

Effect Study

Fact Finding Study

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Contents

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The effect study was conducted as part of the action plan 2002 for the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) and was motivated by a desire from among others the committee of representatives of EVA to review the effect of the evaluations conducted by EVA. This fact finding report represents the effect study and its findings.

1.1 Aims and objectives

The effect study is a project for method development. The aim of the study is as follows:

- to develop and test a method to conduct effect measurements of evaluations carried out by EVA and on the basis hereof
- to assess whether it will be possible to develop a concept for future effect studies to be conducted on a rotation principle, e.g. every three or four years
- to examine which parts of the evaluation process and recommendations of the evaluations that stimulate or hamper the recipients' opportunity or motivation for follow-ups and on the basis of that
- to provide recommendations for improvement of evaluations conducted by EVA in order to improve their effect.

1.2 Evaluations conducted in the effect study

Four evaluations have been selected for the effect study. The evaluations are all from EVA's first action plan from 2000. The four evaluations selected include:

- evaluation of basic study programmes at Roskilde University and Aalborg University
- evaluation of physics in Danish upper secondary schools
- evaluation of history and social studies in Danish upper secondary schools
- evaluation of the transition from higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations to higher education study programmes.

In Chapter 3 the reasons for the selection of the above evaluations are given in more details.

1.3 Sources of the report

The fact finding report is based on various sources in the form of analyses, interviews and questionnaires that are presented in Chapter 3. It should be mentioned that the key sources consist of an analysis conducted by the consultancy TNS Gallup that focus on the effect of the selected evaluations and a questionnaire survey conducted by EVA on the diversion effect in higher commercial examination programmes. The findings from both of these studies are presented in this report.

1.4 Structure of the report

Chapter 2 is a summary of the most important issues and conclusions raised in the report.

Chapter 3 covers reflections on and descriptions of methods applied as well as reflections on the concept of effect.

Chapter 4 illustrates assessments of the effects as they were experienced by the respondents who took part in the effect study or were aware of the four evaluations.

Chapter 5 includes an epilogue by senior researcher Bjørn Stensaker written after the completion of the effect study. In the epilogue the effect study is reviewed in a wider

perspective and the findings of the study are compared to the findings obtained from similar studies

The effect study is a project for method development. The aim of the study is partly to develop and test a method for assessment of the effects of the evaluations conducted by EVA and to assess potential development of a concept for future effect studies, and partly to examine which parts of the evaluation process and findings that stimulate or hamper the recipients' opportunity or motivation for follow-up and to provide recommendations for improvement of EVA's evaluations to increase their effect on the basis of these.

In order to achieve the objectives the effects of four evaluations from EVA's action plan 2000 were examined. They include the evaluation of the transition from higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations to higher education study programmes, evaluations of history and social studies and physics in Danish upper secondary schools and, finally, evaluation of basic study programmes at Roskilde University and Aalborg University.

Experienced effect

In the effect study 'effect' is defined as the experienced effect. It is accepted as an effect if one or more of the participants find that the evaluation, including the evaluation process, report and recommendations:

- has helped stimulate reflections and discussion
- has lead to concrete action.

Effects primarily in the form of reflection and dialogue

The effect study shows that the most important effects of the evaluations are that they have stimulated dialogue and reflection in the institutions, whilst the respondents found that the evaluations only to a limited extent lead to concrete action.

However, the extent to which the respondents experience an effect varies from one evaluation to another. The experienced effect is most prominent in higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations, less prominent in the basic study programmes – though higher at Roskilde University than at Aalborg University – and least prominent among the participants in the evaluations of history and social studies and physics. The evaluations also help render visible and documenting a large number of factors in the institutions and study programmes. Especially central parties in the Ministry of Education have stated that the evaluation reports are very useful for obtaining information about the study programmes.

According to Bjørn Stensaker¹, who wrote the epilogue to the effect study, the findings of the effect study achieved generally correlate with the findings from other effect studies of evaluations in education. From this perspective the findings must be said to be satisfactory.

The effect study in a wider perspective

In the epilogue to the effect study Stensaker reviews the study and its findings from a wider perspective. According to Stensaker the effect findings of the study are typical for that type of evaluation in education that are conducted by EVA, and the effects are thus at par with what would be expected from an international perspective. Stensaker emphasises that researchers in evaluation have more or less stopped trying to find objective goals for effects, and work instead on subjective indicators, like EVA ended up doing in the effect study.

¹ Bjørn Stensaker is researcher at NIFU; Norwegian Institute for Educational Research.

Moreover, Stensaker emphasises that it can be quite fruitful to adapt other perspectives in effect studies, e.g. a political, a market-related or post-modern perspective and thus abandon simple instrumental lines of thinking and view the evaluation in a wider context.

EVA moves between the educational and the political environment and Stensaker finds that it is a challenge to EVA to devise its own evaluation practice to satisfy the needs of both environments. The practice can be further developed for more discussion, reflection and development in the evaluations and for taking the leading edge in the demand for openness, legitimacy and market-orientation which will probably increase for the educational environment in the future.

3 Method for studying the effects

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part covers reflections on the concept of effect and the definition of the concept, which is applied in the effect study. The second part covers the reasons for the evaluations selected in the effect study, whilst the third part describes the study methods applied.

3.1 Reflections on the concept of effect

It has been a key issue of the study to limit and define the concept of effect. The concept of effect chosen would be decisive for the design and findings of the study. Therefore, the study is begun with references to literature and considerations on how the concept can be defined.

The concept of effect is not easy to grasp. Carolyn H. Hofstetter and Marvin C. Alkin (2002)² have written an article about the adoption of evaluations and their effects in which they have emphasised that after 30 years of research in the use of evaluation no agreement has been reached on the definition of effect. Moreover, they write that until the early 70s people were dissatisfied since evaluations did not have a better effect, especially among the evaluators themselves. But later on a different perception of how the findings from the evaluations are used in organisations has emerged. Findings from evaluations can for example contribute to reduce insecurity, get processes going and raise the attention on identified situations. Evaluations and their findings thus have a more subtle effect than can be registered immediately.

In this effect study it has been necessary to use an operational concept for the effects, which could also be used in the planned empirical study. A number of conditions have had an effect on the reflections made:

- It is very difficult to isolate the relationship between an evaluation and its effect, and the multiple factors that affects the participating establishments (gross/net effect)³ both before, during and after an evaluation is conducted.
- One model for examining the effect could be to make comparisons with a control group to see the difference between an establishment that has been evaluated and one that has not. However, the use of control groups demands a fairly uniform point of departure before the evaluation process is launched, combined with a likelihood that the groups compared would have developed more or less the same if the evaluation process was not implemented. It is extremely difficult to find such a control group within the educational environment.
- It can be difficult to give one single definition of the meaning of effect – does it mean that those evaluated have just discussed the report and has adopted it, that they have launched a process, that they have made concrete changes, or would you not call it an effect until you can measure the importance of an evaluation and the final output in the form of e.g. examination marks, percentage of graduates or rate of employment?

² Carolyn Huie Hofstetter and Marvin C. Alkin (2002): "Evaluation Use Revisited". In: D. Nevo and D. Stufflebeam (ed.): *International Handbook of Educational Evaluation*. Klunner Academic Press, 2002.

³ The literature on the studies on effects often distinguishes between gross and net effect. Gross effect means all traceable adjustments (changes) in connection with the evaluation and the adjustments that may arise as a result of other activities and processes. On the other hand, the net effect relates only to the effects that can be attributed to the evaluation.

- Within the framework of an evaluation it can be difficult to decide what exactly caused a given effect – was it for example the external element, the self evaluation phase or the recommendations of the report?
- It can be difficult to identify what may cause a lack of effects – is it matters arising from the process and results of the evaluation or other matters, for example particular circumstances in the individual establishment or external effects?
- Where do unintended effects fit in? Should you identify them, and if so, how, and should they also be included as effects from the evaluations?

Moreover, there are some fundamental terms for the evaluations conducted by EVA from Action Plan 2000 that play an important role for the effect study:

- The establishments that were included in the Action Plan 2000 evaluations had no requirement for preparing a follow-up plan on the basis of the recommendations of the evaluation⁴. Thus no criteria were made for when and how the establishments should follow up on the recommendations of the evaluation.
- If no targets are set for the desired effects of an evaluation, it is rather difficult to assess whether possible effect findings can be said to be satisfactory. The evaluations that were included in the effect study have not had targets for follow-ups attached, and that has given rise to the question of how you should assess the findings of the effect study. For example, when are findings satisfactory? And should/could the question best be answered quantitatively or qualitatively or in a combination of the two methods?

3.1.1 Definition and restrictions

In the effect study 'effect' is defined as the experienced effect. It is thus considered an effect if one or more of the respondents find that the evaluation, including the evaluation process, report and recommendations:

- has helped stimulate a reflection and discussion
- has lead to concrete action.

With this definition of the concept of effect attention should be paid to the fact that the results reflect the respondents' acknowledgements of their experience. Whether a respondent acknowledges having experienced an effect depends on many things, for example recollection, assessment of the evaluation in general and the effect of attitudes to and assessment of the evaluation that occurs over time. The effect study shows that two people – both attached to the same establishment – may have a very different opinion about whether there has been an effect. This is therefore a pre-condition when the study is based on the subjective experience.

The definition of effect is adapted to the above throughout the project based on the experience learned by EVA. Not least the qualitative interviews that were conducted in connection with the study and the experience that the respondents have expressed here, have helped broaden the definition so that the concept of effect will include also discussions and reflections prompted by the evaluation report and process.

At the beginning of the project the work was carried out on the basis of the idea that it would be possible to identify 'objective' or documented effects. This could for example be new descriptions of the targets of a school, more resources allocated for a given field etc. based on the recommendations of an evaluation. However, later on it was found that it has not been possible within the time schedule and resource framework of the effect study to establish whether for example changed descriptions of targets are caused by the evaluation conducted by EVA or other factors.

Evaluations of educational programmes and establishments will not be conducted in a vacuum. A wide range of factors continuously affects the development within the educational programmes and establishments. The evaluations conducted by EVA is just one of these factors that cannot be isolated from the full context in which they are included. In many cases an

⁴ The ministerial order on follow-ups on evaluations at EVA etc. did not come in force until 16 January 2002.

adjustment would probably have occurred as a result of the interaction between the evaluation and other elements – for example existing thoughts on development. Whether an evaluation has caused or contributed to a change in the educational programmes/establishments will eventually depend on subjective considerations. In the effect study the full consequence is thus taken hereof, so the study is exclusively based on the respondents' statements on their experience of an effect. The effect study is therefore not seeking to say whether the evaluations have or have not had an effect in a more objective sense.

In the effect study no direct attempt is made to look for unintentional consequences but if the players have emphasised such consequences – whether they were positive or negative – they have been included in the overall understanding of the effects from the evaluation.

The method and use of the concept of effect that the effect study applies, focus primarily on the respondents' assessment of matters in the evaluations that have stimulated or hampered development in their establishment or educational programme. Thus there might be a risk that other matters relevant to the effect of the evaluations conducted by EVA will be overlooked:

- The aim of the evaluations conducted by EVA is not only to stimulate development but also to make visible and document how the establishments/educational programmes operate. An effect of this may be presumed to constitute a general accumulation of knowledge in the educational areas and the slow change process that can be a result on the basis of that. However, the effect study is based on acknowledgements from individuals, primarily the institutions, for whom it can be difficult to see and assess this broad effect, which is therefore easily under-represented in the study.
- Evaluation may also help make decisions legitimate – decisions that would have been made in any case – and not even this factor describes completely the operational method for effect studies.
- The approach to effect chosen does not always make it possible to identify the strategic/political application of evaluations in a given area. For example, critical discussion and changes can be postponed referring to a coming evaluation. The postponement will also in this case become an unintentional effect.
- It can be presumed that it has an effect for the establishments that EVA exists and focus on ever changing elements in the educational environment in the evaluation reports. Any establishment can become a potential participant in one of the evaluations conducted by EVA and thus attract the world's attention. The potential effect hereof is not identified in the effect study.

3.2 Selection of evaluations

As mentioned above four evaluations were selected from EVA's first action plan from 2000 to be included in the effect study. From the very beginning of the project there was focus on the evaluations conducted by EVA, but it should be noted that it might also have been interesting and relevant to examine the knowledge centre-based projects that were also conducted by EVA. It must also be expected to generate an effect when the knowledge centre makes knowledge and tools available to the educational environment. In connection with this study the evaluations have, however, had the advantage compared to the knowledge centre projects that they are based on named establishments. It is thus possible to get feedback from the establishments regarding their assessment of the evaluation and any effects from it.

The overall selection criterion has been that the evaluations had to be concluded such a long time ago that the effect had had time to materialise. It was therefore decided to select evaluation cases from Action Plan 2000. Other parameters for selection were considered, for example evaluations conducted in a specific educational area. However, it has not been possible to use this parameter for selection in the effect study, since only few evaluations had been conducted within each educational area with EVA's first action plan.

3.2.1 Reasons for selection and opt-out

The evaluation of **basic study programmes at Roskilde University and Aalborg University** was selected because it falls within the area of higher education and represents the category

'educational evaluation'. The evaluation covers all five basic study programmes that are offered at the two establishments altogether.

The evaluation of the basic study programmes was selected instead of another two evaluations conducted by EVA in higher education on the basis of the following elements:

- The evaluation of the Bachelor of Social Work programme was opted out because the programme had been subjected to a comprehensive reform after the evaluation was conducted which had changed the terms and conditions for the programme to such an extent that the value of the learning in an effect study at the level of the education/establishment would be limited for EVA.
- The evaluation of the subject educational theory was opted out because the evaluation was not completed until relatively late, in February 2002, which gave limited opportunities to examine follow-up measures, if any.

The two evaluations of **history and social studies and physics in Danish upper secondary schools** were selected as examples of pure 'evaluations of subjects'. Both of these evaluations include self evaluation in 15 chosen upper secondary schools. Whilst the evaluation of physics was solely based on the gathering of documentation in the 15 schools selected (self evaluation and questionnaires among the pupils), the evaluation of history and social studies was also based on a questionnaire survey that included all teachers with teaching competencies in history and social studies as a subject in upper secondary school.

The evaluation of **transition from higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations to higher education study programmes** is selected because this evaluation is the only one represented in the category 'transitional evaluation' and because it is the first EVA-evaluation that focuses on the correlation between different tiers in the educational system. The evaluation includes 28 establishments in total (out of 90) that have taken part in a self evaluation/questionnaire survey. The evaluation group has visited four of them. The effect study includes only the four establishments that have conducted the self evaluation and been visited.

Primary and lower secondary education is not represented in the effect study. The reason is that the provisions for the two Action Plan 2000 evaluations of the school system in Hirtshals and Middelfart, respectively, differs in essence from the way EVA now conducts evaluations within primary and lower secondary education. As a result of the agreements concluded in connection with the development project F2000, the evaluations of primary and lower secondary education were only pilot projects with voluntary participation from the local authorities and schools. For the same reason it was necessary to collaborate with the local authorities and schools throughout the organisational phase on the focus and form of the evaluations to far greater extents than would be the case in other evaluations conducted by EVA.

3.3 Methods applied

The elements of methods listed below were included in the effect study and will be described in further details in the following sections:

- Identification of recommendations, conducted by EVA
- Other preliminary studies carried out by EVA, for example of literature and contact to evaluation researchers
- Interview with central key staff, conducted by EVA
- Questionnaire survey among central staff at the establishments involved in the study, conducted by TNS Gallup
- Interview with representatives from the establishments involved in the study, conducted by TNS Gallup
- 'Diversity study' i.e. a questionnaire survey among establishments offering higher commercial examination programmes that have not taken part in the evaluation, conducted by EVA.

EVA has considered how pupils and students could be included in the effect study but due to methodology it was found too difficult so they have not been included. The pupils and students who were included in the evaluation back then, have continued their studies whereas the current students have not been included in the evaluation process. Therefore they have no prerequisite for assessing the evaluation process that was conducted three years ago, or for assessing the *correlation* between it and the present circumstances in their educational programme.

Another possibility for including the pupils and the students was to repeat previous investigations – for example self evaluations and questionnaire surveys – among the present students. Nor could this solution be used to document a correlation between the evaluation or any subsequent changes. In other words, the difference between two studies could be caused by factors other than EVA's evaluations.

3.3.1 Identification of recommendations

All of the recommendations from the four evaluation reports have been reviewed and categorised according to a number of parameters:

- theme – what is the theme of the recommendation?
- level – is the recommendation aimed at the institution or the ministry, for example?
- time – is the recommendation short-term or long-term?
- causality – what is the level of abstraction of the recommendation?
- proximity to the establishment – Is the recommendation aimed at one single establishment or an educational area in general?
- type of player – to what extent does the recommendation explicitly indicate who should follow up on it?
- graduation – what importance does the recommendation have, is it a recommendation or an opportunity to develop?

The identification has helped giving an overview of the recommendations made in the evaluations. Moreover, it has formed the basis for hypothesis and analysis of whether there was a difference in the experienced effect of the recommendations depending on causality and whether the recommendation is short-term or long-term⁵.

In a couple of evaluation reports the recommendations have been written as a part of the text without being specifically emphasised. The result has been some room for interpretation of when it was an actual recommendation or just reasoning.

3.3.2 Other preliminary study

The effect study was introduced by studies of literature to narrow the concept of effect. The literature was found among other things by contacting a number of evaluation researchers and others working with evaluations⁶. The first definition of the concept of effect was formulated on the basis hereof and a project description was prepared.

The evaluation consultants from EVA who have been in charge of the evaluations that were selected (none of whom have been included in the project team under the effect study) were first interviewed about their experience and assessments of the evaluation period and process. Moreover, they became involved in issues such as which groups of players at the establishments and central staff in the ministries would be relevant to include as respondents in the effect study.

⁵ However, the study showed that there was no indication of a difference in the follow-up procedure between the different types of recommendations. That is why they are not included in next chapter's presentation of the effects of the evaluations.

⁶ Olaf Rieper, AKF; Erik Riiskjær, Århus Amts Service- og Kvalitetskontor; Poul Skov, DPU; Staffan Wahlén, Höskoleverket, Sweden; Jürgen Harnisch, Zentrale Evaluations- und Akkreditierungsagentur, Germany; Josef Grifoll, Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya, Spain; Peter Williams, QAA, UK; Bruno Curvale, Comité National d'Evaluation, France; Ton Vroeijenstijn, Vereniging Van Universiteiten, the Netherlands.

3.3.3 Interview with central staff

EVA has conducted three interviews with central staff in the Ministry of Education and academic organisations to identify their assessment of:

- The effects of the evaluations in the Ministry of Education and the academic organisations, respectively
- the effects of the evaluations among the institutions.

Two persons were invited at each interview that lasted for 1-1½ hour.

Table 1

Interview respondents

Interview	Respondents
1	Academic consultants in the subjects physics and history and social studies in upper secondary schools
2	The chairman of the academic organisation for physics in upper secondary schools and a board member from the academic organisation for history and social studies in upper secondary schools
3	Staff responsible for higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations under the remit of the Ministry of Education.

The respondents to the interview were selected from their central position within the educational area evaluated. Other respondents could also have been relevant, e.g. the chairman of the association of upper secondary school headmasters and the chairman of the National Union of Upper Secondary School Teachers. However, the interviews have satisfied their objective as they have given some insight into the academic organisations and the Ministry of Education's use of the reports and by giving a broader view of the experienced evaluation effect at the institutions.

3.3.4 The assignment performed by a consultancy

TNS Gallup has conducted a questionnaire survey and a number of interviews with respondents from the evaluations selected. TNS Gallup has prepared an overall analysis on the basis of the data gathered. The analysis is presented in this report.

There were both advantages and disadvantages with asking a consultancy to carry out the assignment to gather the majority of the documentation and conduct the subsequent analysis. It was no doubt appropriate for EVA not to issue questionnaires and conduct interviews. It gave the respondents an opportunity to express their attitudes to an independent third party. Moreover, it has been important to ensure that it was the third party who gathered and analysed the material in order that the greater understanding that representatives from EVA could carry, would not affect the findings.

One of the disadvantages – which is a general condition when using consultancies – is that TNS Gallup has not had thorough knowledge about the context of the individual evaluations and EVA's method. It affects the findings of the study conducted by the consultancy.

3.3.5 Questionnaire survey

TNS Gallup conducted a questionnaire survey among the 39 establishments that were included altogether in the four evaluations selected including self evaluation and visits. They include:

- 15 upper secondary schools that have taken part in the evaluation of history as a subject in upper secondary education programmes. The respondents include the headmaster and subject coordinators or similar.
- 15 upper secondary schools that have taken part in the evaluation of physics as a subject in upper secondary education programmes. The respondents include the headmaster and subject coordinators or similar.
- Four schools that were included in the evaluation of transition from higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations to higher education study

programmes by also having a visit. The respondents include heads of education and educational and vocational guidance counsellors.

- Five basic study programmes that were included in the evaluation of the basic study programmes at Roskilde University and Aalborg University. The respondents include:
 - ▲ Roskilde University: rector, head of faculty and course supervisors in the basic study programmes
 - ▲ Aalborg University: rector, head of faculty and course supervisors in the basic years during the study programme.

Two upper secondary schools did not wish to or could not be included in the study. During the period when data was gathered it was reported that heads of faculties were often not appropriate as respondents since they do not have actual experience in the basic study programmes. Instead the course supervisors in the superstructure courses were considered an obvious group of respondents. TNS Gallup thus included them in the questionnaire survey. TNS Gallup also ensured that if new candidates were appointed to some of the relevant posts, the previous candidates would be included whenever possible.

The survey was an overall study where all relevant respondents received a questionnaire. For all four areas evaluated there was a relatively small population, but the validity is reinforced by the fact that the survey is conducted as an overall study. Nevertheless, when reading the percentages that derive from the survey the small populations should be kept in mind! The number of respondents in the questionnaire survey and the percentage of responses are shown in appendix A.

The questionnaires were prepared by EVA and included a general part and a specified part. In the general part the respondents were asked about their assessment of:

- how the overall evaluation has contributed to development in the establishment, including its aims and objectives, structure and internal dialogue
- whether individual parts of the evaluation process, i.e. self evaluation, user survey, visits at the establishment, hearing, any seminar/conference activities and the final report had helped implement development at the establishment
- whether the recommendations of the report have been followed.

In the specific part of the questionnaire some questions were prepared for *each individual recommendation* that catered for the respondents at the establishments in the respective evaluation reports⁷. The questions related to the respondents' assessment of:

- whether there had been any follow-up on the recommendation
- whether the recommendation is relevant for the area in question
- whether the language used in the recommendation is formulated in such a manner that it stimulates follow-up.

This type of question technique resulted in comprehensive questionnaires for the respondents who were included in evaluations where many recommendations were made. The questionnaires included all in all questions related to between 10 and 43 specific recommendations.

The findings from the questionnaire survey have helped with providing an overview of the respondents' assessments of whether the recommendations have been followed up, and to what extent the evaluations have helped to start off development at the establishments.

3.3.6 Interview

TNS Gallup has conducted the qualitative part of the survey in the form of individual and focus group interviews. The interviews included the following respondents:

⁷ Any recommendations that did not refer to the establishments, e.g. at ministerial level, were opted out in the questionnaire.

Table 2
Informants in interview

Institution/subject	No. of informants	Job descriptions (any potential)
Roskilde University	5	Rector, vice rector, course supervisor and head of section within the central study guidance department, head of faculty in the basic study programmes
Aalborg University	4	Course supervisors in the basic study programmes, deans, head of department
Higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations	3 and 3	Head of education and educational and vocational guidance counsellors
History and social studies in upper secondary school	6	Rector and subject coordinators or the like
Physics in upper secondary school	6	Rector and subject coordinators or the like

Originally the plan was to include more informants. E.g. four to five rectors and four to five subject coordinators, respectively, from the evaluation of history and social studies and the evaluation of physics have been included. However, TNS Gallup unfortunately did not succeed in gathering the desired number of respondents for the interviews despite their attempts. Most of the interviews were conducted in groups; some have even been conducted as telephone interviews.

Two focus group interviews were conducted including respondents from the basic study programmes. The respondents at Roskilde University were interviewed at Gallup in Copenhagen and the respondents from Aalborg were interviewed at the university. The respondents from the two universities were interviewed separately, partly because the descriptions, assessments and recommendations of the reports were specific to the individual university, and partly for practical reasons since the two universities are geographically situated far away from each other.

The respondents from history in upper secondary school and physics in upper secondary school were interviewed across the school boundaries. This choice was made because none of the evaluations, as opposed to the evaluation of the basic study programmes, included descriptions or recommendations closely related to their establishment. The essential element to examine throughout the interviews was the respondents' experience and assessment of the evaluations, their findings and effect. If each interview were conducted with only one single respondent from one of the schools, there would be a risk that the in-house conditions at the school might take up far too much room. However, the respondents from the higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations were interviewed at school level for practical reasons because the schools are situated in opposite corners of Denmark.

The headings for the interviews were generally:

- The experienced effect of the evaluations
- The reasons why the effect was experienced in that manner
- Experience of the evaluation process and its influence on the effect
- Other elements that might have contributed to the evaluation having had an effect and the experience of being evaluated.

TNS Gallup has stated that the respondents were very enthusiastic during the interviews and had a need to 'state their view points'. Moreover, TNS Gallup found that the focus group interviews ensured that the individual statements were more sophisticated and had wider perspectives and an intimate atmosphere was created for professional sharing of ideas. However, individual interviews would have had other advantages. This form of interview might

have given room to a wider range of attitudes than the ones expressed at a focus group interview with academic counterparts from other schools. It is of course the moderator's responsibility to ensure that all attitudes are voiced but the respondents may feel that some attitudes are more legitimate to voice in front of colleagues rather than in front of other people.

All things considered, the interviews have generated indispensable knowledge. They have all helped providing understanding and explanations where the questionnaire survey provided an overview of attitudes. However, there is much discrepancy between the quantitative and the qualitative findings compared to the scope of the experienced effect. In this respect the quantitative findings are generally more positive than the qualitative ones. It is difficult to tell what has caused this discrepancy. One hypothesis could be that the difference in methods is important. In the quantitative survey the respondents had to take defined questions into account, whereas the respondents in the qualitative survey had to keep in mind and define what effects they had experienced from the evaluation.

The explorative approach in the interviews has helped focus on some elements that are different from the questionnaire surveys. The findings of the questionnaires arrive at an indication of experienced effect or lack of effect, whereas the findings of the interview examine to a much larger extent *why* the experience is the way it is. Moreover, the respondents have prepared the agenda for the interviews and it has been a very central point in the effect study to obtain the respondents' assessment of what elements they found important to focus on. This way the findings from the interviews can become important input for EVA's continuous development and improvement of methods and practice.

3.3.7 Diversity study

EVA has also conducted a study of to what extent effects of an evaluation can be detected at establishments that are similar to those evaluated but which have not been included in the evaluation. The reason why that perspective was included is that the evaluations conducted by EVA may only directly include a small part of the large number of establishments that are available at the different educational areas.

Being a pilot project it has been decided to examine the diversity effect of the evaluation of transition from higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations to higher education study programmes. EVA has decided not to examine diversity in all of the relevant evaluations of upper secondary school, since it is a pilot project and EVA generally seeks to limit the number of questionnaire surveys among relevant parties to an absolute minimum.

The method chosen to measure the diversity effect is in the form of a questionnaire survey because this method provides a quantifiable/representative result that can identify areas in which the evaluation must have had an effect. All heads of education and course supervisors responsible for overall pedagogy at higher commercial examination programmes and educational and vocational guidance counsellors at the higher commercial examination schools that have not been included in the evaluation, have received a questionnaire. A total of 74 % have completed the questionnaire. The respondents were asked to assess the following topics:

- Are they familiar with and/or have they read the evaluation report and/or a smaller publication from the evaluation?
- Has the evaluation started off discussions, development and new ways of thinking at their school?
- Has their school followed up on some of the central recommendations of the report?

The diversity study and its high response rate reflect whether the evaluation has reached the school that was not included in the evaluation.

4 Effects of the evaluations

This chapter presents the effects that the respondents in the effect study have acknowledged they have experienced. The findings appeared on the basis of the definition of effect that was described in the previous chapter, i.e. the experienced effect.

First of all the chapter presents the effects from the evaluation of the basic study programmes, and then the effects from the evaluation of history and social studies in upper secondary school, followed by the evaluation of physics in upper secondary school and finally the effects from the evaluation of transition from higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations to higher education study programmes. The chapter is concluded by a summing-up.

4.1 The basic study programmes

4.1.1 The effect assessed in the responses to the questionnaire

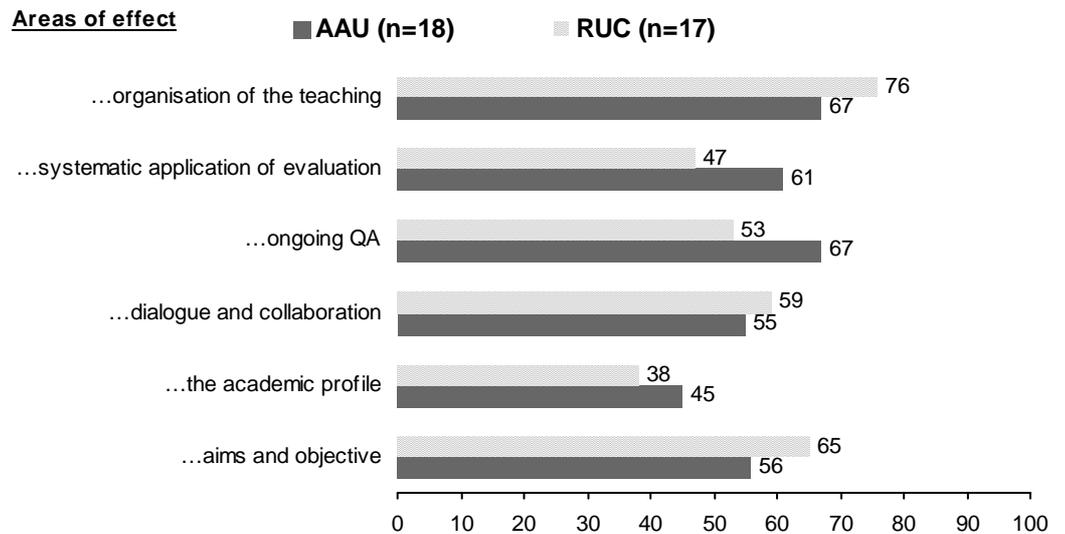
In the questionnaire survey the rector and other relevant heads of faculties and course supervisors from Roskilde University and Aalborg University were asked to answer the question: 'to what extent has the basic study programmes generally followed the recommendations of the evaluation report'. At Roskilde University 88 % of the respondents found that to a large extent (18 %) or to some extent (70 %) they have *generally* followed up on the recommendations. At Aalborg University 61 % found that this was the case (11 % and 50 %). Thus a relatively large percentage especially at Roskilde University found that such follow-up were made.

In relation to *each individual* recommendation the respondents were asked whether a particular recommendation had been followed up. An accumulation of all the answers made by the respondents gives the following result (see Appendix B that shows TNS Gallup's method of calculating the accumulated percentages). At Roskilde University it is found that 43 % of the recommendations have to a large extent been followed up (10 %) or to some extent (22 %) or that development measures were implemented before the report was published (11 %). At Aalborg University the respondents found that 39 % of the recommendations have been followed up to a large extent (6 %) or to some extent (21 %) or that development measures were implemented before the report was published (12 %).

The two ways in which to ask whether the recommendations have been followed up thereby generate different responses. The general question about the overall follow-ups on the recommendations gives the largest percentage of positive responses. It is of course a case of having two responses that are difficult to compare, because in one case it is taken from the number of respondents and in the other from the number of recommendations.

In both basic study programmes most of the respondents found that the organisation of the teaching – among a number of other elements – has been reinforced or developed after EVA conducted their evaluation. They count 76 % from Roskilde University and 67 % from Aalborg University (see Figure 1). This must be said to be relatively large shares. Moreover, 67 % of the respondents from Aalborg University experienced that the evaluation has helped to develop/reinforce the ongoing QA. The professional profile of the programmes is the element that the lowest percentages of respondents (45 %) from Roskilde University and (38 %) from Aalborg University find have been reinforced/developed because of the evaluation.

Figure 1
The respondents' assessment of "to what extent the evaluation in general has contributed to develop/reinforce..." in percentage of the number of affirmative responses (to a large extent or to some extent) for Aalborg University and Roskilde University, respectively.



The difference between the assessments of the evaluation at Aalborg University and Roskilde University and its effects can be caused by various elements. It appears from the qualitative interviews that Aalborg University from the beginning of the evaluation was affected by a deep concern whether an institute located in Copenhagen – like EVA – would be able to understand a university situated in a provincial area. The respondents from Roskilde University believed that the 'blue print' they experienced that the evaluation report gave the basic study programmes had the effect that Roskilde University was positively surprised about the evaluation and its findings.

4.1.2 The effect assessed by interview

During the interviews the respondents were also asked to describe which effect they had experienced from the evaluation. However, the findings achieved from this were different, more sophisticated and slightly more critical than the findings from the questionnaire survey. The respondents from Roskilde University stated that the effect had primarily meant that various elements of the programme were in focus and certain change processes were also started off faster. Many measures were already started off prior to the evaluation and many recommendations have given ongoing development an extra boost by reflection and discussion.

The respondents to the interview from Roskilde University were asked to describe which recommendations they recalled had had an effect - however, they were not unanimous. The respondents agreed only on one single recommendation that had had an effect. The course supervisor at Basic Studies in the Natural Sciences now holds office for a period of four years where previously it was for two years only. For the other relevant recommendations, the university reform or undefined elements are emphasised as hindrances to the effect.

Like the respondents from Roskilde University, their counterparts of Aalborg find that many of the recommended measures were already implemented when the report was published and that the effect of the report has primarily been that reflection and debate was increased.

However, the assessment made by the respondents from Aalborg University on the recommendations they recalled is severely affected by the fact that one of the recommendations in the evaluation to make a more detailed design of the basic part has led to a conflict between basic and superstructure. The respondents believe that the recommendation

was misused. This experience seems in general to have affected the general assessment of Aalborg University negatively, although they do not blame EVA for this 'misuse' and the consequent conflict.

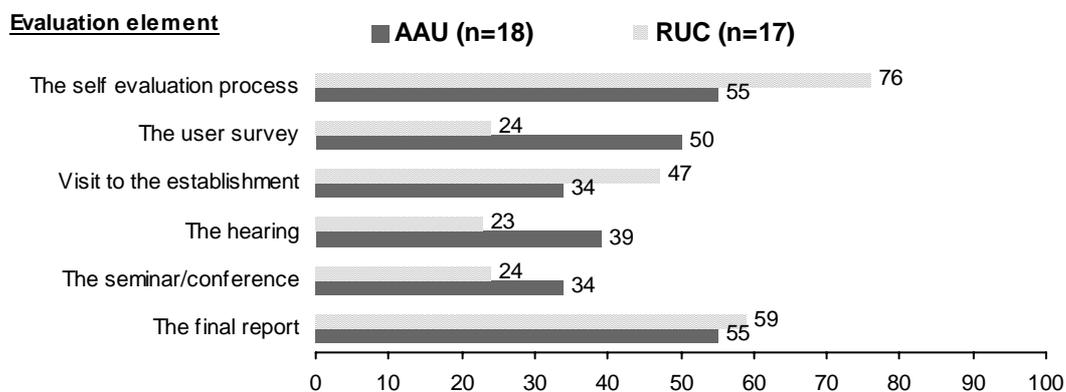
Only one single recommendation is believed to have had an actual effect. This is the recommendation to create closer correlation between the teaching activities and the project work, but also here the recommendation seems primarily to be a reinforcement of an already ongoing activity.

4.1.3 The effect of the various elements of the evaluation

In the questionnaire and the interviews the respondents were asked to respond to whether the individual elements of the evaluation have helped to start off development in the basic study programmes. As illustrated in Figure 2 - and in the interviews – most of the respondents from Roskilde University have experienced that the self evaluation process has been important for the development in their basic study programmes. This is what 76 % of the respondents found. However, 60 % of the respondents also indicate that the report has been very important or important to some extent.

At Aalborg University the respondents also indicate that the self evaluation is an important element for a development process, and according to the questionnaire survey to the same extent as the report (55 %). However, in the interview the respondents from Aalborg University emphasised that the development process that the self evaluation started off was hampered by the long time span between the self evaluation and the final report.

Figure 2
The respondents' assessment of "whether the individual elements of the overall evaluation process have helped starting off development in the basic study programme", percentage of affirmative responses (to a large or to some extent)



According to the questionnaires internal and external elements were not that important for the follow-up activities from the report. It should be noted, however, that 35 % of the respondents from Roskilde University indicate that external elements have hampered their follow-up activities. It has not been possible to examine which external elements they had in mind. Moreover, one of the hypotheses is that the use of the report at Aalborg University can be hampered by the fact that the report unintentionally has added fuel to the internal conflict between the basic study programmes and the superstructure programmes. In general the respondents at Aalborg University do not find as mentioned above that internal elements have hampered follow-up on the evaluation.

4.2 History in upper secondary school

4.2.1 The effect assessed by responses to questionnaire

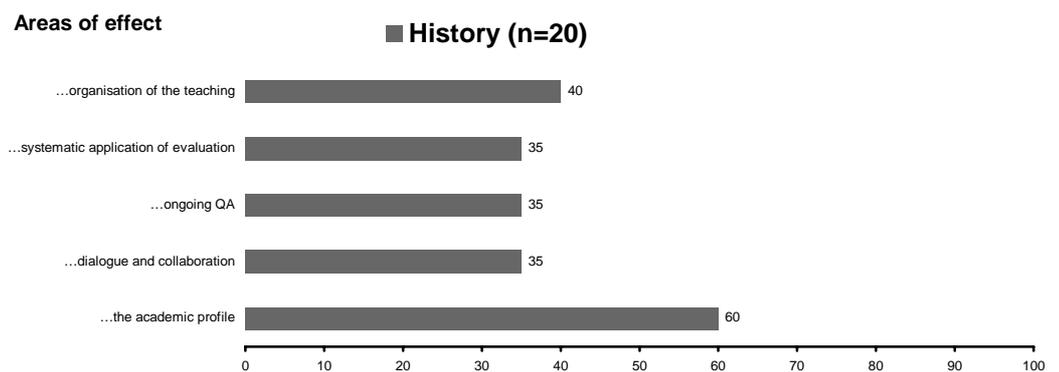
The rector and subject coordinators were included as respondents in the questionnaire survey in the evaluation of history. The respondents find to a very limited extent that their institutions have *generally* followed the recommendations of the report. 45 % of the respondents have

stated that the institutions to some extent have followed the report – none of them have stated to a large extent.

As to the questions posed in the questionnaires about follow-up on *every single* recommendation of the evaluation report, the respondents find that 62 % of the recommendations were to a large extent (8 %) or to some extent (26 %) followed up or development was started off before the report was published (28 %) (See Appendix B for method of calculation). A relatively large part of the development that is recommended is thereby found to have been started off prior to the evaluation. In relation hereto it is worth remembering that attempts are made to design the recommendations of the evaluation so that they will be relevant for all upper secondary schools nationwide – and not only for the 15 upper secondary schools that were included in the self evaluation. The recommendations may therefore also be used to communicate good ideas from the evaluated upper secondary schools to the others.

The respondents have stated to what extent the evaluation has helped to reinforce various elements regarding the subject, see Figure 3. A total of 60 % of the respondents find that the evaluation in general has helped to develop or reinforce the academic profile in history to some extent or to a large extent. While 35-40 % find that the organisation of the teaching, systematic application of evaluation, regular QA and dialogue and collaboration have become developed/reinforced to a large extent or to some extent.

Figure 3
The respondents' assessment of "to what extent the evaluation in general has contributed to develop/reinforce..." in percentage of the number of affirmative responses (to a large or some extent)



4.2.2 The effect assessed by interview

In the qualitative interview the rectors and history teachers were asked what effects they recall from the evaluation. The same applies to these groups as to the respondents from the basic study programmes interviewed namely that the indications from the qualitative findings are more critical than the quantitative ones but at the same time the qualitative findings contribute with much more explanation and sophistication. The rectors and the teachers find that the evaluation was not that important for the subject as a whole. However, they indicate that the evaluation has contributed to more debate about the future of the subject and the academic priorities in general.

The respondents give several reasons for their critical view on the effect of the evaluation. At the beginning of the evaluation there was a negative atmosphere caused by dissatisfaction among the history teachers that the schools had to pay for their participation in EVA's self evaluation. This negative atmosphere was intensified by the fact that the evaluation was conducted after a new collective agreement was introduced which the teachers were generally dissatisfied with. Moreover, the respondents stated that their attitude to the evaluation has been affected by anxiety about what the evaluation was all about, or in other words they were concerned that there was a hidden political agenda in the wake of the evaluation. Moreover,

the respondents found that the relationship between EVA and the subject adviser did not work out properly. A possible interpretation is that all these elements might have given cause to the general reluctance towards the report that the respondents expressed. Moreover, the representative from the association of history teachers who was interviewed stated that the history teachers found that there was no clear correlation between documentation and recommendations in the report. This may also have created a more negative atmosphere.

Furthermore, the rectors and the history teachers emphasised that the report did not bring any new ideas and therefore it might end up gathering dust on the shelf. The same viewpoint was expressed during the interview with the representative from the association of history teachers. The view turned out to be in line with the fact that the respondents included in the questionnaire survey found that development had been started off in relation to a relatively high percentage of recommendations (28 %) as mentioned above.

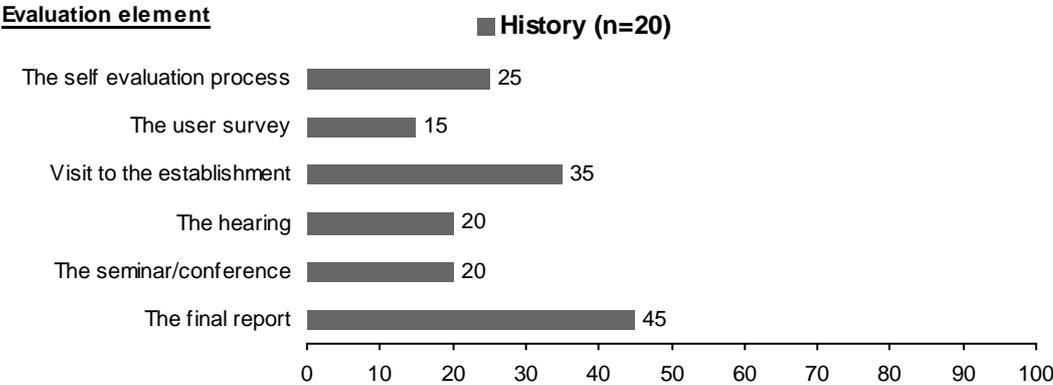
The teachers, the rectors and the representative from the association of history teachers also refer to the culture among upper secondary school teachers as a reason why the evaluation report has not gained a stronger foothold. The culture among teachers is described as difficult to affect and change. The representative from the association of history teachers stated that the teachers feel that their professional standard as a teacher first and foremost is affiliated to a wide knowledge of their subject more than to the role of educators. They feel responsible for the provisions of the regulations covering the guidelines for the individual subjects and want to adjust their teaching accordingly. The impact of the evaluation is therefore tied to its effect on the regulations covering the guidelines for the individual subjects.

4.2.3 The effect of the various elements of the evaluation

In the questionnaire questions were posed regarding the effects of the various elements in the evaluation process. A total of 45 % of the respondents find that the evaluation report has helped start off development activities at their establishment to some extent or to a large extent, see Figure 4. A total of 35 % of the respondents find that the visit to the establishment has been very important. Only 15-20 % of the respondents find that every single remaining element to some extent or to a large extent has helped start off development. This was a fact in the user survey, the hearing, the seminar and the self evaluation.

It is worth noting that only 25 % of the respondents find that the self evaluation process has led to development. Other groups of respondents, the teachers in physics amongst others, find that the self evaluation has played a far more important role as an engine for development.

Figure 4
The respondents’ assessment of “whether the individual elements of the overall evaluation process have helped starting off development at the establishment”, percentage of affirmative responses (to a large extent or to some extent)



In the questionnaires 30 % of the respondents indicate that internal elements at their establishments to a large extent or to some extent have hampered the follow-up activities at

the establishment, whereas 50 % stated that they have not been important. Only a few respondents find that external elements have hampered follow-up activities in the evaluation.

However, the representative from the association of history teachers and the subject adviser indicate that the change of government and the upper secondary school reform are factors that have put many follow-up processes on hold. The change of government is for example stated as the reason why initiatives to follow-ups suggested by the report from the association of history teachers and the subject adviser had to be cancelled.

4.3 Physics in upper secondary school

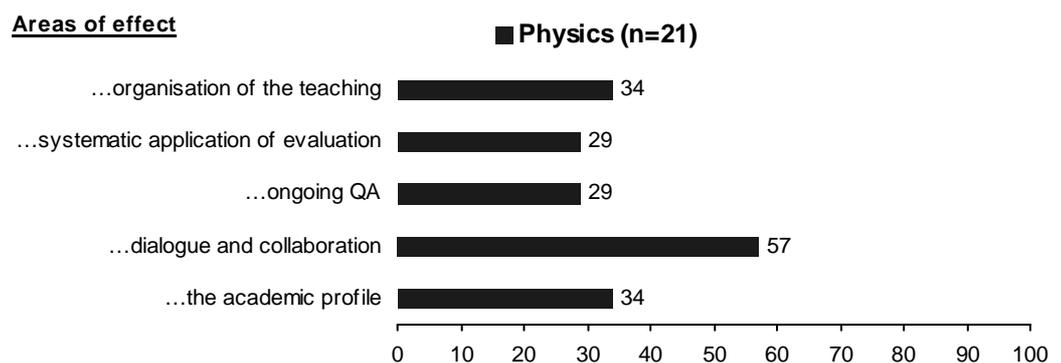
4.3.1 The effect assessed by responses to questionnaires

In the questionnaire survey the rectors and subject coordinators were asked to respond to the question "to what extent their establishment in general has followed the recommendations in the evaluation report". A total of 67 % of the respondents stated that it had been complied with to a large extent or to some extent.

The respondents' replies to the follow-up on *each individual* specific recommendation in the report, indicate that 56 % of the recommendations were followed up to a large extent (6 %) or to some extent (13 %), or that measures had been implemented before the evaluation report was issued (37 %) (See Appendix B for method of calculation). Moreover, the respondents find that 70 % of the recommendations were relevant.

To the question posed in the questionnaire whether the evaluation as a whole had contributed to develop/reinforce various elements in the programme, 57 % of the respondents stated that dialogue and collaborative activities had been improved to some extent or to a large extent, see Figure 5. Between 29-34 % of the respondents replied that systematic application of evaluation, the ongoing QA, organisation of the teaching and the professional profile have been improved to some extent or to a large extent.

Figure 5
The respondents' assessment of "to what extent the evaluation in general has contributed to develop/reinforce..." in percentage of the number of affirmative responses (to a large extent or to some extent)



4.3.2 The effect assessed by interview

Part of the statements from the interviews with rectors and history teachers from the evaluation of history and social studies were repeated in the interviews with rectors and physics teachers from the evaluation of physics. In particular there was anxiety about a hidden agenda in the evaluation. Moreover, the respondents interviewed in the evaluation of physics emphasised that they agreed with the descriptions in the evaluation report but that the report did not contribute with anything new. Nor could they identify a recommendation that had had an effect.

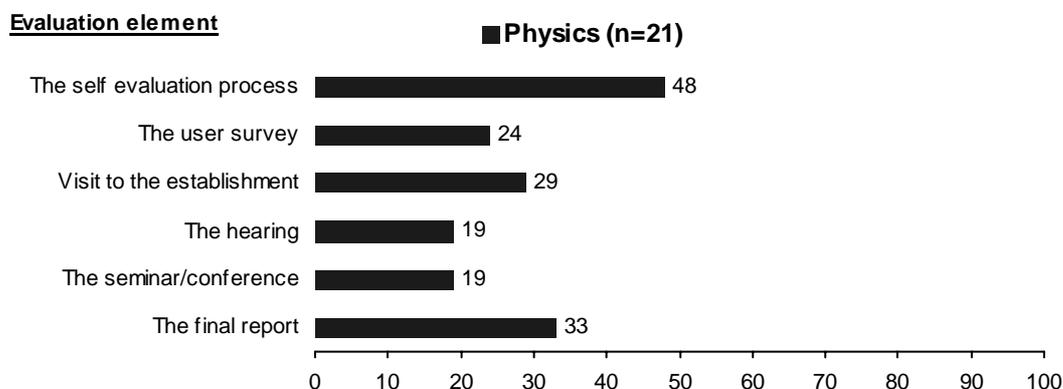
The respondents from the interview emphasised that physics is a subject that has been examined thoroughly. Prior to EVA's evaluation critical studies of the subject had thus been published, and that may have affected expectations to and the experience of EVA's evaluation and contributed to the experience that the evaluation did not contribute with any news. However, only 19 % of the respondents in the questionnaire survey indicate that external elements to a large or some extent may have hampered the establishments' follow-ups on the evaluation. The subject adviser and the representative from the association of history teachers indicate that the change of government and the prospects of a reform of the upper secondary schools have delayed the effect of the evaluation, amongst others in relation to the follow-up made by the Ministry of Education.

4.3.3 The effect of the various elements of the evaluation

The respondents' assessment of the fact that the evaluation has been important for dialogue and collaboration can probably be attributed to the relatively large number of the respondents (48 %) who found that the self evaluation has had a positive impact to a large extent or to some extent, see Figure 6. The respondents in the interview also found that the self evaluation contributed to a positive trend. The representative from the association of physics teachers and the subject adviser stated for example that the self evaluation process has contributed to more intensified collaboration and a better dialogue in the academic groups.

Fewer respondents, 33 % and 29 % respectively, have experienced that the final report and the visit to the establishment has contributed to development to a large extent or to some extent, whereas 19-24 % of the respondents have experienced that conference, hearing and user survey have had that effect.

Figure 6
The respondents' assessment of "whether the individual elements of the overall evaluation process have helped starting off development at the establishment", percentage of affirmative responses (to a large extent or to some extent)



4.3.4 The effect identified by subject advisers and representatives from the academic associations

Apart from the impression that has already been described above, the subject advisers and representatives from the academic organisations referred to other elements associated with effects.

Likewise they did not find that the reports described anything new. On the other hand, especially the subject advisers found that the reports have contributed with extensive documentation that can help making visible what actually goes on in the teaching. The extensive documentation material has also been used as source for knowledge by the researchers.

As regards the representatives from the ministry it is rather difficult to talk about a clear correlation between the two evaluations and a political approach. A few measures were already in the melting pot before the reports were issued, especially within physics.

Currently the respondents find that it is rather in the new non-completed curriculum that the effect of the evaluations shall be found.

4.4 Higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations

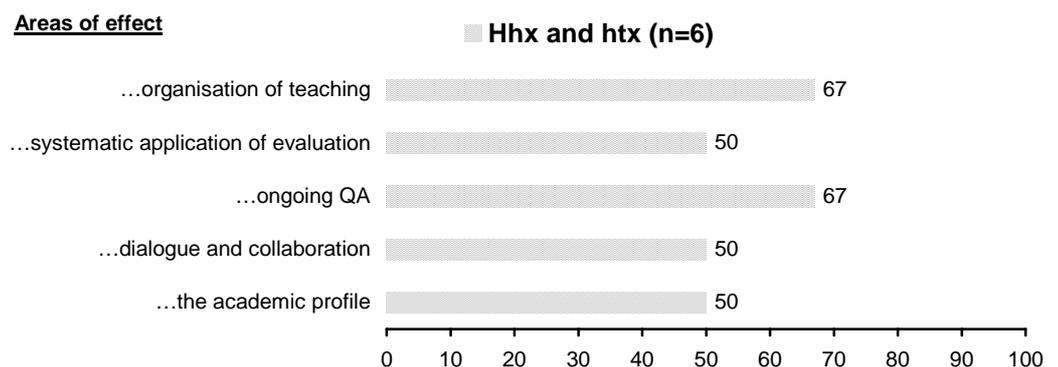
4.4.1 The effect assessed by responses to questionnaire

At the schools for higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations the assessment of the effect of the evaluation is generally very positive. The questionnaire survey prepared for the respondents at the schools for higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations, i.e. heads of education and educational and vocational guidance counsellors, shows that 67 % (i.e. 4 persons) find that their school *generally* to a large extent or to some extent has followed the recommendations.

The replies from the respondents in relation to what extent they find that *every single* specific recommendation has been followed up, indicate that 87 % of the recommendations were followed up to a large extent (39 %) or to some extent (39 %) or that measures had been implemented before the evaluation report was issued (9 %).

As regards the question posed in the questionnaire to what extent the evaluation as a whole has contributed to develop/reinforce different parts of the programme, 67 % (i.e. 4 persons) responded that the evaluation has been important for the organisation of the teaching and the ongoing QA, see Figure 7. The percentage of responses in the other areas – systematic application of evaluation, dialogue and collaboration and the academic profile – were all at 50 % (i.e. 3 persons).

Figure 7
The respondents' assessment of "to what extent the evaluation in general has contributed to develop/reinforce..." in percentage of the number of affirmative responses (to a large extent or to some extent) from higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations



4.4.2 The effect assessed by interview

Heads of education and educational and vocational guidance counsellors from higher technical examination programmes mentioned in the interview that the effect of the evaluation first and foremost is experienced as PR value for the programme. They experienced that the programme with the evaluation was shown, respected and communicated to the outside – something that they had obviously been missing. This is also confirmed by the interview of those responsible for higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations from the Ministry of education.

The heads of education and educational and vocational guidance counsellors indicated that they find that many of the recommendations in the report are aimed at the Ministry of Education. The analysis for the recommendations that were made as a preliminary study for the effect study shows, however, that the majority of the recommendations (95 %) were explicitly targeted at the schools and/or the teachers. The effect study does not suggest an unambiguous cause for this discrepancy.

Moreover, the respondents found that the recommendations in the evaluation have had various effects. First and foremost they have been important for the procedures and for reorganising priorities in the schools.

The following shows the effects of the recommendations that the respondents from higher commercial examination programmes – without prompt – recall:

- More systematic evaluation of the teaching has now been integrated – however some experience this as a control measure.
- As a result of the report more targeted guidance is implemented compared to motivation for higher education. It is a question of specific measures such as interviews after graduation and an extensive STORM –concept (student-oriented meetings in upper secondary programmes).

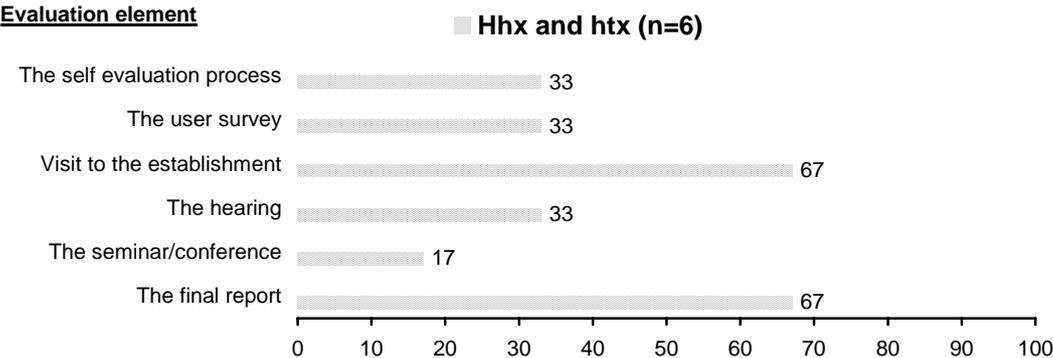
The respondents from higher technical examination programmes recall:

- The report has started off an important debate about the contents of and reinforcement of the profile of the higher technical examination programmes.
- The recommendation to strengthen the study environment at the schools came as a surprise, but it has started off improvements. The schools now work on strengthening the pupils’ sense of an actual study environment.

4.4.3 Effects of the various elements of the evaluation

For the higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations – in contrast to other programmes – the self evaluation has had less effect than other elements of the process according to the questionnaires. This is probably due to the fact that the self evaluation in the higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations was based on a questionnaire-like guidance that to a lesser degree than usual for EVA’s self evaluations invited to internal reflection and dialogue. Thus only 33 % (i.e. 2 persons) found that the self evaluation process to a large extent or to some extent has supported improvements, see Figure 8. The factors that have been most important in this area are the visits to the establishments and the final report, stated by 67 % (i.e. 4 persons) to a large extent or to some extent. The user survey, hearing and seminar are found by 33 % (i.e. 2 persons) and 17 % (i.e. 1 person), respectively, to have been important for the improvement.

Figure 8
The respondents’ assessment of “whether the individual elements of the overall evaluation process have helped starting off development at the department”, percentage of affirmative responses (to a large extent or to some extent) for the commercial examination programmes and the higher technical examinations



The respondents in the questionnaire survey do not find that internal or external elements have either hampered or stimulated the opportunities for follow-ups. Though the respondents experience that many recommendations are aimed at the Ministry, has reduced their impression of being 'the target group' for the report and thus the experience of effect. Again it should be emphasised that the majority of the recommendations were explicitly aimed at the schools but the respondents have obviously not had this impression.

4.4.4 The effect identified by responsible parties in the commercial examination programmes and the higher technical examinations from the Ministry of Education

Responsible parties in the Ministry of Education in commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations stated that it has not been possible for them to distinguish between the effects of the evaluation and the effects caused by other factors. A decision was for example made on some measures before the report was issued, e.g. amendments of examination methods in commercial examination programmes.

The parties responsible for commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations indicated that they agreed with the reflections made in the evaluation report that upper secondary programmes must change 'gear' compared to the primary and lower secondary programmes, and that it was something they had worked on in the Ministry. The recommendation could therefore be used as 'a ram' to proceed with the Ministry's own plan. On the other hand, there were some recommendations that the parties responsible for commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations did not agree about and consequently they have not proceeded with them.

Finally, it is important for the effect of EVA's evaluations to what extent they are in line with or different from political trends. All respondents included in the interview from the academic organisations and ministries emphasis that the impact of course is more significant if a recommendation is in compliance with current political intentions of measures. This does not least apply to recommendations that have financial consequences.

4.5 Study of the spread effect

The aim of the evaluations conducted by EVA in primary and lower secondary schools and post-secondary programmes is typically to describe and assess practice aimed at a wider field than the establishments that are included in an evaluation, in order to start off improvements in other establishments. In the effect study it has been examined whether any other parties apart from the establishments that were included in the evaluation knew a given evaluation and its findings. The schools for higher technical examination programmes were selected as case in the pilot project. The other school areas were opted out in order not to include too many respondents in the pilot project as mentioned in the section on methods applied.

The heads of education and course supervisors and educational and vocational guidance counsellors from the 55 schools for higher commercial examination programmes that were not included in the evaluation have received a questionnaire about their knowledge and application of the evaluation. Since EVA has not formulated any success criteria from the outset for the distribution of their reports, it may be difficult to decide whether the spread effect we can identify is satisfactory. However, higher commercial examination programmes is an area with relatively few establishments, and the evaluation of transition from higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations was the first EVA evaluation conducted in that area. Therefore you might expect a reasonably high recognition of the evaluation, which is indeed the case. A total of 77 % of the heads of education/course supervisors indicate that they have knowledge of the evaluation to a large extent (50 %) or to some extent (27 %). A total of 68 % of the educational and vocational guidance counsellors have knowledge about the evaluation to a large extent (26 %) or to some extent (42 %). Thus the guidance counsellors have less knowledge about the evaluation than the heads. The first group mentioned might have been expected to have special interest in the evaluation since it

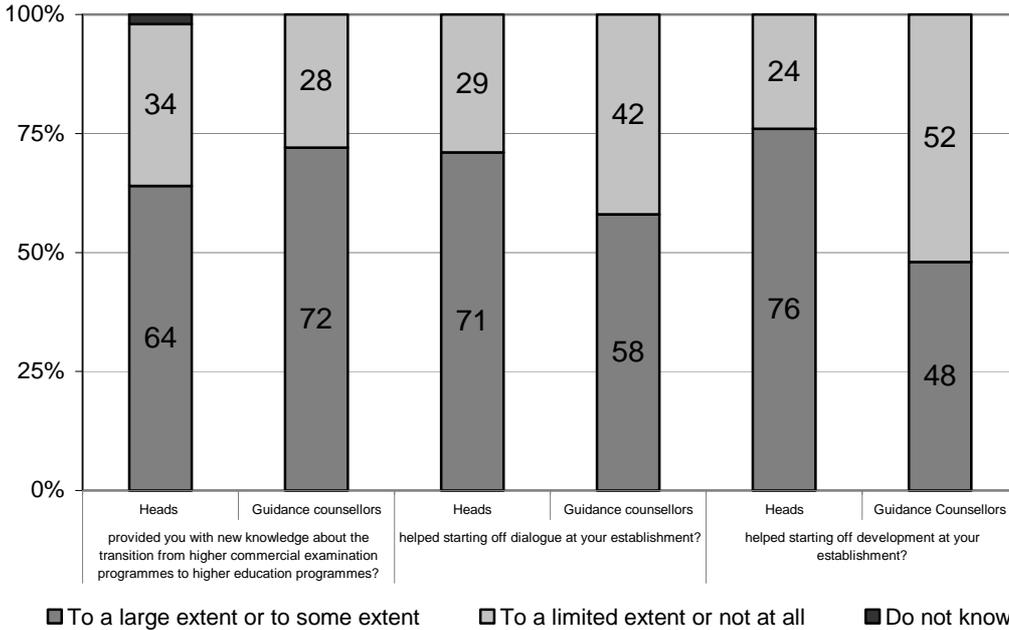
deals widely with their responsibilities. The survey fails to show what has caused the two groups to differ.

19 respondents – 17 guidance counsellors and 2 relatively newly appointed heads – stated that they had no knowledge about the evaluation. The 19 respondents have not completed the remaining part of the questionnaire. Throughout the rest of this section reference is only made to the persons who acknowledged that they knew about the evaluation. They include 41 heads and 64 guidance counsellors.

Of these 86 % of the heads and 90 % of the guidance counsellors, respectively, stated that they had read everything in the report on the higher commercial examination programme or parts of it. A larger part of the heads (59 %) than guidance counsellors (31 %) have read everything about the higher commercial examination programme in the report.

In general heads and guidance counsellors estimate that the evaluation has had a positive impact on several areas, see Figure 9. A total of 76 % of the heads found that the evaluation to a large extent or to some extent has helped start off improvements at their school, only 46 % of the guidance counsellors hold this position. On the other hand, 72 % of the guidance counsellors found that the evaluation report to some extent or to a large extent provided them with new knowledge, 64 % of the heads hold this position. 71 % of the heads and 58 % of the guidance counsellors found that the evaluation has helped starting off discussions at their school. 76 % of the heads and 48 % of the guidance counsellors found that the evaluation has helped starting off development at their school.

Figure 9
The respondents' replies to "to what extent do you find that the evaluation has ...":

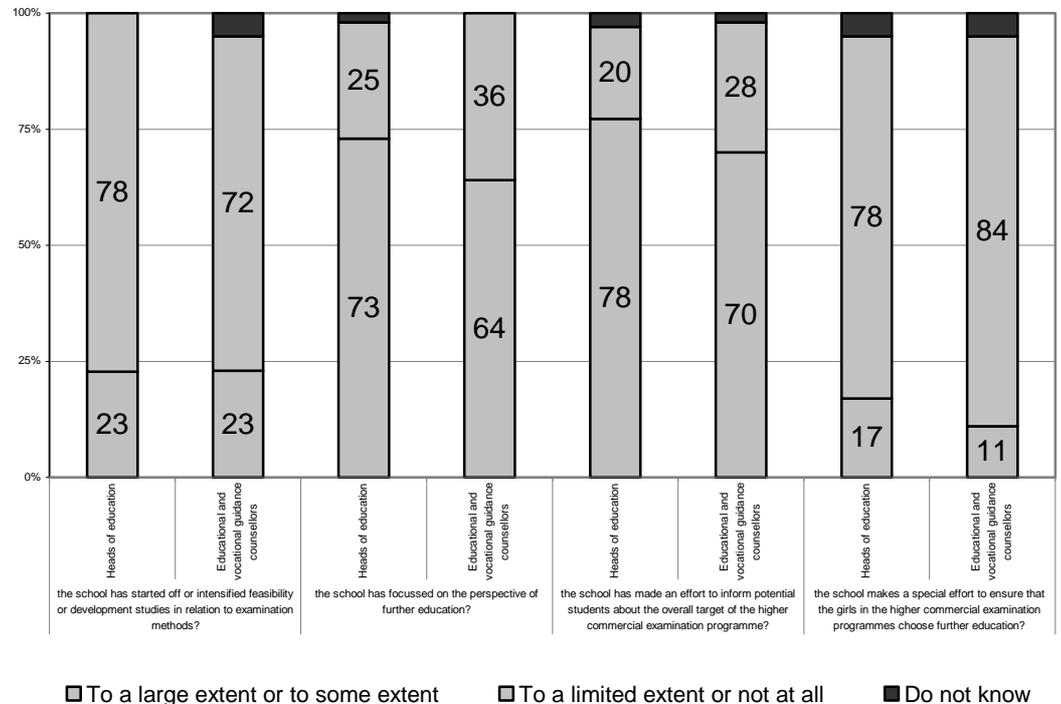


It is again worth noting the difference between the heads and the guidance counsellors. The heads have – with one exemption – a more positive view than the guidance counsellors on the impact of the evaluation. The survey does not suggest a cause for that.

The heads and the guidance counsellors were asked to assess whether the evaluation has contributed to improve four areas that were covered by the recommendations in the evaluation report, see Figure 10. The responses were positive to a large extent in two areas, i.e. whether the evaluation has contributed to "the school has focussed on the perspective of higher education" and whether the evaluation has contributed to "the school has made an effort to inform potential students about the overall target of the higher commercial examination programme". Between 64-78 % of the guidance counsellors and the heads suggested such attitudes. On the other hand, a considerably smaller number – between 11 and 23 % – found

that the evaluation has contributed to “the school has started off or intensified feasibility or development studies in relation to examination methods” and that “the school makes a special effort to ensure that the girls in the higher commercial examination programmes choose higher education”. In relation to these four questions, the heads are generally more positive in their assessment than the guidance counsellors.

Figure 10
The respondents’ replies to “has the evaluation contributed to the school having...”:



The study of the spread effect generally shows reasonable diversity of the messages in the evaluation report and the intention to improve, though there are some exceptions such as making an effort to ensure that the girls in the higher commercial examination programme choose higher education.

4.6 Summing up

The effect study shows that the most important effect in the evaluations is that it helps starting off dialogue and reflection at the establishments. Moreover, the evaluations contribute to various elements becoming more visible and focussed. The study shows that an evaluation effect is experienced only to a limited extent in the form of concrete action. This result is very much in line with Hofstetter and Alkin’s report (2202) that was presented in Chapter 3. They emphasise that the effects of evaluations are often seen as reducing insecurity, starting processes off and raise the level of attention towards specific matters.

However, the extent to which the participants experience an effect varies from one evaluation to another. The effect experienced is most prominent in higher commercial examination programmes and higher technical examinations. This is also reflected in the fact that knowledge of the message in the evaluation report and the intention to improvement has dispersed into the schools for higher commercial examination programmes that were not included in the evaluation. It should be pointed out that the disparity effect has not been examined for the other types of establishments. The basic study programmes experience to a more limited extent an effect - however, Roskilde University found the effect more extensive than Aalborg University. The respondents in the evaluations of physics and history and social studies found to an even more limited extent that there had been an effect.

According to Stensaker’s epilogue for the effect study, which is presented in Chapter 5, the findings from the effects study generally correspond to the findings that other effect studies in

evaluations of educational programmes have achieved. In that respect, the findings should be considered satisfactory.

The respondents to the effect study have found that the documentation material has helped to shed light on and document several important elements. It has for example been quite useful both for ministries and researchers. Many of the respondents in the interview criticised the evaluations stating, "they don't bring any new ideas". But the question is to what extent the aim of EVA's evaluation reports is to "bring any new ideas". The reports are based on statements made by players in the educational environment and attempt to illustrate how the educational programmes/establishments function. The suggestions for improvement are therefore based on this description of reality, which must be recognisable to the players.

5 Epilogue: effects of evaluation – a relativisation

This chapter is written by Bjørn Stensaker from the Norwegian Institute for Studies in Research and Higher Education (NIFU) who has been asked by EVA to put the study and its findings into a broader perspective after the effect study had been completed.

5.1 Introduction

Evaluations seem to have come to stay in our society. These processes are today a natural part of the current body of control. The growing number of evaluations can be attributed to the trend of increased delegation of authority and responsibility in society - both in the public and in the private sector. Where central control used to be the tradition individual organisations are now much more responsible for achieving objectives and results. The fact that responsibility is delegated in this manner and is narrower makes it far more imperative but also simpler to conduct an evaluation of an organisation. The object that needs to be evaluated is often more clearly limited and the processes and the targets that are the object of the evaluation are often so specified that they open up for an evaluation.

The current body of control demands also that the evaluations conducted will have consequences for what they apply to. The evaluations constitute the 'wider society's' control that the increased responsibility is taken, that financial resources are spent sensibly and that the objectives are actually achieved. As part of this control from society, it is natural that the evaluations be subjected to an assessment. Do they have any effect? Do they contribute to the body of control operating in accordance with the purpose? Will the objectives drafted be achieved?

When evaluations are subjected to such assessments, it seems however that you look slightly beyond the given context in which the evaluations are included. The current body of control also defines how to take control of the evaluated organisation. When evaluations are assessed, the perspective that the evaluation idea forms a natural part of is often the only one that is established – and not other perspectives that 'goes beyond' this mindset. The result is that the wider context is ignored. However, this epilogue is suggested as an attempt to 'widen' the focus - since we first need to assess the effects that EVA's business seems to have for the establishments given the more traditional framework for how to perceive 'effects' but the other perspectives must be introduced to challenge our way of thinking and question what evaluations are 'good' for, who benefit from the evaluations, and not least what can be expected to be the effects of an evaluation.

5.2 Effects of evaluations in education – what do we know?

Compared to the current body of control – what we could call the rational/instrumental perspective – effect studies are an area in which scientific criteria should be established as the basis for measurements. It is often desirable to work out the exact criteria for what can be considered an effect, and the efforts to find 'objective' targets dominate the work. In our days a parallel can be drawn to various sectors, and attempts to find 'performance indicators' that in a simple and plausible way can tell us whether the objectives for a given organisation are achieved.

However, the problem that often arises is that ambitions for a scientific approach often have to be abandoned due to difficulties in establishing causal connections. Although it is far simpler to study changes in one single institution instead of the educational sector as a whole, there are

various elements that contribute to complicate the assumed cause – impact connections: The institutions are changing continuously, many factors, and not only the evaluation institute, affect these changes, and create effects in composition and diversity. And when are you actually supposed to measure effects– after one year or after ten years? In the first case the effect cannot yet have been achieved. In the other cases the driving force behind the changes might be forgotten. Researchers have therefore largely given up finding ‘objective’ targets for the effects of an evaluation, and apply different forms of method triangulation and ‘subjective’ targets to be able to make meaningful suggestions on what happens after the evaluations have been completed. The effect study conducted by EVA is one out of a number of attempts to find and identify ‘objective’ indicators first, but afterwards realising that ‘subjective’ indicators would probably be more suitable.

If such ‘subjective’ indicators are taken into account – the experience that a given organisation voice – you can, however, compare the effects that EVA has suggested both to previous effect studies of Danish evaluations and international studies in this area.

Effects of Danish evaluations over time

In Denmark national evaluations have been conducted since 1992, and in connection with the former Evaluation Centre changing from a pilot scheme to a permanent establishment in 1998/99 an effect study was conducted of the evaluations that had been prepared during the period up until 1998. The study, which was conducted by PLS-Consult suggested effects that fit well with the effects that EVA, has now identified in ‘the second round’. Typical effects that were identified in 1998 were that several respondents had a positive experience of the entire evaluation process, that self evaluation was the individual process that most people could benefit from, and that the establishments had followed up on the recommendations in the evaluations in more than 60 % of the cases (though with variations between subjects and establishments) (PLS-Consult 1998: 4-6). Moreover, PLS-Consult found that the typical effects of the evaluations were that they ‘urged’ existing change processes and that the degree of discussions and reflection processes in the establishments had increased accordingly (see also Massy 1999).

These findings match the findings from the effect study conducted by EVA quite well. The findings should also be considered reliable since they are consistent over time (same effects) but they are also interesting since they have more or less the same strength. For example, there seems to be followed up on the same number of recommendations as before. Some researchers in this area have previously claimed that evaluations in education will have a declining effect when they are repeated since the establishments will then ‘learn’ how to adapt to the evaluations, and might reduce their interest in these processes - they have become ‘harmless’ (See e.g. Jeliaskova & Westerheijden 2001). That the effects seem to be consistent over time in Denmark indicates that this assumption is not necessarily accurate. Maybe one of the reasons could be found in the discussions and reflections that the evaluations in Denmark seem to contribute to? It is therefore a question whether the assumption that the effect will be reduced should be attributed only to evaluations with an extensive control function, while the Danish evaluations, that have also included development and improvement as important objectives, will thus be less ‘vulnerable’ to such ‘strategic conduct’?

Effects of the Danish evaluations in an international perspective

As a result of the increased diversity in the evaluations of education in Europe throughout the 90s, and that many studies have been conducted to examine the effects of these, it is also possible to link the Danish findings to various international studies (see Stensaker 2003 for a summing up).

The Danish findings seem in general to match quite well with what has been done in other international effect studies. To sum these up:

- About 50-60 % of the recommendations generated by the evaluation are subsequently followed up by the establishments.

- The self evaluation process is often emphasised as the individual element that has most impact (especially if the external evaluation to a limited extent challenges or comes as a 'surprise to' the establishment. Where the external evaluation manages to give the establishment a new perspective of the organisation, this element will be far more appreciated).
- The evaluations often have the effect that attention rises to elements attributed to teaching and learning. Since credit transfer in academia is often attributed to research, such rise in attention has the effect that educational issues are put on the agenda of the establishments to a much larger extent.
- In general you see that discussions and the level of reflections are subsequently increased at the establishments.
- An unintentional effect of the evaluations (but also of other change processes in academia) is that the degree of what you might call 'bureaucracy' and centralisation increases. The phenomenon of bureaucracy is often attributed to the need to establish your own QA systems at the establishments as well as the routines that arise as a consequence of these. Centralisation often emerges as an effect of the need for management and control that the establishment's leadership (because responsibility is vested in them) has to follow up on processes that can be important for the reputation of the establishment and its ability to produce results.
- The evaluations increasingly contribute to 'transparency' – often establishing new communication channels, databases and improved basis for statistical comparison to increase establishments' ability to 'answer' the questions that the evaluations generate.
- None of the studies show a correlation between national evaluations and the students' learning output.

If you compare the effects mentioned above to the Danish findings you will find many similarities regarding follow-ups on recommendations, the self evaluation process when it comes to increased discussions and maybe also 'bureaucracy'. Complaints that it takes a long time to conduct the evaluations can not least be interpreted as an expression of the fact that the administrative burden increased as a result of the evaluation processes. The conclusion is therefore that the Danish findings are typical for this form of evaluation in education, and that the effects discovered in Denmark are what you might expect from an international perspective.

5.3 Assessment of effect – other potential perspectives

So far only the traditional rational/instrumental view on the assessment of effects has been established. When evaluations are exposed to assessment, other perspectives may, however, also be established – perspectives which to a much greater extent challenge our perception of what evaluations are good for and what function they fulfil. Some of these perspectives are presented in the following.

A political perspective

Since national evaluations are established to pass controlling information to the authorities among other things, and from a controlling perspective, you may, however, claim that the effects of an evaluation should be linked 'back' to this starting point instead. Instead of asking the question whether the evaluations have contributed to changes at the institutions, the question should be phrased as to what extent the evaluations have had effects at the political level. Will politicians use the output from the evaluations? Are politicians satisfied with how the evaluations operate as a control instrument?

A typical finding in national evaluations is that they often to a limited extent are 'applied' by the authorities that commission them (see e.g. Sandberg et al 2002). This does not mean that the evaluations cannot affect this perspective too. The policy is, as in many other fields, exposed to increased 'control' and a 'good' effect in such a perspective would for example be that politicians obtained credit and positive feedback from various players at the evaluation institutes in general (the fact that you try to 'measure' quality may, in a political perspective, indicate that you try to 'do something' for the quality). In Denmark it is possible to suggest that

this is a view for example that the political authorities adopted when EVA was established in 1998/99 (UFK 1998).

In this perspective the variable effect is thus attributed to what extent the evaluations contribute to support the control ideology of the political authorities, and how the evaluations make current policies in education legitimate.

A market perspective

An alternative perspective to the effects of the evaluations is to consider the evaluations a form of 'user information' – the purpose of which is ultimately to offer the students the best conditions for learning as possible, and to pass the information to the parents about where their child should study, or to inform potential employers about the candidates they should take on the payroll. In such a perspective the effects should rather be measured in relation to the existing 'educational market'. As mentioned above it is difficult to find studies that show that national evaluations are of direct importance to the students' output from their learning (Stensaker 2003). Likewise, it is difficult to find studies that show that evaluations (especially those rating institutions) are important for the students' choice of institution. In the light of the increased use of 'the market metaphor' in the educational sector it is, however, highly probable that this perspective will become increasingly more important in the coming years.

In this perspective the variable effect will be attributed to the concept of relevance to a much larger extent, and how the evaluations contribute to the strengthening of the educational programme's relevance to various 'users/consumers' within this sector. In the effect studies conducted in Denmark, this perspective is only taken into account to a limited extent although the design of evaluations in Denmark has integrated such thinking in the form of the user surveys that are regularly conducted.

A post-modern perspective

It is also possible to establish an ironic – we can call it post-modern – perspective as to how the effects of the evaluation business in Denmark can be assessed. If your starting point is more recent (newly institutionalised) organisational thinking, the most important effect of the evaluations is not that the students, the politicians or the establishments are satisfied with the evaluations, but that EVA is considered an important institute by other players in education, something that can ensure that EVA will survive in the long run.

When EVA was established in the mid-90s and had to justify its existence to the players within the sector, this line of thinking – tied with its own importance and survival – was relatively clear. In the self evaluation report that was formulated in 1998 it was not least emphasised how important it was that the evaluations appeared as 'reliable' (EVA 1998: 25), an indication that the institute at that time clearly emphasised how important it was that the design of the evaluations was considered serious and impeccable. That EVA in its methods applies a large number of data sources is not necessary just an expression of the wish to prepare the best evaluations possible, but may also be interpreted as a need to acquire a good profile so you become an establishment that the Danish educational system cannot do without.

Some important effects in such a perspective would be attributed to others' perception of EVA's importance to ensure and improve the quality of higher education in Denmark. In order to achieve such effects you should not underestimate the need to prepare 'extensive' evaluation reports, establish thorough and systematic routines on how to conduct an evaluation and be careful that no players be 'forgotten' in the evaluation process. Although EVA is now a permanent body, it will sooner or later be confronted with the question of 'cost-benefit' of conducting evaluations - i.e. whether the costs of evaluations are in excess of the benefits. This perspective might be ironical, but it may easily become a regular one in the future.

What is the use of all these perspectives?

The purpose behind the illustration of alternative perspectives as to what evaluations are 'good' for and to identify how effects are changing since you attribute the purpose of the evaluation to various interests, is first and foremost to show that the simplified target-means thinking that are often used to describe evaluations and studies of the effects thereof should be abandoned, and instead use the effect studies to a more random analysis of the context of which the evaluations form part. As the Danish researcher in evaluations Dahler-Larsen (2000:167) so strikingly indicated, evaluations help 'constitute reality' – and effect studies of the same evaluations often have the same impact.

Moreover, it can be argued that there are plenty of reasons to challenge such 'constituted reality'. If the effects of various forms of evaluations should be studied again in the time to come, the use of many of the perspectives could increase the benefit from such studies:

- Much more discussion and reflection on the evaluations and their objectives could be generated to a larger extent. The institutions have clearly experienced that there is more discussion and reflection on their business after the evaluations were conducted, something that has contributed to starting off new change processes. Maybe time is ripe to stimulate more discussion and reflection in the evaluation processes too? Evaluation can be seen as a form of systematic dialogue between society and the educational sector that might become even more open to the political skills arena. An effect can attract more attention and involvement in these processes for various players.
- You may contribute much more to (further) develop EVA as a 'learning organisation' where even more motivation, development orientation and reflection practice with the staff can become the final result. Like Askling et al (1998) indicated in a former assessment of EVA, the challenge to the organisation has not traditionally been attributed to 'technical operation' competencies, but the need to add wider competencies than you have time for in busy everyday life. Since follow-up is not for EVA to perform by definition, though EVA has an indirect responsibility thereof (since improvement is part of the purpose behind the evaluations) - the effect studies can be used to assist the establishment in their follow-ups (what are the circumstances that improve/hamper follow-ups on evaluations?).
- You may also benefit from taking various perspectives if you have an ambition to be on the cutting edge of the trends in society and to further develop evaluations used as a controlling instrument in more general terms. Not least is it highly probable that the demands for insight, openness, legitimacy and 'market orientation' will be strengthened in the coming years, and that the demands will also affect what are considered 'good' evaluations. If the evaluations are not changed in line with society's view of value, they may easily become outdated control processes. You may claim that some control measures have just become 'obsolete' because they possess features which society no longer consider relevant (see e.g. Stensaker 1998).

5.4 Conclusion

Like Askling et al (1998) have emphasised before, EVA as an organisation finds itself in between academic subjects and politics – where stakeholders from both worlds make demands for the business that EVA runs. The challenge for EVA – both before, now and in the time to come – is to identify and develop its business in ways that will please both worlds. This means that not only should the evaluation business be conducted in a 'balanced way' – but the effects of the evaluations should also include such balance.

5.5 References

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Analysis of responses from the questionnaire survey

The tables below illustrate the percentage responses from the questionnaire survey – in total and for the individual groups of respondents. Since it became clear throughout the period when TNS Gallup gathered the data that the heads of departments typically were not suitable as respondents and that the questionnaires should be directed at the course supervisors in the superstructure courses instead, two tables have been prepared below - one that includes the two groups and one that does not.

Table 1

Group of respondents including heads of departments and course supervisors in the superstructure courses, percentage and number

	Included		Not included		All	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
Basic study programmes in the Humanities at Roskilde University	18 %	2	82 %	9	100 %	11
Basic study programmes in the Social Sciences at Roskilde University	33 %	5	67 %	10	100 %	15
Basic study programmes in the Natural Sciences at Roskilde University	33 %	3	67 %	6	100 %	9
Inter-disciplinary Roskilde University	100 %	4	0 %	0	100 %	4
<i>All programmes at Roskilde University</i>	<i>40 %</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>60 %</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>100 %</i>	<i>42</i>
Basic study programmes in the Social Sciences at Aalborg University	32 %	8	68 %	17	100 %	25
Technology and Natural Sciences at Aalborg University	40 %	8	60 %	12	100 %	20
Interdisciplinary Aalborg University	100 %	2	0 %	0	100 %	2
<i>All programmes at Aalborg University</i>	<i>38 %</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>62 %</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>100 %</i>	<i>47</i>
Higher commercial examination programmes	75 %	3	25 %	1	100 %	4
Higher technical examination programmes	50 %	3	50 %	3	100 %	6

<i>Higher commercial examination programmes + Higher technical examination programmes</i>	60 %	6	40 %	4	100 %	10
<i>History and social studies in upper secondary school</i>	71 %	20	29 %	8	100 %	28
<i>Physics in upper secondary school</i>	72 %	21	28 %	8	100 %	29
Key ratios	53 %	82	47 %	74	100 %	156

Table 2**Group of respondents not including heads of departments and course supervisors in the superstructure courses, percentage and number**

	Included		Not included		All	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
Basic study programmes in the Humanities at Roskilde University	100 %	1	0 %	0	100 %	1
Basic study programmes in the Social Sciences at Roskilde University	100 %	1	0 %	0	100 %	1
Basic study programmes in the Natural Sciences at Roskilde University	100 %	1	0 %	0	100 %	1
Interdisciplinary Roskilde University (rector etc.)	100 %	4	0 %	0	100 %	4
<i>All programmes at Roskilde University</i>	<i>100 %</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>0 %</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>100 %</i>	<i>7</i>
Basic study programmes in the Social Sciences at Aalborg University	67 %	2	33 %	1	100 %	3
Technology and Natural Sciences at Aalborg University	100 %	2	0 %	0	100 %	2
Interdisciplinary Aalborg University	100 %	2	0 %	0	100 %	2
<i>All programmes at Aalborg University</i>	<i>86 %</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>14 %</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>100 %</i>	<i>7</i>
Higher commercial examination programmes	75 %	3	25 %	1	100 %	4
Higher technical examination programmes	50 %	3	50 %	3	100 %	6
Higher commercial examination programmes + Higher technical examination programmes	60 %	6	40 %	4	100 %	10
History and social studies in upper secondary school	71 %	20	29 %	8	100 %	28
Physics in upper secondary school	72 %	21	28 %	8	100 %	29
Key ratios	74 %	61	26 %	21	100 %	61

Appendix B

Accumulation of responses from the questionnaires

In the analysis conducted by TNS Gallup the respondents' replies to questions to each individual recommendation are accumulated in the questionnaire to obtain a clear overview of the responses. TNS Gallup has prepared a concept of counting which briefly "add together the responses to the individual specific recommendations" within each type (A, B and C, respectively). Technically speaking the exercise is rather complicated since it requires that all nine sets of data (cf. that there are nine sets of specific recommendations) be thoroughly transposed and reviewed.

In terms of contents the exercise is illustrated in the tables below:

Answer key	The question of specific recommendation (three types – A, B and C – as per recommendation)					
Respondent	X1A	X1B	X1C	X2A	X2B	X2C
1	1	2	5	3	2	5
2	2	1	5	4	1	5
3	1	4	2	2	2	2

List of responses: 1=to a large extent; 2=to some extent; 3=to a limited extent; 4=Not at all; 5=Do not know 6=Started off before the report; 7=NA

Number of responses	TYPE			
List of responses	A	B	C	Total
1. To a large extent	2 (1+1)	2	-	4
2. To some extent	2	3 (1+1+1)	2	7
3. To a limited extent	1	-	-	1
4. Not at all	1	1	-	2
5. Do not know	-	-	4	4
6. Started off before the report	-	-	-	-
7. NA	-	-	-	-