

Jeg er økonoma! I'm a (administrative) dietitian!

I'm an administrative dietitian with a diploma in management and nutrition and for 2 years I have been the manager of the "food and meals" department in Gribskov, north of Copenhagen in Denmark. Denmark has a population of 5 million inhabitants.

My department has 25 employees and is the local supplier of meals for 400 elderly people and more than 300 staff members in the municipality of Gribskov. My staff comprises cooks, nutrition professionals, administrative dietitians, one confectioner, food assistants, and finally drivers who deliver the food.

I was head-hunted for this position especially to manage the change process towards a more individualized approach in the preparation of meals in combination with changes in production and delivery of meals in the municipality.

I graduated from the Administrative Dietitian school in 1992.

In Denmark dietitians are educated at 4 university colleges which offer the Bachelor of Nutrition and Health programme. The education as it exists today was founded in 2002 when three educations, the Administrative Dietitian, the Clinical Dietitian and the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Health were merged into the Bachelor of Nutrition and Health educational programme.

This education takes 3 ½ years. The first 18 months are general education and during the last 2 years the students specialize within 7 different areas. The areas Catering, Management and Clinical Dietitian are based on the former Clinical Dietitian and Administrative Dietitian programmes, while the areas Human Nutrition, Facility Management, Health Communication, Product Development, Nutrition and Physical Activity are based on the former Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Health programme.

The Danish Diet & Nutrition Association has been the standard-bearer when it comes to supplementing the Bachelor of Nutrition and Health degree with management competences, and the degree can now be supplemented with a Diploma in Management.



Marianne Margaard Lange, Denmark

The Danish Dietetic Association was founded in 1923 and is now called the Danish Diet & Nutrition Association. 7500 members with various educations within the diet and nutrition area are organized in this association. Of these approximately 2000 members are Administrative Dietitians.

In 1923 there was no education in Denmark within the diet and nutrition area, but the association saw a great need here and started offering courses within the area, which during the 1950s lead to the establishment of an actual Administrative Dietitian educational programme. In 1966 the Administrative Dietitian School became an independent institution, and in 1975 the first experimental Clinical Dietitian course was offered. This pilot project ran until 1983 when the course became an approved official education.

The objective of the Danish Diet & Nutrition Association is to ensure that its members thrive in the workplace, deriving professional and personal job satisfaction from their duties. The Danish Diet & Nutrition Association works on behalf of its members to secure satisfactory wage levels and favourable working conditions, promoting workplaces that guarantee members impact on day-to-day routines, and a first class working environment where professional pride is sharply focused and human resources development a matter of course. The association is based on the principles of collective bargaining and agreements and, equally, active participation in the food quality and food in the public arena debates. The association works very closely together with research institutions and knowledge centres.

Dietitians work in many different places, for instance as Nutritional Consultants at municipal health centres, as Clinical Dietitians at hospitals, offering guidance on nutrition and how to live healthier, as Managers of Nutrition and Meals or Catering Managers at nursing homes, hospitals and folk high schools, as Health

Consultants in nutrition and physical activity, working to promote health and prevention of lifestyle related deceases, as Quality Coordinators at great hospitals, coordinating food safety and quality, and as Executive Administrative Dietitian at hospitals and nursing homes.

As an Administrative Dietitian and Manager in the municipality of Gribskov, I have to navigate among expectations and demands from all directions and levels. A large part of my job consists of communication with employees, colleagues, controllers, managers, clerks, citizens, clients and their relatives. My job is focused on 3 main areas:

- At a strategic level I spend a lot of time and effort influencing the strategic and political levels in relation to the decision making process, especially when it comes to budget discussions and that good quality comes at a price.
- At a professional level I am in charge of the process of applying a more customer oriented approach to the production process. We focus on the wishes and requirements of our users, but also on nutritional value and culinary quality in our daily good meal.
- Another important part of my job is the management of the staff. My employees expect me to set the direction and motivate in a visible manner, and I have to make sure that they feel appreciated and secure in their work.

To me life long and continuous education is very important and so is access to professional networks where you can share experiences. You have to challenge yourself at a theoretical level and on your established work routines and habits. As a manager you put yourself at stake and must be open and honest in order to facilitate a constructive dialogue. You have to create an understanding and lay the groundwork for the exchange of ideas by showing your passion, so the staff get a clear understanding of you preferences. I am proud to be an Administrative Dietitian.

I have worked at two different hospitals in Herlev, in Copenhagen and at the University Hospital of Odense. I have also worked in the private sector as Restaurant Manager and Head of Service in one of the biggest department stores in Denmark. But I really like my present job where I can serve meals with passion and professionalism.

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