

School Psychology in Denmark

1. Context of school psychology

The Kingdom of Denmark is a Scandinavian/Nordic country situated in Northern Europe between the North Sea and Baltic Sea; with Scandinavian Peninsula in the Northern part and Germany in the Southern portion. It is considered a small country with a population of only 5.5 million people, yet considered to have one of the largest coastlines (7,300 kilometers) in Europe. Thus, people in Denmark enjoy water activities in the summer months and walk along the beach even in the winter months (Retrieved from the <http://denmark.dk/> on February 8, 2014) The average life expectancy is 81.62 years for women and 77.3 years for men, based from their 2012 data. The median age is 40 for females and 39 for males.

Denmark is the world's fifth (5th) largest exporter of food products; although at present 79% of its workforce is in the service industry. Aside from the agricultural products, Denmark is known for their other resources like education, ideas, commerce and technology (Retrieved from the <http://denmark.dk/> on February 8, 2014).

Education in Denmark is open to all and generally free from preschool to university levels. Most children (88%) in Denmark attend public schools. Denmark's public primary and lower secondary school system is called FOLKESKOLE (founded in 1814). All their public institutions are regulated and financed by the state to ensure the quality of education. However, administrative decisions are made at the local school area. Each school has its own school board consisting of five to seven parents, two teachers, two pupils elected by their peers and the head teacher. There are also private schools available in Danish education system. Parents have to spend only 15% to 20% of the cost since most of the educational costs in the private schools are financed by the State. Parents usually prefer to send their children in private schools because of three concerns: religious affiliations, political or social preferences and pedagogical theories of the competing schools. One of the provisions of high quality education in Denmark is on special education. The Danish educational system provides educational assistance to children who need these kinds of services. After completing the compulsory nine (9) years of basic education, children have the option to continue to general upper secondary education programme or receive a vocational education.

2. History and current status of school psychology

Briefer on the milestones of school psychology in Denmark

- 1880 - The term "school psychology" first appeared in print in Denmark.

- 1924 - The Committee for School Psychological Examination was formed (Developed achievement tests in reading and arithmetic)
- 1930 - The Danish version of Binet Intelligence test was published.
- It also marked the beginning of school psychology in Denmark, when a teacher (with MA degree in Psychology), was tasked to examine 15 children to determine if they need special education)
- 1934 - The first school psychologist in Denmark was appointed
- 1937 - The municipals introduced special education services following the Education Act of 1937
- 1957 - The provisions for special education became mandatory
- 1975 - The Ministry of Education required that special education services will be given only upon the recommendation and assessment of the school psychologist should be provided.

The services provided by school psychologist diversified following the reforms and laws introduced by the Ministry of Education. All the services and activities that involved examination, evaluation, counseling and decision making are based on collaboration. Hence, a Pedagogical Psychological Counseling Office is recommended to consist of: chief school psychologist, two assistant school psychologists, two clinical psychologists, a social worker and a part-time specialists in speech, hearing and mental retardation. Moreover, school psychology services have been an integral part of the educational system. Most of the school psychologists also provide counseling services within the community.

3. Infrastructure of school psychology

The Union of Danish Psychologists (founded in 1947), Association of Pedagogic Psychologists (founded in 1956) are the national and regional professional organizations serving the interest of school psychology. Members of both associations are required to have teacher's certificate and become members of the Danish Teachers Union. The Act of Psychologists (1993) protected the practice of psychology in Denmark. The title of "Psychologist" is conferred to person who holds degree Candidate in Psychology or Candidate in Pedagogical Psychology. The term "authorized psychologist" is used by person with a university degree and 2 years professional work experience.

Psykolog Nyt (Psychology News) and *Pedagogisk Psykologisk Radgivning* (Pedagogical Psychological Counselling) are the professional journal and newsletter relied on by school psychologists.

4. Preparation of school psychologists

The school psychology programme consists of a three (3) year bachelor programme plus two (2) additional years of graduate preparation. The courses included are: psychology of personality, cognition and learning, social psychology, developmental psychology, human biology, psychiatry, quantitative methods of research, science theory of psychology and methodology, clinical psychology, psychology of labour, educational psychology, intervention techniques and test theory. The design of this programme is intended for psychologists who want to work with educational issues in Folkeskole.

5. Roles, functions, and responsibilities of school psychologists

The following are the roles, functions and responsibilities of school psychologists in Denmark:

- a) Support and influence schools, administrators and staff; foster instructional activities with the goal of serving all children including those with special needs
- b) Evaluate students in terms of assessing their special needs
- c) Implement pre -school programme that help prevent academic related difficulties.

6. Current practice impacting school psychologists

Education is a priority in Denmark. To better prepare their students in taking active roles in the society and in the global community, the State continuously institute reforms in their educational system. These reforms in the educational system lead to changes and challenges. Hence, school psychologists are expected to uphold the strong tradition of quality education offered by Denmark to its people. They are called to respond by finding meaningful ways to solve the various problems in the educational system.

Reference:

Shane R. Jimerson, Thomas Oakland & Peter Farell (2007). The Handbook of International School Psychology. Sage Publications. Chapter 8 71-79