

Better Education

This publication gives a brief introduction to the action plan *Better Education* launched by the Danish government.

The plan is published in *Better Education – Action Plan*.

The action plan should strengthen the proficiency and competence level in upper secondary education, in higher education and in adult and further education and continuing training.




The Danish Government
June 2002

Better Education

**The Danish Government
June 2002**

Ministry of Education
Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation
Ministry of Culture
Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs
Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs
Ministry of the Interior and Health
Ministry of Employment



Title: Better Education

1st. edition, 1st. impression, September 2002:
2000 copies

ISBN 87-603-2235-7
ISBN (www) 87-603-2237-3
URL: pub.uvm.dk/2002/better2

Published by the Danish Ministry of Education

The report can be ordered from:
The Danish Ministry of Education
Strandgade 100 D
DK-1401 Copenhagen K
E-mail: forlag@uvm.dk
Fax no. +45 33 92 52 19

Order no. UVM 0113

Ordering Fee: 40 dkr.

Cover design: Malchow A/S
Layout text and print: Malchow A/S

Printed with vegetable printcolor on
100% recycled paper

Printed in Denmark 2002

Better Education – Action Plan
is published as an onlinepublication.

It can be downloaded from:
pub.uvm.dk/2002/better1



BETTER EDUCATION

Danish education and training must match the best in the world. When comparisons are made with other countries, it is our aim that Denmark should stand at the very top.

It is very ambitious to want to create the best education system in the world. Nevertheless we have all the prerequisites to do so: we spend a great deal of money on education, we have a long education and training tradition, we have excellent teachers and good institutions.

However, we can become even better at making use of these prerequisites. *Better Education* is the path the government wants to follow to attain this aim. The focus is on upper secondary education; higher education; adult education and continuing training, and these initiatives must be seen in close connection with the government's aims for the Folkeskole (primary and lower secondary education).

The prerequisite for creating the best education system in the world is to make greater efforts within five central areas: qualifications and competences; flexibility; innovation; free choice and output management.

■ Qualifications and competences

All education courses must consist of a solid foundation of qualifications and competences. No matter which level of education the pupil/student is on, the quality of a

programme depends totally on the degree of proficiency and competence.

The subject-specific profile of the programmes must be more precise. There must be the possibility of immersion in the subjects, and a better coherence must be created between the subjects. Clear targets must be set for qualification, competence and quality, and it must be possible to document that pupils and students actually learn the things they are supposed to learn. Finally, the programmes must match the ever increasing demands in the private and public sector labour market.

■ Flexibility

The programmes must be organised in relation to the needs of the individual and the needs of the business sector. Everyone must be ensured the possibility of lifelong learning in that the education system should provide the individual throughout his/her life with relevant education and training courses. The education system must be more flexible so that it is possible to acquire competences in different ways and with varying time consumption for the individual.

■ Innovation and entrepreneurship culture

The education sector must to a much greater extent than today ensure that the Danish business sector receives an efficient transfer of knowledge. Research and new ideas must be translated into economic growth and welfare for both the individual and for society. The initiatives contained in *Better Education* must therefore be seen as a continuation of the government's growth strategy *Determined Growth*.

Pupils' and students' desire to study must be encouraged. It must be challenging and attractive to start up something new and be independent - and we must be much better at preparing and inspiring young people to do this.

■ Free choice

The intention is that greater flexibility must make it possible for pupils and students to put together their own programme of education. However, this is a question of freedom with responsibility. The freedom to put together a course of education must not be exercised to the detriment of qualification and competence. To give young people the freedom to choose what they want without thinking about what this freedom can be used for afterwards is to deceive the young and other members of society.

■ Output management

The educational institutions must be given a greater degree of freedom and thus a better framework for developing quality, but at the same time the institutions must document and be evaluated on whether they live up to the increased responsibility. Proficiency, competence and quality must reach the required standard.

There must be a change when we go from detailed regulations about “how things are to be done” to the measurement of output, i.e. “what do we get?” Do schools and universities ensure that the graduates have relevant and valid qualifications?

In the following, we will present a number of the major concrete initiatives from the action plan. Together with proposals and time perspectives the government’s global vision for education is described in the action plan, *Better Education* (see www.uvm.dk).

■ INITIATIVES IN THE VARIOUS AREAS OF EDUCATION

■ Reform of the Gymnasium (general upper secondary level)

It is the aim of the reform of the Gymnasium to improve the pupils' real study competence and thus strengthen their possibility of completing a higher education programme. In the course of the three-year Gymnasium the pupils must develop from being pupils to being students. Their qualifications and competences must be strengthened through better possibilities of immersion. More optional subjects are to ensure a freer choice for the individual pupil and better possibilities of directing the final examination towards future education and employment. The present division into mathematical, science or language lines will be abolished. Instead, there will be a short introductory period before the pupil chooses his or her subject combination.

■ Reform of the HF Programme (Higher Preparatory Examination) (general upper secondary level)

The HF programme must be based on proficiency and competence and enable the pupil to qualify for further study, and ensure a good basis for the choice of further education and of a profession. The qualifications and competences must be strengthened through the creation of a greater coherence between the subjects. The HF level must be more flexible so that the schools are to a greater extent able to organise the teaching according to the students' different prerequisites. Dependent on the individual student's choice of subjects and levels, the HF level may give access to all higher education programmes.

■ Innovation of the vocational education and training programmes (EUD) (vocational upper secondary level)

The commercial vocational education and training programmes must be innovated with a view to meeting the needs of the business sector regarding a variety of competences.

The programmes must be target-oriented so that it will be possible for the pupils to complete them more quickly and find a job. The practical training must be organised in a more flexible way, and new solutions must be developed to replace the school-based practical training scheme.

Within the technical vocational education and training programmes, the government will carry through an assessment of the practical training place situation (including the school-based practical training), the qualifications and competences acquired and the resulting employment prospects.

It is the aim to establish more flexible education courses in order to provide recognised vocational competence with the possibility of a later upgrading of the acquired qualifications.

■ Reform of the continuing vocational training programmes (AMU) (adult vocational training)

The vocational education and training programmes and the continuing vocational training programmes must be merged in such a way as to give a broader, flexible and transparent supply of programmes, which meet the needs both of the business sector and of the individual. Furthermore, there must be a greater extent of bridge-building between what is learned through the courses and what is learned at the place of work.

■ Higher education

In short-cycle higher education, there must be an innovation of the interaction with the business sector with a view to a continued assurance of the relevance of the programmes.

Medium-cycle higher education must be upgraded with a view to reaching the professional bachelor level. The need for development of medium-cycle higher education, directed at the private sector, must be clarified.

■ The university programmes

The research-based bachelor and master's degree courses must have a clearer competence profile. It must be more apparent that the academic bachelor-programmes are independent, complete programmes. There must be a supply of university programmes where the focus is both on the quality of the teaching and on the social relevance. It is the aim to reduce the dropout rate and ensure that even more university graduates enter the labour market faster.

■ Art and architecture programmes (higher education level)

Wherever possible, the art and architecture programmes must be structured with a bachelor and a Master's degree course, and the building up of knowledge must be strengthened. It is the aim to ensure more flexible, transparent, coherent programmes with a greater freedom of choice for the individual student and better possibility of adaptation to the demands of the labour market. At the same time, the vocational guidance in the art and architecture education programmes will be extended.

■ Maritime programmes (higher education level)

The maritime programmes are to be reviewed in order to strengthen the coherence, flexibility and the further edu-

cation possibilities as well as possibilities of a more effective duration of study.

■ **Health education (higher education level)**

It is of decisive importance that Denmark has a well-educated workforce in the health sector. The government will make greater efforts to recruit and train more people for the health education sector.

■ CROSS-CUTTING INITIATIVES

■ Guidance

Young people must be ensured a better basis for making their educational choices. The dropout rate and wasted time must be reduced. The government wishes for more coherent educational and vocational guidance. This guidance must to a greater extent be oriented towards those young people with the greatest needs.

■ Natural sciences

The intake to the technical-natural sciences programmes is too low. Danish children and young people have little interest in this subject area, and in international studies they do not score as well as we would like. The government will therefore strengthen the natural sciences throughout the entire education system. The teaching must be modernised. The role of the business sector in relation to the programmes must be strengthened and made visible.

■ Internationalisation

Denmark must be ahead in the global knowledge society. It requires professional and cultural competences to cope in an international labour market. The Danish programmes must be internationalised, and the students' transnational mobility must be increased. It must be easier for Danish students to get results recognised and receive credits for stays in educational institutions abroad.

■ IT in education

IT gives great possibilities when it comes to organising the teaching in a flexible manner. IT must be used to differentiate the teaching so that the individual pupil is faced with challenges that correspond to his or her proficiency and competence level. It is the aim that all pupils and students should be able to use IT in examinations and tests. IT-based

examination forms and Internet-based teaching materials should be developed.

■ Recognition of prior learning

Reliable and accepted methods should be developed for the assessment of the individual's prior learning or real competences. The focus must to a greater extent be set on "what a person can do" rather than on "what he or she has" in the form of certificates - the qualification and competence requirements must however be maintained.

■ Danish for adult foreigners

The employment level among foreigners should be raised. The individual must more rapidly gain a foothold in the labour market. This demands a better coherence between the teaching and the practical use of the language in the workplace. It must be possible to combine the teaching in general Danish with the technical language in the business firm. Teaching should be established in the businesses, and be organised in such a way as to be more flexible and adapted to the individual's and the business's need for teaching.

