

What is the educational purpose of problem-oriented project-based learning?

Reading the discursive construction of the educational aims and purposes of problem-oriented project-based learning in textual introductions from 1974-2018

Sørensen, Kasper Anthon

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Kasper Anthon Sørensen



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- a Ph.D. Dissertation from the Doctoral School of People and Technology

Kasper Anthon Sørensen

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Supervisor:

Eva Bendix Petersen, professor
Roskilde University

Roskilde University
Department of People and Technology
The Doctoral School of People and Technology
Centre for Research on Problem-oriented Project Learning (RUC-PPL)
The Programme for Learning, Working Life and Social Innovation (LASI)

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Kasper Anthon Sørensen:

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Building 02

P.O. Box 260

DK-4000 Roskilde

Denmark

T: +45 4674 2732

E: forskorskolen@ruc.dk

Website: <https://ruc.dk/phdskolen-mennesker-og-teknologi>

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Preface by the Doctoral School

Problem-oriented project work, or its more recent label ‘problem-oriented project learning’ (PPL), has been the central educational activity at Roskilde and Aalborg university for 50 years. It has been hailed as a progressive form of higher education borrowing from both inquiry-based and problem-based approaches, notions of student-centred learning, and strong on collaborative forms of studying. It continues to attract attention globally as an alternative and noteworthy approach.

The doctoral dissertation at hand takes as a starting point however that we should not assume to know what PPL is, rather we need to examine how it is constituted and how it has been constituted historically. Much has been said about PPL, and it has been enacted through thousands of student projects, but one question that has remained under-explored is this: what is the educational purpose of PPL?

While this question can be explored in many ways, the dissertation takes a Foucauldian approach, undertaking a genealogical discourse analysis that begins with a problematization of the present. To investigate how current dominant discourses about the purposes of PPL came to be, the dissertation undertakes a careful reading, and rereading, of carefully selected introductions to PPL from the 1970s until today.

The contribution of this original work is multifaceted. Importantly, it insists on a (re)consideration of the purpose of higher education at a time where this debate is captured almost exclusively by an interest in graduate employability. Yet, its contribution does not lie in a decontextualized singular normative notion, but through a fieldwork in philosophy that shows the discursive continuities and discontinuities that constitute the field of possibilities for formulating positive purpose statements. Further, it undertakes a stimulating (re)reading of canonical PPL texts, which gives new insight about these specific historical discourse actors, and such work is interesting and important in and of itself. As such, the work makes it possible to move more knowingly, more deliberately, should one be called to formulate the educational purpose of PPL in the 21st century.

Professor Eva Bendix Petersen
PhD supervisor, Roskilde University

Acknowledgements

Before properly taking off in this study of the educational purposes of problem-oriented project-based learning, I would like to address a language matter - why write this thesis in English? The object of study is constantly being connected to the Danish universities in Roskilde and Aalborg, and most material related to this educational approach is in Danish (and it has taken hours of work to translate the texts studied into English). Furthermore, my first language is Danish, and it would have been a lot easier not to constantly break my head for finding the 'right' words in this English language. Still, I find it important, and worth the trouble, to write this dissertation in a language that might help to connect the questions asked to a wider global audience (and the act of translating is a great teacher). I do believe there is much to learn from widening the dialogue on problem-oriented, project-based and interdisciplinary approaches to higher education. Although I have laboured to make statements and situations intelligible, there will still be elements (and formulations) that are likely to be difficult to decipher (or simply awkwardly written) for the reader not familiar with Danish higher education. Notwithstanding, I hope this thesis will come to be a contribution to widening the (global) conversation on the purposes of higher education and alternative university pedagogies.

Now to the acknowledgements. Many people have had an impact on this thesis, the ongoing thought-process and my four-year journey as a PhD student.

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Kasper Anthon Sørensen

kanthon@ruc.dk

kasper.anthon.soerensen@gmail.com

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As an integrated part of the Roskilde Model, the PPL provides a concrete and historically rooted pedagogical framework for university studies, which has attracted the interest of universities around the world. PPL studies are characterized by an explicit orientation towards social relevance and high academic standards.

Preface to *The Roskilde Model: Problem-oriented Learning and Project Work*

(Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015: x)

Since the global university lacks an internal reference point, an internal criterion of what it means to be a (good) university, it can only adapt and adjust to what comes to it from the outside. Because the global university stands for nothing, it runs the risk of falling for anything.

Gert Biesta in *How Useful Should the University be?* (2011: 42)

(...) the critical use of history: its just treatment of the past, its decisive cutting of the roots, its rejection of traditional attitudes of reverence, its liberation of man by presenting him with other origins than those in which he prefers to see himself.

Michel Foucault in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* (1977a: 164)

Preface

Arriving at the train platform near Roskilde University, everyone walk down the same staircase to get to the street level. On the way down, if you look up, you will see a huge advertising space occupied by the university.

“Welcome to the university of reality”¹, I read one morning on a big poster greeting commuters. Another day, on the same spot, a new poster, in bright red writing, proclaims: “We solve real problems – one project at a time”² accompanied by a big “RUC”-logo. These two statements have continued to bug me. What is this occupation with ‘reality’? What would the opposite of ‘reality’ and ‘real problems’ be? Which position is it speaking up against – who is being addressed here? And stating that ‘we’ should ‘solve problems’, is that what you do at university, whether student or researcher? Is that what ‘problem-orientation’ means?

In the hallway outside my uni office, posters have popped up. One in English and one in Danish. Looking at the former, the headline reads “The 7 principles of PPL”. Spread across the poster, seven numbers in various bright colours fill the glossy paper followed by small blocks of text with each their own heading:

1. Project work
2. Problem orientation
3. Interdisciplinarity
4. Participant control
5. Exemplarity
6. Group work
7. International insight and vision.

There is no explanation on the poster of what “PPL” stands for, but in the top right corner, a clue is given with the words “RUC’s EDUCATIONAL MODEL”. My initial curiosity is the very existence of this poster – how does a university come to have a poster of its educational model? When did the marketing team, as it seems, come to have such a central role in articulating ‘what PPL is for’? What is this ‘PPL’ anyway and where did it come from?

It is not only in the branding material of Roskilde University, that ‘PPL’ makes its curious appearance. While attending the teacher training programme at the university, we were asked to read some chapters from the edited volume ‘The Roskilde Model: Problem-

¹ My translation of the Danish “Velkommen til universitetet i virkeligheden”

² My translation of the Danish “Vi løser rigtige problemer – et projekt ad gangen”

Oriented Learning and Project Work’, published in an Academic series on Springer in 2015. The book was presented as an authoritative source. In its preface, it states:

In fact, for four decades the hallmark of the university has been to develop the concept of problem-oriented, interdisciplinary and participant-directed project work into a unique model of education and educational design. The everyday term for this rather lengthy concept would be ‘Problem-oriented Project Work’ or ‘Problem-oriented Project Learning’ (PPL). (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015: ix)

For four decades, it reads, “Problem-oriented Project Learning (PPL)” has been “a unique model of education” for the university. ‘PPL’ appears to be the natural way of speaking of this approach. Some years prior - before the campus had a make-over with posters - I, a former RUC student, had never heard this term. To my knowledge, the most commonly used term for ‘what we do at Roskilde University’ was ‘problem-oriented project work’ or ‘project pedagogy’. When did ‘work’ become ‘learning’ in the language of PPL? And how did this happen?

I also wonder at the title of the book, ‘The Roskilde Model’. If PPL is tied to a specific institution as its ‘model’, does that make it ‘unique’ in a way where no other university has similar educational approaches? To what extent does it go into dialogue with other approaches to higher education? Who can act as ‘experts’ on PPL?

The preface to the book continues by expounding the aims and outcomes of this ‘PPL’:

PPL studies are characterized by an explicit orientation towards social relevance and high academic standards. In addition, PPL is meaningful and motivating in terms of student needs and interests and deliberately oriented towards the development of innovative and creative skills. (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015: x)

Browsing through the pages of the edited volume, I am struck by the intensely positive lingo in which this approach is articulated. The list of formulated learning outcomes and benefits is long: social relevance, high academic standards, meaningful, motivating, student-centred and skill-inducing. Critiques or inconsistencies of ‘PPL’, on the other hand, seem not to be addressed in any substantial way.

A myriad of questions flood my mind. Are all the mentioned educational aims commensurable? Or, are some of them, from other perspectives, contested or at odds with one another? Are there alternatives to the glossy stories of PPL as a coherent and continuous educational model? If looking in detail, looking differently and looking places less visited for the educational aims of PPL - what might we find?

□□□

The encounters with the texts above have sparked my curiosity (and continue to do so) for what PPL is *for*, what it ‘wants’ for students, scholars, the university and society - and in what ways this connects to discourses of higher education.

The ambition of this study is to open up the discussion about the educational aims and purposes of 'PPL', a discussion that seems to have gone stale in recent decades with increased focus on branding and marketisation of education.

Therefore, as the initial interest of this study, I ask: what does PPL aim to do as a form of education, and how is it possible, and impossible, to ask this question?

I. Introduction

In this first chapter of the thesis, I construct the problem of the inquiry. The chapter begins with a diagnosis of the contemporary higher education field in which PPL is situated. The second section explicates the assumption of this study that education is inherently a process of direction and values. This entails an engagement with the educational question of ‘what is desirable’ and a conceptual discussion of what this study means by ‘aims’ and ‘purposes’. Then follows a positioning of the meta-theoretical perspective where aims and purposes, building on Foucaultian discourse theory, are understood as discursive and historical constructions. This leads up to a problematisation of PPL and the research questions guiding the thesis.

In the final section of this chapter, existing studies of problem-oriented project-based learning in higher education are reviewed to situate my study and to delineate its contributions to the higher education field and studies on PPL.

Economisation and technification of higher education

What is happening in current higher education? In this section, I relate the problematisation of the purposes of PPL to this question and lay out recent tendencies within the field. I show how a wide range of policy and ethnographic studies of higher education point to an increased ‘economisation’ and ‘technification’ that narrow down, and make self-evident, the possible answers to the question: why do we educate? These developments towards a homogenisation of possible aims and purposes of higher education (not limited to ‘higher’ education) necessitate, as I argue in line with others, a pluralisation and re-opening of the continuous discussion of why we educate, and for what (Zgaga 2009, Biesta 2010, 2011, Barnett 2017, Masschelein and Simons 2018, Magnússon and Rytzler 2022).

The following can be thought of as addressing what Stoller and Kramer (2018) call “the material and political conditions of institutions” (p. 4), or what Barnett (2017) calls “the social ontology” of the university (p. 85). This said, I focus on the educational aspect of the university.

Becoming part of the ‘knowledge economy’

Several scholars within higher education research argue that universities³ have seen certain changes in their governance since the 1980s and 1990s. Universities have become part of the so-called ‘global knowledge economy’, the number of students rise and pressures on producing research and delivering ‘efficient learning’ intensify (Krejsler 2006, Biesta 2007, Krejsler and Carney 2009, Barnett 2017, Stoller and Kramer 2018, Masschelein and Simons 2018, Wright et al. 2019, Shore and Wright 2019). Some texts identify the rise of ‘the knowledge economy’ earlier such as Simons and Masschelein (2008), who quote Drucker from having written in 1969: “Education has become too important to be left to educators.... Education is far too big a cost to be accepted without questioning. To ask whether it is fruitful investment or simply expense is a legitimate question.” (Drucker 1969: 313 in Simons and Masschelein 2008: 396-397).

Simons and Masschelein (2008) write how the notion of the knowledge economy meant casting ‘knowledge’ as the “central capital” (p. 396) for national economies, which positioned universities centrally as the producers of this knowledge (ibid.), understanding research as “knowledge production” and education as “production of learning outcomes” (Masschelein and Simons 2018: 50). One of the major effects has been to reconfigure the discussion of legitimate purposes of universities, albeit in different ways around the globe. In a major study published as ‘The Death of the Public University? Uncertain Futures for Higher Education in the Knowledge Economy’ (Wright and Shore, eds. 2019), the two editors, in the introduction (Shore and Wright 2019), give a list of “major trends” (p. 2) accompanying the changing situation of universities. These trends are identified mainly in English-speaking countries, which the authors see as “a laboratory for testing out a new model of the neoliberal entrepreneurial university” (p. 2), indicating how these changes might possibly spread the other countries. The authors identify at least seven major trends (italics in original): “*State Disinvestment in Universities?*” (p. 3), “*New Regimes for Promoting Competitiveness?*” (p. 4), “*Rise of Audit culture: Performance and Output Measures?*” (p. 4), “*Administrative Bloat, Academic Decline?*” (p. 5), “*the Power of the ‘Administrariat’?*” (p. 7), “*Rise of ‘The Entrepreneurial University’?*” (p. 8), “*Higher Education as Private Investment Versus Public Good?*” (p. 9).

A common denominator for many of the mentioned policy studies on European universities, is to give the inter-state actor Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) a powerful role in producing and spreading economised understandings of what universities and higher education is (and should be) for. Wright et al. (2019,

³ The studies I draw upon are mainly from a European context and some are specifically studying Danish higher education. Countries that are part of the European Union have a certain policy frame in common, but the local enactments of these policies differ and the policy studies included mostly concern the Danish university system.

chapter 3) and Wright (2021) show through policy analysis how the publication ‘Redefining tertiary education’ from OECD in 1998 was instrumental in producing an economic market discourse of the university (and its education and research) as ‘absolutely necessary’. Such a ‘market university’ was perceived as follows, in the words of the report from 1998, “Primary values include customer satisfaction, a good match between the labour market and courses and qualifications on offer, and efficient and cost-effective delivery of service” (Wright 2021: 13). The ‘market university’, characterised by “utility in the market place” (Wright et al. 2019: 65), is contrasted to another model interchangeably dubbed a “classical liberal”, “Humboldtian”, “critical intellectual” and “Newman” model of the university (Wright et al. 2019: 65). Wright et al. (2019, chapter 3) analyse how the OECD-report through these binaries manages to position the ‘market’ model as the future, while the ‘classic’ model becomes articulated as an absurdly liberal and implicitly outdated institution seeking the “unconstrained advancement of knowledge” (ibid. 65). Central to the argument in international policy, including the OECD-report from 1998, is how universities so far had been ‘isolated entities’ disclosed from the rest of society, and with unclear contributions (Wright 2021: 13). In terms of uttering possible and impossible purposes of the universities, the OECD and European policy entities manage to position ‘Humboldt’ and ‘Newman’ models of the university sarcastically as concerned with “the qualities of the educated person, the self-governing or collegiate body of scholars, academic discourse and interchange, and the endless quest for knowledge and understanding” (Wright 2021: 13). In the spreading and naturalisation of a market discourse, such aims – the quest for knowledge and becoming an educated person – become increasingly illegitimate. This happens subtly by transforming the “classical liberal” and “Humboldt” university into “tradition”, providing a “temporal fixity which disqualifies them as serious scenarios for the future” (Wright et al. 2019: 68).

The rise of the knowledge economy discourse, and the strategic positioning of Humboldtian discourses of higher education as ‘traditional’ and outdated, have seen the emergence of an economised language of education and a tendency to think universities in terms of producing capital. Some scholars refer to the increased ‘economisation’ of the university as *Academic capitalism* (Masschelein and Simons 2018: 58, Stoller and Kramer 2018: 4, Lee and Stensaker 2021: 158). A capitalist perspective of the university understands its activities and subjects as commodities and judges their worth primarily in terms of economic growth, as Baez (2021) writes: “the humanities, or even any science, physical or social, that is not premised on promoting economic growth, might thus also be deemed wasteful under capitalistic logic.”⁴ (Baez 2021: 33). The particular economic

⁴ This is very much the case in Denmark in recent decades, where especially the Humanities struggle for legitimacy in an increasingly hostile economic discourse, and policies of higher education to follow (Wright et al. 2019).

work done on subjects, McClanahan (2017) names “neoliberalism” (p. 511) and in commenting on Wendy Brown’s (2015) book ‘Undoing the demos – Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution’, McClanahan (2017) writes how it shows as “the becoming-economic of formerly non-economic realms of life, sociality, and governmentality.” (p. 511). McClanahan (2017) argues from reading ‘Undoing the demos’ (Brown 2015) that “the contemporary neoliberal university” was formed by the introduction of a distorted, neoliberal version of “human capital theory” in late 1990s (p. 514). The purpose of education in the neoliberal university, in the words of Brown (2015, chapter 6), is “educating human capital” (p. 175). It is “a formulation of education as primarily valuable to human capital development, where human capital is what the individual, the business world, and the state seek to enhance in order to maximize competitiveness.” (Brown 2015: 176). The rise of neoliberalism as “a governing rationality that disseminates market values and metrics to every sphere of life and construes the human itself exclusively as *homo oeconomicus*” (Brown 2015: 176, emphasis in original) has, according to Brown, lead to the downfall of “broadly accessible and affordable higher education” in the “Euro-Atlantic world”. To Brown (2015), this change “threatens the democracy itself” (ibid. 175).

Cracks in the economised university

In the introduction to the book ‘Death of the Public University?’ the authors (Shore and Wright 2019) respond to the question of the death of the public university in the following way: “it may not be dead, but it cannot be allowed to continue in its zombified state.” (p. 21). This diagnosis seems warranted when seen from the perspective of the presented studies analysing the ‘economisation’ of the university. Though most studies, I have found, agree on a changed situation for universities in terms of governance and a spread of dominant discourses emphasising economic and market value for higher education, the assessment of the effects of these developments vary. Hammershøj (2019), for example, offers a counter-discourse to, what I would call the more ‘gloomy’ readings of the higher education field in the literature. He identifies what he calls “a lack of reflection” in many contemporary studies on the idea and organisation of the university, which “manifests itself as an academic bias towards critical thinking and general education and against utility and professional education.” (Hammershøj 2019: 160). The problem with this bias against employability as the purpose of higher education, he holds, is that it rests on a certain simplistic understanding of employability as “a matter of education for profit and economic growth.” (ibid. 162). Also, he writes, many scholars seem to omit that the very existence and persistence historically of the university depends on its ability to “prepare for employment” (ibid.). As a response to this type of argument, Biesta (2007) seems to suggest how it is not his aim to ‘replace the knowledge economy’ and that “we must be realistic about the importance of techno-science for economic development” (p. 478). Zgaga (2009), who studies the purpose of the university in EU-policies, gives the same

disclaimer to ‘onesidedness’; “To make it clear from the start: it is not my intention to diminish the importance of the ‘economic’ dimension of higher education” (p. 176).

The goal of the study at hand is not to deem certain *á priori* purposes of the university irrelevant (or ‘better’), but first and foremost to inquire into the *possibilities* of discussing what Zgaga (2009) has called “the full range of purposes” (p. 183) for the university. Such an investigation, with Problem-oriented Project-based Learning (PPL) as the study object, can then lead to a discussion of what educational aims and purposes – within and beyond a ‘full range’ – may be desirable for the present and future university.

While the studies drawn on hitherto have been mainly document-based policy analyses that observe relatively clear tendencies in discourses on higher education, anthropological-ethnographical studies can nuance and trouble this picture. Studies of the lives of students (Wright et al. 2019, chapter 10, 11 by Nielsen) and academics (Krejsler 2006, Krejsler and Carney 2009, Sarauw 2011, Wright et al. 2019, chapter 8) show that economic and managerial neoliberal discourses are produced, reproduced, resisted and transformed in many, unpredictable ways. Based on studies of Danish universities, Krejsler in Wright et al. (2019) identifies a declining “democratic and *Humboldtian* university discourse” (p. 215, emphasis in original) prevalent since late 1960s, which is giving way to a “knowledge economy university discourse” emerging after Danish university reforms from 2005-2007 (p. 215-216). Though Krejsler (in Wright et al. 2019) sees certain changes “on a general level” of governance (increased ‘accountability’, ‘efficiency’, ‘excellence’ and new technologies for publishing and funding), he finds that at each university of his study “dominant signifiers and political technologies were negotiated in very different ways” (p. 234). He also finds that the *Humboldtian* and knowledge economy discourses were not balanced equally at the different universities (*ibid.*). Sarauw (2011), in her doctoral study of the introduction of ‘competencies’ into Danish Higher education policies following the Bologna process, shows that academics thought they could transform and resist certain values, when formulating learning goals:

At the University of Copenhagen, their concern was to sustain the *Humboldtian* tradition of students’ freedom to pursue deep learning as a long term good for sustaining society. At Roskilde University, the concern was to sustain participatory and formative learning. In both cases, the academics felt they had succeeded. (Sarauw 2011: 220)

The study (Sarauw 2011) showed that these efforts of resistance shattered in the narrow frameworks of designated learning outcomes, omitting formulations of education that could not be formulated in terms of its value to the labour market, which in turn made academics “co-producers” of a market-oriented competency-discourse (p. 220).

Learnification and the narrowing of educational purposes

In this final section on the tendencies within higher education, I home in on what happens to the educational idea of the university in the current dominant discourses. I turn

to two interconnected problematics that are central to the study at hand: the proliferation of ‘learning’ as the main term for educational endeavours, and an increasingly superficial and narrow understanding of the educational aims and purposes of the university. This latter point is an important motivation for the inquiry and its endeavour to open up the discussion of the educational purposes of the university. In line with philosophers in higher education, I find it particularly pertinent to revisit a thought that can seem unthinkable from economic and utilitarian logics: conceiving of university education and studying as an end in itself (Biesta 2011, Barnett 2017, Masschelein and Simons 2018, Stoller and Kramer 2018, Bengtson et al., eds. 2021, Feldt and Petersen 2021).

Within educational policy, practice and research, Biesta (2010) has identified what he calls “learnification”⁵ (p. 18). He shows how “learning” in many places has replaced “education” as the term to describe what is going on in schools, universities and adult education settings:

The rise of what I have referred to as ‘the new language of learning’ is manifest, for example, in the redefinition of teaching as the facilitation of learning and of education as the provision of learning opportunities or learning experiences; it can be seen in the frequent use of the word ‘learner’ instead of ‘student’ or ‘pupil’; it is manifest in the transformation of adult education into adult learning, and in the replacement of ‘permanent education’ by ‘lifelong learning’. (Biesta 2010: 17)

The problem, Biesta (2010) argues, is that learning is an individually oriented term, which therefore cannot help in discussing the relational character of ‘education’ between educator and educated (p. 18). At the same time ‘learning’ is rarely – in policy and education theory - accompanied by notions of *what* is to be learned and therefore remains a concept that says very little about educational content, aims and purposes (ibid.). Biesta (2010) does not have a problem with ‘learning’, as such, but it is rather its discursive effects that become problematic for education (p. 18). Other critics of the ‘effects’ of changes in the conceptualisation of ‘learning’ and ‘education’ such as Simons and Masschelein (2008) point to similar developments, where ‘learning’ in the 1990s became linked to an employability agenda:

The term ‘learning’ of course has long been used. What is new about its contemporary use is that the term, disconnected from issues of education and schooling, is part of discourses that regard learning as a kind of capital, as something for which the learner him- or herself is responsible, as something that can and should be managed (and is an object of expertise), and as something that is employable. (Simons and Masschelein 2008: 402)

⁵ Though Biesta (2010) identifies ‘learnification’ in a context of general education and schooling, I agree with Magnússon and Rytzler (2022: 26) that the same tendency is prevalent in higher education.

In this way, the concept of ‘learning’, when detached from *pedagogical* discussions, risks becoming colonised by economic discourses, making it a commodity in the competition for value on the labour market.

Returning to Biesta (2010), he identifies a problem with agency and democracy in the current discussion of education and ‘learning’. He writes that if educational researchers, educators, policy makers, politicians do not bring up a discussion of values in educational matters, but let economically underlined discourses of ‘quality’, ‘effectiveness’ and ‘learning’ drive discussions on education, then we end up, as Biesta (2010) puts it “valuing what we (can) measure” instead of “measuring what we value” (p. 13). This becomes a technical-instrumentalist understanding of education instead of a value-based education founded in explicit ethics (Biesta 2010: 26-27, 127). An example from the higher education field is the popularised concept of ‘constructive alignment’ from the book ‘Teaching for Quality Learning at University’ from 2011 by Biggs and Tang (Naskali and Keskitalo-Foley 2019, Magnússon and Rytzler 2022). According to a critical reading by Naskali and Keskitalo-Foley (2019), the book constructs teaching as a technical and linear method (neglecting the question of content) aimed at enhancing the learning of students, who are positioned as individualised customers in need of having their psychological needs fulfilled (p. 112-113). In the same line, Magnússon and Rytzler (2022) find that ‘constructive alignment’ has become less a pedagogy based in educational theory than an uncritical driver for international policies that detaches itself from “[c]ontent, context and history” and “treats teaching as a set of technologies to be implemented” (p. 60).

Biesta (2011), in a critique of globalising discourses of the ‘usefulness’ and competitiveness of the university, argues for a loss of inner purpose and direction. He directs his critique at “the global university”, which is a trope Biesta (2011: 37) uses to describe what universities long for: to compete and compare themselves with other universities globally to be the most “excellent” and “world-class”, where ‘being better’, and measuring higher on certain parameters than the others becomes a goal in itself (*ibid.*). The global university, Biesta (2011) writes, which universities strive to become, “is not based on a substantive set of values and principles but is articulated in terms of how one institution is positioned *in relation to* other institutions.” (p. 37, original emphasis). The discourse of the global university, Biesta (2011) argues, risks making universities lose their sense of direction, pursuing hollow ends of being ‘the best’:

Since the global university lacks an internal reference point, an internal criterion of what it means to be a (good) university, it can only adapt and adjust to what comes to it from the outside. Because the global university stands for nothing, it runs the risk of falling for anything. (Biesta 2011: 42)

For Biesta, the recent changes within higher education at the turn of the 21st century have lead debates on the various purposes of university education to be silenced by dominating, self-evident and “pseudo-substantive” arguments about ‘quality’ and ‘excellence’ (and partly ‘learning’) (Biesta 2011: 37-38, 43). The problem, he holds, when arguments

about for instance ‘being useful’ (something also explored as ‘the discourse of utility’ by Baez 2021), dominates discussions on the purposes of higher education, is that educators, researchers, students, policymakers and politicians have difficulties arguing outside of dominating economic discourses prevalent in higher education policy and practice. Biesta (2011) writes “we can say that as long as education tries to be ‘useful’, that it tries just to give what students say they want, it runs the risk of becoming un- if not anti-educational.” (p. 43).

Summing up tendencies in higher education

Thus far, I have presented a diagnosis of the recent and current landscape of higher education as construed by policy analysts and philosophers of (higher) education. Most studies point to a dominating knowledge economy discourse of university education that narrows the legitimate purposes of university education and makes teaching and learning into mainly technical matters. The studies of policy and the pedagogical roles of the university will later be drawn upon as discussants in the analysis. The diagnosis of an economised and ‘technified’ field pose at least two questions to PPL. Firstly, how does it as an ‘educational approach’ become subject to (and re/produce) the discourses mentioned? Secondly, does PPL possibly hold discourses in its repository that would enable counter-discourse and new imaginaries for higher education pedagogy?

The next section explores what educational aims ‘are’ (and what makes them ‘educational’) and shows why they are important to the study of PPL.

Education as a matter of what is desirable

A fundamental assumption of this inquiry, is to understand matters of education and pedagogy, as questions about ‘the desirable’. This is by no means controversial or ‘new’, and has been the subject matter of thinkers in education for thousands of years, but as stated in the previous section, there is a contemporary need to revive this discussion. I take the phrasing of ‘the desirable’ from Biesta (2011, 2017), who distinguishes between what we “desire”, as individual ‘wants’, and then the question of whether these desires are “desirable” pointing to the social aspect of living in a world together:

To exist as subject therefore means that we engage with the question of whether what we desire is desirable, not only for our own lives, but also for the lives we try to live with others on a planet that has limited capacity for fulfilling all the desires projected onto it. (Biesta 2017: 4)

I see such elaborations of what ‘education’ and ‘pedagogy’ are, and what they try to do, as important and necessary engagements for this project. The conceptual grappling of

the following section is important to challenge and expand notions of teaching and pedagogy as mere technical matters of efficiently applying the right methods for maximum learning outputs while minimising the risks of education (Biesta 2013).

Expanding on the assumption of education as concerning ‘the desirable’, this is not an optional view, but as Biesta (2010) writes, it concerns the nature of education: “Education, be it in the form of schooling, workplace learning, vocational training or learning through life, is by its very nature a process with direction and purpose.” (p. 2), and he continues: “That is why the question of good education – the question of what education is *for* – is not optional but always poses itself when we engage in educational activities, practices and processes.” (ibid.). The assumption that education in its many forms is necessarily involved with questions of aims, purposes, ends, goals and values is shared by a wide range of educational scholars (see e.g. Barnett 2017, Nepper Larsen 2014, Tanggaard et al. 2014, Harris 1999, Moore 1982, Dewey 1916/2012).

That education essentially concerns what is *valued* and *desirable*, beyond initial desires and wants, can for example be seen in Marples (1999), who, with reference to Plato, connects educational matters to what ‘the good life’ means (p. x). Dewey (1916/2012) similarly connects education to, among other things, questions of the kind of society we want (p. 71). For the same reasons, questions of education - just as of ‘the good life’, and ‘preferable kind of society’ - are subject to diverging views and theories; they are inherently “contentious” and “normative” (Biesta 2010: 1-2). These insights become particularly important when, as seen in the previous section, the opposite is the case; when educational activities are made to appear ‘value-free’, ‘self-evident’ and ‘neutral’, thus seeking to make redundant questions about what aims, purposes and values are pursued through this and that activity.

The questions of what is desirable in education, are in this project conceptualised with the terms ‘educational aims and purposes’. I will lay out why these are helpful concepts to think with for my inquiry, and how they, ‘aim’ and ‘purpose’ respectively, point to different aspects of education.

For the understanding of ‘pedagogy’ for this project, I draw on Nepper Larsen (2014), who defines ‘pedagogy’ as “the will to do *something* with *someone*” (Nepper Larsen 2014: 183, my translation, emphasis in original). Thus, in pedagogical matters, as understood here, there is a sense of *desirable aims* (something) and *an educational subject* (someone), and I might add, *an educator*, holding a will. Pedagogy in this sense is an inherently normative concept. Nepper Larsen (2014) writes how the Danish term “Pædagogik” is related to concepts (in Danish) such as “opdragelse” (in German ‘Erziehung’, meaning ‘upbringing’ or ‘moral education’) and “uddannelse” (similar to the German ‘Ausbildung’) (2014: 182). ‘Uddannelse’ and especially the German ‘Ausbildung’ associate training and vocationally or professionally oriented education with the prefix ‘ud’ and ‘aus’ (meaning ‘out’) pointing to a certain ‘place’ (such as a profession) after successful training. A related concept,

contained in the Danish 'ud-dannelse' is 'dannelse', which sometimes appears synonymously with the German 'Bildung' referring to the development of the person and its character and virtues, not necessarily related to a formal education system. Illeris (2012) writes how Bildung ('dannelse') tends to be understood in opposition to working life and work (p. 12). In English, 'Bildung' can be translated to 'cultivation', or as the philosopher Richard Rorty (in Noaparast 2014) calls it; "self-formation" (p. 86). Later, Rorty's "preferred translation" of Bildung becomes "edification" (ibid.). To Rorty, this refers to a process of "individuation" (p. 85) that students (should) experience when entering tertiary education to alternate and challenge their views and prior "acculturation" (p. 84).

All of the mentioned concepts could legitimately translate to the English term 'education', and I see it as a reminder to think of the multitude of aspects related to 'education', which at the same time call for conceptual clarity when writing on education.

Finishing this short conceptual exploration, what is important for the project at hand is that 'education' and 'pedagogy' are understood primarily, as showed by Biesta earlier, as having to do with certain desirable values and direction. In other words, with aims and purposes. Notions that spark movement (from one state to another) and transformation. Broadly speaking then, pedagogy, a part from concerning 'what is desirable' (as different from what is 'desired'), entails reflection and thinking on the relation between a number of elements. Pedagogical reflections include an (imagined) *educational subject* (e.g. 'child', 'pupil' or 'student') or *subjects, an educator* (or 'pedagogue' and 'teacher' with the latter often being connected to school settings), *something* (depending on the context this could be phrased 'subject matter' or 'content') and *a way of pursuing this 'something'* (e.g. 'methods'). In certain settings such as teacher education, more elements could be added to this list (see e.g. Kinchin and Gravett 2022: 66), but for this investigation, the mentioned will suffice. Modes of thinking and acting in education that do not include considerations on the above aspects and their relations, are not, with these definitions, educational or pedagogical.

These elements of education, or, pedagogy are all important aspects of 'good educational practice', but for the study at hand the emphasis lies with desirable *ends of education*; its aims and purposes. Tanggaard et al. (2014) claim that questions of the ends of education should have primacy over means and methods in discussions of good education:

It makes sense to discuss pedagogical means and techniques only as long as we consider what ends are considered valuable. For this reason, discussions of ends should precede

discussions of means in education [pædagogik], even though ends and means will be intertwined in un-pure [uren] ways in everyday life – and hurray for that. (p. 12, my translation)⁶

Thus, it becomes problematic (for the practice of ‘good education’) when elements of pedagogy become isolated from the others, and especially, as suggested above, when aims – what is desirable (including an engagement with what it means to live ‘well’ in the world together) - are detached from means. This happens for example when pedagogy becomes equalled to a “‘technist’ view of effective teaching techniques”⁷ (Kinchin and Gravett 2022: 65). Then teaching becomes a matter of ‘efficient content delivery’, leaving out questions of the content, the teacher, the student and desirable educational aims (ibid. 66).

To the study at hand, the pedagogical-philosophical perspectives here help to show when something might be called ‘educational’ and not. It shows that not all aims can be pursued at once, and might contradict one another. These insights will be drawn into the later discussion or, whether the articulated aims of PPL can be said to be ‘educational’ (if they reflect on the elements of pedagogy and adhere to theories of education) or not.

The aims and purposes of education

To have a better idea of what ‘aims of education’ might be, and in what sense they are theorised differently from ‘purposes’, the next couple of pages address these two key concepts.

Biesta mainly speaks of ‘purposes of education’ posed in the question ‘what is education *for*?’ This is also the initial question asked in this project, but looking through older and newer writings by philosophers of education, the preferred terms differ (Mulcahy et al. 2015, Biesta 2010, Harris 1999, Moore 1982, Dewey 1916/2012). Several mainly use ‘aims of education’ (Dewey 1916, Harris 1999), some do not seem to differ and use the terms interchangeably (Dewey 1916, Biesta 2010, Mulcahy et al. 2015), while others make a sharp distinction between the two (Moore 1982). The question I ask here is what the difference between the two terms could be made out to be, and whether it is useful for this investigation.

⁶ I use squared brackets in quotes mainly to show the reader the ‘original’ word of a translation that I find troublesome and in need of its ‘original’, or for adding words for understanding. Unless otherwise stated, squared brackets in this thesis are my doing.

⁷ Kinchin and Gravett (2022) use the (according to a Google search) uncommon word “‘technist’”, instead of e.g. technical, technological or similar.

Concerning the relevance of including ‘older’ philosophers of education, such as Dewey, in the current inquiry, Stoller and Kramer (2018), write how Dewey’s insistence on education as an end in itself is much needed for contemporary higher education:

One of the major failings of contemporary higher education is the lack of a theoretical discourse that describes its labor and its value on its own terms. This is perhaps one of the most important impacts of Dewey’s denotative method in relationship to a robust theory of higher education, but also the most misunderstood or ignored. (Stoller and Kramer 2018: 18)

For this study, I revisit the thinking of Dewey – and other philosophers – exactly to help think about education in various ways, also as an end in itself. T. W. Moore (1982) in an introduction to the philosophy of education argues that all educational practice is necessarily based on some idea about *what one is doing*, it is “theory-loaded” as he calls it (p. 12). It points to a sense of deliberation, that educational practices have some direction, whether conscious and explicit or not, and this is what Moore calls ‘theory’. The sense of direction involved in an educational activity Moore (1982) calls ‘educational aims’: “This is a commitment to value and a logical prerequisite of there being a theory at all. All practical theories, limited or general, must begin with some notion of a desirable end to be attained.” (Moore 1982: 24). If practice is not guided by some notion of an attainable end, Moore does not see it as educational practice at all: “Unless what is done is done according to some theory, bearing in mind some desirable end to be achieved and the means to achieve it, it is not practice at all, merely random behavior.” (Moore 1982: 12). While Moore’s philosophy of education seems to build fundamentally on rational planning and control, saying little of ‘the beautiful risk of education’ (Biesta 2013) and the messiness of actual teaching practices, he does provide useful definitions of ‘aims and purposes’ for this project, as will be elaborated.

A similar, but different position to Moore is found in Dewey (1916/2012) who posited that educators must have aims in order for their practice to be “intelligent”, what he called “to have a mind” (p. 75). Such aims are for Dewey intrinsically linked to, and formulated in, concrete teaching activities and ‘intelligent’ means that teachers assess the situation and form their aims and practice accordingly, which then continues as a part of an educational process. Though Dewey writes these points under the chapter ‘Aims in Education’, he uses “purpose” and “purposeful activity” synonymously to ‘aims’ (ibid.).

For Dewey, aims are connected directly to educational activities, something teachers and educators (must) have, whereas ‘education as an abstraction’ “has no aims” (p. 78). He does speak of ‘general aims’ of education, though, but these are only seen as helpful and ‘educative’ to the extent they help the formulation of aims in concrete activities; aims external to teaching situations run the risk of being ‘uneducative’:

Even the most valid aims which can be put in words will, as words, do more harm than good unless one recognizes that they are not aims, but rather suggestions to educators as

to how to observe, how to look ahead, and how to choose in liberating and directing the energies of the concrete situations in which they find themselves. (Dewey 1916/2012: 78)

In this way Dewey's concept of 'aim' is radically situated, processual and localised in concrete teaching practice, being a point in itself for his theory of education. 'Aims' may be found in many 'places', but for these to make activities *educative* and something worthy of being called 'educational practice', they are 'found' and formulated in educational activities themselves. Both Moore and Dewey construct 'aims' as something educators can have (and not), and something they ought to have for educational practice to be good, that is, 'theory-loaded' for Moore and 'intelligent' for Dewey.

Internal and external aims of education

Concerning 'purposes', Moore (1982) makes a useful differentiation between 'aims' and 'purposes', where the former refers to intrinsic ends, while the latter concerns 'external ends':

To ask the aim of education is to conceive of education as an end in itself, something intrinsically good, involving the development of a person. To ask its purpose or purposes is to think of it as a device designed to bring about external goods, skilled workers, executives, professionals. (Moore 1982: 29)

Moore connects the question of purpose to asking 'why are you doing this? What for?' whereas the question for the aim of something is to ask 'what are you doing? What are you about?' which implicates aims as already integrated in educational practice itself (remember Moore does not consider 'aimless practice' to be practice at all). And though Moore (1982) privileges the latter question focusing on the aims intrinsic to an activity, he does not find it unimportant to ask to the purposes, the external ends, of education (p. 30). Approaching the question of 'external purposes' to education more radically, Dewey (1916/2012) does not see any external aim – as long as it is external – as beneficial for educational practice. In 'My pedagogic creed' from 1897, Dewey wrote "I believe that education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living." (Dewey 1897, article II). This statement he elaborated later and repeated that education must always be seen as an end in itself: "That education is literally and all the time its own reward means that no alleged study or discipline is educative unless it is worthwhile in its own immediate having." (Dewey 1916/2012: 80). As stated, Dewey does speak of 'general aims' such as "larger ends which have currency in the educational theories of the day", but these must be "truly general" and hold merit only insofar as they add to, and engross, the "immediate concrete and diversified aims which are always the educator's real concern." (Dewey 1916/2012: 80).

In this project, I will not make mutually exclusive distinctions between aims and purposes, but use the insights of Moore (1982) and Dewey (1916/2012) as helpful heuristics for this study to be able to identify discourses of internal and external ends as well as concrete and general ones. The conceptual discussion of 'aims and purposes' helps to ask

questions about ‘theories’ (Moore 1982), direction and values in education. A final set of concepts, that I use to think with in this study, is the analytical divide Biesta (2010) makes of purposes of education as: qualification, socialisation and subjectification (p. 5). Biesta sees these as ‘functions’ in an analytical sense, and as ‘purposes’ in a prescriptive sense, depending on the task at hand (ibid.). These functions/purposes intertwine in educational practice, and are all seen as necessary to education, but Biesta (2010) holds that “any education worthy of its name should always contribute to processes of subjectification that allow those educated to become more autonomous and independent in their thinking and acting” (p. 21).

Aims and purposes as discursive constructs

While the hitherto conceptualisation of the aims and purposes of education is useful and will be drawn upon along the way, the way I study aims and purposes are not as philosophical concepts, but as discursive constructs. In this section, I address the onto-epistemological aspects of the investigation, that is, how I understand ‘PPL’ and its aims to be discursive and historicised. As such, the educational aims of purposes of PPL come into existence through practices that produce, and are produced by, discourses of higher education. In this sense, I follow Harris (1999) in making the question of how aims and purposes ‘exist’ not primarily a prescriptive one, but mainly an empirical and complex one:

These [aims of education] too could be regarded not only as ‘high-level directives’ laid down before practitioners while being taken to an analytic guillotine by philosophers, but rather as competing statements of values and intent, contested in and between the arenas of formation and implementation, and eventually subject to a plurality of readings and a plurality of practices. (Harris 1999: 10)

Thus, ‘aims of education’ as statements are, as Harris writes, “subject to a plurality of readings and a plurality of practices”. The construction of educational ‘aims and purposes’ as they are studied in this project, is inspired by Harris (1999) along with the discourse analytic approaches of Maclure (2003) and Hemmings (2011). Such an approach involves questions of power such as who gains from these and those aims? Who formulated them, and how? For whose benefit? Harris (1999) understands aims of education as always situated and contingent:

At any time and place many people and many institutions proclaim different often competing aims for education. Aims, like all matters of policy, are contextual, political, normative, dynamic and contested. But the dynamic contest is also continually resolved, or momentarily settled, in that policy becomes manifested in distinct and definite practices. The trick is to recognise how such settlements come about. Thus there is a point in investigating who has a voice in formulating aims of education, whose aims are legitimated, whose destination and ends are taken as desirable, and whose aims are pursued in the formulation of educational policy and practice – and why. (Harris 1999: 3)

The point I want to make is that aims and purposes of education, like education itself, are not neutral or innocent, because they imply certain desirable values and ends, certain ideas about an educated person, a good life and a good society, knowingly or not, which constitutes possible ways to think and enact.

When I write that this study ‘historicises PPL’, I am inspired by a Foucaultian approach to history, what he called ‘genealogy’ (1977a). From such a perspective, the educational aims and purposes of PPL are understood as constructs that emerge through certain discursive struggles contingent in time and space. Such a genealogical perspective, I find to be well laid out by Marshall (1990):

The concept of emergence sees the present not in any final way, as a result of historical development, but rather as a stage in the war-like confrontation between opposing forces in the quest for control and domination. Historical developments are conceptualized then as manifestations of stable mechanisms of governance, as exercises of power to restore stability, or as out-and-out contests or struggles. (Marshall 1990: 19)

Based on a genealogical perspective, I want to enquire into the historical stabilisations of PPL’ educational aims to show that these are not ‘natural’ or ‘necessary’, but rather the contingent product of in- and excluding struggles for domination. I am interested in examining the truths about what PPL is for, but not to judge the truthfulness of such accounts. Here I follow Simola et al. (1998), who writes that “the central question is not whether the truth is true or false, scientific or ideological, but how it is produced, circulated, transformed, and used.” (p. 65). Through the inclusion of a variety of empirical material and detailed examination, a genealogical discourse-oriented analysis challenges continuities by also searching for discontinuities and juxtaposing their relations (Jóhannesson 2001: 244). In this way, the (his)stories of continuities of the educational aims of PPL will be critically examined, and held up against discontinuities, enabled by meticulous study of selected empirical material from the history of PPL.

Situating PPL as the problem of inquiry

An important effect of the theoretical stance of this project is that ‘PPL’ is understood as principally without any stable meaning. Thus, the word ‘PPL’ does not mean anything, per se, except being a handy, but exchangeable, shorthand for ‘what this investigation is studying’. When I write ‘PPL’ throughout the thesis, this should be kept in mind. One

strategy could be to put it under erasure⁸ to show that PPL as such is meaningless, but at the same does not cease to exist and becomes ascribed with meaning from various perspectives as a discursive and historicised construct. This is evident from the preface, where ‘PPL’ in various texts becomes attributed all kinds of meanings. As it is a part of this investigation to study the stabilisations of the educational aims of PPL and the discursive effects – which thinking and imaginaries this enables and shuts down – I will take the first steps in examining some central ways in which PPL has been stabilised, and why this is worthy of study.

Borgnakke (1996) can provide some inspiration here, as she identified a myriad of different names for ‘what she was studying’. Sometimes she calls it “project pedagogy”, sometimes “the alternative pedagogy” and at other times simply “the idea”, which has been associated with, and recognised under, a number of other names: “Reform pedagogy”, “Critical pedagogy”, “Emancipatory pedagogy”, “Marxist pedagogy”, “Experiential pedagogy”, “Project pedagogy” (p. 52, my translations). Depending on who, and what, you ask, PPL will be attributed different names and relations. Another possible stabilisation is to relate PPL to the international field of problem-based pedagogies, and in particular ‘Problem-based Learning’ (PBL), as for example in Acton (2019). Sometimes, PPL, is made same to “PBL”, or said differently, PBL is made PPL and vice-versa (Graaff and Kolmos 2003: 658). What is interesting for the study at hand is not to compare or judge whether this or that is ‘PPL’ or ‘PBL’, or to marvel at the myriad of names for PPL, but to be curious as to what truth-constructing strategies such statements of difference seek to achieve.

For now, I will stabilise PPL as it is constructed in ‘The Roskilde Model’ (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015), that is, as the educational model of Roskilde, and as something that positions itself as different from “the internationally more well-known concept of Problem Based Learning (PBL)” (Andersen and Heilesen 2015: x). I stabilise PPL as a kind of *reform pedagogy*⁹ that emerged in the 1970s in the wake of student revolts in May ’68 with

⁸ Putting ‘PPL’ “under erasure” inspired by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s preface (as the translator of the book into English) to ‘Of Grammatology’ by Derrida (Derrida 1997: xvii). Spivak explains the crossing out of certain words (‘signs’) to show that it exists (it is written), but it has no essential meaning (and thus is crossed out).

⁹ Kampmann (2017) refers to ‘reform pedagogy’ as a European version of ‘progressive education’ (p. 874). They are not the same, though, Kampmann (2017) holds, as they have different trajectories. Kampmann (2017) connects ‘progressive education’ to the development of new educational ideas in the early 20th century in the English-speaking world much connected to the work of John Dewey. ‘Reform pedagogy’, Kampmann writes, is more used in Europe as an umbrella term for different uptakes, at different times in the 20th century of Deweyan thinking and European educational thinkers such as Rousseau, Fröbel and Pestalozzi but with quite different manifestations from country to country (Kampmann 2017: 875-876).

the aim of ‘doing things differently’, of being an alternative to ‘traditional higher education’ and thus imagining higher education and the university differently. I write that PPL can be seen as a kind of reform pedagogy, because it, in continental educational research (Nørgaard and Henriksen 1993, Christensen 2013, Kampmann 2017) is being connected especially to certain developments at the beginning of the 20th century. This “motley group of pedagogical efforts”, as Nørgaard and Henriksen (1993: 97) call reform pedagogy, has, the story goes, been revisited and transformed by PPL (Christensen 2013).

Making this stabilisation even firmer, Andersen and Kjeldsen (2015), in ‘The Roskilde model’-book, connects the emergence of PPL to the introduction of “project work” at new universities in the 1970s, which they call “reform universities”¹⁰ (p. 13). Andersen and Kjeldsen (2015) connect ‘Project work’ to ideas of reform pedagogy (ibid. 14), which they attribute to the pedagogy of school reforms in the beginning of the 20th century associated with the work of John Dewey (ibid. 13). The (new) idea of Dewey’s educational thinking, they write, was “to bring classroom activities closer to the experiences of the children on the basis of their natural development, aiming at personal growth and education for democracy.” (Andersen and Kjeldsen 2015: 14). This reform pedagogy, they tell, often took on the form of ‘project work’ as opposed to classroom teaching and these ideas were then transferred from general education and introduced to universities in the 1970s, where “faculty members and students transformed the concept in a critical pedagogical direction. Now project work would aim at equality and social justice in society.” (ibid.).

‘The Roskilde Model’ (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015), as shown in the opening of this thesis, presents a wide range of educational outcomes and promises related to PPL, such as student-centred learning, social relevance, interdisciplinarity, innovative and creative abilities, high academic standards (Andersen and Heilesen 2015: x), and skills transferrable to “working life” (ibid. xi). The potentials of PPL for enhancing 21st century skills and enabling more transformative relations with the world and its existential issues, are repeated in newer studies on this educational approach (Acton 2019, Warren 2019).

In line with the disrupting effects of a genealogical perspective of PPL, I employ the work of the Foucaultian scholar, Hemmings (2011), to help open up PPL and its educational aims as these are formulated in different temporalities. Hemmings (2011) writes that “history is more complicated than the stories we tell about it” (p. 16), and she sees the task of the analyst to investigate “the politics that produce and sustain one version of

¹⁰ It is a bit unclear exactly what the authors refer to as “reform universities” other than the two ‘new’ Danish “university centres” in Roskilde from 1972 and in Aalborg from 1974 (Andersen and Kjeldsen 2015: 4). Wright et al. (2019, chapter 1) also refers to the universities in Roskilde and Aalborg as reform universities connecting their establishment to “European debates about ‘reform’ pedagogy in the 1970s” (p. 16).

history as more true than another” (p. 15-16). This is what I set out to do in the inquiry of PPL: to investigate how different educational aims have been formulated as truths at various points in the ‘history of PPL’. As an empirical study, the investigation takes a special interest in the truth-constructing texts that have been shown to play a significant part in the discursive construction of PPL and its educational purposes.

Research questions

Motivated by the nebulous constructions of the educational aims and purposes of PPL and the current lack of a critical discussion of what PPL wants as university education, this genealogically inspired discourse analysis is guided by the following three research questions:

- *What are the discursive continuities and discontinuities of educational aims and purposes of PPL as read through selected textual introductions from 1974-2018?*
- *How are the educational aims and purposes constructed in and through the discursive work of the texts?*
- *In what ways is PPL constructed as a university pedagogy?*

While all three questions inform the study as a whole, each part of the thesis emphasise particular questions. In chapter three, a series of individual discourse-oriented readings of textual introductions go into detail with the discursive construction of the educational aims and purposes of PPL. This part particularly addresses the research question on the discursive work of texts, that is, how textual mechanisms work to produce discourses of PPL in particular ways. Chapter four reads across the individual analyses and pays specific attention to the continuities and discontinuities of the educational aims of PPL, while also addressing how these aims and purposes are constructed. Chapter five ends the thesis with a concluding discussion that reflects on the conclusions from the analysis. The last chapter especially addresses the question of to what extent PPL has been constructed as a university pedagogy, and considers what would be important in present and future formulations of such a pedagogy in relation to the international debates on the purposes of university education.

The methodology-chapter of the thesis elaborates on, what it means that this study examines ‘texts’. In short, the material analysed consists of books and pamphlets (and a poster) that have had (and some still have) a life, whether quiet or lively, in and around the university. They have been taken up, interpreted, re-interpreted, thrown away, deleted, stolen, referred to, copied, scolded at, appraised, ignored, cited – in brief, they are *used* extensively to construct PPL. They are texts that matter in the discursive production of PPL, whether responsible for silencing or proliferating certain discourses and the ed-

educational aims and purposes they enable. Earlier, I quoted Biesta (2010) for this statement: “the question of good education – the question of what education is *for* – is not optional but always poses itself when we engage in educational activities, practices and processes.” (p. 2). I take the same to be true for the PPL-texts included in this study; they co-produce, whether implicit or explicit, what good education – here in relation to ‘PPL’ – can be. Ten textual ‘introductions’ to PPL¹¹ ended up being subjected to detailed discourse analysis.

Existing studies of PPL in higher education

This section presents studies of PPL that have asked questions similar to the one at hand, that is, educational-empirical, text-based research studying PPL and its educational aims and purposes historically with a theoretical engagement¹². Studies are limited to higher education (HE). Let me start with a few considerations to the scope of this review.

As this study concerns problem-oriented project learning (PPL), which, as it is stabilised here, explicitly distances itself from ‘Problem-based Learning’ (PBL), I will not include literature that positions itself as studying ‘PBL’¹³. Much literature endeavour to define differences (and similarities) between ‘PPL’ and ‘PBL’ as pedagogical concepts (see e.g. Kolmos 2008, Olsen 2013, Christensen 2013 and Servant 2016). It is not the task of this study to meddle in similarities and differences between those two terms, but to focus specifically on what has come to be known as ‘PPL’. In that sense, I follow Servant (2016) and Andersen and Kjeldsen (2015), when they hold that ‘PPL’ and ‘PBL’¹⁴ have different genealogies, different trajectories. Another limitation to the included literature is that it must have higher education as its context, or at least address it.

¹¹ See the list of the texts in the methodology-chapter

¹² The works drawn upon in the review are the result of search in library databases, snowballing from the literature found and conversations with colleagues at Roskilde University and academics I have met over the years.

¹³ The research literature on ‘Problem-based Learning’ (PBL) is a vast field internationally (Savin-Baden 2000, Savin-Baden and Major 2004, Moallem et al., eds. 2019) and in Denmark, where most concerns engineering (Chen et al. 2021, Holgaard et al. 2017, Kolmos and Graaff 2015, Graaff and Kolmos 2003). There are also other kinds of publications such as a few edited volumes on PBL coming from Aalborg University (Kolmos et al., eds. 2004, Krogh et al., eds. 2008, Krogh and Jensen, eds. 2013).

¹⁴ A brief note on names here: Servant (2016) writes that Aalborg University took up “the PBL terminology” by the 1990s (p. 198). Servant (2016) holds that Aalborg took up ‘PBL’ to connect to the international field and to “distance itself from Roskilde” (p. 278).

In the literature, I have found that PPL is often constructed as ‘a Danish thing’, and something closely tied to the emergence of the universities of Roskilde University and Aalborg University in Denmark. For example, Christensen (2016) explicitly uses the label “Danish Project Studies” for PPL (p. 168), and Servant (2016) positions “The Danish model” as unique for its “critical pedagogy line of thought” (p. 240). This is an observation that has made it a part of the endeavour of this project to put the study of PPL into conversation with the global academic field of higher education research.

In terms of the genre, I limit this presentation to research literature. This means omitting other kinds of works on PPL¹⁵ such as for example teaching books, evaluation reports and debate literature of which there is a considerable amount (see for example the long bibliographic lists accumulated for literature out of Roskilde University, Skærbak 1977 and 1982). Such a division is contested territory as lines between genres are blurry and contingent on definitions. For this review, I identify ‘research’ as work that is published in scientific journals, doctoral theses and scientific reports coming from universities. This means delimiting the presentation from related genres such as ‘development work’, which leaves out engagement with for example the ‘UNIPÆD-project’ from Roskilde University that led to several publications on the development of different aspects of project pedagogy (see e.g. Ulriksen 1997, Frello 1997, Simonsen 1997, Simonsen and Ulriksen 1998). Some studies exist in convergence between categories such as the extensive historical investigation of Roskilde University by Hansen (1997), ‘A coral in the stream of time – RUC 1972-1997’ (my translation). The book is based on a historical research-project, but at the same time performs as a popularised dissemination for communication purposes closely tied to Roskilde University, and it has more of an institutional focus than pedagogical (Hansen 1997: 14, Servant 2016: 3). This said, the methodological interest of Hansen (1997) is similar to mine as she asks to “ruptures and continuities” (p. 17, my translation) in the history of Roskilde University, but she does not elaborate on this methodologically. I will briefly include some of the conclusions, as Hansen’s study points to parts of the motivation for the study at hand. Hansen (1997) concludes that Roskilde University contemporarily (in 1997) lives through myths of historical continuation and unity blocking out counter-narratives and self-critique. These myths, Hansen (1997) argues, are caused by an internal loss of purpose when the university in the 1970s, following an energetic and chaotic beginning, met severe critique from politicians for being ‘infested by critical Marxists’, and thus was put under external governmental control leading to profound changes to institutional governance and educational practice.

¹⁵ Olsen (1993) makes a similar divide for literature on PPL in his PhD thesis – between “research” and “method dissemination” (p. 21, my translation) - but he never presents any criteria to be able to divide these two kinds of literature and leaves it open for the reader to interpret.

The blurriness of textual categories also goes for what could be called ‘the anniversary literature’ published at the anniversaries of Aalborg¹⁶ and Roskilde University¹⁷. This concerns ‘Project studies – a late university reform?’ edited by Olesen and Jensen (eds. 1999), which contains proceedings of varying quality from an academic conference celebrating the 25 year anniversary of Roskilde University. I do not include any of these proceedings, as they, by the definition used here, do not qualify as research.

One finding of the search conducted for this review is that much of the literature on PPL is what I would call *advocacy literature* characterised by an intention to ‘advocate’, ‘sell’ or ‘teach’ PPL. This kind of literature is often bereft of (self)critical perspectives, empirical data, theoretical foundations and substantiated arguments. The following review leaves out the advocacy-literature and focuses on research with scope and methodology similar to my study: historical, text-based, empirical, conceptual-philosophical studies on PPL.

With these conditions in mind, I have found three bodies of relevant work: Studies by Virginie Servant-Miklos (Servant 2016, Servant-Miklos and Spliid 2017, Servant-Miklos and Noordengraaf-Eelens 2019), Karen Borgnakke (1983, 1996) and Gerd Christensen (2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2008, 2013, 2016, 2020). The purpose of presenting these studies in the following is to include their insights to see how they have pursued their interests, and to position my own study and its contributions. While serving as inspirations for the conduct of my investigation, the results of the mentioned studies will also be drawn in later to discuss the conclusions of the inquiry at hand.

Intellectual history of PBL and PPL

Virginie Servant-Miklos has published a range of studies on what she calls “the intellectual history” of Problem-based Learning (PBL) (Servant 2016, Servant-Miklos and Spliid 2017, Servant-Miklos and Noordegraaf-Eelens 2019). Though ‘PBL’ is her main object of inquiry, she does include an investigation of PPL under the name “problem-oriented project work” (Servant 2016: 218). She studies PPL as it emerged and developed in Denmark under the heading “The Danish Problem-orientation Reform” (chapter 5 in Servant’s PhD thesis 2016: 197). I focus on this last part of her work.

Servant-Miklos (under the name ‘Servant’) published her doctoral thesis in 2016 with the title ‘Revolutions and Reiterations – An Intellectual History of Problem-based Learning’. Through William Whewell’s “inductive historical analysis” (p. 273) and an extensive cor-

¹⁶ See for example Kjersdam and Enemark (1994), Kolmos et al. (eds. 2004), Krogh et al. (eds. 2008)

¹⁷ See for example Pedersen (1997) and Jensen (ed. 1997)

pus of sources ranging from documents to oral interviews, Servant (2016) traces the “origins” (a term used frequently in the thesis, e.g. p. 71) of PBL. The motivation for the study was the observation that the history of PBL, in Servant’s words, had been “handled in a haphazard manner” and was “devoid of empirical verification.” (p. 273). Venturing out to remedy this, Servant (2016) positions her own study as “the first systematic historical account of the intellectual history of PBL.” (p. 273). By ‘intellectual history’ Servant (2016) means to research the “philosophical and historical foundation” that PBL was “missing” and thus asked as her main question of inquiry “which theories, ideas and practices were directly influential in the early development of PBL in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and to what extent did these shape the practice of PBL?” (p. 2).

In the search for the ‘origins’ of PBL, Servant discovered that Aalborg University in Denmark claimed to be doing ‘PBL’ and having started in 1974, this could mean they were part of the “founding fathers” (p. 247), as she calls them. This led to a larger plunge into the intellectual history of Aalborg’s educational model, which took Servant (2016) to Roskilde University and the pedagogical literature surrounding its emergence in the early 1970s two years before Aalborg. She found that the intellectual history of the “Danish project-work model” (p. 278) was very different from that of McMaster and Maastricht mainly due to “social revolutionary movements and Frankfurt School ideas” (ibid.), which she found to last longer in Roskilde than Aalborg¹⁸. Servant (2016) points to ‘foundational’ ideas of PPL coming from German critical pedagogy, especially from the work of Oskar Negt (Servant 2016: 203). According to Servant (2016), these ideas influenced a Marxist-inspired movement critical of the scientific disciplines at Roskilde University under the name “Fagkritik”¹⁹ (this is concluded from an interview with a professor involved in the founding of the university, Henning Salling Olesen) (p. 205). Further, Servant (2016) argues, the initial years of PPL in the 1970s were inspired intellectually by “the somewhat less politically revolutionary but nonetheless educationally alternative views of Dewey, Piaget, Rogers and Bruner”²⁰ (p. 206). Servant (2016) refers to a book from 1974

¹⁸ Servant (2016) notes that though ‘project studies’ over time came to mean different things at the universities in Roskilde and Aalborg, they shared certain theoretical references such as a strong cognitive psychology base from Piaget through the texts of Knud Illeris (also in the engineering programme at Aalborg) (p. 215). This said, she saw different take-ups of ‘project studies’ depending on the disciplines: Humanities and social sciences at Aalborg University held on to the earlier understanding of ‘project studies’ and did not identify much with ‘PBL’ becoming prevalent in technical and engineering studies (p. 217-218).

¹⁹ Literally translates to ‘Critique of the disciplines’. I keep the Danish form as it refers to a certain movement. As with other words in the thesis, the ‘meaning’ of ‘fagkritik’ is contingent to its use in the texts analysed.

²⁰ Servant (2016: 206) writes that Henning Salling Olesen disputed the influence of progressive pedagogy at Roskilde University, but she sustains Dewey as main inspiration with reference to his mention in ‘The Roskilde Model’-book from 2015.

by Knud Illeris, ‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction’²¹, which, she writes, became the most known introduction to PPL containing these inspirations (p. 210). The interviews with various employees at Roskilde University serve to nuance the initial analyses of Servant. For example, Jens Højgaard Jensen holds that Natural Sciences was unaffected by the texts of Illeris and drew instead on experience from Copenhagen University (Servant 2016: 210), while Jørgen Raft, who worked with Illeris at the university in the 1970s argued that his approach was perceived as more psychological than based on Critical theory (ibid. 210-211). Servant (2016) thus presents the emergence of PPL and its ideas as a struggle (especially shown through interviews) between groups, especially the Student movement, oriented towards Marxist and Critical theory, and then Constructivist psychology, Deweyan pedagogy and more traditional disciplinary approaches to university education (Servant 2016: 211). Following an event in 1976, where the Danish government almost closed down Roskilde University due to a suspected “communist” infiltration, Servant (2016) claims that notions of Marxism and ‘fagkritik’ disappeared from PPL, which was then taken over entirely by constructivist psychology (ibid. 212).

Servant’s project involves extensive empirical work incorporating a vast amount of archive material from four different universities including several oral interviews to go with the written text. While I consider the empirical breadth a contribution to the field of PPL-studies in general, especially the interviews combined with document-analysis on ‘The Danish Problem-orientation Reform’ are an inspiration to my study, because they elicit the complexity of the matter.

The data has ontological primacy in the realist methodology used through Whewell’s so-called ‘inductive method’ from 1858. This approach limits the extent to which the material can be thought of and read *in different ways*, because the possible imaginaries of PBL are bound to the empirical data from a realist perspective. Theory and methodological considerations take up very little space in the project. Servant (2016), in a note on the selection of method for the project, writes how she did consider using Foucault’s ‘Archaeology of knowledge’ to be able to “deconstruct the conveniently continuous ‘progress’ of education philosophy”. Servant writes how she in sharing this consideration, was warned by a colleague, Bruce Kimball, not to go ahead with Foucault, because, he replied, “one inevitably starts fitting the evidence to one’s framework or lens” (Servant 2016: 21). As a conclusion, Servant went instead with ‘Whewell’s inductive method’. The particular realist historical approach is enacted in a way that values telling compelling and coherent (his)stories, based on the myriad of material as directly telling ‘the truth’ of PBL and PPL. There is little reflection on the researcher’s part in constructing the material as

²¹ My translation. Danish original full title: ‘Problemorientering og deltagerstyring – et oplæg til en alternativ didaktik’

well as the story it is made to tell. Thus, other possible readings and nuances in the material are rarely reflected, which makes the tale of PPL appear one-dimensional. The historical search for ‘origins’ in Servant (2016) makes her study preoccupied with ‘the past’, and ‘the beginning’ and less so with the present, and how this present came to be, which means her investigation becomes more silent after the 1970s in relation to PPL. Also, Servant as non-Danish speaker faced a language barrier in studying texts in Danish (and interviews with Danish educators were in English). In the study at hand, the genealogical and discourse-oriented approach opens for multiple possible readings of PPL-texts and relates PPL to current discourses in higher education. Also, limiting the study to a handful of texts from 1974-2018 allows for greater detail and nuance in how PPL is constructed over, and in, time.

A genealogy of group work in project studies

Gerd Christensen has, over the last two decades, studied PPL²² critically from a Foucaultian²³ theoretical perspective focusing on its principle of group work (Christensen 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2013, 2016, 2020). In 2008, Christensen published the book ‘Individual and discipline – the history of the pedagogical subject’²⁴, which uses Foucaultian genealogy to analyse the discursive formation of ‘the pedagogical subject’ in a Danish context. Though the book includes analysis of PPL, the focus lies with the construction of ‘the subject’ in educational discourse – with no particular focus on higher education - and sees itself as part of introducing the disciplinary field of “pedagogical psychology” (p. 15, my translation). Much of the work of Christensen focus on penetrating and challenging contemporary myths surrounding group work as an unproblematic and democratic way of learning together. Christensen points to the complexity and emotionally demanding nature of group work and a dire need for scaffolding and serious teacher-involvement (Christensen 2016: 177).

For this review, I focus on Christensen’s (2013) doctoral thesis, because it contains an elaborate genealogical analysis of PPL in a university context. The thesis, titled ‘Project Groups’²⁵, presents itself as working from Foucaultian and poststructuralist theory and employing genealogical analysis as its “method” (Christensen 2013: 28). It problematises

²² Christensen mainly refers to PPL as “project studies” (e.g. Christensen 2013: 368).

²³ I deliberately write ‘Foucaultian’ and not ‘Foucauldian’ (what is the ‘d’ doing there anyway?).

²⁴ Original title: ‘Individ og disciplinering – det pædagogiske subjekts historie’

²⁵ The full title, as seen in the English abstract of the thesis (which is in Danish), is ‘Project Groups – An Analysis of Subjectification Mechanisms in Group- and Project Work at University Level’. Quotes from the thesis (Christensen 2013) are my translations unless otherwise stated.

group work in project-organised university education and asks how subjectification processes are possible in group projects. This leads to an inquiry split into two parts: a genealogical investigation of the emergence of ‘group work’ as seen in various texts, and field work at Roskilde University and Copenhagen Business School (both in Denmark) that includes interviews, observation and a survey. For the purpose of this review, the genealogical part is prioritised in the following.

The genealogical study found three “interests” of group work that constitute its position in PPL: A *pedagogical* interest, a *critical* interest and a *methodological* interest (Christensen 2013: 5). The pedagogical interest of group work is traced to reform pedagogy at the beginning of the 20th century in relation to schools²⁶, where groups became an alternative to larger classes and the teacher took on a less authoritarian role as “leader of the group” (Christensen 2013: 41). Christensen (2013) ascribes a significant role to John Dewey, and William Kilpatrick in the progressive pedagogy drawn on in PPL with reference to a student pamphlet from Roskilde University (Nielsen and Jensenius 1996), the reading of Knud Illeris’ book ‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction’ (my translation) (1974) and a dissertation from Borgnakke (1996) (Christensen 2013: 38-40). The critical interest in group work is related to Danish university reform in the 1970s. Christensen (2013) writes how the critical interest was inscribed into PPL by two books from the aforementioned educator Knud Illeris; ‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction’ (1974) and ‘A pedagogy of counter-qualification’²⁷ (1981) (Christensen 2013: 68). With this interest, Christensen writes, came an imperative of “equality” and “the collective” (p. 369, from English abstract). According to the analysis of Christensen (2013), the theoretical inspiration of PPL flowed from Oskar Negt and “critical pedagogy” (p. 69) drawing on the Critical theory of the Frankfurt School and “Freudo-Marxism”, which aimed at integration of the working class in the educational system and the building of a socialist state (ibid.). The study showed that the initial dominance of various versions of Marxism in PPL waned and was “written out” (Christensen 2013: 95) coming into the 1990s, where PPL and Roskilde University had become “well-behaved” (ibid. 96). The argument for group-work also changed from the critical “collective” to “individual competency project” (ibid. 369, from English abstract). Lastly, the methodological interest of group work in PPL, is traced to various experiments within social psychology, which developed into a persistent belief and naturalisation of groups as the best organisation for development and learning (Christensen 2013: 369, from English abstract). Group work was seen as “a method” (ibid. 118). The initial ideas and insights from social psychology and small-group

²⁶ It becomes a point in itself for Christensen (2013) that ‘group work’, which is seen as inherent to PPL at university, came from a different context; schools and children (p. 38).

²⁷ My translation. Danish title: ‘Modkvalificeringens pædagogik – problemorientering, deltagerstyring og eksemplarisk indlæring’ (Illeris 1981)

research, Christensen (2013) holds, became transformed in the later PPL-literature leading to what she sees as a puzzling disappearance of the question of “leadership” (p. 369, from English abstract). She traces this change to the collectivist imperatives of the 1970s (ibid.).

The study concludes that many norms identified in the genealogical study are still active in the present day collaboration of project groups. Group members engage in, and experience, exclusions and dominant behaviour through various positionings while claiming to be “social” and “accepting” (Christensen 2013: 372, from English abstract). The study concludes that group work “still contains great opportunities”, but needs “much more attention than ‘learning by doing’” (ibid.), which would entail a more active teacher-role in order to make collaboration in project groups a pedagogical and ethically responsible endeavour (ibid.).

The work of Christensen, and the thesis (Christensen 2013) in particular, has served as a methodological inspiration because it operationalises Foucaultian genealogy to study the emergence of parts of PPL. Also, the insights on the theoretical inheritances, silences and continuities of group work as part of PPL adds to the analyses of the study at hand, and will be drawn in to qualify my readings of the discursive work of central PPL-texts. This said, Christensen’s focus is different from mine with its particular attention on group work and subjectification processes. Furthermore, Christensen’s genealogical studies draw on a wide range of empirical texts to identify larger discursive formations over time, which I find valuable to the general study of PPL, but it leaves little attention to the detail of how each text discursively construct group work as part of PPL. Here, I see my contribution as examining central PPL-texts²⁸ in detail and focusing on PPL’s educational aims and purposes as they relate to contemporary discourses of higher education.

A ‘critical’ study of PPL in ‘theory and practice’

Karen Borgnakke has studied PPL extensively (Borgnakke 1983, 1996, 2021). Her first larger work is from 1983 with the name ‘Project pedagogy in theory and practice’ (my translation)²⁹. Later, in 1996, the hitherto work of Borgnakke was compiled and re-worked into a doctor dissertation³⁰ in two volumes of more than one thousand pages

²⁸ While many of the texts studied in my investigation have not been granted much attention as discourse actors before, Christensen’s studies (2008, 2013) do include some of the same PPL-texts albeit they are not given much individual attention in the broad genealogical studies.

²⁹ Unless otherwise stated, the works and quotes in this part are my translation of Borgnakke’s work, which is in Danish.

³⁰ In Denmark, the highest academic rank is called ‘doctor’, which should not be confused with the English ‘doctorate’, or ‘PhD’ (therefore in Denmark some use the term ‘doctor-doctor’ to

(Borgnakke 1996). Focusing on the methodological aspects of studying PPL as a process moving from ideas to praxis, and developing this into a distinct approach, the dissertation was named 'Process analytic theory and method' (my translation). In the following, I engage with the publication 'Project pedagogy through theory and practice' (Borgnakke 1983) as this is the most relevant for the study at hand. The doctor dissertation by Borgnakke (1996), as I read it, is an elaboration of the former empirical work, but with an intensified and elaborated methodological focus, which is of less relevance to my study.

Borgnakke (1983) consists of ethnographic work at Aalborg University and the Open University of Jutland from 1980-1982, where she investigated what she refers to as "The new university pedagogy" (Borgnakke 1983: 2)³¹. After prolonged ethnographic field work including observations and interviews, Borgnakke identifies a "gap" between the "actual praxis" and the "theories, principles and ideologies of project pedagogy" as well as the "institutional goals" (Borgnakke 1983: 2). The theories of 'project pedagogy' as they were formulated at the time, Borgnakke found to be an inadequate description of the practice she observed. Though not a part of the initial intention, she sets out to first "confront" the "underlying pedagogical theory" with the perceptions of the institution (the university), and secondly to "confront" both theory and institutional perceptions with "actual reality" (Borgnakke 1983: 2). Methodologically the project, in its own words, is situated within class room research and action research as well as communication research with the aim to study "intended" vs. "actual" practice (Borgnakke 1983: 27).

The study was initially motivated by a lack of research on, what Borgnakke refers to as the "actual practice" of this 'new pedagogy', while there was plenty of work, she claims, on its idea and intended practice from the 1970s (Borgnakke 1983: 32-33). This statement leans on a 10-year status report on universities by Ole B. Thomsen following the student rebellions of 1968, which, in the words of Borgnakke (1983), observed: "a catastrophic lack of 'objective accounts' of the practical reality (Thomsen 1978, s. 198)." (Borgnakke 1983: 42). Thus, the work began as a study of practice that had an evaluative element after nearly ten years with 'the new university pedagogy' at Aalborg University (established in 1974).

The engagement with the theories of PPL, Borgnakke (1983) calls "ideology- and theory critique" (p. 28). She analyses "newer" introductions to project pedagogy (p. 50); Knud

avoid confusion). The Danish 'doctor' is often an extensive re-collection of the oeuvre of a scholar published in a coherent report longer than a PhD thesis.

³¹ My references to Borgnakke (1983) are to an electronic version, in which the page numbers differ from the physical text book. Other than that, the electronic and physical text are the same.

Illeris' 'Problem-orientation and participant-direction' (1974) and 'A pedagogy of counter-qualification' (1981), the collaborative book 'Project work'³² (1977) by Jens Berthelsen, Knud Illeris and Sten Clod, and two publications from Eva Hultengren; 'Problem-orientation, project work and report writing'³³ (1976) and 'Interdisciplinarity as political education'³⁴ (1979). These are the texts Borgnakke (1983) considered the "most thorough and most used introductions to project work" (p. 89).

She then engages in a comprehensive critique of especially Illeris (1974, 1981). After stating that Illeris' formulations of the principles of PPL are insufficient and vague, and lack qualitative orientation, Borgnakke (1983), in a reconstructive effort, searches for points of orientation that could make the concept more meaningful. In the search for a reference point to qualitatively state the meaning of the concepts of problem-orientation, participant-direction and exemplary learning, Borgnakke refers to Hultengren (1976, 1979) as giving a potential positive answer (Borgnakke 1983: 65). The answer comes in the form of the "Marxist methodological considerations" of Hultengren, which according to Borgnakke (1983), could attribute meaning to the mentioned principles (p. 66).

In a way, Borgnakke is correcting Illeris, but without being explicit on what she considers 'the right way'; she is correcting the introductions to PPL, the 'intended practice', from the point of her critical reading and the field work, the 'actual practice'. Though Borgnakke (1983), as showed earlier, mentioned several introductions to PPL, her main engagement, and critique, is addressed at Illeris (1974, 1981), and especially his 1981-text. Despite the critique, she calls Illeris "one of the most sophisticated proponents for the ideas of project pedagogy" and refers to his work as the "most thorough and utilised introductions to project work" (Borgnakke 1983: 89). After critically discussing these introductions to PPL, Borgnakke (1983) moves on to address the critique posed of project pedagogy in the late 1970s from several sides (Borgnakke 1983: 95ff). At this point, I will not elaborate on these analyses, and they will instead be drawn in later in my analyses.

Borgnakke's work has been inspirational to my own study for its detailed analysis of PPL-texts taken to be central in the history of PPL, such as Illeris (1974, 1981). The unapologetic critical stance of her work effects analyses that cast centralised PPL-texts as incoherent, unclear and unable to show any pedagogical direction for education. This critical perspective, I have not often come across in the late field of PPL-studies. I would categorise the work of Borgnakke (1983) as a fagkritik-based investigation implicitly drawing

³² My translation. Danish original full title: 'Projektarbejde – erfaringer og praktisk vejledning'.

³³ My translation. Danish original full title: 'Problemorientering, projektarbejde og rapportskrivning'.

³⁴ My translation. Danish original full title: 'Tværfaglighed som politisk undervisning'.

on Critical theory and action research. The study throws itself into discussion with various standpoints aggressively correcting other PPL-texts that are ‘not right’, and it reflects little on its self-evident assumptions of good education and good research. The study comes across unfinished at times, for example the analytical strategies are not laid out making it unclear what concepts and procedures the analysis builds on. It has not been easy to get hands on Borgnakke’s writings as many of them appear in local Danish journals and very few appear in international online journals (and most of the work is in Danish). Accordingly, Borgnakke is rarely cited in the studies on PPL, I have come across (an example is Servant 2016).

Reflecting on the contribution of my study in relation to Borgnakke’s work, it lies in an explicit discourse theoretical stance that understands the texts of PPL to be open to various contingent readings, and wants to show these. By writing in English and addressing international literature on higher education, I endeavour to bring the study of PPL in closer conversation with the English-speaking world.

The contributions and ambitions of the dissertation

“Truth is undoubtedly the sort of error that cannot be refuted because it was hardened into an unalterable form in the long baking process of history.” (Foucault 1977a: 144). I find this paraphrase of Nietzsche useful to think of the current forms of PPL. As shown in the preface, ‘PPL’ is put forth as an ‘educational model’ that answers the call of current educational policies for ‘21st century skills’ that are employable in the knowledge economy. At the same time, PPL is positioned as being ‘historically rooted’ in critical pedagogy and oriented towards social justice. PPL, as it seems, is capable of anything.

These truths come across as self-evident in current articulations of PPL, but what if that ‘long baking process’ of such truths was not ‘unalterable’? What if the current and dominant truth of PPL and its aims is not the result of a ‘natural historical development’, but is instead a particular story that exists through certain power/knowledge struggles that, to use the words of Hemmings (2011: 15-16), “produce and sustain one version of history as more true than another”? These questions speak to the ambition of this study. It seeks to break open the discursive closures of PPL by showing how the educational aims and purposes are constructed in texts over time as contingent struggles for domination. Some aims become dominant, while others are marginalised, or disappear, in discourse. This study examines how this happens in texts that have shown to be significant in the construction of PPL. Another ambition is to question claims of PPL as being ‘an educational model’ or ‘a pedagogy’. Philosophers of education contend that for something to call itself ‘education’ or ‘educational’, it needs to have a direction, a sense of what is desirable – and what is not desirable. As presented in this introduction, education further involves something to be studied, or learned, which is not only directed towards external ends,

but also a process valuable in itself. For the investigation at hand, I do not a priori position PPL as ‘a pedagogy’ or as having this and that ‘educational aim’, or drawing on this and that theory of education. I also do not assume PPL to be a ‘university’ pedagogy that has a notion of what such a context would mean for education. Rather, I ask openly how PPL and its articulated aims are constructed over time, and to what extent these aims and purposes can be said to be ‘educational’, and whether they have a notion of ‘the university’.

The presentation of policy, philosophical and ethnographic studies of higher education suggest that it is difficult to speak of, and enact, education outside the knowledge economy discourse and demands for immediate utility. ‘Education’ and ‘pedagogy’ are replaced with the concept of ‘learning’ that with its often self-evidently desirable appearance further muddies and closes down the discussion of what higher education is for. In this study of PPL, I both inquire empirically into how it relates as producer/produced to the knowledge economy discourse, and at the same time study the construction of PPL over time to see whether a detailed examination of central texts may elicit possible counter-discourses. This part of the study I see as a contribution to the international debate on higher education as it responds to the need for a re-invigorated discussion of what universities are *for* as places of education - beyond external and economic arguments (Zgaga 2009, Biesta 2011, Barnett 2017, Masschelein and Simons 2018, Stoller and Kramer 2018, Bengtson et al., eds. 2021, Magnússon and Rytzler 2022). To write the dissertation in English helps in connecting to, and widening, such a conversation.

As seen in the previous section, there are few research-based studies that enquire into the historical construction of PPL, and especially its educational aims and purposes. My search showed that literature on PPL tends to be either advocacy-literature uncritically selling an educational approach, practice-oriented evaluation studies, or critical and polemic essayistic papers. Together with the few other research projects (Borgnakke 1983, 1996, Christensen 2013, Servant 2016), this investigation contributes to the field of PPL-studies by enquiring analytically and empirically into the construction of ‘the history of PPL’. As seen, there are differences between these existing studies, and I see the main contribution of this particular investigation to be the detailed and sustained discourse analysis of textual introductions to PPL. These are texts that have shown to be significant in the discursive construction of PPL, but either have not been studied in much detail for their complex discursive production of PPL, or have not been subject to scholarly study at all. My aim for examining the ‘central texts of PPL’ is as Stronach and Maclure (1997) put it “to reassert the existence of a plurality of voices, values and perspectives, in the face of universalizing tendencies of the dominant culture.” (p. 53). A strength of the particular discourse-oriented approach here (Maclure 2003) is to examine such PPL-texts not only as illustrations of certain points and arguments, or static ‘products’ of discourses, but as important and complex *discourse actors* in their own right (Anaïs 2013).

To conclude, I contend that this genealogical discourse analysis of the educational aims and purposes of PPL can serve to destabilise the current stabilisations by introducing discontinuity into the constructed continuities of ‘PPL-stories’. Paraphrasing Foucault (1977a), the act of presenting current forms of PPL with a different history than what it is used to, matters. It matters to the ways those involved in PPL education - students, educators, scholars, administrators, managers - are able to think-and-enact education at university. For example, in Christensen (2013), the author showed how the norms of group work found in the genealogical study was still prevalent in educational practice today and constituted the possible subjectification processes of students working together. Ethnographic studies at Danish universities, including Roskilde University, have showed too how discourses produced on various policy levels matter to the way academics can think and practice education (Krejsler 2006, Krejsler and Carney 2009, Sarauw 2011, Wright et al. 2019).

Finally, it is the ambition of this project to contribute methodologically to the field of higher education studies by integrating philosophical-theoretical and empirical traditions. The ambition to pursue this integration, I have in common with other scholars within the study of higher education (Suissa 2006, Bridges and Smith 2007, Barnett 2017, Stoller and Kramer 2018, von Oettingen, ed. 2018, Kinchin and Gravett 2022). In their book on the discourses of higher education, Kinchin and Gravett (2022) argue for a need to include more “theory” in higher education research, a field of which they write: “Historically, a key feature of higher education research has often been a disengagement or limited engagement with theoretical concepts.” (p. 20). Even though they feel the field has seen improvements on this account in the last ten years, Kinchin and Gravett (2022) still encourage “rigorous research into higher education as a global academic field” (p. 21) to look to a broad array of theories and concepts that will “open new possibilities and provocations for the body of work in higher education” (ibid. 22). This study contributes to such an ambition.

II. Methodology

The main driving questions for this investigation are: What are the educational aims of PPL and how are these produced discursively? In the study of these questions, I employ a certain historical approach to the analysis of discourses and their production, *genealogical discourse analysis*. In this chapter, I lay out the elements of such an analysis and why it is a useful way to study PPL and its educational aims. The chapter begins with a section on the genealogical perspective, which works both as a certain historicising epistemology and a driver for critique that adds temporality as a central aspect in this analysis of PPL and its purposes. Then follows an engagement with discourse analysis as theory and method. The section asks what it means to view the educational aims of PPL as discursive practices, what the relations are between discourses and texts, and what specific strategies are useful to interrogate PPL-texts on their part in producing (and being produced by) educational discourses of what PPL is for. The chapter finishes with considerations on the choice of texts for the analysis, and how I go about writing up such an analysis.

A genealogical perspective

The term ‘genealogy’ is understood and used in many different ways in various fields of research. Koopman (2013) writes that “it sometimes seems as if anyone who does history and is not themselves a historian is eager to describe their work as a ‘genealogy.’” (Koopman 2013: 5). Accordingly, some studies use ‘genealogy’ in a commonsensical way synonymous to ‘historical study’ without theorising the concept or explaining its specific take on ‘history’ (see e.g. Ahmad 2017, DeMarzio 2017). Within the field of philosophy, some scholars practice genealogy under the name of “vindicatory genealogy”, which seeks to cast “judgments on certain concepts” (Koopman 2013: 18). Yet others, including the study at hand, draw on genealogy as it was developed in the work of Foucault (Tamboukou 1999, Meadmore et al. 2000, Christensen 2013, 2016, Koopman 2013, Tóth 2017). More specifically, I employ a genealogical perspective entailing a certain kind of *epistemology* and *critique* that has helped to open up the investigation of the educational aims of PPL.

PPL as historically contingent

How can PPL and its educational purposes be known? How do I understand ‘PPL’ as something that can be researched, i.e. created knowledge of? These are the epistemological questions of this study. Positioning genealogy as a way to understand PPL and its educational aims entails a certain historicisation, that is, casting PPL as inherently contingent in time. To use Foucault’s work on genealogy as a certain kind of ‘historical’

epistemology (and not a method) is inspired by Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) and Lončarević (2013). The contingency introduced by a genealogical perspective relates not only to a linear or static understanding of ‘time’, but also to “multiple temporalities” (Koopman 2008: 353), and as such, a genealogical perspective troubles common sense notions of history as the excavation of something static that is fixed by a singular temporality. This is pointed out by Dean (1994), who views Foucault’s initial introduction of ‘genealogy’ as a means to critique its antagonist; ‘traditional history’. Dean (1994) writes how Foucault (1977a) in the essay ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’³⁵ was reading Nietzsche in order to develop ‘genealogy’ as a use of history in direct opposition to the so-called Platonic uses of history: 1. History as *Monumental* (celebrating the great deeds of the past) 2. History as *Antiquarian* (preserving the past to uphold a feeling of continuous identity), and, 3. History as *Critical* (judging the past in the name of present truths) (Dean 1994: 18, Foucault 1977a: 164). The following quote on a genealogical ‘use of history’ from Foucault’s 1977-essay reads as a response to these ‘traditional’ uses of history:

The first is parodic, directed against reality, and opposes the theme of history as reminiscence or recognition; the second is dissociative, directed against identity, and opposes history given as continuity or representative of a tradition; the third is sacrificial, directed against truth, and opposes history as knowledge. They imply a use of history that severs its connection to memory, its metaphysical and anthropological model, and constructs a counter-memory — a transformation of history into a totally different form of time. (Foucault 1977a: 160)

According to these statements, a genealogical use of history is parodic, dissociative and sacrificial. These aspects work towards the aim of constructing a “counter-memory”. Counter-memories become possible from a genealogical perspective of time as it shatters its appearance of linearity and universality. It does this by examining the contingent “descent” and “emergence” (Foucault 1977a: 148) of things rather than looking for origins and progressive “historical developments” (ibid.). Transplanting this thinking onto the case of PPL and historicising it from a genealogical perspective, helps to think of it differently, and to ask the following ‘opening’ questions: What happens when the ‘history of PPL’ is cast as a parody, not a serious celebration of great deeds, but instead a construction of events used for certain truth-producing purposes? What if the study of the past of PPL was not aimed at ‘making familiar’ and building identity by looking to continuities, progress and origins, but rather to dissociate oneself by identifying ‘inconvenient’ discontinuities and inconsistencies as well? And finally, what if history did not look for the most true and right form of PPL because that did not exist other than in numerous historically contingent forms? Studying PPL for the sake of constructing a ‘counter-memory’ to naturalised and dominant histories will enable a destabilisation of existing

³⁵ This is positioned as the text in which Foucault most explicitly addresses ‘genealogy’ (Dean 1994: 14, Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 106), and still, as Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) holds, it is difficult to sort out which points were ‘Foucault’ and which were Nietzsche (ibid.).

knowledge and tales of PPL. This means saying goodbye to ‘history’ as being something in the past, and thus unchangeable – as the Foucaultian scholar Hemmings (2005) has put it: “all history takes place in the present, as we make and remake stories about the past to enable a particular present to gain legitimacy.” (p. 118).

Such a genealogical perspective, such questions, is exactly what PPL needs. As shown in the presentation of existing studies on PPL, the majority of these set out to erect monuments for PPL in their search for telling the most celebratory tale of this educational approach. Of the few research-based studies of PPL and its educational aims, Servant (2016) is mainly preoccupied with finding the one ‘truth’ of PPL, to ‘get to the bottom of things’ with the help of a ‘historical inductive method’; to search for PPL’s origin. Borgnakke (1983) is also concerned with the truth of PPL, and the ‘critical’ perspective of her study is performed in a sense where her own biographical history with PPL turns into a reconstruction aimed at ‘being right’ and having the ‘right’ readings of central PPL-texts. In contrast, a genealogical perspective opens up the study of PPL. On a more personal note, the genealogical perspective from Foucault (1977a) has posed a necessary challenge to interrupt and expose my own perceptions of PPL, and my affective attachments. Having a history with PPL, one that began in 2010 as a student at Roskilde University, it has taken work (and continues to do so) to be able to view it differently, to see how it is discursively constituted, and differently at different times and places - what its educational aims ‘are’ in relation to what they could also be. Lončarević (2013) points to this effect of genealogical inquiry: “Genealogical critique reminds us of the possible dangers of our accounts and prevents us to become too comfortable with our own positions and ‘truths’.” (p. 80).

Genealogical critique

A second aspect of the genealogical perspective in this study is its function as a critique, inspired by Koopman’s (2013) naming of genealogy as “a philosophical-historical critique of the present” (p. 5) and a “historicizing critique” (p. 19). Critique is enabled by the epistemological implications of historicisation: when PPL is understood as temporally contingent and not the ‘product’ of some universal and natural ‘historical’ development, it becomes possible to search for different stories and different truths. It makes it possible to think of educational aims of PPL that were otherwise unthinkable or forgotten. A genealogical perspective opposes any notion of ‘natural development’ by viewing history as a series of contingent power/knowledge struggles (Foucault 1980: 83, Marshall 1990: 19). The aim of surveying for the unseen and forgotten (whether deliberate or not) knowledge and relating it that which is considered ‘common sense’ and ‘known’ is, as Foucault wrote “to make use of this knowledge tactically today.” (ibid.). By pointing to ‘new’ and (for some perspectives) surprising relations between practices, details and events, a genealogical perspective enables different views, different stories. That is what

‘critique’ means for this study: to challenge (what has become, and is becoming) authoritative story-telling of PPL’s educational aims by examining its discursive construction. As Christensen (2016) writes: “When genealogy is applied into educational research, it offers the opportunity to gain insight into contemporary pedagogical assumptions and, thus, to consider them in a different perspective.” (Christensen 2016: 766). This study echoes such an ambition. An investigation into PPL and its educational aims as they are made to appear in various temporalities can help to illuminate contemporary constructions and entanglements of this educational approach. To paraphrase Foucault, I intend to use the historical knowledge of discursive struggles of PPL tactically to open up the current discussions of what PPL aims to do educationally. This ‘opening up’ becomes possible by forcing current forms of PPL into conversation with their own histories, uncomfortable as they might be. Such work is important not only for PPL, but also for the general deliberation on the educational purposes of the university and problem-based pedagogies.

Genealogy as method?

Until now, I have presented a genealogical approach as a useful way to historicise (in a certain way) and problematise the present forms of PPL. I have positioned genealogy as primarily a historicising *epistemology* and an enabler of *critique*. I will now turn to the question of how the genealogical approach of this project affects the methodology and concrete methods used, and in what ways this differs from what others have done in the field of educational research.

Foucault was never very concrete or consistent on ‘how to do genealogy’, neither did his works contain explicit ‘methodology chapters’. The Foucault-scholar Mitchell Dean (1994) writes how Foucault “left us no extended methodological statement of his genealogy” (p. 14). Anais (2013), who is experimenting with combining genealogy and discourse analysis, similarly states: “It is fair to say that genealogy constitutes an ethos of analysis rather than a strict post-structuralist methodology, so I would be remiss to suggest that I was tidying up an otherwise messy methodological approach.” (Anais 2013: 124). Other ‘genealogists’ concur and write that there is no recipe for doing genealogy (Tamboukou 1999, Meadmore et al. 2000, Christensen 2016). Consequently, any genealogical study drawing on Foucault requires some work in translating his thoughts and provocations to the concrete ‘doing of genealogy’ when using it as a method. Though Foucault provided no ‘manual’ for doing genealogies, his specific works can serve as exemplars just like later scholars’ take-ups of Foucaultian genealogy can be an inspiration to others. An example of a certain take-up of genealogy is Christensen (2013) who, as mentioned in the introduction, did a genealogical investigation on ‘group work’ in the Danish education system, especially related to ‘project pedagogy’. Christensen (2016) re-

fers to her use of genealogy as “a qualitative method in poststructuralist research (Christensen, 2013; Fendler, 2001; Meadmore et al. 2000; Villadsen, 2006)” (p. 763). Here, genealogy is positioned as a “qualitative method”, and Christensen (2013) lays out in some detail how such a method should be carried out. The main inspiration drawn upon in Christensen’s work (2013, 2016) is a chapter in a Danish book on sociological methods (Villadsen 2006), where the author, against his own warnings, ventures forth to formulate a “general method” for genealogical analysis (p. 87, my translation). As such, the chapter takes the reader through a step-by-step guide to doing genealogical analysis from the questions asked to assembling an archive and writing up the research. Helpful as it can be to develop genealogy into a method for researchers to use, in the specific sociological take-up seen in Christensen (2013) and Villadsen (2006), it risks being caught up in ‘doing it the right way’ and ‘following the right procedure’ in a slightly universalised, non-situated understanding of ‘method’ that Foucault never provided³⁶. Accordingly, Dean (1994) writes that “to speak of following ‘Foucault’s methods’ is as paradoxical as speaking of ascending stairs or cascading waterfalls in the graphic work of M. C. Escher.” (p. 2). This is not to say that I think ‘genealogy’ should eclectically and casually be employed in any research project. I find it important to adhere to a serious theoretical engagement with the concepts and methodologies used in educational research, and how this affects the inquiry. At the same time, such work can never arrive at (nor aim at) some ultimate truth or representation, from a poststructuralist perspective (Stronach and Maclure 1997). What is at risk, I believe, in using genealogy as a method based on step-by-step guides (as with any narrow methodical take-up of an idea) is the methodological openness, creativity and sensitivity to the specific subject matter of situated research problems in the concrete take-ups of genealogy.

Methodological implications

That I do not employ genealogy as a method, but rather draw on it as epistemological provocation and a catalyst for critique, does not mean that such an approach has no consequences for the methodology and methods employed in this study. Thus, I will continue by elaborating in what ways my approach draws inspiration from its genealogical perspective on knowledge in its procedure and analytical focus and why.

As has been laid out, a central analytical aspect from a genealogical perspective is that of ‘time’. Jóhannesson (2001) studying educational reform in Iceland writes how the study of *continuities* and *discontinuities* is central to genealogical inquiries: “Genealogy searches for

³⁶ The Foucaultian scholar, Jóhannesson (2010) points to (and enacts) the same problematic in an article where he both points to the risks of universalising Foucault’s thinking into methods (especially in the qualitative-quantitative binary), but at the same time provides a step-by-step guide to what he calls “historical discourse analysis” (p. 251), drawing on Foucault and Bourdieu (ibid.).

continuities and discontinuities, ruptures and breaks in discourses and social practices, and it examines the relationship between these continuities and discontinuities.” (p. 244). I read this quote as an elaboration of Foucault’s (1977a) emphasis on genealogy as the study of descent and emergence, and most importantly, their *relations*. In the study of the educational aims and purposes of PPL, I follow continuities in discourse as well as discontinuity across temporalities in and between selected texts from 1974-2018. I ask: What discourses are prevalent, and when and how, in the enunciation of what PPL is for as a form of education? Which are silent, and when were they silenced? (were they once otherwise?) How do they relate to one another? The study will also examine the use of temporality itself, as the positioning of certain things as being in the past, present and future often work for legitimating specific stories of ‘the present’, while delegitimising others (Hemmings 2005). Focusing on the ‘how-questions’, this genealogical discourse analysis is not interested in ‘explaining’ changes (or lack of change), but tasks itself with showing them.

The genealogical perspective has also affected the assembling of material. In the work of bringing together texts to be studied, I am interested in both material that has shown to be central in the dominating (hi)story-telling of PPL, and material that shows to have been made less central (see the extended argument for choosing texts below). In the reading of such material, the genealogical perspective helps to force a ‘strange’, or different, reading of material that has been read many times before as well as reading less known texts imagining a trajectory in which they were made central to the dominant discourse. A final genealogical trait characterising the analysis, is a certain empirical focus happy to dwell on detail rather than jumping to quick conclusions. Lončarević (2013) relates the attention to detail to the epistemological outset of genealogy: “Namely, what Foucault’s general epistemological reflections show is that we should focus on specific, local and particular, because we cannot escape, despite all the efforts, our temporal, cultural, political, and local specificity and particularity.” (p. 79). In Foucault’s (1977a) essay on Nietzsche, he writes that genealogy “requires patience and a knowledge of details and it depends on a vast accumulation of source material.” (p. 140). The same observation of Foucaultian inquiry to have an eye for details is held by Tamboukou (1999), who, in discussing Foucault’s genealogies, writes:

Foucault is careful with minor textual details, scrupulously citing his examples, commenting on their structure, following the ‘order of their discourse’, comparing and juxtaposing them, tracing their repetition, recurrence or even disappearance in relation to the era, the philosophical school or even the historical personalities they were adopted by. (p. 214)

These are virtues that I incorporate for the study of PPL; an attention to the details of the material and a patient study. It takes careful examination to read a text for its production of educational aims, especially when these are not explicitly mentioned, but must instead be read from the text as a whole, from its relations to other texts, and from what the text *does*. By choosing to study the educational aims of PPL empirically, I lean on

Koopman and Matza's (2013) categorisation of Foucault as being 'empiricist': "Foucault is a critical empiricist insofar as his best legacy involves the patient use of empirical analytics as a check against the speculative use of abstract conceptualization." (p. 821).

Summing up

As indicated at the beginning of this section, the main reason for employing a genealogical perspective to the analysis has been to introduce a certain kind of *temporality* into contemporary constructions of PPL. A genealogical perspective helps to destabilise and interrupt current stories of PPL and its educational aims as certain contingent constructions out of multiple. The initial irritation for this project was a feeling of not knowing, or it being nebulous, what PPL is aiming at as an *educational* approach - what it wants for its educational subjects and the world (and what it does not want). Central stories of PPL seemed to tell a story of an educational approach capable of following any aim, any fashion of the day (even if contradictory). Concurrently, the main institutional home of PPL, Roskilde University, was busy branding itself with PPL and producing advertising posters and other promotional material selling PPL as the answer to both societal problems, high-quality research and students' needs. In order to disrupt and open up this study of PPL, genealogy presented itself as a useful approach that could serve as an epistemology to position PPL as historically constituted through historical power/knowledge struggles. Accordingly, a genealogical approach to discourse analysis enables critique because the study of dominant and marginalised - forgotten and continuous - educational aims makes possible new perspectives on the contemporary discussion of what PPL is for. From the above, I have sought to make clear that this study is not a genealogy, as such. Neither is it a philosophical, historical or linguistic study. It is a discourse analysis within higher education research that takes a genealogical perspective in its study of what has come to be known as 'problem-oriented project learning' and its educational aims.

The next section addresses how this study is a 'discourse analysis'.

Studying educational discourse in and through text

The previous section laid out how a genealogical perspective adds an important temporal perspective to the discourse analysis of the educational aims and purposes of PPL. While the genealogical perspective makes out the specific historical conceptualisation of PPL rendering it open to critique, the main part of the research work has been to study certain texts, as empirical material, in detail for their part in the complex discursive production of PPL and its educational aims. As such, 'genealogy' and 'discourse analysis' acts as different aspects of the same study: a genealogical discourse analysis. Where the genealogical part of this methodology emphasises a certain temporal perspective on knowledge, the

‘discourse analysis’-part emphasises both a theory of the social world as constituted by discursive practices and a method for analysing, or what I call ‘reading’, texts.

Just as with ‘genealogy’, there are many different approaches to ‘discourse’ and what it means to analyse it. As Nikander (2008) writes: “The term *discourse analysis* (DA) is best understood as an umbrella designation for a rapidly growing field of research covering a wide range of different theoretical approaches and analytic emphases” (p. 413). As will be seen, the approach taken to ‘discourse’ and its study here draws on an amalgam of poststructuralist methodology and analytical tools from studies of texts. The use of discourse analysis in this study builds primarily on the work of Maggie Maclure (2003, 2007) and Clare Hemmings (2005, 2011), who have, in different ways, taken up poststructuralist theories of discourse and brought them to work on various kinds of texts in respectively Educational research and Feminist theory. The two scholars have in common putting Foucault’s legacy to work in a serious engagement with the details of texts that works counter to quick deductive readings. The special attention to the details of texts is useful in my study, where, as will be seen, PPL-texts call for attentive scrutinisation in their act of constructing certain truths on educational aims and purposes. One might ask (as I have) whether critical discourse analysis (CDA) would not have been useful with its developed framework for analysing texts (see e.g. Rogers, ed. 2011). Let me briefly delineate the differences between CDA and discourse analysis in this study. Remembering Nikander’s (2008) point, ‘critical discourse analysis’ too exists in many forms and variations, and is as contingent a term as ‘PPL’, but one way to articulate it is as Maclure (2003) does, calling it an approach that “explicitly attempts to marry ‘the bigger picture’ offered by social theory with the technical sophistication of linguistic analysis” (p. 186). Also, Rogers (2011) in an introduction to critical discourse analysis within education explains how the ‘critical’ aspect relates to its aim being “to design and forge alternative ways of representing, being, and interacting in the world with the goal of creating a society free of oppression and domination.” (Rogers 2011: 5). Taking a poststructuralist position and drawing on a Foucaultian notion of ‘discourse’ (Foucault 2002), this study differs from CDA by having an onto-epistemological approach with a troubled relation to truth (and teleology), structuralism, representation and ‘reality’. This entails a different understanding of power as regimes of truth rather than a possession, always involved in discursive practices and not resolvable in any ‘emancipation’ to come (See Skov 2019 for an elaborate discussion of CDA and Foucaultian discourse theory). In the following, I elaborate how this study understands ‘discourse’, ‘texts’, their relation and the analytical tools to investigate these.

Discourse, reading and (con)text

In a now famous quote in ‘The Archaeology of Knowledge’, Foucault (2002) wrote on the task of the discourse analyst:

A task that consists of not – of no longer – treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents of representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this *more* that renders them irreducible to the language (*langue*) and to speech. It is this ‘more’ that we must reveal and describe. (Foucault 2002, p. 54)

‘Discourses’ in this quote are articulated as “more” than groups of signs used “to designate things”. They are seen as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak”. I read this as pointing to ‘power’ and its investment in ‘truth’; that utterances and statements are always involved in reality-making and that language therefore is never innocent. Thus, when I in this dissertation use the verbs ‘articulate’, ‘formulate’ and ‘enunciate’, this indicates a truth-production from the post-representational perspective that “discourse is not a slender surface of contact, or confrontation, between a reality and a language”. (Foucault 2002: 54). To point attention to the power involved in discursive practices, discourses from a Foucaultian perspective have been referred to as “regimes of truth” (Wright et al. 2019: 218) with certain “rules of inclusion and exclusion” (ibid. 217). When Foucault above articulates ‘discourse’ as ‘practices’ rather than underlying structures, I view it as a post-structuralist point. Discourses do not exist exterior to their practicing - outside writing, reading, speaking and thinking (Maclure 2003) - and just as discourses constitute the meaning of signs in various ways, the use of signs also produce discourses in complex and changing relations (Krejsler 2006). These matters concern the relation between discourse and text. As mentioned, this study analyses the discursive production of educational aims as identified in and through chosen texts. The way texts are understood here is that they make up certain relations of signs that can be studied. Drawing on Anaïs (2013), I see texts “not as passive objects but as actors with a role to play in the enactment of social configurations (Prior, 2008).” (Anaïs 2013: 132). Texts are positioned as *discourse actors*, because they are not mere ‘products of discourse’, they also co-produce discourse. As Maclure (2003) writes: “big and familiar issues of curriculum, opportunity, authority, policy, history, power and point of view are woven into the most mundane fragments of talk and writing.” (p. iix). When I write that discourse is studied *in* texts, I point to what in lack of better words could be called ‘the content’, that is, what meaning can be read by the signs of a text concerning the educational aims of PPL. This involves a study of the ‘form’ of text, *how* something is written, which is here, from a poststructuralist perspective, seen as inseparable from ‘content’. Simultaneously, discourse is studied *through* texts, which points to what a text ‘does’ in terms of producing truths of PPL and its educational aims - what I call the *discursive effects*. These two aspects, the form/content in a text and the discursive effects of it, are intertwined in the discourse analysis and of equal importance to the study.

I would like to address what it means for this investigation to ‘read’ a text. As such, ‘reading’ in this thesis is used interchangeably with ‘analysis’ and ‘interpretation’. Doing

research from a poststructuralist perspective, ‘interpretation’ does not mean that the analyst in a hermeneutical sense can peel away layers of a text to get to the bottom of some hidden, intended or inherent meaning. Exegesis, as the quest for laying bare the essence and intended meaning of a text, is not possible, because there is no ‘essence’. Foucault reflected on this ‘superficiality’ of interpretation: “There is nothing absolutely primary to interpret because, when all is said and done, underneath it all everything is already interpretation” (Foucault 1967: 189 in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 107). This does not mean that interpretation – and thus ‘reading’ – is impossible, but that it is always one out of several possible readings, and therefore should be situated. Concerning the question of ‘intended meaning’, Foucault (1977b) in the essay ‘What is an author’ wrote that the task of reading, what he calls “criticism”, “is not to reestablish the ties between an author and his work or to reconstitute an author’s thought and experience through his works” (p. 118). Thus, in my analyses I do not search for ‘intended meanings’ of an author outside the text. Rather, a reading for the discursive production of PPL is primarily concerned with the text itself and the relations between its signifiers. Troubling this perspective, Foucault (1977b) also wrote that “the writing of our day has freed itself from the necessity of ‘expression’; it only refers to itself, yet it is not restricted to the confines of interiority. On the contrary, we recognize it in its exterior deployment.” (p. 116). I maintain an analytical focus on ‘the text itself’ and its details as different from reading a text primarily for ‘author meaning’ and its representation of some non-discursive world outside the text. Therefore, I include several quotes for the texts analysed as evidence of my readings. At the same time, I take Foucault’s latter statement on ‘exterior employment’ to point to the meanings of a text being constituted when related to other statements or texts, that is, when being ‘read’. This relates to the question of ‘context’. I am wary of this term, because it easily comes to mean that something external or prior to a text, something that when viewed together with (‘con’) the text, can fixate its meaning and explain it (Petersen 2015: 154). Such ‘contexts’ could be ‘time’ (e.g. ‘the 1970s’³⁷), ‘discourses’ (e.g. ‘neoliberal discourses’), memories, a reference to ‘societal movements’, various ‘isms’ and it could be other texts. While being careful of ‘context’ as a means of closure in interpretation, it is an inescapable and necessary part of the analysis to momentarily stabilise the meaning of specific statements and texts by relating them to other statements and texts, to situate them (Stronach and Maclure 1997). A risk with ‘context’ is that it can make things self-explanatory and glosses over the statements and details of a text and makes it an illustration of something external to it, whereby relieving the text from further examination. ‘Context’ can easily insert itself as structuralist concern in a post-structuralist endeavour. My strategy to engage with this problematic has been firstly to prioritise detailed readings

³⁷ For example, Hemmings (2005) analyses how the labelling of texts within Feminist theory when positioned as ‘being from the 1970s’ often simplifies and discards such texts as being ‘essentialist’, but without much substantiation due to a sedimented ‘taken-for-granted’ status of the 1970s in discourse on Feminist theory.

of the texts as significant actors. Secondly, to draw in other elements such as statements, literature, research, observations, knowledge, thoughts and perspectives from colleagues to expand or challenge possible readings. Thirdly, I have tried to resist (or at least sceptical of) quick and easy connections and be transparent as to how readings of relations are contingent to several ‘contexts’. Thus, instead of looking for context to fixate meaning, I will endeavour to be sceptical of such actions, try to look for counter-readings and ask what the discursive effects are of specific ‘contextualisations’ (whether my own or asserted by a text).

Analytical strategies for disarticulating texts

How is it possible to ‘see’ educational aims in a text? How do you study the discursive production of PPL and its aims in a text? In this section, I will lay out the tools that are used for *opening* up the texts for discourse analysis - tools for “disarticulating” the articulations of texts, as Maclure (2003: 79) puts it. These ‘tools’ are developed from poststructuralist discourse studies and build on the epistemological assumptions laid out in this chapter. The two primary inspirations are Maggie Maclure (2003, 2007), who has employed Foucaultian thinking into the study of various texts in education, and Clare Hemmings (2011), who has developed various strategies from careful readings of texts within Feminist theory. Hemmings bases her work on Foucault’s oeuvre as well as narrative theory, and a specifically useful aspect of her study is to analyse how texts use temporality³⁸ to construct certain ‘historical’ truths. The specific tools presented in this section were not ‘ready-made’ before the accumulation of texts for analysis, and the analysis itself, and the tools and concepts for analysing them have developed continuously and with the specificity of the chosen texts in mind (see more of the concrete texts in later sections).

Textual arrangements and binaries

Maclure (2003) writes that it takes “discursive literacy” (p. 79) to be able to take a text apart and study its grammatical construction of what is considered the truth and in what ways. One analytical question is thus how a text is structured and how this affects its discursification of PPL. This includes an engagement with the materiality of a text (Prior 2008, Anaïs 2013), that is, whether it is an electronic text, a text book with moulded pages, or if elements have been scribbled over, if signs are made up of letters, perhaps with a certain font, or if illustrations, models and pictures are used. Such elements are studied for the part they may play in the fabrication of PPL and its educational purposes. In the analyses, I use the term ‘genre’ loosely as an umbrella term for these analytical foci: what makes up the ‘fabric’ of a text, how it is constructed and how does it perform?

³⁸ Hemmings has previously been drawing on ‘genealogy’ (Hemmings 2005) and similar “historiographic approaches” (p. 118) in her study of the telling of truths in Feminist theory.

Another aspect of discourse analysis, pointed to by several authors, is to analyse how meaning is constructed through binaries and to consider the truth-making effects they produce (Maclure 2003, Hemmings 2011, Macfarlane 2015, Kinchin and Gravett 2022). Maclure (2003) writes that binaries construct the world into two incommensurable positions: “One ‘side’ achieves definition – comes to meaning – through its *difference* with respect to a (constructed) ‘other’ which is always lacking, lesser or derivative in some respect.” (Maclure 2003: p. 10). One side of the binary becomes ‘bad’, while the other due to the binary logic is necessarily ‘good’. Prevalent binaries within higher education are for example, as studied by Macfarlane (2015); old/new universities, student-centred/teacher-centred, deep learning/surface learning, liberal/vocational (p. 102). The point of this analysis is not to identify binaries in order to undo them or come up with ‘better ones’³⁹, but rather to point to their discursive effects in the construction of PPL.

The use of narratives and temporality

A major inspiration for the study at hand is the book ‘Why Stories Matter’ from 2011 by Clare Hemmings. The book is a critical investigation of recent Western feminist narratives, which not only analyses feminist story-telling, but also suggests (and performs) certain strategies to work differently with, and to disrupt, these stories. As Hemmings (2011) writes in the introduction: “I seek to flesh out the substance of Western feminist stories and to intervene by experimenting with how we might tell stories differently rather than telling different stories.” (p. 16). The book presents a study of a cohort of feminist academic journal articles, and Hemmings (2011), through careful reading, identifies three dominant narratives of Western feminist theory across these: stories of progress, loss and return (p. 3). Although these specific narratives are developed from the specific empirical material studied by Hemmings, I include these narratives into the arsenal of analytical strategies, because they can help, as heuristics, to examine how PPL and its educational aims are being constructed and valorised temporally. In the ‘progress’ narrative there is a sense of development, where ‘the past’ is constructed as ‘over’ and ‘crude’, while the present has the intellectual high grounds with advanced (post)-theories that can critique former essentialist and naïve positions (ibid. 3-4). The ‘loss’ narrative tells a story where the feminist project has been depoliticised by the introduction of notions such as ‘post-feminism’, and the ‘a-historical’ practices of these approaches (ibid. 4). Finally, the ‘return’ narrative tells of the failure of postmodernist and poststructuralist theories to change the status-quo of women’s’ situation, and that perhaps it was better to reengage with former feminist work that was ‘actually’ political and believed in real change through

³⁹ The poststructuralist assumptions on language and discourse in this study entail that there is no ‘safe space’ outside language, which means that language cannot be ‘escaped’ and constructing new binaries will still involve certain effects of power (Stronach and Maclure 1997). At the same time, calling out dominant binaries and offering new constellations can help to pluralise the educational aims of PPL.

activism and material critiques (ibid. 4-5). The use of ‘temporality’ is a powerful discursive strategy that can construct other positions in certain ways to promote a specific argument or position. For example, in relation to the ‘progress’ narrative, Hemmings (2011) writes: “What takes place in the past is cast as irredeemably anachronistic, in order that the present can represent the theoretical cutting edge.” (p. 38). In my study, temporality becomes a central analytical aspect that is both involved in the genealogical perspective studying continuities and discontinuities over time, as well as how PPL and its educational aims is constructed ‘in time’ within the texts.

Citation practices and textual affect

Hemmings (2011) writes of her analytical tools: “My intention is to identify the repeated narrative forms that underwrite these stories by analysing the textual mechanisms that generate coherent meaning and allow for author, context and reader agreement.” (p. 17). I am not doing a narrative analysis, but I do borrow the notion of analysing how ‘agreement’ is sought established textually between author and reader. One such device is to study who and what is cited (and who is not), in what ways and with what effects (Hemmings 2011: 161ff). Such citation practices are particularly useful when part of the research interest is to study how texts construct the pedagogical-theoretical inheritances of PPL. It is not certain that the text analysed explicitly draws on references to theories and pedagogies, which besides being an analytical point in itself can require extended analysis to make qualified readings of the text’s production of educational aims. The analysis of citation practices is not limited to ‘theories’ but includes referencing other texts in the assemblage, that is, to what extent and in what ways (with what effects) the assemblage text ‘cites’ each other.

Another strategy for a text to establish agreement with its reader is the deployment of affect. Such “textual affect”, as Hemmings (2011: 17) calls it, relates to the way ‘subjects’ and ‘objects’ and their relation are constructed in the text appealing to certain emotions (knowingly or not) in the reader and author, e.g. belonging, identification, happiness, frustration, fun or anger (Hemmings 2011: 191). I use ‘textual affect’ to analyse how a text seeks to construct certain emotional reactions in its reader, e.g. whether this or that part of PPL is told to invoke feeling of celebration, anxiety, disgust, pride, shame or something to laugh about.

Subjects, othering and silence

Connected to the ‘affect’ in a text and what discursive work it does, is the objects and subjects infiltrated in such affect. It is a focus in itself to study who or what takes part in the text as ‘subject’ (the acting part) and ‘object’ (acted upon). Whatever becomes ‘subjects’ in a text also produce ‘others’, that is, there is a struggle to be “the heroine”, which are narratives that “are staged as refutations and resentments of other positions, subjects and narratives.” (Hemmings 2011: 191). For my analysis, ‘othering’ is not reserved for

‘subjects’, but is used as a concept that points to not only who but also what is made ‘other’ in the text. Whenever an educational aim is put forth, it might be formulated in a way where other educational aims and purposes are silenced, simplified or otherwise degraded in order for ‘the first’ to prevail. This is a matter of analysing the perspectives of the text – where does the text write from? How are educational aims articulated and what becomes its ‘other’? Which subjects and objects are active, well-described (meaning that they take up much space), mentioned little (or not at all), and what affects are they produced through?

The statements of a text have a dual effect of ‘putting into discourse’ both that which is written and that which is not. Stronach and Maclure (1997) write how discourse-oriented studies must be attentive to the silences of a text: “to read against the grain - to interrogate texts for what they fail to say, but cannot fully cover up – is to reassert the existence of a plurality of voices, values and perspectives, in the face of universalizing tendencies of the dominant culture.” (p. 53). I see this as pointing to the struggles necessarily involved in a text’s effort to appear coherent, convincing and universal in its telling of the world (when it is not). These struggles may be discernible partly from the statements of a text and the related affect and from subtle inconsistencies, but they may also be entirely absent. In order to analyse silences, whether partly or wholly, I will be drawing in other texts that can help to expose silences by providing other perspectives, to show what could also have been written on the educational aims of PPL.

Applying the strategies

To sum up the analytical strategies, the ways of ‘seeing’ educational aims in the analysis are several. All of these strategies are part of the arsenal of tools to open up the study of the main research interest: investigating the continuities and discontinuities of educational aims of PPL and how these are produced in, and by, selected texts.

Firstly, in my analysis of the texts, I have examined explicit statements on what PPL is for, in what direction it should go, such as ‘PPL is great for qualifying students’. As laid out in the introduction chapter, educational aims relate to matters of direction and what is considered desirable whether concerning life, society or education itself (see e.g. Dewey 1916/2012, Moore 1982, Biesta 2010, Barnett 2017). Also involved in educational aims are educational subjects, the students and teachers – what does PPL want for whom? Statements on what PPL is for, or aiming for, may cite various theories (or not) to support its claims. This is also an interest of the study – which theories/knowledge are drawn upon to construct PPL and whether they are ‘pedagogical’. Statements on PPL’s traits and inheritances can be countered or nuanced by other statements in the text that may contradict, confirm or otherwise affect the first. Here, analysing the relations between statements in a text, and relations to other texts is central. Asking what is written also includes asking what is not written; the silences.

A second aspect to the analysis of the texts is that it matters *how* educational aims are articulated (or not). Aims are not necessarily posed as explicitly as suggested, and it then takes careful examination to study how a text produces truths of PPL and what it is for in more subtle ways. Educational aims are part of discursive struggles (Harris 1999) and because texts may not explicitly state ‘this is the aim of X’, the task is to study how a text ‘speaks’, how it appeals to its imagined reader, and how other texts are drawn in, and with what discursive effects. For example, a text may cite predominantly critical theory, or it may use casual or formal language that affects the construction of PPL. Studying the ‘how’ of the texts is done through the analytical foci of textual affect, the construction of temporality and textual arrangements. The question of *what* is written, and *how* it is written are intertwined in the analysis and cannot be separated epistemologically from the discourse-oriented perspective of this investigation.

Together with the genealogical perspective and theory of discursive practices, the analytical strategies provide the questions that I use for opening up the texts and analysing them for their part in constructing the educational aims of PPL. This has been a reiterative and unfolding process of going back and forth between the texts analysed, my analytical strategies, the questions of the project, PPL-literature and studies in higher education to widen and complicate the temporal discursive networks of how educational aims of PPL become possible and impossible.

Constructing an assemblage of PPL-texts

In this section, I lay out the process of constructing a selection of texts and address how the study of these will help me answer the research questions. Designating texts as empirical material to be analysed has been an unfolding process, and I reflect on the principles of inclusion/exclusion that have developed along the way.

Drawing on the post-structuralist perspective and its scepticism of strict claims for ‘scientificity’ and ‘methodology’, there are no *á priori* ‘right’ or ‘perfect’ texts for my analysis, and no ‘one right place’ to begin (Masny 2016: 669). In this line of thought, I have found it helpful to think of the pool of texts as an ‘assemblage’, because they have not been collected from predetermined ‘criteria’, but instead from a variety of emerging principles. Masny (2016) writes that “elements” in an assemblage, such as texts in my case, “come together in an assemblage based on a problem at hand, drawn from the flux of experiences of life” (p. 668). Accordingly, the texts for this analysis made their way into this study based on their capacity to help engage with the research questions. The ‘usefulness’ of a text could only be hypothesised prior to examining it in detail, and therefore the assemblage has developed in close relation to the analytic process - as a continuous and contingent back-and-forth movement between research interests, theories and the material engaged with. Just as the artist constructs assemblages from ‘things’ picked up

through their life, one strategy was to select texts already known to me as a former student and current teacher of PPL. On the other hand, it became a principle to challenge my own familiarity with the PPL-literature and to look for texts unknown to me. For this purpose, I have drawn on my professional networks⁴⁰, searched in electronic library databases, scanned the shelves on my many visits to university and municipal libraries and looked in the reference lists of texts, I found. The multidimensionality of the assemblage resonates with a formulation by Anaïs (2013), who reflects on assembling texts for a genealogical critical discourse analysis:

On the one hand the archive assembled for the purposes of analysis will have to be ‘living’ in the sense that the researcher will be adding new source materials. On the other hand, the researcher will have to make defensible decisions concerning what finds its way into the archive and what is excluded from it. (Anaïs 2013: 131)

In the same way, the assemblage for this study has been living and not as such within the control of my deliberations as researcher. At the same time, various interests and principles have guided the choices along the way (knowingly and unknowingly). In the following, I present these interests and principles.

Considerations for selecting texts

In the process of searching for texts to study further, what have been the emerging principles?

As noted, the texts should aid the investigation of the educational aims of PPL and therefore had to be categorised as ‘PPL-texts’. I apply this name to texts that have been stabilised as actors involved in producing the discourses of what PPL wants as educational approach. Thus, an initial task has been to identify such ‘PPL-texts’, which lead to a gross list of close to 200 texts⁴¹. Further, I have been interested in texts that are ‘used’, which here primarily means that they are, or have been, dominant in the discursive production of PPL. The aim is to challenge and interrogate these texts that are, and have been, central in the truth-producing machine of PPL. This interest follows the critical aim of being able to, as Hemmings (2011) writes, “tell stories differently rather than telling different stories” (p. 16).

The way to identify ‘use’ for this study is to search for texts that have been drawn upon frequently in teaching (understood broadly) to argue for, teach, or explain PPL. For example, they might have appeared year after year on the syllabus for first-semester stu-

⁴⁰ In various situations at Roskilde University, I have asked colleagues what texts they find to be significant for PPL.

⁴¹ This gross list of PPL-texts can be given on demand.

dents, they have been recommended by tutors, ‘taught’ by academics, or used in university group projects when in doubt of ‘what we are doing?’ As a strategy, to add to (and challenge) my own experiences as student and teacher at Roskilde University, I have looked broadly in curricula, and have checked for texts that are produced in large quantities, re-printed or edited into new versions. I take these elements to be indicators of ‘use’. Another possible indicator is when texts (or parts of texts) are translated into other languages, which shows a certain demand for that text. Finally, I have noted texts referring to other texts. For example, if certain texts are continuously referred to as ‘important texts’ for understanding PPL, or texts might themselves argue that ‘this is a text that gives the arguments and principles for PPL’ (which does not necessarily make them ‘dominant’ in the discourse).

Text books and pedagogical-theoretical inheritances

Many different texts take part in the discursive production of ‘PPL’ and its educational aims and purposes, such as power-point-shows, lunch-talks, writings in media, buildings or anecdotes from former students and teachers. Still, the texts that made it into the studied assemblage are predominantly text books⁴² that introduce the reader to PPL. How did this come to be the case? Firstly, I find, as also Naskali and Keskitalo-Foley (2019) have suggested, that introductory textbooks (still) have great “institutional power in constituting knowledge” (p. 101), and thus constitute possible ways to *think* and *enact* PPL. Secondly, this study is interested in the pedagogical-theoretical inheritances of PPL as these are related to the formulation of educational aims and purposes, and text books (contrary to e.g. pamphlets and guides with no explicit references) may provide a site for studying these pedagogical-theoretical inheritances (and their construction) through for example citation practices. That is, to examine which theories are drawn upon in the construction of PPL and from which fields (e.g. sociology, education, psychology), or whether (educational) theories are drawn upon at all.

A reflection is why this study concerns itself mainly with textual introductions (words and signs on pages in published works)? Why not include ‘texts’ in the form of e.g. interviews such as it is done in oral history (for example Servant 2016), or transcripts of classroom teaching situations (as Borgnakke 1996)? Such material could help to show and understand how PPL and its educational aims are enacted by teachers and students in teaching situations, and how central actors perceive of and ‘use’ different text books (and what other materials and inspirations they draw on, if any, for their understanding and practice of PPL). For this study, I have chosen to focus on textual introductions to PPL.

⁴² This is my categorisation as some of the texts do not call themselves ‘text book’, but rather ‘report’ or ‘pamphlet’. By ‘text book’, I mean a text that is published and has the physical form of a book of a certain amount of pages and with either hard or soft back. I have also included a poster – the newest text (2018) - which functions as an opener and catalyst for the analysis.

directed for use in education as discourse actors that too have a part in the discursive production of PPL's educational aims. As shown, few PPL-texts have been subject to detailed discourse analysis, and this investigation prioritises such sustained examination. Several of the included texts are significant actors in the construction of PPL, and there is a need to open the 'readings' of these texts and challenge uncritical and celebratory readings from a post-structural discourse-analytic perspective. Many of the text books consists of several hundred pages, some have several contributing authors and many draw on a myriad of theories and references, which has made detailed reading time-consuming and often made it necessary to confer with other texts to discern possible meanings. As such, the contribution of this study is the extensive discourse analysis of selected text books that are central in different ways in the discursive production of PPL and its educational purposes over time.

Time span and feasibility

Choices have been made along the way concerning the date of publication of texts as well as the number of texts analysed. Concerning time, I do not go further back than 1974 with the book 'Problem-orientation and participant-direction' by Knud Illeris. This book is by many later texts positioned as the 'first' and 'primary' text of 'PPL' (see e.g. Kolmos and De Graaff 2015: 145). I could have followed notions of 'problem-orientation', 'project work' and 'participant-direction' further back in time (as e.g. Christensen 2013 does with 'group work') as for example a different kind of genealogy would, where the analysis is not limited by certain years, but instead follow traces across time. As indicated earlier, this study prioritises the detailed discourse analysis of a special selected number of texts, and I have chosen to take the book by Illeris (1974) as a cutting point⁴³, because it is constructed as one possible beginning of PPL, and a book that is drawn upon heavily by later PPL-texts. Thus, the span of texts analysed is set from 1974 to 2018 partly due to the specific research interest in certain texts and partly to make the patient and detailed investigation feasible.

Concerning the number of texts included in the assemblage, I began with a list of almost 200 texts and have ended with ten texts – more than 1000 pages - that are studied in detail. This has been the result of both having answered the research questions, that is, having a notion of the discursive continuities and discontinuities that constitute present constructions and (his)stories of what PPL is for educationally, and an assessment of what was possible to analyse in detail within the time limit of the thesis.

⁴³ A genealogy of PPL that more directly wanted to disrupt the 'common tale of genesis' of PPL could have strategically started its investigation (or at least its dissemination) with a wholly different text, perhaps one that was more peripheral or unknown in the dominant histories of PPL.

Summing up the emerging principles of the assemblage

One principle has been to include texts that have been (and are perhaps still) used to teach, define and argue for PPL and its educational aims. I have had a primary interest in texts that are used extensively, cited several times by other texts, mentioned by colleagues or activated through my own student/teacher experiences with PPL and have thus been made dominant in the discursive and narrative constructions of PPL. At the same time, I have maintained an openness to texts that do not take up any part in the contemporary tales of PPL and its history. As such, the selection of texts have been contingent to the ongoing tracking of continuities and discontinuities of educational aims, and ‘useful texts’ has been a category that changed as the research process unfolded (Anais 2013, Masny 2016). Another principle that has emerged is to select texts that are published between 1974 and 2018, with the newest being a poster (RUC 2018) taken from the campus of Roskilde University and acting as a catalyst of problematisation for this project and the earliest being a book positioned by many texts as the starting point of PPL (Illeris 1974). The rest of the texts are scattered across the decades from 1974 to 2018 with the most being from the late 1990s. It has not been a deliberate principle to pick texts from certain years, or to have a diverse set of texts in terms of decades – the primary driver has been the question of ‘use’ and intertextuality (whether the texts point out each other as central to discourse). In terms of genre, I have sought texts that use references to support their arguments, in various ways, for PPL as educational approach in order to learn more about how its pedagogical-theoretical inheritances are constructed. From these emerging principles, most texts have ended up being textbook introductions to PPL, some single-authored, some edited volumes. The authors, as told by the texts themselves, are: students, teachers, managers and educational researchers.

A list of the ten focus texts

Below is a brief overview of the textual introductions to PPL that made it into the assemblage. All but Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015) and ‘RUC 2018’ are originally in Danish (my translations). All texts are available (in Danish libraries, at least), except ‘The 7 Principles of PPL’ (RUC 2018), which is attached as an appendix.

A brief note on citing the assemblage texts. As I analyse each text as ‘one text’, one discourse actor (although possibly consisting of several authored texts within the ‘wider’ text), these are cited as written in the list below, e.g. (Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen, eds. 2013) and not from individual contributions (which is the norm from APA standards with edited works). I do this in their function as *analysed* texts (and to avoid confusion due to multiple different citations). This said, I do try to make it clear, with words, who and what ‘speaks’ in the analysed text in question.

The analysed texts are here listed from earliest publication.

- **(Illeris 1974):**
‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction: a suggestion for an alternative didaktik’, book, by Knud Illeris, Munksgaard
- **(Hultengren 1976/1981):**
‘Problem-orientation, project work and report writing’, booklet, by Eva Hultengren, Aalborg Universitetsforlag
- **(Illeris 1981):**
‘A pedagogy of counter-qualification: problem-orientation, participant-direction and exemplary learning’, book, by Knud Illeris, Unge Pædagoger
- **(Ingemann, ed. 1985):**
‘The methodology of project work: an edited volume of meta-theoretical problems for problem-oriented, interdisciplinary work’, edited volume, by Ingemann (ed.), Forlaget Samfundsøkonomi og Planlægning
- **(Nielsen and Jensenius 1996):**
‘The reality of project work’, pamphlet, by Nielsen and Jensenius, Student council, Roskilde University Centre (‘RUC’)
- **(Olsen and Pedersen 1997):**
‘Problem-oriented project work: a work book’, edited volume, by Olsen and Pedersen, Roskilde Universitetsforlag
- **(Ulriksen 1997):**
‘Why project pedagogy?’, published report, by Ulriksen, Erhvervs- og voksenuddannelsesgruppen, Roskilde University Centre
- **(Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen, eds. 2013):**
‘The complexity of project work: knowledge, tools and learning’, edited volume, by Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen (eds.), Samfundslitteratur
- **(Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015):**
‘The Roskilde Model: Problem-oriented Learning and Project Work’, edited volume, by Andersen and Heilesen (eds.), Springer
- **(RUC 2018):**
‘The 7 principles of PPL’, a poster by Roskilde University (RUC)

Reflections on in- and exclusions

Several other PPL-texts could have been introduced to the analysis; other assemblages could be constructed. Though I have provided the emerging principles for the assembling process that have supported the specific inquiry at hand at different times, I will briefly reflect on possible discursive effects of the in- and exclusions made. Looking at the assemblage as it turned out, it includes no textual introductions (explicitly) from the technical and natural sciences (and these exist⁴⁴), and to the extent the texts position themselves in relation to disciplinary perspectives, there is a bias towards the social sciences and the humanities⁴⁵. This is not to say that several of the analysed texts could not have been used within the natural and technical sciences, but the texts included here do not explicitly direct themselves to these fields. There is another range of texts that are not included in this study, namely those involved with PPL and action research (Jæger, ed. 2002, Bilfeldt et al., eds. 2018, Frandsen and Andersen 2019). In my search from the emerging criteria laid out (especially concerning ‘the use’), these have not been included in this investigation.

A final reflection on the assemblage is that all texts except from the poster (2018) are published works that can be loaned at the library. A reflection is whether the stories I get are specifically ‘glossy’ and ‘censored’ in relation to other kinds of PPL-texts? This is based on the assumption that texts produced for (or with the intention of) wide accessibility have certain editorial filters and have been through rounds of editing, which does not apply in the same way to e.g. toilet door writings or gossip in the hallways of an institution. By including these texts in the assemblage, I reproduce the ‘use’ of these, and other stories of PPL might have emerged if I had mainly studied ‘not-so-used’ texts. This said, the main intention of this project, as stated earlier, is not to ‘find new PPL-texts’, but rather to read those texts that have been made central, *differently*.

Writing the analysis – analysing my writing

In this final section of the methodology, I address the construction of the analysis. When language is not innocent, nor a mirror of some reality, this thesis is as much studying PPL and its educational purposes as it is thereby involved in constructing these. How then do

⁴⁴ For example, Algreen-Ussing and Fruensgaard (1990) from the technical-natural sciences at Aalborg university, and Dahl et al. (2005) related to bio sciences at Copenhagen University.

⁴⁵ Servant (2016) writes how, according to Jens Højgaard Jensen (involved in Natural sciences at Roskilde University since the 1970s) the Natural Sciences were unaffected by the texts of Illeris and drew instead on experience from Copenhagen University (p. 210).

I write PPL and its educational aims into becoming? What are the possible discursive effects of my writing and structuring of the analysis of the ten PPL-texts?

Other researchers who have struggled with the crisis of representation implicated by a post-structuralist perspective on educational research (e.g. Stronach and Maclure 1997, Honan 2007, Petersen 2015), have developed certain post-structural writing practices. Petersen (2015) in her critical study of self-proclaimed post-structuralist policy research in education uses a 'split-text' with a "truth-telling-as-usual"-text, and a "juxta-text" to unsettle the former (p. 147). Stronach and Maclure (1997) experiment with a variety of strategies for grappling with a post-realist ontology in their book 'Educational Research Undone – The Postmodern Embrace'. For example, one chapter is formed as a conversation between 'reader' and 'author', where the 'reader' gives its critique of the truth-telling of the book, while the 'author' provides a counter-critique (Stronach and Maclure 1997: 132). Another chapter offers multiple readings of the same interview (and readings of these readings, *ibid.* 34-57), while a third chapter breaks up the 'traditional' narrative and textual structure of writings in educational research⁴⁶ with an outro that mixes headings, main text, footnotes, fonts, reference lists, formal/informal/literary/reflexive writing styles (*ibid.* 154-171). These strategies have all been employed to engage with the implications of a post-realist perspective on knowledge by interrupting a universal perspective and the quest for proper representation. For both Stronach and Maclure (1997) and Petersen (2015), the experimentation with the form of the text was an end in itself as part of their study; to break new ground in educational research and to model post-realist writing, respectively. For the study at hand, it has not been an aim in itself to experiment with the form of the thesis, or writing as such. The poststructuralist implications for this research project are onto-epistemological through the genealogical perspective on the 'history of PPL and its educational aims' as well as in the post-structural conception of 'text' (as actor) and 'discourse'. This destabilising perspective has been necessary in viewing, and studying, PPL and its educational aims differently, to read textual introductions as discourse actors rather than truth-speakers to agree and disagree with.

Though I have not engaged in much experimentation with the format of the thesis (as compared to Stronach and Maclure 1997 and Petersen 2003, 2015), the post-structuralist onto-epistemology of this study has issued certain ways of writing. As Koro-Ljungberg (2008) points out, a situated and constructionist understanding of the world comes with a certain vocabulary (Koro-Ljungberg 2008: 429). The question of 'language', of writing my investigation into existence, is a serious question of reality-construction. In order to enact the performativity and constructionism of the subject of this thesis, I endeavour to

⁴⁶I am aware that these points are from 1997 and what was considered 'new' and 'traditional' at that point is likely to have changed today (in dominant discourse), where post-structural (and post-modern) research strategies have been practiced in many ways in different fields over the last three decades.

write in a 'language of becoming' (instead of 'being'), where the 'things-actors' of this project, such as 'PPL', 'are' not anything, but they rather contingently 'become' something (Holstein and Gubrium 2008: 389). Especially the verbs (becomes, articulates, produces, constructs etc.) throughout the chapters are manufactured to achieve this. Also, I pursue a certain degree of reflexivity in the writing and seek to acknowledge what Foucault (1977a), in his reflections on genealogical inquiry, called "affirmation of knowledge as perspective" (p. 156). My perspective(s) enacted in the thesis, just like those identified in the texts analysed, comes 'from somewhere' and should therefore be situated.

Structure of the analysis

The analysis is structured in two parts. The first one consists of ten individual readings of the ten selected texts, while the second part is a cross-reading of all texts for continuities and discontinuities in discourses of what PPL is for educationally, and how this production happens discursively.

I have prioritised detailed discourse-oriented readings of the ten PPL-texts, and giving each analysis its own space slows down the tempo to show how the discursive production of PPL and its educational aims happens in the details of the writing. For this argument, my study aligns with the aims of Maclure (2003) in her book on analysing texts from a discourse-oriented take on educational research:

By picking apart the fabric of these texts, the book tries to show how big and familiar issues of curriculum, opportunity, authority, policy, history, power and point of view are woven into the most mundane fragments of talk and writing. (Maclure 2003 p. iix)

Another motivation for giving each text its own analysis, is that the selected texts are all given a significant position in the history of PPL. The main part of these texts are lengthy text books drawing in various theories to tell certain truths of PPL and what it aims to do for education. To read such texts for their production of educational purposes takes careful examination and sometimes calling upon other texts to qualify the readings. For this study, the inclusion of all ten discourse readings shows how PPL has been constructed in complex ways in and through significant texts from the 1970s until today. Such work is necessary to understand, critique and pluralise the educational aims of PPL, which can serve as an exemplary case for reinvigorating the discussion of the educational aims and purposes of the university more generally.

The analysis begins with a brief introductory reading of a 'present' text (RUC 2018), inspired by the genealogical perspective of the study. This is meant to be a catalyst for asking questions about what PPL can look like in 2018 – how did this construction of the educational aims of PPL come to be? The remainder of the individual readings are ordered chronologically from oldest to newest text, that is, after examining the poster from 2018, the analysis jumps to the Illeris-book from 1974. This order allows the reader

to follow continuities and discontinuities over (chronological) time. Also, it makes it easier to refer to previous analyses, when texts draw on (or ignore) each other, e.g. when ‘The Roskilde Model’ (2015) draws on, or rather constructs, ‘A pedagogy of counter-qualification’ (1981). Ordering the readings chronologically, and presenting each text individually, can seem a peculiar choice for a study with a genealogical perspective when genealogy wants to disrupt notions of linear time and study the descent and emergence of discourse. This said, the chronological ordering does not mean that the analysis tells a ‘history of progression’, rather the discourse-oriented readings lay out continuities as well as discontinuities in discourse and draws relations back and forth in time as well as investigating the workings of power (in- and exclusions). Thus, the genealogical-epistemological perspective of this study historicises PPL into several possible (his)stories and opens it for critique, but the genealogical aspect is not employed as a ‘method’, and neither as a form of writing (e.g. a genealogy told as a counter-history⁴⁷).

Where the individual readings allow for great detail of how each text constructs the educational purposes of PPL, the second part of the analysis, the cross-readings, changes to a broader perspective and seeks to draw lines across the assemblage as well as going into dialogue with PPL-literature and studies in higher education. Reading across the texts allows for a more articulated and substantiated crafting of the relations between continuities and discontinuities in discourse. In the cross-reading, I will draw on studies in educational research to connect my analysis to similar work on the construction of educational aims in higher education. Both parts of the analysis, though valuable in themselves, need each other: the individual analyses delivers the evidence for broader claims made in the second part, while the second part connects the analysis more clearly to the research questions and the field of higher education research.

Over the next many pages ensues ten detailed discourse-oriented readings of significant PPL-texts. These analyses make out the main part of this entire investigation, and are included to show, in the study of how PPL and its educational aims are discursively constructed, and that “the textual operations of poststructuralist approaches are slow, dogged and localized” (Maclure 2003 p. 181).

⁴⁷ This is not to say that the thesis cannot come to function as a counter to existing histories of PPL and what it is for. I do hope that the detailed discourse readings of both known texts and less known texts can make those involved with PPL think differently, even ‘freer’ about what educational aims PPL may pursue.

III. Ten detailed readings

The present - 'The 7 principles of PPL' (RUC 2018)

It is the spring of 2019. I am sitting in my office at Roskilde University just outside the provincial town of Roskilde (Denmark), thinking about my newly acquired position as PhD-student in the also new 'Centre for Research on Problem-oriented Project Learning', abbreviated 'RUC-PPL'. On the wall across me, I have pinned a small poster that I got as part of my 'starter pack' as newly employed. The poster has colourful letters on it, small boxes of text (so small I can hardly read them from my chair) and a big heading in bold letters reads:

'The 7 principles of PPL'

Just outside my office, in the hallway, which I share with employees from the Unit for Academic Development at the university, a bigger version of the poster hangs on the wall. One in Danish and one in English. This text has invaded the university: it appears on the website of Roskilde University, it meets the eyes on walls when walking around campus, it is found in the 'goodie bags' given to new students, and on the pages of their introduction pamphlet. The text is part of a whole series of texts; posters, pamphlets, white papers, website entries, introduction books. Where did this text come from? What does it say, and who is its sender – and receiver? How does it construct 'PPL' at this present time at the end of the 2010'? In what ways does it relate to other PPL-texts?

The rest of this analysis grapples with these questions through a detailed reading the text 'The 7 principles of PPL' (the English version) to study how it produces 'PPL' and its educational aims and purposes.

Form and arrangement of the text – a hierarchy of principles?

On a white background, seven squared sections of texts are spread out with each a heading in bold (each indicating a 'principle'), and a number:

- "1. Project work",
- "2. Problem-orientation",
- "3. Interdisciplinarity",
- "4. Participant control",
- "5. Exemplarity",
- "6. Group work"
- "7. International insight and vision".

Each of these sections are placed with a coloured number as their background (each in different colour). At the top of the text, a heading in bold letters accompanied by a huge “7” in yellow reads “The 7 principles of PPL”. The principles are spatially ordered from top left corner going right (principles 1, 2 and 3) and continuing from bottom left corner with 4, 5, 6 and 7 (following the way many western languages are read). That it is ‘continuing’ is inferred from the numbers ascending from 1-7 giving the appearance of a certain way of reading the principles starting with number 1 and ending with number 7. In the bottom right corner there is a logo in black and white stating “RUC”, the acronym for Roskilde University (=Roskilde universitetscenter). In the right top corner it reads “RUC’S EDUCATIONAL MODEL”; the text constructs itself, and “PPL”, as a model.

Let me reflect on the possible significance of the principles being ordered in numbers - what does it do with these explicit numbers? As already stated, having numbers from 1-7 gives the notion of a movement starting with one and continuing to seven. Thus, the principles are ordered. Also, the placement of the principles starting with number ‘1’ in the top left corner and continuing right (the typical reading pattern for the English language) gives the notion that this is where you start, this is the ‘first principle’.

Note: this analysis is not concerned with how the text is ‘actually’ read by different readers, as in a reception analysis, but instead what the text itself indicates as possible ways of being read. Of course, my analysis can also be considered an ‘actual’ reading, although readers probably do not normally spend this much time on a text like this – and this is a point in itself; this text is not one that readers spent long time on, it is *to be understood at a glance*.

I am curious whether there is a hierarchy in the principles, put forward through the text, or if they are constructed as being of equal importance. I cannot identify any words in the text that refer to a certain order (such as for example words being presented early in the text and then not later in the text, because it is expected the reader already read that, or explicit markers such as ‘as already stated...’). Thus, the reader could read any principle first and the principles seem equal. This said, the numbers and the placement of the principles suggest a certain hierarchy, or at least a certain order in which the principles are to be understood. This reading is backed up by the two first principles being “Project work” (1) and “Problem-orientation” (2) that also figures in the two first letters of ‘PPL’ referring to ‘Problem-oriented’ and ‘Project (Learning)’. The “Learning”-part of the PPL-acronym is not represented on its own in any of the principles, although the word “project learning” figures in the text bit for principle 1. But I am getting ahead of myself here and drawing in ‘other texts’ to make the mentioned connection, because the text itself does not explain what ‘PPL’ stands for; it simply appears as “PPL”. One reading of this, is that acronyms work as brilliant branding devices and that this text, in order to be understood properly, must be accompanied by other texts, and that the reader is expected to understand what ‘PPL’ stands for. Another reading is, that what “PPL” stands for is

not important for the text, but instead the important thing is to put this acronym ‘out there’ and state its existence through 7 principles.

Concerning the question of hierarchy in the ordering of the principles, I argue that “Project work” and “Problem-orientation” are put at the centre of PPL by being the first two principles. For the next principles (3-7), I do not see signs of any specific ordering force apart from the numbers themselves, which makes me think that the order here is not important apart from the principles being put in an order at all (I come to think that some branding and dissemination experts often advice to give points in bullets or with numbers to make them seem coherent, that is, if there is no intrinsic coherence, the numbering will give them one - people love lists!). This said, principle ‘7’ on “International insight and vision” stands out in the sense that I have not come across it before as neither a focus, nor principle, in other PPL-texts, whereas all other principles are presented in various texts. It is a question in itself to pursue how and when PPL consisted of principles? For example, in their development work on the pedagogical practices at Roskilde University, Ulriksen (1997) in ‘Why project pedagogy?’⁴⁸ and Simonsen and Ulriksen (1998: 129ff) in ‘University studies on crisis’⁴⁹ present PPL, stabilised as ‘project pedagogy’ and ‘problem-oriented project work’, from these “principles” (Ulriksen 1997: 11):

- “Project-organisation”
 - “Problem-orientation”
 - “Participant-direction”⁵⁰
 - “Interdisciplinarity”
 - “Experience-based and -oriented”
 - “The principle of exemplarity”
 - “Group work”
- (Ulriksen 1997: 5, my translation)

These “principles” (Ulriksen 1997: 11) also appear, in the same order, in Simonsen and Ulriksen (1998: 129ff). The ‘principles’ are not numbered, but follow a certain order, where the two first coincide with the order of ‘The 7 principles of PPL’. Ulriksen (1997) does not mention ‘International insight and vision’, but instead has a principle that requires PPL to be “Experience-based and -oriented”. If this means that ‘International insight and vision’ is a ‘new’ principle in 2018, I read its placement as number 7 as showing it to be ‘the newcomer’ and the least central principle, but still one that is ‘necessary’. The discontinuation of a principle of ‘the experiential’ and emergence of ‘the international’ in

⁴⁸ My translation of the original Danish title ‘Projektpædagogik – hvorfor det?’

⁴⁹ My translation of the original Danish title ‘Universitetsstudier i krise’

⁵⁰ My translation of “deltagerstyring”, which the poster analysed has translated as “Participant control”. I find ‘control’ too strong a word, and arrive at the somewhat awkward ‘direction’, pointing to the studied problem and the processes of PPL being *directed* by the *participants*.

‘The 7 principles of PPL’ will not be commented further at this point, but instead be brought into the ongoing analysis.

Concerning the significance of ‘numbers’ - that the principles in the text at hand are explicitly ordered through seven highly visible, coloured numbers - this is something ‘new’ in the assemblage of PPL-texts. Thus, in the text at hand, ‘PPL’ as consisting of certain principles is emphasised. They have a number on their back and can now be known by their number and not just by their name.

In terms of the layout of this ‘text’, words have a minor position. Instead, numbers and colours fill up the space; if this text is looked at from a distance the chunks of texts for each principle will be impossible to read, but the heading (name of each principle) and the numbers will stand out and be discernible. The colours are strong, fluorescent and bright in yellow, pink, green, orange, red and blue: a colour scheme reminiscent of flashing lights in 1980s discotheques or colourful playgrounds of children. Altogether, I read these signifiers as pointing to a text that is meant to be looked at, not necessarily being read, not closely at least. This gives the notion, that the details of the principles, what they mean, is less important, whereas the main message for the sender of this text, “RUC” (as seen by the logo in the corner), is that the university has an educational model, and it consists of 7 principles.

‘Who’ is in the text?

This section addresses the subjects of the text. ‘Who’ is in the text and are they actors or acted on? In the text through most of the principles there is a “you” that is spoken to; the reader in the text is addressed directly. Going through the text, this ‘you’ is constructed in different ways, but the one addressed seems to be a student, which I will elaborate on in the following.

In principle 1 (“project work”) the “you” is a project worker and investigator; “In project work, you will develop and formulate a relevant problem, which you will investigate”. The ‘you’ is present in all principles as someone who

- helps “to define problems” (2),
- explores “your problem in a new way” (3),
- plays a role in “the definition of relevant topics, issues, methods and learning goals (4),
- “should be able to understand an issue in depth without losing the broader perspective” (5),
- “can explore a problem in greater depth with others” (6), and
- develops the ability to “identify, analyse and reflect on global, national and regional challenges” (7).

The addressee constructed here is primarily a 'learner', who gains a range of "abilities" and "competencies" from their PPL-studies. Also, the 'you' of the text is a 'future worker' for the labour market (6) and finally *an individual*. Even though the pronoun "you" and "your" (used in the text) is ambiguous in English as it can refer to both an individual and more than one person, in this text, judging from the text as a whole, I do not read the 'you' as a group, e.g. a project group, but as an individual student. This reading is backed by looking at the Danish version of this text, which shows that every 'you' grammatically refers to the individual student ('du' instead of 'jer'), but this reading is only made available through the 'Danish version' of the text. Grammatically there are also other (human) actors than the student-'you' in the text, such as "us", "teacher/supervisor" and "fellow students", but these are not addressed directly in the 'you'-form and therefore I see them as secondary objects in the text.

Thus, the intended recipient, as I read it, is the individual student. In terms of what kind of student is constructed in relation to the purposes of PPL-education the main focus seems to be the development of relevant problems combined with a strong emphasis on 'developing competencies'. The following quotes from the text, show how the principles of this 'educational model' are framed mainly in terms of the 'learning outcomes', that is, what "competencies" the addressed student gain from PPL;

- "You also develop important competencies in terms of entering into and managing long-term investigations." (principle 1)
- "This develops your ability to define and assess problems." (principle 2)
- "The ensuing diversity generates important academic discussions about the project, reinforcing both individual reflective skills and mutual learning" (principle 6)
- "The principle of international insight and vision develops your ability to identify, analyse and reflect on global, national and regional challenges. The knowledge and insight that you gain will develop your global awareness and citizenship, intercultural understanding and communication, critical engagement, tolerance and respect." (principle 7)

The competencies offered in these statements perform almost as 'presents', something that PPL education 'gives' in return of student enrolment. This way of writing places education as a product offered to the buyer/consumer; the entire poster can be seen as a response to the question from a prospective student asking 'What is in it for me?' In my reading, the only place in the text that offers a different kind of speech act is principle 5 that demands something of the student; "Exemplarity means that you should be able to" and "You must understand, and be able to explain". The point remains, that the main speech act of the text is that of offering, promising and giving something (competencies) to the student, while acts of demanding something of the student is less prevalent. With these statements, the text articulates education through a language of commodification

as well as (re)producing a notion of student-centredness occupied with satisfying their imagined needs. This latter notion, performed by the text, clashes with the principle of participant-direction, which, in the text, explicitly makes “relevant topics, methods and learning goals” a matter of “professional dialogue” between “you, your fellow students, your teacher/supervisor and your study regulations”. This is but one of the ambiguities of the text.

The development of competencies are related to situations outside of education itself, as seen in this formulation of principle 6: “Your experience of getting group work to function optimally will prepare you for cooperation in other contexts, for example the labour market” (principle 6). Grammatically, putting the labour market in as an “example” leaves the relevance of the competencies of the student open to other contexts, such as life in general, but the intelligibility of having this as the only articulated example, makes me wonder whether this was the most important example, addressing certain expectations from the imagined reader?

There are also other articulations of the aim and purpose of PPL-education available in the text. Principle 7 on “International insight and vision” relates PPL to the development of “global awareness and citizenship, intercultural understanding and communication, critical engagement, tolerance and respect.” (principle 7). On face value, these concepts connote citizenship and *Bildung* (developing desirable virtues in the global citizen). Like the other principles, the “International insight and vision” is framed as abilities, as competencies the student develops from studying with the educational model of PPL.

The overall speech act of the text, based on this analysis points to the text acting as a commercial: PPL enables the development a long range of competences relevant in various contexts outside the university, and students will work independently with “understanding and solving real world issues”. The designated reader is the individual student-in-spe at RUC, someone who considers studying at this university, and the text serves as an advertisement looking to attract (and possibly retain) students in the style of ‘what is in it for you’.

Conclusions and questions for further investigation

To finish off this first analysis, I will reflect on the text as response to the main inquiry before continuing with some questions for further investigation. The two main questions for this analysis are: How is PPL and its educational aims and purposes constructed? What is its relation to ‘the university’? Answering the first question, the text presents itself as “RUC’s EDUCATIONAL MODEL”, that is, ‘PPL’ is bound to a specific university, ‘Roskilde University’, and makes out its “educational model”. This ‘model’ consists of seven listed principles, who, through their enumeration and ordering, performs a coherent hierarchy. The internal coherence and consistency of the principles is less clear and

they appear as an uneven conglomerate of the current organisation of teaching, educational policy and responses to various agendas including producing qualified workers for the job market as well as educating citizens for a globalised and challenged world. Common for the principles is that they are framed in terms of what competencies they give to the individual student, making the text appear as a commercial for prospective students looking to buy in on a university education as a means to other ends. In terms of the position of 'the university' in PPL-education, the poster does not explicitly mention 'university' at any point, but it relates PPL to "science" through projects being "oriented towards understanding and solving real world issues through the use of theory and scientific methods". The relation to the university thus goes through "science" and "interdisciplinarity", as "PPL uses scientific research as its role model." This is positioned up against university as a place where students do "assignments", whereas in PPL they "help to define problems".

This analysis of a 'present' text has sparked several questions for the ongoing investigation: when, where and how did the principle of "experience-based and -oriented" in PPL (dis)appear and how did the principle of "International insight and vision" emerge? When and how did the name 'PPL' emerge and how (and where) did 'learning' come to replace the concept of 'work' as the name for 'this thing'? Was PPL always as 'student-centred' as it appears in this text, and how has such a notion of the 'participants' of PPL-education transformed? Did PPL ever have a language for its aim and purposes, as something valuable in itself, something other than commodification?

With 'The 7 principles of PPL' as an indicator of a present problematisation of PPL as university education, the analysis continues with the aim of studying how PPL and its educational aims and purposes came to be through emergences and breaks. Following the logic of emergence, the next analysed text constitutes a beginning as the oldest text of the assemblage, from 1974, after which the analysis ascends chronologically towards the present.

‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction’ (Illeris 1974)

When it comes to problem-oriented project-based learning in Denmark, the book ‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction – a suggestion for an alternative didaktik’⁵¹ by Knud Illeris (1974) is, by many, considered to be one of the most central texts (see Borgnakke 1983: 51, Borgnakke 1996: 130, Ulriksen 1997: 12, Christensen 2013: 68, Laursen 2013: 33, Servant 2016: 18, 210). In her PhD thesis, Christensen (2013) quotes Ole B. Thomsen who wrote: “It would not be far off to view Illeris’ Problem-orientation and participant-direction as the primary source to understanding the problem- and project-orientation of the RUC-model (Thomsen 1977: 9)” (Christensen 2013: 68, my translation). Similarly, Servant (2016) notes how Illeris’ 1974-publication along with his later works “are considered the theoretical cornerstones of Danish Reformed University pedagogy, and is still very popular in Denmark today.” (p. 18), while Laursen (2013) calls it “an important and influential book” (p. 33).

For these reasons, ‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction’ readily found its way into the assemblage of texts to study. In this analysis, it is constructed as the most central discourse actor of PPL over time and also a text that is drawn on again and again in later texts on PPL (see e.g. Hultengren 1976/1981, Keldorff and Salomonsen 1981, Borgnakke 1983, Nielsen and Jensenius 1997, Olsen and Pedersen 1997, Ulriksen 1997, Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015). I am not the only one to have analysed this book in detail, and my readings are shaped by points from the analyses of Keldorff and Salomonsen (1981), Borgnakke (1983) and Christensen (2013).

The analysis at hand is the result of a detailed reading of the book in its entirety, all 273 pages. Apart from being open to the singularity of the text, I have asked the same question as to other texts in this study: what is the educational aim and purpose of PPL – how are these aims and purposes constructed *in* and *through* the text? This main question has been accompanied by analytical questions to help answer the research interests of the project: In what ways is PPL constructed? What pedagogical-philosophical inheritances are drawn forth, and in what ways? How is ‘the university’ and ‘higher education’ constructed?

‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction – a suggestion for an alternative didaktik’ is a book that was first published in 1974 by Munksgaard publishers. The book sat as part

⁵¹ My translation of the original Danish title ‘Problemløserorientering og deltagerstyring – oplæg til en alternativ didaktik’. I have chosen to keep the Danish term ‘didaktik’ in the translation as it is a point for the book to draw on a German tradition of ‘Didaktik’, which I find would disappear in the English term ‘didactics’.

of a series called “Working papers for psychology and pedagogy” (my translation), written on the front cover of the book, which was edited by the psychologist Jens Bjerg, who also has a page in the text introducing this series of working papers (p. 6). He writes how these texts in the series are ‘working papers’ in the sense that the ideas are not necessarily thought through and are to be considered as work in progress’. Being part of this series, the book has a few pages at its beginning and end, which advertise the other texts in the series. Notable is that the first six texts all concern the theories of Swiss scholar Jean Piaget. In the foreword following the short prompt by Jens Bjerg, ‘Illeris’⁵² explains how this book is a revised version of his dissertation from the Psychology programme at the University of Copenhagen. In the introduction of the book Illeris’ addresses its intended readers – those who want change in education:

The book is primarily directed at the, by now, many pupils, students, teachers, parents, administrators and politicians who have realised or experienced the insufficiency of the traditional forms of teaching and education, and who, wherever they may find themselves in the educational system, want to follow different paths. (p. 7)⁵³

From this short introduction the discourse analysis of the book continues in its study of the construction of the educational aims and purposes of PPL.

The purpose of education: qualification

This imperative runs through much of the text; that the self-evident aim pursued by the development of an alternative model⁵⁴ of education is *qualification*. Or, it is more accurate to say that the purposes of education are articulated through a proliferated and dominant ‘language of qualification’ and that ‘qualifications’ come to mean different things throughout the text than merely ‘developing the skills for a job’. In this way, the book can be read as an early proponent of a competency discourse of education, although the word ‘competency’ is not prevalent yet.

⁵² I put ‘Illeris’ in single quotation marks here to show that this is a reference to ‘the author’ of the book, the writer *in* the text, and not to the person Knud Illeris. This goes for the rest of this analysis: Illeris = author-in-the-text.

⁵³ All citations from the book ‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction’ (Illeris 1974) have been translated from Danish to English by me, unless otherwise stated. Words that I find difficult to translate without losing too much of its meanings, will be explained or brought in both original and English (in squared or rounded brackets) or kept in their initial form.

⁵⁴ Illeris uses this term several times, and has a longer chapter on the development and planning of a model of education (p. 90) in which he compares four “models of general education” and arrives at his own visual model with boxes and arrows (p. 113).

'Problem-orientation and participant-direction' begins and ends with an analysis of society and the educational system under the headings "Societal relations"⁵⁵ (p. 22-53) and "Didaktik and societal change" (p. 241-255). The diagnosis concludes that the educational system is in need of change to accommodate the demands of society for "flexibility": "The strongly increased societal need for flexibility, intensifies the demands on the educational system, especially concerning the production of general skills-related, accepting adaptation-related as well as creative, qualifications." (p. 49). This need is reiterated throughout the book and the development of an educational model based on the two main principles of 'problem-orientation' and 'participant-direction', is articulated as the pedagogical answer to this need:

These principles are to be taken as the best foundation for a holistic cognitive form of learning [indlæring] which also includes the creative qualifications, and to take these principles as a starting point must therefore be seen as necessary for a societally sufficient qualification process. (p. 121).

The principles suggested are described as "necessary" for the "qualification process". Thus, the 'need' for the educational model is framed directly in a 'qualification'-language, in which education first and foremost serves the needs of society and industry. But this understanding of qualification 'for society and industry' needs to be nuanced; thus a few words on how 'qualification' is formulated in the book.

Illeris develops his qualification categories from the West German writer Michael Masuch and his book 'Politische Ökonomie der Ausbildung' (original title from Illeris' reference list) from 1972 (Illeris 1974: 262). Illeris splits 'qualifications' into three greater categories: "Skills-related qualifications" (p. 32), "Adaptive qualifications" (p. 33) and "Creative qualifications" (p. 34). These categories are Illeris' translation of the categories of Masuch into an educational context. The first qualification-category concerns the specific skills needed for certain kinds of work. Illeris calls this first category of skills "the ability of crafts" (p. 32). The second kind of qualification concerns adaptive qualifications related to ones attitude as a worker such as "diligence, endurance, carefulness" (p. 33), but also "obedience and duty" and finally characteristics suppressing engagement "in activities that may harm businesses" (p. 34) such as "indifference and apathy" (ibid.). The third qualification, the creative (or 'innovative' in Masuch's words) qualifications, concerns "the, for capital necessary, continuous development of the means of production [produktivkræfterne]" (p. 34) and is related to scientific knowledge work and the development of traits such as "critical thinking, independence, openness, creativity and the ability to collaborate constructively." (p. 35), which is needed for continuing industrial development

⁵⁵ This is translated from "Samfundsmæssige forhold". The Danish term 'samfundsmæssig' is used frequently throughout the book as a, in my reading, clumsy adjectification of the noun 'samfund' ('society').

and growth. This latter kind of qualification holds a special position for the book, as it, for Illeris, involves the potential of critique and societal change.

The aim for Illeris, as shown above, is to offer an alternative model of education that enables the development of all three types of qualifications (see also p. 249-250) and especially flexibility. The need for a flexible workforce, Illeris draws directly from Marx's 'Das Kapital' (here in an excerpt half-way through a longer quote): "The nature of the great industry thus conditions an ongoing change in work and that the worker and his functions do not stiffen, but retain the ability of dynamic movement' (Marx 1971, s. 693)" (p. 39). Illeris writes how "the production of *flexible* labour" (emphasis in original, p. 40) is the biggest educational challenge of his time; that workers are able to "renew themselves" (ibid.) as well as "learning to learn" (ibid.). Here, it is reiterated what qualifications are *for*; work, or more specifically, to serve the needs of 'The great industry'. It is unclear to me what the authors affective relation is to these statements, but my initial reading is that they are articulated with indifference; it is laying out the facts, telling the truth.

In the final part of the book, Illeris comes back to the relation between society and education and addresses what he sees as the current political challenges, which more or less align with political intentions cited by OECD and the Danish Government (p. 250-252) in seeking a solution to the more and different qualification (ibid.). Illeris mentions the so-called "educational reserve" (p. 242, 245) referring to the amount of potential students that could take up an education, but have not yet. This goal goes hand in hand with another political ambition; "The equality goal" (p. 244), which refers to the aim of equality in the intake for education, mainly regarding 'class'; that all children and adolescents should be able to take up the education they want, regardless of their class background. This ambition is directed at the working class, who, Illeris shows, are systematically disadvantaged in the educational system in spite of reforms, especially in higher education (ibid.). On the final pages of the book, its main aim is reiterated:

It can thus be concluded that educational reforms based on foundational didactical principles of problem-orientation and participant-direction align with the development of the qualification needs in society, while also contributing to the equality goal of the educational system, wanted by so many (p. 252).

This quote supports the reading that the main purpose of developing an educational model based on participant-direction and problem-orientation is to meet the need for more and qualitatively different qualification. At the same time the "equality goal" is mentioned as important, but Illeris notes how this goal is "ideological": "the equality goal has been, and is still an ideological addition, which can only be fulfilled to the extent that it aligns with the demands for qualification, or at least does not cost more." (p. 245). The aim for equality is constructed as 'ideological' to the extent that it is not logical economically, and thus not in line with the (economical) interests of existing society; in this logic, educating working class children would be seen as "Overqualifying" and "a waste of resources" (p. 245). I find these statements difficult to read as to whether they perform

sarcasm and critique or complicity and acceptance of a capitalist agenda, or both. My initial reading of the intelligibility of statements is that the text supports the equality aim, as such, but finds it a foolish (=ideological) ambition from the truth-telling-perspective that existing society is capitalist and thus only interested in change that supports the development of growth such as more and different qualified labour. The book here takes a 'double-perspective' in that it adheres to a critique of capitalist society, but within the educational system such critique can only take place through reforms that do not challenge the existence of the current capitalist system. I will discuss these ambivalences in the following.

Until now it might seem like the purpose of the book is little else than to design a kind of education that lives up to the qualification demands of society in order to keep the wheels turning and the profit rising. Though qualification, as I read it, is articulated as the primary purpose of education in the book, there are other aims than 'keeping the wheels turning' as part of the development of qualifications. These are educational aims of "emancipation" and the possibility of societal change (p. 51). According to the text, there is an inherent possibility in the production of creative qualifications for resistance and critique because such qualifications entail the development of "independence, the ability to cooperate and critical thinking – traits which are prerequisites for challenging what exists." (p. 50). In this way, Illeris (1974) holds, the development of capitalist society inevitably also contains the seed for its own possible destabilisation, which is a point he draws from the scholars Masuch and Salling Olesen (p. 52). The development of creative qualifications is a possible way to "emancipation", a conclusion drawn from a report on the experience with the 'new' university at Bremen in Germany, which reads: "With the rapid technical development of the means of production and its effect on the educational system, the possibility of emancipation opens up..." (Universität Bremen 1970)" (Illeris 1974: 51). It is not explicated, at this point, what "emancipation" means and from what.

This possibility of emancipation, resistance and societal change sits within the language of qualification, which at one and the same time contains the key to the reproduction of capitalist society and its destabilisation. This creates tensions and ambivalences in the text. Consider this example of such tensions:

One must always ensure the production of the necessary or traditional skills-related qualifications for the educational programme at hand. But, as an addition, one can try to emphasise the creative qualifications with the possibilities herein. An example that clearly illustrates this strategy is the Necessary teacher training college [Det nødvendige seminarium], which in its curriculum includes all of the existing teacher training programme including exams, but in addition incorporates a range of radical extra activities that seek to develop the creative qualifications in the broadest way possible and hereby shed new light on the traditional parts of the curriculum. (p. 53)

In this case, it is produced as a taken-for-granted truth, through the use of the non-personal “one” [man] and the sentence-form of a claim, that the most important task for an educational institution is the “production” of the qualifications required of it. The potential for resistance that sits in “creative qualifications” is subordinated living up to ‘what is required’. In the example with “the Necessary teacher training college”, the development of creative qualifications is an extra-curricular activity, something that may take place only after the instantiation of “the existing teacher programme”. This subordination of educational aims of emancipation and critique is made clear in a quote from Masuch in Illeris: “If the reform is to become reality nonetheless, the system-stabilising functions must be combined with the non-system-stabilising functions.” (p. 52).

Thus, the suggestion of an educational model based on problem-orientation and participant direction becomes intelligible through a historical-material qualification discourse building on economic analyses of education in society. As will be explicated below, this perspective, I read as a *Marxist-reformist* perspective, which believes in change through reform, within the existing system. As seen in the quote from Masuch above, the key logic of such a perspective becomes the possibility of “becoming reality” , that is, the historical materialist analyses put forth on the need for qualification, take their value from being realistic - ‘implementable’ in praxis - which relates to the later section here on ‘a regime of praxis’.

The cracks and ambivalences of educating for resistance and adaption will be the problem for further investigation in the next section on the many ‘shades of Marxism’.

Shades of Marxism

To start off, I will remind myself and the reader, that following the onto-epistemological assumptions of this project, I endeavour not to employ an *à priori* understanding of what Marxism might mean; that is a question for the discourse-producing statements of book. This entails detailed textual analysis that shows what ‘Marxism’ comes to be here; what ‘Marxisms’ are at work. As indicated earlier, my analysis shows that a certain *Marxist-reformist discourse* constitutes the aims and purposes of education; what can be said and not, who is addressed in what ways, what has need of explanation and what does not.

To begin this analysis, I will study the citations used, how they are used and the language throughout the book. The part of the book addressing “societal relations” (p. 22-53), diagnosing the state of education in society, is the part where what I will call ‘the language of Marxism’ is most prevalent. Most of the references for this section are German, the most used being the book ‘Politische Ökonomie der Ausbildung’ by Masuch from 1972 (Illeris 1974: 262), which is introduced as: “a Marxist oriented analysis of the functions of education in the modern capitalist society” (p. 14). As part of the societal diagnosis, Marx is also referenced. There is no introduction to Karl Marx, nor any meta-comment

on the two times his book 'Das Kapital' (in a Danish translation from 1971) is quoted. Under the section "The conditions of production and educational institutions" (p. 24), Marx is drawn in for the first time in the following way (spacing between sentences in original):

The subordination of workers to machinery is in no way a problem-free process:

It takes centuries before the 'free' worker as a result of a developed mode of capitalist production voluntarily agrees (that is, is forced by the social circumstances) to sell his entire active lifetime, well his very ability to work for the price of bare necessities, his birth given right for a plate of lentils' (Marx 1971, p. 416)

The problem is to adapt the workers to the new conditions or as it was once expressed by the German Lachmann, to get the workers used to always uphold 'persistence and permanence even by monotonous, inane occupations' (...). (p. 26, my end brackets)

As written, this is the first time Marx is drawn on in the book, but there is no introduction or commentary to him or his work. 'Das Kapital' is used as any other reference in the section to diagnose the role of education in society. The entire section on "societal relations" uses citations much like the above, where the author and resource is not introduced in the text itself. In my reading this relates to the expected reader of the text; that there is no need for introductions or meta-commentaries as the reader is assumed to recognise and agree with the diagnosis (or at least to have read Marx), and the truth-value of the citations is naturalised and taken-for-granted. This is very different in the section on "psychological-theoretical conditions", where knowledge is contested from the first page; "within psychology no agreement exists on these matters" (p. 53) and citations include mostly psychologists from universities introduced with their full names and backgrounds.

Another observation concerns 'the language of Marxism', which comes with a certain vocabulary and a certain 'subject'; the worker. Mostly prevalent in the societal diagnosis-section, but also sprinkled across the pages, there is a certain language centring on 'production' and 'work'. This vocabulary consists of words such as 'work', 'capital', 'production', 'means of production', 'class struggle', 'qualification', 'manpower'. This vocabulary constitutes how 'education' is understood; what its purpose is (and can be) and what its 'subjects' are (in the double meaning of the word).

The economic framing is important as it has certain effects on the perceived role of education in society. Illeris puts forth a description by the author Peter Wivel from the book "*The institution of slaves*" ['Slaveanstalten'] (as seen in Illeris 1974: 265, my translation, emphasis in original), which is an example that spells out the perception of education from a (certain) Marxist perspective:

We have seen how school moved into the life of children when the slavery in the industry stopped. In this empty space children were made to struggle with the slavery of schools. And the schools later made the children accept the roles that capitalist society advised for them (Wivel 1972, s. 59). (Illeris 1974: 28)

The notion of education here by example of the school frames the educational system as part of capitalist society, as a necessary institution to uphold ‘the means of production’. At the same time the quote shows the anti-capitalist sympathies calling the activities of school “slave work” implying the pupils being slaves, whose future is determined by capitalism. One of the effects of drawing on the Marxist vocabulary of production is that the educational system becomes constituted mainly in economic terms. This is made explicit in a quote from an OECD-report on the societal role of education:

‘It is a given today that the educational system too belongs to the economic realm of society, that it is just as important to prepare people for the labour market as wares and machines. The educational system is now equal to high ways, steel works and fertiliser factories.’ (Coombs 1966). (Illeris 1974: 29)

In this quote the education of people for work in the industry is likened to the production of goods and wares, and educational institutions compared to “steel works and fertiliser factories”. Very different to the critical notions of educational policy research, as presented at the beginning of this thesis, the comparison between education and industry is seen as a good thing. This is at least how I read it, as it is articulated in the text, because this means that education is being taken seriously through its new important role in national economies. The discursive effect though, is a naturalisation of thinking of education in mainly *economic* and *industrial* terms. Thus, while seeking to challenge capitalist society, the effect of Illeris’ text, reproducing an economistic Marxist vocabulary through a naturalised use of qualification theory, is to constitute possible understandings of education in mainly economic terms, making it difficult to think educational purposes beyond economistic qualification. An additional effect is to cast education as a means for something *external* to itself with purposes connected to the economy and growth of society, or the destabilisation of the same. At the same time educational perspectives viewing personal development as an end in itself, or to become ‘a good person’, not in relation to work, but for example through a notion of ‘Bildung’, are absent in the strong ‘societal’ discourse of education.

As noted, the reformist-Marxist perspective of the book with its emphasis on ‘change from within’, involves certain tensions, especially to more ‘radical’ Marxist perspectives. Illeris was aware that the book might be read in this way, seen by the first words of his final part of the book headed “For the people or for profit?” (p. 252):

But what happened to the critical perspective and societal change? What emancipatory possibilities could possibly lie in reform principles also acknowledged by Børsen [Danish financial times] and OECD? Isn’t the problem-oriented and participant-directed forms of work exactly what big business [storkapitalen] needs to keep the wheels turning under capitalist conditions of production with profit as the final driver and standard? (p. 252)

Illeris is articulating a critique from a perspective that would see a “critical perspective and societal change” as incommensurable with reproducing “capitalist conditions of production”, a perspective that, inferred from the existence of the rhetorical questions in the quote, is assumed to be held by some readers, which I will label a ‘revolutionary-Marxist’ perspective critical of the ‘change-from-within’ strategy. The answer to this assumed critique becomes, as hinted in the previous section on ‘qualifications’, that the potential for critique and societal change goes hand in hand with the development of capitalist society; there can be no critical change without also living up to the requirements of the “established society” (p. 252).

In terms of the intelligibility of the reformist perspective of the book, a possible reading is that it draws its intelligibility from ‘experience’, that is, from experience with various ‘successful educational experiments’ mentioned throughout the book. The author, for example, draws in his previous experience from developing participant-directed teacher education at ‘Blågård teacher training college’ (p. 141). The experience drawn upon from concrete development work has shown ‘what works’ and what does not in collaboration with ‘the system’, represented by governmental boards. My reading is further that this book is less occupied with systemic change, but rather what is possible *within* the system, pedagogically, which shows from frequent positive mentions of various educational experiments carried out in collaboration with the existing system. This interpretation shows the position of the book, in Marxist terms, as not revolutionary, but instead reformist in that its answer to societal crisis is educational reform with a pragmatic approach first and foremost valuing ‘what works’ in terms of being successful with reforms. The ‘pragmatic-realist’ didactical approach appears throughout much of the argumentation in the book, e.g. here a quote from the final chapter, where Illeris quotes “James 1972”: ”An educational system cannot solve the problems of a society, less so of humanity, but the least it can do is to correspond to the conditions in which young people grow up.” (James 1972, p. 151).” (Illeris 1974: 246).

This assumption of the relation between education and society, where the former follows and adapts the movements of the latter, is dominant in the book. A different perspective, where education carries change, is mentioned briefly by Illeris quoting a news paper article by Jens Ahm from 1969: ”the way in which we build and design our education also has a strong influence on the development of society.” (Ahm 1969 in Illeris 1974: 247). Following this quote, a strategy of truth-telling that is used much in the book comes into play: the author presents a critique or nuance of a claim put forth only to close the critique down again with reference to the initial claim. Right after stating that education also affects ‘society’, Illeris writes:

Only, one has to be aware that this building and designing of education solely may take place within certain given frames and on certain conditions which are determined by the existing [herskende] constellations of production [produktionsforhold] and the resources that can be allocated to the production of such qualifications. (p. 247)

Grammatically the “only” indicates an objection to a claim (that education also affects society), and the “one” man gives a notion of speaking to whoever had that claim. The performance here, as I read it, is one of ‘knowing better’, or ‘lecturing’ a naïve position that might overstate the possibility of change. Borrowing a term from a poststructuralist argumentation analysis by Hansen (2003), I would call this sort of argumentation, that is typical throughout the book, a “yes, but still...”-argumentation (p. 35). This is expressed by bringing forth a nuance or critique of the author’s point, but quickly closes it down again to make the argument stand in its ‘pureness’, ignoring inconsistencies and nuances.

The transformation of ‘Negt’

A final point to be made in this section is to dwell on the introduction and use of the German sociologist, Oskar Negt’s work. Negt is made a central reference for the principles of the didactical model developed, and the transformations of Negt’s ideas for the use in the model relates directly to the positions and negotiations of ‘resistance’, ‘emancipation’ and certain Marxist aspects of the educational purposes of the model. Negt’s ideas are mainly drawn in under the headline of “Choosing topic and project” (p. 170), where Illeris is looking for a way to decide what content, what subject matter, it is relevant to engage with and how to know this. Negt is presented as the most relevant answer to this end with the approach dubbed “*The sociological imagination and exemplary learning of Negt*” (p. 177-178, emphasis in original). The two Negt-references drawn upon are; “The education of workers in late capitalism” (my translation from Danish) in the journal ‘Vindrosen’, 1970, and the book “*Soziologische Phantasie und exemplarisches Lernen*” (original German title) from 1971 (taken from the reference list, Illeris 1974: 262, emphasis in original). Negt was doing his work within worker education in Germany for which he developed the principle of ‘exemplary learning’, which Illeris then incorporates into his didactical model. Illeris cites Negt on three criteria for “exemplary topics in workers’ education” (p. 178):

“The exemplarity of the educational value of topics is decided by three factors: their closeness to the individual interests, to the elements in the consciousness of the workers which in their content transgress the immediate interests and concern more general societal relations, and finally, the significance of the educational content for the emancipation of the workers. If the educational value of such fields of topics is determined only by one of these factors, the educational worker programme must give up its ambition of educating the workers.” (Negt 1971, p. 97). (Illeris 1974: 178-179)

These three “factors” of Negt’s theory were all incorporated into Illeris’ general model of education. The introduction of Negt’s points into Illeris’ general model of education

had certain effects. Illeris does address that “Negt explicitly limits his principle and considerations to workers’ education”⁵⁶ (p. 179), and a few pages later Illeris also disclaims the special understanding of “individual interests” for Negt, “that he by the criterion of the individual interests actually means the individual experience of the collective interests of the workers.” (p. 181). When Illeris develops his model, this apparent incommensurability of Negt’s particular context and Illeris’ ambition to develop a general model of education is ignored. Drawing on Negt together with points from John Dewey, Carl Rogers (to which I will return) and the so-called “communicative didactics” (p. 180), Illeris reaches a first principle for selecting relevant problems in his model of PPL: “*the topics of the problem-oriented, participant-directed teaching must appear and be experienced as relevant problems or problem fields for the individual participants and be shared by all participants.*” (p. 181, emphasis in original). There are two claims here. The first is that problems should be experienced as problems by the individual participant and that this experience should be shared by all participants. In terms of Negt’s ideas, which were developed with workers in mind and their particular and class-specific shared interests, Illeris generalises this into meaning that ‘participants should share an interest’. Illeris is aware that this is a conceptual leap, but through a ‘yes, but still’-argumentation, he maintains the general principle:

In other cases it might be difficult to determine a societally relevant shared element in the situation and outset of a group of participants, but it must principally be maintained that exactly such a shared element should be pinpointed and taken as the departure point for the selection of a topic. (p. 181)

Thus, it is admitted that “in other cases” than with workers, who have a common class interest, it might be hard to find a common “societally relevant” element for the participants, but this leap in the argumentation is then remedied grammatically through the statement “but it must principally be maintained”. No substantiation or argumentation follows. This said, Illeris considers the didactical benefits of having a “societally relevant shared element”: “at once the opportunity for a meaningful collaboration and for the necessary individualisation and mutual inspiration through the participants’ different relation to the shared element” (p. 181). It is not made concrete what participants could have in common societally. What happens here, is that ‘the worker’ as subject becomes replaced by the more general subject ‘the participant’. Thus, ‘the worker’ becomes little more than an example of something participants could have in common, which erases ‘the class struggle’⁵⁷ on the side of the working class as being significant and instead opens up to an individually focused orientation.

⁵⁶ “workers’ education” is my translation from the Danish “arbejderoplysning” (Illeris 1974: 179), which literally means the enlightenment of workers.

⁵⁷ Similar conclusions on Illeris’ (1974) use of Negt are reached by Hultengren (1976/1981), Keldorff and Salomonsen (1981), Borgnakke (1983) and Christensen (2013).

The discussion of what should be criteria for subject matter, based on take-ups of Negt, Dewey, Rogers and “the communicative didactics” (p. 180) results in a collection of principles, a curricular model for PPL. It is articulated as “societally exemplary” (p. 188), and laid out as follows (I will quote this in its entirety, as it is central to Illeris’ educational model):

The topics must be chosen from their inherent potentials for societal emancipation which lie in connecting the immediate experiences of participants to the general societal structures, broadly construed. They must therefore

- a) be experienced as immediately relevant problems or problem fields for the individual participants and be shared by all participants,
- b) have a quality that enables them be an outset from which to shed light on existing societal structures and their preconditions.

Finally, the chosen topics must

- c) together or in relation to other teaching activities, include the relevant or regulated important content areas for the education in question. (p. 187)

Concerning the first criterion, in the first line, that topics should be chosen for their “potentials for societal emancipation”, this relates to Negt, and Illeris makes the reader aware that this “is not to be understood in an individual sense, but in a societal and class-related sense.” (p. 187). At the same time it is unclear what is meant by “societal emancipation” and whose emancipation, when it is not strictly ‘the worker’ who is the educational subject here and Illeris mentions that ‘societal’ should be understood “broadly construed” (see above), making this notion even more blurry.

The final criterion ‘c’, relates to the already mentioned point drawn from Masuch and Salling Olesen, that education “to transgress the limits of existing society necessarily must live up to its demands” (p. 186). Wrapping up the use of Negt, I wonder what the discursive effect of the specific use and transformation of his work has been. First of all, Illeris is well aware that the ideas are being transformed, and he explicitly calls his “societally exemplary set of criteria” a “generalisation of the principles of Negt” (p. 188). What is less explicit, is what this generalisation does to the ideas of Negt. By transforming the educational subject from the specific ‘worker’ to the general ‘participant’, the critical and Marxist potential that is articulated in Negt’s work, loses its specificity (Borgnakke 1983 reaches similar conclusions, see e.g. p. 65). For the same reason there are almost no indications, nor examples, of what a relevant ‘problem’ could be in Illeris’ general educational model. Notions such as ‘participant’, ‘problems’, ‘emancipatory’, ‘common interests’ and ‘societal’ have little point of reference in the general model and they could mean many things and thus support very different educational aims and purposes. The class struggle on the side of the worker, that is mentioned elsewhere, is difficult to accommodate into a didactical model that also wants to include *all* pupils, students and teachers. The ongoing analysis of PPL-texts is attentive to the discursive effects of this conceptual tension.

I will make a final point on the citation practices here that supports a reading of the book as being pragmatic and eclectic. References, ideas and theories are drawn in and transformed to fit the intended education model from a criterion of ‘what works’, not addressing the conceptual issues and discursive effects that ensue from such theoretical combinations. Though it might seem like Negt was the only inspiration for the criteria of relevant subject matter for PPL, several other ideas were brought into the melting pot. For criterion ‘a’ mentioned above, that problems should be experienced as relevant for the individual and be shared by all participants, this is supported in the text by a homogenised conglomeration, a ‘making same’, of Dewey, Rogers (who is made a proponent of the approach “student-centred teaching”, p. 173) and the “communicative didactics” (p. 176). The latter is presented as a German development by Karl-Hermann Schäfer and Klaus Schaller in their book ‘Kritische Erziehungswissenschaft und kommunikative Didaktik’ from 1971, as seen in the reference list (Illeris 1974: 264). For criterion ‘b’, the communicative didactics is drawn in as an inspiration alongside Negt, and Illeris even equals these two inspirations by calling his set of criteria for PPL “a generalisation of Negt’s principles” or “a clarification of points made in the communicative didactics” (p. 188). These points are important in the later ‘Illeris-reception’, where Negt is often the only inspiration drawn forth, thus for example ignoring the significance of communicative didactics for Illeris’ concepts. Drawing on Hemmings’ (2011) notion of ‘folding back in’, these various theoretical inheritances also point to the possibility of re-telling what the ‘central’ theoretical inspirations for the construction of PPL could be such as for example centring the works of Dewey, that are barely mentioned in Illeris’ text, or re-reading the works of Negt.

A regime of praxis

The book ‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction’ is 273 pages long. The first 90 of these address what the book calls “Basic conditions” (chapter 2) divided into a ‘societal part’ and a ‘psychological part’. I could frame this part as developing ‘the ideas’. In the very last part of the book, beginning on p. 241, Illeris comes back to the societal significance of his proposed didactical model. In between this, counting page 90 to 241 (=151), the headlines of chapters are “Planning” (chapter 3) and “Carrying out” (chapter 4) problem-oriented and participant-directed education. This, I would call the ‘practical part’, which makes out more than half of the book. As will be shown, this practical part is characterised by a meticulous attention to the smallest detail, including considerations on how meetings should be facilitated and how classrooms can be designed to better accommodate group work. This leads to a kind of recipe-style, or ‘manual-reading’, leaving little space for the practitioner/reader to do differently (also pointed out by Borgnakke 1996). For the same reason Illeris’ book has later been called ‘a cooking book’ alongside other introductions to problem-oriented project studies (e.g. by Borgnakke 1983 and Keldorff and Salomonsen 1981). The ‘praxis-orientation’ also shows in the choice of references

and resources, where experimental and empirical work is prioritised. The point is that ‘praxis’ becomes extremely important in this book, related to the reformist-Marxist discourse, which distributes ‘relevance’ to other statements, thus my labelling of this as a *regime of praxis*.

Introducing the ‘practical part’ of the book, the text makes explicit the importance of ‘practical use’ and that the suggested didactical model holds value only to the extent that it can be implemented here and now: “It should be underlined right away that the deciding criterion both in the design of the model and the practical guidelines is practical usability [praktisk anvendelighed]” (p. 90). Notice how “practical usability” is positioned as “the deciding criterion” in the development of the educational model.

In the book there is a sense of urgency. This urgency shows through the detail and minute guidelines given in the book; this model is to be incorporated and at some speed. At the same time the praxis-orientation tends to make ‘other’ ‘theoretical work’ and ‘ideas’ to the extent that this kind of work does not, explicitly, give concrete and immediate advice for practitioners. In this quote on the purpose of the book, the urgency and the drive for immediate and practical change is at the front against the common enemy called “the traditional”:

The purpose of the work laid out in this book is to continue the development of the alternative, critical didaktik and more specifically to take steps towards a concretisation which can hopefully serve as a help for the many, who, currently, in various parts of the educational systems and under different conditions, seek to break with the traditional didaktik to follow different paths. (p. 19)

This quote reiterates the addressees of the book; “the many” who seeks to “break with the traditional didaktik and follow different paths”. I note how there is no mention of the addressees necessarily having a specific political or ideological orientation, which I read as indicative of the perspective of the book; its primary concern is to do education differently, to go against “the traditional” and less to revolutionise society or pursue certain political aims. This would position the enunciated ‘Marxist perspective’ with a critical perspective an economic analysis as one that the book has a need to adhere to, which has certain effects for its statements, but the strongest textual affect lies elsewhere; with immediate pedagogical change and psychological theories of learning. The latter is addressed in the following.

The hegemony of ‘pedagogical development work’

In the chapter “Basic conditions”, there is an engagement with “psychological-theoretical conditions”, in which Illeris is exploring relevant “theories of cognitive learning”⁵⁸ (p.

⁵⁸ This is my translation of “indlæringsteorier”. The Danish word “indlæring” literally meaning ‘in-learning’, is the concept used throughout the book, and is different from the word ‘læring’. I

53) in developing his model. The Swiss scholar Jean Piaget ends up being a primary inspiration, but it is problematised that his work did not contain a “psychology of learning”, but was more a “psychology of development” (p. 60), and that his theories were not “experimentally tested” (p. 61). For this end, interpreters of Piaget, who have experimented with his theories take centre position (and are referenced before any original work by Piaget enter the pages). The first reference is to a book by John Flavell appearing in the reference list as ‘The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget’ (original title) from 1963 (Illeris 1974: 258), which is framed as transforming Piaget’s theories into “a pedagogically usable theory of learning” (ibid. 60). The second reference is to Jens Bjerg’s ‘Pedagogical development work in the public school’ (my translation of the Danish title) from 1972 (Illeris 1974: 255), which is presented as a “different and more directly pedagogically relevant piece of development work where a learning-oriented continuation of the concepts of Piaget are confronted with pedagogical praxis” (ibid. 61). Thus, it is less the work of Piaget himself that is drawn upon in the text (there are three direct citations of Piaget in the book), but rather certain practical transformations of his theories. A final reference that is made central to the take-up of Piaget here is Thomas Nissen and his book ‘Cognitive learning and pedagogy’ (my translation from the Danish title) from 1970 (Illeris 1974: 262), in which he describes a pedagogical development project drawing on the ideas of Piaget. When Nissen is introduced as a relevant interpreter of Piaget, the specific theory-praxis relation, favouring the latter, does its work. Nissen’s work is seen as relevant:

because this development of the theories of Piaget, in contrast to most of purely theoretically oriented [grundforskningsorienterede] Piaget-inspired work, ‘has come into existence in a close relation between researchers who see it as an obligation to make their research relevant in a pedagogical context.’ (Nissen 1970, s. 3). (Illeris 1974: 67)

In this quote a dualism is constructed between “purely theoretically oriented, Piaget-inspired work” and research that is “relevant in a pedagogical context”, where the sympathy, in my reading of the textual affect, lies with the latter. This might not seem like a tension, but when related to an anti-academic discourse explicit in other statements, it is difficult not to interpret quotes as the one above as a strong positioning towards praxis, implicitly critiquing its constructed other; ‘theory’. Drawing on Nissen shows some of the ambivalences related to drawing on this pedagogical-developmental work: it is disclaimed how Nissen in his 1970-book does not explicitly relate to the theories of Piaget (p. 68). This worry is remedied by the words that “the theoretical apparatus used in the

have chosen to translate “indlæring” to ‘cognitive learning’ here as it relates to psychological theories such as Piaget occupied with understanding how experience and inputs from the world (often in schools) is transformed into the mind as thoughts, attitudes and knowledge. Due to its association with school, ‘indlæring’ is closely related to another term used by Illeris: didaktik.

development work as psychological-theoretical orientation is strongly influenced by Piaget” (ibid.). Consequently, for the book and the didactical model proposed by Illeris, this means that onwards in the text, it is the concepts used by Nissen, which are different from Piaget, as presented in the book (Illeris notes this on p. 68, that Nissen splits up the three concepts into phases, although Piaget saw them as intertwined in practice). This specific transformation of Piaget’s theory makes it possible for Illeris to say that a situation is either ‘cumulative learning’ (Illeris names this “dressage”, p. 70), ‘assimilative learning’ (dubbed “ordinary school learning”, p. 71) and ‘accomodative learning’ (dubbed “emancipation”, p. 71). Illeris makes these conceptual splits despite writing that Piaget (here partly quoted with no reference) “again and again emphasised that ‘both functions (assimilation and accommodation) are present in any intellectual process’” (p. 68). That Illeris explicitly ignores the “principle of mutuality” (‘samtidighedsprincippet’) (p. 68) of assimilation and accommodation in Piaget’s theory, is explained away by the statement that “the division is made entirely out of pragmatic (utilitarian) reasons.” (p. 69).

This example of the transformation and concrete use of Piaget in the text, points to the ‘praxis-orientation’ that in its hegemony allows a theoretical eclecticism made intelligible from a logic of ‘practical value’. The praxis regime has consequences for ‘the university’ envisaged in the book, and the focus on praxis produces an ‘other’, ‘a theoretical regime’, which antagonistically becomes what ‘must be departed from’.

The ‘other’: the academic

In this section, I will engage with the construction of ‘university’ and ‘higher education’ in the book. As the heading suggests, there is a certain ‘anti-academic’ approach to education emanating from the pages. It is not that the text is written against the university as such, but rather certain notions of ‘the university’. To clarify, the word ‘academic’, as it is used in this section, refers to an antagonistic constellation, produced in the text, which denotes high-theory, irrelevant disciplinary traditionalism and elitism. In the following I will explore how this plays out.

The book does not engage much with the university as specific educational context. Even though the author begins the foreword by disclaiming that his own experience comes from contexts of “high school, teacher education and university” (p. 8), the educational contexts throughout the book varies from public schools to vocational training to high school and university. Though higher education does not take up centre position – it is but one in many educational contexts touched upon for this “general didaktik” (p. 19) - there are still certain constructions of this ‘field’ in the text. Under the section on ‘psychological conditions’, a UNESCO-report (Faure et al. 1972: XXX-XXXI in Illeris 1974: 57) is drawn in as an authoritative status on the so-called “academic approach to education” (Illeris 1974: 57). The report is accompanied by these words: “Here, Edgar Faure

actually proclaims the death of the traditional, academically oriented perception of education” (p. 57), which is then followed by a longer quote from the report (here, the first half of the longer quote):

There is also widespread agreement that the academic model, which is still highly valued in many countries and under certain social and timely circumstances has produced the results expected of it, today, is outdated, not only in relation to the working class, but also in its practical relevance for the young people of the bourgeoisie for whom it was originally intended. It entails a reproduction of the social power of previous generations. It is excessive in its use of theory and memory. It gives conventional written and repetitive forms of expression a privileged role while disfavours the spoken word, spontaneity and creative research. (Illeris 1974: 57)

The model under ‘accusation’ here, the so-called “academic model”, is characterised, in the text, by its “excessive” use of “theory and memory” and privileging “conventional written and repetitive forms of expression”. The academic model is positioned as “outdated” for all (both ‘working class’ and ‘the bourgeoisie’), while ‘the new’, which has suffered under its hegemony is for example “the spoken word, spontaneity and creative research”. Later in the book, similar notions of ‘academic’ and ‘Wissenschaft’⁵⁹ are brought forth. In the section on “Choosing topic and project” (p. 170), different approaches are considered for choosing relevant problems to enquire into (my bullet points):

- “Dewey’s principles” (p. 171)
- “Student-centred teaching” (p. 173)
- “The Wissenschaft-centred curriculum” (p. 173)
- “The (‘classical’) principle of exemplarity” (p. 175)
- “The communicative didactics” (p. 176)
- “The sociological imagination and exemplary learning of Negt” (p. 177)

As written earlier, Illeris draws inspiration to his educational model from certain articulations of Dewey, “student-centred teaching” (represented by Carl Rogers), Negt and the communicative didactics, while the “classic” principle of exemplarity and the “Wissenschaft-centred curriculum” constitute ‘what the model is not’. Both of these latter approaches are positioned through certain notions of ‘academic’ and ‘Wissenschaft’. The Wissenschaft-centred curriculum, represented by Jerome Bruner, is rejected by Illeris as a relevant approach in the model because it, according to Illeris, takes science/Wissenschaft and its disciplines as its outset and has no concept of the interests of the individuals

⁵⁹ I refer to the German word for the Danish ‘videnskab’, literally ‘knowledge craft’, as it is closer to associations with the pursuit, study and creation of knowledge than the English ‘science’, which connotes mainly the natural sciences. Throughout the thesis, I will mainly use ‘Wissenschaft’ acting as an equivalent to the Danish ‘videnskab’ in the sense of ‘knowledge craft’.

nor historical-material conditions. In the words of Illeris, this has the result that it “principally cannot be united with participant-direction” (p. 182) and that “the cognitive interest is, despite its ‘modern’ form, when all comes to all, technical and not emancipatory.” (p. 183). Similarly, the so-called ‘classic principle of exemplarity’ is made irrelevant as it takes as its point of reference “tradition” and “culture” (p. 176) of which, as I read it, the author writes with a certain amount of sarcasm:

[One has] been more inclined to look in the subjects of school, in culture, in tradition, well one of the strongest proponents of the principle of exemplarity has even claimed to find the criterion in ‘the eternal connection with the exemplary educational world [dannelsesverden] of antiquity’ (Derbolav 1957, s. 22) and has thereby ‘led the so-called ‘exemplary’ intentions of reform and concentration back to the traditions of classical education (artes)’ (Blankertz 1969, s. 177). (Illeris 1974: 176, my squared brackets).

Through the use of the word “even” the above statements are articulated through a textual affect with a certain amount of disbelief or sarcasm that ‘someone would actually look to the classical education of antiquity’ as a reference point for relevant subject matter. Later in the text, when considering the use of the different approaches, the ‘looking back to ancient tradition’ of the classic principle of exemplarity is positioned as “supporting the status-quo of society, perhaps even reactionary – and this is to an extent that even existing society considers getting rid of this principle” (p. 183). Towards the end of the book, Illeris mentions things in the educational system, he believes should have been removed years ago. This list gives an impression of the inherent linkage constructed between that which is ‘academic, elitist and theoretical’ and that which is considered ‘outdated’: “middle school, the preparatory classes for teachers’ colleges, studies in antiquity [oldtidskundskab], compulsory introductory philosophy exam at university [filosofikum], apprenticeship education, division of disciplines etc.” (p. 242).

As seen, Illeris does not speak directly against ‘the university’ as institution, in fact he does not write much about ‘the university’ at all in his quest to formulate a general model for education. He does draw on the experience from the universities at Roskilde and Bremen, but not to explore what the specific university context might mean for problem-orientation and participant-direction, but rather to draw on the experiences of two such ‘experiments’ in implementing a new educational model. Also, universities are articulated in the text as important sites for fostering creative qualifications in students, and for increasing the quality of life for the working class by fighting for their inclusion into these institutions, but the ‘anti-academic’ discourse necessitates the form and content of such an education to be in line with ‘the praxis regime’ and live up to the demands of society. The ‘praxis-regime’, related to the Marxist-reformist perspective, analysed above, performs as ‘the first’, while its ‘other’ becomes a certain elitist construction of ‘academic and knowledge pursuing’ understandings of education, which in the examples brought forth here, is positioned as something *outdated*, out of time. A textual indicator in the pursuit of legitimacy by staying within the ‘right’ discourse, one I have labelled a Marxist-

reformist or praxis-discourse, is the emphasis on societal and practical : the adjective ‘societal’ is used page after page in the text as an adjectivisation to be grammatically able to construct concepts as ‘societal’, which I take to mean ‘relevant’. This, in turn, produces its *other*, the ‘non-societal’, which I have called ‘academic’ or ‘theoretical’. An example is the ‘principle of exemplarity’, where ‘the classic’ is outdated, while the ‘new’ is named ‘societal exemplarity’.

Concluding thoughts and further questions

My overall reading of ‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction – a suggestion for an alternative didaktik’ from 1974 is that it is filled with ambivalences and tensions. And it would seem that much of the book is spent trying to make perspectives initially very different and incommensurable into the same thing, to try and make the ambiguous meaningful. This happens textually through various strategies of ignoring conceptual inconsistencies through e.g. a ‘yes, but still’ argumentation (Hansen 2003) driven by the reformist logic that if it works in practice, it is a legitimate transformation. What is interesting for the analysis here is the result of the negotiations and glossing over of seemingly incommensurable perspectives, how things are made to fit and what the effects are. What happens to problem-oriented project learning, its pedagogical-philosophical inheritances and educational purposes?

One tension relates to the will to develop a “general didaktik” (p. 19), a pedagogical model relevant to all parts of the educational system. This makes the model unable to build on specific context, such as the university. It also makes it unable to pinpoint a specific educational subject such as the worker, which creates conceptual problems in the Marxist-reformist discourse, which by the example of Oskar Negt, cannot take the worker and their class struggle as the sole educational subject of the model. This will to generalise makes central concepts such as ‘emancipation’, ‘participant’ and ‘societal change’ vague and open to multiple interpretations. In my reading a Marxist-reformist discourse constitutes much of what is said (and not) in the text, and it comes with an economistic vocabulary of education. With the reformist perspective believing in change from within the existing system, comes what I see as the main driver for the text: to change concrete teaching led by a praxis-oriented, pragmatic approach based on the experience of the author and other education experiments, and evident in the long sections on concrete planning and advice for praxis. In some ways the pedagogy suggested can be seen as a ‘negative pedagogy’ in the sense that it primarily seeks to go against the established, the traditional way of doing school with class rooms, teacher-direction, passive learning based in disciplines and an elitist academic approach to especially university education. This creates a strong textual affect with the reader ‘wanting to do differently’, which becomes more important than the quality of substantiated arguments. In this way, ‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction’ is subject to the antagonistic world-making that

Dewey (1938) pointed out in the chapter “traditional vs. progressive education”, reflecting on the risk of automatically discarding all that is considered ‘traditional’ in favour of ‘the new’, between which “it recognizes no intermediate possibilities” (p. 17).

The didactical model proposed by Illeris becomes the opposite of a construction of ‘the traditional’, which marginalises certain perspectives such as for example anything hinting ‘academicity’ such as the Wissenschaft-oriented curriculum from Bruner, the reading and writing of texts as well as theoretical work and research. This ‘othering’ can be grammatically connected to the repeated use of the adjective ‘societal’, for example suggesting “societal exemplarity” (Illeris 1974: 188) different to “(*classical*) exemplarity” (ibid. 175, emphasis in original), which signifies whether something is ‘relevant’ and ‘right’ in the discourse, or not. In this reading, where ‘societal’ mainly takes a negative meaning in signifying what ‘it is not’, it becomes an extremely vague notion open to many different meanings. Looking at the by line in the title of the book “a suggestion for an alternative didaktik” and similarly the search for an “alternative psychology of learning” (p. 60), the term “alternative” becomes central in a ‘traditional-alternative’ dichotomy, where anything labelled ‘alternative’ is good (e.g. ‘progressive’) and the traditional is bad (e.g. ‘reactionary’).

In terms of questions that emerge from the reading of this text and might be relevant in the ongoing analysis, one is the question of ‘creativity’. Illeris emphasises ‘creative qualifications’ as necessary for the development of capitalist society and at the same time the qualifications holding the potential for doing things differently and pursuing emancipation and societal change. ‘Creativity’ is also mentioned in later works on problem-oriented project learning, but is it constructed in the same way as in Illeris 1974? Is Illeris drawn in as a reference?

Another focus is to see how Illeris 1974 is being read in later texts (if at all) and what significance this book came to have on the field constructing PPL onwards. In this regard it will be of particular interest which theoretical references follow Illeris: is it Dewey? Negt? Rogers? Piaget?

'Problem-orientation, project work and report writing' (Hultengren 1976/1981)

Two years after Illeris' 'Problem-orientation and participant-direction' came out in 1974, this next text was published under the name 'Problem-orientation, project work and report writing'⁶⁰, written by Eva W. Hultengren (1976/1981). In the assemblage of texts, this one stands out in its affiliation with Aalborg University⁶¹ (not Roskilde): the author, it reads on the back of the booklet, is an associate professor at the university, and on the front cover, the logo and name of the publishers "Aalborg University Press" (my translation) tells of its birth place. But how then, did this text make its way into this project, when so many other texts affiliated with Aalborg University did not?

This text is included from the principle of following references backwards from other PPL-texts. And the name 'Hultengren' appears again and again (Illeris 1981, Borgnakke 1983, Ingemann, ed. 1985, Borgnakke 1996, Ulriksen 1997, Christensen 2013, Borgnakke 2021). In the construction of PPL over time, the name 'Hultengren' appears through two texts: 'Problem-orientation, project work and report writing' (1976/1981) as already mentioned, and the later 'Interdisciplinarity as political education'⁶² from 1979. Both texts are referred to, by Borgnakke (1996), as part of "important (Danish) introductions to project pedagogy from that time" (p. 130, my translation). The texts similarly appear in Illeris (1981: 15), and in Christensen (2013), where they are positioned as texts that have "developed and defined the founding ideas of project pedagogy" (p. 37, my translation). The later text by Hultengren (1979) is in Ulriksen (1997) presented as one of "the central texts on project pedagogy from the first ten years of RUC"⁶³ (p. 12, my translation). Viewing Hultengren's texts as 'central' and 'important' is not shared by all. Servant (2016), in her study, acknowledges that Hultengren "produced a number of written works throughout

⁶⁰My translation of the original Danish title: 'Problemløsningsorientering, projektarbejde og rapportskrivning'. All quotations from Hultengren (1976/1981) are my translations from Danish to English, unless otherwise stated.

⁶¹At its time of publishing, in 1976, the university had the name 'Aalborg University Centre' ('Aalborg universitetscenter').

⁶²My translation of the original Danish title: 'Tværfaglighed som politisk undervisning'

⁶³This statement could suggest that I should also have included Hultengren (1979) in the analysis, but I initially chose not to, because the title sounded less relevant. When later taking a closer look at the book to find that it could have been included, I assessed it to be similar disjunctively to the already analysed Hultengren (1976), and therefore decided not to proceed with a detailed reading and instead prioritised other texts.

the 1970s” on “Frankfurt School Marxism and problem-oriented project based basisuddannelse”⁶⁴ (p. 213), but she concludes that “the influence of Hultengren’s ideas in Aalborg was marginal – confined to some branches of Social Sciences and Humanities.” (p. 214). These statements, Servant builds on interviews with a former student from the Social sciences, Lone Krogh Kjær-Rasmussen, the former dean of Engineering and Science, Finn Kjærdsdam, and a ten-year anniversary book from 1984, called ‘Exploration’ (‘Udforskning’), on the research at Aalborg University (Servant 2016: 214-215). In contrast to this perspective, Keldorff, in a chapter on PPL, refers to Hultengren’s 1976-text as “The ‘bible’ of project work at AUC”⁶⁵ (Keldorff and Salomonsen 1981: 36, my translation).

As I initially got my hands on the text ‘Problem-orientation, project work and report writing’ from the library, there was some confusion around the year of publication and the edition. The text in my hands, which was the only version available at the university library, was not the 1976-version, but instead a reprinted second edition, which on the front cover claimed to be from “1981”. In the foreword (unnumbered) to this second edition, Hultengren writes how it had been “almost 4 years” since the first edition, while some lines later advertising the coming of the publication “Interdisciplinarity as political education” later in “the autumn of 1979”, indicating the time of writing being 1979. The confusion was total. The Danish library database (bibliotek.dk) tells me that the first edition came in 1976, and the second edition in 1979, but how this second edition at hand, which is the object of the following analysis, got the year “1981” attached to it remains a mystery. But, for that reason I refer to it as Hultengren (1976/1981), indicating both the publication year of the first edition and the year of the text at hand, as the foreword tells that “revision was kept to a minimum” in the second edition⁶⁶. What I found important for inclusion of this text in the analysis was that it had come out in a second edition and at the time of printing, as written in the colophon of the 1981-version, it was on its 8th print, which are both indications of ‘use’ and demand.

After having read Hultengren (1976/1981), it showed to be positioned as writing (and being written through) a specific strong critical-Marxist discourse of PPL (see also Christensen 2013: 74). Thus, it made itself a position as, in my reading, the most explicitly

⁶⁴ Servant writes in English but has kept the Danish word ‘basisuddannelse’, which in refers to the specific structure of the two first years educational programmes in Aalborg and Roskilde, followed by three years of ‘overbygning’ (‘superstructure’). ‘Basisuddannelse’ was characterised by broad, transdisciplinary programmes (see Servant 2016).

⁶⁵ ‘AUC’ is an abbreviation of the initial name for Aalborg University: Aalborg University Centre (‘Aalborg universitetscenter’).

⁶⁶ The library database bibliotek.dk accordingly suggests that the first and second edition have the same amount of pages (n=138), indicating few changes made.

Marxist discourse actor in my assemblage of PPL-texts. It is a question for the further analysis how Hultengren and this critical-Marxist discourse of PPL is transformed and intertwines with other discourses. With no more jumping to conclusions in this detailed discourse analysis, I will slow down and go into detail of the reading of the text and its production of ‘Marxism’ as well as the relation to the educational aims and purposes of PPL.

Becoming a text: layout, genre and knowledge production

For this first part of the analysis, I ask to the materiality of the text and the ways in which it produces knowledge, and reflect on what this means for the constitution of PPL.

The text at hand is a 138-pages long text in an A5-format with a green cardboard cover. The pages are glued together at its spine, which in the version at hand fails to hold on to the dusty-smelling yellow-ish paper that is coming apart from its cardboard cover. This text has seen some wear and tear. The text refers to itself as a “working booklet” (“arbejdshæfte”) (p. 1), and I will call it by this name.

Concerning the recipient and sender, as stated by the text, its introduction reads; “This working booklet is primarily written for students, teachers and other employees at AUC who in their education or work are involved with problem-oriented, project-organised group work.” (p. 1). As seen in the quote, the designated ‘setting’ of the booklet is “AUC”, or Aalborg University Centre⁶⁷, thus relating the conceptualisation of PPL, here named “problem-oriented, project-organised group work”, to the university. Another detail emphasising the ‘university’ as the educational space addressed is a recurring articulation of PPL as “the new university pedagogy”, as e.g. seen on the back cover of the booklet. The quote above addresses its subjects as “students, teachers and other employees at AUC”, which I read as a constituting of PPL as having to do with ‘teaching’ in the direct mention of “teachers” and not e.g. ‘academics’ or ‘researchers’.

Thus, from the initial observations, the text at hand materialises as a *local, basic* booklet addressing PPL as a new way of ‘teaching’, a “new university pedagogy”. It is local because it situates itself at Aalborg University Centre and its intended readers are the students and teachers there; most examples in the booklet concerns the education programs at AUC, and the sender of the text, the author, is from AUC (explicated on the back cover of the booklet). The booklet is basic, or perhaps ‘casual’, because with its cardboard

⁶⁷ The detail of referring to the university as a “university centre” in the text is an important one as it allows a differentiation from “traditional universities”, as seen e.g. in Hultengren (1979: 7, my translation)

cover, the glued spine, its typewriter text font and several typing errors throughout, it reads as a text that has been produced on a low budget and without much editing.

Continuing this analysis, I will elaborate on the writing style of the booklet and its way of producing and legitimising knowledge, which I read as informal and local, constituting PPL in certain ways. As stated, this text presents itself as a ‘working booklet’, a booklet that is to be ‘worked with’. The text legitimises itself as filling out the gap in the social sciences and the humanities of “written guidance” to “project work” (p. 83). The booklet calls itself “a handbook” in the foreword and later states: “The advice and guides are written to help survive the everyday with project work” (p. 84). At the same time it becomes important for the text not ‘just’ to be a ‘handbook’, as indicated in the foreword; “Handbook’ is to be understood as ideas and not a recipe”, and later where Hultengren writes: “Some paragraphs have an almost technical-hands-on character, while others concern methodological, pedagogical and psychological matters.” (p. 83). The word “almost” becomes important in the negotiation of the genre of the text, which, at points wants to be perceived as ‘research’: On the front cover it reads “Series on educational research no. 1”, which positions the text as “educational research”, and in the later publication by Hultengren (1979), there is a short mention of the 1976-text in the colophon as a “research report”. Another indicator, in the text (Hultengren 1976/1981) itself, is its structure, here shown through the table of content, which is ordered in a conventional ‘report-like’ way with formalistic headlines (here only the headlines of the chapters as seen in the table of content, capitalised in original):

- “INTRODUCTION”
- “PARAGRAPH 1 – A layout of the central concepts”
- ”PARAGRAPH 2 – A categorisation of difficulties in collaboration and their interrelation”
- ”PARAGRAPH 3 – A concrete example and an analysis”
- ”PARAGRAPH 4 – Elaboration of some specific issues”
- “PARAGRAPH 5 – Suggestions for behaviour in teaching situations”⁶⁸

In my reading, this structure has reminiscence of an investigative report that ‘reports’ the course of a study in that it follows this disposition; an “introduction” stating target group and purpose, an explanation of “central concepts”, a “categorisation of problems of working in a project group”, an “example and an analysis”, “elaboration of certain conditions” and finally “suggestions for educational practice”. The form of the text and its labelling as “educational research” on the front cover stands in contrast to the text referring to itself as ‘handbook’ and ‘working booklet’, and reading it as a whole, it does not

⁶⁸ I find this difficult to translate and will bring the Danish original sentence here: “Forslag til adfærd i undervisningsituationen”. I have gone with a literal translation, but in more detail; the chapter is a run-through of the various elements of the course of a student project.

perform ‘research’ or ‘research report’. The construction of ‘research’ I draw upon here, builds on (or is) an investigation, embedded in a scientific field, one in which claims are followed by evidence, possibly in the shape of empirical data or theoretical arguments, and argumentation similarly builds on data in some form, or theoretical arguments, which is shown through references. The booklet acts closer to ‘handbook’ in the sense that knowledge produced through the text is mostly based on the writers experience, and opinions, and references are limited to what can fill up three pages at the end of the booklet (“References to literature”, p. 136-138). An example is in the introduction to chapter 1, “Central concepts”, where the understanding of the main concepts is presented as being deliberately ‘personal’; “This is an introduction to my understanding of the concepts. Others might argue for other ways of understanding them. As of now, there is hardly any consensus as to their definition.” (p. 6, emphasis in original). On the same page it is elaborated that ‘personal understanding’ refers to “my recommendation of what should be understood and what actions this should lead to” (p. 6). Here, the text is openly *prescriptive*; the understanding of problem-oriented project work is prescriptive, that is, concerning what should be understood by this kind work and how to enact it.

It will be a continuous focus of the cross-reading of the assemblage to trace these constructions of PPL produced through local, prescriptive and casual forms of knowledge.

A Marxist discourse on ‘legitimate knowledge’ and ‘proper inquiry’

In this section, I will show that constructions of PPL, its educational purposes, its problems and solutions, its subject matter and notions of ‘science’ and ‘inquiry’, as well as the addressees of the text are all contingent to a dominant Marxist discourse that makes most statements in the booklet intelligible.

On the first page of the introduction, the booklet points out its designated readers that are assumed to already have the “necessary insights” (p. 1):

Such a historical political economical insight is necessary if one wants to understand, solve or pretend to solve the difficulties that may arise in concrete teaching situations. But I must refer the readers to a self-study on these analyses, as this is the foundation from which I start. (p. 1-2)

The “historical political economical insight” mentioned in this quote refers to the relation, as written in text, between education and educational research on the one hand and the demand for qualifications of the job market on the other (p. 1). This ‘relation’ is backed up with reference to two references that have specifically “analysed” (p. 1) the case of PPL: “Fjord-Jensen” and “Illeris”⁶⁹ (ibid.). At the final pages of the booklet, in the bibliography, I find these two references, which are respectively a chapter in an edited

⁶⁹ These references appear in the text only by name, but without any year of publication.

volume called ‘The humanities – retired by capitalism?’ (my translation from Danish) (Hultengren 1976/1981: 136) and ‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction’ by Illeris from 1974 (ibid. 137). At this point, Hultengren uses Illeris (1974) as a reference, a ‘comrade’, who have already expounded ‘the necessary analyses’, which are not explained further than the relation between educational developments and “the development in demands for labour qualifications posed by businesses.” (Hultengren 1976/1981: 1). The specific Marxist perspective of Hultengren comes with a proliferated use of the term ‘societal’, as was the case in Illeris (1974). As an example, the stated purpose of education in the booklet is: “to get behind the surface and understand the societal relations [sammenhænge]” (Hultengren 1976/1981: 11). Contrary to Illeris (1974), this booklet is explicit in its Marxist perspective, as shown in this quote brought as the conclusion to a discussion of what might serve as criteria for the subject matter of PPL:

Instead, one must take the point of departure in a clear and precise understanding of society and design [tilrettelægge] teaching so that it leads to such an understanding. For this, there is only one kind of science [videnskab] which offers the necessary totality: Marxism (in some form). (Hultengren 1976/1981: 80)

Here Marxism is posited as “the only kind of science”⁷⁰. The only ‘science’ that, for Hultengren, gives proper criteria for the content of education. This statement is made possible by the construction of ‘insufficient criteria’ through a critique of Illeris’ concept of “societally exemplary” (p. 75) topics. This is positioned as “an impossible criterion to steer by” (p. 80), while the concept of “participant-direction” put forward here from Illeris is repeatedly positioned as being “psychological selection of subject matter” (p. 75, 77, 79). In the discourse produced here, it (in a derogatory sense) means: “steering by random ideological ideas and interests.” (p. 81). Thus, this constructs Illeris’ concepts of “participant-direction” and “societally exemplary” as vague and ultimately supporting the status quo in the Danish educational system and society, which in this text is called “the social partner ideology” (p. 76) (“socialpartnerideologien”)⁷¹. The highlighted quote above also makes explicit, the proposed educational aim of PPL; that “education” must be “designed”, so “that it leads to such an understanding”, that is, PPL should be designed to lead students to a Marxist understanding of the world (this is also the main issue addressed in Hultengren 1979).

The Marxist discourse does not always as explicitly as above and it is also brought into existence in and through the text in more subtle ways, constituting it as a naturalised

⁷⁰ Here I have translated the Danish ‘videnskab’ to ‘science’, instead of ‘Wissenschaft’ as done elsewhere in the thesis.

⁷¹ This is explained in the text as follows: “In the social partner ideology various groups (especially workers and employers) are considered as free, equal and interdependent partners.” (Hultengren 1976/1981: 76, emphasis in original)

discourse through a textual affect of unspoken agreement with the reader. Throughout the booklet there are several examples of student projects and troubles in project groups, where the ‘natural’, ‘coincidental’ example mostly concerns, what I would call ‘a Marxist problematic’, which means that the example in some way has to do with ‘Marxist theory’, ‘capitalism’ or ‘class struggle’. One of these instances is in the section of the booklet that analyses a ‘case group’, where it is claimed that certain student groups belonging to certain classes will not be able to accept insights that go against their “class interests” (p. 47). A short exemplification is then made:

The insight could e.g. be that the exploitation of workers [lønarbejdere] or the wearing down of the working class is a (not very surprising) consequence of the continued process of capital accumulation. Of the continued striving for increased or not decreasing added value [merværdi]. (p. 48)

This ‘exemplification’ of an insight students in a project group might gain, serves to uphold the Marxist discourse. ‘Examples’ like this one, becomes a discursive strategy for the text that serve as means of constructing and consolidating the Marxist discourse as the intelligibility through which other signifiers stabilises their meaning. The bracketing in the quote above “(not very surprising)” can be read as a message to the anticipated reader – someone likeminded for whom this ‘Marxist insight’ is not surprising (again, this is ‘readers-as-made-by-the-text’).

The Marxist discourse also constitutes the ‘form’ of PPL: it becomes a kind of ‘scientific-Marxist’ inquiry. In the chapter of the booklet that analyses a case group project (chapter 3), the project is subtly and naturally put into a “model of Marxist research methodology” with the following words: “The cognitive learning- and work process of the project group is easily explained through this simple (and well-known) model of Marxist research methodology” (p. 71). Here, the “cognitive learning- and work process” of the project group is put into a model of “Marxist research methodology”. The model shows a wavy ‘surface’ called the “(pseudo)concrete” and an arrow leading downwards imitating how “research” tries to get behind this surface to discover, through the research process, “the concrete totality” (p. 71). Here, the constructions of ‘the purpose of research’ and ‘the purpose of education’, put forward in the booklet, align: to get behind the surface to understand the societal relations. In the quote above, the bracketing “(and well-known)” can be read as a strategy to produce legitimacy in putting the project into this model in that it is “known”, but it can also be seen as a signalling to ‘the Marxist reader’, who would find it natural to put any research process into a Marxist model. What the quotes show is that the Marxist discourse affects not just what can be relevant problems for inquiry, but also *the way* this is done.

The Marxist discourse is not ‘alone’ in text (and does not exist, as such, but is produced in certain, contingent ways), and intertwines with other regimes of truth in the text. There is also a ‘pragmatic’ perspective at work, one I would almost call a forbidden *desire*, as it

textually struggles against the dominant Marxist discourse, to which it becomes apologetic. In the following quote, the pragmatic desire is openly engaged in a struggle with the Marxist discourse concerning the aim of the booklet:

The 'program for action' [handlingsprogram] in this working booklet is of a very pragmatic kind. (Some might think it to be revisionist). The advice and guides are written to help survive the everyday of project work. The everyday that leads to a degree and exams. (p. 84)

In this quote, the text is written as though it is troubling the dominant Marxist discourse with the bracketing practice "(Some might think it to be revisionist)". I read "revisionist" as a derogatory label for what Hultengren, according to the text, is possibly doing: revising, as in 'diluting', the Marxist doctrine. This statement speaks to the assumed Marxist reader, the "some", who, in the specific, revolutionary Marxist discourse would understand the aim of helping students and teachers "to survive the everyday with project work" as an acceptance of the 'status quo' ("the social partner ideology", p. 76). From this discourse, such action would be 'wrong' instead of doing 'the right thing', which the text also knows, what is:

A 'program for action' based on such an understanding, one might expect to concern how to expose these relations, that is, to work on a consciousness in students of these relations between science [videnskab] and capital. (see M. Larsen and others) (Hultengren 1976/1981: 84)

The text is busy legitimising its 'pragmatic endeavours'. Here, it speaks to those – the critical-radical comrades as constructed in the text - who "might expect" the booklet to be developing a guide for 'exposing the relations' and for creating "a consciousness" of the "relation between science and capital". The 'explaining' continues, when later stating how the different "programs for action" are not incommensurable and that no matter the educational structures there will always be "an educational everyday" (p. 84). Thus, the logic goes, it is possible to fight against the capitalist system, but also to give concrete advice on the everyday of the current educational system. The work the text does here legitimising its advice can be read as a way of being accepted in the specific Marxist discourse, a certain radical one, while at the same time adhere to a pragmatic discourse valuing the 'everyday troubles' of students and teachers. The strong Marxist discourse I have analysed here constructs, among other things, what 'PPL' is, in the sense that it positions PPL as a Marxist research method based on 'social' and 'realist' inquiry. This construction affects the future academic and disciplinary (im)possibilities for PPL, and will be explored in the next section.

The dominance of 'social' and 'realist' research inquiry

Continuing from the previous section, here I will elaborate on *how* PPL becomes a certain kind of social and realist inquiry, a Marxist research method, in the booklet. This happens

through specific, naturalised notions of ‘scientific discipline’, ‘research’ and ‘project work’, which become conflated.

As stated earlier, the educational purpose of PPL as articulated by the text is to “gain insight into (certain) societal relations” (p. 4). In the ‘Introduction’ of the booklet this notion slides into meaning “social scientific dimension”, when it is discussed whether PPL is relevant within the technical- and natural sciences: “Experience allegedly shows that it is difficult to integrate a social science dimension (an insight into societal relations) in technical- and natural science projects.” (p. 4). In this sentence it is presupposed that every project, also technical- and natural science project, should “integrate a social science dimension”, making “insight into societal relations” and “social science dimension” the same. This truth is expected, self-evident and not in need of explanation.

I write that PPL is constructed as a certain kind of social research inquiry. In this text, this ‘inquiry’ incorporates a realist onto-epistemology. It assumes an understanding that operates with ‘a world out there’ with ready-made problems, ready to investigate for the PPL-student with the aim “to get behind the surface of and gain insight into the societal relations” (p. 11). The realist ontology of ‘problems’ can be seen in the following formulation: “for all basic education programmes [basisuddannelser] it is advisable to choose concrete problems from societal reality (see later).” (p. 9). This claim is later nuanced in the following way:

Maybe instead of choosing problems from societal reality, one could say that it is advisable to take as the starting point concrete and observable phenomena [fremtrædelsesformer] which show to be a problem of practical or educational interest. (p. 10, emphasis in original)

What happens here, is that the “problems” are corrected from ‘being there’ in an essentialist-determinist way, to a more processual understanding, where educational problems can develop from “observable phenomena”. This does not change the realist ontology of this discourse as such, but it elaborates on the epistemology that becomes more processual than determinist; that relevant problems for inquiry can be developed instead of being ‘found’. This notion is continued further on in the booklet and the text ends up valuing *inquiry in itself* as the most important criteria for ‘relevant problems’; that such problems “calls for an investigation that tests hypothesis and is of a non-descriptive character” (p. 11). Relevant problems in this sense are those which are educational and leading to further inquiry.

Combined with the construction of PPL as realist social inquiry comes certain methods. Throughout the booklet, the self-evident method presented is “empirical data collection” (e.g. p. 103). Chapter 5, “Suggestions for behaviour in the teaching situation”, in the booklet, which is dedicated to the ‘practical side’ of project work, has two subsections on: “Data collection” and “Field observation” (p. 103). Reading through the booklet, this is the naturalised ‘way of doing project work’, the default ‘method’; ‘collecting data’ and

‘observing in the field’ (not e.g. reading theory or literature). The latter is legitimised from the statement that “the desire” for students to “involve people and problems from outside the teaching environment is big” (p. 105). Hultengren then makes a list of probable causes for doing field work:

A reaction to the ivory towers of high school

A political attitude.

A certain perception of the purpose of the new universities and university programmes compared with the old universities. (p. 105, listing in original)

From this list the method of field work, that is, acquiring empirical data from the “outside”, becomes connected to a “reaction” to “the ivory towers”, and to “the new universities” with the antagonist being “old universities”. In this way, the ‘new universities’, and ‘the new university’, PPL, takes on a certain form with certain empirical methods, emanating ‘the new’ and positioned against its ‘other’; traditional universities with non-empirical (theoretical) methods and staying ‘inside’ the university. The discursive construction of PPL as ‘the new university pedagogy’ is here produced through binaries of new/old, empirical/theoretical and inside/outside.

The binary of empirical/theoretical methods, with the former being ‘natural’ and the latter ‘other’ is made explicit in a section of the booklet presenting ways to come up with ideas for projects, where it reads: “Other ways of coming up with problems could be through reading. It is my opinion that reading proper (the very theoretical) books is not suitable.” (p. 87), and it continues; “More suitable are articles and pamphlets, which are often written on the specific problems” (ibid.). Here, ‘theoretical books’ are discouraged as spaces for sparking problems for inquiry, while texts that are more easily accessible in style exists as part of, what is here constructed as ‘societal reality’.

The dominant socially-oriented Marxist discourse of science and research in the booklet has certain effects for the way disciplines exist legitimately through the text. For example, ‘the humanities’ is constructed in a ‘social’ way to make it relevant for the strong Marxist perspective. The text constructs the Humanities as potentially troublesome (similar to tech- and natural sciences being made “difficult” for not easily enabling ‘societal insights’ through its disciplinary problems, p. 4) due to its immediate scope not being “concrete problems from the societal reality” (p. 9). This trouble is then remedied by, in a brief side note, constructing “the human sciences” as ‘social/societal’, as “a part of the social sciences”:

For the basic education programmes in the humanities, the primary application [anvendelsesområde] of the human sciences [de humanistiske videnskaber] is mediation, and this

mediation takes place in certain societal areas: mass media, school, church, literature, theatre etc. (The mediation is of course of some content that is to be studied). The human sciences are here considered a part of the social sciences. (p. 9-10)⁷²

“The human sciences” are here constructed as having the task of “mediation” (‘formidling’) in various “societal contexts”, where after a leap is taken to position these “human sciences” as part of “the social sciences” (‘socialvidenskaberne’). The bracketing-practice in the quote can be read as the author in the text explicating how every discipline, also humanities, “of course” has a ‘content’, but the bracket, here, makes this information less important and can therefore mainly be read as the author trying to legitimise the conceptual positioning of the humanities as a “part of the social sciences”.

Concluding remarks on Marxism and theoretical inheritances

As I wrote in the introduction to this analysis, the booklet ‘Problem-orientation, project work and report writing’ (1976/1981) has made a position for itself in the assemblage as the producer/product of a strong and explicit Marxist discourse for PPL. This position and construction of PPL is continued and amplified in the later text ‘Interdisciplinarity as political education’ (1979, my translation), which discusses “whether it is possible through a certain pedagogical design of education to build a political consciousness in university students.” (back cover, 1979, my translation). In this final section, I will show how the Marxist perspective is partly constructed through a critique of Illeris’ book ‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction’ (1974). There after I address the discursive effects of the pedagogical-theoretical inheritances of Hultengren (1976/1981) including a prevalent psychological perspective.

The strong and explicit Marxist position of the text achieves its dominance through relations to other texts. For example, Illeris’ book ‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction’ has a central place in the booklet. Illeris (1974) becomes the position that this text mirrors itself against, and in this case; critiques and departs from. When Hultengren arrives at Marxism as the only “science” to “offer the necessary totality” (p. 80), this statement comes from five pages of critique of Illeris’ notion ‘the problem’. The critique revolves around the lack of a reference for “content” in Illeris (1974), and that “problem-orientation becomes the content of the educational process.” (p. 77). Hultengren holds that “problem-orientation” as Illeris’ presents it, which she calls “the pedagogical-psy-

⁷² The final word of the quote here is “socialvidenskaberne”, which literally means “the social sciences”, which in Danish, and at other times in the booklet, is termed ‘samfundsvidenskab’, which uses the Danish word for ‘society’ (‘samfund’) instead of ‘social’. I wonder whether this practice is done to not make the humanities the same as the discipline of ‘samfundsvidenskab’, but rather to construct both as sciences that are ‘social’?

chological frame” (p. 81), thus becomes an end in itself, because he offers no unambiguous reference point to the qualitative content. Hultengren explains how the lack of a proper reference for content causes problem-orientation to look to other principles for subject matter, such as for example Illeris’ notion “participant-direction”, but Hultengren writes how this would lead to “steering by random ideological ideas and interests.” (p. 81). This statement is made intelligible from another critique from Hultengren: that Illeris uncritically took up the principle of “participant-direction” from Oskar Negt and his writings on workers education, which was then translated into general education (including universities) in Denmark (p. 75-78). Hultengren concludes that “Students have no common understanding of problems as seems to be the case with a worker collective.” (p. 78). Thus, basing ‘problems’ solely on students’ “random ideological ideas and interests”, would, according to Hultengren, result in reproducing the status-quo of society (p. 82). The argument then returns to Hultengren’s main point: Marxism is the only viable answer to the issue of ‘content’.

Illeris (1974) becomes a figure for text, which both acts as an ally and authoritative reference to Marxist analysis of education and qualification (p. 1), and the object of critique due to identified vagueness in his concepts, which positions Hultengren (1976/1981) as the ‘better Marxist’. Hultengren further constructs her text as “pedagogical-psychological” (p. 73), and frequently refers to Illeris’ perspective as dominantly “psychological” (e.g. p. 75), which puts them in the same category as ‘psychologists’. But my reading is that Hultengren constructs Illeris (1974) as predominantly occupied with the learning-aspect of PPL, constituting PPL as a ‘form of learning’. Hultengren agrees with the psychological aspects as beneficial for PPL concerning motivation (p. 79) and learning (p. 81), but because she explicitly positions PPL as a Marxist form of inquiry, she also addresses the question of ‘content’.

As indicated, ‘Problem-orientation, project work and report writing’, a part from producing strong Marxist truths, includes a psychological-pragmatic perspective, which for example take up much of chapter 2, “A categorisation of difficulties in collaboration and their interrelation”. Similarly, there is a longer section on “cognition” (‘erkendelse’) in chapter 4. Though my initial analysis concluded that the knowledge base of the text mainly is the experience and opinion of the author, there are a few references to certain theories. Concerning what Hultengren (1976/1981) refers to as “the processes” (p. 20) of PPL, she draws in her own book “Social psychology” (p. 137, my translation) from 1975, and the book “Group psychology” (my translation) by Arne Sjølund from 1966 (Hultengren 1976/1981: 138). The entire chapter 2 addresses collaboration in group projects and the troubles encountered. The chapter has no explicit references, but is shaped by what I would call ‘the expertise’ of the author with headings such as “issues of group psychology”, “issues of individual psychology” and “issues of working methods” (p. 23). Later, in a chapter on the roles of teachers and students and the cognitive learning of

students, Hultengren draw in Paulo Freire. Freire and his book 'Pedagogy of the oppressed' (my translation from the Danish version) from 1973 (Hultengren 1976/1981: 136), is used to compare the so-called "banking education" ("sparekasserpædagogik") and "problem-posing pedagogy" to teacher-student relations in PPL (p. 55, my translations). Hultengren (1976/1981) engages in a Marxist analysis with Freire to challenge what she calls "the myth of equal standing" (p. 50) in PPL. This myth tells that teachers and students are equal, and Hultengren (1976/1981) analyses how "dialogue", which is the instrument and ideal of the 'problem-posing pedagogy' (p. 57), is challenged by the power relations of "oppressors-oppressed" (p. 58) imposed upon teachers and students through "the capitalist state" (p. 61). A central pedagogical task for PPL, Hultengren (1976/1981) writes, thus becomes to "uncover" (p. 59) the oppressive conditions of capitalist society so that eventually, through dialogue, "the institutionally constituted relations of teacher – pupil (subject-object) are dissolved". (p. 60). Hultengren continues on the next many pages (p. 61-68) to explicate "the cognitive process" ('erkendelsesprocessen') (p. 61) of a "problem-oriented form of education" as different to "discipline-oriented education" (ibid.). She compares this 'cognitive process' to Freire's concept of "cultural synthesis" (p. 65), which Hultengren (1976/1981) understands as

the pedagogical strategy directed at the contradiction between the psychological understanding of the problems and the steps of cognitive learning which contain an understanding of the societal relations behind the surface. (A more sociological and political understanding). (p. 65)

I cannot find an explicit argument in the text for including Freire in booklet, other than that the statement that his ideas are "fruitful" (p. 65), but one possible understanding is that his perspectives align with the Marxist understanding of Hultengren (1976/1981). Freire's "pedagogical principles" are referred to as "clearly part of a revolutionary praxis", whose relation to the pedagogical praxis at Aalborg University, Hultengren holds "lies outside of the scope of this booklet" (p. 65).

My point in showing these theoretical inspirations for the booklet is that they construct PPL through certain kinds of knowledge. Roughly speaking, the main resources of the booklet can be divided into various references that are translations or engagements with the work of Marx, and then a range of pedagogical-psychological references. Freire becomes a central theoretical reference that adheres to both the Marxist and the pedagogical-psychological perspective. Adding to the knowledge base of the author's experience and opinion, these references constitute how PPL can be understood (and not) as a Marxist research method and beneficial form of cognitive learning. The sections of practical advice for students (chapter 5) to 'make the everyday work' reproduces PPL as a practical form. Knowledge perspectives and resources that are *not* mentioned nor performed are for example various theories of science, literature on the idea of the university and philosophical perspectives on both. The uses and silences of certain knowledge, affect the ways that PPL can be understood, which makes it a question for the ongoing analysis to

study how the knowledge-regimes of Marxism, psychology, pedagogy and praxis are distributed in other texts to shape the educational aims and purposes of this 'thing', PPL.

'A pedagogy of counter-qualification' (Illeris 1981)

In 1981, the book 'A pedagogy of counter-qualification – problem-orientation, participant-direction and exemplary learning'⁷³ was published by 'Unge pædagoger' ('Young pedagogues'). It came out as a, according to itself, strongly revised edition of Knud Illeris' book from seven years prior, 'Problem-orientation and participant-direction' (1974).

Whereas the 1974-book by many is positioned as 'the key-original text of PPL', the text that started it all (see analysis of Illeris 1974), it is less clear what position 'A pedagogy of counter-qualification' takes in the assemblage. A text like Ulriksen (1997) uses the 1981-book as its foundation of speaking of PPL, while other PPL-texts barely mention this book (e.g. Olsen and Pedersen 1997, Andersen and Heilesen, ed. 2015). The text 'The reality of project work' (Nielsen and Jensenius 1996, my translation from Danish) draws on discourses available in the 1981-book in a nostalgic framing about a 'Marxist past', and refers directly to this book (p. 38), but not the 1974-version. To situate 'A pedagogy of counter-qualification' in the assemblage, it is one of the texts that does not forefront, and even include, 'project work' in its title (neither does Illeris 1974). In the meantime though, Illeris wrote the book 'Project work – experiences and practical guidance' (Berthelsen, Illeris and Poulsen 1977, my translation from Danish)⁷⁴ with Jens Berthelsen and Steen Clod Poulsen, which, as the title suggests, emphasised PPL as "project work" and aimed at giving concrete advice for practitioners. Though 'A pedagogy of counter-qualification' also contains comprehensive practical advice (and it draws on Berthelsen, Illeris and Poulsen 1977 and 1979 in its chapter 6 on "the practical work pattern known as *project work*", Illeris 1981: 159, emphasis in original), it has been categorised by Olsen and Pedersen (1997) as a "more theoretical book" (p. 13) compared to the aforementioned. I mention this to show that PPL was produced in various ways simultaneously and with the same authors. One strand is focusing on 'project work' (Berthelsen, Illeris and Poulsen 1977, 1985), centring around 'project' and practical guidance, while others are 'more theoretical' and mainly concerned with concepts such as 'problem-orientation' (Illeris 1974) and 'counter-qualification' (Illeris 1981). The latter book is later presented

⁷³ My translation of the original Danish title: 'Modkvalificeringens pædagogik – problemorientering, deltagerstyring og eksemplarisk indlæring'. All quotations from this book are my translations, unless stated otherwise.

⁷⁴ Olsen and Pedersen (1997) refer to this book as "the bible of project work" (p. 13, my translation), an affective label that aligns with their own construction of PPL as 'project work'; as practical knowledge work. A later and revised edition of 'Project work' came out in 1985 with the authoritative title 'An introduction to project work – theory and practical guidance' (my translation of 'Grundbog i projektarbejde – teori og praktisk vejledning') (Berthelsen, Illeris and Poulsen 1985).

later as a publication where Illeris “radicalized his concepts in a political direction” (Andersen and Kjeldsen 2015: 8). In this discourse analysis and looking at Illeris’ authorship, the 1981-book holds an interesting position with its – as will be shown – explicit Marxist-socialist perspective. Such a perspective is less prevalent in the 1974-book, as seen in the previous analysis, and increasingly marginal in Illeris’ later work that concerned itself less with PPL and oriented itself more towards the concepts of ‘learning’ and ‘identity’ (Illeris 1999, Illeris et al. 2002, Illeris, ed. 2012, Illeris 2013). Thus, a question for the analysis of the text here is how it was possible. Does it sit as an island in the oeuvre of Illeris, and in the PPL-assemblage as a whole? How does it position itself (and others), and how is it positioned? What discursive effects does the exclusion and inclusion of this book in concrete textual narratives have for the production of ‘PPL’ and its educational purposes?

The analysis at hand takes an interest in the relation, the intertextuality, between the 1974-book and the 1981 version, that is, it asks what has changed and what has not, in the 1981-book. ‘A pedagogy of counter-qualification’ calls itself “a thorough revision” of the former book, and a “more or less new book with a new name” which at the same time “to a great extent” builds on “the old book” (foreword, p. 8). The 1981-book, being published later, has the possibility of categorising ‘the old book’, which also becomes a part of the investigation, that is, how ‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction’ is constructed and for what purposes. These relations, similarities and differences between the two texts are then reflected in their significance for the construction of the educational aims and purposes of PPL. This analysis is genealogical in the way that it studies continuities and discontinuities, intensification and weakening in discourses of the educational purposes of PPL between the two texts.

The book begins with an extensive 17-pages foreword addressing the changes made to this ‘revision’. It legitimises its own existence with reference to turbulent change since 1973; that “quite a lot” (p. 7) has happened. For example, the foreword mentions how the 1974-book has received notable critique, PPL has become more widespread and tested in practice, and the ‘financial boom’ of the early 1970s has been replaced by economic crisis (p. 8). Looking at the titles, there are some immediate differences between the two books:

‘A pedagogy of counter-qualification – problem-orientation, participant-direction and exemplary learning’ (1981)

‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction – a suggestion for an alternative didaktik’ (1974)

Initially, there is the introduction of the ‘new’ concept of ‘counter-qualification’ – a concept that has not appeared in prior PPL-texts. ‘Counter-qualification’ is written in genitive, indicating that the ‘pedagogy’ suggested is not any pedagogy, but ‘a pedagogy of counter-qualification’ (my emphasis). Casting PPL as “pedagogy” is also new, whereas in 1974 ‘it’ was formulated as “didaktik”. Though Illeris spent some pages in 1974 to lay

out his understanding of 'didaktik' as not narrowly 'teaching method' or "planning" ('planlægningsvirksomhed', p. 17), but instead 'an alternative' and broader pedagogical concept based on Wolfgang Klafki including aims and purposes, the signifier to signify 'PPL' in 1981, in the title, becomes "pedagogy" (Illeris 1974: 15-16). This said, the term "a didaktik of counter-qualification" also appears further into the 1981-book (p. 28). A more detailed discourse analysis is required as to the contingent 'meanings' of these signifiers. Another change indicated in the title is the inclusion of "exemplary learning" as an addition to "problem-orientation" and "participant-direction" as the main concepts of PPL. Also, these principles now appear in the by-line, prioritising the statement of 'PPL as pedagogy', whereas the principles came before the term 'alternative didaktik' in the 1974-book.

Apart from these initially observed differences, here follows a slower inquiry into the text, its positioning in relation to its 1974-relative, and its construction of the educational purposes of PPL.

A Marxist-socialist (re)articulation

I read the text as an articulation, or re-articulation, of a Marxist-socialist perspective, that performs a 'sharpening' and 'clarification' of the 1974-book. This reading is based especially on the foreword (p. 7-24), which positions the book much like a *response* and compensation aimed at certain Marxist critics. In this section, I will delve into this re-articulation to study how it happens, while the next section concerns the production of the book as 'a response'. The concept of 'counter-qualification' will be explored after the following analysis as a main formulated educational aim for PPL.

In several ways, based on repeated statements, this book wants to make a certain perspective – a Marxist-socialist - explicit by introducing and reiterating certain concepts. With some ambiguity the book is defending its predecessor 'Problem-orientation and participant-direction' from 1974, while also trying to distance itself from it:

As such, 'Problem-orientation and participant-direction' actually concerned counter-qualification, but this was not introduced nor clarified as a concept and the main endeavour lay with the pedagogical principles that could carry an 'alternative didaktik'. (p. 10)

On the one hand, the former book is defended by writing that it "actually concerned counter-qualification" ("ganske vist", translated to "actually", in Danish indicates that the statement is very true and self-evident with assumed surety – something that assumed to be known by the reader, and thus a very powerful strategy). On the other hand it reads that the main foci of the former book was "the pedagogical principles". It becomes a divide in the text to categorise the former as 'pedagogical', whereas this new book is more "political":

It has become increasingly clear that education, as part of the capitalist society, is subject to a political struggle, and ultimately a part of the class struggle, and it is these matters that I have tried to centre by changing the title of the book and by introducing the concept of counter-qualification. The outlook is thus placed on a political level instead of a pedagogical in a traditional sense. (p. 9-10)

In the last sentence the book is placed “on a political level” instead of a “pedagogical”. This construction creates a split between these two categories, where ‘the pedagogical’ is not ‘political’, positioning the former book as ‘pedagogical’ and thus ‘not political enough’. In the 1981-book, the ‘political’ comes to mean a certain Marxist-socialist perspective, which in the quote is articulated through the natural enunciation of “the capitalist society” as a subject and placing education as “a part of the class struggle”, which has led to the introduction of a new concept in the title of the book; “counter-qualification”. In spite of Illeris’ claim that the 1974 book “actually concerned counter-qualification”, the new book achieves legitimisation as ‘new’ by distancing itself from what is consequently referred to as “the old book” (Illeris 1981: 12, 13, 14, 23).

The intensified articulation of a Marxist-socialist perspective happens through continuous and extensive use – as compared to the 1974-book whose Marxist vocabulary was reserved for particular chapters - of notions such as ‘capitalist society’, ‘class struggle’, ‘resistance’ and the main concept of ‘counter-qualification’. On the back cover of the book, the text makes this perspective explicit (emphasis in original): “*A pedagogy of counter-qualification* is written for all teachers, pupils, students and others who want to break away from traditional forms of teaching and tread new paths – with a socialist perspective.”

Differently from the 1974-book, this text explicitly positions itself such as for example on the backside adding the remark “with a socialist perspective”, which I read as an important clarification-act for the overall aim of the book to appear ‘Marxist-socialist’. And to do this beyond doubt, and not to make the same mistake as the ‘old book’. Illeris holds that the former book had the same intentions – to counter-qualify pupils and students to effectively join the class struggle on the workers’ side - but that this was not ‘made clear’ and this 1981-revision the tries to remedy that ‘error in communication’. In this way, ‘A pedagogy of counter-qualification’ could be read as primarily *a communication project* (as opposed to having conceptual problems), a piece that should convince the reader - beyond any doubt - that s/he is dealing with a book that is explicitly Marxist-socialist. The sharpening of these formulations also show in a stronger normative language of what is right and wrong in terms of understanding society and its influence on citizens:

The pedagogical problem [problemstilling] of counter-qualification, on a general level, thus becomes – within the possible space of action and as supplement to the ordinary qualification – to canalise an insufficient understanding of society and an inappropriate resistance towards a more correct understanding of society and a more purposeful resistance. (Illeris 1981: 94)

In this quote, the educational task becomes to ‘correct’ students that have an “insufficient understanding of society” and to direct their act of resistance to capitalist society away from being “inappropriate”. This speak of ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ understanding of society are made intelligible by the strong Marxist discourse, making the ‘correct’ understanding one of realising the oppressing structures of capitalist society. Such a reading is supported by the book’s reference to ‘socialisation theory’, a range of structuralist theories studying how capitalist society socialises individuals to behave and think in certain ways (p. 72-73). Through these citations, Illeris is able to explain the behaviour of individuals as ‘incorrect’ capitalist behavior, which makes the educational aim one of lifting this spell; the alternative is “inappropriate resistance” such as loafing, violence and nihilism (p. 28). The same understanding is repeated a few pages later when addressing the educational task of problem-oriented teaching in the language of cognitive psychology from Piaget and Nissen: “the incorporated incoherent and distorted assimilative structures may be subject to accommodative disassociations, thus enabling the construction of new structures.” (p. 101). Though Illeris in 1974 also wrote of the educational task being “emancipation” from societal and class-related structures through studying their preconditions (1974: 187), the formulation of “correct” and “insufficient” understanding of society was not there in the 1974-text. I read this as a strategy to try and radicalise a Marxist perspective in the 1981-text. This radicalisation of the specific Marxist discourse also shows in a slightly more inclusive attitude towards more revolutionary perspectives (though I would still primarily position the 1981-text within a reformist line of thinking). In the 1974-book, it was posited as self-evident that effective educational *reform*, which was the primary aim, had to adhere to existing societal conditions, here in a quote from Kallós 1972: “It is, on the other hand, hard to imagine a society that would tolerate educational policies deliberately aimed at revolting against the existing social system.” (Kallós 1972: 219 in Illeris 1974: 245-246). In the 1981-book, articulation has shifted towards action considering “purposeful resistance” (Illeris 1981: 94) as seen in the earlier quote instead of ‘psychological conditions for learning’ and “*consciousness-raising*” in the 1974 Illeris-text (p. 71, emphasis in original). In the revised book Illeris (1981) presents the pressing class struggle in favour of the worker with the aim of “eventually revolting against the capitalist social system.” (p. 27). An action-oriented *revolutionist* perspective is being more intensely articulated.

The format and layout of the book underlines this intensification in the Marxist discourse, while other perspectives fade into the background. Looking at the table of contents, the book is shorter than the 1974-version (the ‘old’ being 272 pages compared to 228 pages in 1981), having cut down especially on the ‘practical part’, which was significant in 1974. The two books still follow the same structure with first a conceptual part and then a practical part, where the former consists of what I could call ‘a societal-qualification part’ and a ‘psychological part’. The psychological part was called “Psychological-theoretical conditions” in 1974 (p. 53-77), the corresponding section is now called “The resistance

potential” (Illeris 1981: 63-92). The final chapter, which in 1974 had the title “Didaktik and societal change” (p. 241) is now (in Illeris 1981) called “Counter-qualification here and now” (p. 205). Thus, the proliferation of this Marxist language with ‘counter-qualification’ and ‘resistance’ is intensified and the perspective seeks to be made unambiguously clear with these replacements in the language used.

Introducing the ‘psycho-social’: socialisation and critical psychology

The amplified Marxist-socialist discourse also shows in its theoretical references. An observation is that ‘Dewey’ has been *erased* from this book and is neither mentioned nor referenced, as he was in the 1974-version (even if briefly, p. 171-173, 257). I do not have evidence to suggest that the removal of Dewey is a result of an intensified Marxist discourse, and must pose this as an open speculation for further investigation in the assemblage. Concerning the ‘psychological part’, which is not labelled as such anymore, Illeris has received a critique from Staf Callewaert and Daniel Kallós (translators of Illeris’ 1974-book into Swedish) that the book should not have included psychological theory in the first place (Illeris 1981: 13). This notwithstanding, Illeris rejects the critique, and sees it as necessary to address the “psychological-theoretical foundation” (p. 14) and holds on to what he now calls “the Piaget-Nissen-theories” (ibid.), while admitting to a weakness in their “lack of societal reflection” (ibid.). He then searches for psychological theories with a stronger societal aspect, what he has come to call “psycho-social structures” (p. 68) grammatically indicating a merger between ‘the psychological’ and ‘the social’, and looks to Marxist psychological theories that can merge the individual-structure conceptualisation:

In the marxist-theoretical language, what is needed is a theory of *subjectivity*, that is, of the societyness [samfundsmæssighed] of the psycho-social structures, and the much debated foundation for such a theory, I have addressed previously. More concretely, it is primarily the Freudian psychoanalysis and its personality model with the three entities – the id, the ego and the superego (see e.g. Freud 1965) – that has been seen as a possible foundation for a Marxist theory in this area. (p. 68, emphasis in original)

Illeris turns to the concept of “subjectivity” to address “the society-ness of the psycho-social structures”, that is, how capitalist society affects and shapes the individual and how this results in various outlets of resistance. The choice falls on Freudian psycho-analysis as possible psychological theory to merge with Marxist theory, but Illeris also points to several problems with a direct use of Freud. After engaging briefly with newer developments of Freudian theory from Danish translations of Herbert Marcuse, Eric Fromm and Wilhelm Reich (Illeris 1981: 69), Illeris (1981) finally arrives at two theoretical developments, he sees fit for his purpose: “socialisation theory”, or “the Hannover School” (p. 71). He draws on references from Leithäuser and Heinz, Nielsen and Nielsen, Ziehe and Krovoza (Illeris 1981: 71-72), and “critical psychology” also referred to as “the Berlin school” with reference to Dreier and Holzkamp (Illeris 1981: 71).

Before arriving at these two approaches, Illeris also explored Humanist psychology, including Carl Rogers, and Soviet psychology from especially Lev Vygotsky, as alternatives. The former was critiqued for not having any notion of ‘society’ and being too liberal (p. 70 – this is a critique also found in Illeris 1974: 75), and the latter for being “authoritarian, teacher-directed and consequently oppressive” (Illeris 1981: 81) and for forgetting the subject (p. 71). The conclusion to the chapter addressing various psychological theories (again, not calling them by this name, but instead “The resistance potential”), becomes that Illeris, despite of heavy critique, decides to hold on to Nissen and Piaget referring to them as the only theorists with a proper ‘theory of learning’ (p. 81). With the addition of Marxist-Freudian inspired socialisation theory and critical psychology, Illeris tries to remedy the critiques to Nissen and Piaget by “placing” them in a “societal context” (p. 89). In terms of the reading of the book as a strong articulation of a Marxist-socialist discourse, Illeris performs this by introducing the aforementioned theories. At the same time, he does not discard Nissen, Piaget and Rogers and their concepts’ central role in the theory of learning for PPL, and thus ends up with a diverse smelting pot of various theories held together mainly by Illeris’ arguments for their relevance. He seems to be aware that the integration of theories may be read as farfetched as the concluding section of the chapter is, with some hedging, called “an attempt at a conceptualisation [sammenfatning]” (p. 90).

The point is that the inclusion of socialisation theory and critical psychology does not seem to change the main enacted pedagogical principles much in the book. This said, their inclusion serves an important discursive function for the book in addressing and acting on the critique of certain ‘radical’ Marxist perspectives. For example, the critique of Kallós and Callewaert that the psychological theories of the 1974-book were bereft of a societal perspective in themselves and also were not integrated into the societally-oriented pedagogical model suggested, and the psychological perspective was therefore, by Kallós and Callewaert, seen as superfluous (Illeris 1981: 13).

Integration of pedagogical and political aims of PPL?

The Marxist discourse is dominant in the book, but its enunciation is spread unevenly throughout the pages. Whereas this discourse dominates most of the first part, what I could call ‘the conceptual part’, the part on ‘the pedagogical principles’ and ‘planning’ and ‘implementing’ remain similar to the 1974 version, though the words ‘counter-qualification’ and ‘resistance’ appear time and time again in the engagement with the pedagogical principles in the 1981-book. An example is one of the most central places in the book, as I read it; where Illeris defines a set of criteria for *the content of exemplary problems* in teaching aimed at ‘counter-qualification’:

The subjective criterion, which means that the content of teaching must be experienced as immediately relevant and engaging for (all) participants in the teaching situation – and *The objective criterion*, which means that the content of the teaching must enable a shedding of light [belysning] on existing societal structures. (p. 113, emphasis in original)

And then he adds another two:

The criterion of action, which means that the content must be selected in a way so that it contains concrete possibilities of action [handlemuligheder] for the participants – and *the criterion of relevance*, which means that the content must be relevant for the aim and the regulations of the educational programme in question. (p. 113, emphasis in original)

Not much has changed in these formulations since the 1974-book, though they now appear in the conceptual part of the text under the principle of ‘exemplarity’ (part of the trinity in the title of the 1981-book), where it previously appeared in the ‘practical part’ of the 1974-book on page 187. A difference is that criteria are now framed in a ‘subjective/objective’ schematic, but the statements themselves, that problems should “be experienced as immediately relevant and engaging for (all) participants” and that the work on these should enable a “shedding of light on existing societal structures” are almost similar to those from the 1974 Illeris-text (p. 187). The criterion of ‘relevance’ - that the work must be relevant for the study programme in question - is also present in the former book. A new addition is the “criterion of action”, whose intelligibility I will discuss in the following.

As it is written in the above quote, it is not elaborated what is meant by ‘action’, and Illeris (1981) writes how he deliberately keeps its specific meaning open to ‘accommodate’ participants in diverse situations and contexts whether for small children, where “one must act directly in relation to the surrounding societal world” (p. 114) or for students, where it “may be sufficiently action-oriented to investigate certain theoretical matters through literature studies” (ibid.). The argument for including the criterion in the book comes from ‘practice-experience’: “practical experiences, which have shown that problem-oriented and participant-directed educational programmes function better, when participants are involved in concrete actions” (p. 113-114). Despite these statements, it is still elusive what is meant by “better” in the quote, and in looking for discourses to make this intelligible, I relate the statements to the ongoing ‘anti-traditional’, progressive discourse, what I could call a ‘pedagogical-didactical discourse’, where ‘traditional teaching’ is perceived as passive and secluded from ‘action’. Illeris (1981) writes: “In problem-oriented and participant-directed educational programmes, the criterion of action aims at creating integration between action and learning in new ways.” (p. 114). As I read it, the criterion of action becomes legitimated primarily through a learning argument; that participants simply learn ‘better’ when they act. This is laid out in the following statements:

But it must be emphasised, that in this context, the demand for action cannot be understood merely as a motivational device, that possibilities of action are necessary to create engagement. And it cannot be understood as merely a utilitarian or political-activist demand for education to lead to action. In meaningful, and thus politically relevant programmes, action and learning are necessarily two sides of the same coin: You develop because you act, and you act because you develop. (p. 114)

I find several plausible readings of this quote. As mentioned, one way is to see this as a learning argument, on that could almost sound like the infamous slogan *learning by doing* (this phrasing is not used in the book): “You develop because you act, and you act because you develop.” But, this would be too narrow a reading as Illeris does not discard the various arguments of ‘utility, ‘motivation’ and ‘political-activist’; he argues against understanding them in isolation and pleads for an integration to make action and learning “two sides of the same coin”. Thus, in this way the criterion of action becomes merged in a *pedagogical-political aim* where ‘learning’ and ‘political action’ are intertwined.

Returning to the earlier quote that lays out the various criteria for exemplary content for a pedagogy of counter-qualification, I will make it a point that those statements read in isolation could be interpreted in several ways. They are formulated broadly, and it takes a reading of the book as a whole to stabilise them in the Marxist discourse that constitutes what it means that subject matter is ‘relevant’ for participants, what it means to be “shedding light on existing societal structures” (p. 113) and what it means “to act” (p. 114) in the ‘context’ of PPL. This is different from other parts of the book, where the Marxist discourse is made explicit, leaving little room for interpretation on behalf of the reader. In the same way, the book’s intention to stay on a general level in terms of educational contexts – such as for example the mentioning of diverse participants such as small children and students – adds to a vagueness in the terms, because being concrete would go against Illeris’ intention of creating a pedagogy for all levels of the educational system. The effect is that many of the concepts of the book, such as “the criterion of action” are left open for various interpretations by the reader, whether one’s perspective is socialist, capitalist or otherwise.

I will finish this section with a few words on the relation between the pedagogical and political aims of PPL. Though Illeris is trying to integrate the two perspectives, the pedagogical and political, they work on different levels, where the political perspective functions mainly as an aim, and the concrete, didactical principles become the means to this aim. At the end of the book, Illeris (1981) addresses this relation and calls counter-qualification “a beacon in the distance” (p. 207) and points to what he sees as the more immediate possible change:

Where counter-qualification usually only functions as a perspective, it can always be an initial task, a first important step on the road, to try and break with the traditional oppression – to reverse what has been called ‘the hidden curriculum’. (p. 208)

Here, counter-qualification is positioned as just “a perspective”, that is, something to strive for. In the everyday of school, the task here is “to break with the traditional oppression” and to reverse the “hidden curriculum”. Thus, the pedagogical articulation is somewhat spearheaded, but is seen as intrinsically intertwined with the political aim of counter-qualification. This last point is a difference from the 1974-book, where Illeris in the last chapter asked “For the people or for profit?” (Illeris 1974: 252) and answered

that PPL could, and should, work for both. This openness of the educational aims of PPL, is reduced significantly in the 1981 book and even though Illeris (1981) still underlines a necessary aim of ‘double-qualification’ – to both qualify and counter-qualify (p. 12) - the book tries to live more up to its title; that the pedagogy put forth works for one educational purpose mainly: counter-qualification. It is not ‘merely’ “an alternative didaktik” as the 1974-title suggested, but rather a “pedagogy of counter-qualification”.

In the next section I will go further into, what I see as the main speech act of the book, and its *raison d’être*: an apologetic response to a certain strong Marxist discourse acted through certain critics, which the book finds it cannot ignore.

A defensive response and the construction of continuity

When reading the text, and especially the lengthy foreword (p. 7-24), there is a certain defensive tone that makes the text appear as a response to a conversation (which is perhaps not surprising, when the book explicitly calls itself a comprehensive revision required after 7 years of various changes, including a range of critiques to the 1974 book). The defensive tone, as I read it, becomes part of struggles over the educational aims of PPL, and I read the defensiveness as related to the incapability of the book to - unproblematically and to its own frustration - include the many various educational aims and purposes of PPL. The construction of a general, holistic educational model starts to crack. These cracks and tensions, as I read it, are produced in the book when wanting to be political/Marxist/socialist, but also appear pedagogical and with psychological insights (the incommensurability of these perspectives is not ‘natural’, but constructed by the book itself). Discursive cracks come from wanting to support workers in a class struggle, while at the same time conceptualising PPL as a ‘general pedagogy’ and referring to its use as potentially both capitalist and Marxist, and not wanting to be specific and speak of subject matter and thus not committing to any specific educational context leaving its concepts broad and vague.

Let me give some examples of the defensive tone in the foreword. This first quote defends both books (1974/1981) as fundamentally concerning ‘class struggle’:

It is true that I do not use the term class struggle in the old book. That, I do now – but the decisive point, after all, is that both books fundamentally concern how class struggle is pursued, in the most appropriate way, within the educational system. I am certainly not blind to the fact that problem-oriented and participant-directed education [undervisning] can come to function as modernised adaption – and this I have, one time to many, expressed. (p. 12)

Here, Illeris responds to a critique by Callewaert and Kallós, the previously mentioned translators of the 1974-book into Swedish, who hold that the class struggle was completely absent from the 1974 book (Illeris 1981: 12). The critique is addressed, but quickly

transformed in an act of disarming the severity of the critique, into a mere communication problem (rather than more profound) in the sense that Illeris writes how he did not use “the term class struggle” in his book, but that “both books fundamentally concern how class struggle is pursued, in the most appropriate way, within the educational system.” He also assures the reader that the communication problem is ‘fixed’ as he now uses the term in the book. In the last part of the quote “and this I have, one time to many, expressed”, I sense a slight aggression, as if the author is tired of repeating the same defence to the same critique; that PPL, in itself, can serve capitalist society just as well as a socialist agenda. Illeris does not argue with this critique, but he comments that concerning the support of workers in the class struggle, PPL provides “the best possibilities” (p. 12), thus making the educational aim clear. In the next example, Illeris is commenting on a critique from Hultengren (1979) concerning an apparent lack of engagement with the concept of ‘interdisciplinarity’ in the 1974-book:

The way I have worked with the concept of problem-orientation, I thus believe, that ‘the concrete interdisciplinarity’ is contained within that concept. But that has probably not been made clear, that my concept of problem-orientation actually, in its consequences [i sin konsekvens], entails an uncovering of the societal causes of the problems and thereby, consequently, a Marxist approach – and that, I hope, has been remedied in this book. (p. 16)

Again, Illeris points to the critique as basically resulting from a ‘communication problem’ and not a foundational, conceptual problem, when he writes that it “has probably not been made clear”. He then seeks to correct the reader’s understanding of his use of the concept of ‘problem-orientation’, that it “actually, in its consequences [i sin konsekvens], entails an uncovering of the societal causes of the problems and thereby, consequently, a Marxist approach”. This becomes a struggle for the reading of the 1974-book. The final words spell out the primary speech act of this book, as I read it: to *remedy* something. In the next and final example, it is made explicit, what the intentions of the book are:

But in accord with the change of the title of the book, I will add that this is certainly pursuing different paths with a socialist perspective. This perspective was already in the old book – but it has now been made clear, and there is no reason to silence that. I take this clarification to be an obvious betterment. (p. 23)

This quote comes right after the author has repeated words from the 1974-book; that the intended readers are pupils, teachers and others who “seek different paths” (p. 23). The statement then clarifies that it is not ‘any other paths’, but that the book is “certainly pursuing different paths with a socialist perspective.” Thus, it becomes important for the text to ‘clearly’ state that it pursues a “socialist perspective”. As with the other examples, the author repeats how this perspective was also there in “the old book”, but that it has now been ‘clarified’. These repeated statements saying ‘it was already there in the old book’ can be read as a strategy to place part of the blame for ‘not seeing it’ on the reader; that the right perspectives have been there all along, but the reader just did not see them. What happens next in the quote above is extremely central. It reads “and there is no

reason to silence that”, which I initially found a curious statement – why write that? But in trying to make it intelligible, a possible interpretation is to think of it as addressing certain critical voices: that Illeris in his 1974-book deliberately toned down a Marxist-socialist perspective; that other perspectives were more important or pressing. The answer to this accusation becomes a definitive ‘no’ from Illeris, but this answer had not been relevant if there was not a felt accusation of the book being ignorant of ‘societal reality’ and in favour of a socialist future.

These examples support a reading of the book as being mainly a response to certain critics; the ‘critical Marxists’ whom the book considers voices that must be listened to – as if it wants to be seen as part of their community; to be seen as a book with an undoubtedly Marxist-socialist perspective. For the 1981-text it becomes important to create this sense of *continuity* and coherence between the two books – that the educational aim of PPL was always to support a Marxist-socialist agenda through the concept of ‘counter-qualification’. This act towards crystallisation of the educational aim makes it appear stable and incontestable. And as mentioned earlier, the title of the 1981-book can be seen as a very powerful statement for the doubters; this book is not on counter-qualification *and* pedagogy, no, it is the pedagogy *of* counter-qualification: a political-pedagogical aim that has its own, integrated pedagogy – they belong together, one does not go without the other.

So, is the proposed continuity of a Marxist discourse warranted in Illeris (1974, 1981)? My own analyses (as well as Borgnakke 1983, 1996 and Keldorff and Salomonsen 1981) provide somewhat a counter-reading to these claims. Though in my reading of the 1974-text, I arrive at a certain prevalent Marxist-reformist discourse, this struggled with pragmatic and learning-oriented desires, and the intention to provide an ‘alternative didactics’ and practical guidance for its implementation; an ‘anti-traditional’ educational model. This was of more immediate importance than aims of emancipating participants from capitalist society. Where the pedagogical-political aims for PPL are constructed as intertwined and inseparable in the 1981-book, these perspectives appeared more separated in 1974, and were not explicitly labelled ‘Marxist’ or ‘socialist’. These differences are levelled out in the 1981-book. The question is how ‘profound’ the Marxist discourse for PPL is enacted by Illeris (1981), how it converses with other desires, or whether it is mainly a matter of satisfying the right readers, the right discourse by using certain ‘words’, but desires lie elsewhere. I have sought to answer these questions by pointing to the discursive struggle between a Marxist, political ‘dogma’ and pragmatic-pedagogical desires for educational change, but it would take further analysis of the authorship of Illeris (which is outside the scope of this thesis), to broaden such knowledge.

One of the discursive effects of the narrative of continuity is that it enables the narrative of loss: once the text has established a continuity over the course of the two books from 1974 and 1981, a break to this continuity, a construction of PPL without the Marxist

frame, becomes a loss. If PPL as it is told into existence here, is a pedagogy intrinsically bound to Marxist aims, that the Marxist-socialist frame gives aim and purpose to PPL, then tales of PPL without this perspective would appear empty and ‘wrong’, and it would be reduced to a technical method, a ‘didactic’ in its narrow technical sense without any clear direction, and without an educational aim to steer after.

Introducing counter-qualification as educational aim

In this section, I will explore the discursive effects to the educational aims and purposes of PPL contingent to the newly introduced concept of ‘counter-qualification’ and the relation to its antagonist, qualification.

In my analysis of Illeris (1974), a main point was that the framing of education and PPL was contiously in relation to ‘qualification’, to its ‘societal function’, underlined by the extensive use and effect of German qualification theory. The same frame is continued in 1981, where ‘qualification’ takes a central role as the purpose of education:

But I must maintain that the fundamental societal function of the public educational system as a whole is the qualification function, which must therefore be taken as the foundational starting point for pedagogical considerations. It is the development of the demands for qualification that have historically been the driver for the development of the educational system, and qualification is still the main task for more or less the entire [den helt overvejende del] educational system. (Illeris 1981: 11)

Here qualification is presented as “the fundamental societal function” and “the main task” for education. Illeris backs up this statement by writing how the demands for qualification “have historically been the drover for the development of the educational system”. This argument, viewing the primary function of education to produce human capital, and supporting this view from a historical argument, I see as determinist and realist, a perspective that is valued in the book as a counter to more abstract, philosophical and utopian thinking. Also, it is not the idea of education that is studied, but rather the “educational system” as a real, societal-sociological construct. The realist perspective can for example be seen in the following quote, where qualification also is positioned as a necessary companion to counter-qualification.

It has not been the intention of this book to build castles in the sky or a utopia. I have tried to analyse and describe what is actually possible and realistic, at least as a guide. The point of departure has been the situation of the current capitalist society with its contradictions and development tendencies. The necessary qualification must be the foundation for counter-qualification. The didactical principles of problem-orientation, participant-direction and exemplary learning are presented on the dual premise that they can both serve the current development in the demands for qualification and give better opportunities for a counter-qualification. (p. 206-207)

In this quote, the work of the book is positioned counter to being “castles in the sky” or “a utopia”, and is instead preoccupied with “what is actually possible and realistic”. I see

these statements as speaking from a perspective, where things that are concrete, real, possible and practical have value opposed to things that are abstract, philosophical, dreamy and utopian, which can be related to similar statements in the book that cherish 'work', 'workers' and 'practice' contrary to 'thinking', 'theory' and 'academics'. I read this as the same anti-academic, anti-elitist discourse at work in the 1974 version, constituted by the combination of progressive educational desires and a socialist-Marxist imperative. Further, in the quote the relation between qualification and counter-qualification is articulated in a way where the former is posed as "necessary" and precedes aspirations for counter-qualification. The quote also tells how the "didactical principles" are built on the "dual premise" of being able to support both qualification and counter-qualification. Thus, the introduction of 'counter-qualification' is still thought of as a dualistic concept, a 'double-qualification', where there can be no counter-qualification without qualification. At the same time, the emphasis has, in the main narrative of the book, shifted in favour of 'counter-qualification', despite still clinging to its twin, qualification. Though this latter function of education is still posed as fundamental, it is formulated with some ambivalence, as qualification is presented as involving "adaptation, making docile [disciplining], distortion and other kinds of oppression" (p. 12). Where in 1974, elements such as "adaptation" and "making docile", were put forth as necessary parts of qualification in capitalist society, these are now seen as "oppression".

The introduction of 'counter-qualification' is formulated as a deliberate move to operate on a "political level" (p. 10) and connects this concept explicitly to the class struggle for workers:

Therefore a concept such as counter-qualification, a counter to the qualification demands of the capital, must be the foundation for a pedagogical theory, which consciously seeks to engage itself in the class struggle on the side of the working class, and the pedagogical principles, models and guide lines must take their legitimacy and form from this concept. (Illeris 1981: 10)

In these formulations of counter-qualification, the educational aim of PPL is clearly articulated: to engage participants in the class struggle on the side of the working class. The invention of the concept of 'counter-qualification' becomes a powerful tool to contain the educational aims of the Marxist-socialist discourse, a contraption that did not exist in the 1974-version (I can think of no similar concept in the 1974-version). This left 'Problem-orientation and participant-direction' (1974) open to critique from Marxist-oriented critics, who did not necessarily see their perspective represented in that book. As written earlier, this new concept narrows down the various interpretations of the educational aims of PPL, by making it stable and through the construction of continuity between the 1974 and 1981-text, the concept appears even stronger; counter-qualification was always there as the educational aim of PPL, and now it is put into discourse; it has a name. More importantly, the name in its newness, appears less ambiguous, e.g. in comparison with

‘creative qualifications’, which for Illeris (1974) contained the double qualification, including the seed to critique and emancipation.

The significance of this new term becomes evident in the last chapter of the book, where Illeris (1981) in a seafarer-analogy subordinates the pedagogical principles of problem-orientation, participant-direction and exemplary learning as *tools, means*, to pursue the educational aim, the distant lantern, of counter-qualification:

They are introduced as tools [hjælpemidler], as motor, compass and map of the sea, the best tools available in the market today, but not as ends in themselves. And project work is only a principle for organisation, a suggestion for a kind of standard that constitutes the framing of how best to make it all work in praxis. (p. 207)

The three principles are formulated as “tools”, and ‘project’ as “only a principle for organisation”. These principles are not ends in themselves, they are means to another end; counter-qualification. This is a crucial point in difference from 1974; that the principles of PPL – problem-orientation, participant-direction and exemplary learning – are explicitly articulated as “tools”, as methods. This perspective was also present in 1974, where Illeris indicated that the principles could serve both “the people” and “the profit”, depending on concrete use (Illeris 1974: 252).

This also means, that without counter-qualification, in this framing, the principles including project work has no beacon to aim by; they would be directionless (or, more accurately, open to other ‘direction-givers’). This allows the final words of the book, directed at the immediate work of the reader: “let the perspective of counter-qualification and not the many principles and guide lines of the book be the point to steer by [rettesnoren].” (p. 209). As written previously, the construction of this tight, intrinsic connection between the four principles, as method, and their educational aim, makes PPL prone to the later narratives of loss, if counter-qualification and the Marxist-socialist perspective should wane: PPL would become directionless; open to whatever educational aim.

The absence of ‘Bildung’ and ‘the university’

A question I could ask, is whether ‘counter-qualification’ might be seen as a kind of ‘Bildung’⁷⁵ – a discourse, or educational purpose, that was also, potentially, available at the time (see Illeris 1981: 29). Or perhaps subjectification, as Biesta calls it? Whether being ‘counter’ to qualification would make these two concepts similar in their reference to a broader notion of education as being more than qualification, more than preparing for work life and focusing on a broader cultural education and liberation? I will not take an a priori understanding of ‘Bildung’, but rather investigate it as various possible ways of

⁷⁵ In the following I use the German term ‘Bildung’ as a synonym to the Danish term ‘dannelse’.

speaking of education along other discourses – so the question is how Bildung is constructed (if at all) and positioned in these two texts by Illeris?

The concept of Bildung ('dannelse') is barely mentioned in the two books, but it is used when Illeris discusses 'didaktik' as educational approach. In 1974, Illeris includes Wolfgang Klafki and his book 'Studien zur Bildungstheorie und Didaktik' from 1963 as seen in the reference list (Illeris 1974: 260), to discuss definitions of 'didaktik' as "the science of teaching" and "the theory of the content of Bildung, its structure and selection" (ibid. 15). Drawing on various Danish educationalists in his discussion, Illeris (1974) ends up departing from 'didaktik' as both "the theory of the Bildung categories" and "educational technology", and instead choosing what he calls "an alternative, critical didaktik" which "analyses educational programmes in their societal context and follows an 'emancipatory (liberating) cognitive [erkendelsesledende] interest'" (Illeris 1974: 18). Here, Illeris refers especially to Jürgen Habermas, but also other authors from Germany such as Freerk Huisken, Oskar Negt together with similar Danish developments from Henning Salling Olesen and Mihail Larsen (Illeris 1974: 18). In 1981, Klafki is gone, but Illeris (1981) presents the same points as in 1974; that 'didaktik' in the 1960s drew on "the German theoretical-pedagogical tradition of Bildung" with reference to C. A. Høeg Larsen (Illeris 1981: 29), which was then challenged by the notion of "educational technology" (ibid. 30). This development in the Danish educational field lead to a conglomerate Illeris calls "Bildung technology", a technical version of Bildung (ibid.). As in the earlier text, Illeris (1981) departs from this position. He instead highlights Freerk Huisken's text "Critique of the bourgeois didaktik and educational economy" (p. 32, my translation from Danish) from 1972 and Oskar Negt's "Sociological imagination and exemplary learning" (p. 32, my translation from Danish) to formulate and pursue a "*didaktik of counter-qualification*" (p. 32, italic in original). Thus, the concept of 'Bildung' has marginal space in the two books.

Going on from this detailed discursive reading of the articulation of 'Bildung', I would like to trace a certain notion of Bildung (thus saying there could be other formulations of Bildung and perhaps even 'Marxist Bildung'). In my reading, there is a certain formulation of Bildung that mainly exists through its absence; 'Bildung' as the bourgeois antagonist of Marxist counter-qualification. In the 1974-book, there are explicit statements as to what PPL is not. When discussing the reference point of the notion of exemplarity, the suggestion to look to 'classical education' and Antique Greece as exemplary cultures to mimic and serve as examples, Illeris (1974) ridicules such a perspective (see also analysis of Illeris 1974) as more or less reactionary and traditional (p. 175-176). He then goes on to use Negt and the German notion of 'kommunikative didaktik' as exemplary reference points (Illeris 1974). 'Bildung' in its specific meaning of 'elitist fine arts Bildung' becomes 'the other', the negative element of PPL. And actively; what it tries to counter (as well as 'qualification', but this has a different status). In the 1981-book there is more or less silence on this notion of 'classical Bildung'. The text does not even entertain the idea of looking to any sort of 'classical education' for reference points; it writes as if such

references never existed. Thus, in this sense, ‘counter-qualification’ is not equal to ‘Bildung’. As seen above, in the discourse of the 1981-book, the ‘didaktik of counter-qualification’ deviates from didaktik as both ‘Bildung theory’ and ‘educational technology’, and this becomes the divisive point, in the way these latter two do not include an analysis of societal conditions, neither aim at supporting the workers in the class struggle.

My reading of the position of ‘Bildung’ (‘dannelse’) for PPL can be expanded by drawing on other texts by Illeris. The book ‘Society and pedagogy’ by Illeris, Laursen and Simonsen (1978, my translation from Danish), explains Bildung (‘dannelse’) under the headline “the decline of a pedagogy of Bildung”, with this diagnosis: “Through a closer analysis, such theories of Bildung [dannelsesteorier] come to function as a legitimisation or justification of the ruling class in a certain society.” (p. 39, my translations). ‘Bildung’ as the knowledge and virtues related to Ancient Greece and the arts, is seen to be on the decline (Illeris, Laursen and Simonsen 1977: 39). In the view of the authors, Bildung is ‘outdated’ from the view of the analysis that it reifies the elitist reign of the ruling class and is therefore no longer relevant in an educational system for the masses (ibid.). In a much later text, Illeris (2019) looks back at the 1970s, when he took part in the establishment of ‘the free high school’ (my translation) in Copenhagen. He comments on the notion of “general Bildung” (my translation of ‘almendannelse’) in relation to high school as being undesirable to which he comments: “This was so certain that we did not even want to discuss it. General Bildung [almendannelsen] was directed at the past.” (p. 59, my translation). He continues that “Bildung was an elitist, and therefore oppressive, concept.” (ibid. my translation).

If I take these statements in relation to the analysed text at hand, the silence could be explained from the notion that the question of ‘Bildung’ was seen as so irrelevant to the naturalised progressive-Marxist discourse of PPL that “we did not even want to discuss it”.

Due to the silence on ‘academicity’ and ‘the university’, it is difficult to conclude from the text itself, what its approach to these notions is (apart from the effect of silence in itself, as shown). In the following quote, Illeris is discussing the nature of problems to enquire into between “practice” and “theory”:

This could also be expressed in the sense, that in project work, praxis and theory must be united, and it is as detrimental for the project if either part of this dialectic is neglected. This duality should be ensured through the problem formulations, and at the very basic [jordnære] practical level this usually means that a special attention must be paid to, on the one hand starting from very concrete problems that one can go out into the every day life [tilværelsen] and investigate, but at the same time also formulating more abstract or theoretical problems which enables a more general and not immediately accessible understanding – problems that are typically formulated with a *why*. (p. 175-176, emphasis in original)

In this quote, the book takes up a reconciling position arguing for a ‘union’ of “praxis and theory” in project work. The text is suggesting the inclusion of both “very concrete problems that one can go out into the every day life and investigate” and “more abstract or theoretical problems”. By posing these two kinds of problems as being two distinct problems, contrary to the intention, the text upholds the split between the two constructs “practice” and “theory”. However, it does not in this quote – as is characteristic for the anti-academic discourse as it appears e.g. in Illeris 1974 – privilege practice over theory and instead proposes an integrated approach. A bit later in the book, Illeris (1981) addresses the criterion of action and writes how it is important that participants “work with problems as they appear in the societal reality and perhaps also try out alternative strategies for action in relation to the concerned problems” (p. 177). Here, there is an emphasis on problems “as they appear in the societal reality”⁷⁶, and the former quote articulated how participants (no specific educational subject is mentioned, instead the impersonal Danish ‘man’ is used as the main pronoun, adhering to PPL as a ‘general didaktik’) should “go out into the everyday life”. These statements read as counter to the university as a closed ‘ivory tower’. At the same time, Illeris also wrote, as presented earlier, that it “may be sufficiently action-oriented to investigate certain theoretical matters through literature studies.” (p. 114). In this way, certain statements suggest that the 1981-book, at points, is not as strong in its anti-academic discourse, as was the 1974-book, where one of the primary purposes was to break from ‘traditional’ teaching and ‘academic’ institutions that were seen as ‘old-school’, theory-oriented and elitist.

A few final words

My reading of ‘A pedagogy of counter-qualification’ can be exemplified with the following quote from the back cover of the text: “*A pedagogy of counter-qualification* is written for all teachers, pupils, students and others who want to break away from traditional forms of teaching and tread new paths – with a socialist perspective.” (Illeris 1981, back cover, emphasis in original). The addition at the end of “with a socialist perspective” is key to the performance of the text: the progressive-pedagogical desires from the 1974-text remain, but they are accompanied by an intensified articulation of a Marxist-socialist language. This language serves to address a dominant Marxist discourse that distributes right and wrong, and what statements are in need of explanation (e.g. pragmatic and pedagogical notions) and not. Thus, the educational aim and purpose of PPL is formulated as ‘counter-qualification’, which is a new term and a strong articulation of a critical-Marxist

⁷⁶ The term ‘societal reality’ is an example of the ‘societalisation’ of everything, that I pointed out in the analysis of Illeris (1974); it is a grammatical indicator for the specific Marxist discourse that reality itself is ‘societal’.

perspective which subordinates problem-orientation, participant-direction and exemplary learning as 'means'. At the same time, the particular construction of 'counter-qualification' continues a human capital discourse of education (critical of e.g. a certain 'Bildung'), and the main desire of the text as discourse actor, as I read it, is, as it was in the 1974-text. Illeris (1981) reproduces the will to develop a "*general didaktik*" (1974: 15, emphasis in original) that is progressive, pragmatic, praxis-oriented and driven by the immediate break-away from a constructed antagonist of 'traditional education'. Thus, without 'Marxism', that in the text partly stabilises the meaning of 'counter-qualification', the articulation of PPL has no educational aim and purpose to steer by and becomes open to stabilisation by other discourses.

'The methodology of project work' (Ingemann, ed. 1985)

The book 'The methodology of project work – an edited volume on meta-theoretical problems in the problem-oriented, interdisciplinary work'⁷⁷ came out in 1985 from the publisher 'Social economics and planning' (my translation) situated at Roskilde University Centre (RUC). It is an edited volume consisting of a 'foreword', an 'introduction' and two parts. The first part is called "Meta-theoretical considerations" with three longer chapters by respectively Jan Holm Ingemann (the editor), Peer Hull Kristensen and Ove Kaj Pedersen. They are the three contributors of the book. The second part is called "On the project work" and outlines the practical consequences of the arguments laid out in the main chapters. The three shorter chapters of the second part are authored by Peer Hull Kristensen (one of them) and Jan Holm Ingemann (two of them). In this analysis, I will treat the book as a whole, but also go into each of the chapters as they are very different, have different relevance for the project at hand and each have their own author. Texts within a text. But first a few words on how this text came to be one out of ten analysed.

This book had a different way into the assemblage than the previous texts. I had never heard of it before, neither had I seen any other text citing it. It was on one of my occasional trips to the university library to scan the book shelves for anything interesting, that this book came into my hands. Looking at the cover and the title, there was no recognition (and at that point, I knew quite a few texts on PPL), so it sparked my curiosity. Turning the pages, the book read mainly as a discussion of project work as research and it explored the meta-theoretical boundaries of transdisciplinary research. Though the contributions of the edited volume differ in their aim and purpose, it is presented in the introduction as a book that seeks to formulate a metatheory – an epistemology - for project work and thus make it a 'proper' interdisciplinary research paradigm. At first, my reading of this text labelled it 'non-pedagogical' from a perspective that divides 'research' and 'education and pedagogy' as two separate realms⁷⁸. My conclusion was that this book

⁷⁷ Translated from original Danish title: 'Projektarbejdets metodik – en antologi om videnskabs-teoretiske problemer i det problemorienterede, tværvidenskabelige arbejde'. All quotes in this analysis are my translations from Danish.

⁷⁸ It has become a common notion (in job ads, in organisation, strategies and how academics see their tasks) to divide the functions of the university into research, education and outreach (also 'extension' and 'impact') (see Masschelein and Simons 2018). This was also a divide that constituted my understanding of the everyday at the university, both as a student and a teacher (and still does). My understanding did not change until my close colleagues challenged me on this split notion of the roles of the university (where I saw myself researching the 'educational-pedagogical' part), and presented me with the article by Masschelein and Simons (2018), in which the endeavours of the university are integrated into a concept of 'study'. Had this not happened, I

was not relevant, as I was looking for ‘pedagogical’ texts. It was a mistake to spend time reading it, I thought. Luckily, the text ended up staying in the assemblage thanks to a widening of my concept of ‘pedagogy’ made possible by the meeting with critical questions from fellow academics and the reading of Masschelein and Simons (2018) in which research, education and ‘extension’ is integrated into the concept of ‘study’ as what a university should do.

Having included the text, does it then live up to the question of ‘use’? Looking at the foreword, ‘The methodology of project work’ is directed at students and academics doing PPL (p. 2), and its second part reads as a more practical part directed for use in project work. Thus, it was ‘written for use’, according to itself. That I find little indicators for ‘actual use’, that is, second editions and mention in other texts, has become a reason to include this in the assemblage; why was this seemingly ‘forgotten’ text not ‘used’ (as far as indications go) or (to my knowledge) mentioned in later texts? And how does it produce the educational aims and purposes of PPL, and does this relate discursively to the other PPL-texts?

A text that should not have been published?

So, how does it come into existence, this text at hand? A brief tour of what meets the eye (in this case, my eyes), might give some impression of ‘what it is’. “168” it reads at middle of the bottom on the last page of the book. Seven chapters and three authors. It calls itself “an edited volume”. Out of the seven chapters, four of them (more than half) are authored by Jan Holm Ingemann, who is also the editor of the book (p. 1, my reproduction of the list of content without page numbers):

Foreword

PART I: META-THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Jan Holm Ingemann: Introduction

Peer Hull Kristensen: Fantasy and creativity as methodological foundation

Ove K. Pedersen: Yet another problem

Jan Holm Ingemann: An exemplary meta-theory

PART II: ON THE PROJECT WORK

Peer Hull Kristensen: The liberal creativity

Jan Holm Ingemann: An example of exemplary project work

Jan Holm Ingemann: Research and dissemination

would probably have discarded ‘The methodology of project work’ as part of the assemblage (and thus missed valuable knowledge).

What does it tell the reader that one person wrote more than half of the chapters in an anthology? Nothing, perhaps. Flicking through the pages of the book, the eye meets white paper with black typewriter font on it. After having flipped through the first two chapters with scarcity of air between the lines, suddenly the third chapter arrives on page 63 and the lines are now allowed to breathe, to such a degree that twice as many lines could have appeared on the pages. At the end of the chapter on page 105 the lines retake their cramped position, huddling up on the pages, with the beginning of chapter 4. The airy space between the lines might have lessened, but instead it has gathered at the bottom of the pages leaving around 5 centimetres bottom margin, while the top has to suffice with 0,5 cm. Warning, seasickness might occur! Throughout the book the words and lines seem to have an ongoing struggle with the paper on where to position themselves. This taken into account with the numerous spelling errors along a third chapter that is generous with ‘name-dropping’, but has no reference list or mentioning of books or page numbers (the other chapters have reference lists), leaves me, a reader, with a feeling that perhaps this so-called ‘edited volume’ was not ripe for publishing? I do not sit alone with that feeling. The editor is aware of it and ‘reveals’ this in what I read as a ‘passive-aggressive’ note in the foreword:

It should not be denied that it has sometimes been a frustrating task to head this volume. It was no problem getting the discussions started. But to procure the written contributions was difficult. Actually, the volume has been delayed one year according to the original schedule, and quite a few planned contributions did not make it into the final publication.
(p. 3)

The editor hopes for an “expanded and better second edition”⁷⁹ (p. 3), making me think whether this book is the opposite; ‘narrow’ and ‘not too good’? Finishing off, the editor salutes the two contributors that made it, while at the same time, implicitly, shaming those who never made it to book; “Finally, I should like to thank the authors who actually took my reminders seriously.” (p. 3).

What is the point here? What does the form of a book has to do with the discourses on PPL and its educational aims? It has to do with the legitimacy of PPL, and the ways in which it has been written into existence. It makes me think whether this book is exemplary of ‘PPL-texts’ in the sense that much of what I have seen (and analysed) so far on PPL have been half-finished local writings, essays and working papers whose legitimacy often rests on ‘the experience’ of the authors or ‘their interest’ in PPL. It is also possible that the publishing practices within Academia have changed in a way, where more local, informal texts were the norm in the 1980s, and that this looks ‘strange’ to a young researcher, who works in a university environment in the early 2020s, where international peer-reviewed articles are the main currency. At this point it is beyond the scope of this

⁷⁹ I have not been able to find a second edition.

project to investigate the academic publishing practices. For now, I must pose it as an open question, whether the local and informal character of the PPL-texts, I have encountered from the 1970s and 1980s is uniquely tied to ‘PPL-writings’, or the way academics published their works at those points in time. I do wonder, though, what happened to peer-reviewed literature on PPL by ‘experts’ or researchers within fields such as Pedagogy and Educational studies? This question will be taken into the ongoing analysis.

In the book at hand, the trustworthiness of the book and its points are tied to the authors as academic persons, as the editor states in the foreword:

When I find this book important, it is because its problematisations and tips and tricks come from people who, through several years, have held an interest in the methodology of project work and have followed the development closely – two of the contributors of the book have even, as students, been a part of the very beginning of RUC and AUC. The contributors are worth listening to. (p. 2)⁸⁰

Here, the ethos of the authors is attributed to their “*interest* in the methodology of project work” (my emphasis), their ‘closeness to the subject’ and ‘having been students’ at universities with PPL as their alleged educational model. Legitimacy is based on the extent of ‘nativeness’ of the author. There is no mention of the research merits of the authors, which I read as related to the following (constructed) truth; to be an expert in PPL you need to have some experience and a strong interest in it, never mind research merits.

In terms of the situatedness of the text, it positions itself as part of “The Department for Social Economics and Planning” at Roskilde University Centre (RUC). Its argued *raison-d’être* is closely connected to local discussions at this department, as stated by Ingemann in the introduction of the book: “The background for this book began with discussions 2-3 years back in relation to the Department for Social Economics and Planning, RUC.” (p. 6). Most of the exemplification throughout the book also relates to ‘RUC’, and sometimes, but to a lesser degree, Aalborg University Centre (AUC). The way I read the text, the universities of ‘RUC’ and ‘AUC’ are not made important as institutions; RUC is the main case (examples are drawn from the praxis there), and AUC mainly figures as ‘a similar university’ with similar approaches to research and education. AUC and Aalborg mainly come alive in Ingemann’s chapter in his references, where several publications from AUC are drawn on ‘positively’, that is, it is research Ingemann is inspired by (not critiquing).

Citation practices and questions of genre

The book is a first edition, first print (stated directly in the colophon) published through the local departmental publishers “Social Economics and Planning”. It is addressed, as

⁸⁰ “RUC” and “AUC” are acronyms of Roskilde University Centre (RUC) and Aalborg University Centre (AUC).

will be seen, at local discussions aimed at ‘students’ and ‘researchers’ (the foreword p. 2-3 solely speaks of “researchers” and “students” as addressees, e.g. not ‘teachers’) at the department and the social sciences at the university (RUC). While I have argued that this text is ‘similar to other PPL texts’ in its primitive layout, local situatedness and knowing essayistic style, it is also different from other PPL-texts; its citation practices are different. This is the first text in the larger analysis that frequently refers to philosophers – several of them English and American - and brings quotes in English. In the book, citations include Bertrand Russell (in the ‘Introduction’), Paul Feyerabend (Kristensen’s chapter 2), Karl Popper (Introduction and most chapters), Thomas Kuhn (Introduction and most chapters), Michael Polanyi (Kristensen’s chapter) and Louis Althusser (Pedersen’s chapter 3). There are also other kinds of citations, many from a continental, philosophical tradition: Marxist scholars and postmodernist thinkers, that will be explored in sections below, when dwelling on each chapter. To put this into perspective in the wider assemblage, texts such as Illeris (1974) and Hultengren (1976/1981) rarely cite philosophers and when quotes occur they are mostly from Danish works, Danish translations of books, Nordic works, or German originals.

Ingemann, in his chapter, touches on the use of references, which he connects to “the almost dialectical regrowth and withering of university Marxism” (p. 107) and its critique of “positivism” as scientific approach and its associated “‘bourgeois’ scientific ideals” (p. 107). Of the ‘university Marxism’, he writes:

First a complete rejection of the ideals of the bourgeois science sciences [videnskaber] – including their epistemological foundations – and thereafter a tendency to return to these ideals out of legitimisation needs in times of crisis. During the period of rejection, the heretics – as it has happened so many times in history when seeking to break new ground – have been seen as one, whereby many interesting philosophers of science were so badly treated that their thought-provoking contributions have been overlooked – in the same way that Marx’ many contributions throughout history have been rejected, because it was Marx, and thus a – for the bourgeois society – dangerous person that once proposed these ideas. (p. 107)

Ingemann’s own contributions in the book can be seen as a response to his diagnosis that “interesting philosophers were so badly treated that their thought-provoking contributions have been overlooked”. Thus, he draws in a range of philosophers of science in his chapters, e.g. Thomas Kuhn and Karl Popper (p. 12). But also Marx is used by Ingemann, as a citation he discusses with (p. 128). The point here, as I read it, relates to the aim of the volume; to formulate a ‘scientific’ version of project work, which in this case entails listening to the work and ideas of “interesting philosophers”, despite their perceived political affiliations. To put *Wissenschaft* before politics. The text, legitimised by the world constructed in the quote, manages to position itself as ‘the rational middle-position’ on its own manufactured scale of the ‘university Marxists’ at one end and the ‘bourgeois society’ on the other.

In terms of genre, the book is hard to categorise, which might be due to its unfinished character (and the diversity of the style of the three authors), but as a text, I mainly read it as discussion paper for a research community interested in developing PPL as research methodology. At the same time, students are addressed, and especially the second part of the book speaks directly to the student. The book tells the reader what it is not; “The book is not thought of as an encyclopaedia or introduction” (p. 2). It wants to make the reader “use their fantasy” and judgment; make students and researchers reconsider their PPL praxis. Though it mainly sees itself as a text for discussion, the second part, “On the project work”, is written in a more instructive tone and speaks directly to the student (especially Kristensen’s chapter 5, which repeatedly speaks in the second person, to “you”), which makes it (in spite its intentions) feel like a handbook in some sense. The second part is only around 30 pages long (out of 168), which tells me that the most important part of the book is the discussion of and contribution to problem-oriented, interdisciplinary project work as *scientific inquiry*. The aim of ‘discussing’ and not ‘commanding’ or ‘instructing’ of the book supports its scientific endeavour, its notion of ‘research’, modelling how it perceives of PPL as research practice; to stay open and not close down, but keep asking questions on the quest for better knowledge, better PPL-practices at university.

Making PPL (meta)scientific

In this section, I will go into more detail on the aims of the book, and how it constructs certain ‘problems’ with certain ‘solutions’ offered, and how this relates to the discursive production of PPL and its educational aims.

The problem motivating the book (Ingemann, ed. 1985) comes from the experience of the authors that student projects have decreasing quality (p. 6). This is attributed to a lack of discussion of the nature of PPL, which, according to the book, results in a narrow paradigm for ‘relevant inquiry problems’:

Practice has developed in a way where new students without critique and reflection use an already determined paradigm for their project work – a paradigm that has been simplified because of, amongst other things, a lack of accumulation of experience and discussion [spelling error]. (p. 6)

Ingemann does not go further into what this “paradigm” stands for in the introduction, but from my reading of the book as a whole, the same ‘paradigm’ for ‘choosing problems’ is mentioned by Pedersen, who criticises the current process of formulating relevant inquiry problems at Roskilde University: “Between the problem makers of the outer world and our problem formulations no filter exists; no methodological conceptualisation.” (p. 69), and he continues; “without any reflection or conceptualisation [bearbejdning], problems have usually been chosen freely from the catalogue of problems, which the current political and ideological struggles have 1) pointed at and 2) has formulated as problems.”

(p. 70). The paradigm mentioned before could then, as constructed by the book, be articulated the tendency of students choosing ‘problems’ that are defined by “political and ideological struggles”, which remain unquestioned in the ongoing work and are not subject to critical reflection and conceptualisation. Thus, the book constructs a certain development leading up to its publication, a deterioration of PPL that calls for change (p. 7). Against this narrated background, the book constructs its argument; that “problem-oriented, interdisciplinary work”, as mentioned in the book title, has resigned to the uncritical adherence to a paradigm of latest (political) fashion, and it is therefore in dire need of a meta-theoretical foundation, a methodology, a philosophy of science. This is where the contributions of the book come in. The contributions from each of the three authors can be seen as responses to this articulated meta-theoretical ‘crisis’ of PPL. It needs to be made ‘scientific’.

Ingemann, in his chapters, starts with an engagement with Marx and “historical materialism” (p. 108), which from a lack of ‘proper’ scientific methodology leads him to “the exemplary method” by Oskar Negt (p. 109), which also, Ingemann argues, needs a “meta-theoretical foundation” (p. 18). The ‘exemplary method’, Ingemann writes, was formulated as partly a response to “the demand to start from current, societal problems primarily formulated in relation to underprivileged groups.” (p. 108-109). Inspired especially by the work of a colleague at Aalborg University Centre, Lennart Nørreklit (p. 133), Ingemann arrives at a certain version of the “exemplary method”, which as “research praxis”, and model for PPL, aims to “formulate real [reale] problems and thereby ultimately contribute to explanation of the constitution of actual reality [den reale virkelighed].”⁸¹ (p. 20). Building on “Marx” and “historical materialism” (p. 127), Ingemann thus sees “concrete” and “theoretical” problems as “symptoms” that through “conceptualisation” are to be formulated into “real problems” (p. 128). In Pedersen’s chapter (he only has one, chapter 3, p. 63-105), he suggests what he calls “a paradigm of clues” (p. 94) from the scholar Carlo Ginzburg, who draws on Freud and Marx to focus on “clues” that point to something “more” (p. 97). Pedersen furthermore draws explicitly on the thinking of Althusser, Conan Doyle (Sherlock Holmes) and Habermas. The ‘paradigm of clues’ is formulated into a so-called semiotic “reading strategy” that aims at “breaking a given frame of meaning, which enables the construction of a different one.” (p. 105). The implied default activity of Pedersen’s formulation of PPL (as ‘a paradigm of clues’ and ‘reading strategy’) is ‘reading theory’, which is very different from the texts analysed until now, which favour ‘empirical work’.

⁸¹ Ingemann uses the word “reale problemer”, which cannot be translated directly, as he operates with two words for the English ‘real’, e.g in the sentence “den reale virkeligheds constitution” (p. 20).

Kristensen's main chapter (Ingemann, ed. 1985, chapter 2, p. 5-27) has the full title "Fantasy and imagination as methodological foundation – tracing the epistemological anarchist" (p. 28). In the chapter, Kristensen draws on a range of thinkers including Nietzsche, Foucault, Kierkegaard and Polanyi (see his reference list p. 61-62) and conceptualises the subject (the one *doing*) of PPL as an "epistemological anarchist" (p. 28) contrasted to "the scientific conformist" (p. 35). Emphasising 'creativity' and 'imagination' as central concepts for research, Kristensen, as compared to Ingemann and Pedersen, places importance on the individual and sees scientific inquiry as "your own work on yourself" and writes that through "experiments" the individual (addressed through a "you") may "test new forms of action, new points and new contexts for yourself." (p. 60).

Despite the difference in the three responses of Ingemann, Pedersen and Kristensen, they all respond to the same 'crisis', that is, they provide an answer to the question of what PPL as an interdisciplinary research paradigm would look like, and what aims PPL would pursue as research praxis. Both the construction of 'the crisis' and the responses are achieved by positioning other, and former, approaches to PPL as antagonists, which I will explore further in the next section.

Constructing the other: 'the pedagogical'

In the process of formulating PPL as a certain approach to research, the book constructs certain 'others', namely 'the pedagogical', which come to act as a negative mirror of the contributions in this volume. How these discursive moves of power happen and their effects is the focus of the following pages.

In Ingemann's main chapter "An exemplary meta-theory" (p. 106), he introduces the concept "the exemplary method" (p. 108) as his answer to building a meta-theoretical foundation for project work as a kind of science. Ingemann argues that 'the exemplary method' first and foremost emerged as a "pedagogical method" (p. 109), though it later became used in 'research-like' projects, but this aspect was never developed much (*ibid.*). As stated in the previous section, Ingemann relates the use of 'the exemplary method', in its 'non-scientific' form, to "current, societal problems primarily formulated in relation to underprivileged groups" (p. 108-109), which he in the following quote shows the consequence of:

The starting point is the claim that the historical materialism lacks a meta-theoretical [videnskabsteoretisk] foundation, which makes it unfit for the ongoing scientific work. Here, the exemplary method is, among other things, seen as an answer to this flaw. But, it is pointed out [spelling error], the exemplary method has not gotten any meta-theoretical, but

only a pedagogical foundation, which has effectively lead to a transformation of the Marxist theorist into an action-theoretical practitioner [aktionsteoretisk praktiker]. (p. 18)⁸²

I read this quote as saying that the hitherto use of “the exemplary method” with its “pedagogical foundation” has been ‘non-scientific’ due to its lack of a “meta-theoretical” foundation. This ‘non-scientific’ position is here given the name “action-theoretical practitioner”. No specific names are mentioned at this point, but I find it a possible reading to perceive this as a strong critique of certain “action-theoretical” authors from a perspective that divides ‘Marxists’ into two: those who pursues ‘pedagogical’ aims from a non-scientific perspective, and those (including Ingemann’s chapters) who understands the meta-theoretical flaw in the approaches with nothing but a ‘pedagogical foundation’, and therefore works to remedy this problem from a ‘scientific’ standpoint.

In the following, Ingemann continues the positioning of his perspective, which is here constructed in the same frame as mentioned earlier, where two poles make a continuum on which the ‘creator’ places themselves as ‘the rational middle-position’. On the one pole, there is “traditional research praxis” in which the disciplines direct ‘relevant problems’ from a deductive point of view (p. 19). At the other end of the pole, Ingemann places the ‘exemplary method’ in its ‘pedagogical’ form:

As an anti-thesis to this research praxis, a praxis is presented, which works with concrete problems, that is, problems defined in an by the societal praxis. This has typically (since the end of the 60s) been problems for underprivileged social groups. But it is pointed out that the choice of problem and theory becomes arbitrary, because there is no theoretical foundation that can decide what problems have relevance, and because there is no link between problem and theory. (p. 19)

Again, the ‘non-scientific’ character of the ‘exemplary method’ is repeated from the alleged “arbitrary” relation between problem and theory. This is a flaw in the eyes of Ingemann, who, on the next page comments on a “genuine research praxis”, the strategically constructed ‘middle-position’, and what this might look like: “Such a research praxis demands genuine interdisciplinarity, and here eclectism [spelling error] is rejected, because such an approach does not ensure a logical connection between the elements of a theory.” (p. 20). From the perspective of Ingemann, “eclectism” is ‘non-scientific’ due to its ‘lack of logical coherence’.

As part of stating the ‘underdevelopment’ of PPL as a fitting model for research, Ingemann discredits the ‘pedagogical work’ on the exemplary method at Roskilde University and Aalborg University, and comes closer to naming ‘the others’:

RUC and AUC were both built on the foundation laid by the discussions on interdisciplinarity and problem-orientation (6) and thus on pedagogical models that are based on the

⁸² In this translation, I have corrected a typing error in the Danish original, making the word ‘påges’ (should be ‘påpeges’, I assume) into “pointed put”.

exemplary method (7). Consequently, resources were spent on developing the pedagogical elements of the exemplary method – though many will probably think it was too few, and that it failed (8). But little effort was made to give it a broader, meta-theoretical foundation to make it useful in a research praxis. (p. 109)

The statements of this quote do several things. Ingemann constructs the hitherto work on PPL, here named “the exemplary method” and related to “interdisciplinarity and problem-orientation” as mainly “pedagogical”, which here becomes intelligible from a conceptual split between ‘pedagogy’ and ‘research’, making PPL, in such a framing, thus far, irrelevant to ‘research’ as it has no “meta-theoretical foundation”. Not only is PPL constructed as ‘only pedagogical’ (and thus; not scientific), the ‘pedagogical development’ of PPL is also positioned as “a failure”. Concerning ‘who’ the critique from Ingemann is directed at, thus far there have only been broad categorisations of ‘those’ connected to ‘action-theory’ Marxists, those ‘pedagogical’ actors with no meta-theoretical for their arbitrary PPL-praxis, but here a reference to ‘the who’ is made indirectly in the quote through the in-text notes. The number “7” in the quote relating to “the pedagogical models” that RUC and AUC were built on, directs to the following endnote in the text; “(7) In the context of Danish universities, especially developed by Knud Illeris and Eva Hultengren.” (p. 133). The cat is out of the bag; names have been put to the category of ‘the pedagogical’, the ‘other’ in this text. In the mentioned note, it reads as though the work of “Illeris” is equalled to ‘the pedagogical model’ of RUC, while “Hultengren” is made fundamental to the development of the educational model at AUC. There are not direct mentions of specific work or publications from Illeris and Hultengren, but as the only authors mentioned by name, they become the representatives of a ‘pedagogical understanding’ of PPL, in a slightly derogatory sense (and developments that have “failed”), as seen from the ‘university and PPL as *Wissenschaft* and research’-perspective of the book.

Another mention of certain ‘actors’ in the quote, is where Ingemann writes that “many” would “probably” think that the pedagogical development of the exemplary method was a failure. It is unclear exactly who “many”⁸³ refers to, but the end-note gives one example; “(8) See e.g. Søren Keldorff and Per Salomonsen: *Knowledge changes the world... Aalborg 1981.*”⁸⁴ (p. 133, my translation). In the sentence there is a “probably”, though, which could show that there is some uncertainty bound to the statement of the critique of the pedagogical work at AUC and RUC. The act of putting specific names in endnotes (instead of in the text itself), I read as a strategy of toning down a full-on direct critique of Illeris and Hultengren, and what they represent for the discourse of the book.

⁸³ One possible answer to who ‘many’ might be can be found in Borgnakke (1983), who presents the ‘critiques of project pedagogy’ by several authors including Keldorff and Salomonsen (1981).

⁸⁴ My translation of the book ‘*Viden forandrer verden*’ by Keldorff and Salomonsen (1981).

A final point to make from the quote is that it constructs the discussions of “interdisciplinarity” and “problem-orientation” related to the two universities, as “Marxist”. This happens textually through the note mentioned in the text, “6”, which is a reference to the text “An analysis of Marxist schools within political science” (Ingemann, ed. 1985: 133, my translation from Danish) by John Houman Sørensen, Aalborg 1975, positioned as the text that may tell “the history behind” (ibid. 133) the ‘foundations’ of RUC and AUC (ibid.).

In this study of the constructions of PPL over time, this book is the last to, unproblematically and without the use of humour or a narrative of loss, to position the emergence of the two universities in Roskilde and Aalborg, and PPL as explicitly ‘Marxist’. As indicated in the introduction to this analysis, Ingemann addresses the use of Marx directly, claiming ‘Marx’ to be a relevant reference still, although implying that the use of him has become troublesome and illegitimate (p. 107).

PPL as research practice – a ‘Humboldtian’ quest for knowledge?

The starting point is that the purpose of the sciences is knowing [erkendelse]. Driven by curiosity and the eternal desire for truth and therefore certainty, researcher seek to categorise their surroundings in comprehensible and predictable categories. (p. 113)

In this quote from Ingemann’s chapter (chapter 4), he lays out, what he calls “the abstract purpose of the sciences” (p. 113). Although nuancing this claim and positing ‘truth’ as a difficult matter, Ingemann makes it explicit that “knowing”, or “erkendelse”⁸⁵ as it is written in Danish, is the primary aim and purpose for the sciences (and thus also PPL).

This basic assumption of the aims of scientific research is carried on in the construction of PPL through the notion of ‘the exemplary method’, making it an interdisciplinary research methodology. Importantly, this includes ‘education’ and ‘pedagogy’ at university; these realms become one with ‘research’ in PPL, as it is constructed here. Or, rather, research and the pursuit of knowledge *is* the pedagogy for a community of students and researchers. And this is my reading and my wording, as the book, as shown, has a sharp divide between their own position, with *Wissenschaft* and research, and then ‘pedagogy’ as its antagonist. The construction of ‘research as education’ shows in the introduction, where the activities of students and researchers are equated in a reflection on the ‘use’ of the book:

⁸⁵ This word is difficult to translate and from time to time I keep the original Danish phrasing. “Erkendelse” as I read it here relates to the cognitive acquisition of knowledge, the process that changes the way we think, what I have called “knowing”. ‘Knowledge’ is a central associated word as e.g. ‘epistemology’ in Danish is called ‘erkendelsesteori’, the ‘theory of knowing’.

At the same time, it is the hope that its meta-scientific suggestions may come to work as a catalyst for discussions among researchers in the interdisciplinary research environments. After all, the cognitive knowledge process [erkendelsesprocessen] of students and researchers is not all that different – one does not change one’s praxis of knowing just because of graduation! (p. 2-3)

In this quote, the “cognitive knowledge process” of students and researchers are equated, and their “praxis” is the same. From this understanding, the pedagogy of the university, that is, what the university wants for its ‘students’ and the form it takes, is *doing research* within a scientific community in the quest for knowledge (‘erkendelse’).

I read the construction of PPL in the book as dominated by what Krejsler (2006) has referred to as a “Humboldtian’ discourse” in the sense that it relates to the formulations of the university by Wilhelm von Humboldt in the beginning of the 19th century entailing the “unity” of “*teachers and learners*”, “*research and teaching*”, “*knowledge*” (Pritchard: 510 2004: in Krejsler 2006: 213, emphasis in original). There are also ways in which the book at hand differs from the ‘Humboldtian’ here. The subjects of the book are ‘students’ and ‘researchers’ (not ‘teachers’ and ‘learners’) and the more detailed formulations of research of the three authors vary. Most notably, Ingemann and Pedersen both place significant importance on specific relations between Wissenschaft and society qua their Marxist perspectives from respectively Marx (‘historical materialism’) and Althusser. In spite of the differences between the contributions of the three authors, the overall point of articulating PPL as a form of interdisciplinary research including both what students and researchers do at university, is a general one for this text.

Conclusions

‘The methodology of project work’ (Ingemann, ed. 1985) is one of the few discourse actors in the assemblage to produce PPL as ‘research praxis’, not as a praxis that only ‘mimicks’ research, but has educational aims outside Wissenschaft, but a praxis that shares aim with scientific research; the quest for knowledge – to come to know. Based on ‘the use’ of the book, it was not widely spread, nor re-printed or drawn much on later, and similarly its discursive production of PPL as research methodology for the furthering of knowledge at university, is a marginalised perspective in the constructions of PPL over time.

The most dominant author of the edited volume (and also the editor), Ingemann, seeks to develop an identified missing meta-theory, an epistemology for PPL under the name ‘the exemplary method’. This ‘missing theoretical base’ is appointed to the hitherto work on PPL, which is dubbed ‘pedagogical’ and positioned as ‘non-scientific’ and instead ‘political and ideological’. From the ‘pedagogical’ perspective, problems are directly imported from actors outside university, and often problems of ‘underprivileged groups’ in society. Though few names are put to this position, ‘Illeris’ and ‘Hultengren’ becomes

the name-given representatives of this 'non-scientific' development of PPL as 'pedagogy'. Ingemann, thus positions his contributions as the 'natural middle position' from two poles of 'traditional science' on the one side, celebrating theoretical deduction, and seldom questioning its societal constitution, and 'concrete problems' on the other hand represented by the 'exemplary method' in its non-scientific pedagogical form. Ingemann's contribution focuses on 'real problems', a conglomeration drawing on Marxist historical materialism and various philosophers of science. Pedersen suggests what he calls 'a paradigm of clues', making the researcher into a detective looking for clues to a 'meaning-giving' frame. Finally, Kristensen (one out of the three authors), pursues a different path from Ingemann and Pedersen as he formulates PPL from a perspective drawing, among others, Nietzsche, Foucault and Feyerabend, conceptualising the researcher as 'epistemological anarchist' celebrating creativity, chaos and imagination. Despite their differences all three authors respond to a constructed crisis of PPL, bound to mainly Roskilde University, where the quality of projects has decreased. The answer to this crisis are three different formulations, but all informed by a 'Humboldtian' notion of the university, seeking to make PPL a scientific form of inquiry in the quest for knowledge and self-formation.

'The reality of project work' (Nielsen and Jensenius 1996)

This is a reading of the booklet 'The reality of project work'⁸⁶, written by Jens Nielsen and Niels Jensenius and published by the Student council at Roskilde University Centre (RUC) in 1996. Ulriksen (1997) calls the text "an introduction to the work in projects written by RUC-students, for RUC-students." (p. 70, my translation). The inclusion of this text comes from a curiosity of texts that have students as their senders – what discourses are at play here? Will it be 'student-like'? (and what would that mean?) Will the booklet present a narrative along the lines of 'a unique insight on the reality of project work' as the title suggests? The Student union at Roskilde University has been a central institution in introducing new students to their study life at the university, and also to its pedagogy – is this book such an introduction?

Alongside the curiosity of a text with student authors, this particular booklet has also been included because other texts indicate that it has been used widely to introduce new students to PPL at Roskilde University. Christensen (2013) places the booklet centrally in her work and uses it as the starting point for her genealogical investigation of 'group work':

The following analysis will take its point of departure in the formulations of the pamphlet *The reality of project work*, which was, for long time, given to students prior to their first semester at RUC, and whose formulations are an explicit form of the wording of the current study regulations (see e.g. RUC 2006/2008). (Christensen 2013: 38, emphasis in original, my translation)

Christensen writes how the booklet (she names it "pamphlet") has, "for a long time", been "given to students prior to their first semester" and has affected the content of later study regulations into the late 2000s. Olsen and Pedersen (1997) use the booklet as a source of information, and Ulriksen (1997) includes it in his analysis and categorises it as part of "newer introductions to project pedagogy at RUC" (p. 14, my translation). As such, 'The reality of project work' is positioned as 'the student text' of the assemblage, but what this means, and how it comes to produce the educational aims of PPL is a question for a more detailed discourse-oriented reading.

A student booklet: Initiation to 'the real RUC'

The text at hand calls itself a "booklet" ('hæfte', p. 6) and comes in a 38 glossy pages A5-format with a Times New Roman-looking font. The text was produced as an internal

⁸⁶ My translation of the original Danish title 'Projektarbejdets Virkelighed'. All quotes from this text are my translations, unless stated otherwise.

booklet at Roskilde University Centre (RUC), directed at first year students, as read on the back cover: “This booklet is written for students in the basic studies programme, but it is recommendable to all who wants to know more about the project pedagogy of RUC.” The sender of the text is discernible on the back cover, where a logo reads “SR”, which I assume refers to ‘Studenterrådet’ (‘The Student Council’) at RUC. The booklet cannot be seen as a ‘publication’ as such, but rather an internal print; there is no colophon, no visible information on ‘publishers’ or year of publication. Situating the text in terms of time is possible, though, by reading the foreword, which is signed with date and names of those who also perform as the authors: “RUC, October 21, 1996 *Jens Christian Nielsen og Niels Hasselgaard Jensenius*” (p. 6, emphasis in original).

Thus, the booklet is written by students; in the foreword there is a ‘we’ speaking, the authors of the booklet, who write that the basis of the booklet is “our own experience with studying at RUC” (p. 5), and on p. 21 it reads “we as students” creating a ‘we’. A booklet by, and for, students. The authors are not positioned as ‘just students’, though, they also appear as ‘experts’ and ‘experienced’ students, as the booklet is written in an instructive tone, but with very little references. Especially the foreword and the epilogue have, what I sense as a moralising tone almost as if older siblings are initiating smaller brothers or sisters into a club or circle of trust:

At RUC there is constant debate on how to develop and improve the professionalism of projects [projektfagligheden], which means that you cannot expect a ready-made solution to your studies. You have decided to study at RUC; it is not always easy, but with a bit of enthusiasm and reflection it is, in our opinion, without a doubt a both challenging and rewarding way of studying. (p. 6)

I read a slightly patronising tone in the implied assumption that the reader is someone who would “expect a ready-made solution”, and that ‘it should be easy to study’. I wonder what ‘voices’ are being responded to here? Later in the analysis, I will go further into the way ‘the student’ is imagined, but note that they are assumed to be ‘enthusiastic’ and ‘reflective’ and not expect their studies to be easy. This tone is also prevalent in the epilogue, where the student reader is made responsible for ‘making the best of it’:

Of course it is overwhelming that you, from the first day, *can* and *must* take this responsibility on yourself – because we know it is an immense task, and it is something you should learn in collaboration with your fellow students. But we think it is an opportunity you, as a RUC-student, should seize and make the best of. (p. 36, emphasis in original)

In this quote, the authors recognise the potential pressure of bearing the responsibility of one’s education alone through the wording “of course”, although this is then followed by a “But” which makes the previous statement symbolical and the message remains; at this university you alone are to make the best of your studies, and even though it is tough, it holds great rewards at the end. The student at RUC is here constructed as very independent. What I would like to notice in the two quotes is *how* the booklet accomplishes

legitimacy around its statements: what is the knowledge base of the text and its truth-telling? In both quotes the stated outcomes and promises of problem-oriented project work at RUC are based on the opinion of the authors; “in our opinion” and “we think”. The foreword reads, as indicated, that the booklet is based in the *experience* of the authors and that it is “our take on what we believe problem-oriented project work *can be*” (p. 5, emphasis in original), but nowhere does the text draw on examples from practice; the bulk part is conclusions and statements that makes the text read as an ‘expert book’, where someone holds an expertise that allows them to use their own opinion as legitimate knowledge. The statements of the text rarely have any explicit sender apart from the authors, which again is typical of what might be called ‘an expert text’. The only citations *in* the main text are to William Kilpatrick and John Dewey (on the final pages of the pamphlet there are ‘suggestions for further reading’, p. 37).

Looking at the cover of the text, it looks to be graphically designed on a computer; the background of the front and back looks like something that resembles white marble with greyish crevices. On the front cover this ‘marble’ is broken up at the upper half of the page and beneath a reddish-brown brick wall is ‘revealed’ with the writing “The reality of project work” on it. The back cover has a dark grey text box in front of the marble background stating the content of the booklet. What might be the possible significance of this layout? One reading is to view the marble as something ‘fine’ and ‘elitist’ related to this material as being more expensive than for example bricks. It can also be understood as ‘classical’ in a sense, where it refers to ancient Greece and pillars of marble. Underneath this marble surface on the front cover a brick wall is exposed in a way that looks like someone cracked through the marble. When the text “The reality of project work” is taken into the reading, the brick wall could be ‘reality’, whereas the marble then makes out some ideal surface, perhaps posited as a symbol of the ideals of the university? Of the teachers? It is also possible to read the cover into a class discourse, where the marble belongs to the elitist bourgeoisie, while the raw brick wall resembles the working class. From this perspective the cover can be read as a reference to the main narrative, as I read it, in the rest of the booklet; that RUC during its first years was driven by forces that were anti-intellectual, populist and critical of the university that was seen as a capitalist and elitist scientific institution. The metaphor of project work being ‘behind’ or ‘underneath’ some surface is also seen in constructions of the purpose of education in some educational versions of Marxism (e.g. Hultengren 1976/1981) and critical pedagogy.

Looking through the pages of the booklet, it is sprinkled with text boxes, highlighted quotes, cartoons and other graphics that accompany the main text on each page. These accompaniments work as part of the text in the discursive production of possible meaning and they will be drawn upon in the following analysis in the same way that sections of text are drawn upon, when they become relevant to the analytical points. From this

introductory section, I will continue by exploring the production of educational aims in the text.

PPL as a means to ‘develop qualifications’

Throughout the booklet there is a dominant understanding produced of PPL as a means to develop certain qualifications. I will investigate further *what* qualifications, and *for what purpose*, but it becomes an important point in itself that PPL mainly throughout the text is articulated in terms of what qualifications it might *give*. It varies whether these qualifications are ‘given’ by PPL, or whether they are ‘to be developed’; that it takes work from the side of the student to attain these. This qualification-orientation is not explained, but is made to exist in the text as a natural way of conceiving of PPL. It is naturalised. For example in the foreword, when presenting the structure of the text, the chapter on “Problem-oriented project work” is presented primarily in terms of “qualifications”; “In the first chapter, *The problem-oriented project work*, we describe the qualifications that problem-oriented project work gives. We also present central characteristics of the various thoughts behind the project work form.” (p. 5, emphasis in original). The qualifications presented are split into “academic⁸⁷”, “social” and “personal” qualifications in the text (p. 9). The relation between these is not equal and the text becomes proponent for the two latter; that the social, and especially personal, aspects of project work are very important (and the narrative of the text is that this has not always been so). This is written up against a narrative of the university being dominated by a focus on ‘academic qualifications’. The chapter “Problem-oriented project work” starts like this:

The aim of problem-oriented project work is not *only* to train qualifications academically, that is, methodologically and knowledge-wise [kundskaabsmæssigt]. Problem-oriented project work also has the pedagogical aim of developing you personally and socially, that is, your communicative and collaborative competencies. (p. 7, emphasis in original)

It becomes important for the narrative of the text to think of PPL in ‘other ways’, than what is here constructed as a default-logic; ‘university education gives you academic qualifications’, but also to conceive PPL as developing “communicative and collaborative competencies”. Here the word “competencies” is introduced in the text, and throughout the pages it is used interchangeably with ‘qualifications’. Thus, the dominant discourse on purpose of education is one speaking of education in terms of ‘qualifications’ and ‘competencies’. By using the word “not *only*” in the quote above, the text creates seeing education mainly in terms of academic qualification as a narrow understanding, and adding the “personally and socially” thus becomes a ‘widening’ of the purposes of education.

⁸⁷ This is my translation of ”faglig”, which I find difficult to translate properly into English. It relates to the professional competencies and knowledge connected to a specific field, to a ‘fag’ (subject or discipline) in Danish.

At the same time it divides and splits education into ‘academic’, ‘personal’ and ‘social’ as three distinct kinds of competencies that can exist individually as something different from the others (instead of these being aspects of the ‘same thing’). Another point is that in this way it is possible for the text to construct PPL as something ‘more’ than ‘traditional education’ because the addition of ‘social’ and ‘personal’ qualifications is connected directly to this *form of study*, to its *process* and especially to the *group work* (later in the booklet on p. 26 there is a longer section on group work and what skills are trained through working with others). The emphasis on personal qualifications continues in the chapter on “Problem-oriented project work”, and PPL becomes connected to development of “the broader life” of the student;

As a student you will have the opportunity to work independently and learn to take responsibility, which supports your development and gives you personal strength. In other words, in the project work you will gain experience with the connection between the scientific work and your own experiences, your life and identity. (p. 8)

Here, the independent work with the project group is presented as giving the student “personal strength”, and a relation between “the scientific work” and “your experiences”, the “your life” and “identity” is established. The educational purpose of PPL is constructed as mainly personal development, that the academic work is deeply intertwined with experiences of the student, their life in general (outside education) and also their identity. In this perspective, ‘academic work’ becomes instrumentalised for the purpose of ‘personal development’ of the student. There are no specifications on *how* education should influence students’ experiences and their life and identity (as is the case in the strong Marxist discourse in Hultengren 1976/1981, where students through their education are to become politically aware and to see how capitalism and science work to uphold a status-quo and suppress the working class). In this text, development and qualifications become a *goal in themselves* as there is very little specification of what development and for what purpose. Later in the chapter though, it is written how the “scientific and problem-oriented qualifications” gained through project pedagogy, are “wanted in private businesses and the public sector.” (p. 10). This purpose of ‘doing education to qualify for a job’ is not at the forefront of the booklet though (as far as I can see this is only mentioned on p. 10). In a later chapter it is stated how PPL is also a “critical praxis” (p. 21) and that an aim of studying is “to become conscious of, and critically engaged with, the curriculum, tradition and societal use of one’s education.” (p. 20). Thus, there is an aim to be “critical”, but again it remains unclear in this narrative why students should be critical and what this means. In my reading this can be seen as a dilemma for the text in that it wants to distance itself from ‘the Marxist past’, but at the same time it constructs such an inheritance and wants to honour it. The result, as I read it, is ‘a rebel without a cause’, an imperative for education to help students become ‘critical’, but no specification of the rationales or what this might mean in practice.

The construction of most aspects of education as either ‘a competency’ or ‘qualification’, produces a strong commodification of education, where the accumulation of competencies becomes an end in itself, and a currency in an economistic life-long learning discourse that emerged in the 1990s (see Sarauw 2011, Masschelein and Simons 2018, Wright et al. 2019, chapter 3).

‘Learning’ and ‘process’ as aims and ends particular to PPL

Related to the educational purpose of PPL being to develop qualifications – especially ‘social and personal qualifications’ – there is a strong focus in the text on PPL as *process*, a form of study. This notion is positioned up against ‘result- and product-oriented’ kinds of project work with examples of “research” (p. 10) and “project work in businesses” (p. 13). Thus, the focus on the learning process is related to an articulation of PPL as used within *education*; PPL is an educational concept. In the following section from the epilogue of the booklet, the ‘process of project work’ is positioned as equally important to the specific problem investigated and this is formulated as something particular to the education at “RUC”:

many forget that the labour of getting project work and the group to function well is just as important as learning to work academically with theories of the human, society and nature. At RUC, it is important to remember that *the way* things are done is just as important as *what* you do. (p. 36, emphasis in original)

With the statement that “*the way* things are done is just as important *what* you do”, this becomes intelligible from the presupposition that *usually* there is a primary focus on “*what* you do”; on qualification through acquisition of theories on “the human, society and nature”, while the ‘processual aspect’ of PPL is something that “many forget”. It is unclear who “many” refers to. Thus, ‘the learning process’ is constructed as something that is usually marginal to ‘academic qualification’, a focus on ‘content’. This constellation is produced through a binary of form/content prevalent in most of the booklet. The construction of the ‘learning process’ of PPL as central, is evident throughout the text, as seen by these examples (the italicising is original):

“*The learning process* is to a large extent the purpose of problem-oriented and project-organised study processes.” (p. 9).

“*What is the absolute core for you – as students and group – is the learning process.*” (p. 10).

“*How* the project is carried out and your reflections on this, is, in education, just as important as *what* you do.” (p. 13)

”Es sind nicht die Nachten Resultate, die wir so sehr bedürfen, als vielmehr das *Studium*; die Resultate sind nichts ohne die Entwicklung, die zu ihnen geführt hat. *Friedrich Engels*” (quote on p. 22, original wording)

It is not that ‘content’ and ‘academic knowledge’ (the ‘what’ of education) is not articulated as important in the booklet, but judging the text as a whole it spends most of its energy on ‘process’ and ‘form’ and very little on ‘content’ (e.g. a large part of the booklet is dedicated to “the problem-oriented form of working”, p. 23). The text is preoccupied mainly with PPL as ‘process’ and because of the way it constructs ‘content’ as ‘the dominant other’, ‘process’ is put forward as something very important that has been neglected and overseen for a while, and therefore now must come to the front of educational thinking and practice.

In the booklet’s chapter on “problem-oriented project work” (p. 7), the text calls upon two theoreticians whose work “project pedagogy originates from” (p. 13): John Dewey and William Heard Kilpatrick. The booklet has a ‘further reading’-list (p. 37), where these two scholars are presented under ‘Classics’ with the following texts: “How we think” by Dewey from 1910, “Experience and education” (my translation) by Dewey, here in a Danish translation from 1974, and “Foundations of Method” by Kilpatrick from 1925. These are the only theorists drawn on explicitly in the bulk text of the booklet, but in the chapter dubbed “a historical investigation” of the development of PPL (“A critical study”, p. 15), other resources – some which I would call part of the ‘Marxist inheritance’ – are detectable implicitly, and also mentioned in the ‘further reading’-list, Oskar Negt and Paulo Freire (p. 37). My point is that by drawing mainly on Dewey and Kilpatrick the way it is done here, where their contribution to “the project method” (p. 13) focuses on “the principle of problem-orientation” (ibid.) and having teaching “take place from the perspective of the students” (ibid.), a process-aspect of PPL is made salient. Yet another move puts ‘process’ at the centre of the PPL-construction. On the opposite (previous page) of where Dewey and Kilpatrick are presented, a full-page text box shows “Demands for the problem-oriented project work” (p. 12) followed by four demands, reminiscent to, in its wording, the criteria developed by Illeris (1974: 187). One of the four “demands” is called “experience and cognition-based” (the others are “relevant for the individual student”, “relevant for the educational programme” and “exemplary”, p. 12). In the description under the heading “experience and cognition-based”, it reads; “In project work, the experiences of you and your group are to be studied. This is what could be called ‘processual experiences’, that is, experiences gained by you and your group in the course of the project.” (p. 12). Here, ‘experience-based’ does not mean that problems and project should be based on the *prior* experiences of the students, but that students *during* their project work reflect on their own experiences with the work. This ‘demand’ is reflected directly in the ‘practical’ chapter of the booklet (p. 23), where it is suggested,

or rather requested as necessary, that students over the course of their project write down their process in a “project diary” (p. 33) to be able to learn from their project experience: “A description of the process is your documentation to prove that your choices and reflections have been conscious, and that you have strived to make the process personally and academically qualifying.” (p. 33).

To sum up, there is a dominant narrative in the text of focusing on PPL as ‘a process’, ‘a form of study’, that is, ‘not real research’. The aim is ‘learning’ and not a ‘perfect product’ or producing new results. This narrative of PPL as ‘process’ and ‘method’ functions in a form/content-binary, where form is positioned as something neglected that therefore must be put up to par with a ‘natural’ dominant content-focus. A possible discursive effect of the constructions here of putting ‘learning process’ at the forefront of PPL in the booklet is that ‘PPL’ risks becoming disconnected from (or put positively – compatible with any) subject matter, educational purpose and academic discipline, because form and content are ‘split’.

Student-directed learning?

Intertwined with the discourses of attaining qualifications, competencies and learning as the main purpose of education, there is a strong notion of ‘the student’ as the centre of project work. The term “participant-direction” (p. 21) is introduced in the text in a way where it comes to mean ‘student-direction’, while the teacher slides into the background as a ‘guide on the side’ who supports the needs of the student and its ‘learning process’. ‘The student’ is spoken of in the singular, and at the same time there is a prevalent moral tone in the writing addressing the responsibility of the individual student now that they have entered a form of (university) education, where they are in charge and at the centre of most educational endeavours. This strong student-centredness (again, this is my construction, and the booklet does not draw on, or explicitly relate to, the contemporary field around ‘student-centred learning’ in higher education research) is not seen in other texts I have analysed so far, and it has widespread repercussions to the present discourse on PPL, which I will show in the following section.

The text puts the student at the centre early on, which can be seen in the introduction to PPL: “The important thing is, then, that *you are at the centre* with all the freedom and responsibility this entails in relation to yourself and your group.” (p. 8, emphasis in original). The italicisation emphasizes the student-centredness and in the same quote the “responsibility” expected from the student, is put forward. Later in the text, ‘participant-direction’ is put forward as a central principle in PPL, which comes to focus solely on the *student* as participant:

Because the principle of the *participant-directed, problem-oriented project work* is key in the RUC’ean [RUC’ske] form of study. This pedagogical principle gives us as students the possibility, and the obligation, to interpret the educational programme and the demands

posed to it, in our own way. We believe that the demands to the students' responsibility for their own learning [ansvar for egen læring] is greater at RUC than other universities. (p. 21, emphasis in original)

Here, the principle of 'participant-direction' comes to mean "the possibility, and the obligation, to interpret the educational programme and the demands posed to it, in our own way". In this framing, the students are the participants, who are "obliged", that is, they *have to*; it is their duty to interpret their education the way they want. It is not that study regulations, curricula and the teacher are not mentioned in the booklet, but they come to have a minor role in PPL as it is constructed in the text. The student-centredness, which here means 'student-direction' also affects the content of the project work, that is, what problems are relevant to inquire into. In the chapter on PPL at the beginning of the booklet, a full-page text box explains "Demands for the problem-oriented project work" (p. 12), where the first in the top left corner is that PPL must be "relevant for the individual student" (ibid.). It is elaborated that the student is supposed to find the inquiry problem of the project work "interesting" (p. 12), which is explained in this way: "The motivation of project work lies in the fact that you carry out a piece of work because it is meaningful to you." (p. 12). The student reader is more or less promised that their project work should be "interesting" and "meaningful" for them *personally* as a requirement for participating in PPL, and if it is not, then they are entitled to bail out or choose differently. One of the other demands in this text box is that the project work should be "relevant for the educational programme" (p. 12), but this section is finished off by saying that "ultimately, it is *your* understanding of the paragraphs that is interesting" (ibid. emphasis in original), which, in this construction, leaves the final say in the hands of the students. Thus, in this text PPL is constructed as radically student-centred in the sense that no engagement and no inquiry problem or collaboration is relevant unless it is "interesting" and "meaningful" for the individual student. This is different to constructions of 'participant-direction' as seen in other texts in my assemblage such as Illeris (1974), where the individual student is articulated as but one out of several participants with whom the form and content of the education must be negotiated; the other students, the teacher and the curriculum of the study program. Following this analysis, I wonder whether the radical student-centredness produced in and through this booklet has an effect of haunting PPL studies onwards in time by creating high expectations for individual students and their expected 'outcomes' of PPL education? Expectations that then clashes when the individual student is faced with other expectations from group members, a teacher and the demands of a study program. This is a conjecture to be traced further in the analytic work.

The construction of the student as the centre of PPL performs as a double-edged sword. On the one side *independence* and *freedom* is articulated as fundamental, which then on the other side comes with *great responsibility* framed in the slogan "responsibility for your own learning" ("ansvar for egen læring") (p. 21), which is repeated throughout the booklet.

The student is at the centre of everything; success and failure. These two outcomes are directly connected to the student's *person*. Thus, the student in PPL is imagined to be ambitious, independent, individual and responsible⁸⁸. An example to back up this reading is the casual introduction of "evaluations of the person" (p. 29) as the main tool for dealing with "social problems" (ibid.) in the group: "It can be difficult to deal with social problems in a group, but one of the methods you can use to address this part of the group work is the person-directed critique, also called *evaluation of the person*." (p. 29, emphasis in original). There is no description in the booklet of exactly *how* such evaluations should take place other than they are to be solved within the group itself at group meetings (no mention of the supervisor or the study program). Thus, in the text there are few concrete tools for dealing with group troubles, and the main 'strategy' of the booklet, in my reading, is to appeal to the responsibility of each student and their "respectfulness towards others and their work" (p. 29), which builds on the understanding of students as autonomous, sovereign individuals. These statements are also possible to read as relating to a notion of 'the university' as an educational institution, which is a perspective also prevalent in the booklet. An institution where pupils becomes students that must stand on their own two feet. The epilogue of the booklet solidifies the focus on the individual student and the moral pressure on their shoulders to 'make the best of it': "The many important considerations on problem formulations, project report, group work should not make you forget that it is *your* education and it is *your* responsibility to qualify your work and your effort." (p. 36, emphasis in original). This focus on the individual student and their responsibility is 'new' in the historical constructions of PPL based on this assemblage of texts, and it is a question for the cross-reading to see when this focus changed and whether it continues in later texts.

Constructions of a 'Marxist past'

This section concerns certain constructions of Marxism and the related concept, "the fagkritik"⁸⁹ (p. 17) as being (mainly) in the past, which in turn construct the present and PPL in certain ways. In the chapter "A critical study" (p. 15) in the booklet, what I read as the construct 'the Marxist past of RUC' is brought alive. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are shown in full figure in a photo on p. 17 (bronze statues of Marx sitting, and Engels standing next to him), and Engels has been given a whole page for a quote (in

⁸⁸ This point is similar to Lars Ulriksen's analysis (Ulriksen 2009) of 'the implied student' in his study of conceptualisations of 'the student' as seen in study regulations, commercials and teacher talk at Roskilde University.

⁸⁹ Literally 'the critique of disciplines', but as written earlier, I keep the Danish wording as it, here, functions as a signifier for a certain movement. I write the word in smaller lowercase as it is written in the analysed texts.

German) on the importance of the process of studying as opposed to narrowly focusing on “results” (p. 20, see also earlier in this analysis). My interest here is to investigate how these figures, and ideas being related to them (as constructed by the text), are presented and how this (dis)connects to constructions of PPL and its educational aims.

Marxism enters the text literally in the chapter “A critical study”, and is presented, in past tense, as a “critique of educational content”, a critique of “science” (p. 17): “The Marxist critique of the bourgeois society had made its appearance at the university. From the perspective of Marxist theory, students attacked the sciences [videnskaben] for not being the objective science it made itself to be.” (p. 17). Continuing this thread, the text presents ‘fagkritik’ as the conceptual conglomerate where ‘academic qualification’ and (Marxist) ‘disciplinary critique’ met in the 1970s:

The fagkritik became the activity in which the demands from the university for academic qualification, on the one hand, and the political and social indignation of the students on the other, could become one. The fagkritik thus meant to have a political perspective on one’s education, the societal function of the sciences and the role of the highly educated in society. The ideological character and oppressing function of the bourgeois science [videnskab] were to be revealed. (p. 17)

As I read it, ”fagkritik” is presented as a product of, or a certain educational version of, Marxism, but in a form that also incorporated ‘the need for academic qualification’. In terms of temporality, ”fagkritik” is positioned as having had ”its prime in the 70s” (p. 19), and as something that is not very visible ‘today’: “In spite of its earlier dominance, the fagkritik has, apparently, silently disappeared from the daily academic [videnskabelige] praxis at RUC.” (p. 15). At the same time it is stated how ”several of the principles of fagkritik” are still “foundational for project pedagogy.” (p. 20). I wonder then, what principles, in the production of discourse, are being continued in the booklet, and which are left behind, and in what ways?

The notion of “critique” and being critical towards the educational program, is seen as important and central, and as a continuation of ‘fagkritik’; “the aim is to become conscious of, and critically engaged with, the curriculum, tradition and societal use of one’s education.” (p. 20). As stated earlier, here ‘being critical’ is put forward as important, but there is no specification in the booklet of what it might mean to ‘be critical towards your study program’, which I read as a result of the waning of a Marxist discourse that can no longer crystallise the meaning of ‘being critical’. In a text box at the end of the chapter “A critical study”, ‘being critical’ becomes a *qualification* through the heading “The study form of RUC qualifies for:” (p. 21) and then three bullet points, where two of them concern being critical; “critical acquisition of theory and method” and “critical judgment of the educational programme and its function” (p. 21). Again, there is no specification of this ‘criticality’ and the result is that ‘being critical’ reads as without much meaning other than being ‘an important qualification’. Thus, the ‘critical side’ of ‘fagkritik’ is continued, or at least the term ‘critical’ is continued, but without specificities; there is little

discourse (other than the qualification-competency discourse) to constitute its meaning, when the Marxist 'edge' is lost, and 'being critical' is exalted to a general qualification.

There are other places in the booklet, where I read traces of 'Marx'. In the 'practical part' of the booklet, it is stated what constitutes a relevant problem for inquiry:

In relation to projects, problems arise from phenomena in one's surroundings, which there is a need to understand the causes and explanations for. It is necessary to get behind the immediate appearance of the problems to understand them. (p. 24)

In the quote above, Marx is not mentioned literally, but I see similarities to the Marx-inspired discourse of science in Hultengren (1976/1981) and Ingemann (ed. 1985) where the former articulates the aim of PPL in more or less the same way; to "get behind the immediate appearance of the problems". The urge to 'get behind the surface' also appear on the front cover of the booklet with 'reality' being the raw brick wall *underneath* the perfect marble. But again, the booklet as text does not lend the reader many hints as to the significance of this 'surface'-metaphor – what is 'reality'? What is 'surface'? Another point that serves to support a reading of the booklet as paying homage to some 'Marxist past', but in its 'doing' being far from Marxist, is the introduction of "exemplarity" as a criteria for relevant project work (p. 12). In Illeris (1974), the term 'exemplarity' is taken from Oskar Negt, and Illeris (1974) suggests the term "societal exemplarity" (p. 188) to specify that problems should give insight into societal relations. In the booklet at hand, the notion of exemplarity is related to 'the project' (the process, not the content) and has no explicit societal aspect (although Oskar Negt is mentioned in the literature list under "Classics" at page 37 with a Danish translation from 1975 of 'Soziologische Phantasie und exemplarisches Lernen' – but he does not venture forth from this safe place at the very back of the booklet). The formulation of 'exemplarity' in the student pamphlet (Nielsen and Jensenius 1996) is much closer to a curriculum-disciplinary-focused understanding: "In other words, in the course of one's study, the aim is to learn to find the essential that can exemplify a broader field of curricular content." (p. 12). 'Exemplarity' in this booklet becomes a way of engaging with the challenge of a vast curriculum to cover, where the 'good example' of an inquiry problem is able to signify 'the whole'. Part of the construction of exemplarity is a strong process-focus, where PPL provides methods that can be used in different contexts: "This means that during your studies, you do not only specialise in certain projects, you also gain tools and methods that enables an orientation in fields you are not familiar with." (p. 10). This then leads the authors to name PPL-graduates "flexible specialists" (p. 11), which is contrasted to students from the University of Copenhagen:

As a RUC-student you are not lead through a certain disciplinary field in its breadth, such as for example students at the University of Copenhagen, but through the problem-oriented project work, you learn how you can identify all the parts of the field *yourself*. (p. 11, emphasis in original).

Students from the University of Copenhagen are here positioned as someone who might have broad knowledge, but they are “lead through” a broad field, written in a passive voice, which I see as a hint to a ‘transfer-model’ of teaching, while ‘RUC-students’ through PPL learn to acquire the knowledge they want ‘themselves’. Thus, here a construction of the students from the University of Copenhagen as knowledgeable but dependent help to position RUC-students as independent and able to ‘learn to learn’, which means then can acquire any knowledge they need (Christensen 2013 also points out the construction of Copenhagen University as counter-image, p. 104). This latter, I read from the proposed outcome of PPL as being “*building* basic skills for further education” (p. 11, emphasis in original).

Coming back to the constructions of ‘the Marxist past’, I wonder what the discursive effect is for the booklet, when, as I tried to show in my analysis, the discourse of the text in its *doing* has very little relation to Marxism as an ideology for critiquing and exposing capitalist society (and science) as dominated by bourgeois ideas resulting in the oppression of the working class. I arrive at the conclusion that the Marxist past and ideas related to this appear as ‘toothless’ reconstructions, as glorified sentries, caricatures of some imagined past, with the sole purpose of reproducing a certain (continued) narrative of the university to some imagined reader (or, new students at RUC). This is a continuity that constructs the booklet as an actor that ‘represents the real RUC, because we know of its past, and where we come from, and we are proud of this and how critical it made us!’

Reading through the booklet, and especially the chapter “A critical study” (p. 15), I get the notion, that the 1970s are glorified to a certain extent, or perhaps seen as fascinating, in that the booklet spends several pages and cartoons⁹⁰ on the 1970s, on “fagkritik” and on “Marxism”. These concepts are produced through certain textual affects and their demise is articulated as ‘the way of the world’ more than a deliberate move ‘forward’, almost in a tone of ‘nostalgia’ or ‘loss’. This is read from formulations such as “the fagkritik has, apparently, silently disappeared from the daily academic [videnskabelige] praxis at RUC.” (p. 15). Also the statement: “Internally, the ideological struggles have gone silent with the consequence that the politically emancipatory part of the education has more or less disappeared, and the educational purpose of changing society has been

⁹⁰ There two cartoons in the chapter “A critical study” (p. 15). One is on p. 18-19, where little people with long hair, glasses and books under their arm (academics, I take it) are walking around the pages, and some are grouped. Some of them speak, and the topic is the same; how they all orient themselves towards ‘workers’ and wish they were part of the working class that they see themselves as proponents of. But they remain academics, not of the working class. The other cartoon is a half-page illustration on p. 20, where lots of different people are discussing with each other. I see the illustration as depicting the ideological debates of the 1970s. The cartoon is signed “Claus Deleuran 1978” (Nielsen and Jensenius 1996: 20). In my reading, these two cartoons, apart from illustrating certain periods in time, signify the booklets fascination with the nostalgic construction of ‘the political energy of the 1970s’.

toned down.” (p. 19). In the first quote the word ”apparently” indicates some surprise and indignation about this move, and in the second quote words like “gone silent”, “disappeared” and “toned down” gives a sense of *loss*. This reading might also explain the construction of “the principles of fagkritik” as “still being foundational for project pedagogy” (p. 20). Thus, despite ‘Marxism’ not having much discursive effect on the overall booklet, which is instead filled by a language of ‘learning processes’ and ‘qualifications’, a certain re-construction of a ‘Marxist past’ is still produced in this booklet, which I read as a means to ‘flag the right colours’, as a symbolic politics to show the reader that ‘we represent the real RUC’. This glorification of ‘a Marxist past’, at least by literal naming of this perspective, disappears in the construction of PPL coming into the 2000s.

Rounding off

This booklet by the student council at Roskilde University Centre (RUC) is dominated by a strong qualifications-competencies discourse that constructs the educational purpose of PPL as being to provide students with personal and social qualifications. The main purpose of education here is for the student to develop personally. The competency-focus casts most educational purposes of the booklet as commodities, as currency to be traded for other values (but not, as such, formulated as valuable in themselves). PPL is mainly put forward as a process, a form of studying, where the student and the student’s learning is at the centre of any educational endeavour. The text distances itself from what is constructed as a dominant *content* and *result* focus in university education, and positions RUC and PPL as natural counters to such foci. The booklet also draws on a certain narrated reconstruction of a ‘Marxist past’ through the concept of ‘fagkritik’, where some features are told as being lost such as a societal ‘change-orientation’ (p. 19) and critique of capitalism in the project work, while others such as ‘being critical’ is kept, but with little point of reference. This Marxist past and the ‘1970s’, which come alive by several illustrations and cartoons, is brought forward in a tone of nostalgia and loss, and their inclusion has little to do with Marxist discourse, but can be read as a reconstruction working as a kind of symbolic politics from an assumption of ‘the real RUC with a critical inheritance’. This analysis has helped to ask questions to the further analytical work such as; When and how did ‘learning’ become a dominant way of talking about the outcomes of PPL? When did the American theoreticians and educationalists William Kilpatrick and John Dewey become re-introduced into the discourse on PPL? (They are given almost no role in Illeris 1974 and Hultengren 1976/1981). When and how did notions put forward in this booklet of ‘learning by doing’ and ‘responsibility for your own learning’ enter into discourse and what do they do? How has responsibility for the education and its outcomes been configured across the assemblage?

'Problem-oriented project work' (Olsen and Pedersen 1997)

In 1997, the book 'Problem-oriented project work – a workbook'⁹¹ came out on "Roskilde University Press" (my translation), written by Poul Bitsch Olsen and Kaare Pedersen. This rather bulky text (378 pages) made it into the collection of analysed texts partly from my own experience as student and teacher at Roskilde University. This is the one 'PPL-text', I remember from my time as a student at the basic studies in the Humanities at Roskilde University from 2010-2013. After graduating from the university in 2016, I started teaching an introduction course to PPL for first semester students in the same Humanities programme. I made 'Problem-oriented project work' by Olsen and Pedersen (1997) part of the syllabus and asked students to get their hands on it and told them this was to be seen as a comprehensive introduction to PPL. I remember being aware that the book was directed at students in the social sciences, but used it anyway as it, to my mind, was 'the best bid out there' for an introduction to PPL.

When looking further into the life of this text, its version-history tells me that this is a book with great perseverance in the question of 'use over time'. The first edition was published in 1997 and twenty one years later, in 2018, the fifth edition came out (this is the newest version, to my knowledge), still with the same name. A year later, in 2019, the fifth Danish edition came out in an English translation. The first translation of the book into English came out in 2005. I see the several editions and translation into English as indicators for a certain demand for the book, and thus 'use'. The book 'Problem-oriented project work' is also referred to in later texts in the assemblage (Ulriksen 1997, Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen, eds. 2013, Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015), as well as in various studies on PPL (Christensen 2005a, 2006, Servant-Miklos and Noordegraaf-Eelens 2019)⁹². Most of these texts briefly cite the book as an introduction to PPL at Roskilde University, and the only text on PPL to cite (and quote) it several times is Ulriksen (1997), who uses the book to discuss with, as an 'equal partner' (see later analysis of Ulriksen 1997). He writes that in Olsen and Pedersen (1997), "the acquisition of knowledge [erkendelse] is central" and that their argumentation for PPL focuses on "the academic qualification and socialisation" (Ulriksen 1997: 57, my translation).

In the following analysis, the aim is not to discuss with 'Problem-oriented project work', neither to reminisce over the book, nor to read it from a student or teacher perspective; the text is read from the perspective of a discourse analyst. Though the text was familiar

⁹¹ Translation of the Danish title 'Problemorienteret projektarbejde – en værktøjsbog'. All quotes from this text are, unless otherwise noted, my translation from Danish.

⁹² In their analyses of PPL neither Christensen (2013) nor Servant (2016) include Olsen and Pedersen (1997).

to me (and still is, in certain ways), here it is made *strange* and dangerous (as any other truth-telling actor in this study), and read anew as a text that produces PPL and its educational aims and purposes in certain ways with certain discursive effects. The question guiding the analysis is *how* this happens, how this first edition in a range of later editions produces PPL, and whether it, as Ulriksen (1997) suggests, constructs ‘the academic quest for knowledge’ as the prime educational aim of PPL?

Layout and production of the text

First a few observations about the materiality and design of the book. On the front cover of the book, besides the title and the name of the two authors, at the bottom half there is a picture pitted against the dominant grey background colour of the cover. This picture warrants a few thoughts, because it relates to how problem-oriented project work might be constituted in this text.

In the picture, or painting as it more rightly is, seven men are hanging out in what looks like one end of an apartment. Three of the men are standing on a balcony with open doors and a blue sky and village houses in the background, while two sit on a red brick floor, one on a table and the last one in a chair. All men are smoking – most of them long pipes – and one is drinking something from what looks like a porcelain cup (there is a table with a pot and cups as well, so they have probably all been drinking the hot beverage, perhaps tea or coffee). They are wearing long jackets and high hats, except one who is wearing a red fez and another who is not wearing a hat. Their dress with long hats and the style of the painting comes across as ‘old’ dating a few decades back. The seven men seem to be engaged in conversation and relaxing. Turning the pages to the colophon, it reveals the title of the painting: ”Et selskab af danske kunstnere i Rom”⁹³ (original title) from 1837 by Constantin Hansen. In my view, the men look very well-dressed and their posture and serious faces come across ‘important’; fine gentlemen discussing an important topic over tea and smoke. This of course one possible reading out of several as ‘important’ and ‘serious’ can give various associations and it relates to my interpretation of the painting as showing ‘how project work might be’ with an image of academics, or artists, discussing big thoughts over refreshments and a pipe.

Why have this painting on the front cover on a book on problem-oriented project work? Is this how a group of students working on a project is imagined; as high-hatted male artists chatting over smoke and tea? And why show artists, and e.g. ‘scientists’? Is ‘science’ considered a kind of art, and is this what ‘erkendelse’, knowledge work, might look like? Is project work imagined as a ‘cozy’ activity in informal settings as e.g. an apartment in Rome? Discussion of possible answers to these questions takes an engagement with the

⁹³ ‘A group of Danish artists in Rome’ (my translation)

rest of the book and how PPL is constructed throughout, but one possible reading, taking the other texts of this analysis into consideration, is that the book tries to distance itself from former more Marxist-oriented texts on PPL, which were dominant in the 1970s and 1980s. This is far from a sympathy with workers and a celebration of manual labour. As such, the painting could be read as a reclaiming of ‘Wissenschaft’⁹⁴ and the bourgeois; a kind of re-traditionalisation of PPL as part of ‘the arts’ with roots centuries back and not some 1970s idea of ‘research for the people’. Whatever the painting might signify, it has persevered in later editions, and is enlarged in the 5th edition from 2018 to fill out the entire front cover.

Continuing the glance of the book as ‘material’, the main part of the back cover consists of a sum-up of the book and keywords on its content. It is emphasised how this is a *practical book* directed to help students in their every day with project work: ”Students are equipped with concrete tools, ideas and concepts with relevance for the process and everyday of project work.” This aligns with the by-line of the book’s title, “a workbook”, a publication that gives students the ‘tools’ to do problem-oriented project work; the text tells itself as a practical hands-on book. The back cover text finishes with a presentation of the two authors letting the reader know that Poul Bitsch Olsen is a sociologist with a PhD in Economy working at Roskilde University Centre (“Roskilde universitetscenter”) as a subsidiary lecturer, while Kaare Pedersen has a PhD in social science and holds “more than 10 years experience with problem-oriented project work as first a student and now an assistant professor”. They both work at ”The department for environment, technology and society” (my translation) at Roskilde University, it reads.

Structure and significant elements

Looking at the structure and content of the book it is split into five parts with subsequent chapters, as seen in the table of content:

1. ”**Project work as a process**” (p. 9-115, 106 pages)
2. ”**Group work and academic guides [vejledere]**” (p. 115-171, 56 pages)
3. ”**The philosophy of science and methods**” (p. 171-301, 130 pages)
4. ”**The project report**” (p. 301-343, 42 pages)
5. ”**Exercises, encyclopaedia and index**” (p. 343-378, 35 pages)

Though the cover gives the impression that Olsen and Pedersen are the (only) authors of this book (there is no indication that they are editors with a bracketed ‘eds.’ or similar) there are also contributions by others. For the first part, Niels Åkerstrøm Andersen - of whom there is no description - has a chapter, and for the second part there is a chapter by Arno Kaae (in his chapter he presents himself as a pedagogical consultant at Roskilde

⁹⁴ I will use the German ‘Wissenschaft’ as a similar replacement to the Danish ‘videnskab’, which is the term referred to throughout the book.

University Centre, p. 117) and one by Katrine Balslev-Olesen, Nanja Buch-Hansen and Jeanet Oehlers (presented as students – visible by a footnote on p. 145 saying that their chapter builds on a Psychology project from Roskilde University Centre). The five parts consists of chapters with name-given author. Pedersen has the most contributions for part 1 on ‘Project work as a process’ and part 4 on the writing of ‘The project report’, while Olsen has the most contributions for part 3 on ‘The philosophy of science and methods’. Some chapters they have written together.

What I find significant here, is that the longest part concerns ‘The philosophy of science and methods’, which contradicts the first sentence of the foreword proclaiming that: “This is not a methods or philosophy of science book, but rather a book on *the idea and practice of problem-oriented project work*, emphasising the practice-part” (p. 5, emphasis in original). Thus, the book tells the reader it is not a ‘methods- or philosophy of science book’, but for a large part of the text, this is what it *performs*. Also, the title of part 3 “the philosophy of science and methods”, can sound like an introduction to ‘general science’, but in the foreword the authors state that part 3 “is specifically aimed at the social sciences.” (p. 5). The second longest part is ‘Project work as a process’, while the two shortest parts (except for the last one on exercises) are ‘Group work and academic guides’ and ‘The project report’. Also, the part on group work and supervisors is the one with the most varied contributions, and the least contributions by the two main authors: out of its three chapters (6, 7 and 8), only one is written by Olsen and Pedersen (collectively). In my reading of the book, this division says something about the expertise and knowledge base of the text: group work and the ‘pedagogical’ is delegated, outsourced, while project work and theory of science is ‘in-house’ expertise. The last 35 pages of the book are dedicated to “Exercises, encyclopaedia and index” (part 5), which adds the book being read as ‘easily usable’ and directly hands-on. Also, throughout the chapters there are several figures, schemes and models that illustrate what is said, and each chapter ends with a sum-up in bullet points.

My reading of the layout of the book is that there is some tension between on the one hand calling itself a “workbook” that wants to help students in “the process and everyday of project work” (back cover) and manifests itself in exercises, short sections and bullet-point sum-ups. On the other hand, the book is a voluminous piece of almost 400 pages, which dedicates the most of its pages to “The philosophy of science and methods”. This ambivalence in the genre performed by the text as both hands-on ‘how to’ study guide and scientific-theoretical introduction book/brick also plays out in constructions of PPL and its purposes in the rest of the text, as will be shown.

A RUC-internal text?

A last point I would like to make in this section on the layout and production of the text, is what I see as a book strongly tied to Roskilde University as an institution. I wonder

what this might mean for the production of PPL? In the foreword, the book imagines to have a broad relevance both institutionally and disciplinary:

The target group is primarily students in social science programmes at higher education institutions – universities, colleges etc. – who work with problem-oriented projects of longer duration, that is, about two to nine months. Although the primary target group is students within the various social sciences, we hope that it can also be used by students from the humanities and technical sciences. It is only part III which is specifically aimed at the social sciences. The other parts have a broader appeal, even though they are, here and there, affected by our background in the social sciences, and partly, technical sciences. (p. 5)

On the one hand, the book believes to appeal broadly across institutions and disciplines, and on the other side, it proclaims a certain inclination towards social science. Thus, there is an explicit proclamation of the *perspective* of this book, but the institutional anchoring is not a part of this: nowhere in the book does it explicitly say that it mainly concerns PPL as it takes place at Roskilde University. This notwithstanding, throughout the book, the main point of reference is problem-oriented project work as it takes place at Roskilde University; all authors are related to this university, the examples drawn forth are from group projects at the university and the publisher is related to the university (using the same logo)⁹⁵. There is no addressing of this in the text, which I take to be the assumption that the experiences, practices and ideas put forth in the book are not institution-bound, but relevant broadly across institutions of higher education in Denmark (as stated in the foreword). But still, I wonder – what are the effects for the production of PPL when having a book that is implicitly referring to a certain institutional setting?

An entanglement of educational purposes

To the question of how this text constructs the educational aims and purposes of PPL, the answer is multi-faceted. It is a point in itself that the book presents a long range of arguments for PPL, and similarly several outcomes, while not discussing any critique. In the first chapter, ‘Why problem-oriented project work?’, Pedersen presents PPL as being “full of learning, exciting and engaging” (p. 11), something that involves “*the whole person* in an engaged and emotional involvement with the content” (p. 12, emphasis in original), as a widespread “work method in most jobs” (p. 11), as giving a “*solid and broad qualification profile*” (p. 12, emphasis in original), and as an academic praxis that helps to “apply” theory “to concrete problems for analytical purposes” (p. 12). Thus, PPL comes with several promises to the student reader.

⁹⁵ In the 4th edition from 2015 the publisher changes from ‘Roskilde University Press’ (my translation) to the publisher ‘Samfundslitteratur’. In this process the logo of Roskilde University disappears from the cover.

With the articulation of diverse aims for PPL in mind, the dominant articulation, as I read the book as whole, is to position PPL as a *kind of Wissenschaft*, or scholarship. The articulated aim is to analyse produce knowledge, to come to know, a certain kind of enlightenment. This is put crudely and there are many nuances, contradictions and entanglements in the text, especially between the different contributors. Discourses of PPL as means for qualification and acquiring competencies for a life after the university, and especially on the job market is also prevalent. Finally, a certain ‘student-directed’ framing of PPL is articulated, which especially shows itself as an emphasis on – and a *responsibilisation* of – the individual student to muster their intrinsic (essentialist/deterministic) ‘will to study’ and always make the best of their studies. This notion is read as a product of the focus on PPL as *Wissenschaft*. In the following, I study how these discourses constituting the educational purposes of PPL come to be, and what they position themselves up against; what becomes their ‘other’.

PPL as applied science: ‘the craft of knowing’

As indicated, the dominant framing of PPL, as seen throughout the book, is as a kind of scholarly inquiry. It is a certain notion of ‘science’, an *applied science* with emphasis on “analysis and application” (p. 12) as seen in this argument for PPL:

Thirdly, the craft [kundskaab] of analysis and application is the essence of problem-oriented project work. One thing is to be able to retell a theory, may be able to explain it though its concepts and notion of truth, but it is something else to be able to apply it to concrete problems for analytical purposes. (p. 12)

In this truth-telling of PPL, the student does not read a theory to “retell” it or “explain it”, but to be able to *use it*. That is the “essence” of PPL, as articulated here. When addressing the principle of ‘problem-orientation’, Pedersen uses Berthelsen, Illeris and Poulsen (1994) ‘Introduction to project work’ (my translation of the Danish title), which he calls “the bible of project work” (p. 13), as a figure to position his own text up against. He writes: “It [the problem] is defined solely as a subjective and societal problem, but not as that, which is absolutely central; a knowledge problem [erkendelsesmæssigt problem].” (p. 13). In this quote it is stated how ‘what is central’ to PPL is “knowledge” as different from “subjective” and “societal”. The understanding of PPL as pursuing “knowledge” (“erkendelse”) is connected to Pedersen’s concept of “saglig faglighed” (original wording), which in a later English translation is called “Issue-based academic competence”⁹⁶ (Olsen and Pedersen 2008: 18). This is a term Pedersen developed doing his scholarship of teaching and learning programme (Pedersen 1997). The concept ‘Issue-

⁹⁶ As here, I will note if the translations of Olsen and Pedersen (1997) are drawing on the later English editions, but otherwise the translations are mine, which is done mainly because I have analysed the first 1997-edition in Danish.

based academic competence', as it is constructed in the book, gives knowledge inquiry in PPL an applied dimension:

It is a competence [faglighed] that is preconditioned by an understanding of the disciplines (their subjects and theories), but first and foremost aims at building practical knowledge [kundskab] of the *application* and the *misuse* of these disciplines, subjects and theories. It is an issue- and problem-oriented application, which urges a transgression of the disciplines – interdisciplinarity – and a critical reading and acquisition of theories in terms of their relevance in explaining the problems/issues investigated. (p. 20, emphasis in original)

'Issue-based academic competence' is posited as a certain 'PPL-competency'. It as an approach that, as read in the quote, requires an understanding of the disciplines, but also aims to transgress these. This 'PPL-competency' is thus made a certain interdisciplinary competency. The way 'Issue-based academic competence' incorporates the use and "*the misuse*" of disciplines and "critical reading and acquisition of theories", it shows a certain inheritance to the concept of 'fagkritik', the Marxist-academic critique of science and the disciplines as reproducing a capitalist status-quo, mentioned in earlier assemblage of PPL-texts (e.g. Nielsen and Jensenius 1996). Pedersen does not use the term 'fagkritik' at any point, though. Also, it is possible to read the development of a specific 'PPL-competency' as related to the text by Ingemann (ed. 1985), where the contributors tried to develop a certain 'interdisciplinary research paradigm' for PPL from the assumption that this approach to knowledge and learning is *different* from so-called 'traditional disciplinary approaches'.

Moving on from this intertextual observation, the articulation of 'issue-based academic competence' is made possible through its 'other': "conventional academic competence" (p. 19). The book (Olsen and Pedersen 1997) shows a scheme (p. 20) split into these two kinds of 'competencies' followed by their characteristics. "Conventional academic competence" is constructed as "mastering a discipline", while following its inner logic and "reproducing subject knowledge" (p. 20). Using Bloom's taxonomy (p. 18), "conventional academic competence" is connected to the three lower steps (p. 20) ("knowledge", "application", "understanding", p. 18), while "issue-based academic competence" includes all six steps of the taxonomy (p. 20), adding "analysis", "synthesis" and "critical assessment" (p. 18). "Issue-based academic competence" is constructed as "[t]he craft of analysing a problem/issue" (p. 20) by the use of theories and methods. In terms of "learning" (this is a rubric in the scheme), the "issue-based academic competence" fosters "change and reorganisation of ones way of thinking and acting", whereas the conventional approach seeks to "acquire factual knowledge and skills" (p. 20).

From this binary comparison, "issue-based academic competence" emerges as 'the better approach', one that departs from a "conventional" way of thinking, where "disciplinarity" is seen as slightly narrow-minded and 'knowledge for the sake of knowledge'. "Issue-based academic competence" does not wholly depart from the disciplines, it just does something 'more' in both adhering to a discipline while at the same time "transgressing"

(p. 23) such boundaries. It becomes a kind of *super concept*. For this to happen, the construction of a ‘conventional academic competence’, which has no appointed reference, becomes necessary as ‘the other’, the inferior approach from which the interdisciplinary ‘issue-based academic competence’ is cast as the obvious successor. A quote to support this interpretation is given later regarding the role of ‘theory’ in PPL:

The theoretical work is not only related to theories or collected empirical observations, but to practice and context. E.g. political science, Jung’s dream theories, macro-economic theory, philosophies of history or the like are not studied as a discussion between theories alone, but in relation to practice. (p. 38-39)

I note how the words “not only” creates a certain deficit academic learning that would ‘only’ relate theories to imagined empirical data or other theories in discussion. Shortly after the use of theory by the PPL student is likened to the way a mason uses tools and materials (p. 39), reiterating PPL as *a craft*. Another point adding to ‘PPL as applied science’ is that Pedersen often speaks of “problem-solving”, here in relation to what characterises “problem-orientation” in ‘issue-based academic competence’:

Problem-orientation means that when faced with a knowledge problem, you are able to break it into its constituent parts (analysis), creatively find a way to solve it and critically assess whether the solution you have arrived at is the right or best way to solve the problem. (p. 19)

In my reading, there is some tension between “a knowledge problem” on the one side that connotes inquiry aimed at cognition and knowing, addressing something one does not understand, whereas the verb “solve” connotes another kind of inquiry focused on identifying more or less practical problems that can be solved. This ambiguous understanding of ‘problem-orientation’ becomes evident in a later categorisation of four types of problems in PPL (in chapter 2 “Problem formulation and problematic”, also by Pedersen), where one of them aims to address and solve problems for companies and organisations (p. 35-36), which creates tensions for what can be understood as ‘PPL as scientific inquiry’. The four kinds of problems are (quote):

- **Anomaly** = A deviation from the norm. Something new.
- **Paradox** = A deviation from the norm (anomaly), which also problematises existing beliefs.
- **Planning problems** = A lack of knowledge of what should and could be done in a complex situation.
- **Normalies** = A critical problematisation of that which is taken for granted. (p. 37)

I would like to focus on number three, the “planning problems”, because this is Pedersen’s own addition, whereas the other three are added by the aid of literature. The anomaly and the paradox are inspired by the thinker Hans-Georg Gadamer and a book by Jes Adolphsen from 1992 called ‘Problems in science’ (my translation of the Danish title) (Olsen and Pedersen 1997: 51), and the point on ‘normalies’ is inspired by “postmodern and poststructuralist perspectives” (ibid. 36). The ‘planning problems’ are understood as “the need for action or a decision in situations with no certain knowledge of what to do” (p. 35), which is related to “strategical decision processes in private and public organisations and companies” (ibid.). In this way, ‘planning problems’ are connected more narrowly than the others to a certain kind of field within social science; planning studies and similar programs with strong ties to certain vocational areas of society. Pedersen seems to be aware that this kind of problem is a bit different and perhaps not as ‘inquiry-oriented’ and general as the others, as he writes: “It should be underlined that even though problems are action-oriented, it is still the knowledge element that is sought after. Thus, decision problems are also knowledge problems.” (p. 36). I read this as a disclaimer or an attempt for *justifying* that “decision problems” and “action-oriented problems” are also legitimate problems for academic projects – a justification that becomes necessary because of a felt risk of seeing such a problem as ‘non-academic’. The model for PPL becomes a certain form of social science.

A final point to round off this section is that the very form of the book supports the emphasis on ‘application’ in the articulation of PPL. As noted earlier, the text is filled with models, sum-ups and recipes for praxis. For example, chapter two “Problem formulation and problematic” has a certain way of *technifying*, of *instrumentalising* the question of ‘what makes a good inquiry-problem?’ Formulating a good inquiry-problem is constructed as first and foremost a matter of *form*, which makes it possible to present a ‘9-step-model’ on page 42-43: “Model 3: Nine check points for the good problem formulation”, which students can follow to arrive at a relevant problem. In this way, the layout of many of the chapters in schematics and recipes supports the construction PPL as primarily a craft that can be learned, a certain pool of skills and competencies. On the other hand, such school-like layouts can be said to counter the idea of a ‘craft’ as something that is learned through practice (and thus cannot be ‘told’), which is the articulated aim of the book as being “a support, a shoulder to cry on and tool box; a ‘guide book’”, which should be read “parallel to concrete project work.” (p. 5). This adds to the ambiguity of the acted genre of the book between a schoolifying recipe hand-book and a heavier method- and theory of science book.

PPL as ‘the best’ competency for work and life

The story of PPL as a way – and as *the best way* - to develop a range of qualifications and competencies relevant for the job market is told in the book, and especially in the first chapter “Why problem-oriented project work?” (p. 11). In the line of arguments for PPL,

the relevance for the job market is put as the first one. Out of four enumerated arguments for PPL the first is that problem-oriented project work is used “in most *job functions*” (p. 11, emphasis in original), and the fourth reason is that it gives “*a solid and broad qualification profile*” (p. 12, emphasis in original). The latter includes a long range of “traditional *academic crafts*” (emphasis in original) such as argumentation, writing and various methods, but also “*personal and social skills [kundskaber]*” (emphasis in original) like giving and receiving feedback, solving group conflicts and working independently (p. 12). This framing of PPL in a language of ‘qualification’ is dominant in the argumentation around the purposes of PPL enunciated through words such as “craft” and “skills”. The third and final part of the chapter “Why problem-oriented project work?” has the title “Academic, social and personal qualifications” (p. 23), which becomes a trinity that elevates PPL as not ‘only’ something that gives academic qualifications, but involves “*the whole person* in an engaged and emotional involvement with the content” (p. 12, emphasis in original). Similar articulations also appear in the student pamphlet (Nielsen and Jensenius 1996), which was emphasising PPL as ‘not only’ giving academic competencies, but also ‘personal’ and ‘social’. This construction of PPL as a ‘holistic life-practice’ is repeated in the sum-up of the chapter through another trinity; “it is practiced with the brain, the heart and the stomach – thought, emotions and body” (p. 26). Such a description of PPL reads as romantic and appealing; a strong, textual-affective *advocacy* for PPL. I wonder whether such statements are given in the light of the readers being students and if the intelligibility of such utterances comes from an assumed student-reader, who fears university education and problem-oriented project work to be ‘dull, academic toil’? At the opening of the chapter (p. 11), less romantic descriptions of ‘a project that has stalled’ and a group that is a ‘pestilence’ with delayed deadlines and opposing expectations is given, but such situations are romanticised as ‘part of the game’ from statements such as this: “For these reasons project work is both loved and hated. In any case, it is my experience that the benefits by far overshadow the down sides” (p. 11). This statement in Pedersen’s introductory chapter, the way I read it, is key to understanding the discourses at play. He writes how PPL is both loved and hated because of ‘the way it is’, which comes out in a certain deterministic manner, where “mind-expanding experiences” (p. 11) as well as annoying group members and terrible writing processes are *natural* parts of project work. These truths of ‘actual project work’ are not followed up by any critique of its practice and conditions for practice, neither any addressing of such *educational* challenges and how these can be worked with, but instead the claim that the pros outshines the cons; no pain, no gain. Another observation from Pedersen’s statement is that his argumentation derives from “my experience”, as he writes. At this point he does not draw on surveys, investigations or research of problem-oriented project work, but rather his own “experience” as the legitimate realm of argumentation. Thus, the personal experiences of the author, “more than 10 years at Roskilde University first as a student and now assistant professor” (it reads on the back cover), becomes the foundation to know ‘what happens in problem-

oriented group work' and the source for developing guides, tips and tricks for the students throughout much of the book. The discursive effect is that the author's positive view of PPL, and the construction of challenging groups and frustrating writing processes, becomes *the norm*, becomes 'natural'. More importantly perhaps, it becomes something that, in this text, is not a cause of critique or engagement with research or other experiences, but becomes a problem for the individual student under the imperative "responsibility for your own learning" ("ansvar for egen læring", p. 23)⁹⁷. It is not that in the whole book there is no engagement with e.g. group dynamics and how to address and work with conflicts, but this is 'outsourced' to part 2 and especially the chapter by the pedagogical consultant Arno Kaae and the chapter by the three students. Predominantly, in the chapters of the book by the two main authors, Olsen and Pedersen, PPL-praxis remains a romanticised and *naturalised* endeavour deriving from (positive) 'personal experience'. Such a point is what later motivated Gerd Christensen (2013) to study group work critically and empirically as it played out in all its messiness while trying to de-romanticise prior myth-making around problem-oriented project work in groups.

Under the final part of chapter 1 on "Academic, social and personal qualifications" (p. 23) there is a section on "The demands of the labour market" (p. 24), discerning what it is employers want from future employees. The main reference drawn upon here is a 1995-report from 'DJØF' (the Danish union for lawyers and economists accommodating most social science graduates) with quotes from a municipal director, Vendelboe, and a private consultant, Hornemann (p. 24-25). After displaying the qualifications needed in jobs the public and private sector, Pedersen concludes: "Vendelboe and Hornemann's demands for future candidates can hardly be attained in any other way than problem-oriented project work." (p. 26). Here, problem-oriented project work is articulated as more or less the 'only' way to achieve the qualifications asked for. Problem-oriented project work as the relevant educational approach for the needs of the labour market is positioned up against "traditional university education" in a quote by Vendelboe (municipal director) (p. 25). Similarly, in a long quote by Hornemann (consultant company), the Danish higher education system is described as predominantly "based on the passive transmission of knowledge" (p. 25) issued through "lectures and literature studies" (ibid.), which rarely train the needed "practical, factual and political know-how" (ibid.) or "skilled written communication, interactive abilities and social understanding" (p. 26). In the same quote by Hornemann from the DJØF-report, he explicitly mentions the exception from the above; "case- and problem-solving-oriented educational programmes as they are e.g. known from several international universities and from certain programmes at Roskilde University Centre and Aalborg University." (Olsen and Pedersen 1997: 26). Through

⁹⁷ The statement in Danish "ansvar for egen læring" comes across as a slogan that is difficult to translate. It comes with a strong moral appeal to the educational subject: 'it' is responsible for its own learning, not the teacher or any other person.

these quotes from two employers, the text manages to formulate problem-oriented project work, and how this takes place at Roskilde and Aalborg, as the best way to live up to the needs of private businesses and public organisations. The “case- and problem-solving-oriented educational programmes” at e.g. Roskilde and Aalborg become the ‘first’ to its narrated ‘other’; “traditional university education” based on “the passive transmission of knowledge” (p. 25).

In terms of the educational purpose of PPL formulated here, it becomes to study for the job. This aligns with the construction of the PPL student as a “project worker” (student graduates are explicitly mentioned as “workers”, e.g. p. 111), and a reading of the book as being a *professional* guide to the (social science) project worker to-be-employed in public organisations or private companies. The book gives everything this project worker needs: the methods and theories needed, the working techniques – most of the book consists of chapters aimed to help *train* writing, collaboration, project management, developing a problem and structuring a report - and the qualification profile along with exercises to train the relevant skills and competencies. There is no mention of other possible trajectories for graduates such as for example becoming a teacher in high school or even a teacher-researcher at the university.

As hinted at, the promises put forth in the book: to become a successful knowledge-project worker with a strong ‘issue-based academic competence’, and to have fun studying with PPL while developing personally and socially, this all depends on the will of the individual student. As will be explored in the following section, such a statement produces a ‘responsibilisation’ of the individual student and it relies on a certain naturalisation of PPL and the students; either you got it or you don’t.

Being and becoming ‘responsible’

A framing that entangles itself with PPL as research and qualification is a ‘responsibilisation’ of the individual student through catch-phrases such as “responsibility for your own learning” (“ansvar for egen læring”) (p. 23, 26), which is repeated throughout the text. I am curious as to the function and effect of this discourse: why is there a need to speak like this to the designated student readers? Why, as I read it, the slight moralising tone? Is it to address a critique of PPL? What discourse does it respond to? One possible reading is that the emphasis on the individual student as being responsible for their education is a certain ‘defence of the university’ as ‘not being a school’, that is, the book is writing up against a constructed discourse of the university as a ‘school’, a spoon-feeding institution, where teachers nurse students. This becomes the pedagogical approach to PPL at university. But the text is not framed as ‘pedagogical’, on the contrary I read certain ‘anti-pedagogical’ notions of ‘pedagogy’ being related to schools and nursing students towards predetermined aims, something that does not align with the book’s emphasis on PPL as a kind of *Wissenschaft*. The continuous articulation of PPL as ‘project work’ and not e.g.

'learning' or 'pedagogy', supports this reading. The antagonistic truth-construction of pedagogy vs. university is similar to that of Ingemann (ed. 1985). These discursive practices of 'responsibility for your own learning', as will be shown, are accompanied by a *psychologisation* of students, that problems occurring during education have their root in the student itself, and should be solved there, from an essentialist point of view.

In the following quote from the first chapter, Pedersen follows his enumeration of the 'outcomes' of PPL by relating these benefits as contingent to the 'will of the student':

This said, it is also a trait of problem-oriented project work that these qualifications and experiences are only attained, if the will is there. It can be demanded of one's education that it provides the frame work for getting these qualifications – that there are teachers and courses that supports etc. – but when this is done, the rest is one's own responsibility! Just like other forms of study, it is possible to learn nothing and to learn a lot. It is your responsibility that you learn a lot. (p. 12)

The outcomes of PPL are here conditioned by "if the will is there"; success or failure in education lies with the 'will' of the individual student. The responsabilisation of the student is made explicit in the last sentence, where the address changes from passive third person to a direct second person: "It is your responsibility that you learn a lot." These statements can be read in various ways. One reading is to see this as a 'setting free', a liberalisation of the student. With this liberalisation comes an essentialisation of the student and a toning down of the teacher-role. A short comparison with Illeris (1974) highlights the intelligibility, and difference, here. In Illeris (1974) the teacher-role was also not very elaborated or strong, but for different reasons: student and teachers were seen as part of an *anti-authoritarian* collective, they were principally 'equal'. But, for Olsen and Pedersen (1997) the toning down of the teacher-role relates to a certain notion of 'the university' and PPL as 'student-directed'. Another difference is that for Illeris (1974), success and failure in education was connected to social class analysis and the 'hidden curriculum', where in the book at hand, the cause is to be found within the *individual student*.

The construction of 'the teacher' in the text, is achieved through a differentiation of "teacher" and "academic guide" ('vejleder')⁹⁸ (p. 159). The authors write that "[t]here is a difference between academic guides and teachers" (ibid.), and continue: "[a]n academic guide leaves choices and overview to the group, who becomes responsible for the outcomes of the education." (ibid.). There is no articulation of any pedagogical responsibility on the side of the teacher, and success is put on the student and their group from an essentialist-determinist point of view. The authors operate with "the good group" and

⁹⁸ The Danish word 'vejleder' could also be translated as the perhaps more common English word 'supervisor', but because this book emphasises the responsibility of the students to direct – and have the final responsibility for – their own work, the term 'supervisor' would be misleading here.

”the difficult group” and write that ”[g]ood guidance takes a good group” (p. 169). These types of groups are formulated in the following way:

The good group goes into dialogue with the academic guide, asks questions, criticises etc. It takes the responsibility for its project and uses the academic guide as sparring [resonansskasse]. The difficult group responds to all critique with excuses, does not write, postpones meetings with the academic guide, and expect the guide to come up with solutions. (p. 169)

The text also provides an explanation for the troublesome group: ”From experience, the difficult group is difficult due to one of two reasons: Because it is *lazy*, or because it is *unsure*.” (p. 167, emphasis in original). The knowledge base for this dichotomous conclusion, comes from “experience”, and any literature on supervision or university teaching from the educational research field is absent. The conclusion to the address of the role of the academic as “guide” is put in the following moral judgement: “If the guidance does not bear fruit, because the group knows it is lazy, there is little else to do than to start working or drop out of the educational programme.” (p. 168). Thus, the mantra of having ‘responsibility for your own learning’ takes a shape ruled by certain determinist-paternalistic statements: you can either start working or you can drop out. In the quote above the ‘unit’ is not the individual group, which is taken to be one actor, making the individual student group members the same. I read these statements as relating to the book’s notion of ‘the university’ as a place for grown-up academics, and as a counter-discourse to a perceived, by the text, ‘schoolification’ of higher education. The discursive effect of the essentialist determinism based on experience is that pedagogical analysis of educational problems, and the possibility for change through education, through ‘teaching’, become redundant.

The part of the book called “Group work and academic guides”, where the above statements come from, also has a chapter by a “pedagogical consultant” (p. 117), Arno Kaae. My initial question was how this chapter, “Group processes and –problems” (p. 117), by a different author, produces PPL and its purposes? Reading it, I find that it continues the discourse of the book in the sense that ‘problems’ in project groups are seen as *coming from* and *to solved within* the group itself. For this purpose, the chapter presents a plethora of prescriptive tools and tricks for the group to try with headings such as “Ingredients for a developing and efficient group meeting” (p. 122) and “Practicing active listening” (p. 130), “Do not discuss without writing” (p. 132), “Conflict solving” (p. 134). The chapter is based on experience and a few citations on group psychology, and there is little address of other educational ‘participants’ outside the student group; the teacher, the educational structures, educational research or societal-educational discourses constituting possible praxis. Thus, I read this chapter as creating a psychologisation of educational problems, placing them within the student group and within the individual student. Kaae opens the chapter by positioning PPL as a praxis-form with little structures:

There is no employer to decide when to meet and when to work, or to demand well-defined tasks to be fulfilled. Also, the content and methods of the work is not integrated in familiar routines, especially in the first years of study. It is *learning by doing*. (p. 117, emphasis in original)⁹⁹

Here, PPL is positioned as a practice more or less defined by students themselves, and through the use of the slogan "*learning by doing*", PPL is pragmatically constructed as something that is intrinsically 'practical', thus marginalising notions such as preparing for 'praxis', educational research, theorising and conceptualising. The chapter also continues the responsabilisation of the student, e.g. under the heading "Do the right thing – it is not that dangerous" (p. 139), where students are called to express their frustration of other group members in certain ways. The aim of education, as articulated in this chapter, is to make 'group work work' by 'solving' troubles. The responsibility lies with the group and the individual student. In this first edition of the book, there is a chapter by a group of students titled "Group work – stories from RUC" (p. 145), which brings an analysis based on a semester-project, in which the culture and ideals of group work are addressed. This analysis posits a less romantic view of group work, nuancing the fast 'how to to'-style of Kaae's chapter. In later editions of the book, this chapter is taken out.

Conclusions and questions for further investigation

The book 'Problem-oriented project work – a workbook' constructs PPL as a 'form of work' with a multitude of educational aims and outcomes. These are put forth from a romantic advocacy-perspective, where the troubles of PPL are seen as 'natural part of the work', giving the text a 'sales' feel not addressing problems and critiques of PPL. The sales-talk also shows in widespread language of competencies and qualification, where many aspects of PPL are positioned as 'useful' on the job market. Besides qualification as a main education aim for PPL, there is a strong attention to PPL as 'Wissenschaft', that is, a praxis driven towards the acquisition of knowledge. Though presenting various perspectives on 'science', and different understandings of 'problems', the most frequent and dominating formulations of PPL, is to view it as an 'applied science', as a 'craft'. The educational subject, the student, is cast as a 'project knowledge worker', and through the competency-language PPL becomes *professionalised* including the naming of the specific 'PPL-competency': "issue-based academic competence" ("saglig faglighed") (p. 17). I see traces of Ingemann (ed. 1985), which is also briefly cited in footnotes (Olsen and Pedersen 1997: 75, 81), indicating that Olsen and Pedersen (1997) have read Ingemann (ed.

⁹⁹ The phrase "*learning by doing*" is written in English in the original Danish version (Olsen and Pedersen 1997: 117).

1985)¹⁰⁰. The traces concern the construction of PPL as a university- and research praxis, and what I call ‘anti-pedagogical’ notions seen from a certain ‘university-perspective’ that emphasises the educational subjects as ‘students’, ‘researchers’ and ‘academic guides’, who are posited as grown-ups in an academic (not ‘pedagogical’) relation focusing on (social) scientific knowledge work. There are also several differences between the two texts, one being that the text by Olsen and Pedersen (1997) is written in the language of competencies and qualifications and perform a ‘hand book’-style text with ample tips and tricks, bullet point lists and models for students to follow.

With the emphasis of PPL as a kind of ‘knowledge craft’ relating to ‘the university’, comes a strong moral articulation of the student as ‘responsible for their learning’. This constellation positions the teacher as ‘an academic guide’, who offers his expertise to the group, but has no ‘pedagogical’ responsibility for the success and failure of the group, which from the essentialist-determinist perspective created lies solely with the students. The same teacher-student relation with the mantra ‘responsibility for your own learning’ appears in Nielsen and Jensenius (1996).

A question to pose for the cross-readings, is whether PPL has been formulated from the perspective of the Humanities? Thus far, the analysed texts mainly draw on certain kinds of social science and psychological perspectives on PPL.

¹⁰⁰ Olsen and Pedersen (1997) is the only text in the assemblage to explicitly cite Ingemann (ed. 1985).

‘Why project pedagogy?’ (Ulriksen 1997)

The next many pages of this series of interpretive analyses, revolves around the text ‘Why project pedagogy?’¹⁰¹ (1997) authored by Lars Ulriksen. The text enters the assemblage as an ‘expert book’ in the sense that it sits as part of the so-called ‘UNIPÆD-project’. This was a development project from the late 1990s aimed at a “continuing development of project pedagogy in its broadest sense” (p. 3), where various experts in university pedagogy at Roskilde University carried out a variety of surveys and studies on “project pedagogy”, as it played out at that university. In the various publications that sprung from this project, ‘Why project pedagogy?’ (Ulriksen 1997) sits as the piece that engages the most with the *ideas and principles* of PPL, where the other publications have more narrow foci on specific topics such as being an assistant professor (Simonsen 1997), or being a new teacher at the university (Frello 1997). These other studies mainly study practice and base themselves on empirical work. The author of ‘Why project pedagogy?’, Lars Ulriksen, is presented in the book as a member of “the academic group for educational research”, who carries out the project (p. 3). In the introduction to the book, it reads how he has 14 years of experience with PPL at Roskilde University as both student, teacher and developer, indicating a certain amount of expertise. One of the main drivers for including this text in the assemblage has been the curiosity to study how an apparent ‘expert book in university pedagogy’ would construct PPL. A book that throughout refer to PPL as ‘pedagogy’. Further, the text appears in a variety of later publications (Jæger, ed. 2002, Christensen 2013, Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015). Especially ‘The Roskilde Model’ (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015) uses Ulriksen (1997) as an authoritative text, that is, as a citation to make points on the changing conditions of PPL (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015: 26, 28).

Now, with this opening it could sound like an analysis is already set in stone: ‘yes, this is an expert book from a development project carried out by university pedagogues’. But stepping a bit back, these statements are ‘labels’, something the book advertises itself to be – it remains to be investigated in what ways (and whether) the book *performs* ‘expert’, ‘university pedagogy’ and ‘being conceptual’. Thus, before getting ahead of myself and categorising the book before having explored it more openly, these will be the questions for this discourse analysis. So, adding to the main questions of this inquiry concerning the educational purposes of PPL and constructions of the university, special attention will be given to the ways in which this book constructs and positions itself as an actor within the field of ‘university pedagogy’ and PPL-studies.

¹⁰¹ My translation of the Danish title ‘Projektpedagogik – hvorfor det?’ (Ulriksen 1997). All quotes from this book are my translations from Danish, unless stated otherwise.

Questions of genre – is it educational research?

In this first section, I will take a close look at what this text makes itself out to be. The book, or perhaps more fitting, ‘booklet’, as it counts 126 pages in a paperback A5 format, shows its institutional bonds to Roskilde University with a glance at the cover. Both the front and back cover of the book is made of a zoomed-in, cropped picture of the University’s logo at the time; a coral with a slogan around it “In tranquillo mors – in fluctu vita – Universitas roskildensis”. A smaller version of the logo is pitted in the left corner of the back cover emphasising the indication of the text as associated with the university. On the front cover, the title of the book and its author appear beneath a banner saying “THE UNIPÆD-PROJECT” referring to the larger project in which this publication sits as number “7” – written in the bottom right corner of the front cover. On the back cover, a text box introduces the book and refers to itself as “report”, indicating the results of an investigation.

Positioning the book in terms of genre, I would say it acts an institutionally tied development project with a certain educational sociology perspective and not, as such, a pedagogical-didactical one. And how does this show? First of all the book explicitly presents itself as part of ‘The UNIPÆD project’, which on the front cover has the by line: “Development of project pedagogy and continuing pedagogical education of university teachers”. This project is elaborated on the first page after the colophon:

THE UNIPÆD-PROJECT will instigate a series of initiatives in collaboration with the academic milieus and a series of reports will be written with the aim of collecting experiences and initiating a continuing development of project pedagogy in its broadest sense.
(p. 3)

The purposes of the project of which this makes out a report are proposed here as “collecting experiences” and “continuing development”, which indicates the genre to be *development*. Throughout the book, the purpose of development of practice and the strong and local ties to the university are continued. The very *denomination* of the object of the book, which I refer to as ‘PPL’, is in many places referred to as “the RUC-pedagogy” (e.g. p. 5 and 110). This term appears already in the table of contents, where part 2 is called “The RUC-pedagogy – ideas and justification” (p. 5). This naming after the university in Roskilde, ‘RUC’, constructs the concept as something intrinsically tied with the specific university institution. The discursive effect is to make PPL something special and unique to a specific institution, but it is also a naming that makes it, conceptually, less open to conversation with similar ideas and practices outside this university.

Another feature of the report that makes it act ‘development project’ is its knowledge base. It speaks of a wide range of ‘sources’ included in the work: surveys and studies from the UNIPÆD-project, evaluations from the university itself, introductions to project pedagogy, evaluations and research from Aalborg university, experience of the author and certain theoretical perspectives (p. 14). What adds to a ‘development’ genre, as I

interpret it, is the emphasis on studies from the UNIPÆD-project mainly being surveys with students and teachers, and then the author's experience, which constructs the legitimacy of the author as an 'expert practitioner' instead of, for example, 'educational theorist' or 'philosopher':

Fourthly, there is my experience from 14 years at RUC – partly as a student, partly as a teacher. Here, I draw on my experience with the educational policy work of introducing combi-programmes in the middle of the 1980s, where a series of principal questions were raised and discussed, on my experience as a teacher [vejleder] in the basic studies of the humanities, and my participation in the pedagogical development of the university [universitetspædagogiske arbejde]. (p. 14)

In this quote, the author's "experience" with PPL is made a central source of legitimacy, both as teacher and student – research is not mentioned. The overall motivation of the book is also mainly taken from the surveys of the UNIPÆD-project, which found that it was unclear for teachers and students what exactly the pedagogical principles of the university were and why they were beneficial (p. 11). Thus, the outset of the book is certain problems derived from educational practice – from the experience of teachers and students - and not for example a theoretical or philosophical critique, or pedagogical standpoint.

The style throughout the book is informal and changes between statements based on references to research and studies, and statements without explicit references, but generally the author seems a bit withdrawn, or cautious, in making explicit normative statements and lets the references do the talking. This would tip the genre towards 'report' and 'investigation' rather than e.g. 'argument' or 'prescriptive development paper'. It comes across as a value to 'discuss openly' and not settle on certain standpoints, as seen on the text on the back cover:

The aim is to contribute to a greater consciousness of, and discussion of, the pedagogy at RUC: what it is and why it should be like this – if it should be like this. The report does not conclude on the discussion. It pushes it on. (back cover)

On the one hand, the text wants to shed light on the pedagogy and its arguments, but on the other hand, it does not want to settle on an answer, when it for example writes "if it should be like this". The book does what it says here; it pushes the pedagogical questions of what to do and why to do it elsewhere. It wants to ask questions instead of answering them. This is seen as a strength. To arrive at possible readings, I will look at how the book constructs its theoretical-epistemological perspective. Concerning the 'theoretical' part of the knowledge base of the text, it is articulated like this "Finally and fifthly, there is a broad theoretically based understanding of the changed societal status of universities (e.g. Habermas 1987 and Scott 1995)." (p. 14). These theoretical citations are not used for reflections on onto-epistemology (which is not addressed) or a methodology-chapter, which aligns with the practice-oriented development-genre, but rather serve as citations that are drawn in once in a while to explain phenomena related to the development of

universities. That the ‘theoretical’ mainly becomes resources drawn in, makes it implicit what the theoretical ‘stance’ of the text is. In my reading, this makes the book appear ‘a-theoretical’ in the sense that it does not reflect on its own position; it stays on a realist plane, describing things ‘as they are’. The combination of an a-theoretical, practice-based approach and a mainly uncritical use of sources – these are made to speak for themselves in an accumulative knowledge perspective, not reflecting much on their particular perspectives and positioning – makes the book perform like practice-based development literature.

Continuing on the knowledge base of the text, another characteristic is that much of the points come from what I read as a certain structural, educational sociology perspective, where phenomena at university are explained with reference to societal developments, and especially (late) modernity. This perspective, as it practised by the text, makes the it adhere to the primary speech acts of ‘explaining’ and ‘diagnosing’ and refrain from ‘concluding’ or ‘showing a direction’ in a pedagogical sense. The particular sociological approach is not reflected explicitly (it does not write ‘this perspective is sociological’ anywhere), but appears through a certain form of explanatory power and the use of certain references, which I would label ‘modernity studies’ such as Ziehe 1989, Beck 1992, Giddens 1991 and Scott 1995¹⁰². When discussing the principle of “participant-direction” (p. 71), he uses Ziehe to argue for the continued relevance of this concept:

The original justification towards democracy (see p. 30) shifts to being a way to accommodate a new student identity that questions the legitimacy of the form and content of education instead of just readily accepting it (Ziehe 1989). Ziehe describes a type of pupil to whom the demand for finding subjective meaning and realisation in education becomes crucial, and to whom inner motivation [lysten] is the driving force. Seen in this light, it is not realistic to move *away* from the principle of participant-direction. (p. 77, emphasis in original).

In this quote, Ulriksen uses Ziehe to diagnose the current state of students – although the reference to “Ziehe 1989” is from an essay set in a school context (note the subject being the “pupil”) – and he then goes on to use Ziehe’s diagnosis as the base for keeping the principle of participant-direction. Ulriksen refers to a certain “type of pupil” for whom “the demand for finding subjective meaning and realisation in education becomes crucial”, which then becomes the main argument for continuing the principle of participant-direction. Here, the principle is not argued for from a normative philosophical point of view (e.g. ‘democracy’), but from a sociological: from the point of a diagnosis of the

¹⁰² Looking in the list of references of Ulriksen (1997), these citations are to Thomas Ziehe 1989 (Danish edition): “Jeg er måske også lidt umotiveret i dag’ i *Ambivalenser og mangfoldighed*” (p. 119, emphasis in original), Ulrich Beck 1992: “*Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*” (p. 113, emphasis in original), Anthony Giddens 1991 (Danish edition): “*Modernitet og selvidentitet*” (p. 114, emphasis in original), Peter Scott 1995: “*The Meanings of Mass Higher Education*” (p. 118, emphasis in original). I have not translated these titles; they appear as in Ulriksen (1997).

“modern” (Ulriksen frequently refers to contemporary society as ‘modern’, e.g. p. 97) society and its realisation-oriented subjects. The argumentation becomes *student-centred* in an essentialist way, by wanting to change and adjust higher education to the immediate ‘needs and desires of students’.

Another example is when addressing “group work” (p. 98) as one of the principles of PPL. A brief note here is that the report is split into two parts: a presentation of ‘the principles’ and then, what I would call, an analytical reconstruction of the principles under the heading “Critiques and new arguments” (p. 53). The two parts of the text are structured by the principles (in the order they appear in the table of content, p. 5): “Project-organisation”, “Problem-orientation”, “Participant-direction”, “The principle of exemplarity”, “Interdisciplinarity”, “Experience-based and experience-oriented”, “Group work”. In the case of “group work”, Ulriksen points to a certain change, where more and more students choose to do their projects alone, which is then explained with reference to, among other things, an increased individualisation in society and thereby a changing student body:

The societal modernisation process has meant an increased individualisation – as both a pressure and possibility for the individuals (Beck 1992, Giddens 1991). The course of life has been opened and liberated from predetermined forms of life, while social inheritance simultaneously continues to be in effect, and several choices are not as free as they would seem. (p. 100)

The truth-telling here states that society is undergoing a “modernisation process”, which means “increased individualisation”. This is a truth that can help explain why an increasing amount of students leave the troubles of group work and choose to work alone. Ulriksen continues to use ‘modernity’ as explanatory figure, here through “Beck 1992” and “Giddens 1991”.

The societal diagnosis is followed up by a study from the UNIPÆD-project, which also aims at characterising the ‘new student body’:

Altogether, this means a different attitude towards the studies and group work. The teachers interviewed for the UNIPÆD-project give an impression of a student body that has become more goal-oriented [målrettete], but without a drive towards knowing [erkendelsesrettet drev], who have become depoliticised and have a very different approach to their education (p. 100).

Here, the new “student body” is positioned as “goal-oriented”, “without a drive towards knowing” and “depoliticised”. Like the above references to Beck, Giddens and Ziehe, this diagnosis, in the discursive logics of the text, helps to explain certain changes at the university, in this case the increasing amount of students doing their study project alone. Ulriksen does also mention other drivers for this change such as worse conditions for group work with a lower student-teacher ratio and larger group sizes, but the inclusion of the sociological analyses has certain effects for the statements possible in the text. By

including theories that identify a range of changes in society known under the term ‘modernisation’, it is possible for Ulriksen to construct a ‘before’ and ‘after’ these diagnoses. This then makes it possible for the text to point out changes in the principles of PPL initiated by societal movements, while the principles were something different, something ‘original’ before these societal changes. These effects of ‘modernity’ thus comes with a slight textual affect of *loss*, and that things were better ‘before’. The strong explanatory power of ‘modernity’ of changes in educational practice, ignores other possible explanations such as inherent tensions in the principles of PPL (Christensen 2013 makes this same point for the later summary report to the UNIPÆD project; Simonsen and Ulriksen 1998).

Concerning the construction of ‘the university’, this too is conceptualised from a certain sociological perspective through for example the reference to ‘Scott 1995’. There is little articulation of the university as an idea whereas the main construct is the university as a societal function, as an institution subject to ‘the changing times’. This ‘change’ becomes truth through citation practices that ‘explains’: by references such as Scott 1995, who in the list of references appear with the book “*The Meanings of Mass Higher Education*” (Ulriksen 1997: 118, emphasis in original).

The title of the book ‘Why project pedagogy?’ could be read in various ways; for example that the book would give pedagogical arguments for PPL and show a way forward. But instead of taking an explicitly normative road, the book answers the question in a sort of pluralist and structural, sociological manner, meaning that it communicates ‘what others said’ and accumulates these (different) answers and gives explanations to change with reference to ‘modernity’. In this way, the text ends up not taking an explicit standpoint on the question of what PPL is and should be, and instead “pushes the discussion on”, as it says on the back cover. This does not mean that the book does not practise certain sentiments for the direction PPL should take – and should not take. But this happens in subtle and implicit ways, as will be shown. In the next section, I will study this textual affect and explore the unclear entanglement of educational aims and purposes, which seem to stay elusive. The textual affect often appears in narratives of *loss* and *nostalgia*, and I will also go further into such constructions of ‘what was’, of what was considered ‘original’ – and its discursive effects - and what is constructed as ‘new’ and necessary.

Nebulous educational aims of ‘fagkritik’ and ‘social relevance’

As the book is preoccupied with communicating what other texts wrote on PPL, and mainly wants to diagnose, the educational aims and purposes appear as vague shapes in a thick fog. If you look hard you might see them, but you can hardly grasp them. While, in its own words, happy to ask questions and ‘discuss’, positive formulations to the question in the book title ‘Why project pedagogy?’ remain mostly nebulous and are relegated to the cracks and crevices of the grammatical constructions of the book.

This said, the text positions itself a through certain affective language, and towards the end, the text becomes slightly more prescriptive. In terms of the educational purposes of PPL, my analysis shows that in the few sections where the book speaks its desires outwardly, it emphasises “social relevance” (p. 111) as a core concept of PPL meaning that university studies should matter ‘outside itself’ (ibid.). It remains elusive though, what this could mean more specifically. The constructions of social relevance are connected to ‘interdisciplinarity’, which is pitched against an antagonist of discipline-oriented studies and certain notions of ‘university’ that connote closed-off-ness from ‘the outside’ captured in the metaphor of the ivory tower, thus evoking and reproducing a binary image of ‘inside/outside’ the university with the latter often called ‘reality’. ‘Social relevance’ becomes intertwined in the concept of ‘fagkritik’, which on the very last pages, in the most explicitly normative statements of the text, becomes the suggestion for a way forward: “*one must realise that the political project has disappeared as collective orientation, and recognise the necessity of having the same type of discussions – a new fagkritik?*”. (p. 111, emphases in original). Though there is an explicit normative claim here – to engage in a “*new fagkritik?*” as a substitute for “*the political project?*” – this statement is argued from a logic of “*necessity?*”, and not e.g. personal or philosophical beliefs and values. The statement reads as if the book, hitherto, has been a series of evidence that naturally leads to the (only) conclusion; that a new ‘fagkritik’ is needed. It is also not clear ‘who’ has to realise this by the use of the impersonal “*one?*”. My reading is that there is a censoring at work, a strategical blurring of certain statements and actors as seen in the above quote. In the following, I will study how the text reaches the conclusion of ‘fagkritik’ as the conceptualisation of PPL, and how this happens through subtle and nebulous statements in terms of educational aims – written up against a certain discursive censoring position – and through certain narratives of loss. As such, I adhere to the task of the discourse analyst: “to interrogate texts for what they fail to say, but cannot fully cover up” (Stronach and Maclure 1997: 53).

I will begin by exploring the ways in which the book uses a ‘on the one hand, on the other hand’ argumentation ending with non-conclusive questions rather than answers. This is a book that sits as part of ‘university pedagogy project’ and is written by an expert in the field, and when it asks ‘Why project pedagogy?’, this evokes certain expectations for answers to that question. Also, the book does not refer to its object as ‘project work’ in the title, but ‘pedagogy’, which could be read as a statement pointing to PPL not as a method, but as a pedagogy with a certain history, with certain ideas around learning, around its subjects (whether ‘learners’, ‘students’ or similar), and finally, about its educational aims and purposes – directions and desires. But it remains mostly silent and elusive on this matter, from its ‘own’ position, while letting various ‘others’, a myriad of cited PPL-texts, do the talking. Instead, the text performs as diagnostic and distanced.

When the text is addressing the principle of exemplarity, which it explains as a matter of relating the particular to the whole (p. 31), it explores what constitutes ‘the whole’ – what

should be the point of reference for problem-oriented projects and the question of ‘relevance’? It begins by stating how there was “no doubt” of “the whole” in the early years of the university:

In the early years of RUC there was no doubt as to what the whole was – at least not in the internal understanding at RUC. The political embeddedness in the principle of problem-orientation meant that the exemplary was no cause of debate at all. The aim was to make the workers conscious and to analyse and uncover the function and structure of the capitalist societal totality. (p. 78)

The past is constructed as a time, where there was “no debate”, because everyone agreed on the orientation of project work; emancipate the working class through analysis of capitalist society. Ulriksen explains how the loss of such a “common understanding of the political orientation” (p. 78) has dissolved the point of reference for problems, leaving a gap to be filled by other reference points. In his exploration of alternatives to ‘the whole’, Ulriksen first identifies “the discipline” (p. 79) as dominant reference point, which he shows, has become dominant among students at Roskilde by a reference to “Nielsen and Jensenius 1996”, but also at Aalborg University with a reference to “Vithal et al. 1994” (p. 79). Ulriksen discards the discipline as ‘the whole’, arguing they are too difficult to define properly, and would place too much responsibility on the teacher as “representative of a discipline” (p. 80). The second identified alternative is to view “the method” (p. 80), or “form of work” (ibid.), as the whole. Though Ulriksen mentions benefits from this approach in terms of “learning” and “qualifications” (p. 81), he finds it an insufficient answer in that it renders considerations on the content and character of problems subordinate: “the methodology of project work becomes an independent qualification goal, a formal demand which must be fulfilled for its own sake and for the sake of qualification rather than for the problems that were supposed to be the object of the project work.” (p. 81). Departing from these two alternatives identified in practice at Roskilde and Aalborg University, Ulriksen now comes up with a third option as reference point for PPL: “*the profession*” (p. 82, emphasis in original). Albeit, this is quickly turned down from the observation by Ulriksen that Roskilde University has few educational programmes directed at specific professions and at the same time a dominating professional focus may ignore other “purposes of the university” (p. 83) such as “the democratisation- and formational aspect” and “broader knowledge-oriented dimensions” (ibid.). In these statements lie an implicit view of the purposes of the university as including ‘democratisation’, ‘formation’ (‘dannelse’) and ‘the furthering of knowledge’ (‘erkendelse’). Consequently, the exploration ends with no fitting alternatives to the former ‘political interest’ guiding the notion of ‘exemplarity’, leaving the question of reference open and unanswered:

The whole that project should mirror can then neither be a discipline, a method nor a profession and apparently not political either. The first step towards a clarification of this rather important point must be to even *discuss what whole one could think of*. (p. 83, emphasis in original)

The conclusion drawn from the short investigation is that neither “discipline”, “method”, “profession” nor “the political” can be used as the “whole” to mirror project work. Ulriksen then ends up by pointing the arrow outwards at the impersonal “*one*” and postpones any answer to the question by emphasising “discussion” as an important next step. In the quote there is a discernible element of resignation or surprise in relation to “the political” that is posited as “apparently” not being a relevant point of reference. I read this as a certain nostalgia, or *mourning*, directed at a narrative of a strong and collective political orientation, more specifically a Marxist one (“to make the workers conscious and to analyse and uncover the function and structure of the capitalist societal totality.” p. 78). The problem is that this political orientation is situated ‘in the past’, but this is not really followed by any argument or attitude as why this is so, which is perhaps why it is stated with a certain atmosphere of loss? At another point in the book, Ulriksen comments on Illeris (1981) and hints at the impossibility of bringing back Marxism as common societal-political orientation:

But what is more precisely meant by ‘the societal relation’ is not made clear, and the preciseness found with Knud Illeris relating to a ‘more correct understanding of society’ is not, as such, unproblematic. (p. 60)

I read this quote as Ulriksen positioning Illeris (1981), at this point, as too radical with the notion of “a ‘more correct understanding of society’”. There is no explanation of how the societal orientation by Illeris could be ‘problematic’, and taken together with the silence regarding arguments for bringing back versions of Marxism, this is assumed as a self-evident impossibility.

This leaves the position of the text in a pickle. The formulations of a reference point for the problem-oriented project work are mainly negative, that is, what should *not* be considered ‘the whole’ to mirror projects, and though there is a performed valorisation of centring a ‘political orientation’ and ‘social relevance’, these find nothing to hold on to as all Marxist notions have been outlawed (with no explicit actor to blame). Thus, the constructions of PPL in the text leaves it no closer to any pedagogical standpoints on its purpose and direction, which is a matter projected as ‘up for discussion’. It is not entirely clear *who* can take part in such a discussion on the direction and orientation of PPL – is it certain experts? Is it pedagogical theories and philosophies? Is it management? One response is the first sentence on the back of the book where it reads “What do we do at RUC and why do we do it?”, which seems to create a “we” that is ‘us at RUC’. Reading this together with a call for a collectively oriented “shared reflection” (p. 111) on the future of PPL it is possible to read it as if *everyone* at the university – from a perspective that values ‘the collective’ – is invited to have a say in what direction PPL should take and what it should orient itself towards. The book produces a troubled relation to authority as belonging to certain positions, which affects its (lack of) conclusions and final

statements of a normative direction for PPL. It is possible to read this troubled relation to authority as a trace of progressive anti-authoritarian pedagogical notions. As Biesta (2017) writes, this makes it difficult to give explicit authority to anything when it is perceived as the opposite of ‘freedom’ (p. 42). At the same time, the question of authority does not disappear and always is a part of educational matters, whether implicit or explicit (ibid.).

Constructing PPL as ‘anti-academic’

As stated, the position of the book stands with ‘fagkritik’, ‘practice’ and ‘social relevance’, but as these concepts are mainly formulated from what they are *not*, they are difficult to formulate positively for the text. In the following, I will study these constructions that produce a certain ‘anti-academic’, here referring to a certain sceptical construction of ‘the university’ and all that becomes related to this construct, and ‘anti-disciplinary’ position, which estranges ‘PPL’ from a certain construct of ‘the university’.

The text is critical of ‘the disciplines’, which are both articulated as fragile constructs and something of the past for “the traditional universities” (p. 80). At the same time, the text finds it troublesome to come up with a viable alternative, and ends up suggesting an interdisciplinarity that works much like the disciplines, here from the final chapter, “The conclusion” (p. 103):

Instead of an orientation towards the existing (but, as said, also crisis-ridden and challenged and therefore fragile and vulnerable) disciplines [fagligheder], the only realistic possibility is to establish interdisciplinarity as a *new professionalism* [faglighed] with the same kind of limitation, institutionalisation and stringency as the old disciplines, but organised in relation to an interdisciplinary engagement with a field of problems [problemfelt]. (p. 109-110, emphasis in original)

Here, Ulriksen uses ‘an argumentation of the necessary’ by writing “the only realistic opportunity”, and suggests “interdisciplinarity as a *new professionalism*”. In brackets, there is a reiterated statement indicated by the words “as said” (‘jo’), assuming the reader to already know that the existing disciplines are “crisis-ridden and challenged and therefore fragile and vulnerable”. This becomes a curious construction of ‘interdisciplinarity’ as a kind of ‘new disciplinarity’, or professionalism, that follows the same logic as Ulriksen has presented for ‘existing disciplines’, but still is posited as different through a ‘new-old’ binary.

Another feature of the text is a certain, subtle ‘anti-academic’ discourse that constructs ‘the university’ as something inherently ‘traditional’ (and therefore ‘outdated’ in the discourse of the book), and something that is different from PPL. This happens, for example, in the conclusion of the book, where Ulriksen sums up certain tendencies in the higher education landscape that change the principles of PPL:

In relation to several of the principles there is a slippage, because the university as institution as it exists with its traditions, norms and power relations, changes the principles. It is important to pay attention to the point that this process, where there the programmes and pedagogy of RUC experience a slide towards a more traditional academic and university [universitär] orientation, happens at the same time as the university as institution and other universities are experiencing changes which in some ways pull them closer to the structure of RUC. (p. 105)

In this quote, a “slippage” is constructed, which creates PPL as being in two states; one ‘before’ and one ‘after’. This change is initiated by “the university as institution” with certain “traditions, norms and power relations”. The ‘university’ *does* something to PPL, and the way I read it, this “slippage” performs as a kind of ‘corruption’, that the principles are in a worsened state because of the influence of the university. At the same time PPL was ‘better’ before this “slippage”, before ‘the university’ changed it – perhaps PPL was better off without ‘the university’? Next in the quote Ulriksen identifies this change of Roskilde University’s “educational programmes and pedagogy”, uttered through the word “slide”, as moving towards “more traditional academic and university”. The last part of the quote points out to the reader that while Roskilde University is moving towards ‘traditionalisation’, the “other universities” are becoming more like ‘RUC’. I read this as a narrative of *loss* (Hemmings 2011), where PPL and its principles have more or less been corrupted by ‘the university’ and its academisation. By using the word “university”, which is an adjectivisation of ‘university’, and the combination of “traditional” and “academic”, the textual affect indicates an undesirable change from a point of view, where being ‘university-like’ – “university” – is not a good thing, because it, here, connotes elitism, traditionalism, conservatism and disciplinarity. This discourse also allows the move of “the other universities” towards becoming ‘less university-like’, to be a desirable development, a ‘modernisation’.

A similar construction adding to the anti-academic discourse, is the positioning of ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ and their relationship. Ulriksen uses “Schön 1983”¹⁰³ (p. 82) to tell a certain truth about the theory-practice relation at higher education institutions, and how PPL is well fit to challenge this: “First there is theory (which is the finest), then comes applied science and finally, practice. This problematic hierarchy is possible to break at RUC because the studies, throughout, are project-organised.” (p. 82). In this quote, the project studies at Roskilde University become a spearhead in breaking with a certain ‘theory domination’ that is posited as characteristic of ‘traditional’ university teaching. Project work is articulated as an integration of theory and practice. Ulriksen’s use of the Schön-reference continues and is used to highlight the benefits of a more practice-oriented PPL: “The combination of interdisciplinarity and problem-orientation can be seen as a strong

¹⁰³ As seen in the reference list of Ulriksen (1997) ‘Schön 1983’ is a citation of Donald A. Schön’s (English) book “*The Reflective Practitioner. How Professionals Think in Action.*” (p. 118, emphasis in original)

potential for the project work form to educate [uddanne] what Donald. A. Schön calls the reflective practitioner (1983), and may well be one of the true forces of project pedagogy.” (p. 92). Ulriksen writes this in a section on new developments of the principle of exemplarity, and he seeks to challenge a thinking of ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ as being opposites, for which he points to “reflection” as the tool to merge theory and practice in the project studies. Here, he uses Schön and suggests to think of the PPL-student as a “reflective practitioner”. The inclusion of Schön, who studied professionals at work, and the articulation of students as ‘practitioners’, pulls the constructions of PPL in the text towards a professional and practice-oriented position. This counters other places in the book, where Ulriksen posits how Roskilde University does not have many ‘professional education programmes’, while he also puts forth a worry that project work becomes “too practice-oriented” (p. 92). Again, this shows certain ambiguities in the book and a will to ‘show all sides of PPL’, but at the same time the anti-academic sympathy towards ‘practice’ dominates the textual affect.

To round off this section on the anti-academic educational aims of PPL, I will address a certain strategical citation practice, where citations from Aalborg University – “Olsen & Sørensen 1995” (p. 55) and “Laursen 1996” (p. 66) - are positioned as *more academic*, while those from Roskilde University – “Olsen & Pedersen 1997” (p. 56) - retain some practice-orientation. In the anti-academic discourse of the text, this makes the latter ‘better’. The following quote is from the section on new developments of the principle of “project organisation” (p. 54), and Ulriksen is writing how at Roskilde University students still do both “practice-oriented” and “theory-oriented” (p. 55) projects, which he then contrasts to Aalborg University with a quote from an introduction pamphlet, ‘Olsen & Sørensen 1995’, for students of Culture and Language Studies there: “A project is creative, text-producing group work based on various literary and academic texts, which are given in relation to an independent and knowledge-oriented [erkendelsesmæssigt] question posed by the group.’ (Olsen & Sørensen 1995, p. 56)” (Ulriksen 1997: 55). Ulriksen (1997) comments on this definition questioning the emphasis on “knowledge inquiry” (‘erkendelse’): “the understanding of the project has shifted to a production of and engagement with texts in a more closed space of knowledge inquiry which does not seem to move beyond the boundaries of the university.” (p. 55). A few lines later, Ulriksen comments on the above quote where it becomes explicitly articulated how the shift towards a “closed space of knowledge inquiry” is not a preferable one, and Ulriksen’s ideals of PPL and its educational purposes are enunciated:

But by emphasising the text-producing and knowledge-oriented elements in the definition, the focus is moved to an academic engagement with knowledge-oriented [erkendelsesmæssige] problems, where the practical problem (whether it concerns dissemination or social work, e.g. connected to integration projects or community houses) becomes *an occasion* for knowledge-driven text production. As such, Olsen and Sørensen do not reject the possibility of including empirical work in the project, but it is still the knowledge-oriented problem that takes centre position. (p. 56, emphasis in original)

This construction of a certain change is told through a *narrative of loss*, indicated by the “but” at the beginning of the quote: this is not a desirable development. In this quote the text produces two kinds of approaches to PPL, which is shown below in certain binaries (my construction) through which PPL becomes articulated in the text:

Practice-oriented – *academically oriented*

Outside university – *inside university*

Empirical – *text-based*

Practice – *theory*

Practical problems – *knowledge-driven problems*

Through the use of the quote from ‘Olsen & Sørensen 1995’, the approach at Aalborg becomes positioned as the one on the right side above, where practice-oriented projects might not be banned, but they are subordinated “knowledge-driven text production”. Practice-orientation becomes a means, a mere “*occasion*” for the quest for knowledge. In these constructions, the text – against its own intentions – reproduce a practice-theory binary, which is used as a taxonomy of projects. To contrast the articulated approach of Aalborg University, Ulriksen (1997) draws on “Olsen & Pedersen 1997” (p. 56) from Roskilde University. Though Ulriksen also identifies a focus on “knowledge inquiry” (“*erkendelse*”) as main educational aim of PPL, Olsen and Pedersen are positioned as different: “In Kaare Pedersen’s (Olsen & Pedersen 1997) conceptualisation of project work, the knowledge-oriented and text-producing element is not central in the same way.” (p. 56). Ulriksen later comments on their understanding of problem-oriented project work as being less scholastic: “Thus, it is an emphasis on the aspects of the project that goes beyond purely being an assignment or an essay.” (p. 57). The result of this comparison becomes that Olsen and Sørensen from Aalborg stands as the narrow, disciplinary understanding of PPL, where Olsen and Pedersen from Roskilde has a broader and more socially oriented approach to PPL. Ulriksen does not comment on the disciplinary situatedness; that the two texts come from respectively “language and culture studies at Aalborg University” (p. 55) and the social sciences at Roskilde University (Olsen and Pedersen 1997). In my reading, this reproduces the social sciences as the default understanding of ‘true inquiry’ of PPL and erases ‘discipline’ as relevant differentiation in a universalised notion of PPL (something that Ulriksen criticises on p. 61).

The divide between Aalborg as academic and discipline-oriented and Roskilde as more socially and practice-oriented is reiterated later in the book when addressing ‘problem-orientation’. Here, Ulriksen draws on two reports from Aalborg University, “Olsen 1993” (p. 67) and “Laursen 1994” (p. 66), which he assess with these words:

The criteria for discussing the quality of project work in the two reports is univocally related to a qualification from within a disciplinary tradition and in relation to a traditional academic standard. Problem-orientation as an engagement with problems of relevance and importance to the surrounding society, or for groups in society, is nowhere in sight. (p. 68)

In the quote, the text continues the construction of 'proper' PPL as something that engages in "problems of relevance and importance to the surrounding society", while the two mentioned reports 'only' focus on "disciplinary tradition" and a "traditional academic standard".

In Ulriksen's comparison between texts from Aalborg University and Roskilde University, the subordination of problems to "existing disciplines" belongs to Aalborg, 'the others', whereas Olsen and Pedersen emerge as *allies* to Ulriksen at Roskilde, where the approach to PPL transgresses existing discipline-orientation. The discursive effect of the use of these references from Aalborg and Roskilde is that the anti-academic discourse becomes (re)produced. Through this discursive strategy, Roskilde can emerge as having the 'better' approach to PPL through its emphasis on practice, empirical work and the relation to the 'outside world', while Aalborg retains a traditional, academic and scholastic approach to PPL – something undesirable, and un-true to PPL, in the anti-academic discourse of the text.

An 'Illerisian' approach to PPL?

The text makes extensive use of texts from Illeris (1974, 1981, 1995), and especially 'A pedagogy of counter-qualification' (Illeris 1981), which frames the entire discussion of PPL. It puzzled me to find a widespread absence of the critique directed at Illeris (1974, 1981) from e.g. Keldorff and Salomonsen (1981), Borgnakke (1983) and the critique Illeris addresses in his 1981-text. How come this is not a part of this engagement with 'project pedagogy' in a report that investigates the arguments for, and critique of, PPL? The critique and challenge that *is* put forth by Ulriksen never really endangers 'PPL and its principles' as being something inherently 'good'; the discussion and critique takes place *within* assumed principles and does not go beyond them or challenge their *raison d'être* almost as if there was a fear of risking 'blasphemy' of the 'sacred texts of old'.

A main continuing binary from Illeris (1981) is to speak of PPL and its subject matter in terms of "subjective" and "objective" criteria (Ulriksen 1997: 26). This is first presented, when explaining the principle of 'problem-orientation', where Ulriksen refers to Illeris (1981), and writes that a problem of inquiry should have "subjective relevance" and "objective relevance" (Ulriksen 1997: 21). Ulriksen quotes Illeris (1981) in explaining that problems must "*appear as or be accepted as a problem for the participants*" and "*should be able to be placed in a wider and ultimately always societal context*" (Ulriksen 1997: 21, emphasis in original). Finally, Ulriksen (1997) mentions how 'objective relevance' should be understood

as a dual concept both including a societal dimension and an educational dimension, captured in the concept of “double qualification” (p. 21). These constructions of PPL continue as the main truth to discuss within, and there is no critique of discussion of the framing itself and the thinking of PPL in terms of ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ dimensions. Later in the book, when discussing critiques of the principle of problem-orientation, Ulriksen explores various suggestions to fill in, what he finds to be, a ‘lost’ political orientation for PPL. For this purpose, he includes a quote from a newer Illeris-reference, ‘Learning, development and qualification’ (my translation of the Danish title) from 1995, which Ulriksen calls a “more open” (p. 61) formulation of problems in that they must contain:

*‘a **subjective** justification, that is, it must concern something that the participants find to be of significant importance to work with themselves, and an **objective** justification, that is, it must be something that exists and is of importance to the surrounding world and is relevant for the educational programme in question’ (Illeris 1995, s. 126). (p. 61, italic and bold in original)*

This quote continues the conceptualisation of PPL and its relevant curriculum in three parts: 1) A ‘subjective’ part based on the ‘interest’ of participants 2) An ‘objective’ part referring broadly to “*importance to the surrounding world*” and 3) An ‘objective’ part referring to the relevant curriculum. Ulriksen later challenges these three criteria and points to their lack of reference and asks: what makes out ‘participants interest’? What could social relevance mean? And what should the curriculum be? (p. 111). But as shown earlier, Ulriksen does not answer these questions and ends up pointing to certain problems, but does not break with these constructions.

The effects of continuing an ‘Illerisian’ framing of PPL in the book is firstly that it makes it difficult to think differently and outside the suggested framing of ‘subjective-objective relevance’ and the principles of PPL. Secondly, Ulriksen continues an anti-academic discourse of PPL, from Illeris (1974, 1981), with little notion of ‘the university’ beyond a troubled bourgeois, discipline-based construct. Thirdly, it aligns with a production of PPL as a *negative* pedagogy that has much to say about what it wants to break with, but little to say in terms of positive formulations of where to go, what to give authority to, and what to believe in.

Concluding thoughts – a “new fagkritik”?

On the final pages of the report analysed here, Ulriksen (1997) elaborates on the elements of the “new fagkritik” (p. 111), he is proposing:

The aim must be to make possible a collective reflection on the objective societal relevance instead of it being an individual concern. Such a fagkritik should discuss the purpose of studies and education as something different from purely individual and societal economic-utilitarian investments, just as it should not limit itself to a critique of the functions of work. It should aim to integrate the subjective formation project [dannelsesprojekt] of students with a broad formation- and socialisation project where an interest in societal

problems was a legitimate and necessary reflection next to one's own interest in realisation and formation." (p. 111-112)

In my reading, this quote brings together the desires of the text, that is, to integrate certain educational aims of subjectification – “the subjective formation projects of students” – based on youth research in ‘modernity’ e.g. from Thomas Ziehe, with a certain aim for socialisation, where students develop an “interest in societal problems”. Where the aim for ‘subjectification’ comes from a contemporary sociological analysis (and thus becomes a temporary empirical educational aim instead of philosophical), the socialisation aim reads as a more profound desire being the replacement for the identified loss a political orientation for PPL. The text is critical of ‘qualification’ as education aim because of its present dominance (p. 110). The quote is written a language of ‘the necessary’, making the suggestion appear as a logical outcome of the analysis of the text rather than based explicitly on personal beliefs and values. Despite the proposal for a new direction, it remains formulated in vague terms and does not come closer to what “societal problems” might be. Instead, and in line with the collective imperative of the text, concrete answers are pushed on as questions that should emerge from discussion. The quote thus continues to construct higher education, its aims and activities, in broad terms: the two main activities for the university and its students is “to reflect” and “to discuss” what the meaning of education is and what ‘social relevance’ might mean. Thus, the aims and purpose of higher education is put on the shoulders of the students as something they can discuss and reflect on “collectively”.

A final comment is that the book presents “experience-basing and experience-orientation”¹⁰⁴ (p. 40) as one of the principles of PPL (alongside ‘project organisation’, ‘problem-orientation’, ‘participant-direction’, ‘the principle of exemplarity’, ‘interdisciplinarity’ and ‘group work’, see p. 5). This principle is a curious inclusion as it does not appear elsewhere (at least not as principle) in the assemblage of PPL-texts. So, what is it doing there, what is its discursive effect? The text does not help much at a first glance as the section on ‘experience’ have few references and the concept is not really being related to Roskilde University and its history (which is a point in itself – that the text wants to include a principle that is difficult to draw explicitly from the available citation repertoire of PPL). An initial reading is that this principles is drawn from the text’s relation to certain educational research communities, especially focusing on ‘adult education’, where *experience-basing* is central for the ‘older learners’, which Ulriksen also mentions (p. 40), but he sees it as an open question whether this also applies to a university with a diverse student body. Also, the text relates itself to not just the ‘UNIPÆD-project’, but also to “The

¹⁰⁴ I choose a very direct translation of the Danish “erfaringsbasing og erfaringsorientering” (p. 40), which comes to sound awkward in English, but I want to keep them as nouns (as they are written in Danish) just like the other principles, instead of e.g. using ‘experience-based’ and ‘experience-oriented’.

group for vocational and adult education” (my translation from the colophon) at Roskilde University, which, in the colophon, is presented as the sender and publisher of the book, which appears as “no. 57” in a series from this group. Further, the final pages of the text has long lists of other publications from “The group for vocational and adult education”, where many contain “experience” in their titles (p. 121ff). In the section on “Experience-basing and experience-orientation”, Ulriksen draws on Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge with “Negt & Kluge 1974” and Henning Salling Olesen with “Olesen 1985”¹⁰⁵ (p. 41) to show that ‘experience’ is to be understood as a kind of “learning”, something that is an end in itself: the continuous formation of experience (p. 41). Dewey is not mentioned. The motivation for including this principle is not made explicit, but Ulriksen gives some arguments for its relation to PPL: 1) Experience-basing as a source of motivation drawn from Piaget (p. 42), 2) Experience-basing as a response to an increasing and diversifying student mass (not just the elite) in the 1960s, 3) Experience-orientation as “*the formation of political consciousness*” (ibid., emphasis in original). And finally, education with the aim to challenge and change the existing experience of students; to “dissolve the bourgeois distortion and barriers to experience” (ibid.).

The inclusion, and ‘birth’ (as this has not appeared as a ‘principle’ before in the constructions of PPL), of this principle in the book at hand, I read mainly as a deliberate inheritance from Illeris (1981), a manifestation of the anti-academic discourse, a ‘post-Marxist’¹⁰⁶ notion where ‘experience’ works as a ‘subjective-societal’ counter to ‘curriculum-oriented’ or ‘science-oriented’ education.

¹⁰⁵ As seen in the list of references of Ulriksen (1997) the citation of “Negt & Kluge 1974” (p. 41) is to “*Offentlighed og erfaring*” (p. 117, emphasis in original) and “Olesen 1985” (p. 41) is to the book “*Voksenundervisning – hverdagsliv og erfaring*.” (p. 117, emphasis in original). These titles appear as they do in Ulriksen (1997).

¹⁰⁶ I use ‘post-Marxist’ (knowing it can have a multitude of meanings) as a word for perspectives and texts in this study that I read as having inheritances to Marxist perspectives from e.g. Illeris (1974, 1981) and Hultengren (1976/1981) (these texts I would dub more or less explicitly ‘Marxist’), but ‘post-Marxist’ perspectives cannot legitimately use ‘Marx’ as an explicit reference, hence such perspectives are ‘post’ legitimate use of ‘Marx’.

'The complexity of project work' (Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen, eds. 2013)

In 2013 the edited volume 'The complexity of project work – knowledge, tools and learning'¹⁰⁷ came out from the publisher 'Samfundslitteratur'. Five years later, in 2018, the book was published in a second edition in which the two editors, Anita Mac and Peter Hagedorn-Rasmussen, addressed the use of the first edition: "*The complexity of project work* has, since the first edition came out in 2013, been used in a series of courses at universities as well as vocational colleges and in continuing education" (Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen, eds. 2018: 15, emphasis in original). This is also the main reason for including this text in the assemblage of texts; its use as a handbook in higher education to accompany teaching of PPL. As a teacher at the humanities entry level at Roskilde University, I have used some chapters of this book myself in an introduction course to PPL, and I know it has been part of the syllabus for similar courses as well as drawn in by supervisors of group projects. Reading the book for this thesis, that is, not as a handbook for teaching, but as a 'strange' discourse actor in the contingent power/knowledge struggle for constructing 'PPL', it has a curious feature for an edited volume with various contributions and several citations over 268 pages: there is but one mention of other texts addressing PPL (a brief mention in chapter 4, p. 57, of "Pedersen 2009"¹⁰⁸). A question for analysing this text thus becomes: What is the discursive effect of not mentioning any other PPL-texts, as though they did not exist? And what citations are then drawn on to construct PPL? Apart from these specific questions, I inquire into the main research interest of this thesis, that is, how this text with its various chapters, construct PPL and its educational aims and purposes.

Some words on the construction of the text

Let me kick off this analysis with a few words on the book's genre, authors, layout and self-legitimation. 'The complexity of project work – knowledge, tools and learning' is edited by Anita Mac and Peter Hagedorn-Rasmussen, who according to the colophon are associate professors at Roskilde University whose expert fields are respectively "project management, complexity and creative processes" and "project management", "change processes" and "the interplay between "leadership, learning and work life". The

¹⁰⁷ My translation of the Danish title 'Projektarbejdets kompleksitet – viden, værktøjer og læring', first edition from 2013, edited by Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen. All quotes from this book are my translation from Danish unless otherwise stated.

¹⁰⁸ As seen in the reference list of Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen (eds. 2013), "Pedersen 2009" refers to a chapter in "*Problemløst projektarbejde – en værktøjsbog*" edited by Olsen and Pedersen (p. 261).

book consists of 14 chapters written by a range of individual authors including the two editors. At the back of the book, there is a short description of all ten authors, who, according to their bios, are all affiliated with Roskilde University as “researchers, teachers and students” (p. 253). Part of the analysis will be to address differences and similarities between the different chapters to see how they might vary from and align with the overall discursive production of the book. In terms of genre, the text presents itself as a handbook for students in higher education doing project work and it is filled with tools and models for various dimensions of project work such as facilitating meetings (chapter 9), managing projects (chapter 11), reading and writing academically (chapter 12 and 13) and ‘learning to learn’ through portfolios (chapter 14). The book imagines itself to be relevant to both students and teachers (p. 25) and also suggests to be used as the companion to an introductory course to project work: “The book is also relevant for courses in project work, which aim at developing the competencies of the students within project-theoretical and practical dimensions.” (p. 25). Besides relevance for higher education, the book also targets “practitioners who wish to sharpen their knowledge of, and become better at understanding and handling, the complexity of project work.” (back cover). It is not elaborated who “practitioners” refer to.

As said in the introduction, the book does not explicitly draw in other PPL-literature or refer to ‘the past’, so how does it position itself as a new powerful producer of PPL-discourse? The text articulates its *raison d’être* by reference to ‘practice’. The main argument is that project work in higher education often takes place as tacit knowledge and with little explicit reflection on the various competencies needed for successful project work. Thus, the book intends to articulate this tacit knowledge and put into words the plethora of competencies developed through project work:

We see the project work form as a fantastic frame for academic learning processes, and we are convinced that the outcomes for the individual participant can be significantly strengthened if he/she becomes more conscious of what processes are in play and which competencies are needed in project work. Often, the knowledge and project competency acquired by students in relation to the specific characteristics of project work, come about by coincidence. And often it is not articulated. (p. 15)

Without referring to specific practices or empirical studies, the book diagnoses the outcomes of current project work as being coincidental and “not articulated”. Thus, the book intends to do just that: systematically articulate the competencies of project work, the so-called “project competency” as put forth in the quote. PPL becomes a competency. The substantiations for ‘the problem’ addressed by the book and claims to the potentials of PPL, are, in this quote, based on the authors’ convictions through the words “We see” and “we are convinced that”. Throughout the book, it becomes apparent that the editors have carried out workshops and focus-group interviews with students on the topics of the book. Snippets from these activities are used to strengthen the need for the

book, such as this quote from a student saying “Why haven’t you told us this before?” and “If we had known about the phases of project work and how to conduct better meetings already at the beginning of our studies, we could have avoided much frustration.” (p. 17). The editors then use these statements to generalise the need for the book:

This statement is typical for students with a certain amount of experience with project work, who is then presented with the complexity of project work. They experience getting a conceptual language for the considerable amount of tacit knowledge gained, and getting tools to better handle the study practices in group projects. One might say that their tacit knowledge is transformed into conscious competencies. (p. 17)

In this quote, the *raison d’être* of the book is repeated: to transform “tacit knowledge” into “conscious competencies” by articulating that which is taken for granted in project work. This claim is backed up by the earlier statement from a student, which is then taken to be “typical for students with a certain amount of experience with project work”. The entire chapter 2, ‘Project work is understood backwards, but must be practiced forwards’ (p. 27), can be read as a legitimisation of the book. It reads as an essayistic account of the experience of a former student, who on the one hand acknowledges and naturalises the ‘learning potentials’ of the ‘uncertain conditions’ of project work, but also yearned for some more advice and tools to reflect and handle the complexity of doing projects during her own studies. As said, there are no references to studies of PPL in the book and the claims to ‘the problem’ of the book, and thus, its legitimisation, is mainly based on students’ accounts acquired by the editors (from the mentioned workshops) and the convictions of the authors themselves. Accordingly, the potentials of PPL as a form of learning in higher education do not find any direct substantiation in studies from a higher education context, but are instead, for the most part, claims transplanted from an extensive amount of literature from doing ‘project work’ in *organisational and business* contexts.

Before continuing with a more detailed analysis of the book, I will conclude this little introduction by pointing out that the book ties itself to Roskilde University as an institution. It does this through its authors that are, as written in the author-bio, all associated with the university (p. 253). Further, the text is equipped with a foreword signed by “*Hanne Leth Andersen, vice-rector responsible for education, RUC*” (p. 11, emphasis in original), who also wrote the foreword for the second edition in 2018, now as the rector of the university. I could speculate as to the reasons and significance of having a foreword by a vice-rector, but that is not the task here. All I will say is, reading the foreword, it very much aligns with the perspectives of the rest of the book. The aim of the book as formulated in the foreword is to “inspire students to get more out of project work by using the book’s insights and advice for creating optimal learning processes.” (p. 12). Further, it articulates the work of the authors as honing in on “the competency profile of project work between assignment-orientation, science [videnskab] and profession.” (p. 12). Thus, the foreword is constructing PPL through three spheres that intertwines in various ways

as the discourses constituting educational aims of PPL throughout the book: an educational sphere (here referring to the formal education system and to a school-like educational institution with ‘assignments’), a scientific sphere and a professional sphere aimed at developing competencies for work life.

Educational purposes: ‘learning’ and ‘developing competencies’

The three realms of project work constructed in the foreword – education (in a certain form), science and profession – can be thought of as the language that constitute the educational aims and purposes throughout the book in various ways. Though these three spheres might appear equal when presented in the foreword, they are unevenly distributed in the text with ‘educational’ (understood as ‘learning’ in formal education) and professional discourses dominating, while the scientific-academic articulation of PPL is more marginal. Prevalent across the entire text is the construction of ‘learning’ as the main purpose of project work accompanied by a strong competency-focus, the educational purpose of PPL is for students to learn and gain competencies for their study life and later professional life – the aims of education point *outside itself*, at ‘external use’. Stating that ‘learning’ is the main aim of education is not always elaborated and it sometimes remains elusive what ‘learning’ might mean or point to (other than itself), leaving it as a processual and technical concept. In the following analysis, I will explore the various constructions of ‘learning’ and ‘competencies’ and reflect on its effects for the discursive productions of PPL and its purposes.

The articulation of PPL through ‘learning’ and ‘competencies’, that is, thinking of PPL in terms of the questions ‘what do you learn from it?’ or ‘what do you get out of it?’ begins with the very first words of the foreword: “In both education and work life today, there is a search for the key to creativity and innovation, autonomy and agency.” (p. 11). The spaces for speaking of PPL thus becomes “education” and “work life”. The desirable outcomes, or ‘competencies’ as they will later be known as, are “creativity and innovation, autonomy and agency”, which through the temporal label “today” are situated as current needs. This constructed need makes it extremely timely that this book, not surprisingly, suggests ‘project work’ in its complexity, as the answer to the needs of education and work life. The foreword continues by presenting project work as a relevant “form of work” and “form of learning” (p. 11), constructing PPL as ‘work’ and ‘learning’, thus implicitly connecting to ‘work life’ and ‘education’. Continuing the enunciation of PPL through a competency-discourse, the foreword opens a paragraph half-way by asking “What are the capabilities of someone who has worked problem-based in groups through most of their education, and what does it mean to choose student-directed forms of work, dialogic [debatterende] and critical approaches?” (p. 11-12). There has been no grammatical indicator leading up to this question, but the competency-discourse of edu-

cation naturalises the question, and the answer becomes a reiteration of the opening sentence of the foreword: creativity, innovation, autonomy and vigour. The foreword also addresses barriers to realising the potentials of project work and speaks directly to the *raison d'être* of the book when asking “But why are many students and graduates in doubt of their skills and competencies?” (p. 12). This question presupposes that students and graduates doubt their own skills and searches for a reason why, which then becomes a truth that legitimates the rest of the book:

But we each need to become aware of our own skills and competencies, both to become further development-oriented, to plan new learning, and to communicate competencies in relation to job search – or job creation. Therefore students and teachers [vejledere] need a language to speak of, and to reflect on, project work and what they can and want with it – without removing focus from the practice dimension and from the unpredictable. (p. 12)

The foreword does several things here. Firstly, it legitimates the book by calling for “a language to speak of, and reflect on, project work” and its outcomes. Secondly, it reiterates the designated realms of project work, especially the job market by emphasising “job search” and “job creation”. Further, “we” need to become “further development-oriented” – not just ‘development-oriented’, but *further* development-oriented - and be able to “plan new learning”. This reads much like a life-long learning discourse articulating the educational subject as constantly developing and learning, thus making all aspects of life a potential ‘learning and development opportunity’ in an ongoing quest for building ‘competencies’ for a long life of learning (a tendency in higher education addressed by Masschelein and Simons 2018).

The foreword sets the tone for the rest of the book by articulating PPL in a competency-discourse focusing on employability and life-long learning and thus emphasising aims and purposes outside of PPL itself – the book wishes to assert that it is a brilliant form of learning and working towards becoming better at learning and more relevant on the job market. In chapter 1, an introduction by the two editors, Anita Mac and Peter Hagedorn-Rasmussen, the competency-focus is continued with PPL construed as a form of learning that has both educational and professional relevance:

As a student in higher education one will, by reading and using this book, gain a more conscious relation to the processes of project work and get knowledge and a language for these themes, which will make it possible to handle project work in a more qualified way. These competencies also qualify for jobs as the working world to a large extent uses project(like) organisations. To have a language for and to be able to handle and develop the many academic and collaborative challenges of project work, are important qualifications in both study life and work life. (p. 25)

In this quote, the editors repeat the aim of the book; to make students' conscious of the processes of project work and to develop a language for its competencies. The competencies gained through PPL are then positioned as some that "qualify for jobs" from the argument that companies and businesses also use project-like work forms. Thus, PPL is articulated as an important "qualification" for both study life and work life.

The proliferation of a language of learning

The spread of the language of 'learning' permeates every chapter of the book, even if in various ways. The pages are sprinkled with headings such as (my emphasis):

"The complexity of project work: knowledge production and **learning**"

(chapter 1, p. 15)

"Conflicts as an occasion for **learning**" (chapter 7, p. 107)

"Creativity is closely coupled with **learning**" (chapter 10, p. 169)

"Writing as a tool to remember and to **learn**" (chapter 12, p. 203)

"**Learning** portfolio – **learning** to **learn**" (chapter 14, p. 229)

'Learning' finds its way in as the aim and outcome of a long range of activities connected to project work whether dealing with conflicts in group work, idea creation, giving feedback, writing or evaluating a project. In the two chapters (12 and 13) on 'writing' by Sanne Knudsen, PPL is repeatedly referred to as "the learning project work" ("det lærende projektarbejde") (p. 199, 215, 218 and 227). Chapter 12 starts by situating PPL historically: "The learning project work was originally introduced in the Danish education system as a progressive way to include personal engagement, interdisciplinarity, cooperation and active use of knowledge in learning contexts." (p. 199). In this truth-telling the concept "the learning project work" is granted a history constructing it as something with an existence over time. This constructs PPL as something that was always directed at *learning*. It becomes a continuation of the learning-orientation. Further, PPL is constructed as related to "personal engagement, interdisciplinarity, cooperation and the active use of knowledge in learning contexts". At this point there is no mention of PPL as being 'critical' or societally oriented, neither is interdisciplinarity unfolded as a critique of disciplinarity, and PPL is therefore constructed as mainly a form of learning. Situating these statements in the larger analysis, this text gives birth to the term "the learning project work", as it does not appear in the other PPL-texts of the assemblage, thus challenging the position that 'PPL was always aimed at learning'. Though "the learning project work" is not mentioned literally in other PPL-texts it is a question for the intertextual analysis to trace the continuities and discontinuities of the notion of PPL as a form of – and *for* – learning. Based on the study of the assemblage texts, I would say that 'The complexity of project work' is the text that most explicitly merges the two terms 'project' and 'learning', thus being the beginning of the contemporary formulation of PPL as 'project learning'. At the same time other available principles of PPL such as 'problem-orientation', 'partic-

ipant-direction' and 'exemplarity' are not addressed in the book. This said, the book frequently uses the term 'project work' (instead of 'project learning'), and the term 'project learning' does not appear literally in 'The complexity of project work' and is not used explicitly as a term before 'The Roskilde Model' (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015).

As mentioned earlier, the use of the term 'learning' in the book is rarely elaborated or explained, while a few chapters do address the concept in detail and explicitly refer to theories of learning. This is especially chapter 7, "Conflicts as an occasion for learning" (p. 107), by Peter Hagedorn-Rasmussen, who was also presented as a researcher of learning in the colophon, and then chapter 14, "Learning portfolio – learning to learn" (p. 229), by Sussi Zimmermann, who under the author presentations is positioned as "special consultant in university pedagogy" (p. 255).

In chapter 7, conflicts in project groups are viewed from a "learning perspective" and the author differs between "negative" and "positive learning":

To see conflicts from a learning perspective can motivate us to meet conflicts constructively – to handle them. The following sections therefore conceptualises learning to contribute to a prevention of negative learning and to turn the encounter with difference into a potentially positive learning experience. (p. 120)

As the only chapter in the book, Hagedorn-Rasmussen is adding a normative element to 'learning' making it capable of being good or bad, or in the words of the text "negative" and "positive". This is different to the rest of the book, where 'learning' appears as something intrinsically positive. To explain the concept of learning, Piaget is drawn in with reference to "Illeris 2008"¹⁰⁹: "In the psychology of learning one speaks of learning in the individual as resulting in a (re)organisation of mental schemes, a metaphor taken from the psychologist Piaget (Illeris 2008: 18)." (p. 121). The chapter then continues with a presentation of the concepts "cumulative learning", "assimilative learning", "accommodative learning" and "transformative learning" (p. 121-122). These concepts appear without any direct citation. Using these concepts read a continuation of Illeris (1974) and Illeris (1981) and it reproduces PPL as a certain form of learning. As written in the beginning of this analysis, 'The complexity of project work' has more or less no references to other PPL-texts and the current references to Illeris are also not to his earlier work on PPL, but instead to his later works on 'learning'. Adding to the literature from Illeris, the chapter also draws in "theories on organisational learning" on "single loop- and double loop learning" (p. 123), citing "Argyris and Schön 1996" and "Bottrup and Hagedorn-Rasmussen 2011" (p. 123). Using these citations to explicate PPL, equals it to the learning that takes place in organisations.

¹⁰⁹ There is a glitch in this reference in the book as "Illeris 2008" is not present in the reference list, but instead Illeris 2007: "*Læring*" (p. 259) and Illeris 2009: "*Læringens teorier: seks aktuelle forståelser*" (p. 259) are there, and I assume this citation points to one of these.

The other chapter that is explicit in its understanding of ‘learning’ is chapter 14 by Sussi Zimmermann. This chapter speaks of a “paradigm shift from *teaching* to *learning*” (p. 230, emphasis in original) and positions itself accordingly:

The theoretical base in this context is an understanding of learning as being situated, experience-based and emergent (Lave and Wenger 2003, Dewey 1933, Schön 1983). The perspectives on *reflective practice* are based on thoughts developed by Donald Schön in the book ‘The reflective practitioner’ (translated to Danish in 2001) and David Kolb (1984). Portfolio pedagogy and methodology is mainly based on John Zubizarreta (2008, 2009) and Birthe Lund (2009). (p. 231, emphasis in original)

The four first references mentioned here to Lave and Wenger, Dewey, Schön and Kolb are not used much in the rest of the chapter (neither in the rest of the book – this is the only Dewey-reference) which is instead dominated by newer Danish literature on learning portfolios making the above enumeration appear as mostly a strategical positioning act. When reading the chapter, the introduction of learning portfolios read as based rather on a technological-policy approach to learning, one that concerns itself primarily with learning efficiency and implementing policy desires:

Logbooks, study descriptions and group process evaluations have, with more or less success, been used as doors into the study experiences and outcomes of students. In later years though, a more systematic and reflective evaluative method has been called for. The learning portfolio method is a possible answer. It is a study-reflecting method, which has the aim to increase learning outcomes and ensure educational progression. (p. 229)

This quote speaks in the language of educational policy with the aim for learning portfolios to “increase learning outcomes” and “ensure progression”. A few lines later, it reads that this method supports students in “*learning to learn* – more, faster, continuously” (p. 229). I read this statement as an educational technology perspective concerned with ‘efficient education’ the concept of “learning to learn” reads as part of the life-long learning discourse positioning its subjects as ‘learners’ both during an educational programme and after.

“Erkendelse” – an academic-scientific educational aim?

Besides the two powerful and intertwined languages of ‘learning’ and ‘competencies’ there is a third more marginalised educational aim put forth in the text: ‘Erkendelse’. It is not clear what this concept means in the book, but it often seems to relate to notions of ‘academicity’. In this section, I will investigate what ‘erkendelse’ comes to mean and how it is constructed as an academic-scientific educational aim of PPL.

‘Erkendelse’ appears in the introduction as an aim of project work: “Thereby the book’s contribution to the topography of project work increases the chance for participants to have interesting realisations [erkendelser] along the way.” (p. 22). The claim here is that

the articulation of the processes of project work will increase the chance of having “interesting realisations”. The meaning of ‘erkendelse’ throughout the text is elusive to my reading, as it is not elaborated, and when read with the rest of the book it often seems to be used synonymous to ‘learning’ and ‘development’. At the same time, when the book is positioning project work as a particular kind of learning that takes place in higher education, the term ‘erkendelse’ could also refer to ‘academic insight’. On the first page of the introductory chapter, project work is positioned, without any substantiation, as “an indispensable part of many academic studies” and “a fantastic frame for academic learning processes” (p. 15). It is unclear here what “academic learning processes” are, compared to other kinds of learning processes. On the next page, the authors emphasise how project work in this book has “a specific academic purpose: to produce knowledge” and they refer to this kind of project as “knowledge production project” (p. 16). Thus, there are some statements positioning PPL within an academic context, but it remains unclear what this might mean and how academic projects are different from other kinds of projects. The construction of PPL as scientific inquiry here positions it as “production of knowledge”, and not e.g. as ‘questioning’ or ‘study’, (re)producing current discourses of research and *Wissenschaft* in economic terms (Masschelein and Simons 2018). Also, there are very few references to any literature or theories that could elucidate what academic learning and the quality of project work in a university context might be. Throughout the book there are very few mentions of ‘the university’ or ‘higher education’, although on the back cover of the book it is stated the primary target group of the book are “students at higher education institutions”. I will now jump to specific chapters of the book to see how notions of ‘academicity’ are constructed, that is, reading for signs of explicating a particular nature of ‘academic’ learning in relation to project work as being different from other kinds of learning.

In chapter 4, the author Allan Westerling has constructed a model of the dimensions of problem-oriented projects, which are “Interests of participants”, “Research fields/problems fields” and “Study regulation, disciplinary curriculum” (p. 61). These are elements that inform the development of problem-oriented projects at the beginning of each semester. Westerling does not draw explicitly on Illeris, but the model is very similar to the criteria posed by Illeris (1974: 187); that content for problem-oriented, participant-directed education must be experienced as relevant by participants, help shed light on societal structures and finally be relevant for the educational programme in question. The main difference being that “Research fields/problem fields” for Illeris was not a valid reference point, and he sought ‘societal exemplarity’ as a reference point instead (Illeris 1974: 188). Getting back to the chapter by Westerling, he explains project work as partly inspired by research and science:

At the same time, the idea is that one gets closer to the phenomena through scientifically based perspectives, thinking and systematicity, whereby another insight – a scientifically based *cognition* [*erkendelse*] – becomes possible. In this way, the problem-oriented project work is similar to a scientific research project (Flyvbjerg 2010). (p. 61, emphasis in original)

Here, “*erkendelse*”, which I in this quote translate as “*cognition*”, is constructed as an educational aim of PPL, and it is articulated how this insight is “a scientifically based *cognition*”. ‘Cognition’ thus becomes directly connected to academic-scientific knowledge production, and PPL is compared to “a scientific research project”. Chapter 4 differs from the rest of the book by continuously referring to PPL as “problem-oriented project work” (e.g. p. 61), emphasising PPL as a certain kind of project work – where most of the book mainly refers to ‘project work’ alone.

Notions of PPL as academic practice at university are very present in the two chapters (12 and 13) by Sanne Knudsen. Out of the fourteen chapters of the book, those two chapters are the only ones explicitly addressing what it means to study at a university and the literature drawn in is written for higher education contexts – contrary to most other chapters with literature from especially management and organisational theory. Knudsen’s two chapters on reading and writing draw mainly on academic writing literature, most of which concern American college students with titles like “College Students’ Theory of Note-Taking derived from their Perception of Note Taking” (p. 262), “How College Science Students Engage in Note-Taking Strategies” (p. 257) and “Combined Effects of Note-Taking/-Reviewing on Learning and the Enhancement through Interventions: a Meta-analytic Review” (p. 259). Many of these studies are from international journals within educational psychology. Especially chapter 13, “Critical writing – exploring theory in project work” (p. 215), is constructing PPL as academic study. For example, the chapter addresses “academic critique” as “a method to investigate, understand and develop further” (p. 216) and it explicates how academic writing aims at “entering into the academic [faglige] conversation” (p. 216). In this chapter, PPL is spoken through an academic writing discourse constructing PPL as a student-version of research:

But writing investigative back stage texts may also lead to entirely new questions and thereby to more theoretically inspired and well-reasoned empirical data. In the learning project work, the critical-investigative aspect concerns much more than being able to understand something in depth – it also helps to integrate theory and empirical data into a well-founded project. (p. 227)

In this quote, the author writes how inquiry-oriented academic writing may lead “to entirely new questions” and to “theoretically inspired and well-reasoned empirical data”. The latter part of the quote presents “the critical-investigative” element of PPL and how this not only concerns gaining a deeper understanding, but integrates theory and empirical data “into a well-founded project”. The construction of PPL as critical inquiry aimed at deeper understanding and integration of theory and empirical material positions PPL within an academic discourse, albeit one that is focused on studying (here understood as that which students, and not researchers, do) and therefore only *mimics* research.

To conclude this section, there are notions in the book of PPL as academic practice within university, one that is often articulated with the educational aim of 'erkendelse': realisation and cognition. There are also notions in the book of PPL as 'critical inquiry', which apart from chapter 13 also show in the foreword, where part of the learning in PPL is to "challenging the existing, whether a theory, a system, a form of working or a product." (p. 12) and in chapter 10 on "Creativity in academic projects" (p. 167), where the authors, Sabine Madsen and Anita Mac, write: "It is an important aspect of the critical approach to academic work to challenge the known and perhaps to find other ways of understanding and acting." (p. 167). Such statements are easily read in an academic discourse, and they could be read as radical, e.g. to 'challenge the system'. But despite these statements, it is slightly unclear to me what these formulations refer to; whether they point to a scientific search for truth, better science and a more just society, or a critique of society? Due to this vagueness, the criticality becomes open to colonisation by the dominating discourses of 'learning' and 'competencies', making 'being critical' yet another competency for any purpose. For example, the focus on 'being critical' and 'challenging existing beliefs' are related to the production of 'creative competencies' more than for example societal change or better science. This can be read as a continuation from Illeris (1974), who also suggested PPL as a form of learning that would foster "creative qualifications" (p. 34). As hinted vaguely in the foreword and chapter 10 of 'The complexity of project work', and as seen more explicitly in Illeris (1974), the creative qualifications are posited as the seed of critique and reform from the inside. On the one side, they would satisfy a societal need for higher order qualifications, but because creative qualifications require independent individuals and critical thinking, these same qualifications enable possible societal change through the ability to think and act differently (Illeris 1974: 34-35). Reading 'The complexity of project work' as a whole, the ('critical') academic-scientific discourse of PPL and its educational aims is marginalised compared to the major discourses celebrating learning, competencies (as ends in themselves) and qualification.

PPL in a management-organisational discourse

In this section, I will investigate the knowledge drawn upon in the book, that is, what fields of knowledge are used to construct PPL, and how does this affect intelligible educational aims. The dominant field of knowledge in the book is made up of managerial and organisational studies inspired by psychodynamic theories. This makes project work as it is carried out in companies and businesses – in working life - the implicit reference point for this book on PPL in higher education. The effect of this dominant field of knowledge is that the lines between PPL in an education setting and in a work setting blur with educational practices being treated as if they took place in a work context, a shift, or transplantation, that is rarely being addressed. Also, the book has little theoretical language for 'education', 'learning' and 'pedagogy' as the large bulk of literature and the-

ories used in the text hails from the management and organisational field. The gap between the theoretical and empirical foundations from the research field of management and no such references from the higher education field, which is the stated context of the book, causes the authors to fill this gap by their own inventions. For example, the introduction by the two editors presents a model for the course of a project called “From idea to explosion”, which is presented with the words: “We call the typical course of a project ‘from idea to explosion’ (see model 1.1).” (p. 19). The model appears with the by-line “Source: Developed by Anita Mac and Sabine Madsen” (p. 19), which are two of the authors in the book. This model is developed from *experience*: “Though all study projects are unique, it is still, in our experience, possible to speak of a typical course of a project.” (p. 19). In my reading of the book, this is a general tendency throughout the chapters. Most authors are researchers and experts within organisational and business studies, but have experience as university teachers and therefore the ideas of the book and the construction of PPL happen through a transplantation of management theory from work contexts into ideas, practices and tools for higher education. The connecting link being their own *experience* as teachers.

The majority of the chapters speak PPL into existence through a managerial-organisational discourse, where the project group in higher education is thought of as a team in work-setting. The book does try to flag that project work addressed takes place within an educational setting where learning is the primary aim (and not for example producing value for a company), but my reading of the book is that these statements mostly remain declarations. Discursively, the text performs as if the setting was ‘work’, which partly happens through the extensive use of literature from a management-organisational field.

An example is how ‘project’ and ‘the project group’ are being constructed. In the introduction (chapter 1), a section is headed “The project concept in relation to study projects” (p. 18) indicating that projects are taking place in a “study” setting. The section ends with a very broad conception of “study projects” that I cannot differ from e.g. ‘work projects’: “We can thus conclude that all (study) projects are characterised by being unique assignments that are solved by a project group in a limited time period.” (p. 18). This definition concerns the process and form of the project (and constructs projects as “assignments” that can be “solved”), but not the aims. In chapter 3, the project group is compared to “a team”, and these two entities are taken to be the same thing:

In the theory on teams (e.g. Belbin 2005) there is a divide between team and group: A group is a loose gathering of people within a certain work community while a team often refers to a smaller group of people who work closely together on a task or a goal. In this chapter, we will only use the term *group* because this is the vested term in study contexts. But we thereby refer to more or less the same as that which others call team: A smaller gathering of people bound together by the wish to solve a certain task, and who are closely tied to each other in a mutual interdependence to contribute to reach the goal of the group. (p. 38, emphasis in original)

In this quote, the authors decide to use “group” as the designated term for a number of students working together on a project, but this choice of wording is due to ‘group’ being “the vested term in study contexts”. I read this statement and the use of the word “vested” (“hævdvundne”) as being slightly sarcastic, indicating the using the term ‘group’ is somewhat old-fashioned, implying that using ‘team’ would be a more accurate term for what these students are doing. The authors write how they by saying ‘group’ actually mean “more or less the same as that which others call team”, but they still stick with the word ‘group’, which I tread as a strategic move to be recognised and accepted within an imagined educational discourse community. But why is this choice of terms important for the analysis at hand? It is important because the book by stating that it understands ‘groups’ as ‘teams’ positions itself within a certain vocabulary that comes from organisational theory and work contexts (instead of e.g. ‘education’ and ‘pedagogy’). The above reference to “Belbin 2005” appears in the reference list of the book as a link to the Danish website “Potential.dk” (p. 257). On this website (Potential 2022), it reads that Belbin is a psychologist who did his work on “management teams” (ibid.), who did his seminal book ‘Management Teams – Why They Succeed or Fail’ in 1981. Along with “Belbin 2005”, chapter 3 in ‘The complexity of project work’ presents “the literature” (p. 38), that is, ‘the literature’ in the field of project groups, to be “Lennéer-Axelson and Thylefors 2004” and “Sjölund (1990)”¹¹⁰ (p. 38). These citations have in common to put ‘work’ (not e.g. ‘study’) as their primary setting for studying ‘groups’ and ‘teams’. The point is, that even though the chapter proclaims to be speaking of groups in an educational setting, the literature drawn on comes from organisational work contexts. This also means that it becomes natural for the book to conceptualise project groups as being basically like organisations: “It is well-known from the field of organisational theory (Scott 2003) that organisations – a project group is also an organisation – can be characterised by their formal and informal dimensions.” (p. 38) In this quote the transformation of “a project group” into “an organisation” is so naturalised that it is only noted in a parenthetical sentence; it is a minor detail. Discursively though, this transmorphing has the powerful effect that an entire field of ‘organisational theory’ becomes relevant and natural when a project group is assumed to be the same as an organisation.

With the introduction of organisational theory into the construction of PPL in the book comes a psychological focus drawing on psychodynamic notions of behaviour. This results in a psychologisation of students. When framing groups as organisations, the chapter writes that it is “well-known” that such entities can be viewed through their “formal

¹¹⁰ As seen in the reference list of Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen (eds. 2013), these citations are to Lennéer-Axelson and Thylefors 2004: “*Om konflikter – hjemme og på arbejdet*” (p. 260, emphasis in original) and Sjölund 1990: “*Gruppepsykologi*” (p. 262, emphasis in original).

and informal dimensions” (p. 38). The formal dimension concerns the task of writing a project together and collaborating on the investigation, while the informal dimension “concerns the social dynamics of the group including power, interests, irrational choices, personal preferences etc.” (p. 39). In the model posed by the author these two dimensions are repeated with the informal dimension pertaining to, for example “the social unconscious”, “fear” and “desires” (p. 39). Though the chapter does not address its specific psychological perspective, I read the formal/informal divide taken to be “well-known in organisational theory” and the focus on “the social dynamic of the group” and “the social unconscious” to be speaking from a psychodynamic perspective. The psychological perspective continues throughout chapter 3 (by Anita Mac) as it suggests to view behaviour in the group through the concept of “roles” (p. 40) and expands this to two approaches seen as relevant for use in project groups: “Graves’ values test” (p. 41) and “Belbin’s role theory” (p. 44). Both approaches are presented as test-systems that students can use in their project groups to discuss “the cooperative preferences of participants” (p. 43) and “the strengths and weaknesses of the collaboration”. For example, in Belbin’s role theory students can label themselves and each other as different roles such as “The organiser” or “the finisher” (p. 45). Belbin’s roles are distributed in a cobweb-model, where students can place themselves and their peers (p. 44-45) between “stable versus restless” and “introvert versus extrovert”, which again is being related to certain behaviour: “*Introvert/extrovert* indicates whether the behaviour of the person is mostly introvert which empirically could show as ‘thoughtfulness’, or extrovert empirically expressed for example as ‘very talkative of thoughts and opinions.’” (p. 47, emphasis in original). Thus, students are asked to observe their own and others’ behaviour to see whether it is for example ‘thoughtful’ or “very talkative of thoughts and opinions”, which would then allow them to be labelled ‘introvert’ or ‘extrovert’. Staying in the act of categorising things, I read these approaches as an essentialist psychologisation of students. The chapter asks students to look for certain behaviour in themselves and their peers and categorise this from a range of predefined categories that can then be used to predict future behaviour of that person. The book is aware of these effects and finishes chapter 3 with the heading “Risks by articulating roles” and addresses the risk of “stigmatisation” (p. 55) and “psychologisation”: “The other important risk is that the participants of the group become everyday psychologists [lommepsykologer] for each other, perhaps even without the consent of the ‘patient’. It is tempting to ask to the reasons for the roles of the person and from there, it is not far to psychologisation.” (p. 55). Thus, the author warns of becoming “everyday psychologists” in the group and to avoid potential “psychologisation”. Despite of these disclaimers, the chapter maintains the value of using roles in project groups with reference to the danger of not addressing such “informal processes” (p. 54), which might have “a destructive effect” on the collaboration in the group” (p. 54). The argument seems to be that if the roles and tests are used ‘properly’, that is, not “rigidly” (p. 55) the dangers will be avoided.

Chapter 3, “The project group and roles in the project group” (p. 37) by Anita Mac, is written with some ambivalence as the author on the one hand positions the perspectives of the book away from ‘psychology’, and on the other hand mainly draws on psychological perspectives from organisational studies. I read this as a positioning of the book away from a perceived construction of ‘psychology’ as something *individual and bad* as if such a positioning is important to cater to certain readers. The author of this chapter, ‘Anita Mac’, is instead positioning herself as ‘sociological’ as a position that incorporates a social perspective, different from ‘psychology’: “Some theories do first and foremost approach the individual psychologically. Others take a sociological approach and focus on the relations between the individuals of the group (Mac and Ejlskov 2009).” (p. 40). This same positioning game is played out in relation to a ‘project management discourse’, which the book on the one hand is based on, but on the other hand tries to position itself away from.

Chaos reigns – a liberal approach to learning?

”The project is collective, the group formation awaits and chaos is a basic premise: *Go for it!*” (p. 13). These words end the foreword of the book, which introduces “chaos” as a natural part of project work. The naturalisation of chaos in the foreword aligns well with the presented ‘complexity-perspective’ of the book, where the inherent ‘uncertainty’ and ‘unpredictable’ nature of project work is celebrated as the source of learning and creative competencies. With these assumptions comes a certain liberal-progressive approach to learning – seen as the assumption that students learn best by ‘doing it themselves’ (the foreword uses the metaphor of “dry swimming”, p. 11). In the foreword, it is stated that the ‘chaotic nature’ of project work require students to be and become independent:

Project work is not suitable for everyone and should not be used for any purpose. It is not everyone who can, or should be able to, navigate independently and collaboratively in chaos, but if you as a student are able work your way through a student-directed education in a strong research environment in a responsible and critical manner, then you will get competencies that are surely wanted in the innovation society. (p. 13)

Project work is not for the faint-hearted. This quote reads as a challenge to brave students and a warning for ‘those who are not ready’, which comes down to whether you as a student are able to work your way through a “student-directed education” in a “responsible and critical manner”. If you are responsible and critical and ready to work in a student-directed environment, PPL is something for you. These statements read as relating to a *responsibilisation* of students and a ‘responsibility for your own learning’-imperative, though those exact words are not used.

This way of conceptualising learning, where the responsibility and direction lies with the participants and not for example with the university institution, the teachers or with certain theories, is prevalent throughout the book. Norms for e.g. collaborating and giving

feedback and expectations to individual performance and mode of cooperation is something that is negotiated within the group. This liberal approach to learning is related to the book's positioning within a so-called 'sociological' perspective. An example of this specific 'sociological' perspective is from chapter 6, when addressing crises in project work:

As such, project work is characterised by a high degree of uncertainty and ample opportunity for academic disagreement. This is the way with complex tasks; they are open and can be interpreted, and there is no manual or fact sheet (Mac 2013). They must be defined through academic immersion and social consensus. (p. 99)

The truth-telling here reiterates the specific character of project work as being 'uncertain' with "complex tasks" and "no manual" with reference to "Mac 2013", which according to the reference list is a chapter called "Managing Complexity" in the book "*The Balanced Company*" (p. 260, emphasis in original). The conclusion is that tasks in project work should be defined through "academic immersion" and "social consensus". I read these statements as part of a larger network of statements in the book, where questions of what the project group should do and what norms they should direct themselves towards becomes a question of 'consensus' within the group, between the students. Absent from this perspective is *the role of the teacher*, institutional rules and norms as well as norms and criteria for 'good academic practice' in research literature and pedagogical theories.

Concluding remarks

The book has a lack of pedagogical and didactical perspectives and theories, which instead mainly draws on discourses from the field of project management and organisational studies, constructing PPL as 'project work', as a form without content and direction, omitting other available principles such as problem-orientation, participant-direction and exemplarity. The management and organisational discourse is then transplanted into an educational context with the experience of the authors as glue. Constituted by such discourses, the book produces dominant educational aims of learning and gaining competencies transforming every aspect of PPL in the book – feedback, conflicts, collaboration, writing, planning – into 'learning and competency'-opportunities. These aims become intertwined with employability and life-long learning agendas, constructing the purpose of PPL in higher education as mainly *qualification*. The student is asked to become opportunistic and to constantly self-improve. As 'learning' is rarely elaborated theoretically in the chapters, it tends to become a self-evident positive term with little meaning or direction as to *what* should be learning and *for what* seen for example in notions such as 'learning to learn'. The book is silent when it comes to questions of the relation to society (other than as means of production) and available notions of education for democracy, social critique and justice or similar, are absent from the pages. Accordingly, the book does not cite any other PPL-texts, or address any history of PPL. This disengagement with other constructions of PPL allows the book to appear as a unique, timely

and relevant response to proposed contemporary needs for creative project workers in the labour market. There are no other actors-in-the-text to challenge this: the book is able to offer a 'new discourse' of PPL with models and an elaborate management-language to help students articulate competencies to become excellent workers for the 'innovation society'.

'The Roskilde Model' (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015)

This is the last of the ten detailed and slow discourse-oriented readings of the PPL-texts in the assemblage. Apart from 'The 7 principles of PPL' (RUC 2018), this is the most recent text of the assemblage. The text analysed is the edited volume 'The Roskilde Model: Problem-Oriented Learning and Project Work'¹¹¹, edited by Andersen and Heilesen and published in 2015. The book is remarkable in the assemblage in the sense that it is the only text written in English (except from the poster, but that also exists in Danish), and not a translation from Danish, but deliberately written in English from the beginning. The book is published by the international publishing company 'Springer' and has 19 contributors all related to Roskilde University. In its capacity as one of the few texts on PPL in English, the book and its chapters have been 'go-to' texts whenever Roskilde University has visitors or enquiries from non-Danish speakers¹¹². In addition, the English-spoken programme for the Certificate of Teaching and Learning (CUTL) at the university, which all teacher-researchers must go through before they can take up an associate professorship, has used chapters from this book in their curricula. Thus, whenever someone requires English-language material on PPL, they are likely to be given 'The Roskilde Model' or parts of it. This makes it a text likely to be perceived as an authority on PPL, which is also reflected in many of the contributors being managers at the university; the rector, for example, has written two chapters. In the assemblage of texts, this book stands out by its level of editing and its international desire, that is, it is published as number 12 in the series "Innovation and Change in Professional Education" by Springer, as read on the front cover and colophon, where it also reads that an international editorial board have reviewed the book. This is very different from the many 'working papers' and internal booklets and pamphlets in the assemblage. Would this mean, I wonder, that this book is more 'scholarly', more nuanced, more critical, or something else? Another point for this text is that it is the first in the assemblage to use the acronym "PPL" and the longer term "Problem-oriented Project Learning", which introduces "learning" into the name of PPL. In this analysis, it will be one of the foci to analyse how "PPL" comes into existence, and how it is constructed between 'work' and 'learning'. The main inquiry here concerns how the texts produces educational purposes of PPL and what 'PPL' comes to be in and via the text. As the book is an extensive piece with more than 200 pages, I have chosen to focus my analysis predominantly on the introductory chapters often tasked with framing a book. Thus, I particularly read the cover, the

¹¹¹ All quotes are brought as they appear in English in the book.

¹¹² I know this from conversations with people at the Unit for Academic Development, Roskilde University, who are often involved, whenever the university has international guests or enquiries on the educational model.

foreword, the preface and the two first chapters as they focus on ‘PPL’ as a concept; “Theoretical Foundations of PPL at Roskilde University” (p. 3) and “A Critical Review of the Key Concepts in PPL” (p. 17), both authored by Anders Siig Andersen and Tinne Hoff Kjeldsen.

International scholarly volume or institutional sales text?

What does the text at hand tell itself to be? The book is published by Springer, which publishes various academic genres such as journals and book series. ‘The Roskilde Model’ sits in one of these series (‘Innovation and Change in Professional Education’). The layout of the cover supports their ‘series look’ which is simple and generic but recognisable – many readers within Academia will be able to spot a book from Springer on its cover alone; a dominating text font on 3D-animated background in a lively colour. From these observations, the book performs seriousness and ‘being international’; it is a part of an international series from a renowned publisher engaged in prestigious scholarly publishing.

In terms of genre, I would position the book somewhere between ‘scholarly edited volume’ and ‘institutional sales text’. As written, the book is part of a series called ‘Innovation and Change in Professional Education’. On the first page of the book, there is a list of the editors of the series which are academics from universities in the Netherlands, Germany and the US. On the next page there is a description of the series as follows: “The series promotes publications that deal with pedagogical issues that arise in the context of innovation and change of professional education. It publishes work from leading practitioners in the field, and cutting edge researchers.” (p. ii). Positioning the text as coming from “leading practitioners” and “cutting edge researchers”, gives a notion of authority and superiority. Also, this description shows that the education under scrutiny is considered “professional”, which the rest of the book supports in its statements; that the education at Roskilde University is considered ‘professional’. Supporting the style of a scholarly text, the book is arranged as an edited volume with various contributions that all more or less share the same structure looking much like a scientific article (with a precise title, an introduction, subheadings, citations and a list of references at the end). Each chapter is credited with the name of its author. Alongside this ‘looking and speak scholarly and international’, the book has a local and institutional side to it. This is performed through a practice-based, self-evident argumentation and behaving like an *institutional sales text* showing ‘only the best’ while omitting dangerous inconsistencies or critiques to the institution. The book can be read as a balancing act between these two positions, which the rest of this chapter will show.

How does the book come across ‘institutional’, and what does that mean? First of all, a large part of the contributors have managerial positions at the university: the two editors are, respectively, head of a department and head of the academic IT unit, the rector has

two chapters and there are a few heads of study programmes. Further, the head of the unit for academic-pedagogical development has a chapter and a former rector has a joint chapter at the end discussing the future for PPL and Roskilde University. These positions are discernible from an elaborate presentation of the contributors on page xxiii-xxvii after the table of contents. One of the editors, Anders Siig Andersen, who the 'bio' tells me is head of the Department of Psychology and Educational Studies and researches adult and vocational education (among other areas), has the most contributions to the book. In terms of the targeted audience of the book, this is not solely students as many of the other PPL-texts in the assemblage, but rather a wide range of stakeholders are believed to read the text (p. xii): faculty, students, managers, planners, teachers, politicians, journalists and "members of the general public" (ibid.). Another feature of 'the institutional' is that the argumentation of educational practices and ideas sometimes is articulated as naturalised and self-evident. This gives the impression of an internal community, where 'outsiders' cannot argue against their practices and ideas, because 'they would not understand', which becomes intelligible from a marketing perspective to negate possible critique and counter-arguments. An example of this is when the authors, Andersen and Kjeldsen, are arguing for the use of group work, that students should work in groups when carrying out their projects. They write: "At Roskilde University, all parties agree that project work should be carried out primarily in groups." (p. 31). It is not clear who these "parties" might be and the reader is left with little transparency as to why group work is a preferable mode of doing projects. The argument primarily becomes 'institutional' in the sense that "parties" at the university have agreed on this, and that is where the argument rests. The above statement is followed by a few pointers as to the benefits of group work. It reads that it supports "collaborative learning processes" and can create "more advanced knowledge", participants can "learn from each other" and "learn how to work in group settings" (p. 31). These pointers come without any reference to neither empirical studies nor theory. A few lines down, the authors write how group work "has been challenged by the fact that an increasing number of projects have been conducted by individuals, especially at graduate level." (p. 31). Again, this statement is not followed by any justifications, and the mere "fact" that students are increasingly doing projects alone – breaking with *institutional code* – becomes the problem here. This construction of the group work element in PPL as taken-for-granted and without any theoretical or empirical references (for example there is no reference to the work of Gerd Christensen) is characteristic for the PPL-texts analysed, as also pointed out by Christensen (2013).

Positioning PBL as inferior to PPL

Not only does the argumentation in the book at times rest on closed tradition-based arguments, there is also a strong notion of the Roskilde Model and PPL as being 'the best in the world', which is sometimes achieved by positioning other models as 'inferior'. This happens in subtle ways. An example is a comparison between "Problem-based Learning" (PBL) and "Problem-oriented, Interdisciplinary and Participant-directed Project Work"

(PPL)” (p. 14). On the one hand, the authors see certain similarities between PPL and PBL: “The PPL concept shares some key pedagogical ideas with the internationally more well-known concept of Problem Based Learning (PBL).” (p. x). On the other hand, certain differences are also stated: “In PPL, however, there is a stronger emphasis on the students defining problems of their own choice, as well as on aligning study work with research procedures.” (ibid.). This statement is not, at this point, directly backed up by any references, though a later elaborated comparison in chapter 1 brings in international literature on PBL. In the comparison between PBL and PPL, as it is constructed in the book, it is PBL that is ‘lacking’ something, while PPL does the same as PBL, but then also does something more in a comparative-competitive discourse. This ‘more’ becomes connected to the degree of ‘student-centredness’ and how much the educational practices resemble ‘real independent research’:

In the tradition of problem-based learning, it is the teachers and not the students who discuss what requirements must be formulated with regard to a good problem or problem scenario. In the tradition of problem-oriented, interdisciplinary and participant-directed project work, it is viewed as crucial that the students formulate the problems of their project work, and that they themselves find literature of precise relevance to the study. This pedagogical model is inspired by models of research work. (p. 14)

These statements that appear un-referenced rest on the assumption that the more student-centred something is, the better, and the more educational practices are like research, the better. These two notions, *student-centredness* and *research-like*, become strong values throughout the book, notions that become intertwined with PPL and, in the discourse of the book, serve as the crown jewels of PPL. In the quote above, PBL is constructed as an approach that is somewhat ‘teacher-oriented’ and where students are positioned as pupils, who are served materials and problems. PPL, on the other hand, is constructed as an approach where it is “crucial” that students themselves formulate their problems and gather resources such as literature and data. In this tale of the two approaches, PBL becomes ‘school-like’ and a controlled, teacher-centred practice, while PPL rises above as a ‘truly’ student-centred endeavour that not only mimics research, but is posited as ‘research-like’. Adding to the notion of PPL as being ‘something more’ and more ‘real’ and closer to what happens in ‘the real world’ and in professional life, is an emphasis on “social relevance” as criterion for projects:

Furthermore, the university requires that the students argue for the social relevance of their projects, and that the students choose and explain the epistemological, theoretical and methodological basis for their selected analytical models and literature (see also chap. 8). (p. 15)

This addition to the characteristics of PPL; that projects should be ‘socially relevant’ and that students should be able to argue for “epistemological, theoretical and methodological basis” of the project, is not similarly required in PBL, as it is formulated here. The discursive effect of the way the comparison of PBL and PPL is constructed here is that PPL stands out as a ‘plus-version’ to the more ‘scholastic’ PBL.

Affective tensions between inclusiveness and normativity

I want to draw forth another example of the book oscillating between a nuanced, descriptive scholarly performance and more strategic-normative formulations, which shows in differing textual affect. In chapter 2, when addressing ‘interdisciplinarity’, the authors, Andersen and Kjeldsen, present a study by reference to “Jensen (2012, pp. 66f.)” (p. 20) which identified five academic cultures at Roskilde University with each its own conception and practice of interdisciplinarity; “The *mathematical modelling academic culture*”, “The *empirical experimental academic culture*”, “The *analytical and reflective academic culture*”, “The *analytical academic culture oriented towards social problems*” (p. 21, emphases in original) and “The *creative constructive academic culture*” (p. 22, emphasis in original). For the discursive production of PPL, this presentation has the effect of challenging and nuancing two main claims of the book; that PPL, in its very essence, is interdisciplinary and oriented towards social problems. In the identification of five academic cultures, this multiplication makes the “analytical academic culture oriented towards social problems” just one out of five, while the “mathematical modelling academic culture” is articulated as somewhat ‘discipline-based’, as the authors write: “Within this academic culture, it is a prerequisite for interdisciplinarity that researchers have comprehensive knowledge and skills in their academic discipline.” (p. 21). Here, interdisciplinarity becomes an *add-on* subordinated disciplinary expertise. The book buys into this multiplicity and reads: “The presence of different academic cultures means that there are academically legitimate differences in regard to how interdisciplinary approaches are practiced at Roskilde University.” (p. 22). This claim is not backed by any citations and I read its intelligibility as coming from a managerial-pragmatic perspective that seeks to be inclusive, and e.g. not from a conceptual, philosophical perspective. This seemingly inclusive description of what counts as ‘PPL’ is at other places in the book countered by less inclusive statements and universal conceptions of what PPL is, and what it is not. While addressing “Problem-orientation”, the authors, Andersen and Kjeldsen, write that this used to include a “criterion of social relevance” that “should ensure that the studies were oriented towards existing social problems.” (p. 24). They then continue by explaining how this has now changed:

The social relevance criterion, in particular in the natural sciences and the humanities, has gradually moved towards an interpretation where the connection between the problems and the outside world passes through the problems of the academic disciplines rather than the other way round. It is characteristic that none of the various interpretations of the original concept of problem orientation have led to a common understanding of how the criterion can be attributed an unambiguous meaning. In spite of this, many of the projects that students carry out still reveal a great interest in social issues (see also Chap. 10). (p. 24)

Here, the natural sciences and humanities are singled out as becoming increasingly ‘disciplinary’ in the sense that “the connection between the problems and the outside world passes through the problems of the academic disciplines rather than the other way around”. This statement may not seem critical or problematising as an isolated sentence,

but when read together with other general statements repeated throughout the book, it reads as a subtle critique or *problematization* of an increasing discipline-focus and move away from ‘social relevance’. For example in the preface it reads “The pedagogical basis at Roskilde University is to link interdisciplinarity to problem-orientation, i.e. to allow the problem of a project, rather than a traditional discipline, to determine the choice of theories and methods.” (p. xi). And later in chapter 1: “Furthermore, the university requires that the students argue for the social relevance of their projects” (p. 15). These statements emphasising ‘problem before discipline’ and ‘social relevance’ as a requirement for projects, challenge the alleged inclusiveness mentioned above, but it is a tension that is not allowed to become explicit in the glossy and diplomatic imagery constructed by the managerial-institutional sales perspective.

The tale of Roskilde University: continuity and change

Roskilde University is roughly 30 min by train from metropolitan Copenhagen. Travelling out there, you see how the scenery changes into open fields of maize and turnips, and small rural villages. In many respects, the trip gives me a feeling of leaving the urban sprawl of Copenhagen and travelling to the outskirts of rural Denmark. It is there that I have spent the last couple of years studying for a bachelor in Social Science and soon also a master degree in Welfare Studies and Geography. (p. v)

This is how the foreword of the book begins. A picturesque description of “open fields of maize and turnips”, a university in the countryside. This romantic notion emanates from much of the book making the story of Roskilde University and its educational model sound much like a fairy tale-story line: set in a beautiful scenery, the protagonist, the so-called ‘Roskilde Model’ will encounter challenges and obstacles on the way, but these are never too hard to overcome and it all ends happily. This shows in the book through a glossing over of inconsistencies, an uncritical engagement with references and a presentation of harmless critiques that never really endangers the Roskilde Model or PPL, but are instead attributed to ‘external factors’. Such an interpretation aligns with the book being institutional and ‘selling education’, which makes certain statements less likely to be included, should they endanger the foundation of the book: that there is a certain ‘Roskilde Model’ and an educational approach called ‘PPL’ that is ground-breaking and worthy of being published for the benefit of readers outside of Roskilde University. Let me get a bit more specific and proceed from these general postulates.

The book does not try to omit there being challenges and diverging views on the Roskilde Model – in this sense it keeps its scholarly form of critique and nuance. At the same time, the book strongly argues for the consistency and continuity of the proposed ‘Roskilde Model’. This tension plays out in the resume of the book on the back cover:

It discusses the dilemmas, problems, and diverging views that have challenged the model, provoking experiments and reforms that have helped develop practice without compromising the key principles. The Roskilde Model combines various student-centred learning

concepts into a nexus, providing the foundation for a consistent pedagogical practice that is strongly supported by the educational structure and the academic profile of the university. (back cover)

Thus, the book openly writes that the model has been challenged and that the educational practices have changed over time, and that this has been possible “without compromising the key principles”. The use of words here – “nexus”, “foundation”, “consistent”, “strongly supported” – adds to the discursive building of “The Roskilde Model’ as something that is conceptually coherent and strong.

In chapter 2 “A Critical Review of the Key Concepts in PPL” (p. 17), the authors Andersen and Kjeldsen go through the principles of PPL to discuss them, as the title suggests, ‘critically’. The existence and name of chapter 2 is a point in itself adding to the text wanting to perform ‘critical, scholarly text’. In the chapter, the principles of PPL are ordered into “core concepts” being “problem-oriented, interdisciplinary, and participant-directed project work (PPL)” (p. 17), while “associated concepts” are made to be “group work’, ‘the principle of exemplarity’, and ‘social relevance’” (ibid.). The chapter opens a bit differently from the above quote on the ‘consistency’ and ‘uncompromised’ use of these basic principles, in that it writes: “The concepts function in a social and historical reality and as such change over time.” (p. 17). And the same notion of change continues on the next page:

The concepts have been interpreted in different ways, and have been subject to some controversy at the university. Changes and adjustments have been made in the pedagogical practice due to changes in the student population, government requirements, and the faculty members’ work situation. The changes have resulted in shifts and transformations in the understanding of the pedagogical principles. (p. 18)

These statements come across scholarly, in my reading, as they convey certain onto-epistemological assumptions and show (self) critical sense and complexity. At the same time, this scholarly discourse is at odds with an institutional-sales discourse that seeks to covet continuity and unity in the understanding of the concepts over time. Though it is indicated that ‘the concepts change’, the drivers for this change are located in, as seen above, “student population, government requirements, and the faculty members’ work situation.” Thus, it is not the ideas of the concepts themselves, nor the pedagogy in practice that warrant change or critical review. Also, the book does not critically review the references it takes to be central to PPL such as ‘Illeris’ (e.g. p. 6-7) and ‘Negt’ (e.g. p. 25). The need for a ‘critical review’, as it is constructed here, is warranted from change in surrounding (sociological) elements like ‘the students’, ‘faculty’ and ‘society’. As a truth-making strategy, this protects the concepts and pedagogical practice from any serious critique. The next section goes into detail with the various constructions of ‘change’.

A narrative of loss and the need for renewal

'Change', as it is articulated in chapter 2, is constructed in a way, where past ideas and practices have been lost, or altered, which then becomes a legitimisation for the text to renew, or reconstruct, former ideas. This is achieved through certain notions of what is 'past' and 'present'. This becomes a narrative of loss - that various 'external forces' and 'the times' have changed PPL as it 'originally' was. At the same time, the book employs a strategy to 'reconstruct' PPL, which is enacted by drawing in various 'new' citations and trying to connect PPL to current debates in the field of higher education research. But because the 'critical review' of the key concepts does not challenge the rigour or logic of the concepts themselves, nor the theories of Illeris and Negt, not to endanger the tale of continuous meaningfulness, the reconstruction through new citations appear, in my reading, as unwarranted and symbolic add-ons more than profound and necessary attempts to reconstruct PPL.

In the case of problem-orientation – one of the “key concepts” reviewed in the chapter - the outset of defining this concept is taken from Illeris (1974) and his “trinity of personal, study-related, and societal relevance.” (p. 24). For the latter criterion, mainly referred to as “social relevance” and “one of the original main arguments in favour of problem orientation” (p. 24), the authors mention a change in relation to the disciplinary understanding in natural sciences and humanities, where “the connection between the problems and the outside world passes through the problems of the academic disciplines rather than the other way round.” (ibid.). Accordingly, students show a different interest in ‘the social’, than they used to:

In spite of this, many of the projects that students carry out still reveal a great interest in social issues (see also Chap. 10). Nowadays, however, the social interest is seldom formulated on the basis of a profound critique of social justice, but rather on the basis of technical, social or human interests in reforms. (p. 24)

The first sentence indicate that students' projects “still” have a “great interest in social issues”, but the verb “reveal” shows that this was not initially obvious, or it took some inquiry – the reference is to chapter 10 “Genre and Voice in Problem-oriented Reports” (p. 155), where Sanne Knudsen examines a range of student reports. In the next sentence in the quote, the temporal indicator “Nowadays” initiates a shift, where student projects in the ‘present’ is lacking in terms of “profound critique of social justice”, something that belongs to ‘the past’. This statement begets textual affect through the word “profound” making the past inquiries in “social justice” better than the present “technical, social or human interests in reforms”, thus adding to a sense of loss. Proceeding down the page (p. 24), ‘change’ is also being related to the criterion of “personal relevance”:

Originally, personal relevance was tied to the students' common critical interest. But that is no longer decisive for the students' choice of problems for their projects. The criterion

of personal relevance has shifted towards a concept of personal interests, where it is argued that projects must deal with problems where all participants in the project group share a common interest. (p. 24)

Here, the argument is that student projects “originally” were tied to “common critical interest”, which is now “no longer decisive” and has changed to “personal interests” and an idea that all group members should share these interests. On the grammatical level “critical” disappeared, but these statements I find hard to understand without taking into consideration the other texts in the assemblage. From these, a reading could be that the text is referring to discussions on Illeris (1974) as to whether students share any ‘common critical interest’, that is, if they were Marxist in their orientation, and thus being ‘critical’ of capitalist society and the oppression of the working class. This filling in of meaning to “common critical interest” is not done by the text, which could be read as a certain construction of the past of the university in which Marx does not appear – he is hardly mentioned in the entire book¹¹³. Thus, remaining vague in its formulations and not elaborating on ‘the past’ can be seen as a strategy for the book to construct a contemporary notion of PPL as open to a variety of educational aims (and one in which ‘Marx’ is deemed dangerous).

The narrative of loss and renewal runs through the entire chapter ‘A Critical Review of the Key Concepts in PPL’. In the section on “The Principle of ‘Exemplary Learning’” (p. 25), the authors draw heavily on Illeris (without any references other than just writing “Illeris”), and present his inspirations as being “Oskar Negt”, “Wagenschein” and “Mills” (p. 25). The authors, Andersen and Kjeldsen, explain how Negt emphasised that participants’ study “must be related to their experience as well as to the social conditions that influence their experience in decisive ways (Andersen 1996).” (p. 25), and a similar societal focus in Mills, that “social sciences should be characterized by throwing light on the interplay between social conditions, the everyday environments of peoples’ lives, and the circumstances of their lives as perceived from their life historical perspectives (Mills 2002, p. 42).” (p. 26). Finally, Wagenschein’s understanding is formulated as “discipline-oriented” (ibid.). Following this presentation, the authors write:

As holistic theories of the dynamics and structures of society have been declining, the ideas about exemplary learning have gradually taken more inspiration from Wagenschein’s discipline-oriented understanding of the exemplary principle. (p. 26)

¹¹³ Searching in the e-book-version of Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015), ‘Marx’ gives two hits. One on in chapter 1 briefly stating that “the educational model had many origins”, one being “Marxist theory of qualifications, etc.” (p. 6). The other mention is in the last chapter 17, where “Marxism” is mentioned as one of several rediscovered “continental European critical currents” to criticise positivism in the 1960s at universities (p. 275).

In order to make this quote intelligible, “holistic theories of the dynamics and structures of society” could refer to the mentioned Negt and Mills. More specifically “holistic theories” could refer to Marxist theory and texts inspired by Marxist theory – like Negt and Mills. I read this as another example of trying to gloss over a ‘Marxist past’ not being explicit about this affiliation. Getting back to the quote, the authors write how the principle of exemplarity has gone in a more “discipline-oriented” direction, represented by Wagenschein. The section on the mentioned theorists ends with a plea to the university to decide on their notion of exemplarity and write it into curriculum as “Experience shows that exemplary learning is not always realized if the responsibility is left to the students.” (p. 26). Thus, they write: “the university should decide whether the principle of exemplary learning should involve social issues (Illeris), the link between everyday life, life history and society (Wright Mills and Negt), and/or scientific theories and methods (Wagenschein).” (ibid.). Taking into consideration the institutional-sales discourse, the wording “the university should” shows some kind of critical distance to ‘being the university’, although one of the authors here, Andersen, is head of department and the rector also contributes to the book. I read this as a reference to internal disagreements in the university, or a strategical move for the book to gain leverage in its statements by ‘not being the university’.

In terms of narrative, I would not outwardly categorise the statements on exemplarity as ‘narratives of loss’, but reading on in the chapter, towards the end there is a reiteration of the warning against an overly ‘disciplinary focus’ making the above more likely to be understood as a critique of ‘discipline-orientation’. I read this as a defence, or fear of losing, the criterion of ‘social relevance’, which is positioned as absolutely central to PPL, in this book. The final section “Key Challenges” (p. 32) in the chapter, begins like this:

Faculty members at Roskilde University are currently challenging the conceptual understanding and practice of problem-oriented, interdisciplinary and participant-directed project work. Also broader social trends challenge the Roskilde approach. We may point out the following fields of tension: (p. 32)

Here, certain “Faculty members” at the university and “broader social trends” are pointed out to be “challenging” the concepts of PPL. The first “field of tension” addresses this ‘challenging’:

Conservatism regarding single academic subjects – ‘I only want to teach my own academic subject based on my own research’ – this may be seen as a critical voice against politically defined strategic research and the adaptation of academic educational programmes to specialized labour market demands. Furthermore, it may be seen as a means to meet academic publishing requirements that many believe can be best achieved through publishing in journals that align with the academic disciplines. The conservatism of the academic subjects is easy to comprehend, but it represents a challenge to the concept of problem-oriented and interdisciplinary project work. (p. 32)

The first statement in the first quote, that “Faculty members” “are currently challenging the conceptual understanding and practice” of PPL, I struggle to make intelligible: why

would an institutionally-oriented book give a *reprimand* to faculty? How does that advance the aims of the book? And is this something ‘new’, indicated by “currently”? And why is the claim not backed up by any empirical evidence? To try to make this more intelligible, I will look at the next quote. In the quote, the authors quote an imaginary member of faculty saying “I only want to teach my own academic subject based on my own research”, which I interpret as a strong ‘discipline-orientation’. The authors, in the quote, then visit various logics behind this discipline-orientation; a critique of strategic research and market-orientation and adherence to academic journals. The section finishes with the words that the mentioned logics are “easy to comprehend, but”, which through the ‘but’ indicates that in spite of there being understanding of this ‘challenge from faculty’, it is still “a challenge” and thus goes against the ‘party line’. One way of making sense of these statements is to see it from a managerial perspective, something that already happens grammatically by placing ‘Faculty members’ in third person – as ‘the other’ - thus positioning the authors as ‘someone else’, as ‘first’. Reading the quote from the perspective of a manager charged with making compromises between various ‘stakeholders’ (e.g. students, faculty and external actors such as the government) could make the subtle, but still diplomatic reprimand intelligible. In terms of the analysis of the book, this underlines the institutional perspective and that many authors are also managers (in chapter two, Andersen and Kjeldsen are the authors, the former also being ‘head of department’ as seen in the bio blurb).

Rounding off this section on the narratives of loss and renewal, the discursive effect of these is that the book identifies problems – the loss – but then also suggests solutions for going forward – the renewal. As many of the ‘critiques’ of “the key concepts” are not very elaborate, nor founded in empirical or theoretical evidence, the ‘renewals’ come across unwarranted, as discursive strategies mainly serving as ‘beacons of action’: we identify problems and we do something about them. In my reading, chapter 2, ‘A Critical Review of The Key Concepts in PPL’, becomes mainly a secondary symbolic invention of problems for the book to be able to ‘be critical’ (with ‘sale’ and ‘advocacy’ being the main speech act) and to necessitate *renewal* and *revitalisation*. This is achieved through certain constructions of ‘the past’ and external elements challenging this past in the present.

Constructions of PPL between ‘work’ and ‘learning’

This section explores formulations of PPL as ‘project work’ connoting professionalism, labour market and social relevance and ‘learning’ relating to students, life and school. These different constructions relate to various possible educational aims of PPL.

The title of the book suggests a certain struggle for ‘PPL’. With the name ‘The Roskilde Model: Problem-Oriented Learning and Project Work’, it seems to want to do both. In the preface, the editors try to settle the name of ‘it’: “The everyday term for this rather lengthy concept would be ‘Problem-oriented Project Work’ or ‘Problem-oriented Project

Learning' (PPL). Throughout the book, for the sake of brevity, we will refer to PPL.” (p. ix). The first name, “Problem-oriented Project Work”, is used throughout the PPL-assemblage, whereas the second, “Problem-oriented Project Learning”, seems to be an invention of this book, as I have not seen this specific articulation earlier, including the acronym ‘PPL’. How did ‘Problem-oriented project learning’ become an intelligible name? The two names are seemingly presented as equal, although the editors choose the abbreviation for the latter as preferable term throughout the book. I read as a tactical and inclusive act to present ‘Problem-oriented project work’ first, to acknowledge a term used in other PPL-texts, and then the following “or” introduces the ‘new’ term. To argue for the use of ‘PPL’ by referring to the practical “sake of brevity”, I read as a strategic move to introduce this new term ‘Problem-oriented Project Learning’ in a subtle way (because an acronym for the other term could also have been a possibility, but this is not mentioned), especially the introduction of ‘learning’ into the term itself. Another possible reading is that the book wants to keep both, and that the ‘new’ term is merely a temporary invention to be able to relate to an international audience (as a main aim of the book) and the ‘more known’ concept of Problem-based Learning (PBL).

The book knows that there is some tension between ‘work’ and ‘learning’ as it refers to a distinction made in the ‘PBL’-tradition:

According to Hanney and Savin-Baden, for many years there has been a sharp division in the UK between project-based learning and problem-based learning, with the former adopting a more technical rationalist perspective than the latter, which adopts a more Socratic and dialogical approach (Hanney and Savin-Baden 2013, p. 7). (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015: 12)

For the PBL-tradition, as it is formulated here, “project-based learning” represents a “technical-rationalist perspective”, which is not a desirable approach compared to PBL that is “Socratic and dialogical”. This creates a problem for the authors of ‘The Roskilde Model’, who insist on using ‘project work’ as part of PPL. Thus, the text following the quote above is used to nuance the statement from “Hanney and Savin-Baden 2013”, and to lay out the ‘history of project work’ in three periods:

(a) an early period, where it was used in technical and design-oriented education in order to increase the potential for transferring students’ learning to their professional practice, to (b) a reformulation of the concept in the early twentieth century within the tradition of reform pedagogy and the extension of project pedagogy to include elementary school, and to (c) a development of the concept within a critical pedagogical tradition as it was introduced at the reform universities in the 1970s. Today, the three different varieties of project work are still in use, exerting varying influence in different parts of the educational system. (p. 12-13)

With this quote, the authors are able to both recognise the earlier statement by Hanney and Savin-Baden, to show their knowledge of ‘the history of project work’ and to nuance Hanney and Savin-Baden’s statement by pointing to “varying influence in different parts

of the educational system”. Discursively, this strategy enables the text to situate the Roskilde Model with ‘period C’: “a development of the concept within a critical pedagogical tradition as it was introduced at the reform universities in the 1970s.” Thus, by referring to ‘context’, the authors manage to use ‘project work’ un-problematically as part of PPL. But how did ‘learning’ come to be part of PPL? Going further in this investigation, I ask how PPL is made to be ‘work’ and ‘learning’ in the book, and how these two concepts are argued for - how do they emerge? And what is their relation?

Starting with ‘work’, or ‘project work’, in the constructions of the book’s current arguments for this concept, it becomes closely tied to notions of ‘professionalism’ and ‘qualification’; relations between university and the labour market. As stated in the beginning, the book sits in a series called ‘Innovation and change in professional education’. This is one of the first indicators that the book positions university education at Roskilde University as ‘professional’. This is also articulated explicitly in the preface, when presenting the “pedagogical foundations” (p. xi) of PPL: “The PPL format constitutes an overall pedagogical and professional concept.” (p. xi). At this point it is not very clear what is meant by PPL being “professional”, but later it becomes directly linked with ‘project work’, whose current legitimisation in PPL, as it is formulated in the book, rests mainly on its ‘employability’-potential: it becomes a promise from PPL that it is relevant on the job market. When the principles of PPL are presented in the preface, the following is written on ‘project work’: “Project work has been practised for centuries as an approach to learning, emphasizing the transfer of knowledge and skills from education to working life, and also as a means of stimulating the motivation of learners.” (p. xi). Though project work is presented as “an approach to learning” it is related directly to “the transfer of knowledge and skills from education to working life”. Later, when elaborating on ‘project work’ as a principle, the job market-relation is made explicit:

Recently, the question has been raised as to whether students at Roskilde University succeed in acquiring a sufficient range of project-related skills that are also applicable in the labour market. This is an important question, because labour market demands for project skills are significant for justifying the use of project work at the university. (p. 31)

This quote is taken from chapter 2, which uses a ‘problem-solution’-framing (it constructs a problem and suggests a solution to the problem), here concerning the labour-market applicability of “project-related skills” that are constructed as “recently” being questioned. Following this problematisation, a fundamental truth of the book is formulated: “labour market demands for project skills are significant for justifying the use of project work at university”. Here, the very legitimate existence of project work at university is coupled with skills “applicable in the labour market”. Project work depends on qualification. These statements echoes the central point for Illeris (1974) that PPL only had a place in education to the extent that it would enhance qualification. At this point other possible arguments for project work stay silent. In line with the ‘problem-solution’-frame, the authors, Andersen and Kjeldsen, continue their writing on project work by

giving a list of “work-related project competencies”, especially emphasising “project management” (p. 31). Then the book does what is characteristic throughout: it engages in a ‘on the one hand, on the other hand’-argumentation. Right after the authors have written that university and professional job contexts can benefit mutually from sharing insights on project work, they end the section with a quote by Hanney and Savin-Baden 2013 warning against a “common ‘techno-rationalist’ conception of project management” that may result in “the project being subsumed by an ideology of control dampening the possibilities of creativity.” (Hanney and Savin-Baden 2013: 9 in Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015: 32). Though an interpretation of project work as related to qualification and gaining professional skills is dominant, such argumentations as the above blurry the book’s positioning on PPL and its educational purpose.

I now turn to ‘learning’. When reading the book from its first pages, ‘learning’ appears more or less without any explanation or reference. The term meets the reader’s eyes on the front cover in the title, a few times in the foreword by a student, but the first time it is being directly related to ‘the Roskilde Model’ and ‘PPL’ is on the first page of the preface, as seen, where it slips in without being questioned: “The everyday term for this rather lengthy concept would be ‘Problem-oriented Project Work’ or ‘Problem-oriented Project Learning’ (PPL).” (p. ix). Here, ‘PPL’ and thus ‘learning’ is brought into the text. The next time it appears again is after presenting the Roskilde Model as consisting of certain pedagogical principles, a certain way of organising the studies and a certain academic profile (p. ix-x). Subsequently the authors sum up these features of the model:

The Roskilde Model is characterized by combining the various learning concepts into a nexus, providing the foundation for a consistent pedagogical practice that is strongly supported by the educational structure and the academic profile of the university. (p. x)

In the first sentence, “various learning concepts” are presented with the definite article “the” pointing to something already mentioned or known in the text. It is a bit unclear what “various learnings concepts” is referring to exactly, but it could be the pedagogical concepts of the Roskilde Model, that are now made into “learning concepts”. I read this as a ‘learnification’ of PPL that makes its way into the book as a sales-strategy to connect with current perceived agendas and languages of higher education. This way of ‘learning’ appearing in the book happens throughout the book un-problematically and unchecked. For example, in relation to the two PPL-principles of ‘exemplarity’ and ‘participant-directed’, these become “The Principle of ‘Exemplary Learning’” (p. 25) and “Participant-Directed Learning” (p. 28). Whereas the former label can be seen as a continuation of the name ‘exemplary learning’ used in for example Illeris (1974), the latter has not appeared in the assemblage accompanied by “learning”, but rather as “participant-direction” (“deltagerstyring”). In Illeris (1974), participant-direction was related to “education” (“uddannelsesforløb”) (p. 89) and “teaching” (p. 181), but not ‘learning’. To conclude, in 2015 ‘learning’ makes its way into “The Roskilde Model’ and ‘PPL’ as a self-

explanatory, self-evident concept, one that challenges its ‘rivals’: ‘work’, ‘education’, ‘pedagogy’ and ‘teaching’.

In my reading, I see the upsurge of ‘learning’, and the introduction of learning into the concept of ‘PPL’ in this book as a means to connect with an international educational discourse speaking a language of learning. The book is deliberately written in English only and seeks to connect internationally and must therefore also transform, or construct, a Danish concept into something that is believed to relate to what is going on internationally. An example is the relation to ‘Problem-based Learning’, PBL, which is explicitly posed as “the internationally more well-known concept” (p. x), and by introducing ‘learning’ into ‘PPL’ and making it go mainly by its acronym, it may get some of the same attention as its ‘international cousin’. Remembering the text as sales document, it still wants its product, PPL, to be unique and stand out from PBL, and thus it keeps ‘project’ in its title to stay different.

To sum up this section, the title of the book can be seen as showcasing a discursive struggle in trying to merge two different ways of understanding PPL: as (project) ‘work’ and ‘learning’. Including ‘work’ adheres to a sense of continuation of PPL – that it has roots in 20th century reform pedagogy, but began as something new in the 1970s at university. This ‘new’ understanding of ‘project work’ is being directly related to notions of ‘qualification’ and ‘professionalism’ through e.g. the term ‘project management’. Not including ‘project work’ in this concept, from the perspective of the text, would mean throwing away the key to employability for PPL. The inclusion of ‘learning’ into ‘PPL’ makes it possible for the concept to talk to an international education discourse, and especially the concept of ‘Problem-Based Learning’. By including both ‘project work’ and ‘learning’ into its concept, PPL positions itself as ‘the same but different’ and ‘something more’ than ‘PBL’. By keeping ‘project’ and ‘work’ in its name, PPL positions itself as ‘professional’ and inherently related to the job market, whereas PBL stays a more ‘scholastic’ and learning-oriented concept.

The emergence of ‘the student-centred’

Related to the upsurge of ‘learning’ is a strong focus on ‘the student’ and ‘student learning’ that also more or less unexplained finds its way into the book and the description of ‘PPL’. On the back cover, it reads “The Roskilde Model combines various student-centred learning concepts into a nexus”. Just like the case of ‘learning’, these “student-centred learning concepts” are not easy to point out in the text on the back cover, and the reader is left with an impression that most of whatever concepts are related to the Roskilde Model, you can be sure they are “student-centred”. As with ‘learning’, “student-centred” becomes a key term that works to legitimise ‘PPL’ and to bring it effortlessly through the gates of ‘international relevance’. There are no references to a debate on “student-centred learning” and the term appears self-evident and as something naturally *good*. ‘Student-centred learning’ is made central to PPL, which for example shows when

the book addresses the principle ‘participant-directed learning’. On the one side, the book explains how it deliberately uses “participant-directed learning” instead of “student-centred learning” from the arguments that “a teacher will be allocated to supervise the students” and “activities will always take place within the framework of a formal curriculum” (p. xii). This practical-institutional argumentation supposedly makes “participant-directed learning” different because of its emphasis that there is a “teacher” and a “curriculum” that must be adhered to; something that “student-centred learning”, by implication, does not. On the other hand, “student-centred learning” and ‘student-centred’ is used generously to name the activities and concepts of PPL, and “participant-directed learning” sometimes, subtly, becomes conflated with and subordinated the former. An example is the first lines of addressing “Participant-Directed Learning” (p. 28) in chapter 2, which reads “Participant-directed learning is a key constituent of the student-centred educational philosophy at Roskilde University, and it implies meeting demands for more democratic forms of studying.” (p. 28). In this quote PPL is formulated as a “student-centred educational philosophy”, which then has “participant-directed learning” as a “key constituent”. One reading of this is that ‘student-centred’ is a self-evidently positive word, like ‘learning’, that adds a positive element to whatever part of education, that it is an important, if not mandatory, label to use for the sales argument of PPL to an international audience. This is backed up by the second last sentence of the section on “Participant-Directed Learning” that goes: “From day one, now as before, students at Roskilde University are working in student-centred and research-like ways.” (p. 30).

‘Student-centredness’ also appears in others ways in the book; through representation. The foreword and one of the chapters, “Experiencing PPL – The Student View” (p. 189), are written by students (as seen in the ‘bio’ p. xxiii-xxvii), but not really in a position as ‘experts in a field’, but simply through their ‘being students’: both contributions are based on experience and none of them have any literary references like most other chapters. The use of students as authors comes across tokenistic in my reading as both contributions are uncritical descriptions of ‘my student experience’ that seems scripted, and the main legitimisation that remains is; they are students, and, in the name of ‘student-centredness’, if they vouch for it, it must be good.

Conclusions

This text is ridden with subtle tensions and inconsistencies that are held down by a desire to present PPL as a glossy educational model to an international audience. The book reads as a sales-text that seeks to argue for PPL as a concept that promises a long range of educational outcomes: the formation and self-realisation of students, qualification, high-level interdisciplinary research and student-centred learning. The text does not address whether these many aims are possible all at once, and it appears as an end in itself

to accommodate the imagined need of a wide variety of 'stakeholders'. The many professed educational aims make it difficult to discern the pedagogical position of the text. At the same time, the book writes from a managerial-institutional perspective, which shows in a series of diplomatic, pragmatic and inclusive statements. The sales and institutional perspective makes critique of PPL and its principles (and critique instead relates to 'external elements') illegitimate, but still a certain normativity is readable in subtle textual affects and a narrative of loss, especially relating to an identified emergence of 'disciplinary' perspectives and the waning of 'social relevance' as key concept to PPL. In the construction of the past, Marx is more or less written out, making terms such as 'being critical' and 'social relevance' vague and open to other contemporary educational discourses.

The book introduces 'Problem-oriented project learning' and the acronym 'PPL', which I read as strategies to connect to an international higher education field (while not letting go of the term 'project work'), where 'learning' is, judged from its proliferation in the book, taken to be of importance along with the dominant concept of 'student-centredness'. Another discursive strategy enacted by the text is a reconstruction of PPL by bringing in various 'new' citations, but the reconstruction is sparsely substantiated and the citations come with little explanation and coherence making the reconstruction appear as mainly a strategical move to connect PPL to an imagined international field of higher education.

IV. Cross-reading

Following the ten detailed analyses of individual texts, the aim here is to read *across* the assemblage. The elaborate individual readings make it possible to enquire into the genealogically inspired question that drives this part: in what ways are educational aims and purposes of PPL *continued* and *discontinued* through discourses produced in and by the texts? Where the previous analyses were devoted to showing the complex and detailed discursive constructions of PPL in each text, the cross-reading is drawing lines between discursive practices over, and in, time, and between texts. To thicken and qualify the cross-readings, that is, how the constructions of studied texts relate to other producers of discourse of PPL and higher education, this chapter will draw in other PPL-texts and studies from the field of higher education research.

The cross-reading has come about by systematically going through the ten individual analyses and taking notes for dominant/marginal aims and purposes of PPL while asking when and how they emerge, transform, and disappear. The focus lies with how change happens, not why. This work, I have crafted into two parts roughly addressing the two first research questions of the dissertation. *Part I* traces the continuities and discontinuities of articulated educational aims and purposes of PPL over time - their emergence, relations, and transformation. *Part II* shows how these aims and purposes are produced discursively through certain truth-telling strategies. While these two parts address different aspects of the study, the divide is mainly analytic. From the discourse-oriented perspective of this analysis there can be made no clear-cut line between the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of articulations on what PPL wants - both are equally important for the investigation at hand.

I begin with a brief reminder of what motivated this study: the problematisation of PPL.

The current forms of PPL

What form does PPL take at present time? The text that serves as an example of how the ‘present’ PPL – this construct with no stable meaning – is stabilised, takes the form of the poster ‘The 7 principles of PPL’ from 2018. Each pitted against a colourful number, the poster presents seven principles making up ‘PPL’: 1. Project work, 2. Problem orientation, 3. Interdisciplinarity, 4. Participant control, 5. Exemplarity, 6. Group work, 7. International insight and vision.

The poster naturalises itself and becomes intelligible through certain contemporary discourses in higher education. How does it enact/produce such discourses? The main educational subject is a particular construction of ‘the student’, the “you” of education.

Each principle is presented mainly in terms of ‘what it gives’ to the student; how it develops certain abilities and competencies for the student. The focus on what education ‘can give’ to the student, the “you”, makes education - PPL - into a product, which the poster is trying to sell to the student as consumer or customer. The educational purpose of PPL becomes what it can give to students, as commodities exchangeable on the market of life, and especially on the “labour market” as written under the principle of “group work”. Every aspect of PPL as education, points to ‘use’ elsewhere. For example, why work in groups? Because it “will prepare you for cooperation in other contexts, for example the labour market.” The argument that constituents of PPL could be ends in themselves is not articulated.

When reading the poster in the light of recent policy research of higher education (Sarauw 2011, Biesta 2011, Masschelein and Simons 2018, Wright et al. 2019), ‘PPL’ speaks (and is spoken through) a language of ‘learnification’, student-centred learning, and competencies. This constructs educational aspects of PPL predominantly in terms of their ‘use value’ with an economic understanding of ‘qualification’. Students become human capital (Torrance 2017).

Further, PPL is constructed as having “scientific research as its role model”. This is a kind of research that orients itself towards “understanding and solving real world issues”. In terms of interdisciplinarity, this, in the poster, becomes an addition to, and not, as such, a critique of, a primary disciplinarity, the “traditional academic fields”. Also, the principle of “exemplarity” orients the broader relevance of problems towards “the field”, pointing to disciplinary fields.

And then there is the introduction of principle 7, “International insight and vision”, which has not appeared before in prior constructions of PPL. This ‘new’ principle of PPL gives a series of promises to the student in terms of what they “will develop”: “global awareness and citizenship, intercultural understanding and communication, critical engagement, tolerance and respect.” In the discourse analysis of the construction of the aims of PPL over time, there is little to back up these promises as being part of PPL, so where did they come from? And are they to be read as profound values for PPL, or assumed selling points for students in an internationalised higher education system?

The genealogically inspired questions to this brief prompt of the present form of PPL are these: how did this construction (and not others) come to be the naturalised articulation of PPL? In what ways do other possible purposes exist in the texts of PPL from 1974-2018?

These are the driving questions for this cross-reading.

PART I

In this first part of the cross-reading, I delineate continuities and changes in the way the assemblage has articulated answers to the question: *what are the educational aims and purposes of PPL?* Based on my readings across the ten texts, I arrive at five contingent articulations of what PPL is *for*: qualification, developing competencies, learning, ‘erkendelse’ (the search for knowledge) and social critique. These responses, or, justifications, are not distributed equally (in frequency and dominance) within and across the texts of the assemblage. They exist contingently to each other, entangled in time, space and perspective.

In the follow, I trace these entanglements, that is, how the discursive practices relate to each other in the contingent and temporal articulation of the aims and purposes of PPL.

Qualification and competencies

Over time, this appears as a consistent, dominant and continuous articulated educational purpose: PPL gives the student qualifications relevant for studying, for the labour market and life after their studies. Also, as held in many of the analysed texts, PPL does this better than many other approach to education. Thus, most texts analysed are busy articulating PPL and its educational outcomes in terms of the qualifications it gives. The educational purpose of qualification is not always produced in the language of ‘qualifications’, but also of ‘competencies’. Though these two terms are used interchangeably in the texts, I find it relevant to differ between an educational aim of ‘qualification’, directing education towards work and the needs of the labour market, and a response focusing on ‘competency’, meaning a ‘new’ language casting educational matters, whether directed at work, personal flourishing or life in general, as ‘competencies’. Illeris, in his later work, wrote on the notion of ‘competency’ (2012) and he has the following differentiation between “competency”, “qualification” and “Bildung” (“Dannelse”) as ways of speaking of the outcomes of education:

Still, I believe there is a need for a more coherent and critical conceptualisation, because, on the one hand, competency is by far, in my opinion, the concept that best captures the nature of what it takes to function well in the many different contexts of current society – not least seen in contrast to respectively the concept of qualification, which has not been able to entirely escape its close connection to working life, and to the concept of Bildung [dannelsesbegrebet], which on the other hand clearly avoids any connection to working life, and by the way tends to have some unlucky associations to high culture. (Illeris 2012: 13, my translation from Danish)

I follow these formulations of Illeris in conceptualising the language of competency as addressing broader outcomes of education directed not only towards certain skills needed for specific work and labour, but life in general. ‘Competency’ here means “what it takes

to handle both life and work in modern society.” (Illeris 2012, book cover, my translation). Illeris (2012) writes that “[c]ompetencies concerns what we a capable of” (p. 39, my translation), which is to be understood broadly as the capacity to handle various situations in life, something not necessarily obtained through formal education (ibid.). The language of qualification understood through Illeris (2012) is more narrowly relating outcomes of education to what is needed for certain work and labour, and for specific situations. Thus, qualifications, for Illeris (2012: 39-40), are often tied to skills or knowledge needed for specific tasks and situations and do not as such address the actual ‘doings’, but certain assumed prerequisites. Competencies on the other hand refers to an ability to handle various and unforeseen situations, emphasising the ability ‘to act’ (ibid. 34-35). To complicate matters, some texts in the assemblage might use the word “qualifications”, but the meaning can be made to refer to a competency discourse. This is for example seen in parts of Illeris (1974), where he speaks of “personal creative qualifications”¹¹⁴ as “qualifications for continuing renewal, to be able to engage in new functions, to be able to cooperate.” (p. 35), and later when connecting the development of creativity to the “accommodative learning” of PPL, “which makes the individual capable of using its knowledge in new situations, thus increasing its flexibility.” (p. 77). Also in Nielsen and Jensenius (1996), they write of ‘qualification’ as something that concerns development both “academically, socially and personally” (p. 36). Here, they emphasise PPL education as concerning more than ‘academic skills and knowledge’, while at the same time not being very particular about the designated area of such developments (e.g. job market or studying), casting the development of qualifications as something good in itself. These complexities underline the importance of detailed analysis to identify nuances in language and discursive production, that is, what the words (can) come to mean locally in the texts from various reading perspectives.

Despite the possible differences between qualification and competency-thinking as defined above, the analysis at hand shows that they have in common to direct the ends of education *outside of education itself* and both easily fuse with economic discourses of education such as theories of human capital (Brown 2015, chapter 6, Torrance 2017).

The naturalisation of qualification as inherent purpose of PPL

In Illeris (1974), ‘qualification’ is articulated as the primary purpose of education. This qualification-focus refers directly to capitalist society, that is, the need for qualified workers in the industry. Illeris (1974) spends many pages explicating these needs for qualifications with what he calls “a Marxist oriented analysis of the functions of education in the

¹¹⁴ As in the detailed readings, all quotes from texts in the assemblage are my translations from Danish, unless otherwise stated. The exceptions are Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015) and ‘The 7 principles of PPL’ (2018), which are both written in English.

modern capitalist society” (p. 14). The articulated qualification purpose of education in Illeris (1974) is positioned as part of a *Marxist discourse*. This Marxist perspective, as it is stabilised in Illeris’ book, works from the reformist assumption that capitalist society would eventually dissolve itself and the workers’ struggle should thus come from ‘the inside’, that is, by educating themselves, by obtaining higher order qualifications such as ‘creativity’ and ‘critical thinking’.

The dominance of the ‘qualification’ language in the 1974-text is accompanied by positioning education, aided by an OECD-reference, as part of the industry and thus working to support national economies (Illeris 1974: 29). This can be read as an early appearance of the so-called *knowledge economy*, which gained increased power as a dominant discourse of (higher) education from the 1970s and forward (Simons and Masschelein 2008). Such a reading is supported in Keldorff and Salomonsen (1981). In a critique of PPL, dubbed “the p-pedagogy” (p. 65, my translation), they wrote that the use of Marxist qualification theory in education effected: “a concept of education [opdragelsesbegreb] which - capitalist or socialist – is reduced to a commodity-knowledge [bytteværdi-viden], an economical and more or less political entity” (p. 45, my translation). Keldorff and Salomonsen (1981) thus points to the commodification of PPL and its ‘knowledge’, as an effect of the extensive use of qualification theory. Though Keldorff and Salomonsen (1981) categorises as a ‘PPL-text’, it is not cited in any of the later PPL-texts¹¹⁵ of this assemblage, and thus the mentioned critique of Illeris’ qualification-language is absent in the assemblage.

Torrance (2017) diagnoses the educational thinking emerging after the 1960s, and shows how concepts such as “innovation, creativity and flexibility” - concepts pursued through PPL in Illeris (1974) – become markers of the knowledge economy discourse of education:

The argument of economists and policy-makers is now that innovation, creativity and flexibility will drive economic growth through the provision of intellectual and personal goods and services, rather than large-scale manufacturing. Knowledge is the new capital that nation-states and individuals need to pursue and accumulate – being both the raw material and the product of a knowledge-based economy – rather than the mass unskilled production processes of primary extraction and manufacture (Drucker, 1993; Friedman, 2006). (Torrance 2017: 86)

The naturalisation of the qualification-purpose of education – that education without need of argumentation first and foremost should serve the needs of industry to ensure economical growth – is continued in later texts, although not made explicit in the same way as Illeris (1974). In the Illeris-text from 1981, this articulation is continued although turned down in favour of making certain *critical Marxist perspectives* more salient, indicated

¹¹⁵ I find Keldorff and Salomonsen (1981) a text that, inspired by Hemmings (2011), would be useful to *re-introduce* into the construction of PPL as a provocation that effects several counter-discourses to the dominant ‘history’-production of PPL.

by the ‘new’ title of the book ‘A pedagogy of counter-qualification’. This title explicitly challenges a qualification-focus all the while the book still states “that the fundamental societal function of the public education system as a whole is the qualification function” (Illeris 1981: 11).

PPL as ‘professional’ education

As stated, the enunciation of a qualification purpose for PPL is continued throughout the assemblage. Olsen and Pedersen (1997) constructs PPL as a ‘profession’ and a “craft” (p. 20) with its own specific ‘professionalism’, “Issue-based academic competence” (p. 20). This construction goes hand in hand with an educational purpose of qualification. PPL is formulated as a certain kind of professional education, which is especially fit to meet the demands for holistic qualifications – “academic, social and personal” (p. 23) – needed in professional life on the job market. A later PPL-text, ‘the Roskilde Model’ (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015) also positions PPL as “professional education” and a “craft” (p. vi). It is not elaborated much how and why PPL is ‘professional’ – what does such a statement do, then? I find little other intelligibility in ‘The Roskilde Model’ of relating PPL to ‘professional education’ than catering to contemporary educational policy discourses of employability, indicating that PPL is indeed an educational model relevant for businesses and society in supporting economic growth. The arguments for qualification in ‘The Roskilde Model’ are similar to those of Illeris (1974, 1981) as it, here from the chapter by Andersen and Kjeldsen, naturalises ‘qualification’ as the primary educational purpose of education, and especially for PPL:

Recently, the question has been raised as to whether students at Roskilde University succeed in acquiring a sufficient range of project-related skills that are also applicable in the labour market. This is an important question, because labour market demands for project skills are significant for justifying the use of project work at the university. (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015: 31).

There is no indication in the text of ‘who’ is concerned for students’ relevance in the labour market, but the text takes it seriously and sees it as “an important question”. The argument in the second half of the quote is very similar to those found in Illeris (1974, 1981): the naturalised truth that “labour market demands for project skills are significant for justifying the use of project work at the university”. Following the presuppositions of this statement, project work would have no place at university if this did not align with labour market demands.

The rise of the competency discourse and its effects

The competency discourse, as it is understood here, casts every aspect of education in terms of ‘what competencies it gives’. It formulates education in terms of its ‘use’ in other contexts such as work and life outside the formal education system. In this analysis, the language of competencies works through a commodification of education, that is, making

educational matters into a currency usable in other contexts, outside education itself. In a Danish context, Sarauw (2011) and Wright et al. (2019, chapter 3) show how the introduction of ‘competence’ into universities with the Danish university law of 2003 came with demands for formulating in detail the outcomes of education in a language of competencies. This focus had travelled (and transformed) from international policies and especially the Bologna process begun in the late 1990s, but in Denmark ‘competency’ was, according to Sarauw (2011), not taken up in the broad sense formulated in the Bologna documents, but instead interpreted through a narrow labour-market orientation (p. 219). She concludes that values at the universities transformed beyond recognition to fit with the narrow framing of a job-oriented competency-discourse:

by trying to translate the ‘real values’ of the Danish university tradition into performance oriented ‘competence goals’, the academics became co-producers of a new kind of steering in which knowledge has become truly performative, all values that could not be translated into ‘competences’ applicable to employment were excluded. The effect was to narrow the role and function of the university, because little room was left in the study programmes for anything not related to preparation for the labour market. (Sarauw 2011: 220, quoted from the English abstract).

Sarauw (2011) writes how this meant that a “Humboldtian tradition of students’ freedom to pursue deep learning as a long term good for sustaining society” at the University of Copenhagen and aims for “participatory and formative learning” at Roskilde University were eventually distorted into a reduced form deemed relevant to the labour market (p. 220, from English abstract). Two other Danish educational policy studies (Krejsler 2006, Krejsler and Carney 2009), based on interviews and document analysis (including material from Roskilde University), similarly identify a change of university discourses around the turn of the millennium, moving from “a democratic ‘Humboldtian’ university discourse” toward ‘a market- and efficiency-oriented university discourse’” (Krejsler 2006: 217). These different policy studies point to changes in the discourses of higher education that also show in my analyses, and thus they help to widen the readings of how the articulations of educational aims of PPL relate to, produce and are produced by, certain discourses. Importantly, my analyses show how the competency discourse has not just ‘trickled down’ from European policies in the sense that discourse actors such as the student pamphlet from Roskilde University already in 1996 speaks a language that can be seen as attributing to the later policy enactments addressed by Krejsler (2006) and Sarauw (2011).

In my assemblage, the mentioned student pamphlet (Nielsen and Jensenius 1996) is the first text to formulate PPL in a discourse of competency and its accompanying commodification of education. In the pamphlet, PPL is written into existence through a language of both ‘qualification’ and ‘competencies’. The qualifications developed from PPL, as formulated by the pamphlet, are not directed at the labour market, but instead education itself and for *personal development*. This does not mean that education, as such, becomes and end in itself. The focus on developing one’s person, making it qualified and competent, but not for a particular job (this is not articulated at least), I read as speaking from,

and to, a particular version of the competency-human capital discourse: life-long learning (Biesta 2006, Sarauw 2011: 208). In this discourse, acquiring qualifications and competencies become a goal in itself, which has become related to an economised notion of the human as a marketable resource (ibid.). The student pamphlet (Nielsen and Jensenius 1996), without reflecting on it, speaks from such a perspective. The qualifications and competencies of PPL are articulated in speech acts of commodification and service, where PPL education “gives” qualifications for students to ‘consume’ (ibid. 5). This is the first time in the assemblage this notion of education as a commodity appears. The same kind of notions are also prevalent in the the poster (RUC, 2018), and in ‘The complexity of project work’ (Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen, eds. 2013). Both of these texts predominantly formulate PPL in terms of ‘competencies’ and ‘outcomes’, that is, what the student ‘gets’ from PPL.

What are the discursive effects of the competency language and its commodification of education? In the analysis here, the competency language becomes intertwined with a notion of education as a product for sale to the student consumer. Educational subjects – students and teacher-researchers - are urged to be opportunistic, to ‘optimise’ their deal, or what Masschelein and Simons (2018) identify as “entrepreneurs who invest, calculate, speculate, accumulate, and capitalise (produce added value), and who require learning and research environments that facilitate and protect their individual learning trajectories and research careers (i.e. stimulating, flexible, transparent environments)” (p. 48-49). The competency discourse effects an increased individualisation of students (and academics) and calls for ego-centric demands for the university institution and ‘the others’, whether other students, administrators or teacher-researchers. In turn, the notion of university education as passively ‘giving competencies’ spark counter-discourses such as the strongly moralising slogan of ‘responsibility for your own learning’. Neither of these notions speak of the university as a *community* with common aims and values. Another effect of the competency language is, as Sarauw (2011) has showed, that aims and values that cannot easily be formulated in terms of their ‘use’, e.g. on the labour market, become irrelevant from the competency-perspective. Similarly, from the commodification and competency-perspective, it seems unthinkable to formulate education as (also) a good in itself, something, as Dewey (1916) called it; “worthwhile in its own immediate having” (p. 80).

Counter-discourses to the knowledge economy?

Not all texts in the assemblage articulate qualification (or competencies) as strong educational aims of PPL. Does this then mean that they offer other discourses, or even, counter-discourses to the widespread naturalisation of ‘knowledge economy’ thinking? The texts that stand out are Hultengren (1976/1981), Ingemann (ed. 1985) and Ulriksen (1997). An initial hypothesis, based on the readings, is that for Hultengren (1976/1981)

and Ulriksen (1997), a certain version of Marxism (not foregrounding ‘qualification’ in same way as Illeris 1974, 1981), and for Ulriksen (1997) a “new fagkritik” (p. 111), are emphasising an educational aim of social and disciplinary critique over qualification. For Ingemann (ed. 1985), a certain Humboldtian notion of scientific Bildung becomes the main educational aim of PPL.

It is not that ‘qualification’ is not iterated in these texts, and as such, there are no ‘anti-qualification’-perspectives (Illeris’ “counter-qualification” from 1981 is not ‘anti’) in the assemblage, but there are other agendas which are more pertinent. Ulriksen (1997) takes an analytical stance and observes a strong qualification-orientation in the arguments for PPL: “The primary justifications for the RUC-pedagogy today are *qualification-oriented*” (p. 110). It is an observation, not a position of the text. According to Ulriksen (1997), the qualification-focus has caused a marginalisation of an educational aim of “consciousness-raising” for PPL: “The consciousness-raising has been reduced on the educational agenda in favour of qualification.” (p. 110). This quote can be understood from, what I term, a ‘post-Marxist’ perspective. It is a perspective that cannot legitimately use Marxist references explicitly, nor pose Marxist ideas directly, but instead poses vague terms open to various interpretations, and formulated through an affect of ‘nostalgia’. In Ulriksen (1997), he thus seeks a certain kind of ‘return’, a substitute for the alleged demise of “*the political project*” of PPL (p. 111). I read similar priorities for the Hultengren-text (1976/1981), whose educational aims of PPL are constituted through a dominant Marxist discourse, one which is oriented towards societal insight and change, and not qualification. Finally, in Ingemann (ed. 1985) ‘qualification’ is barely mentioned, but one of the three contributors to the book, Kristensen, does adhere to the desire to plan education for certain futures such as getting a job after graduation, but he warns against giving in to this desire:

As a principle, this is not something you can plan for. If you do, you are putting your curiosity aside for ‘opportunistic’ considerations, for example career. This might feel as a sensible consideration in the poor eighties, but I think it prevents you from becoming involved in the study process whereby your joy of the work and the extent of your knowledge becomes far less than it could have been. (Ingemann, ed. 1985: 143-144)

The prospect of getting a job is not neglected as an important outcome of education, especially in “the poor eighties”, but this is formulated as something that cannot be planned, and therefore all the students can do is follow their “curiosity” and continuously seek knowledge. In Ingemann (ed. 1985) the notion of PPL as integrated education/quest for knowledge/research is constructed as an *end in itself*, contrary to many other texts, and especially those with a strong qualification perspective. The remainder of their book is oriented towards ‘the scientific’ in the sense that PPL is a kind of science/research with the educational aim of *erkendelse*, furthering knowledge inquiry and creation and educating independent students rather than ‘qualification’ for the labour market or other realms.

A final observation for these three texts with little focus on ‘qualification’ is that they are all published before the turn of the millennium. This makes me wonder whether it is possible to formulate educational aims of PPL after 2000 without paying homage to a qualification-competency discourse? Such a question will be addressed in the concluding discussion.

Learning

Since the turn of the millennium (at least), in the field of educational research and policy, there has, according to Biesta (2010), been a rise of a “new language of learning” (p. 17), also referred to as a “learnification” of education (p. 15). Biesta (2010) critiques this dominance of ‘learning’ as he understands it as an “*individualistic* concept” (p. 18, emphasis in original) and a “*process* term” (ibid. emphasis in original). In this sense, ‘learning’ does not in itself indicate *what* is to be learned, the content or subject matter, and what direction education should take. With this in mind, it would seem insufficient to think of ‘learning’ as an educational aim in itself, but this is nevertheless a frequent response to the question of ‘what PPL is for’ throughout the assemblage. In the following, I trace ‘learning’ as articulated purpose of PPL and study how it takes on contingent meanings in the various texts of the assemblage.

In the assemblage, the term ‘learning’ first appears as “*indlæring*” (Illeris 1974: 19). ‘*Indlæring*’ could literally translate to ‘in-learning’ connoting cognitive processing of information, the transmission and acquisition of ‘something’, with the bodily metaphor of putting information *into* “the human organism” (Illeris 1974: 19). Throughout the assemblage, ‘learning’ becomes a self-evident answer to the question of ‘why we are doing this’. In the early texts by Illeris (1974, 1981), ‘learning’, understood as ‘how humans learn’, is accompanied by elaborate psychological-theoretical perspectives. Later in the assemblage, ‘learning’ proliferates, it comes with less citations, there are less references to theory, and when theories appear these are treated superficially, leaving ‘learning’ as a self-evidently positive word in higher education discourse. At times in the assemblage, there are notions of ‘anti-learning’, which mostly relates to texts that position themselves strongly within a *Wissenschaft*-understanding of PPL (e.g. Ingemann, ed. 1985). Similarly, certain perspectives from especially Marxist discourses are anti-psychological and anti-learning, as this becomes connected to being individualistic and having no notion of ‘society’ and ‘the social’ (see e.g. Illeris 1981: 70). Other texts in the assemblage have an ‘anti-pedagogical’ perspective, where I read ‘pedagogy’ as constructed in a certain antagonistic relation to ‘research’ and ‘*Wissenschaft*’¹¹⁶ at university. For example Ingemann

¹¹⁶ I use the German word ‘*Wissenschaft*’ as a similar substitute for the Danish ‘*videnskab*’, which both have different connotations from the English ‘science’, which tends to refer mainly

(ed. 1985), which takes a strong Wissenschaft-position for PPL, speaks of ‘pedagogy’ as it is performed by the author-figures ‘Illeris’ and ‘Hultengren’, in what I read as a derogatory way; as non-academic simplified didactics that has little to do with the ‘real’ university (p. 109). Similarly, Olsen and Pedersen (1997) predominantly positions itself as having a ‘scientific’ perspective on PPL, while being critical of notions of PPL as ‘school-like’ with teachers and pupils (instead emphasising how the role as “academic guide” is different from being ‘teacher’, p. 169). For example, Olsen and Pedersen outsource questions of collaboration and solving conflicts in project groups to a chapter by a ‘pedagogical consultant’. This does not mean that such texts do not have a *pedagogical* perspective or any assumptions of ‘how to learn’. But discursively, the terms ‘pedagogy’ and ‘learning’ in these two texts (Ingemann, ed. 1985, Olsen and Pedersen 1997) are articulated in a narrow and antagonistic sense and positioned as less important (and as something different to research) as seen from a Wissenschaft-oriented understanding of PPL.

PPL, psychology and learnification

Tracing the changes in the discursive production of ‘learning’ throughout the assemblage, the language has gone from being theoretically based in Illeris (1974) to a proliferation characterised by little theoretical referencing and a concept that appears self-evident. A central argument for PPL in the learning-orientation, stemming from Illeris (1974), is that PPL is an approach to learning that is especially good at fostering certain, advanced types of learning that is not just transmission of facts. Instead, the argument goes, PPL promotes learning that changes the person and their outlook – known under names such as ‘accomodative learning’, ‘significant learning’ and ‘transformative learning’. Thus, continuous figures in the study of PPL related to ‘learning’ are ‘Piaget’ and ‘Illeris’, with especially ‘Piaget’ being mentioned in several texts of the assemblage (Hultengren 1976/1981: 61, Illeris 1981, Olsen and Pedersen 1997: 32, Ulriksen 1997: 21, Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen, eds. 2013: 120, Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015: 7). Common for the texts citing ‘Piaget’ and ‘Illeris’ is an uncritical engagement with these references.

For Illeris (1974, 1981) ‘learning’ was not formulated as an educational purpose or aim in itself. The notion of ‘learning’ was connected to both progressive aims of *reforming* education, where Rogers and Piaget were used to focus on the participant and their motivation, but also Marxist aims of gaining insights into societal structures and changing one’s perspective. This latter, Illeris referred to as accommodation as “consciousness-

to natural sciences. Wissenschaft here, relates to ‘knowledge’ (‘Wissen’, ‘viden’) and not only the ‘creation of knowledge’, but the craft or art of scientific inquiry and the quest for knowing. Wissenschaft relates to the educational aim of ‘erkendelse’, which, as written earlier, could be exchanged for signifiers such as ‘knowing’, ‘realisation’ and ‘cognition’, indicating a shift or change in the way one thinks and conceives the world.

raising” (Illeris 1974: 70). Borgnakke (1983), in her analysis of Illeris (1974, 1981), did not find a strong Marxist perspective in Illeris’ texts, e.g. in his use of Oskar Negt, and she instead identified ‘learning’ as being the dominant orientation:

For example, it turns out that Illeris in his interpretation and use of O. Negt’s developments of exemplary learning and sociological imagination, depoliticises and empties of meaning very important parts of the Negtian foundations and perspectives – and this is probably mainly due to a strong and dominating learning-orientation of the principles. (Borgnakke 1983: 65, my translation)

Drawing on Borgnakke’s (1983) analysis, and my own study, Illeris (1974) can be seen as the beginning of formulating PPL in a language of learning. This formulation is connected especially to the educational aims of reforming education, that is, being an alternative to a perceived ‘traditional education’ (one that continues in Berthelsen et al. 1977). This educational aim was intertwined with cognitive theories of ‘how to learn’. It is not before later that ‘learning’ starts being more widely articulated as self-evidently good and with little notion of what learning is *for*, that is, what is considered desirable to learn (Biesta 2010: 12-13).

Entering the 1990s, the text by the student council at Roskilde University, Nielsen and Jensenius (1996), becomes the first in the assemblage to position learning as the primary aim and purpose of PPL. ‘Learning’ pervades the pamphlet. Here, it is not a theoretically-based language of learning, but instead a common-sense language, where ‘learning’ appears as something *good in itself*. In the analysis proposed here, the self-evident, little-theorised and proliferated use of ‘learning’ appears for the first time in the mentioned student pamphlet from 1996 and continues throughout the assemblage with e.g. Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen (eds. 2013) that, in chapter 3 by Sanne Knudsen, naturally and without explanation calls PPL “the learning project work” (p. 199). Lastly, another example Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015), where the principle of ‘participant-direction’ becomes “participant-directed learning” (p. xii), and PPL itself transforms from “Problem-oriented Project Work” to “Problem-oriented Project Learning” (ibid. ix).

I read Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen (eds. 2013) as the discursive pre-conditioner for the later naming of ‘project learning’, which is first used directly in the assemblage with ‘The Roskilde Model’ (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015). As the language of learning spreads, references to theories and discussions of how to learn, lessen. This said, the continuations of drawing on Illeris and Piaget for explaining ‘learning’ become accompanied by other theories. Two of the most cited theories drawn in later in the assemblage in relation to ‘learning’ are the work on ‘the reflective practitioner’¹¹⁷ by Donald Schön

¹¹⁷ Cited in Olsen and Pedersen 1997, Ulriksen 1997, Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen, eds. 2013, Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015.

and the concepts of ‘situated learning’ and ‘communities of practice’¹¹⁸ from works of the scholars Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. These approaches have in common a focus on, and writing within a context of, practice and professions and imagines the educational subject as a *practitioner*, especially Schön who is situated within the field of organisational learning. The effect of drawing in these references is to position PPL as a kind of practice, a ‘doing’, and to position the educational subject as a ‘practitioner’ (instead of e.g. ‘learner’ or ‘student’) relating PPL strongly to work and professional life. The assemblage texts that draw on these theories all speak, and are spoken through, a qualification articulation of PPL, which becomes intertwined with the focus on learning.

PPL becoming ‘form’ and ‘method’

The introduction of the language of learning to PPL begun with Illeris (1974), has the effect of articulating PPL as mainly ‘form’. Biesta (2010) writes that the term ‘learning’ is “open – if not empty – with regard to content and direction” (p. 18), and thus ‘learning’ primarily answers the ‘how’ question of education, and not ‘what’ and ‘why’ (ibid. 19). In several texts of the assemblage, PPL is formulated as a method of learning which is detached from content and from any specific disciplinary field in question and educational aims and purposes. If education, as Biesta (2017) argues, concerns at least “content, purpose and relationships” (p. 28), the construction of PPL as primarily a ‘method’ and ‘form’ of learning, has little answers to these necessary elements of something bearing the names of pedagogy and education. The language of learning is preoccupied with ‘how to get there’, but without any notion of where it is going. In this way, PPL, when formulated mainly as ‘method’ and ‘form’, which is also prevalent in the texts that emphasise ‘qualification’ (here PPL becomes ‘a method of working’), it risks being employed to pursue any (educational) purpose, as it has no answers to this itself. It risks becoming mainly a *technical* approach to university education, as for example Magnússon and Rytzler (2022) shows has happened to the approach ‘constructive alignment’. Borgnakke (2021) in the article ‘Project-organised teaching – ‘other’ and ‘more’ than a form of teaching?’ (my translation from Danish) points to this risk of the use of PPL in the context of public schooling. She warns against casting PPL as ‘form’ only and argues for “a coherent pedagogy” and to develop “the content, forms and formative potentials [dannelsespotentialer] of project work.” (p. 83, my translations).

Beginnings of student-centredness - the end of ‘the teacher’?

Why spend time on investigating the position of ‘student-centredness’ in the assemblage? Because it relates to discourses of education and co-constitutes the possible educational

¹¹⁸ Cited in Ulriksen 1997, Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen, eds. 2013, Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015.

aims and purposes of PPL. In 1974, Illeris was inspired by approaches he called “student-centred” (p. 60). This term, with the words “student-centred teaching” (Illeris 1974: 60), was attributed to Carl Rogers and Humanistic psychology, and Illeris (1974) labels it “a pure form of Dewey’s primary criterion” (p. 173). This meant the choice of problems, the subject matter of PPL, lay “first and foremost in the pupil’s (the child’s) experiential world” (ibid. 172). From this, Illeris develops the first criterion for subject matter in PPL, what he in his 1981-text called “the subjective criterion” (Illeris 1981: 113). But there is also caution of such “student-centred” approaches in Illeris (1974: 182), as he writes “and this points to the perhaps most severe critique of student-centred teaching and so many other so-called ‘progressive’ schools, that they more or less settled for the preconditions of the participants as the criterion for the selection of content” (ibid.). Illeris (1974) continues this critique with a quote from an article on progressive education in the Danish journal “Vindrosen” (p. 260), which reads: “the content element has been pushed in the background – or simply viewed as a means for the progressive functions.” (Kristensen and Kibsgaard 1973: 43 in Illeris 1974: 182, my translation). Though drawing on the so-called ‘student-centred’ approaches from Rogers and Dewey in his curricular model for PPL, Illeris (1974) does not explicitly use the term ‘student-centred’ for PPL. Instead, he formulates the principle of “participant-direction” (ibid. 81), which includes the student and the teacher as participants, while warning against “total pupil-direction” as an un-educative utopia not fostering the transgression and challenge provided by the teacher and needed for “accommodative learning” (ibid. 84).

Taking a jump forward in time, the position of ‘student-centredness’ in PPL has shifted to a more central one, and has transformed from ‘teaching’ to ‘learning’. In ‘the Roskilde Model’ from 2015 (Andersen and Heilesen, eds.), the following statements appear:

“The Roskilde Model combines various student-centred learning concepts into a nexus” (cover)

“Participant-directed learning is a key constituent of the student-centred educational philosophy at Roskilde University” (p. 28)

“From day one, now as before, students at Roskilde University are working in student-centred and research-like ways.” (p. 30)

What are the continuities and discontinuities here? First of all, the temporal truth-telling of Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015) does not waver in its certainty: PPL is, and was always, student-centred. The reservations found in Illeris (1974 and 1981) of labelling PPL ‘student-centred’ are, in the above quotes, non-existing. Secondly, the ‘past’ and the ‘concepts’ of PPL are constructed as being always-already student-centred. Thirdly, the term ‘teaching’ has been replaced with ‘learning’ in the first and second quote. Finally, the principle of ‘participant-direction’, which was central in Illeris (1974), is now subor-

minated as a ‘constituent’ of PPL as “student-centred educational philosophy”. In Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015) PPL is – for the first time in the assemblage – *explicitly* articulated as a ‘student-centred’ concept. This said, it is unclear whether the articulation of ‘the student-centred’ as central in Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015) is a profound value (there are no references to literature on ‘student-centred learning’). One reading is that ‘the student-centred’ mainly functions as a discursive strategy to be able to legitimately join the international conversation on higher education, which has favoured this approach, at least since the publication of John Biggs’ (before C. Tang joined) book ‘Teaching for quality learning at university – what the student does’ in 1999.

Parallel to the rise of ‘the student-centred’, is the trajectory of the term ‘participant-direction’ which, in this assemblage, was ‘invented’ by Illeris (1974) and has survived throughout the PPL-texts making it into the poster ‘the 7 principles of PPL’ (RUC 2018). Its wording has not changed much since 1974. There are texts, where ‘participant-direction’ is presented, but discursively slides towards meaning ‘student-direction’ and ‘student-centredness’. The student pamphlet from 1996 (Nielsen and Jensenius) performs as radically student-centred and student-*directed*. The difference here being that the student-*centred* aspect concerns the interests of the students in the curriculum (but can be directed by teachers), while the notion of student-*direction* makes students directors of education and learning (making the role of the teacher minimal). Ulriksen (1997) continues a strong student-centredness by relating to youth research from e.g. Thomas Ziehe and emphasises student ‘self-realisation’ as an important educational aim for PPL (Ulriksen 1997: 112). Another tendency in the assemblage is to perform ‘student-centredness’ almost literally by including students in activities, which sometimes read as tokenistic. An example is that some of the PPL-texts have text contributions from students: Olsen and Pedersen (1997) has a chapter by a project group, which is removed in later editions, Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen (eds. 2013) has a chapter 2 by a recent graduate reporting her ‘student experience’, and Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015) has a foreword written by a student. These students writing are not ‘experts’ in a field, but are included with the assumption of representing a ‘student perspective’ and hereby performing a student-centred or student inclusive approach.

Just as with ‘learning’, the term ‘student-centred’ comes to appear as a self-evident, naturalised concept, which can then be used without elaboration or theoretical references as an adjective to make other educational concepts ‘good’. This speaks to (and is constituted by) a discourse, where student-centredness accompanied by its other half, ‘learning’, is the natural (and legitimate) way of speaking about education. Biesta (2010) has called this tendency a ‘learnification’ in which “teaching” becomes “the facilitation of learning” (p.

17)¹¹⁹. As such, the student-centred discourse has little language ‘the teacher’. Biesta’s later book ‘The rediscovery of teaching’ (2017) can be read as a response to this tendency in a more general sense.

In terms of the educational aims of PPL, the ‘student-centred’ adheres to aims of the student’s (as individual) personal development, and realisation, based in cognitive and humanistic psychology. Combined with ‘learning’, student-centred approaches, as seen in this study, struggle to formulate educational aims beyond ‘enhancing learning’, and thus easily becomes intertwined with the competency, and knowledge economy, discourse. The notion of student-direction as ‘participant-direction’ occasionally comes to mean, relates, as I read it, to educational aims of anti-authoritarian and democratic participation.

‘Responsibility for your own learning’ – anti student-centred?

In continuation of the previous section, I address the imperative ‘responsibility for your own learning’ (‘ansvar for egen læring’), which is dominant in the assemblage texts from the 1990s (especially Nielsen and Jensenius 1996 and Olsen and Pedersen 1997). I read it as being closely connected to the notion of ‘student-direction’ mentioned earlier, that students direct their education. The question here is what ‘responsibility for your own learning’ does - how it acts discursively as part of the constitution of the possible aims of PPL.

My initial reading of this statement and its emergence in the 1990s texts is that it responds to the spread of ‘student-centred learning’. This latter approach connotes a role of teacher-researchers and the university institution as having to ‘nurse’ students, as teacher would nurse, and be responsible for, pupils in first grade. ‘Responsibility for your own learning’, as I read it, is enunciated as a counter-discourse imagining a university as a community of grown-ups and not a hierarchical school. Occasionally, these notions, student-centredness and ‘responsibility for your own learning’ (student-direction) converge (e.g. Nielsen and Jensenius 1996). This creates a strong *responsibilisation* of the student – students are in charge of ‘their own’ education - in which the teacher and the institution have a minimal role and responsibility. In Illeris (1974), the teacher is given a central role in PPL through the concept of ‘participant-direction’ as the one who ensures that problems “are sufficiently challenging and thus provokes accommodative processes” (p. 85). Emanating from an ideology of ‘the collective’, the teacher is constructed as an equal part of the group together with the students, all equally responsible for the project and its

¹¹⁹ This notion was not foreign to Illeris (1974) either, who writes sceptically on viewing the task of the teacher as “facilitation of learning” (he uses these exact words, in Danish) and “environment planning”, because it, as he writes, risks sliding towards the responsibility of education “being solely in the hands of the pupils” (p. 218).

outcomes. At this point (Illeris 1974), the teacher – called “teacher” (p. 219) and “advisor” (“vejleder”) (p. 220) – is not intended to assess the work of students, neither grade their work (Illeris 1974). Articulating the teacher as a central subject to PPL is continued in Illeris (1981), which has a section dedicated to “the functions of the teacher” (p. 195). The teacher is conceived through roles such as “provocateur” and “expander of horizons” (Illeris 1981: 199), supporting the accommodative learning processes of PPL. At the same time, I also see changes in constructions of ‘the collective’ in 1981. Illeris (1981) gives a list of advice for the advisor, where the last one is to “take part in the work without pretensions to be a fellow student” (p. 203), presupposing a past and present, where this was common (and perceived as a problem). In discourse, as exemplified in programme regulations, the relation between students and teacher-researchers becomes increasingly hierarchical, while the teacher-function, as articulated in the assemblage of PPL-texts, slides out of formulations of PPL (this discursive slide is also noted by Christensen 2013).

In writings on discursive developments within (higher) education, the dominance of the knowledge economy discourse comes with a neo-liberal pressure on the individual to become ‘responsible’ for their educational performance and its optimisation (Torrance 2017, Masschelein and Simons 2018, Schmidt and Kristensen 2020). As stated earlier by Masschelein and Simons (2018), students and academics become positioned as individualised “entrepreneurs” (p. 48) in the university. This transformation is also pointed out by Torrance (2017), who quote a study on Foucault by Lemke from 2001 to show the effects of the responsabilisation of the individual in the knowledge economy:

The strategy of rendering individual subjects ‘responsible’... entails shifting the responsibility for social risks such as illness, unemployment, poverty etc...into the domain...of ‘self care’... [achieving] congruence...between a responsible and moral individual and an economic-rational actor...wage labourers [become]...autonomous entrepreneurs with full responsibility for their own [human capital] investment decisions...they are the entrepreneurs of themselves. (Lemke, 2001, pp. 199, 201) (Torrance 2017: 87, square brackets in original)

The combination of the competitive optimisation-imperative of the knowledge economy and the neoliberal responsabilisation of the individual intertwines with the mentioned ‘anti-school’ notion of ‘the university’, where students themselves and not teachers or the institution is responsible for ‘learning’. This constitutes a possible reading of what ‘responsibility for your own learning’ comes to mean in the assemblage¹²⁰. The student pamphlet from 1996 (Nielsen and Jensenius) is an example of these entanglements.

¹²⁰ Similarly, the catch-phrase of ‘learning by doing’ risks being interpreted in the same way. It becomes a responsabilisation of the individual student and the project group, which I find an example of in Olsen and Pedersen (1997), when uttering that PPL is “*learning by doing*” (p. 117, emphasis in original) in the chapter on group dynamics, littered with tips and tricks for ‘handling’ conflicts.

The responsabilisation of the student has certain discursive effects for PPL as a possible pedagogy. In the assemblage, the ‘making responsible’ is made to apply to both the individual student and the project group. Such networks of statements making students ‘responsible’ come with little *pedagogical* language, which reads as deliberate for the idea of the university that understands ‘pedagogy’ as non-university, school-like and thus, irrelevant. The effect is a silence on the role of the teacher, the role of the institution and how to collaborate in groups (see Christensen 2013 for an extended analysis of this problematic). These elements fall into the background as the student is placed at the centre of attention responsible for success and failure. Success in PPL comes to depend on whether the student ‘got it or not’, and on the group level, whether this is a ‘god or bad’ group, in both cases, on the ‘will’ of the students. As Torrance (2017) writes “the policy rhetoric of the system is that everyone *can* succeed, so responsibility for failure now lies with the students themselves” (p. 89, emphasis in original). The texts speaking directly to the moral responsibility of the student, and this as being unique for PPL, are Nielsen and Jensenius (1996), Olsen and Pedersen (1997), Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen (eds. 2013). These texts are silent when it comes to considering conditions for participation, empirical ‘realities’ (almost no empirical studies are drawn in on group work and studying) and the role of the educational environment such as teachers, buildings, institution and study councillors.

An example of the particular construction of ‘student responsibility’ as specific to PPL in the assemblage is Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen (eds. 2013). Especially the foreword, which can be read as a strong moral preaching to the ‘responsible’ and ‘independent’ student. The foreword by vice-rector at Roskilde University, Hanne Leth Andersen, uses the metaphor of “dry-swimming” suggesting PPL to be “the opposite” (Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen, eds. 2013: 11). Students learn to swim (to study) by being thrown in at the deep end – some might learn to swim, while others do not. This selection process is made explicit in the foreword by stating “Project work is not for everyone” and “It is not everyone who can, or should be able to, navigate independently and collaboratively in chaos” (Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen, eds. 2013: 13). What does this speak to? I read the statements in a certain defensive and patronising tone addressed at ‘those who might think PPL is easy’ or those who might doubt ‘this is a proper university’. The strong ‘responsibility for your own learning’ discourse is employed to underline just how ‘university-like’ Roskilde University and PPL is. Accompanying these statements, there is an understanding of prospective students as being either ready for PPL or not. What is marginalised and silenced in these articulations, is viewing PPL as an educational process, where independence and responsibility is learned along the way. In the mentioned quote, PPL is articulated as “navigating” in “chaos”, which is a taken-for-granted throughout the book (Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen, eds. 2013). Through the formulations of PPL as ‘navigating in chaos’ and ‘jumping into it’ (swimming), a certain narrow discourse of ‘pedagogy’ is reproduced, where pedagogical knowledge (research and theories), the role

(and responsibility) of the teacher and the multiple responsibilities of education are neglected to promote PPL as a proponent of ‘the university proper’. The imagined PPL-student can navigate such complex chaos. Simultaneously, the responsabilisation of the university student is open to being constituted through a competitive knowledge economy perspective, which in the assemblage texts happen when the educational aims and purposes are dominated by ‘qualification’ and ‘acquiring’ competencies.

Wissenschaft and ‘erkendelse’

There is hardly any institutional setting, hardly any place in the education system [spelling error] hierarchy (both viewed historically and presently), which to such an extent and for so long has eradicated the complex (class- gender- and environment-dependent) subjective preconditions/experiences, and immanent to its system stubbornly has rejected all the ‘pedagogical’, ‘social’, ‘participant-oriented’ in its pedagogical perspectives, as the university institutions. The university institutions are qua historical tradition, qua societal placement and function – and because of a relatively steadfast (upper) class homogeneity in its body of teachers and students, and a persevering male dominance - a very anti-subjectivist, anti-emotional – anti-‘pedagogical’ place. (Borgnakke 1983: 116, my translation)

This quote is written by Borgnakke (1983) as part of an argument that Illeris is on the right track with his insistence on ‘participant-direction’. I view this quote as an explicit reproduction of a dominant construction of ‘the university’ in the truth-telling of PPL. This is an important point to take into consideration when tracing articulations of the educational aim of ‘erkendelse’ and the question of whether PPL was formulated as a university pedagogy. By many of the central discourse producers from the 1970s and 1980s (Illeris 1974, 1981, Hultengren 1976/1981, Borgnakke 1983), PPL was formulated as an *alternative* and a counter to a certain construction of ‘the university’, because of its connotations as e.g. being ‘anti-subjectivist’ and ‘anti-pedagogical’, as formulated by Borgnakke. Thus, formulations of ‘erkendelse’ as the educational aim of PPL, and conceptualisations of PPL from the perspective of Wissenschaft, are positions that are rarely taken, nor elaborated in any substantive way, in the assemblage. On the other hand, most texts in the assemblage are directed towards a university setting (mainly targeting students), and many of the texts, at some point, articulate ‘erkendelse’ and the creation of knowledge as an aim for PPL. These ambivalences constitute the position of ‘erkendelse’ and Wissenschaft in the study of PPL.

In the assemblage, the notions of Wissenschaft and ‘erkendelse’ intertwine with other articulations of PPL, such as the qualification- and competency-focus (e.g. understanding PPL as a professional social science, in Olsen and Pedersen 1997), and Marxist perspectives (casting PPL as a Marxist method of Wissenschaft, in Hultengren 1976/1981). In this section, I trace these entangled productions of PPL and its educational aims in relation to notions of Wissenschaft and ‘erkendelse’.

‘The traditional university’ as antagonist and other binaries of PPL

Most texts in the assemblage produce a certain antagonist as being inherent to PPL performed through terms such as ‘the traditional university’ and ‘disciplinarity’. This is what is meant when PPL sometimes is positioned as ‘anti-academic’ or ‘anti-university’: it is constructions that assume a certain meaning of ‘academic’ and ‘university’ as being ‘old’ and ‘traditional’. These are constructions that rarely find a concrete reference point, but when this is the case, it relates to universities that are *not* Roskilde University and PPL such as ‘The University of Copenhagen’¹²¹ (Nielsen and Jensenius 1996) and ‘Aalborg University’ (Ulriksen 1997, Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015). In most iterations of PPL, this configuration looms as a discursive shadow, as ‘the other’ (Hemmings 2011), when texts state that PPL is ‘interdisciplinary’, ‘problem-oriented’ and ‘oriented towards social relevance’. Borgnakke (1996) points out how PPL developed with an inherent “Alternativity contra Traditionality” (p. 35, my translation). She writes how PPL was affected by the same tendencies as Dewey (1938) addressed for progressive versus traditional education, and that PPL “revives this contrasting constellation.” (Borgnakke 1996: 34, my translation). I similarly conclude, in my analyses, that PPL in its formulations of being ‘different’ and ‘alternative’ constructs dualistic positionings. This also affects the construction of ‘the university’, which in most of the assemblage exists as either the ‘traditional university’ (‘traditional teaching’) or the ‘new university’ (‘PPL’). The assemblage texts position PPL with the latter. This construction is upheld through certain binaries produced in the texts such as for example the articulation of an ‘inside’ the university and scientific community and an ‘outside’ referred to as ‘society’ and ‘the real world’. A similar binary is ‘theory/practice’, where the ‘traditional university’ comes to represent the former and ‘the new university’ the latter. Consequently, PPL feeds off a constructed binary system that could be fabricated in the following way:

☐☐☐see next page☐☐☐

¹²¹ Christensen (2013: 104) too shows how Nielsen and Jensenius (1996) use Copenhagen University as ‘the other’ to make its own position of PPL and Roskilde University appear unique and superior.

The antagonist to PPL:	The protagonist - PPL:
The ‘traditional’ university – ‘the ivory tower’	The ‘new’ university
Theory alone	Theory and practice integration
Scientific relevance	Social relevance
Knowledge for its own sake	Knowledge for society
Disciplinary	Interdisciplinary
Internally-oriented	Externally-oriented
Desk-research, reading, thinking (e.g. ‘philosophy’)	Field work, collaborations, doing (e.g. ‘praxis research’ and ‘action research’)
Theoretical-disciplinary problems	‘Real-world’ problems

The list could be continued, but the point is that the discursive production of PPL in a Wissenschaft discourse often materialises in a binary construction, which has the effect of simplifying ‘the university’ and ‘science’ and locking them into certain narrow positions in order to make PPL appear new and ‘different’. Kinchin and Gravett (2022) write with reference to “Derrida (1972)” that binaries are “violent hierarchies” that constrain “thinking” and places a “value judgment” that makes one side of the dualism “bad” and another “good” (Kinchin and Gravett 2022: 7). In an article on dualisms in higher education, Bruce Macfarlane sums up the effects of dichotomous constructions and writes: “bifurcation dangerously over-simplifies the world of higher education research” (Macfarlane 2015: 116). Binaries, as they are used in the assemblage, make certain practices and ways of thinking become incommensurable, such as for example a skilled researcher being ‘for the university’, while at the same time carefully considering the didactics of university teaching (a configuration prevalent in Ingemann, ed. 1985 and Olsen and Pedersen 1997). Another effect of the binaries enacted through the dominant histories of PPL is that certain understandings of Wissenschaft and the university become ‘wrong’ and marginalised. In the study of PPL with its strong anti-university discourses specific educational aims and activities becomes ‘othered’. These are for example studying theory with the aim of understanding it better, not doing field work, philosophical work, literary work, studying for the sake of ‘erkendelse’, wanting to know more as an end in itself.

PPL as *university* pedagogy?

Connecting to the third research question, how do the assemblage texts construct ‘the university’? To what extent is PPL positioned as a pedagogy of the *university*? An initial answer is that the texts are relatively silent on ‘the university’. When the texts do articulate relations between ‘PPL’ and ‘the university’, as already noted, most of the assemblage perform this relation through a negative positioning to ‘the traditional university’, which, at times, casts PPL as an ‘anti-university pedagogy’.

In Hultengren (1976/1981), PPL exists as “the new university pedagogy” (back cover) – a name for PPL not seen elsewhere in the assemblage. As I read Hultengren, ‘the new university pedagogy’ is mainly made to refer to Aalborg University being a ‘new’ institution from 1974 that wants to do something else educationally compared to its constructed antagonist, the ‘traditional’ universities. Hultengren (1976/1981) does not engage much with the idea of the university (Barnett 2017), such as including reflections and citations on what ‘university’ means in relation to other kinds of education, and what this means for its pedagogy. At the same time, there are statements in Hultengren (1976/1981), which relates PPL to the university. There is for example an engagement with the concept of “interdisciplinarity” (p. 15, elaborated in Hultengren 1979) and the articulation of PPL as a “research process” (Hultengren 1976/1981: 129). At one point, Hultengren (1976/1981) positions “Marxist research methodology” (ibid. 71) as the model for PPL. Thus, PPL is likened to a kind of scientific inquiry that pursues “erkendelse” (ibid. 61), which for Hultengren (1976/1981) means “cognition” from the Piaget-inspired (she draws on Piaget) definition of “a progressing process which qualitatively reorganises the cognitive structures in people.” (p. 61). In Hultengren (1976/1981) this ‘cognition’ is closely bound to the Marxist discourse of realising the oppressive nature of capitalist society, enacted through the citing of Paulo Freire. Simultaneous to Hultengren (1976/1981), the texts by Illeris (1974, 1981) produce a different discourse of PPL, one that has no specific conception of the university. In the two Illeris-texts, PPL is posited as a “general didaktik” (1974: 19, 1981: 112). These books do not tie PPL to a specific educational context, rather, it is related to a long range of different settings. This assumed universality is addressed by the author, who leaves the task of translating and contextualising the pedagogical principles, as well as realising its ‘emancipatory potentials’, to the individual practitioner (Illeris 1974: 253). In my reading, the texts of Illeris have little interest in the university as a specific institution and idea, spurred by a slight anti-academic affect through which ‘the university’ is positioned as being traditional, elitist, bourgeois and oriented towards ‘high-theory’. As the texts of Illeris have been used extensively and as authorities on PPL in later texts, with little critical engagement, this silence and subtle textual animosity towards a construct of ‘the (traditional) university’ as inherently conservative and disciplinary, has continued in later parts of the assemblage (especially in Ulriksen 1997 and Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015).

Thus, the texts of Hultengren (1976/1981) and Illeris (1974, 1981) can be seen as the beginnings of two different constructions of PPL and its relation to ‘the university’. One explicitly connecting PPL to ‘the university’ and positioning it as a kind of ‘research methodology’, while the other constructs PPL in an antagonistic relation to ‘the university’ and emphasises it as ‘pedagogy’. If I am to first follow the traces from Hultengren (1976/1981) that presents PPL as a kind of research and calls it ‘university pedagogy’, the 1985-text by Ingemann (ed.) certainly is a continuation of this discourse. Ingemann (ed. 1985) elaborates on PPL as a kind of interdisciplinary *Wissenschaft* citing ‘Marx’ and historical materialism, among others, in the construction of PPL as research paradigm. A difference is that Ingemann (ed. 1985) does not use the language of ‘pedagogy’. Hultengren (1976/1981) is unique in the assemblage in the sense that her text is the only one to unproblematically construct PPL as both university (‘new’ university) research methodology *and* pedagogy. Most other texts positions themselves as one of these, while antagonising the other. To re-construct PPL in close relation with Hultengren (1976/1981) could open up the otherwise dichotomous relation between ‘university’ (research) and ‘pedagogy’.

In Olsen and Pedersen (1997), I read some continuation of the ‘PPL as *Wissenschaft*’-construction, especially with implicit reference to Ingemann (ed. 1985) (and a direct reference in two footnotes, p. 75, 81). Olsen and Pedersen (1997) reproduce a critique of Illeris’ notion of ‘the problem’: ”It [the problem] is defined solely as a subjective and societal problem, but not as that, which is absolutely central; a knowledge problem [erkendelsesmæssigt problem].” (Olsen and Pedersen 1997: 13). Continuing the construction of PPL as a kind of *Wissenschaft*, or science (the perspective is the social sciences), Olsen and Pedersen (1997) have an entire section dedicated to “Philosophy of science and methods” in the social sciences, which for this book is made the same as PPL (p. 171-300). In later texts of the assemblage (Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen, eds. 2013, Andersen and Heilesen 2015 and the poster RUC 2018), the enunciation of PPL as a kind of research pursuing knowledge continues, but in a different way from earlier. In these texts the statement that ‘PPL is like research’ and thus relates to ‘university’ and ‘*Wissenschaft*’, is not accompanied by any elaborations, nor any citations. As such, in the later texts, the articulation of PPL as ‘research-like’ reads as ‘hat-tipping’ with little other function than to enjoy the legitimacy of being related to the label ‘scientific’, and positioning itself away from ‘PPL as school pedagogy’ (see e.g. Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015).

Concerning the slight ‘anti-university’-construction in Illeris (1974, 1981), where PPL is primarily formulated as a ‘pedagogy’, this position is continued in Ulriksen (1997). Such a reading counters initial categorisations of Ulriksen (1997), which is positioned as a part of a “UNIPÆD-project” (a development project at Roskilde University, p. 4), and the author is presented as being well-versed in “pedagogical development of the university” (p. 14). In spite of these indicators, at no point is PPL presented as a ‘university pedagogy’, or in any other way an approach invested in the ontology or philosophy of the

university. Instead, PPL is continuously referred to as “project pedagogy” (e.g. p. 7) and “RUC-pedagogy”¹²² (e.g. p. 12). Rather than continuing and elaborating on a ‘PPL as Wissenschaft’-perspective, Ulriksen (1997) takes up the Illerisian scepticism towards disciplinarity and “universitary tradition” (Ulriksen 1997: 112). The text does use citations concerning the university, being certain sociological studies, “Scott 1995” and “Habermas 1987”, of the development of the university institution in the late 20th century, but these citations are not being related to the formulation of PPL as ‘pedagogy’ (Ulriksen 1997: 14).

The continuous construction of an antagonistic version of ‘the university’ based on the dualisms shown in the schema earlier, casts certain university studies and practices as ‘other’ and ‘problematic’. Such practices are often being related to the humanities and the natural and tech-sciences. This relates to the naturalised discourse of PPL as *social* inquiry. The next section explores how this dominance is produced in the assemblage, and what its effects are for the possible aims, purposes and practices of PPL as university pedagogy.

The dominance of PPL as ‘social’ inquiry into the ‘real world’

When texts in the assemblage position PPL as a kind of Wissenschaft, or research, this has a specific orientation: PPL is a *social* inquiry. This articulation privileges social science that often acts as ‘the model of PPL’ both in terms of subject matter and methods (e.g. Hultengren 1976/1981, Olsen and Pedersen 1997, Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015). The naturalisation of PPL as a certain kind of ‘social’ inquiry, I read as an effect of the initial antipathy towards ‘the traditional university’, constructed as the inward-looking, knowledge seeking ivory tower. Making the scientific inquiry ‘social’ can be seen as a counter to this image, to turn Wissenschaft and PPL ‘outwards’ towards ‘society’, to make it ‘social’. A particular example of these constructions of PPL is ‘action research’ (Servant-Miklos and Noordegraaf-Eelens 2019: 12-13). In the wider networks of PPL-texts, ‘action research’-oriented approaches to scientific inquiry are constructed as a naturalised way of practicing PPL (see e.g. Borgnakke 1983, Jæger, ed. 2002, Bilfeldt et al., eds. 2018, Frandsen and Andersen 2019). In a report on action research (Bilfeldt et al., eds. 2018) by researchers from Roskilde and Aalborg University, the emergence of ‘action research’ is being related to an “external fagkritik” (p. 8, my translation) after the student rebellion and is positioned as a nowadays “research-based counter-point to the neoliberalisation

¹²² Of course it could be argued that ‘RUC’ is a university, and that PPL, then, is implicitly positioned as a ‘university pedagogy’. But the point here is that PPL is not being constructed, as in other texts, as something that relates to the idea of ‘the university’ and its pursuit of knowledge. It seems a more likely reading that ‘the university’, as it is configured in Ulriksen (1997), is a mere coincidental context for PPL whose constituency is to be found elsewhere.

of society” due to its “pro-democratic and pro-social” outset (*ibid.* my translation). Although ‘action research’ is not mentioned much in the assemblage texts of my study, its co-production of the discourse of PPL as social inquiry is enacted by Hultengren (1976/1981), Olsen and Pedersen (1997) and Andersen and Heilesen, (eds. 2015).

A discursive effect of the dominance of ‘the social’ in constructions of PPL is that it troubles and marginalises other ‘non-social’ approaches to knowledge creation often found within Humanities and the technical-natural sciences (see e.g. Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015: 24). For example, Hultengren (1976/1981) writes: “Experience allegedly shows that it is difficult to integrate a social science dimension (an insight into societal relations) in technical- and natural science projects.” (p. 4). This statement presupposes that projects of the ‘new university pedagogy’ must have a “social scientific dimension”. A few pages later, the humanities, to become relevant for PPL, are discursively constructed as part of the social sciences: “The human sciences are here considered a part of the social sciences.” (p. 10). A similar troubling is performed in Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015), where it reads “The social relevance criterion, in particular in the natural sciences and the humanities, has gradually moved towards an interpretation where the connection between the problems and the outside world passes through the problems of the academic disciplines rather than the other way round.” (p. 24). Again, the notion of “social relevance” determines legitimacy for PPL as inquiry at the university. Another element in the constructions of PPL through a notion of *Wissenschaft*, is a favouring of ‘empirical work’ contrasted to ‘theoretical work’. This is prevalent in Hultengren (1976/1981) and Olsen and Pedersen (1997), but also in another text in the wider web of PPL-texts (though not analysed). This is a book chapter by Kjell Askeland, ‘Kontekstuell læring. Problem- og prosjektorientering’ from 1980 (as seen in Borgnakke 1983: 49), which Borgnakke (1983) quotes to make ‘the empirical’ a central criterion for PPL:

By making the empirical principle central to the pedagogical practice, the scientification [vitenskapeliggjørelsen] will even have a positive perspective. Where the encyclopaedic model splits up the craft of knowledge into fragmented pieces and individual disciplines, the practice confrontation in the projects will contribute to restoring the scientific wholeness and coherence. This could be relevant for the individual discipline as well as in relation to interdisciplinary perspectives. (Kontekstuell læring. Problem- og prosjektorientering s. 57). (Askeland 1980: 57 in Borgnakke 1983: 89, my translation from Norwegian)

In the quote, Askeland finds “the empirical” to be the glue that can “restore” the “fragmented” *Wissenschaft* into a “wholeness”. Thus, “the empirical” is made central to PPL, as a unifying element. The discursive effect of the hegemony of ‘the social and empirical’ in PPL, is to narrow imaginable ways of conceptualising and practicing PPL as a kind of *Wissenschaft* and research practice.

Troubling notions of 'Bildung'

The troubled position of the humanities (or, 'The arts') for PPL, I trace to the relation between a Marxist discourse, especially the notion of 'fagkritik', and the humanities. Two texts from the 1970s can help to widen the network of readings. The first text is a volume by the Danish student council ('DSF') from 1972 called 'The humanities – retired by the capital?' (my translation) edited by Henning Salling Olesen. This book (Olesen, ed. 1972) is based on the truth-construct that the humanities are in a state of "crisis" (p. 1) initiated by a critique of capitalism and the academic disciplines as being 'bourgeois' and reproducing the class inequalities of capitalist society. Most of the chapters seek to construct 'new' disciplinary foci in Literature, Language studies and Arts revolving around disciplinary self-critique and incorporating "socially oriented enterprise" and "societal critique" (Olesen, ed. 1972: 7, my translations). The hitherto function of humanistic disciplines is articulated as "conveying high culture" (back cover, my translation), but the text argues how increasing economic capitalist logics render the humanities superfluous: "High culture and the individualistic image of man are no longer the most important legitimisation of the structure of society." (back cover of the book, my translation). This construction of the humanities as a bourgeois 'mediation of high culture' and producing 'an individualistic world view' is being related to certain articulations of 'Bildung'. Through these discursive practices, 'Bildung' becomes an undesirable educational purpose for PPL in its social science-Marxist articulation. This connection is reproduced in the text 'Society and pedagogy'¹²³ from 1978 by Illeris, Laursen and Simonsen. In a chapter on "Theories on Bildung", the authors trace the 'original' content of Bildung ('dannelse') to Ancient Greece and the activities of "competitive sports, exercising rhetoric and reading central works of classical literature" (Illeris, Laursen and Simonsen 1978: 39). Further they write how the notion of 'Bildung' entailed "the ideas that parts of high culture, such as for example paintings from the Golden age and classical music, have an educational [dannende] function." (ibid. 44). Bildung is also being related to the natural sciences as for example learning "Mathematics" (ibid.) and the "seven liberal arts" of Roman culture, including "Geometry" and "Astronomy" (ibid. 43). As constructed by the text, Bildung is not articulated as a useful concept for education. This illegitimacy of 'Bildung' relates to an identified function of "justifying the position of the ruling class in a certain society", and because it, when abandoning the particular 'classical content', as is necessary from the vantage point of the book, 'Bildung' becomes "almost empty of meaning" (Illeris, Laursen and Simonsen 1978: 53). This 'emptiness' then means, as enunciated by the authors, that the "ability to guide teachers in their practical work" becomes "equal to zero". The presupposition is that if an educational concept (such as Bildung in this case) does not "guide teachers in their practical work" it has no value. This impossibility of

¹²³ My translation of the Danish title 'Samfundet og pædagogikken'. All quotes from this book are my translations.

drawing on 'Bildung', and its related troubling of the Humanities and Natural sciences, is constituted by a certain Marxist discourse of PPL in which 'practice' and 'social relevance' have primacy.

These discursive struggles in texts from the 1970s have repercussions for later possible truths of the educational aims and purposes of PPL, and its (im)possible relation to certain fields of humanities and natural sciences. These effects are especially discernible from later assemblage texts producing (and produced by) 'post-Marxist' discourses (Ulriksen 1997, Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015). In these texts, the discursive struggles of PPL appear through the narrative that PPL is experiencing a regression and unfortunate 'return' to disciplinarity, and a decline of 'social relevance' caused by an erosion of 'problem-orientation', 'exemplarity' and 'interdisciplinarity' for PPL. This finds an expression in what I read as a stealthy Marx-reference in Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015): "As holistic theories of the dynamics and structures of society have been declining, the ideas about exemplary learning have gradually taken more inspiration from Wagenschein's discipline-oriented understanding of the exemplary principle." (p. 26). This identified 'regression' can be read as a truth that co-produces the recent upsurge in discourses of PPL being preoccupied with "real-life problems" (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015, p. 22) and "solving real-world issues" (RUC 2018) distancing itself from the 'unrealness' of the troubled concepts of 'the university', 'Bildung' and 'the disciplines'.

Social critique

Based on the discourse analysis, I formulate 'social critique' as a significant response of the assemblage to the question of what PPL is 'for' educationally. The meaning of 'social critique' is constituted through certain relations to the other identified responses: qualification, the development of competencies, (student) learning, and the creation and advancement of knowledge through *Wissenschaft*.

Calling this response 'social critique', that is, articulations of educational aims of PPL pointing towards 'social critique', comes with different emphasis and stabilised meanings in the assemblage, but in my readings, it all relates to certain notions of 'Marxism' and 'fagkritik'. A PPL-text that offers a way of viewing different perspectives on 'fagkritik' in the assemblage, and thus the articulation of various educational aims and purposes for PPL, is a student pamphlet (not the one analysed closely) called "The project work of reality"¹²⁴ by the student council at Roskilde University in 1988 (Jensen, Ulriksen and Jensen). The authors divide 'fagkritik' into "internal fagkritik" as critique oriented to-

¹²⁴ My translation of the Danish title 'Virkelighedens projektarbejde'.

wards the sciences and their bourgeois and positivist notion of ‘truth’, whereas an “external fagkritik” oriented university research towards the emancipation of society and certain marginalised groups (Jensen, Ulriksen and Jensen 1988: 12, my translations). I will use this division of Marxist perspectives of PPL as temporary heuristics to position the various statements on PPL as social critique.

Illeris (1974) and Illeris (1981) mainly orient and produce PPL external to a scientific community towards ‘societal practice’, and the oppressed working class. ‘Fagkritik’ is not mentioned literally in Illeris’ texts (1974, 1981), neither is his work positioned as such by other texts, which could be read as an effect of his disengagement with anything related to ‘the university’. Hultengren (1976/1981), I would position as both, because she produces notions of PPL as aimed at investigating and exposing the oppression of the working class in capitalist society, but also critiques bourgeois Wissenschaft and later engages extensively with the notion of ‘interdisciplinarity’ as a Marxist critique of the disciplines (Hultengren 1979). Another of the assemblage texts that, at points, speaks from a ‘Marxist’ perspective is Ingemann (ed. 1985). It is not preoccupied with ‘oppressed societal groups’, but rather orients its critique towards the ‘traditional’ sciences, all the while retaining a ‘societal’ focus. Ingemann (ed. 1985), from a Wissenschaft-perspective, actively degrades constructions of PPL focusing on societal problems in the form of activist engagements with oppressed groups, which Ingemann in his chapter 4 derogatively refers to as “a transformation of the Marxist theorist into an action-theoretical practitioner.” (p. 18). The presupposed truth here is that proper universities deal (mainly) in ‘theory’ and not ‘practice’, countering the strong practice-orientation of other assemblage texts.

Critique ‘after’ Marxism

Later in the assemblage, the articulation of educational aims of social critique changes. After the 1980s, the formulation of ‘social critique’ becomes increasingly vague in its articulations and struggles to find a point of orientation. These perspectives, I have called ‘post-Marxist’, as it is perspectives that use certain terms from a Marxist vocabulary, but because of de-legitimation of the figure of ‘Marx’, there is no explicit mention of such a position, and statements are sufficiently open to be interpreted in ways not necessarily ‘Marxist’. Concerning the texts of the assemblage with a ‘post-Marxist’ perspective, Nielsen and Jensenius (1996) takes a scientific-oriented position, explicitly relating PPL to remnants of ‘fagkritik’, which becomes a vague formulation of having a ‘critical’ stance towards one’s studies (p. 20). A similar orientation is produced in Olsen and Pedersen (1997), articulating ‘critique’ as oriented towards scientific disciplinarity (p. 20). In the text by Ulriksen (1997), the position lies with both a strong external orientation ‘outside university’, where projects should ‘matter’ to society, while there is also a strong critique of the scientific disciplines. Ulriksen (1997) articulates his perspective of PPL as “a new

fagkritik” (p. 111, emphasis in original), indicating relations to ‘fagkritik’”, while also having a need to reconstruct this in a ‘new’ way (p. 111). Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015) positions itself with notions of ‘social relevance’ (focusing projects on “social issues”, p. 24) and ‘interdisciplinarity’ as being central to PPL, thus emphasising both an ‘internal’ critique, but also an ‘external’ social orientation, without any of these being elaborated much.

Looking at the poster headed ‘the 7 principles of PPL’ (RUC 2018), the articulation of ‘social critique’ as an educational aim for PPL has almost disappeared. This said, the poster does, under the principle of “problem-orientation” state that “projects at RUC are oriented towards understanding and solving real world issues”. This is not elaborated though, and the remainder of the description of “problem-orientation” writes how the solving of issues through “scientific methods” develops “your ability to define and assess problems”. Thus, the most important aim and outcome of PPL becomes the student’s competence development rather than “understanding and solving real world issues” as an end in itself. Also, under the seventh principle, “International insight and vision”, which is mentioned nowhere else in the assemblage, there is an articulation of “critical engagement”, again, formulated as something “you gain”, but this finds not orientation in the text, that is, what it means to ‘be critical’ and towards what. In this text, the student-centred competency discourse of education has replaced any notions of ‘fagkritik’ and social critique (both internal and external).

The articulations of PPL as oriented towards ‘social critique’ have become increasingly vague in the assemblage and struggled to find substantiation, especially from the post-Marxist perspectives in the post 1980s. This makes statements of ‘social relevance’, ‘critical engagement’ and ‘problem-orientation’ (more) open to other discourses such as the competency discourse relating the educational aims of PPL to the accumulation of skills for use in the knowledge economy and positions the ‘solving of real-world problems’ as a 21st century economic marketing version of the (external) fagkritik-catch-phrase, ‘research for the people’.

Concluding on part I: entangled educational aims

What are the educational aims and purposes of PPL? I have laid out five responses to this question as articulated over time through the assemblage texts: *qualification, development of competencies, learning, erkendelse* and *social critique*. It has been the task of this first part of the cross-reading to inquire into the entanglements of these ‘responses’ as they exist in contingent and interrelated ways in and across the texts. Investigating the discursive articulations and silences of (im)possible educational aims of PPL helps to open up the discussion of what PPL wants as a form of education.

A dominant and continuous construction of PPL throughout the assemblage has been to articulate its educational aim and purpose as ‘qualification’. This justification for PPL is especially strong in the texts by Illeris, notably Illeris (1974), which reads as the beginnings of a knowledge economy discourse of education, where PPL is repeatedly positioned as the best way of producing the qualifications that industry needs to continue the economic growth of society. The stated educational aim of making a person conscious of the oppressive societal structures is subordinated qualification. This notion of PPL as being inherently constructed for the educational purpose of qualification, is prevalent throughout the assemblage. In the student pamphlet from 1996 (Nielsen and Jensenius) a strong competency discourse formulates PPL mainly in terms of what ‘competencies and qualifications’ it *gives* students, as a currency, or commodity, usable in other contexts than education (but also in education), such as personal life and on the job market. This competency discourse of education, emerging in the 1990s, goes hand in hand with (but is different from) the notion of the knowledge economy, as well as sales-lingo (competencies as educational products sold to student consumers), and persists in several texts, notably the poster of PPL from 2018. The response that PPL is great for ‘learning’, is a central argument for Illeris (1974) and connects to progressive intentions of reforming ‘traditional education’. Whereas the construction of ‘learning’ is accompanied by several theories in Illeris (1974, 1981), and is articulated as a means to gain insights into societal structures, later it becomes less and less theorised all the while it appears more and more frequent as a self-evident aim and outcome of PPL (beginning with Nielsen and Jensenius 1996). Learning becomes an end in itself. In terms of PPL’s relation to the university and the educational aim of ‘*erkendelse*’, this is a troubled one. The emergence of PPL as a progressive counter to a perceived ‘traditional’ education, comes with an innate scepticism towards anything connoting ‘tradition’, which makes ‘the university’ a troubled institution in its construction as conservative and traditional. Through the concepts of ‘problem-orientation’, ‘participant-direction’, ‘interdisciplinarity’ and a dominance of ‘the social’, PPL becomes an antagonistic formulation to its ‘other’, the ‘traditional university’. This continuously troubles certain disciplinary fields in the humanities and natural sciences for not being ‘societal’ in their orientation. Finally, a response emphasising ‘social critique’ as the aim and purpose of PPL in education, emerges in the texts from the 1970s and 1980s related to certain Marxist perspectives and the so-called ‘*fagkritik*’. The articulation of ‘social critique’ varies (in strength) in and across texts, and divides itself into an academic critique of the ‘bourgeois’ scientific disciplines, and a societally oriented critique aimed at social justice for disadvantaged groups, notably the working class, see Illeris (1974, 1981) and Hultengren (1976/1981). In the 1990s, the articulation of social critique becomes increasingly vague, and Marx is made to disappear as legitimate reference, which opens terms such as ‘social relevance’ and ‘critical engagement’ up to be stabilised by other discourses such as the competency-language and the knowledge economy. It is a general point that most of the articulated aims – qualification, competence-

building, learning, knowledge-creation and critique – are, increasingly, open to stabilisation by the dominant knowledge economy discourse. This materialises in different ways, temporally and contingent on perspective, as laid out in this part 1.

Whether the articulated aims and purposes of PPL are ‘educational’ and sit as part of a pedagogical philosophy, or whether they are mainly proclamations to satisfy current policy discourses, or other pragmatic needs, is addressed in the concluding discussion.

PART II

Part two concentrates on the *production* of discourses. It addresses mainly the second research question of the thesis, that is, *how* the texts as discourse actors construct discourses of the educational aims and purposes of PPL, examining how this takes place through various textual and intertextual discursive strategies. The first section for this part concerns *the (textual) production of truth*; in what ways the texts position themselves (their perspective) and how this affects (im)possible formulations of educational aims and purposes of PPL. The second section explores *intertextuality and the use of history*; how the relations between, and in, texts and citation practices construct discourses of PPL and its purposes through certain temporalities.

The (textual) production of truth

This first section studies how knowledge and truths of PPL are produced through the texts. It asks the texts how they know, what they say, what their base of knowledge is, which is also taken to indicate what kind of knowledge is assumed to be legitimate and not. It also asks what the perspectives of the texts are – where do they ‘come from’? What is their construction of the world (addressees, sender, situation, taken-for-granted notions etc.) to which they address themselves? This part of the analysis includes studying the texts in their position as not only ‘letters on pages’, but discourse actors that through their layout (genre, structure, fonts etc.) and materialities (paper, material, colours etc.) produce discourses on PPL and its educational purposes.

‘Personal experience’ as authoritative mode of knowing

For many of the texts, ‘experience’, rather than studies, theories and empirical data, is drawn in as the valid and celebrated way to claim knowledge and authority of PPL – if you have ‘experience’, you have a legitimate voice. Sometimes this knowledge base is also mixed with opinions and beliefs on behalf of the authors, that a statement is good and true, because ‘I believe it is’. For example, in Olsen and Pedersen (1997), the chapter ‘Why problem-oriented project work’ begins with Pedersen stating the joys and frustrations of PPL, to which he comments: “For these reasons project work is both loved and hated. This said, in my experience the pros clearly outshines the cons, which I will elaborate in this chapter.” (p. 11). Also in Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen (eds. 2013), the authors legitimate the book mainly from their own teaching experiences (p. 17). Experience is also made central in the early PPL-texts (Illeris 1974, Hultengren 1976/1981) partly from the argument that PPL was ‘in the making’. In her text, Hultengren (1976/1981) writes:

My preconditions for writing this work booklet are some years of working with this form of teaching. Partly at the HA-studies in Aalborg, and partly at AUC's language-pedagogical basic education programme. Social science and the humanities, that is. I regret not having any personal experiences from the technical-natural science area to help exemplify my points with. (p. 2)

These statements assume that one cannot write anything about areas of which you have no "personal experience". Personal experience is the main valuable currency. These statements also mean that the Hultengren-text (1976/1981) is assumed not to be relevant within tech- and natural sciences because the author has no experience from there, thus casting PPL as disciplinary-tied instead of 'universal pedagogy'. Continuing to a presentation of central concepts for PPL, Hultengren (1976/1981) bases these on her experience and opinion as author: "This is an introduction to my understanding of the concepts. Others might argue for other ways of understanding them. As of now, there is hardly any consensus as to their definition." (p. 6, emphasis in original). This statement constructs PPL as something which is based on how individual authors might understand it, that everyone might have their own take on PPL, and at this 'early stage' in its life, no common ground has been reached, yet.

In later texts, the positive valuation of 'experience' continues. In Ulriksen (1997), the experience of the author is made salient as a valuable source of knowledge, as "The basis of the discussion" (p. 13):

Fourthly, there is my experience from 14 years at RUC – partly as a student, partly as a teacher. Here, I draw on my experience with the educational policy work of introducing combi-programmes in the middle of the 1980s, where a series of principal questions were raised and discussed, on my experience as a teacher [vejleder] in the basic studies of the humanities, and my participation in the pedagogical development of the university [universitetspædagogiske arbejde]. (Ulriksen 1997: 14)

The taken-for-granted notion in this presentation, its intelligibility, is that having been a student and teacher at a university will make you more fit to study and understand its pedagogy. 'Experience' also takes a central point in the central concepts for PPL, as Ulriksen (1997) – as the only text in the assemblage – puts "experience-basing and experience-orientation" (p. 40) as one of seven principles of PPL addressed in the report. Thus, it could be seen as a strategy of 'practising what you preach' when the text mentions the experience of the author in the introduction. In Ulriksen (1997), the answer to the question in the title of the book "Why project pedagogy"? is not one that the text wants to provide itself. The text shows what selected others wrote on PPL, but is reluctant to take an explicitly normative position, and instead performs a perspective where any experience with PPL is more or less equally entitled to have a say in 'what it is and should be', rendering the author, the university pedagogy expert, just one in many.

A third example of the valorisation of 'experience' in the assemblage and its discursive effects, is Olsen and Pedersen (1997). They include much scholarly literature and theory

when it comes to ‘social science theory and methods’, but when it comes to supervision, teaching and successful collaboration in project groups, ‘experience’ – not theory, philosophy or research - becomes the main source of knowledge. In Olsen and Pedersen’s (1997) chapter on supervision (p. 159), most of the diagnosis and responses are based on the ‘experience’ of the authors. This is for example put into discourse in the following categorisation of groups and their behaviour: ”There are groups that are difficult or impossible to supervise. From experience, the difficult group is difficult due to one of two reasons: Because it is *lazy*, or because it is *unsure*.” (p. 167, emphasis in original). Based on ‘experience’, the authors produce the truth that a ‘troubled group’ can be caused by one of two causes. This truth-telling is based solely on ‘experience’ without drawing in any pedagogical literature or studies on group work. Again, experience is made to be a main legitimate point of knowledge for telling the truth about PPL.

When ‘experience’ becomes the central realm of valid knowledge, other sources such as research-based studies, theories (including philosophies) and empirical data fade in their use and legitimacy. Pedagogical theory and research are scarcely cited. Also, the naturalised value of perspectives from anyone with some experience with PPL, whether as student, teacher or third, makes it difficult to take a position as ‘someone who knows better’ qua for example pedagogical-educational research and philosophy in relation to the study of PPL. This disengagement makes much of the justification for PPL, as analysed in the assemblage texts, idiosyncratic, while it also becomes difficult to engage in a collective scholarly discussion of PPL and its educational aims and purposes.

Constructing PPL as institution-bound and insular

Most texts in the assemblage bind PPL to a specific institution, mainly Roskilde University (and secondly, Aalborg University), which often, in the reading here, produces PPL as related to an exclusive community with taken-for-granted values and practices. Examples of this positioning of PPL is the invention, and unreflexive use, of the term “the RUC-pedagogy” (Ulriksen 1997: 15). Another example is Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015) through which the “The Roskilde Model” is born into discourse leading up to the emergence of “The 7 principles of PPL” as “RUC’s educational model” (RUC 2018). Where the mentioned texts explicitly, and as a point in itself, position PPL as ‘a RUC-thing’, other texts in the assemblage are more silent on this matter claiming broader relevance for their points. Olsen and Pedersen (1997) write that their target group is “students in social science programmes at higher education institutions – universities, colleges etc. – who work with problem-oriented projects of longer duration” (p. 5), but that they believe the book to have ”broader appeal” (ibid.). Similarly, Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen (eds. 2013) have the following address on the back cover of the book: “The book is directed at students in higher education, who work with problem-oriented project work, but it is also relevant for practitioners”. There is no mention of Roskilde University, or

that 'this book is oriented towards students there', but rather the statements points to higher education broadly and also "practitioners", which makes me wonder when a PPL-text finds it relevant to tie itself to 'RUC' and not? Despite these articulations of having 'broad relevance' both books perform institutional RUC-discourse: most examples and references to practice are from educational practice at Roskilde University, all contributors are related to the university (the latter has a foreword by the prorektor) and Olsen and Pedersen (1997) is published by 'Roskilde University Press' (my translation) bearing the logo of 'RUC'.

The only two texts of the assemblage that do not speak PPL into existence through an institution-bound discourse are Illeris (1974 and 1981), which in their pursuit of making PPL a 'general didaktik', use various institutions as examples, but deliberately detaches PPL from any specific 'context'. I speculate whether perhaps the detachment from educational institutions and the aim of being 'general' has helped (along with a popularised and clear writing style) Illeris (1974, 1981) to become some of the texts most widely cited, debated and critiqued in the PPL-literature?

The discursive effect of binding PPL to a specific university, a specific institution, the way it is performed through the assemblage, constructs PPL in an *insular* discourse closing around itself. This naturalised discourse renders substantiation for arguments or critique from other texts, superfluous. As an effect, PPL is cut off from conversation and discussion with other educational philosophies, practices and research literature, both nationally, but especially internationally (despite the international ambition and outlook of Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015, it also gets caught up in institutional and insular discourse of PPL).

Intertextuality and the use of history: PPL's memory

This part of the cross-reading addresses the uses of history: how past and present are divided between various statements and references. It studies intertextuality and citation practices: how texts cite each other - and when they do not - and what this comes to mean for the discursive production of PPL. Drawing on Foucault's (1977a) notion of genealogical investigation as "counter-memory" (p. 160), I call this 'the memory of PPL' examining how statements and perspectives are remembered, articulated and continued, or forgotten. This matters to the constitution of educational purposes of PPL. What I provide here is the possibility of a 'counter-memory' to the extent that I show the constructedness of the memory of PPL - that 'the history of PPL and its aims' can be told differently (Hemmings 2011). I will trace the various constructions of texts and citations as they (dis)appear in the analysed texts to display these workings and reflect on its discursive effects for the production of PPL and its educational aims and purposes.

The emergence and disappearance of cited theorists

The citation practices, that is, the theories cited (and not cited) in the various PPL-texts, are, as read in the analyses, reciprocally constituted by the discourses at play. These relations matter to the ways in which PPL and its educational aims and purposes are discursively produced. In this section, I lay out central citation practices of drawn-upon theories in PPL and how these transform over time and through different articulations.

Constructions of ‘Dewey’

Many later texts on PPL, including research studies, position the two thinkers John Dewey and William Kilpatrick as central to the formulation of PPL (Nielsen and Jensenius 1996, Borgnakke 1996, Christensen 2013, Servant 2016). This observation differs from my detailed readings of the PPL-texts from the 1970s and 1980s. I do not find Dewey to be central in the articulation of PPL. Illeris (1974) mentions Dewey under the exploration of criteria to decide “choice of topic or problem” (p. 170). Under the heading “The principles of Dewey”, Illeris (1974) introduces with a reluctant acknowledgement of Dewey’s work: “The American John Dewey was probably the first to work seriously with the principle of problem-orientation as the basis for planning teaching, and his views have been central in the educational debate throughout this century.” (p. 171-172). Illeris (1974) spends almost less than two pages (out of 272) on explicating “the principles of Dewey”, using the Dewey-text “*The Child and the Curriculum*” (p. 257, emphasis in original) from 1902 as reference, and comes back to his ideas when deciding on relevant inspirations for selecting topics and problems. Illeris (1974) ends up including Dewey’s focus on “The experiential world of the pupil” (p. 170), which he transforms into using “the preconditions of the participants” (p. 180) as starting point for choosing topics. Illeris (1974) finds no use in ‘Dewey’s principles’ to the so-called “external criterion” (p. 182) for the selection of content. Thus, Illeris (1974) discards Dewey’s suggestion of referring to “the experience of mankind” (“menneskeslægtens erfaring”) (p. 173) as “vague” (ibid.) and “unlikely to be of greater value as practical guidance today.” (p. 182). Though Illeris (1974) uses Dewey, as shown, it is to a small extent compared to other theories in the book. In Hultengren (1976/1981) and Illeris (1981), ‘Dewey’ is not mentioned at any point. ‘Kilpatrick’ does not appear in any of these three texts. In Borgnakke (1983), Kilpatrick is mentioned once in the main text (but with no reference), and Dewey only appears in the reference list (not in the main text). Ulriksen (1997) has a brief mention of Kilpatrick as the ‘originator’ of “project work” and Dewey as introducing the concept of “learning by doing” (p. 17), but none of these are included in the list of references.

To conclude, the use of Dewey in the assemblage texts is scarce and Kilpatrick is not mentioned at all in the early texts of the assemblage (Illeris 1974, 1981, Hultengren 1976/1981). How come, then, that these citations are positioned in later texts as central to the emergence of PPL? A possibility is that Dewey and Kilpatrick are not mentioned explicitly, but their ideas can be read from the texts nonetheless. Having read Dewey

(1916, 1938), I do not find this to be the case, and as such, the construction of Dewey as ‘a main influence to PPL’ seems to be primarily a contemporary invention. One possible reading of the minimal appearance is that Dewey (and Kilpatrick) are not seen as relevant theories from a Marxist perspective (most prevalent in Hultengren 1976/1981 and Illeris 1981), because they are seen as focusing on the individual detached from a societal context (as was the case with the critique of Rogers in Illeris 1974 and 1981). This reading is shared by Servant (2016: 240).

Citations of PPL from a post-Marxist perspective

What happened to citations related to Marx (whose name disappeared in PPL-texts after the 1990s)? Who is cited by, what I have called, the ‘post-Marxist’ discourse producers¹²⁵ of the assemblage? Such an examination of citation practices may point to the possibilities of re-introducing, or re-thinking theories, that is, to reconfigure the dominant/marginal positions of theories related to PPL.

A figure of the assemblage whose work is associated with Marxism is Oskar Negt. The ideas of Negt are made central to Illeris’ formulations of PPL (1974, 1981), and Negt continued to be cited as a central conceptual inspiration in Hultengren (1976/1981) and Ingemann (ed. 1985), Ulriksen (1997) and Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015), and more superficially in Nielsen and Jensenius (1996) and Olsen and Pedersen (1997). Negt also came to be a central inspiration for the development of PPL in the work of Borgnakke (1983, 1996). As such, Negt has not been problematised in the constructions of PPL over time and has continued to appear as a citation. How come ‘Negt’ has persevered as a central reference to PPL, despite his Marxist perspective? One possible reading to make this continuity intelligible, is that the Marxist perspectives of Negt’s work were consequently toned down or entirely ignored in later use, continuing the generalisation of Negt exerted in Illeris (1974, 1981). In her analyses of Illeris’ works, Borgnakke (1983) understands his use of Negt to be far from the political-Marxist specificities of the Negt-texts cited (see Feldt 2022 for a recent use of Negt as Marxist educator).

Another theorist associated with Marxism in the assemblage of PPL-texts is Paulo Freire, who appears as a central theoretical inspiration for Hultengren (1976/1981) with the book ‘Pedagogy of the oppressed’ (Hultengren uses a Danish translation from 1973). Freire is not mentioned in either of Illeris’ two texts (1974, 1981). One interpretation of this omission is found in the book ‘Project work – experiences and practical guidance’ (my translation), by Berthelsen, Illeris and Poulsen (1977). They comment on Freire’s ‘Pedagogy of the oppressed’ under a section for ‘further reading’ at the back of the book, and write that due to its context of illiterate farmers in South America, the pedagogy suggested “cannot be transferred to a Scandinavian context” (Berthelsen, Illeris and

¹²⁵ Nielsen and Jensenius 1996, Ulriksen 1997, Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015.

Poulsen 1977: 386, my translation). They continue: “What remains is Freire’s very unclear humanist-socialist philosophy, which in our opinion is an insufficient foundation, both theoretically and practically, for a pedagogical praxis with a socialist aim.” (ibid.). ‘Freire’ finds yet another positioning in Nielsen and Jensenius (1996), where he is called “a classic” of PPL. After this mention, there is silence on ‘Freire’ in the assemblage of PPL¹²⁶. The different positionings of ‘Freire’ show how citations, and thus the ‘theoretical base of PPL’ are being constructed in wildly different and contingent ways.

In two of the texts that produce PPL and its educational aims through a ‘post-Marxist’ discourse, central theorists cited to support the articulation of PPL are Thomas Ziehe (Ulriksen 1997) and Wolfgang Klafki (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015). I read these citations as continuities of the Marxist perspective, but in a legitimate form not mentioning ‘Marx’, due to their relation to a German tradition of critical pedagogy, and because they are both cited in the work of Illeris (Ziehe is cited in Illeris 1981, and Klafki in Illeris 1974). Who, or what, can and cannot be cited, in certain discourses of PPL, constitutes what aims can be formulated and to what extent these draw on pedagogical theory (or other disciplinary perspectives).

The Illeris-critique that ‘disappeared’

No name and reference appears more frequently throughout the assemblage than that of ‘Illeris’. In the constructions of PPL in and over time, the perspectives of Illeris (1974, 1981) act as authorities on ‘what PPL is and wants’ and therefore its ascribed meanings are significant in constituting what PPL and its educational aims can be. This section follows what this construct, ‘Illeris’, comes to mean in various texts; which Illeris-texts (if that is the case) are referred to, and how are they used?

One observation across the assemblage is that Illeris-texts are rarely engaged with critically. It is not that his ideas were not criticised, but texts that include such critiques (Hultengren 1976/1981, Keldorff and Salomonsen 1981, Illeris 1981, Borgnakke 1983, Inge-mann, ed. 1985) rarely make it into the central PPL-texts of my analysis. In Hultengren (1976/1981), Illeris appears in the form of ‘Illeris 1974’, which is used both as a foundation of PPL, and as the object of heavy critique relating mainly to a vagueness in concepts and the extent of his ‘Marxness’. In the introduction of the book, Illeris (1974) is positioned as a “historical political economical insight” (Hultengren 1976/1981: 1) of education, which Hultengren calls “the foundation from which I start.” (ibid. 2). Thus, Illeris is positioned as providing the required Marxist analysis of education and its relation to

¹²⁶ Freire (re)appears in Servant (2016), who instigates a reconstruction of ‘PBL’ by adding ‘Freire’ and ‘Vygotsky’ to Rogers under the heading “Self-directed Learning” to revive its alleged “social-transformative ambitions” (p. 247).

'qualification'. This is where the praise of Illeris ends in Hultengren as the rest of the book is a critical, but, in my reading, respectful¹²⁷, engagement with the thoughts of Illeris (1974). Reading across the assemblage, Hultengren (1976/1981) stands out as the most critical engagement with the work of Illeris; most later texts uncritically mediate certain ideas ascribed to 'Illeris'. Looking across the analysed texts, this shift happens somewhere in the late 1980s, where all latter texts, though they keep using Illeris-references, either have very little critical engagement with his texts, or none at all.

Two texts from the 1980s that perform comprehensive critiques of ideas put forth in Illeris (1974, 1981) are 'Knowledge changes the world' (my translation) by Keldorff and Salomonsen (1981), and 'Project pedagogy in theory and practice' (my translation) by Borgnakke (1983). Both texts are sparsely cited in the assemblage. Keldorff has a polemic critique of Marxist qualification-theory as it was used by Illeris and others (Keldorff does not directly mention 'Illeris'), something he called "the psychological 'choreography' of the apparatus of production" meaning "how the labour force is to be educated/raised to 'dance' correctly for a given organisational development in the capital- and state apparatus." (Keldorff and Salomonsen 1981: 45), my translations). Keldorff views the Marxist qualification theory as "growth socialism" and thus "akin to growth capitalism" (ibid.), which, as shown earlier under the analysis of 'qualification' as educational aim, relates to what others have called the 'knowledge economy'. Also, Keldorff critiqued the Marxist strategy of 'reform' from within the public institutions: "This is not least because we in a series of years on the left wing have seen the political state as something which could be conquered from 'within' (the old West German strategy of 'the long way through the institutions')" (Keldorff and Salomonsen 1981: 82, my translation). I see this as an implicit critique of Illeris (1974) of being naïve to believe in educational reform as the way to achieve Marxist aims.

As mentioned, the 1990s mark a new 'beginning', or a discontinuity, of PPL discourse, in which past educational debates become either 'historicised' or not addressed at all. The later use of 'Illeris' is extensive, but also uncritical and does not elicit the Marxist perspectives also readable in Illeris (1974, 1981). An effect is that the elaborate discussion and critique of the ideas and aims of PPL, as posed by Illeris (1974, 1981) disappears and inherent pedagogical issues for PPL are not addressed and therefor reproduced.

¹²⁷ In the assemblage texts from the 1970s and 1980s, to critique someone's work does not appear to be a 'bad thing' (as it would appear to be after the rise of positive psychology), but rather an act of respect and engagement. At least, it reads as being a 'natural' thing to do (whereas explicit critique is more or less absent in later PPL-texts), see e.g. the following statement from the colophon of a student pamphlet from Roskilde University, 1988: "We thank the people who have criticised prior to the final text" (Jensen, Ulriksen and Jensen 1988, my translation).

Silencing the conversation – reproducing pedagogical problems?

As seen in the previous section, the 1970s and 1980s, as analysed through the texts in the assemblage, had a ‘conversation’ on the aims and purposes of PPL, that is, the texts from these decades drew on each other and engaged in the respective ideas. This conversation – the critical engagement with ideas of other PPL-texts – seems to not having made it out of the 1980s: The texts from the 1990s and onwards, beginning with 1996, increasingly write in the past tense as if ‘debate on PPL’ was something only going on in the 1970s and 1980s. One possible reading of this silence comes from Hansen’s (1997) historical study of Roskilde University. Hansen (1997) suggests that the interference (and almost shutting down) from the government of Roskilde University after an alleged ‘Marxist infiltration’ in the 1970s, created certain myths and taboos of PPL leading to a silencing (at least internally at the university) of perspectives critical to PPL and the university. Exceptions to the disappearance of critical discussions on PPL could be Ulriksen (1997), the conference proceedings after a conference on PPL held at Roskilde University in 1997 (Olesen and Jensen, eds. 1999) and Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015). But in the case of Ulriksen (1997) and Andersen and Heilesen (eds. 2015), the institutional affiliation, and therefore a certain ‘loyalty’ to the university makes the ‘critique’ direct mainly towards ‘external factors’, and not, in any profound way, to PPL itself. Similarly, the mentioned critiques of Illeris’ works are not discussed.

Later texts in the assemblage do not only have limited critical engagement with past and present articulations of PPL – altogether they do not engage much with each other either. This makes many of the texts write into a vacuum, or ignore the past and conflicting perspectives, instead of engaging in an explicit conversation¹²⁸. An example is Mac and Hagedorn-Rasmussen (eds. 2013), which barely mentions any other texts from the assemblage (or PPL-texts as such). The discursive effect is that PPL is invented anew, something made possible by omitting other PPL-texts and thus erasing ‘the history of PPL’ avoiding challenges to the proposed perspective. When texts do not engage critically with the ideas of PPL, when they ignore its history and former debates, there is a risk to reproduce pedagogical problems and issues.

¹²⁸ A question to ponder in relation to what can be critiqued and not, is how collegiality, and institutional affiliation constitutes the possibility to speak and utter self-critique. Most of the critical perspectives to PPL come from Aalborg-related texts, and not from texts related to Roskilde University.

Concluding on part II: truth-telling practices

This second part of the cross-reading has studied the ‘how’ of the production of educational aims and purposes of PPL. It has laid out various discursive practices and strategies that constitutes what can be said and not in articulations on what PPL is for.

Firstly, the knowledge base of the texts in the assemblage, gives authority to ‘experience’, in a sense where experience becomes the admission criterion to the ongoing conversation on PPL. Simultaneously, the assemblage texts perform strong institutional ties for PPL, mainly to Roskilde University, which at times makes discourse insular. This is exemplified with the naturalised use of the term ‘RUC-pedagogy’ by Ulriksen (1997). That PPL-texts are mainly based on experience, bound to an institution and do not draw much on research studies, (pedagogical) theories and empirical data has the effect of closing down scholarly conversation, especially internationally, on PPL and similar approaches in higher education. In the study of PPL, discursive practices of remembering and forgetting perspectives and citations affect the construction of the (possible) educational aims and purposes. For example, earlier critiques of the ideas put forth in Illeris (1974, 1981) are not included in later assemblage texts, the use of ‘Illeris’ as a central discourse producer of PPL’s aims and purposes continues without critical engagement. There is a general decline in the conversation on PPL after the 1980s, seen in the lack of cross-referencing in the texts. The diminishing critical engagement and lack of conversation between perspectives, sometimes shown through ignorance of other PPL-texts, risk reproducing pedagogical problems of PPL.

Part II of the cross-reading, points to the question of, what perspectives it is possible to, legitimately, take in the articulation of PPL’s educational aims and purposes in the current discursive landscape of higher education. At the same time, this examination of how truths of PPL and its inheritance are constructed enables reconfigurations of what PPL is for as a form of education, and what (pedagogical) theories it might draw on.

V. Concluding discussion

This final chapter of the thesis has two purposes. Firstly, it will address the research questions and lay out the main points of this discourse analysis. Secondly, I will discuss the possible implications of these conclusions: what would the insights of the study mean for re-formulations of PPL as a university pedagogy? What perspectives might it be worth drawing on, or re-investing, in such formulations? These questions entail a change in focus from a mainly analytical stance as seen throughout the dissertation to a more explicitly normative perspective.

As indicated in the introduction, this investigation was motivated by recent stabilisations of problem-oriented project-based learning (PPL) as, on the one hand, a marketised ‘educational model’ of Roskilde University articulated with a long eclectic list of educational aims and outcomes. At the same time, PPL appeared as a self-evident ‘pedagogy’ based on a localised and naturalised formula reproduced over time by the staff and students at the university. Both observations sparked the initial curiosity of the study: what are the educational aims and purpose of PPL?

Based on a genealogical epistemology (Foucault 1977a, Lončarević 2013) and a discourse analytic approach (Maclure and Stronach 1997, Maclure 2003, Hemmings 2011) this curiosity was formed into three separate research questions:

- What are the discursive continuities and discontinuities of educational aims of purposes of PPL as read in textual introductions from 1974-2018?
- How are the articulated aims and purposes constructed in and through the discursive work of the texts?
- In what ways is PPL formulated as a university pedagogy?

The concluding discussion will be structured mainly by the two first questions, which involves engaging with the third. As a transition to discussing the implications of the study, I will reflect on the question whether the articulated aims and purposes can be said to be ‘educational’ and if they have a notion of the pedagogical aspects of education as seen in pedagogical theory and philosophy (Dewey 1916, Moore 1982, Biesta 2010, 2013, Kinchin and Gravett 2022, Magnússon and Rytzler 2022).

While laying out the answers to the questions above, other involved research interests will be addressed such as in what ways the contingent articulation of educational aims and purposes relate to the dominant discourses of higher education as seen in the introduction, and what pedagogical-theoretical inheritances of PPL are used in the texts?

Continuities and discontinuities of educational aims

As seen in the cross-reading, the articulated educational aims and purposes of PPL are divided into five kinds of justification: qualification, competencies, learning, ‘erkendelse’ (pursuit of knowledge) and social critique. These responses to what PPL is for as a form of education, are contingent in time and relate to each other in various entangled, and sometimes adversarial, ways.

PPL as an early actor of the knowledge economy

A continuous and dominant articulated purpose of PPL is ‘qualification’. This aim and purpose is constructed as an inherent justification for PPL in most texts, which presupposes that if PPL has no value in terms of qualification, it has no place in education. The qualification purpose relates PPL to the educational production of useable skills to become employable in the job market. Students are future human capital. This discourse is traced back to Illeris’ text from 1974 in which Marx-inspired economic qualification theory naturalises the position of education as the provider of employable skills to the industry. PPL becomes the perfect response to this self-evident purpose of education. As a major point for this study, and perhaps against common folklore of the golden age of PPL, the qualification-focus introduced by Illeris (1974, 1981) is seen as an early legitimisation and co-production of the knowledge economy discourse. Several policy studies locate the emergence of the knowledge economy discourse for higher education in the 1980s (for the Anglophone world, Wright et al. 2019) and somewhat later in Denmark with following the Bologna process of the late 1990s and a new university law in 2003 (Krejsler 2006, Krejsler and Carney 2009, Sarauw 2011, Wright et al. 2019, Wright and Shore, eds. 2019). Nuancing these studies, my analysis identifies an earlier appearance of this discourse in the early 1970s with Illeris’ work, which challenges the claim by Wright et al. (2019) that Danish higher education before the 1980s and 1990s was dominated by a “democratic and *Humboldtian*” discourse (p. 221). It was an articulated ambiguity for Illeris (1974) that PPL was able to aim at both the production of skills for capitalist society and the emancipation of the student from the same oppressive societal structures. In 1981, Illeris made this point explicit by introducing ‘counter-qualification’ in the title of his book. As shown in the analysis, these ‘double perspectives’ with its supposed potential for counter-qualification never came to challenge the dominant knowledge economy discourse, because the articulation of critical Marxist perspectives in Illeris’ were subordinated qualification and also overshadowed by a praxis-oriented pedagogical interest in reforming education for educators in general. The critical Marxist perspectives enunciated in Illeris’ texts (mainly the 1981-book) were omitted in later citation practices of the extensively cited figure ‘Illeris’, which made the knowledge discourse the primary and uncontested producer of the educational aims of PPL.

In the 1990s, the educational aims and purposes of PPL are increasingly articulated through a competency-discourse. As especially shown in a student pamphlet from 1996, PPL is formulated in a discourse of commodification, where PPL becomes a product in the form of ‘competencies’, which the service provider, the university, sells to students as consumers. At this point, PPL is articulated as a way of studying that requires ‘responsibility for your own learning’ as the key to getting the promised competencies. This statement disappears in later more marketised-advertisement formulations of PPL where learning outcomes are one-sidedly ‘given’ to students in exchange of inscription. The competency-discourse is slightly different to the educational purpose of qualification because the building of ‘competencies’ does not limit itself for use in the labour market but includes all parts of life. This discourse *commodifies* every aspect of education (and life as such) as a currency to be exchanged for value in other contexts. As such, from the competency-perspective, it becomes unthinkable to formulate education as an end in itself. The competency-discourse proliferates and intensifies into a dominating way of articulating PPL and what it is for as a form of education. With this discourse comes an individualisation of the student, which McInanahan (2017) identifies as “the neoliberal introduction of human capital theory” (p. 514). These discourses show particularly in the texts from the recent decades (Mac and Hagedorn, eds. 2013, Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015, RUC 2018) and especially finds its expression in a marketised language of PPL. These articulations of PPL relate to the spread and increasing dominance of the commodified competency-discourse in (Danish) higher education as shown by Sarauw (2011) and Krejsler (2006). Also, the formulation of the educational purposes of the university in a marketised language that addresses any imaginable social problem as solvable through pedagogy is shown by Magnusson and Rytzler (2022) focusing on the Swedish context.

Re-producing learnification

Another articulated justification that has been continuous for PPL is that it is ‘good for learning’. In recent PPL-texts, ‘learning’ proliferates as a natural way of writing PPL into existence, exemplified by the ‘new’ naming of ‘Problem-oriented project learning’ seen in the poster (RUC 2018) and the book ‘The Roskilde Model’ (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015). Tracing these enunciations of PPL backwards, the proliferation and naturalisation of PPL as ‘learning’ emerged in the 1990s. For the last three decades, the discursive production of PPL as shown in my analyses has very much been invested in the ‘learnification’ of education pointed out by Biesta (2010), and by Magnusson and Rytzler (in the case of higher education, 2022). This said, the articulation of PPL as aimed at learning, can be traced further back to the texts of Illeris (1974, 1981). In especially the 1974-text, Illeris lays out how PPL as seen from a reform perspective is a cutting-edge form of learning based on cognitive and humanist psychology. PPL is adept at fostering personal development and transformative learning. Just as with the ‘qualification’-focus of Illeris,

he emphasises how learning should aim at a particular, and consequently ‘Marxist’ (Illeris 1981) transformation of the student. This relation is silenced in later citation practices of ‘Illeris’ that solely continue his points on learning, which, without the Marxist perspective, becomes *a good in itself*. Though the constructions of learning later change into a more naturalised and little theorised notion for PPL education, Illeris (1974) can be seen as the emergence of articulating PPL in terms of ‘learning’. The articulation of PPL as a form of learning, when not accompanied by other discourses (e.g. a Marxist), pairs easily with neoliberal and knowledge discourses that closes out substantive values and directions of education beyond a never-ending aim of ‘becoming better’ and enhancing economic growth.

Though ‘learning’ figures as a dominant response to what PPL does as a form of education, it is not left unchallenged. It does find resistance in the discursive struggles for stabilising the educational aims and purposes of PPL. Texts that articulate PPL mainly as an educational approach that is similar to research and aimed at ‘*erkendelse*’ (coming to know), tend to produce an antagonistic relation to PPL as ‘learning’ and ‘pedagogy’. Such statements are related to a specific construction of ‘the university’ and accordingly of PPL as a particular kind of academic-university practice. As based on the studied texts, I use the names ‘*erkendelse*’ and ‘*Wissenschaft*’ for the articulated aims that relates PPL to university in certain ways. As with the other justifications for PPL, the meaning of these articulated aims are contingent on the particular discourses they are spoken through.

PPL as inherently against the (traditional) university

A major point of the investigation is that the dominant constructions of PPL as a ‘progressive form of learning’ have emerged with an inherent antagonistic relation to anything deemed ‘traditional’, and in particular the arch-image for tradition, ‘the university’. From this perspective, the university is construed as a conservative, bourgeois and elitist institution that cares only for the pursuit of knowledge and little for the students and their learning processes (as seen in the related imperative ‘responsibility for your own learning’). In this sense, PPL emerged as an ‘anti-university pedagogy’.

It is too crude to simply call PPL ‘anti-university’, and as indicated, the constructions of PPL’s relation to ‘the university’ exists in interrelated ways to other articulated aims and discourses. When the *Wissenschaft* perspective connects to qualification and the competency-discourse, PPL becomes aimed at ‘solving problems in the real-world’, for students and researchers. The student develops research-like, practice-oriented competencies through PPL to become a useful knowledge worker and ‘reflective practitioner’ in the job market. When intertwining with a Marxist discourse, PPL’s relation to the university can be split into ‘external *Fagkritik*’ directing research towards the emancipation of ‘the people’, especially those oppressed (such as action research), and an ‘internal *Fagkritik*’,

a ‘university Marxism’, that direct scientific critique towards bourgeois and positivist science. Remnants of the Marxist university perspective, after it was delegitimised in the late 1980s, are seen in statements of PPL as being directed towards ‘social relevance’. The strong social articulation of PPL as education and research is dominant and continues over time (e.g. in Illeris 1974, ‘societal/social’ is used as a positive adjective and prefix for most aspects of PPL such as ‘societal exemplarity’). At the same time, the emphasis on ‘the social’ is a contingent label that has shifted over time. Where the societal orientation in the 1970s typically meant that education and research should give participants insight into the (oppressive and capitalist) structures of society, the ‘social relevance’ articulated in recent PPL-texts reads more as directed towards ‘helping society’ in the sense that PPL is useful for solving the (policy) problems of society and companies. Here, PPL connects to the knowledge economy discourse.

Common for the discursive production of PPL over time is that it has a problem with ‘the traditional university’. This anti-traditional university discourse did not mean that PPL was not related to university, but that this had to be a particular relation, as seen in the formulation of PPL as ‘the new university pedagogy’ (Hultengren 1976/1981, Borgnakke 1983). The antagonistic relation to ‘the traditional’ constitutes the formulation of central principles for PPL: interdisciplinarity, problem-orientation, participant-direction and exemplarity. These principles¹²⁹ read as alternatives to discipline-orientation and the professor as main authority of the university. Also, the dominance of ‘the social’ in articulations of PPL, as mentioned, positions certain disciplinary perspectives as troublesome. Disciplines that, in some aspects, struggle to justify an immediate ‘social relevance’ are especially the humanities and the natural sciences, as seen in this discourse analysis. In the discursive construction of PPL, both of these disciplinary fields also connote ‘Bildung’, which from the point of the anti-elitist and social discourse is an outdated and banned concept. An exception to this ‘ban’ is ‘The Roskilde Model’ (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015), in which Andersen and Kjeldsen seek to reconstruct “‘The Principle of ‘Exemplary Learning’” (p. 25) from newer work of the German educationalist Wolfgang Klafki. They add a focus on “‘self-formation’” (‘Bildung’) with the argument that Klafki provides “‘a balanced view of the principle of exemplary learning, referring to different academic traditions and cultures, and at the same time balancing the purposes of scientific learning, self-formation and peoples’ ability to think and act critically’” (p. 27).

¹²⁹ The later centralised principle of ‘project work’, I do not find to be related primarily towards ‘the university’, but rather to the pedagogical reform interest of countering class room teaching (see also Borgnakke 1983 and Christensen 2013). For a genealogy of ‘group work’ and its changing justification in PPL, see Christensen (2013).

University vs. pedagogy and other binaries of PPL

A major point concerning the construction of PPL as university pedagogy is a discursively fabricated incommensurability between ‘university’-perspectives and ‘pedagogical’ perspectives. This exists as a prevailing dichotomy in the discourse analysis¹³⁰. Texts articulating PPL primarily as a ‘pedagogy’ have a strong anti-university perspective, while texts casting PPL as a research-like approach to knowledge creation in university studies, position themselves away from ‘pedagogy’. Hultengren (1976/1981) is an exception of this construction as she includes both pedagogical deliberations while laying out PPL as a (Marxist) research methodology. Possibly due to the explicit Marxist perspective, the booklet of Hultengren is not cited much in later PPL-texts and thus her integrative perspective of PPL as a kind of (Marxist) university pedagogy is not continued over time. The anti-traditional-university discourse of PPL creates a number of binaries (enacted with varying intensity): theory/practice, abstract/empirical work, disciplinary/societal, inside/outside university etc. Binaries produce the world in ‘good’ and ‘bad’ (Kinchin and Gravett 2022: 7), and the problematised side of these binaries belongs to the imagined ‘other’ (the traditional university), while PPL becomes the sensible response as an approach to university and research that is practice-oriented, empirical, societal and externally oriented. Discursively, PPL needs the construct of ‘the traditional university’ to emerge as the superior approach. A discursive effect is that PPL cannot legitimately go into dialogue with first side of the binaries, leaving a range of university-related practices troubled.

The erasure of Marxism and the ensuing orientation crisis

In the early PPL-texts, various articulated Marxist perspectives stabilised certain meanings for notions of ‘being critical’, ‘accommodative learning’ and ‘gaining insight into society’. The educational purpose of university education was to learn of the oppressing capitalist society in order to be emancipated from its structures, and to carry out projects that would expose science as bourgeois and support oppressed societal groups, notably the working class. It is important to note that the articulations of the educational aims of PPL in Marxist discourse in the PPL-texts were not without internal discursive conflicts (see individual readings).

Coming into the 1990s, Marxism was no longer mentioned in PPL-texts, and when it was, this was constructed as ‘something of the past’, through a mix of nostalgia and irony. But also the construction of PPL as having ever been based in a Marxist discourse, dis-

¹³⁰ The same observation of a conflictual relation between ‘university’ and ‘pedagogy’ is made by Christensen (2013) in the broader context of Danish higher education and an emerging pedagogical focus in relation the university institution in the 1960’s (p. 65-67).

appeared in PPL-texts after the millennium. Marxism is being erased from the constructions of 'PPL's past'. It was never there. This removal of the figure 'Marx' and anything affiliated with such a perspective has effected an orientation crisis for PPL, as seen in my study. This crisis is discursively expressed through narratives of loss and nostalgia, where 'contemporary factors' - societal and institutional changes - as well as the lack of knowledge of 'the good old days' for students and new staff, take the blame for having thrown PPL into a crisis. To speak of the demise of a Marxist discourse as causing a crisis is not an option in the dominant story-telling. Seen through my analysis, the disappearance of Marxist discourse leaves articulated educational aims and purposes open to meaning constituted by other discourses, with less clear educational purposes. For PPL, in its dominant construction, the continuously articulated purposes of 'qualification' and 'learning' become obvious ways of attributing meaning to PPL, which naturalises it as part of a neoliberal knowledge economy discourse.

Concluding on the discourses constituting the aims of PPL

In its current, dominant form, and with its current (hi)story-telling, PPL struggles to find alternative justification outside the knowledge economy discourse and a learning regime. As seen in the discourse analysis of PPL-texts from 1974-2018, PPL has begotten a troubled relation to other possible discourses. For one, PPL cannot legitimately position itself with 'traditional' universities and justify its approach with reference to disciplinary traditions, *Bildung* and the search for truth and knowledge. It cannot, after the 1980s, be related to discourses with any direct affiliation with the name of 'Marx', but simultaneously post-Marxist sentiments continue to be effective. This effects a troubled relation to educational aims of 'Bildung' and subjectification, as Biesta (2010) calls it, but these purposes have become more legitimate articulations after university Marxism disappeared. Out of the five identified justifications, PPL is left with the knowledge economy-marketisation discourse articulating PPL as oriented towards qualification and competency-development, and a psychological-cognitive perspective articulating PPL as good for learning. At the same time, counter-discourses to the dominant focus on qualification and learning can be identified in the studied texts. These counter-discourses come in certain versions of the *Wissenschaft*-discourse and a Marxist discourse of PPL. In its current construction, PPL is not being challenged by these perspectives, which can be related to the lack of citations to the texts that are strong producers of the counter-discourses (Hultengren 1976/1981, Ingemann, ed. 1985). For the later deliberations on present and future formulations of PPL and its possible educational purposes, these two references could, as Hemmings (2011) has shown, be re-invested as resources to counter the discursive deadlock of PPL as a form of education directed towards more than qualification for the labour market and personal competency building. It is of course also possible to introduce entirely new discourses and perspectives and to 'tell different stories' (e.g. Mac and Hagedorn, eds. 2013). On the other hand, there is a point in 're-investing' resources

rather than 'telling a different story' and ignoring existing and established constructions of PPL. First of all, the discursive movements studied here, relate to educational practices and lived lives of students and scholars in PPL-settings (with certain fluctuating truths), constituting the possible reception, acceptance and realisation of 'new formulations' in the light of dominant truths. Secondly, ignoring the past of PPL risks reproducing pedagogical problems and inconsistencies. Thirdly, taking hitherto citations and perspectives into consideration continues (or, reinvigorates) the scholarly conversation on PPL as part of a larger discussion on pedagogies in higher education. Lastly, hearkening to the constructed history of educational aims and purposes of PPL, respects the ongoing work of scholars and educationalists, also that which does not make it into international journals.

Many of the points laid forth here from the discourse analysis of the educational aims of PPL, are also found in other research-based studies of PPL (Keldorff and Salomonsen 1981, Borgnakke 1983, 1996, Hansen 1997, Christensen 2013, Servant 2016). This said, it has been new to show the complexity and detail of these continuities and discontinuities in educational discourses as they are constructed by significant discourse actors (texts). In this sense, my study contributes to the existing work. Outside these research-based studies, and especially to the self-image of dominant PPL-narratives, the points of this section are new. In most PPL-texts, the insights of this section are not reflected, nor is the mentioned (critical) research cited or engaged with much (see for example Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015).

The discursive construction of PPL

This section addresses mainly the second research question and shows *how* the educational aims and purposes are formulated. This includes addressing what knowledge base, texts draw on, the cited theories to support arguments of PPL, and how the materiality of the analysed texts take part in the discursive construction of PPL. These aspects have not, to my knowledge, been granted much attention in other research-based PPL-studies, which make the insights a new contribution to studies of PPL.

The knowledge base of PPL: experience and psychology

Concerning the knowledge base for justifications of the direction of PPL, my analyses show that there is very little educational theory drawn upon. By 'educational theory', I mean sustained thinking and deliberation on the relations between educational ends and means, subjects (educator-educated) and subject matter. When arguing for a certain educational purpose of PPL, the studied texts tend to draw on experience, that certain practices 'worked'. This becomes a valuable currency in arguments of both the educational direction of PPL and the pedagogical practices deemed right, e.g. in relation to group

work and the role of the educator in PPL. The exaltation of experience has the discursive effect of devaluing educational theories, research and expertise, while also making anyone with just some experience with PPL into ‘experts’. Especially texts with a strong *Wissenschaft*-construction of PPL either ignore pedagogical matters as part of PPL, or draw primarily on personal experience, while other perspectives (e.g. theory of science in Olsen and Pedersen 1997) are ridden with references to theory and research. An observation is that for perspectives that position PPL as a ‘pedagogy’, the celebration of experience can be read as a deliberate adherence to flat-hierarchy values involved in Danish reform pedagogy. When it comes to the university and science oriented formulations of PPL, the inclusion of personal experience in pedagogical matters is read as simply not seeing ‘pedagogical matters’ as something scholarly or relevant to the university.

Besides personal experience, the PPL-texts examined predominantly cite references from within (educational) sociology, organisational theory and psychology. The citations from these fields tend to perform analytical points such as diagnosing societal tendencies or stating how to learn. As such, these disciplinary perspectives do not aid in giving an educational direction or reflecting values for PPL. In the PPL-texts analysed, there is a widespread absence of philosophical theories and literature in relation to education, and especially university education. This absence can be read as related to Marxist and anti-university discourses that would position philosophy as ‘bourgeois’ and far from ‘the real world’ and ‘practice’. Combined with the mainly analytical perspectives and the valorisation of ‘experience’, the articulated aims and purposes of PPL struggle to base itself in research-based and educational literature that might help it respond to the pedagogical question, paraphrasing Magnússon and Rytzler (2022: 74); why do we educate?¹³¹.

A lack of critical scholarly discussion

A significant insight of the analysis is that in the last three decades there have been no explicit scholarly discussion on the educational aim and purpose of PPL. The assemblage texts from the 1990s and forward either gloss over disagreements and conceptual inconsistencies in the articulation of the educational direction of PPL (the poster from 2018 is an example), they do not engage critically with each other, or they do not cite each other at all. Before the 1990s, which in the study of PPL marks the proliferation of the language of learning, an emerging competency discourse of education and the silencing of Marxist discourses, there was a critical discussion of PPL in published texts. The form of these texts were often polemic articles or pamphlets for use in educational settings. These texts

¹³¹ Keldorff in his book with Salomonsen (1981: 34), mused that PPL was held together as a marriage between descriptive cognitive psychology and Marxist ideology, which in his mind made it a fragile matrimony. Without the Marxist perspective, PPL would be reduced to a form of learning with no specific point of orientation (and thus open to any orientation).

cited each other and were openly critical towards perspectives that would diverge from their own. This debate on the educational purposes of PPL went silent coming into the 1990s and these discussions were not cited in later PPL-texts. Consequently, when reading PPL-texts from the last 30 years, PPL is constructed as a coherent, continuous and consensus-driven educational approach (Hansen 1997 reaches a similar conclusion, p. 321).

Adding to the absence of open and critical scholarly discussion, is a prevalent institutionalised and insular discourse of PPL. These discourses formulate PPL as something unique, something particularly related to Roskilde University, which makes it inherently difficult for ‘outsiders’ to understand, as the truths of this discourse goes. Examples of this clannish construction of PPL is the inventions of ‘the RUC-pedagogy’ and ‘The Roskilde Model’. These categorisations bind PPL to a particular institution, and invests it in the internal policy work and ties it to the branding of the university. The close connections between PPL and a particular institution reproduces insular discourse and give rise to certain myths (see Hansen 1997) as results of the inability to utter certain critiques and ask certain questions. Hansen (1997) concludes that the creation of myths and a narrative of continuity became a political tool for Roskilde university to accommodate external pressure from the government - to survive - while trying to uphold a sense of internal coherence. The ambition to uphold internal coherence meant, according to Hansen (1997), that the intense discussions on PPL in the 1970s and the Marxist politicisation and policing of curriculum was ignored in the institutional story-telling, and PPL became immune to critique as a ‘modern’ educational model “that had always been successful” (p. 332, my translation).

These discursive conflicts and especially the inability to utter self-critique for PPL is performed through one of the recent PPL-texts, *The Roskilde Model* (Andersen and Heilesen, eds. 2015). This book labours to be read as an international and scholarly edited volume, and is one of the few widely known PPL-texts in English and with an international orientation¹³². ‘The Roskilde Model’ performs, and is perceived as, an authoritative and scholarly actor in the construction of PPL, but it still reproduces the silencing of critical discussion of the educational aims of PPL and thus also acts as an educational export-product that seeks to sell PPL to an international market. When ‘Roskilde Model’ is cited uncritically, as seen e.g. in Schraube and Marvakis (2016) and Frandsen and Andersen (2019), the truth-telling of PPL as coherent and glossy pedagogical model with a

¹³² Another example is the proceedings (Olesen and Jensen, eds. 1999) following a conference held at Roskilde University for its 25th anniversary in 1997, which included contributions from various nationalities. Another indicator of making PPL more internationally available, was the translation of Olsen and Pedersen’s book (1997), which was given the name ‘Problem-oriented Project Work – a work book’ and came out in 2005.

‘continued history’, is reproduced. This closes down any ongoing critical and scholarly discussion of PPL wants as university pedagogy.

The deification of the citation figure ‘Illeris’

A final point to make on the discursive construction of PPL is how certain citation practices of ‘Illeris’ have reproduced an uncritical engagement with PPL and its educational aims. Many later texts construe a deity-status for the discourse actor ‘Illeris’ making him immune to former critiques directed at his emphasis on psychology and qualification.

The figure ‘Illeris’ is cited extensively in other PPL-texts with both former (1974, 1981) texts on PPL, and later texts on learning and competencies. Since the 1990s, the many citations of Illeris in PPL-texts have in common positioning his texts (Illeris 1974, Berthelsen et al. 1977) as ‘the bibles of PPL’, and they are treated as sacred artefacts that cannot be subjected to critical examination. For example, after Marxism was discursively banned in the 1990s, no Illeris-reference used since has been attributed any Marxist inspiration¹³³. As such, the discursive work of PPL after the 1990s removed any Marxist affiliation with ‘Illeris’, making him a legitimate reference in the post-marxist era all the while texts could claim a ‘continuity’ in references¹³⁴. It was not only the Marxist perspectives of Illeris’ work that was discontinued in later articulations of PPL, there was also no mention of the extensive critique Illeris’ early work (1974, 1981) had received. In the 1970s and 1980s, the initial articulations of PPL in Illeris (1974) was subject to heavy critique (Hultengren 1976/1981, Illeris 1981, Keldorff and Salomonsen 1981, Borgnakke 1983), but these works are not cited in later PPL-texts, which makes the Illeris-critique slide into oblivion.

The discursive effect of omitting Illeris’ Marxist aspects as well as the critique of his work casts PPL as an approach mainly related to ‘learning’ and ‘qualification’. The critique of these articulated aims for not showing any direction or value for education and not wanting any change to capitalist society and class inequality is forgotten (my detailed study contributes by re-awakening the critical reading of Illeris). As a discursive effect,

¹³³ Paradoxically, the Illeris’ book from 1981 tried to make a Marxist perspective more salient in his formulation of PPL. In later PPL-texts, the most cited Illeris-reference is the 1974-text and not the 1981-version, which reads as part of the systematic erasure of ‘Marx’.

¹³⁴ The same kind of obliteration of Marxist perspectives happens to references to Oskar Negt (see Borgnakke 1983). For an example of a recent Marxist reconstruction of Negt and Illeris, see Feldt (2022). For ‘Dewey’, this study has shown the opposite to be the case, that recent PPL-texts construct him a central reference, while he does not appear as a central citation in the PPL-texts from the 1970s and 1980s.

knowledge discourses and tautological notions of learning become natural truths for telling the tale of PPL and what it wants for education. Another effect of the deification of 'Illeris' is that the mere citation of this author becomes a hat-tipping to the dominant discourse of PPL, which makes further need of substantiation for PPL superfluous.

Are the articulated aims 'educational'?

In several texts, PPL is articulated as a 'pedagogy' and I have written '*educational* aims and purposes' over and over again. But when faced with pedagogical theory and philosophy as laid out in the first chapter, has PPL then been constructed as a pedagogy? Are its formulated aims and purposes 'educational'? To what extent does PPL perform as a *university* pedagogy? The initial answer to these questions is 'no', PPL has not, based on this analysis, been performed as a university pedagogy with profound and substantive notion of education. In the following, I discuss these pedagogical aspects of PPL.

I draw on an understanding of 'pedagogy' from Biesta (2010, 2017) and Kinchin and Gravett (2022) as concerning the deliberate engagement with interrelated, normative questions of educational aims (an element with a certain primacy), content (curriculum), educational subjects (especially students and educators) and notions of how to learn (method). A pedagogical, or educational, view, has a notion of, as Biesta (2017) writes, what is 'desirable', what it means to lead a 'good' life and to live in the world together (p. 4). A particularly important function and purpose of education for Biesta (2010) besides qualification and socialisation is subjectification. He writes that "any education worthy of its name should always contribute to processes of subjectification" (ibid. 21). Thus, for something to be termed 'pedagogical' (or educational) in this sense, it needs to engage with the relation between the mentioned elements, and above all, as indicated by Tanggaard et al. (2014), the questions of what is *valuable* in and for education and what education points to: questions of aims and purposes. Through most of the dissertation I have used these two concepts interchangeably, but it is worth to remember the difference that can also be made between them. Moore (1982) writes that to speak of 'aims' is "to conceive of education as end in itself", while 'purposes' means to think of education "as a device designed to bring about external goods" (p. 29). While Moore (1982) considers both aims and purposes important, he finds the view of education as end in itself essential to educational endeavours.

In the analysis of the discursive construction of PPL, its educational ends are mainly directed towards external purposes, notably with the emphasis on 'qualification'. With the emergence of the dominant competency discourse and its commodification of education, the articulation of PPL as worthwhile in itself becomes almost unthinkable. The marketization language that has accompanied the competency discourse in recent dec-

ades rarely brings any substantiation for its claims of PPL for supporting a certain educational outcome, and aims that would otherwise seem incommensurable or in conflict, co-exist in advertising lingo. When caught up in marketization language and competency discourse, PPL become whatever (institutions think) the consumer wants. It becomes like the construct ‘the global university’, which Biesta (2011) calls the universalising tendencies of higher education, in the sense that there is no internal criterion “of what it means to be a (good) university” and it can “only adapt and adjust to what comes to it from the outside.” (p. 42).

Another aspect of the study that blurs ‘what PPL wants’ is that the question of methods and how to learn dominate articulations of PPL. This relates to the ‘project’-aspect of PPL, which concerns the *form* of PPL education and emerged initially as a methodological response to the progressive critique of classroom teaching, and lectures at university¹³⁵. When PPL is cast as a ‘method’ or a ‘form of learning’ (as in ‘Problem-oriented project learning’, PPL) without any engagement with the pedagogical questions of what should be learned, or for what end, it can be used for any purpose. Due to the lack of a strong relation to educational theory and philosophy, the *means* of education, learning and method, often become articulated as the *ends* of education further impeding the possibility of asking what it would be desirable to learn and for what reasons?

The analysis of PPL-texts over time show that the pedagogical struggles of PPL relate to its emergence, and reproduction, as an ‘anti-traditional’ reform approach to education combined with Marxist discourse. The antagonistic formulations of PPL troubles its relation to central pedagogical elements: how to pick content without looking to traditions and disciplines? (problem-orientation and interdisciplinarity) What is the role of the educator from an anti-authoritarian perspective? (participant-direction) What are the ends of education if there is no wish to pass on tradition (socialisation) or to focus solely on the individual development of the student? At its emergence in the 1970s, Marxism was the answer to these questions. In her booklet from 1976, Hultengren bluntly stated that there was only one approach that could fulfil the demands of PPL: Marxism. In Marxist discourse, PPL found answers (in various ways depending on the kind of Marxist inspiration¹³⁶) to the end of education, the relation between the educator and student, the content of education and how this was to be learned. When Marxism disappeared as legitimate point of orientation, PPL no longer had any substantive answers to the elements of education, except the means (project learning) and the subject (the student).

¹³⁵ Note that the 1974-book by Illeris had the name ‘Problem-orientation and participant-direction’ – project was not yet articulated at the fore of PPL.

¹³⁶ See Christensen (2013) for an engagement with the various kinds of Marxism and their differing approaches to education in relation to PPL (p. 87-92).

This ‘educational’ crisis for PPL is complicated further by its troubled relation to ‘the university’.

A university pedagogy?

I have concluded that PPL after Marxism has struggled to find answers to central pedagogical questions. As shown in the previous sections, PPL has a conflicted relation to ‘the university’ and as such, the positioning of PPL as a ‘university pedagogy’ comes across as an oxymoron, at least as it is articulated in most PPL-texts studied in this thesis. Both Borgnakke (1983, 1996) and Christensen (2013) also concluded that PPL had little notion of the university, its idea and tradition. Borgnakke (1996) writes on the direction of PPL as ‘idea’:

Frequently, we are led elsewhere as the dissemination of the idea to a very small extent was directed at university and higher education. On the contrary. The practical orientation of project pedagogy had a breadth and width that pointed towards the school- and educational system as a whole, ranging from kindergarten to continuing- and adult education. (Borgnakke 1996: 23, my translation)

Similarly, Christensen (2013) writes in relation to the formulated principle of ‘group work’ for PPL “were originally based on school pedagogy and not university pedagogy.” (Christensen 2013: 36, my translation). These points suggest the combination of ‘PPL’ and ‘university’ to have been mainly practical coincidences related to particular institutions in Denmark and not based in tradition, research or theory. This said, PPL became articulated as ‘the new university pedagogy’ (Hultengren 1976/1981, Borgnakke 1983) and was formulated with principles that sought to construct its own version of a new form of ‘university’. Notwithstanding, a discursive effect of being produced as an *alternative* to a perceived ‘traditional university’, and thus being caught up in certain binaries of ‘new’ and ‘old’, shut down conversation with anything resembling ‘the traditional’: disciplines, authority of the ‘teacher-researcher’, lectures and seminars, knowledge inquiry as end in itself, as well as the long-standing literature on the philosophy of education and the idea of the university. In the next and final section, I turn up the normative perspective and consider, based on the analysis, what the possibilities are for (re)formulating PPL as a pedagogy of the university.

(Re)constructing PPL as university pedagogy

This thesis has sought to open up the discussion of the educational aims and purposes of PPL with a special interest in its position as university pedagogy. In this final section, I will try to keep the discussion open and not create new closures for the debate on PPL and its relation to the general discussion of what universities want to teach. At the same

time, the discourse analysis of significant PPL-texts does point to certain insights that are valuable to bring into future (re)constructions of PPL as a university pedagogy.

First of all, if reconstructions of PPL are not to reproduce the uncritical engagement with its past and the pedagogical-theoretical inheritances, it needs to include the perspectives from studies that have critically examined the construction of PPL and its history. This should include both empirical and conceptual-theoretical studies. If the discussion of the educational aims and purposes of PPL is to continue, PPL-texts and research-based studies on PPL must engage with each other, as I have tried to enact through this study. This would involve the acknowledgement of the crisis that the disappearance of Marxism has effected for PPL, and possible considerations as what could step in its place, or perhaps even consider reconstructing PPL from certain Marxist perspectives. For example, Feldt (2022) seeks to formulate a “deliberative curriculum” (p. 2) for higher education by reconstructing Negt and Illeris as “Marxist educators” (p. 1).

Secondly, it would be important to engage actively in deliberating on the interrelated elements of pedagogy, and especially the ‘blind spots’ caused by antagonistic perspectives of PPL’s constructions; the role of the educator, the collective of students and educators, the ends of education, the desirable world and society, and the content of education. Importantly, to counter the radical externalisation of educational purposes in the discourses of the knowledge economy and developing competencies, formulations of PPL would do well to (also) have a notion of education as valuable in itself. To aid this purpose, reconstructions could look to the field of pedagogical theory and perspectives from the philosophy of education (e.g. Magnússon and Rytzler 2022 who introduce a Didaktik-tradition to university pedagogy). Such insights importantly re-awakens the point that educational aims and purposes are inherently normative and thus will always naturally be involved in conflicting interests that should not be glossed over or forcibly reconciled.

Thirdly, reconstructions of PPL as a university pedagogy would need to consider what ‘pedagogy’ would mean in relation to ‘university’ instead of operating with a de-contextualised notion of ‘general education’ or implicitly taking primary school as its imagined context. What happens to the role of the ‘educator’ and ‘the student’, and their relation? How does pedagogy relate to ‘research’ and the disciplines? As my analyses have shown, tending to pedagogical matters and taking seriously the university and its activities tend to be constructed as dichotomous opposites in the formulation of PPL. Loosening up this dualism and re-calibrating the meaning of ‘pedagogy’ and ‘university’ would be a task for reformulations of PPL. As a point in itself, present and future constructions of PPL would benefit from a critical awareness of the many truth-constructing binaries wound up in the constructed history of PPL. The spread of binaries “dangerously over-simplifies the world of higher education research” and make it difficult to “question received wisdom.” (Macfarlane 2015: 116). To challenge binaries, my study has helped to see the articulations of ‘pedagogy’ and ‘university’ as particular constructions (e.g. ‘pedagogy’ as

something related to school and based on experience, or ‘the university’ as a traditional and conservative institution and outdated idea) that can be reconstructed. Recent scholarly work that has tried to reconstruct PPL as a pedagogy in a university context is Feldt and Petersen (2020, 2021). In one of their studies, Feldt and Petersen (2020) reconstruct PPL and its inherent social orientation into the Humanities, while transforming C. Wright Mills’ concept of ‘sociological imagination’ (also used by Negt) into “the Humanities imagination” (p. 3). As theoretical inspiration, the authors mainly draw on Dewey to formulate PPL as ‘inquiry-based learning’ as an educational approach mimicking research processes. The teacher-researcher is articulated as an “interlocutor” that is to “help students open up their imaginative powers” (Feldt and Petersen 2020: 14). A range of studies within higher education research suggest conceptualising university education as ‘studying’, where this breaks the common university dichotomy of research/education (and outreach) into a common activity (Masschelein and Simons 2018, Schildermans 2022, Feldt and Petersen 2021). Inspired by Masschelein and Simons (2018), I would refer to these perspectives as ‘Neo-humboldtian’ in their effort to formulate university as a community students engaged in study (including the researchers). This said, in a Danish context, Kristensen and Schmidt (2020) points out how the notion of ‘Bildung’ is troubled as educational aim for the university due to its anti-qualification connotations (p. 128), while e.g. Hammershøj (2019) suggests an integrative perspective focusing on “*professional ethos* or *Bildung*” (p. 164, emphasis in original).

A task for recasting PPL as a pedagogy of the university, would be to deliberate on what ‘university’ might mean. Masschelein and Simons (2018) argues that this is paramount at a time, where the university is continuously asked by external actors to be something else:

“in order to take up their responsibility, universities are confronted first of all with the challenge to maintain themselves *as universities*, i.e. as forms of public and collective study that do not protect and facilitate but that complicate and expose learning and research” (p. 48, emphasis in original).

As seen in this quote, the activity of the university is imagined as “public and collective study”. This poses questions as to the relation between ‘university’ and ‘society’, and what the dominant focus on the ‘social’ in PPL could mean for university studies. This related to the central pedagogical question of *what* should be studied. In the field of higher education, several recent studies suggest viewing (university) education as ‘world-oriented’¹³⁷ (Masschelein and Simons 2018, Warren 2019, Chimirri and Schraube 2019, Biesta 2022). I understand this as an attention to planetary issues challenging national, student-centred, and traditional views of (university) education. From a discourse perspective, formulations of PPL as university pedagogy, to be taken seriously in current truths of higher

¹³⁷ In Biesta (2022), writing within general education, the “world-centred” view of education is presented as an alternative to “child-centred” and “curriculum-centred” education (p. I, a brief prompt of the book).

education research, cannot ignore addressing the university's relation to society and the world. The ivory tower is still an undesired figure. Questions to consider are how a 'world-oriented' focus of university education related to possibilities for subjectification, and how different scientific disciplines relate to the orientation towards the 'world' and society. A question is whether there is room for conceiving of research and university studies as (also) ends in themselves?

This investigation set out to open up the discussion of what PPL is *for* as a form of education beyond employability, learning and 'solving problems in the real world'. The detailed study of the discursive construction of articulated aims and purposes is a contribution to research on PPL as well as the field of higher education in general, where scholarly work struggle to expose and re-construct university pedagogy as more than a vehicle of knowledge economy discourses (see e.g. Masschelein and Simons 2018, Wright et al. 2019, Bengtson et al. 2021, Magnusson and Rytzler 2022). It is has not been the intention of the investigation at hand to construct PPL as university pedagogy, but to study the possibilities for re-constructing it. This has been enabled by taking a genealogical perspective on the forms of PPL and studying how the educational aims and purposes are constructed discursively over, and in, time. Such work has been necessary for opening up and destabilising PPL in order to engage in the future task of (re)constructing PPL as a possible university pedagogy worthy of such a name.

Abstract

‘What is the educational purpose of problem-oriented project-based learning?’

Reading the discursive construction of the educational aims and purposes of problem-oriented project-based learning in textual introductions from 1974-2018

Working from the assumption that education always involves normative matters of values and direction, this thesis is motivated by the question: What is the educational purpose of problem-oriented project-based learning? Lately, the answer to this question has either pointed self-evidently to ‘learning’, ‘qualification’ and ‘solving problems in the real world’, or it has been articulated through a marketised lingo that promises any outcome imagined to be wanted by students or policy-makers. This situation can be seen as part of the so-called knowledge (and learning) economy which dominates the global landscape of higher education and sees educational value mainly in terms of economic growth. Combined with a dominant logic of utility, it has become difficult to think of university education as (also) an end in itself. In this context, the thesis critically investigates how educational aims and purposes of problem-oriented project-based learning are formulated over time (in a Danish context). Such a study can illuminate the emergence of the current discourses and open up the stagnant discussion of the purposes of higher education.

In contemporary literature, ‘Problem-oriented project-based learning’, or ‘PPL’ as it is dubbed, is presented as a cutting-edge pedagogical concept that through principles such as problem-orientation, project work, participant-directed learning and interdisciplinarity provides students with the 21st century skills needed to succeed in life and work. ‘PPL’ is presented as a ‘reform pedagogy’ that arose after the student-rebellion of 1968 at the Danish reform universities in Roskilde and Aalborg in the early 1970s. There are few comprehensive research studies of ‘PPL’ and a particular lack of theoretically and empirically based studies that inquire *critically* into its emergence and pedagogical-theoretical inheritances. Answering such a call, this study sets out to challenge the dominant and take-for-granted truths of PPL as they are produced in, and by, significant texts. The investigation traces the emergence and change of educational purposes over time from the 1970s until today to learn whether it is possible to think differently of what PPL is *for* as a form of education. Working from poststructuralist discourse theory (Maclure 2003) and a genealogical perspective of history (Foucault 1977), problem-oriented project-based learning (PPL) is conceptualised as a historicised construct which is constantly stabilised contingent on time, space and perspective (as e.g. ‘project work’ or ‘project pedagogy’). As such, the truths told of PPL, and what this approach to education is *for*, are constructed in certain ways as temporary effects of discursive struggles for dominance. The task here is to show these contingent struggles. Prompted by the contingency of ‘PPL’ and an interest in central truth-producing textual introductions to this approach,

the primary research question is: what are the continuities and discontinuities of the educational aims and purposes of PPL as seen in textual introductions from 1974-2018? As a second research question, the study asks *how* the aims and purposes are constructed in the truth-producing work of the texts. Lastly, the study enquires into the ways in which PPL has been constructed as a ‘university pedagogy’.

To address these research questions, the investigation employs a detailed discourse-oriented reading of ten textual introductions that have been used to teach and argue for PPL from 1974 until 2018. Through analytical strategies drawn from Clare Hemmings (2011) and Maggie Maclure (2003), the texts are read in detail for their intelligibility, citation practices, temporal constructions and affective positionings. The analysis is divided into individual readings of each text allowing for detail, nuances and complexity, which is followed by a cross-reading that lays out how discourses have constituted the educational aims and purposes over time.

The cross-reading identifies five intertwined responses, or justifications, to the question of what PPL education aims at: qualification, development of competencies, learning, academic knowledge acquisition (‘*erkendelse*’) and social critique. As a dominant and continuous purpose, *qualification* figures as an inherent to PPL, which is legitimised through its development of useable skills for the labour market. The formulations of ‘qualification’ changed and intensified from the 1990s and onwards with an emerging *competency discourse* that constructs PPL almost exclusively in terms of commodified personal, social and academic outcomes for not just the labour market, but for all parts of life. Intertwined with qualification is the justification that PPL is a progressive form of *learning*. This was central to the early formulations in the 1970s emphasising PPL as excellent for ‘motivation’ and ‘accommodative learning’ drawing on cognitive psychology, notably the psychologist J. Piaget. ‘Learning’ later proliferated as the natural language of PPL and made it into the name ‘PPL’ in 2015 as ‘problem-oriented project *learning*’. At the same time, ‘learning’ became an increasingly un-theorised and self-evident aim of PPL that after the 1980s went from being a means for societal emancipation, to acting as an end in itself. As PPL became part of the learnification of education in the 1990s, the individual student was put at the centre of PPL. Combined with the Danish university imperative ‘responsibility for one’s own learning’, the student became *responsible* for its own success and failure, while the role of the teacher was toned down. In somewhat opposition to ‘learning’, and in some instances also ‘qualification’, the analysis identifies the formulation of PPL as scientific research method for *pursuing knowledge*. Posed through the aim of ‘knowledge acquisition’ (‘*erkendelse*’), this aim is marginalised and underdeveloped in the dominant constructions of PPL. This reads as an effect of the inheritance as a progressive form of education sceptical of matters associated with ‘traditional university’ which is cast as insular, bourgeois and outdated. The principles of problem-orientation and interdisciplinarity arose as responses to ‘the university’, but were not developed much theoretically due to certain anti-university, and anti-Bildung, discourses.

Lastly, a justification of *social critique* is entangled with the other responses in complex and situated ways. Social critique in the form of 'Fagkritik' (disciplinary critique) directs itself both towards bourgeois Wissenschaft as well as towards society with action-oriented 'research for the people'. Social critique emerged into the construction of PPL through various Marxist articulations in the 1970s and 1980s, simultaneously critiquing and adhering to 'qualification', but (especially in its more radical forms) being a counter-discourse to learning and personal development as ends of education. The Marxist focus on 'the social' continued as a central virtue in dominant truth-telling of PPL, but after the 1980s this was no longer articulated from a Marxist perspective. Marx was erased in the later formulations of PPL, both as a present and historical influence. This led to narratives of loss in some texts that had increasing difficulties of orientation for the otherwise centralised concepts in PPL of 'social relevance' and 'critique'. After the demise of university Marxism, the direction of PPL has predominantly been dictated by knowledge economy and competency discourses.

The final chapter of the thesis discusses the insights from the discourse analysis of PPL in relation to the current deadlock situation for openly debating the multiple purposes of higher education as more than qualification for the knowledge economy. The discussion, drawing in philosophical studies on the university and its pedagogy, points to re-introducing and substantiating the position of the teacher-scholar in PPL as part of deliberating on relational pedagogical matters (ends, means, subjects, content), and to engage seriously with the idea of 'the university' beyond dichotomies of new and traditional. A possible response, it is argued, is to (re)introduce the neo-Humboldtian view of the university as an academic community and ecology of study. Finally, the study of PPL shows a need for including substantive pedagogical and philosophical perspectives in future reformulations including a language for education as valuable in itself. Such attentions are paramount in present and future reconstructions of PPL as a *university pedagogy* worthy of its name.

Dansk resumé

'Hvad er det pædagogiske formål med problemorienteret projektbaseret læring?'

Læsninger af den diskursive konstruktion af de pædagogiske mål og formål med problemorienteret projektbaseret læring i tekstintroduktioner fra 1974-2018

Med udgangspunktet at pædagogik og uddannelse altid indebærer normative spørgsmål om værdier og retning, indledes denne afhandling med spørgsmålet: Hvad er det pædagogiske formål med problemorienteret projektbaseret læring? I de senere år har svarene på dette spørgsmål enten været 'læring', 'kvalificering' og 'løsning af problemer i den virkelige verden'. Samtidig artikuleres problemorienteret projektbaseret læring i stigende grad gennem et reklamesprog, der lover ethvert tænkeligt uddannelsesudbytte for at tilfredsstille forestillede behov hos studerende og politikere. Denne situation kan ses som en del af den såkaldte videns- og læringsøkonomi, der dominerer det globale syn på videregående uddannelser. Dette perspektiv ser primært uddannelsers værdi målt i økonomisk vækst og kombineret med en udbredt nytte-logik, er det blevet svært at forestille sig argumenter for universitetsuddannelse, der overskrider kravet om 'anvendelighed'. Som et bidrag til at kunne åbne og gentænke denne fastgroede pædagogiske debat spørger denne afhandling, hvordan de pædagogiske mål og formål for problemorienteret projektbaseret læring er blevet formuleret, og transformeret, over tid (i en dansk kontekst).

I uddannelseslitteraturen bliver problemorienteret projektbaseret læring, der forkortes 'PPL', præsenteret som et banebrydende pædagogisk koncept. Gennem principper som problemorientering, projektarbejde, deltagerstyret læring og tværfaglighed giver PPL studerende de '21st century skills', de har brug for at klare sig godt i livet og på arbejdsmarkedet, lyder det. 'PPL' bliver også præsenteret som en reformpædagogik, der opstod efter studenteroprøret i 1968 på de danske reformuniversiteter i Roskilde og Aalborg i de tidlige 1970'ere. Der findes ikke ret mange større forskningsprojekter om PPL, og særligt ikke teoretisk og empirisk baseret forskning, der kritisk undersøger PPL's fremkomst over tid og dens pædagogisk-teoretiske ophav. Som et svar på en sådan mangel begiver dette studie sig ud for at udfordre dominerende og selvindlysende sandheder om PPL, som de skabes i centrale tekster. Undersøgelsen forsøger at opspore, hvordan PPL's pædagogiske formål er opstået og har ændret sig over tid fra 1970'erne til i dag for at se, om det er muligt at formulere andre formål, end dem, der artikuleres i dag.

Med afsæt i poststrukturalistisk diskursteori (Maclure 2003) og et genealogisk historieperspektiv (Foucault 1977) begrebsliggøres 'problemorienteret projektbaseret læring' (PPL) som en historiseret konstruktion, der løbende stabiliseres i tid, rum og perspektiv (fx som 'projektarbejde' og 'projektpædagogik'). De formulerede sandheder om PPL, og hvad denne pædagogiske tilgang *vil*, er konstrueret på bestemte måder som midlertidige effekter af diskursive kampe for dominans. Formålet dette projekt er at vise disse kampe. På baggrund af denne forståelse af PPL som en diskursiv konstruktion, og ud fra en

interesse i de centrale 'sandhedsproducerende' tekster om PPL, stilles det første forskningsspørgsmål: hvad er de diskursive kontinuiteter og brud for de pædagogiske mål og formål med PPL set gennem tekstintroduktioner fra 1974-2018? Som relateret forskningsspørgsmål, spørges: Hvordan er disse mål og formål konstrueret i teksternes sandhedsskabende diskursarbejde? Og endelig spørger afhandlingen; hvordan er PPL blevet konstrueret som universitetspædagogik?

For at svare på disse tre spørgsmål iværksættes en detaljeret diskurs-orienteret læsning af ti tekstintroduktioner, som er blevet brugt til at undervise i, og argumentere for, PPL fra 1974-2018. Teksterne udsættes for analysestrategier inspireret af Clare Hemmings (2011) og Maggie Maclure (2003), dvs. fokus er, hvordan en tekst gør sig forståelig med læseren, citationspraksisser, tidskonstruktioner og positioneringer. Analysen er delt op i først individuelle læsninger af de ti tekster, hvilket muliggør en høj detaljegrade, nuancer og kompleksitet. Derefter læses teksterne på tværs for i højere grad at fokusere på, hvordan forskellige diskurser konstituerer PPL's pædagogiske mål og formål over tid.

Kryds-læsningen identificerer fem forbundne 'svar' på, eller argumentationer for, PPL og dens uddannelsesmæssige formål: kvalificering, kompetenceudvikling, læring, erkendelse og social kritik. Et dominerende og kontinuerligt uddannelsesformål for PPL er *kvalificering*, der figurerer som et grundlæggende argument, som bygger på PPL's evne til at opbygge relevante færdigheder til brug på arbejdsmarkedet. Italesættelsen af 'kvalificering' skifter over tid, og i 1990'erne ændres dens betydning sammen med en gryende *kompetencediskurs*. Denne diskurs konstruerer PPL som en vare-producent, der fabrikkerer personlige, sociale og faglige kompetencer, som kan bruges ikke bare på arbejdsmarkedet, men i alle aspekter af livet.

Et andet centralt argument for PPL er, at det er en reformpædagogisk form for *læring*. Denne forståelse var central i de tidlige formuleringer af PPL i 1970'erne, hvor denne tilgang til uddannelse blev omtalt som en fantastisk måde at skabe 'motivation' og 'akkommodativ indlæring' på med grundlag i kognitiv psykologi, særligt inspireret af Jean Piaget. 'Læring' spredte sig senere som en naturliggjort måde at omtale PPL på, og i 2015 optrådte begrebet 'problemorienteret projektlæring' for første gang. I takt med sin udbredelse blev 'læring' i stigende grad selvfølgeliggjort og ateoretisk i sine formuleringer, og fra at have været et middel for samfundsmæssig frigørelse indtil 1980'erne, optræder det nu ofte som et mål i sig selv. Da PPL blev en del af 'læringsgørelsen' ('learnification') af uddannelse og pædagogik i 1990'erne kom den studerende stærkt i centrum. I kombination med imperativet fra universitetet om 'ansvar for egen læring' blev den studerende nu ene-ansvarlig for sin succes og fiasko, mens lærerens ansvar gled i baggrunden. I et vist modsætningsforhold til 'læring', og i nogen grad 'kvalificering', optræder et argument om, at PPL er en bestemt tilgang til videnskab rettet mod *erkendelse*. Denne konstruktion af PPL er i høj grad marginaliseret og underudviklet som pædagogisk formål for PPL. En

læsning af denne marginalisering kan relateres til PPL's herkomst som progressiv reform-pædagogik, der var 'anti' på alt, der opfattes som 'traditionelt', og særligt universitetet, der var indspist, borgerligt og bagud. Principperne 'problemorientering' og 'tværfaglighed' opstod som modsvar på 'traditionel videnskab', men de blev ikke videre teoretiseret under de herskende anti-universitære og anti-dannelsesorienterede diskurser.

Et sidste argument for PPL, som optræder i undersøgelsen, er *social kritik*. Ligesom de andre argumenter, optræder dette i diskursive forbindelser til de andre argumentationer. Social kritik artikuleres som en 'fagkritik', der både retter sig mod den borgerlige og positivistiske videnskab, og som en aktionsforskningstilgang, der retter sig mod frigørelsen af undertrykte samfundsgrupper. Den samfundsmæssige kritik opstår i konstruktionen af PPL gennem forskellige vægtninger af et Marxistisk perspektiv i 1970'erne og 1980'erne. Dette perspektiv både kritiserer og understøtter et pædagogisk mål om 'kvalificering', og i sine mere radikale former optræder Marxismen som en moddiskurs til uddannelsesmæssige formål som 'læring', 'personlig udvikling' og 'dannelse'. I senere formuleringer af PPL forsvandt Marx fuldstændig og efterlod mange sandheds-fortællinger om PPL i krise, hvilket kommer til udtryk i svage begreber og nostalgi-fortællinger. Formuleringer om at PPL var 'samfundsorienteret' og 'kritisk' forblev, men kæmpede med at finde en diskursiv holdeplads efter Marxismen blev skrevet ud af PPL's dominerende historiefortælling. Efter universitetsmarxismen var bandlyst i de dominerende diskurser om PPL, blev vidensøkonomien og kompetence-diskursen altdominerende i stabiliseringer af formålet med PPL.

Det sidste kapitel i afhandlingen diskuterer indsigterne fra de diskursive læsninger af problemorienteret projektbaseret læring. Det diskuteres, hvorvidt PPL er en universitetspædagogik, og hvordan den i så fald kunne se ud. Med baggrund i pædagogisk-filosofiske perspektiver peger kapitlet på, at PPL har brug for at genintroducere og åbent diskutere dens forskellige pædagogiske aspekter og deres sammenhæng. Dette gælder særligt lærerens rolle, uddannelsernes indhold og hvilke pædagogiske mål, der ses som efterstræbelseværdige fra et individuelt, fælles, pædagogisk og (globalt) samfundsmæssigt perspektiv. Desuden kræver en reformulering af PPL en seriøs forholden til 'universitetet' som idé og institution hinsides lukkede dikotomier om 'nyt' og 'traditionelt'. Analysen viser, at en neo-Humboldtisk forståelse af universitetet som et fællesskab rettet mod 'studium', der er værdifuldt i sig selv, kunne være et frugtbart indspark i reformuleringer. Med den genealogisk-diskursive analyse åbner PPL's pædagogiske formål sig op, og muliggør fremtidige re-konstruktioner af PPL som en relevant universitetspædagogik.

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The 7 principles of PPL

Project work

In project work, you will develop and formulate a relevant problem, which you will investigate by utilising what you learn in your courses. In project learning, you work on a problem over an extended period, arriving at a deeper, more complex understanding. You also develop important competencies in terms of entering into and managing long-term investigations.

Problem orientation

The projects at RUC are oriented towards understanding and solving real world issues through the use of theory and scientific methods. In this way, PPL uses hallmark of PPL of Roskilde University is that you help to define problems, rather than simply answering questions corresponding to assignments given by others. This develops your ability to define and assess problems.

Interdisciplinarity

Real problems often challenge us to think beyond academic subjects. Interdisciplinarity enables you to explore your problem in a new way, so that new and better approaches can be incorporated into the answers. Interdisciplinarity is a principle that ensures that traditional academic fields become a resource rather than a starting point.

Participant control

All participants – you, your fellow students, your teacher/supervisor and your study regulators – play a role in the definition of relevant topics, issues, methods and learning goals. The principle of participant control makes academic and professional dialogue and negotiation central to the definition of problems and the creation of knowledge.

Exemplarity

Exemplarity means that you should be able to explore an issue in depth without losing the broader perspective. You must understand, and be able to explain, how a specific issue relates to more general questions within the field.

Group work

The PPL principle of group work is based on the belief that you can explore a problem in greater depth with others than you can on your own. In group work each student contributes with his or her own perspective. The ensuing diversity generates important academic discussions about the project, reinforcing both individual reflective skills and mutual learning. Your experience of getting group work to function optimally will prepare you for co-operation in other contexts, for example the labour market.

International insight and vision

The principle of international insight and vision develops your ability to identify, analyse and reflect on global, national and regional challenges. The knowledge and insight that you gain will develop your global awareness and citizenship. Intercultural understanding and communication, critical engagement, tolerance and respect.



'Problem-oriented Project-based Learning' (PPL) is said to originate in the educational models of the post-1968 reform universities of Roskilde and Aalborg in Denmark, and is hailed as the best bid for interdisciplinary research-based higher education providing students with the skills they need to succeed in the 21st century. While much has been written to advocate PPL, little research critically and openly addresses the question: 'what is the educational purpose of PPL?' While important in itself, this question is even more pertinent at a time when the purposes of higher education have become difficult to imagine and articulate beyond employability and economic utility discourses.

To destabilise and open up the present forms of PPL, this study employs a Foucaultian genealogically inspired discourse analysis, through which it reads and rereads the educational purpose of PPL in key text introductions from the 1970s until today. Such an analysis enables a detailed view of the texts' discursive construction of the aims and purposes of PPL and lays out how these emerge and transform over time.

The study shows that while 'qualification' has been a continuously formulated purpose for PPL, former justifications in Marxism and Humanist psychology are abruptly over-taken and transformed by a strong learnification and competency discourse in the 1990s. This happens in a contingent discursive struggle for truth in which PPL, its 'history', theoretical inheritances and purposes are (dis)articulated in certain ways.

The insights of the analysis can help to move more deliberately and knowingly into future (re)formulations of problem-oriented project-based learning (PPL) and its possibilities as an 'educational' university pedagogy.