

# Abstracts

## **Education and the Nordic Model of Welfare**

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Education is an important element of the Nordic welfare model. In the discussion of the Nordic welfare model, great focus is on the social safety net and redistribution via taxes and transfers. While there are several elements of means testing in the social safety net, education is a tax financed universal right. However, the basis for an equal distribution of income is created in the labour market, and here it is of great importance that the qualifications of the labour force are relatively equally distributed. Education is thus crucial for the general level of wealth, but it is at the same time an active distribution policy. Although a large amount of public resources are spent on education compared to other countries, the qualitative and quantitative results are not impressive and thus a large challenge lies ahead for policy makers. In the following, reasons for public engagement in education are discussed, and empirical data on the importance of education for economic growth and development is reviewed. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the

challenges of ensuring a high educational level for both the general population and the elite.

## **The socio-economic importance of education coupled with political despair – a dangerous cocktail**

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Since Edward F. Denison basic work from 1967 »Why Growth Rates differ« the importance of education for economic welfare has been widely know. In this paper this basic connection is again demonstrated by using Danish life cycle income studies.

In spite of this, education policy in Denmark, has for all too long been based on short sighted crisis management policy, ignoring the need for a research based policy. As such the ministry of education has steadily lost its natural authority given rise to widespread confusion on educational questions.

Unfortunately, there is no clear indication, that the new Danish government will chance this unfortunate version of education policy.

## **How to measure if students are learning something in school?**

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Research indicates that feedback from the students to the teacher is one of the most powerful factors influencing learning and achievement. Feedback from the students enables the teacher to adapt the instruction in such a way that the learning process is facilitated for all the students. However the educational field has not been characterized by a culture of evaluation. In this article an ultra brief measure – LRS (Learning Rating Scale) – is presented by means of which the teacher can figure out the extent to which the students are learning. All of the top-performing systems also recognize that they can not improve what they do not measure (McKinsey & Company, 2007).

## **The school, the economy and the Danish education policy**

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The total cost for the Danish Folkeskole is 51.5 billion DKK (in 2010 prices), and many will see this as well spent money. Most will also be of the opinion that there is a one-to-one relation between the expenditure per student and quality of education. But is it so in the real world? Are we in Denmark in a situation where educational policy have been governed by lack of knowledge about or lack of interest in quantitative educational research and instead has been driven by concerns for the working conditions for staff members?

## **What can public ground schools do to reduce drop-out rates from tertiary education?**

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Three issues are often discussed, related to young students transfer from ground school (secondary schooling) to tertiary educations:

- Are young students showing low reading performance (PISA) capable of completing any demanding tertiary education?
- Do many young students after completion of secondary schooling, by shifting many times between various tertiary educational attempts, waste valuable time, compared to students, who select their favorite tertiary education directly after secondary schooling?
- Is it so, that students entering tertiary education from large secondary schools, acquire higher reading ability levels and, through this, gain higher chances of completing a tertiary education?

The paper provides some answers to these three questions, based on data from students in grade 9 in Copenhagen schools 2007. It will appear, that the answer to question No. one is a clear »yes«, to question No. two likewise a »yes« and to question No. three a clear »no«

**What should the future elementary school be like? An economic study of the value of service improvements among parents of school children**

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Priorisation is a necessity in the future welfare society – also in public schools. The central question is, how should the school prioritise and in this relation, which school

services do parents have the highest demands for? The present article presents the results from a preference study concerning improvements of different school services based on a survey conducted among 1,665 parents that have one or more school-age children. The results show that the parents generally are willing to pay for increasing the number of lessons in Danish and physical education, having a lunch arrangement at the school and for fewer pupils in the classes. Preferences vary of course, between parents and the results also show that they depend on the present level of the service experienced by the parents and their children. The higher the current service levels the lower demand for service improvements and vice versa.