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English Summary Denmark

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1. Introduction: The Project and the Programme

Adult Education centres experience increasing diversity and heterogeneity of their course participants. Participants differ in social, ethnical, and educational background, and they bring diverse cultural socialisation and language knowledge with them (Pfabigan 2007:37). This causes several challenges for adult education centres and teachers. To cope with the growing requirements implies both potential and challenges: to thrive on the potential necessitates processes of opening and of changing views on structural as well as on individual level (Bruening 2004, Pusch 2004).

The project "NEW VIEW. New methods in teaching migrants" aims at developing new views and approaches how to handle the challenges whereby vocational trainings for professions within the field of health and social care are in focus. The European Commission supports NEW VIEW within the Lifelong Learning Programme, Grundtvig. Researchers and experts from Austria¹², Denmark³, Germany⁴, Greece⁵ and Hungary⁶ are collaborating in the project that is coordinated by the Research Institute of the Red Cross, Austria.

Teachers are the main target group of NEW VIEW: They are facing different needs and specific demands in their classes like diverse educational background, language competences, learning styles and more subtle group dynamics on several levels. Thus, their teaching methods do not fit in the same way as before. Other pathways are not known or due to several reasons not taken; they are, however, required.

Developing new pathways is also abetting course participants, especially migrants, who are confronted with several stresses attending a vocational training: environment, teaching style and materials might be new; studying in a different language than one's mother tongue may cause high efforts. Moreover, migrants often experience contempt of their competences and their accomplishments. This is especially happening in the context of language. Mistakes in speaking and writing are often interpreted as impression of less competence (Pfabigan 2007:44). Our education system reacts on these challenges with compensation like special support programmes, through differentiating the education offers or with the phenomenon of exclusion (Lanfranchi 2002:3).

Special support is very important, but there are alternatives and NEW VIEW figures one: to adapt teaching methods to the needs of migrants. Sensitive teaching and considering the demands of course participants brings out the whole potential, improves cultural understanding and has even to this point an integrative aspect.

Concretely, the project aims to:

- explore the specific challenges faced by teachers who teach mixed groups (migrants and non-migrants) and

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⁵ EWORX S.A., Greece (dissemination)

⁶ Institute for Basic and Continuing Education of Health Workers, Hungary (research, development and dissemination, Hungary)

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- explore the challenges faced by course-participants attending these courses;
- adapt existing and develop new teaching methods to integrate the demand of intercultural education;
- define methodical-didactical competences and skills which describe the required profile of teachers in multicultural adult education;
- sensitise the vocational teaching community about the impact related to the issue of language.

As a result, a “Tool-Kit” with methods for teaching heterogeneous groups will be developed and be available in Danish, German, Hungarian, and additionally in English. Intense dissemination will support awareness rising and acknowledge enhancing activities. Via website and exploitation activities, all collected inputs are spread especially to the vocational teaching community.

This report summarises in English the results of the exploration phase conducted in Denmark. It brings out the findings of interviews with school managers, teachers and course participants and concretises the main challenges in vocational training for each particular interviewee group from their point of view. The long form of the report written in Danish bears the title: “Interview Rapport: Udfordringer i undervisning i etnisk blandede klasser i danske social- og sundhedsuddannelser”. It is available at www.new_views.eu

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2. The Context of the Exploration

Since 1991 the basic training of health care personnel in Denmark has been organised as a vocational education that is today taught at 19 so-called “social and health care schools” (social og sundhedsskoler) all over the country. The education consists of three courses:

- Basic course, (grundforløb), an introductory course mandatory for participants arriving directly from school, open to adult participants, too (20 weeks or more),
- Step 1 (trin 1), a primary course, which qualifies to the work and title of social and health care helper “social og sundhedshjælper” (14 months), and
- Step 2 (trin 2), a secondary course, which qualifies to the work and title of social and health care assistant or “social og sundhedsassistent” (20 months).

Several schools offer in addition a special prolonged basic course that includes Danish as a foreign language, and some schools offer clarification courses to prepare for the education. Several schools offer an education of pedagogical assistant and some offer other vocational courses.

The ministry of Education supervises all vocational educations, whereas the main organisation of employees as well as of employers along with representatives of local authorities, teacher, pupil and school organisations are involved in the development of the various educations. A central “profession commission” (fagligt udvalg) for the field of social and health care with representation of some of these organisations regulates the education programme. Among other things the profession commission specifies subjects to be taught and “education aims” (uddannelsesmål) for each subject of the education programme.

Vocational educations have a long tradition in the Danish education system and build on a system of exchange between school and work placement to assure the combination of theory and practice. Thus 24 weeks of step 1 and 32 weeks of step 2 is schooling, the rest of the time is spent in work placement. Also the basic course includes work placement.

The teaching forms are open for the schools to decide upon. The teaching form at the social and health care schools has developed under the impact of profound changes within the Danish adult education tradition in the recent decades. First and foremost, a change towards increased participant responsibility and participation has taken place. The role of the teacher has changed from being the ultimate authority responsible for passing on the right knowledge to the participants, to a guide and an organiser of the process of learning (Christiansen og Rosenkvist 1999). The aim and the focus has shifted too; accumulation of knowledge has been challenged as the main goal in favour of an aim of creating active and reflective participants. In practice this has, also within the field of social and health care education, resulted in training considered as a learning process, that very often takes place in team work and is often organised around a project. Recognition and differentiation are some of the most widespread founding ideas of the values in this system.

This exploration of the Danish social and health care educations is concerned with the opportunities of migrants and ethnic minorities in this particular training environment.

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A note on terminology: During the course of the interviews the terminology and the focus has shifted slightly: The interviewer set out with asking about the case of migrants, but this was challenged in the first interviews carried out – the interviews with school managers. It was argued that except for the question of language, the questions touched upon was just as relevant regarding ethnic minorities as regarding migrants, and that the differentiation was difficult to make in practice. In later interviews “ethnic minority participants” was chosen also by the interviewer over the more narrow term “migrant participant”, to avoid long discussions over a differentiation that seemingly made little sense in practice. It is, therefore, also the most common term in the report when referring to participants with an other background than the Danish majority.

3. The Interviewees and the Process

The exploration phase was conducted among teachers, participants and school managers from 6 social and health care schools out of the 19 schools of Denmark.

Teachers:

Teachers from 4 schools participated: 3 group interviews at 3 different schools were conducted with the participation of 15 teachers. In addition, 2 teachers participated in a interview with a school manager of one school. The teachers interviewed are to a high degree representative of the teachers of these particular social and health care schools. Regarding gender, male teachers is slightly underrepresented in the interview material; the schools involved in this exploration have between 3%-25% male teachers, whereas only 1 out of the 17 teachers interviewed, (or appr. 6%), has male background. Regarding ethnic background, 1 teacher with other ethnic background than Danish in the interview material reflects more or less the actual situation; the schools represented in the material have according to their own estimations between 0-5% teachers among their teachers. The educational background – one third with academic education, one third with a health education background, and one third with other background – shows a small under representation of health educated and an overrepresentation of academics. The teachers interviewed had considerable teaching experience – between 5 ad 25 years.

School managers:

A representative of the management of 5 schools were interviewed individually, in two cases the head of the school was interviewed, in one case the head of a department, in one case the educational leader of a school, and in one instance an educational adviser, chosen by the management to represent them. The persons interviewed, according to the interviewers estimation, represent the management fairly, whatever their actual position in the organisation is.

Course participants:

A group interview was carried out with the participation of 17 participants of a course at a social and healthcare school. The course was a clarification course aiming at introducing the field, the education and the approach of the school to participants. The participants reflected well the participants at the schools in regard of gender, age and ethnic background. However, their experiences and contribution to the interviews might reflect particular conditions of the introductory phase, whereas the experience of long term participants might differ in some instances. These are not represented in the interview material. The group interview with participants turned out to be the least informative of the interviews, maybe for the reason that many important questions (regarding motivation for example) were personale and difficult to address in the group.

All respondents were informed about the topic, the aim and the partners of the New View project. In the beginning of each interview these basic information was repeated. All respondents have participated with great interest and have contributed with their experiences and in some cases with ideas and recommendations for the future project.

4. The Outcome of the Interviews

This section reports the most salient feature of the interview response - in quotation and summary.

4.1. Challenges of Teachers

“All the continents of the world in one class”.

“They are as different as we are as Danes – or maybe more different”.

“We have to look at each class to find out what we are dealing with in this specific context”.

All the teachers interviewed have experiences with the ethnic diverse classroom. A class of only majority representatives of Danish origin is not any longer usual and according to the interviewed teachers ethnic minority participants make up from 1/5 to more than half of the classes of the two steps of the education. The “basic course” is just as mixed, if not a “specially organized” basic course (særligt tilrettelagt grundforløb) for participants with Danish as second language, thus exclusively for participants with other ethnic background than Danish.

Asked specific questions in the group interviews about the impact of cultural and ethnic difference, the teachers report of incidents where cultural difference, cultural reservations and unequal language competences are focal points, of methods and practices to adjust to this reality, and suggestions of new methods and practices to meet the challenges of the mixed classroom. Nevertheless, there was a general reluctance to address ethnic and cultural difference as a major challenge in the education. The point was made, that the minority participants were just as different as Danes, indicating that nothing in general should be said about them. It was also said that the participants in general are diverse in many other respects – age, social background and educational background – that the education as a whole adjust to that, and there was no need for sorting out the specific topic of cultural or ethnic differences.

On the one hand the teachers discourse left the impression that there is a great will to adjust to individual needs and efforts are made to differentiate according to competences and situation. On the other hand it seemed to make up an obstacle to establish a common approach to intercultural challenges.

Different values and norms in the mixed classroom

“A good way to approach it, is to make the difference or the opposition open, to talk about it in the class. Then it is settled”.

The main differences in values and norms referred to by teachers touch upon the values at the very core of the profession: the concept of care and the view of and the practice around elderly people. According to the teachers, it is common that participants with other ethnic background than Danish are in opposition to the prevalent Danish view of elderly people and the care provided to them.

It is said several times during interviews that many ethnic minority participants find that old people are not properly taken care of, both by children and family that visit too seldom, and by professionals that are not sufficiently empathic and involved. These are similar points of disagreement regarding values of family, gender, lifestyle, generations, but also political issues such as democracy and freedom of speak, cause discussion and sometimes conflict in class. It is not considered a problem by

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teachers, and sometimes it is seen as a welcoming opportunity to discuss basic values of the profession and to have questioned what is taken for given.

Articulation is the strategy most frequently referred to. Heated conflict occurs at times in class, but the teachers report of success with giving room for elaborated explanation of a point of view or a practice by the holder of it, which presumably enhance tolerance and understanding.

The articulation of different opinions and values not only serve to settle conflicts, value discussion are seen as an enhancement of the profession: "In the education we aim promoting tolerance, we address the question of why people act as they do. We work with cases concerning typical value conflicts to learn a professional attitude, and how to take (the needs of) the citizen as a starting point in our work". Most teachers have incorporated the value differences in the teaching programme. At one of the schools teachers have developed their own teaching material called "the multicultural health care center", in which the eyes of the participants are opened to the need of intercultural competence in the profession through role play and case studies. At another school nonmandatory courses in "cultural encounters at the workplace" is offered.

It seems that value conflicts are only seen as problematic, if they are not expressed. It is a common experience of the teachers that many of the participants with ethnic minority background are not sufficiently assertive and outspoken in the classroom. One teacher say: "It is so exciting when they air their points of view, but many of them do not talk much in the classroom". Reasons for not succeeding in making all participants speak up are, according to the teachers, lack of time and teacher resources compared to learning and exam demands, and insufficient language competences and disability of the participants to adjust to new forms of teaching. Lack of selfconfidence and feelings of being inferior of the ethnic minority participants and lack of respect of other values expressed by the ethnic majority participants are also reasons mentioned frequently during interviews.

A recognition strategy is described by two teachers: they assure that the workplace that ethnic minority participants are connected with when being in work placement, are workplaces with many citizens with minority background, and therefore are in need of their knowledge of the cultural practices of other ethnic groups. It is described as a way to make the minority participants conscious of their strength and the need of their competences, and participants are said to return from work placement to the classroom with new confidence – "the respect of the other participants increases and they become visible in the class".

There seem to be a will and ability to consider the differences as a resource rather than an obstacle in the learning process. Strategies and methods to meet the multicultural classroom are many. They are, though, often surprisingly individual and are seldom shared by more than a few teachers. Tolerance and cultural relativism is a salient feature of the discourse of the teachers. It is surprising that very little is said about handling the disagreement over the values and practices of the profession.

Reservations to the task of the profession seen by teachers

"Two things are feared by all participants, Danes and non-danes alike: genital toilette and death".

When asked specifically if ethnic minority participants have cultural and/or religious reservations towards carrying out basic tasks of the profession, it is at first stressed by the teachers that most participants regardless of ethnic background have reservations and difficulties with parts of the profession. It is said that age and maturity more than ethnic background is crucial. As in the quotation

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above, it is often the intimate hygienics and to handle or just to see death bodies, but a lot of other difficulties in working with the body of others are mentioned. One teacher describes how a simple drill in class, where participants are asked to wash the feet of another participant or brush the teeth of another, cause a lot of resistance among most participants regardless of ethnic background. When asked again, though, cases of insistent rejection of bathing or washing men or assisting in a kitchen where pork is prepared are mentioned as particular objections of some ethnic minority participants.

Again articulation and tolerance is seen as the main strategy to meet the reservations or resistance and to make participants get along and accept these part of the profession. To give opportunity to the participants to air their reservations in class is the most common teacher attitude to this challenge.

Thorough information about the tasks of the profession before registration, in public info meetings and in guidance meetings with education advisers in recent years, is said to have had the effect that the incidents during the education has decreased remarkably. Teachers presume that is has prepared the participants better, and maybe prevented the most rejecting from starting at all.

Explicit demarcations of what is dispensable and what is not, are mentioned as well as a way of handling reservations and objections. It is said, too, that it happens, al though seldom, that some have to be guided to change carrier.

It is mentioned, too, that it is sometimes the impression that the participant is willing to carry out certain tasks, yet her (these cases concerns exclusively female participants) family, husband or part of her network are objecting. It is mentioned that some has to ask at home before they go along with intimate hygienics, and others on the contrary choose to keep it out of the ears of their "backyard": "Some participants do not tell about what they are doing at home. They can themselves accept what they take part in, but it should not be said loudly".

An interesting incident is described: A female participant with Muslim background required a document from the school that testified that intimate hygienics of men was an indispensable part of the profession. On request of her father she had consulted an Imam, and all the Imam needed to know to condone the tasks, was documentation that testified that the motives to touch a man in intimate zones were purely professional.

There are reports from all partipating schools that some ethnic minority participants are followed and fetched from school, that family members in some cases check, by calling or dropping by, whether participants are actually there and behaving righteously. It is also mentioned, that some participants consider school as a relatively free space, that provide chances to, at least partly, to get rid of control and surveillance of family and network.

These reports are merely observations; teachers are puzzled by them and find them telling of other cultural forms of life. Very little is said during interviews and little is presumably done in practice in regard to the network or family of participants, although they are in some instances seen to have an impact on the ability of the participant to learn and take part in class.

An accurate description of how to get a fair understanding of the nature of the objections of some participants - how are open questions asked and what are the right questions to ask – are lacking, as well as a clear picture of the responsibility of the teacher in these cases. It seems to be the personal and social skills of the individual teacher that are drawn upon in the dialogue with the participant.

Teachers attitudes towards ethnic minority participants

“We have to understand them and to act differentiated according to that”.

The teachers are in general very attentive to the varied group of participants, to differences between them and to their social and educational background. They stress that they organize the teaching programme according to the actual participants in class, that it is a challenge, yet a challenge they do have a lot of experience with.

Various things are done to come to know the participants and their background:

An introductory presentation round in class is an almost indispensable component in all classes. Participants are asked to tell about their family, education, work experience etc.

A lifehistory project with the individual history as a the focal point of class and team work, is developed by one teacher and conducted in the beginning of the basic course.

Contact teachers is an arrangement at some of the schools; each class has two contact teachers, each responsible of one half of the participants, available for individual and advisory talks.

Education advisers at one school have been allotted the task of having advisory talks with all participants before course start. The teachers at this school consider this precaution as a very important tool to assure that participants can be supported in the most apt way during the education.

According to the teachers interviewed many of the participants regardless of ethnic background have social problems. If any thing significantly divides the majority and the minority participants it is the kind of social problems – forced marriages as well as traumatisation are mentioned as particular problems of the ethnic minority participants, whereas alcoholism is more frequently seen among participants with majority background.

Regarding educational background, some participants arrive directly from basic school, whereas others have vocational or even academic educations in their luggage, sometimes along with years of work experience from another field: “It is exiting to have highly educated participants in the class. We are very cautious then, and I think we are good at showing respect to these people. I once had a Chinese academic with a university degree in philosophy in class. Believe me, she worked very hard; the Danish language was so difficult for her... ”.

The general teacher attitude is that it is interesting to have highly educated participants in class, and in some cases a ressource that can be used in the class dynamic. Some teachers add that it may be hard to the educated participant her- or himself, and demands a good handling of ones identity and self worth.

The teachers´ knowledge of each individual participant seem to be extensive, and teachers seem to adjust their teaching and the organisation of it accordingly. It includes organising teams where participants complement each other, in other occasions to do the opposite, letting those at the same level work together. And it also includes to differentiate in academic level in the questions that are posed in class, in homework and in project tasks.

It was curious for the interviewer to observe that even among these teachers so articulate and seemingly effecient in taking difference – whether cultural, social or other – into consideration some rather bombastic categorisations of minority groups slipped into the discourse: “The Eastern European

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participants are the best, when it comes to gaining knowledge, the African girls have great difficulties, especially in social issues and science”.

Even more striking, when comparing two group interviews carried out on subsequent days; during the first interview most of the 6 teachers present agreed upon that “they” are much too lax regarding meeting times and deadlines. When asked about who “they” are, Africans and Middle Easterners are mentioned. The next day consensus of 6 other teachers at another school was achieved upon the point that “they”, a not specified group of ethnic minority participants, are characterized by having an extraordinary high work moral and are very dutiful.

Whether one or the other is right - there might be some truth in both – is not to be evaluated here. The point to be made is rather that specific narratives about one ethnic group or nationality or about ethnic minorities in general, easily occurs in any environment, and even at these workplaces with a high degree of tolerance and recognition of difference. It might require certain strategies and a steady effort to prevent such narratives from dominating the intercultural discussion among colleagues.

Unequal language skills in class

“The education has become very theoretical and requires quite a lot of language skills. We do not always have the resources to help them in class”.

“When they are weak in language, the greatest problem is the difficulties in achieving the respect of the other participants”.

The topic of unequal language skills in class was met with deep sighs in all interviews. The general impression is, though, that very many supporting activities, such as language classes and homework support, is by now available at all schools, and has changed the situation to the better in recent years. It is also mentioned that the current crisis and the subsequent raise in applications to the social and health care education, has resulted in a decrease in admission of participants lacking the necessary language skills.

To favour cooperation and help among participants is a strategy of all teachers.

One of the frustrations of the teachers is the dynamic in classes where some participants have limited language skills. The participation in discussion and reflection in class is hampered by low language skills and this is seen as an important part of the learning process (see below). Also team work is an integrated part of the learning programme at all schools, and it causes problems when some participants are not able to contribute fully.

On the other hand, many examples are given of teams where participants have learned about cooperation, have gained from having a supportive role or have come to know their own competences better etc. Reports of successful endeavours of introducing a high degree of responsibility among participants for each other regardless of level in language and in other respects. Some teachers stress that there is a limit to that, that the education and the society at large favours individual or even egoistic strategies. Some ask for opportunities to honorate personal and social competences in a much more direct manner than it is possible to day. They point to a schism between the bookish demands in exams and the education on the one hand and the demands and needed competences in the actual work.

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However, teachers deal with the inequality of language skills all the time, and many ways of handling it was mentioned:

To make other participants explain words or concepts that are not understood in the first place is mentioned as a way to deepen the understanding of concepts for the class as a whole. The example given was the word "fødevarer" (or foodstuff). A participant with Danish background volunteered to explain the meaning of the word, yet was only able to do so partly, and others had to assist. The method is said to be very beneficial with the heavy concepts of the profession, such as care, illness etc.

To have others to write was in one case mentioned by a teacher as a way of overcoming language problems. Two participants are very qualified but lack the skills of writing Danish. The teacher volunteers to write on their command: "I said: "You tell me what to write". It is simply not reasonable that qualified participants should not be able to make it". Other teachers in the group tend to disagree; incidents where participants have let family members write for them are referred to as *fraught*.

To make use of other language sources than Danish is a path that is sometimes taken. A teacher mentions a situation where 3 french speaking participants are allowed to form a team and support each other in the learning process. A single report of the same is given in another interview.

Remarkably, it is said in two interviews that it is a problem when it comes to groups of young Turkish women: "The other participants feel excluded and they do not know whether the Turkish girls are laughing of them. It makes both us and the other participants feel uncomfortable". In one of the schools it is an unwritten rule that no other language than Danish must be spoken – even in breaks and at social events at the school. It is striking that the speaking of a minority language of one of the biggest minority groups in Denmark in a school environment is difficult to handle by both teachers and majority participants.

Education approach

"It is a common problem for many participants to learn to be reflective. It needs training!"

"It is not always clear to them what good knowledge is. They do not understand that knowledge learned by heart is not always in high esteem".

"What they lack is, "here you have to think yourself, it is not served for you by the teacher"".

In the discourse of the teachers interviewed, a crucial competence in their form of education is the ability to be reflective. Reflection seems to be a major tool in as well as an important aim of the education. During interviews, there is consensus that most ethnic minority participants have considerable difficulties with the reflective learning processes. The teachers stress that some – mainly elderly - majority participants face the same difficulties, yet the difficulties are more widespread among ethnic minorities.

A long list of related problems are mentioned: difficulties with sorting out what is important and what is not – favouring factual knowledge learned by heart – difficulties in understanding the practical perspective in learning – difficulties in making up their mind and express an opinion – expecting teachers to confirm what is right and what is wrong – difficulties in accepting that there is not always one truth and one right answer – fear of opposing the view of teachers – passivity and lack of initiative – difficulties in choosing topics for projects.

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Teachers consider it an important task to address these difficulties and convey the reflective form of learning to participants. The list of strategies are also long:

Writing of logbook; at one of the schools writing of a log book as a daily activity is mandatory. The teachers report that some participants in the beginning write only facts about what happened during the day, whereas the teacher feedback guides them towards reflecting upon their own experience of what has happened.

A lifehistory project that force the participant to see ones own life path in a wider context and present it to others.

Selfevaluation; at another school a daily evaluation of ones own performance regarding some given parametre, fx activity in class, interest, language, preparation.

Designing teams and follow them closely. Teachers recommend smaller teams and teams that are put together with a purpose. A teacher at the sideline is often needed to assure that everybody takes part and to guide the team from step to step not to be overwhelmed by complexity.

Presentation in class. Participants take turns in presenting part of projects in class.

Learning profiles and teaching style; one school is in the process of implementing ideas of the theory of learning profiles and teaching styles according to that. The challenge is to organise the teaching programme so that all learning profiles whether visual, auditive, kinesthetic or other are met. Most of the teachers from the other schools, as well, seem to be inspired by the insight that learning take place in different ways. Especially the use of pictures in various ways is widespread and teachers report that it is often a path to engage some of those who have difficulties with participating in class discussion and verbal performance. It is as well a matter of achieving another perspective of each individual participant. One teacher relates of an incident where what formerly was seen as lack of langauge skills or poor understanding proved to be a matter of learning styles. In that case the learning process of the participant can now be adjusted to her way of learning.

Problem Based Learning (referred to as PBL); PBL is widely used at the schools. Teams are organised around a realistic case, and it is up to participants to make a plan for action and seek needed knowledge according to that. Ethnic minority participants are said to have difficulties in understanding the concept and therefore to contribute appropriately. Nevertheless coming to understand this way of working is seen as crucial to the learning process.

Inspite of the great difficulties that teachers describe, they are in general quite optimistic and confident about the perspective of conveying new ways of learning to the participants. Some relate of great satisfaction when participants prove to have "learned to learn" in the favored way. Asked whether a bending of the form of teaching towards more traditional forms would be appropriate, most teachers disagree strongly. One teacher relates that participants are very satisfied with the form of the teaching and no one ask to go back to a more traditional form. The general opinion is that the new forms have the potential of adjusting also to the intercultural challenges.

4.2. Challenges of the Participants

The 17 participants interviewed, are part of the same clarification class, a special course to prepare to the formal steps of the education. Answers must be seen in the light of, that participants were at this particular level. Though subject to the same teachers and form of teaching as other participants at the

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social and health care courses, they have not at this course specified education aims, neither do they study for final exams with specific demands.

Different values in the classroom

“We started out the course with teamwork about life quality. We had to agree on the five most important values. In our group the Danes could not find common ground. Where one came from made no difference”.

“I think we have been open to them (ethnic minority participants). We have helped them if they had difficulties”.

The participants report of many interesting discussions and oppositions regarding values and norms in the class. No one sees disagreement as related to cultural or ethnic background. It is said out several times that the class is inclusive, participants tolerant and that majority participants have shown tolerance and patience with minority participants. Majority participants needed no invitation to say so, minority participants approved when asked directly.

The atmosphere was indeed welcoming in the class; the discussion was vivid, sometimes teasing, but always respectful. Nevertheless, the interview illustrates well some of the descriptions of the class dynamics from the group interviews with teachers. Almost every majority participant took part in the discussion. A few of them were rather dominating. Only few of the minority participants took actively part, most of them was sitting listening, only answering when asked directly.

It is obvious that the discourse of tolerance is not sufficient to assure everybody an active role in the mixed classroom. In this particular classroom of the clarification course, the tolerance is never really challenged, no exams are awaiting to make majority participant impatient, and participants do not have to approve or accept the values of the profession.

Reservations towards tasks of the profession seen by participants

“I only had one problem during my work placement: I had to take out the teeth of an old woman, she had an extremely awful breath. It does not bother me to wash them, but the smell bothers me”.

A participant with Danish background tells about his specific limit and challenge. The general impression among participants was that most meet challenges when having to work in practice, that challenges and difficulties are individual, and that most get used to it. Most female participants nod when one female participant relates of her difficulties with washing the genitals of a man, and also when she adds that she just has to practice to get hold of the task. Ethnic minority participants are asked directly, they answered accordingly that it can be difficult and strange in the beginning, but one just has to get used to it.

The participants in general approached the difficult task of the profession as a matter of achieving a professional attitude, which most of them felt they were about to.

Unequal language skills in class seen by participants

“Often people think you are not intelligent, if you do not speak Danish well. If you do not understand everything, they think you are stupid”.

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"We help each other, and we help those who do not master the language completely. Or they have a little dictionary that they consult".

"It is up to oneself. You can use a dictionary or ask your friends".

Some of the minority participants have the experience of contempt of their intelligence and competences, presumably because of their limited language skills. All, however, says that this has not been the case in this particular class. On the contrary, the teachers are aware of the background of participants and help making visible in class that participants with limited language skills have important competences and resources. The demands of the teachers have been differentiated according to ability, teaching style has been adjusted to learning profiles and skills, and other participants have been helpful in team and class work.

The dictionaries, though, are mentioned quite often, and ethnic minority participants relate that they use much time at home to spell their way through texts. One minority participant sometimes feel stupid; asked what could be done to take this feeling away from her, the answer is "I have to try harder, to study more". Underlying the explicit responsibility and helpfulness of the class, there seems to be an individual approach that leaves it up to the individual ethnic minority participant to take hand of the language challenge.

The forms of teaching

"We have made planches" – "Cutting out pictures of magazines" – "Role play" – "Tried out technical requisits of the profession" – "Tried out how it is to be blind" – "Sitting in a circle and told about ourselves" – "We have been on a trip to Copenhagen".

"When I went to school team work was not common. It is great to try it".

"I like team work, I like very much to come to know the perspective of others".

The list of different activities during the course is long. Although the teaching form is new to most of the participants the attitude is very positive. Practical drills and visual means are stressed as particular useful by those who have little experience with bookish learning and those with limited Danish skills alike. Team work is well received; to learn from each other and to feel responsible for achieving and learning are mentioned as the benefits of team work.

Teachers of the class mention in the interview with them, that team work in classes like this one requires continuous supervision. If projects are made, they are not to be very long and guidance is needed from step to step. Ethnic background seems not to matter much, most participants regardless of ethnic background go through a process of "learning to learn" in new ways.

1.1 Challenges of School Managers.

The 5 managers interviewed represent schools that differs in size – from 110 participants yearly to more than 600 yearly – but have only minor differences in the institutional structure. At most schools the management is made up of 3-4 persons, with a head of the school, a deputy head who takes care of administration, one or two heads of education or development. Two school have different departments with different premises and therefore also heads of departments as part of the management.

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The teaching is organised in very much the same way, with one exception though: one school has skipped the traditional class structure and organise the teaching in a matrix system where participants are part of a 12 persons cluster ("klynge") followed by, not a teacher, but a tutor, and besides from that takes various courses across clusters.

The pedagogical and didactic principles

"The human being as a starting point" – "the human being at the center" – "a strong view of the human being".

All the interviewed representatives of the school managements (hereafter just the managers) stress the humanistic starting point. Asked to elaborate on the basic principle of the school, 4 out of 5 managers stress that the individual participant is the starting point of the education. With this starting point, it is articulated, the offers at the school are on the one hand organisation of the teaching that is sensitive to difference, and on the other hand special and extra offers to met the needs of each individual participant. In concrete, it means a high degree of differentiation in the teaching in the class room and a special supportive offers.

At the last school a different answer is given: "We are working to make the school reflect the surrounding multicultural society. To us that means that diversity is a resource, that we have to acknowledge different competences, that other ideas of care, for example, does not have to be changed or made to go away". In concrete that means among other thing that a concept of the multicultural is presented at basic courses, and intercultural processes is a topic at the teaching program.

When it comes to the concrete offers and strategies the elements mentioned are

Recognition or an appreciative approach is widely supported and mentioned by all as a major principle when admitting a diverse group of participants. It has wide implications, too: By some recognition is described as a tolerant attitude, others as a practice of the teachers when participants communicate project results to each other in class. One manager elaborates a little more by this example: When a participant is absent for a longer period, it is not acceptable and it has to be made clear to the participant that she has to attend. Nevertheless, when it turns out that the reason of the prolonged absence is the illness of her children, the school must recognise the participant to the extent that it is a valid point of view that a mother has to stay with her children when they are ill. It is not unvalid or a negative value, it is just not compatible with the order of the school. Another manager admits that there not all teachers are actually capable of recognition of difference and competences of the ethnic minority participants. He refers to a teacher who consequently designate participants with limited skills in Danish as illiterate. The basic view that he attempt to build on is "everybody has resources regardless of differences and cultural approach, and everybody has to become part of the culture of the profession".

Team work and processual learning are rather a part of the solution than the problem. Even though all school managers are aware of the difficulties of integrating into a new education tradition of many participants they consider these forms as a provider of opportunities to make use of difference, to create synergy and dynamics and to educate professionals able of coping with challenges at the work place.

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Specifically PBL or problembased learning and learning profiles referred to by teachers as well, are put forward by managers as the main principles and methods.

Community colleges is an American developed strategy to work with the family and network of the participants, to make the school a part of the society. One school has put the question of cooperation with family, mainly parents to the young participants, on the agenda, and prepare a strategy with inspiration from the American experiences of community colleges.

Recruitment, sustainment and employment policy

“We are not interested in the number of ethnic minority participants. We are interested in getting participants that have considered what it takes to come close to others, participants who are able to communicate”.

The share of ethnic minorities at the schools involved differs considerably. As registration of ethnic background is forbidden in Denmark it is not possible to know exactly, yet the estimates of the interviewed are between 5-10% to 40%. The general attitude is as the above quoted, that the number is not important, which might reflect that the interest and application for the schools are currently high. One manager is of the opinion that the share ought to reflect the share of the population – at the actual school the share of ethnic minority participants are presumably higher than their share of the population at large. Recruitment efforts mentioned are mainly special offers for ethnic minorities, particularly the specially organised basic courses including Danish as a foreign language. One school though has a procedure of visiting local schools with many ethnic minority pupils and have translated parts of their recruitment material to the greatest minority languages.

Drop-outs and sustainment, on the other hand, is very much on the agenda. It is though not considered an issue regarding ethnic minorities especially. Numbers from one school support their view: According to informal registrations of admission and withdrawal at the school, the drop out is slightly lower for the minority participants than for the majority population (9 % versus 10%). The minority participants are as well making use of most of the special offers, and the interviewee presumes as well that they more often than majority participants apply for and get admission to prolongation of their education period.

Indeed, efforts are many to reduce the drop out: All schools do follow participants closely, some by way of the education guides, at one school an interview with an education guide is mandatory at admission, others by way of tests of competence at admission at basic course or at admission at step 1.

4 out of these 5 schools are part of a regional cooperation with the aim of increasing sustainment of participants. The main activities of the project is realcompetence clarification with admission and a mentor programme. One of the four schools are as well involved in a ministerial campaign for sustainment of especially ethnic minority youth on vocational educations, the sustainment caravan (fastholdelseskaranen). This has among other things resulted in the extension of homework support and social offers after school hours.

Some managers mention the cooperation between teachers and education advisers as a crucial point. One adds the cooperation with the work placements as a point for development.

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All schools have special offers for ethnic minority participants, among them special basic course, extra language courses, homework assistance and the like. Currently it seems that some schools add new offers of a more social kind – afterschool activities and mentor programmes – and try to adopt them to the special needs of ethnic minority participants. As mentioned before only one school are in the process of cooperating closer with the network and family of the minority participant. Others though, are aware that more information to the social surroundings of the ethnic minority would make a positive difference and solve some problems of young and/or female participants experience when attending a education environment unknown to her ethnic peers.

Employment policy and teacher qualifications

“Along with more male teachers, teachers with ethnic minority background is on top of the list of wishes”.

The share of ethnic minorities among the teachers are between 0 and almost 10%. All schools would welcome teachers with ethnic minority background, some managers state that they are very keen on attracting them. All agree that they could become potent role models of participants with minority background. Nevertheless, no recruitment strategy or campaign has been developed very keen on attracting these teachers. When this is questioned it turns out that there is an assumption that only few with ethnic minority background would qualify – “they have not yet accomplished a high level in education” – and in addition that those who would qualify rather choose other fields of work with “more status”.

When asked about the intercultural competences of the teachers employed, the general picture is that single teachers at all schools have qualifications and in some cases diplomas in intercultural communication or the like. All managers point out that opportunities of further qualification and education of teachers are good and that individual teachers choose to take this direction. Whereas other development projects involving the group of teachers at large are carried through, no development within the field of intercultural learning are taking place – at least not with this headline. Development in the field of learning profiles and teaching styles and in conflict resolution (which has taken place at two schools) are considered a development in the intercultural field.

5. Conclusion: Major Challenges in Teaching Mixed Classes

In the field of intercultural training a change in perspective from a deficit approach to a resource perspective has been long underway and is still not fully implemented in all contexts (Pusch 2004). Maybe the track of development parallels that of the field of diversity management; here most efforts have been guided towards recruitment and sustainment of a diverse workforce, while an approach that promote the potential in the form of synergy and dynamic in the culturally and ethnically diverse workgroup are only recently evolving (Hagedorn-Rasmussen og Kamp 2003). In the context of the Danish social and health care education, recruitment efforts are to a great extent incorporated into the practices of the schools; the share of ethnic minority participants has found a reasonable level very often reflecting that of the region. The institutional setup – the regulations from above as well as the policy of the school managements - support the development of appropriate special offers and provide as well the background knowledge about participants to make sensitised teaching possible. Challenges of drop-out and sustainment are currently addressed in large-scale development projects.

When it comes to internal intercultural challenges and the move towards a resource perspective, a wide range of experiences are achieved by teachers active in the field in the last decade and a great variety of strategies and methods are developed, if the picture drawn in the exploration interviews are to be believed. The overall picture, though, leaves the impression that there is need for development in some directions.

Towards a strategy of intercultural learning

One of the schismas of diversity management is that a balance between over-emphasis and under-emphasis of cultural diversity can be hard to find; when setting out to eliminate old and often negative stereotypes, new stereotypes often take their place. Even if the new stereotype focuses on diversity advantage rather than disadvantage, it might nevertheless limit the scope of the individuals who are understood through it.

The reluctance of teachers, course participants and school managers alike of addressing cultural diversity as a subject in itself, are probably founded in such precautions. However, if lessons from the field of diversity management are to be learned, abstaining from addressing the challenges of cultural diversity specifically is not a solution. Rather the lesson is that the focus has to be sustained and renewed all the time in a coordinated effort, if not to grow and uphold new limiting stereotypes of “the cultural other”.

The absence of a coordinated strategy of intercultural learning has some implications:

Firstly, the strategies regarding teaching and learning in the mixed classrooms tend to be mainly individual. Even if vivid exchange between colleagues takes place and individual teachers achieve further intercultural competence through education these endeavours are not part of a coordinated effort. As a result, accumulation of experience and knowledge do not always take place. Strategies, methods and teaching materials have to be invented and developed over and over again by individual teachers or small groups of teachers.

Secondly, the teachers involved in this exploration, have high ambitions and are in their professional approach very attentive to trends in adult education in general and of founding principles of the school

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in particular. Left without a coordinated and explicit strategy, though, the adaptation of concepts and theories is not always sufficiently profound and reflective. The best example of that is the concept of recognition. Recognition is seemingly one of the founding principles of the schools, but has only to a very limited extent been defined and developed into a coherent strategy. For some teachers recognition of cultural value difference has come to take the meaning of mere tolerance and therefore provide no guidelines for the handling of difference. The teachers might feel inclined to be open and tolerant towards the presence of different values and opinions in the classroom, but are practically left without an operational strategy when difference affects the ability and willingness to achieve of the learning process and to perform the profession. The theory of appreciative enquiry would in this case provide the needed elaborations to make a operational strategy on the basis of the ideas of recognition.

What currently stands out as the main intercultural challenge of the Danish social and health care schools is to develop a coherent strategy to promote intercultural learning. The strategy could, on the one hand, be developed on the basis of the experiences already achieved, by collecting teachers ideas and methods already put into effect and, on the other hand, consist in an effort to elaborate and make operational the approaches that are considered the founding principles of the schools. This requires, in addition, a plan of and commitment by the school managements to mainstream the strategies; i.e. a plan for the implementation at all levels of the institution. The mainstreaming necessitates among other things an offensive strategy of the development of competences in the field, not only for individual teachers who make that carrier investment themselves, but for the group of teachers of each school as a whole.

An intercultural learning strategy in a multicultural society

A few indications in the interview material are given that making the strategy of intercultural learning part of an explicit multicultural policy would be beneficial.

Firstly, one of the schools included in the material has an ambition of adjusting to the multicultural conditions of society (within the time limit it was only possible to conduct an interview with a representative of the management and not the teachers, so the experiences of the school are only superficially informing this report). The school are inclined to become a part of the surrounding community and one of the implications of that is to interact with family and network of the ethnic minority participants. A move towards interaction with families and minority networks might be an advantage and contribute to the strategy of intercultural learning in important ways. Not only in regard to recruitment and prevention of drop out, but also in the development of ways to handle cultural diversity and culturally or religious reservations in the classroom.

Secondly, teachers of other schools seem to come closest to a resource approach to ethnic minority participants when relating to the workplaces of the field and the growing cultural diversity here. Most teachers already takes this context into consideration in their teaching and some have developed teaching materials adjusting to these multicultural conditions. A systematic mainstreaming effort in this direction would nevertheless strengthen this tendency.

Thirdly, the challenge of unequal language skills in the classroom might benefit from being seen in the light of the wider multicultural society. In a society with a large presence of citizens with minority background that along with the language of the majority use their mother tongue, the challenge of language at the school have at least two perspectives which deserve more attention than it gets from

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teachers currently. Firstly, the presence of other languages than the majority language is a permanent condition. In that perspective speaking of minority languages is a normal act and not in itself an offence or a threat to the majority. While discussions about norms of language use might in some cases be recommended, rules that limits the use of other languages are futile. Secondly, the competences in languages other than Danish might in near future become a most required skill of health care professionals to answer the demands of the workplaces in the profession.

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