

# **OECD Country Note**

## ***Early Childhood Education and Care Policy***

***in***

***Denmark***

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Purposes of the OECD Thematic Review

1. This Country Note for Denmark is an output of the OECD *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy*, a project launched by the OECD's Education Committee in March 1998. The impetus for the project came from the 1996 Ministerial meeting on *Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All*. In their communiqué, the Education Ministers assigned a high priority to the goal of improving access and quality in early childhood education, in partnership with families, with the aim of strengthening the foundations of lifelong learning (OECD, 1996). The goal of the review is to provide cross-national information to improve policy-making in early childhood education and care in all OECD countries.<sup>1</sup>

2. Denmark is one of 12 countries participating in the review between 1998 and 2000. The others are Australia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. These countries provide a diverse range of social, economic and political contexts, as well as varied policy approaches toward the education and care of young children.

3. The scope of the review covers children from birth to compulsory school age, as well as the transition to primary schooling. In order to examine thoroughly what children experience in the first years of life, the review has adopted a broad, holistic approach to study early childhood policy and provision. To that end, consideration has been given to the roles of families, communities and other environmental influences on children's early learning and development. In particular, the review is investigating concerns about *quality*, *access* and *equity* with an emphasis on policy development in the following areas: regulations; staffing; programme content and implementation; family engagement and support; funding and financing.

4. As part of the review process, each country hosts a review team for an intensive case study visit. After each country visit, the OECD produces a short Country Note that draws together background materials and the review team's observations. The present report for Denmark is an important input into the final OECD *Comparative Report* that will provide a review and analysis of ECEC (early childhood education and care) policy in all 12 countries participating in the review.

5. Denmark was the eleventh country to be visited in the course of the review. In preparation for the visit, a preliminary report on ECEC policy in Denmark was commissioned by the Danish Ministry of Education (referenced as *Draft Background Report*, 2000), and then, a finalised *Background Report* was completed by the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs. The latter work is referenced throughout this text as the Background Report and cited as (Danish Background Report, 2000). Guided by a common framework that has been accepted by all participating countries, *Background Reports* are intended to provide a concise overview of the country context, major issues and concerns, distinctive ECEC policies and provision, innovative approaches, and available quantitative and evaluation data. They are an important source of information in the review process, and their preparation should normally provide a forum of debate for the

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1. A detailed description of the review's objectives, analytical framework, and methodology is provided in OECD (1998).

different actors in early childhood in each country. Following authorisation by the issuing countries, they will be placed with the Country Notes on the OECD website.

### **The course of the review**

6. After analysis of the *Draft Background Report* (2000) and other documents, a review team composed of OECD Secretariat members and experts with diverse analytic and policy backgrounds (see Appendix I) visited Denmark from 4-14<sup>th</sup> April, 2000. The ten-day visit was co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education. In the course of the visit, the team interviewed many of the major actors involved in ECEC policy and practice, and had the opportunity to observe a number of early childhood programmes across the country (see Appendix II for the programme of visits). The particular sites visited reflected not only a concern for geographic diversity but also the desire to show the review team a representative selection of both typical and innovative services. The site visits concluded with a final debriefing of the Ministries in Copenhagen.

### **Structure of the Country Note**

7. The Country Note presents the review team's analyses of key policy issues related to ECEC in Denmark. In addition to the present prologue, which forms *Chapter 1*, the structure of the Country Note is as follows:

- *Chapter 2* provides a brief introduction to various contexts in Denmark that have relevance for the early childhood field: demography, governance, employment and gender equity; child and family policies.
- *Chapter 3* provides an overview of current policies and provision in the early childhood field, in which the following topics are covered: auspices; overview of services provided; dimensions of access; quality regulations and measures; staffing, work conditions and training; parental involvement; funding and financing, innovation and experimentation, and current reform efforts.
- In *Chapter 4*, the main issues or challenges, identified by the reviewers and related to ECEC policy and practice in Denmark, are outlined. Seven issues are chosen for comment, viz. the social construction of childhood in Denmark; the diversity of policy auspices and implementing agents; the traditional division between "education" and "care"; improving quality through intensive re-training and the renewal of learning theory; emergent literacy; transitions; issues of access for bilingual children.
- The conclusions, *Chapter 5*, are composed of some brief recommendations for further consideration.

### **Acknowledgements**

8. The OECD wishes to thank the Ministry of Education for making this review possible and the Ministry of Social Affairs for its involvement and close interest in the review. The work of all those involved in preparing the initial education report, the abundant supplementary documentation, the *Background Report*, and the comprehensive programme proposed for the team review visit is gratefully acknowledged. The reviewers also wish to place on record their appreciation of the hospitable, open and informative meetings that were held in the involved Ministries and local authorities, as well as the welcome given to the team in the many institutions and sites visited.

9. Throughout the *Country Note*, the analyses and suggestions offered are tentative, in recognition of the difficulty facing a visiting review team—no matter how well briefed—in fully grasping the variety and complexity of a country-wide system and the range of issues that need to be taken into account. While

all the members of the team are very experienced as researchers and policy analysts in the field of ECEC, they are clearly influenced by their own cultural perspectives and histories. A ten-day fieldwork period, even in a country as well briefed in early childhood affairs as Denmark, is limited in terms of the amount of data that can be collected and verified.

10. The facts and opinions expressed in the *Country Note* are the sole responsibility of the review team. While the team acknowledges with gratitude the valuable help received from ministry officials, researchers and practitioners in Denmark, they have no part in any shortcomings which this document may present. To mitigate the potential for misunderstanding or error, it is assumed that the *Country Note* will be read in conjunction with the *Background Report* issued by Denmark, as the two documents are intended to complement one another.

### Terminology

11. Under the Social Services Act (*Lov om social service*), the overall term used for public daycare facilities for children is *Dagtilbud*. They include municipal, independent and private care, all of which have to be registered and supervised by the municipalities, which themselves account directly for about 60% of provision. *Dagtilbud* include:

*Kommunal dagpleje*: municipal daycare.

*Kommunale og selvejende daginstitutioner* (municipal and independent daycare facilities).

*Puljeordninger*: schemes under which private facilities are operated on the basis of agreements with a local authority.

*Legestuer*: Playrooms and facilities shared by all municipal childminders, are operated in relation to the municipal childminder arrangements.

### Types of *Daginstitutioner* (daycare facilities)

- *Vuggestuer*: crèches (0-3 years)
- *Børnehaver*: kindergartens (3-7 years)
- *Aldersintegrerede institutioner*: age-integrated facilities (0-7 years)
- *Fritidshjem*: after-school centres
- *Særlige dagtilbud*: Special daycare facilities for children with permanently and considerably reduced mental or physical capacity.

In addition there are:

- *Fritvalg-ordninger*: Free-choice schemes. Parents are offered grants for private care of children from the age of 24 weeks until they begin in a kindergarten class at a primary school.
- *Åbne pædagogiske tilbud*: Open educational arrangements for children in private care.
- *Legesteder*: Centres where parents can take children they look after at home to play with other children.

### Staff

*Dagplejer*: Childminder employed by a local authority

*Pædagog*: Employee with relevant education employed in a daycare facility = child and youth educator

*Pædagogmedhjælper*: Employee without relevant education employed in a daycare facility = nursery and childcare assistants

### The folk school

*Folkskole* or the public primary and lower secondary school

*Lov om Folkeskolen = Folkeskoleloven*: The *Folkeskole* Act or Act on primary and lower secondary education

*SFO*: School-based leisure-time facility, or SFO facilities

*Børnehaveklasse*: Optional one year kindergarten class in the *Folkeskole*

## **CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUAL ISSUES SHAPING ECEC POLICIES IN DENMARK**

### **Demography**

12. In terms of population, Denmark is one of the smaller nations in the European Union. The number of inhabitants at this time is 5.3 million, and the population density is approximately 120 people per square kilometre. 85% of the population live in towns with the greater Copenhagen region having about 1.8 million inhabitants. The second largest city is Aarhus (215,000 inhabitants). In addition, several medium-sized towns are scattered throughout the country. Denmark covers an area of 43,000 km<sup>2</sup> consisting of the peninsula of Jutland (30,000 km<sup>2</sup>) and 406 islands (13,000 km<sup>2</sup>) of which 80 are inhabited (1998). The biggest islands are Zealand – with the capital of Copenhagen – Funen, and Lolland-Falster. These islands are inter-linked by bridges. The Danish Kingdom also comprises two self-governing territories: The Faroe Islands in the Atlantic (14,000 km<sup>2</sup>; 45,000 inhabitants) and Greenland (2.2 million km<sup>2</sup>; 57,000 inhabitants). The education and care policy pursued by the Faroe Islands and Greenland are not dealt with in this report since education and care are the responsibility of their local parliaments, and not of the Danish parliament.

13. Although early childhood services have expanded significantly during the last decade, the number of children in Denmark is decreasing. Since 1980, therefore, there has been a decline of 3.6% in the number of children between the ages of children 0–14 years of age. Women increasingly postpone the birth of their first child. Fertility rates of younger women (20–24 year olds) have dropped considerably, the rate is slightly increasing for 25–29 year olds and increases markedly for those women aged between 30 and 35. Because of this tendency to have children later, women need increased ECEC services to maintain their already established place in the work force.

14. At this time, there are about 290,000 foreign immigrants in Denmark, comprising 4.1% of the population. The vast majority live in the three largest cities: Copenhagen, Aarhus and Odense. In addition there is a small German minority in southern Jutland. Traditionally, the most common form of immigration to Denmark had been from southern Europe for the purposes of work, but during the last thirty years, immigration patterns have undergone profound changes. The number of immigrants from countries with very different backgrounds, in particular Turkey, the former Yugoslavia and Asia (especially Pakistan), has been increasing. They come to seek work, for the sake of marriage and family reunion (particularly the case for women), and to find shelter from the war-torn Balkan countries and drought-stricken developing countries. Denmark perceives itself as an intensely homogeneous society and sees provision in the form of daycare centres as potentially a means for enabling immigrant children to integrate easily and effectively.

### **Governance**

15. Denmark is a parliamentary democracy, the head of state being the monarch. The most important political bodies are the *Folketing* (the Danish parliament and the legislative power in Denmark), and the *regering* (government, ie the prime minister and other ministers with various fields of responsibility), which has the executive power. The language spoken throughout the country is Danish, and the vast

majority of the population have been baptised into the established Lutheran church. Denmark is, therefore, rather homogeneous both nationally and culturally. Administratively the country is divided into 14 counties (*amter*) with population figures ranging from about 45,000 to about 632,000 and 275 municipalities (*kommuner*) with population figures ranging from about 3,100 to 282,100. Two municipalities do not belong to any county: Copenhagen with about 488,999 inhabitants and Frederiksberg with about 90,000 inhabitants.

16. The Danish Constitution dates from 1849 and has thus been in force for 150 years. This Constitution, which has only been subject to minor amendments over the years, forms the basis for the Danish democratic system. The *Folketing* has 179 members. Two members are elected from the Faroe Islands and two from Greenland. The members of the Folketing are elected in general elections which as a minimum must be held every four years. Local authorities in Denmark have considerable autonomy. Most local authorities - though not Copenhagen and Frederiksberg - are members of the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark (*NALAD Kommunernes Landsforening*), which negotiates with the central government. It also represents local authority employees in collective bargaining concerning wages, working hours and duties.

17. Public authorities in Denmark are expected to create sound policy frameworks for children and secondly, to provide the best possible conditions for families with young children. They should ensure that children and young persons will be protected against injustice and lack of care, through central government guidelines and supportive measures that are decided and implemented at local levels. While the public system has organised and structured the frameworks for all families with young children, within these frameworks families are free to choose what suits them best from a variety of provision available at local level. General issues relating to child and family policy are handled centrally by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which lays down the overall legal framework and general conditions. The actual organisation of facilities and service offered to citizens is carried out at the local level by the municipalities and to some extent also at county level.

18. As in all countries, child and family policy in Denmark is characterised by many facets and multiple auspices.

- The Ministry of Social Affairs has prime responsibility for ECEC daycare facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children,
- The Ministry of Education is responsible for kindergarten classes (*børnehaveklasse*), primary and lower secondary education and after-school facilities (*skolefritidsordninger*),
- The Ministry of Labour is in charge of parental and childcare leave schemes,
- The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the legal status and position of children,
- The Ministry of Taxation is responsible for the payment of allowances to families with children, etc.

#### *The Governmental Child Committee*

19. Denmark has chosen not to unite the responsibility for children and families in a single ministry. Instead, a Governmental Child Committee and a parallel committee of government officials called the Inter-ministerial Child Committee were established by the government in 1987. It provides for cross-sectoral collaborative body for the fifteen ministries whose work is of direct relevance to children and families. The Ministry of Social Affairs holds the chairmanship of this committee and hosts its secretariat.

### *The National Council for Children*

20. In order to monitor the impacts of social planning on children and young people, it was decided in 1993 to establish a *National Council for Children*. The mission of the *National Council for Children* is “to safeguard the rights of children and to attract attention to and issue information about children's conditions in society, offer advice and guidance to public authorities concerning children's conditions, incorporate the points of view of children in its work and assess the conditions of children in Denmark in the light of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child”. (Danish Background Report). In addition the Council is heard in relation to new legislation and other matters that may have an impact on children.

### **Employment and gender equity**

21. Since 1990, Denmark has seen a decrease in unemployment rates, and a mounting level of female labour force participation. Most women work full-time, with about 25% in part-time work. The participation rate for women of working age (16-66 years) is 77.5% for the group as a whole. For the age group 16-24 year group, there has been a marked increase in the number of young women studying or in training. For the group aged 20-44, that typically represents families with at least one child, the overall participation rate is much higher at 85.7%. The participation rate is higher for men than for women in all groups (see Tables 1 and 2 below).

22. One result of social developments over the past twenty years is that the active participation of mothers of young children, in the labour force has now reached almost the same level as men. Currently, 92% of mothers and 96% of fathers are in the labour force. This has required social policy to focus on the child, and has thereby precipitated two inter-related issues: firstly, how best to take care of children while their parents work, and secondly, ensuring that children do not become institutionalised and distanced from their families. Nevertheless, it is considered a fundamental right that children are looked after and taken care of by the public sector in Denmark.

23. The high participation rate of women in the workforce has changed the conditions of families with children in many ways, and it has resulted in increased focus on the framework provided by society as regards the function of the family. Better access to parental leave schemes is one outcome of this focus, as figures were showing that parents with young children work many hours a week. According to a study carried out by the Danish National Institute of Social Research (SFI, 2000), fathers of young children worked 42 hours a week on average in 1996, while mothers of young children worked 36 hours a week on average. Indeed, work is a defining characteristic of Danish culture, and a high participation rate is expected and supported. At this time, there are approximately 8000 people outside the labour force, a figure constantly monitored by the authorities. Single mothers with children are the most likely to fall into this group as well as ethnic minority families. Social support and benefits are provided to unemployed persons, particularly to single mothers, while encouraging them through training to rejoin the labour force.

**Table 1: Labour force participation rates for age group 16-66, 1989-99**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1999</b>
- Women	76.4	75.6	73.5
-Men	85.5	83.2	81.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>81.0</b>	<b>79.4</b>	<b>77.5</b>

*Note:* Participation rate means the number of people in the working population (16-66 years) expressed as a percentage of the total population aged 16-66.

One reason for the drop in the participation rate is the improved access to leave schemes.



**Table 2: Labour force participation rates for age groups between 20 and 44, 1989-1999**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1999</b>
<b>Age group 20-24:</b>			
Men	89	82.4	82.3
Women	81.5	77.2	75.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>85.3</b>	<b>79.8</b>	<b>78.8</b>
<b>Age group 25-29:</b>			
Men	93.3	89.6	87.9
Women	87.8	84.9	80.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>90.6</b>	<b>87.3</b>	<b>84.4</b>
<b>Age group 30-34:</b>			
Men	95.1	92.0	90.6
Women	92.7	88.4	84.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>93.9</b>	<b>90.2</b>	<b>87.8</b>
<b>Age group 35-39:</b>			
Men	96.3	92.1	90.4
Women	89.8	89.1	86.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>93.1</b>	<b>90.6</b>	<b>88.4</b>
<b>Age group 40-44:</b>			
Men	96	91.9	89.8
Women	89	88.8	86.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>92.6</b>	<b>90.0</b>	<b>88.3</b>
<b>Age group 20-44:</b>			
Men	93.9	89.6	88.0
Women	88.2	85.7	83.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>91.1</b>	<b>87.6</b>	<b>85.7</b>

*Note:* The participation rate is the number of people in the working population aged 20-44 expressed as a percentage of the total population aged 20-44.

*Source:* Danish Background Report.

### **Family and child policies**

24. Living standards in Denmark are high by international standards, and the gap between rich and poor is smaller than in many of European countries. After redistribution mechanisms have been applied, just over 5% of Danish children live in poverty (UNICEF, 2000). Nevertheless, as elsewhere, the pattern of family life is changing in Denmark, and the number of single parents, divorces, and cohabiting partners is increasing. However, this does not change the general high level of support for families in all its different forms.<sup>2</sup> 75% of all Danish children live with both their parents (Rostgaard & Fridberg 1998). In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a decrease in the proportion of children living with both their parents. 24% of children live with one parent only, generally their mother (single provider). The National Council for Children did express concern about the high incidence (17%) of real poverty experienced by some single mothers, who, with their children, accumulate a series of material, psychological and educational disadvantages.

25. Danish child and family policy is based on the overall principle that the family is the foundation of a child's upbringing. The living conditions of children are mainly the responsibility of their parents, but public authorities have the responsibility to provide a social framework and support to families with children. Direct economic transfers and the provision of child and family services is therefore a major

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2. In addition, all children in Denmark are offered free, preventive health care, dental care and treatment of illness.

source of social expenditure in Denmark. The goals of this policy are to equalise living conditions between families with and without children, and to maintain social cohesion through additional support to vulnerable families. In addition, public authorities should protect children and young people against abuse and neglect, and offer advice and guidance to enable parents to meet their obligations and responsibilities.

#### *Parental leave and parent-friendly work conditions*

26. The possibilities for supported parental leave following childbirth have been expanded for both mothers and fathers (currently, at 14 weeks *maternity leave*, followed by 14 weeks *parental leave* and 2 weeks *paternity leave*, - all paid at full unemployment benefit rate - to which 26 weeks of *childcare leave* may be added, paid at 60% of the unemployment rate). Total childcare leave period may not exceed 52 weeks. If parents decide to take childcare leave, their child must not use public daycare facilities before the age of 3 years. If childcare leave is taken after the first year, children aged 3-8 may have part-time places in a daycare facility in the leave period. Special supplementary allowances are paid to single working parents with children between the ages of 24 weeks and five years when the parents take leave to look after children, because the local authority is unable to offer a place in a daycare facility. The sum of the special supplementary allowance and the leave allowance must not exceed 80% of the parent's previous income.

27. It is still being debated how the labour market can cater better for the needs and requirements of parents with young children. The aim is to allow parents to combine working life, family life and arrangements for children in such a way that there will be time and 'space' for parents and children to spend time together. The present trend in the labour market towards more flexible working hours, leave schemes and increased opportunity for part-time work has an impact on demand. It influences too the structure of daycare, the number of part-time and full-time places offered, and the opening hours of daycare facilities.

#### *Child and family allowances*

28. In Denmark, the Ministry of Social Affairs Act on child allowances proposes various types of tax-free *Child Allowances*:

- *Ordinary child allowance* is paid to single parents and to families in which both parents are pensioners, the sum being DKK 3,692 a year.
- *Additional child allowance* is paid to single parents who also receive ordinary child allowance and live with the child. Only one extraordinary child allowance is granted, the sum being DKK 3,756.
- *Special child allowance* is paid to children who have lost one or both parents and is sometimes also paid to pensioners. The special child allowance is DKK 9,420 per child per year, DKK 18,840 if the child has lost both parents.
- *Multiple children allowance* is paid if more than one child is born at that same time (and to adopted children born at the same time). The allowance, which is DKK 6,076 per child per year, is paid until the children reach the age of 7 years.
- *Adoption allowance* may be paid in relation to the adoption of a foreign child. The allowance is paid out as a lump sum of DKK 35,033.
- Allowances for parents with seriously ill children.
- Additional expenses incurred in relation to the care of disabled children in their own home.

29. The Ministry of Taxation is responsible for matters relating to the Act on *Family Allowances*. Tax-free child family allowances are paid for all children under the age of 18. As per 1 January 2000, the

annual allowances are: babies (0-2 years), DKK 11,700; toddlers (3-6 years), DKK 10,600; other children (7-17 years), DKK 8,400.

### **New Danes and bilingual children**

30. The term “New Danes” refers to legally resident immigrants in Denmark, who continue to maintain their own language and cultural practices. The first immigrants were mainly men from Turkey, Yugoslavia and Pakistan who came to Denmark in the 1970s as migrant workers. Later on, many of them brought their families to Denmark. More recent immigrants have mainly been refugees from areas affected by civil war, e.g. Iran, Palestine, Chile and Somalia. The term "bilingual children" is used for the children of these immigrant groups - often to the third generation - who do not speak or learn Danish until they make contact with Danish society at large.

31. Because social exclusion had begun to characterise some of these groups and their children, the government published, in February 2000, an overall action plan to promote integration. An important initiative in that plan is to stimulate the language skills of the young children before they begin school, as fluency in Danish is deemed crucial for their integration into Danish society. Another initiative will aim at improved integration in the first years of primary education. As the proportion of bilingual children varies greatly from municipality to municipality, integration is made even more difficult. Many bilingual families live in deprived areas in relatively large municipalities where up to 90% of pupils at a single school may be bilingual. It is estimated that 9% of pupils in Denmark are now (2000) bilingual.

**Table 3: Bilingual children - breakdown by grade level in 1997/1998**

Grade	Kinderg class	1st form	2nd form	3rd form	4th form	5th form	6th form	7th form	8th form	9th form	10th form	Total
Pupils	5,105	4,668	4,343	3,976	3,923	3,831	3,683	3,369	3,260	3,330	2,345	41,833

Source: *The Folkeskole in figures, 1997/98*. Ministry of Education, 1999.

### CHAPTER 3: THE ECEC SYSTEM IN DENMARK

32. Chapter 3 will provide a brief overview of the early childhood education and care system in Denmark, focussing on the following aspects: auspices; overview of services provided; extent of coverage and admission criteria; quality regulations and measures; educational contents, inspection and supervision; staffing, work conditions and training of personnel; parental involvement; funding and financing. A fuller treatment of some of these topics can be found in the Danish Background Report (2000), which may be accessed from the OECD website: [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)

#### Auspices

33. The Ministry of Social Affairs, through the 1999 Social Services Act, has the main responsibility for ECEC provision in Denmark for children 0-6 years. The Ministry issues guidelines for daycare facilities in accordance with the Act, and in keeping with the principles laid down in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the kindergarten class (generally from 6-7 years) and for the training of child and youth educators (*pædagoger*) and school teachers. Through the 1995 *Folkeskole* Act and further consolidation acts, the Ministry has defined a general framework governing the general purpose, method, organisation and administration of the kindergarten class within the *Folkeskole*. However, executive responsibility for the delivery of services and for educational curricula (including the *Folkeskole*) lies with the municipalities and local authorities.

34. Local authorities have the overall responsibility for providing daycare facilities for children, to ensure a sufficient supply of places, and to take all necessary initiatives in relation to children in need of special supports. Their estimate of sufficient supply will be based on a number of factors: the number of places already available, including under other jurisdictions; present and foreseen demand, and financial factors. Parents are free, however, to decide what kind of childcare they want to use, and may be provided with a grant to use the services of a free-choice childminder, recognised by the municipality. Grants are not given to parents who look after their own children. Parents are supported, however, by maternity, paternity and parental leave and by child care leave (see below).

35. The individual local authority determines its own daycare structure on the basis of local needs and requirements. It decides the age-groupings to be made, the combination of the various types of daycare facilities to be used, and promote co-operation as it sees fit. The local authority also determines the framework for work and the objectives of daycare facilities, and the extent of the power and responsibility to be given to parent boards in daycare centres. It decides also the opening hours to meet local childcare requirements. A few local authorities have established night crèches and kindergartens (*natbørnehaver*) where children can stay throughout the night.

36. Part-time places may be provided in several ways: as half-day places (the child will be present each morning or each afternoon); as full-day places (the child will be present every second day or two days in one week and three days in the next); or as places providing access to the daycare facility every second week. A place will not be considered a part-time place unless the rate paid by parents is lower than that charged for a full-time place. In January 1998, only 3% of children had part-time places in daycare facilities.

37. According to Section 63(3) of the Social Services Act, local authorities must approve all agreements made about the care of a child, and the person or persons that the parents have chosen to look after the child. They should supervise also conditions in all private daycare facilities (*privat dagpasning*). If a private provider operates on the basis of a local authority agreement, local authorities must check that municipal grants for the facilities are exclusively used as set out in the agreement concerning the operation of the facilities. In turn, county councils supervise the municipalities, except in Copenhagen and Frederiksberg, where the Ministry of the Interior has responsibility for supervision.

### Overview of services provided

38. In simplified terms, the main early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in Denmark for children aged 6 months to 7 years, are listed below. Their provision falls under the responsibility of the local authorities, who provide directly about 70% of all daycare services (*kommunale daginstitutioner*). Independent or private daycare institutions (*selvejende daginstitutioner*) provide the rest. Most private institutions have entered into agreements with the local authority to provide services. In this situation, the local authority pays all operating costs provided that the facility makes places available to the local authority.

- *Daycare services (dagtilbud)* offered under the Social Services Act (*Lov om social service*) for children from 6 months to 7 years.
- *Kindergarten class (børnehaveklasse)*, offered under the Act on Primary and Lower Secondary Education (*Lov om Folkeskolen*) for children 5/6-7 years. The compulsory school age in Denmark is 7 years, but already in the kindergarten class, the enrolment rate is 98%.
- *After-school centres (fritidshjem)* and *school-based leisure-time facilities (skolefritidsordninger or SFOs)* for children of school age.

#### *Daycare services*

39. Local authorities generally establish the following types of daycare facilities (*daginstitutioner*):

- *crèches (vuggestuer)* for children aged 6 months to 2 years
- *family daycare (familiedajpleje)* for children aged 6 months to 3 years
- *kindergartens (børnehaver)* for children aged 3-5 years
- *age-integrated facilities (aldersintegrerede institutioner)* for children aged 6 months to 6 years - possibly up to 9/10 years.

40. In addition, local authorities provide support for private daycare facilities (*Puljeordninger*), enterprise-based facilities, special daycare facilities (*soerlige dagtilbud*), and open educational facilities and play centres. Children who are not looked after in a recognised daycare facility are looked after by their parents, their family, a recognised free-choice childminder or by non-registered private childminders. The exact figure for non-registered, private child-minding (generally on a part-time basis) is not known exactly. It is considered, however, to be very low, because of century-old laws forbidding remunerated care of more than one child by a non-family member, and by reason of the advantages of being attached to municipality funding and support.

41. In principle, all children in Denmark should be offered a place in a daycare facility if their parents want one. This has not always been the case, and it has led to waiting lists in some larger municipalities.<sup>3</sup> Present agreements between the central government and local authorities give high priority to the elimination of waiting lists. Already, 87% of municipalities, that is, 239 local authorities, do guarantee places for every child, and the situation is rapidly improving.

#### *Family daycare (municipal childminders)*

42. Family daycare for children aged 0-7 years is offered on a par with crèches, and in fact, predominates as the chosen form of care for children up to three years, especially in rural communities. In fact, in about 120 municipalities, family daycare (municipal childminder) places are the only places offered to children aged 0-2 years, since these municipalities have neither crèches nor age-integrated facilities for children in this age group. The childminders are employed by the local authority, which also approves the home or the premises. Indoor and outdoor facilities will be checked and so will the personal qualifications of the childminder. Very favourable child-staff ratios are the rule. Centres for childminders have been established in most areas, so as to lessen the likelihood that individual childminders are isolated with the children they look after, to provide training, and ensure contact for the children with other children and adults. Local authorities take much care in managing family daycare and in providing ongoing training for the childminders.

43. In order to support individual childminders even further, local authorities have employed special childminder supporters who offer educational and administrative assistance, and check that the children are looked after in an acceptable way. If a childminder is absent from work because of holidays, sickness, participation in courses or the like, the local authority must provide another childminder to look after the children - a so-called 'guest' child minder. In such cases the children will generally be looked after by one of the other childminders in the group with whom they will already be familiar.

#### *Private daycare facilities (Puljeordninger)*

44. The framework for the operation of a private daycare facility in a municipality is determined in the agreement made with the local authority. The local authority is not obliged to enter into such agreements, and is entitled to decide in its area how many private daycare facilities it wishes to authorise. The local authority will provide a grant per child included in the scheme as specified in the agreement. Private facilities operated on the basis of agreements with the local authority make up only a small proportion of the daycare facilities offered; and cater for approximately 6,000 children (about 1%).

#### *Enterprise-based facilities*

45. Private and public enterprises may establish enterprise-based facilities to help their employees. The children of employees will be entitled to some or all of the places in the facility. Enterprise-based facilities may be established either as independent daycare facilities or as private day care, based on an agreement with the local authority and subject to ordinary funding. The enterprise may provide additional funding.

#### *Special daycare facilities*

46. Counties, as well as municipalities, have the responsibility to fund and provide places in special daycare facilities (*særlige dagtilbud*) for children who need special support and treatment because of their

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3. Some ten municipalities in which the waiting lists are longest account for almost half of the total waiting list in 2000, that is, just over 5000 children.

disability. Special daycare facilities are established in the form of crèches, kindergartens, age-integrated facilities or after-school centres in the same way that municipal daycare facilities are established. In general also, local authorities establish groups of special support staff who can provide professional expertise and carry out targeted supervision, when a daycare facility admits children with physical and/or mental disabilities and/or children with social or behavioural problems. In terms of modality of admission, local authorities may meet their obligation in several ways:

- Integration of individual children in ordinary daycare facilities, possibly supplemented by special support staff.
- Admission of children with physical or mental disabilities in municipal childminding facilities, possibly combined with a reduction in the number of children in the facility.
- Establishment of disability groups in ordinary daycare facilities.
- Establishment of municipal daycare facilities exclusively accepting children with physical and/or mental disabilities.
- Establishment of a shared municipal facility operated by the county.

#### *Open educational facilities and play centres*

47. In addition to the facilities above, local authorities may establish open educational facilities (*åbne pædagogiske tilbud*) and play centres (*legesteder*) for children below school age. These facilities are managed by people with an educational background and are available for short periods of time every day. To a certain extent, they are based on parent participation.

#### **The kindergarten class**

48. In Denmark, education is compulsory for children between 7 and 16 years of age, which means that there are nine years of comprehensive basic education. Parents must ensure that their children receive education, but school attendance is not compulsory. Almost all children attend the *Folkeskole*, a unified municipal school in which there is no streaming at any level. The curriculum framework is determined by the *Folkeskole* Act and the school year comprises 200 school days.

49. Local authorities are responsible for the *Folkeskole* and must provide a kindergarten class (*børnehaveklasse*). Children generally attend from six, but can be admitted one year before or one year after the sixth birthday. Though not part of the compulsory education period, about 98% of all children attend a kindergarten class. Teaching in kindergarten classes should as far as possible take the form of play and other developmental activities, but should endeavour to make children familiar with the daily routines of school life. Part of the teaching may be organised as an *integrated school start*, bridging across kindergarten class and the first and second form levels. About half of all schools use this programme, and there is a tendency to extend its use. In small schools, all teaching in these forms may be carried out in common with other forms.

#### **After-school care and school-based leisure-time facilities (SFO)**

50. In 1984, local authorities were given the possibility of using elementary schools, their amenities and outside areas for play and recreational activities for children outside normal school hours. This option is called school-based leisure time facilities (*SFO*), and has proven very popular with municipalities and

parents. In 1997/1998, only 52 local authorities had not established any school-based leisure-time facilities (SFO) under the *Folkeskole* Act. The facility is used essentially by the children attending the particular school, 40% of which offer part-time places. Concurrent with the dramatic growth in the number of SFO facilities, the number of after-school centres has fallen, since after-school centres with SFO facilities are generally much less expensive for local authorities to operate.

**Table 4: Number and percentage of children in after-school facilities, 1993-1998**

	1993/94		1994/95		1995/96		1996/97		1997/98	
	Children	%	Children	%	Children	%	Children	%	Children	%
Pre-school children	415	0	438	0	145	0	154	0	535	0
Kindergarten class	21,370	26	21,847	25	26,281	26	28,915	26	30,539	26
First form	21,634	26	22,425	25	25,444	25	27,733	25	29,638	25
Second form	18,848	23	20,275	23	22,755	23	24,438	22	26,169	22
Third form	13,711	17	15,586	18	17,749	18	19,337	18	20,648	18
Fourth form	4,341	5	4,530	5	4,981	5	5,303	5	5,194	4
Fifth form	1,504	2	1,795	2	2,023	2	2,232	2	2,436	2
Sixth form	676	1	814	1	912	1	963	1	904	1
Seventh form	429	1	396	0	531	1	527	0	525	0
Eight form and above	97	0	18	0	27	0	5	0	11	0
Not distributed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	83,025	100	88,124	100	100,848	100	109,607	100	116,599	100

Source: *The Folkeskole in figures 1997/98*. Ministry of Education, 1999.

### Extent of coverage and admission criteria

51. The coverage rates for children aged 0-9 years enrolled in various types of daycare and SFO facilities appear in Tables 4 and 5 below. The coverage rate for children under the age of two has been calculated on the basis of the number of children aged six months to two years.

**Table 5: Percentage of children aged 6 months to 9 years enrolled in daycare facilities, April 1999**

	Family daycare	Crèche	Kindergarten	After-school centre	Age-integrated facility	SFO facility	Special daycare facility	Clubs	Total
½-2 years	41%	10%	1%	0%	12%	0%	0%	0%	64%
3-5 years <sup>2</sup>	6%	1%	51%	0%	31%	1%	0%	0%	91%
6-9 years	0%	0%	6%	12%	11%	49%	0%	2%	81%
½-9 years	13%	3%	19%	5%	18%	21%	0%	1%	80%

Notes:

1. Clubs are defined as after-school centres, youth clubs and open educational facilities.
2. Children under the age of 6 enrolled in SFO facilities or in clubs are included in the number of enrolled children aged 3-5 years.
3. For children aged six months to two years, the enrolment rates are: up to one year 28%; 1-2 years 68% of children.

Source: *Danish Background Report*.

52. The significant increase in coverage rates can be judged from Table 6 below, which includes all types of facilities for children, including SFOs. The coverage rate for children aged six months to two years has increased from 56% to nearly 64%. The increase has been even greater for children aged 3-5 years: from 75% to 92%. The greatest increase is seen in relation to children aged 6-9 years: from 49% to 81%, the main growth coming from the growing use of SFO facilities.



**Table 6: Increase in coverage rates for children aged six months to nine years, April 1999**

	1989	1994	1999
½-2 years	56%	60%	64%
3-5 years	75%	85%	92%
6-9 years	49%	64%	81%

Source: Social Resource Statistics.

53. The fundamental principle governing admission to ECEC in Denmark is that all children who are resident in a municipality must have equal access to places in public daycare facilities, unless there is a question of special need. Thereafter, admission is based on the *criterion of seniority*, i.e. either the date of birth of the child or the date on which the parents filed their application. Several local authorities find that the seniority principle is too rigid. The Ministry of Social Affairs is to present a bill concerning the issue.

#### *Children with disabilities*

54. As with immigrant families, the number of children and families with special needs is increasing. It has doubled in the last 10 years due to the change in birth practices, inter-marriage in immigrant communities, and traumatised children in refugee families. These children receive superb support in Denmark. Certain improvements are also being discussed. With the increasing numbers of children and families needing special supports, there is a need to educate all professionals to be sensitive to the needs of these groups, as they cannot be dealt with on a case by case basis any longer. Separate training for specialised professional roles will remain necessary, but will need to be supplemented by generalised special training of all staff, as pressure builds for increasingly scarce human resources.

55. We visited a special age-integrated institute for children who were integrated with other normal children. There were three groups of 16 children, with 3 disabled children in each group. In addition, there was a group of 4 children with severe communication disorders. Each group of 16 children of mixed age was supported by 3 pedagogues and one helper. Extra weekly support was provided by a physiotherapist (20 hrs), an occupational therapist (20 hrs), and a music therapist (11 hrs). When the children with special needs attended therapy sessions they were able to choose a friend to accompany them. Children's disabilities included epilepsy, spastic paralysis, autism, including a range of intellectual handicaps. It was observed in this setting that children with disabilities were explicitly taught and had structured activities prepared for them. The major driving principle for the work of this centre is that good practice for special needs children is good practice for all children. For instance, daily notes pass between home and the kindergarten and back again. Home visits are common and clear aims for each child are communicated to the parents. Centres like this one attract five times the resources of normal centres.

#### **Quality in Danish daycare and the *Folkeskole* kindergarten class**

##### *Quality in daycare (0-6 years)*

56. The concept of quality in daycare is broad and resists any single interpretation. Quality is determined by many factors including child:staff ratios, training levels, staff conditions (see next section), the organisation of the caring environment, and its educational content. Table 7 below, shows the ratios of child:staff ratios for both qualified staff and all employees (using full-time equivalencies) in the various types of daycare facilities.

**Table 7: Number of children per full-time employee working with children, April 1999**

	Family Daycare	Crèche	Kinder- garten	After-school centre	Age-integrated facility	Special daycare facility	Club <sup>3</sup>
<b>Qualified staff</b>		5.7	9.9	14.4	9.4		26.2
<b>All staff</b>	3.5	3.2	6.4	9.3	5.8	1.4	18.4

Source: Social Resource Statistics.

57. It can be seen that the number of staff per child is highest for the youngest children. The number drops proportionally with the age of the child. Staff intensity is highest in special daycare facilities for children with physical and/or mental disabilities. Crèches have on average 3.2 children per employee, while a childminder looks after 3.5 children on average. In kindergartens the average number of children per employee is 6.4. The figure is 5.8 children per employee in age-integrated facilities. This is due to the fact that these facilities accommodate both children aged 0-2 years and children aged 3-6 years and that the number of children aged 3-6 years generally exceeds the younger group.

58. In recent years, the following quality concerns have come to the fore in Denmark:

- *To work in a targeted manner on the conceptual perception and language development of each individual child*, both in the form of independent activities and as an integral element in the other activities taking place in the daycare facilities. In particular, it is important to provide response and support when individual children want to develop their skills or learn new skills.
- *To encourage children to participate in the life of the daycare centre and share the responsibility for their own daily life*, depending on their age and stage of development. A nation-wide project "Children as citizens" was launched in the early 90s to give children an increased opportunity to take part in local activities and decision-making that had an impact on their lives. It was followed up by an investigation, "*Children's participatory rights in society*" in 1994 and 1995, concerning children's participation in decision-making processes in daycare facilities. These programmes are inspired by Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- *To give children an opportunity to achieve a broad understanding of Danish culture*, as well as a good understanding of other cultures they meet in daily life.
- *To lead children to acquire knowledge about and experience of the natural environment*, the purpose being to increase their awareness of environmental matters. A number of local authorities have established forest and nature kindergartens where the children spend a great deal of time outdoors all year round.

59. In order to further promote quality in daycare facilities, the Ministry of Social Affairs in consultation with the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark and the National Union of Child and Youth Educators (BUPL), established in 1996 a working group on quality. The Ministry aimed in particular to develop new methods for educational work, and increase the opportunities of children to express themselves in the daycare centre. Two published studies ensued: *Quality development in daycare facilities for children - experience gained by four local authorities* and *Quality development in daycare facilities for children - themes and experience gained by daycare facilities and family daycare*.

60. BUPL, the Danish National Federation of Early Childhood Teachers and Youth Educators, with more than 50,000 trained staff members across Denmark, also contributes greatly to quality improvement. It provides extensive in-service and continuous training, not only of its own members, but also at

community level for all those involved in early education and care matters. BUPL has been closely involved also in the discussions setting up a common Educational University for teachers and educators.

#### *Quality development in the Folkeskole kindergarten class*

61. The original Bill setting up the class in 1966 stated that “actual instruction wholly or partly equal to that of the first form must not be given in kindergarten classes”. Some years later, however, it was admitted that children could work with number and letter games, just as they could in kindergartens. A section was also added to the legislation in which it was stipulated that the daily work in kindergarten classes must be organised by a trained educator. The Act of the *Folkeskole* takes a similar approach to curriculum. According to the Act, there are no centrally formulated objectives or any curriculum guidelines for kindergarten classes except that pupils should become familiar with daily school routines.<sup>4</sup>

62. Traditionally, parents in Denmark have fully supported this approach. Childhood is often viewed as a very special and unrepeatable part of a person’s life. “Children must be allowed to be children” is often heard. Danish daycare facilities and kindergartens stress that children learn by playing, by observing and interacting with other children and adults. Activities were organised to match the interests, maturity and developmental stage of the children.

63. In 1985, the 'integrated school start' scheme was introduced in legislation, allowing kindergarten class pedagogues and first and second form teachers to “teach” in each other's classes. It is still only an option and the final decision is made at the municipal or local level. In the scheme, children in kindergarten classes share common activities with children in the first and second forms in age-integrated groups, and vice versa. The strategy provides differentiated teaching that takes the actual developmental stage of the children into consideration, and allows all children both to play and take part in structured learning processes. A purpose of the scheme is to allow teachers to be with the children in their first year in school, and allow pedagogues to accompany the children with kindergarten methods until the child has become used to school routines. An ongoing result has been to bridge the gap between the teaching traditions of schools, and the play and development traditions of kindergartens.

64. Quality in kindergarten and the *Folkeskole* became, however, a live issue in the 1990s because of the relatively poor results obtained by Danish pupils in the international IEA reading and mathematics tests, at 9 and 11 years. Discussions and reflections triggered by these assessments and other critical analyses of the Danish educational system resulted in a shift in attitudes, with greater emphasis being placed on childhood as a period of learning. In response, the Ministry of Education launched the *Folkeskole 2000* project, which attempts to strengthen the integrated school start, and promote co-operation between the kindergarten class, the primary school and the SFOs. The main objectives are to have better continuity within and across all levels of education, to ensure better learning progression and to make institutional life for the children a more integrated experience. A pre-condition to achieve these aims is to bring together the pedagogues (social educators) and teachers around a common task, viz. in all services, to support the child’s experience-based development and her progression toward agreed educational and social aims. By means of the additional funding made available through the *Folkeskole 2000* project, the Ministry has successfully engaged several key municipalities and their pedagogical advisors to undertake comprehensive reviews of learning and educational practice across these services (see Chapter 4).

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4. At decentralised level, local school authorities are encouraged to set targets and formulate developmental and pedagogical action plans for schools to discuss and follow. About 57% of kindergarten classes follow a syllabus or activity plan for the year.

## Inspection and supervision

65. In the section on *Auspices* above, some indications were given about the responsibility of the local authorities to supervise and support all daycare services within their area. They hold similar powers with regard to education. Within the framework of budgets allocated, the authorities are free to set their own priorities, within being bound by any centrally defined framework or accounting. To quote the Danish Background Report (2000):

*This includes the provision of grants to the school system and the definition of the financial framework applying to schools, the appointment and dismissal of principals and teachers on the recommendation of the school board, the school structure including the number of schools and the size and activities of each school in terms of form levels, special education, leisure-time education and leisure time facilities for children, the framework for the composition of classes, the number of lessons in each form, special education, and general guidelines for cultural activities aimed at the local community.*

66. The Ministry of Education is responsible for overall leadership, that is, the Ministry is expected to formulate learning objectives, monitor developments, intervene in areas where quality improvement is required, and continuously assess how quality levels in general may be improved. To support quality improvement, the Ministry of Education provides material and tools to schools describing or enabling 'best practice' in relation to teaching and school activities. One example of such material is a very sophisticated net-based quality development program recently released by the Ministry of Education: "Quality in the Folkeskole"

67. The establishment of the Danish Evaluation Institute (*Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut*), in 1999 is expected to reinforce the accountability of schools for children's learning. The Institute is an independent institution operating under the Danish Ministry of Education and covering the entire educational system in Denmark. It will carry out systematic, mandatory evaluation of teaching and learning at all levels of the educational system, from kindergarten classes to post-graduate programmes. All institutions depending on the Ministry of Education will be evaluated, including private institutions that receive grants from the ministry. After evaluation, a report must be prepared and submitted to the board of the Evaluation Institute and the Minister involved. The report must be published two weeks later. The Minister involved will not be allowed to make any changes in the report but various comments - including comments by the institution that has been evaluated - may be added. The report must not contain any quantitative data which could lead to any kind of classification of schools.

## Staffing, work conditions and training of educators

68. In Denmark, there are four basic types of staff in the daycare and related services:

- *Managers of services*: All daycare facilities, with the exception of municipal childminder facilities, have a manager and a deputy manager. Both must be qualified educators, that is, pedagogues (see below). Open educational facilities are also managed by people with an educational background.
- *Pedagogues (pædagog)*, that is qualified child and youth educators (sometimes called social educators) who work in daycare facilities, kindergarten classes and SFOs. (Qualified teachers also work in the *Folkeskole* kindergarten classes that belong to integrated school start). They have completed a four years' study programme at a teacher training college.
- *Nursery and childcare assistants (pædagogmedhjælper)* who work mainly in crèches, kindergartens and SFO facilities.

- *Municipal childminders* or family daycare caregivers: There are no mandatory training programmes for childminders but courses in childcare have been offered since the early 1980s when municipal childminder facilities for children aged 0-2 years were offered on an equal footing with daycare facilities.

69. Pedagogues and assistants, employed on a full-time basis, work 37 hours a week. The weekly working hours of full-time family daycarers (childminders) are 48 hours. Like other employees in the Danish labour market, all three categories are entitled to paid holidays, pay during periods of sickness, and parental and childcare leave. Rates of pay are displayed in Table 8 below:

**Table 8: Average monthly pay of various staff groups, November 1999**

Child and youth educators	DKK 20,700
Managers	DKK 25,900
Nursery and childcare assistants	DKK 16,000
Childminders	DKK 17,200
Pre-school teachers	DKK 22,300
School teachers	DKK 23,800

*Source:* The Common Municipal Pay Data Office. Key figures.

70. Almost all pedagogues are members of the National Union of Child and Youth Educators (BUPL). Nursery and childcare assistants are organised by the National Union of Nursery and Childcare Assistants (PMF). These two unions are active in providing professional development opportunities for members. From an international perspective it is interesting to note that almost all municipal childminders are members of the National Union of Public-Sector Employees (FOA).

#### *Training of child and youth educators (pedagogues)*

71. At present there are 32 training colleges for child and youth educators in Denmark.<sup>5</sup> Each college offers diploma programmes of 3½ years' duration.<sup>6</sup> Provided that a college follows the basic ministerial guidelines (see below), it is free to organise its courses as it sees fit. The courses comprise theoretical subjects combined with work practice. This alternation between theory and practice is an important feature of Danish training. A work practice period of 13 weeks is included in the first year, and students have a six-month work practice period in their second year and a six-month work practice period in their third year. Students are paid for their work during these periods. After graduation, students are qualified to work in daycare facilities, school-based leisure-time facilities, and kindergarten classes. In addition, they have the qualifications needed to carry out educational and social work for people "from birth to 100 years".

72. Ministry of Education guidelines define the overall structure of the courses, and specify which subjects must be included: 30% educational theory and psychology; 20% social and health subjects; 40% culture and activity subjects: Danish, music, physical exercise, workshop subjects, drama and natural science; 10% communication, organisation and management. The course is very popular because of its generalist approach that combines a humanistic curriculum with real work experience. In 1999, only 75%

5. Many of these colleges may soon be merged into larger administrative units called Centres of Further Education, that will also include teacher training colleges. No changes to the actual course for child and youth educators are planned.

6. The diploma programme is being thoroughly revised at the moment, one purpose being to provide child and youth educators with an opportunity to take an academic degree.

of applicants who identified the course as their first choice, could be admitted, despite the creation of many new places in the training colleges over the past ten years. At the same time, there is a major shortage of educators as many new daycare facilities and after-school facilities are being established.

73. Throughout the course, students work in small project groups. Teamwork, thematic exploration and problem-oriented projects have priority over individual subjects and disciplines. The aim is to model the type of experiential learning that is the hallmark of early education, to provide students with many different competencies, and to help them develop various skills and attitudes (see Danish Background Report, 2000, pages 57ff.).

74. Because the profession is interesting, relatively well-paid and offers a well-defined career structure with good opportunities for promotion, an above-average proportion of men become candidates for training. Their recruitment is supported by Government, which has already launched several programmes to attract men into the profession. At present male students make up about 22% of the student population. However, the younger the children, the higher the number of women employed, e.g. men make up 8% of employees in daycare facilities for children aged ½-6 years, but constitute 25% of employees in SFOs. Despite some sex-abuse cases, parents, children, staff and local authorities are all very positive towards the employment of men. The reason generally cited is that the involvement of men in social care functions improves the quality of daycare facilities and promotes the equal status of boys and girls.

#### *Training of assistant child and youth educators*

75. Nursery and childcare assistants are often young people (typically between 18 and 25 years old) who want to work for a year or two before they enrol in a course of study, for example, the child and youth educator (pedagogue) course. The job as a nursery and childcare assistant is very popular since it is relatively well paid and involves responsibility and team-work with other people. No formal education requirements apply to them, although recruitment policies seem to favour an intake of relatively mature students who have had prior work experience, particularly with young children. In recent years, some training colleges have begun to recruit young people from immigrant backgrounds. In 1997, a new basic educational training programme called PGU was launched that caters for nursery and childcare assistants, childminders, care workers (*omsorgsmedhjælper*) and similar professions. The training programme - offered also on a part-time basis - is organised at various educational institutes throughout Denmark. Again, it combines theory with work practice periods. Students are employed as trainees by local or regional authorities and receive pay in the 18-month study period during which time school-based teaching alternates.

#### *Training of municipal childminders*

76. There are no mandatory training programmes for childminders but courses in childcare have been offered since the early 1980s. Almost all local authorities organise several types of courses for their registered childminders: an *introductory* course (one week), a *basic* course (two weeks) and a *weekly morning or afternoon refresher session* in one of the municipality daycare centres, and *supplementary courses* as the occasion arises. These courses cover such subjects as: laws, rules and regulations; planning and framework; feeding and sleeping habits of babies; ergonomics, work positions, lifting techniques and back exercises, organisation of daily routines child development - motor, linguistic, emotional and social development, educational aspects of childminding - playing and learning; communication and co-operation with parents, colleagues and the educator attached to the childminding facility, duty of non-disclosure and duty of information; guidance and supervision.

## Parental involvement

77. Another feature of Danish daycare and the *Folkeskole* is the existence of strong parent boards<sup>7</sup>, obligatory since 1993 in all municipal and independent daycare facilities. Parents are also given opportunities, by statute, to influence the work of family daycare centres and SFOs, not least with regard to the budgetary framework. Essentially, parent boards have the task of defining principles for the educational work carried out in the daycare facilities and for the use of funds made available within a budgetary framework. This annual activity profile of a centre is typically communicated in the form of a business plan, and is an important element of information in the dialogue and collaboration with other parents, members of staff, and the local town or city council. In addition, business plans are used as a basis for evaluation of the work carried out in facilities. The staff of centres is also member of board, but generally, parent representatives must have the majority.

78. Parent boards are consulted and set the principles governing:

- the work of the daycare facility, including educational methods and activities, cooperation between parents and the daycare facility, external co-operation, etc.
- the use of the budget, which means that the parent board must adopt principles to apply to purchases relating to child-related accounts in particular, e.g. the purchase of toys, materials, furniture and expenses relating to summer camps and the like.
- local authority employment of staff. Parent boards must be given opportunities to exercise this requirement by, for example, participating in job interviews.

## Funding and finance

79. The basic principle is that local authorities pay all the operating costs of registered daycare facilities and *Folkeskoles* in their area. A condition for local authority grants provided to private childcare facilities is that these facilities must be used exclusively for daycare activities, and that the private operator cannot take out profits from the centre.<sup>8</sup> Funding comes from local taxation, block grants and parent contributions. Block grants are usually non-earmarked, central government grants to the local authorities.<sup>9</sup> Local authorities fund daycare to at least 66% of costs. In the *Folkeskole*, all classes from pre-school to the tenth form are free, and in private schools, government and local authorities cover about 75-80% of the expenditure. In 1999 the total net expenditure by public authorities in relation to daycare facilities amounted to DKK 19.6 billion, while the figure for after school hours care (SFO) facilities was DKK 2.6 billion, the total sum being DKK 22.2 billion. Average annual grants paid by municipalities for daycare

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7. In the Danish *Folkeskole*, the creation of Parent Boards, Educational and Pupil's Councils is obligatory in all schools (with classes above Fifth Form).

8. According to the Danish Background Report, (2000). "The operator can only obtain a profit by means of management fees or the like, which must be approved by the local authority in the agreement. The company may also earn an income through additional services such as laundering and the sale of various services not covered by the rules on parent payment. There is great focus on outsourcing of the operation of daycare facilities and several local authorities have initiated negotiations with private enterprises concerning this. Since such schemes are very new, no experience has yet been gained in relation to them".

9. The fields of responsibility of local authorities include taxation, childcare, education for children between the ages of 7 and 16, voluntary adult education, libraries, cultural and sporting facilities, home help and care of the elderly. Central government grants can be used for any of these purposes, as the authority decides. County responsibilities include special daycare facilities for children with disabilities and a more general responsibility for hospitals and upper-secondary education.

are: DKK 36,400 per child aged 0-2 years and DKK 30,800 per child aged 3-5 years. The annual cost per pupil in the *Folkeskole* was DKK 44,000.

### *Parental fees*

80. Parental fees are levied according to family income, but they should not *in total* exceed 30% (in some cases, 33%) of the costs of the daycare service. This principle applies also to parents using recognised, family daycare and SFOs. Parents with incomes less than DKK 109,700 per annum are exempted, and there are also mandatory fee reductions for siblings. Local authorities may increase parent contributions by one percentage point a year, to a ceiling of 33%, if the local authority offers guaranteed places to children from the age of 26 weeks to enrolment in a school. Table 9 shows total average costs of the various services and the contributions paid by parents. Average figures are used, since operating costs and parent contributions differ from local authority to local authority.

**Table 9: Average total cost and average parent contribution (before reductions) in DKK, per place, per month in various daycare facilities, 1999**

Type of service	Total cost	Parent cost
Family daycarer	5,612	1,659
Crèche	8,026	2,186
Daycare Kindergarten	4,186	1,247
Age-integrated facility	4,583	1,323
After-school facility	3,099	871
SFO facility	2,230	858

*Source:* Danish Background Report, 2000.

81. A brief analysis of this table reveals the financial logic of certain choices that operate in early education and care in Denmark. For example, it is cheaper for parents to choose family daycare rather than a crèche, and the operating costs are cheaper too for the municipality. Again, the table shows that it is cheaper for the municipality to fund SFOs rather than after-school facilities, all the more so as municipalities recuperate from parents 24% of the costs of SFOs, compared to 16% of the cost of after-school facilities.



## **CHAPTER 4: ISSUES ARISING FROM THE VISIT**

82. In Chapter 3, we have outlined the impressive contours of Danish ECEC: its stable and generous funding, its almost universal coverage, the high levels of training and work conditions enjoyed by staff, its strong local organisation and parental engagement. In this chapter, we shall raise a number of issues that were brought to our notice during the review, namely: the social construction of childhood in Denmark, differences in policy implementation across municipalities; issues of access for children; issues of quality; and the division between “development” and “education”.

### **The social construction of childhood in Denmark**

83. ‘Ideal’ childhood is deemed a right for each and every child in Denmark, including the very poor or disadvantaged or ‘at risk’ groups of children. The upbringing of children is seen as an important responsibility, shared between the family and Danish society represented by the State and local authorities. In this sense, services for children are seen as an essential meeting point of private and public, of family culture and Danish culture. Indeed, the function of day-care and of schooling is not only about the development of skills, abilities and knowledge, but these institutions are seen as major contributors to the country’s sense of social cohesion. Space is made for families to participate in the care and education of their children. They are welcome in the centres and can become members of parent groups and committees, which statutorily take part in the decision-making process at all levels. In addition, kindergartens are constructed, furnished and organised more to resemble the home than a school (see Box 1 below). The emphasis of the pedagogues and assistants is on living in community with children, doing things with them rather than on teaching or transmitting knowledge to them.

84. However, most Danish mothers (about 92%) have a job and work increasingly longer hours (Rostgaard *et al*, 1998). The practical outcome is that young children spend between 5 and 11 hours each day away from their homes and family members. Children are growing up away from their families, and constructing their own world of ‘childhood’ in the daycare centre and kindergarten. Some families find this difficult to accept. The dilemma raises several important questions about the definition of ‘family’ as a concept in the Danish welfare state; about the roles of parents with regard to their children’s development, and about the reconciliation of work and family life. These tensions are not easily reconciled within a society that values the work ethic *and* yet supports parents who want to stay at home with their children when they are young. Mothers, in particular, say they want to spend more time with their children while also wanting to return to work, even feeling this as a pressure. Several issues are at stake here: to decide what is best for the child? secondly, how to avoid the risk of marginalising the role of families? and thirdly, who should decide these questions? These questions have become more acute with the arrival of the New Danes, with bring with them traditional family types and attitudes.

### **Box 1: Physical environments for children in Danish day-care**

#### *Rooms for 0 – 3 year olds*

In one centre we visited, the architecture, lay-out and furnishings were such as to make the centre a comfortable and interesting home. Many staff were present, and in the infants' section, the child/staff ratio was two to one. Staff observed closely how the children use resources, and moved these around the room accordingly. They ensured that the youngest children had easy access at their level to dolls and toys, paper, pencils, books, paints, water trough, beads and other objects, or items collected from outdoors.

The daily schedule included many home-like activities. As in a home, the younger children helped with all the daily tasks of the centre: they put out plates, they wheeled the trolley with food and helped to clear things away. Communication diaries are available in each room for parents and pedagogues to enter relevant information. Children's art work is displayed on the walls in gilt frames, to express the value that the adults place on the children's work.

#### *Rooms for 3 – 6 year olds*

In this area of the centre, there were many inter-connecting rooms that serve a wide variety of purposes. Some were curtained off to make fresh spaces as required, and to offer opportunities for private activities. Others were open-plan and enable staff to move between areas while still observing the children. The cupboards and drawers had labels and pictures on them, illustrating what is inside and children could help themselves to resources as they needed them for different activities. Again, art work was displayed carefully in frames. In one room there was a glass cabinet referred to as a 'Cupboard of Wonder', where objects were displayed because of their 'specialness' for the children. These objects could be contributed by children, staff and/or parents. They could be rare, beautiful, sensual, and in some way interesting and pleasing. From time to time, they were carefully taken from the cupboard for the children to discuss and enjoy with wonder.

This centre, and others we visited, gave the immediate impression of entering a home, rather than an 'institution' or school. The furniture and floors were comfortable with cushions, music was softly evident and the rooms were flooded with natural light. There was much emphasis on the aesthetic appeal of the surroundings with furniture made of wood rather than plastic, and natural objects displayed for a variety of purposes. Mirrors were evident at the children's level and photographs of shared activities were on display for children to remember and reflect on experiences.

85. Another aspect of childhood in Denmark is that there is a long tradition of respect for childhood and early independence. The historical thread reaches back to the strong 19<sup>th</sup> century Danish education tradition, and includes the influence of Froebel. The Danish child is not considered incompetent, and childcare is not seen merely as 'looking after' children. Rather, the aim of the childcare centre and kindergarten is to create settings that will foster the children's development, well-being and independence.

86. Today, this philosophical thread is completed by legislation based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The protection of young children is, of course, a central theme, but also their right to be consulted, to express their opinions and participate. The articles in the Convention that enjoin respect for and knowledge of the environment also link strongly with other enduring aspects of Danish culture and educational theory. Threading back to the vision of Rousseau, the Danish kindergarten places earth, air, fire and water at the centre of children's experiences of their world. In the kindergartens, this is emphasised through being outdoors, through the use of the elements in many of the activities, and not least through the development of forest kindergartens (see Box 2 below).

## Box 2: A Forest Kindergarten in Denmark

The forest kindergarten visited by the team was at the edge of a wooded area. The children spend most of their time outdoors (even in winter) in small groups with staff members and explore the area, playing games, using the outdoor equipment, planting gardens, spending time round the fire, chopping wood and generally taking advantage of the beauty and resources of this natural setting. When we asked how long the children stayed outdoors in the winter, we were told that they didn't spend so long each day, only four or five hours.

When we arrived, some children had blockaded the roadway with milk crates and were asking passers-by for a secret password before they were allowed to go further. The children were accompanied by a staff member who told us that very little traffic passed that way, except locals in farm carts or other vehicles who were familiar with the presence of these children. The centre was of wooden construction, much like a cabin and was decorated with all the things children had found from outside and had chosen to treasure or learn more about. These items included pieces of bark, wild flowers, feathers, stones with fossils, acorns and nuts collected from the forest floor. The children were all wrapped up warmly and some ran around while others sat in twos and threes sharing stories, conversations or just absorbing the natural beauty of their surroundings.

On visiting an urban kindergarten in Copenhagen, we saw a group of children and some staff members mounting a bus outside. When we enquired where they might be going, we were told they were travelling to the forest kindergarten for the day. This was a frequent part of the centre's weekly routine. When we asked how long this journey would take, we were told it took about an hour in each direction. When we asked how well these young children coped with travelling in the bus so long, we were assured that they mainly slept, and didn't appear to experience any difficulties.

These experiences illustrate a strong commitment among Danish pedagogues to share the natural environment with as many children as possible, regardless of where they live. It was seen as an important part of growing up in Denmark to experience and explore the natural world and all its wonders. A sense of connection with nature and the environment is an important aspect of Danish childhood.

### Differences in policy implementation across municipalities

87. Policies and guidelines for children are promoted at national level by several ministries. These policies and guidelines are then locally interpreted by the 275 different municipalities, which establish their own ECEC goals. Their independence leads, at times, to some diversity in approach, provision and quality, e.g. over half the Danish municipalities have taken the trouble to avail of *Folkeskole 2000* funding and programming, but many have not. This independence vis-à-vis central authority initiatives may explain, in turn, divergences in quality across municipalities, and why co-ordination between kindergartens, kindergarten class, lower primary and the SFO may be quite different from one municipality to another.

88. Efforts to address the challenge are made at central level, especially, as we have seen in Chapter 3, through steering the municipalities through extra funding, as in the *Folkeskole 2000* project, or through the comments of the independent "watchdog" bodies such as the *National Council for Children*. The Council in fact has argued that municipalities may have too much discretion in implementing frameworks and guidelines, leading to unequal provision across the country. Even when ministry policies and guidelines are sound and clear, the financial and management arrangements between the sponsoring ministry and the local authorities seem too weak to allow for rapid implementation or effective monitoring.

## Issues of access

89. It seems curious to raise issues of access in a country that provides such comprehensive services. Yet, certain insufficiencies in access were drawn to our attention, related in particular to two groups: infants and toddlers, and bilingual children.

### *Infants and toddlers*

90. A first criticism made of provision for this group is that in many municipalities only one kind of provision is offered, namely family daycare. One can understand the preference of many parents for family daycare, in that it resembles the type of care that a family can offer. Experience in other countries would show, however, that when there is a choice, parents will often demand a crèche for their baby, as they prefer a relationship with a service and professionals rather than an exclusive relationship with the daycare parent. This choice is not offered in many municipalities in Denmark, possibly because of the higher cost to municipalities in organising crèche services.

91. Another criticism made, is that the allocation of a place for a baby at 26 weeks (the accumulated maternal and paid parental leave) is not automatic in many municipalities. The review team was informed of mothers having to postpone their foreseen date for a return to work, or having to refuse a new post offered, as a foreseen childcare place was still not available. In short, there is a three-month period - immediately after the end of a mother's accumulated paid leave at 6 months to the child's reaching 9 months - where there is uncertainty about public daycare being available. Despite the efforts of the municipalities to expand the number of places available, the situation was aggravated some years ago by the decision to reduce the child care benefit. This reduction led to more young women returning to work immediately after maternity/parental leave, thereby increasing pressure on public daycare.

### *Bilingual children*

92. There are great differences in the use of daycare facilities by new Danes and original Danes. Only about a quarter of new Danes in the age group from 0 to 2 years have a place in a daycare facility. In the slightly older age group (3-5 years), about 65% of new Danes have a place in a daycare facility, compared to about 90% for all children. One reason for these differences is that many new Danes do not see daycare for infants and toddlers as a "natural" option. They have another concept of the family and its responsibilities. In addition, many of the women have low educational levels, with low literacy skills in Danish, making employment for them problematic. As the enrolment figures for the kindergarten indicate, the immigrant families find it more acceptable to send their children to a public institution after the age of three years, but even then, to a lesser degree than native Danes.

93. In the ministries and municipalities, the general consensus is that bilingual children should master the Danish language before they enter primary school, if they are to benefit fully from education. In line with this policy, a significant change was introduced in Section 4(a) of the *Folkeskole Act* in 1998, making it *mandatory* for local authorities to offer language-stimulation activities to bilingual children. In the case of children who do not have a place in a daycare facility, language assistance must be provided for at least 15 hours a week in the year in which a child reaches the age of 4 years. The aim is to promote linguistic development by bringing together groups of bilingual children, thus creating a space in which the focus is on communication and the desire to communicate. It is emphasised that these children should also be encouraged to develop a positive identity based in the two cultures to which they belong. They should be given an opportunity to develop communicative skills both in their native language and in Danish.

94. Language activities may be carried out in various places: in the daycare facility where the child has a place, in child groups meeting at a school, in the morning at an after-school centre or in connection with activities for parents. According to the Danish Background Report:

*Given traditional educational principles applied in Denmark in relation to young children, it is quite extraordinary that small children are offered language classes for up to three hours a day before they begin in a kindergarten class.*

95. In a pamphlet called “Information about language-stimulation activities aimed at young bilingual children” prepared by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs, a number of guidelines are given concerning early language activities aimed at bilingual children. Shortly after childbirth, the parents of bilingual children should be given an opportunity to talk with a specialist about the language requirements and other requirements that the child will be expected to meet in Danish society. Health visitors play an important role in relation to this dialogue and must inform parents of local activities organised for young children.

96. However, there are some reasons to believe that the language approach, though necessary, may be insufficient. According to interviews, particularly of New Danes, the ethnic communities have difficulties in relating to the strong cultural values enshrined in Danish child-rearing practices and school behaviours.<sup>10</sup> The clash of cultures, particularly with regard to child-rearing practice, goes far beyond the question of Danish language fluency. In fact, the facilities supplied to enhance language fluency may sometimes get in the way, e.g. admission into a “reception class” in the school often disappoints the family, as they see this provision as marking their child as a failure, even before schooling begins. In addition, the concern of municipalities and the State to teach the language may be felt by some as encroaching significantly into the lives of immigrant and bilingual families, some of whom are second- or third-generation families, but whose children are perceived to be at risk of school failure. There is a pressing need to enable the different cultures to come together with shared understandings and respect, and to understand that language learning alone cannot address the range of needs of *New Danes*.

### **Issues of quality**

97. The guarantee given by government that from 1996, all children over one year, whose parents so wish, should have a place in daycare services has been successfully implemented, but, it seems, not always under the best conditions for children. To honour the guarantee, the numbers of children in public facilities increased significantly but in some municipalities, without an increase in staff numbers and physical places. The issue can be seen most clearly in the case of the SFOs, where intake has greatly increased. Child-staff ratios are not as favourable, however, as in the traditional after-school care centres. Moreover, SFO facilities are school facilities, and are not tailored specifically for recreational purposes. The arrangement suits municipalities as both capital and current running costs are lower, and a far greater proportion of costs are recuperated through parental fees. Parents are caught in an ambivalent situation: although recreational quality may not be as high as in the traditional after-school care units, there are

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10. Danish children are socialised in such a way as to make few demands of those around them. They are expected to become independent and responsible, with little help or assistance from the adults around them. Children from other cultures may be socialised differently in their family homes. With mothers generally at their disposal, children from some ethnic groups make many more overt demands, expect much help and attention, and may not be expected to contribute much to household chores or family tasks, until late childhood or early adolescence. At that moment, a girl may be required to help with the care of younger children, regardless of school obligations.

compensatory advantages. Costs in the SFOS are marginally lower,<sup>11</sup> and there is no need for their children to take transport from the school premises to another location.

98. Quality in kindergarten classes and the *Folkeskole* became a live issue in the 1990s because of the relatively poor results obtained by Danish pupils in the international IEA reading and mathematics tests, at 9 and 11 years. Discussions and reflections triggered by these assessments and other critical analyses of the Danish educational system resulted in a shift in attitudes, with greater emphasis now being placed on childhood as a period of learning. Today, part of the new discourse in Denmark and other countries, is to increase the accountability of providers, and to require criteria of learning progress in the years from 3 to 6 years or beyond. Government and local authorities are asking: how can the development and progression of children be measured, evaluated and monitored. What are our goals and aims for children before they start formal school? It is clear that the knowledge of many pedagogues in this regard is tacit, and needs to be made more explicit through reflection on practice and beliefs. Some critics affirm even that an erosion of pedagogical method has taken place in Denmark, with pedagogues not taking on sufficient responsibility for the progress of children.

99. The challenge has been taken up by the responsible ministries, by BUPL (the pedagogue trade union), and by several municipalities through their pedagogical advisors. Already, in Chapter 3, some account has been given of the quality improvement measures taken by the responsible ministries, in particular the quality studies undertaken by the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Education *Folkeskole 2000* project, which has strengthened co-operation between the kindergarten class, the primary school and the SFOs. In much of the *Folkeskole* project, the Ministry is supported by BUPL, the pedagogues' union.

#### *In-service training by BUPL*

100. BUPL is the Danish National Federation of Early Childhood Teachers and Youth Educators, with more than 50,000 trained staff members in childcare centres, kindergartens, leisure-time centres and youth clubs across Denmark. BUPL is at once a traditional trade union, protecting its members working conditions and salary levels, and a professional association committed to raising quality in Danish ECEC. BUPL positions itself in relation to the competent ministries (the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education), as an independent consultative partner, and supports them in implementing national policy. It attempts to maintain a presence in all the arenas important for early education and care, ranging from informal meetings with local authorities, civil servants, parents and parliamentarians to membership of councils and committees at central and local levels. BUPL starts from the premise that the quality of personnel in the early childhood centres is fundamental to the well-being of children in ECEC settings.

101. In the last two years, BUPL has actively taken part in the programme *Folkeskole 2000*. A main objective is to strengthen co-operation between the kindergarten class, the primary school, and the SFOs (after-school care). The municipalities have nominated its members as pedagogical advisors with the task of raising education standards and improving pedagogical methods. BUPL's Education Division is researching at the moment the issue of children's development of competencies - personal, developmental, cognitive and social - in wide consultation with childcare centres, kindergartens, parents, experts and local employers. With pedagogues in the field of special education, BUPL has created a Foundation for Development and Research, which finances, from its own funds, projects on childcare and special education. It has also been closely involved also in the discussions setting up a common Educational University for teachers and educators.

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11. Although their outlay is lower, parents pay, in fact, a higher proportion of total costs.

### *Comprehensive consultations conducted by the municipal pedagogical advisors*

102. Many municipalities have responded positively also to the Ministry of Education *Folkeskole 2000* project. In return, they receive supplementary funding to improve pedagogical quality in the kindergarten through to the early years of primary school. In most municipalities, the municipal pedagogical advisors led the project. These advisors - at least in the municipalities that the review team visited - do not approach quality through assessing children or inspecting institutions. They see their task as one of working closely with personnel, parents and authorities so as to formulate clear learning projects for the children and schools in their area. Emphasis is placed on finding answers to the issues that have come to the fore: Why are the children finding the transition into school difficult? Are our institutions working effectively together to solve this problem? How do staff at kindergarten, kindergarten class and lower primary level understand learning theory? How does each level understand the pedagogical relationship with young children? Where can we invest extra funding to help resolve the issue, in a manner satisfactory to all the actors? Both BUPL (the pedagogical union) and the teachers' union are closely involved in the project.

### **The traditional division between “development” and “education”**

103. To some extent, all discussions in Denmark of quality in the early childhood field are marked by strongly distinctive Danish traditions in education and care, both of which have made a significant contribution to international studies in these fields. Popular, lifelong education through the *folkehøjskole* and the successful introduction of compulsory primary schooling in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are Danish instances debated in many education departments abroad. The Danish kindergarten tradition, which dates back 170 years, has equally been studied. Long before early childhood theorisation had begun in many countries, the Danish kindergarten had identified the development of the young child as its central role. “Development” was seen as the externalisation of the child's self, through self-activity and play, taking place ideally in interaction with caring, specialised staff in an enriched environment. Already, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Danish kindergarten was developing its home-like atmosphere, secure relationships, play and self-directed discovery, practical-aesthetic and expressive activities (dance, art, drama, photography, pottery, drawing, cookery, sport, outdoor activity...).

104. In this strong kindergarten tradition, development was often contrasted with “education”<sup>12</sup> or “teaching”. In the school, it was said, teaching is the major activity, not development, activity and care. According to Broström (1998), the teacher's role was understood as producing a situation (often through transmission) that would provide an opportunity to the child to appropriate or construct knowledge and skills. Teaching was seen to be based on the prior construction of goals, educational contents and methods. If play was used, it was used to “trick” children into learning what the adult wants them to learn, and not what the child decides.

105. Today, this rather negative appreciation of (early) education is still alive. The conflict is revealed in many ways. The statement “*Play is one thing, learning is another – they are two different things.*” was commonly heard in the settings for young children that we visited. Play is defined as children doing what they choose, while learning is defined as children attending to what the adult chooses. Some pedagogues fear that children's play and personalities will be overwhelmed by school and adult requirements. Many parents support this viewpoint, and keep their children in kindergarten for as long as possible, even though kindergarten costs them money whereas kindergarten classes are free. The divergence of views spills over even into discussions about leisure-time activities for the older children. Should after-school leisure and

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12. In translation from Danish, ‘education’ means didactic teaching. The tension between education and care in Denmark is, therefore, not exactly the same as for other countries. It is more a tension between styles of pedagogy than one of quality of provision.

time in class be a separate or an integrated experience for the children? Should the SFOs be staffed by pedagogues only, or should teachers be present who will make use of the knowledge and activities studied earlier in the day? Is there not a danger in the SFOs that the school influence will lead to content driven activities rather than an emphasis on the development in children of free-choice and self-direction?

106. The difference in approach is underpinned by institutional divisions, e.g. the different auspices of care and education, the separate training of the professions, and differentiation in work patterns. For example, the working week for all workers in Denmark is 37 hours. Pedagogues may spend almost the entire 37 hours in contact with children. Teachers spend 20 – 25 hours with the children, and the rest of their hours are spent in preparation and marking etc. While the pay received by qualified pedagogues and school teachers is not dissimilar after tax, pedagogues see this difference in contact hours as unfair, all the more so as they too spend time preparing for their daily work with children. In addition, while pedagogues need extra qualifications to work in schools, teachers do not need extra qualifications to work in day-care settings.

107. Moreover, because of the training requirements and job expectations of the different groups, they belong to different trade unions. The union cadres are generally aware of the need to bring the professions together for the good of the children. BUPL, the pedagogue union, for example, funds research focusing on transition issues from kindergarten to school, and documents best practice. However, the task of the unions vis-à-vis rank and file members is not easy. Many pedagogues in Denmark consider themselves to be child-focussed, and perceive teachers to be subject and curriculum focussed. Teachers, on the other hand, may perceive the pedagogue's role to be lacking in rigour and accountability. Children, they say, have not "learned enough" before coming into school, and remain headstrong and undisciplined for many months. In short, differences in philosophical beliefs concerning children's development in the early years, and the disparities in working conditions and training, continue to keep the professions and their activities apart.

108. A serious consequence of the division is the lack of common goals and a shared learning theory. One might argue that sharing goals and approaches is not so important where the very young children are concerned, but as children approach the transition into the kindergarten class, some alignment of goals and methods becomes necessary. In this matter, the pedagogues do not seem to be helped much by the official texts. The Social Services Act, though mentioning certain pedagogical goals for early childhood services is rather silent about both pedagogical activities and articulations with the school system. In consequence, there seems to have been in past decades a certain drifting away from national educational goals, at least if one can judge from critical assessments of the Danish kindergarten system, which - despite its many excellent features - has been seen by several observers as being *laissez-faire* where children are concerned. The tendency of pedagogues to remain apart, to avoid programming and rely on routines, to be onlookers rather than active cultural agents, etc. has often been noted (see for example, Weikart, 1992). Even the creation in 1985 of the 'integrated school start' allowing kindergarten class pedagogues and first and second form teachers to teach in each other's classes, did not bring the traditions together as closely as was expected.

### *Emergent literacy*

109. Attitudes to emergent literacy were also ambivalent. Until recently, emergent literacy (and numeracy) was not a standard project in the kindergarten or age-integrated services in Denmark. Legislation against preparing children for school in the kindergarten years (stipulating no teaching of letters, no numbers in nursery or kindergarten unless in the form of games) had been interpreted very literally. Attempts to provide environments in centres that would allow children to pursue their interest in books and writing were not encouraged, as pedagogues considered that there were more important developmental tasks for the child to achieve.



### *A changing scene*

110. Today, there seems to be less camping on positions, as kindergartens attempt to respond to the new demands of parents and municipalities. We were informed that many parents, while not wanting reading and writing instruction, would like their children to have an interest in reading or to be able to write their name. In one of the age-integrated centres we visited, a great deal of thought had been given to emergent literacy. There were many and varied literacy resources around the centre: computer keyboards, typewriters, displays of children's work at eye-level. Children were encouraged to play-read and play-write; telephone books were available next to the telephone, storybooks were shelved in shared areas.

111. At the same time, a new discourse is being heard, that of 'school readiness'. Requirements for school include that young children on entry should know how - to look after themselves, to learn, to concentrate and work with other children. Kindergartens are becoming 'educational' as well as 'developmental', while the early cycle of the *Folkeskole* addresses the young child's need for play, movement and free expression. The *Folkeskole* increasingly acknowledges that the skills of pedagogues are needed in the early classes, in experimental settings, in schools dealing with disadvantaged populations or with children in need of special support. In one region of Denmark the funding of joint projects is designed to bring the providers together across the divide. Indeed, more than 200 municipalities have committees designed to bring together local policies for both 'education' and 'care'.

### *Renewed learning theory*

112. The greater alignment of the later years of kindergarten and the early years of primary is not interpreted positively by some pedagogues, who see the move toward a more learning oriented kindergarten as undermining the Danish early childhood development model. They view with apprehension the more widespread European pre-school model that justifies its emphasis on early literacy and numeracy as an "early start, a means of supporting children from low-income backgrounds to integrate school more successfully. While sympathising with the more holistic approach to children taken in Denmark, the review team did not share these fears. The structures, organisation, child-staff ratios and programmes of the Danish kindergarten remain intact. At the same time, a renewal of learning theory and practice is taking place. To a great extent, this renewal has been led by researchers and pedagogues, e.g. those working in the *Folkeskole 2000* project.

113. The new approach attempts to bring together the viewpoints of pedagogues and teachers around the notion of 'learning activities in a caring environment'. It incorporates the learning theories of influential educators (Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner...) as well as the increasing body of research literature addressing early literacy development. The apparent contradictions between "development" and "teaching" approaches are addressed. For example, where the ideal role of the pedagogues is concerned, those supporting the learning reform argue that children's interests alone are not enough to drive learning activities in day care centres. Adults are needed to mediate a child's introduction to culture and society. Effective mediation requires adults to match their strategies to the child's intentions, knowledge and understandings, and to move in and out of reactive and proactive roles. Through a prior preparation of the environment and caring attention to the child's desires, adults can motivate the child to pursue valued competencies, without in any way abusing the freedom of the child. Vygotsky's theorisation of the zone of proximal development and of the adult's scaffolding role are invoked to justify and motivate a more active approach by pedagogues. Likewise the seeming contradiction between the child's free play and formal learning in intellectual fields (e.g. numeracy, literacy activities, oral communication...) is addressed through clarifying the cultural assumptions behind notions of play and learning, and through creating the environments that allow children to integrate freely into their play culturally valued activities.

114. The learning theory of the pedagogues whom we interviewed had gone far beyond the care and education divide. There was an understanding that young children need the support of adults and enriched

environments for successful early learning to take place. The pedagogue should be active in directing their attention, supporting their learning attempts, regulating complexity and sharing with them appropriate language through focused conversations. The steps in the scaffolding of the adult may be described in this order: forming a trusting relationship with the child; pointing the child toward the task through the organization of the environment, picking up an interest shown by the child; motivating the child by explaining the usefulness of the task and, especially, showing how the activity will contribute something to others. In short, learning is seen as embedded in social relationships. The child and the adult share a *learning relationship* when they focus on an issue of interest to them both. They propose that these three elements - the child, the pedagogue, and the issue- share an equal weight in the learning relationships.

115. Attitudes to children are based on children's rights and on a child observation perspective. "If we want democratic, responsive children", we were told, "then we must take children seriously, and acknowledge that each child is *the* expert of her own experiences, feelings and language. We must take the needs of children seriously - their need to play, to make friendships and to be in contact with adults that like them". A clarification of values lies at the heart of the new pedagogy. "What are our educational values? What kinds of human beings do we want for Danish society?" (Gladsaxe, 2000).

116. Many municipalities have made it a requirement also that kindergarten facilities in their jurisdiction should develop *Learning Plans*, so as to provide structuring, and ensure continuity between the upper years of kindergarten and the early years of schooling. In this endeavour, they receive funding and support from the Ministry of Education's *Folkeskole 2000* project. In one municipality we visited, Gladsaxe, eighty different kindergartens and schools had come together, under the leadership of the municipal pedagogical advisers, to discuss the requirements and implications of these *Plans*.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

117. A clear strength of Danish early childhood policy and provision is that it has emerged steadily within an environment of stable government over many years and within an agreed framework of social values. Being Danish has been clearly understood by all, and there has been the opportunity for long term sustained planning for the welfare of young children. A strong policy has been developed that supports parents who wish to work and take on responsibility for the well-being of young children. Efforts in the direction of cross-ministerial collaboration are impressive and the development of the National Children's Council gives a 'voice' to the concerns of children. With the 'light' guidance of central government, the decentralisation of early childhood and educational responsibility to municipalities has allowed for local appropriateness in the organisation of child-care, education and family services.

### **Co-ordination and coherence of services**

118. Concern was apparent, however, concerning the implementation of policies and their co-ordination across the 275 municipalities. More coherence would seem necessary on matters that are so important for parents, such as immediate access for infants at the end of maternity/parental leave, or the confusion caused by differences in the guarantee of places across municipalities. Again, the range of services offered can differ from one municipality to another, e.g. many municipalities do not provide crèche services but offer only the cheaper alternative, family daycare, which some parents see as a second best. Even the guaranteed place offer is unsatisfactory for many parents as they must accept whatever is offered despite their preference for a specific type of daycare.

119. It seemed to the review team that to resolve such limitations, system-wide monitoring of quality and learning could be strengthened. The view of the National Children's Council, cited in Chapter 4, merits consideration, that individual municipalities may have too much discretion in implementing central policies, leading to unequal provision across the country. The situation is further complicated by the different perspectives of ministries, although here it should be pointed out that a common, holistic approach to the sector is being adopted, that is, care, educational and social objectives are well balanced in all services.

120. What seems to be dividing the system, and weakening its capacity to monitor, are traditional administrative competencies that divide responsibilities for children from birth to eight between the ministries and the National Association of Local Authorities. To find an answer to how greater co-operation and coherence of policy should be achieved between these central bodies is outside the competence of the review team. It can be seen that the project *Folkeskole 2000* has been extremely helpful in bringing the system together around issues such as coherence and improving quality. Perhaps, a more permanent instrument to continue this work may be envisaged, e.g. an early childhood agency with members drawn from the two responsible ministries, the National Association and other major stakeholders. Whatever solution is envisaged, we believe that some permanent guidance is needed from the central level as to what are the national objectives for early childhood care and education, and how the achievement of these goals are to be monitored in a systematic way. A systemic approach implies a

common policy framework with consistent goals across the country, and clearly defined responsibilities for both central and decentralised levels of government.

121. At the local level, coherence can be easier, especially in municipalities that have brought together their social and educational services to treat kindergarten and schools in a coherent manner. Many municipalities have strengthened their administrations and pedagogical teams to engage in quality improvement and monitoring, sometimes, as we have seen, with remarkable results. Other municipalities rely, however, only on the licensing regulations. A consequence is that management and quality levels may depend unduly on the director and staff in a particular centre. Our conclusion is that with 75% of young children in care outside the home, a rigorous monitoring system needs to be developed to protect these children and bring greater coherence and quality into the programmes they receive. Consideration may be given as to whether monitoring can be both national and local, the former concentrating on overall objectives for the system, general statistics and information and research. In parallel, local monitoring mechanisms could measure the achievement of more local aims, such as the objectives announced in the *Learning Plans*.

122. At the same time, the review team recognises that Denmark is still in an enviable position compared to many other countries. The overarching policy and legal frameworks for early childhood provision have been worked out at national level, and receive national approbation, funding and supports. The promise of a guaranteed place for every child over one year has been pursued effectively, on a universal access basis that yet prioritises children in need of special support. Services are remarkably comprehensive, integrated and coherent throughout the country. Though demonstrating a good deal of variety and experimentation, they are delivered in much the same way in every municipality. The professionals involved are well-trained, their profiles well defined, and there is general satisfaction with working conditions. They receive similar training across the country, and share similar understandings of what early development services are about. Parents too are well-informed about the services available, understand what to expect from each kind of service and, statutorily, have a major influence on daily routines, programmes and even budgetary decisions of the centre in which their child is placed.

### **Access issues**

123. It seemed to the review team that two main groups are affected with regard to access: infants at six months and the children of immigrants and New Danes.

#### *Infants at six months*

124. We have seen that parents in many municipalities have difficulties in finding a place for their child at the end of maternity leave. To this, it may be responded that more parents should consider taking some months of child care leave. As the post-April 1997 increase in demand for services shows, many parents consider 60% of unemployment benefit insufficient, particularly when they have been working, and contributing through their taxes to social benefits. Yet, and this is another consequence that needs attention, the compensation may be sufficient to encourage low-income mothers to remain at home with their children, and be a contributing factor in denying their children contact with early development services. An extension of universal parental leave to one year, while requiring municipalities to include the 6 to 12 months period among the guaranteed places may be a solution to consider. The child would be more mature when first placed in care outside the home,<sup>13</sup> and the rolling demand for a childcare place by parents benefiting from a longer leave, would open up sufficient places for the parents who actually need the service.

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13. It would be interesting to have some research on the ideal age for children to enter daycare services, and in the best interests of children, to take this into account when making early childhood policy.

### *Children of the New Danes*

125. The economic imbalance between the majority world and the falling populations of Europe means, in all probability, that Denmark will accept certain levels of immigration and move toward a greater multi-culturalism. In such a context, family and child policies are destined to become an area of focus and research in Denmark. Language is a major dividing line of culture, but so also are attitudes toward families and young children. For generations in Denmark, family policies have been a mixture of financial support to families with young children, and public responsibility for the care and education of young children so as to allow parents to work. These policies suited the vast majority of Danes, and were justified in terms of a fair start in life for all children, equal opportunity for women, and integration into a common Danish culture. There was little actual policy for families who did not opt for institutional care, and relatively few outreach policies toward their children.

126. Today, with 9% of the school population of immigrant origin, the situation is changing. According to reports, many immigrant mothers do not speak Danish at all. Many, in fact, may be illiterate as the marriages of young male immigrants in Denmark (even second generation) are sometimes arranged for them in their home village, and their spouses then brought over. The question for us here is not one of numbers or the legality of these family reunions, rather, how to respond to the growing numbers of families who do not want public care for their young children, and who prefer to live in their own ethnic neighbourhoods. In the best interests of the child, what are the policies and outreach strategies that should be adopted to support traditional families to rear their children according to their values, and yet in a manner that allows the children to be part of Danish society. While the issue is still couched in terms of 'learning to speak Danish', other important issues go unanswered.

127. More proactive and radical policies may be envisaged, but they require leaving the attitude: "how can we help them integrate into our society", to focus rather on dialogue and mutual exchange. This approach is proposed, in fact, in the 1998 amendments to the *Folkeskole* Act, which recommend that bilingual children should be encouraged to develop a positive identity based in the two cultures to which they belong, and given the opportunity to develop communicative skills in their native language as well as in Danish.

128. Seen from this perspective, the local authorities may wish to monitor early childhood and school services in terms of fairness and responsiveness to ethnic sensitivities. Are the content and practice of centres in ethnic neighbourhoods scrutinised for bias? Does the mix of pedagogues and assistants in the services reflect the composition of the population being served? Are there bilingual staff (including managers and pedagogues) available in all centres that serve predominantly ethnic populations? Is the culture of ethnic children cherished and celebrated in the centres? Are the weekly menu and the celebration of holidays planned with ethnic parents? How should centres reach out effectively to families living in ethnic neighbourhoods, in which women may not speak any Danish at all? Are the public authorities sending out the right message to the New Danes by cracking down on racist attitudes, and by publicly examining racist bias in the larger society? Are devaluation and power issues in society as a whole being addressed? Few would deny that these are difficult projects to undertake, but the experience of the Danish municipalities, where large concentrations of immigrants are found, would suggest that the long-term solutions will be worked out in dialogue and mutual respect. It seems evident too that daycare and kindergarten are the key public institutions in which learning to live positively with diversity must begin.

129. Studies of the transition of children into school from other countries also show that children from disadvantaged and/or non-mainstream language backgrounds need special supports to make transitions successfully. They tend to be rated by their new teachers as being less intelligent, having fewer social skills and a tendency to behavioural problems. This can be due at times to the child's anxiety and lack of self-esteem. At other times, however, teachers may not recognise that the child in question is very

competent in her own language and the behavioural responses appropriate for her own culture. (Sameroff & McDonogh, 1994).

### **The new focus on learning**

130. The review team found the new focus on learning a fruitful way forward between the conflicting discourses on care and education. Rather than becoming entangled in traditional oppositions, there is a new move to develop planning and programming around the useful notion of 'learning in a caring environment'. The additional financial support that is provided by the Ministry of Education through *Folkeskole 2000* has been critical in moving the idea forward, and in working out its practical implications at local level.

131. The consultative approach of the pedagogical advisors seemed to the review team particularly effective. The formulation of municipal learning plans, based on agreed values and on a renewal of learning approaches, is an interesting development. Where practised, the approach has brought together, around a common project, the different institutions, stakeholders and professional bodies at local level. The resulting learning plans provide educational continuity across programmes and institutions dealing with children from birth to 8 years, without sacrificing in any way the attention to development, play and social skills for which Danish kindergartens have long been known. In many instances, attention has also been given to the SFOs and the contribution they too can make to the learning and socialisation of children. This action-research at local level has not only educational but also budgetary implications, as an important offshoot is more cost-effective use of the competencies of different kinds of staff.

### **Quality issues**

132. With regard to quality, concern was expressed about the rising child-staff ratios that have occurred in many municipalities, following the efforts made to meet the government promise of a guaranteed place for every child. To an outside review team, these ratios seem rather positive. However, the tendency to increase the number of children per trained pedagogue needs vigilance. In addition to its impact on the quality of programmes offered, further increases in child numbers may have a negative impact on children's health, particularly perhaps in Denmark where young children spend so many hours daily in rooms with other children.<sup>14</sup> We do not have evidence that quality and the health issues are more acute in the SFOs, where intake has greatly increased, but if it has not already been done, perhaps some attention may be given to the question. Child-staff ratios in the SFOs are not as favourable as in the traditional after-school care centres, and there may be a tendency for municipalities to use greater numbers of auxiliary staff rather than trained pedagogues. Moreover, SFO facilities are school facilities, and are not tailored specifically for recreational purposes.

133. Again, concerns were raised with regard to the erosion of the quality of programmes in kindergartens. It seemed to the reviewers, however, that kindergartens are more structured and reflective today than some years ago, when the institution was often criticised for the low involvement of the pedagogues and their distrust of "education". Some remnants of that approach are still seen, and need to be addressed. However, as outlined in Chapter 4, many excellent initiatives are being taken by ministries, municipalities, the pedagogical advisors and BUPL, that are shaking old certainties and restoring critical reflection on actual practice. There is a greater focus now on the kindergarten as a learning environment for young children, while maintaining the traditional Danish view of "a time for childhood".

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14. The connection between overcrowding in classrooms and a rise in respiratory and inner ear infections is well established.

134. There is a growing acknowledgement too that children will progress to school. The integrated school start and *Folkeskole 2000* are evidence that the central authorities are aware of the difficulties of transitions for children. Proactive approaches may also be considered at kindergarten level, e.g. a conscious focus on preparing children for transition; informing parents how to support transition; ongoing communication between the staff of the *Folkeskole* and the kindergartens from which children come; ensuring curriculum continuity with a diversity of learning approaches and programmes. In this work, the perspective of the child - and particularly her anxiety about separation from friends - should not be forgotten. Within the kindergarten class itself, flexible schedules and the allocation of time for free play may also be considered. Play is important as it allows children to make meaning of discontinuities in their experience.

135. The OECD team wishes to acknowledge the attention already being given to maintaining quality in the early childhood sector in Denmark. The funding of services is among the highest in the OECD, and the structural and process features of quality are well-known and closely supervised. By any standards, the initial training of pedagogues is excellent, and it is not difficult to find outstanding practice in many centres. Assessments of quality (generally informal) often take place and they are planned to include the children's views as well as those of the parents and the pedagogues. The kindergarten committees, unions and the media also focus relentlessly on failures to provide good services, and as we have seen above, many recent initiatives have been taken to improve the quality of programmes being offered.

136. Perhaps the challenge in the coming years will be to retain the Danish focus on early childhood as a specific and precious moment in the human cycle, where children are supported to use their freedom creatively and constructively. According to research by Broström (1998), primary school contents and methods have made significant inroads into the kindergarten class in recent years. The question is raised: will this content be learned by children in a teacher-directed context or can the Danish kindergarten retain its active and child-directed learning environment? Will the interest in literacy be integrated into the child's semiotic universe or, on the other hand, be imposed as the dominant tool of communication, and overshadow other modes of development? The consultative approach, shared values and the learning theory outlined by the pedagogical advisors whom we interviewed give hope that this will not happen, and that the Danish approach will enrich, as in the past, early childhood practice in other countries.

137. The current Minister of Education is confident that this is a dynamic time of change and opportunity for early childhood services in Denmark. With schools needing to take much more account of what children have learned in kindergarten, and integrated training programs for teachers and early childhood professionals under discussion, the way forward looks very different from the road travelled to this point. Liaison between different interest groups is increasing and pathways are being beaten towards new partnerships. Discussions concerning quality are a feature of many municipalities, along with the development of a wider understanding of learning. Knowledge in this sense is being taken beyond old disputes toward a renewed focus on well-being, communication skills, and adaptability to the new challenges that are awaiting Danish children, as they move towards adulthood in the twenty-first century.

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## APPENDIX I: OECD REVIEW TEAM

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## APPENDIX II: PROGRAMME OF THE REVIEW VISIT

4 to 14 April 2000

### Tuesday 4 April

*Arrival in Copenhagen*

### Wednesday 5 April

9h00 - 12h00

General information: information and discussion on family policies; information and discussion on ECEC and the day-care system; the Interministerial Committee on Children. Participants: Kirsten a Rogvi, Head of Division, Ministry of Social Affairs; Bryan Nicholls, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Affairs; Helle Beknes; Jytte Juul Jensen.

Ministry of Social Affairs, room no. 461  
Holmens Kanal 22  
1060 København K

13h00 - 16h30

General information (continued): information on block grant - the financing system for municipalities; information on the Danish education system; legislation on school start in the Folkeskole; ECEC from the point of view of the public school system; information on the visit programme - arrangements, appointments and questions. Participants: Niels Jørgen Mau Petersen, Head of Division, Ministry of the Interior; Jørn Skovsgaard, Head of Division, Ministry of Education; Thomas Roed Jakobsen, Head of Section, Ministry of Education; Helle Beknes, Educational Advisor, Ministry of Education; Jytte Juul Jensen.

Ministry of Education, room 'Høloftet!' (The Hayloft!)  
Frederiksholms Kanal 26  
1220 København K

### Thursday 6 April

*Gladsaxe*

9h00 - 12h30

Day-care centres in a medium size town municipality - Gladsaxe/Helle Beknes: visit at an age-integrated centre for 0-6-year-olds including a 'culture group', meeting with staff and leader; visit at an ordinary kindergarten for 3-5/6-year-olds including an 'out-in-the-woods group', meeting with staff and leaders.

13h30 - 16h00

Meeting at Town Hall of Gladsaxe. Introduction to aims and curriculum of the Gladsaxe early childhood day-care centres.

## **Friday 7 April**

*Lyngby*

9h00 - 12h00

Family day-care in a medium size town municipality - Lyngby-Taarbæk/Lisbeth Denkov: visit family day-care homes. The review team will be divided in two smaller groups. Visit at the municipal centre of family day-care. Meeting and discussing with staff and leader.

13h30 - 14h30

Independent day-care centres and kindergartens with special purposes/Lisbeth Denkov: meeting with representatives of the Association of Parish kindergartens, the Association of Free Kindergartens and Leisure Time Centres and the Association of Day Care Centres.

Ministry of Social Affairs, room no. 430

15h00 - 17h00

The municipal politics and administration of ECEC/Lisbeth Denkov: meeting with Lis Sandberg, Vice Head of Division; Søren V Christiansen, Consultant.

The National Association of Local Authorities

Gyldenløvesgade 11

Dk-1600 København V

## **Sunday 9 April**

*Travel to Århus*

## **Monday 10 April**

*Beginning of the day programme at 9h00*

ECEC in a big town municipality – Århus: meeting with the head of the municipal compulsory education and the head of the municipal social affairs.

ECEC in the school system: school visit: pre-school class, 1st and 2nd grade and school-based leisure-time facilities. Meeting with staff and leader.

Staff education: teacher and pedagogue training programme: meeting with staff of a pedagogue training college including a representative of a teacher training college.

Research concerning ECEC: meeting with researchers.

Accompany persons: Jytte Juul Jensen, Ministry of Social Affairs; Kirsten Rasmussen, Ministry of Education.

## **Tuesday 11 April**

*Beginning of the day programme at 9h00*

Children with special needs: visit at a kindergarten with disabled children. Meeting with staff and leader. Visit at an age-integrated day-care centre for 0-6-year-olds.

ECEC in a small rural municipality – Rønne: visit at a local ECEC institution. Meeting with staff of the municipal children and school administration.

Accompany persons: Jytte Juul Jensen, Ministry of Social Affairs; Kirsten Rasmussen, Ministry of Education.

*Return to Copenhagen*

### **Wednesday 12 April**

9h00 - 12h30

ECEC for pre-school children of ethnic minorities/Helle Beknes and Lisbeth Denkov: visit at a kindergarten with programmes for ethnic minority children. Meeting with staff and leader. Visit at a Language Programme for 4-year-olds ethnic minority children who are not attending day-care centres. School visit in an area with a high percentage of ethnic minority children: Pre-school class, 1st and 2nd grades. Meeting with staff and leader.

12h45 - 13h30

Lunch at the Ministry of Social Affairs.

13h30 - 15h30

Meeting with the head of department of bilingual pupils of the Municipality of Copenhagen, and a project collaborator on language programmes for bilingual pre-school children in the municipality of Copenhagen, the director of the municipality of Høje Taastrup and a consultant of the Høje Taastrup programmes for bilingual children.

Room no 491

16h00 - 17h00

The minister of Education: perspectives of early childhood education: meeting with the Minister of Education.

### **Thursday 13 April**

*Beginning of the programme 9h00 in the Ministry of Education, room 'Høloftet'*

9h30 - 11h30

The policies of interest groups and work unions/Lisbeth Denkov, Helle Beknes: round table discussion with representatives of parents' organisations and relevant trade unions.

12h30 - 15h30

Children and families with special needs/Lisbeth Denkov, Helle Beknes: visit at the Counselling of Children and Young People in the Municipality of Helsingør. Meeting with staff and head (*Lunch is included*).

16h30 - 17h30

The Children's Council: meeting with the president of Children's Council (Equivalent of Children's Ombudsmand).

The Ministry of Social Affairs

18h00 -

Review team meeting in the Ministry of Education.

## **Friday 14 April**

### *Ministry of Education*

8h30 - 9h30

ECEC policy. Challenges and priorities: meeting with the chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of Education.

9h30 - 11h30

End of the visit. Conclusions: debriefing and conclusions.

## **APPENDIX III: INFORMATION ON THE DANISH BACKGROUND REPORT**

The preparation of the Denmark Report was coordinated by the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Ms. Jytte Juul Jensen of Jydsk Paedagog-Seminarium.

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