

# Danish Teacher Education System

## ► **The Structure of the danish education system**

The Danish education system consists of 3 levels: basic school, youth education and higher education, to which should be added the area of adult education.

The basic school is a 9-year comprehensive school. Prior to this, there is a voluntary pre-school class, and after there is a voluntary 10th school year.

Youth education is primarily either academically oriented (general upper secondary education) or vocationally oriented (vocational education and training). The individual programmes: vocational basic training (egu) and free open education (fuu) have been established as an additional offer for young people. The youth education programmes are normally of a duration of approx. 3 years; their duration does however vary between 2 and 4 years.

Upon completion of youth education, it is possible to continue in higher education. Higher education can be divided into: short-cycle (1-3 years), medium-cycle (3-4 years) and long-cycle (5-6 years) higher education.

There is moreover a civil service training system for the staff of the police, the Danish State Railways, the postal service etc. To this should be added programmes organised within the armed forces and within the private sector, i.e. banking, insurance and shipping.

In Denmark, there is a long and strong tradition of adult education. Major parts of the adult education area is government financed and regulated by law, but in addition to this there is a wide range of private offers which do not receive any government funding.

And last but not least, we must mention the area of "folkeoplysning" (liberal education): "folkehøjskoler" (folk high schools), courses provided in pursuance of the Act on "Folkeoplysning" (liberal education at day and evening schools), "efterskoler" (continuation schools), youth schools etc. which all provide possibilities of personal and occupational development in a free school environment without leading to any actual vocational qualification.

## ► **The Training of 'pre-school-educators' or child-minders**

A very high percentage of young mothers and fathers in Denmark work full-time and families rely on municipal child minding facilities or private day care for the 0-6 year olds. There is no formal literacy or numeracy training till school starts at the age of 6-7, but the various child minding facilities emphasize training of social skills in a very friendly environment. The staff at municipal day-nurseries and kindergartens are educated at national colleges for social educators.

## ► **The Training of teachers for the Danish Folkeskole (age 6-16, i.e. primary and lower secondary level)**

At present, teacher training is offered at 18 colleges distributed all over Denmark. The colleges are administered by the Ministry of Education and are under ministry supervision both with regard to financing and to the education offered. The colleges of education are the only institutions which are authorised to provide the 4-year programme, which qualifies for teaching posts in the Danish Folkeskole.

### ► **Duration and structure of the programme**

The teacher training programme is of 4 years' duration. The programme includes teaching practice at a school for a total of 24 weeks, the organisation of which is decided by the individual institution.

The programme includes the following subjects:

*Common core subjects:*

- theory of education, psychology, general didactics, school and society (70%);
- religious studies and philosophy (20%);
- teaching practice (60%);
- thesis (15%).

*Main subjects:*

- Danish or mathematics (70%);
- three further main subjects (each 55%), chosen by the student.

These four main subjects must be chosen so that at least two of the following three areas are represented: humanities, natural sciences and practical-aesthetic subjects.

(The percentages indicate the proportion of a student's full-time workload devoted to these subjects during one year).

### ► **Admission and student population**

The admission requirement for the teacher training programme is one of the following leaving examinations at upper secondary level: the upper secondary school leaving examination (the "Studentereksamen"), the higher preparatory examination (the "HF-eksamen"), the higher commercial examination (the "HHX") or the higher technical examination (the "HTX").

Due to the fact that there are normally more applicants than available study places, it has been necessary to introduce restricted admission to the teacher training programmes.

Every year, the ministry allocates student places (divided into quota one and two). Quota one students are admitted solely on the basis of their examination results, quota two students are admitted by the individual college of education based on criteria set by each college. Colleges do, however, cooperate in setting these criteria which may comprise work experience in Denmark or abroad, folk high school attendance, study visits etc.

1/3 of the students are men, 2/3 are women.

### ► **Legislation**

Consolidation Act no 608 of 10 July 1997 on the Training of Teachers for the Danish Folkeskole only indicates the general lines of the programme: the duration, subjects, rules regarding the institutions and their management etc.

Ministerial Order no 382 of 19 June 1998 regulates the scope of the subjects, the principal lines of the content of the subjects, and general rules for the assessment of students. The more detailed regulations are laid down in local curricula drawn up by the institutions.

### ► **Administration**

Each college has a board consisting of 5-15 members representing local interests (the municipality, trade unions, folk high schools, municipal primary and lower secondary schools etc.).

The board shall safeguard “the interests of the college as an educational institution and decide on the guidelines for the external work of the college and the development in the long term”. The board is furthermore responsible for the running of the college, including the administration of the budget.

The rector is responsible for the day-to-day running of the college, i.e. the teaching and finances of the college.

Each college establishes two councils, one for students, the other for staff (teaching-, clerical, etc.) These councils are mandatory.

### ► **Qualifications of the teachers at the colleges of education**

Most of the teachers at the colleges of education have one of the following qualifications:

1. A university degree (Master’s level) in humanities or in natural sciences subjects
2. An academic degree (Master’s level) from the Royal Danish School of Educational Studies

Four years after employment (at the latest) teachers have to submit to assessment of their general qualifications (their teaching subject as well as didactics). Teachers are assessed by a committee appointed by the ministry.

### ► **Economy**

The budget is based on the number of active students, i.e. students who pass the prescribed examinations within the officially stipulated time of study. Expenses relating to the teaching, materials, teaching practice and administration are based on this. Also the expenses relating to buildings, cleaning, electricity/heating and rent are mainly based on the number of active students.

About 80% of the budget go to the payment of salaries. And the remaining 20% cover the operational expenditure. The total cost of one student was DKK 55,000 per year in 1998.

### ► **In-service-training**

Many local municipalities set aside funding for in-service-training, and teachers profit from the training. However, Danish schools do not offer many career opportunities as such, they form very non-hierarchical systems. A teacher may be promoted to headteacher or deputy head or to a post as a local, municipal adviser. But these posts are few and far between.

### ► **Future plans for teacher training and in-service training**

At present, Danish Parliament is debating an act intending to create larger and more efficient institutions teacher training colleges, colleges for social educators and others. These future centres of education may structurally be compared to the centres already existing in Holland.

### ► **The Competence of Danish Folkeskole teachers**

Danish colleges of education offer a programme which in scope and level can be said to correspond to certain types of university programmes in the English-speaking world. The qualification which students obtain on completion of the programme can most aptly be compared to a UK/US Bachelor’s degree.

All the colleges are under ministry supervision. The quality of the examinations is controlled by external examiners appointed by the ministry.

In theory, a teacher's certificate qualifies the graduate teacher to teach all subjects to all forms (1st-10th forms), but in fact the teacher is generally considered competent to teach the 1st to 10th forms in the four main subjects taken. In practice, the authorities responsible for the appointment of teachers (i.e. the municipalities, including the school board and the headteacher of the individual school) take the final decision with regard to the question of competence.

▶ **Teacher training at upper secondary level**

Teachers at general upper secondary level (comparable to the British 6th form colleges) are educated at universities (a five year course) and start their professional careers by completing a mandatory in-service training course of didactics.

Teachers at colleges of vocational education and training have differing backgrounds. Some have trained as teachers, some have university degrees, and some are skilled craftsmen who have completed a course of didactics.

▶ **The European dimension**

Is not an issue for debate, but is inherent in our education system; foreign languages take up a large proportion of studenttime, and subjects like geography are taught from an early age.