



Marginalization of the Youth – a Current Societal Development?

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The last two years a discussion on reforming the public sector has emerged. At its very heart we find important concepts like ‘quality reform’, ‘democracy’, and ‘development’. Recently I have presented an example of the ‘quality reform’ in SocMag, and this leads me to prolong that discussion on central themes on welfare state and democracy. Much energy is invested in arguing about management of the public sector: Do we need more competition from private companies? Do we need more control? Are more contracts concerning outcome needed? Can we be sure about the accountability needed from politicians? How much documentation, effectiveness measurement, bureaucracy, and evidence-based policy and practice are we looking for? A number of interesting questions – but strange enough we do not discuss the purpose of ‘keeping a welfare state’. What sort of understanding is lying behind the welfare state, and what kind of democracy are we drawing upon?

The following pages are partly inspired by and partly referring to Katrin Hjort (Hjort 2008).

As a parallel to what Katrin Hjort is telling in her article, I introduce the discussion by referring to a similar ‘invention’: Nearly 8-9 years ago – as I was still employed at ‘The University of Applied Pedagogical Sciences’ in Copenhagen – a handful of my students was as part of their diploma work doing developmental work in a municipality in the southern part of Zealand. During their research and ideas on how to develop kindergartens to become more inclusive they were asked to ‘prove’ that an early intervention towards small children stemming from ethnic minority families was worthwhile. In other words: they were asked to do a cost-benefit-analysis. They were not only astonished, but directly shocked. So got I, as they asked me to supervise their analysis. Until then I had – naively it showed up -believed that early interventions had to do with children at risk, and that such interventions were part of the Danish welfare state arrangement in order to avoid the children to become later on really exposed. At least 10 years ago one could still get shocked. To day nobody would get surprised. We have over the recent decade got used to the argumentation that welfare should pay off – for us. We are not supposed to love our neighbour as we love us self, we love our neighbours because of our selves (Petersen, L.H. and Petersen, J.H. 2007).

Looking a little more in depth we are experiencing a displacement or even a shift in our understanding of the reasons for having a welfare state and likewise a displacement of what a democratic society is understood as. In brief: we are confronted with more competing models of welfare and democracy.

Below I shall try to expand this example.

1 Systematic questioning current societal development

What is at stake in the Danish welfare state? As Shakespeare once wrote “there is something in the state of Denmark”. Let us try to find out what is rotten.

In general we’re facing radical changes, which Hjort illustrate by the figure below:

Classic Nordic welfare model	New models of welfare in the Nordic countries?
Welfare as <i>social insurance</i>	Welfare as <i>social service</i>
User	Consumer
Welfare as <i>social distribution</i>	Welfare as <i>social investment</i>
Citizen	Investor

The figure shows that the success of the Danish welfare state has been connected with its function as social insurance for the broadest segments and social classes, especially the middle classes. The principle is: by paying taxes people are insuring them selves in order to receive services which they really do not hope to use (long time in a hospital to get a cancer treatment for example). Along side of the insurance we find motives within the classic model contributing to social equality by redistributing the taxes to lower income groups, etc. This model met its ‘golden days’ in the 1960’es and early 1970’es – before the so called ‘oil crisis’, when stability and full employment were confronted with inflation and massive unemployment. The Keynesian receipts did not work satisfactory any more, and Friedman’s ideas on market directed governing of finances won the lead. During the 1980’es a broad wave of liberalization undermined the sovereignty of the nation-states. Production, labour, and thereby the question of unemployment became dependent on the development of international currencies and interests. The hitherto known correlation between economic activity and political authority was weakened, and nation-states were challenged by increasing problems of governing and controlling the national economy. In brief those changes meant an important shift of the nation-state from “social security state” (or welfare state) to “liberal competitive state” (or welfare society). Further this was followed by an understanding that what ever possible should be mobilized in the global competition (business culture, labour market structure, networks, relations of cooperation where ever, the ability of innovation of the Danish population, the level of education, etc.).

The original functions are based on three conditions:

- The regulation of working conditions – social policy in production
- The regulation of standard risks (illness, accidents, aging) – social policy in distribution
- The regulation of public services (education, health) – social policy in reproduction.

(Olsen 1990; Goul Andersen et al. 2000; Korsgaard 1982, 1997, 1999; Rosendal Jensen 2006; Hansen 2007).

This is more or less history and simultaneously a reservoir of counter memory, open for broad, popular mobilisation. Now a days the old definitions (left side of the figure) are competing with two new models (right side of the figure) – welfare as social service and as social investment.

Introducing social service means that distribution is no longer a matter of who needs what, but a matter of what each of us as consumers might claim as our right. We claim the right to exact declarations or information about the public services and the right to make complaints if we do not get what we have paid for. Furthermore this approach implies a set up of minimum standards or standard rights in order to protect the public service organisations against immense demands. Each and every one has the right to this or that service – if they request more, they have to buy additional services (Petersen, K. 2007; Petersen, J.H. and Petersen, L.H. 2007).

The fourth model has definitively left the idea that welfare is something that we pay for, a sort of necessary cost in a modern society. Welfare as social investment is quite the opposite, since the basic idea is to invest in order to get returns. It is no longer sufficient if the direct consumers or users (children, students, patients, and clients) are satisfied. As representatives of taxpayers, shareholders, or investors the state and the municipalities have to require that public financed human-service organisations submit an accurate account of their production and financial outcomes.

This rationalization of institutions of education, health and social services is said to be future oriented. If Denmark as a nation shall compete on the global market, what is then our competitive advantage? The really exceptional about Denmark is our welfare (flexicurity), so why not sell the welfare in order to preserve it? The local signs of that strategy are the processes of merging hospitals, universities, transportation, etc. to bigger units and by that enabling Danish institutions to compete with European or global institutions. The European background is the directive on services in order to create a European market for social services, education and health. Which are the consequences? At least my suggestion would point at comparative studies on exactly the consequences of a new welfare model in general and their implications for further marginalization of youth. Social investment means “no child or youngster left behind”, a slogan implying that we are urging youngsters to follow mainstream, the demands of normalisation and a not discussable quality of life. What about those – conscious or not – who prefer other life stiles? Or about those who do not have the know-how to be in a better position to articulate their specific demands? (Klausen and Ståhlberg 1999; Ejersbo and Greve 2002; Pedersen 2004; Hjort 2006; Moos 2006; Pedersen, O.K. 2006).

2 Paradise lost - is social service minus stigmatization possible?

The service as well as the investment model is raising new demands to democracy. It is well known that classic Nordic democracy was a representative democracy, supplemented by direct participation on local or regional level. The representative democracy is based on a broad public debate recognising human rights and reason, and built upon the tripartition of power, freedom of speech and organisation plus protection of every person’s private life and protection of minorities. “Doing democracy” in the educational system is a part of the legitimate purpose of the primary and secondary school. Whether we like it or not, this understanding depends on consensus, the idea that all interests and points of view have to be balanced and integrated into a totality (conservative, social democratic or communitarian).

This seems to be the direct cause of the high score of Danish pupils in international tests on democratic knowledge and competence (Dorf et al. 2005; Bruun et al. 2002, 2003).

The market democracy seems to be the opposite: not an integration of interests, but rather an aggregation of individual preferences. This understanding is conflict oriented, and the idea of balancing different interests and unite them for the sake of “the common good” has been dropped. Market democracy means that each group is supposed to follow its own interests, and the real challenge consists of guaranteeing the various interested parts maximal possibilities of choice and action (Olsen 1990; Petersen et al. 2007; Bøje et al. 2006). This means that the public is ascribed a new function. Former the precondition of making legitimate decisions was the public debate as known from Parliament, political parties, and independent media. The premise is that the public is informed about the decision making which in its turn anticipates freedom of speech – not only as the right to speak loudly about your own opinion in public, but also and primarily the duty to use a rational argumentation taking the rights of other human beings into consideration (Koch 1945). Training children and youngsters like this is mandatory for the Danish primary and secondary school system – in the form of a dialogue. Right in the centre of such dialogues you will find consideration and thoughtfulness in favour of your school mates as well as the responsibility in favour of the community you are a part of (Nordentoft 1944).

In the market democracy the most decisive point is that every individual is capable of making a reasonable choice in order to follow her own interests. This tends to raise several new problems:

First of all the function of the public changes from debate and reasoning to getting information on for example public services in order to ensure a “rational choice”. In addition the new competitive democracy, as it was labelled in the 1950’es in the US, seems to be a more indirect democracy, not depending any more on public debate and active political parties representing different interests in their programmes, but rather like the electoral campaigns in the US – find cases, which could be made actual, or arguments, which could be made popular, regardless of whether such cases or arguments are directly contradictory to what we traditionally understand as the political principles of the involved political parties. In brief a competitive democracy is about opinion. An interesting hard fact about the development mentioned has to do with changes on democratic participation during the last 4 decades: Up to the reform of municipalities 1970 Denmark had 1388 parish councils and 15.000 elected politicians on that level. After the reform in 2005 we have 98 municipalities and about 2000 elected politicians.

The figure below illustrates the points.

	Consensus – collectivity Integration of interests	Conflict – individuality Aggregation of preferences
Direct	Participatory democracy Public: Dialogue “We are all equal”	Market democracy Public: Information “Freedom of action depends on what you have”
Indirect	Representative democracy “gather a majority for a case” Public: Debate (traditionalism/humanism) Tripartition of power + protection of private life and minorities “All are equal to the law”	Competitive democracy “Create a case that gathers a majority” Public: Opinion (actuality/popularity) Strategic governing Loyalty Contracts “The Winner takes it all”

Which are the consequences? The social services model means that you as a consumer need to use your private spending power in order to get qualified services in the field of education and health.

The investment model represents a “Winner takes it all”-perspective, implying that a political majority is able to open agendas in areas former protected by the tripartition of power, the liberal rights of the citizens, among other things also the freedom of speech of the public servants, the right to clients’ private life and the protection of minorities. With regard to this we already have witnessed import of for example models like PMT or MST, development of evidence based manuals, demands of loyalty from side of public servants or professionals in regards of municipality budgets, etc. We should discuss further whether this trend is causing less independence and less professionalisation or eventually mere de-professionalisation in youth work, and we should discuss the consequences of giving up diversity and the right to be different. At home the political climate has changed in a sense one never thought of. The majority takes the decisions, and the minority is expected to be as loyal to those decisions as the members of the majority. In an enlarged version this seems to be very close to a dictatorship of the majority, resulting in neutralisation of the political public and minority

protection as parts of the classic representative democracy. The majority is in that sense always right, which means that some are more equal than others (Pedersen, M.N. 2007).

This discussion reactivates old questions like social rights – social justice, equality as well as inequality. Usually social rights are connected with a positive interpretation of the concept of freedom as opportunities of development. The role of the modern state is by definition not restricted to create rules of the game or procedures aiming at avoiding people from bothering each other. The role has much more to do with following up on objectives in order to provide citizens with social rights such as education, pensions, treatment, environmental protection, etc. Welfare policy becomes a question of social distribution aiming at social equality and justice. It is obvious that many understandings and/or concepts of equality are competing. In a narrow sense equality is reduced to formalities (none is directly denied access to education or medical treatment due to gender, social or ethnic background). In a wider sense Danish welfare researchers are using the term equality of outcomes – meaning that every citizen is getting the public services necessary to get the same chances of life as any other citizen. Equality of outcomes or consequent equality never was disseminated in modern societies, but the Nordic welfare states have had a programmatic effort of establishing social justice (Pedersen, S.H. 2007; Hansen, E.J. 2007; Petersen, K. 2007; Petersen, J.H. and Petersen, L.H. 2007).

Consequently the service model is caught in a dilemma. On one hand it stipulates citizens not only being formal equal, but in fact real equal (e.g. the number of years sponsored by the state for education); on the other hand it opposes to meet the needs – that those who have the largest need get most. The model stops at minimum standards, and if you need more you will have to pay it your self. Therefore, the service model implies a new sort of inclusion and exclusion based on people's private economy or their purchase power.

Further. The role of consumer is problematic in more ways: development of knowledge, mutual trust, authority and the basic understanding of the public good. When professional logic is undermined or given lesser space – meaning that the professional logic, the market logic, and the bureaucratic logic are changed or at least modified in the light of an alternate logic: the client or patient as co-producer. This might do well for well-educated people, organised in participatory boards. But which options do less educated people have? They are often accused of being promoting insecurity, crime, and ethnic conservatism. This is a visible stigmatization – but it seems possible to change when they organise in for example trade unions with colleagues, and when the trade unions are fighting for their members regardless of colour, ethnicity, religion, and habits.

In the following I will dwell on the investment model and the freedom of speech. While the service model raises questions about social rights, the investment model questions the liberal rights of freedom – the freedom from state restrictions or direct unjust measures. This entire question has been much more intensified since public institutions are now intentionally run as private businesses. Establishing political governed service providers – able to compete on market terms and at the same time governed by contracts – represents a hitherto unseen form of close linking between policy, professional work, and economy (Jensen and Rosendal Jensen 2007). Trying to develop political government in pedagogy or education is not a new feature – neither seen on a historical distance or in countries which we usually do not like to be compared to. But the new features consist of linking political priorities and practising public activities via financial incitements. The ambition is that the political level should be able to define as unambiguous goals for the professional work as possible. Outcome

measurement and salaries according to outcomes are seen as methods to implement this ambition. A well known example is the accountability system (Rahbek Schou 2006; Steensen 2006; Baumann 2007). This so called new structure of financial incitements is displacing the focus of the work of the professionals. Now the professionals have to take into consideration whether their efforts are worthwhile to offer clients, pupils, elderly people, etc. For example students not passing exams are a direct danger to teachers' jobs and income, since teachers might only get paid for those who pass exams or. The teachers might even get sacked if they are not able to perform on average level or better.

Such examples would be worth studying empirically in separate countries and since compared in order to get a picture of the various forms of activity, struggle, resistance and maybe even smaller or bigger victories/ achievements in different European countries (for an instructive example of how to start on a firm base – see Duyvendak et al. 2006).

3 Every day life and education: a European dimension?

As argued above such radical changes have a major impact on what we might call modern marginalization. Still, we are facing harsh examples of the old forms of marginalization (juvenile delinquents, homeless, disadvantaged, drug addicts, prostitution, school drop outs, poverty, lesser chances in life, etc.), but new forms are increasing in depth and importance. French scientists have stressed some interesting figures: those holding a 'secure, stable job' are assessed to be 51,6%, those holding a 'stable, but threatened job' at 28,5% and those holding 'unstable jobs' or 'unemployed' 20% of the working population (quoted from Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 351). Is there any connection between exclusion and social asymmetries? In many political discussions exclusion is presented as someone's misfortune, not as the result of social asymmetry from which people profit. Thus exclusion ignores exploitation. In most European countries the politicians try to make a clear distinction between exclusion and exploitation, since due to their argumentation exploitation only occurs at work, and since the majority of the excluded is lacking work. But it is possible to bring those two loose ends together? May we within an understanding of 'a new spirit of capitalism' find the missing link? Boltanski and Chiapello have recently (2005) tried to conceptualize a new ideological configuration called the 'projective city', which "is founded on the *mediating* activity employed in the creation of networks" (p. 107). The authors underline something interesting, namely some principles of the late modern way of life by which they discriminate between 'common superior principles' (like activity, projects, extension of networks, etc. – p. 109) as well as the 'condition of great men' and of 'little persons'. Without showing any detailed presentation here it is still important to understand the consequence of that new configuration in terms of forms of justice: status relation connected with redistributions of 'connections' or 'network'. To our purpose the most striking question is how an excluded person looks like. In the 'old days' exclusion had to do with poverty and exploitation – e.g. in a traditional Marxist understanding; then followed the modern type of exclusion understood as cultural poverty. In brief: the interpretations moved from 'class related exclusions' to 'exclusions related to the network metaphor' (ibid. 347-48), drawing upon Robert Castel's elaboration of the notion of disaffiliation. Class was thereby substituted by individual suffering, often seen as a lack of personal qualifications or competencies. The authors warn strongly against such kinds of explanations and substitute them by indignation at poverty as well as indignation at egoism.

Their argumentation is that "the new network mechanisms encourage the emergence and development of an original form of opportunism, which is different from market opportunism and more extensive" (ib. 355). Hereby they show that the 'great man' in that modern society

is mobile, streamlined, maintaining numerous connections, and able to extend networks. He is a so called 'network-extender' (356), while the similar person uses his success and qualities only to "serve their own personal interests in a selfish, even cynical fashion" (ib.). This latter person is called a 'networker'. If we distinguish between three types of capital (economic, human, and social), we may assign the last the most important role, because it conditions the possibility of accumulating capital in the other two forms. Social capital is characterized by the set of personal relations that an individual can totalize. Thereby an asymmetry can be formed, and differential accumulation becomes possible. The opportunistic networker seeks to exploit asymmetries of information – for example by keeping his different networks apart, by hindering his contacts to get to know each other via him, etc.

Besides this more personal egoism they are pointing at exploitation in the network world. They ask: "Can the strong and the weak not belong to a shared world without the good fortune of the one depending on the misfortune of the other?" They answer: there must be an interdependence between them that is not merely structural, but also substantial. They conclude that some people's immobility is necessary for other people's mobility (362): "local roots, loyalty and stability paradoxically constitute factors of job insecurity and are, moreover, increasingly experienced as such, as is indicated by the reluctance of young people in marginal positions to settle down in life, to borrow to buy accommodation (rather than renting), to marry (rather than cohabit), to have children (rather than an abortion in the hopes of keeping one's job), an so on. Thus, 'disaffiliation' can be initiated by self-defensive behaviour in a situation of job insecurity, the paradoxical result of which is to increase the insecurity" (364). Further, the authors point at opening a new agenda on social justice by denouncing unjust ways of profiting from mobility, and thus restrict the level of exploitation in a connexionist world.

Among the new forms you will find education and obesity. In this context I shall dwell upon the exclusion caused by education.

Let me draw your attention to the fact that Denmark has had a comprehensive school since 1958.

Until that year the primary school was divided into two separate 'production lines' – one for better off children who aimed at Realeksamen and Abitur/High school degree; another for those who either aimed at or were forced to seek their future at the labour market as unskilled helping hands. The division took place in grade 5 as pupils were 12 years old. A minority passed the exam (up to 40%), while the majority either did not pass or did not even try. This division or organisational differentiation had been 'contested terrain' at least since 1945. Smaller reforms were made, and schools were able to document that the division had nothing to do with IQ or intelligence, but much more with social and cultural background. The middle and left wing in Parliament (Social Liberals, Social Democrats, and Communists) discussed and suggested a manifold of varied reforms, ending up in a legislation enabling parents to decide whether their kids should be divided after grade 5 or not. An overwhelming majority wanted a comprehensive school from grade 1 to 7 – in spite of resistance from the teachers who fought against the popular rebellion and lost the battle. During the 1960'es a number of reforms were carried out, and by 1971 the Social Democratic government launched 9 years of comprehensive schooling plus the possibility of enlarging the offer on municipal basis to 10 years. The 'red' municipalities then took the lead and invested in better schools, lower class sizes, modern equipment, etc. By 1975 the national picture showed that the majority of schools in Denmark offered a 10 years comprehensive school.

In the same years kinder garden classes on optional basis were offered to parents who seemed to like the offer, since many used it. Of course, this offer was partly pedagogical or educational oriented, partly related to the labour market due to an increasing number of employed women in public services (kinder gardens, schools, caring of elderly people, and hospitals) needing their children to be taken care of.

Let me also draw your attention to the well known fact that expanding schooling meant enlarging social control with children and adolescents. More time in school meant less hours of “wasted time” at street corners, smoking in coffee bars, watching bad movies in cinemas, rambling around, getting into ‘bad’ company, etc.

Since the mid-90’es it has been a public issue to establish an enlargement of general schooling. It began with adult education, aiming at bridging the gap between more than 1 million employees having left school at the age of either 12 or 14. The slogan was “Education for all”, and large sums of money were invested and broad initiatives taken in lifelong education of employed as well as unemployed unskilled and skilled workers, building upon the famous Danish tradition of ‘folk high school’. This was some years later followed up by intense efforts to develop alternate youth educations based on a practical approach and offered on a voluntary basis. Around the end of the 1990’es it became a mantra to repeat ‘education, education and education’ as an answer to global competition. One might not overestimate the situation by emphasising that the slogan verbatim meant: Either you get more education or you perish.

Therefore, the resistance did not show up in Parliament, when the problem of enlarging school time for children was made the focal point of the political agenda. The Danish government supported by a majority in Parliament decided that 95% of every youth cohort should complement 12 years of formal schooling (9 years of primary school (Folkeskole) + 3 years of youth school (gymnasium, technical school, etc.)) before 2015. The actual percentage is between 75 and 78, meaning that every 4th or 5th young male or female is not able to complete an education above the Folkeskole. By completing the compulsory school you have to take into consideration that a little number of pupils did not succeed – first of all migrant boys. They could not profit of the so called invisible pedagogy of Danish middle class teachers. By that they were in fact handicapped compared to their schoolmates.

Bad experiences from basic schooling later showed up in youth education. Even those who start full of enthusiasm experience that they are not fit for one or another reason. Among the most tragic reasons count the fact that many did not learn sufficient in the folkeskole. They underperformed and dropped out due to cultural differences and lack of parental help. The hard facts are still: The lower social classes continue to get limited education, and vertical mobility has not changed the last 25 years. Ever since the first Danish research were made on social mobility through education it has been evidenced that economic, social, cultural, geographic and gender conditions were usable explaining factors of the differences. In the early 1960’es the Social Democratic party launched a grand campaign for “equality through education”. The campaign was extremely expensive, but it did not change much on the vertical level. Later cultural factors won the price as the most important obstacle against mobility. In the same round geography got a subject of research, and the efforts ended at gender.

It is confirmed to be a general assumption that the ideology of equality and welfare contributes to an understanding that social inequality is decreasing by means of welfare

interventions and investments. A narrow focus on school shows us another picture. The postulate here is that schooling is one of the most important producers of inequality. First. Due to the ambiguity of the concept equality it is difficult to get hold of what we are talking about. Second. A very strong confidence that schools do not discriminate against anybody does not fit with facts. Statistics show that social levelling or equalization has been minimal. Knowing that social background has a decisive influence on pupils' abilities it is insufficient that the state is equalizing pupils economically. Inequality based on social background has to be compensated. The problem of school reforms is therefore that an enlargement at the top (from grade 7 to grade 9) more or less is used to strengthen already established differences instead of equalize pupils from their very start in school. A means of creating more equality is consequently to let children start school earlier and fix standards of the outcome. The point of departure for this argumentation on reducing inequality is to be found in the concept of 'equality of outcomes'. James Samuel Coleman has argued that equal opportunities of education have to be assessed by the product of school (its outcome) and not by the resources spent on school (input). Coleman writes that "...equality of educational opportunity implies, not merely 'equal' schools, but equally effective schools, whose influence will overcome the differences in starting point of children from different social groups" (Coleman 1966: 72). A claim of 'equality of outcomes' moves the responsibility of getting better outcomes from the individual himself to the institution in which he is participating. There are at least two versions of 'equality of outcomes': the strong version states that every pupil has to meet similar basic standards at the end of school. A weaker version points at equality being achieved, when it seems probable that members of the different social classes have similar opportunities to get hold of status positions of the societal pyramid. Coleman stresses the weaker version by arguing that school effectiveness partly is making "the conditional probabilities less conditional – that is, less dependent upon social origins" (ib.). The challenge of the weaker version (= equality of opportunities or chances) is that it will neither change the size of the social classes nor change the societal pyramid itself.

We usually assume that an increase in the number of student places contributes to social equalization of the chances of education. But we cannot be sure that this is the truth and nothing but the truth. It depends upon the method of calculation. If social equalization is assessed by what a social class gains in accordance with its degree of education, then small changes in a group with a low part of education seem to become a remarkable progress. Just the opposite result shows up, if the reduction of the part which has not completed a certain education, is used as basis for the calculation. A combination of the two methods points at a conclusion showing that the policy of social equalization has not been a remarkable success. Therefore, we have to use much stronger means in order to achieve the goal of equal educational opportunities. It might seem a little shameful, but the overall conclusion seems to be the following: The resources of public schools used through teachers in order to influence the motivation and performance of the pupils have lesser impact than the resources pupils are equipped with at home. The planned effort of public resources seems not capable of annulling or counteracting the impact of informal effort of private resources. The hard facts then seem to be: resources like school material, equipment of instruction, and teaching staff have less effect on the educational returns of pupils than family background and peers.

Such research findings are useful and are used by the left as well as the right wing. While the right is explaining inequality by pointing at individual characteristics, the left earlier stressed that the entire educational system was an instrument of the ruling classes (Jensen 1969, Bowles and Gintis 1976). Jencks and his colleagues explicitly argued that a mounting degree of

social equality could not be achieved by educational reform *eo ipse*, but preconditioned a wider number of efforts from side of the welfare state (Jencks et al. 1972).

Critical research in the early 1970'es roughly points at the impossibility of changing social inequalities. The capital argument sounded something like: In a class society school cannot change fundamental mechanisms of social reproduction. Since then a lot of newer findings points in another direction. The main message is that schools can make a difference. E.g. George Weber showed in his research that school effectiveness was influenced by factors like strong leadership, explicit expectations towards the pupils, a regulated and well arranged school environment plus a focus on learning (Weber 1971). These variables had not been part of earlier research. The 'learning climate' of a school was something thrown in the bargain as well as the relationship between school and home, and both factors had important influence on the performance of the pupils. Further more the interplay of the mentioned factors contributed to the total effect on pupils' outcome of school efforts (Brookover et al. 1979; Edmonds 1979; Rutter et al. 1979). The conclusion at the end is that later research modified earlier findings. Anyway earlier research did influence the education policy of the Social Democratic party as well as other political parties. Among other measures the debate concentrated upon how to overcome inequality by means of differential treatment or positive discrimination in favour of the lower social segments. E.g. it was suggested to develop new efforts in preschool as well as offering parents help to raise their children. The slogan might be summarized like "reduction of differences demands differential treatment".

As globalisation overwhelmed the agenda, education shifted scope, too. In stead of discussing inequality as a general societal phenomenon and thereby understand inequality as a severe political challenge to a welfare state inequality was reduced to be a question of visible problems like homelessness, prostitution, drug addiction, alcoholism, etc. The wider scope was dropped from the political agenda and substituted by scandals about how bad people like the above mentioned were treated from side of public institutions and professionals. Only a few education planners and economists paid attention to the problems of the rising 'knowledge society'. Their diagnosis was tough: the Danish society was at risk like the American (A Nation at Risk); the smaller cohorts of youth could pick either education or find a good job without a higher education; the easy coming would end as easy going, so the warnings.

The diagnosis pointed at a school failing pupils as well its societal task or duty. The so called free option only supported children from better off families, since such options creates social inequalities due to the fact that parental resources become more important than ever when it comes down to options and home work. The alternate receipt is well known:

- more structure
- more standardisation
- more working discipline
- more training of the basics
- more concentration on subjects matters
- more demands to the pupils' performance
- more demands on parental engagement and support.

This change of course was an open reaction and struggle against a progressive philosophy of learning, local curricula, and school autonomy. The time had come to rehabilitate the school of knowledge putting weight on competencies. As a consensus sentence one might mention that education became “the key to future economic prosperity” (Brown et al. 1999). As fresh research findings showed the importance of institutional conditions, consensus was sought in harsh terms: high demands, strong standards, strong discipline, and strong parental participation and responsibility in the community (Coleman and Hoffer 1987; Coleman 1990).

Similar initiatives were presented in the international organisations: OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank, who offered a Universal Model of Education for the Information Age (Beech 2006: 191-192). An allusion to the statement of Mafia Godfather lies close: “We have an offer you cannot resist”, showing that nation-states have lost partly their legitimacy. International agencies have become a fundamental source of authority that can legitimise a policy agenda, while the nation-states are “too small for the big problems of life and too big for the small problems of life” (Giddens 1990). But such agencies are not only legitimising a pre-existing policy agenda, they are certainly promoting their own models as an ideal to adapt educational systems, meaning that they are defining as well as promoting an education policy agenda (Beech 2006: 196).

Among the suggestions one could mention

- full-time school for all pupils in the folkeskole
- precise plans of subjects
- fewer optional subjects
- higher teacher education – creating specialist teachers on high level
- better data for education statistics.

The (re)armament of subjects were pointing at Danish, Mathematics, and English. Later followed subjects like History, Biology, Geography plus a large number of national tests. Further higher education had to be reorganised. Larger units, merging of universities, high profiling and specialisation were slogans encompassing the entire education system.

If one should dare a characterisation those reforms are attached to the welfare policy and enlarging the perspective of education to become a life long or even life wide perspective. For the moment at least three types of reforms have been used:

- structure reforms
- content reforms
- personal reforms.

Structure reforms – e.g. merging universities into larger units (from 13 to 6); creating university colleges (from about 32 to 5 plus subdivisions); augmenting the number of years in the folkeskole; demanding that 95% of the pupils should complement a full youth education.

Content reforms – e.g. new curricula in the folkeskole, gymnasium, and in teacher education.
Personal reforms – new working conditions, developing individual competencies, etc.

During the same years the structure of leadership changed – aiming at implementing a full system of goal- and frame management, including strong leaders equipped with more authority as well as the power to make sanctions.

By such means a new kind of instrumentalism was introduced in education policy. The leading idea is to develop competencies within a gifted population, revitalising the old idea of a reserve of talent or pool of ability among people who would usually not get attracted by academic education. Last time a similar discussion took place was as a reaction to “the Sputnik shock”. In those years the Soviet Union showed the West that it was superior in the space. Nowadays the challenge has nothing to do with Russia, but is formulated as “the challenge of globalisation”. Anyway the reforms mentioned are by and large connected with demands from side of the business conditions. Without being in any sense prophetic it seems useful at this spot to quote John Dewey who stated that “no misconception of the instrumental logic has been more persistent than the belief that it makes knowledge merely a means to a practical end” (Dewey 1916: 330).

Getting back to Danish contextual realities the trend is as follows: Although modern or fresh research is not giving up earlier insights, it seems as if research in this field, including my own (Gudmundsson and Rosendal Jensen 2005; Rosendal Jensen 2007), shows – in no way surprisingly – that school achievements has much too much to do with the parents’ education and/or cultural capital. This conclusion should not lead to a mistake like: Then school doesn’t matter. On the contrary – school matters. It does not matter if it continues to separate from the local environment or the tasks defined by Parliament on behalf of society. Although Luhmann spreads illusions about autopoiesis and self-referentiality, it is still worth to observe that school is a living part of the existing society for good and bad. The Danish success so far is basically depending on our comprehensive school (folkeskole), based on engaged teachers, happy children and active parents. Research is showing that the main perspective is emphasising ‘what school does to children – especially in their classes, and especially in the first years of school’ means much more than the family’s cultural capital (except for their general abilities). Researchers need to further evidence what school is doing in the every day life of the children. One of the strong challenges is that education policy is mistaken in a very precise sense, namely the belief that education institutions are only dealing with one language, one way of thinking, one way of experiences, and one way of discussion.

Nearly all researchers in Denmark are agreeing that a further development of the comprehensive school system from classes 9 to 12 is the only way to obtain the ambitious goal of 95% completing 12 years of school in 2015. The majority also points at the importance of diversity in language, thinking, experiences, and discussions.

That Europe chose the university model for schooling in stead of the apprenticeship model (Brint 1998: 20), had a striking consequence, namely that adolescents not fit for the gymnasium are treated like problem kids. This means that a young person who do not want, can or dare to follow the mainstream (=gymnasium) is looked at as a kind of new marginal man. We already expect that such normal youngsters will be objects of the labelling industries. They might become the included that are excluded, meaning that young people (especially young males) who are not familiar with school are forced to stay there for three more years, getting results that are worth nothing. Of course, they are clever enough to know their chances, and their conclusion is to stay put and wait until the wasted time is over. Much seems to confirm what Willis demonstrated years ago (Willis 1977).

Interesting fact is that on the contrary some of the most labelled young people in Denmark, the migrants, have shown that they are more convinced about education as social mobility compared to young 'vikings'. Young migrants between 16 and 24 years are performing a little better than ethnic Danish youth: 60% compared to 59%. Young migrants select other educational paths than ethnic Danish youngsters. While they are choosing medicine, law, engineering, and biology, the young Danes prefer humanist or social science subjects. In fact young migrants are doing exactly what the government wants, and by that they are more 'useful to society' than Danish youngsters. The challenge therefore is not pointing at young migrants starting a useful education, but first of all that they complement it. Due to recent statistics about 60% of the migrant youngsters drop out of technical schools, and in spite of further attempts to complement a youth education about 20% end up with out education above the folkeskole (Rosendal Jensen 2007; Gudmundsson and Rosendal Jensen 2005).

Female migrants have understood that their future depends on education, and they are conquering gymnasiums, technical schools, universities and other higher education institutions. When it comes to using the possibilities, migrant boys and girls are much eager than so called Danish youngsters.

This could be seen as a contradiction or paradox. Another paradox is a rather recent public debate on top and button of basic education. At the button an increasing number of pupils meet severe problems in school; around 15% of the pupils are either full time or part time segregated to special education (using around 22% of the resources of schools). Some times learning disabilities are identified, and the pupils in question are usually placed outside their classroom at least for a number of school lessons. At the top up to 5% of the pupils are "too" clever and not challenged sufficiently in their home class. They are presented as mere victims of boredom. When compared within PISA the outcome told that Danish pupils were not at the top (in literacy and (natural) sciences the PISA-number was 9% compared to 6-7 in Denmark). Not necessarily what a distant observer would label shocking, but sufficient for the government to be misused as an argumentation against the comprehensive school system. A short explanation follows: As graded ability groups were not allowed by the reform of the folkeskole 1993, ability grouping became so to say anathema. Of course, words or rhetoric made in no way such problems disappear. Parents chose the back door of problem solving by placing their children in private schools. Such types of 'civil disobedience' were from side of the government interpreted as signs of a hidden rebellion against what is called the 'ideology of equality' in the Danish school system and used as examples to argue for higher standards, more challenges to top as well as button and by the way pave the new roads in support of elite schools or gymnasiums. The right wing think tank (in the case mentioned the concept 'think tank' is more than exaggerated, since the so called thinking reminds of well known old times conservative ideas of aiming at new kinds of division between pupils) has suggested to class the challenge of very clever children with those of now and then giving boys or girls some lessons on their own, separate from the opposite gender, or with those of migrant children who are bilingual and therefore need some special attention. Such paradoxes are supposed to exist in other countries as well.

A common European or at a smaller scale bilateral research in this field might show us whether the grass of our neighbours is greener. Or in other words: comparative research might show alternate ways of solving that challenge. One angle of such research is caused by the astonishing fact that we still need or require further exploration of the extent to which any model of learning places the learner as the centrepiece. Traditionally we have been influenced by the individualistic, psychologically oriented literature, and most researchers can see some

features of this tendency in their own work. But more and more, such a framing of learning alone is becoming inadequate, not capturing the complex interactions of person, context, and culture. We need to find ways of acknowledging the individual as social and context-bound whilst allowing for the possibilities of transformation. Another angle might be addressing cultural and social capital in the neighbourhood or in the families and how to empower families and neighbourhoods. Yet another field ought to be school – what should teachers do better or different, not for the sake of the global market, but for the sake of citizenship and democratic participation? What kind of education ought to be manufactured to broaden democratic participation and install real citizenship for all? Might there still be a rational kernel in reform pedagogy or critical pedagogy? Or are Bourdieu and Passeron (reproduction), Althusser (ideology and state apparatus), Gramsci (hegemony) and Marx himself (The German Ideology or Capital) right when they are talking – with different words, of course – about ideology, symbolic violence and hegemony of the ruling classes and in consequence pointing at rebellion or social revolution as a remedy of the calamities? Such challenges are still open for debate. And to my impression debate is more than needed.

If we launch a broad campaign for more justice and equality, we continuously need to evidence social inequality, injustice and lack of democracy. This implies that we are not researching in “Who gets what when, where and how and by whom”, but first of all the service itself. Is it offered aiming at emancipation? Is it a vehicle to develop democracy and democratic participation? And if this is the case: for whom – in whose interest – on the cost of whom? As Boltanski and Chiapello demonstrate a ‘fight against exclusion’ is possible when it aims at ‘social citizenship’ denouncing the inequalities and promoting social rights.

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