Results from Denmark's 2018 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth

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Introduction

There is a need for gathering and translating high quality knowledge on children, youth and physical activity (PA) to guide practice, program and policy development. The purpose of this paper is to summarize the results of the 2018 Danish Active Healthy Kids Report Card on PA for children and youth.

Methods

The 2018 Report Card includes 10 indicators for PA amongst children and youth (cf. Table 1). In Denmark, robust data is available on 7 of the 10 indicators. Indicator assessment with subsequent grading were based on national surveys related to health and/or PA behaviors (including the HBSC 2014 study,1 the National Health Survey 2017,2 the Youth Profile 2014,3 the Danish Sports Habits study 2016,4 the School day Movement study 2017,5 Managing the Primary School area 20176 and the SPIF 2018 study7), scientific literature (including Møller et al, 20144 and Tomkinson et al, 20176) and government reports/legislative documents (including The Day-care Act, The Danish Education Act, and The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity). Relevant data from 2014-2018 was used.

A national committee, consisting of members with different areas of expertise related to PA and human movement among children and youth, graded each indicator based on a structured consensus process. Designated committee members were asked to collect, analyze and present best available evidence on specific indicators and suggest an indicator grading. The presentation and preliminary grades formed the starting point for joint committee discussions to establish consensus on each of the indicators.

Results and Discussion

Denmark’s 2018 Report Card cover is displayed in Figure 1 and the grading of each indicator is summarized in Table 1. For the Overall Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour indicators, a firm
assessment of national trends is challenged by the fact that current data only concern children between 11-17 years of age – most of whom are in the latter part of this age range. It most certainly is expected that a larger part of the designated population would meet PA-recommendations if younger children were included. Thus, the reported data does not display a complete picture of the number of children and youth aged 5-17 who adhere to the recommendations for physical activity.

The level of policy and legislative support in relation to PA in a school context is relatively high in Denmark. It is, however, a challenge to implement and maintain stated objectives and targets. In future grading rounds, it may be considered to focus more on the municipal level. In Denmark, local authorities play a key role in the realization of public strategies on physical education, sport and leisure – including also the school area.

While seven of the ten indicators were assigned a grade in the 2018 Report Card, research and monitoring gaps remain that, if addressed, would better inform the process. Firstly, methodological challenges related to objective versus subjective measures are observed. Secondly, quality data is missing on a total of three core indicators.

**Conclusion**

The first Danish Report Card on PA for children and youth from 2016 showed that Denmark performed rather well on strategic and
political levels, but that the impact on the individual level were somewhat scanty. This indicated an implementation gap between the governmental and individual level. Two years later, the implementation issue remains perhaps the greatest challenge – alongside the need for more comprehensive and methodologically solid studies to better address and grade the full range of indicators.

References


