

## Danish University Colleges

### Country report from Denmark school leaders conditions

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# Country report from Denmark

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## School leaders conditions in Denmark

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**01-01-2007**

This report is part of the Comenius project Collier - Collaborative learning for visionary leadership. The overall aim of the project was to enhance the quality of school leadership through generating a trans-national learning community of school leaders.

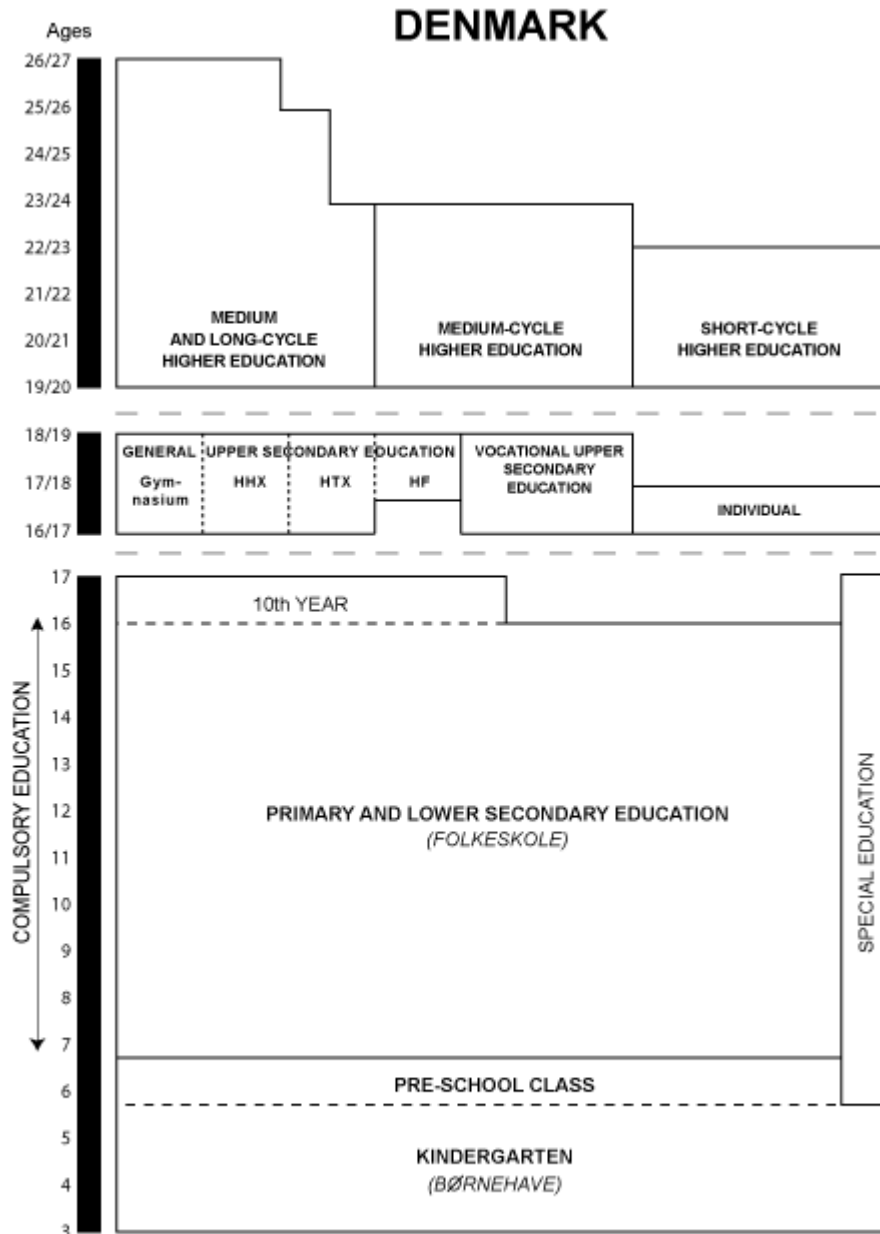
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## The Danish School System

The Danish education system consists of a one-year voluntary pre-school class and a 9 year compulsory primary and lower secondary school, after which the pupils will have to make their choice of school career between the academically oriented courses of general upper secondary education offered by the *Gymnasium*/the *HF*-courses and the vocational colleges and the practically oriented vocational education and training courses offered by the vocational colleges.



Note: The age is the theoretical minimum age for the formal courses of education, i.e. excluding adult education. After basic school, the pupils are often older due to sabbaticals, waiting time, change of study programme etc. The arrows illustrate general connections between basic school, upper secondary and higher education but not all actual transitions. Moreover, see section 2.1

### **The “Folkeskole”**

The "Folkeskole" is the Danish municipal primary and lower secondary school. Education is compulsory in Denmark for everyone between the ages of 7 and 16. Whether education is received in the publicly provided municipal school, in a private school, or at home, is a matter of choice, as long as standards are met. It is education itself that is compulsory, not school.

According to the Danish Constitution, all children of compulsory education age have a right to free education in the *Folkeskole*. In 1994, a new Act on the Folkeskole came into effect, which contains innovations in a number of fields. Fundamentally, the 'Folkeskole' must have room for all, and all pupils shall be entitled to instruction and to showing their abilities in the broadest sense of the word. The main element of this new act is the abolishment of the course-division after the 7th form and the consequent introduction of differentiated teaching.

The Danish *Folkeskole* is a comprehensive school which includes the entire period of compulsory schooling, i.e. both primary and lower secondary education.

Within the framework of the law, the Ministry of Education issues the principal regulations and orders for the conduct of the 'Folkeskole'. It thus lays down regulations pertaining to the aims of the teaching in each subject and topic, and it issues curriculum guidelines for the individual subjects as well as guidelines for the distribution of lessons.

And it is the highest instance of appeal in cases relating to salary and the appointment of teachers and also in questions regarding the extensive system of special educational assistance.

The Folkeskole must comprise a one-year pre-school class. At the request of its parents, a child must be admitted to a pre-school class in the calendar year of his or her sixth birthday or - under certain circumstances - one year before or after the sixth birthday. The pre-school classes have no centrally formulated aims or any curriculum guidelines - except that the pupils should become familiar with daily school routines. However, at the decentralised level, the local school authorities may propose guidelines for the content of the activities taking place. In recent years, such aims and guidelines have been proposed by an increasing number of authorities.

The 10th form constitutes an offer to that group of pupils who, on completion of the 9th form, have not yet come to a decision on their choice of education. This school year is thus to be seen as a supplement at the time of transition from basic school to upper secondary education, and the offer is in particular meant for pupils who need to strengthen their subject-specific or personal competencies in order to acquire more confidence with regard to their choice and ability to complete a course of education at upper secondary level.

### **Post 16**

Nearly all school-leavers continue in upper secondary education: about 41% in vocational colleges (technical or commercial) and 53% in schools providing general upper secondary education. About 6% leave or drop out of the education system after the Folkeskole.

The majority of the vocational education and training programmes are offered at technical or business colleges as well as to a limited extent at adult vocational training centres (AMU). In addition to these, there are other types of colleges offering social and health education programmes, agricultural programmes etc.

### **Vocational education**

A Danish vocational college normally offers programmes at all post-compulsory levels of education - from vocationally oriented general upper secondary education (hhx and htx) and vocational

education and training programmes to tertiary diploma programmes of the highest standard. In addition to this, they offer all kinds of continuing education and training programmes for adults and for youth at risk.

### **General upper secondary education - Gymnasium**

There are two forms of general (i.e. non-vocational) upper secondary education in Denmark: the 'Gymnasium' and the higher preparatory examination courses, the 'HF'. Institutions may offer both courses either in a package or as single subjects.

The county councils are responsible for the financial administration of general secondary institutions, of which 85% are publicly owned. A dozen schools take boarders.

The national examination system is administered by the Ministry of Education, which is also responsible for the content and for monitoring the quality of the education.

### **Who owns the schools?**

#### **Public and private schools**

The great majority (88 %) of the children/students attend public institutions. Denmark has a tradition of private schools with a substantial government subsidy. About 12% of all children at basic school level (including the voluntary pre-school class and 10th form) attend private schools. In 1998, approx. 73,000 children attended 429 private schools, while 541,000 pupils attended the municipal school.

#### **Administration**

Pre-school classes are regulated by the Act on the *Folkeskole* and belong under the Ministry of Education, which has the overall responsibility of this area of education.

The Danish *Folkeskole* is a comprehensive school which includes the entire period of compulsory schooling, i.e. both primary and lower secondary education.

Within the framework of the law, the Ministry of Education issues the principal regulations and orders for the conduct of the 'Folkeskole'. It thus lays down regulations pertaining to the aims of the teaching in each subject and topic, and it issues curriculum guidelines for the individual subjects as well as guidelines for the distribution of lessons.

And it is the highest instance of appeal in cases relating to salary and the appointment of teachers and also in questions regarding the extensive system of special educational assistance.

The secondary level divides into general upper secondary education and vocational secondary education. The Ministry of Education has the overall educational responsibility at general upper secondary education: it issues regulations pertaining to the curriculum and to the examinations, elaborates the written examination questions, and approves new optional subjects. It supervises the teaching and examinations. It is furthermore the instance of appeal in educational disputes, including complaints about examinations. The Ministry lays down the conditions relating to the permanent employment of teachers and is responsible for the pedagogic training of the teachers.

In Vocational Upper Secondary Education The Ministry of Education lays down regulations pertaining to admission, intake numbers, educational requirement of teachers, course content, curricula and other matters relating to the teaching of the individual courses.

The Ministry supervises and advises the schools and may gather information about the courses, students, teachers and operation of the institutions as such to be used for this supervision.

The Ministry is responsible for the approval of schools and lays down conditions for this approval. Finally, it also approves the statutes of the schools, which are self-governing institutions.

### **Control and monitoring**

The overall principle is target and framework control, both in legal and financial terms with extensive autonomy to the institutions. Administrative monitoring and inspection as it is known in most other European countries was abolished in Denmark in the 1960s. It was replaced by a system of national advisers (educational or subject advisers), who work part-time in the ministry and part-time as teachers. They constitute an indispensable link between the ministry and schools seeking to keep the delicate balance between monitoring the quality for the ministry and giving professional advice to colleagues. There are national advisers responsible for the *Folkeskole*, the *Gymnasium*, *HF*, *HHX*, *HTX*, and for the vocational education and training programmes.

The Ministry of Education has a general monitoring obligation, which is among others enforced by the Ministry's controllers. Furthermore, the Ministry organises visiting rounds to individual schools.

### **Financing**

The different levels of the Danish education system, which belong under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, are in some way or other funded by means of the so-called "taximeter system" (i.e. according to the principle of "the money follows the student").

The taximeter system is part of the Ministry's overall strategy of target and framework management. The main idea behind this strategy is, that decisions with regard to the implementation of courses of education are best made by the people directly faced with the problems, i.e. the heads and boards of the educational institutions.

### **The Folkeskole level**

The *Folkeskole* is a municipal school and the municipal schools are not financed according to the taximeter system. The municipalities decide themselves as to which system of financing they want to use for the schools under their responsibility, but the Ministry of Education has laid down certain minimum requirements.

### **General and vocational upper secondary education**

Local government schools, i.e. municipal and county schools, are not financed according to the taximeter system. Municipalities and counties decide themselves as to which system they want to use when financing the institutions under their responsibility (i.e. *Folkeskoler* and *Gymnasium/HF*-courses), but the Ministry of Education has laid down certain minimum requirements.

The *HHX* and *HTX*-programmes which are offered at the vocational colleges, are financed according to the taximeter system, see

### **How is the degree of decision-making autonomy for schools?**

The Danish *Folkeskole* is centrally regulated by the Act on the *Folkeskole*, which sets the framework for the activities of the school. This means that all municipal schools have common aims, common provisions for the subjects that are to be taught at the different form levels, common provisions for the central knowledge and proficiency areas of the subjects and common provisions for the organisation of the school system. But it is the responsibility of the individual municipality to decide how the schools of the municipality are to function in practice within the framework of the Act.

The central administration of the *Folkeskole* is in the hands of a department in the Ministry of Education. The Danish Parliament takes the decisions governing the overall aims of the education,

and the Minister of Education sets the targets for each subject. But the municipalities and schools decide how to reach these targets.

The Ministry of Education publishes curriculum guidelines for the individual subjects, but these are seen purely as recommendations and as such are not mandatory for local school administrators. Schools are permitted to draw up their own curricula as long as they are in accordance with the aims and proficiency areas laid down by the Minister of Education. However, nearly all schools choose to confirm the centrally prepared guidelines as their binding curricula.

### **Vocational Education and Training**

The Ministry of Education lays down regulations pertaining to admission, intake numbers, educational requirement of teachers, course content, curricula and other matters relating to the teaching of the individual courses.

The Ministry supervises and advises the schools and may gather information about the courses, students, teachers and operation of the institutions as such to be used for this supervision.

The Ministry is responsible for the approval of schools and lays down conditions for this approval. Finally, it also approves the statutes of the schools, which are self-governing institutions.

### **General and vocational upper secondary education**

The Ministry of Education has the overall educational responsibility: it issues regulations pertaining to the curriculum and to the examinations, elaborates the written examination questions, and approves new optional subjects. It supervises the teaching and examinations. It is furthermore the instance of appeal in educational disputes, including complaints about examinations.

The Ministry lays down the conditions relating to the permanent employment of teachers and is responsible for the pedagogic training of the teachers.

### **Autonomy for 44 aspects in primary/lower secondary education (Key data in Europe B23)**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Autonomy</b>
Number of days per year	None
Number of hours per year	Limited
Number of hours per week	Limited
Number of hours per subject	Limited
Duration of a period	None
Start and end of lessons	Full
Timetabling of subjects over the week	Full
Textbooks	Full
Methods	Full
Content of teaching programmes	Full
Subjects offered as options	Full
Compulsory subjects in addition to minimum curriculum	Full
Continuous assessment of pupils	Full
Decisions about whether pupils should redo a year	Full
Content of certifying examinations	Limited
School rules	Full
Expulsion and suspension criteria	Full
Criteria for electing pupils at enrolment	None
Criteria for grouping pupils together	Full
Allocation of the overall school budget	Local authority
Allocation of the budget for ongoing operational resources	Local authority
Acquisition of teaching material	Local authority
Acquisition of computer equipment	Local authority



Acquisition of buildings	Local authority
Acquisition of classroom equipment and materials	Local authority
Ongoing maintenance	Local authority
Appointment of school head	None
Definition of the number of teaching posts	None
Recruitment of teaching vacancies	Limited
Recruitment to replace absent teachers	Full
Termination of teacher's employment	None
Performance-related salary increases	Limited
Salary adjustments for overtime work	None
Number of teaching hours per week	None
Number of hours of teacher's presence at school per week	Limited
Planning of in-service training	None
Seeking donations and sponsorship	Local authority
Service provision and fund-raising	None
Loans	None
Use of private funds to acquire operational goods and services	Full
Use of private funds to acquire classroom equipment and materials	None
Use of private funds to employ non-teaching staff	None
Use of private funds to acquire buildings	None
Use of private funds to employ teaching staff	None

### **Who are the school leaders, how are they recruited and who appoints the school leaders and for how long time?**

Professional experience in teaching is officially required in order to be a school leader in primary, general lower and upper secondary education but there aren't any requirements concerning the duration. The school leader is often recruited as being the best among equals. He or she has often been involved in school development or work related to the union for instance by being a shop steward. A candidate for a school leader post applies for the job on the basis of a public announcement of vacancy and he or she is selected based on CV in competition with other candidates. At "folkeskole" level the local authority – the municipality - sets up an employment committee that conducts the different job interviews and decides which candidate is best suited for the job. It's the same procedure for the general upper secondary education except that the local authority is the county. The vocational education institutions are self-governing institutions and the board of the institution is the appointing authority. There isn't any duration concerning a school leader job.

### **What title is used:**

Early years schools up to 6 years	School leader
Primary school (6-11/12 years)	School leader
Lower secondary school (11/12 – 16 years)	School leaders
Gymnasium	Rector
Vocational education schools	Director

## **What is the definition and responsibility and does the job involve teaching responsibility?**

### **The Folkeskole level**

The school leader and an elected board carry out the administration of the institutions at this level. A pedagogic council advises the school leader on educational issues, and a pupils' council represents the pupils' interests vis-à-vis the school and the municipal authorities. The school leader has the administrative and educational responsibility for the school and is responsible for the activities of the school vis-à-vis the school board and the municipal council. The school leader is responsible for the supervision of the work tasks and for their distribution among the school staff, and he has powers to make all concrete decisions regarding the pupils. The school leader draws up a proposal about the criteria for the activities of the school to be presented to the school board as well as a proposal for the budget of the school within the financial framework laid down by the municipal council. The school leader carries out these tasks in co-operation with his staff. Most school leader also has teaching duties but in a smaller scale as for instance a substitute.

The school board, which must have the following composition: 5 or 7 parent representatives elected by and from among persons who have custody of children enrolled in the school, 2 representatives of the teachers and other staff elected by and from among the staff of the school, 2 pupil representatives elected by and from among the pupils of the school, conducts its activities within the target and framework laid down by the municipal council, and it moreover supervises the activities of the school. It lays down the principles for the activities of the school, including such matters as the organisation of the teaching, the number of lessons of the pupils at each form level, the supply of optional subjects, the provision of special education at the school, and the distribution of pupils in classes, the co-operation between school and home, information of parents about their children's progress at school distribution of the workload between the teachers, and joint arrangements for the pupils during school hours, school camps, work experience etc. The school board approves the budget of the school and the teaching materials, and it draws up the rules of conduct of the school. It furthermore draws up a proposal for the curricula of the school for submission to the municipal council. And it is consulted by the municipal council on issues relating to the school in question.

At each school, a pedagogic council is set up to perform advisory functions vis-à-vis the school leader. The council is made up of all staff with educational and pedagogical functions at the school and includes teachers, pre-school teachers and recreation centre personnel. In addition to its advisory function, the pedagogic council's most important function is to provide a forum for debate on educational issues and innovation at school.

At all schools with 5th forms or higher form levels, the pupils are entitled to form a pupils' council. The pupils' council appoints pupil representatives for committees etc. that the school has set up to deal with questions of importance to the pupils in general. This however does not apply to committees etc. where the pupils' participation would be in contradiction with other legislation. The Minister of Education lays down more detailed provisions on the election of pupils' councils, on the activities of the pupils' councils and on the municipal council's obligation vis-à-vis the pupils' councils.

### **Gymnasium**

The rector, an elected board, the pedagogic council and the teachers' assembly carry out the administration at the gymnasium. The rector is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, and he or she is responsible for the school's activities vis-à-vis the municipal council.

The rector has the pedagogical responsibility for the teaching and examinations conducted by the school vis-à-vis the Minister of Education. He or she supervises and distributes the work among the staff of the school and take concrete decisions regarding the pupils, including the admission of pupils. The rector has teaching duties in addition to his or her administrative duties.

The board must comprise representatives of the county council, the municipal councils of the local area of the school, parents, and of the pupils and staff of the school as well as representatives of other groups and organisations etc., if any, according to special local needs. The staff and student representatives must not constitute a majority on the board. The rector of the school must sit on the board in a non-voting capacity. Upon the recommendation of the rector, the school board lays down the maximum number of pupils per class, the subject supply of the school as well as the holiday plan. The school board is moreover to promote cooperation between the school and home, contribute to the solution of social tasks in relation to the school, lay down the school rules, and contribute in building matters, and it may submit proposals to the county council for the improvement of buildings etc. Upon the recommendation of the rector, it establishes the budget of the school within the financial framework set out by the county council. It is responsible for the financial operation of the school vis-à-vis the Minister of Education.

A pedagogic council is set up at all *gymnasiums*/ *HF* - courses. It consists of the rector and all the teachers of the school. The pedagogic council elects its own chairman and decides on its own procedure. The pedagogic council acts as an advisor to the rector. As opposed to the pedagogic council, which comprises all the teachers of the school, the teachers' assembly only comprises the teachers of a class headed by the rector.

It is the task of the teachers' assembly to deal with the level of attainment of the students and counsel the students and their parents on the advancement to the next class.

At each *Gymnasium*, the pupils are entitled to form a pupils' council. The pupils' council appoints pupil representatives for committees etc. that the school has set up to deal with questions of importance to the pupils in general. This however does not apply to committees etc. where the pupils' participation would be in contradiction with other legislation.

### **Vocational Education and Training:**

The director and a board carry out the administration of the institutions at vocational education and training level. The day-to-day management of vocational colleges lies in the hands of a director who shall see to it:

- that the courses are carried through in accordance with the legislation in force,
- that the education and training conditions are satisfactory,
- that the budget approved by the board is observed, and
- that the activities of the college as such are in accordance with the decisions and guidelines of the board.

The director has a right but no duty to teach.

A board that is responsible for the overall management of the college governs each college. The board must normally consist of 6-12 members, of which 1 member must be appointed by the county council and at least 1 member by the municipal councils. Employer and employee representatives must be equally represented and must be connected to the geographical area and to the labour market that the college caters for. The teachers and the technical-administrative staff of the college must be represented on the board in a non-voting capacity by 1 member each. 2 representatives must represent the students of the college in a non-voting capacity.

Upon the recommendation of the director, the board decides on the annual activity programme of the college and approves the budget and accounts.

Upon the recommendation of the director, it furthermore decides which approved vocational education and training programmes and supplementary courses the college is to offer in its programme.

It appoints and dismisses the principal and approves the appointment and dismissal of other staff on the recommendation of the principal. It may lay down more detailed guidelines for the activities of the director or may authorise him to assume powers normally vested in the board. It is furthermore its job to administer the grants allocated by the State. In co-operation with local interested parties, it furthermore decides on the college's future offer of vocational education and training programmes, continuing training etc. Together with the director, it is also responsible for the organisation of the more detailed content of the programmes in co-operation with the local training committees.

The board is responsible vis-à-vis the Ministry of Education for the operation of the college and the administration of the government grants.

### **How well or how little are school leaders rewarded?**

School	Minimum per capita GDP	Maximum per capita GDP
Primary and lower secondary education – small schools	126	The maximum salary depends on additional payment negotiated at local level
Primary and lower secondary education – large schools	139	The maximum salary depends on additional payment negotiated at local level
Upper secondary education	195	205

### **What are the core school values and beliefs?**

#### **Folkeskole-level**

When asked about the core values and beliefs in the Folkeskole teachers and school leaders will automatically relate to the aims of the Folkeskole and especially to point (3) of the aims.

#### **The Aims of the "Folkeskole"**

- (1) The Folkeskole shall – in cooperation with the parents – further the pupils' acquisition of knowledge, skills, working methods and ways of expressing themselves and thus contribute to the all-round personal development of the individual pupil.
- (2) The Folkeskole shall endeavour to create such opportunities for experience, industry and absorption that the pupils develop awareness, imagination and an urge to learn, so that they acquire confidence in their own possibilities and a background for forming independent judgements and for taking personal action.
- (3) The Folkeskole shall familiarise the pupils with Danish culture and contribute to their understanding of other cultures and of man's interaction with nature. The school shall prepare the pupils for active participation, joint responsibility, rights and duties in a society based on freedom and democracy. The teaching of the school and its daily life must therefore build on intellectual freedom, equality and democracy.

## **The Gymnasium**

The gymnasium qualifies for admission to university and other higher education studies. The aim of the Gymnasium is to provide general education as well as to prepare the students for continued studies.

## **Vocational education**

The Danish Vocational Education and Training system aims at developing both the general, personal and vocational skills of young people. The aim is not only to provide the trainees with vocational qualifications, which are formally recognised and in demand by the labour market, but also to provide them with general and personal qualifications that open up the trainees' possibilities for lifelong learning and for active citizenship.

The system is based on three main principles:

- the dual training principle, i.e. periods in school alternating with periods of training in an enterprise. This principle ensures that the trainees acquire theoretical, practical, general and personal skills which are in demand by the labour market;
- the principle of social partner involvement, whereby the social partners take part directly in the overall decision-making and daily running of the system;
- the principle of lifelong learning, i.e. the system is extremely flexible, and offers learners the possibility of taking part of a qualification now, and later returning to the system and adding to their qualifications in order to access further and higher education.

## **Does the job require special training for school leaders**

There are no national requirements concerning special training for school leaders, rectors or directors. Most municipalities and counties have their own in-service courses for school leaders or leaders in general. Some leaders have before applying for their school leader job taken Diploma studies in leadership provided by university colleges or Masters degrees (MBA, MPM) provided by universities. The upper secondary school education department provides training for rectors and directors.

## **Reference:**

The Danish Ministry of Education: <http://eng.uvm.dk/publications/engonline.htm>

Eurydice: [http://www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/frameset\\_eurybase.html](http://www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/frameset_eurybase.html)

Key Data in Europe 2005, European Commission

Interview Leif Faurholt, Phd. Student on leadership at The Danish University of Education