Compulsory education

Compulsory education [1] in Denmark means an obligation for the parent of a child/the person responsible for a child to ensure the child's participation in the teaching provided by the Folkeskole or the child's participation in teaching comparable to what is generally required in the Folkeskole. Compulsory education commences on 1st August of the calendar year of a child’s 6th birthday and terminates on 31st July of the year in which the pupil finishes 9th grade or alternatively when the pupil turns 17 years old.

Rights and responsibilities of pupils and parents

It is the responsibility of the school head to ensure that a child enrolled in the school attends the education.

If the child fails to attend the instruction, the parents must inform the school of the cause of the child’s absence. The school head then decides the potential sanctions in the case of non-compliance.

Home education

Compulsory education (from age 6 to 16-17 at the latest) means an obligation to participate in the teaching of the Folkeskole (primary and lower secondary school) or in teaching comparable to the requirements of the Folkeskole. Parents or guardians, who themselves can teach or provide teaching comparable to Folkeskolen, can do so. If parents wish to undertake home education, they submit a written declaration to their local authority/municipality.

The local authority/municipality supervises the teaching of home-educated children and the local authority/municipality is entitled to test the children annually. In practice, it is often the school inspector at the district school who appoints a teacher or agrees with an employee from the educational-psychological advisory service to carry out the test. Some municipalities make books available for home education if the parents wish this. Contrary to students in Folkeskolen, home-educated children are not obliged to sit for Folkeskolen’s school leaving examinations (at the conclusion the 9th form). However, if the children wish to sit for these examinations they have a right to do so.

State funded education system

The Danish education system is financed by the state or the municipalities. Private schools [2] have tuition fees and adult education programmes have user payment (see also chapter 3 about Funding in Education [3]).
Danish Education System
The Danish Education Structure

Pre-primary education: Early childhood care and education

Early childhood care and education [4] is for children from age 0 to age 6. The early childhood care and education is optional, but the majority of Danish children attend early childhood care and education.

The public early childhood care and education institutions comprise of:

- Child-minding and day-care centres for children from an age of 16 weeks to the age of 3 years
- Kindergartens for children aged 3 to 6.

For more information about the institutions, please consult chapter 1.1 [5].

Primary and lower secondary education: Single Structure Education

The Danish Folkeskole is a comprehensive school covering both primary and lower secondary education, (grade 0 to 9/10). The duration of compulsory primary and lower secondary education [6] is 10 years.

The primary and lower secondary education institutions comprise of:

- Municipal basic schools (Folkeskoler)
- Private elementary schools
- Continuation Schools-Alternative provision for pupils in the age range of 14 to 16.

Upper secondary education

Upper secondary education is, in theory, optional. That 95 per cent of a youth cohort should complete an upper secondary programme.

The main pathways comprise of:

- The four 2 or 3 year long academically oriented general upper secondary programme [7]s for students after having finished their lower secondary education, which means a student typically can start on a general secondary education programme when he or she is 16 or 17 years old and finish a programme when they are 19 or 20 years old.
- The 2-5 year long vocational education and training programmes [8] for students after having finished their lower secondary education, which means a student can start on a vocational education and training programme when he or she is 16 or 17 years old. However they are often older when the start on vocational education and training programme.

The academically oriented programmes are offered at the general upper secondary institutions while the vocational programmes are offered at vocational colleges. For more details about the institutions, please consult chapter 6 [9].

Higher education

A higher education degree is obtained through the 2 year academy profession (AP) degree [10] offered at business academies, the 3½ professional bachelor’s degree [11] offered at university colleges or the university bachelor’s/master’s degree [11] (3+2 years) offered at universities. Here the age range of students is wide as well. Most students, however, start their higher education studies at an age of 19
or 20 years. The duration of the programmes ranges from 2-6 years.

For more information about the higher education institutions, please consult chapter 7.1. [12]

Adult education and training

The supply of adult education is broad but can be divided into following programmes: [13]

- FVU, AVU or HF: General adult education for all adults over 18 years
- AMU: Adult vocationally oriented education, which target adults over 25 years with work experience
- AP, diplomas or masters: Higher education programmes, which also targets adults with work experience
- Non-formal adult education

For information about the adult education institutions, please consult chapter 8.3 [14].

References

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