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1. Intro

- I would like to thank the Chilean authorities and the OECD for arranging this highly relevant forum. And thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak here – it is a privilege. I believe that the topics on the agenda for the next two days are all of our deepest concern. I would like to address a few of them.

2. Globalisation – the Process

- Globalisation is a reality. Globalisation is making the world smaller. The foundations for economic and cultural development are now defined in the global theatre. We are becoming more interdependent and no nation can define its sovereignty within its geographical borders.
- Globalisation presents promising options for business, citizens and institutions. Some people fear that they will be left behind, and some believe that globalisation raises new barriers. I don't believe in that.
- In Denmark we have experienced that outsourcing has taken many jobs out of the country – but even more new jobs have been created during the process. The explanation is first and foremost Denmark's flexible labour market. Employers can easily hire skilled staff and thanks to our social security system they can also easily diminish their staff. We call it "flexicurity". Many other countries have started looking our way in order to establish similar systems. In a time with increasing outsourcing, the flexicurity model is a tremendous advantage regarding employment - and even more so regarding to reemployment.
- Today a majority of enterprises are organized trans-nationally - they employ staff with different national backgrounds. Cross-border production, international network and strategic alliances are now recognized as preconditions to growth. International competition is increasing and mobility of international labour will increase. This is also the trend on education markets – the number of students studying abroad will rise in the years to come.
- In order to develop strategies for utilising the benefits of globalisation our government has established a new commission. The commission is composed by the important stakeholders and the ministers for the involved policy-domains – including my own. The prime-minister is chairing the commission and we expect to present a comprehensive and coherent strategy for the Danish response to globalisation – including the internationalisation of our education.

3. Options for Individuals

- Seen from an individual's point of view globalisation offers new opportunities for exploiting the personal potential of the individual.
- Globalisation is a gift for all who are prepared to act, take responsibility and perceive the world in new creative patterns.
- But the ability to make a successful life in the context of globalisation will depend on the acquisition of relevant competencies - first of all through an initial education. But the demand for competencies will change and the initial education must be maintained and supplemented through lifelong learning.

4. The Challenge for Societies

- The first concern is to maintain a competitive and flexible workforce that is highly motivated and prepared to respond to rapidly changing demands.
- Growth at national level is dependent on the ability to develop, maintain and attract qualified staff. But as the so-called "knowledge economy" emerges a new precondition for sustainable economic development has become evident: The ability to innovate, do research and develop – and last but not least to apply the results of such processes in businesses and industries. It is obvious that education more than ever before is the key to success.

5. Initial Education

- Initial education must provide a good starting point for all. After completing compulsory education students must have obtained the key competencies needed for success in their next steps into education, work and civic life.
- Competencies are composed of skills, knowledge and attitudes. The way education policy is applied may differ from one country to another. However challenges like drop out rates, acquisition of foreign language competences and natural sciences are shared among most countries. We see how these issues turn up repeatedly on international conference-agendas.

6. Lifelong Learning

- Lifelong learning is another topic of common interest. But in this case we find a more diverse pattern from one country to another.
- In some countries lifelong learning is a brand new feature and the challenge in many of these countries is plain capacity building. Other countries have a long tradition for adult education and training. Some of these countries are re-adjusting in order to meet the needs of the learners and the labour market.
- Others are seeking new ways in financing the expanding demand. And the new way of looking at lifelong learning also includes the topic of accreditation and valuation.
- Denmark belongs to the group of countries with a long and strong tradition for lifelong learning. Our adults have a number of options for education and they are being used. So we are well under way – but this is not enough. In autumn 2004 the government set up a committee including the social

partners for further discussions on how to promote the aim of lifelong learning and continuing training for all.

7. Vocational Education and Training

- The role and the status of vocational education and training has been underestimated and undervalued. Vocational education and training provides new opportunities to young people with no or little academic aspiration.
- In fact some of those who “only” educate themselves to become a skilled craftsman eventually fill the highest positions in our society – in public or private organizations.
- We strive to create a transparent system, with no dead-end streets and designed in a lifelong learning-perspective. More young people should be encouraged to choose the vocational route. If we keep an open door to mainstream education for all, there is absolutely no reason for young people to avoid the vocational route.
- And we should not forget that – by the end of the day - practical solutions are those we all live from. A philosopher¹ once said: “Practice that is when everything works even though you can’t explain why it works. Theory that is when nothing works, but you have a lot of explanations to why it doesn’t work.” Let us hope that we do not end up by unifying theory and practice in the sense that nothing works and we can’t explain why!
- We must make sure that vocational education and training is valued to a higher extent in the public. The affiliation between vocational education and training and innovation should be strengthened.
- Furthermore, vocational education and training should be differentiated to a higher extent, so that it is possible to obtain a certificate at different levels in the same branch or discipline. We believe – in the Danish context – that such changes are a pre-condition for reaching our main objective – that 95 per cent of a cohort complete a youth education.

8. Research and Development

- Innovation, creativity and the results of research and development must secure growth in business and industry. But the same statement applies to education.
- So far we have not reached golden standards in our education institutions. Therefore ongoing innovation, research and development in education itself are preconditions for progress. The OECD acknowledged this by launching the review program “Educational Research and Development”. Denmark took part in the review and the results are promising. We are in particular focussed on the recommendations in the review to develop a culture of evaluation in our schools and to enhance and improve leadership.

9. Tertiary Education

- As far as tertiary education is concerned, we see that internationalisation of education is increasing. The international market for education is expanding.

¹ Oscar Negt i ”Geschichte und Eigensinn”.

- However not all providers seem to be equally responsible. It is necessary to take measures to secure quality of deliverance and such initiatives must be taken in international cooperation. The initiative taken by the OECD and UNESCO to provide guidelines to ensure quality in cross border provision of higher education is a first and important step. And we got the message: More internationalisation – but also better standards.
- Quality assurance is a precondition for a vibrant and diverse international education sector. That is also a precondition for a responsible, accountable and sustainable market for education. This will be for the benefit of the students - first and foremost – but certainly also for the businesses and industries that ultimately employ them.

10. International Cooperation

- Even though education is and will remain a matter of national responsibility international cooperation is needed and will increase in the future.
- In Europe the Lisbon process and other joint efforts in the sector (the Bologna-process in higher education and the Copenhagen-process in vocational education and training) show how we can work together and still maintain education as a domain for national policy. International evaluation and assessments, comparative studies, “what works-studies” and reviews of education policy are activities that we can all benefit from.
- It is my hope that this forum will bring us further down the road. I wish you a fruitful meeting. I wish to thank the OECD and the Chilean authorities for giving me the floor for these reflections - and I thank you all for your kind attention.