

**Guidance and integration of ethnic minorities:  
Initiatives in Denmark**

**The Danish Academia Programme  
Aarhus 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> April 2007**

The week's programme sought through talks and visits to provide an insight into the Danish education system and the position / role of guidance within that system. Also to act as a showcase for current examples of good practice and to provide a forum for the delegates from a range of European States to discuss and compare the issues faced by those employed in education, counselling and guidance in meeting the needs of their states' ethnic minority population.

The table below shows the structure of the week's programme. An account of the Danish systems and impressions of the institutions and projects visited follows. This report will conclude with a review of the issues facing guidance counsellors in the different European states represented and observations on what was learned from attending the week's programme.

Monday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduction to the programme</li> <li>▪ Introduction to the Danish Education System and to the position of guidance within that structure.</li> <li>▪ General introduction to the position of ethnic minorities in Denmark</li> <li>▪ Begin group work activity.</li> </ul>
Tuesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Visit to Langkær Gymnasium (Upper secondary School)</li> <li>▪ Visit to one of three vocational colleges (3 groups)</li> </ul>
Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Presentation on the Urban II Programme in Aarhus</li> <li>▪ Visit to the Community Centre in the Library at Gjellerup</li> <li>▪ Visit to the Gjellerup Youth – Parent Guiding Project</li> </ul>
Thursday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Visit to Aarhus Sprøgcener (language centre) or Midtvask (Hospital Laundry Service), (2 groups)</li> <li>▪ Visit to the UU Samsø Aarhus (Youth Guidance Centre)</li> </ul>
Friday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Presentation on the training for Guidance Counsellors in Denmark.</li> <li>▪ Complete group work activity and reflect on the week.</li> </ul>

## **The Danish Education System**

Danish children begin school at the age of six. Some attend a pre-school class for one year, this is currently optional, but this will soon become compulsory.

In Denmark young people experience nine years of compulsory education, followed by an optional tenth year (an option currently taken by 61% of young people). This comprises the primary and lower secondary school system. At age 16 they can leave and seek employment; enter vocational upper secondary education and training; or enter general (e.g. academic) upper secondary education. The optional tenth year provides an opportunity for further study to attain standards required for the option they prefer to pursue or additional time in which to decide which option to take. There is also an option for young people to complete their compulsory education in state residential schools. This is an option taken primarily by young people from the more rural areas of Denmark.

Most upper secondary level education courses last three years (some two and some vocational courses four).

The earliest age for entry to higher education is 18 / 19, but in general Danes tend to enter higher education in their early – mid 20s. In practice Danes take breaks from education to work, also perhaps to work out 'who' they are and what they want from life. There are many jobs in the Danish Labour Market available to young people under 18, as minimum wage legislation in Denmark only applies to employees over 18. These tend of course to be low skill, low pay jobs.

Danish education policies favour life long learning, providing subsistence 'salaries' to adults who wish to return to upper secondary level education, and grants to those who study at higher education level. Courses at upper secondary level may be attended by a 'mixed age group'.

The Danes tolerate higher taxes than the UK to finance investment in services and education.

The Danish Ministry of Education: [www.uvm.dk](http://www.uvm.dk)

## **Guidance in the Danish Education System**

Traditionally guidance was provided by teachers for whom guidance and counselling was a second or additional function. Recently a national system has been established to provide greater support in relation to transition:

- 7 regional guidance centres that provide support with the transition to higher education.
- 46 Youth Guidance (UU) centres that provide support with the transition to upper secondary education. In practice in many cases this is support and guidance in returning to education after a 'break'.

The establishment of these centres, while welcomed by the guidance community in Denmark (which had been campaigning for improvement and separate professional status for guidance counselling), is driven by an

economic agenda. The Danish Government believes it would be beneficial to the Danish economy for young people to proceed through the education system earlier, e.g. without the 'education breaks' between lower secondary and upper secondary and between upper secondary and higher education.

The Guidance System is described in a booklet available online:

[pub.uvm.dk/2004/guidance](http://pub.uvm.dk/2004/guidance)

### **Education and the Labour Market**

- Denmark has a population of 5.4million.
- The labour force is 2.8 million.
- The employment rate is 76.6%
- Men make up slightly more than half of the labour force (52.5%).
- 23% work in the public sector, 68% are employed in the private sector.

### **Immigration to Denmark**

Historically migrants to Denmark tended to be from neighbouring countries. In the 1960s migrant workers were welcomed from Turkey, Pakistan, Yugoslavia and Morocco.

Rising unemployment in the 1970s produced the first resistance to immigration.

In 2001 the Danish Government established the Ministry for Immigration, Refugee and International Affairs. The Danish Act on Integration (1999) imposed on all municipal authorities a responsibility to ensure that they provide for all refugees and immigrants an introduction to Danish society and Danish language lessons. Also to enable refugees who can to become self-supporting effective members of the Danish labour force.

In June 2006 immigrants and the first generation descendents of immigrants (e.g. the ethnic minority population) accounted for 452,095 people (8.4% of the population).

Immigration (excluding migration from 'Western countries') is now limited primarily to refugees, primarily from Iran, Serbia / Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine (classed as stateless), Syria and Somalia.

The significant ethnic minority populations in Denmark (e.g. including second generation) also include; Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Pakistan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Morocco, China and Thailand.

### **Integration and Economic Issues:**

- Less than half of immigrants from non-western countries and their descendants are part of the work force.
- The dropout rates from vocational training of ethnic minority young people are more than twice that of ethnically Danish young people (and drop out rates among this latter group is already significant at over 30%).

- Largest gap in the labour market position of immigrants and native Danes of any OECD country (combination of lack of developed personal networks, lack of familiarity with the Danish educational system and some discrimination, particularly in recruitment to apprenticeships).
- 1 in 2 bilingual pupils (those for whom Danish is not their first language) lack the Danish language skills to complete upper secondary academic or vocational education.
- Only 10% of immigrants from non-western countries have gained professional qualifications in Denmark.
- Government Policy is to have 25,000 more immigrants and their descendants employed by 2010.
- Also concern in a traditionally Lutheran Protestant majority population about the presence of a significant Muslim minority.

To address these issues the Danish Government has created the integration plan '**A New Chance for everyone**':

1. Young people must be guaranteed relevant offers of education.
2. More people in employment – everyone to be offered enrolment in programmes intended to increase employment / employability.
3. 'Ghettoisation' of neighbourhoods to be countered.
4. Extremism and crime to be prevented and combated.

Integration into the labour market is partly driven by 'push' rather than 'pull' mechanisms, for example social assistance is provided at a reduced rate to those who have been resident in Denmark for less than seven of the past eight years and citizens receiving certain benefits (e.g. unemployment benefit) are entitled, but also obliged to accept 'Job Activation' offers of education, work experience, employment or training.

Such 'push' policies however encourage participation in education and the labour market as long term aims at the expense in the short term of the economic marginalisation of the ethnic minority population.

The answer is seen as guidance services targeted at ethnic minority young people with parental involvement. With emphasis on:

- Explaining the education system.
- Being honest and realistic with each young person about his / her options (parents may over-aspirate, or have limited knowledge of the range of jobs / careers available in the labour market).
- Helping identify and define real options.
- Encourage work experience through part-time employment (most native Danish young people have part-time jobs) as a means of gaining experience, 'soft skills', and of developing a networking beyond their school and ethnic communities.

## Langkær Gymnasium (Upper secondary School)

At Langkær (long pond) Gymnasium we were introduced to three 'bilingual' students, two were from Iraqi refugee families (one introduced himself as an 'Assyrian Christian', the young woman did not indicate her religious background) and the third was a born in Denmark and had an Iranian Shia heritage.

30% of the students attending Langkær are ethnic minority or 'bilingual' students (the ethnic minority population of Denmark is 8.4% of the total population).

The two students who had moved to Denmark from Iraq commented on the difficulties of learning Danish (it was not clear however if this was due to peculiarities of Danish grammar or pronunciation, or if this was the general problem of learning another language), also, the difficulty of moving from one philosophy or practice of education to another. In Denmark students are encouraged to express opinions and



debate in class, and it is normal for students often to be on first name terms with their teachers. Teaching in Iraq was more authoritative.

Both criticised the guidance they had received about their options at the end of their lower secondary education, as they felt their abilities had been underestimated.

The young man had found playing football a useful medium for integration with native Danish students.

Representatives of the school's student council also joined us and described representation of pupil's views to the school's board of governors and to local and national authorities. They also described a celebration feast that had been organised by the pupils to mark the end of Ramadan to help build relations with the Muslim students attending the school.

### **Issues confronting counsellors at Upper Secondary level in Danish education:**

- Government set targets are that by 2010 85% of young people should complete upper secondary education, rising to 95% by 2015. The current rate is 80%. Currently 96% begin upper secondary education and 16% drop out.
- Some technical / vocational schools have a drop out rate of over 50%.
- Some ethnic minority boys do not adapt well to the level of personal responsibility required of pupils by Danish methods of education.
- Some ethnic minority pupils do not participate in social or extra curricular activities. There is a need to find a way to communicate the benefits of these activities to both the students and to their parents.
- Problems with the Danish language may exacerbate other problems by deterring students from raising issues.

### **Support programmes for 'bilingual' students within the school:**

- Support with reading, language and with written assignments.
- Mentor project – some students are assigned mentors who may be staff or other students.
- Guide project – a student interested in a particular career or area of higher education study may be offered contact with a guide or role model working or studying in that area.
- Support with the post upper secondary transition from the regional guidance centre.

## The Aarhus Social and Health Care College



*Located in an Industrial Park and, unlike many colleges on Merseyside, without security shutters and fences*

The College has existed for 14 years and is one of the largest of the 25 colleges of this type in Denmark. It is located in an area of 'industrial parkland'. These colleges offer training at a level below nursing, which is a degree level profession in Denmark.

The standard courses prepare students for employment in social care (mostly working with elderly people), for support level roles in the education

(nursery nurse or teaching assistant) social and health care sectors, or provide a qualification valid for entry to study nursing, physiotherapy, etc.

- 25% of the students attending the college are from ethnic minorities (three times the ethnic minority component of the Danish population), primarily from the Turkish community, the Middle East, Somalia and Vietnam.
- 92% of students attending the college are women, the men attending the college are predominantly from the ethnic minorities.

In addition to the standard courses of vocational training for this sector, this college offers a course aimed at ethnic minority students who need extra support. This course can lead directly to employment (usually in the social care sector) or act as preparation for entry to one of the standard courses.

There is usually one intake for this course, but in 2007 there were two. Students on the course range in age from 20 to 57.

Additional support has been added for students on this course with Danish and to assist with adaptation to Danish working practices. For example the bicycle is frequently the most practical form of transport in Denmark for social care workers supporting elderly people in the community, but many ethnic minority women come from backgrounds where there women do not use bicycles. So bicycle proficiency has become a course element.

Unfortunately as this visit was in the afternoon and the college day runs from 8.15 to 2.15 it was not possible to see the college 'in operation'.

The college is one of the partners (partners in Estonia, Germany, Greece and Wales) in the Iguana project, a European Initiative to find new ways of recruiting people into care of elderly people.

The project web site can be found at: [www.iguana-eu.com](http://www.iguana-eu.com)

## **The Urban II Programme 2001 - 2007**

Sonja Mikkelson (a former Minister of Health and a Minister of Transport) described the Programme, which has been funded by the EU structural fund.

The Gjellerup area has a population of 20,000, which represents 7% of the population of the Aarhus municipality, but 50% of the non-western ethnic minority population, primarily from Lebanon, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Somali and Vietnam (98 nationalities represented) and one-third of the recipients of welfare benefits in the Aarhus area. Additionally:

- The poorest district in Denmark
- High unemployment
- 40% are children
- 80% are in social housing
- The 'educational levels' of one third are unknown
- Many are from 'conflict zones' and suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

The Urban II Programme has sought to address three priorities:

- Job Skills
- Citizenship
- Integration

And has sought to empower members of the local community through 67 separate projects ranging from sports activities aimed at integrating young people to support for a local market, the 'West Bazaar' which offers a small business start-up opportunity for local people.

Over the six years of the programme:

- Unemployment has fallen from 24.3% to 20.4%
- Employment has risen from 29% to 31.2%
- The residents have become more optimistic, more open to opportunities
- Crime has fallen by 60%
- Adult male parents in both the resident native Danish and ethnic minority populations are less likely to impose job / career choices on their children and allow them to make their own decisions.

In Aarhus it has been recognised that the problems of Gjellerup are socio-economically rather than 'ethnically' based, that many of the problems are common to both the native Danish and the ethnic minority population of Gjellerup. As a result support for some of the initiatives started under the Urban II programme will continue beyond 2007.

One, perhaps controversial, measure that has been introduced in Denmark is that the government now assigns refugees accommodation, and they must stay there for the first three years that they are in Denmark. For example all immigrants from Pakistan are initially housed in Copenhagen, all Serbs in Silkeborg and Kosovans are dispersed to a number of smaller towns around Denmark.

## **Gjellerup Library and Community Resource Centre**

The project manager at the community centre based in Gjellerup Library is originally from Tunisia. He now manages a project with 24 staff providing a range of support services to the local community:

- Homework support groups at the library
- Assistance to understand the Danish benefits system
- Job search support at the library (PC access to Danish Job Centre vacancy network, resources on applications, CVs, interview technique, etc.)
- A local health clinic primarily pregnancy and child care advice
- Free legal advice (one three hour clinic per week)

Many of the local community distrust government officials and are more likely to trust the support workers at the community centre.

## **Youth Parent Guiding project**

The project is based in a flat in the Gjellerup area and is staffed by three guidance workers (one Somali and two Palestinian). They are guidance trained and work with young people and their parents.

Their objectives are:

- To raise the number of young people entering and staying in relevant education.
- To broaden the young people's prospects through opportunity and labour market awareness.

The workers work within the community providing information, advice and guidance for parents on the Danish education system, the options available to young people and the range of jobs and careers offered by the Danish labour market

The project mentioned role models, but this seemed to be a reference to model students (aged 16 – 25) who were being given support to stay in education and act as role models to other pupils, rather than people in employment who might act as role models for young people.

## **Lessons from the project:**

- Example stories of success and failure are a useful tool for educating young people about education and employment.
- Young people and their parents need to be informed, but also empowered.
- Making the best use of educational and employment opportunities (in the Gjellerup community) is a collective activity involving young people, their parents and school or community based advisers.

Project web site: [www.vcu.dk](http://www.vcu.dk)



## UU Samsø Aarhus

Though the UU centres have been only recently established I anticipated something at least vaguely reminiscent of a Careers Office or Connexions Centre. The UU Samsø Aarhus is based in an office block just outside the main indoor shopping mall in the centre of Aarhus, but from the outside there is nothing to indicate that the building houses the UU.

The building is opposite the Aarhus Jobcentre, and the UU has negotiated a presence in the Job Centre (one adviser at an information desk) from January 2007.



Lars Pedersen, a counsellor at the UU explains how they work with Young People and other agencies

The advisers working from the UU centre respond to information regarding young people who drop out of education or training and are required to attempt to make contact with these and persuade them of the benefits of re-entering education or training. The counsellors are motivated to help young people, but the provision of the UU centres and the policy directing the counsellors' work with young people is driven by the economic agenda.

Caseloads are large, 17 counsellors for 25,000 young people (1,500 per counsellor), but around 60% of young people will not see a counsellor and are assumed to 'sort themselves out'.

From 2008 they will also have the power to withdraw social benefits paid to parents for the support of young people who are over compulsory education age and who are not in education.

Much of the guidance given is referred to as 'Tupperware' guidance as it is provided at interviews held in the young person's home at the kitchen table.

Counsellors have found that some ethnic minority young people require significantly more interviews with counsellors before a positive outcome is achieved.

**The composition of the group and primary integration issues in their home states:**

The nature of immigration and the issues of integration clearly vary across Europe. The problems of the South are different from those of the East or of Scandinavia.

The Czech Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Integration primarily of ethnic Romanians into the Czech education system, society and labour market.</li> </ul>
Estonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Primarily the integration of those with poor Estonian language skills, primarily the ethnic Russian minority who account for between 20% and 30% (different sources provide different estimates) of the population (some of who do speak Estonian well or adequately).</li> </ul>
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In France there is a principle that all citizens should be primarily 'French' and equal.</li> </ul>
Iceland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Integration of refugees into Icelandic society and the labour market (similar issues to Denmark).</li> <li>▪ Currently few immigrants successfully complete the Icelandic education system.</li> </ul>
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Each province / region of Italy has autonomy over the provision of guidance services so there is no uniformity of service or standard of service.</li> <li>▪ Immigration is a recent phenomenon in Italy, provision of services and resources to support for example teaching Italian as a second language are 'under development'.</li> <li>▪ There are problems tracking immigrant children when families move between regions.</li> </ul>
Norway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Integration of refugees into Norwegian society and the labour market (similar issues to Denmark).</li> </ul>
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The integration of immigrants / economic migrants arriving from Africa. For example in the weekend of 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> May 600 illegal immigrants arrived in Spain by boat.</li> </ul>
Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Integration of refugees into Swedish society and the labour market (similar issues to Denmark).</li> </ul>
England (Derbyshire)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Significant ethnic minority population primarily of Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage. Groups that tend to perform less successfully academically than the national average.</li> </ul>
England (Merseyside)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The majority of young people (under 19) on Merseyside who class themselves as 'Black' or 'Ethnic Minority' are of mixed race.</li> <li>▪ Merseyside (Liverpool) is a designated reception area for asylum seekers and refugees.</li> </ul>

## Observations and Reflections

In preparation for this placement I sought out information produced by Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership, reports produced at a national level, reflected on my knowledge of migration to and within the British Isles and took note of any news items relating to immigration and integration.

Recent news stories have included:

- Concern by government that some ethnic groups have not integrated and that in some areas there are communities that have parallel but separate existences.
- Pronouncements by Government ministers that immigrants should learn about 'British' culture and perhaps must learn English before they can be allowed to work.
- Suggestions from Government that a point system for potential immigrants may be introduced similar to that used by Australia in order to limit immigration to those who will contribute to the economy.

The level of support offered in Denmark to immigrants is considerable and Denmark offers some examples of good practice. But Denmark limits immigration quite strictly and the Danes tolerate relatively high taxation in return for social support. For example in Liverpool tuition in English as a second language is available, but tuition is, I understand, limited to two half days per week (compared to the 15 or 30 hours a week available in Denmark) and demand exceeds provision, so there is a waiting list.

In the UK immigrants are more numerous and perhaps more diverse. Currently on average around 1,000 people migrate to and 500 migrate from the UK each day. Migrants to the UK include:

- Europeans, who now account for 45% of the foreign workforce and the majority of these (32.4 of these 45 percentage points) are from the EU(15) and EFTA countries.
- Numbers of Central and Eastern Europeans (CEE) in the labour force have grown rapidly, reaching 169,000 (11.2% of the foreign workforce) in 2005.
- Citizens of old (Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) and new Commonwealth (e.g. Nigeria, India, etc.) states.
- Workers with skills in skill shortage areas (e.g. Nurses and IT workers from China, the Phillipines, etc.).
- Workers from other developed economies (e.g. the USA, Japan, etc.).

This level of migration is largely a function of the relative success of the UK economy which is drawing in foreign workers, a change in the relative success of the UK economy would moderate the rate of migration.

Many of those emigrating from the UK are people who travelled to the UK to work and who are subsequently returning home or moving on to work in other countries. Migration from the UK (2006 figures):

- 56,000 were from the EU
- 40,000 from "old Commonwealth"
- 24,000 from "new Commonwealth"
- 62,000 from other countries

A substantial number of UK citizens are also leaving, primarily moving to Australia, Spain and New Zealand.

Currently the UK seems to share all the immigration and integration concerns of our European partners in Scandinavia, the South and the East. The UK does receive refugees and asylum seekers, the UK is the destination for illegal immigrants (some of whom may become refugees or asylum seekers) and there are in some areas significant communities composed of a single ethnic minority group.

Distribution of the ethnic minority population across the UK is of course not uniform, comprising 9% of the total UK population, but only 2% of that of Wales or Scotland, and in contrast 29% of the population of London.

Integration of ethnic minority groups into the UK labour market is clearly happening. According to recent findings by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Ethnic minorities in the labour market: dynamics and diversity, April 2007):

- Employment rates for Black African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi men have increased, largely because of improvements in educational attainment, though there is still a substantial difference between the employment rates of these men and the employment rate of the general population. The employment rates of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women remain particularly low at less than 30%.
- Self employment rates, traditionally high for some ethnic minorities have fallen among those of Chinese and Indian heritage, indicative of greater integration into the general labour market and less reliance on self employment in 'traditional' sectors, e.g. restaurants. Self employment rates remain high among Pakistani and Bangladeshi men and their employment is highly concentrated in certain sectors, e.g. restaurants, taxi-driving, etc.

Integration clearly takes time, possibly two, three or more generations, but can be accelerated by providing the ethnic minority groups with effective information, advice and guidance on education and the labour market. Also, by providing both 'host society' and the ethnic minority groups with information about the other. Initially people tend to see differences between people, but information / education can help each identify what they have in common. And this requires both immigrant and host communities to be willing to learn about, understand and accept the other.

Of course immigrants may only be motivated to integrate if they; a) intend to settle permanently in the 'host' country and b) (more controversially) if they settle in mixed communities and are confident that they have equal access to education and employment. Temporary economic migrants, who intend to return to their home country are not so motivated to integrate, and where ethnic communities become established, the residents may benefit on an emotional and cultural level from living in a community that offers 'familiarity', but this can also delay integration.

In conclusion I found the experience of my week in Aarhus thought provoking, perhaps more an experience that has helped crystallise ideas from knowledge I already had as much as a learning experience. In addition to the opportunity to compare the education system and guidance provision in England (the

education system in Scotland and guidance provision in Scotland, Wales and the province of Northern Ireland are different to that in England) with that in Denmark, this experience also gave me the opportunity to learn from the other participants about the immigration and / or integration issues in their home states. Sadly as the programme was so full there was not as much opportunity to compare situations between the course participants, but since returning from this placement I have set up a Yahoo Newsgroup for the participants, to allow sharing of thoughts, resources, etc.

Carolyne Kershaw  
17<sup>th</sup> May 2007