Reflections on Exclusion Dynamics in Education and Training in the Danish Context

Democratic Egalitarian Orientation versus Meritocratic Elitist Orientation

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WP 1.2 Reflections on exclusion dynamics in education and training in the Danish context
– Democratic Egalitarian Orientation versus Meritocratic Elitist Orientation

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The first part of this paper suggests a theoretical framework w.r.t. basic assumptions on inequality and social exclusion. Inspired by Bourdieus relational and conflict oriented understanding of social fields and the struggles between dominating and dominated rationales within the fields. The dominating rationality of the educational system favor certain cultural and social capitals and reproduces social inequality, but socially creative strategies / SCS can challenge the dominating principles. The conflicting principles and orientations of the Danish educational system are summarized in table 1 (Table 1).

The second part has focus on Lifelong Learning (LL) and present research on education and training of low-skilled women and men. In Denmark Lifelong Learning has been a key policy perspective with regard to preventing exclusion on the post-industrial labour market. The low-skilled groups - most at risk - and the problems they encounter will be presented and analyzed. Research on education and training considering the life experiences and needs of the participants will be presented as examples of socially creative strategies.

The last part discusses exclusion of ethnic minorities in the primary and secondary school system. With regard to social exclusion of ethnic minorities, we discuss the necessity for policy makers and teachers to take into account other strategic perspectives then applied to the 'classical' disadvantaged social groups excluded because they lack 'school capital'. Ethnic minorities might have 'school capital' and school experiences very different from what is being valued in a Danish context. Therefore in order to include ethnic minorities, educational strategies need to broaden its perspective on who are included socially and culturally.

1. Basic assumptions on inequality and social exclusion in the Danish education and training system

Despite the fact that Denmark due to its welfare system is often referred to as (and in many ways is) an example of relatively low socioeconomic inequality it is important to stress that the content of school programmes and access to education and training is still reproducing social inequality and exclusion of certain groups. Developing inclusive programmes ensuring both adequate, updated formal skills *and* democratic and social competences is a part of creating opportunities for (re) inclusion on an individual as well as a collective level.

Dealing with the exclusion dynamics it is useful to make a distinction between exclusion *from* education (inadequate access to education – access to the right education) and exclusion *through* education (outcomes of different kinds of education – focusing on content and how it excludes certain groups). An example of the first form of exclusion will be presented in the context of Lifelong Learning and education and training of i.e. low-skilled. Dealing with the second form of exclusion we will focus on the exclusion/marginalization of ethnic minorities in compulsory schools.

In analyzing ED (Exclusion Dynamics) we find it essential to construct an analytical framework that enables us to see both the significance of the Danish welfare system, the structural changes within the welfare system, the consequences of these changes for individuals and groups and what socially creative strategies (SCS) are needed in order to act upon the social exclusion that we find in a Danish context.

In other words our assumptions on social exclusion call for a relational approach, for which we find inspiration in Pierre Bourdieus (1930-2002) works. Relevant in this context are his concepts of: 'habitus', 'capital' and 'field' unfolded below. Furthermore we look into an empirical example of struggling rationales and present an illustrative model of the struggling rationales of the Danish educational system.

1.1 A relational approach

The concepts of habitus, capital and field are closely connected and therefore we will unfold them in a manner that underlines the relational aspect.

Starting on an 'individual level', habitus is the embodiment of the social reality, the living conditions, the historically concrete conditions or what in everyday language is referred to as society[1]. In other words habitus is the embodiment of our biographical path through life, all the experiences we have had and all the circumstances that has constituted our lives (economically, socially and culturally). It is on the basis of our habitual dispositions that we act both consciously and unconsciously in everyday life. Bourdieu argues (in opposition to a Rational Choice approach) that we can not make decisions (consciously) all the time – we need to have some kind of basis (habitus) on which we can navigate in traffic, while shopping groceries etc. without having to think about every one of our actions and the consequences of these actions.

Understanding the context in which agents and institutions act (individually and politically) we use the concept of field because it outlines the struggling rationales and interests of what we refer to as the 'educational field'. Field is often referred to or synonymous to 'battlefield' because it is the struggles of opposing rationales and interests, the struggles of dominating the field, that determines what is valued within a certain field.

It is important to state that agents and institutions in the field are destined (not deterministic) by their living conditions – the embodiment of their living conditions – their habitus.

On one hand perceiving the structural influence on habitus and on the other hand the influence of individual- or group-actions within the field (or subsystem), we need to understand that: "A true sociogenesis of the dispositions that constitute the habitus should be concerned with understanding how the social order collects, channels, reinforces or counteracts psychological processes depending on whether there is a homology, redundance, and reinforcement between the two systems or, to the contrary, contradictions and tension. It goes without saying that mental structures do not simply reflect social structures. The habitus and the field maintain a relationship of mutual affection, and the illusion [*illusio*] is determined from the inside, from

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[1] Specifically 'society' is, according to Bourdieu, characterized by its many more or less autonomous fields (the political field, the bureaucratic field, the educational field etc.) with their internal struggles.

impulses that push towards a self-investment in the object; but it is also determined from the outside, starting with a particular universe of objects offered socially for investment. By virtue of the specific principle of division (*nomos*) that typifies it, the space of possibilities characteristic of each field – religious, political or scientific – functions like a structured ensemble of offers and appeals, binds and solicitations, and prohibitions as well." (Bourdieu et al. 1999)

Despite the complex nature of this quote, it cuts directly through the classical dichotomy of structure and agent or society and individual. By underlining the relational character of both habitus and field it becomes possible to see individual (habitual) dispositions and social structures as consisting one another.

Supplying the concepts of habitus and field by including the concept of capital (economic, social and cultural) we get a perspective on what qualitatively constitute habitus and what is the subject of the struggles within the different fields. Bourdieu uses the 'economical term' *capital* in order to capture the significance of the ongoing struggles on what is being value within each field. Capital should be understood symbolically (except in the case of economic capital), as a concept that refers to the value of i.e. knowing what is expected and how to act in an educational setting (i.e. cultural capital).

The point in relation to ED is that the relational approach makes it possible to understand and explain how the internal power relations (which rationales and strategies are in play) influence the value of the capitals while at the same time agents (and institutions) act in the field on the basis of their habitual dispositions.

In relation to the educational and training system the concept of field and the conflicting (dominating and dominated) rationales of the field that constitute it, provides a 'method' or an approach of studying changes in the social reality or the social spaces: "Each field mirrors the social space in having its own autonomous and heronomous poles, its own dominant and dominated agents and institutions, its mechanisms for reproduction and its struggles for usurpation and exclusion." (Naidoo, 2004) This understanding of fields as a prism through which we can investigate what is at stake within the educational field, is the reason for our Bourdieu inspired approach.

1.2 The struggles of the educational field
Very simplified the major conflicting rationales for the last century has in Denmark been between schools and education build on Meritocratic Elite Orientation (MEO) combined with a neo-liberal market orientation vs. Democratic and Egalitarian Oriented (DEO) education.

Historically elite orientation was especially profound before the industrial breakthrough (in Denmark in the 1890's) because education was reserved the privileged ones. In relation to conservative elite orientation, Mathiesen talks about the rational of 'kundskabsskolens boglige viden for eliten' (Mathiesen 2006) – 'academic knowledge of the conservative skill-based schools for the elite' (our translation).

On the other hand the DEO in a Danish context is referred to as the 'reformpædagogikse tilgang' ('a reform pedagogical approach'), a progressive

pedagogy which has democratic values, democratic education (democratic 'Bildung' or in Danish: 'demokratisk dannelse') as its main objective (Mathiesen 2006).

If we look closer at the elite oriented and neo-liberal market oriented rationale, education is primarily seen as a *private good* and as investments in *human capital* and skills to build rational social exchange and network relations for individuals. The implication of this is that the dominant principles and norms for learning in schools are competitive meritocratism. The school and the teachers have to facilitate norms of "fair competition" in the classroom based on "hard meritocratic" principles: rewards (including student's marks) should constantly and directly be linked to the achievement of individuals from an early age. Schools should also (in line with New Public management principles) be ranked after their scores according to (national and/or international) predefined measurable standards for student outcomes.

Opposite we find a rationale more oriented towards democratic education. This rationale has been especially strong in the Scandinavian welfare societies.
In this rationale education is seen as a *common good*: free education is part of a social citizenship. Important norms for the learning environment are some sort of egalitarianism. Meritocratism and hence some sorting of students after individual skills and achievements is a universal feature of any school system, but sorting and reward systems can take many forms, and be balanced by other more egalitarian and non competitive, non individualizing pedagogical principles, which could be labelled "soft meritocratism". For example individual marks can be introduced at a later stage in the school career and parts of the mark- and reward system in the schools can take form as collective marks and rewards for good participation in group work and project work. In Denmark instruments like *project group work* have been very influential (but also constantly disputed) since the seventies.

The difference between the two rationales might best be described with reference to their objectives. Whereas the DEO rationale wants to develop and build on the students different capacities the MEO rationale wants the students to fit into centrally declared norms and values (Mathiesen 2006). In other words, the objectives are radically different w.r.t. what 'ideal type' students the system is created to produce and care for.

1.2.1 Investing in human capital
Basically all agents and institutions of the educational field can, on a meta level, agree on the necessity of increased investments in human capital, but there is not consensus whether this should be with a DEO (increased human capital investments linked to egalitarian and democratic values) or MEO (increased human capital investment linked to a meritocratic elitist) orientation.

One example of the current struggles in the educational field is the case of PISA-Copenhagen[2], which illustrates conflicts over investments in human capital. In 2003 the municipality of Copenhagen decided to carry out a PISA programme specially focusing on the assessment of 9th graders (approximately age 14-16, but it was a

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[2] PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) was first established as collaboration between national governments (OECD member states) in 2000.

point that age differences did not matter). PISA-Copenhagen was conducted in 2004 where 83 schools and 2352 students participated. The results of the PISA programme have been heavily discussed since they indicate that the assessments of the Copenhagen students were lower then the rest of the country. The point in relation to the rationales of the educational field is that the same results provided substance for very different conclusions on what was needed in order to address the problems (also the nature of the problems that was found in the PISA programme was questioned, but we won't go into this discussion here).

The PISA-Copenhagen survey fuelled an intensified discussion about what should be seen as the most important success parameters for primary and secondary schools. In short the two poles are: those who identify the dominating challenge as how the school system can be adjusted to improve the scores on the PISA scale as a way to strengthen primarily human capital building. The core argument is that open classrooms and too much emphasis on social skills and lack of systematic individual testing pulls down the cognitive level.

The other pole (e.g. represented by the teachers union) defends the priority of the "participatory and social schools". The key problem is lack of resources – in particular for schools in segregated areas with the greatest needs - not lack of ongoing testing systems. This rationale is closely linked to a critique of New Public Management (NMP). Gregory (2002) argues that public administration in New Zealand, a country that has been kept as a laboratory of NPM doctrines, is facing legitimacy crisis, because citizens have become increasingly distrusting towards political and public institutions generally. In Denmark the teachers union refers to New Zealand as the night mare case and argues that too much testing in schools undermines what is really needed; local creativity and social capital building. They argue that professional autonomy and ethics of the teachers guarantees that they serve the common good. The later pole argues that *trust* in teachers as competent (semi)professionals plus student participation and not least: additional allocation of resources (positive selectivism) to the schools with the largest share of underprivileged children is the best way to enhance social capital in schools and potentially including more students.

In relation to social exclusion of certain groups an analysis of the struggling rationales of the educational field can provide knowledge as to what exclusion dynamics are produced by what educational rationales. It is clear in the case of the PISA programme that struggling rationales of the educational field are based on ideological points of view and that the objectives and interests are radically different in relation to what skills and competences are valued in students. You could say that both rationales are posing and answering the same question: what do we want from our educational system – what are the objectives?

The interests embodied in the rationales are essential to the understanding of what drives the educational strategies in Denmark as well as in other welfare regimes. Regardless if we look at education in general or at educational and training strategies aimed at unemployed, low-skilled women and men, ethnic minorities or young people excluded from the educational and/or labour market, it is the interests and the logic connected to the rationales and strategies, that determines what kind of capital (and skills) are being valued (has the highest value) in the educational and training system. This means, that the unemployed or the students who have not got a cultural and

social habitus (habitual disposition) corresponding with the hegemonic or dominating rational of the educational system, are most at risk: "Capital may be viewed as the specific cultural or social (rather than economic) assets that are invested with value in the field which, when possessed, enables membership to the field." (Naidoo, 2004)

1.3 Educational strategies and their orientation
The following table summarizes the main conflicting poles and what strategies are connected to what rationales. The levels on which we analyse the educational strategies ('Strategic and Social orientation', 'Political orientation and Governance', 'Capital', 'School ethos', and 'Education and Pedagogy') are, in line with a conflictual understanding of the ongoing struggles of the educational field, a way of understanding and explaining exclusion dynamics.

Table 1

Conflict axes – educational strategies		
	MEO – Meritocratic Elitist Orientation - Reproduction of social inequalities and exclusion	**DEO – Democratic Egalitarian Orientation** - Socially creative strategies - Transforming or modifying social inequalities and exclusion
Strategic and Social orientation	• Elite oriented • Education as individual investment (private good) linked to individual performance • Individual rights	• Oriented towards marginalized groups • Education as common good linked to social citizenship • Collective rights
Political orientation and Governance	• Instrumental outcome orientation • Market oriented • New Public Management (NPM)	• Democratization of education institutions • Inclusive governance
Capital	• Cultural/Educational capital • Economic capital	• Cultural/Educational capital • Social capital
"School ethos"	• Competitive	• Inclusive
Education and Pedagogy	• Enforced formal meritocratism	• Participatory empowerment orientation • Project work and problem orientation

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It should be underlined that the suggested distinction serves a heuristic purpose – as a framework for discussion of the complicated relations between education and social exclusion – including the complicated linkages between the levels of analysis, between an individual (habitual) and society perspective.

Furthermore, it is important to state that socially creative strategies must focus on better outcome for underprivileged social categories in terms of formal skills such as reading, writing and mathematics, as well as civic and democratic participatory skills.

SCS extend the focus of the educational system by also including competences as teamwork and in general working together through i.e. group organized project work. Another competence that SCS has focus on, is the participants' ability to solve real problems (as oppose to theoretical and synthetic constructed problems), by making the students address a problem in society (or their everyday life) that they have an interest in solving.

1.4 Critique opens up possibilities
Why look at society as fields and why look at the conflicts and not the functions? These questions have often been posed to studies inspired by Bourdieus work. Bourdieus critical approach (and his theoretical apparatus) which emphasize the conception of habitus (habitual dispositions), capital (capital accumulation), and how these influence the prospects of chancing ones possibilities or acting against structural encounters, has often been criticized of being too deterministic in regards to the effect of socially creative strategies or 'turning the boat around'.
It is not unreasonable to interpret some of Bourdieus research as structural determinism, i.e. analysing the chances that children of North African immigrants (some unemployed) have, in former industrialized areas of France, because of lacking economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu et al. 1999). But i.e. in "The Abdication of the State" (Bourdieu et al. 1999) he explains the purpose of his critical approach to i.e. the living conditions of North African immigrants or 'ghettos' outside Paris, as a way of opening up the possibility of acting upon the knowledge accumulated through research: "If I have found it necessary to describe one of the casual series leading from the most critical sites of the State to the most disinherited areas of the social world and, at the same time, to emphasize the properly political dimensions of these processes (no doubt infinitely more complex), which have led to a state of affairs no one ever either dreamt of or wished for, it is not to accuse or indicate, but to try to open up possibilities for rational action to unmake or remake what history has made." Critique and a conflict oriented perspective becomes a weapon against the inequalities and suffering of the world and with this weapon it becomes possible to highlight where socially creative strategies should interfere.

2. Lifelong learning
We will now continue to unfold exclusion dynamics in relation to education and training programmes aimed at marginalized groups – exclusion from education.

In the Lisbon strategy it is stated that high quality education system is the best way of guaranteeing the long-term competitiveness of the Union. Knowledge and innovation,

the role of science technology and lifelong learning are considered to be the "beating heart of Europe" (European Commission, 2005).

In Denmark the access and right to adult education has over the years become a more and more important issue in the collective bargaining for industrial workers. The origins to this dates back to the early seventies where left wing trade unions in the post 68 climate took inspiration from the Italian Fiat workers and the German Metal Workers Union, who struggled for "worker controlled" adult education – in particular inspired by the German intellectual Oscar Negts principles of progressive pedagogical principles , which again was inspired by the world wide Paulo Freirerian (Freire, 1974) inspired movement for the "Pedagogy of the oppressed": learning could be linked to emancipatory objectives if the learning was based on everyday life experience in the workplace and the community. These radical ideas were gradually "mainstreamed" into the tripartite (unions, employers and the state) tradition for collective bargaining in the Danish system of industrial relations. In recent years the tripartite committee on 'Lifelong upgrading of skills and qualification and education/training for all groups on the labour market', have set focus on the most disadvantaged groups on the labour market The focus include people with inadequate literacy and or numeracy skills – groups of employees with low levels of skills and other groups for whom the demand for upgrading and training can be expected to increase due to, among other factors, globalisation and introduction of new technologies. (Jørgensen 2006)

The tripartite committee recommends a strengthening of education and training opportunities focusing on the service and industrial labour force with the lowest skill levels and, in particular, the 500,000 (app. 15- 20 % of the labour force) who are estimated to have lack of basic skills and literacy problems; of these, 150,000 have literacy problems to a serious degree. Furthermore, access to and information about education/training should be tailored to meet the needs of different groups. The committee convincingly argues that many low-skilled citizens know too little about their rights in the field of adult education and what they can do in practice. (Jørgensen 2006)

The tripartite committee documents that continuous lifelong training seems to be taken up mainly by those groups who already have a higher level of education or training, while people with a short education or training background do not take up the possibility of continuous training as a means to upgrade their skills and qualifications.

Our focus in relation to Lifelong Learning is primarily on formal adult education – programmes primarily concerned with supplementing basic education, upgrading the general educational level and providing formal qualifications.

2.1 The barriers for educational inclusion of excluded groups
In an article in International Journal of Lifelong Education the Danish researcher Illeris[3] focus on: "… how low-skilled adults function in relation to participation in training and education activities…" (Illeris, 2006) and specifically on the problems

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[3] Professor Knud Illeris, Learning Lab Denmark, The Danish University of Education

later addressed by the above mentioned tripartite committee: The fact that those who already have the weakest educational background also to a lesser extent than other groups participate in all kinds of adult learning activities. In the following we will present the groups in question ("low-skilled and other vulnerable groups" – Illeris, 2006), the findings of a three-year research programme and relate these to our basic assumptions on inequality and social exclusion outlined above.

2.1.1 Characterizing the excluded groups and the groups at risk of being excluded

In order to fully understand what is meant by excluded groups we will begin outlining the significant characteristics of these groups.

In recent years, 'low-skilled' has been used as a general term for those, who are in a vulnerable situation in relation to the competence demands of modern society (the knowledge based society) and economy (a globalized labour market). However as the demands are growing in extent and complexity, it has become increasingly difficult to define who actually belongs to this group – people without any vocational education and training or unemployed as one, but undefined group?

Traditionally low-skilled have been those whose education consists only of primary and lower secondary education and perhaps some short training courses (training of specific work related skills). But if the issue is approached from the angle of, who is 'vulnerable' and at risk of being excluded from the education and training system as well as the labour market, three rather different main groups emerge besides, of course, a lot of more or less individual and random cases. (Illeris 2006)

First of all the term 'early school leavers' has for some time been used to characterize a social group who has its origin in the traditional industrial labour market, where a big part of jobs did not demand specialized skills (at least not special vocational education). But since the labour market has changed and the amount of jobs requiring no special skills has shrunk dramatically – this group has been structurally unemployed.

The next group primarily consists of young people, who have been in and out of education, training and jobs. This group has individually been looking for their own way of gaining competences and therefore their problem are partly that they do not have any certificate (certified by the state) of their skills and competences and on top of that, many of these young people are 'jumping' from one job or education to another in the name of self-realization.

The third group is structurally unemployed or at the edge of the labour market because of changes within the labour market. Insufficient technical skills or lack of familiarity with information and communication technologies is one of the main barriers for some in i.e. the banking sector. It is a group, with formal skills and vocational education, who are no longer needed (Illeris et. al., 2004).

Together these three groups have been the object of interest in relation to educational strategies for adults but as the descriptions above signals, these three groups have

different reasons for their excluded position, hence different needs as far as education and training goes.

2.1.2 Why low-skilled and other vulnerable groups find it difficult to engage in education and training programmes

Going over Illeris' result there are three themes to highlight in order to discuss SCS in relation to these groups.

First of all the study has found a high level of ambivalence towards education and training among low-skilled: "Those in this group who are formally low-skilled, are usually so because they did not do very well at school. […] Very few of them feel any desire to return to a situation that would remind them of all their failures and humiliations – and probably also repeat them. On the other hand, it becomes more and more obvious that this is the only way out of their vulnerable situation." (Illeris, 2006) The participants in education or training programmes are aware of their insufficient skills in relation to the current labour market, but they also have strong negative feelings towards the educational system because of bad experiences from their childhood. This leads to a rejection of and negative attitude towards the programme and therefore the intended outcome of the programme is not reachable.

An aspect that many of these adult participants experience is related to the structural problem of too little and low quality consultation per individual, in relation to which educational or training programme they are 'being sent to'. Often the low-skilled feel, that they have been placed instead of having chosen an educational or a work related training programme on the basis of their experiences and needs. Part of the problem is that the deciding institutions (unemployment agencies) work under considerable time pressure and therefore they are not able to give the sufficient participatory guidance The feeling of 'being pushed around', takes away the initiative from the participants, like the feeling of humiliation addressed above installs a negative attitude towards learning (and education and training in general). Having said that, we would like to draw a parallel to the point stated in relation to the capital valued in the educational system, because the capital or habitual disposition acquired from the low-skilled in relation to 'being placed', is flexibility and the ability to adjust to the educational or training program that they have been sent to – most likely this is exactly the dispositions or capitals they lack.

The problems addressed above are related to habitus (habitual dispositions) and resource allocation to the unemployment agencies, whereas the following problem relates to the pedagogical (educational planning) perspective of education and training.

Under investigation is the fine line between 'taking' or 'being given' responsibility for ones own learning and outcome of a training or education programme. Often "… participants may be perceived as irresponsible just because they hesitate to assume responsibility for what they ultimately experience that others have decided for them. […] It may also well be that they find it difficult to make decisions themselves when they have the opportunity, but it is, after all, exactly what development of competences to a large extent is meant to produce." (Illeris, 2006) On one hand this calls for some patience in relation to the pace of which progress is made., but it also point to the pedagogical challenge of making the participants recognize that in order

to get out of their marginalized situation, they need to take responsibility for their own learning.

In relation to our point on critique as a possible opening for socially creative strategies it is important to stress that participants will not be able to get to the point of realizing their own potentialities if the pedagogical principles and institutional environment do not support these competences.

Not surprisingly the best results are reached in the parts of the adult education system, which implement problem oriented assignments and project work [4] and they can organize the activities in such a manner, that the starting point of all activities are taken from the participants experiences instead of pre-formulated (pre-manufactured) assignments that are applicable to all participant groups (Illeris, 2006) – the argument is that different participants require different approaches based on participation. In short, we can sum up that the field of adult education in practice is characterized by a continuous struggle within the field, where the socially creative strategies practices are those based on participatory principles.

2.2 The field of education and training of marginalized groups

Summing up we have tried to capture the habitual and structural problems connected to adult low-skilled learners (and other vulnerable groups) who attend education and training programmes. At the same time we have put forward some of the pedagogical principles that are needed in order to change or cope with the specific attitudes and problems attached to these groups. As a supplement to Illeris' work and in line with the conflict oriented (field) approach we will now elaborate on the interests at stake in relation to the life long learning policies for low-skilled.

The structural problem that was pointed out in relation to 'being placed' in an educational setting can in a field perspective be analyzed as a part of a battle between different educational rationales. On one hand we have the (MEO) rationale which perceives the low-skilled as economic burdens that 'society' needs to 'provide' with sufficient skills, in order to be a part of the productive workforce (Table 1). On the other hand there is a rational that favors the idea of 'Bildung' or in general a more democratic. Egalitarian and empowerment oriented perspective on the low-skilled and their experiences and needs (Table 1 – the DEO Strategy)

As mentioned in the first part, opposing rationales are not just peacefully coexisting; they are in a constant struggle. In the case of the lack of time to consult and advice the low-skilled it is obvious that the market oriented rational is dominating – the referring agencies place the low-skilled in education or training programmes in the name of effectiveness and efficiency and have not got the time (resources) to find the right (for the individual) programme. The low skilled are being reduced to resources in the national production of wealth.

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[4] The principals of problem orientation are being used in many educational setting in Denmark – from elementary school to university. At Roskilde University problem orientation or project work (student set up their own problem to solve in their assignments) is one of the leading pedagogical principle – for further reading on this subject see Illeris 1999, *Project work in university studies: background and current issues*, in Salling Olesen et al. *Project Studies*, Roskilde University Press.

Another perspective is the problem of motivation in relation to the exclusion based on lack of cultural and social capital matching the capital valued in schools and the educational system – taking responsibility is an excellent example of what might seem natural and unquestionable from a school or educational perspective (school ethos) but in case of the low-skilled, it is not that natural at all. The fact that low-skilled have not got it as a habitual disposition to take responsibility for their own learning is not only related to the structure of the educational system (the educational system is not the only 'sinner'), also the economic, social and cultural structure of the family and social relations in general (living conditions) are constituting the habitual dispositions. But since education and training strategies *can* take into account that certain low-skilled learners (and other vulnerable groups) need certain competences strengthened before acting 'naturally' (or having embodied the school ethos) in an educational setting, it is even more essential to look at how to plan education and training programmes and how to teach.

2.3 A critical perspective on the Lifelong Learning policy and discourse
As a perspective on the Danish and European discourse of Lifelong Learning we would like address the necessity of not forgetting the importance the participants needs and their experiences on the basis of which they engage in education and training programmes. In order to go beyond the general 'good intentions' of Lifelong Learning politics, it is necessary to take into account: social conditions (economic aspects), gender, age, ethnicity and culture (i.e. family structures) as something that requires special attention (Gitz-Johansen & Ploug, 2004).

The special attention giving to the social conditions, ethnicity etc. can be linked directly to the educational strategies (Table 1), and the favoring of certain capitals. The mainstream educational system still to a large extent favor students with the ability to 'code' what is needed to succeed in the system (those who have the cultural knowledge (habitus) of i.e. taking responsibility for their own learning). But there is also SCS in play: creative, participative, emancipatory forms of education has the potential of empowering the excluded

The danger about Lifelong Learning is when learning gets a strong bias towards an individual responsibility for the learning process and if it is institutionalized in rigid forms. The fact that low-skilled (presumably with little cultural/educational capital) participate in all kinds of adult learning activities to a lesser extent than other groups (Illeris 2006 and Gitz-Johansen & Ploug, 2004) shows that gaining access (and here income compensation is one very important factor) to education and training programmes to the educationally disadvantaged over the life course is in it self an important battlefield. Educational citizenship in the form of flexible but institutionalized rights to education is important Furthermore, as we have discussed the content and pedagogical principles are of extreme importance

3. Ethnic minorities – exclusion through education
Leaving exclusion from education in the context of adult education and training programmes we now move to the problems related to exclusion through education in the context of ethnic minorities attending compulsory schools.

In the process of realizing the growing needs for strategies dealing with exclusion on the basis of ethnic background, teachers and policy makers have to take into account the significance of the ethnic minorities and their different (from the majority's) cultural/educational capital.

Hence, the main question is; how does the school system meet the needs and experiences of ethnic minority students?

Looking at the Danish school system it is becoming increasingly clear that the educational sector is facing a situation characterised by an increasing cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity and the necessity of dealing with this 'new' situation is highly actual. The discourse concerning ethnic minorities and their rights and/or obligations is closely connected to the concept of integration, though the term integration is often used in the sense of assimilation[5]. Despite the mixed use of the term, in talking about integration of ethnic minorities it "… is generally recognised that whatever one means by the term "integration" it is bound to include participation on the labour market by all groups and a necessity for this is successful participation in different learning activities." (Gitz-Johansen & Ploug 2004)

In particular looking at the Danish compulsory school system, one of the contemporary characteristics (not least due to the growing influence of the Danish Peoples Party, who mobilizes on nationalistic issues and is highly influential on the present Conservative - Liberal government) is that it increasingly emphasizes common national identity and a standardised culture and language among the citizens of the nation. One of the present challenges for the national school project is to fit population groups (ethnic minorities), who do not easily fit into a 'Danish' category, into the nation-building project.

The presence of ethnic minority bi lingual students as well as other cultural references, have posed considerable challenge to the staff of compulsory schools (also within i.e. vocational education and training institutions) and school policies.

The dominant political rationale has been to fit the diversity of the students with regards to language and culture, without any fundamental changes in the underlying pedagogical rationality, into the existing 'national' idea of the nation-building school.

An exception (a socially creative strategy) has been mother-tongue teaching (offered some ethnic minority pupils), which can be seen as an acknowledgement of the special needs of this group as well as creating a 'school capital' which improves their possibilities for a productive and creative school trajectory[6]. The idea has been to teach the bi lingual pupils/students basic skills (reading, writing and mathematics as well as i.e. the history of their country of origin) in both their mother tongue (in

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[5] In order to go beyond the common (everyday) use of integration, Gitz-Johansen makes a distinction between integration (a two-way process), assimilation (adapting to the majority and leaving social and cultural characteristics behind) and segregation (living apart) – (Gitz-Johansen 2006).

[6] An interesting international perspective on the inclusion of ethnic minorities into the national school system is the American longitude study by Virginia P. Collier and Wayne P. Thomas on mother tong education (or bi lingual education). The study was conducted in five states (five school districts) in the US. (Collier and Thomas, 2002)

special classes) and Danish and slowly integrate them into only Danish speaking classes.

However, changed dominance relations within the educational field consequently means that the rationale which emphasizes the building of a homogeneous nation, now is dominating the multicultural and equal rights rationale. This 'nationalisation effort' has the potential of excluding a large group of students due to their different lingual and cultural competences (Gitz-Johansen & Ploug 2004).

Another aspect of the dominant pedagogical strategy is a mixture of universalised curriculum and an individualised concept of the learner; what must be learned is the same for all, and failure or success to do so is the responsibility of the individual learner regardless of his or her cultural and linguistic background.

Gitz-Johansen has conducted an ethnographic study of multicultural schools with focus on the outcome of a concept of learning, in which different ethnic identities and different cultural and linguistic backgrounds are regarded as 'obstacles' to be overcome in the attempt to reach common goals (the current government's version of a national curriculum; the so-called "Common Goals"). Analyzing the exclusion dynamics of the Danish compulsory school system he suggests a 'life-wide' instead of only a 'lifelong' approach to learning with regards to the problems that ethnic minorities experience in the educational system. A life-wide approach means that people enter into learning activities with different experiences from their other areas of life, and that these experiences, as a basis of their ability to participate, might improve their chances of successful participation in learning activities. Furthermore Gitz-Johansen argues that: "… the ability of the learning context to embrace and build on the learner's prior experiences will have an impact on whether the outcome is an empowerment of the learner or an experience of defeat. The concept of lifelong learning is in danger of not being adequate in this regard, as it tends to employ an individualized concept of learning, and thus leaving out the importance of the linguistic and cultural background of different groups, and their different preconditions for participating in learning activities." (Gitz-Johansen & Ploug 2004 and Gitz-Johansen 2006)

Following up on the comment "… as it tends to employ an individualized concept of learning…" and relating it to the educational strategies of Table 1, it is furthermore important to stress the fact that 'productive' citizens are not only formally and classically school-skilled citizens, they are to citizens with social and democratic skills which enables them to participate in society. Focusing on investments in individual formal skills might improve the chances of success in an individual life trajectory perspective, but if we want to create equal opportunities for all (despite economic, social, cultural or ethnic background), social and democratic values has to be an important part of the school curriculum.

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