

Action Plan 2004

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2003

Contents

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This publication presents the action plan for 2004 of the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA). The action plan has been reviewed by the board of directors and committee of representatives of EVA and has been approved by the Minister of Education.

The aim of Action Plan 2004 is to provide EVA's stakeholders, schools, educational establishments and other interested parties with insight into EVA's coming evaluations and projects and the context of which they form part. Many of the evaluations and projects are further developed on the basis of previous action plans.

Similar to previous action plans, Action Plan 2004 evaluations are initiated at all educational levels – from primary and secondary education through to post-secondary education, further education, adult education and supplementary education and training.

A distinction is made between knowledge centre projects, evaluations and externally funded projects. The appendix at the end of this document contains a list of the evaluation and knowledge centre projects of this and the previous plan. Further information about the previous published evaluations, projects and publications can be found at www.eva.dk.

Jørn Lund
Chairman of the board

Christian Thune
Director

The knowledge centre has two main tasks. The first is to gather, review and communicate relevant knowledge obtained partly through our active investigative activities on national and international gathering and sharing of experience and, partly, through the activities that we initiate ourselves. The other is to develop tools that can contribute to improving the quality of the Danish school system. These are developed on the basis of the findings from our own activities and from independent analyses for future evaluations or as a summing-up on activities that have already been conducted.

2.1 Gathering, reviewing and communicating knowledge

An important objective for our information activities is to ensure that EVA is accessible to the users, and that the needs of the educational establishments, the stakeholders and the public for information about evaluation of education and teaching are fulfilled. We ensure this primarily through our homepage, action plans, annual reports, financial statements and evaluation reports.

As part of the completion process of an evaluation we take into account the follow-up activities that are needed. This may include publishing the key findings of the evaluation in a shorter and more accessible form than the evaluation report itself in order to reach a broader target group than the establishments that have been evaluated and the immediate circle of stakeholders. It may also include a conference about the key findings of the evaluation and further perspectives involved for the area evaluated.

We place great importance on having a direct dialogue with the educational establishments and stakeholders in the educational field and thus make our knowledge available to them. This may include for example giving presentations or attending workshops, seminars, conferences and educational sessions and to offer courses about self evaluation as a method for development.

In order to obtain knowledge about the trends in evaluation of education, not only domestically but also internationally, we place great importance on taking part in the relevant networks within various educational areas. Apart from the existing networks we participate actively in structuring a Nordic as well as a European network for schools, and in 2003 we have joined forces with an existing Nordic evaluation forum for adult education and supplementary education (NEVA). The development of the educational system is no longer controlled at national level only. The trends in Europe, for example in the form of the Bologna process and recently the Copenhagen Declaration, have considerable influence on the significance of evaluation and quality developments of the Danish education. It is therefore important for us to contribute actively to implement these measures through our evaluation and knowledge centre activities.

Part of our working method is to conduct continuous reviews of the evaluation models applied and to prepare the coming years' evaluations on the basis of the experience gained or by implementing development activities. Due to the growing internationalisation and thus the focus on the need for more transparency in the quality of education and training across borders, we implemented several evaluations in 2002-2003 based on criteria that were defined in advance including development activities that among other things reviewed the use of the criteria. These reviews will be continued in 2004.

EVA was established in 1999. We have now accumulated considerable knowledge both across a broad range of educational levels and within specific areas of education and courses. One of our main priorities in the coming years will be to gather this knowledge in "reports" that summarise issues either within one area or across an area. The aim of the reports is to give a better overview of the problems identified at an overall level.

Planned activities:

- Annual report evaluating the measures implemented on life-long learning in Denmark
- Evaluation courses
- Method gathering.

2.2 Production of knowledge

The most important aim of EVA's activities is to contribute to improving the quality of the Danish educational system. Through its external evaluations EVA is able to focus on problems that are relevant for either one or more educational areas, for all stakeholders in one educational area or for individual educational establishments. However, EVA's evaluations only contribute to improving the quality of the educational sector. Most of the development activities are implemented by the establishments themselves. A considerable part of our work is therefore to implement projects that aim either directly at developing tools that the establishments can employ for their internal development activities or gathering experience through projects that can be made available to the establishments. Another important dimension of our work is that projects contribute also to inspire continuous or future evaluations or other knowledge centre projects.

In 2004 we will prepare a number of tools and publications that are intended to provide inspiration for developments in a Danish school and evaluation context. The activities are widely spread throughout the educational sector and are based on the development activities that are implemented in various areas. One of the tools is a handbook that is intended to support the schools' quality improvement. This is conducted by highlighting the connection and the interaction between the objectives and the evaluation in the organisation, implementation and follow-up phase of a project. The handbook is inspired by the presentations that EVA has made and the courses and workshops that we have attended especially for primary and lower secondary education, but it is inspired also by the discussions that have emerged on a number of evaluation activities in schools.

In 2001 EVA implemented a development project that was intended to examine good practice in classroom observations. One of the main aims of this project was to consider whether classroom observations are a methodological element that can be used effectively in EVA's evaluations. Based on the experience derived from this project and the use of classroom observations in the evaluation of English as a subject in Danish primary and lower secondary schools, we will initiate a project to identify areas in which observation can be used as a tool for internal development of the school for the use of school management and teachers.

Focus on improvement of quality and QA in the educational sector is still growing. This also applies for the general upper secondary education. Traditionally this area was largely centralised but several factors, including a change of attitude to centralised supervision, indicate that individual schools will have much more responsibility for ensuring and improving the quality of their education programmes and teaching. We will therefore initiate a project to develop a model for assessing the quality improvements and QAs made by the general upper secondary schools focusing on implementation as well as organisation.

Two projects will also be implemented that are intended to inspire continuous or future evaluations. These will include a concept for evaluation of the Centres for Further Training and Education and a review of the current practice in evaluation of pupils conducted by the schools and the post-secondary schools.

The majority of the Centres for Further Training and Education are still so new that it will be too early to make an evaluation of them. However, we anticipate that it will be relevant to conduct evaluations of this area in the next few years. For the preparation of these types of evaluations we will initiate a development activity that will be summarised in a proposal for a concept applying to an evaluation of the Centres for Further Training and Education.

Several of our projects have also included a continuous evaluation of pupils. The evaluations indicate that there are no common guidelines or practices in the Danish schools for assessing how the pupils have benefited and, moreover, they indicate that it is difficult to closely observe how all the pupils have benefited. A project based on the above will be initiated and will focus on the correlation between the continuous evaluation of pupils and their daily teaching.

Planned activities:

- Handbook on the correlation between objectives and evaluation as part of internal quality improvements
- Publication on classroom observations as a tool for school improvements
- Preparation of a model for assessment of quality improvement efforts in general upper secondary education
- Development of a concept for evaluation of the Centres for Further Training and Education
- Examination of the practice in the schools and post-secondary schools for continuous assessment of pupils.

The evaluation centre aims to conduct a systematic evaluation of the teaching and education throughout the educational sector from pre-school class through to post-secondary education, further education, adult education and supplementary education and training.

Systematic evaluations means:

- In the preparation of the annual action plan the following issues are taken into account:
 - ▲ that annual evaluations are planned within each of the following areas: primary and lower secondary education, post-secondary education, further education, adult education and supplementary education and training
 - ▲ that the evaluations in any action plan complement the evaluations conducted in the previous action plans or are a continuation of these.
- EVA will always employ systematic methods including feasibility studies, including formulation of terms of reference, establishment of an evaluation group, gathering documentation, self evaluation and user surveys and preparation of a report including analyses, conclusions and recommendations.
- When choosing the schools and establishments that will be evaluated over time, EVA will ensure that they are representative of as wide a selection as possible.

Moreover, in a number of the evaluations EVA will plan an international dimension as a result of the development that has been established under the Bologna Declaration in further education and under the Copenhagen Declaration in vocational education and training. With both declarations there is a wish for more transparency in the education and training across borders.

3.1 Primary and lower secondary education

The following evaluations were initiated in primary and lower secondary education to support Action Plan 2003:

- Sports as a subject in primary and lower secondary schools
- Differentiated teaching in primary and lower secondary education.

The following evaluations will be conducted to support Action Plan 2004:

Efforts made to enhance pupils' reading abilities

The 1990s became the decade when focus was put on reading. This was made through domestic, Nordic and international surveys of the reading abilities of pupils in primary and lower secondary education and through a broader debate about the importance of being able to read in order to cope in society. Many parties affiliated to the primary and lower secondary school system implemented measures to enhance pupils' reading abilities. The results of these measures are documented in the latest OECD (PISA) survey and local government-based assessments of targets, strategies and results.

The aim of the evaluation will be to examine which initiatives have been taken, especially by local government, schools and teacher training colleges to enhance pupils' reading abilities and the correlation between local and domestic measures implemented. On the basis of this, the evaluation will focus on factors that are important to achieve results of the development strategies chosen and to assess the correlation between targets, measures and benefits.

Educational books and study plans in primary and lower secondary education

On 1 August 2000 a statutory order containing provisions pertaining to study plans in primary and lower secondary education came into force. According to this order pupils at the 6th form level will prepare an education book that will be followed up by a personal study plan at the 9th form level. The targets for the individual pupil's education following primary and lower secondary education will appear in this. On 1 August 2004 the Act on counselling pertaining to education, training and work will come into force. It implies a new structure in counselling – and thus in educational counselling also – but the provisions pertaining to education books and study plans will remain the same.

At the end of the school year 2003/04 the first pupils will have completed the process from the 6th form level to the 9th form level, and three classes will bring the study plan to their subsequent post-secondary education where it will be incorporated in the planning of these pupils' further education.

The evaluation will focus on education books and study plans in primary and lower secondary education, the tools that have been applied and how various parties have become involved. It may also be relevant to examine how the post-secondary education have included the study plan in the planning process of these pupils' further education. This is one of the functions of the education books that has been emphasised in the reform of upper secondary schools.

3.2 Post-secondary education

The following evaluations were initiated in post-secondary education to support Action Plan 2003:

- Written skills in selected subjects at level A in Danish upper secondary schools
- English as a subject in the 3-year upper secondary education
- QA and quality improvement in vocational education and training.

The following evaluation will be conducted to support Action Plan 2004:

Integration of IT in the four upper secondary education programmes

Integration of IT in the educational system has been a central issue in general in school improvement recently – including upper secondary education. Many studies, projects and surveys have been conducted dealing with specific academic, educational and organisational problems related to application of IT in upper secondary education. Typically focus has been put on schools that have been spearheads in this field in different ways.

This evaluation focuses on the integration of IT in teaching. Two aspects of IT integration will be examined closely:

- The pupils' estimated competence on completion of their training
- The schools' QA of the integration of ICT in teaching.

Concrete criteria will be formulated for the two focus areas. On the basis of these an assessment will be made on the approach to integrating ICT in the four upper secondary education programmes. The assessment will include both schools that have targeted aspects of IT integration and schools that have not.

3.3 Further education

The following evaluations were initiated in further education to support Action Plan 2003:

- Evaluation of the teacher training programme
- Evaluation of Danish journalism studies.

The following evaluations will be conducted to support Action Plan 2004:

QA in business academy courses

With the reform of the short-term higher education programmes in August 2000, 13 new business academy courses emerged. As part of the reform it has become a requirement that providers of new courses shall establish a QA system for each course. The establishments must include, among others, the students and the purchasers in an annual self evaluation and subsequently prepare a written follow-up plan. The aim of the QA systems is to make the establishments conduct continuous assessments of the results and improve the quality of the courses offered by the business academies.

The aim of the evaluation is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the local QA systems within one or more courses, including the written follow-up plans that are submitted to the Ministry of Education. Focus will be put on the findings of the QA work both in terms of organisation and implementation of the said work. In the selection phase there will be an emphasis on whether the courses have few or many options and whether the courses are offered within technical or commercial areas.

Evaluation of the course leading to a bachelor degree (bachelor course)

In recent years medium-term higher education programmes have been approved or established as bachelor courses. A number of criteria have been formulated in line with the statutory order on bachelor courses, which must be achieved in order that the course will still be recognised.

On the basis of the criteria EVA will conduct a pilot project on the bachelor course chosen. The aim of the pilot project is to develop a method that can form the basis for a systematic review of the bachelor course within a limited number of years.

Evaluation of courses in the universities

In the proposal for the new act pertaining to the universities it is emphasised that the continuous and systematic improvement of quality in universities should, among other things, reveal the quality of these courses and their relevance to the needs in society. At the European level comparative emphasis is put on creating more visibility and transparency between courses across borders. This has put focus on the competency profile of the courses and the bachelor and master level.

In line with this EVA will conduct an evaluation of courses in the universities to identify the themes outlined. This means that an evaluation may include:

- The competencies of the graduates and affiliation to the labour market
- The aim of the education and implementation of the bachelor and master structure
- Factors attached to QA and improvement of quality in the education.

The aim is to include an international dimension in the evaluations. This can be achieved, for example, with participation from international experts in the evaluation group and/or incorporation of internationally relevant criteria.

3.4 Adult education and supplementary education and training

The following evaluation was initiated in adult education and supplementary education and training to support Action Plan 2003:

- Evaluation of Master programmes.

The following evaluations will be conducted to support Action Plan 2004:

Evaluation of the adult education centres

The adult education centres play an important role in providing adults with general qualifications up until upper secondary level by offering the courses General Adult Education and single-subject at higher preparatory examination level. However, within the last decade the adult education centres have been affected by the fact that the profile of the course attendants

has changed and the enrolment figures have dropped in general. These changes make it interesting to identify the role of the adult education centres today in the Danish educational system compared to the intention that is mirrored in the legislation of 2000 to create an overall educational system for adults in Denmark.

EVA wants to conduct an evaluation of the adult education centres aimed at identifying how the centres currently comply with their role, especially focussing on how the course attendants' options are improved compared to further education as well as employment.

Preparatory adult education

More than one million adult Danes have so few skills in Danish and/or mathematics that they need fundamental education at primary and lower secondary school level. Since 2000 Danish and mathematics have been offered as Preparatory Adult Education at primary and lower secondary school level. The courses are held in a number of establishments such as adult education centres, adult day schools and production schools.

The aim of the evaluation is to identify the expectations and experience of the course attendants, teachers and purchasers to the courses. Moreover, the aim of the evaluation is to focus on different ways of recruiting the course attendants, various forms of offers and organisation and the course attendants' benefits from the teaching.

3.5 Multi-disciplinary projects

English as a subject from primary and lower secondary education to further education

Apart from helping to safeguard and improve the quality of the teaching and education within the individual education, EVA will also assess internal transitions and correlations in the educational system.

EVA will implement an evaluation of English in further education. On the basis of this we will identify correlations between the different educational levels from primary and lower secondary school up to and including further education. This will be conducted on the basis of EVA's evaluations of English in primary and lower secondary school programmes (2003), English in upper secondary education (2004) and, then, English in further education.

4 Activities funded by external resources

The activities funded by external resources consist of evaluations conducted by the Danish State Education Grant and Loan Scheme Authority of private education programmes and externally commissioned assignments. The latter can be requested by others, such as ministries, educational councils, district councils or educational establishments, for example.

The aim of the evaluations conducted by the Danish State Education Grant and Loan Scheme Authority is to assess whether the private education programmes comply with a number of minimum requirements. Being in compliance with these requirements ensure that the students in the programmes qualify for the Danish State Education Grant and Loan Scheme. Courses can be subjected to the above evaluation after a four-year term. Implementation of evaluations conducted by the Danish State Education Grant and Loan Scheme on behalf of the Danish State Education Grant and Loan Scheme Authority is a task that EVA undertakes to conduct according to the law.

Moreover, EVA undertakes tasks by orders if they fall within EVA core competencies, i.e. evaluation and quality improvement of education, education programmes, teaching and improvement of establishments.

Table 1
Outline of evaluation projects

Area and project	Action plan	Completion planned
<i>School area:</i>		
Sports as a subject in primary and lower secondary schools	2003	4th quarter of 2004
Differentiated teaching in primary and lower secondary education	2003	4th quarter of 2004
Efforts made to enhance pupils' reading abilities	2004	
The work with educational books and plans in primary and lower secondary education	2004	
<i>Post-secondary education:</i>		
Written skills in selected subjects at level A in Danish upper secondary schools	2003	3rd quarter of 2004
English as a subject in the 3-year upper secondary education	2003	4th quarter of 2004
QA and quality improvement in vocational education and training	2003	2nd quarter of 2004
Integration of IT in the four upper secondary education programmes	2004	
<i>Further education:</i>		
Evaluation of the teacher training programme	2003	3rd quarter of 2003
Evaluation of Danish journalism studies	2003	2nd quarter of 2004
QA in business academy courses	2004	
Evaluation of the course leading to a bachelor degree	2004	
Evaluation of courses in the universities	2004	
<i>Adult education and supplementary education and training</i>		
Evaluation of Master programmes	2003	3rd quarter of 2004
Evaluation of Adult Education Centres	2004	
Preparatory adult education	2004	
<i>Multi-disciplinary projects</i>		
English as a subject from primary and lower secondary education to further education	2004	

Table 2
Outline of knowledge centre projects 2004

Project
Annual report evaluating the measures implemented on life-long learning in Denmark
Courses in self evaluation
Method gathering
Handbook on the correlation between objectives and evaluation as part of internal quality improvements
Publication on classroom observations as a tool for school improvements
Preparation of a model for assessment of quality improvement efforts in the general upper secondary education programmes
Development of a concept for evaluation of the Centres for Further Training and Education
Examination of the practice in the schools and post-secondary schools regarding continuous assessment of the pupils