

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

2009 Edition

DENMARK

SEPTEMBER 2009

1. Education population and language of instruction

By January 2008, 35.94 % of the entire population was between 0 and 29 years of age.

In the school year 2008/09, 710 771 pupils attended compulsory education, that is, primary and lower secondary. This amounts to 39.41 % of the population aged 0-29. The language of instruction is Danish.

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

In the school year 2008/09, 81.62 % of the pupils in compulsory education attended public-sector primary and lower secondary schools, and the 18.38 % 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 *folkeskole* (comprehensive primary and lower secondary education) with the municipal councils.

In January 2007, a national structure reform took place. The reform has implied that five new regions have replaced the 14 counties and a number of municipalities have merged, resulting in 98 municipalities. The reform entailed that education institutions formerly funded by the counties have been converted to self-governing institutions funded by the state. This applies to institutions providing general upper secondary education (*Gymnasium* and *Højere Forberedelseseksamen*), social and health programmes (SOSU) as well as adult education centres (VUC). 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 Innovation. The latter is responsible for long tertiary university educations as well as research programmes. 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 which receive state subsidy.

The Council for the Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Lower Secondary Education was set up by the Ministry of Education with effect from 1 September 2006. The aim of its introduction was to strengthen the evaluation and the development of quality in the *folkeskole*. At the same time as the appointment of the Council, the Agency for the Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Lower Secondary Education was established. The Agency was given the responsibility of implementing national tests and supervising the municipalities, which were obligated to produce yearly quality reports. Every year the Council must submit a report to the Ministry of Education. The report is to contain a summary of the activities of the Council along with suggestions to improve the quality of the *folkeskole*.

In Denmark, the local authorities have to publish an annual quality report, which describes the education in the municipality, the academic level of the schools and the arrangements the local authority has made to evaluate the academic level and how the local authority has followed-up on the latest report. The Agency for the Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Lower Secondary Education specifically has as its task to follow, assess and advise the Ministry of Education on the academic level and the pedagogical development in the *folkeskole* along with the pupils' yield of the teaching.

3. Pre-primary education

<i>Vuggestue</i> (day nursery)	Age 0-3
<i>Børnehave</i> (kindergarten)	Age 3-7

There are three different types of pre-primary institutions: Day nurseries (up to the age of 3), kindergarten (3-7 years of age), and integrated institutions (*Aldersintegrerede institutioner*) which cater for children aged from 3 months to 14 years. Attendance to pre-primary education is not compulsory and it is not part of the education system.

Nurseries, kindergartens, other day-care institutions and pre-school classes are financed by the local authorities from block grants allocated by the state. The parents pay a monthly fee for a place in a day-care institution whether it is nursery, childminder or kindergarten. The fee is scaled according to the income of the household of the child.

4. Compulsory education

(i) Phases

<i>Børnehaveklasse</i> (compulsory pre-primary class)	Age 6-7
<i>Folkeskole</i> (comprehensive primary and lower secondary education)	7-16/17 years of age

As of August 2009, pre-primary class has been made compulsory for all pupils and thus in total 10 years of education is compulsory, most frequently between the ages of 6 and 16. Most *folkeskole* institutions also offer a voluntary 11th year (10th form level).

It is education, not schooling per se, which is compulsory. Thus, teaching 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.

(ii) Admissions criteria

Children enter compulsory education in August in the calendar year of their sixth 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 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-primary class, 1st and 2nd grade), 660 (3rd through to 9th grade) and 840 in the 10th grade of the *folkeskole*. The municipalities decide on the number of lessons in the *folkeskole* with respect to the minimum guidelines set by the Ministry of Education.

(iv) Class size/student grouping

The number of pupils in each class must not exceed 28. In the academic year 2006/07, the average number of pupils per class in the *folkeskole* was 20.1.

Pupils are grouped by age. In the *folkeskole*, pupils are taught by specialist teachers for each subject.

(v) Curriculum control and content

The Ministry of Education lays down general curricular aims and optional guidelines. The curriculum is comprised of three subject blocks: The humanities, practical/art subjects and science. The humanities consist of Danish (all form levels), English (3rd to 9th), Christian studies (all except the form where confirmation preparation takes place), history (3rd to 9th), social studies (8th and 9th). Practical/art subjects consist of physical education and sports (all), music (1st to 6th), art (1st to 5th), textile design, wood/metalwork & home economics (4th to 7th – one or more forms). Finally, science consists of mathematics (all), science/technology (1st to 6th), geography (7th to 9th), biology (7th to 9th) and physics/chemistry (7th to 9th). A second foreign language is mandatory from 7th to 9th – schools are obliged to offer German as the 2nd foreign language, but can also choose to make it possible for students to choose between either German or French. From the age of 13, pupils may also 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 education. There are no prescribed textbooks.

(vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

At the 9th grade, pupils must sit for final examinations in a total of seven subjects. Five of the subjects are compulsory for all pupils: Written and oral examinations in Danish, a written examination in mathematics and oral examinations in English and physics/chemistry. In addition to this, the student must take an examination in two extra subjects which are determined by drawing lots. One of them has to be within humanities which include written English, a second foreign language, history, social studies and Christian studies. The other one has to be within natural sciences subjects which consists of geography or biology. 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 form level. Since the school year 2006/07, it has been compulsory for schools to introduce individual school plans (*elevplaner*) at all levels. The goal is to strengthen the continuous assessment and to improve each pupil's learning outcome. It implies that the pupils (and the parents) are regularly given a comprehensive written summary on recent results and necessary follow-up. From the eighth form level, a mark is awarded in those subjects in which the leaving examination can be taken. All pupils receive a leaving certificate listing subjects taken at school, marks awarded for the year's work and examination results.

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

(i) Types of education

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

By August 2005, a profound reform of the general upper secondary education (*Gymnasium*, HHX and HTX) 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 pupils will receive teaching within humanities as well as social and natural sciences. At the end of the introductory period, all pupils choose an issue-specific direction; that is, choose subjects to concentrate on within certain predetermined frameworks and combinations.

Vocational education and training combine 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

Pupils 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

very rarely recommend to the *gymnasium* that the pupil sits an admission test before they are allowed to enter the *gymnasium*. This is done if the *folkeskole* is not sure of whether or not the pupil is mentally and/or academically ready for the *gymnasium*. 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, English, a second foreign language, 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. By the academic year 2008/09, a new structure of the Danish vocational education took effect. The reform entails among other things that study programmes have been divided into 12 main areas and new plans of action and learning objectives have been created. The aim of the reform is to reduce the drop-out rate and thus get more young people to complete a post-compulsory education.

(iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Final *gymnasium* examinations are taken in at least ten subjects. The Ministry of Education'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. Students 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 also 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.

As of August 1st 2006, a new marking scale comprising seven marks from -3 to 12 replacing the 13-point marking scale was implemented in the general upper secondary programmes and by August 1st 2007, the scale was applied to all levels of education. A main aim of the new scale is to enhance internationalisation 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).

6. Higher education

(i) Structure

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

Academies of professional higher education (*Erhvervsakademie*) 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 (*Mellemlange Videregående Uddannelser*) 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.

As of January 2008, a merging of the university colleges and centres of higher education (CVU) took place and resulted in 8 new regional university colleges (*professionshøjskole*). Furthermore

10 new academies of professional higher education (consisting of the existing business and technical colleges) have been established. They will offer short-cycle education (KVU) and further adult education (VVU). The aim of these new structures is to strengthen the development and cooperation of medium- and short-cycle higher education.

Universities (*Lange Videregående Uddannelser*) offer research-based, long-cycle higher education programmes. Some of Denmark's 8 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 candidates 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.

In 2007, a merging of several institutions took place and thus reduced the overall number of universities to 8; for example the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural School is now part of University of Copenhagen and the Danish School of Education merged with University of Aarhus. The aim was to create new and stronger universities with better services as part of the Danish government's globalization strategy. In addition, 3 major new government research institutes have also been established.

(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 may 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 grade point average.

A new law enabling Danish students to receive a grant to pay contributions to registration fees and tuition costs in foreign universities for up to a two-year period has taken effect from the 2008/09 academic year. In order to receive this grant, the foreign study programme has to be pre-approved.

(iii) Qualifications

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 candidate/master programmes has been implemented in all university degrees.

7. Special needs

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

In the school year 2006/07, 2.2 % of the pupils in primary and lower secondary education received special educational support within the framework of the *folkeskole*, while 0.8 % of the pupils attended a special school so they were segregated from mainstream education. If it is assumed that the pupil is not able to be educated within mainstream education, the pupil is recommended to undertake a pedagogical-psychological assessment. On the basis of the assessment, the school, the local authorities and the parents of the pupil then decide which kind of educational support the pupil must attend.

8. Teachers

Pre-primary teachers attend a college of social educator training for three-and-a-half years. *Folkeskole* teachers complete a four-year non-university course (ISCED 5A) at a college of education. According to the reform of the programme qualifying to teach in primary and lower secondary school (*folkeskole*) that took effect on the academic year 2007/08, the former four main subjects are replaced by two or three main subjects. The reform also entails on a general strengthening of the natural sciences, a general strengthening of the didactic training, admission requirements are tightened and attendance is made compulsory the first year. Gymnasium teachers specialise in one or more subjects, hold a Candidatus-degree (Master's level) and undergo a specially organised postgraduate teacher-training course (*pædagogikum*) which has to be completed parallel with the teaching and takes one year to complete.

Teachers at vocational colleges must have teaching qualification in one or more subjects. Subject-related qualification depends on either holding a *Candidate*-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-primary, *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

Compulsory education

As of the school year 2009/10, pre-primary class is made compulsory for all pupils. *Folkeskole* is now 10 years instead of 9 years.

In the school year 2006/07, compulsory national tests were to be introduced in primary and lower secondary education (*folkeskole*) were introduced. They differ from year to year but are conducted at form level 2 to 9. 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*. The tests are meant for monitoring the quality of the educational system and are also seen as a pedagogical tool for the teachers in the planning of their teaching. In January 2008, however, it was decided to postpone the national tests that were to be held in the spring of 2008. Instead the Ministry of Education in collaboration with up to 900 schools will work on improving and assuring the quality of the tests for the next school year. The ministry of Education hopes that the test will be compulsory in spring 2010. A testing of the tests will take place in September 2009.

Teachers

The possibility of offering a *folkeskole* teacher programme at university level is currently being debated (until now the education of *folkeskole* teachers has been the responsibility of non-university colleges of education). The goal is to attract more applicants to the *folkeskole* teacher programme and strengthen the academic level of teachers.

Unrevised English

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