

**Ministry of Education
Denmark**

REVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICIES FOR EDUCATION

Follow-up report prepared by the Danish Ministry of Education

Follow-up on the 35 recommendations in the OECD report on the primary and lower secondary education system in Denmark (2004)

4 April 2008

PART I

OECD's review of the primary and lower secondary education system – the Folkeskole - in Denmark in 2003-2004

Background for the review

Denmark's results in PISA 2000 were not satisfactory. They showed that Denmark lay around the OECD average in reading, and that almost one in five children left the Folkeskole without adequate reading skills. In science, Denmark lay significantly below the international average. In mathematics and problem-solving, however, Denmark lay significantly above than the OECD average.

After publication of the PISA 2000 results, the then Minister of Education agreed that the OECD conduct a review of the Danish primary and lower secondary education system – the Folkeskole. The OECD had questioned why the Folkeskole, despite a high level of expenditure in international terms, had not produced better results in relation to the academic knowledge and skills of its students. It was also surprising that the Folkeskole was not more effective at eliminating the cycle of negative social heritage.

The OECD put together a Review Team composed of international experts from countries that had performed well in the PISA surveys. The Review Team's visit to Denmark took place in November 2003.

The OECD report on the primary and lower secondary education system in Denmark

The Review Team identified a number of strengths and weaknesses with the Danish Folkeskole, based partly on interviews with students, parents, teachers, school leaders and municipal politicians. The Review Team advocated, among other things, strengthening of the evaluation culture in the school system and further professional development of teachers.

Among the strengths, the experts identified the commitment of the State and municipalities to education, evidenced for example by generous staffing and adequate premises and equipment. The experts also identified frequent opportunities for parental choice, dedicated teachers as well as confident and happy students.

Among the weaknesses, the experts identified the lack of a strong culture of student evaluation as well as a lack of adequate feedback on student performance. There was also an absence of school self-appraisal and not enough sharing of good practice. In addition, schools did not pay adequate attention to early reading problems, and schools also failed to counter the efforts of home disadvantage. The experts also identified an ambivalent attitude to school leadership as well as an over-restrictive teachers' contract.

The full report, published in June 2004, contained 35 recommendations for decision-makers at both national and municipal level. The recommendations were placed under the following six overall themes:

- Learning standards, evaluation of student performance and school effectiveness
- Roles and competences of school leaders
- Pre- and in-service professional development of teachers
- The collective agreement regulating the roles and hours of teachers
- Opportunities for bilingual and special needs students

- Other necessary actions

Follow-up on the OECD recommendations

Immediately after the publication of the OECD report, the then Danish Minister of Education invited the Folkeskole's central stakeholders to take part in a Danish follow-up effort on the report's recommendations. The organisations accepted the invitation, and in September 2004 work was initiated in four focus groups that addressed the following areas:

- The school's educational goals, ongoing internal evaluation and quality of teaching.
- Daily life of the school, the school leader's competences and roles – parental cooperation.
- Continuing education and in-service training of teachers.
- Improved opportunities for bilingual and special needs students.

On 4 October 2004, the feedback responses from the organisations represented in the focus groups were conveyed to the Minister of Education in the report, "The Folkeskole's Response to the OECD Recommendations – Feedback to the Minister of Education from Local Government Denmark (LGDK), the Danish Union of Teachers, The Association of Leaders, the Danish Association of School Leaders, The National Association of School Parents, and the Organisation for Children and Culture".

Besides the organisations represented in the focus groups, the Danish National Federation of Early Childhood Teachers and Youth Educators (BUPL) presented a separate response statement to the Ministry of Education on the OECD recommendations. Similarly, the National Union of Danish Students (DSE) was contacted.

The OECD's review was also the subject of a in-depth debate among the Folkeskole's stakeholders, and many of the proposals were incorporated into various Government proposals and have subsequently been implemented.

Government initiatives before 2004

In relation to a number of the OECD recommendations, plans for action were already being formulated. In November 2002, a broad political agreement was reached on the renewal and innovation of the Folkeskole. The Folkeskole Agreement contained four overall objectives for the Folkeskole's further development:

- Better preparation of children for and introduction to school life
- Greater inclusiveness
- Raised standards in teaching and curriculum design
- Better exit and transition to further education

With the agreement and the subsequent adoption of an amendment to the Folkeskole Act in 2003, it was decided to implement a number of initiatives in which the Government wishes to raise academic and professional standards in the Folkeskole and in doing so contribute to solving a number of the problems that the OECD had highlighted. These included, for example, the introduction of common final objectives and threshold (attainment) objectives in all school subjects, goal and content descriptions in pre-school class, starting English language studies earlier, and a minimum number of hours in Danish and mathematics in the first few years.

Further Government initiatives designed to raise academic and professional standards, December 2004

PISA 2003 was published in December 2004 and showed that there had not been significant changes to Denmark's international placement since the first PISA study in 2000.

In the light of the findings, the Government wished to raise academic and professional standards by implementing four amendments to the Folkeskole Act:

- Mandatory language screening of all children on entering primary school.
- Requirement that the already operational threshold objectives and final objectives for Folkeskole subjects be incorporated in the evaluation of each student's learning outcomes.
- As part of the evaluation process, schools must administer mandatory tests in reading (2nd, 4th, 6th and 8th forms), mathematics (6th form), English (7th form) and science (8th form).
- The procedure for reporting to parents about the student's learning outcomes must include a written report to the parents, including the results of the tests and the language screening.

In addition, an assessment toolbox was also proposed, which besides tests should contain guidance on good assessment practice, guidance on assessment in the various subjects as well as components for in-service training of teachers and school leaders.

The Government Platform, "New Goals", February 2005

The Government Platform in 2005, in which the present Minister of Education took office, comprised a large number of initiatives for the Folkeskole under the heading, "Reforming the Folkeskole":

- Improved teacher training programme
- Strengthened in-service teacher training of teachers
- Strengthened in-service training of school leaders
- National action plan for reading
- Strengthened Danish language training
- Strengthening of history teaching
- Raising of the academic level in science
- Raising of the academic level in mathematics
- A good start in the Folkeskole
- Mandatory level tests in the Folkeskole
- Tailoring the present 10th form subject range
- Promotion of an evaluation culture
- Documentation of the Folkeskole's results
- The Council for Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Lower Secondary Education
- Strengthened municipal monitoring of schools.

The Government's Globalisation Strategy, April 2006

Under the title, "Progress, Innovation and Cohesion. Strategy for Denmark in the Global Economy", the Government published a series of objectives and initiatives in 2006. The strategies contained a series of objectives and initiatives for the Folkeskole, aimed at raising academic and professional standards.

The Government's objectives for the primary and lower secondary school system (Folkeskole):

- Denmark should have a world top performing primary and lower secondary school system. The primary and lower secondary school system should provide students with academic knowledge and skills, promote creativity and independence, and prepare them for further education after leaving school.
- Students in the primary and lower secondary school system should be top performing within the four core subject areas: reading, mathematics, science and English.
- All students should acquire good academic knowledge and skills. The brightest should match the level of the best students in other countries, while the level among the weakest students must be lifted.
- The primary and lower secondary school system should ensure that all young people acquire knowledge and skills that enable them to participate actively in a globalised world.

The OECD review and the Danish Government's initiatives

In general, all the abovementioned initiatives have been launched or are about to be launched. The Government's goals and strategies very much take into account the questions and issues that the OECD raised in its report on primary and lower secondary education in Denmark in 2004, including the report's recommendations. Attention is drawn to the descriptions of the follow-up on the particular OECD recommendations in *Part II*.

Many of the initiatives are implemented by means of legislation. For more information, refer to the list of legislation presented in *Appendix 1*.

PART II

Follow-up in Denmark on the basis of the OECD report's 35 concrete recommendations

First theme: Learning standards, evaluation of student performance and school effectiveness

Actions for the Minister in cooperation with relevant stakeholders

Recommendation 1. The Minister, in cooperation with the Association of Municipalities, the Danish Union of Teachers and other relevant stakeholders, initiates a public debate on expectations, politics, practices and outcomes of the primary and lower secondary system.

During 2004, the state of the Folkeskole was analysed and documented from several quarters and in several different areas. The Danish Evaluation Institute published two evaluation reports on differentiated teaching and the ongoing internal evaluation. The OECD review described the Folkeskole's strengths and weaknesses, and put forward a large number of recommendations. A national follow-up was carried out by the Folkeskole's stakeholders, who took their point of departure in the OECD's report and recommendations. Lastly, PISA 2003 was published at the end of the year.

The Council for Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Lower Secondary Education was set up by the Minister of Education in September 2006. The Council's tasks are to monitor and evaluate:

- Academic and professional standards in the Folkeskole
- Pedagogical development
- Student's learning outcomes
- Combating students' negative social heritage
- Integrating of students with a non-Danish ethnic background.

Each year, before 1 March, the Council must submit a report to the Minister of Education on its activities along with proposed initiatives for how to improve the quality of education in the Folkeskole.

The Council is led by an independent five-member chairmanship. The Council's other 20 members comprise representatives from a number of key stakeholder organisations in the field.

Recommendation 2. The Minister establishes within the Ministry a municipality education monitoring section.

The responsibility for monitoring developments in the quality of the Folkeskole lies with the Agency for the Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Lower Secondary Education, which was established under the Ministry of Education in September 2006. This responsibility entails, among other things, that the Agency monitors to ensure that the municipal councils produce the annual quality report and that this report meets the requirements laid down in Executive Order No.162 of 22 February 2007 regarding the use of quality reports and action plans in the municipal council's work on evaluation and quality development of primary and lower secondary education.

On 9 June 2006, the Folkeskole Act was amended, whereby the municipal councils' responsibility for the Folkeskole and the State's monitoring of the quality in the Folkeskole was made more explicit. With this legislative amendment, two mandatory tools have been introduced, i.e. quality reports and action plans, which the municipalities are to use in their work on monitoring the quality in the Folkeskole. The

quality report has been a statutory requirement since the start of the 2006-2007 academic year and is a tool designed to ensure systematic documentation and cooperation between local politicians, municipal councils and schools on the evaluation and quality development of primary and lower secondary education.

The municipal council is responsible for producing an annual quality report that, among other things, contains a summary evaluation of the academic level at the particular school and for the entire school system in the municipality. If the quality report shows that the academic level in a school is generally unsatisfactory, the municipal council must draw up an action plan for improving the level at the particular school.

Recommendation 3. The Minister commissions the Danish Evaluation Institute to undertake annual surveys of different-aged students in chosen subjects in order to provide a national snapshot of performance.

The development of a national snapshot of performance is linked to the mandatory national tests that were adopted by a majority in the Folketing in 2006, and which are organised and run by the Agency for the Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Local Secondary Education. The results of the mandatory tests are to be published once a year, thus making it possible to use the performance snapshot to monitor changes in the overall national standards and to enable each teacher to compare the students' test results with a national average.

The performance snapshot will be published for the first time when all 10 planned mandatory tests have been introduced (cf. comments to Recommendation 5). To supplement the performance snapshot, it has been decided that steps will be taken to develop and implement representative surveys of students' abilities in certain selected areas not covered by the tests.

Recommendation 4. The Minister commissions a development project to create criterion-based tests in a chosen subject.

Such a development project has not been created. Criterion-based tests are perceived as target systems where focus is exclusively placed on whether the student passes or fails a test. Among the Folkeskole's stakeholders, there has been considerable uncertainty about the relevance of this type of test, which is why it has been referred for inclusion in the evaluation considerations of different assessment methods (cf. comments to Recommendation 5).

The Danish Folkeskole is a comprehensive school system without level streaming, where students receive teaching according to common set goals, but where the teaching is tailored according to the student's different proficiency levels. Consequently, the primary and lower secondary education system in connection with the summative school-leaving exams has no criteria for passing or failing. The same applies with regard to grade point averages for the individual student. This is not calculated.

In recent years, the exam assignments in the various subjects have moved towards the use of clearer goals under influence of the results of the international surveys, in particular the results from PISA. This applies primarily in regard to reading, which is tested in its own right in Danish. Similarly, foreign language exams have been adjusted, whereby the Common European Framework of Reference for evaluating academic sub-elements in the receptive and productive skills has been integrated with the traditional Danish approach to these subjects. Therefore, developments have already at this stage been set in motion with criterion-based testing. Nevertheless, no steps have been taken to implement a national standardisation of these measures.

Similarly, throughout the education system in Denmark, a new grading scale has been introduced, which is more comparable with grading systems used in other countries. This means that students can be more appropriately placed when embarking on studies abroad.

Recommendation 5. The Minister initiates an evaluation of different methods and materials concerned with assessment.

No real evaluation of different assessment methods has been initiated, but there have been several initiatives whose aim it has been to promote the evaluation culture in the Folkeskole and thereby to strengthen the assessment of students' learning outcomes.

A majority in the Folketing decided in 2006 to introduce 10 mandatory national tests from 2nd to 8th form in the following subjects: Danish/reading literacy, English, mathematics and science (biology, geography and physics/chemistry). The tests are computer-based and adaptive, i.e. the difficulty of the tasks is automatically adapted to the particular student's academic level. The development of the tests is continuously monitored by a review team composed of external experts.

All 10 tests are expected to be introduced as of 2009, and approx. DKK 85 million has been earmarked for the development work. This amount includes funds for development and distribution of a set of written guidelines for teachers and school leaders about assessment methods other than tests. For example, a large number of general and subject-specific guidelines and inspiration materials have been developed on how evaluation can be made an integral part of the Folkeskole's teaching. The guidelines are distributed via a special website on evaluation that has been developed for the particular purpose.

Similarly, in 2006 the Folketing introduced a rule that all students in the Folkeskole are to have a written personal learning plan which contains results of the ongoing assessment in all subjects as well as goals for the respective student's development. Besides strengthening the ongoing assessment of the student's learning outcomes from the teaching, the aim of the personal learning plan is to strengthen the basis for the planning and structuring of the teaching as well as strengthening the cooperation between school and home. The personal learning plan is to be issued to the parents of the particular student. In 2008, the Danish Evaluation Institute is conducting a study of personal learning plans.

Recommendation 6. The Minister, jointly with the municipalities and the Danish Union of Teachers, funds a research project to support the development and dissemination of methods of teacher self-evaluation.

Such a research project has not been implemented. However, all three parties have together and separately worked hard to promote an evaluation culture in the Folkeskole. See comments to Recommendations 5, 7 and 10.

Recommendation 7. The Minister, jointly with the municipalities and the Danish Union of Teachers, establishes a task force to determine expected benchmark standards for different age groups in the main subjects of the curriculum.

An amendment to the Folkeskole Act in April 2003 directed focus on raising academic standards. Besides the already operational objectives and final objectives for the Folkeskole's subjects, binding targets were introduced for selected forms (threshold objectives).

In 2005-2006, the Minister of Education established a number of expert committees on selected subjects and disciplines in the Folkeskole, whose task was to present proposals for strengthening the subjects.

The Danish Government's Globalisation Strategy, published in April 2006, states that in extension of the Folkeskole's new objects clause, the aim and objectives of all subjects will be reviewed and the threshold objectives will be adjusted accordingly.

On this background and with a point of departure in the experts' reports and accompanying recommendations, the Ministry of Education will, in collaboration with a large number of external experts, carry out committee work in 2007-2008 to revise the binding targets, threshold objectives and final objectives as well as make relevant adjustments to the description texts of the subjects.

Recommendation 8. The Minister establishes a second task force to investigate the efficacy of the different modes of self-study employed within schools and in the school leisure time schemes (SFO).

Such a task force has not been established. The issues relating to students' homework has, however, been incorporated into a so-called School Start Committee's considerations and recommendations. The Committee was set up by the Minister of Education at the end of 2005 and comprised researchers and experts on the subject of school start. One of the tasks of the committee was to draw up proposals for a learning content description for municipal school-based leisure time facilities (SFO) and recreation centres, which included, for example, homework assistance for academically weak students. With a point of departure in the School Start Committee's recommendations, negotiations took place among the political parties to the Folkeskole Act Agreement that have resulted in the presentation of a parliamentary bill containing a number of legislative amendments relating to school start, including an obligation for the municipalities to formulate goal and learning content descriptions for the pedagogical activities of SFOs – e.g. their role in relation to providing assistance with homework.

With the adoption of the Daycare Services Act, No. 501 of 6 June 2007, action has been taken to follow up on the School Start Committee's recommendation regarding the opportunity for assistance with homework in leisure time care facilities, whereby it is explicitly stipulated in the objects clause for leisure time care facilities in Section 45, sub-section 6 of the Act that children must have the opportunity to obtain assistance with homework in the leisure time care facility.

In addition, the Danish Government has allocated funding to launching a number of homework assistance projects, which are partly targeted at bilingual students in socially deprived residential areas. These projects have all fallen outside the sphere of the SFOs.

Recommendation 9. The Minister, jointly with the municipalities and the Danish Union of Teachers, initiates a development project to create a Danish framework for the evaluation of schooling.

Such a development project has not been formulated, although the recommendation is met through a number of initiatives. See comments to Recommendation 5.

The amendments to the Folkeskole Act in 2006 and the initiative, "Promoting a culture of evaluation" led to a number of changes that aim overall at contributing to the development of the school's evaluation culture.

In 2007, the Danish Government, Local Government Denmark (LGDK) and Danish Regions launched a project to identify the national need for indicators in the Folkeskole sphere. The project is partly aimed at supporting the development of potential, new indicators with a point of departure in the objects clause of the Folkeskole Act, including indicators for identifying the student's all-round development.

Actions for the municipalities

Recommendation 10. Each municipality (or consortium of local authorities) establishes a School Improvement Team to provide immediate support for ailing schools.

Each municipal council can decide for itself whether the municipality establishes or participates in the establishment of a School Improvement Team.

Local Government Denmark (LGDK) states that it has issued a recommendation to all municipal councils that they should decide how the council systematically advises and supports, for example, the 25% of schools that have achieved the lowest results – regardless of how good or bad these schools are. What is important is that the principle of taking systematic action to help the weakest schools becomes firmly embedded. The municipal council must in collaboration with the school's management evaluate how resources should be prioritised.

LGDK has formed a Partnership on the Folkeskole together with 34 municipalities, with the aim of improving students' learning outcomes. The Partnership has selected three focus areas, one of which is evaluation culture. The Partnership has drawn up a status analysis that measures the status of each student's competence level within a number of academic, personal and social areas. Each municipal council uses the results of the analysis in its dialogue with the schools on development and improvement.

Actions for other bodies

Recommendation 11. Copenhagen – as the largest municipality - considers the development of a research and statistics capacity to pilot appropriate data collection and analysis of the concept of 'value added'.

On the basis of the results of different international studies (e.g. PISA 2000 and 2003) as well as the OECD review from 2004, the City of Copenhagen has decided to carry out two rounds of PISA Copenhagen. In both rounds (2004 and 2007), tasks from PISA 2000 were used. At the same time, it was decided to let the Danish University of Education (DPU) undertake extensive formative process research, with the part aim of identifying common characteristics shared by schools which scored above what was expected following socio-economic adjustment in PISA Copenhagen.

After publishing the results of PISA Copenhagen 2007, the City of Copenhagen decided also to launch an extensive development programme targeted especially at teaching of bilingual children and reading across the curriculum. Development of the evaluation culture at schools was also prioritised (cf. OECD review). In 2007, these efforts were expanded with the programme "Academic Excellence for All", which to date is the most ambitious education policy initiative undertaken in the City of Copenhagen.

Second theme: Roles and competences of school leaders. Actions for the municipalities.

Recommendation 12. Municipalities make award-bearing leadership and management courses mandatory for applicants for school leadership posts.

Local Government Denmark (LGDK) states that the municipalities have not chosen to make school leadership and management courses mandatory for applicants for school leadership posts. Nevertheless, a great many municipalities run pre-leadership and management training programmes. LGDK strongly supports such measures.

For the period 2007-2009, the Danish Government has set up a pool of funds, in which DKK 25 million is earmarked for in-service training of school leaders. This pool of funds is structured so as to offer municipalities reimbursement of expenses incurred when school leaders participate in specially designed professional training programmes in school leadership and management developed in collaboration between the Ministry of Education and LGDK. On the basis of reports provided by the municipalities, the Ministry of Education anticipates that the pool will subsidise the further professional development of almost 1,000 school leaders over the next 2-3 years.

The Government Platform from 2005 states that a leadership reform will be launched that includes, among other things, strengthening the provision of leadership and management training programmes. Consequently, the Danish Government, in collaboration with LGDK and Danish Regions, has announced that, in addition to the existing Diploma Programme in Leadership, there must be a large availability of high-quality leadership and management training programmes for institution leaders that provide the individual leader with relevant and general theoretical and practice-oriented leadership and management training.

Recommendation 13. The period of mentoring continues until the end of the first year of appointment as a school leader.

Local Government Denmark (LGDK) states that many municipalities have established a structured mentoring scheme for new school leaders. LGDK strongly supports such measures.

Recommendation 14. Municipalities (coordinated by Local Government Denmark (formerly the Local Authorities' Association)) devise ways to enhance the status of school leaders.

Local Government Denmark (LGDK) has (cf. comments to Recommendation 10) together with 34 municipalities entered into a partnership regarding the Folkeskole with the overall aim of improving student's learning outcomes. One of the focus areas is leadership and management. One aim of the partnership is to disseminate knowledge to the rest of the municipalities about the results of targeted efforts within this area. Another aim is to raise the Folkeskole's prestige and recognise the efforts of school leaders and staff.

LGDK recommends to the municipalities that school leaders take a Diploma in Leadership. Furthermore, during the collective agreement negotiations in 2008, LGDK has striven to increase the managerial freedom of school leaders.

Recommendation 15. Those municipalities which currently do not do so, consider the adoption of allowances for posts of responsibility.

Local Government Denmark (LGDK) states that the municipalities remunerate departmental leaders and others with positions of managerial responsibility through centralised and decentralised agreements on pay grade advancement, function-based and qualification-based pay, etc.

Actions for other bodies

Recommendation 16. The School Leaders' Associations undertake joint research to explore the different perceptions of classroom behaviour.

School leaders – who in 2004 were represented by two associations, The Associations of Leaders and the Danish Association of School Leaders – have stated that in response to the OECD report, they jointly took the initiative to carry out a detailed study of this particular issue and any potential research initiatives. The study, however, has not led the associations to take any further action to initiate research projects focusing on this issue. It was not felt that the different perceptions of student behaviour in the classroom were in themselves sufficiently interesting to warrant investigation into the underlying causes.

It might also be mentioned that in 2005 the Danish Association of School Leaders, in collaboration with the parental organisation, the National Association of School Parents, investigated how and when to intervene in relation to students who show poor behaviour in the Folkeskole. After this investigation, the organisations produced a leaflet – “The good school environment” – which was sent to the school boards and the school’s professionals with a request that each school should review its practice in this area and identify whether there was a need to revise procedures and principles behind the school’s use of sanctions.

Third theme: Pre- and in-service professional development of teachers. Actions for the Minister.

Recommendation 17. Consideration be given by the Minister to the sub-division and possible extension of the current teacher training curriculum into specialist courses – with a view to enhancing specialisation.

In 2006, the Folketing passed a new law on the training of professional bachelors to become teachers in the Folkeskole. See Act No. 579 of 9 June 2006, cf. Bill No. 1 220 of 5 April 2006. The new Act on the Training of Teachers for the Danish Folkeskole is valid for students starting their teacher training programme from August 2007 onwards. The Minister of Education has, pursuant to the Act, issued detailed rules on the teacher training programme, including the course content. For more details, see Executive Order No. 219 of 12 March 2007.

One of the objectives behind the reform of the teacher training programme is to give the programme an academic boost. The new teacher training programme attempts to raise academic and professional standards by, among other things:

- Broadening the scope of all main subjects, whilst reducing the number of main subjects to two or three (compared to four previously).
- Providing opportunities to build a professional profile.
- Introducing proficiency requirements in connection with choosing main subjects.
- Requiring that at least one of the student teacher’s main subjects must be Danish, mathematics or science.
- Tightening all course descriptions.

- Introducing age-specialisation in regard to teaching Danish and mathematics (see Recommendation 18).

In the previous teacher training programme, the subjects Danish and mathematics were each worth 42 points in the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS points). In the new teacher training programme, the subjects Danish and mathematics are each worth 72 ECTS points.

Recommendation 18. Consideration be given by the Minister to the sub-division of the current teacher training course into age-related components.

With the new teacher training programme, the subjects Danish and mathematics are age-specialised according to early/middle years and middle/senior years, respectively. All of these subjects start with a common core module worth 36 ECTS points. The age-specialisation component is placed at the end of the main subjects and carries a weight of 36 ECTS points. Age-specialisation aimed at the early/middle years takes a point of departure in the binding threshold objectives set out in the Folkeskole Act relating to forms 1-6, whereas age-specialisation aimed at the middle/seniors years takes a point of departure in the corresponding threshold objectives set out for forms 4-9. If the student teacher selects specialisation for both age groups in either Danish or mathematics, the total course content is worth 108 ECTS points.

The introduction of age-specialisation strengthens the individual teacher's professional overview of the particular subject at the relevant form level. Teachers acquire a more solid foundation on which to tackle the special challenges in connection with preparing students for primary and lower secondary schooling and also for further education after leaving the Folkeskole. Methodological and curriculum considerations must be linked to the particular needs of the given age group and to the threshold and final objectives for the subjects taught in the Folkeskole.

Recommendation 19. Consideration be given by the Minister to the optimal way of linking teacher training, in-service work and educational research.

The new Executive Order on teacher training stipulates that the teaching on the core component of the training programme must as far as possible incorporate findings from national and international research, pilot and development projects that are of relevance to the teaching profession and suited to contributing to developing and applying new professional knowledge. The educational institution is to assist the student in acquiring the theoretical and practical competences necessary to enable them to engage in contexts where research and development activities are being carried out within the teaching-related sphere. See Section 17 of the Executive Order.

A strategic research programme has been established within educational research and profession-oriented education and training, respectively. Among other things, applications can be submitted for grants to conduct research into educational theory and curriculum-related issues and for conducting studies into what works (evidence in practice) in an educational setting. The programme is scheduled to run from 2008 to 2010. A total of DKK 60 million has been earmarked for educational research and DKK 30 million for research within profession-oriented education and training. The strategic research catalogue, FORSK2015, also contains supplementary research topics within educational research.

At the School of Education, University of Aarhus, a Danish Clearing House for Educational Research has been established, whose task is to provide an overview of best practices in education and disseminate them to practitioners and politicians.

In association with academies of professional higher education – formerly called centres of higher education – a number of knowledge centres have, with support from the special knowledge centre funds, focused on issues such as science education and inclusion/exclusion. The tasks of the knowledge centres include, for example, developing a range of competence development programmes in collaboration with users as well as conducting research and development projects.

Funds have been set aside for research affiliation and systematic production of knowledge at academies of professional higher education in 2008 and 2009.

Actions for the municipalities

Recommendation 20. Municipalities (coordinated by Local Government Denmark) in association with the Danish Union of Teachers establish a mandatory programme of targeted annual in-service training for every Folkeskole teacher.

In a report published in June 2006, a working group comprising representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance and Local Government Denmark (LGDK) mapped the in-service training programmes that had existed to date and presented recommendations for improved and targeted efforts to raise academic standards and upgrade the professional skills of teachers who teach reading, mathematics, English and science.

Based on the report's recommendations, the Danish Government has in the period 2007-2009 set aside pools of funding amounting to a total of DKK 205 million, designated for reimbursing municipalities for expenses incurred in connection with in-service training for Folkeskole teachers of reading, mathematics, English and science subjects. At present, the Ministry of Education anticipates that over the next three years 4-5,000 teachers will undergo in-service training in accordance with the objective behind the announced funds.

The 2008 collective agreement between LGDK and the Confederation of Teachers Unions (LC) incorporates an agreement on competence development.

Fourth theme: The collective agreement regulating the roles and hours of teachers

Actions for Local Government Denmark and the municipalities

Recommendation 21. Local Government Denmark and the Danish Union of Teachers ensure that the teachers' contract is made more flexible.

In 2005, the Danish Government, in agreement with Local Government Denmark (LGDK), set up a committee whose task was to conduct an analysis of the working hours of Folkeskole teachers. The agreement on the working hours of Folkeskole teachers constitutes a significant part of the collective agreement between LGDK and the Danish Union of Teachers.

The committee presented its first interim report in March 2006. Interim Report 1 provided an overview of the existing rules and the historical development in the working hours of Folkeskole teachers. Interim Report 2 was presented in November 2006 and comprised, among other things, a larger study of the working hours of Folkeskole teachers on the basis of data collected from 110 representatively selected schools.

The distribution of teachers' working hours is illustrated in the following key figures:

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Annual hours</i>	<i>% of FTEs</i>
Teaching (broad definition)	706	36.7
Teaching (classic definition) – included in the broad definition figure	648	33.7
Individual time (preparation)	377	19.6
Development time	158	8.2
Break time	183	9.5
Other school time	238	12.4
Absence (holiday, etc.)	261	13.6

The table also shows that the distribution of teaching time, breaks, preparation and other duties varied considerably between schools. It was also discovered that the number of teaching hours was higher than first assumed (Interim Report 1), although lower than in the countries with which Denmark normally compares itself.

Interim Report 3, which was submitted in September 2007, presents a more detailed analysis of the teaching contracts' function, divided into three themes: flexibility, leadership and the time available for teaching.

The report concludes with three recommendations:

- Flexible framework for students' learning
- Teachers to be managed like everyone else
- Scope for more teaching

In connection with selecting demands for the collective agreement negotiations in 2008, LGDK has based its main demands regarding the working hours of Folkeskole teachers on the recommendations of the committee that was set up to analyse the working hours of Folkeskole teachers.

LGDK and the Danish Union of Teachers have signed a new framework agreement on teachers' working hours, which will take effect from August 2009. The new agreement gives the municipalities greater flexibility in regard to planning and to making subsequent alterations to the plans. In each municipality, the municipal council and the local branch of the Danish Union of Teachers must now engage in more detailed negotiations. For example, a local agreement must be reached regarding the number of preparation hours per lesson. In the event the local parties involved are unable to reach agreement, the present agreement will remain valid.

Recommendation 22. Any renegotiated contract includes a substantial component of time dedicated to mandatory in-service training.

In summer 2007, the Danish Government reached a tripartite agreement with the trade union organisations; an agreement subsequently endorsed by a majority of the political parties in the Folketing. The tripartite agreement is manifested in the collective agreement negotiations between the municipalities and the regions on the one side, and the trade union organisations on the other side.

In the sub-agreement from 25 January 2008, the framework was laid down for an intensified effort for the benefit of all municipal employees, including Folkeskole teachers. This included, for example, the right to an annual appraisal interview as the point of departure for mapping the competence development needs of employees. The development activities can include, for example, in-service training and continuing education in the form of courses and competence development programmes, new assignments, participation in internal or external development projects, etc.

It has been agreed that a total of DKK 388 million is to be set aside for the purpose. The funds are earmarked for the purpose and distributed to the individual municipalities. The funds are to be primarily used for competence development courses and in-service training and continuing education courses run by recognised course providers. In specific instances, the funds may also be used to finance, wholly or partially, expenses to cover the cost of hiring temporary staff.

Recommendation 23. Municipalities monitor the use of time within the Folkeskole so that the opportunities for learning are maximised.

The annual municipal quality reports (cf. comments to Recommendation 2) must, among other things, contain information about the planned and implemented number of hours for all primary and lower secondary schools in the municipality. The quality report provides the municipal council with an opportunity to compare information on time consumption with information about the particular school's results. If the municipal council – either through the quality report or by other means – becomes aware that academic and professional standards at a school generally speaking are unsatisfactory – the municipal council is required to draw up an action plan for improving the academic standards at the given school.

Recommendation 24. Local Government Denmark establishes its own task force to consider the optimal way to provide non-academic support for students of the Folkeskole.

Local Government Denmark (LGDK) states that there exists no tradition for setting up a task force of that kind due to the municipalities' decentralised control of the Folkeskole. LGDK adds that a number of municipalities have already relocated welfare offices to, and employed welfare officers at the schools with a view to supporting and providing guidance and advice to children and young people in need of assistance.

Recommendation 25. Local Government Denmark reviews the perceived barriers between teachers and pedagogues.

Local Government Denmark (LGDK) states that no systematic review of the barriers has been conducted, but LGDK has in countless situations advocated and supported collaboration between teachers and pedagogues (youth educators) – especially in regard to preparing children for entering the Folkeskole and in cooperation with the school-based leisure time facilities. LGDK encourages the municipalities in many different ways to promote inclusion and inclusiveness in the school; efforts which often demand targeted and systematic cooperation between teachers and pedagogues, as there is a strong need for the professional knowledge and skills of both employee categories.

Union-related restrictions

The qualified pedagogues working at school-based leisure time facilities (SFO) are organised under the Danish National Federation of Early Childhood Teachers and Youth Educators (BUPL), a body which has the right to negotiate with LGDK on behalf of this group of employees. SFO pedagogues do not have the teaching competence provided for within the existing framework for the coordinated preparation of children entering the Folkeskole which allows the pre-school leader with pedagogue qualifica-

tions (as a member of the Danish Union of Teachers) to teach students to a limited extent in the 1st and 2nd forms of the Folkeskole. There is, however, nothing to prevent SFO pedagogues from assisting in the classroom from 1st form up under the supervision of the teacher. As regards unsupervised teaching duties in the pre-school class, the SFO pedagogue has the necessary educational qualifications to undertake such duties. Pedagogue assistants who may have completed the pedagogue basic training programme (PGU) will typically be organised in the union, Trade and Labour (FOA).

Incorporating SFO pedagogues and SFO pedagogue assistants with a PGU qualification to some extent in the teaching, including undertaking unsupervised teaching responsibilities in collaboration with teachers, has been an important element in many of the school start-related efforts which since 1998 have been implemented in line with the Folkeskole Act's provisions on experimentation. This opportunity for experimentation will be continued for a three-year period. Pedagogue assistants are not and will not be awarded qualified teacher status in connection with these experiments.

Recommendation 26. Local Government Denmark reviews the potential opportunities for more flexible use of school space including, where appropriate, more shared usage.

Local Government Denmark (LGDK) states that the municipalities are currently in the process of renovating many of their schools. In this regard, LGDK calls on the municipalities to pay particular attention to the requirements that are placed on a modern school – e.g. versatile premises, ICT-based teaching facilities, outdoor facilities that encourage physical exercise, as well as optimal utilisation of the school during daytime and evening hours.

Fifth theme: Opportunities for bilingual and special needs students

Actions for the Minister

Recommendation 27. The Minister initiates a research project to investigate the distribution of bilingual students in special education and to make recommendations in the light of its findings.

No genuine research project has been launched on the abovementioned theme. Action has been taken to register the number of bilingual students in receipt of the extensive special education provision. No special action has been found necessary, as the number of bilingual students is not higher than the number of other students. However, several initiatives of relevance to bilingual students with special education needs have been implemented.

In spring 2007, a set of guidelines was published on how the Folkeskole's provision of special tuition to bilingual students should be organised. The materials make it clear that some bilingual students may have need for both language training in Danish as a second language and special education, and that the pedagogical-psychological studies must take into account that test methods and investigation methods to a large extent are developed on the basis of norms specific to the Danish cultural context. The guidelines explain the provisions regarding the Folkeskole's provision of training in Danish as a second language and offer inspiration on how to plan and implement the training.

With the adoption of new rules in 2006 regarding special education, it has been emphasised that special education must either be provided as an integral part of the classroom teaching or organised outside the classroom, so as to ensure that the student in question does not miss classes in other subjects. The changes have been implemented in an Executive Order in December 2005, and a set of guidelines on the Executive Order was published in January 2008.

Recommendation 28. The Minister requests a re-examination of the available evidence concerning the use of mother tongue languages by teachers engaged in the teaching of Danish to bilingual students.

The Ministry of Education has not conducted an examination of the use of other mother tongues in the teaching given by teachers to bilingual students. The initiatives implemented for the benefit of bilingual students have focused on raising the academic level of the teaching to bilingual students in general, including in early efforts to learn Danish. A number of initiatives, however, relate to the use of students' mother tongue. These include the following:

A development project on methods for teaching bilingual students had as one of its main themes the incorporation of students' mother tongue in the teaching. The materials have been published on a completely new website, www.dettevirker.dk, which widely disseminates information about the teaching and integration of bilingual children. In 2008, these materials will also be made available in a printed version, for use by teachers in the Folkeskole and at teacher training colleges.

The Ministry of Education has taken initiative to produce and support the release of a DVD, "Danish as a second language in the Folkeskole – how to organise the teaching" in 2006. The DVD shows four short films which, among other things, demonstrate why bilingual teachers should be incorporated in the teaching.

The guidelines on how the Folkeskole's teaching to bilingual students should be organised, which were published in 2007, contain a special chapter, "Bilingual teachers and staff", which provides instructions and ideas for how bilingual teachers and staff can be incorporated in the teaching of the subjects taught at the school.

On the Ministry of Education's website, www.uvm.dk, the Minister of Education calls for the mother tongue to be utilised in the teaching of subjects taught in the Folkeskole, with the aim of ensuring that bilingual students learn Danish and become familiar with the academic content of the subjects.

Actions for other bodies

Recommendation 29. Local Government Denmark creates a mechanism to disseminate the methods of those municipalities with acknowledged expertise in the teaching of bilingual students.

Local Government Denmark (LGDK) states that the aforementioned Partnership on the Folkeskole (cf. comments to Recommendation 10) has a professional network specifically for teaching of bilingual students. This network systematically shares knowledge with other municipalities. In addition, LGDK has held seminars on special aspects relating to bilingual students and the student's personal learning plan. Furthermore, LGDK has organised three nationwide conferences on "Good teaching and successful integration" in collaboration with the Danish Union of Teachers, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs. Lastly, LGDK has a website rich with information, etc. about teaching bilingual students.

As part of the Government strategy to combat ghettoisation, the Danish Government has launched the project, "This works at our school", which was implemented in the years 2006-2007. "This works at our school" comprises a total of five sub-projects on lesson gathering, research and dissemination of good practices in the teaching and integration of bilingual students at schools with many bilingual students who perform well or who have promising plans. The project focuses on good teaching practice, second language teaching, school leadership and organisation, enhanced parental responsibility, teacher

expectations and the wide dissemination of results, partly by means of a completely new website, www.dettevirker.dk.

The idea is for the project to be incorporated into a task force unit that will be established in 2008 with the aim of supporting knowledge-sharing between schools and municipalities.

Recommendation 30. Local Government Denmark reviews the programme of in-service training in order to ensure that sufficient teachers take additional training to equip them to deal with students with moderate special needs.

Local Government Denmark (LGDK) emphasises that the municipalities have provided in-service training and continuing education to a substantial number of teachers in the field of special education provision. The reasons are two-fold: firstly, because the standard teacher training programme has not given them the necessary knowledge and ballast regarding special pedagogical assistance, and secondly, because the requirement for quality in special needs education and for professionalism in including it in mainstream teaching is clear and necessary.

The annual municipal quality reports (cf. comments to Recommendation 2) must, besides providing an overall assessment of the academic level of each of the municipality's primary and lower secondary schools and for the entire school system, also include a separate evaluation of the special pedagogical assistance and provision of teaching in Danish as a second language. In addition, for each Folkeskole in the municipality and for the entire school system, the municipality must report on the specific managerial decisions in relation to whether the teaching of children whose development requires special consideration or support, is undertaken by teachers with a major in special needs or corresponding competences, as well as whether the teaching in Danish as a second language is undertaken by teacher with a major in Danish as a second language or corresponding competences.

Furthermore, a partnership has been established among academies of professional higher education with the aim of providing adequate provision of in-service training programmes in the sphere of special education. The intention is to include the municipalities in the planning process.

Sixth theme: Other necessary actions. Actions for the Minister.

Recommendation 31. The Minister considers whether further legislation is necessary to deal with any of the issues we raise in our Report.

Since 2003, a large number of legislative initiatives have been taken to raise academic and professional standards in the Danish Folkeskole. Appendix 1 contains a list of these initiatives in chronological order.

The legislative initiatives are deemed to be adequate in number – and that these initiatives must now be given time to take effect in the schools.

Recommendation 32. A policy that diagnostic tests and assessments should not be published in the form of simple league tables be adopted.

In 2006, a majority in the Folketing decided that the results of the mandatory tests in 2nd-8th forms may not be published for individual students, classes, schools or municipalities.

In the Folkeskole Act, rules are laid down regarding the confidentiality of test results, whereby the different parties only have access to the results that are relevant to themselves. For example, teachers have

access to detailed results about their own students, but not the results of other classes or of the school in general. The municipal council has access to the overall results of the schools in the particular municipality, but the council is not permitted to release this information to another party. The test results thus cannot serve as a basis for a public ranking of schools.

Recommendation 33. Denmark continues to participate in such exercises as PISA in order to maintain an external, international perspective.

Denmark has participated in all rounds of the PISA surveys to date and will also participate in the next PISA survey, which is due to take place in 2009. Besides the fixed elements of the survey, Denmark participated in the computer-based test in science subjects in 2006, and in 2009 Denmark will participate in the test which focuses on assessing the reading of electronic texts.

Denmark participated in the international reading literacy study of young students, PIRLS, in 2006 as well as the study of the mathematics and science knowledge and skills of young students, TIMSS, in 2007. No decision has yet been made as to whether Denmark will participate in future rounds of PIRLS and TIMSS.

Actions for other bodies

Recommendation 34. The National Association of School Parents works with chairs of school boards to consider the implications of our recommendations.

The National Association of School Parents states that no such systematic discussions have taken place.

Recommendation 35. The Danish Union of Teachers works with chairs of the Pedagogical Councils to consider the implications of our recommendations.

The Danish Union of Teachers states that it has in writing and at meetings sought to promote discussion on the challenges facing the Folkeskole.

Appendix 1:

Overview of Folkeskole-related legislation since 2003 aimed at raising academic and professional standards.

Act No. 300 of 30 April 2003 amending the Folkeskole Act (Better preparation for school and raising of academic and professional standards in Folkeskole teaching)

- Besides the already operational objectives, subject aims and final objectives for the subjects taught at the Folkeskole, binding targets are introduced for subjects at selected form levels.
- A content description that specifies the objectives of the pre-school class.
- Earlier starting age for learning English.
- Minimum number of hours for the subjects taught at the Folkeskole, divided into three-year subject blocks - including extra hours in Danish, mathematics and English.
- Raising standards in science and history.
- Biology becomes an examination subject.

Act No. 360 of 19 May 2004. (Geography as an examination subject, procedural rules in connection with exemption from attending classes in Christian studies, students' participation in teaching, greater access to school meal schemes, legal basis for requiring information in electronic form as well as legal basis for rules on electronic communication and digital signatures, etc.

- Geography becomes an examination subject.
- The Ministry of Education is authorised to lay down rules governing which procedures the schools must follow before approving exemption from attending classes in Christian studies.
- The Minister of Education is authorised to lay down rules providing municipalities and school with uniform guidelines for registering, etc. student absence.
- The municipalities are permitted to establish voluntary school meal schemes in the Folkeskole with full parental payment.
- The Minister of Education is authorised to require that information for use in performing legislative and guidance functions is submitted electronically. A change is made to the rules regarding deviation from the rules governing school board elections.

Act No. 313 of 19 April 2006 (Greater evaluation and use of national tests as a pedagogical tool as well as mandatory tests, etc.)

- Explicit requirement that the ongoing evaluation of students' learning outcomes must incorporate the binding threshold objectives and final objectives.
- Stipulation that evaluation also forms the basis for notifying parents about their child's learning outcomes.
- Requirement to use centrally devised tests in selected subjects at certain form levels as part of the evaluation of students' learning outcomes – confidentiality of test assignments and results (except for results calculated on a nationwide level).
- Explicit requirement that parents are to receive written notification of their child's test results.
- Mandatory final exams at the end of the 9th form.
- Expansion of the list of examination subjects to include also history, social studies and Christian studies.
- Amended entry-into-force date of the amended Act on strengthened provision of teaching in Danish as a second language, including greater opportunity to refer bilingual students to other schools other than the catchment area school, thereby allowing for referral option to another school also to be used in the 2005-2006 academic year.

Act No. 572 of 9 June 2006 (Clarification of the Folkeskole's objects clause, extra lessons in Danish and history, students' personal learning plans, publication of nationwide test results, clarification of the municipal council's responsibility as well as establishment of a new council for evaluation and quality development of primary and lower secondary education)

- Revision of the Folkeskole's objects clause.
- Extra lessons in Danish and history.
- Written feedback to parents on the results of the ongoing evaluation of the student's learning outcomes and the resulting follow-up decided (students' personal learning plans).
- Publication of nationwide test results (national performance snapshot).
- Stipulation of the municipal councils' responsibility (quality reports, action plans).
- Establishment of a new Council for Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Local Secondary Education assisted by a new governmental agency.

Act No. 579 of 9 June 2006 on the training of professional bachelors as Folkeskole teachers

- The Act raises the academic level of the main subjects in the teacher training programme, among other things by age-specialising the main subjects of Danish and mathematics in relation to the early/middle years and the middle/seniors years, respectively. The scope of all main subjects is increased, and the student teacher in the future only needs to choose two or three main subjects compared to the present number of four. Lastly, the Act entails the establishment of an evaluation programme for evaluating the components of the teacher training programme, the cross-interaction of the various course components, and the overall fulfilment of goals.

Act No. 560 of 6 June 2007 amending the Folkeskole Act and various other Acts (10th form to be targeted at students whose academic knowledge and skills need further improvement and who need additional time to consider which educational route to pursue in order to be able to successfully complete a general or vocational upper secondary education programme.)

(The Act should be seen in conjunction with Act No. 599 of 6 June on amendment to the Act on guidance regarding choice of education and profession.)

- 10th form is to be targeted at students who need to improve their academic knowledge and skills as well as additional time to consider which educational route to pursue in order to be able to successfully complete a general or vocational upper secondary education programme. 10th form is also meant to provide the opportunity to gather up those young people who drop out of a general or vocational upper secondary education programme.
- Introduction of mandatory bridge-building between Folkeskole and upper secondary education.
- Personal learning plans are drawn up for each student, providing a platform for curriculum planning that meets the needs of the individual student.
- A number of new subjects are to be introduced aimed at upper secondary education.
- The opportunity exists for allowing students to sit examinations twice a year and thus make it more possible to gather up students who have dropped out of a general or vocational upper secondary education programme and to allow students to embark on a new vocational upper secondary education programme in the course of the academic year.
- The opportunity exists to tailor the teaching in the 10th form to students who do not acquire adequate knowledge and skills outcomes from following the ordinary programme of education.

Parliamentary Bill No. L 82 (The Folketing 2007-2008, 2nd Reading) (Extension of compulsory education to 10 years, description of the objectives and content of school-based leisure time schemes, etc.)

- Extension of compulsory education from nine to ten years, whereby the pre-school class in the future is incorporated in the calculation of whether or not the requirement for the number of years of compulsory education has been fulfilled.
- Formulation of a new content description with accompanying threshold objectives for pre-school class education, including the introduction of compulsory language screening.
- Introduction of the opportunity to delay class formation.
- Introduction of the opportunity to form teams, also in the pre-school class.
- Introduction of the requirement that municipal councils draw up a description of the objectives and content of school-based leisure time schemes (SFOs).
- Introduction of the opportunity to make decisions to establish schemes with age-integrated classes and possibly also staggered school start.