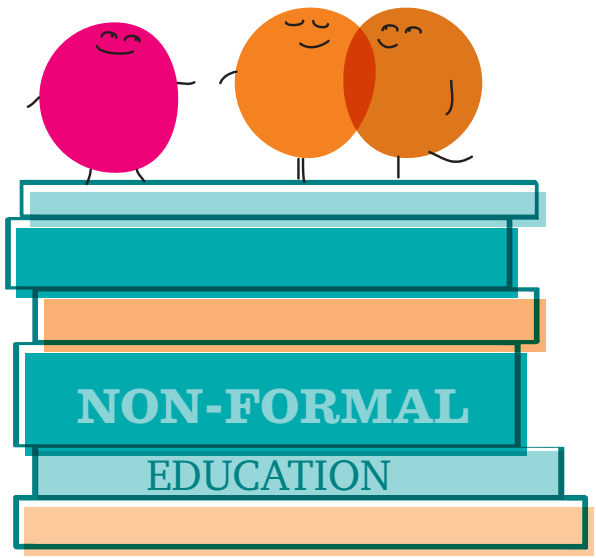
Oscar Olsson
Often referred to as the father of study circle.

The characteristic of non-formal education

The characteristic of non-formal education is that in comparison with formal education it is based on the individual's needs and it is not graded. The study circle is a democratic way of learning in a small group that systematically conducts studies in a specific subject through the groups common needs and goals. It is important to write a work plan for the study circle together and in it document things such as goals and the methods to use to reach those goals.

If this is the first time someone participates in a study circle, the working methods of non-formal education and the study circle as a method can sometimes feel a little new and unusual. It is always good that you as a leader tell the group about what a study circle is and how it is meant to work, even before you start your program. Participants usually appreciate the method in the study circle, as long as they get it explained to them. Being able to be involved and influence a process is always positive, but it can sometimes take some time before everybody feel that they understand. Let it take the time it needs, we all have slightly different starting positions when we throw ourselves into something new.

As a circle leader, it is important that you keep in mind that different individuals learn new things in different ways. You may need to use various methods to take this into account. Try it out and discuss what is best for the current group. You can for example show films, use group work, give time for individual factfinding or role-play. You often want to teach in the same way you learn, but the best way is always to try to vary the methods you use in the circle.



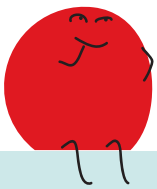
The values of ABF

ABF is an non-governmental organization, anchored in and based on a clear set of values. Thus, it is essential that these values are also shared by all study circle leaders within ABF. The backbone of our organization and most important governing documents is our declaration of ideas, Make another world possible. In this you will find the organizations thoughts on its role in society, both locally and globally as well what challenges we have identified ahead. In addition to a description of what ABF is and aims to be you will also find ABFs view on democracy, humanity and society.

Declaration of ideas:

Through a free and voluntary education, based on the principles of equality, solidarity, and democracy, ABF wants to

- Promote and participate in a social transformation in line with the fundamental values of the labour movement;
- Train members of affiliated organisations for assignments in associations, working life and society;
- Create preconditions for inclusive participation in educational and cultural life for all.



Reflect

What do ABF's core values mean to you?

What does this mean for your study circle?

An inclusive ABF for everyone

In our study circle there are people with different backgrounds, preconditions, opportunities, and areas of interest and everyone's equal right to participate is an important part of the ABF's values. It is the diversity of the study circle that gives it its power. It is therefore important that everyone who participates has the opportunity to participate on equal terms and on the basis of their own circumstances. Someone may have a visible disability, another may have a hidden one. Some have Swedish as their native language, others do not. Through dialogue with the participants, it is usually quite easy to find an arrangement that works for everyone.

ABF shall be an equal and inclusive organisation that strengthens the affinity of all who have a common interest in a society built on solidarity and equality. Therefore, ABF needs to be at the forefront when it comes to shining a light shining a light in both visible and hidden norms and hidden norms.

As a study group leader, you have the opportunity and responsibility to contribute to an even more inclusive ABF, both at a large and small scale. Each participant is unique and as a study circle leader you can help everyone express their needs.

In ABF's Inclusion Policy, we emphasize that we need to think about everyone's equal value in our activities and that we assume everyone should be able to participate based on their own conditions.

"All generations of ABF representatives should own and independently shape their organisation"

Helén Pettersson
ABFs first female chairperson

We start from the seven principles of the Discrimination Act and what inclusion is about, that everyone should be allowed to participate based on who they identify as.

The purpose of the policy is for ABF to have an active and ongoing work of inclusion that is characterized by a norm-critical approach. Remember that no one expects you to guess what each individual needs. Give them the opportunity to talk about this as soon as they register or during the first meeting. It can be enough to ask: "Is there anything I need to know as your study circle leader for the group to work well for you?

The measures involved are often quite simple. It can be enough breaks, study material distributed in advance, audio induction loops, enlarged text, accessibility for wheelchairs, extra clear language or even gluten free snacks. Most of it can be solved with an open attitude and good foresight.

Should there be needs that cannot be met, it is still important to show that you see and respect the individual. In the end, it is not the technical details that make a study circle accessible, but that participants feel welcome and seen for who they are. Therefore, your approach is often the most important thing.

Remember that you are not solely responsible as the study circle leader for the accessibility of the group. Talk to your local ABF branch and they can help you with the educational customizations that may need to be done in the group.

In the ABF Inclusion Policy you will find more about ABF's guidelines for a welcoming, accessible, inclusive, and pedagogical organisation. You will also find a Toolbox with methods and exercises about inclusion.

Reflect

How can you create an inclusive way of working in your study circle?

What does in mean to have a norm-critical thinking?

Leading a study circle

Being a study group leader means you are responsible both in terms of practical matters and when it comes to the groups learning process, the participants however, share that responsibility with you. Together you make sure that all the components of the group will work. You are all there to learn more about a subject, and having a study circle leader provide all the answers does not create a democratic and vivid learning environment. Instead, what is exciting is that you dare to think and feel freely together in the group. An open and accepting conversational climate promotes learning conditions. Daring to be curious, daring to say the wrong thing once in a while, and daring to throw oneself into discussions is developing for the whole group. When you are leading a study group, it is important to keep in mind that your role is about setting up a good climate, a good atmosphere in the group, as well as being knowledgeable in the subject of the study circle.

You do not have to know everything as a leader. Showing that you yourself need to check things and are still learning means creating a climate in the group that says it is okay not to know everything.

In informal adult education, we believe that all people carry experiences and knowledge with them that are important for the study circle. Making use of each other, exchanging experiences of the subject with each other, gives each of you far more knowledge than you had starting out.

It is this type of learning that is typical for a study circle, democratic learning where everyone is equally important. As a study circle leader, it is important to find out what the participants' needs and wishes consists of and then design a work plan accordingly together with the group. The group then evaluates how well it has managed to achieve its objectives together.

Tip!

Advice for the first meeting

Being on time for the first meeting with the new circle is important. If the venue is cluttered and adapted to the previous group that used it, your participants do not feel very welcome when they arrive. Seeing that the room is arranged for your group gives a much better impression. As the person who will be leading the new study circle, it is also important for you that you get to make yourself at home in the room before the participants arrive. It feels better and is better that the participants arrive to the session after you instead of before you . Take a moment to consider how the room is arranged, take out your things, think about the exercises you have in mind and so on. Of course, you always feel more secure if you are well prepared.

Different areas of activities within non-formal education

All study associations receive government grants for the activities they carry out. The Government has established four requirements for popular education in order for the operation to receive government grants and these are to:

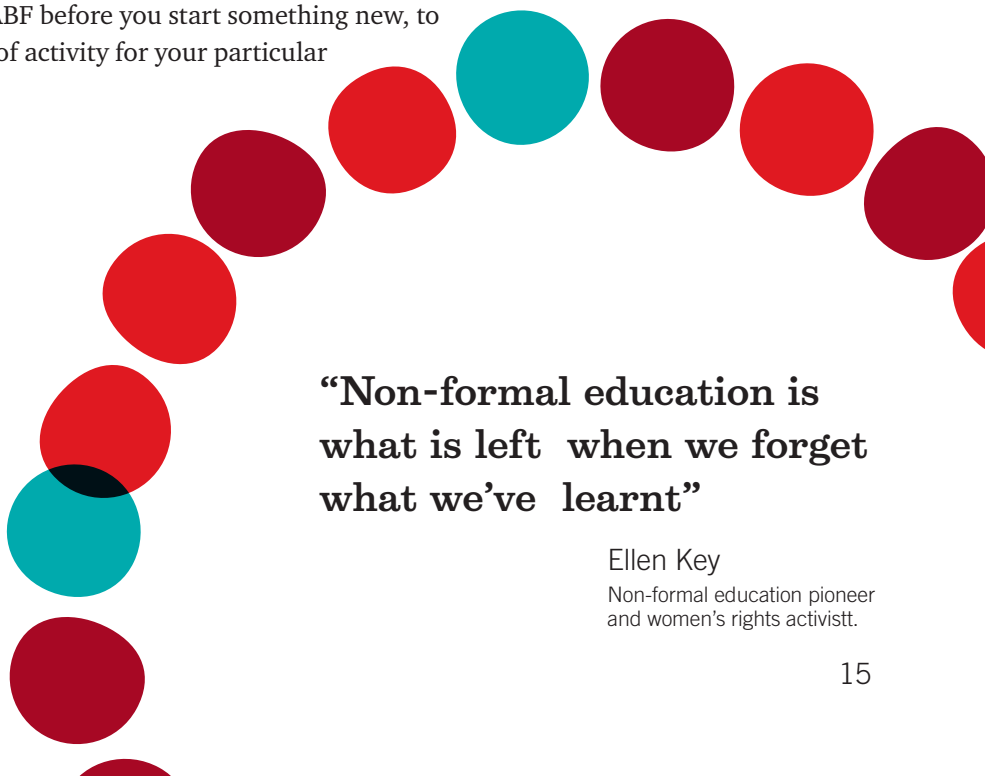
- Support activities that contribute to strengthening and developing democracy.
- Help to enable a diversity of people to influence their life situations and create commitment to participate in the development of society.
- Contribute to a reduction of the educational gap and thus an increased level of education in society.
- Contribute to broaden interest in and increased participation of cultural life.

The government grant to the study associations is calculated on the number of events, the number of unique participants, and the number of study hours. One study hour is 45 minutes.

The government grant is based on three different areas of activities: :

- The study circle
- Other informal adult education operations
- The culture programme

It is not your responsibility to be an expert on how your activities should be reported, that is ABF's job. As a study circle leader, it is good to still have some knowledge of what forms of activity that exist and what distinguishes them. If you are unsure, just ask your local ABF branch. Also have a dialogue with ABF before you start something new, to ensure it is a suitable form of activity for your particular idea.



"Non-formal education is what is left when we forget what we've learnt"

Ellen Key

Non-formal education pioneer and women's rights activistt.

Planning your study circle

By definition, the study circle is a small group of people who meet regularly, based on their needs and interests, to pursue knowledge together. For example you can learn English or how to play guitar. A study circle can be conducted purely through physical meetings, a combination of physical meetings and distance meetings, or solely through distance meetings.

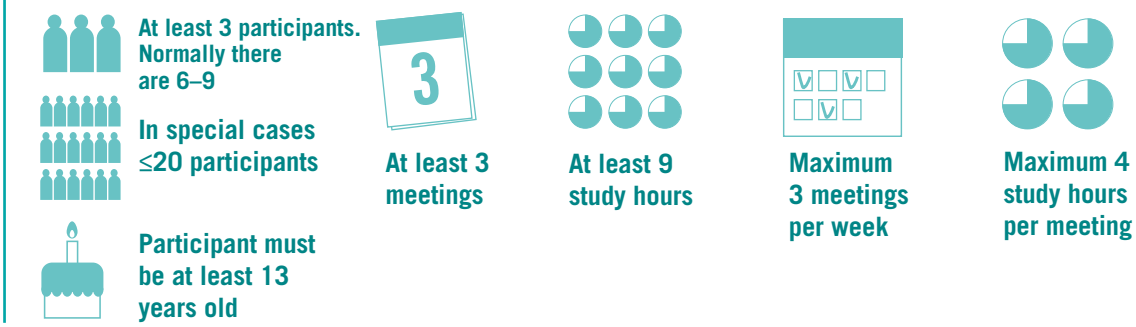
The leader and all participants must be at least 13 years old. A study circle shall consist of at least three people, including the leader. The group shall meet at least three times but often the group decides to meet more times than that. All study circles have a leader that has been approved by the study association, a work plan for what the group wants to achieve and usually a study material. The leader is given a digital attendance list by ABF and is responsible for ensuring that all of the information is filled in correctly. This is easily done via a mobile phone, tablet or a computer.

A study circle usually consists of 6–12 people, but it is possible to be up to 20 participants in some cases. One study hour covers 45 minutes and there must be a minimum of nine study hours for the study circle to be eligible for government grants. To allow for in-depth study and reflection between the meetings the study circle needs to be active for a long period and have at least three gatherings. A maximum is three meetings stretching for four study hours per week.

The ownership of the organiser

The fact that ABF is the organiser means that ABF has the overall responsibility for planning, implementing, and monitoring the non-formal education activities. This is based on the requirements of the State and the Swedish National Council of Adult Education.

The study circle in numbers



Brief facts about study circles

- They are open to all, without the need for prior knowledge.
- Participation is voluntary.
- Participants can influence the set-up as well as content.
- It leads to learning aimed towards development and change.
- Knowledge is sought jointly, conversations and discussion play an important part.
- There is time for reflection between the meetings. There is study material with a study plan or a written work plan drawn up by the group, which includes some form of study material.
- The leader is approved by the Study association and has received leadership training that includes at least 9 study hours.

Study circle participants shall be provided with information so that they:

- Know that they are participating in a study circle.
- Know which Study association is organising the study circle they are participating in.
- Have the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning process.

Other areas of non-formal education

In other areas of non-formal education, we can carry out activities that qualify for governments grants in a freer and more flexible manner in comparison to the study circle or cultural programmes. However, the educational activities should follow the general quality ambitions and be in line with the governments requirements for non-formal education.

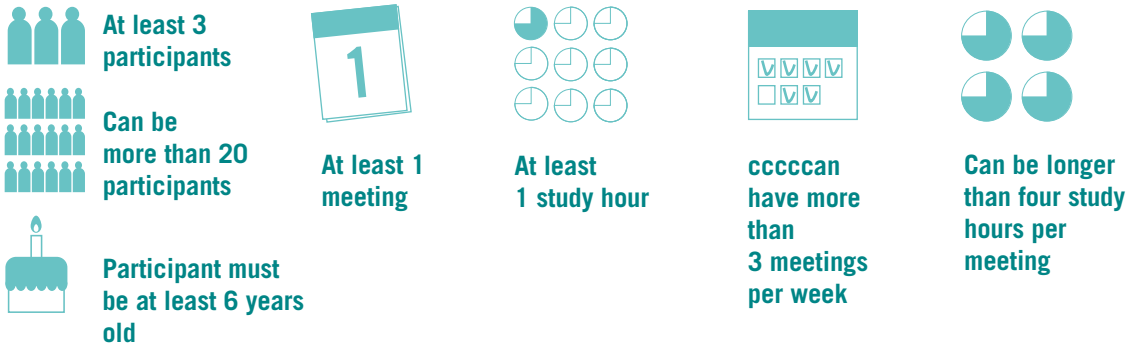
The meetings can be longer and more frequent than in study circle. The number of meetings can be one or more. Examples of activities are “try out days”, workshops, theme nights, one-day courses and weekend courses.

The minimum for this alternative form of non-formal education activities is three participants, including the leader. There can be more than 20 participants. Participants may also be younger than 13 years old, but need to be at least 6 years old.

The leader must be approved by the local ABF branch and the education requirements are the same as for the study circle. This means that ABF has the overall responsibility and that there must be a study material and/or work plan.

As in all forms of educational activties that qualifies for government grants it must be clear who is behind the activitiy. It is therefore important that ABF is visible as an organiser.

Other informal non-formal education operations **in numbers.**



The culture programme

Cultural programmes refer to lectures, theatre, singing, music, dance, dramatic production, or exhibitions performed, or shown to an audience. The programmes shall be designed in such a way that they contributes to a participation and reflection.

A cultural programme shall last at least 30 minutes. If a cooperating organisation to ABF wants to implement a cultural event, it is important that ABF is contacted early on in the planning process. The cultural event is a collaboration between the organisation and ABF. It is also important that both the logotype of the partner organisation and and the ABF logotype is included on posters or other types of marketing material. It is of course still the cooperating organisations cultural programme, but in order for it to become eligible for government grants as non-formal education in activities, cooperation with ABF needs to be made visible.

Culture programmes **in numbers.**

At least 5 participants

Unlimited participation

Participant must be at least 13 years old

At least 30 minutes

At least 1 meeting

The important documents

Attendance list

When you lead a study circle, a course or are responsible for a cultural programe, ABF provides you with a digital attendance list. You will receive a log-in to the e-service where you will find the list. By being included on the list, you and the participants are all covered by accident insurance. It applies during the educational activity and also during travel to and from it.

You as a circle leader report the attendance in the circle digitally. You have all the information directly in your computer, tablet or phone. After the circle is completed, the list must be signed. Once you have signed your digital attendance list, ABF sees that the study circle is complete and can continue the administrative work around the circle, any salary payment and final reporting to the the Swedish National Council of Adult Education.

Upon concluding the study circle, the list should be signed and submitted to ABF as soon as possible. If you have had a substitute leader at one of the meetings, they should sign the list as well. If you receive a payment from ABF for leading the study circle, the list provides the basis for your employment contract. The reporting and signing of the attendance list is completely digital and from a general data protection regulation point of view that's the safest way to handle the participants personal data.

If the study circle plans to reconvene, remember to tell your local ABF branch.

Work plan

You and the participants in the study circle formulate a work plan. There you describe the goals and working methods of the group. It is important to tell us what you plan to learn and how you plan to learn it.

In addition to a description of the content and structure, the work plan should also describe how the study circle will evaluate what has been good and what can be improved.

The work plan is a living document and should accompany you throughout the study circle. You may need to edit it during the study period. The work plan, together with the attendance list, is submitted to the ABF branch.

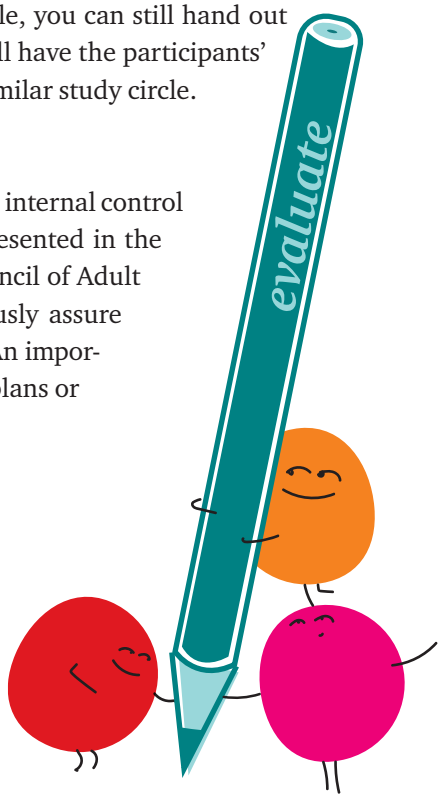
Ask for a work plan template at your local ABF branch. Learning to handle the digital reporting of the study circle is not difficult and you will find out everything you need to know about this during your introductory conversation with ABF or via specially arranged meetings for digital attendance reporting.

Feel free to ask your local ABF branch if you have any questions!

Evaluation is the way forward

In order to constantly move forward and to ensure the quality of non-formal education, evaluation is key. As a study circle leader, you can choose different methods of evaluation depending on whats best suited for your group. A written evaluation is easy to save and look back on afterwards while an oral evaluation may feel better if participants disapprove of expressing themselves in writing. You can also choose to work with ongoing evaluation where at the end of each meeting you ask the participants a few questions to assess the progress of, and feeling in the study circle. For example, you can ask questions such as: “How did you perceive the content of today’s study circle meeting?” “Is there anything you want us to do more or less of?” You ask these kinds of questions to get an idea of if the participants think you are heading in the right direction, whether the learning in the study circle works and whether the goal for everyone is the same as when you started. The answers you receive allow you to decide if to continue work as usual or if something in the structure or content needs to change. At the end of the study circle, you can still hand out a simple written evaluation. That way you will have the participants’ opinions saved for the next time you plan a similar study circle.

Every year, the study associations carry out an internal control on at least 5% of their activities, which is presented in the form of a report to the Swedish National Council of Adult Education. Each ABF branch shall continuously assure the quality of its operations during the year. An important part of this work is to evaluate the work plans or study materials for each study circle.



General information on GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation

GDPR has been in force since 25 May 2018. GDPR stands for General Data Protection Regulation. It is a European regulation aimed at strengthening the protection of individuals information within the EU when processing personal data. Simply put, GDPR says that it is a human right to decide what can be done with your personal data (unless there are other laws or important needs that say otherwise).

ABF and all study associations must register personal data. As a study circle leader, you therefore have an important role in informing your participants that ABF processes and registers participants' personal data in a correct and respectful manner in accordance of the GDPR.

Information on how ABF is processing of personal data can be found here: www.abf.se/gdpr

To briefly summarize, the purpose of GDPR is to:

- Give more information. You must inform before collecting data.
- Save less. Only save what you have to, not what could be good to have.
- Review security. It must be ensured that the information is not stolen, nor accidentally deleted or altered.
- Keep a record. You must have a register that describes the different ways in which personal data is handled.
- Establish routines. You have to have a procedure for how to handle the data, and be able to describe what you have saved and if needed be able to correct errors.

It is the head of department who is responsible for the work of securing GDPR within ABF branches and districts based on the local needs and conditions that exist.


ABF