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Group of National Experts on Evaluation and Assessment

Country Background Report for Denmark

OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes

This report was prepared by the Ministry of Education and Rambøll as an input to the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes. The document was prepared in response to guidelines the OECD provided to all countries. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the national authority, the OECD or its member countries. This document is only available in PDF format and can also be downloaded from the project's website at www.oecd.org/edu/evaluationpolicy.

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COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT FOR DENMARK

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current document contains the Country Background Report (CBR) for Denmark in relation to the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes. The report has been prepared by Rambøll Management Consulting on behalf of the Agency for the Evaluation and Quality of Primary and Lower Secondary Education (the School Agency).

The CBR has been drafted in accordance with the guidelines issued by the OECD, cf. EDU/EDPC/EA(2009)1/REV1. The content of the CBR is based on desk research of existing documentation on the Danish primary and lower secondary school system. In consequence, primary data have not been collected in the process of outlining the report. Hence, analytic judgements and opinions have only been included, if documentation and evidence were available from existing sources.

A summary of the seven chapters of the CBR is provided below.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the school system in Denmark. The chapter introduces the long tradition in Denmark of compulsory education for all. The primary and lower secondary school system consists of different options – both private and public. The public municipal school (the Folkeskole) is used by the vast majority of children in Denmark, but a wide range of different private independent schools constitute an alternative to the Folkeskole. Approximately 600,000 students attend the public schools, whereas nearly 100,000 are students at private independent schools. The Danish Folkeskole is the responsibility of the municipalities, and the principal holds the overall administrative and pedagogical responsibility at the individual schools. In addition, the national/state level establishes – by means of the Folkeskole Act and regulations – the scope and objectives for the execution of the municipal responsibility for the Folkeskole. Chapter 1 is concluded by providing facts on the expenditure, curriculum and subjects in the Folkeskole.

Chapter 2 describes the framework for evaluation and assessment in the school system in Denmark. Accounting in short for the evaluation requirements in private independent schools, the chapter primarily deals with the framework in the public school system. The responsibilities within the framework for evaluation and assessment are presented with a focus on the recent establishment of both a new authority responsible for evaluation and quality development (the School Agency) and an independent advisory council (the School Council). Considerable attention is given to the policy initiatives in the area of evaluation launched in recent years, e.g. the introduction of individual student plans, municipal quality reports and national tests. Some difficulties have been seen in Denmark when implementing evaluation and assessment strategies. Examples are provided in the chapter ranging from overall lack of consensus on some initiatives to specific implementation problems, e.g. the launch of a national test system.

Chapter 3 considers processes related to the evaluation and assessment of the Danish school system as a whole. System evaluation is interpreted to be evaluation at state level with a view to assess performance of the overall school system. As an introductory note, it is described how the demand

for system evaluation has grown stronger in Denmark, in particular as a consequence of the PISA results. The chapter presents in detail the different procedures used in system evaluation. These are common objectives issued for the Folkeskole; participation in the PISA studies; school-leaving examinations (mandatory at form level 9); and mandatory national tests.

Chapter 4 examines the current school assessment processes and practices in Denmark. With reference to the recent TALIS study, it is made clear that systematic school evaluation is a relatively new dimension in the overall evaluation and assessment framework in Denmark. Consequently, the *internal* school assessment practices are rarely documented in a systematic manner, and no comprehensive overview of local school evaluation activities exist. The *external* supervision and assessment of schools are the responsibility of municipalities, and the chapter presents in detail the requirements for drafting yearly quality reports on school quality and development. This requirement was introduced by law in 2006. The remainder of the chapter presents key observations from the TALIS study, e.g. type and use of school assessments.

Chapter 5 focuses on the Danish approach to teacher appraisal – both internal and external teacher appraisal processes. The voluntary nature of teacher appraisal is highlighted in the chapter, since no national requirements exist in this area. Rather, the practice for assessing teachers is determined locally – typically at school level. The fact that teacher appraisals are not conducted systematically at national level does not imply that activities are not carried out locally as part of the ongoing management effort. The TALIS study substantiates that external teacher appraisals are a much rarer exercise in Denmark than in other TALIS countries. The chapter is summarized by stating that Denmark has a tradition for teacher appraisal based on self-appraisal, but also appraisals and feedback provided by the school leader. Also, it is mentioned that the School Council in its most recent report (2010) has recommended that regular teacher appraisal should be more pronounced in the Folkeskole.

Chapter 6 contains information related to the final part of the evaluation framework, i.e. student assessment procedures. The chapter differentiates between summative and formative assessments of students. It is described how the previous approach in Denmark to student assessment (mainly internal school assessments and ongoing assessments) has been supplemented with an increasingly summative dimension. The latter emanates from the recent policy initiatives stressing the importance of student examinations and tests. The multiple student assessments procedures are outlined, but it is also stated that evidence-based studies and research on the impact on student academic performance of the current approach to student assessment do not exist.

Chapter 7 concludes the CBR by summarizing the evaluation and assessment efforts within two thematic areas, i.e. bilingual children and special needs education respectively. It is documented that the academic performance of bilingual children is not satisfactory. Hence, the area has received considerable attention in recent years, and a number of policy initiatives have been launched, e.g. a legal requirement on municipalities to conduct language evaluations of all bilingual children at the age of three and upon starting the school. Furthermore, it is stressed that the aspect of evaluation practice is rarely addressed in the numerous reports on bilingual children. However, the Ministry of Education has highlighted the importance of evaluation and assessment in a publication on how to organise the teaching of bilingual children. Also, the area of special needs education is briefly described. It is stated that evaluation is not a new phenomenon within special needs education, since the use of both individual student plans and tests has been common. Research and other reports do, however, illustrate that the evaluation effort varies from school to school, and that knowledge on the impact is rather limited.

1. THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN DENMARK

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the school system in Denmark. Facts and figures on the primary and lower secondary school are presented, including types and numbers of schools and students. Also, figures on special needs education and bilingual children are included. The chapter comprises an overall description of both the private independent schools and the municipal public schools. Constituting by far the largest part of the school system in Denmark, the chapter elaborates on the main features of the public school (the Folkeskole). This includes the management model, public school expenditure, the curriculum as well as the subjects of the Folkeskole.

1.1 *The primary and lower secondary school*

1. In 1814, Denmark got its first School Act introducing compulsory education for all. Since 1953, the Constitution has established that school education should be free. The philosophy of the Danish school is based on ideas and philosophy from both N.F.S. Grundtvig, who was a Danish writer, theologian and philosopher, and from a teacher named Christen Kold (OECD, 2004, Ministry of Education: Private Schools in Denmark¹). With ideas such as General Public Education and “a school for life”, Grundtvig and Kold inspired the development of the Danish school system. Therefore, it is highlighted in the current Folkeskole Act (§ 1) that the primary and lower secondary school should provide students with the knowledge and skills that prepare them for further education.

2. Denmark does not have – as it is the case in other countries – compulsory school attendance. Instead, there is 10 years of compulsory education. Compulsory education can be fulfilled by choosing different alternatives – in combination labelled “the primary and lower secondary education”. The total Danish primary and lower secondary education consists primarily of the public Folkeskole (the Danish municipal primary and lower secondary school), the private independent primary and secondary schools and independent boarding school for lower secondary students. Furthermore, it is possible for parents to teach their children at home. The vast majority of children in Denmark are attending the Folkeskole, equivalent to approximately 80 percent in 2008/2009.

3. At the beginning of the school year in August 2008, Denmark had 1,630 public schools (including special schools). The smallest school unit has just one student and the largest over 1,500 students. Nearly 40 percent of the schools have between 300-600 students, and the average school size is 354 students. In the school year 2008/2009, a total of 582,658 students attended the Danish public schools. A projection of the number of students in the Folkeskole up to 2020/21 shows that the number will decline steadily from year to year, which is also the case for the total number of students in primary and lower secondary schools due to a decline in the number of children². Approximately 96,000 of the Danish primary and lower secondary school students are students at the 500 private independent schools that exist in Denmark, and approximately 28,000 students attend the independent boarding schools for lower secondary students. The share of students in private schools is almost one fifth of the students in August 2008. This is because of the relative high proportion of students who goes to independent boarding schools in lower secondary education. In primary education in form level 1, the percentage of students in private school is 12 percent in 2008.

4. It is noted that a considerable increase in the number of students at special schools and daily treatment centres has been seen over almost the entire period from 2004/2005 to 2008/2009. The

¹ http://www.eng.uvm.dk/~media/Files/English/Fact%20sheets/090602_fact_sheet_private_schools.ashx

² UNI-C Statistik og Analyse (2008): *Kommunernes skolestruktur*; UNI-C Statistik og Analyse (2009): *Elevtal for grundskolen 2008/2009* samt <http://www.uvm.dk/service/Statistik/Folkeskolen%20og%20frie%20skoler/Elever/Elevfremskrivning.aspx>

increasing number of students and increased resources used represent a present theme in the Danish school debate, although the increase from 2007/2008 also reflects significantly better reporting during the past years³.

Table 1: Number of students in primary and lower secondary schools 2004/2005 to 2008/2009

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
All primary and lower secondary schools	717,971	719,583	723,174	718,325	718,835
The public schools	597,578	596,281	595,561	588,962	582,658
The private independent schools	88,649	90,807	92,064	91,271	95,972
The independent boarding schools for lower secondary students	29,038	29,900	31,079	27,308	28,055
The special schools	1,955	2,513	2,642	8,108	9,066
Daily treatment centre	751	82	1828	2676	3021

Source: UNI-C Statistic and analysis (2009): *Student number the primary and lower secondary school 2008/2009*

* Based on previous years' reports, UNI-C estimates that about 6,180 students are missing in the reporting for the year 2007/2008, 5,400 students from the Folkeskole and 780 students from private independent schools. Likewise, it is estimated that 455 students is missing in the reports for the year 2008/2009. Finally, the considerable increase in student in special schools and daily treatment centres is due to far better registration of student numbers.

5. The Municipalities are in accordance with the Folkeskole Act obliged to provide special needs education and remedial support to children with learning disabilities or any other indication of physical or mental handicap. Special needs education can be given as assistance in the mainstream teaching, in special classes at the ordinary Folkeskole or at special schools. In the school year 2008/2009, just over 9,000 students attended special schools, and a total of nearly 50,000 students in the public schools received special pedagogical support⁴. In parallel, a requirement of special needs education and remedial support also exist in the private independent schools. The private independent schools can assign students to special needs education or remedial support at another private independent school or at a public school.

6. It appears from the Folkeskole Act that all children due to their address or residence belong to a particular school district, where the child has a right to be signed in. The parents, however, have a free choice of school. This implies that they have the right to sign in their child in a Folkeskole by their choice, as long as a place is available – both in the municipality of their residence or in another municipality. The same applies if the parents want the child to change schools during the education (§ 36, paragraphs 2-3). It is required that a place is available at the desired school.

7. The Danish form levels 1-6 correspond, according to ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education), to *primary school*, and form levels 7-10 are equivalent to *lower secondary school*. The distribution of students at the two levels is shown in the table below.

³ UNI-C Statistik og Analyse (2009): *Elevtal for grundskolen 2008/2009*

⁴ UNI-C Statistik og Analyse (2009): *Elevtal for grundskolen 2008/2009* samt

<http://www.uvm.dk/service/Statistik/Folkeskolen%20og%20frie%20skoler/Elever/Specialundervisning.aspx>

Table 2: The number of students in primary and lower secondary school 2000-2006

Year	Number of students pro year						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
The primary and lower secondary school in total:	659,300	674,671	688,033	700,646	708,750	712,065	712,633
Primary	-	407,072	411,015	415,263	413,069	410,283	407,115
Lower secondary	-	267,599	277,018	285,383	295,681	301,782	305,518

Source: UNI-C **Statistics and Analysis: Facts and Figures**

* It includes numbers from the Folkeskole, the free primary and lower secondary schools and the independent boarding school for lower secondary students. Before 2000, there are no numbers differentiated on form levels.

* The proportion of students in the voluntary 10th form level is relatively stable over the period with 33,199 students in 2001 and 33,998 students in 2006.

8. 10 percent of all the students of the primary and lower secondary school are bilingual and are either immigrants or descendants. The largest share of bilingual children is descendants of parents respectively from Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon and Somalia.⁵

1.2 *Private independent schools*

9. The private independent schools represent a wide range of different options as an alternative to the Folkeskole. The schools are founded on different views of life and values, e.g. schools with a specific pedagogical basis, and others (Danish School Association)⁶, including different religious orientations, such as independent schools based on the philosophy of Grundtvig or Kold (Independent Christian Schools) and independent Muslim schools. The private independent schools are characterized as being self-governing institutions. The schools are run by a parent-elected board which has overall responsibility for school performance. The educational content must meet two key demands. One requirement is that academic standards should match those of the Folkeskole, so that students have the same access to the upper secondary programme in the mainstream educational system as those who leave the Folkeskole. The second requirement is that the schools must prepare students to live in a society like the Danish with freedom and democracy.

10. In accordance with the legislation, it is the parents' responsibility to supervise the general school activities. The parents are obliged to choose a person with professional and pedagogical qualifications to supervise the teaching of the school. In addition, the Ministry of Education conducts a superior supervision of the quality of teaching. The Ministry of Education can also undertake an enhanced supervision of a school. A further supervision may conclude that the school is subject to exclusion from the scheme for public financial support for private primary and lower secondary schools. From 1st of August 2010, new rules of supervision are coming into force, and as something new schools can choose to implement self-evaluation as an alternative to the supervisor elected by the parents. Furthermore, the supervisor must have taken part in a special training programme focused on supervising education and must be certified by the Ministry of Education. The private primary and secondary schools receive government subsidies to the amount of 75 percent of the average expenditure in the Folkeskole, if the individual schools meet the conditions in the scheme for the provision of government grants. Thus, Denmark has a tradition of private alternatives to the Folkeskole, although they are significantly co-financed by the public sector.

11. The Danish independent boarding school for lower secondary students also belong to the term "private schools" and constitute typically an offer to young people aged between fourteen and

⁵ UNI-C Statistik og Analyse (2009): *Elevernes herkomst i grundskolen 2008/2009*

⁶ <http://www.friskoler.dk/index.php?id=395>

eighteen. The purpose of an independent boarding school for lower secondary students is to provide fellowship and teaching to students in preparation for a holistic human development and maturation as well as their general education and training. At the independent boarding school for lower secondary students, the students therefore both live and are taught at same location. The schools must meet the same requirements that apply to the private schools.

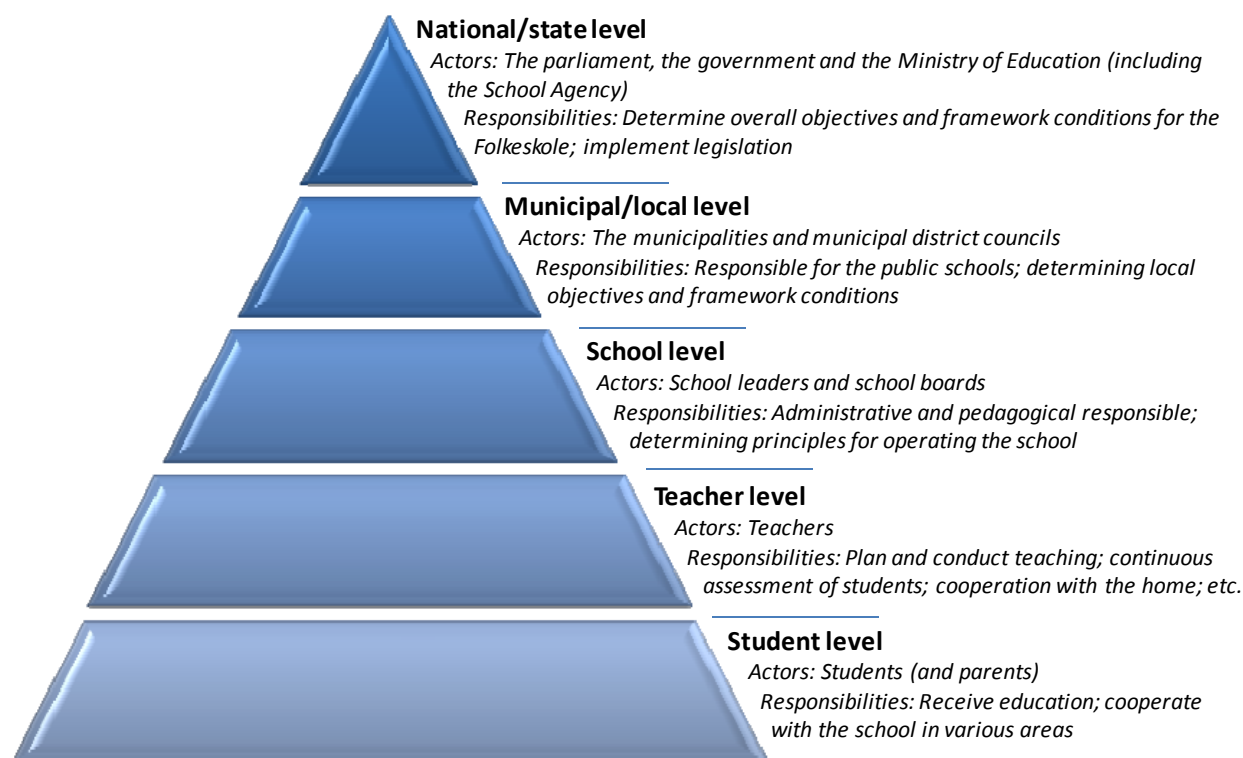
1.3 The Danish Folkeskole

12. As of 1st of January 2007, a comprehensive reform of the structure in the public sector was implemented in Denmark. The reform implements a structural reorganization in which the country's previous 274 municipalities were merged to 98, and 5 regions were established instead of 14 counties. In addition to the new territorial division of municipalities and regions, the reform contained, *inter alia*, a new division of tasks between state, regions and municipalities. The reform has led to changes in the school structure, e.g. the establishment of larger units and management communities.

1.3.1 The Management Model of the Folkeskole

13. The management and steering of the Folkeskole involves various levels and actors. The figure below provides an overview.

Figure 1: The Management Model of the Folkeskole



14. In Denmark, the Folkeskole is a *municipal responsibility* of the now 98 existing municipalities. The municipalities are therefore responsible for running the public schools and ensuring that all children in Denmark receive free education in the Folkeskole or get education that corresponds to this. Further, the municipal district council defines the goals and scope for the school activities and supervises the schools.

15. The municipal responsibility of the Folkeskole has recently been specified in part as a result of criticism stated in an evaluation of the municipalities' quality control of the Folkeskole (EVA,

2005). In response, it was stressed that the municipalities are required to maintain a high level of information regarding the conduct at the individual schools – in particular in terms of quality assurance. Subsequently, the Folkeskole Act was changed to strengthen the municipal responsibility for the public schools. This implies that the municipal district council, as a new feature, has to assess the academic performance of the schools in an annual quality report. If poor quality is identified at a public school, the municipal district council must present an action plan for the specific school (see chapters 3 and 4 for more on quality reports).

16. The municipal responsibility for the Folkeskole is regulated and managed by objectives set at *national level*. The Folkeskole Act and regulations issued by the Ministry of Education establish the scope and objectives for the execution of the municipal responsibility for the Folkeskole. Included are also a number of basic framework conditions such as Common Objectives for the individual subjects and courses, as well as requirements concerning school-leaving examinations, minimum hours of teaching and teacher qualifications. Decisions on recruitment of teachers are taken by the municipal district council, after consulting the school board.

17. Within this overall framework, the municipal district council establishes its own objectives and scope for the schools. The municipal district council can thereby determine local guidelines and launch special initiatives for local schools. The expenditures to the schools are managed by the municipality and the level of service, i.e. in terms of funding in the Folkeskole is also established locally. The level of service might differ significantly from one municipality to the other.

18. At each Folkeskole, a school board is established consisting of representatives of parents, teachers and other employees as well as the students. The school board imposes principles for school activities and performs other tasks defined in the Folkeskole Act. In this way, the Folkeskole works closely together with the parents and the students, who furthermore are involved via the student councils at the schools. It is defined in the Folkeskole Act that students and parents work together with the school to meet the overall objective of the Folkeskole (§ 2 paragraph 3).

19. At the individual schools, it is the principal who holds overall responsibility – both administratively and pedagogically. The principal is responsible for the school activities in relation to the school board and municipal district council. More specifically, the principal manages and distributes the work between the school staff; drafts proposals for curriculum as well as school principles (it is noted that nearly all municipalities and schools apply the guidelines for curricula issued by the Ministry of Education). Finally, he/she is responsible for the school budget and takes decisions concerning the students. It is established in the Folkeskole Act that the principal operates in cooperation with the employees (§ 45 paragraph 4). The principal's decisions concerning the students – within the objectives, scope and principles determined by the municipal district council and the local school board – cannot be tried by the municipal council. In that respect, it is noted that a new regulation on the promotion of good conduct in the Folkeskole was adopted in 2010.

1.3.2 *Public school expenditure in short*

20. In 2008, the overall level of expenditure in the public schools was 36.3 billion DKK and the costs per student are on average approximately 60,300 DKK a year. This amount covers the costs of the Folkeskole, special education in regional offers and municipal special offers as well as covering all students in the Folkeskole (Ramboll Management Consulting, 2009). Compared with other OECD countries, Denmark has a high level of expenditure at the primary and lower secondary school per student (OECD, 2009). Denmark has moreover a significant and growing amount of expenditures for special needs education in the Folkeskole, although an exact overview of the level of expenditure does not exist. The funding of public schools is granted through block grants – the financial support provided by the Danish government to the regions and municipalities.

1.3.3 The curriculum and subjects in the Folkeskole

21. The Folkeskole consists of 10 years of compulsory education and a 1-year voluntary 10th form. The pre-school class, or 0th form, has previously been optional, but from 1st of August 2009 it became a part of the basic primary and lower secondary education and is therefore compulsory. The purpose of the change has been to strengthen both the introductory period in the primary schools and to begin learning at an earlier stage. The compulsory education begins in August in the calendar year, where the child turns six years.

22. The overall objective of the Folkeskole is established in the Folkeskole Act. The Folkeskole has to provide students with professional skills, help students to develop as independent individuals and prepare them for the role as citizens in a democratic society. The teaching at form levels 1-9 will be given within three subject themes and includes for all students the subjects below (supplemented with optional subjects).

Table 3: The subjects in the Folkeskole within three course blocks

Humanistic subjects	Practical/musical subjects	Natural science
Danish	Physical education	Mathematics
English	Music	Science/Technique
Christianity knowledge	Art	Geography
History	Needlework, wood work, home economics	Biology
Social studies		Physics/chemistry

23. The purpose of the individual subject is determined in Common Objectives, which include purpose of the subject, objectives to be met by the end of compulsory education, form level objectives and guiding curriculum for all courses and subjects in the Folkeskole. Common Objectives are binding national objectives and specify the knowledge and skills of the students that the teaching should lead towards.

24. At form level 9, the students draft a mandatory project assignment. The project is assessed with a written statement and a grade. The scope for the project is set out in a regulation.

25. The Folkeskole is concluded with compulsory school-leaving examinations after form level 9, where students are tried in seven mandatory examinations consisting of five fixed exams and two for extraction. The examinations at the 10th form level are voluntary.

26. By the completion of Folkeskole, most students are enrolled in upper secondary education. Approximately 84 percent of the students from 2007 are expected to complete an upper secondary education⁷. The government has set the objective that 95 percent of a student cohort should complete an upper secondary education in 2015.

⁷ http://stm.dk/multimedia/Fakta_om_den_danske_folkeskole.pdf

2. THE FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Chapter 2 gives an overview of the framework for evaluation and assessment in the school system in Denmark. As it was the case in the 2004 OECD Review, the current CBR will focus on the public school system, i.e. the municipal primary and lower secondary school. With a view to ensure that the background report provides information on the Danish school system as a whole, accounts and perspectives on private independent schools will also be included.

Chapter 2 sets the scene for the subsequent chapters. It describes the overall framework for evaluation, the main actors and stakeholders and the responsibilities in this context. The chapter gives an account of the context for the increasing focus on evaluation and performance in the school system in recent years. The policy initiatives launched primarily from the national level are listed, but they are elaborated in more depth in the remainder of the report.

2.1 Current approach

2.1.1 The framework for evaluation and assessment

27. The 2004 OECD review identified a number of strengths and weaknesses with the Danish Folkeskole. The authors formulated 35 tangible recommendations as part of a strategy for improvement. One of the main conclusions of the review was that Denmark lacks an evaluation culture in the school system. It is further stated that the establishment of an evaluation culture probably is the single most important factor in the ambition to improve standards in Danish schools. The report also pointed out a number of additional weaknesses, e.g. deficiencies in relation to the evaluation of student performance, school self-appraisal and knowledge sharing of good practice (Undervisningsministeriet, 2004).

28. Since the publication of the OECD review, a number of significant initiatives have been launched at all levels in the school system to remedy the apparent lack of applied schemes for evaluation – tools, techniques and practice. These will be presented later in this chapter.

29. The management model of the Folkeskole (cf. chapter 1) sets the scene for the different components of evaluation and assessment in the Folkeskole. Evaluation and assessment is conceptualised at different levels matching the implementation chain from the state level over municipalities to schools.

30. **At state level**, the evaluation requirements in the Folkeskole Act are centred on the continuous assessment of students' learning outcomes (§13). Moreover, evaluation conditions (the existence of common objectives) and evaluation instruments are defined. **At local level**, supervision and monitoring of schools are as mentioned the responsibility of municipalities. Systematic and external evaluations **at school level** is a relatively new phenomena in Denmark (Skolestyrelsen, 2009), since local, internal and colloquial evaluation has been the usual practice in the Folkeskole (Dahler-Larsen, 2006). The tradition for systematic **teacher appraisal** is weak in Denmark, cf. chapter 5 for an elaboration. With regard to **student assessment**, it is directly linked to the evaluation requirements in the Folkeskole, although documentation has shown that local practice is characterised by major differences.

31. In general, it is still difficult to refer to the existence of a *coherent* framework for evaluation and assessment in the Danish school system. Several of the national initiatives within the area of evaluation (see section 2.3.1 in this chapter) have been launched with an aim to strengthen the coherence and consistency between the different components in the overall evaluation framework. One example is that test results are perceived to be used by teachers, students and parents in student plans, by school leaders and the school board as well as by municipalities in the quality reports.

Hence, test results should be used at different levels in the evaluation framework. Another example is the evaluation portal (www.evaluering.uvm.dk) which provides evaluation tools to be used by different actors at various levels. These initiatives are, *inter alia*, a response to former documentation calling for better interrelatedness between components in the framework for evaluation and assessment. In 2004, the Danish Evaluation Institute accentuated that the implementation chain from the municipal level over school leaders to teacher evaluation practice is vulnerable (EVA, 2004). The same argument was forwarded by the 2004 OECD Review (Undervisningsministeriet, 2004).

32. It is important to stress that a number of “evaluation arenas” do exist locally (KL, 2005; www.evaluering.uvm.dk). Formal and informal structures and procedures exist for evaluation, assessment and dialogue between local government, school leaders, teachers, students and parents. For example, it is a widespread practice in the Folkeskole that planning, learning and knowledge sharing takes place in *teacher teams* in the schools. Another example is regular meetings between teachers and parents, where the academic performance as well as the overall personal development of students are assessed. However, these evaluation arenas are typically internal school assessment practice and are rarely documented in a systematic manner (Dahler-Larsen, 2006).

33. The above only gives a very short summary of the components of evaluation and assessment in the Folkeskole. These will be elaborated in subsequent chapters.

Box 1: Evaluation and assessment in private independent schools

Supervision and evaluation requirements are not the same for the private schools compared to the public municipal schools. The private schools are subject to specific legislation, although it is required that the teaching provided in private schools meet the same standards as the municipal schools do, cf. chapter 1.

Supervision requirements

It is the responsibility of the parent group of the individual schools to supervise the provision of teaching, i.e. that teaching measures up with what is demanded in municipal schools. The specific character of the supervision is decided by the parent group. Moreover, the Ministry of Education (via the Agency for the Evaluation and Quality of Primary and Lower Secondary Education) carries out different forms of supervision. This supervision is typically targeted at schools which require certain attention. From January 2010, the agency will start a 3 year supervision round with focus on freedom and democracy.

Evaluation requirements

The private independent schools have to formulate and make public objectives for the teaching, including form level and end objectives. The private independent schools can choose to follow Common Objectives 2009 valid for the public schools. Moreover, it is required that the schools have to draft educational descriptions on how the students will reach the end objectives. The private independent schools have to evaluate the learning outcome of the individual student and accordingly inform the student and the parents. Individual student plans are not mandatory for private independent schools. The type of evaluation is decided by the schools, although grades cannot stand alone. Finally, the private independent schools are required to, on a regular basis, conduct an evaluation of the school education as a whole and draft a follow-up plan.

Sources: <http://www.skolestyrelsen.dk/frie%20skoler.aspx>,
<https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=125969>

2.1.2 Main objectives of the evaluation and assessment framework

34. The increasing focus on evaluation in the schools system in the past decade has one overall objective; that is to raise academic standards in the Folkeskole with a view to make knowledge and skills of Danish students comparable to the best in the world. This overall objective has been

stressed repeatedly in recent years from the political level. Establishing a framework for evaluation and assessment strives towards this overall objective. In addition, there are specific objectives and purposes affiliated to the different components and initiatives within the field of evaluation. These are presented at the end of chapter 2.

35. The strategic importance of evaluation and assessment activities has become more strictly articulated in the past decade. Evaluation tools have been launched at national level as crucial in order to improve the results of the Folkeskole.

36. The setting-up of both a School Council and a School Agency (cf. below) illustrates that the strategic importance of evaluation is considerable, since both institutions are specifically targeted at monitoring, evaluating, documenting and disseminating the results of the Folkeskole.

37. At municipal level, Local Government Denmark has carried out a project with 34 municipalities focusing, *inter alia*, on the development of evaluation culture. According to status reports from the project, some progress can be identified (stronger cooperation between district councils, administration and school leaders), but challenges are still ahead. At any rate, the project has put student performance and results on the local political agenda in the municipalities (KL, 2009).

2.1.3 Responsibilities within the framework for evaluation and assessment

38. The framework for evaluation and assessment in the school system in Denmark is characterised by the involvement of various actors with different responsibilities. In recent years, new actors have been established, and responsibilities have been redefined for others.

39. As mentioned, the Parliament (Folketinget) defines the overall objective(s) and framework conditions for the Folkeskole. The Minister of Education (and the Ministry of Education on behalf of the minister) implements current legislation and is responsible for issuing regulations as well as providing guidance and information. The Council for Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Lower Secondary Education (established in 2006) is an independent council and monitors the academic level in the Folkeskole and gives advice to the Minister of Education. The Council is led by a Chairmanship of school experts and the Council consists of 20 other members who represent the key stakeholders in the field. The Chairmanship publishes a yearly report and can commission evaluation and studies on specific issues.

40. The Agency for the Evaluation and Quality of Primary and Lower Secondary Education (the School Agency) was formed in 2006 under the Ministry of Education. The agency was established as a direct consequence of a recommendation in the 2004 OECD Review. The agency has the responsibility for a number of tasks related to the monitoring and evaluation of the Danish schools and can be seen as an institutional evidence of the increased focus on evaluation and assessment in the Danish school system. As mentioned in chapter 1, the municipalities are the “school owners”, and the district councils are responsible for setting the targets and supervising the schools in the municipality. The Danish Evaluation Institute is independent and works with evaluation and quality development from day care centres to higher education.

41. The use of dedicated experts to various aspects of school life is widespread at the Danish public schools (EVA, 2010). Typically, the experts are teachers who conduct their services as a part of their duties as a teacher. However, evaluation advisors are one type of experts which are used less frequently compared to other experts, e.g. IT advisors. No common practice exists at national level in relation to the use of evaluation advisors. It is decided by either the municipality or at the school. The decision to establish/train evaluation advisers is in several municipalities taken in the wake of the PISA results and the 2004 OECD review which both calls for a stronger evaluation culture. (Københavns Kommune, 2006). It should be noted, however, that a new kind of advisors – teaching advisors – was launched in negotiating the collective agreement (including working time agreement) in 2008. The tasks of the teaching advisors are described in an appendix to the collective agreement. It is stated that teaching advisors should be able to guide and coach colleagues and school

management on issues such as subjects, teaching, cooperation, evaluation and the choice of teaching material. Finally, advisors with various profiles are employed at municipal level.

42. Due to the limited use of evaluation advisors, scarce information exists about the number of advisors or specific a description of their tasks and roles. However, a study from the National Institute of Evaluation (EVA, 2009b) deals with this subject. The survey from the study shows that 8 percent of the schools in the study have evaluation advisors. The numbers at each school differ, but on average two evaluation advisors are employed at each school (ibid). There is no common practice concerning the education or training of the evaluation advisors. Some advisors do not get a specific further training, but most have some kind of further training within the field of evaluation and/or guidance. The training is mainly directed to the teachers, and their work is often embedded in the subject committees.

43. The job of the evaluation advisors is not specified in a written form, neither nationally nor locally (AKF, 2009). But the tasks are often to support the school effort with the development of their evaluation practices and evaluation culture. More specifically, the tasks can be to guide the management of the school, teams within a specific subject or form level teams or the individual teachers. In the EVA survey (2009), 3 out of 4 of the evaluation advisors to a high or to some degree undertake the following tasks: Take care of coordinating tasks in relation to the evaluation practice of the school; provide coaching on specific questions from the teachers; inform the school's teachers about new knowledge/new initiatives within the field, e.g. at pedagogical meetings. Also, tasks can encompass participation in meetings with teams and subject committees and implementation of guidance courses with single teachers to develop the teachers' evaluation practice. Only a minority agree that the advisors take part in the testing of the students.

44. In sum, it is not entirely clear what the job of the evaluation advisors is, neither for the advisors themselves nor for the teachers. This entails dilemmas for the advisor concerning of his or her role as well as uncertainty in relation to the use of the advisor (EVA, 2009b; AKF, 2009).

45. Concerning the cooperation with the school management, 9 out of 10 of the school leaders state that the advisors to a high or some degree participate in strategic development work at the school in relation to the school evaluation practice. Also, the task of keeping the management informed about the teachers' planning and of their performance of teaching in the classes is a typical task for the evaluation advisors.

46. Besides evaluation advisors, some municipalities have drafted guidance material for evaluation. The material is sent out to the schools with a view to inspire the school leaders and teachers to use good evaluation practice. However, there is no documentation on the use and impact of the use of these materials. As regards the effort at state level to develop expertise in the area of evaluation, please refer to later sections of this chapter.

2.1.4 Use of information technology in relation to evaluation and assessment

47. In general, Denmark is repeatedly placed at the top in relation to the use of information technology (IT). In 2009, Denmark was ranked as the leading IT nation in the world by World Economic Forum (World Economic Forum, 2009). The focus on IT in Denmark is equally prevalent in the Danish school system, although IT is not a subject in the Folkeskole. Instead, IT should be integrated in all the subjects where relevant. The past decade, Denmark has launched a number of action plans to spread IT in the public schools.

48. The current approach to evaluation in Folkeskole is, at an overall level, supported by the major investments mentioned above. In addition, innovative initiatives have been taken in particular in relation to evaluation. Since 2006, IT-based school-leaving examinations have been implemented in selected science subjects. Although, an electronic breakdown was a major setback in 2007 for the digitalisation of examinations, the IT method has been pursued both in 2008, 2009 and 2010 with success. Implementing IT-based examinations is part of the overall approach towards digitalisation

and cost efficiency is gained, since costs to correct the student exams are eliminated. Another major initiative is the national tests being fully based on IT – both the testing of students as such and the subsequent use of test results by the teacher.

2.2 Context

2.2.1 Key developments and trends in the area of evaluation and assessment

49. As mentioned, evaluation as a concept is mentioned explicitly in the Folkeskole Act in relation to the students' learning outcomes (§ 13). The Act states that a continuous assessment of students' learning outcomes should be an integrated part of the teaching process. This requirement was introduced by law in 1993 and was the result of a comprehensive reform of the Folkeskole. The philosophy behind introducing evaluation as a tool was that the teaching effort should be based on up-to-date knowledge on the performance and standards of the individual student. With this knowledge, the teacher can differentiate and target the teaching to the needs and potential of each of the students (www.evaluering.uvm.dk). The obligation to differentiate the teaching was equally included in the Folkeskole Act in 1993 (§ 18).

50. In 2002, a political agreement was signed with the objective to renew the Folkeskole. An important part of the agreement was the objective to raise teaching standards in core subjects. Moreover, the teaching in the Folkeskole is now targeted at national common objectives. Hence, even though objectives are crucial in an evaluation process, specific evaluation and assessment tools as such were not introduced in the agreement as means to improve school and student outcomes.

51. The 2002 political agreement does, however, mention that the performance of Danish students in international comparisons is unsatisfactory. In other words, the PISA surveys are at this point setting the agenda of the Danish school debate following the publication in 2001 of the first PISA study from 2000. The consecutive PISA studies as well as other documentation (Undervisningsministeriet, 2004; EVA, 2004) have incited a number of policy initiatives within the area of evaluation. They will be presented in the final section of this chapter.

52. The policy response to modest performance in the Folkeskole has to a large extent been national, although municipal initiatives have followed in considerable numbers (see for example Local Government Denmark, 2009). New evaluation requirements have been introduced by means of revising the overall national legislation (the Folkeskole Act). Hence, some argue that Denmark “*has moved towards greater centralisation*” (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009). The current evaluation and assessment policies initiated from the state level do to some extent mark a change in relation to the tradition of extensive local self-government of municipalities and the considerable level of school autonomy.

53. However, the political rationale has been that legislation was necessary to ensure that evaluation and assessment of school practice were comprehensive, efficient and timely. Specific requirements in relation to evaluation have been defined by law – both targeted at municipalities (the yearly quality reports) and at schools and teachers (national mandatory test, individual student plans and mandatory school leaving examinations). Furthermore, national objectives for teaching have been tightened; although mandatory national curricula do not exist in Denmark (only guidelines for curricula are drafted from national level). To reiterate the conclusion in the 2004 OECD Review, “*it is more accurate to say that the state has focused on new areas to intervene, i.e. quality assurance and monitoring of outcomes*. This conclusion is even more valid today after the launch of the policy initiatives.

54. The new approach to evaluation, assessment and performance management in general has resulted in debates among the key stakeholders around the Folkeskole. The recent policy initiatives were perceived by some stakeholders to be in opposition to established practices in the school system, cf. appendix A for an overview of stakeholder views. The 2008-2009 process with the aim of deregulating the Folkeskole did show willingness from the state to give more autonomy back to

the municipalities. The government did hold on to the evaluation instruments launched some years back but opened for the opportunity of more flexible methods to apply individual student plans and quality reports (Regeringen, 2009b).

55. To summarise, the 2006 revisions of the Folkeskole Act marked a shift towards a more centralised approach to evaluation and assessment as a political response to repeatedly modest results by Danish students in international comparisons. The government confirmed with its 2010 Government Platform that municipalities and schools will be given increased local freedom to plan the teaching in the Folkeskole in exchange for documentation of outcomes. The two-sided approach entails on the one hand an extension of local freedom, and on the other hand a demand for systematic evaluation and documentation of performance.

56. With regard to the internal school assessment processes (the school level), evidence from both the OECD and the Danish Evaluation Institute has indicated that the tradition for evaluation is weak. A report from the Danish Evaluation Institute highlighted that evaluation activities were scarce and not an integrated part of teaching and that many teachers were not qualified in applying evaluation techniques (EVA, 2004). Despite the criticism, evaluation does exist in the Folkeskole, and the use of various evaluation instruments has been widespread (e.g. local tests, logs, portfolios, observations, planning etc.).

57. Another report from the Danish Evaluation Institute disclosed that the municipal supervision with the public schools was not optimal to the desired level indicated in the legislation in the sense that municipalities do not collect data on school performance in a systematic and rigour manner, and that many do not follow-up in relation to schools with poor results (EVA, 2005).

58. The Danish Evaluation Institute has published status reports on experiences with the implementation of two of the new instruments, i.e. municipal quality reports and the individual student plans. With regard to the first, the report shows that the municipalities work actively with the quality reports, and that they have adopted quality reports as an instrument. However, a number of challenges are still prevalent, e.g. how to follow-up on results (EVA, 2009a). The status report on individual student plans clearly indicates that teachers as well as parents are happy about the new instrument. However, it is also stated that the individual student plans have not yet had any effect on teacher practice (related to continuous evaluation of student performance).

59. The above documentation illuminates that major challenges in relation to making evaluation a more pronounced and integrated part of the school system in Denmark still prevail. However, a full overview of evaluation activities anno 2010 does not exist, and it is not possible to conclude, whether or not the evaluation tradition has become stronger in the Danish school system in recent years.

60. It should be mentioned that the identified weaknesses related to the evaluation of internal school processes are not the equivalent to the absence of evaluation activities in the Danish education system. The Danish Evaluation Institute has for more than a decade carried out external evaluations and studies of the Danish education system, including a number of highly profiled evaluations of the primary and lower secondary education system setting new agendas for the debate in this domain. The Institute – or EVA – is an independent state institution and can initiate evaluations or carry out evaluations and studies on behalf of external claimants. With the setting-up of the School Council in 2006 (see below), the Council Chairmanship was given the competence to decide the evaluations to be carried out in the area of the Folkeskole.

2.2.2 *Evaluation and assessment policies in the public sector*

61. The increasing focus on evaluation and assessment in the school system is a part of a general trend in the public sector. It is evident that evaluation is a very common exercise in the political-administrative environment in Denmark. The field of evaluation is at the same time very broad and

encompasses a number of methodologies, actors and areas of utilisation. However, systematic studies on evaluation practice in Denmark are scarce (Foss Hansen, 2003).

62. In 2005, the Danish Rigsrevision (Audit of the State Accounts) published a memorandum on the state use of evaluations. It concluded that the quality of the evaluations was satisfactory; that evaluations typically have an effect on administrative and political decisions; and that they contribute to qualify existing knowledge. The memorandum also stated that evaluations are not a well-defined management tool and that common guidelines would be preferable (Rigsrevisionen, 2005).

63. The latter recommendation from the Audit of the State Accounts touches upon the fact that the evaluation discipline has been highly multi-dimensional in Denmark. This implies that practices and approaches vary considerably from policy area to policy area. Even though evaluation as such has not explicitly been part of the various modernisation programmes initiated by the Ministry of Finance (Finansministeriet, 2007), evaluation can to some extent be considered as part of the public reform efforts inspired by New Public Management.

64. The evaluation and assessment discipline is constantly redefining itself – in theory and in practice. In Denmark – and internationally – evaluation is increasingly inspired and challenged by other, and often complementary, approaches. One trend is the ambition to manage the public sector by focusing on the outcomes of public interventions. This approach is often labelled performance management. Another trend is the increasing demand for evidence, including evidence-based policy making. Both the performance management and evidence trends challenge the evaluation discipline (AKF, 2007), but they all relate to the same objective in terms of providing timely and systematic information to employees, managers, policy-makers and the public.

2.3 Initiatives and implementation

2.3.1 Policy initiatives in relation to the framework for evaluation and assessment

65. The 2004 OECD Review has to a very high extent set the agenda for school development in Denmark in recent years. The apparent lack of evaluation and consequently documentation on school performance has spurred a vast number of initiatives to improve existing evaluation and assessment practices. The table below contains an overview of the main initiatives related to evaluation and assessment emanating from the state level⁸. With one exception, only initiatives launched after 2004 are included.

⁸ Only initiatives with specific relevance for the framework for evaluation and assessment are included.

Table 4: Policy initiatives to improve evaluation and assessment

Initiative	Main content
Continuous assessment of students' learning outcomes (1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of a legal requirement to continuously assess the students' learning outcomes of the teaching (§ 13 in the Folkeskole Act)
Common Objectives (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of binding national objectives (form level objectives and end objectives) for all school subjects
Revision of the Folkeskole Act (2006 – Law no. 170)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the strengthening of academic standards • Introduction of a mandatory written student plan for all students at all form levels. The student plan should improve student outcomes of teaching; strengthen the ongoing assessment of student performance; and function as a tool in the cooperation between school and home • Provision on the publication of the country-wide results of the national tests (performance profile) • Making explicit the municipal councils' responsibility for the Folkeskole by, <i>inter alia</i>, introducing mandatory quality reports to be drafted and published by each municipality • Set-up of the Council for Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Lower Secondary Education (the School Council)
Revision of the Folkeskole Act (2006 – Law no. 313)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making explicit in the Act that the continuous assessment of students' learning outcomes should incorporate the binding Common Objectives • Introduction of national testing to strengthen the on-going evaluation of students. National tests should be developed in selected subjects and at different levels in the Folkeskole • Introduction of a national evaluation portal with inspiration and guidance material aimed at particularly teachers but also other school actors • Changing the status of school-leaving examinations into mandatory exams at form level 9.
Establishment of the School Agency (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Agency for the Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Lower Secondary Education (the School Agency) was set up under the Ministry of Education in September 2006. The objective of the Agency is to monitor and evaluate developments in the quality of the primary and lower secondary school.
Integration of student plan and education plan (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the effort to simplify the administrative work for schools, the Folkeskole Act was changed by integrating student and education plans in one plan at form levels 8 and 9.

Source: OECD, 2008, www.uvm.dk and www.evaluering.uvm.dk.

66. The above policy initiatives will be elaborated in the subsequent chapters of the CBR.

67. Local Government Denmark encouraged in 2005 the municipalities to take up the challenge of implementing an evaluation culture in the Folkeskole (KL, 2005). Subsequently, the association has, as mentioned, in recent years collaborated with 34 municipalities to strengthen the Folkeskole and increase students' learning outcomes. One out of three topic areas in the project has been evaluation culture. It is likely that the "school owners" (i.e. the municipalities) have equally introduced initiatives to strengthen evaluation practice in their schools. Examples are in the municipalities of

Aarhus, Copenhagen, Horsens, Elsinore, Vejle and others. However, no systematic overview of municipal initiatives exists.

2.3.2 Stakeholder views on evaluation and assessment policies

68. The key stakeholder groups related to the Folkeskole are numerous. They represent the municipalities (Local Government Denmark), the teachers (Danish Union of Teachers), the school leaders/principals (The Danish Head Teachers Union), the parents (The National Parents Association), the students (Danish Students) and the BKF (the association for municipal management in the area of schools). Moreover, a number of associations represent the interest of the independent (private) primary schools in Denmark. Finally, education authorities, researchers and policy makers are involved in the ongoing discussion on the development of the Danish school.

69. As regards stakeholder views, it is important to note that stakeholders were in consensus in relation to the main challenges outlined in the 2004 OECD Review. First of all, that there was a need to strengthen academic standards in the Folkeskole. Secondly, the stakeholders agreed on the necessity of strengthening the continuous assessment of student performance⁹. Hence, it is fair to say that stakeholders were largely in agreement on the “diagnosis” of the Folkeskole made by the review panel in 2004.

70. On the contrary, some stakeholders have not agreed on all of the policy options opted for in the years after the OECD Review. First of all, stakeholders opposed the establishment of a monitoring agency in the Ministry of Education, since central monitoring from the state level was considered to be in breach with the overall division of responsibilities set out in the Folkeskole Act. Moreover, the specific evaluation and assessment tools introduced in 2006 (i.e. municipality quality reports, individual student plans and national tests) have been contested by several stakeholder groups¹⁰. For an overview of stakeholder views, please refer to appendix A.

71. Apart from the diagnosis of the challenges of the Folkeskole, stakeholders also agreed on some of the initiatives following the OECD Review. The need for common standards at different form levels in the subjects is endorsed by all stakeholders, and the development of an evaluation tool box is supported. Finally, the stakeholders agree that benchmarking of test results should not be pursued.

72. In sum, there has been consensus on some policy initiatives taken in recent years in the field of evaluation and assessment. On the other hand, it has been clear that a number of key stakeholders have jeopardized some and opposed several of the new and mandatory instruments to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation capacity at state level.

73. In general, there is a tradition for involvement of the relevant interest group in the development of the primary and lower secondary school in Denmark. The Chairmanship of the School Council is currently the most prominent platform for involvement and dialogue in relation to evaluation and assessment policies. These above mentioned organisations are all represented in the School Council, see earlier in this chapter.

74. Numerous other examples can be mentioned as platforms for promoting dialogue and common action among main stakeholders:

- A reference group was set up to follow the project “*Strengthening of the evaluation culture in the Folkeskole*”. The reference group with the parties of the Folkeskole has met on a regular basis to discuss the project, including the development of the national tests.

⁹ The Folkeskole’s Response to the OECD Recommendations – Feedback to the Minister of Education from the Parties of the Folkeskole (<http://dlf.org/files/DLF/V1%20taler%20din%20sag/En%20bedre%20skole/folkeskolensvarp%C3%A5oeed.pdf>)

¹⁰ Ibid.

- In parallel, the parties of the Folkeskole were recently involved in a committee established by the minister of education with the aim to deregulate the Folkeskole.
- In 2007-2008, the Danish Union of Teachers and the Ministry of Education collaborated on a project called The School of the Month. On a monthly basis, a school was celebrated for remarkable results (e.g. evaluation efforts). The project has since been pursued under the heading “the good example of the month” (www.skolestyrelsen.dk).
- The Local Government Denmark project “Partnership on the Folkeskole”, involving 34 municipalities, has been a platform for cooperation and reflexion in between municipalities (http://www.kl.dk/ImageVault/Images/id_40353/ImageVaultHandler.aspx).
- The School Agency in collaboration with the Danish Evaluation Institute carry out “inspirational seminars” for teachers and resource persons with a view to inspire schools on how to work with evaluation.
- The School Agency have all major stakeholders represented in focus groups, which are being summoned on a regular basis to provide input on different initiatives in relation to the strengthening of the evaluation culture in the Folkeskole.
- The parties of the Folkeskole launch on a regular basis common actions and/or common proposals related to topics in the Folkeskole, e.g. a very recent paper with the title Common knowledge – Common action.
- The School Council works on collecting and disseminating the most important research results to provide input to the policy process on school development.

2.4 Perspectives

75. The introduction of an evaluation and assessment framework encompassing the entire school system in Denmark is an ambitious task. Even though evaluation requirements have been included in the legislation since 1993, the tradition of evaluation *in practice* is flawed, cf. above. Hence, the challenges in implementing evaluation and assessment strategies are considerable. Below, some of the difficulties related to implementing evaluation and assessment strategies are described, as they have been seen in Denmark.

76. Earlier in this chapter, it was highlighted that gaps do exist in the implementation chain of the Folkeskole. Requirements, decisions and strategies decided at national or municipal level are not always implemented at schools or in class rooms to a desired level. The reasons for these gaps can be many: Lack of explicit information and guidance; professional disagreement on requirements; lack of evaluation capacity and competences; or a lack of enforcement from the educational authorities. It is not possible to point out the decisive causes for implementation deficiencies in the area of evaluation. But it can be illustrative to give examples of the main difficulties experienced in Denmark.

77. First of all, the lack of overall consensus on some of the initiatives has created implementation challenges. The launch of individual student plans did result in both uncertainties on implementation as well as sheer resistance from teachers to use the new instrument (cf. articles at www.folkeskolen.dk). However, reports from the Danish Evaluation Institute have documented that teachers in general are positive to the use of the plans, although it is a challenge for them to make the plans an integrated part of teacher practice (EVA, 2008).

78. A second example is the ambitious project to launch a national test system based on adaptive i-based tests in selected subjects. The development has been more challenging than expected, and the

timetable has been revised a number of times. Hence, the initial political ambitions of a fast introduction of the tests were not met. The 10 tests have now been launched in February 2010.

79. As regards the use of evaluation results, it is difficult to generalise whether or not evaluation results are used throughout the Danish school system. As an example, quality reports are drafted in all municipalities and contain considerable monitoring and evaluation data. However, a set of supporting conditions need to be in place (e.g. clear division of roles and room for dialogue) in order for using quality reports as an instrument for developing quality (EVA, 2009b). Moreover, the Danish results of the TALIS study showed that school leaders do not use rigour evidence in the evaluation of their teachers. Finally, the lack of an evaluation culture in general can be a major barrier in relation to the use of evaluation results.

80. In addition, there are reasons to believe that the evaluation capacity in the Danish school system still needs to be further developed, cf. chapter 3. The School Agency is working towards the overall goal of strengthening the evaluation culture, and activities aimed at information and development of competencies within evaluation are carried out, e.g. in collaboration with other evaluation actors. Other actors – teaching institutions, the Danish Evaluation Institute, researchers etc. strive with their projects and publications to enhance the evaluation capacity.

81. The Chairmanship of the School Council presents in its yearly report an overview of the status of working with evaluation and quality development (available at www.skoleraadet.dk).

82. In sum, it is apparent that a coherent and efficient evaluation and assessment framework is not established and implemented overnight. A thorough revision of habitual thinking in the professional community probably demand a certain time of incubation to reach practice – let alone to be measurable in school performance. A number of significant milestones have been passed in relation to introducing evaluation tools in the Danish school system. The municipal quality reports have been published in its 3rd generation and are used by municipalities to monitor and develop local school systems. The individual student plans are used, and teachers and parents share a positive attitude to the use. However, major setbacks have characterised the ambition to introduce nation-wide mandatory tests. The timetable has, as mentioned been revised a number of times, but the test system is now working in full scale in 2010. The School Council has pointed out these challenges, but in its latest report the chairmanship assesses that the evaluation culture has been strengthened in recent years.

83. The PISA studies have repeatedly disclosed that the performance of Danish students in the Folkeskole is below the national ambition. The Danish students perform in PISA 2006 by average in reading literacy and in science, and above average in math. Give the national priority of primary and lower secondary education this is far from satisfactory. Other OECD countries display far better results in the PISA studies. Even though the latest PISA study (published in 2007) did show some progress in science, the policy response remains that Danish student performance do not match the high standards which are necessary for future growth and prosperity.

84. The national policy priorities in the area of evaluation and assessment are to a very large extent related to the before mentioned weaknesses of the Folkeskole documented in the PISA studies. The policy response has been that stronger and more efficient evaluation efforts could be the instrument to fulfil the overall ambition of providing students in the Folkeskole with knowledge and skills that can match the best in the world. The 2006 government Strategy for Denmark in the Global Economy (Regeringen, 2006) stated that the students in the Folkeskole shall be among the best in the world within the four fundamental subjects: Reading, Mathematics, Science and English. This commitment has very recently been underlined in the new Governmental Platform, where it is stated that Danish school children should reach top 5 internationally by 2020 (Regeringen, 2010).

85. The evidence on unsatisfactory disappointing results has not been limited to knowledge and skills. The data have equally been convincing within the area of evaluation and assessment. Reports from the Danish Evaluation Institute showed that the continuous evaluation of student performance

– as required in the Folkeskole Act – suffered from a number of inadequacies, and the 2004 OECD Review documented that a strong evaluation culture was absent in the Folkeskole. Hence, it has been highlighted from the political level that it is a priority *to strengthen the evaluation culture* as a mean to reach the ultimate goal: To raise the academic and professional standards in the Folkeskole.

3. SYSTEM EVALUATION

Chapter 3 considers processes related to the evaluation and assessment of the Danish school system as a whole. System evaluation is interpreted to be evaluation at state level with a view to assess performance of the overall school system. The chapter describes how system evaluation has become more pronounced in the past decade – both in terms of the introduction of system wide evaluation tools and the emergence of new actors specifically working with evaluation. The chapter presents the different objectives related to system evaluation and outlines the division of responsibilities in the evaluation system. An overview of instruments applied for system evaluation is provided, including common objectives for the Folkeskole, national tests, school-leaving examinations and parent surveys.

References will be made to chapter 2 to avoid duplication of text, since descriptions of the evaluation and assessment framework are equally relevant when referring to the evaluation system.

3.1 Current practices

3.1.1 Overall framework for system evaluation

86. Ad hoc evaluations and evaluations of school development projects have been carried out for decades (Foss Hansen, 2003). Nevertheless, the focus on *system evaluation* has become more pronounced in the recent years, and particularly after the publication of the first PISA results and the 2004 OECD Review. Not only have separate evaluations been commissioned (e.g. the 2005 policy evaluation of the renewal of the Folkeskole Act from 2002, specific evaluations in the area of bilingual children etc.), but a more strategic approach to evaluation and monitoring at a system level has emerged. Hence, it has become clear that the interest in and demand for data on overall school system performance has increased in recent years.

87. The organisational “proof” of the increased focus on system evaluation is the establishment of the Agency for the Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Lower Secondary Education (the School Agency). The Agency is – as mentioned in chapter 2 – a direct response to a recommendation in the 2004 OECD Review. The Agency is a specialised unit under the Ministry of Education working specifically with monitoring, evaluation and quality development from a system perspective.

88. As regards evaluation data, the system perspective to evaluation has equally become more prominent. First of all, the development and launch of 10 mandatory tests should result in so-called national performance profiles for each test presenting a country average in order for the schools to compare with the national result. It should be stressed that the performance profiles are not yet available, since the national tests have been launched only in 2010. Secondly, average grades from school-leaving examinations at school level (both public and private) have for a number of years been made public by the Ministry of Education. It has been recommended that the average grades from school-leaving examinations are adjusted for socio-economic variables to obtain a more accurate measurement of the school effect on student performance (Skolerådet, 2008). A third example is the international comparisons by means of the PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS studies in the sense that the studies provide nation-wide data on student performance in core subjects in the Folkeskole. Finally, the regulation concerning the use of municipal quality reports prescribes a detailed list on the indicators that should be applied in the municipal quality reports. The indicators comprise input, process and result indicators, and although data are provided at a municipal (and school) level, the legislation specifically prescribes the data to be produced. The municipal data are

not aggregated to the national level, but they are used by the School Agency in relation to the agency task of monitoring and supervising the quality of the school system as a whole.

89. In addition to the above, the government has since 2006 published a Competitiveness Report. The report is a comprehensive view of Denmark's ability to compete on the global markets. One of the themes in the report is primary and lower secondary education stating Denmark's position on key indicators (www.konkurrenceevne.dk, summary available in English). Also, a so-called documentation project for the Folkeskole has been implemented with the participation of a number of ministries and Local Government Denmark. The aim of the project was to map out existing data streams in the area of the Folkeskole and to select a limited amount of indicators to be used in the future monitoring of the Folkeskole at system level. Proposed effect/result indicators were grades from school-leaving examinations, grades in the mandatory project assignment (9th and 10th form levels), share of students starting and completing upper secondary education and the performance profile from the national tests.

90. Also, evaluation and research activities on topics related to the school system have been quite comprehensive in recent years. Consultants, researchers and in particular the Danish Evaluation Institute have been very active in publishing reports, studies and evaluations on various topics related the Danish School system. Specific areas of interest have been the bilingual children, special needs education, school leadership, and others. The Council for Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Lower Secondary Education has commissioned a number of studies on specific topics to be used in the yearly reports on the progress of evaluation and quality development (cf. the literature list in the latest report, Skolerådet, 2010).

91. Consequently, it is fair to say that the demand for system evaluation – and system evaluation data – is growing stronger in Denmark, although system evaluation is still less developed than in some other countries. The approach is described in the very recent government platform (Regeringen, 2010), cf. chapter 2. Under the heading “openness on results”, the government will extend more local freedom in exchange for documentation of school results. Specifically, the government wants to make results from national tests public and to develop supplementary indicators to document the well-being and all-rounded development of students. Hence, the approach can be characterised as a balance between leaving responsibility with the local authorities and schools, and at the same time holding municipalities and schools accountable through the provision of available performance data.

92. The objectives – or motives – of evaluating the school system as a whole are numerous. An often used argumentation for evaluation – and consequently better results – is that Denmark's expenditure on the Folkeskole is relatively high compared to other countries. Combined with the unsatisfactory results in PISA surveys, it is argued that Denmark should perform among the best. The approach is “value for money”, and that system evaluation is a tool to secure *accountability* – a legitimate objective in a democratic society (Vedung, 1998; Dahler-Larsen, 2006).

93. Another objective of system evaluation was stressed by the government in the Strategy for Denmark in the Global Economy (Regeringen, 2006). The section on the Folkeskole states that tests and evaluations should be instruments to target the teaching in order for every student to be academically challenged. Hence, the objective is to a larger extent *development of practice*. This argument has been highlighted in the process of developing and launching the mandatory tests, since the tests are aimed at providing information to the teachers, so that they are able to target and differentiate teaching at the individual student. The tests are perceived as a pedagogical tool for the teacher, although some stakeholders (the Danish Union of Teachers) contest this argument.

94. A third objective from the system perspective is *learning* – and more specifically learning from good practice. It has often been forwarded by the former minister of education Bertel Haarder that evaluation should contribute to knowledge sharing in the school system as a whole, since the good examples and solutions are already been developed (Politiken, 2007). This objective – to document “what works” – was equally made explicit when the School Council was launched.

95. A final objective is *documentation* in itself. In the preparatory work for the 2006 revisions of the Folkeskole Act, the general lack of documentation on the efforts and results of the Folkeskole was brought forward as a cardinal issue. In consequence, it is an objective to strengthen the evaluation culture in the system as a whole, e.g. by documenting practice and results in writing.

96. With the latest initiatives, it is clear that the strategic importance of system evaluation is high; since system evaluation data tend to spur a nation-wide discussion on the school system affecting school development at all levels in the evaluation framework. Also, since system evaluation initiatives have largely been mandatory and determined by law, it is logical that the penetration of initiatives is considerable.

3.1.2 Responsibilities for system evaluation

97. The overall responsibility for system evaluation, including the provision of evaluation data, is placed with the Ministry of Education. The department in the ministry working with primary and lower secondary education commissions studies and evaluations on specific topics, but is increasingly become the responsibility of the School Agency to deliver system data on the school system. One of the tasks of the agency is “*to contribute to documenting and analysing the results of the Folkeskole*” (www.skolestyrelsen.dk). Hence, the School Agency is responsible for the implementation of the PISA and TALIS studies, and the agency is also in charge of the operation of the national tests and the school-leaving examinations. Furthermore, the agency monitors the municipalities’ quality assurance/supervision of the schools and conducts supervisions of private independent schools. Finally, the agency commissions separate evaluations, e.g. evaluations of nation-wide pilot projects (currently Project School Development).

98. The Council for Evaluation and Quality Development of Primary and Lower Secondary Education is independent and does not hold a responsibility as a public authority. The Council is determined by law (the Folkeskole Act), and its task is to follow, assess and guide the minister of education on the academic standard and pedagogical development in the Folkeskole. The chairmanship of the School Council has the competence to decide the evaluations that the Danish Evaluation Institute should carry out. The Chairmanship can also commission evaluations and studies on specific issues to other parties.

99. The Danish Evaluation Institute has, as mentioned in chapter 2, worked since 1999 with conducting independent evaluations and studies of the Danish Education System. The evaluations are carried out on the own initiative the institute (based on yearly actions plans) and on behalf of external clients. The Danish Evaluation Institute has its own legal basis. In 2006, the Folkeskole Act was changed giving the School Council the competence and resources to decide the evaluations that the Danish Evaluation Institute should carry out in the area of the Folkeskole.

100. The UNI-C – an agency under the Ministry of Education – is the competence centre in the ministry for statistics and analysis. This implies that UNI-C provides a number of important statistical products within the area of education and research. As regards the primary and lower secondary education, UNI-C provides – via the ministry of education website – statistics related to schools, teachers and students, including average grades, number of teaching hours, data on the enrolment in upper secondary education etc.

3.1.3 Competencies to evaluate the school system

101. As regards competencies, the actors are largely the same as accounted for above. The Ministry of Education, the School Agency and the School Council (through its secretariat in the School Agency) are the main tendering authorities/parties at system level. They each have responsibilities in relation to system evaluation. As an educational authority, the School Agency documents, monitors and evaluates performance. Further, it supervises the municipal quality assurance of the Folkeskole. The Danish Evaluation Institute is not an authority but as mentioned an independent organisation under the Ministry of Education. The institute is governed by means of a yearly result contract.

Finally, researches throughout Denmark are working with evaluating and assessing the performance of the school system. A major research institution is the Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, but other universities and university colleges are conducting research and development on school topics.

102. One could argue that the development of an evaluation culture in the Danish school system – as it has been forwarded politically – is closely related to developing *evaluation capacity*. Evaluation capacity is a broader concept than evaluation culture, as it reflects not only norms and habits but also processes, structures, technologies, objectives and not least human capital/competencies (Dahler-Larsen, 2006; Rambøll Management Consulting, 2008).

103. There are several processes in Denmark to support the development of expertise and competencies in system level evaluation. One process is, of course, the continuous development of competencies with the relevant authorities and agencies. The Danish Evaluation Institute describes in its strategy for 2009-2011 an ambition to be agenda-setting as a knowledge centre within evaluation and quality. The institute also aims at developing new methods to evaluation and quality assurance (www.eva.dk). Furthermore, networks of researchers are joining forces to target research on some of the most pressing issues related to the Folkeskole. An example is the establishment of a new Center for Strategic Educational Research supported with 40.5 million DKK by the state. Finally, different networks of professionals within evaluation are on a regular basis focusing on system level evaluation in the educational area. The largest evaluation network in Denmark is the Danish Evaluation Society (www.danskevalueringsselskab.dk).

104. In sum, it is not possible in an accurate manner to assess the evaluation capacity (including competencies) at system level in relation to evaluating the school system. At any rate, it is a fact that Denmark since the latest OECD Review has mobilised organisations and resources as well as introduced tools with a view to increase the capacity to evaluate the school system.

105. As referred to earlier, it is acknowledged that it will take some time for the new system-level evaluation instruments – and their results – to become an integrated part of local school system. In that respect, it is a considerable challenge to ensure that evaluation results at system level are transferred and applied locally.

106. Using the introduction of mandatory national tests as an example, the School Agency has worked strategically with informing municipalities, schools and teachers. Repeated information roundtrips have been implemented, and the interest from the target groups has been high. A considerable focus has been put on information and guidance in relation to the follow-up of the tests (targeted at the teacher)¹¹. It is crucial for the success of the national tests that the teachers understand the potential of using the test results in practice. Therefore, resources have been spent by the School Agency staff to disseminate knowledge of not only the tests as such, but in particular the potential use of and follow-up to the test. Methodologies used have been pamphlets, seminars, campaigning and information at the national evaluation portal, cf. below.

107. The national evaluation portal www.evaluering.uvm.dk is a comprehensive website tool launched in the beginning of 2007. The perspective is not necessarily that the portal is the information site for disseminating system-level evaluation results, but rather that the portal can contribute to developing evaluation capacity and competencies with municipalities, teachers, school leaders and parents. The portal was developed as part of the project “*Strengthening of the evaluation culture in the Folkeskole*”. It contains a very large amount of articles on evaluation in general, evaluation tools and tools for the individual subjects in the Folkeskole.

¹¹ Although the test results are individual for the student and not strictly system-level evaluation results, it is worth including, since the national tests are *initiated* from the state level. Thus, it is interesting to examine, if test results are actually used by school agents.

108. In addition to the above, it can briefly be stated that system-level evaluation results (whether they are recurring or ad hoc) are presented at relevant websites, e.g. www.uvm.dk, www.evaluering.uvm.dk, www.skoleraadet.dk, etc.

109. Although the coherence of the evaluation framework is a challenge in Denmark (cf. chapter 2), system evaluation is closely linked to evaluation at other levels in the school system. First of all, crucial system evaluation data is collected at student level. This is the case for data from the PISA studies and the national tests. As regards the latter, test results are only to be used by the teachers locally, although results are aggregated into country averages (performance profiles). The publication of national average results is to serve as a reference point for teachers, school leaders and municipalities in order for them to compare test results to a national average. At the same time, the performance profiles will function as an indicator for the development of the nation-wide academic level. Also, statistical data are collected at school, teacher and student level, but as regards performance to a very limited extent. One important exception is the collection of data on grades from school-leaving examinations. This task is handled by UNI-C by means of reporting from the schools.

110. The linkage between system evaluation and evaluations/assessments carried out at school and teacher level is generally known to be less pronounced – except from the linkage described above with regard to the national tests. With the exception of the state supervision with private individual schools, evaluations of public school performance are primarily the responsibilities of municipalities, whereas teacher appraisal typically is handled within the school through parents, colleagues and school leaders. The TALIS survey does, however, provide system data at school and teacher level. TALIS will be described in the relevant chapters.

111. Different agencies produce a vast amount of data on the Folkeskole on a regular basis. Statistics on expenditure, students, schools, demography etc. are published, but the major part has the character of input or process data. In this section, only procedures relevant for producing performance or result data are included.

3.1.4 Procedures used in system evaluation

112. As outlined in chapter 2, the school evaluation instruments introduced in Denmark in recent years have by large taken their point of departure at the national system level. Performance criteria and standards vary from instrument to instrument. The instruments are presented in the box below.

Box 2: Instruments applied for system evaluation

National instruments

The most important system-wide reference standards for evaluation in the Folkeskole are the *Common Objectives*. As mentioned in chapter 2, binding national objectives of the subjects in the Folkeskole were introduced by law in 2003. The national objectives comprise form level objectives as well as end objectives. In 2006, it was further specified that the continuous assessment of student performance should reflect the form level and end objectives of the subjects. Hence, the objectives set out the common pointers for the teaching in the Folkeskole. A national curriculum does not exist in Denmark, but guidelines for curricula and teachings plans are provided nationally.

School-leaving examinations are determined by law and are to be carried out at the end of form levels 9 and 10, cf. chapter 1. The examinations became mandatory at form level 9 in 2006 when the Folkeskole Act was revised. This change was part of the ambition to strengthen the evaluation culture and in particular to provide the students a solid academic basis when leaving school and to ensure the students right to have documentation of 9 years of school. The school-leaving examinations are summative in the sense that it is assessed if the students have academic standards at a level equivalent to the common end objectives. The examinations are developed nationally (by the School Agency) and are also assessed centrally. Average grades are made public at school

level, cf. above. Grades are given on the basis of a 7-point scale, which was recently introduced to make the Danish grading system compatible with international practice.

National testing is a new evaluation instrument, cf. the description earlier in this chapter and in chapter 2. The national tests are mandatory and were launched full-scale in February 2010. The tests are adaptive and it-based. The tests are developed in the following subjects: Reading (2nd, 4th, 6th and 8th form levels), mathematics (3rd and 6th form levels), English (7th form level), biology (8th form level), physics/chemistry (8th form level) and geography (8th form level). The tests are introduced as an instrument to strengthen the ability of teachers, parents and students to assess the acquirement of skills and knowledge in the subjects. Hence, the tests are primarily a pedagogical tool for the teacher, but system level evaluation data will – as mentioned – be produced in the form of average results at national level (a national benchmark). The tests only test areas within the subject suitable for testing on an internet platform. Each test comprises test items in different profile areas of the subject.

Surveys on parents' views with the school have traditionally not been carried out at national level, although some municipalities are using this instrument to get input from parents. However, as part of the Danish Quality Reform for the public sector, a comprehensive pilot project is currently being implemented involving large-scale parents surveys in the area of the Folkeskole. The pilot project involves five municipalities, and the surveys are targeted at involving all parents in the respective municipalities. The concept should enable benchmarking of user satisfaction within municipalities and between municipalities. It has to be decided whether or not the concept will be implemented at national level.

International instruments

OECD studies, surveys and reviews:

Denmark has since the first study in 2000 been participating in the *PISA studies*. As mentioned in chapter 2, the PISA results of Denmark have since the first study been assessed to be unsatisfactory, in particular as regards reading and science.

Improving School Leadership – Policy and Practice (2008): This activity aims to support policy development by providing in-depth analyses of different approaches to school leadership. The study concludes that effective school leadership is essential to improve teaching and learning in schools, and to connect schools with the surrounding community. Inside the school, management helps to improve education by creating the framework and environment for learning. Outside the school, management must connect and adapt the school to the community. School management is therefore a link between the school's internal quality and external reforms that intend to develop quality.

TALIS (The Teaching and Learning International Survey) is the first international survey to focus on the learning environment and the working conditions of teachers in schools. TALIS offers an opportunity for teachers and school principals to give their input into education analysis and policy development in some key policy areas. The first TALIS-survey was published in June 2009. (Skolestyrelsen, 2009). The TALIS study showed that systematic school evaluation is a relatively new dimension in the overall evaluation and assessment framework in Denmark, see chapter 4 in this CBR. Chapter 5 describes the results in the study about teacher evaluation. The TALIS study substantiates that external teacher appraisals are a much rarer exercise in Denmark than in other TALIS countries.

Jobs for Youth. The OECD launched in 2006 a review on Jobs for Youth in 16 countries. The review contains a survey of the main barriers to employment for young people and an assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of existing measures to improve the transition from school-to-work, and a set of policy recommendations for further action by the public authorities and social partners.

The survey shows that Denmark has a dynamic labour market for young people who surpass most other OECD countries. OECD writes however, that Denmark is challenged by the economic crisis and rising unemployment among young people. OECD also points out that there is a high dropout rate in vocational education and training (VET). Therefore, the OECD recommends, among other things, that the weakest performing students in public schools must get better at reading, writing and math (OECD 2010a).

Migrant Education. The OECD Review of Migrant Education is an OECD review of effective approaches to education of immigrants and descendants. The review shows that Denmark has a small but very diverse group of immigrants compared to other countries. It also describes that although Denmark has created a good framework for the teaching of bilingual students in primary and vocational education, immigrants and their descendants perform worse in education than ethnic Danes (OECD 2010b).

Denmark has also participated in several **IEA-assessments** (IEA: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement):

The PIRLS study that measures trends in children's reading literacy achievement and policy and practices related to literacy. The international population for PIRLS includes students in the grade that represents four years of schooling, providing that the mean age at the time of testing is at least 9.5 years. Denmark has participated since 2006. The study showed a significant improvement of the Danish students. Denmark has raised the average reading position with the equivalent of one form level since 1991.

The TIMSS study measures trends in student achievement in mathematics and science. In Denmark TIMSS collects data in mathematics and science at fourth grade. Denmark participated in 2007. Results from TIMSS showed that the Danish students have improved a form level since Denmark last surveyed in 1995.

ICCS – The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study. The purpose of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) is to investigate the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their roles as citizens. The study builds on the previous IEA study of civic education (CIVED) undertaken in 1999. The study was published in June 2010 and showed that Denmark is sharing the first place with Finland.

SITES – Second Information Technology in Education Study – 2006 was an international comparative study of pedagogy and ICT use in schools. The study focused on the role of ICT in teaching and learning in mathematics and science classrooms. The survey shows that schools in Denmark compared with other countries have the equipment (PC and internet connection) available, but they often fail to use it as an integrated part of teaching.

113. As regards other new evaluation instruments, both the individual student plans and municipal quality reports are not included here. These instruments produce evaluation data at other levels, respectively at student and school/municipal level. However, the Danish Evaluation Institute has, as mentioned, published evaluations on both topics, whereby system level data are produced on an ad hoc basis. These are mostly analysed at system level with a view to access, if the instruments are working according to its initial objectives. Such assessments are contained in the yearly reports from the Chairmanship of the School Council.

114. Finally, a number of instruments are applied to assess overall performance of the school system. Several of these have already been mentioned. The Competitiveness Report includes Folkeskole indicators from a competitiveness perspective. The indicators in the Documentation project should provide a simple and timely documentation model to support the dialogue between state and municipalities on school performance. The indicators in the Documentation project are divided into

two subgroups, i.e. effect indicators at one hand and contextual indicators at the other. In the first group are for example grades and number of student starting in upper secondary education. In the second group are included indicators such as number of students in public schools, public expenditures and pupil-teacher-ratios.

115. In February 2009, the National Audit Office was asked to review the implementation of the national tests. The National Audit Office concluded in January 2010 that the management carried by the Ministry of Education related to the project on the national tests generally was good. The National Audit Office found that the parliament had been informed correctly in the process; that the economy stayed within the appropriation; and that the Ministry of Education had regularly evaluated the risks and acted on it. There was also criticism, mainly concerning the preparations which could have been more adequate.

116. The Danish PISA results are also presented in a Nordic comparison of PISA results – *Northern Lights on PISA*. The Nordic researchers attached to the project look at the PISA results from different angles and with special emphasis on what can be learned from analysing results from the Nordic countries. Is the impact of socio-economic status different in different countries and for different groups of students? Are the Nordic countries more closely related to each other than to other countries? The reports are not just for researchers. The main goal is to communicate interesting findings in a Nordic perspective to policy makers and educators. Finally, performance data are on a regular basis produced in relation to reform processes, e.g. the work in the Globalisation Council (www.globalisering.dk) and very recently the Government Growth Forum (http://www.stm.dk/_p_12918.html).

3.1.5 Using system evaluation results

117. The use of system level evaluation results is multi-faceted. System level data are brought into play by the press, stakeholders, politicians, civil servants, professionals and the public in general.

118. Since 2002, the law on transparency and openness in educations etc. has required that education institutions should make relevant information public to improve the citizens' possibilities for comparing schools and institutions. This is also the case for public schools. The information can be accessed via school websites, but some data can also be found through the statistical database on the website of the Ministry of Education. Examples of performance data are average grades of both public and private independent schools and share of students starting upper secondary education. The law also comprises external evaluations carried out.

119. In general, relevant evaluation data are made public. Results from the PISA and TALIS studies are made public through the Ministry of Education (the School Agency). Average grades at school level are equally accessible from the ministry website. Even though quality reports are drafted by municipalities, it is stressed in the legislation that they should be publicly accessible. As regards the national tests, the approach is that the results of the individual tests are confidential and cannot be used for benchmarking purposes. This is stated in the Folkeskole Act. However, the government has in its recent platform from February 2010 stated that the test results will be made public in the future. The Chairmanship of the School Council publishes, as mentioned, on a yearly basis a report, which contains a comprehensive overview of trends within the field of evaluation and quality development, including a thorough examination of relevant evaluation data. Finally, ad hoc evaluation reports on specific topics are continuously published by the Ministry of Education and the evaluators (consultants, researchers and the Danish Evaluation Institute). As regards the Danish Evaluation Institute, a quick overview of all publications relevant for the primary and lower secondary school system is provided on the EVA website (www.eva.dk).

120. The use of the system level data varies according to the needs and conditions. With the 2004 OECD Review as a prominent example, it is evident that policy makers have made extensive use of system evaluation data in recent years. PISA results, research data and other evaluation material continuously affect policy making.

121. In Denmark, parents have the right to freely select a public school, whether or not the school is placed in the resident municipality or not. Hence, parents can make use of accessible information to enlighten their choice of school for their children. An evaluation from 2007 documented that parents are very positive towards the possibility of free choice. Moreover, it shows that the choice of school is a complex decision based on many parameters. As an example, a number of qualitative aspects are more important than the average grades of the school (Undervisningsministeriet, 2008a). However, a systematic overview of the importance of available performance data does not exist.

3.2 *Implementation of system evaluation*

122. As regards the evidence on the impact of current arrangements for system evaluation, cf. chapter 2 and the summary in the next section (“policy initiatives”).

123. A description of major concerns on system evaluation, perceived difficulties and stakeholder views is equally presented in chapter 2. An overview of stakeholders and their positions on evaluation is contained in appendix A.

3.3 *Policy initiatives*

124. As regards policy initiatives at system level, please refer to chapter 2 for an overview and a more thorough description of policy instruments earlier in this chapter. The policy initiatives are therefore only summarised very briefly below.

125. In its yearly report, the Chairmanship of the School Council provides an assessment on the status for the implementation and possible impact of the recent political initiatives. In the 2008 report, it is stated that the numerous challenges in implementing the new evaluation tools in 2007 in the schools, in the municipalities and at national level have documented that it is necessary to spend time and resources also in 2008 to make the new instruments work appropriately (Skolerådet, 2008).

126. In its most recent report, an up-to-date status is again provided. With reference to the TALIS study, it is reiterated that Danish schools can improve their effort in the field of evaluation, since Denmark is rarely using self-appraisal and external evaluations compared to other Nordic countries and the TALIS average. Further, the Chairmanship concludes on the basis of evaluations from EVA that the individual student plans are well under way, although not yet with major significance for teaching practice (EVA, 2008). However, a research project within the area of special needs education has documented a significant positive effect from the use of special needs education by using individual student plans (DPU, 2009). As regards the municipal quality reports, the evidence proposes that the instrument is now used proactively by the municipalities (EVA, 2009). Finally, there is not yet any evidence of the recently introduced national tests. Cost-benefit studies of system evaluation initiatives do not exist.

127. The policy initiatives since the 2004 OECD Review have been comprehensive. Since the introduction of new evaluation instruments in 2006, new national initiatives have not been launched for several years. However, the very recent Government Platform (February 2010) does as mentioned direct attention to the Folkeskole anew. The government sends the signal of more local freedom in exchange for documentation of results. Moreover, the government launched a “360 degrees review” of the Folkeskole. It was carried out in the spring 2010 by a “travelling team” of resource persons, but it remains to be seen if the review results in new policy initiatives within evaluation. The 360 degrees review has resulted in 10 major recommendations. The recommendations are:

Box 3: Recommendations from 360 degrees review

1. Teachers' competencies must be strengthened

This recommendation has several implications. First, the education of teachers must be more focused on evidence-based research than it is today. Second, the admittance requirements for applicants to teacher training should be raised. Third, the academic level at teacher training must be raised. And finally, there should be a more strategic focus on the in-service training of teachers.

2. Raise the competence of school leaders and education directors in municipalities

The competencies of school leaders, and civil servants working with schools in the regional governments, must be raised in order to strengthen the focus on performance and ambitious goals. This will be achieved through continuous training of school leaders and municipal school management as well as spotting and training of future leaders, at both school and municipal level.

3. Strengthened research in school development

A specialized government research institute on school research must be established, including the training of 200 Ph.D.'s. The research should mainly be directed at how students learn most effectively in the class room.

4. Clear goals for what students should learn

The objectives and academic content of the Folkeskole must be modernized. This especially includes the strengthening of students reading skills throughout the entire schooling. Also, milestones and end goals for the comprehensive development of the students must be established.

5. Stronger focus on school performance

All schools must prepare a yearly results-report allowing the municipal school management to secure each school continuous development and focus on results. In addition, forums must be established for presenting the results of individual schools and sharing knowledge between schools. Independent consulting and advice for schools and municipal governments must be made available. Finally, results-based payment and career development should be used more often than is the case today.

6. Far fewer students in special needs education

The legislation on special need education must be changed in order to allow much fewer students with learning disabilities to be segregated into special needs classes and schools. Instead, specially trained teachers should assist these students as well as the teachers, in order to keep these students in the ordinary classes. This will allow the students to benefit from being in ordinary environments – but with extra support – as well as saving considerable amounts of money on the school budget.

7. Students in trouble should have effective support

The relevant competencies and resources at individual schools must be strengthened in order to provide better support for vulnerable students. Also, schooling and leisure time should be integrated more in areas with many vulnerable students as well as a greater focus on parent-teacher-cooperation when dealing with vulnerable children.

8. Schools and municipalities should be allowed greater freedom to run schools

Individual schools should be allowed greater freedom to run schools, including the forming of more flexible team structures of students, more flexibility in regards to minimum hours of education each pupil must receive as well as school opening hours, hiring staff with different competencies and educational backgrounds, and finally a more flexible approach to the teachers work accord.

9. More options and more IT

A new model for students in final years of compulsory school must be established, including more options for the individual pupil and more widespread and consistent use of IT. In addition, the final exams in lower secondary school must be modernized and should be taken in to consideration when assessing the access to further education for individual students.

10. Enhanced professionalism through better schools

In the future, schools should have a size (number of students) allowing them to strengthen the use of teacher and management competencies as well as achieving a better resource utilization.

Source: www.skolensrejseshold.dk

4. SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Chapter 4 examines the current school assessment processes and practices in Denmark. The chapter covers both *internal* (school level) and *external* (municipal and state level) school assessment processes. It is noted that systematic school evaluation – as in many other countries – is a relatively new phenomenon in Denmark (OECD, 2009; TALIS, 2009). As such, obtaining data on systematic assessment of schools is challenging, especially when it comes to the widespread and decentralized, local assessment processes. As regards the external dimension of school assessment, the chapter presents the mandatory municipal quality report as a key instrument in assessing both municipal and school performance. The chapter ascertains that the responsibility for school assessment is primarily placed locally, i.e. with municipalities and principals. Data from the TALIS study is used throughout the chapter. As an example, it is pointed out that internal assessments are far more prevalent than external assessments. The chapter is concluded by referring to a number of recommendations related to school assessment formulated by the chairmanship of the School Council.

4.1 Current practices

4.1.1 Overall framework for school assessment

128. The 2004 OECD Review awarded particular attention to the lack of quality assurance and self-assessment at both the school and municipal level. More specifically, the OECD review noted that:

- Relatively few school leaders, teachers and municipal authorities asked questions about or had a tradition for self-assessment of school performance, both in terms of school quality and equity.
- The extent of school assessment and monitoring by the municipalities in general was unsatisfactory.
- The few municipalities with school assessment generally lacked formalized procedures that related relevant information back to the Ministry of Education.
(Undervisningsministeriet, 2004)

129. Consequently, the lack of systematic processes for *school assessment* specifically is also a dimension as regards the fragility of the overall evaluation and assessment framework in Denmark.

130. The current approach to school assessment is characterized by a high degree of diversity – both in terms of *internal* and *external* school assessment processes.

131. The *internal* school assessment practices are rarely documented in a systematic manner, and no systematic or comprehensive overview of local evaluation activities exist (Dahler-Larsen, 2006). The internal school assessments and their active use in school development are voluntary and varied. The principals are responsible for the pedagogical and administrative management of the schools, including the extent of integration of evaluation practice and documentation in school development (cf. § 45 in the Folkeskole Act). As a result, it is difficult to present a general and uniform approach to internal school assessment and evaluation in Denmark.

132. The *external* supervision and monitoring of schools are the responsibility of municipalities, cf. chapter 1. In 2006, the revision of the Folkeskole Act made the municipal district councils' responsibility for the Folkeskole more explicit and introduced mandatory quality reports to be developed and published by municipal district councils in each municipality. The quality report is a tool that serves to

- Ensure systematic documentation as well as collaboration among local politicians, municipal authorities and schools on the evaluation and quality of schools.
- Strengthen the municipal district councils' ability to maintain their responsibility for the schools by providing them with reliable and timely documentation on the school system.
- Provide the municipal councils with reliable information on which to judge the level of quality of the public schools and make decisions for further development of the schools.
- Provide transparency on school quality (as interpreted by EVA, 2009).

133. As such, the quality reports serve two interlinked purposes: accountability and school development. It is the responsibility of the municipal district council to draft the annual quality report by the end of every year. The report must include an evaluation of both the individual schools and school system in the municipality as a whole. The regulation on the content of the quality reports provides a prescribed list of input, process and result indicators to be included in the quality reports, cf. the box below.

Box 4: The indicators prescribed for municipal quality reports

The national regulation specifies the information to be included in the municipal quality reports. The information should be provided under three "headings": Framework conditions, pedagogical processes and results. Examples of indicators are given below (not exhaustive).

Framework conditions

- Number of students receiving special pedagogical support
- Number of students per class
- Number of students per teacher
- Student absence
- Share of teacher working hours used for teaching
- Implementation of planned hours
- Competencies of teachers
- Expenditure on in-service training

Pedagogical processes (on each of the public schools)

- Description of the continuous assessment of students' learning outcomes
- Description of the cooperation between school and home, including the use of individual student plans
- Description of the special pedagogical support
- Description of teaching in Danish as a second language

Results

- Grading from the school-leaving examinations
- Results from the national tests
- Results from other types of evaluations
- Share of transfer of students to upper secondary education

134. The municipalities are allowed to add locally developed and relevant indicators to supplement their reports. Focus is primarily placed on the educational tasks and less attention is awarded administrative or financial aspects of the schools (OECD, 2009a). Some municipalities have local indicators for the movement of students from school to school as part of the free choice of schools. Another example is an indicator of whether students meet form level objectives at form level 2, 3, 6 and 7 (EVA, 2009a). The law also involves a commitment by the municipal district councils to develop action plans, if the quality report indicates that specific schools are not performing

satisfactorily. The quality report should also document the action plan and follow-up on the previous year's quality report.

135. According to a recent status report by the Partnership Project (a partnership consisting of Local Government Denmark and 34 municipalities – see chapter 2), the 3rd generation of quality reports is actively being employed by the municipalities in educational development activities in the schools (Local Government Denmark, 2009).

136. An independent review, commissioned by the School Council and carried out by the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) in 2009, documented that the 3rd generation quality reports now adhere to the formal standards specified in the legislation and that many local municipalities now make use of the quality reports in developing their school system (EVA, 2009a). However, the review also indicated that many municipalities:

- Need support in the active use of the quality reports, especially in relation to the follow-up processes on poor performing schools (the action plans).
- Face challenges in meeting the formal requirements of the quality reports, emphasizing the need for tools and resources in the form of written guidelines on how to develop and report key figures, how to report on good practice, and how to use existing data from central databases.
- Prefer test results to take account of the socio-economic context of the schools to provide a more accurate measurement of their performance
- Need clearer and more specified role assignments for the different actors involved in developing the quality reports – who delivers what and when?
- Prefer that the quality reports should include strengths and weaknesses of the individual schools in order to use the reports as an instrument for further school development. In addition, many municipalities suggest that this entails a shared understanding among local actors on how to use school assessment in developing and ensuring quality in schools.
- Develop follow-up or action plans for the school system rather than the individual schools.

137. There are no reports or comprehensive documentation on how the current approach to school assessment achieves the objectives of improvement and accountability. However, it is the general assessment of the Chairmanship of the School Council that the introduction of the quality reports, *inter alia*, has strengthened the evaluation culture in Danish schools (Skolerådet, 2010). However, there is still room for improvement in relation to the strategic and systematic use of action plans by the municipalities. While the implementation of the quality reports has introduced a more systematic approach to the documentation of school quality, the extent to which individual schools actively use the results of the quality reports in development activities is yet to be documented (*ibid.*).

138. The overarching rationale for the current approach to school assessment in Denmark is that evaluation constitutes an important stepping stone for developing and improving school performance (cf. Regeringen, 2010). As such, the rationale reflects the national policy priorities in the area of evaluation and assessment that were motivated by the unsatisfactory performance of the Danish Folkeskole in the PISA studies. As mentioned in chapter 2, the political response to the PISA studies came in the form of new legislation aiming to ensure that evaluation and school assessment practices were comprehensive, effective and timely. This shift was in part motivated by the unsatisfactory results in international comparisons, but also inspired by the 2004 OECD review that emphasized a need for a stronger and more systematic approach to the ongoing assessment of school quality. The rationale is that municipalities are awarded increased local freedom in planning and maintaining the quality in their schools, while at the same time required to provide and making public adequate documentation on school performance.

139. The Danish municipalities have taken up the new evaluation agenda, including its increasing emphasis on “what works”, and the importance of school assessment and evaluation is acknowledged by many to be an important component of both school development and accountability.

140. The rationale for the current approach to school assessment aims to achieve both objectives of development and accountability. The motivation for the quality reports is not only to foster collaboration among local politicians, principals and municipal authorities to develop the quality of the schools (school development), but also to provide reliable information on the quality of the schools to the relevant educational authorities (i.e. vertical/contractual accountability in OECD terminology) and the wider community of stakeholders (i.e. horizontal/moral accountability in OECD terminology).

141. While there is no systematic documentation on the strategic importance of school assessment in the overall evaluation framework, school assessment has since the revision of the Folkeskole Act in 2006 received sustained and increasingly systematic attention by the municipal authorities. This move towards a more systematic approach to school assessment – exemplified in the quality reports – indicates the mounting importance of school quality and quality assurance. As such, school assessment has become a stronger and more established component of the overall evaluation framework.

4.1.2 Responsibilities for school assessment

142. The development of yearly quality reports, as described above, is the responsibility of the municipalities. The municipalities are required to make the quality reports available to the public on the internet. In addition to the mandatory quality reports, some municipalities may carry out ad hoc studies and evaluations on various aspects of their schools, depending on local needs and priorities (OECD, 2009). However, there is no comprehensive overview of the quality or quantity of these initiatives.

143. The principals in public schools are required to provide municipal authorities with information relevant to the quality reports and display basic information about the school on their web site (see law on transparency and openness in chapter 3). Schools are not required by law to carry out self-assessment or other internal evaluations.

144. While the conception of the external school assessment processes lies with state level education authorities (defining the mandatory aspects of the quality reports), the responsibility for the subsequent implementation and follow-up on the quality reports rests with the municipalities in collaboration with the local schools. As such, the external school assessment processes primarily concern the relations between the individual municipality and its schools.

145. The School Agency, under the Ministry of Education, provides evaluation resources and support to local principals/school leaders and teachers with the intended aim of strengthening the evaluation culture and capacity in Danish schools. Their support is in the form of voluntary training as well as inspirational seminars, information and resources on how to use evaluation in educational settings (e.g. www.evaluering.uvm.dk). The School Agency is also responsible for developing and operating the mandatory national tests, and the results of these tests have the potential to be used in future school assessment activities initiated on state level. However, the prospect of using the test results in this manner is still being debated.

Box 5: Study on school leadership

In 2006, EVA conducted an evaluation on school leadership. The evaluation examined the framework conditions for school leadership and found that:

- School leaders emphasize pedagogical leadership and wish to spend more time on securing the quality of the education provided.
- School leaders have very different ideas about leadership and function as leaders under very different framework conditions.
- The dialogue between school leaders and teachers rarely involves and generates documentation.

Based on the evaluation EVA recommended that:

- School leaders clarify and make explicit how the objectives of the school can be integrated in the teaching provided.
- Municipalities formulate and follow up on school objectives.
- School leaders receive training on leadership issues and topics (e.g. organizational development, strategic leadership etc.)
- The Ministry of Education and Local Government Denmark articulate a code for good leadership.
(EVA, 2007)

146. There are no inspectorates in Denmark. However, the Ministry of Education has a number of positions targeted directly at developing and monitoring of the Folkeskole, including consultants with specific expertise in relation to the different subjects in the Folkeskole.

4.1.3 School assessment procedures

147. School assessment primarily concerns the individual municipalities and the schools within their jurisdictions. As a result, school assessment is to some extent a component in the framework with few established connections to evaluation processes at other levels (e.g. system and teacher assessment). The strategic importance of school assessment, as indicated by the conception and introduction of the yearly quality reports in 2006, has yet to develop into a more systematic integration of school assessment processes and other components of the framework.

148. Hence, the school assessment procedures are primarily related to the contractual accountability and development activities at the municipal level. As such, the relation revolves around the relations between the schools and their municipality.

149. The quality reports include information on student outcome data, including the results obtained by students in tests and examinations, which may be used in both school and system evaluations. However, many schools employ locally developed tests for use in internal student assessment which may or may not be used in the quality reports.

150. There are two primary sources of performance criteria/reference standards for the school assessments in the yearly quality reports. The first set of performance criteria are the mandatory performance indicators described above, emphasizing context (e.g. the number of schools and number of students), pedagogical processes (e.g. student assessment, relations with parents) and school outcomes (e.g. students gains on grades or test results, transition rates to upper secondary education). These are defined and developed by the Ministry of Education and they are not connected with any prescribed reference standards.

151. In addition to the mandatory indicators, the municipalities are allowed and encouraged to add locally developed and relevant indicators to supplement their reports. These indicators may correspond to the locally defined performance standards and reference standards developed by the

educational authorities in the municipalities. The nature and content of these locally developed indicators may – of course – change over time due to changing political priorities and agendas. A recent review of the quality reports indicated that a growing number of municipalities are tailoring the optional indicators in their 3rd generation quality reports to the specific informational needs of the municipality and the local performance standards (EVA, 2009a). Indeed, this is by EVA considered the logical next step for the integration of quality reports in local school development (ibid).

152. In addition to the above, it is worth noting that a number of management tools are emerging and already in use between municipal authorities and the individual principals. Management by means of objectives is increasingly becoming widespread vis-à-vis principals. Results contracts, principal agreements and other forms of contracting are applied to define the objectives for the individual school (and principal) – typically for a 1 or 2 year period¹². Consequently, monitoring and performance systems are used to continuously assess, if the school is performing according to objectives. Even though these instruments are implemented as management tools as such, they are equally important to hold schools and school leaders accountable for performance. This reflects that the relation between the municipalities and principals – the so-called “municipal leader arena” (KL, 2005) – is crucial with a view to make school assessment meaningful and effective. Effective in the sense that evaluation data is processed and provided for the municipalities (e.g. quality report and other data), and meaningful in relation to the teachers.

153. There is no comprehensive overview of the instruments used to perform internal assessment of schools, but schools are likely to rely on various self-evaluation activities, which may involve a wide range of different methods of data collection (e.g. observing lessons, analyses of student performance etc.). However, the resources presented on the web site The Evaluation Portal (www.evaluering.uvm.dk), maintained by the School Agency, may serve as an indicator on the range of instruments potentially used in internal schools assessment activities. These include, but are by no means limited to, how-to descriptions of survey administration, classroom observation, DELPHI surveys, student and teacher log books as well as guidelines for school leaders on developing evaluation plans. Also, it should be mentioned that the Danish Evaluation Institute has developed several guides for self-evaluation for schools. A study by the Danish Evaluation Institute indicates that school leaders on some schools in their study use classroom observation and that both teachers and school leaders in general would like more opportunities for this type of assessment (EVA, 2007). While school leaders in many schools use student test results from locally developed tests in their teacher assessment, the aggregation and use of these test results at the school level is rare (EVA, 2006b). Some schools also employ student and parent surveys to document their satisfaction level with school quality. There is no documentation on the prevalence of the above-mentioned instruments.

154. The external school assessment procedure is the yearly quality reports, which basically involves an external review by the municipal district council. As indicated in the report by EVA (2009a), the quality reports are often carried out by administrative employees and most municipalities use standardized surveys to collect relevant data from the local schools. In fact, in the quality reports for the school year 2007/2008 around 88 percent of the municipalities employed a standardized survey format for the data collection with individual schools (ibid).

155. Student grade point average on final examinations and tests (presented at school level and municipality level) are made available by the Ministry of Education and may be used in internal and external school assessments. The results from the new national tests allow for assessment of student performance for individual schools. Hence, the municipalities can access test results for the individual schools.

¹² Examples of municipalities working by means of management by means of objectives are Aarhus, Odense and Gribskov.

4.1.4 The content and methodologies in school assessment

156. There is no comprehensive overview of the aspects assessed and the methodologies applied in internal school assessments. Moreover, the internal school assessment processes may differ greatly across schools and educational jurisdictions, as there are no required processes or activities.

157. As mentioned earlier, the external school assessment procedures in the form of quality reports emphasize information about framework conditions (e.g. the number of schools and number of students), pedagogical processes (e.g. student assessment, relations with parents) and results (e.g. students gains on grades or test results, transition rates to upper secondary education).

158. The TALIS study, carried out by the School Agency in 2009 (part of the international TALIS study), documents the importance of selected aspects in school evaluations. As suggested by the table below, emphasis is often placed on *relations between teachers and students* (83 percent), *other student learning outcomes* (79 percent), *student discipline and behavior* (76 percent), as well as *professional development undertaken by teachers* (74 percent).

159. As such, and in the terminology of Stufflebeams CIPP model employed in earlier OECD reviews of school assessment, attention is primarily awarded *processes* and *products* (OECD, 2009a).

Table 5: Importance of selected aspects in school evaluations

In your opinion, how important were the following aspects considered to be in these school evaluations?	Percent of schools
Relations between teachers and students	83
Other student learning outcomes	79
Student discipline and behaviour	76
Professional development undertaken by teachers	74
Retention and pass rates of students	68
Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their main subject field(s)	67
How well teachers work with you, the principal, and their colleagues	66
Teaching of students with special learning needs	66
Teachers' classroom management	63
Feedback from parents	59
Student test scores	56
Teachers' knowledge and understanding of instructional practices (knowledge mediation) in their main subject field(s)	53
Direct appraisal of classroom teaching	51
Extra-curricular activities with students (e.g. school plays and performances, sporting activities)	49
Teaching in a multicultural setting	44
Innovative teaching practices	38

Source: The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2009.

4.1.5 *Competencies to assess schools and to use assessment results*

160. The *internal* school assessment and evaluations are planned and carried out by local school leaders, teachers, and school administrators. The majority of school leaders in Denmark are educated as teachers (99.7 percent). A survey from 2006 conducted by Local Government Denmark shows that nearly 95 percent of all school leaders have completed some form of leader training. Approximately 75 percent of the school leaders have completed basic training in school management and municipal organized leader training. Every seventh School leader has completed a diploma programme in management (KL, FM & UVM, 2006). The Education directors in the municipalities have different educational backgrounds. Some are teacher trained while others have a degree in management or economics. There are no requirements regarding evaluator qualifications or training, but the School Agency, under the Ministry of Education, provides voluntary training sessions and inspirational seminars, evaluation resources and tools.

161. The *external* school assessments, in the form of yearly quality reports, are developed and produced by the municipal district councils and relevant administrative employees in the municipalities (EVA, 2009a). There are no requirements regarding evaluator qualifications or training, but EVA provides voluntary training sessions and inspirational seminars on how to develop and work with the yearly quality reports. The School Agency has provided guidelines for the quality reports and Local Government Denmark has also helped the municipalities to develop the quality reports.

162. In a recent review of the quality reports, many municipalities expressed an unmet need for both guidelines on how to develop key figures in the reports (79 percent), easy access to data already provided for other central databases (77 percent) as well as written guidelines on the content of the quality reports (55 percent). Several municipalities also emphasize the need for guidance on the process of developing the reports (38 percent) and some express a need for other types of support or consultancy (30 percent).

163. There is no agency or organization that evaluates the individual evaluators in Denmark. However, the Danish Evaluation Institute is an active member of the Internal Quality Assurance network (IQA) and was in 2006 approved by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

164. The principals are responsible for providing the necessary data for the quality reports. Principals also verify and confirm the information and evaluation contained in the quality reports before the reports are made public. As such, they play a pivotal role in school assessment processes. The principals/school leaders are very often former teachers with limited knowledge on leadership, and organizational development (Skolerådet, 2007). In general, good school leadership is high on the agenda in Denmark and is often framed as pedagogical leadership, and the Organization for School Leaders recognizes evaluation and documentation of the school activities and quality as part of good pedagogical leadership (Lederforeningen, 2003). In 2007, the Danish Organization for School Leaders developed a code for good school leadership. The purpose of the code was to foster reflection among school leaders on 11 points to ponder related to good leadership, including “to take responsibility for meeting local and national objectives” and “to maintain focus on results and effects.” As such, the code involves several elements of an evaluative way of thinking, but it contains no specific information on how this is to be implemented and allows for different ways of practice.

165. The Organization for School Leaders also recommends and provides access to a tool for leader evaluation to be used in internal assessment processes. As noted in the OECD report on improving school leadership, “the decentralization has resulted in school leadership being applied in very different ways in practice, which indicates – for instance – that leadership in municipal primary and lower secondary schools does vary according to the municipality in question” (OECD, 2007). Accordingly, there is reason to believe that the role of school leadership in internal school assessment activities may differ. In a study by the Danish Evaluation Institute, several school leaders

had expressed feeling uncertain about how to address and carry out internal quality assurance activities, especially in combining a school environment based on trust with increased demands for control through documentation (EVA, 2007a). The introduction of market and results-oriented management principles in the school sector presents school leaders with increased demands for strategic leadership, documentation and evaluation (Skolerådet, 2009).

166. In summary, school leadership is receiving increasing attention in Denmark and several challenges related to school leadership and school assessment have been identified across various publications:

- School leaders feel uncertain about what is meant by school quality (OECD, 2007a).
- School leaders feel uncertain about how to address and carry out internal quality assurance (EVA, 2007a).
- The knowledge level about leadership (e.g. strategy and school financing) and organizational development is relatively low among school leaders (Skolerådet, 2007).
- There is little documentation on the relationship between school leadership and school quality (Skolerådet, 2007).
- The dialogue between school leaders and teachers rarely involves and generates documentation (EVA, 2006).
- The need for an “even stronger leadership emphasis on development and enhancement of an intelligent, logical (for participants) evaluation culture” (OECD, 2007).
- The unmet need for “information for school leadership which is as precise and useful as possible so that decisions can be made on as well-informed a basis as possible” (OECD, 2007).
- The municipalities’ work with defining and following up on local objectives is unsatisfactory, especially in regards to objectives related to educational quality (EVA, 2006).

167. It should be mentioned that the evaluation/assessment of school leaders do exist at municipal and local level, but the practice varies between schools and municipalities. Some municipalities require that a yearly leader evaluation is carried out.

168. The School Agency in collaboration with the Danish Evaluation Institute provides voluntary and inspirational training sessions and seminars for both teachers and school leaders on how to use and work with evaluation. Both the School Agency and the Danish Evaluation Institute also provide information, on-line tools and resources on how to use evaluation in educational practice.

169. The Evaluation Portal website (www.evaluering.uvm.dk), run by the School Agency, provides articles on the value of school assessment, the need for evaluation culture, and how to connect school evaluation with ongoing school development. The web site also provides teachers and school leaders with a wide range of instruments for planning and carrying out evaluations, including, but by no means limited to hands on descriptions of survey administration and classroom observation, guidelines for school leaders on developing evaluation plans and descriptions of selected evaluation models (e.g. realistic evaluation).

170. The Danish Evaluation Institute has since 2008 offered “EVA days” for local authorities involved in developing and using the results of quality reports. The motivation for the “EVA days” is to convey and share information on how on a range of themes, including working with indicators, gathering and using different sources of information/documentation and translating evaluation results into new practice (EVA, 2010).

171. There are no formal and systematic processes that guarantee the development of expertise in the area of school assessment for teachers and municipal employees. As mentioned above, emphasis is primarily being placed on school leadership and its relation to school quality, which involves increased formal training on leadership aspects related to organizational development, quality management and evaluation (Skolerådet, 2007 & 2009).

4.1.6 Using school assessment results

172. The 2009 TALIS study provides insight to the use of school assessments in Denmark. As the table shows, school assessments primarily influenced the performance appraisal of school management (59 percent), the performance feedback to the school (53 percent) and the assistance provided to teachers to improve their teaching skills (44 percent).

Table 6: The extent of influence

To what extent did these school evaluations have an influence upon the following?	Percent of schools
The performance appraisal of the school management	59
The performance feedback to this school	53
The assistance provided to teachers to improve their teaching skills	44
The performance appraisals of individual teachers	33
The school budget	22
The remuneration and bonuses received by teachers	9

Source: The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2009.

173. The internal school assessment activities often serve a formative purpose. As such, the school assessment results are directly linked to school development.

174. As mentioned above, the yearly quality reports are meant to foster collaboration among local politicians, commitment by the municipal councils to develop action plans, if the quality report indicates that specific schools are not performing satisfactorily, and around 73 percent of the municipalities initiated follow-up activities informed by the quality reports for the school year 2006/2007 (EVA, 2009a). The quality report should also document the action plan and follow-up on the previous year's quality report.

175. The school assessment processes in Denmark are not connected with any prescribed set of rewards or sanctions. As such, there are no prescribed financial sanctions or other changes in the status of the schools based on poor performance in the quality reports. The specific action plan for poor performing schools is developed by the municipal district council and will usually not involve financial sanctions, neither for the school nor for the school leader or the teachers.

176. The 2009 TALIS also sheds light on the publication of school assessments. Table 7 presents the degree to which results from school assessments are made public and/or used for school rankings. As the table suggests, most schools experience assessment results being made public (84 percent), while roughly half of the schools (55 percent) have experienced assessment results being used in school rankings.

Table 7: Percentage of schools where school assessments are made public or employed in school rankings

Type of publication	Percent
School evaluations are published	84
Evaluations are used in the publication of tables that compare the performance of individual schools	55

Source: The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2009.

177. The possibility of making individual school performance on the new national tests public is currently being debated; however, the idea raises strong opposition from the Danish Teacher Union.

178. As regards the processes to incorporate results into policy and practice, please see the description of the municipal action plans above.

4.2 *Implementation of school assessment*

179. While there are no statistics or studies on the strengths and weaknesses identified or the impact of the current arrangements for school assessment, the extent of school assessment is documented. Table 8 presents the percentage of schools where an internal or external evaluation has been carried out within five years (2003-2008). As the table suggests, internal school assessment, implemented at 68 percent of schools, is far more prevalent than external evaluations at 47 percent of all schools. Stated differently, 32 percent of the Danish schools have not carried out an internal assessment in the last five years, while 53 percent have not implemented an external assessment of the school in that time period. Moreover, about 25 percent of the schools have neither implemented internal nor external evaluations within the last five years.

Table 8: Percentage of schools with internal or external evaluation activities within the last 5 years

Type of assessment	Percent
Internal assessment	68
External assessment	47

Source: The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2009.

180. The introduction of the quality reports has over the years received a great deal of attention by the key stakeholders. The interest group and member authority of Danish municipalities, Local Government Denmark, argues that the quality reports hold the potential to become important tools for the municipalities in developing and maintaining the local schools and school systems (Undervisningsministeriet, 2008b). However, Local Government Denmark also notes that the regulations for drafting the reports set by the central level limit the municipalities in their work with the quality reports (ibid). In a similar vein, both the Organization for School Leaders and the Danish Teachers' Union argue that the rules for content and form of the quality reports should allow for more diversity across municipalities (ibid).

181. Many stakeholders, including Local Government Denmark, The Danish Teachers' Union, and the Organization for School leaders, have in response to the OECD review in 2004 declared their support for a strengthening of the internal school evaluation activities (DLF et al., 2004). The stakeholders collectively placed emphasis on the need for tools and resources for carrying out self-evaluation and stressed the importance of refraining from making the results of the internal evaluations public (e.g. in school rankings etc.) (ibid).

4.3 *Policy initiatives*

182. As mentioned, the 2006 revision of the Folkeskole Act made the municipal responsibility for the Folkeskole more explicit and introduced mandatory quality reports to be developed and published by municipal councils in each municipality.

183. In the period from 2009-2011, municipalities are allowed to apply for an exemption in order to try out alternative quality reports; however, these alternatives may not omit key components of the standard quality reports. The chairmanship of the school council has announced that it will follow the development and implementation of these alternative quality reports (Chairmanship of the school council, 2010).

184. In 2007, the chairmanship points to an OECD recommendation (2004) that future school leaders should be required to complete a university-based educational program on leadership and participate in a mentor program during their first year as a school leader (Chairmanship of the school

council, 2007). An existing diploma program on leadership has been expanded to include specific modules on school leadership, including quality management, quality development and evaluation (Skolerådet, 2007). A recent study by University College Copenhagen on the skills school leaders themselves wish to develop found that skills to navigate and meet the increased demand for documentation ranks high among school leaders (EVA, 2010). Another study, commissioned by Local Government Denmark, The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education, concluded that 70 percent of school leaders ask for increased competence development in evaluation, strategic development and quality assurance and development (Chairmanship of the School Council, 2009).

185. The chairmanship of the school council stresses the need for more research studies on the relationship between good leadership and school quality. Therefore, the chairmanship of the school council will be launching a research study on the impact of good school leadership on educational environment, teacher and student absence rates, and student grades (Skolerådet, 2009). One study, carried out by EVA in 2004, points to several specific aspects related to “high performing schools”, such as leader visibility, transparent decision/feedback mechanisms, systematic follow up on decisions and close dialogue between teachers and school leaders (EVA, 2004). The Chairmanship of the school council also wishes to follow up on the competence development activities initiated for school leaders (Skolerådet, 2007).

186. The evaluation of the quality reports, carried out by EVA in 2009, indicates that:

- The municipalities may need support and guidance on how to develop and implement action plans for schools.
- The implementation of action plans may be strengthened by a description of the motivation for implementing the proposed initiatives and activities as well as a designation of responsibility and time line for these.
- The visibility of the action plans may be enhanced by making the follow up plans available on the internet and stating clearly that the follow up plans are based on the quality report endorsed by the municipal board.

187. Informed by this evaluation, the chairmanship of the school council recommended that the Ministry of Education develops a set of guidelines on how to develop and actively use the action plans (Skolerådet, 2009).

188. Motivated by the increasing demand for a diverse set of competencies in school administration and management, including skills and competencies in evaluation and organizational development, the chairmanship of the school council has also recommended an increased professionalization of the recruitment strategies and processes for both teachers and school leaders (Skolerådet, 2009).

189. In their 2010 report, the chairmanship of the school council provides several recommendations related to school assessment:

- There should be increased and more systematic knowledge-sharing across schools, especially through qualified, external evaluations of high performing schools
- The municipalities should increase their focus on how schools use the quality reports in their school development and quality assurance (both low and high performing schools)
- The third and final component of the evaluation of the quality reports, carried out by the Danish Evaluation Institute, should focus on how municipalities follow up on the results of the quality reports.

5. TEACHER APPRAISAL

Chapter 5 gives an introduction to the Danish practice and approach to teacher appraisal as well as policy initiatives within this area. The chapter both addresses internal and external teacher appraisal processes as well as informal and formal perspectives. The voluntary nature of teacher appraisal in Denmark is highlighted, since no national requirements exist in this area. Instead, the practice and culture for assessing teachers are determined locally – typically at each school. References are made to the TALIS study to identify the status of teacher appraisal in Denmark. It is stated that external teacher appraisal is not common in Denmark compared to other countries. As regards the informal part of teacher appraisal, Denmark is closer to TALIS average. The chapter refers to the vast inspiration material, which can be found at the evaluation portal (www.evaluering.uvm.dk). In conclusion, it is mentioned that policy initiatives in this area have been sparse. However, in its latest report, the chairmanship of the School Council recommends that regular teacher appraisals are carried out.

5.1 *Current practices*

5.1.1 *Overall framework for teacher appraisal*

190. In Denmark no national requirements for teacher appraisals exist. To perform teaching at form levels 1-10, teachers must, in accordance with the Folkeskole Act, complete the education as a teacher in the Folkeskole or another teacher training which is approved by the Minister of Education, See the box below about the teacher training. In isolated cases, the requirement can be dispensed, e.g. if persons with special qualifications are employed to teach individual subjects (the Folkeskole Act § 28). Hence, it is demanded by law that teachers have specific qualifications, but no national requirements exist in relation to teacher appraisal. Rather, the approach promoted from national level in recent years is that of inspiration and knowledge sharing cf. the box below.

Box 6: The teacher training programme

The objective of the Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) programme for primary and lower secondary school teachers is to train teachers for the primary and lower secondary school and to provide a basis for further training.

Graduates of the teacher training programme have the right to use the title of Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.). The programme provides a general qualification for teaching in the primary and lower secondary school. The long term goal is, to an increasing extent, for qualified teachers to teach their main subject(s).

Approximately two-thirds of qualified teachers work in the public primary and lower secondary school. The final third are mainly involved in other teaching such as at private schools, vocational colleges, folk high schools, and adult training.

There are different opportunities for in-service training and further training, inter alia through

- Courses and subjects on a level with main subjects in the teacher-training programme,
- Further training as a teaching practice teacher in the teacher-training programmes,
- A number of educational diploma programmes,
- The Master of Education degree,
- Master's programmes.

In-service training is provided by University Colleges and the Municipalities.

Where does the training take place?

From January 2008, teacher training is to take place at one of the 8 university colleges in Denmark. University colleges are non-profit institutions under public administration. University colleges offer professional bachelor programmes that ensure that the region is covered geographically, as well as in-service training and further training in connection with this.

Duration, structure and content of the programme

The teacher training programme takes 4 years to complete, corresponding to 240 points in the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS points). A student's fulltime work for one year corresponds to 60 ECTS points.

The programme consists of the following for all students:

Educational subjects in the form of general educational theory, psychology and educational science (a total of 33 ECTS points)

Christian studies/livsoplysning/citizenship (17 ECTS points)

2 or 3 main subjects (a total of 144 ECTS points)

A Bachelor of Education project (10 ECTS points)

Teaching practice (36 ECTS points)

Concerning the educational disciplines

The educational disciplines in the teacher training programme consist of :

Three independent educational subjects (33 ECTS points),

One in the main subjects of Danish (age specialised), physics/chemistry, mathematics (age specialised) and a science/technical subjects integrated general educational element (10 ECTS in each main subject) and

Methodology in the main subjects.

The educational subjects are especially concerned with

- Planning, implementing and evaluating the teaching (in general educational theory),
- Children and young people's learning, development and social interaction (in psychology), and
- Teaching, formation, education, upbringing and socialisation in a societal context (in educational theory and practice).

Concerning teaching practice

The student must have teaching practice in all the main subjects selected and in all four years of study. The goal of teaching practice is to create a link between theory and practice with a view to the student acquiring theoretically based skills in preparing, implementing and evaluating courses of teaching.

During teaching practice, the student teaches children and participates in other teacher tasks at a primary and lower secondary school, a private school (private elementary school), or at a continuation school, under the guidance of one or more teaching practice teachers.

Admission requirements

It is a normal requirement for admission to teacher training that the student has completed upper secondary education.

Source: www.uvm.dk

191. There is no requirement for teachers on annual in-service training. The TALIS survey shows that in Denmark only 35 percent of the teachers found that their professional development was compulsory. In TALIS, the teachers were asked to rate their development needs for various aspects of their work. The aspect of teachers' work most frequently rated by Danish teachers as an area of high development need was "Teaching special learning needs students". Almost one-fourth of Danish teachers rated their development need in this area as high.

Box 7: Inspiration for teacher appraisals

As part of the initiative to promote the evaluation culture in the Danish school system, the Ministry of Education (the School Agency) has launched the national evaluation portal to inspire municipalities, schools and teachers in their work with evaluation and appraisals, cf. chapter 3. The portal can be found at www.evaluering.uvm.dk.

The portal contains a presentation of 27 practical evaluation tools. A number of these tools are targeted teacher appraisal as such with detailed descriptions of the use of tools such as teacher logs, teaching observation and use of surveys. The objective of the portal is to function as a “knowledge bank” for several target groups, but teachers in particular.

The objectives of the tools for teacher appraisal are multifaceted but include among others:

- To support planning and appraisal of courses and projects on teaching, team and school level.
- To support the systematic and dynamic work with all elements in a subject both in relation to the planning and performance level
- To promote reflection in relation to the teaching including documenting the processes and the ongoing adjustments of the teaching.

Also, Local Government Association has produced inspiration material to strengthen teachers' evaluation culture (KL, 2005).

Source: www.evaluering.uvm.dk

192. Concerning the municipal level, the mandatory quality reports are required to contain information about specific focus areas decided by the municipality and about other current projects related to the development of teaching and its quality. Furthermore, and as mentioned in chapter 4, the reports must include relevant information about the pedagogical processes and the related principles provided by the school board from each of the municipal schools. The information on the pedagogical processes should contain the following: A description of the organization of the ongoing assessment of the students' learning outcomes from the teaching and the students' involvement in the organization of the teaching; a description of the cooperation between school and home (including decisions about the use of student plans); a description of the special needs education, and finally a description of the teaching of Danish as a second language. The quality reports do not include requirements for assessments and descriptions of the teachers and/or the teaching, unless this is part of a project initiated by the municipality, whereby the schools must meet the political objectives from the local level. An example could be if a municipality establishes an objective of training and upgrading of skills of teachers. Another example could be increased cooperation between teacher groups. In this manner, a municipality can define requirements or guidelines for the teacher group as a whole in a municipality.

193. It follows from the above that the approach to teacher appraisal in Denmark is based on a rationale in which the teacher appraisal culture primarily is determined locally at each school – and possibly influenced by municipal requirements/guidelines. The Folkeskole Act (§§ 2 and 45) declares that the school leader is responsible for the quality of teaching at the school as well as the overall administrative and pedagogical management of the school. Therefore, the school leader is responsible for the dialogue with the teachers and for establishing the requirements/guidelines of the local culture for appraisal. This normally takes place in cooperation with the staff of teachers at the schools. Thus, teacher appraisals primarily take place within two “appraisal arenas”: The school leader-teacher-arena and teacher-teacher-arena (see also KL, 2005). In general, appraisals and evaluations of the quality of teacher performance – in particular external evaluations – are not widespread practice in Denmark (Skolestyrelsen, 2009). According to the Codex for Good School Leadership, it is paramount for the school leader to show confidence in the employees (Lederforeningen and Dansk Skolelederforening, 2006). This “confidence-based approach” can in part explain the existing culture for teacher appraisal in Denmark.

194. Many municipalities have – as part of their staff policies – a requirement that all employees should participate in an interview with their leader/manager on employee development for the coming year. The interviews are often followed by outlining a development plan for the employee¹³.

195. In addition, teacher appraisals could equally be the focus in the relations between teacher and student as well as between teachers and parents. However, the focus of evaluation conversations within these arenas is typically on the student and student outcome from the teaching, cf. the box below.

Box 8: Cooperation between school and home

The cooperation between school and home is a fundamental element in the Danish Folkeskole. In the Folkeskole Act (§ 1), the overall aim states that the Folkeskole, *in cooperation with the parents*, is to provide students with knowledge and skills.

Further, the Act states that students and parents are to be informed on a regular basis on the teacher's and potentially the school leader's view on the student learning outcome of the teaching.

Hence, the Folkeskole Act sets out the framework for cooperation between school and home based on dialogue, cooperation and continuous feedback. The requirements are centred on the knowledge and skills acquired through teaching. To reiterate, national requirements on the evaluation and feedback from parents in relation to teacher performance do not exist

196. The consequences of a highly local approach to teacher appraisals can be summarized as follows:

- No national requirements, nationally defined guidelines or uniform objectives for teacher appraisals (performance criteria and reference standard) exist in Denmark. Hence, systematic and formalised teacher appraisals are not as such a part of the overall evaluation and assessment framework of the Danish school system.
- Systematic feedback mechanisms within the evaluation framework as a whole through which results from teacher appraisals are incorporated into policy and practice are not widespread. Various appraisal activities are probably carried out locally, but there is little knowledge collected nationally as to the range and specific content of teacher appraisals.
- No longitudinal dimension to teacher appraisal exists, and no systematic collection of data takes place in relation to the development of teachers, e.g. by tracking teacher performance over their teaching career.

197. In sum, teacher appraisals are not conducted systematically at national level. This should not be confused with the fact that activities are not carried out locally. This observation is substantiated with reference to the international TALIS report (Skolestyrelsen, 2009). However, it should be noted that in general there is very sparse documentation within this field. Some sporadic studies as well as the international TALIS study have been carried out. In consequence, the review in this chapter of the approach and practice in Denmark to teacher appraisal will largely rely on these studies.

¹³ For an example, please refer to the website of the Municipality of Copenhagen (<http://www.kk.dk/FaktaOmKommunen/LedelseOgPersonale/Ledelsesgrundlag/Personalepolitik/Medarbejderudviklingssamtaler.aspx>).

Box 9: The conceptual framework for teacher appraisals

In general, two approaches to teacher appraisals exist, i.e. self-appraisal and external appraisal.

- **Self-appraisal** refers to the fact that it is the practitioners themselves who have implemented the intervention being evaluated. By themselves they specify, design and conduct the appraisal.
- In **external appraisals**, objectives, standards and evaluation tools are determined externally, and it is persons external to the intervention, who conduct the appraisal.

The purpose of appraisals is also two-fold and can be divided into summative and formative appraisals:

- “On the one hand, it is aimed at ensuring that teachers perform at their best to enhance student learning (**summative appraisal**). Summative appraisal of teaching is a way to assess that teachers are adopting the actions and ‘best’ practices which improve student outcome. Hence, summative appraisal is an indispensable source of documentation to hold teachers *accountable* for their professionalism”
- “On the other hand, it seeks to improve the teachers own practice by identifying strengths and weaknesses for further professional development (**formative appraisal**). Formative appraisal refers to a qualitative appraisal on the teacher current practice, aimed at identifying strengths and weaknesses and providing adequate *professional development* opportunities for the areas in need of improvement.”

Sources: www.evaluering.uvm.dk; OECD, 2009.

5.1.2 Teacher appraisal procedures

198. The following section outlines the documented knowledge on the prevalence and practice respectively for external appraisals and self-appraisals of teachers.

199. **External teacher appraisal** carried out by external persons or authorities exist in Denmark, but it is substantially rarer than in the other TALIS countries. 70 percent of the teachers interviewed in TALIS have never experienced to be evaluated by an external person or authority. 20 percent of the teachers have encountered this once a year or more – of these 4 percent are being evaluated every month or more than once a month. The external appraisal is most frequently taking place in the private independent schools and independent boarding school for lower secondary students and less likely in the public schools (Skolestyrelsen, 2009). This difference might be ascribed to the fact that it is the parents’ responsibility to supervise the private independent schools’ regular activities. As discussed in Chapter 1, parents must select a person with professional and pedagogical qualifications to supervise the teaching in the school. Overall, external teacher appraisals are not practice in Denmark.

200. In the 2004 OECD review, Denmark was recommended to promote not only an evaluation culture for the school system as a whole but also to work with **teacher self-appraisal** (Undervisningsministeriet, 2004). It is argued that a more or less cohesive attempt to force teachers to change the behaviour often is undermined or met with direct opposition, as it is perceived as a direct criticism of their professional competencies. In contrast, self-appraisals represent an alternative approach, although also a “softer approach”, as it is recognised by the OECD review team in 2004 (ibid.).

201. In the Danish TALIS report, it is concluded in line with OECD recommendation that self-appraisal is the most common appraisal method in Denmark used by schools to assess their own efforts (Skolestyrelsen, 2009).

202. The TALIS study results of the evaluation culture at school level display that 68 percent of the teachers work at schools that have developed a self-appraisal report at least once within the last five years. The average for the TALIS countries is 80 percent. In relation to external appraisals, 47 percent of the interviewed teachers work in schools where external appraisals have been conducted over the past five years. Generally in the TALIS countries, this number is 70 percent (Skolestyrelsen, 2009). Both in terms of self- appraisals and external appraisals of schools, Denmark is below average – however, in particular, concerning external appraisals. The appraisals are used primarily as feedback to the school management, but generally they have a relatively limited influence. In this respect, Denmark differs in particular from the other countries by having a low performance appraisal of individual teachers (ibid). Thus, the present school practices do not encourage assessment of teacher performance as a part of the school appraisals (cf. chapter 4 for school assessment).

203. As regards the teacher level, 69 percent of the interviewed teachers in TALIS receive **appraisals or feedback from their manager** (school leader) at least once a year. The TALIS report suggested therefore that the school leader carries out recurring appraisals of the teachers, among other things made in connection with employee development interviews (in Danish “MUS”), which has designated hours within the category "other duties" in the teachers' working hour agreement (agreement on working hours for teachers in the Folkeskole, 2008) . Thus, it is presumed that a large part of the teacher-school leader appraisals take place within a **formal** framework. The employee interviews can be carried out in many ways. This is also reflected in the fact that 14 percent of the interviewed teachers in the TALIS study indicate that they have never been evaluated or received feedback (Skolestyrelsen, 2009). This suggests that there exists a highly diversified local practice at the individual schools. Potentially, this reflects both differences in practice, but also differences in what are understood to be evaluation/appraisal.

204. The Danish Evaluation Institute has pointed to the fact that there exists a challenge in relation to communicating that the involvement of the management not necessarily constitutes an issue of increased control, but just as much a tool for quality development. Following this, a key leadership challenge is to strengthen and systematize the knowledge in relation to teaching. To quote EVA: *“Management typically has a good feeling for the activities in the schools, but the impression is rarely based on documentation or evidence”* (EVA, 2007a – our translation). Based on a study of quality work at 20 schools, the Danish Evaluation Institute has pointed out that teachers have two broad approaches to the school leader role as a sparring partner regarding teaching and pedagogy. A group of teachers with extensive experience do not feel a need for the management to get closer to the teaching. On the contrary, especially the younger teachers expressed that they want management appraisal and coaching. Since the groups are working alongside, the latter group can easily be overheard (ibid).

205. Concerning the more **informal** part of teacher appraisal, the Danish numbers are closer to TALIS average, when it comes to the **appraisal by colleagues**. This refers to the appraisal by other teachers or members of school management. 40 percent of the teachers never or mostly never receive appraisal and/or feedback once a year. 51 percent receive it at least three times a year – of which 24 percent is evaluated each month or more (Skolestyrelsen, 2009). The latter number is relatively high compared to average illustrating again the vast differences that exist in local practices. Thus, appraisals are defined with reference to the respective approaches of schools to the learning environments of the teachers. The increasing use of team structures in schools (autonomous teams) over the past years constitutes a significant parameter for the appraisal which takes place between teachers, since the appraisal of the teaching at some schools is expected to take place in the teams (EVA, 2007a).

206. Moreover, a new study documents that the so-called *resource persons* play a central role in the collegial appraisal, coaching and supervision in the Folkeskole, as it has become common practice at schools to have and make use of resource persons. The resource persons are teachers who have undergone training and acquired expertise within a certain aspect of school life and act as dedicated experts in relation to this domain as a part of their duties as a teacher. Almost all schools have IT

tutors, 85 percent of the schools have reading tutors, AKT tutors, librarians and coordinators of special needs education. 8 percent of the schools have evaluation tutors who guide colleagues about the organization, implementation and appraisal of the teaching (EVA, 2009b).

207. In general, the resource persons are a part of the normal operation of schools, but they also perform duties in relation to guidance of colleagues, information about new knowledge and implementation of courses in the classes, for selected class or for the whole school. Typically, the teachers use the resource persons in a sporadic manner in relation to single topics or student-specific issues. In several of the training programmes to become a tutor, it is emphasized that the resource persons should help to develop the teaching, and therefore be used more continuously and integrated in the teaching context. Specifically, the resource person can be used as a combination of observation in the classroom, mentoring conversations with teachers, conversations with individual students and/or the whole class. The involvement of the resource persons depends on relational factors such as confidence and trust between teachers and tutors, so the integrated use of resource persons in the teaching is facing some challenges. The report concludes that at it is easier for resource persons to communicate their insight at schools with an open culture, two-teacher arrangements, teamwork and open doors to the classes (EVA, 2009b).

208. In summary, Denmark has a tradition of teacher appraisal based on self-appraisal, but also appraisals and feedback provided by the school leader. The evaluation culture for teachers is primarily voluntary, which is reflected in diverse local practices consolidated by the school leader in dialogue with the teachers. Therefore, the principal has the primary responsibility under the Folkeskole Act and is a key person in relation to ensuring the quality development of the teachers. As in many other countries, the teachers in Denmark have a high degree of freedom of method in relation to the teaching. This implies the right to choose own teaching methods and materials. Furthermore, Denmark has a tradition for a high degree of teacher autonomy, and they are entrusted with the responsibility to fulfil the expectations in a competent manner (Lederforeningen and Danmarks Skolelederforening, 2006). On this background, the term “the private teacher practitioner” has gained ground – although by some from a critical perspective. On this term, Local Government Denmark concluded in 2004 on the basis of a number of studies that “*the private teacher practitioner acts more on the basis of feelings/impressions than knowledge*” (our translation referred in Hermann, 2007). It should, however, be noted that team organization between teachers are receiving increasing attention as well as focus on the responsibility and role of school leaders, which to some extent is in breach with the tradition of the private teacher practitioner (ibid).

209. As mentioned earlier, performance appraisals of teachers exist only to a very limited extent (Skolestyrelsen, 2009). Denmark does not have inspectorates, but occasionally municipal consultants, the Danish Evaluation Institute or a third party carry out teacher appraisals to ensure the quality of the schools and their work. There are no systematic overview of the frequency and content of these external interventions.

210. As regards the **improvement** objective of appraisals, it is central to highlight that 32 percent of the teachers at the Folkeskole in the TALIS study believe that the appraisals carried out did not contain an assessment of the quality of their efforts. Among the participating teachers in the study, 41 percent of the younger teachers experienced that the appraisals have contained suggestions for improving some aspects of their efforts. Only 33 percent of the oldest teachers have the same opinion. However, 86 percent mean that the appraisal will help them in their jobs as teachers (Skolestyrelsen, 2009). In this way, a mixed picture appears of whether appraisals are perceived to support teachers to improve.

211. As for **accountability**, it follows from the TALIS report that teachers assess the relationship to the students and the co-operation with colleagues as the most essential conditions, having some or great importance for the appraisal or feedback they have received. Thus, the relational factors appear as a main objective in the teacher appraisal. Parameters which can say something about accountability, such as the direct appraisal of class teaching, students test results and results from school-leaving exams are only to a lesser degree assessed as being influential (School Agency,

2009). Again, this should be perceived as related to the fact that performance appraisals of teachers are not a prominent feature in the overall evaluation framework in the Danish schools.

212. It should be stressed that there is a tendency to perceive teaching appraisal and student assessment (the continuous assessment of student learning outcomes from the teaching, cf. § 13 in the Folkeskole Act) as highly interlinked. Among the 20 schools participating in the EVA study on quality work, there is evidence that appraisal of the teaching entirely disappears from school appraisal practices. The municipal administration and school management are in charge of school appraisals, while teachers are responsible for the assessment of student performance. In consequence, inspiration and tools to perform teacher appraisal and assessment of the teachers' performance are lacking (EVA, 2007). It is not widespread practice among the OECD countries to use student outcomes as a source of teacher appraisals, because the method requires standardized student tests and – as it is highlighted in a OECD Working Paper – *“because it encounters strong rejection from teachers and scholars judging this instrument as flawed, ineffective or unfair”* (OECD, 2009b).

213. As described, no nationally determined and uniform performance criteria and reference standards for teacher appraisal exist in Denmark. A common denominator in the Danish teacher appraisal practice is the collegial appraisal and coaching (teacher-teacher arena), which – as previously mentioned – is reflected by means of activities in the autonomous teams, and through the use of resource persons. In this context, the teachers are to cooperate on promoting the quality of teaching. As an example, teachers can supervise each other in the teams and exercise a close dialogue on the development of the single student. At some schools, teaching evaluation is expected to take place in the teams, but it can be difficult for teachers to reflect on both students and teaching (Hermann, 2007; EVA, 2007). Furthermore, appraisal is not necessarily the equivalent to knowledge sharing. It is not always the case that team appraisals and appraisals carried out by the individual teacher is disseminated to the remainder of teachers. This indicates that knowledge sharing can be limited despite the fact that appraisals are carried out (Dahler-Larsen, 2006).

Box 10: Nine instruments to perform teacher appraisal

At the national evaluation portal previously mentioned, a number of specific instruments intended for teachers are described in order to perform teacher appraisal. The examples are perceived as an inspiration to teachers, but they cover also the use of instruments for teacher appraisal in the existing practice. Examples are:

- *The quality Star*: Support planning and appraisal of courses and projects at teaching, team and school level
- *The quality stairs*: To qualify the objective of the work. The tool can be used to describe several stages or levels towards the optimal objective within a selected area of focus.
- *The teacher log*: Create an ongoing reflection on teaching in order to make the necessary adjustments to the objectives, and to document the processes and current adjustments the teacher makes in connection with teaching.
- *Natural evolution*: To learn from unintended experiences. The tool maintains experiences through descriptions and reflections and recognize the unintended as a source of learning
- *The SMTTE model*: Helps systematically and dynamically to work with all elements in a sequence as well planning as the execution level. The tool creates coherence through the characters, values, objectives and appraisal categories.
- *The survey*: To collect quantitative data.
- *The development spiral*: A tool to focus attention at the process and the realization of the objective in the course put in motion.
- *Teaching observation*: To gain knowledge about the student learning in relation to the intended objectives of the teaching and to gain knowledge about the importance of other didactic elements.
- *Visions, goals and plans*: The tool focuses on vision and values and brings them into play against objectives and actions.

Source: www.evaluering.uvm.dk

214. The TALIS study indicates that teacher cooperation is highly variable. The variation between teachers is almost as great as the variation between countries in the study. The professional approach of the individual teachers is very decisive. A closer look at the dimensions of teacher collaboration shows that Denmark holds a position close to the average of the two forms of cooperation, respectively: *Exchange and coordination* (in relation to teaching materials, each single students progression, etc.) and *professional cooperation* (co-teaching, observation of each other's education, etc.)

215. School leader information on teacher performance can be collected using various methods. According to several studies, a large part of the school leader knowledge is based on interviews with students, parents and teachers in the staff room. Additionally, the school leader can seek for information either in different types of sources that can be used isolated or in a combination of several sources (EVA, 2007; KL, 2005; EVA, 2009). These are:

- Written sources as annual plans and appraisal/evaluation results
- Oral sources such as employee development interviews and team interviews as well as the use of resource persons
- Observations (possibly followed by follow-up interviews and reflective conversations).

216. The involvement of the written sources as *annual plans and evaluation results* represent an information channel for the school leader. Annual plans must describe what students should learn and the methods used to find out if the objectives of the teaching are reached. The content of the annual plans vary both from school to school and from teacher to teacher. Further, several schools have established regular procedures so the management collects selected test results (EVA, 2007a; Skolestyrelsen, 2009).

217. *Employee development interviews* and *team interviews* serve as an important forum for exchange of information between the school leader and the teachers in general and teacher appraisal specifically. The employee development interviews are typically regularly carried out in the schools and through a formalized report-/follow-up model. However, there is a tendency to focus the interviews on competence development, team and subject division etc. and less on teaching and pedagogy (EVA, 2007a). All 20 schools in the EVA study on quality of work are working with team structures and different forms of teamwork (e.g. class team, year group team, section team and subject team). The development of team structures in recent years has led to an increase in the cooperation between the teachers, and the school leaders typically organise formalized team talks.

218. *The resource persons* have in many schools a key role concerning pedagogical sparring with the school management, since they have access to information about daily life at the school and can therefore provide inspiration in relation to the school's pedagogical development.

219. Besides the above, it should be mentioned that school leader-teacher appraisals exist, e.g. through *teaching observation* either by prolonged nature or walkthrough. 82 percent of the teachers in the 20 participating schools in the EVA study on quality work indicate, however, that their school leader has not observed their teaching in the last year. This is due to both the reservations the teachers have to the control aspect of the teaching observation and due to lack of time among the school leaders (EVA, 2007a). Thus, it indicates that this practice is not widespread. This is also substantiated in the TALIS study. Nine out of ten teachers indicate here that the school leader or another from the management team never or rarely observe the teaching in the classes. According to the survey with the school leaders, however, every fifth states that they quite often or very often attend the teaching in the classes, which might suggest that the school leaders, who are conducting observations of teaching, are concentrating their observations about a small number of teachers' effort (Skolestyrelsen, 2009).

220. As previously mentioned, the perception of the control aspect (of the teacher appraisal) is most pronounced among the older teachers, while the young want more sparring. At some schools, the school leader deals with this problem by implementing introduction programmes with for example teaching observation and later interviews in connection with new recruitment (EVA, 2007a). In this way, both teacher groups are accommodated. It is indicated that the school leader concentrates the teaching observation around the younger teachers in the teaching staff.

221. As previously described, there are no uniform performance criteria and reference standards for teacher appraisals in Denmark. A glance at the subject of the appraisal, as respectively teachers and school leaders assess it, shows that the results do not entirely coincide. The school leader addresses more importance to the student test results and final exams than the teachers do. The teachers experience in particular that the cooperation relations with students, the school leader and other colleagues have been of importance for the appraisal. Thus, the appraisals serve different purposes.

Table 9: Importance of selected aspects in teacher appraisal

The share of teachers and school leaders who consider the below conditions to be of some or great significance for the latest appraisal or feedback, which have been conducted	Percent of teachers	Percent of leaders
Student test scores	29	52
Pass rates of students	25	47
Other student learning outcomes	45	73
Feedback from student	61	75
Feedback from parents	56	69
Cooperation with school leader and colleagues	70	74
Direct appraisal of classroom teaching	41	42
Innovative teaching practices	36	51
The relationship to the students	76	81
Professional development undertaken by teachers	46	79
Teachers' classroom management	62	85
Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their main subject field(s)	47	79
Teachers' knowledge and understanding of instructional practices (knowledge mediation) in their main subject field(s)	41	70
Teaching of students with special learning needs	40	80
Student discipline and behaviour	56	89
Teaching in a multicultural setting	23	41
Extra-curricular activities with students	43	48

Source: The Teaching and Learning International Survey (School Agency, 2009).

222. It is not known how the subjects of the appraisals vary depending on the type of teacher, e.g. depending on the teachers different stages of the career.

5.1.3 Using teacher appraisal results

223. Regarding the use of teacher appraisals, Danish teachers do not witness to receive recognition for good performance. The appraisals have, according to teachers, almost no impact on salaries, the probability of promotion or official recognition from the management. The appraisals have, thus, rarely positive consequences for teachers, and in this way there is only a modest incentive to improve. It is likewise with the negative consequences of the appraisals. 41 percent of the teachers in the TALIS study mean that a continuous unsatisfactory effort from a teacher at the school is tolerated by the teaching staff. 31 percent of teachers at the public schools estimate that teachers are dismissed in case of continuing unsatisfactory performance. This number is lower than at the private independent schools (47 percent) and at independent boarding school for lower secondary students (45 percent.). Thus, there is particular in the Folkeskole some tolerance for teachers who display insufficient results (Skolestyrelsen, 2009). However, this has changed during recent years according to Local Government Denmark.

224. Generally, the school leaders only to a limited degree provide the teachers with sparring about their teaching. The TALIS study shows that the principal, according about 90 percent of the teachers, never or rarely come with suggestions for the improvement of teachers (ibid).

5.2 Implementation of teacher appraisal

225. Overall, there is no evidence of the impact of the local arrangements for teacher appraisal. The TALIS study suggests, however, that the appraisals do not lead to changes in the teachers' teaching practice. It should, however, be stressed that there is much variation in relation to the areas which the appraisals are affecting.

226. Almost 20 percent of the teachers have experienced some or significant change of their class leadership, in the handling of problems with student discipline and behaviour and in emphasising the improvement of test results in the teaching. For about 10 percent of the teachers, some or great change have taken place in relation to their knowledge and understanding of the main subjects; concerning their knowledge and understanding of didactics within the main subject; and the appraisal has led to a development plan for the improvement of the teaching.

Table 10: Impact of teacher appraisal

The part of teachers, who have experienced that the appraisal or feedback that the teacher has received at the school, has led to changes (percent)	No Change	Smaller change	Some change	Significant change	Total
Teachers' classroom management	56,0	25,8	16,5	1,6	100,0
Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their main subject field(s)	70,7	18,4	9,5	1,4	100,0
Teachers' knowledge and understanding of instructional practices (knowledge mediation) in their main subject field(s)	67,9	21,0	9,9	1,1	100,0
Development plan for improving the teaching	66,2	21,4	10,8	1,6	100,0
Teaching of students with special needs	66,0	20,2	12,2	1,7	100,0
Student discipline and behaviour	54,9	25,6	16,9	2,6	100,0
Teaching in a multicultural setting	80,7	13,0	5,6	0,7	100,0
Improvement of students pass rates	60,4	20,4	17,1	2,2	100,0

Source: Calculations from UNI•C Statistic & Analyse for the chairmanship for the School Committee on the basis of TALIS 2009 (The School Council, 2010).

227. As regards stakeholder views, the recent yearly report from the Chairmanship of the School Council (2010) contains up-to-date stakeholder opinions on teacher appraisal. The views are targeted at the chairmanship proposal to strengthen the teacher appraisal in Denmark, cf. below. A selection of the stakeholder response to the proposal is summarized below:

- *The Danish Union of Teachers:* The teachers are positive towards better feedback from the school leaders. Class room observation and procedures for systematic evaluation and feedback to teachers are encouraged. The new working hour agreement puts focus on improved feedback to teachers. The agreement also puts focus on school leadership and the leader being present in the classrooms. The Union is critical towards linking feedback to salary, since this is a contractual condition. It is further argued that the school leaders must attend the teaching, and that the teachers should get accustomed to this fact in order for them to improve teaching.
- *Local Government Denmark:* The municipalities find that a number of tools for school leader appraisal of teaching competencies already exist. Hence, they do not support the recommendation on the development of a specific tool. However, the school leaders have to use

their pedagogical insights, in particular in relation to direct coaching and feedback to the teachers.

- *The Danish Head Teachers Union*: The Union agrees to strengthen the close dialogue between school leader and teacher, in particular in relation to team cooperation. It is not realistic, according to the Union, that the school leader is increasingly present and attending the teaching.
- *Danish Students*: The students support the proposal from the chairmanship that students to a larger extent should be more involved in the appraisal of teachers.

5.3 Policy initiatives

228. As outlined in previous chapters, the Danish response to the 2004 OECD Review recommendations has been comprehensive. However, policy initiatives specifically targeted at teacher appraisal have been sparse. As mentioned, Local Government Denmark has encouraged municipalities and schools to take up the challenge in establishing an evaluation culture in Danish schools, and recommendations and inspiration have been published with focus on the informal, internal self-appraisal (KL, 2005). Local policy initiatives in relation to teacher appraisal possibly exist, but no documentation exist in this respect.

229. The 2004 OECD Review recommended a stronger focus on teacher appraisal and more specifically to establish a research project to support the development and procurement of methods for teachers' self appraisal (recommendation 6). The OECD report stressed that each teacher needs to challenge her or his own performance level to be able to respond self-critically and reflective to the teaching (Undervisningsministeriet, 2004). As documented in the Danish Progress Report (OECD, 2008), the recommendation has not been implemented. This continues to be the case.

230. The policy initiatives for teachers in general have particularly included competence development and training. The government allocated in 2007-2009 230 million DKK to training of teachers and school leaders in the Folkeskole. The resources are divided into three areas: Training of teachers in science, mathematics and English; training of reading tutors; and the training of school leaders. The purpose of the initiative was to train teachers to become "professional beacons" at the schools in order to guide and inspire colleagues and bring the latest knowledge and research into the subject at the school¹⁴. The importance of a continuous strengthening of teacher competencies was recently accentuated by the Chairmanship of the School Council (Skolerådet, 2010).

231. The Chairmanship of the School Council has in its report for 2010 formulated several recommendations relating to the improvement of teacher appraisal. First and foremost, the chairmanship recommends regular teacher appraisal. The chairmanship assesses professional appraisal of the teaching should be conducted on a regular basis by both school management and other teachers. In addition, the chairmanship recommends school management to work with appraisals of the individual teacher based on feedback from parents and students (Skolerådet, 2010). Thus, emphasis is both placed at strengthening the summative (accountability) and the formative dimensions of teacher appraisal (development), although the first is more implicit than explicit. It is further pointed out that the school management can improve the teaching by using resource persons (ibid.). The development of subject descriptions for resource persons can be an approach (ibid; EVA, 2007a).

232. The work at the schools must, according to the chairmanship, be supported by initiatives at municipal level. The municipalities must ensure that all schools develop ambitious development plans for the school's pedagogical and professional objectives. Further, it is recommended that the

¹⁴ <http://www.uvm.dk/Uddannelse/Folkeskolen/Om%20folkeskolen/Nyheder/Folkeskolen/Udd/Folke/2008/Jan/080125%20Flere%20laerere%20i%20folkeskolen%20efteruddanner%20sig.aspx>

municipalities follow up on how each school work with evaluation and quality development. This can be done by means of the quality reports (Skolerådet, 2010).

233. Finally, the chairmanship finds it vital to continue the development of teacher qualifications in the Folkeskole, and that the quality in training is improved by providing longer educational courses rather than short courses. Also, improved training of school leaders is recommended in order for the managers to be equipped to promote better results in the schools, e.g. by giving continuous feedback to the teachers (Skolerådet, 2010).

234. As regards stakeholder views, please see earlier in this chapter.

6. STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Chapter 6 gives an introduction to the Danish practice and approach to student assessment. The chapter illustrates both the formative and summative assessments of students. The chapter provides an in-depth presentation of the multiple student assessment procedures and instruments, e.g. individual student plans, national tests, school-leaving examinations and participation in the PISA studies. The wide scope in terms of usage of student assessment results is outlined, but the chapter also points to documentation showing the barriers to adequate use of the results. Stakeholder views on a proposal to correct the average grades from the school-leaving examinations conclude the chapter.

6.1 *Current practices*

235. In the Danish school system, several forms of student assessment exist. The chapter will expand on procedures related to both formative and summative assessment as well as national examinations and assessments with and without a civil effect for students. In consequence, the following elements will be addressed:

- The continuous assessment of student learning outcomes in the Folkeskole
- Individual student plans
- Exams and similar assessments – including final exams, the mandatory project assignment and continuous assessment marks
- Testing – including mandatory national tests, locals test and international tests.

6.1.1 *Overall framework for student assessment*

236. As regards the formative and summative student assessment, the Danish approach has previously mainly been concentrated on the use of formative assessment – understood as primary internal school assessments and ongoing assessments. An exception from this has been the school-leaving examinations of the Folkeskole. The changes in the legislation in 2006 entailed more focus on summative assessments of students. The final examinations in the Folkeskole were made obligatory, and mandatory national tests have also been introduced (see previous chapters). The introduction of these two initiatives illustrate a turn towards a rationale consisting of more summative assessment forms as a supplement to the existing formative student assessment. At the same time, it is emphasized from political side that the summative evaluation forms of the students only should constitute a smaller part of overall evaluation obligation in the Folkeskole Act § 13¹⁵.

Box 11: Summative versus formative student assessments

- **Summative evaluations (summative and result-oriented evaluation)** can help teachers and leaders by providing an explicit basis for assessment of the student to assess the extent of compliance with objectives. The intention is to make a summative assessment of the student in order to document the learning outcome. The explicit basis for assessment of the student may take form of tools such as the grading scale, form level objectives and end objectives.
- **Formative evaluations (formative-oriented and forward looking evaluation)** can help teachers and leaders to identify changes in teaching required for the student to progress. The evaluation form can be described as a process seeking to gain knowledge about the students in their learning process; where they are heading; and how they best achieve the objectives.

Source: www.evaluering.uvm.dk; Busch et al. 2004

¹⁵ See for example article in the daily Politiken by former minister of education Bertel Haarder on 4th January 2007 ("Man kan hvad man vil").

6.1.2 Student assessment procedures

237. As regards the **formative student assessment**, it has since 1993 been a national requirement that an ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes should be integrated as part of the teaching (the Folkeskole Act § 13). This requirement should on a daily basis be put into practice in the teaching, when the teachers are assessing the students through their participation in the teaching, participation in various tests, the students' homework, etc. Hence, the continuous assessment of the students' learning outcomes has for nearly two decades been an important framework condition for the evaluation effort in the Danish school. However, an often referred to report documented that teacher practice does not always live up to the formal requirement, and that the majority of teachers are not satisfied with their own evaluation practice (EVA, 2004).

238. The continuous assessment of student learning outcomes in the Folkeskole was in 2006 combined with "Common Objectives". The Common Objectives provide the overall framework for the content of teaching in the Danish Folkeskole (see Chapter 3). In the Folkeskole Act, it is made explicit that the continuous evaluation of student learning outcomes must involve the binding form level objectives as well as the end objectives (The Folkeskole Act § 13 paragraph 2).

239. In the revised legislation from 2006, a national requirement for **individual student plans** was introduced. The student plan is a working tool for teachers in relation to the continuous assessment of student learning outcomes, and thus interrelated with the Folkeskole Act § 13. The student plans are not an evaluation tool as such, but represents a tool to summarize the test and evaluation results obtained by each student. Thus, the aim is to give an overview of the individual student's academic level (see L 170 Draft Law amending the Folkeskole Act). In 2009, the regulation on student plans was changed with a view to integrate the demand for student plans and education plans at form levels 8 and 9. The purpose of the revision was to simplify the administrative burdens on the Folkeskole. The combined student and education plan is to be used in the work with the continuous assessment of students and contribute to the student choice on further education after form level 9. With this starting point, the student plans are aimed at strengthening the basis for planning and organization of the teaching and thus improve the learning outcome for each student (§ 2 BEK No. 750 of 13.07.2009). Thus, the student plans mainly have a formative purpose.

240. In relation to **summative student assessment**, different forms of tests are carried out in the Folkeskole. **The school-leaving examinations** at the 9th form level represent the end of compulsory part of the Folkeskole. The final exams were as referred to earlier, made compulsory in 2006 and consists of five fixed exams and two exams which are extracted randomly (see The Folkeskole Act § 14). Through the diploma obtained at the end of school, the marks follow the students further in the education system and in the transition to the upper secondary education. Hence, they have a civil effect.

241. Besides the final exams, all students should be given a **continuous assessment mark** by the teacher at least twice a year in 8th and 9th form level and an opinion in the subject physical education. The mark must represent the student's academic attainment level (The Folkeskole Act § 13 paragraph 6). Further, the students at the 9th form level must draft a mandatory **project assignment**, which is assessed with a written remark and a mark. The students can also make an assignment by choice, which can be assessed with a written remark and/or a mark by choice of the student (The Folkeskole Act § 13 paragraphs 7 & 8). Besides the results from the final exams, the student's diploma must contain information about the student's participation in the teaching, the most recent ongoing assessment mark, and the opinion in the subject physical education. By choice of the student, a written remark and/or a mark for both the mandatory project assignment and the assignment by choice can be added to the Diploma. Also, written reviews of other subjects than the tests subjects can be added or enclosed the Diploma (The Folkeskole Act § 13 paragraph 9).

242. The 2006 legislation moreover introduced mandatory **national tests**. The tests were introduced as a consequence of the PISA results and the OECD report from 2004. The tests were introduced to meet a need for systematic and objective evaluations, which should entail better performance of the

Danish students (www.evaluering.uvm.dk). The tests, however, have no civil effect. The test results for individual students, classes, schools, municipalities and regions are confidential. The staff at schools (mainly teachers), who receive information about the tests and the test assignment, is with respect to such information subject to secrecy (Act No. 313 19/04/2006). However, calculations on average performance are aggregated to the national level (national performance profile), where each municipality can view their performance compared to the national average.

Box 12: National tests in Denmark – a Pedagogic Tool

As a part of the process of evaluating the students' learning outcomes, compulsory national tests have been introduced. The tests make it possible to follow the individual student's acquisition of knowledge and skills so that the education process can be planned according to the individual student's strengths, weaknesses and potential.

The tests are designed by the Danish Ministry of Education and the National School Agency and are developed under a tender contract with a consortium (COWI A/S in cooperation with a group of private and public companies, as well as educational and research institutions). The consortium is providing both the test system and the test items.

What are the main characteristics of the tests?

The tests are computer based and adaptive, meaning that they are continuously adapting to the individual student. The students answer the questions online via the internet. If a student answers a question incorrectly, then he/she is given an easier question. If the student answers correctly, he/she is given a more difficult question. In this way, it is assured that the tests provide a precise picture of each student's academic level.

Test results are automatically calculated and reports are generated. The teachers do not have to correct the tests, and the teacher can access the test results the next day.

What is tested – and when?

The tests cover seven different subjects: Danish/reading, math, English, geography, biology, physics/chemistry and Danish as second language. The two tests in Danish as second language are voluntary to use for the schools. An overview of the test is given below.

The test system is also a useful tool to assess different groups of students with special needs. For this purpose accessibility for students with different disabilities (e.g. students with reading disabilities, physically disabled, visually handicapped) has been in focus.

Students must complete the following tests:

Form	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Subject									
Danish/reading		X		X		X		X	
Mathematics			X			X			
English							X		
Geography								X	
Biology								X	
Physics/Chemistry								X	
Danish as second language									
X: Compulsory ,									
: Voluntary									

What parts of the subject are tested?

The *Common Objectives* (especially the form level objectives) are objectives of the teaching. What is special about these tests (compared to other norm referenced test on the Danish marked) is

that the Danish national tests assess the performance and the progress in the different profile areas, which are designed to look *as much as possible* like the main areas of the Common Objectives for the teaching.

The national tests can only cover a very small part of the total need for evaluation in the *Folkeskole*. The tests are designed to assess only the parts of the subject that are suitable for this kind of testing. Three separate adaptive test sessions are simultaneously conducted. The profile areas are:

Subject	Profile Area 1	Profile Area 2	Profile Area 3
Danish / reading	Language Comprehension	Decoding	Reading Comprehension
Mathematics	Numbers and algebra	Geometry	Mathematics in use
Physics / Chemistry	Energy	Phenomena, substances and materials	Applications and Perspectives
English	Reading	Vocabulary	Language and linguistic usages
Geography	Natural Geography	Cultural Geography	Applied geography
Biology	The living organism	Living organisms' interaction	Applied biology
Danish as second language	Reading	Vocabulary	Language and linguistic usages

The compulsory testing is carried out between February 1st and April 30th and voluntary use of the testing system in the rest of the school year. Due to the construction of the test system, results for the same student in the same test are directly comparable – even though it is different items from test to test – so the test system is designed for measuring progress and added value.

Who is allowed to see the test results?

Information concerning test results for individual students, groups of students, teams, classes, schools, municipalities and regions, etc., is to be kept confidential, with the exception of the results on the national level. The test results will therefore not be covered under the Public Administration Act's regulations regarding the right to public access to information.

The main purpose of the testing system is to provide the teachers with information for pedagogical purposes. The tests are pedagogical tools which can help the teacher analyze the proficiency of the students and the level of the class. The teacher has access to detailed reports with information about his individual students' result as well as test results on class level for his own class. The school leader is allowed to see the student's overall results, the class results and the results for the school. The local governments/ municipalities have access to results on school level and test results aggregated to municipality level. According to legislation parents must be informed about their child's test results by the school. For this purpose, the computer generates a verbalized description of the results for each student.

The only test results that are accessible for the public are the national average, which are used for monitoring trends in development of academic progress.

243. In addition to the summative dimension of the tests, it is also a working tool for the teacher and a tool for the continuous evaluation of the student's learning outcomes. In this perspective, the test is a tool to be seen "*in coherence with the other elements of the teacher assessment of the student*" (see

L 101 Draft Law amending the Folkeskole Act). And it should be seen as a pedagogical tool for teachers in relation to the organization of the further teaching and the adaption of the teaching to single student needs, so that students can be challenged and improve (www.evaluering.uvm.dk). Thus, the compulsory national tests also have a formative side as a supplement to the explicit outcome assessments, and should hence also be seen as interrelated to The Folkeskole Act § 13 (including the continuous assessment of the student's learning outcomes and the student plan).

244. Besides the nationally established requirements for exams and tests, it should be emphasized that there is an extensive use of local tests initiated by the individual schools and by single teachers. In particular, the local use of tests in reading and math is widespread. It is stated at www.evaluering.uvm.dk that teachers are increasingly using assignments, tests and exams prepared by publishing agencies for the use to evaluate teaching and education courses.

245. In addition to the national elements in the student assessment, Denmark has since 2000 participated in the **PISA studies**. Thus, Denmark has participated in the tests in 2000, 2003, 2006 and 2009 (the latter will be published in 2010).

246. Participation in the standardized tests in the PISA studies gives the possibility to document the performance of Danish students compared to students in other and comparable countries. As described in chapter 2, the Danish results have been unsatisfactory in the published PISA studies so far. The studies have thus helped to highlight the Danish Folkeskole and can together with the OECD review report from 2004 largely be seen as the reason for the introduction of many of the legislative changes in 2003 and 2006.

247. Further, Denmark figures in the following international studies focusing on student assessment: *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study 2006 (PIRLS)* and *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study 2007 (TIMMS)*. Further, references include *Civil Educational Study (CIVED)*, which is studying students' democratic principles, national identity and social context and *Second Information Technology in Education Study 2006 (SITES)*, which among other things study how the students learn through IT.

Box 13: Responsibilities for student assessment

Concerning the responsibility for the student assessment, the School Agency at national level is responsible for developing items for the school-leaving examinations and for the national tests. Locally, it is both the school leaders through the pedagogical leadership and especially the teachers who are in charge of implementing and applying the national requirements for student assessment. They are also responsible for specifying the local test and evaluation practice.

The school leaders' and teachers' responsibility varies within a range from considerable responsibility and wide room to manoeuvre to less responsibility. For example, it is up to individual school to determine the form and the precise design of the student plans and the methods used for the continuous evaluation of the students learning outcome in general. The design of the student plans depends, among other things, on how the student plans in more concrete terms are incorporated with the following factors: The teacher's work with the continuous assessment; the development of teaching and learning objectives and the dialogue between teachers, between teacher-student and teacher-parents.

Most of the school leaders have developed guidelines for the work with the student plans at the schools. Further, many municipalities have established objectives and frameworks for municipal practices concerning the student plans. Typically, these point out the organization of the work and pedagogical aspects. Many municipalities have further developed guides which contain suggestions for the design of student plans (EVA, 2008).

248. A longitudinal dimension to student assessment is implemented with the national tests. If the schools want to do so, they can use the tests in such a manner that they can track the student development over a three year period for each test. The test system is designed to link the four tests in reading and the two tests in math together with a common scale. This will be implemented in the longer run. In addition, it should be mentioned that the student plans are a tool to follow the individual student, since plans should be drafted at least once a year. However, the student plans do not imply quantitative tracking of results, but a more qualitative and school internal tracking of the students.

249. Looking at the student assessment procedures within schools, several tests and evaluation forms exist, as mentioned earlier, locally at the individual schools and in individual classrooms both with a formative and a summative dimension (see descriptions at www.evaluering.uvm.dk). More specifically, the local approaches come into play in the teachers' work with **the ongoing assessment of the student's learning outcomes** (The Folkeskole Act § 13). There are no national requirements for carrying out the continuous evaluation, i.e. no requirements for the application of evaluation in specific forms. This means that even though national requirements exist, the predominantly and widespread practice is locally defined student directed evaluation practices. It should be mentioned that, however, there are requirements of the use of the compulsory national testing and the student plans in the evaluation work (the specific content of the mandatory national tests and student plans are described in the following).

250. The purpose of the continuous evaluation of students' learning outcome is to give the teacher insight into the student's overall school situation, including the student's academic level, the ability of the student to evolve, specific needs for support and challenges as well as the personal and social competencies and well-being of students (www.evaluering.uvm.dk). In line with this is the continuous assessment of the student intended as a means to ensure teaching differentiation – a principle which has also been guiding in the Danish Folkeskole since 1993. The purpose of the differentiated teaching is to adapt the teaching so it challenges each student corresponding to the student's specific level (The Folkeskole Act § 18). Further, the continuous evaluation should function as both a dialogue tool between teachers, between teacher and student and between teacher and parents. Hence, the purpose of continuous evaluation is a formative student assessment in the

classroom due to the development-oriented aim of the ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes.

251. In a study from 2004 about the ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes in the Folkeskole, it is shown that individual teachers use different tools to conduct continuous evaluation. The tools cover both "*process tools, tools to set objectives and evaluate periodically, and measuring tools*" (EVA, 2004). The most commonly used tools are in order of priority: Teacher-student conversations, school-home interviews with the student, the teacher's own written assessments, tests/exams, student plans/student objectives, logbook, school-home interviews without pupil and portfolio. Moreover, other not identified tools exist (ibid).

252. After the **student plan** was made mandatory, this is assumed to play an essential role. However, it should be noted that the student plan is not yet fully used as a tool for continuous evaluation in the day-to-day life at schools (EVA, 2008). As referred to earlier, the student plan has now been integrated with education plans at the upper form levels in the Folkeskole.

253. As mentioned, the student plans are a working tool for teachers in relation to the continuous assessment of student learning outcomes (see also Chapter 2 and 5). The student plans are more concretely supposed to strengthen the basis for planning and organization of the teaching, and thereby increasing the benefit of the teaching for the single student (§ 2 BEK No. 750 of 13.07.2009). According to the declaration about the student plans, all students until the 8th form level should receive a written student plan, which contains information about the teacher's evaluation of the student in all subjects. The student plans must be made at least once a year.

254. The student plans are perceived as a tool for dialogue, professional exchanges between the professionals in the schools, for dialogue with the students and with the parents. In relation to the latter, student plans help to provide a visual feedback to parents – including feedback on the results of the mandatory national tests and learning objectives of the following work for the single student. Student plans are in written form. This requirement (the written form) is new in the sense that evaluation has previously been implemented in oral form. It was introduced in the light of the recommendations from, inter alia, the OECD review in 2004 (www.evaluating.uvm.dk).

255. The student plans have been met with criticism with particular focus on the amount of work affiliated with drafting the student plans (Rambøll, 2009). Many schools have wished for the opportunity to determine which subjects to include in the student plan. It could, for example, be subjects, where a specific development has been identified, or where problems have been detected. As part of the government's deregulation plan, 360 schools have been given the opportunity to test alternative ways to work with the student plans. The experiments are ending in 2011¹⁶.

256. The above illustrates that the practice at school level both takes form of tests of the concrete skills of students (e.g. through reading tests, math tests etc.) as well as tools to ensure the students' reflections, such as the logbook, which inter alia, is used to raise questions as: What new did I learn today/this week? What was good? What was not good? (EVA, 2004). It must be added that the student plans are also intended as a tool for motivating students. A study of the work with the student plans show that 74 percent of the teachers always involve form level objectives/end objectives when they are outlining the student plans (EVA, 2008). Thus, these are largely functioning as performance criteria. In most cases, where the teachers use tests or alternative form of testing, the grading scale or similar scoring systems can be included as reference standards.

¹⁶

http://www.fm.dk/Publikationer/2009/~media/Publikationer/Imported/2009/Mere%20tid%20til%20velfaerd/Mere_tid_til_velfaerd.ashx

Box 14: Instruments for student assessment

At the evaluation portal, the following assessment tools are targeted at student assessment (the examples are not exhaustive):

- *Student Logbook* – the students' own reflection on learning and academic benefits
- *Evaluation Conversations* – a tool for reflexion between teacher and students
- *Every day Evaluation* – ongoing evaluation on the student understanding and outcome of specific teaching courses
- *The Class Parliament* – a structured conversation at class level with a view to solve problems and challenges in the class
- *Portfolio* – focus on processes and products by a student over a specific period
- *Appreciative studies* – reflection and development based on factors which are perceived as meaningful and effective.

Source: www.evaluering.uvm.dk

257. Besides the above, it follows from the Folkeskole Act preamble that the Folkeskole should help to promote the all-rounded development and social skills of the individual student (§ 1). The students' personal and social development as well as well-being are thus to a high degree something that should be integrated in the teaching procedures at schools. In a study about the work with student plans, it is shown that 89 percent of the teachers always or often include something on the students' all-rounded development and social skills in the student plan (EVA, 2008). Thus, social competencies also play a significant role in the Danish student assessment within schools and in the dialogue between school and home.

258. As regards the national examinations with a formal civil effect for students, **the school-leaving examinations** at the 9th form level constitute the completion of the obligatory part of The Folkeskole – in addition also the obligatory project assignment. The purpose is to test students' knowledge and skills at the end of the Folkeskole. The final exams at the 10th form level are voluntary.

259. Participation in the Folkeskole's school-leaving examinations is a requirement for the students to start an upper secondary education, and thus to progress in the education system (declaration for enrolment in the upper secondary educations, BEK No. 694 of 25.06.2009). The individual mark level of the subjects can affect the students' opportunities to be enrolled at an upper secondary education after the Folkeskole. The final exams thus have a civil effect for the students.

260. The final exams cover both oral and written exams. Each student must pass two exams in the subject Danish (one oral and one written) and one exam in each of the subjects Mathematics, English and physics/chemistry. Thus, the final exams cover five fixed exams. In addition, each student must pass two exams which are extracted among the following subjects (respectively within the subject block humanities and within the subject block science):

- Geography
- Biology
- Religion (Kristendomskundskab)
- History
- Social studies
- German or French as optional subject.

261. A student can further choose to attend the Folkeskole's final exams, if the student has ended the teaching in the relevant year within the following optional courses:

- German
- French
- Needlework
- Wood work
- Home economics.

262. The centrally provided **Common Goals** constitutes the overall framework for the content of the Danish Folkeskole, and they function as performance criteria for final exams. Common objectives were in its entirety (including form level objectives) made mandatory in 2003 and contain descriptions of the individual subjects and the purpose of the subjects. In addition, Common Objectives contain a description of the long-term end objectives and the more short-term form level objectives describing what the teaching should bring the student concerning knowledge and skills, partly by the completion of specific form levels and partly by the completion of the subject. In this way, Common Objectives form the basis for the school-level student assessment.

263. The focus of Common Objectives is on the students' knowledge and skills. The aims of the teaching are specifically defined within the individual subjects, but may for example cover language comprehension and language acquisition among communicative skills in languages; life philosophy and ethics in the subject Christianity; mathematical application and working methods in the subject mathematics; and music understanding and music performance in the subject music. Across the subjects, focus is at different aspects covering for example knowledge skills, critical thinking skills, communication skills etc.

Box 15: Examples of end objective and form level objective in the 3rd form level in the subject Mathematic (in extract)

End objective after 9th form level

The teaching should lead to that the students have acquired knowledge and skills that enable them to:

- Ask questions, which are characteristic of mathematics and have an eye for which types of answers that can be expected (thinking skills)
- Recognize, articulate, define and solve mathematical problems and assess the solutions (problem processing competence)
- Perform mathematical modelling and decode, interpret, analyze and evaluate mathematical models (modelling competence)
- Devise and implement own reasoning to justify mathematical claims and monitor and evaluate others' mathematical reasoning (reasoning skills)
- Create, understand and use various representations of mathematical objects, concepts, situations or problems (representation competence)
- Use mathematics as a tool to describe or predict a development or event
- Recognize mathematical possibilities and limitations of description of reality
- Work individually and with others on the treatment of mathematical tasks and problems
- Work with problem solving in a process based on dialogue and on students' different basis and potentials.

Objective after 3rd form level

The teaching should lead to that the students have acquired knowledge and skills that enable the to:

- Identify the natural numbers structure and organization, inclusive the decimal numbers system
- Use counting rhymes and work with sequences and graph ranks
- Participate in the development of methods for addition and subtraction based on personal understanding
- Determine the number by using addition, subtraction and simple multiplication and division within the naturally numbers
- Solve concrete problems using mental arithmetic, calculator, computer and simple written calculations
- Identify examples of the use of decimals and simple fractions from everyday situations.

Source: "Common Objective": <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=125973>.

264. With effect from 2009/2010, new Common Objectives have entered in force. The new objectives were introduced as a consequence of a new government platform. Although the hierarchy

of subjects (subject aims, end objectives, and form level objectives) was not changed, some revisions were made in individual subjects. As an example, mathematical competencies are now an integral part of the subject. Another example is the increased priority given to reading literacy in Danish as a subject¹⁷.

265. The grading scale serves as a reference standard in relation to conducting a concrete assessment of the students. The 7-point scale has recently replaced the 13-point scale, so that the highest mark today is the 12. 02 is the mark for passing. The 7-point scale contains the following marks:

- 12 is given for the outstanding performance (A)
- 10 is given for superior performance (B)
- 7 for a good performance (C)
- 4 is given for the mediocre performance (D)
- 02 is given for the adequate performance (E)
- 00 is given for the inadequate performance (Fx)
- -3 is given for the poor performance (F).

266. Concerning the national assessments with no formal civil effect for students, **the mandatory national tests** were in 2006 adopted in the parliament.

267. The mandatory national tests are IT-based. The tests are adaptive, meaning that they automatically adjust to each student. If the student answers correctly to the first question, the student is afterwards given a more difficult question. If the student's answer is not correct; the next question will be easier. Thus, in this way the test is adapted to each student's level, because the degree of difficulty for the questions is adjusted during the testing process. The tests test the students' knowledge and skills and hence the academic level. The assessments of the students are given through the calculation of a score, which is automatically generated to the teachers (www.evaluering.uvm.dk; www.skolestyrelsen.dk – see also Chapter 2 and 3).

268. As mentioned, the tests must also be seen as a tool for the continuous evaluation of the student learning outcomes. In this view, the tests also constitute a tool for teachers in relation to organizing the further teaching and to adapt teaching to the single student's needs. Thus, the mandatory national tests also have a formative purpose.

269. The tests are conducted as mandatory for the first time in the spring 2010 involving between 550,000-600,000 students. For more information, see box 12.

270. With regard to the variation in the student assessment across schools and educational jurisdictions, there exists, as explained earlier in this chapter, a widespread local practice. The most significant difference is the difference between the requirements for student assessment in respectively the Folkeskole and the private independent schools and independent boarding school for lower secondary students.

271. The private independent schools have legal authority to be free of tests, but can use the tests optionally in certain periods' of time. The students at private independent schools, independent boarding school for lower secondary students, household schools or needlework schools, which teach the 9th form level, take the final exams unless the school has informed the Ministry of Education that it does not conduct exams (www.uvm.dk).

272. In the Danish Free School Association, 28 schools have chosen to be free of exams. Moreover, a number of schools apply every year for the exemption to carry through the final exams in

¹⁷ See presentation from the Ministry of Education on the new Common Objectives, <http://cfu.emu.dk/faellesmaal/>.

Christianity and/or history in the light of the school's values¹⁸. If there is no exam in these subjects, an exam must be conducted in another subject.

273. A private independent school may choose to follow the Common Objectives of the Folkeskole. Otherwise, the individual school determines the school's end objective for the subject and theme areas which exist in the Folkeskole and develop curricula accordingly. The curricula must describe the development to the end objectives, describe which form level or age group is working with the various subject and themes, and describe the work with well-rounded personal development. Further, the school determines the partial objective for the teaching in Danish, arithmetic/mathematics, English, geography, biology and physics/chemistry at certain times in the total lesson plan (www.uvm.dk).

274. Besides the curriculum, the independent boarding school for lower secondary students, household school and needlework school develop a content plan describing teaching and social gathering, and how this leads to the main purpose: life education, general education and democratic education (www.uvm.dk). Further, the schools must conduct evaluations of the students' learning outcome. The schools should also regularly evaluate the overall teaching and draw up a plan for follow-up at the evaluation (Law on free boarding schools, LBK No. 869 of 11.09.2009 § 2 paragraph. 6 and 7). Evaluation should also be seen in context with the demand to schools of providing teaching, which is commensurate with what is generally required in the Folkeskole. The school chooses form and method of evaluation (www.uvm.dk).

275. It is pointed out in the EVA study on the continuous assessment of the student learning outcomes in the Folkeskole that "*the teacher's choice of evaluation tools only to a lesser extent seem to be justified by systematic reflection on what tool best illustrates the purpose of the concrete evaluation*" (EVA, 2004). The choice of evaluation tools stems from demands from above in the hierarchy or arbitrarily and not from reflections on which tool would be most appropriate. Therefore, the study points out that the teachers use a variety of evaluation and testing tools, but they are less diversified and targeted at the specific purposes of the evaluation (ibid).

276. It is sought to improve the teacher evaluation skills through various forms of further training and education. As discussed in chapter 5, a new study shows that so-called *resource persons* – i.e. teachers who have undergone training and acquired expertise within a particular area – have obtained a central role in schools. The study shows more specifically that 8 percent of the schools today have evaluation advisors who mentor colleagues on design and implementation of evaluation (EVA, 2009). See chapter 5 for more on evaluation advisors.

277. Further, it may be mentioned that the evaluation portal functions as a national initiative focusing on the different assessment tools that can help to inspire and strengthen the excellence within student assessment.

6.1.3 Using student assessment results

278. As regards the use of student assessment results, the evaluation and assessment tools accounted for in this chapter are used in different ways. Furthermore, they are interrelated in numerous manners. This will be described in the following.

279. The day-to-day evaluations of students' learning outcomes are, as mentioned, used by the teachers in their professional interchanges on the students' performance and conduct but also – and in particular – in the dialogue with the students and the parents. The objective is to make explicit the academic performance of students and to support the further development and progression of students. The evaluation portal (www.evaluering.uvm.dk) illustrates the wide scope of use of tools

¹⁸ <http://www.friskoler.dk/index.php?id=395>

applied in the continuous evaluation of student learning outcomes. It is earlier in the CBR referred to the 2004 evaluation by EVA which points to a number of challenges in this respect.

280. The individual student plans is as mentioned a mandatory tool in the work with evaluation at schools. They can be referred to as constituting the framework for the *use* of the results emanating from the continuous evaluation of students, since the student plans should incorporate the results of this effort. Several schools have permanent arrangements for the collection of test results as part of the management tasks (cf. chapter 5).

281. One of the important evaluation results to be incorporated in the student plans is the student results from the national tests. The national tests are expected to play an important role as an assessment tool in connection with the continuous assessment of students. The test results should be used in the dialogue with students and parents. As a supplement, average results will be calculated at national level (the national performance profile), and every municipality, school leader and teacher can assess their results in comparison with the national average. In this manner, the results can be used in the political process both nationally and locally in the municipalities.

282. The results from the school-leaving examinations as such are *not* used by the student in the continuing education with a view to apply and enter an upper secondary education. In Denmark, it is only a requirement that the examinations have been completed. It is required that grades for every student are submitted electronically to the agency UNI-C, which makes information on grades public every year at the website of the Ministry of Education. Hence, these can possibly be applied in the political process.

283. In relation to current policies on student retention, it should be mentioned that retention is not a focus area in the Folkeskole, since almost all students are subsequently registered at an upper secondary education after leaving the Folkeskole (Vækstforum, 2009). On the contrary, retention is a major theme at the upper secondary education level with a view to get as many as possible to conclude an upper secondary education.

284. Finally, results from international studies are used nationally as benchmarking data to assess whether or not Danish students are performing adequately compared to other countries. As mentioned earlier, the results from the PISA studies in particular have been used extensively in the political process.

6.2 *Implementation of student assessment*

285. Evidence-based studies and research on the impact on student academic performance of the current Danish approach to student assessment do not exist. However, a number of studies exist on, *inter alia*, the teachers' work on the continuous assessment of student learning outcome and student plans (EVA, 2004; EVA, 2008). As regards student plans, it can be noted that the EVA study points out that the student plans do not yet strengthen the work with continuous assessment as expected. At most schools, the student plans are handed out to students and parents once a year in relation to school-home meetings. "*Hence, most teachers do not bring out the student plan and use it as a tool for the continuous assessment in day-to-day work*" (EVA, 2008).

286. EVA also points to the fact that the continuous evaluation "*far from in all instances have the character of processes, but rather takes the form as on-the-spot assessments at regular intervals*" (EVA, 2004). The study from 2004 states that this should be seen in light of the fact that the use of the different evaluation tools for the continuous assessment is not yet well-defined (*ibid*).

287. So far, there are no comprehensive studies on the impact of the use of national tests in Denmark.

288. Please see appendix A for an overview of different stakeholder views.

6.3 Policy initiatives

289. Apart from the already described initiatives following the legislative changes in 2006 (cf. chapters 2 and 3), recommendations have been formulated in relation to improve the effectiveness of student assessment. The chairmanship of the school council has in their report from 2008 proposed to compensate the average grades from school-leaving examinations for social background. Hence, it is argued that some of the difference in grades from schools can be explained by the socio economic background of the students.

290. Regarding stakeholder views on this initiative, the report from the Chairmanship of the School Council 2008 contains stakeholder opinions on the correction of grades in relation to social background. A selection of different stakeholder opinions to the proposal is summarized below:

- *Local Government Denmark*: KL points out that correction for social background is not relevant in all cases. A disadvantage following from the proposal is that correction for social background can sustain low expectations to students with less privileged backgrounds. Hence, KL recommends that the actual results of students always are referred to when correcting for social background.
- *The Danish Union of Teachers*: DLF points to the risks that the publication of school grades can entail, since schools and classes can be compromised. In relation to social correction, it is stated that it on the one hand can give staff well-deserved credit, but on the other hand it can be misleading in relation to the fact that the same objectives are relevant for all students in the Folkeskole. The objective is to bring all students as far as possible.
- *The National Parents Association*: The association points to the importance of parent commitment and wants more focus to this aspect. The important element is that all students are challenged no matter the social background.
- *Danish Students*: The students are opposed to the proposal, since a social correction will underline differences. Instead, it is recommended to focus on the further training of teachers to assist students with special needs and a less privileged background.

7. OTHER TYPES OF EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Chapter 7 presents other types of evaluation and assessment procedures in the school system in Denmark. It takes a thematic point of departure by presenting evaluation practice within two areas of the Folkeskole, i.e. bilingual children and special needs education respectively.

291. The vast majority of evaluation procedures and initiatives in Denmark are described in the previous chapters. As a supplement, this chapter has its focus on evaluation practice in relation to *thematic areas* of particular interest to school development and performance. The themes selected are bilingual children and special needs education. The two themes comprised in this chapter are mainly described on the basis of research and evaluations carried out at system (national) level, since an overview of municipal and local practice do not exist.

Box 16: Evaluation of new policy initiatives and programmes

Initially, this chapter will start with a description of examples of how new policy initiatives and/or programmes are evaluated.

The first example is a project called “School Development”. School Development consists of five different areas within which municipalities and private independent primary schools can apply for a common fund to make experiments in primary schools in the period 2009-2011. The five areas are:

- Teaching assistants
- Vocational classes
- Intensive and motivating reading sessions in primary schools – turbo Danish
- IT-supported teaching methods
- Local task force for school development.

The two application rounds for funding for experiments have been completed and experiments are carried out in the school years 2009/10 and 2010/11. Each strand will be evaluated by an external evaluator, involving research to assess the impact of the experiments.

The School agency also regularly evaluates various aspects of the national test project. The School Agency has, among others, evaluated the teachers’ use of the website The Evaluation Portal and the first pilot phase of the test. In addition, the report to parents (which is sent to the parents with the results of student’s test) is evaluated and revised based on experience from spring 2010.

In The Ministry of Education, it is a requirement that evaluation is incorporated into most of the new initiatives.

7.1 *Bilingual children*

292. The term *bilingual children* is defined in the Folkeskole Act. It is defined as children having another mother tongue than Danish, and not having learned Danish before contact with the society (e.g. through teaching in the school).

293. It is widely acknowledged that the academic performance of bilingual children is not satisfactory and markedly poorer than ethnic Danish students. Already in the country background report to the 2004 OECD Review, it is pointed out that results in this area are unsatisfactory, and that focus is needed. In 2005, a nation-wide research project – PISA Ethnic – was carried out in Denmark using a sample of 4.000 students at form level 9 in the Folkeskole. The sample had an overrepresentation of students with an immigrant background. The results confirmed the

unsatisfactory status for bilingual children. Almost 50 percent of bilingual children leave the Folkeskole without functional reading skills. Moreover, the scores of bilingual children are poorer than Danish student (Egelund & Tranæs, 2007).

294. Various aspects of the bilingual children area have been studied in recent years. Evaluations, research and inspiration material have been published documenting important aspects of the challenges concerning bilingual children (see reference list). The OECD has also conducted a review in Denmark *OECD Reviews of Migrant Education*. The report concludes that Denmark has already developed a good framework to provide equal opportunities in education and has taken significant steps to strengthen the evaluation culture. There are many examples of promising practice in municipalities and schools, and there is a well developed system of language assessment and language support for preschoolers (OECD, 2010b).

295. Also, a number of policy initiatives have been launched, e.g. a legal requirement on municipalities to offer language stimulation training to bilingual children from the age of three; language screening material for bilingual pre-school children and students; voluntary IT based national tests in Danish as a second language; and a Bilingual Task Force.

296. Elaborating on the above, the municipalities are obliged to conduct a language evaluation of all bilingual children at the age of three. Furthermore, a follow-up on the results should be carried up, if language stimulation is needed. In general, the municipalities should continuously assess, whether or not a child has a need for language stimulation activities. Moreover, all bilingual children should undergo a language evaluation when they start school. This evaluation forms the basis for deciding, whether or not – and to what extent – a child should be given Danish as a second language. Both language evaluations described above provide a knowledge basis related to the language development of the individual bilingual child. Hence, it is possible continuously to target language stimulation activities both before and after entering the school system.

297. However, the evaluation practice as such is rarely addressed in the reports on bilingual children. Rather, the theme is touched upon indirectly. Using the comprehensive report – *This works at our school* – as an example, it highlighted the many important features that schools should take into account to perform well (e.g. early language stimulation, strong leadership, use of tests, strong competencies with teachers in Danish as a second language etc.), but it did not explicitly address evaluation and assessment as a theme. At any rate, an evaluation of the teaching of bilingual children in the Folkeskole (EVA, 2007b) points out that the Common Objectives of the subject Danish as a second language is rarely used as a basis for teaching. Another observation made in the report is the lack of objectives and framework conditions from the municipal level. The chairmanship of the School Council (Skolerådet, 2008) has equally pointed out that the Common Objectives to a higher degree should make clear that Danish as a second language should be a dimension in the other subjects in the Folkeskole.

298. In a publication (guidance document for organising the teaching of bilingual children), the Ministry of Education stresses the importance of evaluation and assessment (Undervisningsministeriet, 2007a). The publication states that teachers continuously should follow the progress in the acquisition of Danish language and literacy within the group of bilingual children in the school. Further, it is stressed that students have to be assessed in accordance with the form level and end objectives in the binding Common Objectives – both in Danish as a second language and other subjects in the Folkeskole. To that end, the voluntary tests in Danish as a second language can be used. The publication also provides ideas for organising the teaching in Danish as a second language. In general, it is made explicit that differentiation and evaluation should be an integral part of the teaching in Danish as a second language.

299. It is noted that a focus is put on Danish as a second language in relation to municipal quality reports. The regulation on quality reports states that information on Danish as a second language should be reported in relation to framework conditions, pedagogical processes and results. Hence,

the municipal quality reports do constitute an important evaluation/documentation tool in relation to bilingual children, and in particular the effort within Danish as a second language.

300. For an overview of studies in the area of bilingual children, please see the memo drafted by the Bilingual Task Force¹⁹. Also, short summaries of projects on immigrants and bilingual children (including a presentation of methodologies) have been drafted by the secretariat of the School Council (www.skoleraadet.dk.).

7.2 *Special needs education*

301. It is required by law in Denmark that special needs education should be provided to children with indications of cognitive, mental or physic handicap. Special needs education comprises numerous interventions and methodologies, e.g. counselling to teachers and parents, technical aid, differential teaching and personal assistance. It is generally encouraged to include as many students as possible in the mainstream class. Hence, one approach can consist of support to a student from an assisting teacher for a number of hours in the mainstream class. More comprehensive interventions can be to provide teaching of students with special needs in special classes or in separate special schools. After the reform of the public sector in Denmark in 2007 (cf. chapter 1), the municipalities are responsible for the area of special needs education – including extensive special needs education which was previously the responsibility of the counties.

302. Evaluation is not a new phenomenon within special needs education. As mentioned earlier in this report, individual student plans were introduced as a requirement for all students in the Danish Folkeskole from the school year 2006/2007. However, working with individual plans has long been a tradition in relation to students with special needs (AKF & DPU, 2007). The use of tests is equally an often used evaluation tool in this area (ibid). Research and studies suggest that evaluation and documentation are rather common in relation to special needs education, but that the effort varies considerably from school to school (AKF & DPU, 2007; EVA, 2007c). An evaluation from the Danish Evaluation Institute points to the fact that evaluation takes place at teacher level, whereas the combined knowledge on the impact of special needs education at school level is rather limited. Both reports describe that room for improvement exists in terms of documenting and evaluating the special needs initiatives, and it is stated that an increasing interest is seen in relation to the work with evaluation, in particular with school leaders (AKF & DPU, 2007).

303. In 2007, the Ministry of Education issued a publication specifically targeted at evaluation with the area of special needs education (Undervisningsministeriet, 2007b). It was launched as a consequence of the changes in evaluation requirements concerning *all* students in the Folkeskole (cf. chapter 2). The publication – entitled “*We can try*” – gives good practice examples for carrying out evaluations and assessment in special needs education. The publication takes as its starting point different students with special needs and describes the different evaluation tools applicable in relation to these students.

¹⁹ <http://www.skolestyrelsen.dk/sitecore/content/tstf/fakta%20om%20osprogede/~media/Tstf/PDF/S%20fakta%20om%20osprogede%20%20Faktaark%20om%20undersogelser/S%20fakta%20om%20osprogede%20%20Faktaark%20om%20unders%20C3%B8gelsel%20PDF%20fil.ashx>

ANNEX 1: KEY STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

	Local Government Denmark	The Danish Union of Teachers	The Danish Association of School Leaders	The National Parents Association	The Association of Danish Pupils	BKF
In Danish:	Kommunernes Landsforening (KL)	Danmarks Lærereforening (DLF)	Skolelederforeningen	Skole & Samfund	Danske Skoleelever	Børne- og Kulturchefforeningen (BKF)
Homepages:	www.kl.dk	www.dlf.org	www.skolelederne.org	www.skoleogsamfund.dk	www.skoleelever.dk	www.bkchefer.dk
Representatives of:	the municipalities	the teachers	the headmasters	the parents	The students	Municipal managers of the school area
1) NATIONAL TESTS						
View on national tests	<p>Reserved.</p> <p>There is a need for other and more flexible test opportunities as completion of the school course.</p> <p>Would like to discuss the use and disclosure of test results. KL will look at lessons learned from abroad and translate them into a Danish context.</p>	<p>No support.</p> <p>The national tests are designed so that they act as a control instrument rather than as a pedagogical tool. The tests are testing only parts of the subjects and not the subject in general. DLF believes that there is a risk that teaching will be adapted to the test. It can not be proved that national testing leads to better results.</p> <p>The control and centralization can further weaken the responsibility and commitment at the schools and for the single teacher.</p>	<p>Reserved.</p> <p>Reflections on the need of them.</p> <p>Conducting the tests in relation to specific groups is difficult and likewise to get exemption for not taking the test for this group.</p>	<p>Supportive.</p>	<p>No support.</p> <p>The tests are not reflecting the complexity or concrete themes of the teaching in the class. Therefore the tests are more or less a waste of time for the students and the teachers.</p> <p>The tests are an expression of a political pressure on the government more than a wish to implement a good evaluation culture in the Danish school system.</p>	<p>Reserved.</p> <p>Conducting the tests in relation to specific groups is difficult and likewise to get exemption for not taking the test for this group.</p>

	Local Government Denmark	The Danish Union of Teachers	The Danish Association of School Leaders	The National Parents Association	The Association of Danish Pupils	BKF
Alternative to the existing model	Demand a fundamental discussion about the use and extent of tests and examinations.	It should be left to the individual school to determine what tests are needed. Focus on tests that are useful in teaching. And there exists a wide range of diagnostic tests which can supplement the teachers' different approaches to evaluation. The tests should be used when needed. DLF has developed an alternative to national tests in the form of a quality assurance system in which teachers assess students' proficiency in relation to the attainment objectives.	It should be left to the individual school to determine what tests are needed. And there exists a wide range of diagnostic tests which can supplement the teachers' different approaches to evaluation.	-----	It should be left to the teachers to determine whether to use the tests or not.	More local assessments in interaction between school, home and parents. - That the requirement did not apply all school forms.
2) QUALITY REPORTS						
View on quality reports	Partly supportive. Seen as contributing to increased transparency and as a good documentation and dialogue tool. But very inflexible for the municipalities, especially with regard to the requirements. Municipalities lack the possibility to produce reports every second year instead of every year. Like to focus more on content rather than outcomes.	Partly supportive. Too detailed requirements impede the dialogue between the municipal district council and the individual schools about their results. Likewise in relation to the school involvement and commitment to fulfilling the purpose of the quality report.	Partly supportive. They are seen as a good evaluation tool and can bring concrete changes at the single schools and at the single class. But very critical towards the degree of details of the requirements, the extra work they induce, the focus only on quantitative data, and the deadlines. They are generally too inflexible.	Supportive. They are seen as providing information about the school system and about the single schools, which otherwise would be difficult to get for the citizens and for the school boards.	Supportive.	Mostly supportive. Are seen as good and meaningful tool concerning quality development and quality control. But critical towards inflexible deadlines and requirements to the content, and the extra administrative work they induce.

	Local Government Denmark	The Danish Union of Teachers	The Danish Association of School Leaders	The National Parents Association	The Association of Danish Pupils	BKF
Alternative to the existing model	More local room for decisions and reduce the number of obligatory indicators to the main areas (require a change of rules)	Reduce the number of obligatory indicators to the main areas, and/or only a centrally made framework without specific demands, and introduce a locally rooted quality system. (requires a change of rules). DLF has developed a quality system that is dialogue based and involving teachers' reflections on subjects and teaching.	Reduce the number of obligatory indicators to the main areas, and each municipality should determine the form and content of the reports (require a change of rules)	More local decision about the work with the reports.		Reduce the number of obligatory indicators to the main areas, and/or only a centrally made framework without so specific demands and more flexible deadlines and (require a change of rules)
3) INDIVIDUAL STUDENT PLANS						
View on student plans	Mainly supportive. Seen as having a good purpose and being a good tool to strengthen the evaluation culture. Problems: 1. The municipalities and schools cannot decide which subjects are included in student plan.	Limited support. DLF supports the intention to develop a better basis for dialogue with parents about students' academic performance. The very detailed national framework for designing student plans impede local ownership and may mean a "mechanical" application of the student plan, where teachers fill out forms in order to "get it right" instead of getting a useful tool. Problems: 1. Lack of flexibility. 2. The requirement that all subjects are included	Partly supportive 1. Lack of coordination between the student plan, education book and education plan. 2. A lot of work with preparing student plans for all subjects.	Very supportive. The demand of the written form increase the quality of the cooperation between the school and the parents and is a precondition for differentiated teaching	Supportive. The student plans are qualifying the teachers work with the development of the individual pupil in the long term. But the model needs a bit more flexibility.	Partly supportive 1. Lack of coordination between the student plan, education book and education plan. 2. A lot of work with preparing student plans for all subjects.

	Local Government Denmark	The Danish Union of Teachers	The Danish Association of School Leaders	The National Parents Association	The Association of Danish Pupils	BKF
		explicitly in the plan is an obstacle to a holistic approach to student learning outcomes. 3. Too time consuming.				
Alternative to the existing model	Ad 1) The school assesses what is important to include in the student plan (requires a modification of the Folkeskole Act)	Ad 1) The school assesses what is important to include in the student plan (requires a modification of the Folkeskole Act) Ad 2) replace student plans with interview and summaries between school and the parents	Ad 1) The education plan should replace the student plan at 9 th form level Ad 2) The school assesses what is important to include in the student plan Focus on subject areas rather than on all subjects. (requires a modification of the Folkeskole Act)	The student plan is uploaded electronically, and the plans can continuously be modified	It should be left to the school to determine, which subjects to be included in the student plans from year to year, but a subject must not be excluded from the plan for more than two years.	Ad 1) Simplification and coordination the rules of student plan, education book and plan. Ad 2) Focus on subject areas in rather than on all subjects.
4) PISA STUDY						
View on PISA study	Give rise to ask qualified questions on how we can make the school even better. KL have reservations in relation to harmonized tests - is worried that it provides standardized practices.	PISA is a comparative framework that can be used to discuss own practice. But generally, it is very restricted and not useful for determining objectives (because it does not consider local and national objectives for the school) and neither useful for detecting the reasons for problems in relation to the achieved results.	Give rise to ask qualified questions on how we can make the school even better. But critical because the study only measures on individual subjects and not on other important skills such as e.g. creativity, independence and teamwork, which is also an important part of the leaning outcome in the Danish Folkeskole.	Give rise to ask qualified questions on how we can make the school even better.	Give rise to ask qualified questions on how we can make the school even better, but the study only measures on individual subjects and not on other important skills such as e.g. creativity, independence and teamwork, which is also an important part of the leaning outcome.	Give rise to ask qualified questions on how we can make the school even better.

	Local Government Denmark	The Danish Union of Teachers	The Danish Association of School Leaders	The National Parents Association	The Association of Danish Pupils	BKF
5) THE RESPONSE ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2004 OECD REVIEW						
<p><u>1. Create a debate about evaluation culture</u> In collaboration with KL, DLF and other relevant parties the minister facilitates a public debate on the expectations, policies, practices and Folkeskole's performance.</p>	Agrees	Agrees	Agrees	Agree	Agree	Agree
<p><u>2. Establish a agency for supervision of education in the municipalities</u> The Minister establishes within the Department an agency to monitor education in the municipalities.</p>	Disagree, but as an alternative to the central control, it is suggested to systematize and extend the municipal supervision with the schools	Partly disagrees DLF supporters a stronger system of advisers so they can engage in dialogue with municipalities and schools on students' academic performance.	Disagrees	Partly agree – underline the need of an appeals board, if municipalities and schools do not meet the legal requirements.	Partly agree – underline the need of an appeals board, if municipalities and schools do not meet the legal requirements.	Disagree
<p><u>3. Establish national performance profile (snapshot)</u> The Minister authorizes EVA to conduct annual studies of students of different ages in selected subjects/topics in order to establish a national performance profile (snapshot).</p>	Relevant with <i>snapshots</i> of students in different ages in selected subjects. But underline that there must be a learning potential in the <i>snapshots</i> . They warn against national tests in larger amounts.	Fear that a performance profile would not cover the Common Objectives. Insecure as to whether <i>snapshots</i> will give a real picture of the students' learning outcome, because the tests only focus narrowly on one subject field. DLF is against data collection used for ranking.	A <i>snapshot</i> which is connected to chosen form level objectives could be interesting to follow as a longitudinal study	Agree with the main purpose of the recommendation.	Agree – but the selected topic must cover all the purposes of the Folkeskole including also creativity, independence and teamwork.	---

	Local Government Denmark	The Danish Union of Teachers	The Danish Association of School Leaders	The National Parents Association	The Association of Danish Pupils	BKF
<p><u>4. Develop criteria based test</u> Minister orders a development project for the establishment of criteria based tests in selected subjects.</p>	Positive concerning the criteria based tests, if the tests can be used in a meaningful way in connection with the continuous evaluation	No support. Mean that OECD reason for suggesting criteria based tests is to avoid that the students suffer too many failures with repeated tests. On this basis, the tests will be unnecessary in a Danish context	---	---	---	---
<p><u>5. Develop assessment methods and materials</u> The Minister initiates an evaluation of various assessment methods and materials.</p>	Agrees	Agrees	Agrees	Agree	Agree	Agree
<p><u>6. Develop methods for teachers' self-evaluation</u> Together with KL and DLF, the Minister finances a research project to support the development and dissemination of methods for teacher self-evaluation</p>	Agrees	Agrees	Agrees	Agree	Agree. Suggest that the project should be expanded so it also includes the student evaluation of the teachers.	Agree
<p><u>7. Development of expected standards</u> Together with KL and DLF the Minister create a working group to determine the expected standards for different age groups in the curriculum's main subject.</p>	Agree, but underline that the form level objectives in Common Objectives also should be seen as standards	Agree, but underline that the form level objectives in Common Objectives also should be seen as standards. We already have common goals and attainment objectives. It is essential that the attainment objectives are maintained as teaching objectives and are not developed into	Agree, but underline that the form level objectives in Common Objectives also should be seen as standards	Agree, but underline that the form level objectives in Common Objectives also should be seen as standards	Agree, but underline that the form level objectives in Common Objectives also should be seen as standards	Agree, but underline that the form level objectives in Common Objectives also should be seen as standards

	Local Government Denmark	The Danish Union of Teachers	The Danish Association of School Leaders	The National Parents Association	The Association of Danish Pupils	BKF
		differentiated learning objectives.				
<p>8. Examine students independent work The Minister establishes a second working group to examine the effectiveness of different types of students' independent work for the use in schools and after school care</p>	Agree. But underline that the theme is related to issues about the "inclusive school" and suggests that the working group also focus on inclusiveness, differentiation and evaluation methods.	Agree, but DLF requires that such a Working Group takes the SFO special tasks as starting point.	Agree, but (-) the concept of homework must be challenged and developed	Agree	Agree	Agree, but wishes that the effect of the students homework is examined closer
<p>9. Create a Danish model for assessing students learning outcome Together with KL and DLF the Minister launch a development project to create a Danish model for assessing students' outcome of the schooling</p>	Agrees	Agrees	Agree, but with reservations: support the strengthening of the continuous evaluation and new tools for this, but is reserved to the nationwide tests that are made compulsory for schools and municipalities.	Agree	Agree	Agree, but with reservations: support the strengthening of the continuous evaluation and new tools for this, but is reserved to the nationwide tests that are made compulsory for schools and municipalities.
<p>10. Establish a team for school development at each municipality Each municipality (or consortium of local authorities) make a team for school development, which can support schools with problems</p>	Agrees but with reservation: the municipalities already support the school development in several ways	Agrees but with reservation: the municipalities already support the school development in several ways	Disagrees. It is the municipalities own responsibility to decide about the school development	Agee	Agree	Disagree. . It is the municipalities own responsibility to decide about the school development

	Local Government Denmark	The Danish Union of Teachers	The Danish Association of School Leaders	The National Parents Association	The Association of Danish Pupils	BKF
<p><u>11. Establish a research and statistical unit</u> Copenhagen – as the largest city – considers developing a research and statistical unit to control relevant data and analyze of the concept “added value”.</p>	Agrees	Disagree. Because they mean it will entail a bureaucratic system, where the real outcome is limited because the analysis will be very insignificant and it requires standardised testing and central registration of the single student.	Agrees	Agree	Agree	Agree
<p><u>32. implementation of policy about diagnostic tests and evaluations</u> Implement a policy based on the principle that diagnostic tests and evaluations are not published in form of tables that can rank schools</p>	Agrees	Agrees	Agrees	Agree	Agree	Agree
6) RELATED ASSESSMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SCHOOL COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT: “REPORT ON EVALUATION AND QUALITY CONTROL IN THE FOLKESKOLE 2010”						
<p><u>Acquisition of academic competences</u> - the Danish students should be in the top 5 in the PISA studies - The level of ambition must be raised, so the students progress approximately one year longer in terms of competencies and skills during the entire school, equivalent to about four</p>	Mainly disagrees. Sceptical toward an increase of the Common Objectives for the purpose of improving the ranking in PISA. The Common objectives are seen as sufficiently ambitious concerning the traditional academic knowledge and skills. However, skills as working innovatively, enter into social relations	Disagrees. Disagrees with a PISA-ranking as an objective. It is not seen as an ambitious objective for the Folkeskole, but as a distortion of the purpose of the Folkeskole and of the objectives of the subjects. It should only be used as a basis for debate. Disagrees with a reform of the Common objectives.	Mainly disagrees. Agrees with ambitious objectives for the Folkeskole, but international measures may not be the only parameter.		Agree, but strongly suggest that we set up a couple of other goal for the school – the PISA study must not be the only ranking scale, which the School Council also recommends.	Mainly disagree. Supportive toward ambitious objective for the Folkeskole. Good academic skills are very important, but relational, existential, ethical and innovative skills are important as well. Disagree with a reform of the Common Objectives. The PISA study does not inform about the students’

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weeks each (including a reform of the Common Objectives) - The process to reform the Common Objectives should be started right away	and generate creative solutions to complex problems may be a part of the objectives	Concerning a higher ambition level: It is difficult to see how we can enhance students' academic level with a form level when teaching hours in many municipalities will be reduced.				competencies in relation to the Common Objectives.
<u>Promote students' comprehensive development (objective)</u> - Adopt Common Objectives, including form level objective and end objective for the students comprehensive development - Develop a tool to evaluate students' comprehensive development corresponding to the step objectives.	Supportive. The students' comprehensive development and skill are seen as very important. But recommend starting with specific objective on experimental basis.	Disagrees. The students' comprehensive development can and must not be separated from the students' academic development. Moreover, the comprehensive development already is covered in the Common Objectives.	Support the general inclusion of the students' comprehensive development.	Supportive towards the focus on the students' comprehensive development and underline the importance of different working forms, the physical and psychical teaching surroundings	Support the general inclusion of the students' comprehensive development.	Supportive toward focusing on the students' comprehensive development and to creating measures and evaluation tool which focus on this development.
<u>Strengthening of the evaluation culture in the teachers' teaching practice</u> - Regular professional evaluation of the teaching from both school management and from other teachers - The school management can work with evaluations of each teacher from parents and students	Mainly supportive towards a strengthening of the evaluation culture, but there are already several tools for the school leaders to assess the teachers' teaching skills: e.g. "Walk through"-method, different observations, dialogues, discussion of year plans with the individual teacher	Mainly supportive. Support more and better feedback to the teachers from the management, especially in relation to the teaching, e.g. by the school leader was more often attending the teaching and by establishing more systematic framework for evaluation and feedback	Supportive. Support a strengthening of the evaluation culture; with a focus on forward looking evaluation that aim at optimizing the daily practice. And support more systematic evaluation from the school leader of the teachers' teaching.	Supportive toward strengthening of the evaluation culture. Underline that the school board's role as a supervisor of the school's business.	Strongly supportive.	Partly supportive. Generally support a stronger evaluation culture, but with other means that international test etc. Admit that there is need for clarifying how good leadership is put into practice. Underline that there are many way for the school leader to follow the

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- Development and/or use of effective tools for school management to follow the teachers' professional and pedagogical practices	and with teams. No need for new tool.	on the teachers' teaching at the schools.				teachers' teaching.
<u>A knowledge based school development (methods)</u> The school can benefit from the now quite extensive international research within the school area	Very supportive towards more research based knowledge about the school and evaluations and integration of this knowledge in the school practice.	Supportive.	Very supportive towards a need for better interaction between research and practice. E.g. in partnerships between research institutions, profession schools and municipalities.	Supportive toward that the school should in a higher degree be govern by evidence-based research	Supportive	Very supportive towards a need for better interaction between research and practice. E.g. in partnerships between research institutions, profession schools and municipalities.

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