

Country Report DENMARK

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1. Background and Country Context

Denmark is divided into 14 counties and 275 municipalities, but a current reform aims at reducing the number of municipalities and 5 regions have replaced the formerly existing 14 counties. The state and municipalities are responsible for levying taxes and providing social services and health care.

The state takes overall responsibility for the framework and provision of education. The regions must elaborate visions for education and training in their own geographical area, whereas the municipalities are in charge of providing vocational education and training within the framework set by the government. Municipalities and regions are expected to cooperate in this field. Social partners exert influence on VET in Denmark via trade committees and paying their share of the costs of training employees to become skilled workers. The social partners play an important and formalised role in VET in Denmark. VET legislation specifically mentions that the social partners should be involved in the process, and their role is both an advisory and a decision making one.

The central government provides the overall framework for VET in Denmark. The Ministry of Education formulates – in dialogue with the social partners and various councils and committees set up by the Ministry – the legal basis for the provision of VET, VET institutions, financial aspects regarding VET, teachers' competences, admission requirements, quality assurance, etc. IVET is totally financed by the state whereas CVET is financed by the state and by the users, i.e. mainly companies. The costs for apprenticeships are covered by the companies.

Approximately 80 per cent of a youth cohort complete a recognised vocational qualification (compared to approximately 60 per cent in the early 1980s). Approximately 13 per cent leave the education system without any kind of qualification and will neither have acquired a competency for further studies nor a vocational qualification. 7.5 per cent leave only with a school leaving certificate at general upper secondary level. According to Cedefop statistics, in recent years the figures have not been very positive. (<http://www.uvm.dk/statistik/erhverv/praktik/index.htm?menuid=55101575>)

The quality of in-company training has become a major issue in Denmark. Trade committees play an important role in the Danish system. They are also responsible for in-company training. Trade committees consist of both representatives of companies and representatives of employer organisations and unions (50/50). There are trade committees for all the trades in Denmark. The system costs quite a lot. There are about 60 to 70 trade committees for different branches and occupational profiles (such as painters, electricians, etc.). Currently, a trend can be observed that trade committees merge sector wide such as in the construction sector. Sometimes this can be a difficult process. Some trade committees are very active and contribute to improving the quality work and training, but others are rather conservative and limit their activities to follow the existing rules. It is very difficult to get people from companies to work in trade committees because the task is mostly part-time and done in addition to an employee's regular work. Although the trade committees have secretaries to take care of the daily tasks such as permission for educating, organising the final tests, mediation in conflicts etc. active

participation involves considerable extra work for employees. The national trade committees appoint local trade committees to support and advise the vocational school boards regarding in-company training.

In-company training in Denmark has a strong linkage to the dual vocational training system. Good integration should be achieved by linking the learning in vocational schools and the learning in companies. Practice and theory should be connected better and become integrated. As a consequence, the traditional system is currently undergoing some change as cooperation between vocational schools and companies is not very effective. However, both actors are gradually coming closer to each other and the companies understand the benefits deriving from linking school-based training and practical training. It is also considered an important aspect for attracting better qualified students.

Initial vocational education and training

After completing compulsory education, 95 per cent of a cohort continue in either general or vocational upper secondary education (approximately 55 per cent of an age cohort), or in other vocational training programmes (approximately 30 per cent of an age cohort). General and vocational upper secondary education last three years and give access to studies at tertiary level. Vocational training lasts between two and four years and qualifies students for either entering the labour market as skilled workers or for specific short cycle higher education programmes at vocational colleges.

Vocational education and training is based on the dual training principle, i.e. school-based education and training alternating with training in a company. In Denmark, VET only exists as apprenticeship training. VET programmes give direct access to nation-wide recognised occupations at the labour market and are based on a dual training. In some cases schools have to offer school-based training when students are not able to find an apprenticeship place in a company. Also there are some educational pathways where students have to get their in-company training in other countries.

The main programme for vocational specialisations (currently there exist 96 vocational profiles) starts with an on-the-job training placement. Before being allowed to start the main programme the student must have an apprenticeship contract with a training company (or with a college if no company offers the selected training). Before the main programme starts the students usually attend a basic programme in a vocational college attached to the sector of the future profession. In 2007 there were 7 sector programmes, but from 2008 onwards there will be 12 sector programmes as entrance programmes. The students learn about sector specific issues and general subjects such as mathematics, language, social science etc., but with a particular focus towards the needs of the sector specific technical subjects.

Besides entering a VET programme through the basic programme, trainees may also start directly in a company with which they have an apprenticeship contract. In this case, they start the practical training in the company and then alternate between school and in-company training for the remaining training period. Trainees, who start directly in a company, receive a salary for the entire training period, including during the time they spend at the college. Trainees who start at school receive a state grant until they have concluded an apprenticeship contract and begin their in-company training after having completed the basic programme at school.

Most students choose to start their education in a college before concluding an apprenticeship contract, and many companies prefer that students have gone through a

school-based programme. They assume that the students are more mature for the in-company training afterwards.

The programmes provide young people with professional, personal and general qualifications that are in demand on the labour market. If students do not have a contract with a company during this period, the colleges support the students with guidance and their connections to the local labour market and companies. When the young people graduate from the vocational programme, they are able to fulfil specific jobs in different trades but have only limited access to education programmes at higher level.

A number of schemes exist for young people who are not clear in their educational/occupational choice, have learning disabilities or social and personal problems. They can, for example, enrol in a course at a production school or in a basic vocational training programme (Erhvervsgrunduddannelse - EGU). The latter is an individualised course aiming at enabling the young people to enter either the ordinary VET system or the labour market.

Continuing vocational education and training

In Denmark, the public sector plays a major role in the provision of continuing vocational education and training as well as general adult education. However, in the last 10 to 20 years private provision of continuing and adult education and training has grown. This includes courses provided by consultancy firms, private course providers and internal HRM departments.

The main type of CVET in Denmark is, however, the adult vocational training (CVT) programmes offered by labour market training centres and vocational colleges. These programmes are important provisions for achieving policy objective of enhancing lifelong learning and contributing to the creation a flexible labour market. Employees are given the opportunity to increase their skills and competencies regularly by following a CVT programme.

Providers of the programmes such as labour market training centres (*Arbejdsmarkedetsuddannelsescentre - AMU*) and vocational colleges are locally based. Programme success depends on close cooperation between local enterprises and training institutions, and that programmes are adapted to local conditions. When a course is recommended by the trade committees' CVET board and recognised by the Ministry of Education, employers can get refunded part of the cost for the course.

In 2000, a reform was adopted which created stronger coherence within adult education and continuing training by providing a new framework of lifelong learning opportunities for adults and giving the social partners greater responsibility in terms of prioritising and organising CVT programmes. The reform was followed by a focus on closer dialogue between management, staff and training institutions and on the concept that training should be integrated with learning at the workplace. It also focused on individuals with a low level of educational attainment and the provision of training to provide these people with competencies similar to skilled workers.

Overall, the CVT programmes have three aims:

1. To maintain and improve vocational skills in accordance with labour market needs and technological development;
2. To solve restructuring and adaptation problems on the labour market in the short term;

3. To contribute to a general uplift in qualifications on the labour market in the medium and longer term.

In addition, programmes are developed and organised for low skilled and skilled workers, technicians and the like. This includes both employed and unemployed people and there are special training offers to groups at risk of becoming marginalised on the labour market. For instance, this may include the long-term unemployed, refugees and immigrants.

2. How is the work and training of trainers organised?

For in-company trainers, there are no formal training requirements. Traditionally, companies are used to manage themselves and to avoid rules and regulations. However, in recent years there has been **an increasing interest in in-company training and trainer skills**. There are many reasons for this. First of all, there is an increased interest in apprenticeships and learning in *communities of practice*. In-company training constitutes 2/3 to 3/4 of a Danish IVET programme and, consequently, it is important to ensure the quality of training, not only through the final journeyman's test but also constantly during the overall training period. Second, the drop-out rates of IVET programmes have increased, not only during the school-based part of training, but also during the in-company training period. A number of studies have confirmed that drop-out is partly due to a clash of expectations between the trainees and the employers. Third, the new tools (personal education plan and logbook) aim at creating greater coherence in IVET with new demands on companies and trainers. The trainers are expected to use the new tools while at the same time in-company training is made more visible. These methods stipulate that trainees describe their training periods and what they have learned during in-company training. This requires increased coordination between school and company. As a consequence, a number of trade committees have initiated training courses for trainers – with varying degrees of success. One barrier is that Danish industry is dominated by SMEs and often they do not have the resources to train their trainers. So training of trainers is still a trend to be monitored.

Another motivation for the new awareness of in-company training is the increased focus on **quality**. Denmark is in a good economic situation with a very low degree of unemployment (about 3.2 per cent). If companies want to attract apprentices and new employees they have to work on their quality management of education and training.

Regarding the in-service training of trainers a number of technical and commercial colleges offer short coaching technique courses for in-company trainers who need specific training to develop their skills. The focus of these courses lies on developing the trainers' pedagogical skills (much in line with the skills being developed at the postgraduate educational training course for VET teachers). Furthermore, trainers typically lack basic knowledge of the VET system in general and know only little about the many reforms and changes initiated during the past years. Surveys show that companies are – when being contacted – interested in tools to improve their training.

Overall, companies increasingly recognise the need for qualifying their trainers and see that this would be in the interest of both enterprises and trainees. The trainee can learn better from a well-trained trainer and would thus become a more valuable employee for the enterprise. However, the training of trainers is an issue which can only be dealt with by the social partners as they are responsible for in-company training.

According to the expert interviews the general feeling in Denmark is that there is a need to start to train the trainers more systematically. There has been a large pilot project together with DEL (vocational teacher education institution) and some trade committees to arrange a standard trainer course in 2006 with the aim to standardising the trainer training across different sectors. This has led to many trade committees discussing this same issue. There are new initiatives from trade committees to foster the integration of trainer courses into the AMU system. That means that the vocational colleges' CVET department would be able to offer trainer courses in the future.

As an outcome of the project, a TrænerGuide as a web-tool is under construction in different sectors. The trainer guides are developed for different occupational fields and are an offer to the companies and to organisations for working on the further development of the system. The TrænerGuides could form some kind of basis for establishing the system. In the TrænerGuide there is a description of what it means to be a trainer. Best practises are described and simple training tools can be downloaded.

On the issue of the training of trainers, several questions arise. The first question is "who will train the trainers?" The most common way of thinking is to involve technical colleges. They have departments for further education and would have the administrative capacities to offer trainer courses. Another question addresses the competences of trainers and how and if the trainers have to be examined: are the teachers really able to teach trainers, and if not, should they be educated first? The vocational schools have the right to organise education for trainers and they also get financial support for that. There is also financial support for the companies for the training their trainers. Small companies, however, are unwilling to participate in the training courses. They underline a lack of time and do not see their first responsibility in providing training and thus do not see the need for formal learning. But they have an interest in receiving advice and tools. That means tools like the TrænerGuide and in-company guidance of trainers might be a way to also qualify trainers of SMEs in the future.

Another aspect is that a lot of trades are not very theoretically oriented. The companies also need better facilities, e.g. material for the training of trainers, like simulations and practice-oriented e-learning material, not only theoretical textbooks. Especially e-learning with very practical simulations and tools could be good alternatives. In conclusion, more practical training for trainers is needed. But the question is: how should it be done and what are the key competences that trainers need? If it comes to the worst, a not very professional college teacher may spoil the whole training and motivation of the trainers. The EUROTRAINER interviews with experts emphasise that the people who train the trainers must have a good connection to the work practice in companies and should also be vocationally well updated.

1. How is the work and training of trainers financed?

Industry evidently supports the continuing training of their employees. The companies also pay the salaries for the apprentices. The training of trainers can be financially supported if vocational colleges are able to adapt AMU-based courses. In 2007 there were three courses under development each of which was of one day duration: 'education planning', 'cultural understanding' and 'coaching'. These courses are partly recognised and established and partly under development in the Ministry of Education.

2. How are trainers selected and how are human resources allocated?

Trainer issues are the responsibility of the enterprises. Usually trainers are skilled workers or workers with a long work experience within their respective professional field. Most of the trainers train apprentices as an integrated part of their daily work. Only big companies have full-time trainers and well-structured education plans. SMEs usually let the training follow the company's daily production schemes.

3. How are trainers qualified?

Cf above point 2. In general, there is little knowledge about the situation and qualification trainers. Some large companies have education and training departments that offer in-company training courses to their employees. In these departments, a number of teachers and trainers can be found. However, the requirements to their skills and their profiles depend on the company and its specific training needs.

According to the EUROTRAINER study companies are now becoming more open to the professionalisation of trainers. They think if they improve their in-company training system, they will get a better and more motivated labour force, apprentices and better professionals.

Danish companies are eager to get guidance and ask for tools to monitor their training and the quality of the training they provide. Although the companies stress that they do not like too much bureaucracy. Quality assurance in vocational education has become a major issue of concern. The discussion is now on the differences and advantages of quality control versus quality assurance. Control and assurance are felt to be almost the same. Companies generally favour a quality system that could be voluntary for the companies.

4. How is the reputation of trainers and how are they integrated in enterprises/society?

In Denmark, most trainers are part-time trainers. Full-time trainers are only to be found in some of the largest companies. Training can be considered an unrecognised task, which means that the training is integrated into the employees' job and forms an integral part of their work. The downside of this high level of integration is that it implies a lack of awareness of the potentials and needs of training – also the additional skills needs that the training function requires.

The employers usually have an idea about the quality of their training and the performance of their trainers. They know who of their skilled workers is a good trainer. Trainers for their part often appreciate assuming additional responsibility by being in charge of providing training for an apprentice. Although there are no official rewards for performing training activities some big companies have discovered that trainers have a great potential for taking on a leader position later on.

5. How innovative is the work and training of trainers?

Danish trainers are used to integrate training into their job tasks. This makes the training being practice-oriented and efficient. In companies that offer good training apprentices are trained to get a high degree of responsibility and this is one of the main targets of the Danish VET system. Many companies treat their trainees as 'ordinary employees' with a low power distance within the organisation. However, there is also a considerable lack of knowledge about how to provide high quality and effective training. Trainers often lack support through adequate training methods, knowledge about educational planning in SME's, feed back methods, conflict solving tools, etc.

Overall, great differences exist between different branches and sectors and some sectors might be more innovative than others. Big companies and global players have much greater potentials and financial resources to invest in the empowerment of their trainers and the development of their training systems. Here we can find best practise examples like Bestseller A/S (textile and commerce), Møbeltransport Danmark (transportation) and Grundfos A/S (industrial production).

Companies that can be considered good practice examples stand out with their close cooperation with vocational colleges as their partners. Also small companies may be very active in the local school board by participating in the local trade committee, for example. An example of a nation-wide system aiming towards close cooperation between vocational school and the company is the digital tool "Elevplan", which provides individual education plans for each student giving access for reading and writing to the company trainer, vocational teacher and student at the same time.

DENMARK: Summary of expert interviews

Issues and challenges

1. Develop a consistent approach towards in-company training

The trade committees, which exist for all trades in Denmark (currently between 60 and 70 trades overall) play a key role in the Danish system and are responsible for the training in companies. They consist of representatives from companies, employer organisations and unions. Trade committees organise tests, develop curricula and negotiate agreements for the apprenticeship programme, among other aspects. The system of trade committees faces challenges of instabilities and inconsistencies as to how they enact their responsibilities. Some are very active and contribute to improving the quality of training, while others are not very active. Representatives from companies are mostly underrepresented as working for the trade committees is part-time in addition to their regular work tasks.

2. Quality assurance and monitoring

While the trade committees have been promoting the professionalisation of trainers and have tried to establish some standards and mandatory minimum requirements, companies are rather reluctant to engage in a more systematic approach of quality monitoring. They prefer a decentralised and voluntary approach while at the same time they also seek guidance and tools. However, most companies are reluctant to accept strict legislation and standard solutions. The need for establishing forms of quality assurance and monitoring have also been emphasised by the government, which has produced a future report. Thus, quality monitoring is also a political issue.

3. Introduce standards for the training of trainers

Several initiatives promote a more systematic approach towards the training of trainers. For example, in 2006 some trade committees arranged standardised courses in cooperation with different sectors for the training of trainers. The aim is to also involve the further education system and to promote training tools and methods such as the 'TrænerGuide', a tested guide of 9 modules, which address all main issues of becoming a trainer. However, a main remaining challenge is to find the right people and institutions to train the trainers. One possibility is to involve technical colleges, which have departments for further education and also the administrative resources to offer trainer courses. But are teachers able to teach the trainers? The trainers of the trainers need to have a good connection to the actual work practice and also need to be vocationally well updated. So far the vocational schools are in charge of arranging training for trainers and they are financially supported for that. Some form of quality monitoring also needs to be introduced for the teachers who train the trainers. Companies also receive financial support to train their trainers. Another issue is that formal training courses do not reach out to SMEs, mainly because trainers are predominantly practically oriented. They do not see themselves as trainers and are thus not oriented towards formal learning to enhance their competences as a trainer. In fact, they do not regard training as a separate part of their job, but it is totally integrated. Another issue is that companies cannot work well with theoretical tools (such as textbooks), but need different methods, e-learning and practical simulation tools for example.

4. Increase the appreciation of apprenticeship programmes

5. Increase the commitment of companies

Companies need to engage more to recognise and define training as an important area of their business and regard it as a strategic part of their recruitment policy. However, there is a dilemma, because in Denmark there are not enough young people. While on the one hand the staff shortage is a good situation for the

development of apprenticeship training, it raises the issue of not having enough trainers to train the apprentices on the other hand. Some companies also need forms of financial support. Another obstacle for companies to engage in training is that it may involve a lot of bureaucracy and paper work since most training is school based.

6. **Strengthen the self-awareness of trainers**

There are no associations for trainers or other forms of professional representation which could lobby for the trainers' interests.

Examples of 'good practice'

Rene Moller, Company Møbeltransport Danmark, Islevdalvej 110, 2610 Rødovre (suburb of Copenhagen), which has its own training centre.

Future trends

1. The increasing amount of immigrants and an increasing number of people coming from different cultural backgrounds will cause many challenges also for trainers. For trainers the challenge is that the targets of the education system are quite broad – so the students need quite broad opportunities in Denmark and not such a narrow specialist education like in Germany, for example. However there is also a growing need for specialists, which means that there is also a growing need for trainers who have specialist knowledge in addition to being able to train students. Trainers often do not have the specialist vocational skills and this is sometimes difficult to admit for the companies. Equipping trainers with the right set of skills is one big challenge for the future.