

**Background Report**  
**OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and**  
**Care Policy**

**Early Childhood Education and**  
**Care Policy**  
**in**  
**Denmark**

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## **Foreword**

This report has been prepared as part of an OECD project concerning “Early Childhood Education and Care Policy”. The following countries participate in the project: Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, Italy, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. An expert group consisting of five people have visited Denmark in connection with the project.

The report has been prepared on the basis of the 'Questions to guide the Preparation of the Background Report' issued by the OECD.

The preparation of the report for the OECD concerning Early Childhood Education and Care in Denmark has been coordinated by the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Jytte Juul Jensen of the College for Social Care and Education.

## Glossary

*Lov om social service = serviceloven*: Social Services Act

*Dagtilbud*: The overall term used for *all public day-care facilities* for children under the Social Services Act, comprising: *kommunal dagpleje* (municipal day care), *kommunale og selvejende daginstitutioner* (municipal and independent day-care facilities) and *puljeordninger* (private facilities based on local-authority grants).

*Kommunal dagpleje* (Municipal childminder arrangement): *Dagplejere* (childminders) employed by the local authority. *Legestuer* (playrooms), which are facilities shared by all municipal childminders, are operated in relation to the municipal childminder arrangements.

*Daginstitutioner* (day-care facilities): *vuggestuer, børnehaver, aldersintegrerede institutioner* and *fritidshjem*.

*Vuggestuer*: crèches

*Børnehaver*: kindergardens

*Aldersintegrerede institutioner*: age-integrated facilities

*Fritidshjem*: after-school centres

*Særlige dagtilbud*: Special day-care facilities for children with permanently and considerably reduced mental or physical capacity.

*Dagplejer*: Childminder employed by a local authority

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

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

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

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 pre-school 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.

*Lov om folkeskolen = folkeskoleloven*: Act on primary and lower secondary education = the Folkeskole Act.

*SFO*: School-based leisure-time facility = SFO facilities

*Børnehaveklasse*: Optional one year pre-school class

*Folkeskole*: Public primary and lower secondary school

## General information about Denmark

Denmark is one of the oldest nations in Europe, located in the northern part of Europe. The system of government is based on a democratically elected parliament, 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 Danish Constitution dates from 1849 and has thus been 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 of the members are elected on the Faroe Islands and two are elected in Greenland. The members of the Folketing are elected in general elections which as a minimum must be held every four years.

The living standard in Denmark is high by international standards and the gap between rich and poor is smaller than in many of the countries with which Denmark is traditionally compared.

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 Copenhagen - Funen and Lolland-Falster. These islands are interlinked by bridges.

The number of inhabitants is 5.3 million, and the population density is about 120 per square kilometre. There are about 290,000 foreign immigrants in Denmark. In addition there is a small German minority in southern Jutland. The language is Danish throughout the country, and the vast majority of the population have been baptised into the established protestant church. Denmark is therefore rather homogeneous both in national and cultural terms.

Immigration to and emigration from Denmark have undergone changes during the last thirty years. Migration between Denmark and other countries in Europe that resemble Denmark socially and economically has balanced throughout this period. On the other hand the number of immigrants from countries with completely different backgrounds, in particular Turkey, the former Yugoslavia and Asia (especially Pakistan), has been increasing. In the entire period the number of immigrants has exceeded the number of emigrants. The proportion of foreign nationals in Denmark has therefore been increasing and on 1 January 2000 foreign immigrants made up 4.1% of the population. The vast majority of these immigrants live in the three largest cities: Copenhagen, Aarhus and Odense.

Eighty-five per cent of the population live in towns. The greater Copenhagen region has about 1.79 million inhabitants. The second largest city is Aarhus (215,000 inhabitants). In addition, several medium-sized towns are scattered throughout the country.

Seventy-five per cent of all Danish children live with both their parents (1999). In the 1980s and 1990s there was a drop in the proportion of children living with both their parents. This drop has resulted in an increase in the proportion of children living with one parent only (single provider), particularly the proportion of children living with their mother.

**Table 1 Overview of the number of children living with both parents, one parent or no parent**

<b>Children living with both parents, one parent or no parent</b>			
	<b>1980</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1999</b>
Children living with both their parents	1,057,185	824,351	853,618
Children living with one parent only	236,238	250,135	263,867
Single mother	127,260	144,658	156,423
Single father	16,833	19,418	18,560
Mother in new relationship	79,518	74,948	79,367
Father in new relationship	12,627	11,111	9,517
Children not living with any of their parents	25,861	15,232	15,003
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,319,284</b>	<b>1,089,718</b>	<b>1,132,488</b>

Source: Danmark Statistik, *Statistiske Efterretninger. Population and elections. Household and family statistics 1991 and 1998, and special statement for 1980.*

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. Local authorities have considerable autonomy.

Local and regional authorities are responsible for approximately 70 % of governmental activities, despite the fact that they only receive about 30 % of taxes and excises. The difference is made up by central government grants. Most of these grants are provided as block grants which the local and regional authorities then allocate for various purposes. In an attempt to avoid a rise in public spending, an agreement is currently in force under which the local authorities have agreed that neither taxes nor spending should be increased. If the local authorities wish to increase spending in one area, they must cut costs equivalently in another area. 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. County responsibilities include special day-care facilities for children with disabilities and a more general responsibility for hospitals and upper secondary education.

Most local authorities - though not Copenhagen and Frederiksberg - are members of the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark (*Kommunernes Landsforening*), which negotiates with the central government and also represents local authority employees in collective bargaining concerning wages, working hours and job duties.

The Danish Kingdom also comprises two self-governing territories: The Faroe Islands in the Atlantic (1 4000 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 treated in this publication since education and care are the responsibility of the local parliaments, not the Danish parliament.

## **Section 1: Definitions, contexts and current provisions**

### **ECEC**

Early Childhood Education and Care generally comprises facilities for children below compulsory school age, ie children aged 0-5/6 years. The ECEC facilities for children in this age group are day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children offered under the Social Services Act (*Lov om social service*) as well as the optional pre-school class (*børnehaveklasse*) and school-based leisure-time facilities (*skolefritidsordninger (SFO)*). This report also includes a brief description of facilities for children in the first years at school offered under the act on primary and lower secondary education (*Lov om folkeskolen*).

The Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for the Social Services Act and consequently has main responsibility for ECEC facilities, while the Ministry of Education is responsible for the act on primary and lower secondary education and for the training and education of child and youth educators (*pædagoger*) and school teachers.

*The general purpose of the ECEC facilities* for children offered under the Social Services Act is to further the development, wellbeing and independence of children in consultation with their parents. In addition the day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) have three purposes of equal importance: educational, social and care purposes.

### **Social initiatives in relation to children, young people and families in general**

#### *Danish child and family policy*

Danish child and family policy is based on the overall principle that the family is the foundation a child's upbringing and that the living conditions of children are mainly the responsibility of their parents. Public authorities have an overall responsibility for providing a good social framework and for providing the best possible conditions for families with children. In addition, public authorities must protect children and young people against abuse and neglect, and they must offer advice and guidance to parents so that the parents will be able to meet their parental obligations and responsibilities.

General issues relating to child and family policy are handled centrally by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which lays down an overall framework and general conditions, while the actual organisation of facilities and service offered to citizens is carried out at the local level in the 275 municipalities and to a certain extent also in the 14 counties and in the municipalities of Copenhagen and Frederiksberg.

Families with children receive support partly in the form of financial support and partly in the form of various services which are granted on the basis of the principle that everybody with a need must have equal access to the services offered. Public facilities and services for parents and children are basically offered to give children and young people optimum conditions for a good childhood and adequate development.

One result of social developments over the past twenty years is that the active participation of women - particularly mothers of young children - in the labour market has now reached almost the same level as that applying to men.

The participation rate for women of working age (16-66 years) is 77.5% for the group as a whole. For the group aged 20-44, which typically represents families with one child, the overall participation rate is much higher: 85.7%. The participation rate is higher for men than for women in all groups (see tables 2 and 3).

**Table 2**  
**Participation rates, age group 16-66, 1989-1999**

<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 3**  
**Participation rates, age group 20-44, 1989-1999**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1999</b>
<i>Age group 20-24:</i>			
Men	89.0	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>
<i>Age group 25-29:</i>			
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>
<i>Age group 30-34:</i>			
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>
<i>Age group 35-39:</i>			
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>
<i>Age group 40-44:</i>			
Men	96.0	91.9	89.8
Women	89.0	88.8	86.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>92.6</b>	<b>90.0</b>	<b>88.3</b>
<i>Age group 20-44:</i>			
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.

The high participation rate 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. One reason for this is 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), 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.

The possibilities of leave following childbirth have been expanded both for mothers and fathers, it has become possible to obtain leave to look after one's children, and there has been a major increase in the number of day-care places available to children. It is still being debated how the labour market can cater even more for the needs and requirements of parents with young children, so that it will be possible to combine working life, family life and the life of children in such a way that there will be time and 'space' for parents and children to spend time together.

#### *The Governmental Child Committee (Regeringens Børneudvalg)*

The conditions of children and families are affected by many aspects of social life across legislative and professional boundaries. The conditions of families with children have always had high priority. Denmark has chosen not to unite the responsibility for the conditions of children and families in a single ministry. Instead these conditions are covered by several different ministries which have expertise in the various areas for which they are responsible. The Ministry of Social Affairs has prime responsibility for ECEC day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children, the Ministry of Education is responsible for pre-school 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 and a parallel committee of government officials called the Interministerial Child Committee (Det Tværministerielle Børneudvalg) were established by the government in 1987 as a cross-sectorial collaboration body for the fifteen ministries working with matters that have a direct impact on children and families. The main purposes of the governmental Child Committee is to create cohesion and coherence in initiatives relating to children and families and to take cross-sectorial initiatives to improve the living conditions of children and young people. The Ministry of Social Affairs holds the chairmanship of the committee and hosts its secretariat.

#### *The Child Council (Børnerådet)*

In order to accelerate the integration of the conditions of children and young people in social planning, it was decided in 1993 to establish a Child Council. The Child Council was formally established in 1994 on a trial basis. After the trial period, the Child Council was given permanent status as from 1 July 1998.

One job of the Child Council 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 provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the intentions behind the convention.

When the Child Council obtained permanent status, its field of competence was extended, one result being that the council became a "watchdog" in relation to the implementation of and follow-up on the UN convention. In addition the council must be heard in relation to new legislation and other matters which have an impact on the conditions of children and young people.

#### **ECEC facilities offered under the act on social service**

Day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) established in accordance with the provisions of the Social Services Act.

On 1 July 1999 the Social Assistance Act (*Bistandsloven*) of 1976 was replaced by the Social Services Act (*Service-loven*) and the act on public security and administration in relation to social services (*Retssikkerhedsloven*). The Social Services Act contains rules concerning day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children, while the act on public security includes rules about supervision of day-care facilities.

The provisions of the Social Services Act (*Service-loven*) concerning children and the Ministry of Social Affairs guidelines concerning day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*), etc for children in accordance with the Social Services Act have been formulated on the basis of the principles laid down in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

#### *Purpose of day-care facilities*

In the Social Assistance Act (*Bistandsloven*), which became effective on 1 April 1976, the purpose and consequently the framework for the educational content of the services offered did not appear from the act itself but were incorporated in a Ministry of Social Affairs circular concerning day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children and young people offered in pursuance of the Social Assistance Act. In order to increase the focus on the purpose of day-care facilities, the purpose was included and explained in

the Social Services Act (*Serviceloven*). The objectives formulated describe the overall expectations of society in relation to the work carried out in relation to day-care facilities.

According to the general objective laid down in section 4 of the Social Services Act, all day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) must contribute to the promotion of children's development, wellbeing and independence. This applies both to general work and to preventive work, as well as to initiatives aimed at children with disabilities or some other special need for support.

The Social Services Act (*Serviceloven*) specifies that day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) have educational, social and care-related purposes, and that all three purposes are equally important.

#### *Focus on children*

Section 8 of the Social Services Act concerning the purpose of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children focuses on the needs and requirements of children and on the development of children. It also stresses that initiatives must be prepared in consultation with parents. The overall objectives are based on a criterion of ensuring that the use of day-care facilities must contribute to giving each child a good, safe and secure childhood, while at the same time supporting the personal development of each child in such a way that the child will acquire a number of social and general skills.

The main focus of this provision is on the needs and requirements of each individual child, the reason being that children's needs and requirements and their development are considered to be determined individually. Activities in relation to each individual child must therefore be based on the development stage of the child in question. This is crucial to strengthen and support a multi-faceted development and the build-up of the self-esteem of each individual child.

Local authorities determine the objectives and the framework for work carried out in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) as an integral part of each local authority's general services for children and of preventive and supportive initiatives taken in relation to children, including children with physical or mental disabilities or some other special need for support.

In connection with the determination of objectives and frameworks for day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*), local authorities must decide the extent of competence to be given to parent boards (described later in this report).

The following is a more detailed description of the purposes of day-care facilities for children:

*The preventive and integrating role of day-care facilities.* Day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) are part of the overall services offered in relation to children. In addition, day-care facilities must ensure that children with special needs are given necessary support. Staff in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) must be particularly attentive to problems faced by individual children and families which require special action and initiatives.

Staff must therefore be alert to any signals which show that a child has difficulty to such an extent that it needs support to overcome the difficulty. If this is the case, the day-care facility (*dagtilbud*) must - insofar as possible in consultation with the parents - ensure that relevant support is provided.

*Interdisciplinary collaboration.* Through their close and generally long-term contact with children and their families, day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) will normally acquire extensive knowledge about matters which may be crucial in deciding what kind of support a child or a family needs. If a local authority is to investigate the situation of a child prior to making a decision concerning special support, the law provides that the basis on which the decision is made must include knowledge acquired by day-care facilities.

*Collaboration between parents and day-care facilities.* The work of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) must be carried out in close collaboration with parents. This means that initiatives taken in relation to individual children must be agreed with the parents, which stresses the rule that parents have overall responsibility for the development of their children. The initiatives taken by day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) must be adapted to the initiatives taken by the parents in relation to their children. This

means that the work of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) must be intensified if the parents are not particularly active.

*Quality and continuity in childhood and adolescence.* Each individual day-care facility (*dagtilbud*) must contribute to ensuring that children have a safe and secure childhood. Children must be given care and must be supported in their learning and development of social and general skills. It is crucial that the starting point is the needs and requirements of each individual child and his or her development if the work carried out is to strengthen and further a multi-faceted development and boost the child's self-esteem.

*Care* is a basic fundamental for providing a child with self-confidence and trust in its surroundings. The care provided by day-care facilities must be such that the children are given both sufficient physical care and sufficient emotional care.

Learning of *social skills* means that day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) must contribute to ensuring that children are given a good educational basis and learn to interact with other children and with adults. A precondition for this is that the children develop openness, tolerance and respect of others. Similarly, the learning of *general skills* means that children learn to manage on their own to the extent that can be expected for their age group. They must, for example, learn to use various tools, take part in domestic chores and acquire other motoric abilities.

*Experiences and activities.* In order to ensure the wellbeing of each individual child and to strengthen his or her identity and general personal development, day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) must give children opportunities to experience various things and take part in various activities which stimulate their imagination, creativity and linguistic development. Children must be given space to play and learn, to carry out physical activities, to interact with others and to explore their surroundings.

*Imagination and creativity.* Day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) must offer an environment that furthers the wellbeing of children and give them opportunities to carry out physical and other activities which contribute to stimulating their imagination and creativity both within the framework of the day-care facility and in the local community.

Support of the development of *language skills* which are compatible with the development and maturity of each individual child is a key element in the work of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*). This is also true in relation to bilingual children.

The linguistic development of children is crucial in relation to the children's ability to tackle many different situations. It is therefore necessary to work in a targeted manner with the linguistic development and conceptual perception of each individual child, both in the form of independent activities and as an integral element in the other activities taking place in the day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*).

*Playing and learning.* Day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) must give children opportunity to play and learn. Children learn by playing as well as by observing committed adults and interacting with them.

Many of the activities in which children take part during their stay in a day-care facility (*dagtilbud*) involve certain learning processes. The provision in the act indicates that day-care facilities must pay attention to possible learning elements in various activities in relation to the maturity and development of individual children. In particular, it is important to provide response and support when individual children want to develop their skills or learn new skills.

*Children's right of participation.* It is important to listen to children and to take children seriously. In day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) children must be able to play a participatory role and share the responsibility for their own daily life, depending on their age and development stage. This will contribute to developing independence and will teach children to share responsibilities, and it will develop their collaborative skills and ability to take part in committing communities. This complies with article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which concerns children's right to express their points of view.

*Culture and nature.* Day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) must also 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. In addition, it must be possible for children to acquire knowledge about and experience with fundamental aspects of the natural environment, the purpose being to increase their awareness of environmental matters.

#### *Required number of places*

The local authorities have the overall responsibility for providing day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children and to ensure that the number of places needed are available. The obligation to provide places applies to all children resident in the municipality.

Each individual local authority estimates how many places it must establish. The estimate will be based on a number of factors, including the number of places already available, present and future demand, and financial factors.

In addition the number of places offered must be seen in relation to other facilities available that may meet actual needs and requirements, including facilities offered under other legislation, e.g. after-school facilities established under the act on primary and lower secondary education.

Local authorities may compose day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) in a flexible, adaptable manner in order to cater for local requirements.

The present trend in the labour market towards more flexible working hours, leave schemes and increased opportunity for part-time work and the like has an impact on demand and consequently on the day-care structure, the number of part-time and full-time places offered, and the opening hours of day-care facilities.

#### *Organisation of facilities in individual municipalities*

Local authorities may establish and operate day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) themselves, but they may also outsource the operation to private enterprises. If a local authority decides not to be in charge of operation, a written agreement must always be made between the local authority and the private enterprise carrying out the work on behalf of the local authority. Irrespective of whether a local authority decides to operate day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) on its own or to outsource the work to private enterprises, the local authority will have overall responsibility, and the day-care facilities will have to observe the objectives and framework defined by the local authority.

Day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) established under the Social Services Act can be day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*), childminder schemes (*dagpleje*) or so-called *puljeordninger* (schemes under which private facilities are operated on the basis of agreements with the local authority).

#### *Day-care facilities*

The day-care facility system dates 170 years back. It began in the 1820s when urbanisation and industrialisation had progressed significantly and the number of poor women working outside their homes was so high that it was a major problem for them to find somebody to look after their children.

Private initiatives were taken to establish places where the children of poor families could be looked after during the day. These first day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*) were called asylums and were open to children aged 0-7. The main concern of the people who looked after the children was to ensure that the children did not cause themselves or other children any harm. Up to 1900 a little more than 100 asylums were established.

In the period from 1850 to 1900 another types of day-care facility (*daginstitution*) was established: part-time kindergartens (*børnehaver*) for children of well-to-do people. These part-time kindergartens were open to children aged 3-7 and were inspired by the ideas of Friederich Frøbels concerning the upbringing of children. They were the first day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*) based on educational ideas, the basic element being "that all children need to spend a few hours a day in the company of other children and that children develop and are stimulated if they are engaged in certain activities."

After 1900 various initiatives were taken to approximate asylums to the system applied by kindergartens (*børnehaver*).

In 1901 the *Folkebørnehaveforening* (Folk Kindergarten Association) was established. It was followed by other private associations established to create full-time kindergartens (*børnehaver*) for a wide spectrum of the population. The folk kindergartens were funded in the same ways as asylums, i.e. through payments from parents, collections, donations, etc.

In 1912, a total of twelve folk kindergartens had been established but "since the collaboration with asylums did not meet expectations", folk kindergartens gradually became full-time kindergartens (*børnehaver*).

In 1915 the "Folkebørnehaveforeningen af 1915" began to establish part-time kindergartens (*børnehaver*) in poor districts in Copenhagen. The association established kindergartens in parishes where they were needed and entrusted the parish with the operation of the kindergartens as well as with the financial responsibility for them. Consequently these kindergartens are generally called parish kindergartens.

In addition to the kindergartens (*børnehaver*) two other types of day-care facilities are established: crèches (*vuggestuer*) for children aged 0-2 and after-school centres (*fritidshjem*) for children of school age. The first crèche (*vuggestue*) was established on private initiative in 1849 but had to close seven years later because of the risk of infection. It took until 1882 before hygienic standards were such that crèches (*vuggestuer*) could be established again. Progress was slow and only 26 crèches (*vuggestuer*) had been established by 1927. The crèches were managed by nurses and the main focus was on ensuring the physical health of the children.

The first places where children could be looked after after school were opened in 1874 and additional places were only opened at a very slow pace. In 1919 there were 20 after-school centres (*fritidshjem*).

The first government grants for kindergartens (*børnehaver*) were provided in 1919.

After World War II the number of women on the labour market increased, but day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*) were mainly offered in Copenhagen and other large cities.

The first legislation concerning independent day-care facilities (*selvejende institutioner*) was passed in the early 1950s. Most independent day-care facilities are members of interest organisations which offer advice and assistance concerning establishment, management, etc.

As from the late 1960s municipal day-care facilities (*kommunale daginstitutioner*) are established by several local authorities to supplement the independent day-care facilities (*selvejende institutioner*). The two types of facilities are funded in the same way, the operation being based on grants from the government and the local authority as well as payments from parents. Day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*) had to be approved by the government.

In 1976 the responsibility for day-care facilities is transferred to the local authorities. The government continues to pay grants to cover part of the operating costs. In 1987 the local authorities assume full responsibility for the operation of day-care facilities.

Day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*) may be either municipal (*kommunale*) or independent (*selvejende*) institutions.

Local authorities generally establish the following kinds of day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*):

- crèches (*vuggestuer*) for children aged 6 months to 2 years
- kindergartens (*børnehaver*) for children aged 3-5
- age-integrated facilities (*aldersintegrerede institutioner*) for children aged 6 months to 6 years - possibly up to 9/10 years
- after-school centres (*fritidshjem*) for children of school age.

About 70% of all day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*) in Denmark are municipal day-care facilities (*kommunale daginstitutioner*). These facilities must comply with the general rules on local government.

Independent day-care facilities (*selvejende daginstitutioner*), i.e. the rest of the day-care facilities, are independent legal entities governed by a board and operated on the basis of a charter or statutes concerning the operation of the facility. Independent day-care facilities (*selvejende daginstitutioner*) must also enter into agreements with the local authority concerning their operation. The local authority will pay all operating costs provided that the facility makes places available to the local authority.

As appears from the sections above, Denmark has a long-standing tradition for individuals and organisations (NGOs) being involved in the operation of day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*). The proportion of day-care facilities operated as independent facilities (*selvejende institutioner*) has been falling in recent years, one possible reason being that the requirements made by local authorities in relation to the independent facilities are considered to be too restrictive. Consequently an increasing number of these facilities are being converted into municipal day-care facilities (*kommunale daginstitutioner*).

#### *Municipal childminders*

The 1964 Child and Youth Care Act made it possible to provide public grants for municipal childminders (*dagpleje*). The municipal childminders were considered a supplement to the day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*). A political agreement was made in which one element was that the childminder system (*dagpleje*) was to be extended. Consequently municipal childminders from 1981 became a facility (*dagtilbud*) for children aged 0-2 in line with the ordinary day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*). The municipal childminder system (*dagpleje*) for children aged 0-2 is now offered on a par with crèches (*vuggestuer*).

The difference between the municipal childminder system (*dagpleje*) and day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*) is that municipal childminders are looking after a small group of children, normally in private homes (in most cases the childminder's own home). Childminder facilities (*dagpleje*) may also be established in other suitable premises which are close to the daily environment of the children, for example in shared houses or in the home of one of the children in the group. Either the childminder (*dagplejeren*) or the child must thus have some connection to the premises used for child-care purposes.

Each individual childminder (*dagplejer*) must not look after more than five children under the age of 14. If several childminders go together, the local authority may approve up to ten children in a group. The local authority may also decide that the childminder's own children under the age of 3 can be part of the group which the childminder is being paid for looking after. The general rule is that, in addition to his or her own children, the childminder must look after other children as well, though three of the childminder's own children under the age of 3, for example triplets, may constitute the entire group of children looked after by the childminder.

Childminders (*dagplejere*) are employed by the local authority, which also approves the home or the premises used by the childminders. Indoor and outdoor facilities will be checked and so will the personal qualifications of the childminder.

In order to ensure that individual childminders (*dagplejere*) are not "isolated" with the children they look after, and to ensure that the children have contact with other children and adults, local authorities have established centres for childminders in local areas. The childminders (*dagplejere*) and the children they look after meet at these centres to carry out various activities. The centres may include rooms for rhythmic activities, etc. In addition, childminders (*dagplejere*) are generally part of small groups of childminders who meet at the centres. This system means that the children know the other childminders (*dagplejere*).

If a childminder is absent from work because of holidays, sickness, participation in courses or the like, the local authorities must provide another childminder to look after the children - a so-called guest

childminder. In such cases the children will generally be looked after by one of the other childminders (*dagplejere*) in the group with whom they will already be familiar.

In order to support individual childminders (*dagplejere*) even further, local authorities have employed special childminder supporters who offer educational and administrative advice and assistance and check that the children are looked after in an acceptable way.

#### *Private facilities operated on the basis of agreements with local authorities*

The possibility of establishing day-care facilities in the form of private facilities operated on the basis of agreements with local authorities (*puljeordning*) was introduced with the 1990 Social Assistance Act, the purpose being:

- to provide maximum flexibility in the provision of the day-care facilities required; and
- to improve the possibility of parents and others of contribution to meeting the demand for day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) on their own terms.

To begin with, this possibility was a response to an identified need and desire to enable local authorities to supplement ordinary day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) with new, more flexible facilities. Owing to lack of resources it was no longer possible to solve the waiting list problem by means of conventional capacity expansion.

*Puljeordninger* are private day-care facilities for children based on agreements between the *puljeordning* and the local authority. The local authority will provide a grant per child included in the scheme as specified in the agreement. Local authorities are not obliged to enter into such agreements and offer grants to facilities under the *puljeordning*, but are entitled to decide how they want to compose the day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) offered in their respective areas.

The framework for the operation of a *puljeordning* is determined in the agreement made between the *puljeordning* and the local authority. No special requirements apply to the organisation of a *puljeordning*. A *puljeordning* generally involves small groups of children and are often established on the initiative of a group of parents. It will typically be operated by a group of parents and cover a small local area. Sometimes the initiative is taken by enterprises (establishing kindergartens for the children of employees), housing associations, boards of private independent schools and the like. In addition there are a number of schemes similar to the childminder scheme, in which a single person is responsible for the scheme and for the childminding.

#### *New initiatives*

In 1998 a local authority entered into an agreement with a *private company* (ISS Juniorservice) concerning the operation of a child centre under the *puljeordning* scheme. This was the first agreement of its kind. The local authority provides the same grants to ISS Juniorservice as it does to municipal and independent day-care facilities in the municipality.

It is a condition that the grants provided by the local authority must be used for day-care activities, and the company is not allowed to take out profits for the private operator of the centre. 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 on additional services such as laundering and sale of various services not covered by the rules on parent payment.

There is great focus on outsourcing of the operation of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) and several local authorities have initiated negotiations with private enterprises concerning the operation of *puljeordninger*. Since such schemes are very new, no experience has yet been gained in relation to them.

#### *Flexible day-care structure*

Existing legislation does not specify the *age groups* to which the various types of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) apply. It is up to each individual local authority to determine its own day-care structure on

the basis of local needs and requirements. It is important that the structure chosen reflects local needs and that it is developed on an ongoing basis concurrently with changing needs.

Developments on the labour market leading to more flexible working hours, various leave schemes, increased access to part-time work, etc have an impact on demand and consequently on the day-care structure, including the number of full-time and part-time places.

Local authorities may combine and use the various types of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*). They may, for example, determine the age distribution or they may focus on close collaboration between various facilities, e.g. between childminders (*dagpleje*) and day-care facilities (*daginstitution*).

*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 day-care 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.

Local authorities may also divide the opening hours of day-care facilities into *modules* of a certain duration, e.g. an hour or more, or modules covering a specific period during the day or during the week.

The trend is towards fewer part-time places, since demand has been limited. In addition it may be difficult to find staff if they can only be offered part-time work. Furthermore the local authority has no financial advantage in relation to such arrangements.

In January 1998, three per cent of all children had part-time places in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*).

Similarly, existing legislation does not contain any provisions concerning the *opening hours* of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*). Local authorities decide the daily opening hours of day-care facilities so that they will meet local childcare requirements. A local authority may decide to have different opening hours in different day-care facilities, i.e. that some day-care facilities open early and/or close late.

In some municipalities there is a need for day-care facilities being open in the evening and at night because of parents' working hours. A few local authorities have therefore established crèches (*vuggestuer*) and kindergartens (*børnehaver*) where children can stay throughout the night. These facilities are called night kindergartens (*nattbørnehaver*). The experience gained to date in relation to these kindergartens has been good.

A number of local authorities have established forest and nature kindergartens (*børnehaver*) where the children spend a great deal of time outdoors all year round, though a cabin is available in the area.

#### *Enterprise-based facilities*

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

Enterprises will generally have employees living in different municipalities. Though a local authority is only obliged to provide facilities for children resident within its own area it may offer children from other municipalities places in an enterprise-based facility if the local authority in the child's municipality of residence pays the municipal proportion of the cost of operating the day-care facility (*dagtilbud*).

#### *Open educational facilities*

In addition to the facilities mentioned above, local authorities may establish open educational facilities (*åbne pædagogiske tilbud*) for children below school age if their parents wish to look after them

permanently or in a certain period of time, but still want the child to spend time with other children outside its own home.

Open educational facilities (*åbne pædagogiske tilbud*) are managed by people with an educational background and are available for a short period of time. They are to a certain extent based on parent participation.

#### *Play centres*

Local authorities may also establish play centres (*legesteder*) where children and parents can meet if the parents have chosen to look after the children at home.

#### *Grants for private childcare - the free-choice scheme*

The free-choice scheme, which local authorities may adopt on a voluntary basis, was introduced on 1 January 1998 following a two-year trial period in which almost 100 municipalities tested a similar scheme.

The purpose of the scheme is:

- to give parents greater influence and a greater freedom of choice in deciding how their children should be looked after if the parents do not look after them themselves; and
- to increase the scope of action of local authorities in the field of day-care facilities.

Under the free-choice scheme (*frit valg-ordningen*) local authorities can make it possible for parents to opt for financial support which can be used to pay for private childcare in the period from the children reach the age of 24 weeks to the time when they would normally be enrolled in a pre-school class (*børnehaveklasse*). This option is available to parents who do not wish to have a place for their child in a day-care facility (*dagtilbud*).

In order to obtain such grants, the parents must already have and use a place in a day-care facility, or the child must have been given a place in a day-care facility (*dagtilbud*) without yet using it.

It is up to the parents to decide what kind of private childcare they want to use, and they must make an agreement with the private childminder or private facility themselves. The local authority must approve the agreements and the person which the parents have chosen to look after the child. In addition the local authority must monitor the arrangement on an ongoing basis. Grants are not given to parents who look after their children themselves.

Each local authority determines the size of grants, which must be the same for all children within the same age group. Grants for individual children may not exceed 70 per cent of the parents' documented expenses in relation to the private childminding arrangement. In addition the maximum grant provided by a local authority is a sum equivalent to 85 per cent of the net cost relating to the cheapest place in a day-care facility for the relevant age group in the municipality. A local authority may decide to provide grants which are lower than the maximum grant allowed.

#### *Day-care facilities for children with physical or mental disabilities*

According to section 7 of the Social Services Act, local authorities are obliged to provide day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children with physical or mental disabilities. Local authorities may meet this obligation in several ways:

- *Integration of individual children* in ordinary day-care facilities (*daginstitution*), possibly supplemented by special support staff.
- Admission of children with physical or mental disabilities in *municipal childminding facilities* (*dagpleje*), possibly combined with a reduction in the number of children in the facility.
- Establishment of *disability groups* in ordinary day-care facilities (*daginstitution*).
- Establishment of *municipal day-care facilities exclusively accepting children with physical or mental disabilities*.
- Establishment of a *shared municipal facility operated by the county*.

### *Support staff*

In order to support children with particular difficulties, local authorities have established groups of special support staff who can provide professional expertise and carry out targeted supervision, which may be necessary if a day-care facility (*dagtilbud*) is to admit children with physical or mental disabilities and children with social problems or behavioural problems.

### *Special day-care facilities*

In addition, section 16 of the Social Services Act provides that counties must provide places in special day-care facilities (*særlige dagtilbud*) for children who need special support, treatment, etc because of their disability. The county's obligation is a supplement to the obligations of municipalities.

In addition to the obligations laid down in the provision which specifies the purpose of special day-care facilities, special day-care facilities (*særlige dagtilbud*) for children must provide special support, treatment, etc to children with whose physical or mental capacity is severely and permanently impaired.

Special day-care facilities (*særlige dagtilbud*) observe and diagnose children with impaired capacity and offer relief stays to such children. In addition the special day-care facilities and local authorities offer advice and guidance to municipal day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) with disabled children and to parents with children who have not obtained a place in a special day-care facility (*særligt dagtilbud*), as well as to authorities in charge of the referral of disabled children to day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*).

In the same way as municipal day-care facilities, special day-care facilities (*særlige dagtilbud*) may be established in the form of crèches (*vuggestuer*), kindergartens (*børnehaver*), age-integrated facilities (*aldersintegrerede institutioner*) or after-school centres (*fritidshjem*).

### *Private childminding*

Children who are not looked after in a public day-care facility (*dagtilbud*) are looked after by their parents, their family or a private childminder.

In 1888 it was laid down by law that nobody was allowed to accept money for looking after a child under the age of 14 under a childminding or family care arrangement without having obtained permission from the local authority. This legislation remained in force until the adoption of the Child and Youth Care Act in 1964, which provided that nobody is allowed to look after more than two children under the age of 14 against payment without have obtained permission to do so.

Private childminding schemes are operated without financial support from public authorities and are thus solely funded by parents and possibly private grants. The childminders are not employed by the local authority.

There are no rules concerning admission, parents' contributions and parent participation. Each private childminder decides which children he or she will look after, and the size of the sums paid by parents is a question to be settled between the private childminder and the parents.

The permission of the local authority must be obtained of more than two children under the age of 14 are looked after against payment. Such permissions are granted on the basis of the same criteria as those applying to municipal childminders.

Private childminding may be carried out by private childminders or on private day-care facilities which are not receiving any public grants.

### *Trial approval*

According to section 138 of the Social Services Act, the minister for social affairs may approve that other facilities than those mentioned in the Social Services Act be established, provided that such facilities have been recommended by a local or regional authority.

The purpose of this provision is to give local and regional authorities an opportunity to test alternative solutions which are not possible within the framework of the Social Services Act.

Approval of experimental facilities makes it possible for a local authority to deviate from specific provisions which may hinder the establishment of a specific type of day-care facility.

The provision only makes it possible to grant dispensation from the provisions of the Social Services Act only. Dispensation cannot be granted from any other legislation, and no dispensation can be granted from the rules on parents' payment in relation to day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*). All experiments must be limited in time and they must be evaluated after conclusion.

The Social Services Act has been amended on several points in recent year because of experience gained in relation to experiments carried out in pursuance of the act's provision on experiments.

### **Facilities offered under the act on primary and lower secondary education**

#### *Pre-school education: One-year pre-school class*

The Folkeskole Act lays down provisions governing pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasse*), including the following provisions:

- the *folkeskole* must comprise a one-year pre-school class (*børnehaveklasse*), nine years of basic schooling and a one-year 10th form;
- the local authority is responsible for the establishment of pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasser*);
- at the request of its parents, a child must be admitted to a pre-school class (*børnehaveklasse*) in the calendar year of his or her sixth birthday or - under certain circumstances - one year before or one year after his or her sixth birthday;
- teaching in pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasse*) should insofar as possible take the form of play and other developing activities and should not be scheduled systematic training similar to conventional "school teaching". Furthermore it should be endeavoured to make the children familiar with the daily routines of school life;
- in the pre-school class and the first and second form levels, part of the teaching may be organised as an "integrated school start" (see below). In small schools all teaching in these forms may be carried out as common activities for all the forms.

The pre-school class (*børnehaveklasse*) is part of the basic school system and similar private schools cater for children from the age of 5/6. The *børnehaveklasse* is the optional one-year pre-school class and is the educational offer that comes closest to "Early Childhood Education". Although the pre-school class is not part of the compulsory education period, about 98% of all children attend a pre-school class. This percentage has remained more or less unchanged in recent years.

According to the Folkeskole Act there are no centrally formulated objectives or any curriculum guidelines for pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasse*) except that pupils should become familiar with daily school routines. However, on the decentralised level, the local school authorities may propose guidelines for the content of the activities taking place in pre-school classes. In recent years such objectives and guidelines have been proposed by an increasing number of authorities. A study carried out by the Royal Danish School of Educational Studies shows that descriptions of activities have been formulated for 57% of all pre-school classes in the form of a syllabus, an activity plan or a year-plan. There are no statistics available at the central level concerning the number of local authorities which have formulated municipal activity plans for pre-school classes.

Pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasser*) are relatively new in the public school system and became an official option about 35 years ago. The official start was in 1963 with the adoption of a bill that made it possible to establish classes in the *folkeskole* for children under the age of compulsory education. Throughout the country, pre-school classes were established on an experimental basis. Children were at school for a maximum of three hours a day. Legislation in force at the time did not contain any provisions regarding the purpose or regarding the minimum age for participation.

According to the report prepared prior to the adoption of the 1966 bill the purpose of the new legislation was to prepare children for compulsory school activities and to make them familiar with daily school life. A few years later the law was amended so that from then on activities in pre-school classes were to be conducted with due consideration for the children's age and developmental stage. In

the report relating to the 1966 bill it was also said that “actual instruction wholly or partly equal to that of the first form must not be given in pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasse*)”. It was, however, established 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 pre-school classes must be organised by a trained educator.

According to the Act on the *Folkeskole*, a child may commence compulsory instruction in the year when the child reaches the age of six. This means that a child may begin in a pre-school class at the age of five. This rule was adopted in 1986 when it was specified that children could be enrolled in a pre-school class at the age of 4 years and 10 months at the earliest.

At present the length of a school day in pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasse*) must be between four and five hours a day, which corresponds to the hours of attendance applying to the first and second forms. In 1997/98 about half of all pre-school classes and first and second forms in public schools were to some extent an integrating part of the teaching activities under a system called integrated school start. In the past few decades it has been possible to identify an increasing ambition among educators to merge the content and methods of the optional *børnehaveklasse* and compulsory education on first form level.

#### *Compulsory education*

Education is compulsory in Denmark. It is an obligation for parents to ensure that their children receive education, but school attendance is not compulsory. Education is compulsory for children between 7 and 16 years of age, which means that there are nine years of comprehensive basic education. The duration of compulsory education is set out in section 34(1) of the *Folkeskole Act*: “compulsory education commences on the 1st of August of the calendar year of the child's seventh birthday and ends on the 31st of July in the year when the child has received regular instruction for 9 years (not including the year in a pre-school class)”.

The requirement of compulsory education can be met by letting a child receive instruction in one of the following ways:

- in municipal elementary schools;
- in private elementary schools; or
- through home tuition (this option is rarely used).

In the 1990s it was discussed from time to time whether the age for commencement of compulsory education should be lowered and the compulsory education period should be extended correspondingly because of the high proportion of children attending pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasse*). However, this has not been a key issue on the political agenda for the past fifteen years.

#### *The folkeskole: primary and lower secondary education*

The *folkeskole* is a unified school in which there is no streaming at any level. The curriculum guidelines are determined in the *Folkeskole Act*. The school year - 200 school days - starts on 1 August.

#### *Private elementary schools*

Private schools or "free schools" must provide teaching that meets the standards of the *folkeskole*. Private schools are non-profit self-governing institutions. They teach about 12 % of all children of compulsory school age.

#### *Integrated school start (samordnet indskoling)*

Regular teaching was not allowed in pre-school classes until 1985. That year the rules about so-called integrated school start were also introduced in legislation. Integrated school start means that pre-school class teachers and first and second form teachers to some extent teach in each other's classes, so that the teachers are given an opportunity to follow the children in their first years in school. The purpose of the integrated school start system is to provide differentiated teaching which takes the actual developmental stage of the children into consideration and gives them opportunity both to play and take part in learning processes. The system means that children in pre-school classes are to a certain

extent taught together with children in the first and second form in age-integrated groups. Following the introduction of integrated school start, the concept of teaching was extended to cover "play and other developing activities".

In the years before 1985 many schools and local authorities had introduced the integrated school start system for the youngest classes on an experimental basis. The main result of the integrated school start system has been to bridge the gap between the teaching and learning traditions of schools and the play and development traditions of kindergartens. Integrated school start from pre-school class to the second form is still only an option and the final decision is made at the municipal or local level.

In the 1997/98 school year, 880 municipal elementary schools in 224 municipalities (about half of all municipal elementary schools in Denmark) had established some kind of integrated school start. In schools where there is no integrated school start, pre-school classes and first and second forms carry out certain activities together during the school year.

#### *School leisure time facilities (SFO)*

In 1975 it became possible to establish day-care facilities in school premises. The purpose was primarily to create a day-care facility for the youngest schoolchildren. The care facilities were often located in school buildings or parts of school buildings which were no longer used, for example in dwellings originally intended for head teachers, basements or other available facilities.

From the outset the operation of school-based leisure time facilities was less expensive than ordinary day-care facilities.

In 1979 the following provision was inserted in the Folkeskole Act: "The local authority will request payment from parents for the supervision of their children before and after school hours". In principle, local authorities were free to decide the sums to be paid by parents for use of the facilities.

In 1984 local authorities were given the possibility of using elementary schools outside normal school hours for play and other activities open to children enrolled in the school. This option is called school-based leisure time facilities (*SFO*).

The system is still in operation, and it is up to the local authorities to decide whether one or more *SFO* facilities should be established at municipal schools.

Since only a few rules concerning the *SFO* system have been formulated on the central level it is up to the local authorities to decide how the *SFO* system should operate in their area. Due to the lack of centrally formulated rules the Ministry of Education has issued a set of brief guidelines concerning *SFO* facilities. The guidelines concern issues such as staffing and the activities to be offered. Local authorities are not obliged to follow these guidelines.

Various kinds of informal parent boards may be established in relation to *SFO* facilities, but the actual supervision of the activities carried out in an *SFO* facility is the responsibility of the school board. The head of the school has the educational and administrative responsibility for the form and content of the *SFO* activities but generally the daily management of *SFO* facilities is carried out by an *SFO manager* who reports to the head of the school who has overall responsibility.

A municipal school (*folkeskole*) may offer children access to an *SFO* facility if they are enrolled in the school or have attained the minimum age for enrolment in pre-school class (i.e. 4 years and 10 months).

#### *Enrolment of younger children in SFO facilities*

According to section 55 (1) of the Folkeskole Act "the Minister of Education may deviate from the provisions in the act to the extent it is deemed necessary in order to promote innovative work or educational development work .... or in order to keep small schools in operation".

In this context a small school is normally defined as a school with up to 150 pupils. At present the minister has granted dispensation from the standard minimum age of children at the time of enrolment,

so that children may be enrolled from the age of three. Dispensation is normally granted for a period of three years and may be extended if the school in question still meets the criteria formulated.

#### **Number of children and coverage rates for various age groups**

The number of children aged 0-9 enrolled in day-care facilities and SFO facilities and the coverage rates applying to these children in April 1999 appear from the table below (breakdown by the following age intervals: below 3 years, 3-5 years and 6-9 years as well as intervals of one year). The coverage rate for children under the age of three has been calculated on the basis of the number of children aged 6 months-2 years.

**Table 4 Children aged 0-9 enrolled in day-care facilities, April 1999**

	<b>Child- minder arrange- ment</b>	<b>Crèche</b>	<b>Kinder- garden</b>	<b>After- school centre</b>	<b>Age- inte- grated facility</b>	<b>SFO facility</b>	<b>Special day- care facility</b>	<b>Club<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Total</b>
0-2 years	69,961	17,826	1,679	0	21,137	0	137	0	<b>110,740</b>
3-5 years <sup>2</sup>	12,506	2,170	107,536	393	66,269	2,781	645	229	<b>192,529</b>
6-9 years	60	1	17,110	31,664	29,865	130,674	364	5,477	<b>215,215</b>
<b>0-9 years</b>	<b>82,527</b>	<b>19,997</b>	<b>126,325</b>	<b>32,057</b>	<b>117,271</b>	<b>133,455</b>	<b>1,146</b>	<b>5,706</b>	<b>518,484</b>

Note:

1. 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.

Source: Social Resource Statistics

**Table 5 Coverage for children aged 6 months - 9 years enrolled in day-care facilities, April 1999**

	Child-minder arrangement	Crèche	Kinder-garden	After-school centre	Age-integrated facility	SFO facility	Special day-care facility	Club <sup>1</sup>	Total
½-2 years	41%	10%	1%	0%	12%	0%	0%	0%	<b>64%</b>
3-5 years <sup>2</sup>	6%	1%	51%	0%	31%	1%	0%	0%	<b>91%</b>
6-9 years	0%	0%	6%	12%	11%	49%	0%	2%	<b>81%</b>
<b>½-9 years</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>80%</b>

Note:

1. 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.

The coverage rate for children aged ½-2 years is 64%, while it is 91% for children aged 3-5 and 81% for children aged 6-9.

About 63% of children aged 0-2 years are covered by childminder arrangements (*dagpleje*). In small municipalities in particular, childminder arrangements account for the vast majority of places offered to the youngest children. In about 120 municipalities, childminder places (*dagpleje*) are the only places offered to children aged 0-2 years, since these municipalities have neither crèches (*vuggestuer*) nor age-integrated facilities (*aldersintegrerede institutioner*) for children in this age group.

*Puljeordninger* (private facilities operated on the basis of agreements with the local authority) make up only a small proportion of the day-care facilities offered; approximately 6,000 children or about 1%.

In the past few years there has been a significant increase in the number of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children (including SFO facilities), as appears from the table. The coverage rate for children aged ½-2 years has increased from 56% to 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 being in the number of SFO facilities (*skolefritidsordninger*).

**Table 6 Coverage rates for children aged ½-9 years, April 1999**  
**Coverage rates for various age groups in 1989-99**

	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

The table below shows the number of children enrolled in day-care facilities and coverage rates in April 1999 (breakdown by one-year age intervals):

**Table 7 Number of children aged 0-9 years enrolled in day-care facilities, April 1999**

	Child-minder arrangement	Crèche	Kinder-garden	After-school centre	Age-integrated facility	SFO facility	Special day-care facility	Club <sup>1</sup>	Total
0 year	7,777	949	13	0	1,077	-	5	-	<b>9,821</b>
1 year	30,159	7,666	142	0	8,144	-	29	-	<b>46,140</b>
2 years	32,025	9,211	1,524	0	11,916	-	103	-	<b>54,779</b>
3 years	11,458	2,136	27,178	38	20,262	-	159	-	<b>61,231</b>
4 years	865	31	41,183	25	23,522	-	237	-	<b>65,863</b>
5 years	183	3	39,175	330	22,485	-	249	-	<b>62,425</b>
6 years	42	1	16,581	5,953	12,782	25,554	-	-	<b>60,913</b>
7 years	6	0	440	9,077	6,877	39,297	-	-	<b>55,697</b>
8 years	9	0	43	8,918	5,900	36,464	-	-	<b>51,334</b>
9 years	3	0	46	7,716	4,306	29,359	-	-	<b>41,430</b>
6-9 years	-	-	-	-	-	-	364	5,477	<b>5,841</b>
under 6 years	-	-	-	-	-	2,781	-	229	<b>3,010</b>
<b>0-9 years</b>	<b>82,527</b>	<b>19,997</b>	<b>126,325</b>	<b>32,057</b>	<b>117,271</b>	<b>133,455</b>	<b>1,146</b>	<b>5,706</b>	<b>518,484</b>

Note:

1. After-school centres, youth clubs and open educational facilities

**Table 8 Coverage rate for children aged ½-9 years enrolled in day-care facilities, April 1999**

	Child-minder arrangement	Crèche	Kinder-garden	After-school centre	Age-integrated facility	SFO facility	Special day-care facility	Club <sup>1</sup>	Total
½ year	22%	3%	0%	0%	3%	-	0%	-	<b>28%</b>
1 year	44%	11%	0%	0%	12%	-	0%	-	<b>68%</b>
2 years	47%	13%	2%	0%	17%	-	0%	-	<b>80%</b>
3 years	16%	3%	38%	0%	29%	-	0%	-	<b>86%</b>
4 years	1%	0%	58%	0%	33%	-	0%	-	<b>93%</b>
5 years	0%	0%	57%	0%	33%	-	0%	-	<b>91%</b>
6 years	0%	0%	24%	9%	18%	37%	-	-	<b>88%</b>
7 years	0%	0%	1%	14%	10%	59%	-	-	<b>84%</b>
8 years	0%	0%	0%	14%	9%	56%	-	-	<b>78%</b>
9 years	0%	0%	0%	12%	7%	46%	-	-	<b>65%</b>
6-9 years	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%	2%	<b>2%</b>
under 6 years <sup>2</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	1%	-	0%	<b>1%</b>
<b>½-9 years</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>80%</b>

Note:

1. 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.

Source: Social Resource Statistics

### Free choice scheme

In 1998 about 120 local authorities used the free-choice scheme. In early 1999 the figure had increased to about 150 local authorities. Almost 2,000 children under three years of age and a little more than 500 children aged 3-5 were looked after under this scheme. In 2000, a total of 162 local authorities are expected to pay grants under this scheme. Average annual grants paid by municipalities will be DKK 36,400 per child aged 0-2 years and DKK 30,800 per child aged 3-5 years.

### Increase in the number of after-school facilities

In 1984, which was the first year in which local authorities could establish school based leisure time facilities, 1223 children had places in such facilities.

**Table 9 Number of children in school based leisure time facilities (SFO) 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
Pre-school 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>83.025</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>88,124</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100,848</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>109.607</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>116,599</b>	<b>100</b>

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

It appears from the table that the number of children in the schemes increased by 40% over the five-year period in question. In 1997/98 a total of 116,599 children were enrolled. The preliminary figures for the 1998/1999 school year indicate further growth of 12%. It appears from the table that 92% of children in SFO facilities in 1997/1998 came from pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasser*) and the first three forms. This is very similar to the situation in 1993/1994.

Concurrent with the dramatic growth in the number of SFO facilities, the number of after-school centres (*fritidshjem*) has fallen. Many local authorities have replaced after-school centres with SFO facilities, since the latter are generally less expensive for local authorities to operate.

In the first four forms twice as many children, on average, are enrolled in an SFO facility as compared with age-integrated facilities (*aldersintegrerede institutioner*) and after-school centres (*fritidshjem*) as a whole. In 1997/98 a total of 1,427 SFO facilities were in operation. About 40% of these facilities offered part-time places. Out of the total number of children enrolled in a facility, a little less than 1.3% are enrolled in a SFO facility located at a school which is not the one where they have their daily lessons.

In 1997/1998 fifty-two local authorities had not established any school-based leisure time facilities (*skolefritidsordninger*) under the Folkeskole Act. This does not mean that no facilities were available in these municipalities or at schools in the area, but the local authorities concerned have opted for after-school centres (*fritidshjem*) or age-integrated facilities (*aldersintegrerede institutioner*) established under the Social Services Act.

### Other facilities offered to families with small children

In addition to the ECEC facilities outlined above, families with small children are supported by public authorities in various ways. Ministry of Labour legislation gives parents the option of looking after their children themselves through various leave schemes, e.g. parental leave and childcare leave. To

this should be added direct financial grants to families with children, e.g. child family allowance, child allowance and adoption allowance.

#### *Parental leave*

The rules concerning parental leave have been greatly improved over the years. According to the rules in force at present, parents are entitled to 24 weeks' leave following childbirth. The first 14 weeks can exclusively be used by the mother - though the father is entitled to two weeks' paternity leave within this period. The parents may then agree whether the father or the mother is to stay at home with the child in weeks 15-24 after childbirth. In addition the father is entitled to two weeks' paternity leave in weeks 25 and 26 after the birth of the child.

#### *Childcare leave*

The act on childcare leave gives people a *right* to take leave from work to look after their own children aged 0-8 years in an uninterrupted period of at least eight weeks and a maximum of 13 weeks. If the child has not reached the age of one year when the leave period begins, the leave period may be between eight and 26 weeks long. In addition to the *right* to 13 or 26 weeks' leave, employees may make an *agreement* with their employer concerning leave for an uninterrupted period of at least 8 weeks. The total childcare leave period may not exceed 52 weeks. Parents on parental leave will receive leave benefits equalling 60% of the highest unemployment benefit rate.

If parents have decided to take childcare leave, the child they are looking after must not use any public day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) before it reaches the age of 3. Children aged 3-8 may have part-time places in a day-care facility in the leave period. However, children may be enrolled in a public day-care facility in a period of up to two weeks before the end of the leave period, so that they can become acquainted with the facility.

#### *Supplementary allowances*

According to section 27 of the Social Services Act, local authorities may provide supplementary allowances to parents who receive leave allowances in childcare leave periods. The local authorities may decide that allowances will only be granted to parents with children in a specific age group. Allowances must not exceed a sum of DKK 35,000 annually, and the sum of the leave allowance and the supplementary allowance must not exceed 80% of the parents' previous income.

Section 27 of the Social Services Act also provides that local authorities must pay special supplementary allowances 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 day-care facility. The sum of the special supplementary allowance and the leave allowance must not exceed 80% of the parent's previous income.

### **Financial support**

The overall purpose of financial support provided to children is to improve the conditions of families with children.

The Ministry of Social Affairs act on child allowances defines 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.

*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.

### *Child family allowance*

The Ministry of Taxation is responsible for matters relating to the act on child family allowances. Tax-free child family allowance is paid for all children under the age of 18. As per 1 January 2000 the annual allowance is:

Babies (0-2 years):	DKK 11,700
Toddlers (3-6 years):	DKK 10,600
Other children (7-17 years):	DKK 8,400

### *Allowance for parents with seriously ill children*

Section 19 a of the Ministry of Social Affairs act on benefits in connection with sickness or childbirth provides that parents of seriously ill children aged under 14 are entitled to financial compensation if they partly or completely give up their job to spend time with a sick child. A precondition for receiving the allowance is that the illness is expected to imply hospitalisation or the like for a period of at least 25 days. The 25-day requirement does not apply to single parents.

### *Additional expenses incurred in relation to the care of disabled children in their own home*

According to section 28 of the Social Services Act, people who take care of a child under the age of 18 with a physical or mental disability are entitled to reimbursement of all necessary additional expenses incurred as a result of the disability, i.e. expenses over and above the expenses the family would have incurred if the child had not been disabled. In addition section 29 of the Social Services Act provides that the people in question are entitled to support to cover loss of income in cases where the loss is caused as a result of the disability and where the child is being looked after at home and it is most expedient that either the child's father or mother is looking after it.

## Section II - Policy concerns

This section focuses on the quality of EDEC facilities and the chances of obtaining places in the facilities. In addition, facilities offered to bilingual children are described.

### *Quality*

#### **The quality of day-care facilities**

##### *Quality and continuity in childhood*

Day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) are for all children. Local authorities have an obligation to provide the necessary number of places. However, the number of places actually offered has been insufficient for many years. Even though local authorities have increased the number of facilities and places considerably, demand has been constantly increasing. Reduction of waiting lists has had - and still has - high priority. Parents are active in the labour market and children spend a great deal of their waking hours in day-care facilities. We are approaching a situation where places will be available to all children (compare the high coverage rates mentioned in the previous section).

It is now a natural part of most children's life to spend their days in a day-care facility (*dagtilbud*). This means that new requirements are made in relation to day-care facilities, including requirements concerning quality. Day-care facilities are an important part of children's childhood, and the facilities must therefore cater for the needs and requirements of children.

The objectives formulated are an important basis for the quality of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) - centrally and on the local level, as well as in individual day-care facilities.

As mentioned in a previous section, the overall objectives applying to day-care facilities are laid down in the Social Services Act. In this act the quality of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) is covered by the provision in which the *overall objectives* are defined, specifying what the purposes of day-care facilities are.

In compliance with the objectives provision many different initiatives have been taken to improve the quality of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*).

The concept of quality is very comprehensive and there is no single interpretation of it. Quality is determined by several factors including educational content, staff conditions and the physical framework.

The quality aspect is taken into consideration in various contexts on an ongoing basis. The Ministry of Social Affairs has taken the initiative to prepare a number of publications containing examples of how certain day-care facilities and local authorities have addressed the issue and which may provide inspiration for local authorities and day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) in general. The following examples of initiatives illustrate the great variation in approaches to the concept of quality.

##### *New quality initiative*

For several years the focus has been on quantitative development. Together with the objectives provision in the Social Services Act, this has made the *Minister for Social Affairs* take the initiative to a project which looks at quality development in relation to day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*), the purpose being to follow up on content, e.g. the development of the competencies of children, development of staff competencies, the importance of play in relation to child development, relations with parents, etc. The main players in this project are the Ministry of Social Affairs, the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark and the National Union of Child and Youth Educators.

### *Previous initiatives*

#### *Quality in individual day-care facilities*

When parent boards were introduced in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) in 1993, an obligation was imposed on local authorities to the effect that they should formulate objectives and set up a framework for day-care facilities. At the same time, parent boards were given the task of defining principles for the educational work carried out in the day-care facilities and for the use of funds made available within a budgetary framework. It is the job of managers of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) to translate educational principles into educational activities and processes in everyday situations. In this way each individual day-care facility will have a profile of its own. This profile will typically be communicated in the form of a business plan.

Business plans and the work carried out in relation to the plans are important elements in quality development. A business plan may be a day-care facility's face towards the surrounding world and it may document the special characteristics of a day-care facility (*dagtilbud*) in relation to the local authority, politicians and the users of the day-care facility.

### *Special initiatives*

#### *Working group focusing on quality development in day-care facilities*

On the basis of a parliamentary agenda, the Ministry of Social Affairs in consultation with the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark established a working group in 1996 which was to look at further development of quality in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*), the purpose being to develop new methods for educational work, increase the opportunities of children to express themselves and improve the general health of children. The starting point for the work carried out by this group is that quality is determined and developed in an interplay between local authorities, day-care facilities and parents. In 1997 a publication entitled "Quality development in day-care facilities for children - experience gained by four local authorities" was issued. This publication focuses on the processes involved in the development of quality in day-care facilities, including the formulation of objectives in the area and the relationship between various stakeholders. In 1998 a publication entitled "Quality development in day-care facilities for children - themes and experience gained by day-care facilities and childminders". This publication describes how day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) have organised their work in relation to actual quality themes. The two publications are intended to provide inspiration for groups working with day-care facilities.

#### *Child participation in decision-making processes*

##### *"Children as citizens" project*

In the past decade many initiatives have been taken to increase the participation of children in decision-making processes and to give them influence on their daily life. One such initiative was a project called "Children as citizens", the purpose of which was to give children increased opportunity to take part in local activities and decision-making which had an impact on children. The idea was to give children influence on both the actual content of activities and on the planning and implementation of the activities. One of the most important elements in the project was a number of close relations between children and adults.

##### *Project "Children's participatory rights in society"*

As a follow-up on the "Children as citizens" project various experiments were carried out in 1994 and 1995 concerning children's participation in decision-making processes in day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*). The evaluation of the experiments showed that even very young children are able to make decisions concerning matters which are important to them.

##### *Project concerning noise reduction in day-care facilities*

On the basis of a study which showed that noise levels were very high in day-care facilities the quality working group has initiated a project concerning educational initiatives aiming at a reduction of noise levels in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*). The purpose of this project is to ensure increased awareness of the options available in terms of reducing noise levels and in terms of better use of indoor and outdoor facilities.

*Working group focusing on an increase in the number of male employees in care facilities for children*  
As mentioned in a previous section, the main task of the Interministerial Child Committee is to provide cohesion and coherence in matters relating to children and families and to take cross-sectorial initiatives to improve the living conditions of children and young people. In 1997 the committee established a working group composed of representatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Equal Status Council. In 1998 the working group issued a report which, among other things, explains why only a few men enrol in relevant study programmes and apply for jobs in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*). The report also gives a number of concrete suggestions for initiatives that could be taken to address this problem.

*Working group focusing on collaboration between day-care facilities and schools*

A working group composed of representatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education issued two independent publications in 1998. These publications were intended as inspiration in two different areas: strengthening of children's language development and closer collaboration between day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) and schools. The purpose of these publications is to create a common understanding between day-care facilities and schools, thus contributing to creating increased cohesion and coherence in the life of children.

*Governmental public health programme*

The governmental public health programme for 1999-2008 contains a number of part-objectives relating to the health of children in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*). To a certain (limited) extent the Ministry of Social Affairs share the responsibility for achieving these objectives, for example in relation to an initiative concerning quality development in day-care facilities, which means that regular checks of indoor climate and sanitary standards are being carried out in all day-care facilities.

*Research programme concerning children and young people with disabilities*

There is a great need to obtain increased knowledge about children and young people with disabilities. In particular, it is necessary to focus on the qualitative aspects and the content of the services offered to children and young people with disabilities and their parents.

On the basis of grants provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Danish National Institute of Social Research (SFI) has initiated a research programme concerning children and young people with disabilities. One of the themes in the research programme is *integration of children and young people with disabilities in day-care facilities and in club and leisure time activities*. The purpose of the programme is to identify the limits to integration of children and young people into the "standard systems" as compared with special facilities.

The other themes in the programme concern the interplay in the system for parents of children with disabilities and the situation of older children and young people with disabilities who are about to start a life as independent adults.

*Mapping of previous initiatives taken in relation to children and young people in ethnic minorities*

The Interministerial Child Committee has been asked to map the initiatives taken to date in relation to children and young people in ethnic minority groups in order to identify any shortcomings and to present concrete proposals for action to be taken in this area. In this connection the committee has contacted a number of central authorities, local authorities and others who may contribute to the mapping of the initiatives.

*Integration of bilingual children in day-care facilities*

In order to further the integration of young bilingual children in Danish society through a strengthening of initiatives taken in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) in relation to young bilingual children, the Ministry of Social Affairs published a book called "Focus on bilingual children" in the summer of 1999. This book contains articles which may be used as inspiration for work relating to young bilingual children in day-care facilities and to language-stimulating activities carried out under the Folkeskole Act. The book gives examples of administrative organisation, the use of language consultants, work carried out in various day-care facilities and relevant educational programmes.

*“Environmental rules” for children*

*Development of a healthy environment in day-care facilities*

Since children spend a great deal of time in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) it is important that there is a healthy environment in the day-care facilities.

*Design competition concerning day-care facilities of the future*

It is necessary to develop new, interesting buildings to accommodate day-care facilities for children, in which the physical framework, the layout and interior design are based on compatibility with educational objectives and the needs and requirements of children. In order to provide a better physical framework for children in day-care facilities, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the "Waiting List Committee" (which is composed of a number of organisations representing educators) invited entries for a national competition for architects concerning the design of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for the future.

The entries submitted showed that many architects intend to put themselves in the place of the children, i.e. to go into the universe of children, when they design the physical framework for children's daily life. The architects showed great understanding of the correlation between the physical framework and educational work, not only in relation to the actual design and layout of buildings but certainly also in relation to surroundings and outdoor play areas.

*Pamphlet on the environment*

A good physical environment in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) is very important for the well-being of children.

In connection with a proposal submitted in the Danish parliament, a working group in the Ministry of Social Affairs prepared a pamphlet called "Environmental rules for children" which provided an overview of rules. The pamphlet was published in June 1998 and sent to local authorities, day-care facilities and others.

The pamphlet gives an overview of rules, regulations, etc applying to the physical environment in day-care facilities for children. The pamphlet lists the rules and regulations in force which have a general direct or indirect impact on the physical environment in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children, for example rules and regulations concerning prevention, health, physical framework and hazardous substances. The pamphlet seeks to create an overview of the rules introduced by various ministries by stating the title and giving a short description of the rules, thus making it possible for people who are interested in the rules to find them whenever necessary.

*Non-smoking environments*

In order not to expose children to passive smoking, the Ministry of Social Affairs has asked local authorities to make sure that smoking is not allowed in rooms used by children in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*).

*The preventive and integrating role of day-care facilities, including their role in relation to children with disabilities and bilingual children*

As mentioned above, parents have overall responsibility for the upbringing of their children, but day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*), healthcare services and schools also play an important role in relation to the children's daily life. The advantage of day-care facilities is that they accommodate all children, including children who need special support. In addition, a very large proportion of all children have places in day-care facilities. Consequently staff must pay great attention to the signals emitted by children and must be active partners in cross-sectorial work. Day-care facilities are important elements in the social network of children and therefore have a broad preventive effect.

In addition day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) provides ample opportunity to provide special support and genuine help to the most vulnerable children. Staff in day-care facilities must be particularly attentive to any problems faced by individual children and families, which may require that special initiatives are taken.

### *Dialogue-based counselling*

Because of their close and often long-term contact with children and their families, day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) will normally acquire extensive knowledge about matters which may be crucial in the determination of the support needed by a child or a family. A precondition for day-care facilities taking part in preventive efforts carried out by local authorities is that they are involved in cross-sectorial collaboration which also involves other professions such as health nurses, psychologists and social workers.

In 1995 guidelines were issued concerning help and assistance to children and young people through dialogue and collaboration with parents (dialogue-based counselling). These guidelines are particularly aimed at professions which meet children and young people in their daily work. They provide advice concerning initiatives that may be taken in relation to children and young people with significant problems. The guidelines also outlines rules concerning non-disclosure and the duty to report various matters. The purpose of the guidelines is to enable staff in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) to offer better, more targeted help at an earlier stage in relation to vulnerable children and families. The guidelines have been in great demand and a new, expanded version will be issued.

### *Childhood values*

In order to focus on doing what is best for children in general, the Minister for Social Affairs has taken an initiative to start a broad public debate on the conditions of children. Efforts must be made to ensure that not only the usual opinion-makers take part in the debate. In order to do this the Ministry of Social Affairs has prepared information material called "The life of children - debate on childhood values and responsibilities", including a game on values, and a special website has been established ([www.boerneliv.dk](http://www.boerneliv.dk)). In addition UNICEF and the Ministry of Social Affairs organised a Nordic seminar of children on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The seminar participants were children aged 12-16 years.

It is intended that the debate should be a "soft" approach to the subject of childhood values, without any legislative initiatives or pre-defined values being involved. Only a few structural elements will be defined in relation to the debate: involvement of child organisations, focus on childhood values through the governmental child committee, dialogue which institutions and facilities for children throughout the country and finally, as mentioned above, a conference attended by several hundred children from the Nordic countries. The summing up of the debate on childhood values may eventually form the basis for government initiatives but as long as the debate is going on, no initiatives can be finally determined. This initiative is related to the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child both in terms of content and in terms of timing.

### *1998 report on policies relating to families with children*

In June 1998 the government presented a report concerning policies relating to families with children in the Danish parliament. The report lists a number of initiatives taken to improve the conditions of families with children. These initiatives include efforts to develop a more flexible labour market and the introduction of greater flexibility in the access to childcare leave.

The quality development initiatives mentioned are very important initiatives. In addition quality is continuously being developed on the local level and in individual day-care facilities.

### **Quality development in the public school system**

In the public school system quality assurance is to a large extent based on self-evaluation, voluntary initiatives, decentralisation and local social control, i.e. a mixture of formal and informal elements combined with considerable parental influence. External and imposed evaluation and control do not play any important role.

Quality development and assurance as regards the *Folkeskole* include the following elements:

- A high degree of decentralisation based on municipal and institutional self-regulation combined with "framework management" by the Ministry of Education. Framework management means that central authorities must formulate adequate objectives and provide an appropriate framework for the

activities of schools, monitor developments, intervene in areas where quality improvement is required, and continuously assess how quality levels in general may be improved.

- Local authorities are responsible for the activities of the *Folkeskole*. Many local authorities set up targets and formulate action plans which they follow up on and assess. This means that evaluation takes place at the municipal level.
- Danish schools and Danish teachers are generally very sensitive to criticism made by outsiders. Consequently strategies formulated to increase standards are first and foremost based on self-evaluation and quality development organised by the schools themselves. To support these activities the Ministry of Education publishes material and provides tools for inspiration by giving 'good examples' and describing 'best practices' in relation to teaching and school activities in the hope that other teachers and schools will use the material and the tools. 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*" ([www.gsk-kif.dk](http://www.gsk-kif.dk)).
- The final examination system applying to ninth and tenth forms in the *Folkeskole* is to a large extent organised centrally and externally by centrally appointed examiners and national advisors. This system is regarded as a means of checking the quality of the education provided by the *Folkeskole*

#### *Recent and future quality development - Establishment of the Danish Evaluation Institution*

The Danish decentralised system is rooted in the generally accepted concept applying to the relations between public authorities and citizens and between individual citizens or groups of citizens. This is basically a sociological phenomenon which is deeply rooted in Danish traditions and goes beyond the education provided by the *Folkeskole*. Comparisons with other systems suggest that as far as educational outcome is concerned, decentralisation might lead to a certain extent of organisational inability to collect national information about standards and about the quality of education.

In the 1990s there was growing pressure on the decentralised system of quality assurance, one reason being the relatively poor results obtained by pupils in the primary and lower secondary education system in Denmark in subjects such as elementary reading and mathematics as compared with results described in international comparative studies. Discussions and reflections triggered by these studies and other critical analyses concerning weaknesses of the Danish educational system have resulted in a shift in attitudes, which means that a system involving increased assessment at the central level may be introduced.

An important sign of this shift is the establishment of the Danish Evaluation Institute (*Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut*), which became operational in the autumn of 1999. The Evaluation Institute is an independent institution operating under the Danish Ministry of Education and covering the entire educational system in Denmark. The Danish parliament has asked the institute to carry out systematic, mandatory evaluation of teaching and learning at all levels of the educational system, from pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasse*) to post-graduate programmes. The general aim of the activities of the Institute is to monitor the quality and development of education and training in Denmark. The Institute may also cooperate with other ministries and institutions which focus on quality and evaluation in their programmes. In addition, the Institute will gather national and international information concerning evaluation of quality development in relation to education.

The primary focus is on improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, while the secondary focus is on accountability vis-à-vis the government. This same perspective is manifest in the explicit statement that the Institute is not going to rank order institutions or programmes. Another explicit statement is that self-assessment must be an integral part of all evaluation initiatives.

The Danish Evaluation Institute is governed by a board composed of eleven members who represent the most important levels and sectors in the Danish educational system. According to the legislation applying to the Institute the board is independent and autonomous to a very great extent.

The board sets up a team in relation to each planned evaluation activity. The team will be composed of specialists in the subject or theme in question. The evaluation will be performed without any interference from the ministry. All institutions depending on the Ministry of Education will be evaluated. Private institutions will only have to accept evaluation if they 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 institutions that has been evaluated - may be added. The report must not contain any quantitative data which could lead to qualitative classification of schools.

## Access

### Capacity: guaranteed places / waiting lists

It has been the government's objective for many years that all children should be offered a place in a day-care facility if their parents want one. The starting point is that all children have equal access to places in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*).

The elimination of waiting lists has had high priority in annual financial agreements between the central government and local authorities. The present government basis from 1997 states that it is the government's objective that all parents will be entitled to childcare for young children. The *financial agreement for 2000-2003* between the central government and local authorities includes a common objective of offering all parents day-care places. The parties agree that local authorities should in particular focus on providing places for children aged 1-5 years.

#### Guaranteed places

According to a study of waiting lists carried out by the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark, the number of local authorities offering guaranteed places to all children under the age of 10 or to groups of children under the age of 10 has gone up from 219 local authorities (80%) in 1996 to 239 local authorities (87%) in 2000.

A breakdown of guaranteed places by age group can be made for the period from 1997 and onwards. This breakdown shows that the number of local authorities offering guaranteed places for the entire 0-9 year age group has increased from 179 local authorities (65%) in 1997 to 196 local authorities (71%) in 2000, while the number of local authorities offering guaranteed places to children in the 0-5 year age group has gone up from 188 local authorities (68%) in 1997 to 208 local authorities (76%) in 2000.

**Table 10 Guaranteed places - breakdown by age group**

	<i>Number of local authorities</i>			
	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>
The entire age group (0-9 years)	179	185	169	196
1-9 years only	2	5	5	4
3-9 years only	1	0	2	0
0-5 years only	9	10	6	12
1-5 years only	0	0	3	1
0-2 years only	3	2	5	2
3-5 years only	0	0	1	0
1-2 years only	0	0	0	0
6-9 years only	23	23	34	24
0-2 years and 6-9 years only	1	2	1	0
No guaranteed places	57	48	49	36
Guaranteed places in various forms	218	227	226	239
<b>Entire age group (0-5 years)</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>208</b>

*Source: Waiting list studies carried out by the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark*

A few local authorities have declared that they will offer guaranteed places soon. One reason for this may be that a new section 15 (a) (effective from 1 January 2000) has been introduced in the agreement

between the government and the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark concerning the economy of local authorities and the services to be offered by them in the period from 2000 to 2002. According to this section local authorities offering guaranteed places in day-care facilities to all children from the age of 26 weeks until they start in school may increase the rates paid by parents by one percentage point a year up to a maximum limit of 33%. In its Order No 1166 of 29 December 1999, the Ministry of Social Affairs has formulated guidelines concerning parents' payment for places in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children.

A place must be offered to all children whose parents want a place in a day-care facility (*dagtilbud*) within three months after submission of an application.

However, parents who apply for a place for a child immediately after the 26-week maternity and paternity leave period must be offered a place when the child reaches the age of 30 weeks at the latest (i.e. four weeks after the end of the leave period), provided that the parents have applied for a place within the application period determined by the local authority. Local authorities may extend the period in which a place must be guaranteed in cases where parents apply for a place after the expiry of the normal application period. The extension period must correspond to the period passed after the expiry of the application period. In all events, children must be offered a place within a period of three months after the end of the maternity and paternity leave period.

The reason why some local authorities do not offer guaranteed places or only offer guaranteed places for certain age groups is that there are still waiting lists for places in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) in some municipalities.

#### *Waiting lists for places in day-care facilities*

**Table 11 Waiting lists for places in day-care facilities in which attendance is checked (excluding private arrangements, etc)**

	½-2 years	3-5 years	6-9 years	Total
<b>1994</b>	10,775	5,440	1,781	17,996
<b>1995</b>	6,721	4,295	1,343	12,359
<b>1996</b>	9,340	5,003	1,432	15,775
<b>1997</b>	10,033	4,224	1,518	15,775
<b>1998</b>	8,116	2,626	872	11,614
<b>1999</b>	5,442	2,360	926	8,728
<b>2000</b>	4.037	1.223	223	5.483

*Source: Waiting list studies carried out by the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark*

The number of children on waiting lists has been reduced to about 5,500 in 2000. Waiting lists are still longest for the youngest children, in relation to whom the coverage rate is lower than the coverage rate for older children. The reduction of waiting lists that has been achieved over the past ten years has mainly been an advantage to the youngest age group.

The waiting list problem is concentrated in a few municipalities. The ten municipalities in which the waiting lists are longest for each individual age group account for almost half of the total waiting list in 2000: 46% of the total waiting list for children aged ½-2 years; 45% of the total waiting list for children aged 3-5 years; and 83% of the total waiting list for children aged 6-9 years.

#### *Admission to day-care facilities*

The rules on admission to day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) were changed when the Social Services Act came into effect. The Social Assistance Act specified that admission to day-care facilities would be based on a concrete assessment of needs, but section 12 of the Social Services Act provides that, as from 1 July 1998, admission must be based on a more objective criterion of seniority, i.e. either the date of birth of the child or the date on which the parents filed their application.

The fundamental governing principle is thus that all children who are resident in a municipality must have equal access to places in public day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*).

Following the introduction of the principle of seniority no specific group of children can be given general priority as regards access to municipal day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*), a general exception being day-care facilities established with a specific purpose, for example for children belonging to the German minority in Denmark.

However, a certain flexibility is necessary in certain cases and consequently there are two exceptions from the principle of seniority. It is possible to overrule the principle of seniority if a child urgently needs a place in a day-care facility (*dagtilbud*) for social or educational reasons (section 12(3)) or if special circumstances mean that a child has an acute need of a place (section 12(4)).

The rules concerning the allocation of places in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) were changed because certain local authorities had experienced problems because children of unemployed parents not only had to wait longer for a place but were actually excluded from obtaining a place. This did not comply with the provisions of the Social Assistance Act. The main purpose of changing the admission rules was therefore to ensure that children of unemployed parents would not be discriminated against in the allocation of places in day-care facilities.

The changed admission rules should also be seen in the light of the fact that the Social Services Act clearly specifies that day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children have three equally important objectives: educational, social and care objectives, all of which are justifications for admission to a day-care facility.

Several local authorities have stated that they think the seniority principle is too rigid. They point out that some parents are unable to accept a job they have been offered or risk becoming unemployed because they cannot get a place in a day-care facility (*dagtilbud*) for their child because others, who may be unemployed, are higher up on the waiting list and because the allowable exceptions do not make it possible to move them up the list.

Following the introduction of the changes problems have occurred, particularly in relation to the exception granted in section 12(3). The Ministry of Social Affairs will therefore expand and clarify the admission rules.

In connection with the signing of the financial agreement for 2001 between the government and the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark, the parties agreed that the rules concerning admission to day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) should be adjusted so as to ensure that local authorities offering guaranteed places in accordance with the provisions of the Social Services Act would not be covered by the principle of seniority in relation to the admission of children in day-care facilities, since the requirement of basing admission on seniority must be considered to be met by municipalities offering guaranteed places. The principle of seniority will continue to apply to local authorities not offering guaranteed places.

The Ministry of Social Affairs will therefore present a bill concerning these issues some time in the autumn. The admission rules will be expanded and clarified for local authorities not offering guaranteed places.

### **New Danes**

Denmark used to be a homogeneous country both in terms of language and culture with only one national language and a number of local dialects (which are becoming less and less widespread). Since the 1970s a large number of immigrants speaking a foreign language and having a different cultural background have come to Denmark. The first immigrants were mainly men from Turkey, Yugoslavia and Pakistan who came to Denmark 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. These refugees have been granted residence permits in Denmark. A distinction is made between first, second and third generation immigrants. In addition people from

Britain, Sweden and the United States live in Denmark. Their culture and way of living, however, are rooted in the same norms and values as those adhered to by Danes, since these norms and values are typical of Western culture.

The special situation of many bicultural and bilingual children is that they experience very different types of care and requirements in their childhood and youth. In Denmark independence is considered to be a very positive thing, and independence and self-esteem are explicitly mentioned in the objectives provisions concerning both day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) and the Folkeskole. Children are expected to be able to handle several things on their own. In other cultures such expectations and requirements may be seen as lack of care for young children. In many of the cultures in which immigrants and refugees have been brought up individuals are considered to be part of a larger whole: the family. Individuals are not required to show any individual independence as is the case in Danish culture. Instead they are required to show respect and responsibility in relation to their family and the community it constitutes.

The term "bilingual children" is used about children whose mother tongue is not Danish and who do not learn Danish until they get into contact with society at large. Fluency in Danish is crucial for integration into Danish society.

#### *Day-care facilities*

In order to ensure adequate integration of bilingual children it is important that they have a place in a day-care facility (*dagtilbud*). Such a place will give the children an opportunity to learn the Danish language and to enter into social relationships. In addition they will become familiar with Danish culture.

In day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) with many bilingual children the staff will generally include people with a non-Danish background, for example Turks or Pakistanis.

In order to ensure the best possible integration of bilingual children it may be taken into consideration that a child is bilingual when it is offered a place in a day-care facility (*dagtilbud*). If a day-care facility has special staff, a bilingual child may be offered a place before other children on the waiting list.

There are great difference in the use of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) 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 day-care facility. In the slightly older age group (3-5 years), about 65% of new Danes have a place in a day-care facility. The percentage for all children aged 3-5 years is about 90%. One reason for these differences may be that many new Danes are not used to young children staying in a day-care facility away from their homes for many hours every day and consequently do not see this as a natural option. The public authorities are making a great effort, for example via the activities of health visitors, to integrate young new Danes by means of day-care facilities.

In February 2000 the government published an overall action plan for improved integration. As part of this action plan the government will take a number of initiatives aimed at children with a non-Danish ethnic background, one such initiative being to stimulate the language skills of young children before they start in school. Another initiative will aim at improved integration in the first years of primary education. In addition the government will follow-up on the language stimulation services offered by local authorities to children before they start in primary school.

#### *The Folkeskole*

The key to acquiring knowledge and skills at school - and a major precondition for ensuring that children benefit fully from ordinary educational activities - is that they master the Danish language even before they begin in primary school.

In 1996 a new section 4 (a) was inserted in the Folkeskole Act. This section made it *possible* for local authorities to organise language-stimulation activities for children aged 3-5 years in order to ensure that the children will learn the Danish language. These activities are open both to children in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) and children not enrolled in a day-care facility.

In 1998 a small but very significant change was introduced in this provision of the act. As part of the government's efforts to strengthen its policy of integrating immigrants in Danish society it became *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 day-care facility (*dagtilbud*), the language assistance must be provided for at least 15 hours a week in the year in which a child reaches the age of 4.

The reason for the introduction of this rule is that experience has shown that some bilingual children have not learned enough Danish to live up to the expectations of schools. The primary target group is bilingual children who do *not* have a place in a day-care facility (*dagtilbud*), but section 4(a) of the Folkeskole Act also allows language-stimulation activities aimed at children who *have* a place in a day-care facility. In day-care facilities with a large proportion of bilingual children it may be difficult for those children to learn Danish. In day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) where a bilingual child is the only child speaking the child's mother tongue, the child must be supported in combining the two languages.

The language activities may be carried out in various places: in the day-care 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. 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 pre-school class (*børnehaveklasse*).

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 must 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 offered to young children.

One of the objectives of the provisions laid down in section 4(a) is to focus on the linguistic development of these children by establishing groups of bilingual children, thus creating a space in which the focus is on communication and the desire to communicate. To this should be added a special task in relation to bilingual children: the children must be allowed to develop a positive identity rooted in the two cultures to which they belong. They must also be given an opportunity to develop communicative skills both in their mother tongue and in Danish.

**Table 12 Bilingual children - breakdown by form level - 1997/1998**

Form	Pre school	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*

In spite of the decreasing number of pupils at the various form levels, the number of bilingual pupils in pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasse*) in 1997/98 was almost twice as high as the number of bilingual pupils in the tenth form. It is estimated that 9% of pupils will be bilingual in 2000.

The proportion of bilingual children differs a great deal from municipality to municipality, and this makes integration even more difficult. Many bilingual families live in areas characterised by social problems in relatively large municipalities where up to 90% of pupils at a school may be bilingual.

## Section III - Policy approaches

### *Regulations*

The Danish system is characterised by a very high degree of decentralisation. The government defines the overall framework applying to day-care facilities in legislation. The local authorities operate the day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) and are responsible for them, and each individual local authority adopts guidelines for the operation of its own day-care facilities within the framework of legislation in force. Parent boards take part in the formulation of the principles which are to govern the work carried out by the day-care facilities, the use of budgetary frameworks and the appointment of staff (see the section entitled "Family engagement and support").

Within this framework and in compliance with the objectives formulated, the staff in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) may decide the content of daily activities, working methods and materials used to further the learning process and development of children.

In order to increase awareness of the framework and principles applying to the activities carried out in municipal day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*), local authorities often issue written information about these subjects.

### *Day-care facilities*

A description of the background and the basis for the structure of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) is given in Section I. This section will primarily focus on the supervision carried out in relation to day-care facilities covered by the provisions of the Social Services Act.

### *Supervision of day-care facilities*

The rules concerning supervision of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) are included in the act on public security and administration in relation to social services.

According to section 16 of the act on public security and administration in relation to social services, *local authorities (i.e. town or city councils)* must supervise the execution of municipal work. The supervision must include both the content of services and the way in which the work is carried out.

All day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) which are to some extent funded by local authorities must be supervised.

Individual local authorities decide how the supervision is to take place, the only constraints being the rules laid down in legislation.

Local authorities thus have an obligation to ensure that day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) are suitable for the children for whom they are intended and that the day-care facilities comply with the local authorities' instructions concerning content and quality. In addition financial matters must be covered by the supervision in order to ensure that the content and costs of the services offered comply with local authority requirements and responsibilities.

Through their supervision activities, local authorities will mainly keep an eye on the following:

*Educational content.* Local authorities must ensure that staff have the qualifications and competencies needed to meet the objectives.

The rules concerning supervision require that local authorities regularly ensure that each individual day-care facility (*dagtilbud*) is in fact carrying out the work defined by the relevant local authority by means of framework provisions and objectives and that the work is carried out in such a way that it will be possible to meet the objectives defined.

Consequently, supervision will to a great extent require ongoing dialogue with the day-care facility (*dagtilbud*) concerning the objectives and methodology applied by the facility.

*Health and safety, etc.* The following precautions relating to the prevention of accidents should be taken into consideration in relation to supervision:

- General prevention of accidents (see Ministry of Social Affairs booklet entitled "Take care of the children - about prevention of accidents day-care facilities for young children", 1997).
- The layout of playgrounds and the state of repair of playground equipment.
- The use of reins for children. Only approved reins may be used.
- Safe transport of children.
- Sleeping positions (the purpose being to prevent cot death)
- Toys, the use of toys which meet formulated safety requirements.
- Sanitary conditions. Must comply with the regulations issued by the National Board of Health.
- Smoking. Non-smoking environments must be provided for the children.
- Insurance. Proper insurance must be taken out for day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*).

The supervision of childminder facilities (*dagplejen*) must take place in the physical framework where the childminding activities take place and where the children spend most of their time, i.e. in the home of a childminder or in premises in the children's domestic environment.

The supervision of childminder facilities (*dagplejen*) includes regular checks that the children are looked after under acceptable conditions. In addition, ongoing support must be provided to childminders (*dagplejere*) both in their daily work and as regards the prevention of special problems for individual children or in the relationship between childminders and parents.

Advice and guidance provided in the childminder's home may be supplemented by group meetings and other types of common instruction of childminders and parents.

As regards so-called "*puljeordninger*" (private facilities operated on the basis of agreements with the local authority), local authorities must check that municipal grants for the facilities are exclusively used as agreed in the agreement concerning the operation of the facilities and that the facilities provide an adequate framework for the children using the facilities.

According to section 39 of the act on public security, *county councils* must supervise the execution of work carried out by counties. The supervision must cover both the content of services offered and the way in which the work is carried out.

When supervising special day-care facilities (*særlige dagtilbud*), county councils must pay special attention to the following:

- Educational content and treatment
- Health and safety, etc
- Financial matters

According to section 63(3) of the Social Services Act, local authorities must supervise conditions in private day-care facilities (*privat dagpasning*). The actual supervision must be carried out in the physical framework where the private day-care activities take place.

In addition all counties have established *supervisory boards* to carry out legal supervision of local authorities. In the municipalities of Copenhagen and Frederiksberg the supervision is carried out by the Ministry of the Interior. The supervision must check that no legislation has been disregarded. If a special complaints authority exists it will replace the supervisory authorities.

Supervisory boards may, for example, check the legitimacy of general decisions made by local authorities which cannot be brought before any other administrative authority.

### *The Folkeskole*

As in many other fields of public administration a key word in relation to the management of the public school system in recent years has been decentralisation. This applies both to the curriculum and the allocation of resources.

The purpose of decentralisation is to make the educational system more flexible. Individual institutions of education and individual local authorities are free to set their own priorities as regards allocated funds without being bound by centrally defined regulations or central accounts. Generally speaking, the purpose of decentralisation is to improve the quality of programmes as well as to ensure optimum utilisation of the resources allocated.

### *Local authorities (town or city councils)*

Local authorities have the overall responsibility for the Folkeskole. 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.

### *School boards*

All schools have a governing body composed of representatives of pupils, employees and parents. The members representing parents hold the majority of places in school boards. School boards determine the principles that are to govern school activities, prepare proposals for curricula and approve teaching material provided to pupils free of charge.

### *The principal*

The principal is responsible for the administrative and educational management of the school and for the activities carried out by the school in relation to the school board and the local authorities. The principal carries out his or her duties in consultation with the school staff. Teachers enjoy considerable freedom in their choice of subjects taught and teaching methods.

### *Educational council*

All primary and lower secondary schools (*folkeskoler*) have an educational council composed of members of staff who teach or carry out other educational functions at the school. The members are the principal, the deputy principal, teachers, staff teaching in pre-school classes and staff working in SFO facilities. The council offers advice to the principal and is also a forum for educational debate and development at the school. The council has no formal special competence.

### *Pupils' councils*

All schools having classes above the fifth form must establish pupils' councils. Schools which only have forms up to the fifth form may also set up pupils' councils. No rules have been issued by central authorities concerning matters that may be discussed by pupils' councils. The councils are cooperation bodies which are intended to protect the democratic rights of pupils and to formulate these rights in formal rules and procedures as part of a system of representative democracy. Pupils' councils appoint two representatives to sit on the school board.

## **Staffing**

All day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) - with the exception of municipal childminder facilities - have a manager and a deputy manager who must both be qualified educators. Managers of day-care facilities are empowered to make decisions concerning the administrative and educational management of the facility of which they are in charge. In addition there are two types of staff: child and youth educators (*pædagoger*) and nursery and childcare assistants (*pædagogmedhjælpere*). The same types of staff are employed by SFO facilities. The staff in pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasser*) are also qualified educators. The teachers employed in the Folkeskole have completed a four years' study programme at a teacher training college.

### *Educators*

The historical background for the present training and education of educators (*pædagog*) goes more than 100 years back. The first course for educators took place as early as 1885. It was a course for educators working in Frøbel kindergartens. In 1904 the course formed the basis for the two-year study programme at the first training college for educators. Another study programme for educators working in after-school centres (*fritidshjem*) and in other facilities for young people was launched in 1928. A third study programme dates back to 1930. This programme was designed for educators wanting to work in crèches (*vuggestuer*), homes for children or in facilities for children and adults with reduced physical or mental capacity. In 1992 the three study programmes were united in one general study programme: the study programme for child and youth educators. At the same time the programme was prolonged by six months so that the total duration of the study programme is now 3½ years.

At present there are 32 training colleges for child and youth educators in Denmark. It is likely that some of these colleges will soon be merged into larger administrative units called Centres of Further Education, which will also include teacher training colleges. No changes of the actual study programme for child and youth educators are planned. Each training college offers study programmes of 3½ years' duration. The programmes comprise theoretical subjects including a number of culture-related subjects and activity-based subjects which are combined with work practice. After graduation, students are qualified to work in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*), school-based leisure-time facilities (*skolefritidsordninger*) and pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasser*). In addition they will have the qualifications needed to carry out educational work in relation to young people, children and adults with reduced physical or mental capacity or other social problems.

All training colleges are funded by the government and operated by the Ministry of Education. Training is free for all students, just like all training and education programmes at institutions of higher education. In the study period students are entitled to study grants under the State Education Grant and Loan Scheme. Grants amount to DKK 3,907 a month in 2000. This sum may be supplemented by a low-interest loan of DKK 2,031 a month.

The Ministry of Education has formulated a number of guidelines which define the overall structure of the study programmes, specify which subjects must be included in the study programmes, and set out rules concerning exams, which must be the same at all 32 training colleges. Provided that these general guidelines are observed, training colleges are free to organise their study programmes as they please.

An important element in the 3½-year study programme is the alternation between theory and practice. A work practice period of 13 months is included in the first study 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 in these periods. The study programme contains the following disciplines and subjects:

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.

Throughout the study period students often work in small project groups. Interdisciplinary projects and modules are to a great extent based on individual choice and responsibility. Thematic subjects and problem-oriented projects have priority over individual subjects and disciplines.

The philosophy behind the study programmes is to educate and train educators (*pædagog*) with many different skills and competencies which result in professional and personal development. Some of the most important skills and competencies are:

- the ability to assume responsibility for one's own learning (you are not given an education, you take it);
- the ability to make decisions on the basis of consultation and interaction with other people (i.e. the use of democratic procedures);
- the ability to express oneself both intellectually and emotionally - verbally, aesthetically and by means of body language;

- the ability to assume leadership, manage and take initiatives;
- the ability to act in a flexible, creative manner combined with a good understanding of given situations and respect for other people;
- the ability to develop self-awareness: Who am I? What do I do to other people and why I am doing it?
- the ability to stimulate several intelligences. If you don't stimulate your EQ (emotional intelligence) you will neglect your IQ.
- the ability to navigate in chaotic situations and to take up challenges.

Throughout the study period students are encouraged to look at all children and adults as unique individuals with special needs and special personalities and not only as members of a specific category or age group in society.

The child and youth educator study programme has been very popular among young people in Denmark for many years, as measured on the basis of the number of young people wanting to be enrolled in the programme. The new study programme introduced in 1992 has been particularly popular because of its generalist approach which combines a humanistic curriculum with real work practice.

**Table 13**  
**Child and youth educator vs. school teacher: Number of applications, number of applicants choosing the study programme as their first priority, and number of students admitted in 1992 and 1999**

		Number of applicants	First priority	Number of students admitted
Child and youth educator:	1992	24,088	9,553	4,064
	1999	17,807	7,940	5,929
School teacher:	1992	9,731	3,177	2,232
	1999	11,988	4,477	5,059

Source: Key figures for various years, Ministry of Education.

In 1999 almost 18,000 people submitted applications for enrolment in the child and youth educator study programme, but only 75% of applicants having this study programme as their first priority were admitted, the reason being that the government fixes the number of students admitted. The number of students enrolled in this study programme is higher than the number of students in any other study programme.

As present there is a major shortage of child and youth educators (*pædagog*) since many new day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*) and after-school facilities (*skolefritidsordninger*) are being established. Because of the increased demand for child and youth educators, the number of places in the study programme has been increased over the past ten years. A number of basic admission criteria apply, but if they are met it is up to each individual training college to decide which students will be admitted. Experience from work as a nursery and childcare assistant and other practical work experience or long stays in other countries, voluntary work and the like will increase an applicant's chances of admission. The average age of students is high: 27 years. This is quite extraordinary as compared with other countries. Students in the study programme therefore have both extensive life experience and extensive work experience.

Another interesting aspect which differentiates the Danish study programme from study programmes in other countries is the high proportion of male students. In 1994 all 32 training colleges for child and youth educators launched a campaign called "Children also need men" in relation to which multi-coloured posters and brochures were distributed in wide circles. The campaign obtained good media coverage. In 1995 male students made up 22% of the total student population at the colleges, but the proportion of men dropping out of the programme exceeded the proportion of women dropping out (see the report prepared by the working group set up by the Interministerial Child Committee to

increase the number of men working in facilities for children). At present male students still make up about 22% of the student population.

It is also possible to become a child and youth educator by enrolling in a part-time programme. This option is available to students with at least five years' experience from educational or similar work. The part-time programme does not include two paid work practice periods but is otherwise identical with the ordinary child and youth educator study programme.

A few training colleges have introduced one-year "bridge-building" courses for refugees and immigrants. Most of the students who complete this introductory course continue in the ordinary child and youth educator programme.

#### *Assistant child and youth educators*

No formal education requirements apply to nursery and childcare assistants (*pædagogmedhjælper*). 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 study programme, for example the child and youth educator study programme. The job as a nursery and childcare assistant is very popular since it involves major responsibility and work with other people and since it is a relatively well paid job.

In 1997 a new basic educational training programme called PGU was launched. This programme is aimed at people who want to work as nursery and childcare assistants (*pædagogmedhjælper*), childminders (*dagplejer*), care workers (*omsorgsmedhjælper*) and the like. The training programme is aimed at young people and is being offered at about 20 institutions of education throughout Denmark, including social and health schools, a few child and youth educator training colleges and adult education centres (VUCs). Students are employed as trainees by a local or regional authority and receive pay in the 18-month study period during which school-based teaching alternates with work practice periods. The study programme is also offered on a part-time basis.

#### *Career opportunities and further training and education*

Managers and deputy managers in day-care facilities are qualified child and youth educators (*pædagog*), which means that the chances of promotions are fine for educators.

A wide spectrum of further education and training programmes for child and youth educators are offered by child and youth educator training colleges and other institutions of education as well as by local authorities, private organisations and others. It is possible to supplement basic training and education with a diploma in educational work. 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. Each individual institution is more or less free to decide how many child and youth educators (*pædagog*) it wants to enrol in programmes of further education and training and what subjects are to be taught.

Various courses are available to nursery and childcare assistants (*pædagogmedhjælper*) at adult vocational training centres (AMU centres).

#### *Childminders*

Municipal childminder facilities are managed by staff who have received educational training. There are no mandatory training programmes for childminders (*dagplejere*) 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 day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*). When this initiative was taken it was also decided that more courses were to be offered and that the government should ensure that course activities were initiated. Given this background, the National Board of Social Welfare issued a circular (Circular 709 of 1 December 1980) concerning course activities for municipal childminders. This circular ceased to apply when the Social Services Act came into force. In 1999 the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark and the National Union of Public Sector Employees (FOA) completed a new course concept for childminders (*dagplejere*).

Local authorities offer introductory and basis courses as well as various supplementary courses to childminders.

It is recommended that the duration of the *introductory course* is one week and that it takes place immediately after the employment of the childminder. New childminders (*dagplejere*) are typically introduced to the job in the form of one information day taking place in the local authority, one day of work practice with an experienced childminder, and a three-day introductory course. The purpose of the introductory course is to give new childminders an idea of the basis on which the childminding system works, its objectives and the principles governing work relating to the children looked after by childminders. The introductory course includes subjects such as "Organisation of daily routines - planning and framework", "Babies - food and sleeping habits", "Working alone and working in groups", "Working positions", "Duty of non-disclosure and duty of information" and "Educators in the childminder system - guidance and supervision".

In addition it is recommended that the *basic course* period is at least two weeks and that it takes place within the first year of employment. The purpose of the basic course is to improve the ability of childminders (*dagplejere*) to work with children through increased knowledge about child development, collaboration processes and the childminder's own working conditions. Subjects in the basis course programme include "Childminding - a workplace in your home", "Child development - motoric, linguistic, emotional and social development", "Educational aspects of childminding - playing and learning", "Communication and cooperation with parents, colleagues and the educator attached to the childminding facility", "Ergonomics, work positions, lifting techniques and back exercises", "Food and health" and "Laws, rules and regulations".

The purpose of *supplementary course modules* is to give childminders (*dagplejere*) an opportunity to acquire competencies in fields where such competencies are needed to accommodate local requirements. Supplementary courses are available concerning socially vulnerable families, immigrant and refugee children and first aid in childminding facilities.

In addition to these short courses, childminders (*dagplejere*) may also enrol in a basic educational study programme called PGU (*pædagogisk grunduddannelse*). Childminders usually take the part of the programme in relation to which they can be granted credit transfer. This part is aimed at people who have worked with children for a period of at least twelve months in the three preceding years. This programme is a purely theoretical programme of one year's duration. Subjects include Danish, educational theory and psychology, culture and activity subjects, social subjects and health subjects. To date very few childminders have enrolled in this study programme.

Finally childminders (*dagplejere*) may enrol in a *child and youth educator programme* organised as a special credit programme which requires that students have five years' experience from an educational job function.

Childminders (*dagplejere*) receive pay when they attend courses, and childminders enrolled in a PGU programmes may also be entitled to pay and to have the cost of the training programme refunded.

#### *Staffing and pay*

Table 14 gives an overview of educational staff in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) in 1989, 1994 and 1994 after conversion to full-time jobs. Staff in SFO facilities (*skolefritidsordninger*) are not included in the resource statistics from 1993 and later and consequently such staff are not included in the table.

**Table 14 Full-time staff working with children<sup>1</sup>**

	1989	1994	1999
Childminders	18,996	21,810	23,677
Crèches	7,432	7,173	6,188
Kindergartens	14,365	16,304	19,898
Age-integrated facilities	8,622	14,941	20,695
After-school centres	5,278	3,283	4,035
Special day-care facilities	488	612	907

Note:

1. Full-time staff including temporary staff employed in vacant positions, excluding other temporary staff, long-term unemployed, supervisors and managerial staff in childminding schemes, and kitchen and cleaning staff

Source: Social Resource Statistics

Table 15 shows the number of employees as compared with the number of children in individual day-care facilities, listed as the number of children per each full-time employee. It also shows how many children a full-time employee is to look after in the various day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*).

**Table 15 Number of children per full-time employee working with children, April 1999**

	Child- minding facility <sup>2</sup>	Crèche	Kinder- garden	After- school centre	Age- inte- grated facility	Special day-care facility	Club <sup>3</sup>
Qualified staff		5.7	9.9	14.4	9.4		26.2
Temporary staff and non-qualified staff <sup>1</sup>		7.5	17.9	26.2	14.9		62.4
<b>Staff working with children</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>18.4</b>

Notes:

1. Comprises temporary staff working in vacant positions, non-qualified staff and trainee staff

2. Childminders are listed as full-time employees

3. After-school centres, youth clubs and open educational facilities

Source: Social Resource Statistics

As appears from the table, the number of staff per child is highest in relation to the youngest children. The number drops proportionally with the age of the children. The staff intensity is highest in special day-care facilities for children with physical or mental disabilities.

Crèches (*vuggestuer*) have on average 3.2 children per employee, while a childminder (*dagplejer*) looks after 3.5 children on average. In kindergartens (*børnehaver*) the average number of children per employee is 6.4 children. The figure of 5.8 children per employee in age-integrated facilities (*aldersintegrerede institutioner*) 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 number of children aged 0-2 years.

Almost all child and youth educators (*pædagoger*) are members of the National Union of Child and Youth Educators (BUPL). This union traditionally works for better pay and better working conditions, as well as for higher quality in day-care facilities. Nursery and childcare assistants (*pædagogmedhjælpere*) are organised by the National Union of Nursery and Childcare Assistants (PMF). In an international perspective it is interesting to note that almost all municipal childminders (*dagplejere*) are members of the National Union of Public-Sector Employees (FOA).

Child and youth educators (*pædagoger*) and nursery and childcare assistants (*pædagogmedhjælpere*) employed on a full-time basis work 37 hours a week, whereas the weekly working hours of full-time

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.

**Table 16**  
**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.*

The unemployment rate for child and youth educators (*pædagog*) is very low. Because of low birth rates some years ago, the number of young people is low. This factor and the low unemployment rate mean that employers and institutions of education fight to attract young people. So far the child and youth educator study programme has been able to maintain its recruitment level, as opposed to many other countries which experience shortages in this area.

#### *Men*

Although Denmark is one of the countries where the number of men working in day-care facilities is relatively high, the majority of employees in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) are still women. The younger the children, the higher the number of women. The group of nursery and childcare assistants (*pædagogmedhjælper*) includes relatively many men. In 1995, men made up 8% of employees in day-care facilities for children aged ½-6 years and 25% of employees in day-care facilities for children aged 6-10 years (see *Report prepared by the working group focusing on increasing the number of men working in day-care facilities for children*).

Over the years it has been discussed how more men could be attracted to the profession. In 1997 the Governmental Child Committee decided that "initiatives to further the recruitment of men in child and youth educator study programmes and teacher study programmes as well as initiatives to increase the number of men employed in day-care facilities for children should be considered". As a result of this statement the report referred to above was prepared. The report presents various proposals for actions and initiatives. Unfortunately a number of child abuse cases have tainted the debate in recent years, though this has not resulted in any drop in the number of male applicants for enrolment in the child and youth educator study programme. Parents, children, staff and local authorities are all very positive towards the employment of men, the main reason being that involvement of men in social care functions will improve the quality of day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*) and further the equal status of boys and girls. A mixed staff group will mean greater variation as regards masculine and feminine characteristics than would be the case of a single-gender group. Another advantage would be that the workplace would provide greater variation for employees.

#### *Number of employees per pre-school class (børnehaveklasse):*

In 1996 the Royal Danish School of Educational Studies carried out a questionnaire survey in fifty municipalities. The study covered 519 pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasser*) at 509 schools. A total of 1.030 adult employees were linked to the 519 pre-school classes included in the survey, i.e. 1.9 adults on average for each pre-school class. Of these, 692 were qualified child and youth educators (*pædagoger*) and 132 were nursery and childcare assistants (*pædagogmedhjælper*) without any formal training and education. No information was provided in relation to 206 employees who may have been teachers teaching in pre-school classes in relation to integrated school start programmes.

#### *The Folkeskole*

##### *Qualification requirements applying to Folkeskole teachers*

The Folkeskole Act stipulates that Folkeskole teachers must have completed an youth and child educator study programme or the like in order to teach in pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasser*). Teacher in the first to the tenth form must have completed a formal teacher training programme. At

schools where integrated school start programmes are in operation, school teachers may to a certain extent teach pupils in pre-school classes, and child and youth educators may to a certain extent teach pupils in the first and second forms.

*Qualifications requirements applying to teachers in pre-school classes (one year)*

Pre-school teachers working in the Folkeskole have completed a child and youth educator study programme (described earlier in this report), which means that the pre-school class is an intermediate link between the methodologies applied in kindergartens and the methodologies applied in the first year of the compulsory Folkeskole system. 97% of the teachers in pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasse*) are women (1997/98).

*Qualification requirements applying to teachers of children in the first to the tenth form in the Folkeskole*

Folkeskole teachers teaching in forms 1-10 must have completed a study programme at one of the 18 teacher training colleges in Denmark. These colleges are the only institutions of education which are authorized to provide the study programme which qualifies students for teaching posts in the Folkeskole. Students must have passed upper secondary exams before they can be enrolled in a study programme at a teacher training college.

The study programme takes four years and is placed at the intermediate level in the system of higher education. The scope and level of study programmes offered by teacher training colleges are comparable to certain university programmes in the English-speaking world. The qualification obtained by students on completion of the programme can best be compared to a UK/US bachelor's degree. The programme includes:

- *Common basic subjects:* educational theory, psychology, general didactics, school and society, religious studies.
- *Main subjects:* Danish and mathematics and three other main subjects chosen by the student. The four main subjects must be composed in such a way that at least two of the following three areas are represented: humanities, natural sciences and practical-aesthetic subjects.

In theory a teacher certificate qualifies the holder to teach all subjects to all forms (forms 1-10) but in practice teachers are generally only considered to be able to teach forms 1-10 in the four main subjects chosen.

One-third of students at teacher training colleges are men and two-thirds are women.

In 1997/98 local authorities had fixed the number of full-time employees at about 9,700 in SFO facilities.

**Table 17**  
**Full-time equivalents for SFO staff**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Full-time equivalent</b>
Pre-school teachers	249
Child and youth educators	6,562
Other employees with relevant qualifications	838
Employees without relevant qualifications	1,942
Trainees	136

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

***Programme content and implementation***

This point is already covered in the preceding sections.

## ***Family engagement and support***

### *Day-care facilities*

#### *Collaboration between parents and day-care facilities*

##### *Parents boards*

In addition to informal contact concerning the situation of individual children, both municipal and independent day-care facilities (*daginstitutioner*) must establish parents boards with powers to make decisions in matters which are important to the conditions of children in the day-care facility (*dagtilbud*). Parent boards are not required in private facilities operated on the basis of agreements with the local authority (*puljeordninger*). If private facilities have not been established on the initiative of parents and are not operated by parents, local authorities will be asked to ensure that the agreement made with the private facility contains provisions concerning parent influence and participation.

The majority of the members of parent boards are parents elected by and among the parents of the children in the day-care facility (*dagtilbud*). Other members represent facility staff. In independent facilities (*selvejende institutioner*) the board of the facility may decide whether employees are entitled to be represented in the board or whether they should be given influence in some other way. Employees do not have to be members of a board in a day-care facility (because of the additional powers it would imply in the form of appropriation and employment competence). If an independent parent board is established, employees must be represented in it. Representatives of other stakeholders may also sit on such boards. If a day-care facility collaborates with a local housing association, a representative of the association may be elected to sit on the board. However, parent representatives must always have the majority of seats in parent boards.

The Social Services Act defines the minimum competence to be given to parent boards in day-care facilities. Parent boards in municipal day-care facilities (*kommunale daginstitutioner*) must have influence in the following three areas:

- *principles governing the work of the day-care facility*, including educational methods and activities, cooperation between parents and the day-care facility, cooperation with others, etc.
- *principles governing the use of the budgetary framework*, 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.
- *recommendations to the local authority concerning the employment of staff*. Parent boards must be given a good basis for their recommendation. They may, for example, participate in job interviews.

Parents have the same kind of influence in independent day-care facilities (*selvejende institutioner*). The boards of independent day-care facilities decide whether this influence should be exercised through a parent board or by representation in the board of the facility.

Parents whose children are looked after by a childminder (*dagplejer*) must be given influence on:

- *overall principles governing the work of childminders*, i.e. guidelines and activities common to all childminders, and
- *principles governing the use of the relevant budgetary framework*.

This means that parent boards in the childminder system do not have any competence to formulate principles concerning conditions in individual childminder facilities, since this will typically be discussed by individual parents and the childminder concerned.

Parent boards must exercise their competence within the framework of the overall objectives formulated by the local authorities concerning day-care facilities.

##### *Business plans*

An important tool in the work carried out by parent boards is business plans. These plans may concern the framework formulated for the activities of the day-care facility by all three parties involved (the local authority, the day-care facility staff and the parents) and may, for example, relate to:

- The local authority's objectives concerning day-care facilities and the framework provided for the facilities.
- Decisions made by parent boards concerning educational principles and the use of budgets.
- The day-care facility manager's translation of the principles into an educational action plan.

The business plan is both a useful tool and an important element of information in the dialogue and collaboration with the other parents and members of staff, as well as with the local town or city council.

In addition, business plans contribute to *strengthening quality in day-care facilities* and may be used as a basis for evaluation of the work carried out in day-care facilities (see the sections concerning quality and continuity in childhood).

### *The Folkeskole*

According to the Folkeskole Act, schools are responsible for the quality of teaching in accordance with the objectives laid down for the *Folkeskole*. However, due to the local nature of the organisation of the *Folkeskole*, there are other influences which partially replace the need for formal external intervention, for example the function of the school board of each *Folkeskole*. School boards have a number of responsibilities, some of the most important responsibilities being the formulation of principles for the activities of the school, the approval of budgets, the submission of recommendations to the local authority regarding the appointment of principals and teachers, and the formulation of proposals for the school curricula for submission to the local authority. Given this responsibility, each school board takes part in different ways in assessing the school as an institution. In addition to this formal system of parental influence school boards are to a great extent involved in informal communication between parents and informal assessment of school activities.

### ***Funding and financing***

Local authorities pay the cost of operating day-care facilities and schools in the Folkeskole system. The cost is funded on the basis of taxation, block grants and parent contributions.

Block grants are usually government grants to the local authorities. These grants are not earmarked for any specific purposes, and it is therefore up to each individual local authority to decide how to use the grants. The size of block grants is determined by the proportion of each individual local authority of the overall taxation base.

In 1999 the total net expenditure for public authorities in relation to day-care facilities amounted to DKK 19.6 billion, while the figure for SFO facilities was DKK 2.6 billion, the total sum being DKK 22.2 billion.

#### *Payment for day-care facilities*

Parent contributions are determined in accordance with section 15 of the Social Services Act. The contributions must equal 30% of total budgeted costs in individual day-care facilities or 30% of the average cost of day-care facilities of similar type in the municipality. As far as *puljeordninger* is concerned, parent contributions are calculated on the basis of the cost of operation each individual facility. Parent contributions must not exceed 30% of costs. Contributions are fixed for one financial year at a time on the basis of budgets prepared by the day-care facilities.

In an order concerning parent contributions to the cost of day-care facilities for children, the Ministry of Social Affairs has laid down rules concerning parent contributions.

Payment may vary according to the age of the children because of the different costs applying to different age groups.

Local authorities may provide grants to reduce parent contributions if they want to reduced price differences between, for example, day-care facilities and crèches.

It is mandatory to provide a discount for siblings. Parents must pay the full price for the most expensive place but pay only 50% for all other places. Local authorities may decide to grant higher discounts.

Parents will not have to pay any contributions if they can document that their income does not exceed DKK 109,700. Contributions go up by 5% for the first sum of DKK 2,425 above the base figure and will then be increased by 1% for each increase of DKK 2,426. Parents must pay full contributions if their income exceeds DKK 340,200. For families with more than one child, the income limits will be increased by DKK 7,000 per additional child. These figures are adjusted once a year.

In addition local authorities may decide that for social or education reasons no parent contributions are to be paid in individual cases, or they may decide to reduce contributions even though the parents' income exceeds the standard limits stated above. A precondition for this is that the local authority must be convinced that a child may otherwise not be enrolled or stay in a day-care facility.

In the past ten years various improvements have been introduced in relation to parents contributions. On 1 August 1991 the maximum contribution rate was reduced from 35% to 32% and later to 30%. In addition discounts for siblings have become mandatory and the rules concerning free places have been improved as well.

As mentioned above, section 15 of the Social Services Act allows local authorities to increase parent contributions by one percentage point a year, though not to more than 33%, if the local authority offers guaranteed places to children from the age of 26 weeks to enrolment in a school.

*School based leisure time facilities (SFO)*

According to section 51(2) of the Folkeskole Act local authorities must request payment from parents of children enrolled in SFO facilities. Formally there is no ceiling on the maximum percentage of the operating cost that parents can be asked to pay. The section also states that the rules laid down by the Ministry of Social Affairs concerning payment for participation in day-care provisions for children and young people apply to the allocation of a family allowance for families with more than one child enrolled in a after-school facility, day-care facility etc., or if the local authority decides to grant wholly or partly free places because of the financial situation of parents or for social or educational reasons.

*Costs and parent contributions*

In the illustration of the costs involved and the contributions paid by parents in relation to the various facilities average figures are used, since operating costs and parent contributions differ from local authority to local authority.

**Table 18 Average total cost per place per month in various day-care facilities, 1999**

	<b>1991</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1999</b>
Childminder	4,786	5,150	5,612
Crèche	7,473	7,607	8,026
Kindergarten	3,825	3,922	4,186
Age-integrated facility	3,926	4,223	4,583
After-school facility	2,939	2,870	3,099
SFO facility	2,220	2,089	2,230

*Source: Legislative model*

**Table 19. Average rates for parent contributions per place per month in various day-care facilities before pay reduction in contributions based on sibling discounts or the provision of free places, 1999**

	1991	1994	1999
Childminder	1,553	1,517	1,659
Crèche	1,664	1,851	2,186
Kindergarten	1,210	1,162	1,247
Age-integrated facility	1,162	1,177	1,323
After-school facility	799	806	871
SFO facility	727	733	858

Since maximum parent contributions were reduced from 35% to 32% as per 1 August 1991, the average rates, etc. for 1991 in the following tables only apply to the period from 1 January 1991 to 1 August 1991.

Source: Legislative model

The *actual* distribution of overall average costs per place between parents and public authorities after deduction of sibling discounts and free places appears from the following table:

**Table 20 Payment for day-care facilities. Distribution between parents and local authorities.**

	1991		1994		1999	
	Forældre	Kommune	Forældre	Kommune	Forældre	Kommune
Childminder	30%	70%	23%	77%	25%	75%
Crèche	20%	80%	19%	81%	21%	79%
Kindergarten	27%	73%	22%	78%	20%	80%
Age-integrated facility	25%	75%	21%	79%	20%	80%
After-school facility	22%	78%	20%	80%	16%	84%
SFO facility	30%	70%	27%	73%	24%	76%

Source: Legislative model

The average gross cost is highest for crèches. On average, a place in a crèche costs almost DKK 100,000 in operating costs, which means that the contributions to be paid by parents averages about DKK 2,200 a month. It also appears that it is less expensive to have a child looked after by a childminder, for which the average parent contributions amount to DKK 1,659. Operating costs and parent contributions are more or less the same for kindergartens and age-integrated facilities, which is also the case as regards after-school facilities and SFO facilities, though the operating costs relating to after-school facilities are considerably higher than the operating costs relating to SFO facilities. This means that parent contributions to the operation of SFO facilities make up a higher percentage of total costs: 24% as compared with 16% for after-school facilities.

*The educational system including the system applying to primary and lower secondary education*

Education in the Folkeskole is free from pre-school class to the tenth form. In private schools parents contribute to the payment of some costs.

The government and local authorities cover about 75-80% of the expenditure of private schools. The rest is covered by parents' contributions.

Total public spending in relation to the Folkeskole amounted to DKK 23.2 billion, which is only a minor increase as compared with 1989. Since the number of pupils has fallen over the period, the cost per pupil has gone up. The cost per pupil has gone up from about DKK 38,900. In 1989 the figure was DKK 44,000, which corresponds to an increase of 13%. These average figures represent a span from DKK 30-35,000 per pupil to DKK 50-70,000 per pupil.

Public spending in relation to independent primary and lower secondary schools increased from DKK 1.8 billion to DKK 2.6 billion in 1989. The cost development in independent schools is similar to that applying to the Folkeskole, since the grants provided for independent schools depend on local authority spending on schools in the Folkeskole system.

## Section IV - Evaluation and research

Each year Danmarks Statistik (statistical office) collates figures concerning social affairs, including figures concerning the number of day-care facilities, places, children, staff and rates relating to day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children. The figures are published in the Social Research Statistics.

In addition the Ministry of Social Affairs publishes an annual report called Social Trends - The Social Information and Analysis System.

The Ministry of Social Affairs provides support for a number of ad hoc studies and research projects, including studies and research projects carried out by the National Institute of Social Research. Furthermore a number of research units are attached to various institutions of education.

Moreover, the Ministry of Social Affairs provides support for a number of pilot projects organised by local authorities.

Finally it should be mentioned that the Ministry of Social Affairs has established Development and Dissemination Centres throughout Denmark. These centres are independent institutions which collate data and work with process support, development of methodologies and dissemination of information concerning social affairs. Two of these centres deal with matters relating to children.

*Dissemination of information concerning day-care facility policy and sharing of experience gained in experiments, etc*

Many initiatives are taken in the field of day-care facilities, both at the central level and the decentralised level. Many books have been written about educational theory and about methodologies that can be applied to ensure quality in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*), to evaluate experiments, etc. It may sometimes be a problem to disseminate information about these initiatives to a wider circle of people, and it may be difficult for local authorities, institutions and others to overview huge amount of information they receive.

Consequently an important element in Danish policy on day-care facilities is to identify an appropriate strategy for the dissemination of information, which will insofar as possible ensure that less rigid instruments for management and control reach the right people and that the messages will be brought across, which again will ensure that the policy pursued is not only pursued in theory but also applied in practice. In addition to conventional dissemination methods, more targeted dissemination strategies are required.

*Distribution of publications and inspirational material*

To date the Ministry of Social Affairs has by and large only used "written words" to disseminate information in the form of publications and the like aimed at the target group. Generally a press release is also issued when material is distributed.

*Use of the Internet for dissemination of information*

After 1 January 1998 it has become the standard procedure to make publications and other relevant material available on the website of the Ministry of Social Affairs. This means that a much wider circle of people is now given an opportunity to study the material produced and distributed by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Since the Internet is likely to become the most important information base in the future it is essential that the website of the Ministry of Social Affairs is updated and developed on an ongoing basis.

*Video film about children in day-care facilities produced in collaboration with the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark*

The Ministry of Social Affairs and the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark have had a video film made concerning daily life in an age-integrated facility (*aldersintegreret institution*). The film approaches the subject from a child's perspective.

The film is primarily aimed at parents with children aged 0-6 years and at child and youth educators (*pædagog*) working with this age group. It may be shown at parents meetings and be used as a common basis for dialogue concerning quality in day-care facilities.

*Collaboration with the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR) concerning a television series entitled "Children of our time and age"*

As part of a new and different information dissemination strategy, the Ministry of Social Affairs has planned a television series entitled "Children of our time and age" in consultation with the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR).

The purpose of the television series is to attract attention to children's conditions in day-care facilities. The series will give examples of several ongoing experiments which may provide inspiration for other day-care facilities, parents and decision-makers in local authorities and other public authorities.

#### *Research*

The Danish Institute for Educational Research is the sector research institute of the Ministry of Education. The Institute carries out research concerning educational problem complexes relating to young children, school start and school-based after-school activities. The Royal Danish School of Educational Studies is in charge of the research and data collation carried out by the Centre for Research concerning Young Children in the field of early childhood education and care policy (EDEC). From 1 July 2000 both the Royal Danish School of Educational Studies and the Danish Institute for Educational Research will become part of the newly established Danish University of Educational Studies. The purpose of uniting various independent research institutions specialising in educational research in a university of educational studies is to increase the quality of Danish research in the fields of educational theory and learning processes.

## Section V - Concluding comments and assessments

### *Trends in the day-care facility area*

The day-care facility area has changed considerably over the years. It has become more flexible and varied in order to accommodate the needs and requirements of children and parents and to take municipal finances into consideration.

Innovation, improved quality and greater freedom of choice are important elements in the continued development of EDEC facilities. A new element in this context is reflections as to whether increased interaction with private organisations concerning the operation of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) may be a solution in future developments in the field of day-care services.

### *Interplay between public and private organisations*

It has always been a very sensitive subject to discuss the possibility of letting private businesses take over the operation of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*), thus allowing private organisations to "earn money on childcare". The first agreements between local authorities and private childcare providers signed in recent years have therefore attracted great attention.

An important precondition for increased collaboration between public and private organisations concerning day-care facilities is that local authorities specify the services and the quality to be supplied by private organisations for the money they are paid by the local authorities. It is also necessary clearly to identify the "core services" in the day-care facility (*dagtilbud*) that are covered by such agreements between local authorities and private businesses, since parents' contributions must not exceed 30/33% of the cost of operating a day-care facility. In this connection the concept of "supplementary services" has been introduced.

### *Supplementary services*

In relation to negotiations concerning the economy of local authorities, the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark has expressed a wish to the effect that it should be possible for municipal institutions to offer supplementary services against payment on a equal footing with private operators of day-care facilities. This subject is discussed in the Ministry of Finance report concerning "Free choice of municipal services" published in May 1999.

In principle, municipal day-care facilities (*kommunale daginstitutioner*) may not offer any supplementary services against payment. The operation of day-care facilities is determined by the provisions of the Social Services Act, which also determines the size of parents' contribution. In addition the interpretation of the powers vested in local authorities limits the opportunities of local authorities of offering supplementary services. The powers vested in local authorities do not make it possible for local authorities to operate business enterprises or to engage in activities that may distort competition.

Just like private enterprises, independent day-care facilities (*selvejende daginstitutioner*) and private day-care facilities (*puljeordninger*) are not constrained by the limitations in the powers of local authorities, which means that they may offer parents supplementary services in addition to standard day-care services.

Payable supplementary services have already been offered, e.g. laundering, food preparation, TV monitoring and driving. All these services are not included in the basic services that must be provided by day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*). Payment for such supplementary services falls outside the scope of the rules concerning parents' payment for places in day-care facilities.

The debate concerning supplementary services is still relatively new and calls for further clarification and specification of the core services to be offered by day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*).

### *Experiments concerning tenders and outsourcing*

In order to disclose any regulatory barriers to increased collaboration between public and private organisations, the Ministry of Social Affairs has declared that it will look favourably upon requests for advance approvals (see section 138 of the Social Services Act concerning experiments), so that local authorities will have an opportunity to test new solutions such as the invitation of tenders or outsourcing of the operation of day-care facilities. The overall responsibility for day-care facilities cannot be transferred to private organisations and will therefore remain with the public authorities.

Experience gained in relation to such experiments may make it easier to establish what would be the best relationship between local authorities and private service providers and what requirements local authorities should make to ensure that privately operated day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) will live up to the objectives defined in the Social Services Act and will comply with the objectives and framework provided by local authorities in relation to day-care facilities in their respective areas.

Local authorities interested in these initiatives may send applications for advance approval of experiments to the Ministry of Social Affairs. Applications must include a description of the purpose of the experiment and state the provisions in the Social Services Act from which exemption is needed in order to carry out the experiment. Approvals will take the form of a ministerial order.

### *Greater freedom of choice in relation to day-care facilities*

Another theme is "parents' free or freer choice" as to the day-care facilities they want for their children if they also want to benefit from public support.

Local authorities may allow parents to choose any day-care facility *within municipal boundaries*. In connection with the agreement between the government and the local authorities it has been discussed whether parents could be given a greater freedom of choice in relation to day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) if they were entitled to choose a day-care facility in a neighbouring municipality or in the municipality where their workplace is located.

In relation to the free-choice scheme ("*frit valg-ordningen*") (grants for private childcare) the following wishes have been defined:

- Parents should be entitled to receive the grant even in periods when the child is on the waiting list for a place in a day-care facility (*dagtilbud*). The City of Copenhagen has been given advance approval to the operation of such a scheme because of special problems in the City of Copenhagen regarding provision of additional places in day-care facilities in the conventional manner.
- Parents should also be entitled to receive the grant if they wish to look after a child themselves. There is no political support for this proposal and a decision made by a supervisory board establishes that local authorities are not entitled to initiate experimental schemes based on such a solution.
- The system should be "debureaucratised" to an even greater extent than is the case at present. The National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark has updated its information folder to parents concerning the free-choice scheme.

### *Admission rules*

The Social Services Act specifies that day-care facilities must be open to all children in a municipality, and the seniority principle stresses that all children must have equal access to places in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*).

Experience gained in relation to the new admission rules, which have been in force for two years, shows that local authorities are still uncertain about the interpretation and application of the seniority principle. One result of this is that the admission rules have been seen as very rigid rules. In order to counter this perception a bill will be tabled in the autumn, providing that the seniority principle should not apply in municipalities where places in day-care facilities are guaranteed. In a parallel development the admission rules laid down in the Ministry of Social Affairs guidelines concerning day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children, etc will be expanded and specified in greater detail for use in municipalities where places are not guaranteed.

It will still be necessary to monitor developments relating to the seniority principle closely after the introduction of these initiatives in order to assess whether additional initiatives are needed.

#### *Change of parents' contributions and increased flexibility*

Following the adoption of the local authority agreement for 2000-2002 a working group was established to investigate the possibilities of ensuring greater flexibility in day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) and payment systems in such a way that there will be a closer relationship between actual use and contributions paid by parents.

The background for this is that although local authorities already enjoy great freedom as regards flexible organisation of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*), it would in fact be possible to use the facilities more optimally than is the case at present. Such an optimisation of the utilisation of childcare facilities would make it possible to offer facilities to more children at no additional cost.

The report entitled "Flexibility and payment systems in relation to day-care facilities for children" presents various models that may be used to provide greater flexibility in the system of parent contributions, including models that will imply changes in the rules concerning parent contributions.

Two other working groups/committees have been established on the basis of the local authority agreement. They focus on the following areas which to a certain extent overlap the mandate formulated in relation to our working group:

- The issue of "greater freedom in the choice of day-care facilities" is part of the mandate formulated for the committee focusing on greater freedom of choice in relation to municipal services. This subject has been discussed in the preceding paragraphs.
- A working group has been set up under the Ministry of the Interior. This group is to focus on payment systems and intermunicipal rates, and it will also look at the issues of parent contributions and intermunicipal settlement systems.

#### *Day-care facilities of the future*

The Danish Agency for Development of Trade and Industry has attracted attention to children's learning and play activities. The Agency has table a proposal concerning day-care facilities of the future and product development carried out in close collaboration between researchers, enterprises and educators.

#### *Contemporary educational issues concerning young children starting in school. Criticism of the Folkeskole*

In the 1990s, public debate concerning schools was intensified, including the debate on school start arrangements. The background for the debate was increasing dissatisfaction with the Folkeskole. This dissatisfaction was expressed in a large-scale debate in the media concerning the Folkeskole, peaking in the summer of 1996 and the spring of 1997. The general impression in the population after the debate was that the Folkeskole was unable to provide children with adequate basic skills. The debate was further fuelled by disappointing results of several international studies concerning the levels achieved by pupils in primary and lower secondary schools.

#### *A united whole or disintegration as a theme in public debate*

Simultaneously with the debate outlined above, another debate concerning young children and school start arrangements began. This debate was governed by a vision of schools functioning as a united whole. The concept of a united whole has been part of public debate on children's conditions in Denmark for many years, and the vision formulated should be seen as a result of a desire to create continuity to counterbalance the ongoing disintegration of modern society.

There is no doubt that the growing interest in school start arrangements was triggered by financial and educational interests. Individual local authorities may be interested in establishing coherent educational services and facilities, while at the same time ensuring that the resources available in the area will balance in the overall budget. In addition new ways of thinking and new ways of using school facilities and the manpower offered by the staff may turn out to provide good results.

#### *The 1997 government basis*

The following is stated in the present government basis which was formulated in 1997: "(At the same time) greater coherence must be introduced in children's daily life. Pre-school classes, school activities

and after-school facilities must to a great extent be seen as an integrated whole, and learning should therefore begin in pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasse*)."

#### *The Folkeskole in 2000*

Several of the trends outlined above are also mentioned in the action programme called "The Folkeskole in 2000". The eight focus points defined in this programme concern important aspects of the activities carried out by the Folkeskole. At the beginning of the 1998/99 school year, the action programme was implemented through binding collaboration between the three bodies that have the overall responsibility for quality in the Danish Folkeskole: the Ministry of Education, the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark and the Danish Union of Teachers. The collaboration resulted in a two-year plan covering all aspects of the school start period.

#### *Focus point 5: A good start - a common basis*

Called "A good start - a common basis", focus point 5, concerns children's start in schools. Some of the intentions behind this focus point are:

- that increased collaboration between day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) and schools and between pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasse*), the first forms and after-school facilities must be ensured;
- that experiments and development work should be initiated concerning the content and organisational structure of work relating to children's school start in order to improve the quality of form and content and to ensure greater cohesion and coherence in children's daily life;
- that the various initiatives suggested in educational theory concerning schools and after-school activities should be used as a starting point in order to use the educational potential of different staff groups more efficiently and effectively."

In the two years in which the programme has been in operation, the work carried out in relation to focus point 5 has contributed to the initiation or intensification of several local initiatives relation to young children and children's start in schools, all of which have complied with the intentions described in this section. Projects and development work aiming at the establishment of collaboration between day-care facilities, pre-school classes, forms 1-3 and SFO facilities have been initiated or continued. During the period, educators and teachers have developed new forms of collaboration, which in many cases have resulted in common planning and implementation of activities and teaching across former professional boundaries and other distinctions between educators and teachers. There seems to be a genuine interest in coordinating and harmonising various educational services offered in relation to day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) and schools.

#### *Exemptions from the Folkeskole Act granted in relation to experiments and development projects*

Many things are possible within the existing legislative framework, but the Ministry of Education has also granted various exemptions from the provisions of the Folkeskole Act to several local authorities which have wanted to carry out experiments and to improve school start activities.

Because of the exemptions it has been possible to:

- increase the number of lessons in pre-school classes, first and second forms to six lessons a day. Many schools and local authorities have taken this opportunity to offer the youngest school children a 30-hour school week.
- deviate from qualification requirements so as to make it possible to for teachers and child and youth educators to organise teaching in the first forms including pre-school classes (*børnehaveklasse*) together to a much greater extent than was previously possible. Coordination, which was previously only possible in pre-school classes and the first forms, may consequently be extended to cover teaching activities in the Folkeskole and activities carried out in after-school facilities as well.
- Experiments with "rolling school start", where children can be enrolled in the pre-school class at any time during the school year, i.e. not only at the normal start of the school year on 1 August.
- Integrated groups in which pupils in pre-school classes and the first form (and possibly also the second form) are taught together in various groupings before classes are finally constituted in the second or third form.

When the evaluation of the action programme has been completed, a political decision will be made as to the extent to which the experience gained should be used and followed up upon. In all events,

cooperation between day-care facilities, after-school facilities and schools is growing rapidly at present.

#### *Children across sectors*

As mentioned in the introduction, the conditions of children are the responsibility of several ministries with expertise in various areas. In Denmark it is a long-standing tradition that the Ministry of Social Affairs is in charge of day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children, while school facilities are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

In recent years many discussions have been conducted both locally and at the central level concerning cohesion and coherence in children's daily life and concerning the meaning of these concepts and the methods to be used to create such cohesion and coherence. One issue discussed is facilities which cover both school and after-school activities. Another issue is the establishment of closer links between day-care facilities and schools.

At the municipal level there has been increasing interest in formulating visions and objectives for all municipal services aimed at children as a whole. Many local authorities have also merged several administrations in order to establish a single, common administration with responsibility for all matters relating to young children, schools and leisure time activities.

In this connection some people have advocated the transfer of the responsibility for day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) for children from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education or the unification of responsibilities relating to day-care facilities and responsibilities relating to schools in a single ministry.

However, organisational changes alone would probably not automatically ensure cohesion and coherence in children's daily life. Such cohesion and coherence may be ensured through cooperation and coordination across ministerial boundaries. In addition, transfer of responsibilities would cater for certain intentions but on the other hand new interfaces would be created in other areas.

The basic attitudes expressed in the objectives applying to day-care facilities and the Folkeskole are very compatible. The reason why the two kinds of facilities are maintained in two different ministries is that day-care facilities (*dagtilbud*) are considered to be very important in preventive efforts carried out in relation to children. Given this, it may be problematic to separate day-care facilities from the entire area catering for the special needs of particularly vulnerable children.

From political quarters great emphasis is being placed on considering childhood as a period of learning and development. A very special characteristic of day-care facilities is that children learn by playing and by observing and interacting with other children and adults. The daily activities in day-care facilities involve various learning processes, and the learning elements of various activities are being used in such a way that they match the maturity and development stage of each individual child. It is important to maintain that the early childhood years are important years in a child's life. Children must be allowed to be children.

Danish child and family policy has many facets. These facets form an integral part of the general policies formulated in various sectors. This calls for coordination and collaboration across ministerial boundaries, which is the reason why the Governmental Child Committee has been established.

There are thus many historic, cultural, educational and other reasons why the responsibility for various matters relating to children is placed in many different ministries. However, this system means that knowledge about the values and norms on which other ministries based their activities is important because these norms and values form the basis for the operation of day-care facilities and schools. Such knowledge is also important to facilitate transition between various facilities. First and foremost it is important that all parties involved understand children and are willing to meet their needs and requirements, so that children's childhood years will be safe and conducive for the children's development.

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