



DANNELSE **THAT** **WORKS**

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT



GLOSSARY

*) **EFTERSKOLE**

Independent boarding schools. Most Danish-English dictionaries offer 'continuation school' as a suitable description in English. However, the American English term 'continuation school' is a misleading description of the *efterskole*'s purpose and form. Therefore, the term '*efterskole*,' or '*efterskoles*' in the plural, will be used throughout to refer to this unique Danish school form. (*Efterskole* literally translates to 'after school' in English)

*) **DANNELSE**

A Danish term that means 'formation'. It is applied to general, non-vocational education whose aim is to produce well-rounded individuals.

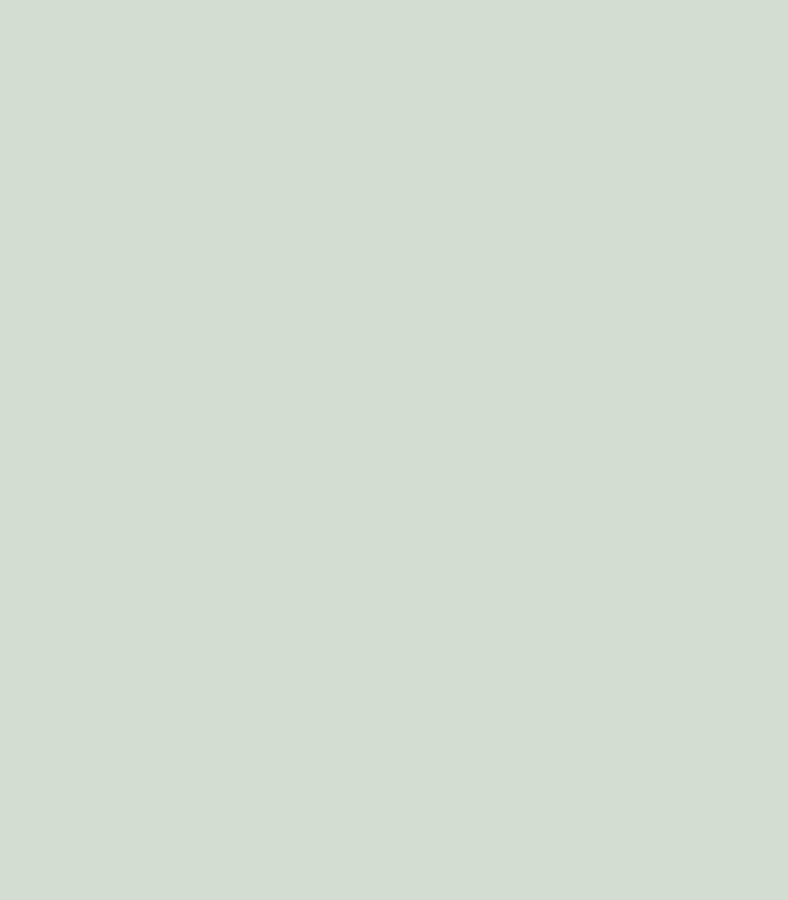
Dannelse is similar in meaning to the German *Bildung*, used within Educational Sciences. There is currently no direct translation for either of these terms in English. However, one will often see 'education' and 'character formation' used in translation.

For the purpose of this translation, the author has retained the Danish term *dannelse* throughout so as not to obscure meaning in relation to the source text.



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THE DANISH *EFTERSKOLE*

I**N THE EYES** of many Danes a year at an *efterskole* is much more than a school year: it is a *dannelse*'s journey, which both in academic and personal terms prepares young people for adulthood. *Efterskoles* often like to cheerfully express through their marketing, that "a year at *efterskole* equates to seven human years".

The Danish *efterskole* form does not exist in other countries. *Efterskoles* are independent "boarding schools" where Danish and foreign pupils aged 14-18 choose to spend a year or two of their lower secondary school education before continuing on to upper secondary education. *Efterskoles* are popular: each year the ca. 250 *efterskoles* attract around 28,000 students from all levels of society. Some *efterskoles* have 75 pupils, others 500, but on average an *efterskole* has around 100-120 students. Besides the normal compulsory subjects, the schools offer courses such as football, dance, performance, riding, entrepreneurship, and citizenship.

Some schools have a particular profile focusing on gymnastics, music or other subjects, whilst other so-called general *efterskoles* offer a range of different courses. As *efterskoles* are boarding schools, pupils and teachers are together all day long. This, combined with the particular *efterskole* pedagogy, creates good conditions that both academically and socially strengthen the students as well as making them more independent and mature. Previous research has shown that young people, who have attended an *efterskole*, are better prepared to do well in upper secondary and higher education.

The Executive Order on *Efterskoles* and Free Vocational Schools, states that, "The *efterskole* shall contribute to enlightenment for life, general education and democratic citizenship."

The Executive Order clarifies that the *efterskole*'s task is both educational in general as well as the broader task of supporting students' *dannelse*. *Efterskoles* have not come about by chance. Their founding was based on a pedagogical need, which required "a school after one's normal schooling"; a school form, which through education, enlightenment and democracy contributes to a shared existence and social cohesion within society.

RESEARCH CHALLENGES

PROJECT BACKGROUND

THE AMOUNT of research available that examines and describes the educative value and didactic instruments of *efterskoles* is relatively limited. Therefore, The *Efterskole Forening* (*Efterskole* Association) initiated the research project “Well-rounded education that works” in 2008. The project’s intention was to document and describe the particular didactics and pedagogy of the *efterskoles*, along with the educative and formative process that *efterskole* pupils undergo throughout the school year.

SIMILARLY, it would provide proof to the outside world of what added value (*dannelse*’s value) *efterskoles* have to society. In this context, the *Efterskole* Association was not only interested in collecting statistical data on students’ education, but in particular in documenting the lasting quantitative and normative effects that *efterskoles* are able to provide.

A NUMBER OF FUNDAMENTAL issues arise when researching the *efterskole*’s *dannelse*’s effect and its pedagogy:

- *Dannelse* and its processes are not unique and well-defined concepts. Thus they require definition and theoretical clarification. The same applies to didactic methods and teaching methods, which are also wide-ranging phenomena. However, by limiting the definition of these terms one always runs the risk of losing essential facts and insights.
- Processes of *dannelse* are lifelong processes, and in order to document their effect; one must be able to identify their value over a long period. This raises the question as to whether one can measure an effect of *dannelse* over a long period of time, say 30 to 50 years.
- *Efterskoles* have different profiles and target groups. There are general schools, special needs schools and schools with specific profiles (such as sports, outdoor pursuits, theatre, politics, religion, etc.). This means that the various *efterskoles* have different normative cultures, and didactical and pedagogical concepts.
- As a school form, the *efterskole* has a long history, which over the centuries has resulted in a number of ideological narratives and self-descriptions. These have all contributed to the self-understanding of the schools, and provided its cultural roots.

RESEARCH DESIGN

THE PROJECT EXAMINED both current *efterskole* pupils as well as those who graduated 10, 30 and 50 years ago. The aim was both to investigate the effect of studying whilst attending an *efterskole*, and the effect that this education has had on pupils many years after their graduation. In order to cover the *dannelse* effect of this unique school system, and their specific didactics, the project has made use of empirical studies as well as educational and socio-philosophical theories. Thus, the results of the project are an interaction between reality on one hand, and normative and hypothetical structures on the other.

The starting point for the project was that the educational and pedagogical practices of these school are neither neutral nor random. On the contrary, the *efterskoles'* didactics and students' *dannelse* processes actually include a number of intentional practices. Teachers and pupils do not act randomly or arbitrarily, but act based upon principles, ideas, choices and motives. It is the determinants of these practices that the project helps to uncover. Within these determinants lies notions of a particular *efterskole* pedagogy – and not least the notion of the significance of the well-rounded *efterskole* education.



THEORETICAL DESIGN

THE RESEARCH PROJECT has based the theoretical limitation of the definition of the concept of *dannelse*, and the special didactics and pedagogy of the *efterskole*, on the general educational and social philosophical research tradition (eg. Dietrich Benner, Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor).

To determine the concept of *dannelse*, the project adheres to the theory of recognition, more specifically to Axel Honneth's theoretical framework. Honneth's impetus is the Hegelian assumption that modern man suffers from indeterminacy (*Leiden an Unbestimmtheit*). Man is not born to his purpose, but he must struggle for recognition through processes of recognition and *dannelse*.

Honneth's formulation that man suffers from indeterminacy may sound abstract. What is meant by indeterminacy, and why does he suffer, you may ask?

Indeterminacy supposes that man is not born with a particular biography. There are no predetermined roads down which one's existence will lead: what job one will get, which religious and ethical contexts will one adhere to and what cultural interests will one develop? Everything must first be discovered and learnt, and therefore processes of *dannelse* are processes where we learn what we want and what we do not want in life. With Honneth's words we turn "indeterminate" into something "determinate" – but we cannot know for sure that what we decide to do will be better, and thus whether or not we will be happier. People have to determine their own indeterminacy in order to give their existence fullness and shape; but whether or not this will be a happy life will first be settled while life is being lived.

Therefore, *dannelse* concerns how to "determine one's existence and co-existence", without first being able to know what this will come to signify. Consequently, *dannelse* is not just something that happens to someone; it is not socializing or learning, but it is a process in which one's personality, through interaction with who or what one encounters, changes one's understanding of oneself and the world. One becomes something "determinate" through *dannelse's* processes. These processes are lifelong processes, as throughout life one must constantly consider one's existence and coexistence.

It is with regards to this point that *efterskoles* play a huge role, because a period at an *efterskole* can put students on track to determining what *dannelse* means for their future lives.



ACCORDING TO HONNETH one can point to three distinct forms of recognition, each of which contributes to a person's social-development (*dannelse*). These are love, rights and solidarity (Honneth, 1995: 92ff; also Honneth 2007, 129-142).

The 'love/affective' recognition sphere

The intersubjective, reciprocal and emotional experience with others. An acknowledgment form which also appears in friendly relations.

The 'moral/rights' recognition sphere

The experience and experiences of being an autonomous actor.

The 'solidarity/social' recognition sphere

The experience and experiences of being involved in a social community.

All three spheres of recognition are essential to the *dannelse* process and they indicate that these processes are not self-reliant processes, but processes that are mediated by "mutual recognition", i.e. "the Other". When encountering the unfamiliar, whether this be the other person or the world one does not know, processes of *dannelse* are realized. When this Hegelian *dannelse* motif is selected as the point of departure for the analysis, it is mainly because it corresponds to an *efterskole* experience which is constituted in the meeting with the Other and the Others.

At the same time there lies a social-philosophical critique of the development of society in the Hegelian motif, and not least in Honneth's recognition theory, whereby young people's options for *dannelse* are becoming more and more streamlined and as a result threatened. An *efterskole* provides space and time to encounter familiar, moral or social recognition forms, and to encounter these recognition forms (termed 'love', 'rights' and 'solidarity' by Honneth), which are essential to the students' processes of *dannelse*.

DANNELSE'S EXPERIENCES

THE STUDY SHOWS that *efter-skole* forms young people in three ways. Therefore, on the basis of Honneth's three recognition categories, the project has examined, through various interviews, these three specific *dannelse* experiences which *efterskoles* in particular create.

The friendly communities enhance students' confidence, communities of common interest improve students' sense of self-worth and the *efterskole*'s social community enhances students' self-esteem.

DANNELSE THROUGH FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

At an *efterskole*, pupils live with their peers around the clock in a pedagogical environment that supports and stimulates friendships. This means that *efterskoles* provide space to experiment with relationships in a very open manner, and this has a strong formative effect. Pupils will gain enlightenment for life because they generate new and unfamiliar friendships, and through these friendships, build confidence in developing their own identity, as well as responsibility and concern for others. Two current *efterskole* pupils from the study expressed this as follows:

Rune, *efterskole* student

- Here there's lots of time to be able to share your life, and it is also here that I think there are emotions at stake, more than elsewhere, I believe.

- You build a really special relationship with your friends at an *efterskole* as you are with them all the time and that is of course a really big plus.

Jan, *efterskole* student

From both the qualitative and quantitative material, it becomes clear that friendships are a central phenomenon within these schools, and are crucial for the students' *dannelse* process. The importance of an *efterskole* as an "experimental area" for friendly relations which has a lifelong and lasting quality, cannot be overestimated.

By encountering the forms of *efterskole* friendship, one gains a feeling of confidence that does not shut out, but rather opens up the world – not unlike what one might call enlightenment for life.

Helene, who graduated from *efterskole* 50 years ago

- Well, I often tell people that *efterskole* had a huge impact on me. This is probably something that you notice as you get older – how much it meant to you. You are very impressionable at that age ...



DANNELSE THROUGH COMMUNITIES OF COMMON INTERESTS

As previously mentioned, these schools offer different courses in which students are given the opportunity to excel in subjects, such as music, entrepreneurship or sports, with instruction at a high level. In communities of common interest, students' self-esteem is strengthened and developed. Furthermore, students learn that their interests, for example, in languages, science, sports, gymnastics or theatre, can be developed and shared with others. They also learn that education can be exciting – they learn that 'learning' makes sense. An *efterskole* prepares students, making them more robust for further and higher education because it enhances their self-esteem; if you read the different interviews, you will

discover that the *efterskole* community of common interest helps to develop and increase students' engagement, as well as their freedom and ability to act. This, in turn, will strengthen them in the future.

Søren, who is currently at an *efterskole*, explains that one could perhaps have gone directly to upper secondary after secondary school. But then again:

- I feel that I've gained a lot of independence. Back home, you come home from school and you've got homework to do, so maybe you sit with your mum and dad to do your homework, as mum is always asking if you have homework or not ... Here though, you have to go to the 'homework café' yourself, or sit in your room and write your own essay, or do maths on your own; thereby you become more independent.



The community at an *efterskole* forces students to relate in a positive way to what they are being taught. This is especially due to the respectful nature of teaching, which students encounter partly through the teachers and partly through the schools' rules:

At *efterskoles*, students learn in a social community. This community gives them peace of mind so that they can share their scholastic strengths and weaknesses with each other.

- (...) when there's so much discipline, it's also a motivating factor. For example, if I've got a teacher who can't be bothered then neither can I!

Marco,
current student

Cecilie

-I've improved my grades because I dared to say: I'm bad at this, please help me! So, you're accepted as you are ... Of course, the teaching is the most important part, but it just gives an added bonus that you've got the social life of an *efterskole* as well.



DANNELSE THROUGH SOCIAL COMMUNITIES

Through *efterskole* communities students' self-esteem is developed and strengthened. An *efterskole* community should be understood as the community that goes beyond friendship and interest-based communities and includes the wider community of the *efterskole*. At these schools students experience that there are valuable associations which stretch far beyond their friendships and interests into a larger social community. Through this community students learn to transcend their personal interests and specific relationships, and learn to actively participate in larger communities. Therefore, they feel that the social integrity that they experience along with others at the school also has an important social and democratic integrity in society. This act of participation is preparation for adulthood as well as being part of a public and democratic community as a responsible citizen. It is therefore appropriate to say that the community at an *efterskole* makes a distinct contribution to the wider democratic community.

Efterskole leads to a social authority and experience of a different type than that which students have previously experienced.



Here **Sylvester** highlights this social aspect of the *efterskole* as the identity developing trait:

- We've learnt a lot about being an individual. You learn a lot about having your own opinion and standing by it, as well as saying no and opening your mouth when you have an opinion.

Karen feels that because pupils are together with their friends around the clock, they learn to accept their eccentricities:

- We're together here all the time. This makes it easier to accept other people, who are different, because we are, in a way, forced to be together here.



INTERACTION/ TOGETHERNESS

GENERALLY, one could say that the *efterskole*'s distinct contribution to students' *dannelse* occurs primarily in three spheres, each of which develop students' general formative experiences:

1. Students are formed by participating in friendly communities that extend and refine their self-confidence
2. Communities of common interest which develop and refine their self-worth
3. *Efterskole* communities that enhance and fine-tune their self-esteem

All three processes are in play at an *efterskole*, each of which contribute to the students' future. However, in the meantime it is their active and mutual interaction that makes *efterskoles* pressure-cookers of *dannelse*.

DANNELSE'S DIDACTICS



REGARDLESS of whether you ask current students, 30- or 50-year-graduates, it is apparent that what is special about the *efterskole* is the close relationship between teacher and student. It is essential that the students and teachers meet each other in different contexts, in addition to the actual boarding school element where they are together all day long. As a form of boarding school, *efterskoles* offer a special pedagogical structure. For instance, this can be seen in the daily routine where there are rules and social practices that must be observed and respected. These structures allow students and teachers to step into an educational fellowship with special conditions to create meaningful and engaging lessons and learning. Students experience what it means “to learn” and “to live” together, and it is precisely this combination which is the secret of the *efterskole*'s special didactic principle.

Efterskoles have a unique opportunity to combine and connect learning to pupils' own lives, so that they learn that this can increase their self-confidence, self-worth and self-esteem. However, this concrete lifestyle along with the learning processes that are encountered at an *efterskole*, are “artificial” processes. They are didactically organized and by no means arbitrary.

The crucial role that the combination of interaction and coexistence with teaching plays in *efterskole* didactics is described both directly and indirectly through the different interviews with teachers.

- I think we emphasize the fact that they are entering into a small community, which is what we are. We more or less eat, sleep, do our laundry, get up and even go to bed at the same time.

You could say that we are borrowing the children, and that it's our task to get them to function in a small community. We really believe that they will be better prepared and do well when they leave home in two to four years time; also, that later on they will be able to cope in communities other than those they have been accustomed to.

Lars



IN THE STUDY of the *efterskoles'* didactics and pedagogy, the project relates to the general pedagogical tradition, developed in particular by Dietrich Benner. Benner has three pedagogical forms. This didactical tripartite division is based on three pedagogical actions: Structured social contact and interaction, educational interaction and communal guidance.

The distinction is made between three didactical areas that are aligned with the three categories of *dannelse*:

STRUCTURED SOCIAL CONTACT AND INTERACTION

The boarding school form supports a structured interaction around the students' formative processes. However, these structures do not dictate how life should be lived and experienced, but rather organize and enable learning and the formative processes. The structured interaction creates frameworks and trust to ensure that life at an *efterskole* does not end in chaos and anarchy.

EDUCATIONAL INTERACTION

At an *efterskole* teachers and students are part of a number of different social practices that constantly have to be worked with. Teachers guide students through conversation, by asking and encouraging them to consider both professional and practical contexts. The educational interaction at these schools unfolds in many different contexts and frameworks – both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers are not just teaching, they are also didactically present conducting serious and meaningful “learning” with knowledge, expertise and understanding from various viewpoints both inside and outside of the classroom.

Through this educational interaction, pupils come to see that their lessons make sense; furthermore, they see a value in their lessons that they have not encountered before, which in turn creates authority and freedom.

COMMUNAL GUIDANCE

The *efterskole* structure also allows for a generational meeting on issues that go far beyond lessons and into life's diversity. Teachers and students are part of an indicative togetherness where the answers and solutions are not known in advance. The indicative togetherness is the intergenerational process around “the indetermined dialogue.” The teachers are authentic interlocutors, who take the questions young people have about their lives and future seriously, and who also guide them in relation to matters they might not even know the answer to yet. The intergenerational dialogue is, in post-modern life, more and more important because it creates a context for *dannelse*.

EMPIRICAL DESIGN

THE RESEARCH project's empirical components consist of both quantitative data and several types of qualitative data.

The point of departure for the empirical study was a comprehensive study of documentation from previous studies, legal texts and so forth. Through studying this documentation, the project aimed to gain insight into how the concept *dannelse* has been previously operationalized, how the *efterskoles* have been characterized and how their social function has been represented.

This study has helped to define and focus topic areas. At the same time, the study illustrated the need to include multiple sources and use several methods. Therefore, the four empirical elements are as follows:

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS / WEBSITE ANALYSIS

The purpose of discourse analysis was to gain insight into how *dannelse* is expressed at different *efterskoles*, i.e. across a range of interests, sizes and geographical locations. Twenty *efterskoles'* websites were selected for this analysis in order to cover a broad spectrum of these schools.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

In contrast to a questionnaire, the focus group interview is characterized by being a very low structured method of data collection, which gives a better opportunity to gain a more comprehensive insight into some causalities. Four *efterskoles* were selected and each provided eight students for a student interview as well providing a group of teachers – consisting of eight teachers on average. In addition, the project sought out individual graduates from *efterskoles* where the only requirement was that the graduates had completed their *efterskole* education 10, 30 or 50 years ago.

QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaires were aimed to provide an overall picture of what an *efterskole* education means for students. The study was conducted at six schools. On average, fifty-seven students from each *efterskole* completed the questionnaire.

EMPLOYER SURVEYS

Employer evaluation involved educational managers and department heads at various educational institutions (Higher Preparatory Exam (HF)/upper secondary school, business, military and vocational schools and colleges.) In all a total of ten have contributed. Communication with employers aimed to provide an external perspective on the *efterskoles*; the local community might view the *efterskole* in a different way and therefore may provide a different view of them.



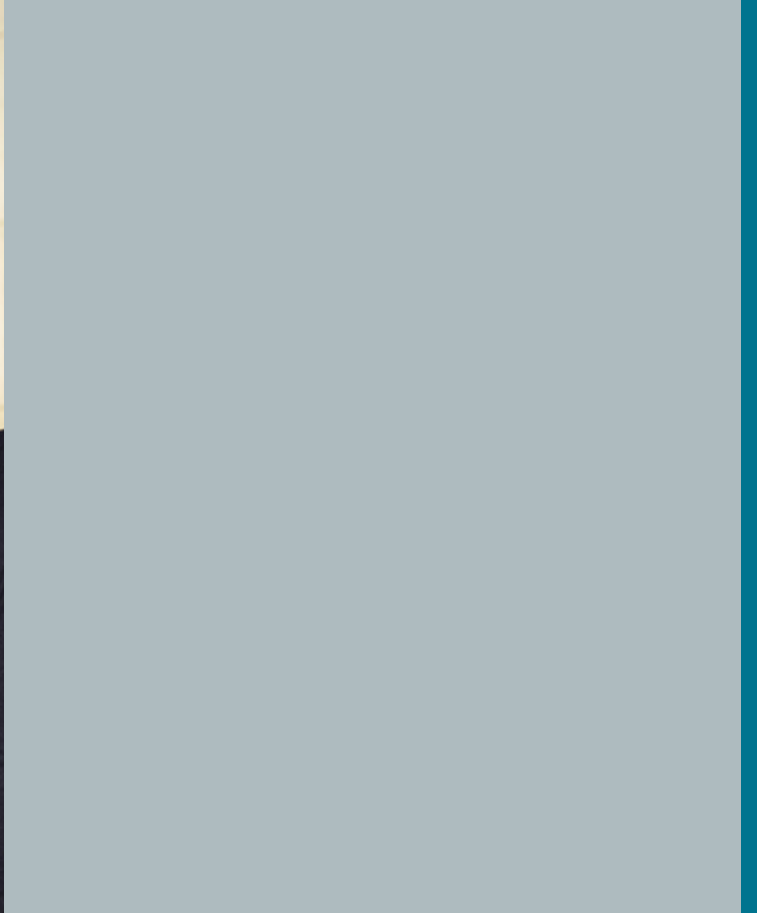
BRIEF OVERVIEW

THE *EFTERSKOLE* CANNOT CREATE A SOCIAL AGENDA, but it can make a difference in equipping emerging generations to meet and manage a complex modern society. There seems to be much to be gained here in the didactics of *dannelse* and unique *efterskole* pedagogy that we have tried to document and describe in “Formative education that works”.

Our overview of the *efterskole*'s pedagogy can be illustrated in full here:

| MAIN AIM | <i>DANNELSE'S</i> EXPERIENCE | <i>DANNELSE'S</i> SPHERE | <i>DANNELSE'S</i> PERIODS | <i>DANNELSE'S</i> INSTITUTIONS | <i>DANNELSE'S</i> DIDACTICS | <i>EFTERSKOLE'S</i> PEDAGOGY |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| ENLIGHTENMENT FOR LIFE | Self-confidence · shifting identities · responsibility · care | <i>Dannelse</i> through friendly communities | Period of self-confidence · expansion of horizons | The family's school · conservative dissemination | Structured social contact and interaction · trust building · familiar infrastructure · life enlightening | Friendship-pedagogy · contextualisation of and perspective on life |
| GENERAL EDUCATION | Self-worth · expansion of interests · educational readiness · assured decision- making | <i>Dannelse</i> through communities of common interests | Period of self-worth · to develop and qualify the school · learn to learn | The educative school · changing dissemination | Educational interaction · pedagogical practice · respectful lessons · meaningful education · popular enlightening education | Authority-pedagogy · contextualisation of and perspective on knowledge and opinions |
| DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP | Self-esteem · social maturity · social integrity | <i>Dannelse</i> through the social community at the <i>efterskole</i> | Period of self-esteem · to expand and qualify interests | The generational school · innovative dissemination | Communal guidance · closeness and distance · immediate future · introduction into an open and democratic existence | Intergenerational pedagogy · contextualisation of and perspective on the Indetermined Dialogue |





Efterskoleforeningen
Vartov
Farvergade 27, H. 2.
DK-1463 København K
Phone +45 33 12 86 80
www.efterskoleforeningen.dk

