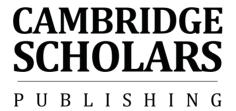# Exploring Task-Based PBL
in Chinese Teaching and Learning

Exploring Task-Based PBL
in Chinese Teaching and Learning

Edited by

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**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

PREFACE

In recent years, in Denmark as well as in the rest of the world, the number of students who study Chinese as a foreign language has increased dramatically. This development naturally leads to questions of how to teach and learn Chinese in an efficient way. In this volume, we explore how tasks and task-based PBL can be used to teach and learn Chinese. The Chinese saying 摸着石头过河 – "Feel out the stones while crossing the river" describes our approach well. We have developed a number of language tasks, tried them in classrooms, and analysed and evaluated the outcomes. As the studies in this volume show, tasks are not the answer to all of the challenges which teachers may encounter in class. We do, however, see great potential in the use of language tasks, and consider them to be valuable tools in the language teacher's "tool-box" when it comes to the teaching and learning of Chinese as a foreign language. The Task and Problem Based Learning (PBL) methodology is good at motivating students by making them participate and interact, and involving them in real-world language activities with a concrete and defined outcome. Thus, we believe that Task-Based PBL prepares students well for the real world they are going to act and navigate in after graduation.

We sincerely appreciate all of the efforts made by the contributors to this book. We are grateful to a list of organizations and individuals who gave us their trust and tremendous support in the process of developing this project:

- The Confucius Institute Headquarters
- Ministry of Education in Denmark
- Several municipalities (as listed in chapter 2) in North Denmark
- Educational institutions (as listed in chapter 2) who are pioneers in the establishment of Chinese Language and Culture, in particular, the leaders, teachers and students who participated in our teaching planning, evaluation process and other aspect of research process.
- Beijing Normal University

We are also indebted to Aalborg University for providing us a supportive, inspirational and rich environment to explore PBL in language education.

CHAPTER ONE

EXPLORING TASK-BASED PBL
IN CHINESE TEACHING AND LEARNING
IN A DANISH CONTEXT

XIANGYUN DU AND MADS JAKOB KIRKEBÆK

1. Setting the Scene

In recent years, the Danish educational system has greatly stressed the need to become more international. Educational institutions at all levels are increasingly focusing their attention on the development of relevant strategies and plans. Consequently, not only universities and upper secondary schools, but also primary and lower secondary schools are making efforts to provide students with opportunities to learn about other cultures and study a wide range of foreign languages. Along with the increasing interest in collaboration with China in many areas, a growing number of people in Denmark are interested in learning Chinese language and culture (CLC).

This is also the case in the North Denmark Region, where CLC as a subject was established at university and high schools in 2009 and lower secondary schools in 2010. While some other regions in Denmark and in the world have had a tradition of teaching and learning the Chinese language at universities for decades, North Denmark has started this subject very recently and has no previous experience with its implementation. Despite growing interest, this initiation raises a series of local concerns such as how to provide qualified teaching and learning of CLC in different educational institutions such as universities, high schools and lower secondary schools. What does it mean to be a CLC teacher in the Danish context? What support is required to facilitate CLC courses at the institutional level? How can the establishment of CLC as a subject benefit the overall internationalisation process of education?

   The Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at Aalborg University (CI AAU) (for detailed information see chapter 2) has been functioning as a major actor in facilitating the establishment of CLC in the North Denmark Region since autumn 2009. CI AAU is responsible for planning, designing curriculum, supplying the teachers and providing teaching material and evaluations. Since 2010, with the support of CI AAU, CLC as a new subject was offered to approximately 20 lower secondary schools in the North Denmark Region. Based on its mission and function as a research centre, CI AAU also conducts a series of educational development and research activities.

   This pioneering initiative is attracting substantial attention at both the national and regional level. In April 2011, a workshop was organised by CI AAU to discuss how to encourage CLC teaching and learning development in Denmark with a particular focus on innovative pedagogy and institutional facilitation. More than 50 participants, including the majority of the Chinese language teachers in Denmark and a group of head teachers, contributed their ideas during the two-day workshop. During the workshop, the participants shared their experiences with CLC teaching and learning in the Danish context in relation to learning motivation, knowledge, skills, innovative methodology, quality assurance, institutionalised support and relevant research. This workshop also identified difficulties and challenges in CLC teaching and learning. One of the major issues discussed was the mismatch between the traditional methods of teaching Chinese and the teaching and learning methods in use in the context of Denmark.

   The Danish educational system (lower secondary education in particular) is deeply built upon the philosophy of *dannelse* (for a detailed introduction see chapter 2). Based on this concept, teaching and learning is not only the mastery of knowledge and development of skills for students, but more importantly, a process of personal development and good citizenship cultivation. Beginning at the primary school level, Danish students have been encouraged to develop their critical thinking and collaborative learning capability on a day-to-day basis. This means that group work is a method used frequently in the Danish classroom. The teacher-student relationship is also noticeably different, with the culture allowing for students to challenge knowledge that comes from teachers and textbooks.

   The method of teaching the Chinese language, based on the experiences of the Chinese teachers in Denmark, has followed a grammar-translation approach (for explanations see chapter 3), which focuses on an established structure of language. As an aside, it is worth mentioning that, in the

Danish context, the Chinese language is regarded culturally as one of the most difficult languages in the world. Therefore, it was agreed by the teachers participating in this workshop that Chinese language teaching in Denmark faced the challenge of motivating students right from the beginner level.

In addition to the challenges identified in this workshop, the CLC development work in the North Denmark Region encounters other concerns—the diversity of teachers' backgrounds. Chinese teachers involved in the developmental work have different backgrounds: 1) Danish teachers with an educational background of Chinese studies and who have also been to China, 2) Chinese teachers who are new to Denmark but have a professional background of teaching Chinese overseas, 3) Chinese teachers who have lived in Denmark for a few years and who have a background relevant to Chinese studies. While this diversity gives the advantage of a rich pool of teaching resources, at the same time, it also creates challenges due to different teachers' understandings of what to teach and how to teach it.

Therefore, a situation not previously seen arose in the development of the new subject; everything was new for teachers (teaching Chinese in a new context), students (learning a new subject) and schools (managing a new subject in a different way from what they are accustomed to). CI AAU faced the following questions: what aspects of Chinese culture should be taught and how can culture be taught and learned effectively? What aspects of language (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, oral, writing) should be focused on in teaching, and how can they be taught effectively? And, how can teachers, students and schools be prepared with appropriate tools in order to maximize learning outcomes?

With the overall aim being to bridge the cultural clash between the teacher-centred method in Chinese language teaching and the student-centred learning method in the Danish context, a project was set up by CI AAU as a follow up to the workshop. By initiating this project, CI AAU aimed to not only engage in further educational development of CLC, i.e., developing new teaching methods and materials, and teachers' development in Denmark, but also further investigate the effectiveness of these initiatives via scientific research.

Specifically, this project aims:

- To encourage innovative thinking in the teaching practice, and to look for alternative approaches to maximize the motivation, engagement and effect of language teaching and learning;
- To explore possibilities of renovating the current Chinese teaching practice by exploring Task-Based PBL via combining two innovative

approaches—Task-Based Teaching and Learning(TBTL) and
Problem and/or Project Based Learning (PBL);

- To contribute to the research fields of TBTL in language education and PBL in general educational fields;
- To promote research based teaching by inviting teaching practitioners to participate in educational research;
- To contribute to the practice and research of teacher development (improvement of pedagogical competence).

2. Why Task-Based PBL?

In the past decades, a shift in focus from teaching to learning within educational settings has occurred, and pedagogical approaches have gradually moved from traditional lecture-centred to student-centred learning. Consequently, pedagogical innovation flourished with the employment of diverse approaches such as "discovery learning", "experiential learning", "active learning", "inquiry-based learning", "scenario-based learning", "case-based learning" and so on. Among all these innovations, Task-Based Teaching and Learning (TBTL) is a method that has been progressively used in foreign language education to prioritise the role of teacher and students instead of the structure of the language. Problem and/or Project Based Learning (PBL) has been increasingly well recognized as an effective and efficient vehicle of educational change in that it involves not only a change of curricula, but more importantly, a change of the fundamental understanding of teaching and learning at a philosophical level.

Chapter 3 gives a detailed introduction to these two educational methods. Our efforts in this project are to explore a methodology that will bridge the cultural gap between how the Chinese language and culture is traditionally taught and the Danish context. The exploration of combining TBTL and PBL aims to search for a contextualised methodology that contributes to the development of not only foreign language education but also institutional internationalisation. It is also an attempt to develop an interdisciplinary research field that investigates new knowledge about what aspects of a foreign language and culture should be focused on in formal educational setting, how to teach these aspects particularly in a cross and intercultural context, and how to conduct classroom research to document and evaluate these teaching activities.

3. Defining this Book

This book is a collective work written by a group of pedagogy researchers and Chinese language teachers with the aim of exploring alternative methods of stimulating Chinese language teaching and learning as well as developing teachers' pedagogical competence. This work is based on the philosophical and methodological concept of Problem and Project Based Learning (PBL), which has been implemented at Aalborg University across all disciplines and faculties since 1974 and has been documented as an effective and meaningful way of learning for both students and teaching staff (Du 2011). We also draw upon the rich experiences of the Task-Based Teaching and Learning (TBTL) approach that has been well employed in foreign language teaching and learning. Combining these two methodological concepts and practicing them in the newly established area of Chinese teaching and learning in a range of educational institutions in the North Denmark Region is no doubt a challenge for both the conceptual framework construction and the empirical exploration of its practice. In this project we undertake the challenge of exploring a localised methodology and develop Task-Based PBL by combining TBTL and PBL. This book is also an attempt to motivate teachers to take part in research in addition to fulfilling their teaching role.

This book is neither a comprehensive introduction to Task-Based Teaching and Learning, nor a guidebook to PBL. It is an exploration of alternative ways of teaching and learning Chinese as a foreign language in a cross and intercultural context with the purpose of facilitating motivation for beginner students and facilitating teachers' development. It is the documentation and reflection of the first stage of the afore-mentioned project. Therefore, we define this book as an exploratory work for educational experiment and practice that provides research into a new area and aims to improve teachers' pedagogical competence.

In the process of this project, we have taken a PBL approach for the development and research work: we experienced diverse ways of getting the teaching practice started, and we identified problems and challenges. Then we searched for alternative ways, both theoretically and methodologically, to change and improve, and we finally documented our research findings and used them to evaluate and reflect upon our experience. With regard to research methods, we mainly used evaluation forms to offer a students' perspective, interviews with several school administrators and managers to offer the schools' perspective, and classroom observation from teachers to provide the teachers' perspective.

The methodological limitations were reflected upon during the writing process; for example, there were challenges in evaluating the effectiveness of tasks from the perspective of the learning outcome. Reflections on the current research methodology (chapter 9) help to develop future work on this project. Thus, this book is a pioneering initiative of competence development for both research skills and teaching competence. In this way, we also identify this book as an effort to contribute to developing research-based teaching.

The overall project includes our development and research work from approximately 20 primary and lower secondary schools, several upper secondary schools and Aalborg University. In this book, we mainly include the documentation from selected cases of lower secondary schools and one case from an upper secondary school.

4. Terminology Clarification

The literature on language views and theories of language acquisition are not always consistent in the way they employ the terms foreign language (FL) and second language (L2). Some tend to differentiate between them, while others tend to ignore the differences. In this book, we simply use the term *foreign language* (FL) in all cases.

Terms for schools differ from country to country. In Denmark, official terminologies include *folkeskole* and *gymnasium* (see chapter 2). In this book, following the documents on the Danish Education System [1] published by the Ministry of Education, we use the terminologies of primary school (student age between 7-13), lower secondary school (student age between 13-15) and upper secondary school (student age between 15-18).

Chinese Language and Chinese Culture are often used to refer to two different subjects in a study programme. In this book, we use *Chinese Language and Culture (CLC)* to refer to our initiative of combining these two elements with the purpose of motivating student learning, in particular, at a beginning level.

5. Organisation of the Book

In chapter 2, Ulla Egidiussen Egekvist gives an outline of the structure of the Danish educational system and the history and philosophy behind

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[1] See   http://www.iu.dk/publikationer/2011/the-danish-education-system/The%20 Danish%20Education%20System%202011.pdf

the school system and teaching methods that are commonly encouraged in Denmark, in particular, in primary and lower secondary schools. The internationalisation of education in Denmark and how the development of language education is used as a strategy for this purpose is also presented in this chapter. This is followed by an introduction to the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at Aalborg University and how it functions as the main facilitator of the Chinese language and culture teaching and learning in the region. Taking into consideration all of these backgrounds, chapter 2 aims to establish common ground and set the context for this book.

In chapter 3, XiangYun Du gives a brief overview of the traditions and trends in language education and discusses two innovative teaching and learning methods—Task-Based Teaching and Learning (TBTL) and Problem and/or Project Based Learning (PBL). Based on a combination of these two approaches, a framework of Task-Based PBL is proposed, which paves a theoretical foundation for the remainder of this book in the aspects of learning philosophy, principles and guidelines for teaching design.

Chapters 4-7 present four cases selected from the overall project. These cases are documented by three Chinese teachers—Rui Bao in chapter 4 and 6, Youjin Ruan in chapter 5 and Mads Jakob Kirkebæk in chapter 7. These selected cases include the teachers' experiences of using tasks in developing Chinese Language and Culture teaching and learning at lower secondary schools (chapters 4, 5 6) and in an upper secondary school (chapter 7). These cases represent different focuses of this method: chapter 4 and 6 describe how tasks are used in teaching oral Chinese, chapter 5 discusses using tasks in teaching Chinese culture, and chapter 7 reports how tasks are used in teaching Chinese characters. In relation to the application of Task-Based PBL, these cases cover different degrees of flexibility in the implementation of tasks. Throughout these chapters, the authors share not only their successful experiences, but also the unsatisfactory ones.

Chapter 8 provides 20 language tasks ready for use in the classroom setting. They are developed based on the teaching practice of Mads Jakob Kirkebæk, Rui Bao and Youjin Ruan. This initiative aims to share their best practices with other teachers and researchers. It is also hoped that the methods may be tested in a broader context, both by a wide variety of teachers and students as well as in different educational contexts.

In chapter 9, XiangYun Du and Mads Jakob Kirkerbæk summarise the book and reflect upon the overall project. The chapter first reflects upon the practice and concept of Task-Based PBL by what has worked so far and what did not work as expected in the first stage of the project. It also

reflects upon the initiation of new language teaching and learning via three levels—individual, institutional and overall societal and cultural. It also gives recommendations that may serve to mould future perspectives on the concepts we have discussed in this book.

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CHAPTER TWO

INTERNATIONALISATION OF EDUCATION IN DENMARK: WHY CHINA AND CHINESE?

ULLA EGIDIUSSEN EGEKVIST

Abstract

The Danish education system is unique in many ways; objectives and concepts used are not easily comparable with those of other countries. In order to establish common ground for this book, this chapter presents the Danish Education system from primary to upper secondary school with a main focus on the primary and lower secondary school, including both factual information and philosophical traditions. In addition, the internationalisation strategies within the Danish education system are discussed, with an emphasis on how Chinese language and culture activities are compatible with the current internationalisation trends. Following this, the text offers background information on the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at Aalborg University (CI AAU), a presentation of the CI AAU's Chinese language and culture teaching in the North Denmark Region, and an introduction to the specific schools presented in chapters 4-7. Finally, the chapter is summarised, including reflections on its relation to the rest of the book.

1. Structure of the Danish Education System

In brief, the Danish education system is divided into ten years of basic education in primary and lower secondary school (grades 0-9), and an additional elective eleventh year (grade 10). Following this are three years of upper secondary education and various levels of higher education as illustrated in figure 2-1.

Fig. 2-1 Structure of the Danish education system[1]. Source: The Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation 2011a, 2[2].

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[1] STX: The STX programme (also referred to as "*Gymnasium*" in Denmark) focuses on general education and study competences in the humanities, natural sciences and social sciences.

HHX: The HHX programme (also referred to as "*Handelsgymnasium*" in Denmark) focuses on business and socio-economic disciplines in combination with foreign languages and other general subjects.

HTX: The HTX programme (also referred to as "*Teknisk Gymnasium*" in Denmark) focuses on technological and scientific subjects in combination with general subjects.

HF: The HF programme emphasises both the practical and theoretical, and like the STX programme, it consists of a broad range of subjects within the humanities, natural sciences and social sciences (The Ministry of Children and Education 2012a. Available online at: http://www.eng.uvm.dk/Education/Upper-Secondary-Education/Four-Upper-Secondary-Education-Programmes-in-Denmark).

EUX: The vocational education and training with EUX programme combines general upper secondary level qualifications with vocational education (The Ministry of Children and Education 2012b. Available online at:

Education is compulsory for everyone between the ages of six and sixteen, but as long as acceptable standards as defined by the Ministry of Education are met, it is up to the individual to decide how to receive education: in public/private/independent schools or at home (The Ministry of Children and Education 2012e[3]).

Education from primary school to university is tuition free, and regardless of their social standing, students are entitled to public grant support (SU) from the age of eighteen for youth education attendance, e.g., upper secondary education and for six years of higher education studies. In addition, students can obtain state loans at favourable interest rates during their studies, and students with children receive extra grant support and state loan opportunities (Danish Education Support Agency 2012[4]). At the Ph.D. level students are usually employed with salary.

1.1 History and Philosophy behind the Folk School

The idea of creating a comprehensive school for all Danes dates back to the 18th century, but it was idealistic thinking in a time when the education system was divided into a school system in the countryside and a school system in the market towns. The course was set for a comprehensive school, but a breakthrough did not occur until the General Education Act in 1903 (*Almenskoleloven*), when the vision of an all-encompassing school system was adopted using the term "*folkeskolen*" (the Folk School). A middle school (*mellemskole*) was also established to serve as a bridge between the Folk School and higher education (Brøcher 2003).

Basically, the Folk School is built on a view of humanity derived from 18th century philanthropism, which is consistent with later research within the fields of psychology and personality development.

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http://www.eng.uvm.dk/Service/~/media/UVM/Filer/English/PDF/120312%20Education%20and%20training%20in%20DK.ashx).

Egu: The Egu is an individualised basic vocational education and training programme which aims at both employment and continued education (The Ministry of Children and Education 2012c. Available online at:
http://www.eng.uvm.dk/Education/Upper-Secondary-Education/Basic-Vocational-Education-and-Training-(egu)).

[2] Available online at: http://www.iu.dk/publikationer/2011/the-danish-education-system/The%20Danish%20Education%20System%202011.pdf

[3] Available online at: http://www.eng.uvm.dk/Education/Primary-and-Lower-Secondary-Education/The-Folkeskole

[4] Available online at: http://www.su.dk/English/Sider/agency.aspx

"The object of the school is to develop *all children's* capabilities - and *all capabilities* in children - and assist them in expanding any habitual perceptions of education prevailing in the environment they come from; not to draw hasty conclusions about their capabilities. And in a democratic society where we are all in need of each other, the school must also teach us to live in harmony and respect of each other" (Brøcher 2003, 25).

Over the years, a number of reforms have been implemented. 1969-1972 saw many changes that form the basis of the Folk School today; for example, the decision to have ten years of undivided primary and lower secondary school, nine of which were compulsory, was made then (Brøcher 2003). In 2008, this was extended to ten years of compulsory education.

The concepts *dannelse*[5] (originally translated from the German *Bildung*) and "education" (*uddannelse*) are important to understanding the Danish education system (Andersen, Jørgensen and Skovmose 2008, Kettel 2003). *Dannelse* is a process and can be described as:

"... a goal for teaching, education, and upbringing in its broadest sense. That is, the formation of a self with the ability to reflect upon this self. That is a self with a relation to tradition, with knowledge, and the ability to cooperate with others, and with knowledge of how to deal with society in general. Bildung is then the formation of the young person's mind so the young person becomes able to be part of society, tradition and a profession. It is also the ability to abstract, to be able to take in theoretical knowledge, and to use this knowledge in accordance with tradition and particular professions" (Henriksen 2006, 54).

Husted (2008) emphasises the difference between educating someone (*dannelses*-thinking) versus educating someone for something (education thinking). In particular, in the later years, many have criticised the development taking place within the Danish school system due to its increased focus on education and what is referred to as a management ideology and product orientation (Kemp 2008).

Today there is an increased focus on preparing children for the business world rather than life in general (Jørgensen and Skovmose 2008). In relation to the primary and lower secondary education system, the philosopher Peter Kemp (2008, 96) states that: "The 'dannelse' has disappeared, and only education is left." According to Kemp, the one-

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[5] *Dannelse* is frequently translated to "cultural formation" or "liberal education", but these translations do not denote the same deep and profound meaning as in Danish and German (Henriksen 2006).

sided focus on knowledge and skills is a breach of the humanistic pedagogy, which has characterised the Danish Folk School since N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872). Kemp (2008) does not advocate a return to past education acts, but rather for the development of a new act, which embraces globalisation and emphasises the development of children's cosmopolitan awareness and responsibility, the development of world citizens and cosmopolitan humanity.

The current aims of the Folk School, which form the basis of the Folk School system, is available in box 2-1.

"1. (1) The Folkeskole is, in cooperation with the parents, to provide students with the knowledge and skills that will prepare them for further education and training and instil in them the desire to learn more; familiarise them with Danish culture and history; give them an understanding of other countries and cultures; contribute to their understanding of the interrelationship between human beings and the environment; and promote the well-rounded development of the individual student.

(2) The Folkeskole is to endeavour to develop the working methods and create a framework that provides opportunities for experience, in-depth study and allows for initiative so that students develop awareness and imagination and a confidence in their own possibilities and backgrounds such that they are able to commit themselves and are willing to take action.

(3) The Folkeskole is to prepare the students to be able to participate, demonstrate mutual responsibility and understand their rights and duties in a free and democratic society. The daily activities of the school must, therefore, be conducted in a spirit of intellectual freedom, equality and democracy.

2. (1) The Folkeskole is the responsibility of the municipalities, cf, however, article 20, paragraph 3. The municipal board is responsible for ensuring every child in the municipality a free education in the Folkeskole. The municipal board is responsible for setting the targets and framework for the activities of the school within the provisions of this Act, cf article 40 and article 40a.

(2) Each school is responsible for ensuring the quality of the education in accordance with the aims of the Folkeskole, within the framework of the Act, cf article 1, and also bears the responsibility for determining the planning and organisation of the programme of education.

(3) Students and parents are to work together with the school in order to live up to the aims of the Folkeskole. "

Box 2-1 The aims of the *Folkeskole*. Source: The Ministry of Children and Education 2012d[6].

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[6] Available online at: http://eng.uvm.dk/Education/Primary-and-Lower-Secondary-Education/The-Folkeskole/The-Aims-of-the-Folkeskole

The aforementioned aims of the Folk School are also closely linked to the teaching philosophy behind and methods applied within the Danish education system. This will be discussed in section 1.2.

1.2 Teaching Philosophy and Methods

Using culture theorist Geert Hofstede's theoretical framework as a point of departure, the Danish culture is characterised by a low power distance, which influences the relationship between parents and children, teachers and students, and the Danish view on human beings in general. Based on Hofstede, the Danish Ministry of Education (2002[7]) presents some fundamental aspects of the Danish school system in terms of the relationship between teachers and students, teaching methods, and rewarded student behaviour:

- Inequalities among people should be reduced to a minimum.
- To some extent there should be interdependence between more powerful and less powerful people. Hence, teachers expect students to take initiative in the classroom.
- Teachers are professionals who pass on impersonal truths.
- Students treat teachers as equals.
- Organisations' hierarchies mean inequalities in terms of roles that are distributed according to convenience.
- Decentralisation is widespread.
- The ideal boss is a resourceful democrat.
- Privileges and status symbols are unpopular. Students should not "suck up to" teachers (Danish Ministry of Education 2002[7]).

Group and project work are learning methods, which are widespread and commonly used, and active student participation and innovative thinking is rewarded within the education system. Group work is inspired by learning theorists such as Jean Piaget and can be considered practical training for democratic decision-making. Thus, it is closely related to the aims of the Folk School (see box 2-1) (Den Store Danske 2012a[8]). Moreover, it can be considered an argument for using PBL and tasks at primary and lower secondary school level, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

In addition, Denmark is considered a feminine society, which refers to

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[7] Available online at: http://pub.uvm.dk/2002/multikulturelvejledning/03.htm
[8] Available online at: http://www.denstoredanske.dk/Erhverv,_karriere_og_ledelse /Pædagogik_og_uddannelse/Undervisningsmetoder_og_-teorier/gruppearbejde

the expectation on people to be modest; to have great sympathy for the weak in society and, in terms of grades in school, to let the average set the standard. The mind-set of democratic equality permeates Danish society: everyone should have equal opportunities and be treated equally, and thus, teachers are expected to be kind and treat students equally (Danish Ministry of Education 2002[7]).

Danish education institutions are often decentralised in their organisation, and many primary and lower secondary schools are organised in self-governing departments and teams (Thrane 2011). This is closely connected to the school culture for teaching and learning, the emphasis on interdisciplinary methodology, and teachers' freedom of teaching methods and materials. Thus, the practice of teamwork and democracy is not only present in the teaching, but also in the teachers' working environment.

1.3 Primary and Lower Secondary School Education

Presently, primary and lower secondary school education in Denmark is generally carried out in comprehensive schools from grade 0-9, and students stay predominantly with the same class group for the entire duration of their primary and lower secondary education. On average, a class size is around 20 students and must not exceed 28 students. The schools are co-ed, there is no school uniform and students call their teacher by his/her first name (Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation 2011b[9]).

Danish teachers qualify with a Bachelor's of Education after four years of training, including six months of practical training from a teacher training college (*seminarium*). The 18 teacher training colleges in Denmark are the only institutions authorised to provide the four-year education programme. The teachers will usually qualify to teach two to three subjects, and they can teach classes from grades 1-10. Qualified teachers from other Nordic and EU countries can apply for a position in the Danish primary and lower secondary schools on equal terms with Danish applicants, whereas applicants educated in other places have to be approved by the Danish authorities (The Danish Union of Teachers 2009[10]).

Approximately 80% of the Danish children attend the public/municipal primary and lower secondary schools (the Folk Schools), and Northern

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[9] Available online at: http://www.justlanded.com/english/Denmark/Denmark-Guide/Education/Schools-in-Denmark

[10] Available online at: http://www.dlf.org/english/the+folkeskole

Denmark is the part of the country where most students (84%) attend these schools (Danmarks Statistik 2011). 14% of the Danish children attend either a private primary and lower secondary school (*privatskole*) or an independent primary and lower secondary school (*friskole*), and 4% attend an independent boarding school for lower secondary students (*efterskole*)[11] (Danmarks Statistik 2011). The Danish State subsidises approximately 70% of these schools' costs, while parents pay the remaining costs—on average DKK1000/€135 per month. In addition, many private schools have free or partly free places to children whose parents' cannot otherwise afford the school fee (Borgerservice 2012[12]).

Private and independent schools are free to determine the contents of their curricula, but they are required to provide the students with teaching that meets national standards. Thus, in grade 9 (and 10), all private schools offer the same final exam as the municipal schools (Borgerservice 2012[12]).

According to an OECD study, the particular school of attendance has little influence on the level of student achievement in Denmark. In this regard, they differ from many other nations in which the type of school attended can have drastic future consequences, both positively and negatively (Pont 2012 [13]). This is also articulated in the following description of the Danish education system:

> "The combination of non-academic reasons for founding private schools and the relatively low tuition fees means that, in contrast to other countries, Danish private schools are not generally considered "elitist," and they do not necessarily provide pupils with higher social status or advantages in terms of entry to higher education" (State University 2012[14]).

General support for the Folk School within the Danish population is perhaps also an important part of its success. However, there has been increasing public discontent within the past ten years, which can be traced back to the PISA wave. Historically, the Danish Folk School has enjoyed international recognition for its ability to include children across social class lines and it has played a key role in the Danish welfare system. However, an average Danish PISA performance has caused massive

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[11] The remaining 2% attend other kinds of schools.
[12] Available online at: https://www.borger.dk/Sider/Privatskoler-og-friskoler.aspx
[13] Presentation by Senior Education Policy Analyst at the OECD, Beatrice Pont, at the Danish School Students' Conference "School Summit 2012", at the Danish Parliament, Christiansborg, May 3, 2012.
[14] Available online at: http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/371/Denmark-PRIMARY-PREPRIMARY-EDUCATION.html

criticism, and a growing number of parents and students choose private or independent schools as alternatives, especially in the Copenhagen area (Strand and Kamil 2011).

In recent years several changes have taken place within the primary and lower secondary education system, and part of these are related to the increasingly globalised world we live in. The internationalisation of education in Denmark will be discussed in sections 2-2.2.

2. Internationalisation of Education in Denmark

David Killick (2006) argues that internationalisation of education can be interpreted as the education system's response to globalisation. At a conceptual level internationalisation of a school describes the transformation process that occurs when transnational co-operation has an impact on the school as an organisation, and thus, there is a close link between internationalisation and school development (Heidemann 1999).

A distinction is often made between "Internationalisation at Home" (IaH), involving for example, curriculum development and exchange of academic staff, and internationalisation through mobility, involving studies abroad and student exchanges (Jones and Brown 2007, Joris, Berg and Ryssen 2003). How an educational institution decides to go about an internationalisation process can therefore vary greatly.

Despite some initiatives like the Comenius projects, there is currently no widespread tradition for internationalisation through mobility at primary and lower-secondary and upper secondary school level in Denmark, and thus IaH would be the expected main focus for Danish schools working towards internationalisation.

At a more fundamental level there is also the question of why schools internationalise, and Killick (2006) argues that many fail to incorporate a sufficiently broad conceptualisation of the term and explains that internationalised education:

> "is not about who we educate or where we educate, it is not even directly about what or how we teach those who come to be educated. It is, more fundamentally, about why we educate. Content, methodology, and context should be shaped in response to the values which drive our endeavours" (Killick 2006, 1).

Internationalisation does not only have an impact at an institutional level. Using the programme logic model, Darla Deardorff (2005) indicates that the outcome of internationalisation at an individual level is interculturally competent individuals, or in other words, people capable of living as

global citizens in the present multicultural and globalised world (Risager 2000). Intercultural competence development is a never-ending process, but it can be encouraged and supported in formal educational contexts.

In the past decade, a number of ministerial reports in Denmark have emphasised the need for internationalisation of the Danish education system (Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, The Danish Government 2006, 2010, The Taskforce for Foreign Languages 2011). Higher education is not the only focus of their attention. Recent initiatives are putting increased attention on the primary and lower secondary schools, and indeed the internationalisation of the entire education system is the overall objective.

In the 2010 report "The Internationalisation That Never Came to Life" (*Internationaliseringen der blev væk*), it was addressed that many primary and lower secondary schools in Denmark actually do not live up to the minimum demands in terms of bringing in the international dimension to their teaching. The inclusion of the international dimension was made compulsory in 2009, and it is now required to be present as an integrated part of all subjects (and not only language subjects) from grade 0-10. In addition, students are expected to take part in at least one international project during their time in school. Thus, although focus on international aspects is highly emphasised, it is not always carried out in practice (Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation 2010b, The Taskforce for Foreign Languages 2011).

While internationalisation is not considered only relevant to foreign language teaching, and the inclusion of the international dimension is compulsory in every subject, languages are still considered to play a key role. Thus, the importance of focusing on language education at all levels within the education system has been stressed. Both teaching more language classes and offering an even greater variety of languages have been highlighted as an important part of the internationalisation strategy (Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation 2010b).

2.1 Foreign Languages in the Internationalisation Strategy

Danish is the national language in Denmark, and students learn Danish from grade 0. English is compulsory from grade 3, but some schools begin the teaching as early as grade 1 (Frank 2012[15]). In grade 7, students have an option to study a second foreign language, primarily German, though

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[15] Available online at: http://www.folkeskolen.dk/507923/engelsk-i-1-klasse-breder-sig-

sometimes also French, and 89% of the students leave grade 9 with two foreign languages (Olsen 2011[16]). It is a requirement for students continuing their education in general upper secondary school (STX, HHX, HTX, HF or adult upper secondary level education[17]) to have had two to four years of primary and lower secondary school teaching in German or French as a second foreign language (Uddannelsesguiden 2012[18]). Some schools also offer language teaching in a third foreign language from grade 7 or 8 with or without a school certificate.

In a 2011 report "Languages Are the Key to the World" (*Sprog er nøglen til verden*) the unique role of foreign languages was stressed and recommendations were made to begin the teaching of English in grade 1 instead of grade 3, to make the second foreign language, usually German or French, obligatory from grade 5 instead of elective from grade 7, and to offer a third elective foreign language with a school certificate from grade 7.

The importance of offering a wider range of languages as the third foreign language was underlined in the report, and Chinese, Spanish, Urdu, Portuguese, and Arabic were offered as suggested languages. Already a number of private/independent schools offer such teaching, but in general, the recommendations are still far from integrated into the school system, both in the private/independent schools and the municipal, public Folk Schools (The Taskforce for Foreign Languages 2011).

In the foreign language hierarchy in Denmark, Chinese has not been and still is not highly ranked. However, with the changing role of China on the world stage and the emphasis to introduce even more languages to Danish students, there appears to be room for Chinese in the future. English is undeniably the most important foreign language in Denmark, but German and French are also considered very important languages. German is important due to it being the most spoken native language in Europe (18%) and Germany being the neighbouring country to Denmark. Meanwhile, French is considered an important language of culture and is seen as a useful entrance point to other Latin languages (The Taskforce for Foreign Languages 2011).

For obvious reasons, Danish people do not encounter Chinese as often as German or French in a local context, but Chinese is spoken by approximately 1.3 billion people, and increased transnational mobility indicates that by 2050 Chinese might be a second language for many

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[16] Available online at: http://www.folkeskolen.dk/69192/de-radikale-tysk-skal-vaere-obligatorisk
[17] See previous note in figure 2-1.
[18] Available online at: http://www.ug.dk/flereomraader/maalgrupper/6til10_klasse/optagelse_til_de_gymnasiale_uddannelser.aspx

people, just like English is today (Risager 2006). Moreover, according to Chen and Chung (1993 in Burnett and Gardner 2006), a maximal distance exists between Western and Eastern cultures, and thus, the introduction of Chinese could open a window to the East for Danish students and further their understanding of the global world–and the world outside of Europe.

At the upper secondary school level in Denmark, foreign language teaching is now facing many obstacles. An unfortunate side effect of an upper secondary school reform in 2005/2006 is that the percentage of students studying three or more languages has steeply declined from 41% in 2007 to 3% in 2009 at STX upper secondary schools and from 22% to 3% at HHX upper secondary schools. On the other hand, the percentage of students doing two level A[19] languages has risen from 13% to 31% (STX) and from 11% to 42% (HHX) in the same period. However, the reason for this trend is often that students choose English and then start up with a new foreign language, often Spanish, instead of pursuing German or French as a continuation of their language skills from primary and lower secondary school. German and French are facing difficulties attracting students in upper secondary school while more exotic languages such as Latin, Greek and Chinese are growing in popularity—perhaps due to an interest among the students to learn more about different cultures or the novelty of a language such as Chinese (The Taskforce for Foreign Languages 2011).

Chinese as a foreign language is new at the primary and lower secondary school and upper secondary school levels. The Ministry of Education estimates that, currently, approximately 380 students are studying Chinese as a foreign language at a beginners level (B and A) or Chinese area studies at the upper secondary school level. Furthermore, two upper secondary schools, Niels Steensens Gymnasium and Stenhus Gymnasium, are taking part in a pilot project to offer Chinese as a foreign language at a continuation level (Bühlmann 2012[20]). There is no official record of primary and lower secondary schools offering Chinese language and culture activities. The CI AAU's information shows that 14 primary and lower secondary schools in Northern Denmark have offered Chinese language and culture activities; however, it is very likely that there are other China/Chinese-related initiatives in Denmark of which we are unaware.

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[19] For more information on levels in upper secondary school, please see section 4.4 about Aalborg Handelsskole (Aalborg Business College).

[20] *Fakta om kinesisk som sprogfag og som områdestudium*. Unofficial document from the Danish Ministry of Education, last updated January 2012.