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## 8. GUIDANCE IN THE DANISH EDUCATIONAL SECTOR

*The Development of the System Since 2000*

### ABSTRACT

A major reform was introduced to Denmark in 2003 through a specific law on guidance in education. The aim was to create a more professional guidance system less dependent on schools and educational institutions and establish independent guidance centres at two levels and focussing on the use of information technology in guidance. The law contained specific objectives for guidance.

The new law came into force in 2004, but from 2006 to 2018 the law was changed ten times, in many cases due to other political reforms or plans where guidance was considered as a tool to achieve other political aims. New concepts and tools were introduced in that process, e.g. eGuidance and a concept of readiness for education.

In the first part of the period, guidance was strengthened, and more resources were allocated to the guidance sector, but that picture changed in 2014, when guidance in compulsory education was reduced considerably as part of a reform of the vocational education system.

Among the objectives for guidance set out in the law is that guidance shall be to the benefit of both the individual and society. The chapter concludes that emphasis has moved towards benefit for the society and away from benefit for the individual. The role of the guidance practitioners has moved from support for the individual student towards being a civil servant who is responsible for checking whether the pupil fulfil specific demands.

### BACKGROUND FOR THE REFORM 2003

#### *The Guidance Landscape before the Reform*

Prior to 2003 educational and vocational guidance in the education sector in Denmark was characterised by each educational area having its own guidance system, which was usually physically located at the individual educational institution. There were about 26 different guidance schemes. Guidance was normally given by teachers from the school or educational institution of whom some had received a short in-service-course in guidance. Every educational sector had its own in-service-courses.

In addition to the services found in education institutions there were 12 cross-sectoral guidance services, a student advisory service, some private actors and the Council for Educational and Vocational Guidance (an agency working with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education to produce written guidance material and give advice to the ministers on guidance matters).

### *Political Considerations*

The process was initiated by a proposal for a resolution in the parliament by the Conservative Party (Beslutningsforslag, 2000) asking the government (then centre-left) to establish a new educational and vocational guidance system for the educational sector and to make it independent of institutions.

By this time, educational and vocational guidance had become an increasingly important factor in the transition from primary and lower secondary education to upper secondary education and vocational education and training and for subsequent transitions to higher education and/or employment. Therefore, it was important that the guidance reflected the available knowledge of current and future developments in the national and regional labour markets.

It was also mentioned in the resolution that the guidance 'system' suffered from several weaknesses. It was very decentralised and linked to individual schools and educational institutions. The institutions' guidance schemes had the school's or the institution's own students as target audiences and, to a lesser extent, also potential students. This raised issues of impartiality as the guidance practitioners were employed by the institution concerned. Thus, the guidance could become very inward-looking and centred on institutions' own educational programmes and need for students.

On the other hand, the benefits of the existing organisation of the guidance activities were that guidance was implemented in the young people's educational environment by teachers with close knowledge of the individual.

The proposal was not finalised in the parliament, but a majority in the educational committee of the parliament proposed to the government analyse alternative models for organising and financing a transversal independent education and vocational guidance system. The analysis was published in a report on cross-sectorial guidance from the Ministry of Education (Undervisningsministeriet, 2001). The report found that the existing approach to guidance did not support young people to make a free choice in education and employment. Nor did it meet the requirements for openness and transparency in education. It argued that there was a need for clearer objectives, less fragmentation and greater coordination. In addition, guidance was insufficiently based on individual needs and poorly adapted to those young people who had the greatest need for guidance. According to the report, several studies also pointed out that the training and qualification level of guidance practitioners should be increased.

At the same time, the OECD initiated reviews of some member countries' guidance systems including Denmark (OECD, 2002). This review pointed out the weaknesses of the Danish guidance system, noting that it was excessively based in sectors; inward looking; weakly professionalised; and had a lack of effective quality-assurance procedures. The report had 22 recommendations for Denmark including to:

- establish new cross-sectoral centres which should see clients as well as being service centres for sector-based counsellors;
- introduce more robust quality-assurance systems across all areas of guidance provision;
- develop a strategy for collecting data on the outcomes and benefits of guidance;
- develop mechanisms for converting labour market information into a form which enables it to be used by guidance counsellors and by individuals; and
- make more use of websites for guidance purposes.

Shortly after, the government proposed a new 'Law on guidance about choice of education and employment' (Lovforslag, 2002). The final law was passed by the parliament in April 2003 (Vejledningslov, 2003).

#### THE REFORM 2003

The educational guidance system and landscape was thoroughly changed by the reform. The responsibility for guidance was moved from schools and educational institutions to a set of new independent and professional institutions at three levels – national, regional and municipal. Career and labour market information was now provided online rather than through paper and books (see Jochumsen, Chapter 19, and Kettunen, Lindberg, Nygaard, & Kardal, Chapter 11, this volume, for a discussion of more recent developments in this area).

The law on guidance came into force 1st August 2004, and a new division for guidance in the Ministry of Education was established a year before to deal with policy issues in relation to guidance and the implementation of the guidance reform, to act as knowledge centre for guidance, and to be responsible for guidance at national and regional level.

#### *Objectives*

The law established a set of objectives for guidance and the guidance system:

- The choice of education and employment shall be of the greatest possible benefit to the individual and to society.
- The individual's interests and personal qualifications as well as the anticipated need for qualified labour and self-employed businessmen shall be considered.

- Guidance shall be targeted especially at young people with special needs for guidance, and contribute to a reduction of dropouts and changes in the choice of education, and
- Guidance shall contribute to improving the individual's ability to seek and use information including ICT-based information about choice of education and career, and
- Guidance shall be independent of institution- and sector-specific interests.
- The qualifications and competencies of guidance practitioners shall be improved.

### *Institutions*

Two sets of independent guidance centres were established, namely 45 Youth Guidance Centres at municipal level and seven guidance centres at regional level.

*Youth guidance centres ('Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning').* The municipal Youth Guidance Centres were given responsibility for guidance related to the transition from compulsory education to youth education (upper secondary education and vocational education and training (VET)). Their target groups were pupils in lower secondary education (forms 6-9/10), young people under the age of 19 outside education, training and employment, and young people between the age of 19 and 25 who seek out guidance in relation to youth education and employment.

The guidance of pupils in lower secondary education was to be provided at the schools and use of educational portfolios and personal transition plans were compulsory.

Educational institutions were required to notify the guidance centres when a pupil or student below the age of 25 years drops out so that the centre can offer guidance to the young person.

The municipalities funded and had overall responsibility for the centres and appointed managers who were responsible for the daily management. The objectives, methods, activity plan, and results were to be published on the internet and the centres were obliged to cooperate with primary and lower secondary schools on career education and guidance, and with youth education institutions in the area, the regional guidance centres, local employers and public employment services.

*The regional guidance centres ('Studievalg').* The regional centres were given responsibility for guidance related to transition from youth education (upper secondary education and VET) to higher education or employment and to provide information about all higher education programmes in Denmark and possible job opportunities after completing a higher education programme. Their target groups were pupils in youth education programmes and young people and adults outside the education system wishing to enter a higher education programme.

The Ministry of Education was responsible for the centres and most centres were established as independent consortia of different educational institutions chosen

after a call for tender. The centres were obliged to cooperate with partners in their region: youth education and higher education institutions, youth guidance centres, social partners, and industry and commerce.

### *National Guidance Portal (UddannelsesGuiden)<sup>1</sup>*

At the national level a guidance portal with information about education and training, professions, labour market issues and possibilities abroad, was established. The portal also included web-based guidance tools for guidance practitioners and other users, a virtual resource centre, and links to guidance centres, educational institutions and to the electronic admissions systems to higher education and youth education.

### *Knowledge Centre for Guidance*

The division for guidance in the Ministry of Education was to act as a knowledge centre for guidance and had in that capacity activities such as collecting best practice, initiating analyses, surveys, and undertaking experimental activities, coordinating between the different guidance services, the maintenance of the virtual resource centre as mentioned above, and establishing and maintaining a quality assurance system for guidance.

### *Quality Assurance System*

The purpose of the quality assurance system was to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the guidance reform, provide decision makers with a comprehensive view of scope, results and effects of guidance, and promote credibility and public confidence by reporting the results of guidance.

Furthermore, the system was intended to serve as a foundation for further development and, through common guidelines and methods, create a basis for comparability between similar guidance units. It also aimed to illustrate approaches and methods for the guidance centres in their development and to strive to measure quality systematically.

The monitoring system measured productivity through the production of statistics such as the number of contacts with the users of guidance services, user benefits, which were monitored through nationwide surveys and questionnaires, and the effect on society which was measured using transition, completion, and drop-out rates, relative to each guidance centre. All data for each guidance centre were published on the internet (Jensen, 2008).

### *National Dialogue Forum*

The National Dialogue Forum's aims included securing cross-sectoral dialogue, developing the level of quality in Danish guidance, and providing advice to the government on guidance issues

The Forum consisted of individual members appointed by the minister and representatives of social partners and ministries.

### *Training of Guidance Practitioners*

Before the reform, each sector had its own training programmes for the teachers who acted as guidance practitioners. The reform established one common training programme, offered by centres for higher education. The programme was equivalent to 6 months' full-time study and was open for guidance practitioners who had completed at least a two years higher education programme and had two years of relevant working experience.

### *Funding*

The reform was financially neutral in the sense that no extra funding was given for the guidance activities, but the resources were re-distributed e.g. the municipalities got extra funding for the work of the Youth Guidance Centres which was taken from the upper secondary schools and from VET institutions who no longer provided guidance for their pupils and students and thus could reduce their staff costs.

### *Implementation*

The law specified that the youth guidance centres should be established with attention to geography, quality and sustainability. This meant that not all of the 98 municipalities in Denmark could have their own youth guidance centre. Several centres were established as inter-municipal cooperation between two or more municipalities. The process ended up with 45 centres with a total of around 1000 guidance practitioners. In the first years after the reform, most employees in the centres were former teachers with a guidance background. But that changed gradually through the years so that staff's backgrounds became more diverse.

The regional centres were established after a tender issued by the ministry. In most cases the tender was won by consortia of educational institutions establishing independent guidance centres and the staff came from earlier information centres for higher education.

Also, the guidance portal was established following a tender issued by the ministry. The tender was won by a private company who ran the portal for eight years. After that it was run by the ministry through one of its agencies.

## GUIDANCE IN OTHER POLITICAL AGENDAS

Until 2013–14 the political climate was very positive toward guidance. There was a political belief that guidance was the answer to many political problems and political

will – supported by funding – to strengthen guidance and to use guidance as a tool in different political agendas.

The idea was that more and better guidance would mean that more young people would continue in post-compulsory education and that they would choose a pathway that was suitable, which led to employment and contributed to the growth and development of society.

In the period 2005–2010 guidance was included in legislation concerning the integration of immigrants, globalisation of the economy, welfare and investment in the future, compulsory education and ensuring that more young people were in education or a job.

As part of the government programme on the integration of immigrants ‘A new chance for all’ (Regeringen, 2005) the law on guidance was changed (Vejledningslov, 2006) to strengthen the involvement of parents in the guidance process.

As part of a political agreement about ‘welfare and investments in the future’ (Regeringen, 2006b) the law on guidance was expanded on several points (Vejledningslov, 2007).

The weak formulation in the law in relation to the training and qualifications of guidance practitioners was strengthened so that it became a prerequisite for guidance practitioners to have a qualification approved by the Ministry of Education or similar qualifications. Guidance practitioners must either have completed the (post-graduate) diploma or master programme, or have their prior learning, competencies and skills assessed and recognised.

### *Focus on Vulnerable Pupils*

It was specified that guidance should begin from the sixth form in lower secondary school with special attention to pupils at increased risk of not beginning or completing an upper secondary education or VET programme. Likewise, the law specified which guidance tools should be used in the different forms in lower secondary education. A mentoring scheme for disadvantaged young people was introduced, and the duty of the Youth Guidance Centres to systematic outreach to young people who have not begun an upper secondary education or VET programme or who have dropped out, was underlined and expanded.

Furthermore, detailed rules about bridgebuilding activities from compulsory education to youth education were included in the law on guidance. The youth guidance centres gained new tasks as they got the competence to decide whether a young person belonged to the target group for the preparatory programme Schools of Production, (Produktionsskolelov, 2004) and to decide whether a young person belonged to the target group for the special education for young people with special needs and disabilities, (STU-lov, 2007) and later also the Combined Youth Education, (KUU-lov, 2015). The target groups for the Combined Youth Education and the Schools of Production is young people who doesn't have the qualifications to

enter neither upper secondary education nor VET. The target groups for these three programmes have a big intersection and are not easy to distinguish from each other.

## EVALUATION OF THE REFORM

The law on guidance included a provision that it should be revised in 2007-08 and, as preparation for that, the National Evaluation Institute (EVA) completed an evaluation of the law and its effects (EVA, 2007). Together with elements of the government's 'Strategy for Denmark in the Global Economy' (Regeringen, 2006a) led to changes in the law on guidance in 2008 (Vejledningslov, 2008).

### *Objectives*

Some of the objectives in the law were expanded and a new one added:

- The choice of education and employment shall be of greatest possible benefit to the individual and to society, including that all young people complete an education giving them occupational competencies.
- Guidance shall be targeted especially at young people with special needs for guidance who have or will have difficulties in choosing, initiating or completing an education or in choosing an occupation.
- Guidance shall contribute to a reduction of drop-outs and changes in the choice of education and that each pupil or student complete the chosen education with greatest possible professional and personal benefit and outcome. Guidance shall support the pupil's or the student's ability to make choices included in education and to secure coherence and progression for each pupil and student.

The objectives refer directly to the government's goal that 95% of a youth cohort (25 years after compulsory education) should have completed at least a youth education (upper secondary or VET).

### *Guidance in Relation to Completion of Education*

So far, the law on guidance had only dealt with guidance in transition from compulsory to youth education or employment and from youth education to higher education or employment. The educational institutions had had different forms of guidance in relation to the completion of education, but now the law on guidance was expanded to include a set of rules for guidance in relation to completion of education, including a provision that completion guidance should be executed by staff with a guidance training qualification of the same level as the guidance practitioners at the guidance centres.

It also required that the educational institutions should report back to/inform the Youth Guidance Centres and the lower secondary education schools on how the pupils coped with their education.

*National Dialogue Forum*

Finally, the rules for the National Dialogue Forum were changed. Until now the minister had in principle been the chair of the Forum (in practice: the head of division for guidance). It was changed to a triumvirate with one chairperson and two vicechairs – all appointed by the minister. Also, the composition of the Forum was changed so that the educational sector got a higher presence than before, and the number of personally appointed members by the minister was reduced.

## NEW CONCEPTS AND TOOLS

A political agreement from November 2009 about ‘more young people in education or job’ (Regeringen, 2009) led in 2010 to many and fundamental changes in the guidance law and had huge implications for the guidance sector (Vejledningslov, 2010). The main changes were:

*Obligation to Education, Employment or Other Agreed Activity*

15–17-year-olds became obliged to be in education, employment or another activity in accordance with their personal education plan, which was made for every young person in collaboration between the young person, his/her parents and the guidance centre. The aim was that the young people sooner or later completed vocational or upper secondary education or gained a foothold in the labour market. The Youth Guidance Centre had to ensure that the pupil’s personal education plan was complied with or changed.

The municipality got the competence to withhold the family allowance for 15–17-year-olds if they do not comply with the obligation to be in education, employment or another agreed activity and where the family is not willing to cooperate. The municipality can also choose to give the family allowance directly to the young person rather than to the family.

*Readiness for Education*

Another new concept was introduced: ‘readiness for education’. When a young person leaves compulsory education for vocational or upper secondary education, the youth guidance centre must assess whether the young person possesses the necessary professional, personal and social skills to enter the chosen programme of upper secondary education. For young people, who are assessed as ‘not yet ready for education’, the municipality had to provide training or whatever support is needed by the young person to qualify for a positive assessment.

Again, the focus of the Youth Guidance Centres was directed to the most vulnerable young people in the sense that they had to reach out to vulnerable young

people in the transition from 9th and 10th form to youth education to avoid quick drop-out ('handheld guidance').

These changes together with the already mentioned tasks of deciding whether a young person belonged to the target group for some specific programmes meant that the youth guidance centres efforts focused more on these administrative tasks – for the benefit of society – rather than on guidance of the young people. For many guidance practitioners this conflicted with their ethical standards. Are you an advocate for the young person or a civil servant?

### *Youth Database*

To give the Youth Guidance Centres a tool so that they could live up to the new legal obligations, the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Employment established a Youth Database recording the educational and employment status for all young people below the age of 30.

### *eGuidance*

The Guidance Portal was expanded to include an eGuidance service to provide personal guidance through 'e-channels' primarily to resourceful youths and their parents. eGuidance was offered as personal communication via telephone, online chat, SMS, e-mail and through social media (Facebook). eGuidance was manned by professional guidance counsellors and cooperated with the Youth Guidance Centres, the regional guidance centres, and the editors of the national guidance portal.

### *De-Bureaucratization*

The law from 2010 also included some de-bureaucratization initiatives, which implied that many of the detailed rules for the Youth Guidance Centres and the municipalities were removed from the law including the rule to establish the Youth Guidance Centres on a geographical and quality sustainable basis. That meant that the number of Youth Guidance Centres rapidly increased as some of the original centres were split up when a municipality that had cooperated with other municipalities in a common centre wanted to have its own centre. In 2018, it has grown to around 60 centres.

### *Guidance in Relation to Completion of Education*

Finally, the rules about guidance in relation to the completion of education were removed from the law and replaced by rules in the educational laws about the institutions obligation to keep students in education.

These changes were accompanied by a substantial addition of funds to the guidance sector.

## THE CHANGING PICTURE

In 2011, the responsibility of the regional guidance centres was moved from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Higher Education and Research in response to a change of government. Although there was a good cooperation between the two ministries, the guiding principle of a coherent guidance system throughout the education sector was broken and the possibilities for coordination were made more complicated.

Where improvements so far had been made to the guidance efforts – and the disposal of increased resources – the picture changed in 2014. As part of the political agreement on ‘Better and more attractive vocational training’ (Regeringen, 2014) a reduction of guidance and consequent substantial financial cuts in the sector took place.

It came as the culmination of an increasing scepticism among many politicians about the effects of guidance and its lacking possibilities for promoting a desired educational choice (VET) among the young people. It is worth mentioning that it was not the purpose of guidance to promote VET, but to work to ensure that all young people entered into (any) youth education. It should be noted that all changes – both the expansion and the reduction – have been passed by a broad majority in parliament. This has been exacerbated by the limited evidence base in guidance, which has only to a very limited degree been able to answer the questions ‘Does guidance matter?’ and ‘Does it pay off?’

While politicians may be unclear about the general role of guidance, they have utilised it as a tool in VET policy, believing that it should guide people “to” jobs and educational and career routes rather than educating them “about” these things. The government has set up some (probably unrealistic) goals for VET education that in 2025, 30% of a youth cohort should start a VET education after compulsory education – it was 19% in 2018.

*Changes in the Law*

The main change in the law (Vejledningslov, 2014) was that individual face-to-face guidance was reserved for pupils who were assessed ‘not ready for education’ and there was an increased focus on group and collective guidance for all pupils. The assessment of the pupil’s readiness for education was expanded to take place both in the 8th and the 9th form, and detailed rules for the assessment were inserted in the law including criteria for being ready for education. At same time admission requirements for VET were introduced, and these criteria played an essential role in the assessment of education readiness.

The assessment of readiness for education is taking place at the beginning of the 8th form before the pupils are graded for the first time in their school career and they are supposed to choose a youth education before they have been introduced to VET and upper secondary education through introduction courses later in 8th form.

Pupils that are assessed not ready for education in the 8th form are subject to specific support including obligatory bridge building in the 9th form. The bridgebuilding activity in the 8th form, which is obligatory for all, must include VET.

Some previous Youth Guidance Centre tasks were passed to the teachers in lower secondary schools, e.g. the basic elements in the assessment for readiness for education. A timeless theme on career education – called ‘Education and Job’ – was introduced in the primary and lower secondary school under the responsibility of the school in cooperation with the Youth Guidance Centres (see Skovhus & Thomsen, Chapter 17, this volume).

This was the beginning of an increased sectorisation of guidance, which the guidance reform from 2003 had reacted against.

The substantial changes of the law on guidance in 2008, 2010 and 2014 have meant that the emphasis has moved towards benefit for the society and away from benefit for the individual, and the role of the guidance practitioners has moved from support for the individual pupil to a civil servant responsible for checking whether a pupil fulfils specific demands.

### *Other Changes of the Law*

After the introduction of admission requirements to the upper secondary education in 2016, the law on guidance was changed to reflect this change in the rules about assessment of readiness for education (Gymnasielov, 2016). And in 2018, the rules for the assessment of readiness for education was expanded to include practical skills together with professional, social and personal skills (Vejledningslov, 2018a).

## DISINTEGRATION OF THE 2003 REFORM

### *The Regional Guidance Centres*

As mentioned, the responsibility for the regional guidance centres (Studievalg) was moved from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Research and Higher Education in 2011 but the centres continued to act under the common law on guidance. In 2018 a specific law on the regional guidance centres was passed and the rules concerning the centres were taken out of the law on guidance (Studievalglov, 2018). The guidance centres will be established as an agency under the Ministry for Higher Education and Research with departments spread over the country and thus no longer subject to a tender. The new law repeats the relevant parts of the objectives of the law on guidance. The task for the centre will be to provide guidance about higher education and expected employment possibilities to pupils in youth education.

*The Law on Guidance*

In connection with a substantial reform of preparatory short-term programmes for young people who are not ready to begin VET or upper secondary education, the law on guidance has been changed radically (Vejledningslov, 2018b).

*General Changes*

- The title of the law is changed to the ‘law on municipal support for young people below the age of 25 years’.
- The Youth Guidance Centres are removed from the law and replaced by the municipalities. The municipalities shall establish a new youth centre that will integrate the previous tasks of the Public Employment Centre for young people with the previous tasks of the Youth Guidance Centres.
- Educational, vocational and career guidance shall still be delivered but in another organisational framework and still by educated guidance personnel.
- The municipalities shall still offer professional guidance independent of sector and institutional interests.
- The ministry’s role as a knowledge centre for guidance has ceased to exist.
- The National Dialogue Forum have been closed down.
- The provision on coherence in the guidance system has been deleted.

*The Municipal Support Unit for Youth*

The municipality gets the full responsibility to ensure that all young people are able to complete a youth education or to be employed. The municipalities coordinate the work for young people in the educational, employment, and social areas, and appoint one transversal contact person for a young person who needs support for whatever reason.

The unit shall take care of all tasks that have formerly been taken care of by the Youth Guidance Centre and the Public Employment Centre.

*The Educational Plan and the Youth Database*

The educational plan will be expanded to be a coherent plan for both the young person and the involved authorities and other actors and will be supported by an expansion of the Youth database to include all relevant information about the young person including housing and use of drugs. Relevant data from the Youth database will be transferred to the educational institution the young person attends.

### *Consequences*

With these changes, two of the fundamental ideas of the guidance reform in 2003 have been removed from the law: the idea of one coherent and transversal guidance system with a common quality assurance system and the possibility of coordinating the guidance efforts across the different sectors.

Furthermore, there is a risk that guidance will vary in volume and quality across the municipalities and that guidance to an even higher degree than today will be focussed on the vulnerable young people, so that other young people might be left alone in their choice of education.

### NEW DEVELOPMENT

Nearly all parties in the parliament agreed on a large set of changes in different laws with the purpose of increasing the transition from lower secondary schools to vocational education and training. The agreement is called 'From primary school to skilled worker' (Regeringen, 2018).

The agreement includes several initiatives on guidance giving the teachers in compulsory education a clearer role in the development of the pupil's competencies to choose an education. A national programme on the choice of youth education and a coherent plan for guidance activities will be developed and integrated in the education.

Introduction to youth educations and bridgebuilding activities will be replaced by a new, not yet developed model, which will provide an introduction to youth education, and all pupils in 8th and 9th form will be assessed for educational readiness for all youth educations independent of the pathway which they wish to choose.

Furthermore, the municipalities will be given more responsibility for the pupil's choice of youth education and they must set up local targets for the transition to youth education. The agreement was turned into law in 2019 (Vejledningslov, 2019).

With these changes the disintegration of the 2003 reform has taken yet another step as the work of the guidance centres probably will be reserved for vulnerable young people and schools will get the main guidance responsibility for the majority.

### WHAT WORKS?

With the pace in which the content of and the guidelines for guidance has been changed since the guidance reform in 2003, it may be difficult to trace the impacts of the different aspects of the reforms. Some of them have only been allowed to work in a short period of time before they were changed again.

One of the objectives for guidance is that it shall be of the greatest possible benefit both to the individual and to society. This is a very long-term goal – both for the individual and for society. Politicians like – and for good reason – to have evidence

that guidance works, but they should probably let the changes work for a little longer period than has been the case since the 2003 reform.

In 2010, the Ministry of Education asked the Danish Clearinghouse for Educational Research at Aarhus University,<sup>2</sup> to investigate what international research says about the effect of the guidance methods used in education systems. It resulted in a meta study that looked at research from comparable countries (Nordic countries, UK, Canada, US, Australia, New Zealand and some other Western European countries) (Danish Clearinghouse, 2011). One of the results was that individual guidance was highlighted as effective because it is personal and can be customised to the individual.

It is thoughtful that this effective guidance tool was removed for the young people ready for education with the changes in 2014.

A study from The Danish National Centre for Social Research (SFI)<sup>3</sup> has shown that the reform from 2003 increased admission to upper secondary school between 4.0–6.3 percentage points for immigrants, and at best small improvements for the native students (SFI, 2012).

The annual surveys among all graduates from lower secondary schools shows that among the most important elements of guidance are introductory courses, bridge building and similar activities where the young people get acquainted with further education and/or the labour market. The survey was made every year up to 2014 (Undervisningsministeriet, 2014).

### *Need for Knowledge and Data*

There is a need for greater clarification about the impact of guidance and which guidance elements are working. This is part of a broader need to convince politicians – and especially economists – that guidance is important. In order to achieve this, we need more accurate research and data on the impact of the different elements of guidance.

It is not an easy task to measure the effect of the guidance. However, some simple data on the outcome of guidance and how the guidance benefits both the individual and society can be crucial for how the guidance will be developed in the future.

The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) has throughout its existence (2007–2015) worked with quality assurance and the evidence-base for guidance and has proposed a framework and indicators (ELGPN, 2015).

## TWO TURBULENT DECADES FOR GUIDANCE

In the beginning of the century guidance in the educational sector in Denmark was boosted and organised in a new professional way with still more tasks and resources.

But the wheel is turning, and it looks as if Danish educational guidance is moving back to a situation similar the one the 2003 reform changed radically. We see an increased sectorisation with more and more guidance tasks given to the teachers

rather than professional guidance practitioners. The professional guidance is reserved for special and vulnerable groups, and the guidance personnel are expected to act as civil servants that control young people rather than as resource persons for that empower young people.

Some of the fundamental ideas of the guidance reform in 2003 have been removed from the law: the idea of one coherent and transversal guidance system with a common quality assurance system, the possibility of coordinating the guidance efforts across the different sectors, a national dialogue forum for guidance and a knowledge centre for guidance.

Due to growing concerns about a lack of skilled labour in the future labour market, guidance has increasingly been seen as an instrument for achieving specific political goals in terms of the right labour supply rather than a support service for the individual in their choice of education and career development. The lack of evidence on the impact of guidance has also created scepticism among politicians about the necessity of guidance.

While it is a positive development that the new municipal youth support services combine the tasks of the Youth Guidance Centre and the Public Employment Centre, one can be worried about the possible clash between the supportive culture from the youth guidance centres and the control culture from the Public Employment Centres. The fear is that the latter will win.

If guidance in Denmark is to regain its former position to the benefit of all people, it is necessary that we can – and are willing to – measure the effect and the quality of guidance and convince the politicians about the importance of having a well-functioning guidance system as a public good and not as a political tool to steer young people to specific educations.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ug.dk/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://edu.au.dk/forskning/dansclearinghouseforuddannelsesforskning/>

<sup>3</sup> Now VIVE, the National Research and Analyses Centre for Welfare; <https://www.vive.dk/da/>

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