



FOLKETINGET
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FOLKETINGET
RIGSREVISIONEN

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The compulsory form level 9 school-leaving examinations

1. Introduction and conclusion

1.1. Purpose and conclusion

1. This report concerns the compulsory form level 9 school-leaving examination and how the Danish Ministry of Education monitors and supports the Folkeskole (public school – primary and lower secondary education) in its efforts to ensure that all students take the examination.

The amendment of the Folkeskole Act in 2006 made it compulsory for all students in lower secondary school to take examinations in seven subjects to complete form level 9. Subsequently, **admission** to upper secondary education has been adjusted, and as from 2019, students are only entitled to start on an upper secondary education directly after lower secondary school, if they have taken all the compulsory form level 9 school-leaving examinations.

2. The Ministry of Education has the overall responsibility for the Folkeskole, whereas the municipalities manage and run the just under 1,300 municipal schools. In the term 2017/18, the municipal schools served approximately 543,000 students, and total municipal spending on the schools was approximately DKK 36 billion.

The Ministry of Education's responsibility includes supporting the municipalities and schools with counselling and guidance on relevant regulations and requirements. The ministry is also responsible for supervising developments in the area and taking action if the objective of the legislation is not achieved, or the administration does not comply with the legislation. Additionally, the ministry also has a statutory responsibility to supervise quality improvements, cf. the Folkeskole Act, section 57 d. This supervision is conducted based on the three national goals set for the Folkeskole and with focus on the schools that are facing the largest and most serious challenges.

3. The purpose of this study is to assess whether the Ministry of Education is monitoring and supporting the municipal schools adequately in their efforts to ensure that all students take the compulsory form level 9 examinations, as prescribed by the Folkeskole Act. The report answers the following questions:

- Is the Ministry of Education preparing for and supporting implementation of the amendment to the act from 2006 by developing rules and launching initiatives in the form of guidance and counselling to schools and municipalities?
- Is the Ministry of Education collecting comprehensive, true and fair data and subsequently drawing up specifications and analyses that shed light on the form level 9 examinations?

The three national goals set for the development of the Folkeskole:

- All students must be challenged in order to reach their full potential.
- The significance of social background on academic results must be reduced.
- Trust in the school and the students' well-being must be enhanced through respect for professional knowledge and practice.

- Is the Ministry of Education's supervision, to an adequate extent, capturing the schools that for several years in succession struggle with high rates of non-attendance at the form level 9 examinations?

Rigsrevisionen initiated the study in April 2018.



Conclusion

According to the Ministry of Education's data, many students complete form level 9 without sitting for all the examinations in spite of the fact that taking these examinations has been compulsory since 2006. Since the amendment of the act twelve years ago, the share of students in the Folkeskole that do not take the compulsory examinations, has increased slightly and reached 10 percent in the term 2016/17, which was the highest level ever. In the most recent term (2017/18), more than 8 percent of the students in the Folkeskole did not take the compulsory examinations.

As from 2019, students no longer have a legal claim to start on an upper secondary education immediately after having completed a lower secondary education, if they have not taken all the compulsory examinations. This makes it difficult for the students to continue their education directly after lower secondary school. The analyses included in this report also show that the share of students in education or working at the age of 20 is lower among the students that have not taken all the compulsory examinations on completion of form level 9 than it is for students that have taken all the examinations.

It is Rigsrevisionen's overall assessment that the Ministry of Education has not adequately supervised the area and supported the public schools in their efforts to ensure that students complete form level 9 by taking all the compulsory form level 9 examinations prescribed by the Folkeskole Act.

Rigsrevisionen's study shows that the Ministry of Education has supported the implementation of the law amendments concerning the compulsory form level 9 examinations in a satisfactory manner through communication of regulations and through a general information campaign, for example.

The study further shows that the Ministry of Education's supervision of the quality of the public schools does not capture the schools that for several years in succession struggle with high rates of non-attendance at the compulsory form level 9 examinations. Based on that finding, it is Rigsrevisionen's assessment that the supervision in this area is inadequate.

At the same time, it is Rigsrevisionen's assessment that the data held by the Ministry of Education on the form level 9 examinations is incomplete. Most of the statements that are worked out by the ministry every year do not take into account the many students that do not take all the examinations. Furthermore, Rigsrevisionen has noted that the reports submitted by the schools are characterised by incorrect registrations and inadequate internal consistency. Additionally, the ministry has not checked the quality of its data on attendance at examinations in the period 2006 to 2018. Since Rigsrevisionen initiated this study, the ministry has carried out a sample check and informed Rigsrevisionen that it has introduced a new procedure for control of data, with effect from the school term 2017/18.

Furthermore, the ministry has no knowledge of the number of students that should be included in the data, and it is therefore unclear whether the data is complete. The same data and statements provide the basis for the ministry's efforts to support the municipalities and schools in their quality improvement work.

Last, Rigsrevisionen's study shows that the Ministry of Education, for a number of years, has had the opportunity to strengthen its supervision through analysis of data across the many sources that the ministry has access to and from which it collects data. Increased use of data collected across the ministry's data sources would provide the ministry with an opportunity to target its initiatives and supervision in order to ensure quality improvements in the public schools, and support achievement of the goal set in the preamble to the Folkeskole Act concerning the issue of preparing the students for further education.