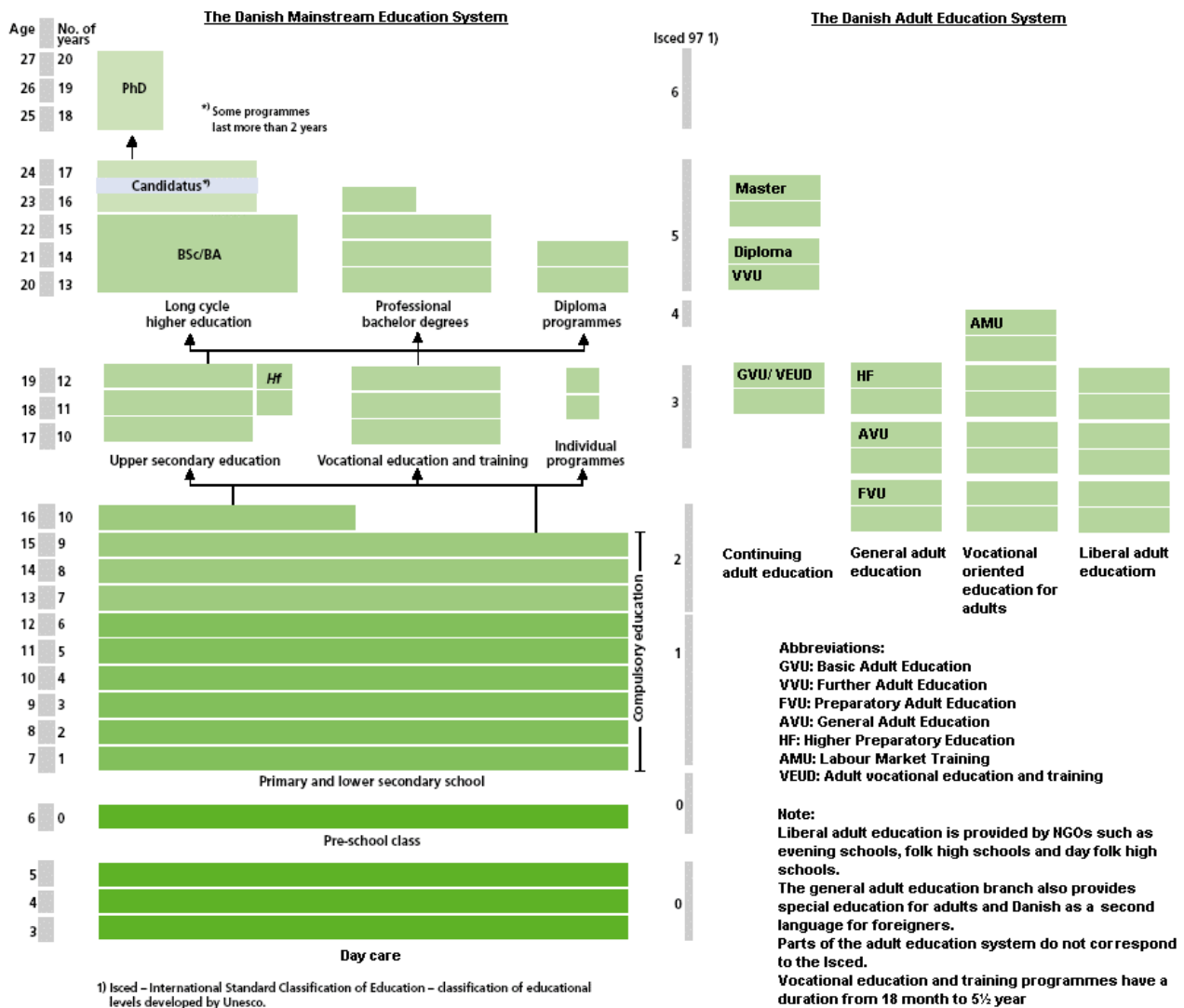


Factsheet on Denmark: Education and Training

The Danish education system is divided into a number of main areas according to level and branch of education. The main areas are presented below:



Primary and lower secondary education

Education is compulsory for nine years in Denmark. The majority of children (87.5%) begin their formal education in the nine-year public school system. Alternatively, parents can opt for private school with government financial support or home schooling. Prior to this, the vast majority of children have attended the non-compulsory year in pre-school class, and in addition, most parents have made use of the public day care system, where the children are prepared for school life on the basis of explicit developmental goals. The day care system and the school system are decentralised.

The municipality owns the institutions and can allocate resources and set priorities within the framework established by the government. The government, for example, sets the minimum number of hours a child is required to attend school, defines objectives for the school subjects, and lays down obligatory attainment targets for the core subjects. A leaving examination completes the nine years of education. However, pupils can also choose to continue at school for a one-year, non-compulsory 10th form.

Teachers in the primary and lower secondary system are educated as professional bachelors at teacher training colleges. The teacher training qualification gives access to the teaching profession in the entire primary and lower secondary branch.

Upper secondary education – general and vocational

General upper secondary education programmes not only provide students with an all-round education but they also prepare them for higher education, and in principle they give access to all higher education programmes. The extent to which an applicant has access to a specific programme depends on the particular admission requirements.

The four different three-year courses have a common structure consisting of a six-month general programme followed by a two-and-a-half year programme in the students' chosen areas of specialised study. The Higher Preparatory Examination Course (HF) exists in two forms – a two-year option intended for young people and a single-subject option intended for adult learners.

In the three-year courses, there are a large number of compulsory subjects, elective subjects and individual choice of subject areas.

The Danish vocational education and training system – VET - is based on dual training, whereby training alternates between education and training in a vocational college, and in-company training.

Trainees can either enrol on a basic programme or start in an enterprise with a training contract. In both cases, school periods (1/3 of the entire training programme) will alternate with periods of in-company training (2/3).

The VET programmes include a basic course, which is broad in its scope, and a main course, in which the trainee specialises within a craft or a trade. Most VET programmes have a duration of four years, but the system encompasses programmes from 18 months to 5½ years.

Out of the 2003 year group, 80.3% is expected to complete either a general or vocational upper secondary programme, and approx. 11% will take both a general and a vocational programme.

Higher education

The Danish higher education system is divided into three levels, according to duration:

- Vocational academy programmes (short-cycle higher education programmes), which enrol 16% of students in higher education in technical colleges or vocational academies.
- Profession-oriented bachelor programmes offered at Centres for Higher Education (CVU)/University Colleges (medium-cycle higher education programmes), which enrol 44% of students in higher education.

- University programmes (long-cycle higher education programmes), which enrol 40% of students in higher education. Another factsheet presents the Danish university system.

The higher education programmes provide occupational competences and build on upper secondary programmes. They are theory-based programmes, some of which include a practical element, which is especially true of the profession-oriented bachelor programmes and to a limited extent the vocational academy programmes.

Today, approx. 45% of a year group completes a higher education programme, and this figure is rising.

Adult education

The Danish adult education system gives the population access to further education and continuing training. Via the general adult education system, low-skilled adults can upgrade their formal qualifications and eventually get access to a new start in mainstream education. Programmes on offer in the general adult education system include special needs education and Danish as a second language. Continuing programmes include profession-oriented diploma and master's programmes. The vocationally oriented branch, which is governed by the tripartite system (state, trade unions and employers' association), offers education related to the needs of the labour market and sustained employability for individuals - 47% of the labour force participates in job-related continuing education and training; which is the highest level among the OECD member countries. Private companies also provide a wide range of adult learning courses, and companies undertake substantial internal education activity. Liberal adult education provided by NGOs offer education related to individual prerequisites, interests and hobbies.

Challenges and initiatives

Primary and lower secondary schools

Academic standards do not match the expectations arising from the fact that the Danish school system is one of the world's most expensive. Approx. 17% of children leave school without being able to read properly (PISA 2003).

Key initiatives:

- Academic standards need to be raised considerably in the core subjects of reading, mathematics, science and English.
- Evaluation and testing should give teachers, parents and pupils a clear idea of where particular focus is needed.
- A reform of the teacher training system should make the teachers subject specialists.
- The school's management should be strong and visible, and the local authorities' responsibility for the academic results should be crystal clear.

General and vocational upper secondary education

Today, virtually all young people enrol in either general or vocational upper secondary education, but many drop out. It is the government's objective that 95% of a cohort should complete an upper secondary education in 2015. Owing to the necessity of many more students completing an upper secondary education, this places demands especially on the competence of the VET system.

Key initiatives:

- Municipalities should have clear responsibility for ensuring that all young people complete a general or vocational upper secondary education programme.
- Reform of the vocational education and training (VET) programmes, with the aim of reducing the drop-out rate and providing programmes suitable for both strong and weak learners.

Higher education

Too few enrol in higher education and far too many drop out. The completion rate should improve from 45% to 50% by 2015. Furthermore, too few young people choose education programmes within engineering, science, ICT and health.

Key initiatives:

- Educational institutions should be obliged via development contracts and economic incentives to take steps to retain students.
- New attractive education programmes should increase enrolment in programmes within engineering, science, ICT and health.
- Guidance services should be strengthened.
- All institutions engaged in providing medium-cycle higher education should be gathered in few multi-disciplinary university colleges with academically strong and modern study environments.
- New profession-oriented and practice-oriented education programmes should be developed.
- An independent accreditation body should be set up to evaluate all higher education programmes according to international standards. Accreditation should be a precondition for public funding.

See also the factsheet on the Danish universities.

Adult education

Everyone should engage in lifelong learning. In March 2006, the Government and the social partners agreed on the need to strengthen adult education and continuing training.

Other key initiatives

- All young people should complete an education programme with a global perspective. Many more young Danes should have the opportunity to pursue a study period abroad. And it should be made more attractive for highly qualified foreign students and teachers to come to Denmark.
- The professionalism of guidance services should be improved.

Further information:

“Progress, Innovation and Cohesion – A summary of the Government’s Globalisation Strategy” (May 2006). Available in English at www.globalisation.dk

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