

## Chapter 7

### The Knowledge Clearinghouse, Denmark

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*In this chapter, we discuss how new demands and expectations from the decision makers and stakeholders in educational R&D are affecting and challenging the Danish institutional framework.*

#### Introduction

In recent years the political interest in educational R&D in Denmark has exploded. OECD's PISA results in 2000 and 2003 have been an eye-opener for decision makers at all levels. The PISA examinations indicated that the competences of the Danish pupils at the age of 15 in general were close to the OECD average. To a small, open economy – which depends on the ability to integrate a large share of the population in knowledge-based professions – the results were disappointing and testify to the need to strengthen the quality of education. Educational R&D is perceived as an effective means of addressing the problem of weak performance – not only in the primary and secondary schools but at all levels of the educational system. The purpose of this article is to discuss how new demands and expectations from the decision makers and stakeholders on educational R&D are affecting and challenging the institutional framework within the field.

A central expression of these new demands and expectations is the Globalisation Strategy, “Strategy for Denmark in the Global Economy” ([www.globalisering.dk/page.dsp?area=52](http://www.globalisering.dk/page.dsp?area=52)), tabled by the Danish government in April 2006. Strategy was the outcome of a process featuring 14 meetings in the Globalisation Council – a council set up by the government comprising 26 key decision makers and chaired by the Prime Minister.

The Strategy contained 350 specific initiatives, launching a comprehensive reform within the field of education, research and innovation affecting actors from primary schools to higher education, from public research institutions to private businesses. It focused on improving the efficiency of public spending on education and research, in particular by allocating more public funds in open competition and by increasing competition and internationalisation in the Danish economy as a whole. Competitiveness was perceived as a means to ensure prosperity and cohesion in the society.

The initiatives will be financed by a Globalisation Fund. Ten billion Danish Kroner (DKK) will be set aside for future investments up to 2012. The pledge will get gradually

phased in, with another DKK 2 billion allocated per year until 2010 and DKK 1 billion allocated in 2011 and 2012.

As described below the initiatives of the Globalisation Strategy are presently transforming the map of educational R&D in Denmark. Starting from a brief description of the institutional framework of educational R&D, new demands and expectations towards sector are discussed. The discussion is focused on two specific incidences/cases/processes, which are central to the understanding of the actual development of the institutions of educational R&D in Denmark. One is the response to the OECD evaluation on educational R&D in Denmark in 2004, and the other the impact of the governments Globalisation Strategy.

## **The institutional framework of educational R&D in Denmark**

Educational R&D is undertaken by multiple actors. The organisation of the activities is not formalised and coordinated in Denmark. However, the usual perception is that the 12 universities – and a few research institutions – are involved in the research activities funded by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, while 17-19 university colleges/Centres of Higher Education (CVUs) in partnership with local authorities and schools, are responsible for developmental activities financed by the Ministry of Education.

The institutional framework, as it appears at the moment, is a result of an institutional reform which was undertaken in 2000. One of the central elements in the reform was the establishment of the Danish University of Education (DPU) by a merger of the Royal Danish School of Educational Studies, the Danish School of Advanced Teaching and the Danish Educational Institute. The aim was to create a leading international research university in education. Learning Lab Denmark (LLD) was merged into DPU as well.

DPU appears as the largest environment for academic research in didactics and education in Denmark. In a European context the university is also unique. It employs approximately 200 researchers in permanent positions, more than a third of the researchers (calculated as full year's work for one person) conducting educational studies in Denmark. Approximately 5 000 students are enrolled in study programmes, making the university the largest in Europe within the field. An international alliance with similar universities in Europe has been initiated. It is expected that the Institute of Education, University of London, which is already a well-known collaborator, will be part of this alliance. Additionally, DPU is a leading partner in the ASEA-project: the ASIA-EUROPE Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning.

Another central element of the reform launched in 2000 was the merger of a wide range of institutions in the college sector into new Centres of Higher Education, CVUs. CVUs offer bachelor degrees for teachers at the primary school level, nurses and other professions in the health sector as well as degrees in engineering and business. In the legislation of the CVUs, it was envisaged that they be “research affiliated” and this was ensured through cooperation agreements between CVUs and relevant research institutions in Denmark (as well as other countries) on user-inspired research projects. The DPU has a specific duty to support CVUs in R&D projects. The purpose of the “research affiliation” of the CVUs was to ensure that the CVUs had ready and on-going access to recent research-based knowledge, to develop qualifications of CVU teaching staff and to build bridges between “scientific research” and “applied research and development”. At the moment there are 18 CVUs.

Since 2004 a number of regional knowledge centres have been established. The purpose of the centres is to collect, process and transmit knowledge established by institutions offering short-cycle and medium-cycle study programmes to researchers, teachers, students, field workers, parents, etc. Many centres involve CVUs with special competences of didactics. This is for example the case in relation to the Centre for Reading Research, the Centre for Curriculum Education and Development, the Centre for Adult Learning and Education. The Ministry of Education is funding the centres, with an annual budget in 2007 of nearly DKK 50 million.

## New expectations and demands

### *The Danish response to the OECD evaluation of educational R&D*

On the request of the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, OECD examined national educational R&D in Denmark in 2004 ([www.oecd.org/dataoecd/56/21/33888206.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/56/21/33888206.pdf)). The purpose of the review was to assess the extent to which it serves its function of creating, collating, distributing and applying the knowledge on which practitioners and policy makers can draw. Thus the aim of the examination was broader and different from a traditional educational R&D review that would focus on the quality of the research. In particular, the examination focused on interactions between producers and users of educational R&D.

OECD concluded that there was no explicit national strategy for educational R&D. The R&D activities were organised in a large number of small-scale projects largely determined by the individual interests of the researchers. Coordination and dialogue between the various actors – especially between researchers at the universities on the one hand, and trainee teachers at the university colleges on the other – were modest. In general, there appeared to be a lack of basic research, a low capacity to apply a range of research methods (in particular quantitative methods) and few mechanisms for accumulating and sustaining the knowledge.

Based on these conclusions and on experiences from the United States and the United Kingdom, the OECD suggested the establishment of the following new institutions:

- A National Education Research Forum, which could hold regular meetings (annually, or two or three times a year) for researchers, teachers and policy makers to share ideas on education issues and needs.
- A clearinghouse on education, which could be a means to offer regular reporting on significant educational research gained nationally as well as internationally.
- An Educational Observatory in Denmark.

In the wake of the OECD report, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation initiated a process of round table discussions to clarify the organisation of the new institutions.

There is general acceptance of the need to build new institutions at the national level in order to develop a national research strategy and strengthen coordination between actors. However, there seems still to be widespread disagreement on strategies, priorities and needs. At the first conference in the National Education Research Forum held in March 2006 these disagreements were exposed.

Two questions have been focal points of the differences of opinions.

The *first question* concerns the concept of evidence. The disagreement is based on a fundamental academic dispute of the definition of the concept of evidence and consequently the appropriateness of the idea of establishing a new clearinghouse focusing on evidence-based research. Should the concept of evidence be restricted to formal, quantitative empirical research based on classical experimental design model? Or should the concept be more broadly defined enclosing a wider array of interpretative disciplines and implying a close interaction between student and practice in the search for evidence? The discussion has partly run parallel to the discussion between the university and university college sector on the dissemination of evidence, with the former sector tending towards the narrow definition.

The *second question* concerns the organisation of educational research in general and the new clearinghouse in particular. At the moment DPU is carrying out 40% of the research projects, while other universities and research institutions are responsible for 60% of the projects. Some have argued that the process of establishing a new clearinghouse indicates a political ambition to control the research agenda and concentrate activities. The dominant role of DPU in the clearinghouse process has been criticised by a group of universities, which is also opposing a further centralisation in the sector.

Due to the implementation of the government's Globalisation Strategy, and especially the ongoing committee work concerning a merger of the DPU with a university (see below), the process of building new institutions is put on hold at the moment.

### ***University mergers and the Strategy for Denmark in the Global Economy***

Among other measures in the Globalisation Strategy the government proposed a major institutional reform directed towards institutions offering higher education. In the university college sector the aim was to merge the 17-19 existing CVUs into 6-8 multi-disciplinary, regionally based university colleges. In the university sector the ambition was to create world class universities by integrating the 13 government research institutions in 12 universities.

In October 2006 the government made a formal decision in relation to the issue of university mergers. The decision implied that the current 25 universities and research institutions by January 2007 will be reduced to 11, and 97% of their activities will be concentrated in seven universities ([www.ubst.dk/uk/page\\_university\\_mergers.html](http://www.ubst.dk/uk/page_university_mergers.html)).

Denmark will have three large universities (University of Copenhagen, University of Aarhus and Technical University of Denmark), four medium-sized universities (Aalborg University, University of Southern Denmark, Roskilde University and Copenhagen Business School) and one small university (IT University).

The position of the DPU was not a part of the decision made by the government in October 2006. The reason was that the government in June 2006 decided to set up a committee to describe models of a merger of DPU with University of Copenhagen or another university. Below, considerations concerning the future of DPU are outlined.

## New solutions

The recent development in the wake of the Globalisation Strategy is expected to change the initial set up fundamentally and in effect implement the solutions proposed by the OECD.

The position of DPU is not finalised, but the most likely result seems to be a merger of DPU in University of Aarhus. A number of reasons make the University of Aarhus an attractive partner. First, the new University of Aarhus will be a modern university with a unique research profile combining basic research, user-oriented research and research services for public authorities. Secondly, as the merger enters into force in 2007 the university will introduce a new model of organisation. Inspired by the Anglo-American tradition the faculty model will be supplemented by a new model of university school. The DPU is expected to merge into University of Aarhus as a school of education. This construction enables close contact and cooperation between the new university school and representatives of the users and the professions. The cooperation will be formalised in an advisory board. The Board will advise the university school about future educational needs, development of new study programmes, research strategies and strategies for cooperation between institutions in the field.

The specific conditions of the merger and the new advisory board are presently (December 2006) uncertain. However, the results of the actual negotiations between University of Aarhus and DPU are highly relevant to the process of building new, national institutions, to define national strategies on educational R&D and to secure cooperation among the actors within the field.

It is expected that the ideas of a National Education Research Forum and clearinghouse will be further developed as the institutional reforms of universities and university colleges are in place.

## Biography

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**René Bugge Bertramsen** is the Deputy General Director for the Danish University and Property Agency within the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. Since 1999 he has been involved in reforms aiming at enhancing the quality of the Danish educational R&D system (such as the establishment of the Danish Pedagogical University – DPU – and the R&D centre Learning Lab Denmark). Mr. Bertramsen was responsible for the University Act of 2003 which gave Danish universities a new governance system, *i.e.* boards with external majority and employed rectors, deans and department heads. In 2006-2007 he was responsible for a merger process where government research institutes were integrated with the universities and a number of single-faculty universities were merged with larger multi-faculty universities, including the merger of DPU with multi-faculty University of Aarhus.

**Robert Boruch**, Professor, University of Pennsylvania (USA). Dr. Boruch is current co-chair of the Steering Group of the International Campbell Collaboration, and principal investigator for the Institute of Education Sciences What Works Clearinghouse, which is designed to be a central and trusted source of information on evidence about what works in education. Dr. Boruch is an elected Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Statistical Association, and the Academy for Experimental Criminology. He has received awards for his work on evaluation policy, randomised trials, and on privacy of individuals and confidentiality in social research. Dr. Boruch's academic background is in psychology, statistics, and mechanical engineering, with degrees from Iowa State University and Stevens Institute of Technology.

**Satya Brink** is currently Director, National Learning Policy Research, Human Resources and Social Development Canada. She and her team are responsible for developing evidence in support of policy development for lifelong learning for the Government of Canada. This work includes analysis on outcomes for each age group and type of education as well as the impacts of earlier learning on subsequent learning. In her previous post, she was responsible for research on human development based on two major Canadian longitudinal surveys. During this time she and her team produced a major body of evidence based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth which influenced major new initiatives of the Canadian government in support of children and their families.

**Tracey Burns** is a research and policy analyst for the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, OECD, Paris. Previous to this she worked on social determinants of health across the life-span with Charles Ungerleider & Associates in Vancouver, Canada. As a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the University of British Columbia, Dr. Burns led a hospital-based research team investigating newborn infants' responses to language. Tracey Burns holds a BA from McGill University, Canada and PhD from Northeastern University, USA. She is the recipient of various awards and honours, including the UBC Post-Doctoral Fellowship, a student-nominated university teaching award, and the American Psychological Association Dissertation Research Award.

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**Jane Davidson** is the Assembly Member for Pontypridd and former Deputy Presiding Officer for the National Assembly (Wales, United Kingdom). Since October 2000 she has been the National Assembly Education and Life-Long Learning Minister responsible for all aspects of education, training and lifelong learning. Educated at Malvern Girls' College, Birmingham University and the University of Wales, Jane has taught English, Drama and Physical Education. She is also an experienced youth worker and former Cardiff City Councillor. She was a member of the Arts Council for Wales and its Lottery Board, and Head of Social Affairs at the Welsh Local Government Association before her election to the Assembly. Jane has had a keen interest in education and youth work and is enjoying the challenges of the Education and Life-Long Learning portfolio.

**Stephen Gorard** holds the Anniversary Chair in Educational Studies at the University of York (United Kingdom), and directs the Centre for Research into Equity and Impact in Education. He is currently leading an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded project promoting the use and understanding of randomised controlled trials in public policy (<http://trials-pp.co.uk/>), and was the originator of the ESRC's Research Capacity-building Network. He has published widely about the research process in social science, but his substantive work focuses on issues of equity, especially in educational opportunities and outcomes, and on the effectiveness of educational systems. Recent books include "Teacher supply: the key issues", "Adult learning in the digital age", "Overcoming the barriers to higher education", and "Schools, markets and choice policies".

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**Maria J.A. van der Hoeven** is the Minister of Economic Affairs (Netherlands). Maria J.A. van der Hoeven was born in 1949. She was trained as a primary teacher and taught at schools of home economics and junior secondary commercial education. Thereafter she was head of the Adult Commercial Vocational Training Centre in Maastricht and of the Limburg Technology Centre. From 1991 to 2002 Ms. Van der Hoeven was a member of the House of Representatives for the Christian Democratic Alliance (CDA). She has held a variety of social and cultural posts. Ms. van der Hoeven served as Minister of Education, Culture and Science from 2002 until February 2007. She was appointed as Minister of Economic Affairs in early 2007.

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**Bill Kilgallon**, OBE, has been the Chief Executive of the UK's Social Care Institute of Excellence since 2003. Prior to that he was Chief Executive of St Anne's Community Services from 1978 to 2002, an organisation he founded in 1971, which works with single homeless people and people with learning disabilities, mental health problems and alcohol and drug problems across Yorkshire and the North East. He was Chair of the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, the largest NHS Trust in the country from 1998-2002 and Chair of the Leeds Community & Mental Health Services NHS Trust from 1992-1998. Bill Kilgallon served as a member of Leeds City Council from 1979-1992 where he chaired the Social Services, Housing and Environment Committees. He has led independent inquiries, including one into alleged abuse in a local authority children's service and one into the management of an NHS hospital for people with learning disabilities.

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**Johnny Nilsson** is the Former Secretary of State for Education in Sweden.

**Andrew Pollard** is Director of the Economic and Social Research Council’s Teaching and Learning Research Programme ([www.tlrp.org](http://www.tlrp.org)), the UK’s largest coordinated initiative for educational research. As a teacher, his career started in Yorkshire primary schools and he has worked in teacher education or research at Oxford and Bristol Polytechnics and the Universities of the West of England, Bristol, Cambridge and London. He is presently based at the Institute of Education London. Andrew Pollard has published widely, including work on longitudinal ethnography and analysis of social factors in teaching and learning, learner perspectives, and resources for teacher education and school practitioners. He is at present working on an analysis of learning experiences through secondary education.

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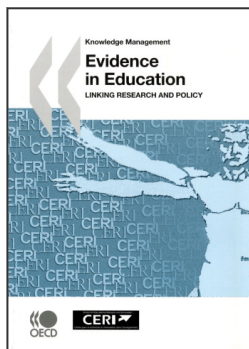
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