

Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Danish case study report 4 Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut: Evaluating the quality of education for the disadvantaged

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The EPASI project is a programme of analysis of educational programmes in fourteen European countries, designed to address various forms of social inequality. The project analysis was conducted in the period 2007 – 2009. This report is part of the overall project, details of which are at <http://www.epasi.eu>.

The analysis is intended to be used within the overall framework of the EPASI programme.

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The EPASI project was conducted by the following institutions:

- The Institute for Policy Studies in Education, London Metropolitan University (UK) (Coordinator)
- Katholieke Hogeschool Zuid-West-Vlaanderen (Belgium)
- Univerzita Hradec Králové (Czech Republic)
- Montpellier III - Université Paul Valéry (France)
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- Universitat Autònoma of Barcelona (Spain)
- Malmö högskola (Sweden)

Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut: Evaluating the quality of education for the disadvantaged

Summary

The work of the Danish Evaluation Institute, EVA, is relevant to knowledge and interventions related to educational disadvantage, although this is not explicitly formulated as a coherent policy of the Institute.

Theme: Ethnic minorities, linguistic minorities, religious minorities, socio-economic disadvantage, disabilities, gender.

Background

The Danish Evaluation Institute, EVA, is an independent state institution under the Ministry of Education. It was founded in 1999 following a new law (*Bekendtgørelse af lov om Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut*, Law of the Danish Evaluation Institute). It replaced an older Evaluation Centre with a different organisation and partly different aims. Today EVA can be seen as a very important institution in the Danish educational system, due to the high priority given to evaluation and encouragement of evidence-based methods in the national education policy.

Aims

The aim of EVA is to evaluate and develop the quality of education at all levels, including pre-school education (crèches, kindergartens and pre-school classes).

Funding

EVA's regular work is financed by funds from the Ministry of Education. Special evaluations made at request for public authorities and institutions, as well as private institutions, are funded by the client.

Description

The main areas of EVA's work are the following:

- Evaluation of educations and subject teaching.
- Studies of coordination and bridge-building between different parts of the educational system.
- Counselling in quality development in education.
- Development of evaluation methods (EVA, 2007).
- Analysis and diffusion of knowledge of evaluation and quality development in education, based on Danish and international experiences.
- Information in order to encourage self-evaluation at schools.

Action plans are made annually. Results of studies at macro level are published in reports available on the EVA homepage, www.eva.dk.

Here we shall particularly focus on how the themes of educational disadvantage are addressed in EVA's work. However, this dimension is not explicit in action plans, so the occurrence of EVA initiatives in the different theme areas is variable and heterogeneous rather than systematic and predictable. Besides the initiatives directly related to disadvantage, it might naturally be argued that school evaluations and quality development may improve conditions for disadvantaged pupils indirectly, on the general level. Below, however, some examples of directly theme-related EVA initiatives will be mentioned.

Indigenous minorities:

We have not found any evaluations specifically related to indigenous minorities such as the officially recognised German-speaking minority.

Ethnic minorities:

- Evaluations concerning bilingual pupils (see linguistic minorities below) are also relevant from an ethnic minority perspective.
- In 2003, EVA presented a report on the implementation of an international dimension in teaching in a sample of eight elementary schools. The rationale was, among other things, a paragraph of the Law of the Public Elementary School saying that elementary school teaching shall give pupils an understanding of Danish culture as well as contribute to their understanding of other cultures. It was found that there was much engagement but relatively little systematic work with the international dimension in teaching and in the organisation of schoolwork. EVA recommended systematic efforts at all levels, including a stronger focus on the potential contribution from the pupils' own experiences (EVA, 2003).

Linguistic minorities:

- Following the new Law of Day Care, which makes it compulsory for local authorities to offer language-screening for three-year-old children from 1 August, 2007, EVA developed a test material for children in kindergartens during 2007.
- EVA made an extensive study of elementary school teaching of bilingual pupils in 2006-7. We describe this study in the Project DK151, [Education of bilingual pupils in the public elementary school](#) (Undervisning af tosprogede elever i folkeskolen).
- During 2008 EVA will evaluate language-screening for children at the start of primary school, and how the start of school is organised in relation to this screening.

Religious minorities:

We have not found evaluations specifically related to religion and religious minorities. Religion may, however, be one aspect of international dimensions in teaching (see Ethnic minorities above).

Socio-economic minorities:

During the years 2007-9 EVA is evaluating 84 development projects in childcare, which are funded by the Ministry of Family and Consumer Affairs. A large part of these projects are specially directed to vulnerable children in various ways, while not necessarily focusing on strictly pedagogical aspects of childcare.

Disabilities:

- In December 2007, EVA presented a report on the relation between special teaching and ordinary teaching in elementary school. The background is the widespread efforts to increase integration between special pedagogies and “mainstream” pedagogies in schoolwork (EVA, 2007a).
- During 2008-9, EVA will make a study of how pupils with special needs experience the change of organisation of certain special education institutions and services, where political responsibility was moved from regional to local authorities on 1 January, 2007.
- In 2008, EVA will present a final evaluation report on the project *AspIT*, a vocational IT education for pupils with Asperger and related syndromes.

Gender:

- A project starting in 2008 will study factors throughout the educational system, from the pre-school level upwards, which may influence pupils’ gender-related choices of education. The rationale for this is the strong gender segregation in the labour market.

Concluding comment

We have the general impression that much of the present political (as distinct from the academic) evaluation discourse in Denmark tends to focus on quantitative evidence and “effect” evaluations. Among the EVA studies, however, examples to the contrary can also be found. The study *Education of bilingual pupils in the public elementary school*, with its qualitative components (including reflective self-evaluations at schools) and method triangulation, may be seen as an example of this.

References

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