

**Careers Europe Placement Report
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**“Guidance and the prevention of school failure – new initiatives in
Denmark”**

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Introduction

I am currently employed as a Key Worker within Careers Scotland. I was keen to take part in the European Guidance Exchange to Denmark because the focus was on young people who drop out or at risk of dropping out of education. I went with the main aim of finding out about new initiatives and ways of working with hard to reach young people.

The programme lasted a week and comprised of talks, visits to schools, guidance centres and projects. The week was packed with visits and was hugely interesting. There were fifteen participants from eight different countries which added greatly to the learning experience.

Much of the week was devoted to ways in which the Danish education and guidance system are working to reduce the number of young people not completing a further education course. There was also a focus on work with minority ethnics. Denmark has, in the past, had liberal immigration policies and as a result has many citizens from a large number of countries, many are refugees and a proportion speaks no Danish or English on arrival. Many of the social inclusion policies have focused on this group.

In Denmark Careers Advisers are called Guidance Counsellors. After the Danish guidance reform all Guidance Counsellors are now full time guidance professionals. The majority have a teaching background.

This report will take the form of a daily diary and will try to draw comparisons with the system in Scotland, identify existing good practice within Careers Scotland and also highlight ways of working we could learn from Denmark.

Denmark population 5.4 million

Young People (12-24) 792,081

% of year group moving from compulsory education to youth education 94%

Percentage completing youth education 78%

Labour force 2.8 million 53% men, 47% women

Unemployment 6.3% Youth unemployment 4.2%

The Danish Ministry of Education 2004

Monday 24th April

We spent the day at CIRIUS listening to a variety of speakers and presentations.

CIRIUS

First of all we heard about CIRIUS who were our host for the week. CIRIUS is a new authority under the Ministry of Education, created in 2005. Their aim is to work to promote the internationalisation of education and training. They do this by administering the Socrates and Leonardo programmes as well as the Eurodesk and Euroguidance. They offer support to individuals, institutions and employers.

More information can be found at: www.ciriusonline.dk www.euroguidance.net

Danish Education System

We then heard about the Danish Education System and about Danish culture in general which was very informative. Denmark has a population of 5.4 million and holds the principles of a welfare state and life long learning in very high esteem.

The education system is complex but the ordinary system is split into compulsory education, youth education and higher education.

Youth education is for those between 16 and 19 and is split into general upper secondary and vocational upper secondary education and training programmes (VET). General upper is academically orientated and VET is vocationally orientated. There is also a distinct adult education system

In addition, there are Production Schools for young people up to the age of 25 with no formal qualifications with the objective of enhancing their personal development. We visited examples of all these schools during the placement so they will be covered in more depth later in the report.

“The Government’s aim is for at least 85% of a year group in 2010 and 95% in 2015 to complete a youth education programme.” Government source 2005

This quote highlights why there is such a focus on school failure and guidance as a way to meet these targets. Youth education is not compulsory and unlike Scotland Denmark has no issues with young people not attending compulsory education. Young people are dropping out post 16 and Denmark wants to reduce this.

For more information visit: <http://eng.uvm.dk> click on “Education” and “Fact Sheets”.

Danish Guidance System

We listened to a presentation about the guidance system. As a result of the 2004 reform the whole guidance system was overhauled. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) guidance report pointed out weaknesses in the Danish System. These included a lack of professional training for guidance practitioners, a top heavy focus well known education options and a lack of quality assurances systems. Throughout the week there was much emphasis placed on the EU guidance polices and common reference tools. This document lays out quality standards and Denmark have very much used them to reform there guidance system.

For full report see: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/51/19/2088292.pdf>
Or <http://www.oecd.org>

Main aims of the guidance system:-

- Guidance shall help ensure that choice of education and career will be of the greatest benefit to the individual and society.
- Guidance shall take into account the individuals interests and personal qualifications as well as the anticipated need for qualified labour.
- Guidance shall be targeted especially at young people with special needs for guidance.

The last aim is similar to Careers Scotland's NEET (not engaged in employment, education or training) strategy.

Guidance is available for young people at every stage of transition throughout education. The decision is made after primary education whether to take vocational or general (academic) education. The vocational system has the highest drop out rate 20-30% of those who start drop out. This figure has trebled over the last 10 years and many of the drop outs are minority ethnics. Some do re-enter at a later stage.

Guidance is organised into:-

- 46 youth guidance centres which focus on transition from compulsory to youth education. Advisers are in lower schools and youth education institutions. In addition to the work with young people in schools the youth guidance advisers have a target group of young people under 19 not involved in education, training or employment. Centres are obliged to contact this group and provide suitable offers for them.
- 7 regional guidance centres which focus on the transition from youth education to higher education.

We received a presentation from a guidance counsellor working in one of the youth guidance centres. In her centre there are 25 full time counsellors. She starts with young people from a young age looking at dreams for the future and recording them in their guidance log book. This is an on-line resource that every young person in Denmark has access to. The young person, guidance counsellor and parents all contribute at regular intervals throughout the young person's education. Plans are long term and are tracked. The log book goes with the young person's application to further schools. Work experience is also recorded here. The guidance counsellor arranges the work experience and employers seem to be very willing to get involved. We were shown the log books on-line, they are very well organised and highly thought of by everyone involved so have good buy in from parents and young people. It is a simple idea that could be implemented with great effect to enhance career planning with Careers Scotland clients but would require cooperation from schools and parents as well as investment in the IT required.

For further information on the guidance system see: "Guidance in Education"
<http://pub.uvm.dk/2004/guidance/?menuid=45>

Strategies to prevent drop out

We were told about the following initiatives designed to increase retention in education: -

- There has been an emphasis on schemes that enable young people to 'try things out'.
- Schools must notify the youth guidance centre of any drop outs and the guidance counsellors have a responsibility to contact the young person. This is a large part of what the guidance counsellors do to reduce drop out rates. Schools lose funding every time a student leaves without completing a course.
- Different types of mentoring schemes (covered later in the report)
- Involvement of parents. There has been a focus on minority ethnic parents.
- "Bridging" schemes to bridge the gap between lower schools and youth education.
- Enterprise schemes.
- SSP – School, Social Work and Police cooperation. Those most at risk are identified. Projects are usually social work bases.
- Production schools (we visited a production school called KUBA which will be outlined later in the report)
- Mentoring projects (see next page).

Tuesday 25th April

We travelled by train from Copenhagen to Hillerod College of Technology and Business. This is a Vocational school.

Vocational School

Vocational schools provide youth education to those who want to follow a vocational career path. The education comprises training in school as well as periods out in employment. All students entering the vocational system complete a general course before specialising.

There are 4 guidance counsellors in the school and we were given a really fascinating tour through the school visiting workshops and also inclusion projects within the school. We visited preparatory classes for minority ethnics to help them with English and Maths before entering mainstream programmes. We also saw a project that dealt with young people who have attention deficit disorder, social issues etc. The project allows young people to 'try out' different occupational areas. They are based in a workshop but have very good links to the rest of the school and employers. Both projects were creative, innovative attempts to increase retention in the system.

Every morning those who do not register for school and who haven't called in are highlighted on the guidance counsellor's computer system and they call everyone.

Mentoring

We heard about a mentoring project that is one of 7 pilots currently running across Denmark in an attempt to increase retention. They are trying to test the idea that informal relationships can increase participation in education. The results of the different pilots will be evaluated and conclusions drawn. The target is the 'middle' group not those who are really difficult to engage.

The mentoring project in Hillerod focuses on minority ethnics and the majority of participants are boys. There are cultural and personal issues to deal with and some are without any family. The aim is for a mentor to follow the young person from compulsory to youth education during the transition to prevent them opting out. There is currently a 60% drop out rate among this ethnic group. The guidance counsellors identify young people who are at risk and a mentor is assigned. Mentors come from all backgrounds, ages and ethnicity. They meet the young people regularly to discuss problems and issues and link with other agencies to resolve them.

I saw lots of similarities between the mentors and the role of Careers Scotland Key Workers. Both advocate for and support young people over a period of time and networking with other agencies is seen as vital. However, the mentors are only in schools and do not follow people into employment. They have not really received any training and act more as a friend than another professional.

Hillerod International Youth School - School for refugees

This afternoon we heard about a school dedicated to refugees aged between 14 and 20 years of age. There are approximately 100 students. The aim is to develop their written and oral Danish to a level which would enable them to progress into further education. They have a holistic approach to integration addressing both academic and psychological issues. Work experience is built in. These students would be lost if they went straight into mainstream education. Many are without parents but for those who come with their families the school works closely with parents to educate them about Danish culture and education.

Wednesday 26th April

We travelled an hour and a half out of Copenhagen by train to Odense.

Guidance Counsellors

The first speakers were advisers from a youth guidance centre. They talked more about the log book used by all pupils. The log book starts age 12 and consists of questions designed to get the young people thinking about their future. It is very much an education plan and doesn't focus much on employability skills or employment.

Careers education in on the national curriculum and class teachers have to deliver the subject in class in addition to the one to one guidance counsellors offer.

The advisers focus on those who need the most guidance and follow up on those who have opted out of education.

Out Reach Project

We then visited an outreach project located in a housing estate which is home to 10,000 refugees. It is a 3 year project focused on providing extended guidance for 16-25 year old people living in this area.



The minority ethnic outreach guidance project in Odense

They have a drop in centre and after school learning facilities. They also have a club for girls only and also for mothers and fathers. They try to run lots of activities and events with the Islamic community. The guidance counsellors working in the drop in facility link very closely with education and social work. The aim is to give young

people ownership over their future in Denmark. These guidance counsellors were the closest we saw to the role of the key worker. It is a project focusing on a very specific group rather than mainstream activities.

General Upper Secondary School

We went to see a general upper secondary school. They take young people who have the academic ability to progress onto university. The guidance counsellor at lower school will chat with young people in order to work out which upper school would be best and for those who want to go to general upper secondary the guidance counsellor has to sign in agreement.

Thursday 27th April

KUBA production school

This was one of the most inspiring visits of the week.

They have 110 students with 7 different courses. There are 2 guidance counsellors. Production schools are unique to Denmark. Production schools are for those who are not ready to start a general upper or vocational education after completing lower education. Production schools traditionally focused on craft skills but KUBA focuses on creative and artistic areas. They offer courses in graphics, theatre, photography, writing, digital and sound media and music. The idea is for the students to produce something and receive a wage for it. If they are under 18 they receive 75 Euros per week and over 18 receive 170 Euros. Attendance has to be good otherwise they don't receive payment. The aims are:-

- Develop new skills.
- Develop social skills.
- Become more self aware and think about what they want to do in the future.
- There is room for everyone.

Many of the pupils have a high ability but have other difficulties that they need to work on. Many have been studying in the mainstream system but dropped out. KUBA has a rolling programme and referrals are via a guidance counsellor at the youth guidance centres. There is an inclusive ethos and a very friendly, informal atmosphere.

At the moment they have no way of measuring soft skills but they are looking at this.

Similarities can be drawn between some of the work KUBA does and our Get Ready for Work programme. However, production schools focus on getting young people back into mainstream schooling rather than employment. This highlights the centrality of Education to society in Denmark. The methods and mediums being used to teach students in KUBA were artistic, creative and flexible. Classroom work was limited with most activities taking place in practical workshops.



Students art work at KUBA

New Pathways

In the afternoon we visited New Pathways an extended guidance project. It is for young people who have failed to complete a youth education programme.

They focus on those who:-

- Are tired of school.
- Have dropped out of education.
- Lack social competencies.
- Have low self esteem.
- Are of minority ethnic background.
- Have behavioural issues.

They teach traditional subjects along with creative classes. They teach small groups and have counselling and guidance as an integral part of the project. They also place importance on life skills and nutrition. Young people often progress into vocational education.

Friday 28th April

The last day was spent in CIRIUS.

Training of guidance counsellors

We heard from a speaker about the training of guidance counsellors in Denmark. One of the objectives of the Danish Guidance reform was to improve the qualifications and competencies of guidance practitioners. There is now one common training programme. It is not obligatory for existing counsellors to complete the training. The programme consists of 3 modules:-

- Careers guidance and the guidance practitioner.
- Careers guidance and society.
- Careers guidance and the individual.

The training programme is offered as an adult learning programme and corresponds to half a diploma degree.

EU Common Guidance Reference Tools

We spent much of the day looking at the EU Resolution on Lifelong Guidance and the European Reference Tools. The EU Reference Tools provide common aims and principles for life long guidance, common reference points for quality assurance and key features of life long guidance.

We were asked to discuss the tools and checklists in relation to our countries guidance systems. Using the check list Careers Scotland scores highly, particularly when compared to some other EU nations. Some positive observations were made about Careers Scotland:-

- Careers Scotland key principle is life long learning and all age guidance.
- A key feature of a quality guidance system as detailed in the checklist in the Reference Tools is access. Careers Scotland's operating model involves access to guidance through walk in, drop in or log in and this highlights the importance we place on access to services.
- Guidance professionals are regulated by the Institute of Careers Guidance (ICG) and we have a VQ model of training. We have quality time and Investment in People (IIP). This highlights our quality assurance systems.
- The Career Panning Journey aims to help people manage their career and enables the client to have active involvement and empowerment over their career.
- We have open access and a priority focus on NEET avoidance which works directly to reduce social exclusion
- Focus on employability and life long learning.

The EU Resolution on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe are defined in:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/resolution2004_en.pdf

Improving lifelong guidance policies and systems. Using Common European Reference Tool. This can be located at:

http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/publication/download/panorama/4045_en.pdf

Does guidance in Denmark contribute to social inclusion?

At the end of the week we were asked to discuss the above question.

Counsellors in Denmark focus primarily on education. They do not concentrate on those in employment or give extended guidance focused on anything other than education which is a narrow view but led by the current government agenda. They are very good at tracking young people who drop out of the system and have developed innovative ways of re engaging them in the education system. They are embracing the Common Reference Tool as a way to develop guidance and are keenly trying to enhance guidance provision as a way to reduce social exclusion.

Conclusions

- The guidance log book seems to work very well but this would involve heavy investment in systems and buy in from all parties to get this up and running.
- Guidance centres and advisers located in schools are notified straight away if young people drop out or have poor attendance which is of benefit. This allows the adviser to follow up on the young person straight away and try to reengage them in education or training. Schools are obligated to immediately communicate this information.
- We could learn from the creative ways in which Denmark work with young people. In particular they place importance on nutrition and physical fitness and see a strong link between this and learning and engagement. Many of the projects use creative arts to engage young people.
- In Scotland the guidance system is different. The majority of our advisers are not teachers and so have a wider focus than simply education. We also have a more holistic approach to the person than the Danish Guidance Counsellors although it was noted that other countries such as Ireland have an even wider holistic approach by combining Careers Guidance with personal counselling.
- Within Careers Scotland we seem to have mainstreamed work with the NEET group more by employing full time Key Workers and also managing a number of projects such as the early intervention projects in schools, Activate and Worknet. Scotland has different cultural issues and a different focus on Education but never the less we seem to be ahead of the game with respect to inclusion work than many of the European Countries represented in the Guidance Exchange.

The guidance exchange group

