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Extract from Rigsrevisionen's report on

the teaching at the Danish university colleges

submitted to the Public Accounts Committee



1849
147.281
237
1976
114.6
22.480
908

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1. Introduction and conclusion

1.1. PURPOSE AND CONCLUSION

1. This report concerns teaching and management of resources at the four most popular education courses at the Danish university colleges where students study to become teachers, social workers, pre-school teachers and nurses. Rigsrevisionen took initiative to the study in August 2015.

2. The activity level at the Danish university colleges has increased steadily since they were established in 2008; more students are enrolled and more students graduate from the colleges. At the same time, however, there are indications that the management of resources allocated to the colleges and the output of the education provided at the colleges need to be scrutinized.

3. A report prepared by the chancellors of the Danish university colleges in 2011 showed huge differences in the number of teaching hours provided by the colleges. Since total number of teaching hours and overall workload may be connected, a low number of teaching hours may indicate that the workload on the students is insufficient to constitute a fulltime education. After the report was published, the Minister for Higher Education and Science, who has the overall responsibility for and is supervising the university colleges, said that the differences in number of teaching hours provided at some of the courses were too big.

The purpose of the study is to assess whether resources for education at the four courses are effectively managed by the university colleges. The report answers the following questions:

- Is the number of teaching hours provided to the students largely the same at all the university colleges?
- Are the university colleges ensuring that the teachers spend more of their working hours on teaching?
- Could the university colleges use their resources more effectively?

In connection with these questions, we have also examined how the Ministry of Higher Education and Science has exercised its supervision of the area.

CONCLUSION

Rigsrevisionen's study shows that resources allocated to the four most popular courses could be managed more effectively by the university colleges.

The university colleges could improve their management of resources in three areas: hours of teaching provided to the students, the use of the teachers' working hours and the output achieved by the university colleges in terms of student retention and graduation grades. The extent to which the colleges could improve their performance in these three areas varies, but there is potential for improvement at all the colleges.

Firstly, the number of teaching hours provided to the students at the different university colleges is not the same. Across the country, students studying to become teachers, pre-school teachers and nurses are not offered the same number of teaching hours. At some colleges, students enrolled in the nursing and pre-school teacher courses are offered, respectively, 71 per cent and 66 per cent more hours of teaching during the full course of the study. For students studying to become teachers, the number of teaching hours may vary by up to 50 per cent. The number of teaching hours offered at social worker courses is largely the same at all the university colleges.

TEACHING HOURS

The number of teaching hours provided during a course.

Teaching hours include class teaching, lectures and student counselling. One teaching hour corresponds to a lesson of 45 minutes.

The differences in number of teaching hours are quite big. While leaving room for local priorities, the Ministry of Higher Education and Science should – in dialogue with the university colleges – consider whether the university colleges are sufficiently ambitious in respect to the number of teaching hours they offer.

Secondly, the university colleges have not ensured that their teachers spend more of their working hours on teaching. This was one of the objectives defined in the collective bargaining agreement entered in 2013 (OK13). The study shows that the teachers, on average, spend approximately half their working hours on teaching, i.e. preparing lessons, giving lessons and feedback, and exams, which is the same as before the OK13 became effective.

Management at the university colleges have not been sufficiently focused on how much of the teachers' time that is spent on teaching. The boards and management have only to a limited extent defined objectives for increasing the number of teaching hours, nor have they ensured that they had access to management information on how the teachers' working hours are used. Rigsrevisionen recommends that the university colleges ensure that management have access to information on the allocation of resources between the teachers' core tasks. Collecting this information will provide management with a better basis for prioritizing resources.

Thirdly, the study indicated that the university colleges could improve the output at some of their campuses without increasing resources. There are differences between the performances of the campuses when levels of grades and student retention rates for the four courses are benchmarked against the best-performing university colleges. The estimated average potential for improvement is three to seven per cent for the teacher, pre-school teacher and nursing courses. This means that three to seven per cent of these students could achieve higher grades, and the number of students that could be retained in the courses could be increased by three to seven per cent, without increasing resources. The average potential for savings that can be implemented by the university colleges without affecting their output has been estimated at eight to thirteen percent of the salary costs that concern teaching at the three courses.

The examination of the potential for improvements and savings is based on a model calculation that shows clear differences between the performances of the campuses. The calculation indicates the estimated scope for potential improvements and savings at the individual campuses, but does not quantify the potential.

It is Rigsrevisionen's assessment that the university colleges would derive benefit from working with the results of this study, particularly in relation to identifying the causes of the differences between the university colleges and learning from the campuses that achieve better results with the same resources.

The concept underlying the Ministry of Higher Education and Science's supervision of the university colleges is generally satisfactory. However, before the summer 2016, supervision of the number of teaching hours provided by the university colleges was not part of the concept. Rigsrevisionen welcomes the ministry's decision to supervise teaching hours in the future, but finds that the ministry should have done so earlier.

The Ministry of Higher Education and Science has played an important role in relation to supporting the implementation of OK13 at the university colleges. However, the ministry has not adequately followed up on whether the teachers spend more time teaching, in conformity with the OK13 agreement. Rigsrevisionen finds that the ministry should follow this area more closely.