



**National summary sheets on  
education systems in Europe  
and ongoing reforms**

2006 Edition



# DENMARK

SEPTEMBER 2006

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## 1. Education population and language of instruction

By January 2006, 36.02 % of the entire population was between 0 and 29 years of age.

In the academic year 2005/06, 690 825 pupils attended compulsory education, that is, primary and lower secondary. This amounts to 35.34 % of the population aged 0-29. The language of instruction is Danish.

## 2. Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education

In the academic year 2005/06, 86 % of the pupils in compulsory education attended public-sector primary and lower secondary schools, and the 13.1 % remaining attended private grant-aided schools. Private institutions at this level receive approximately 85 % of their operational funding from the State.

The legislation covers the aims and framework of education, funding and in some cases curricula, examinations and staffing. The Ministry of Education jointly oversees the one year of pre-primary class and the *folkeskole* with the municipal councils. The Ministry of Education shares control of the *gymnasium* and *Højere Forberedelseseksamen* with the county councils and school or course boards. The Ministry of Education controls vocational education and training. Higher education is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Development. The latter is responsible for long tertiary university educations as well as for research programmes, and short and medium tertiary educations are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Culture is responsible for tertiary studies within the fields of architecture, design, the visual arts, music, film, theatre and dance as well as the programmes offered by the Royal School of Library and Information Science.

The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) conducts evaluations of teaching and learning at all levels of the education system. The Institute is a self-governing institution, which carries out evaluations both on its own initiative and upon request from the government, ministries and advisory boards, local authorities and educational establishments. The evaluations encompass public educational institutions as well as private providers in receipt of state subsidy.

### 3. Pre-primary education

There are four different types of pre-school institution: day nurseries (up to the age of 3), kindergarten (3-7 years of age), voluntary pre-primary classes (6-7 years of age) in a *folkeskole* and integrated institutions which cater for children aged from three months to 14 years. Municipal pre-primary classes are free, while private (subsidised) schools charge fees. Attendance in pre-primary education is not compulsory.

### 4. Compulsory education

#### (i) Phases

<i>Folkeskole</i> (comprehensive primary and lower secondary education)	7-16/17 years of age
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Nine years of education is compulsory, most frequently between the ages of 7 and 16. It is education, not schooling per se, which is compulsory. Thus, tuition does not have to take place in public schools but can be conducted in private schools or at home as well – as long as it is directly comparable to what is required in public schools.

Most *folkeskole* institutions offer a voluntary pre-primary class and many a voluntary 10th year.

#### (ii) Admissions criteria

Children enter compulsory education in August in the calendar year of their seventh birthday. Parents are free to choose any school within their municipality. The education in the *folkeskole* is free, whereas private schools charge varying tuition fees.

#### (iii) Length of school day/week/year

The school year commences in August and ends in June. Schools are open for five days a week. Each lesson typically lasts 45 minutes, although municipalities can change the length of lessons. The minimum annual number of taught hours (60 minutes) is 600 (pre-school and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade), 660 (3<sup>rd</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grade) and 840 in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade of the *folkeskole*.

#### (iv) Class size/student grouping

The number of pupils in each class must not exceed 28. In the academic year 2005/06, the average number of pupils per class in the *folkeskole* was 19.6.

Pupils are grouped by age. Separate teachers for each subject throughout the *folkeskole* teach students.

#### (v) Curriculum control and content

The Ministry of Education lays down general curricular aims and optional guidelines. There are no prescribed textbooks. The curriculum is comprised of three subject blocks: the humanities; practical/art subjects; and Science. The humanities consist of Danish (all form levels), English (3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>), Christian studies (all except the form where confirmation preparation takes place), history (3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>), social studies (8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>). Practical/art subjects consist of physical education & sports (all), music (1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>), art (1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>), textile design, wood/metalwork & home economics (4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> – one or more forms). Finally science consists of mathematics (all), science/technology (1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>), geography (7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>), biology (7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>) and physics/chemistry (7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>). From the age of 13, pupils may choose from a number of optional subjects. Teachers must meet the needs of all individuals in mixed ability groups. This is done through the concept of differentiated teaching, which is a basic principle in primary and lower secondary.

#### (vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

The pupils take formal examinations in up to ten subjects at the end of compulsory education. The Ministry of Education sets written examinations while teachers conduct oral exams. Assessment throughout the *folkeskole* is continuous, and progression to the next year is automatic. General progress

(no mark) in each subject is reported to parents at least twice a year until the seventh year. From the eighth year, a mark is awarded in those subjects in which the leaving examination can be taken. All students receive a leaving certificate listing subjects taken at school, marks awarded for the year's work and examination results. Students who remain in the *folkeskole* for the voluntary tenth year may take examinations in five subjects.

## 5. Post-compulsory education/upper secondary and post-secondary level

### (i) Types of education

<p><b>General upper secondary education</b></p> <p><i>Gymnasium – STX</i> (3-year academically oriented course, completed by an examination, which qualifies for admission to higher education)</p> <p><i>Højere Forberedelseksamen – HF</i> (Higher preparatory examination course. A 2-year academically oriented course based on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade of the <i>folkeskole</i>, completed by an examination, which qualifies for admission to higher education)</p> <p><i>Højere handelseksamen – HHX</i> (Higher commercial examination course. A 3-year course of commercial and general education, completed by an examination, which qualifies for admission to higher education)</p> <p><i>Højere teknisk eksamen – HTX</i> (Higher technical examination course. A 3-year course of technical and general education, completed by an examination, which qualifies for admission to higher education)</p>	<p>Age 16-19</p> <p>Age 16 and upwards</p> <p>Age 16-19</p> <p>Age 16-19</p>
<p><b>Vocational upper secondary education</b></p> <p>Vocational education and training (EUD)</p> <p>Basic social and health training (SOSU)</p> <p>Agricultural, maritime etc. education</p>	<p>Age 16-20</p>

By August 2005, a profound reform of the general upper secondary education area took effect. The most notable innovation is that all general upper secondary education programmes now entail an introductory period, which is common for all students. In the introductory period, the students will receive tuition within humanities as well as social and natural sciences. At the end of the introductory period, all students choose an issue-specific direction; that is, choose subjects to concentrate on within certain predetermined frameworks and combinations.

Vocational education and training combines general and vocational education at a vocational college with on-the-job training. Basic social and health training and agricultural, maritime and other comparable forms of education take place at specialised schools.

### (ii) Admissions criteria

Students are usually aged 16 or over and have completed nine years of compulsory education whereupon they are eligible for admission to the *gymnasium*. The pupil's *folkeskole*, however, may recommend to the *gymnasium* that the pupil sits an admission test. Tuition is free of charge.

### (iii) Curriculum control and content

The Ministry of Education's Department of General Upper Secondary Education issues curriculum regulations for teaching in the *gymnasium* and HF, but teachers decide on textbooks and teaching methods. Core subjects studied at different stages of the three years include Danish, first and second foreign languages, Science, history, social studies, religious studies, art, classical studies and physical

education. Curricula for basic vocational education and training are determined by schools and trade committees, and include basic core subjects, optional subjects and specialization subjects.

#### (iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Final *gymnasium* examinations are taken in at least ten subjects. The Ministry's Department of General Upper Secondary Education sets written examinations. External examiners appointed by the Ministry of Education assess written papers. Assessment for the final marks is also based on a major written assignment. Successful candidates receive a certificate with marks gained in each subject as well as marks for the year's work. Progression is automatic provided that the content of the course is followed, the course is fully attended and examinations taken; students may repeat a year. Vocational courses have a final examination, and final marks reflect both oral and written assessment. In addition to the written and oral examinations, students following HTX and HHX courses complete a major written assignment.

## 6. Higher education

### (i) Structure

In Denmark, 3 types of institutions offer higher education programmes:

**Academies of professional higher education** offer 2-year academy profession programmes in fields such as business, technology, and IT. They combine theoretical studies with a practically oriented approach and are usually completed with a project work of 3 months' duration.

**Specialised colleges and centres for higher education/university colleges** offer 3-4 year professional bachelor programmes in fields such as business, education, engineering and nursing. Theoretical studies, practical training through internships and a bachelor project are common parts of all programmes.

**Universities** offer research-based, long-cycle higher education programmes. Some of Denmark's 12 universities are multi-faculty institutions covering many disciplines, while others are specialised in specific fields, e.g. engineering, business and pharmaceutical sciences. Universities offer 3-year bachelor programmes (BSc/BA), 2-year candidatus programmes (MSc/MA) and 3-year PhD-programmes. Following the University Act of 2003, all universities are organised as self-governing institutions funded by the state.

### (ii) Access

General access requirements to higher education are one of the general upper secondary school leaving examinations, that is, STX, HF, HHX and HTX. Many 3 to 4-year vocational education and training-programmes also give access to professionally oriented higher education programmes. Access may also depend on specific requirements, such as a specific subject combination in upper secondary school or a certain level of grades.

### (iii) Qualifications

Universities offer three-year Bachelor's degrees. Students completing non-university higher education receive a diploma after one to four years. There are a number of medium tertiary (non-university) educations that last three to four years and lead to specialised job-specific qualifications. With the University Reform, the 3+2 structure of 3-year BAs followed by 2-year postgraduate candidatus/master programmes has been implemented in all university degrees except medical and veterinary programmes.

## 7. Special needs

Students with special educational needs tend to be educated within mainstream education, in accordance with the principle of differentiated tuition. Thus, integration is the main organisational principle.

In the academic year 2005/06, 2.1 % of the pupils in primary and lower secondary received special educational support within the framework of the *folkeskole*, while 0.7 % of the pupils attended a special school, i.e. were segregated from mainstream education.

## 8. Teachers

Pre-school teachers attend a college of social educator training (*pædagogseminarium*) for three-and-a-half years. *Folkeskole* teachers complete a four-year non-university course at a college of education (*lærerseminarium*). *Gymnasium* teachers specialise in one or more subjects, hold a *Candidatus*-degree (Master's level) and undergo a specially organised postgraduate teacher-training course. Teachers at vocational colleges must have teaching qualification in one or more subjects. Subject-related qualification depends on either holding a *Candidatus*-degree (Master's level) or holding a vocational college, university or college of engineering degree with subsequent relevant professional experience. Teachers of vocational subjects must have two years' relevant professional experience. Teachers at vocational colleges complete their training at a specialist institute within two years of their appointment. Pre-school, *folkeskole*, *gymnasium* and vocational college teachers are employed on a group contract basis, many under conditions similar to those of civil servants.

## 9. Current reforms and priorities

### In general

By January 2007, a national structural reform takes effect. The reform implies that five new regions replace the 14 counties and a number of municipalities are merged, resulting in 98 municipalities. The reform entails that education institutions at present funded by the counties will be converted to self-governing institutions funded by the state. This applies to institutions providing general upper secondary education, social and health education programmes (SOSU) as well as adult education centres (VUC).

In November 2004, a commission under the auspices of the Ministry of Education suggested a new marking scale, comprising seven marks from -3 to 12, to replace the 13-point marking scale. As of August 1st 2006, the new scale was implemented in the general upper secondary programmes, and by August 1st 2007, the scale will be used at all levels of education. A main aim of the new scale is to enhance internationalization, as the scale is readily comparable to the ECTS-scale. The new marking scale consists of 7 detailed grades from excellent (12 points) to -3 (unacceptable).

### Pre-primary education

The minister of Education has suggested that the pre-primary classes are renamed first form and made mandatory, thus extending the period of compulsory education from 9 to 10 years. This is in view of easing the transition from kindergarten to comprehensive primary and lower secondary school.

### Compulsory education

In the academic year 2006/07, compulsory national tests in primary and lower secondary (*folkeskole*) will be introduced. During the nine years of compulsory schooling, ten compulsory national tests will be conducted. The subjects to be covered by the national tests are Danish, English, mathematics and the natural sciences. A primary aim of the national tests is to assign greater priority to the scientific subjects and to enhance the evaluation culture in the *folkeskole*.

### Higher education

A major debate concerns the organisation and governance of the universities. In this context, the minister of Science, Technology and Development has proposed that a merging of several institutions reduces the overall number of universities.

Another major debate concerns the State Education Grant and Loan Scheme (SU). In this context, the Government has proposed that the financial support for students in higher education is made dependent on certain predetermined requirements regarding progression.

### Teachers

In March 2006, a reform of the programme qualifying to teach in primary and lower secondary school (*folkeskole*) was decided upon. The reform takes effect in January 2007, and i.a. entails:

- Two or three main subjects as opposed to the present four.
- A general strengthening of the natural sciences.
- A general strengthening of the didactic training.
- Admission requirements are tightened up, and attendance is made compulsory the first year.

### Adult education and continuing training

In September 2004, the Government established a commission whose aim it was to map out, analyse and evaluate the adult education and continuing training sector in light of the anticipated future needs and challenges. In March 2006, the commission concluded its work and recommended a general strengthening of the adult education and continuing training sector, in particular for the benefit of vulnerable segments of the labour market, e.g. adults with inadequate reading and writing skills. In connection with the commission's recommendations, the Government has formulated four overall objectives of the future policymaking within the field of adult education and continuing training:

- It is considered crucial to motivate even more people to participate in adult education and continuing training. Concurrently the recognition of prior learning must be strengthened, not merely focusing on competences acquired within the formal education system, i.e. 'real competences'.
- A strengthening of the general basic skills, especially for those with the lowest level of education and other vulnerable groups.
- The provision of adult education and continuing training should be attractive, targeted and flexible with reference to employers and employees.
- The framework for governance and financing of the sector must support the initiatives undertaken.

*Unrevised English*

<p>For more detailed information on education systems in Europe, you may consult the EURYDICE data base, EURYBASE (<a href="http://www.eurydice.org">http://www.eurydice.org</a>)</p>
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