YoYo

– Youth transitions, youth policy and participation –

National report from Denmark

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The first part of the report (I – VI) focuses on youth policy in general, and transitions through education and work. The second part (VII – XI) deals with the discussion on participation and citizenship

I.   Some general aspects of the youth population

- *Decreasing youth population:* As in other western societies the percentage of young people in the population is decreasing, and in Denmark the population between 15-24 years has declined with 20 % from 1991 to 2001. The percentage of young people between 15-24 years has declined from about 15 % of the total population i 1991, to about 11 % in 2001.[1]

- *Large geographic mobility:* Taking the population as a whole 7-9% move during any given year whilst young people move significantly more: 10-17% of 15-19 year olds and over 25% of 20-24 year olds move each year, probably due to the location of educational institutions, the labour market or because of intimate relationships. It cannot be shown to what degree the respective factors cause the increase in regularity of the movement of young people.[2]

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[1] From 758.005 of totally 5.146.469 inhabitants in 1991, to 605.385 out of totally 5.349.212 inhabitants in 2001. The exact % are 14,7% in 1991, and 11,3% in 2001(NYT fra Danmarks Statistik nr. 74, 13. februar 2001).
[2] Bay 1996

- *Most young people still live at home and they remain living at home longer than previously:* 50% of young people have left home before they reach 20. Only 1/10 live at home after they have reached 25. The young remain at home longer than during the 1980's presumably because of a combination of a lack of appropriate housing and the fact that intergenerational conflicts are reduced. In addition the housing situation for the parental generation has improved so that there is space for the young to have their own room[3]

- *An increased proportion of youth from ethnic minorities:* In 1990 there were 27.545 young people between 16-24 from ethnic minorities out of a total population of 5.135.409 (0.5% of total population, and 3.6% of the whole youth population), whilst in 2000 there were 49.805 from a total of 5.330.020 (0,9% of total population and 8% of the youth population.[4]

- *Still situated in the educational system:* A first all over picture of the educational situation shows that a growing proportion of young people between 15-19 years are still situated in the educational system after obligatory school years – in 1998 this was the situation for 8 out of 10 in the agegroup/aged between 15-19 years.[5] In general the educational level in the population has increased during the last decades, and still more people are staying for a longer time in the educational system. In 1998 1/3 of all inhabitants between 15-34 years were at some level in the educational system. The overall political objective is that a larger group of the population gains a qualifying education.

- *Economy*: The economical situation for young people in Denmark may be different from other European countries. (Basically) Education is free, and young people in education receives som financial support fra the state, called SU (State Educational benefit). The amount of money changes according to age and livingconditions (living at home with parents/living by herself). Most young people in eeducation can only manage by supplementing SU by state-guarenteed loans, money from parents og by having part-time jobs.[6] Considering the long education in Denmark, where many young people do not enter the adult labour market until the age 26-30 years, this situation is not without influence on the general life quality and perspective for young people. Young people outside education, and those who are unemployed, receive a cash benefit from the state.

II.   Mainlines in politics of transition: Competence through individualised education

As earlier research has shown, there is as a general trend in modern European societies that educational systems become increasingly important and that education (and training) has become the most important means for individual success or failure. Both in the respect that educational systems may be used as instruments for democratisation (as in the Scandinavian educational model:

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[3] Bay 1996
[4] Danmarks Statistik; *Statistisk tiarsoversikt 2000*
[5] Undervisningsministeriet: *Tal der taler 2000*
[6] And a growing proportion of youth in education are working part-time. In the beginning of 1980thies, app. 1/4 of all students over 15 years had a part-time job, in the mid ´90thies the proportion had rised to app. 1/3 (Bay 1996). The proportion of part-time workers in education is probably even higher today.

"equality through education"), but also because a high educational level is expected in more and more jobs and often unemployment problems are seen as consequences of too low qualifications.[7]

The general understanding of (youth) education as important to individual development and social integration has made youth life an object of broad public interest and specific youth policies, and the educational approach is clearly reflected and expressed in the official Danish youth policy.

Since 1997 there has been an official youth policy program which points to numerous initiatives for improvement of youth life. The overall objective of this program is that all young people shall have the possibility for a substantial youth, which "qualifies for a independent life with interesting perspectives and participation in development of the society".[8] The main goals are *"democratic influence", "education to all", "full employment", "international qualifications", "improvement of housing conditions", "access to information technology", "cultural diversity", "access to youth counselling", "cultural diversity"* – and the right to *"gain a foothold in life"*.

Education is emphasised, both as important in itself, and also as a method to gain "employment to all" – employment through education. Government has set itself the target that at least 95% of a youth generation shall complete a secondary school, and 50% shall complete further and higher education.

Today 83% of a youth generation completes a secondary school, and 43% gain a higher education.[9] In the strategy to reach the last group, and also to reach those who drop out of the education system, the keywords are "spaciousness and flexibility", both in the sense that the transitions between different education becomes more easy, and to match the needs for the individual student.

The political measures are, that at least 95% of a youth cohort shall complete a secondary education, and 50% shall complete further and higher education. One way of doing this, is decreasing the rates of "drop-out" in secondary education. In 1998 the drop-out rate was app. 17 % for the gymnasium and vocational secondary education[10]. A vast of initiatives has taken place as an effort to decrease the drop-out rates, especially upon the vocational education. To decrease the drop-out rates. The exact measures and methods are[11]:

- *individualisation and strengthening of the guidance-programme:* On all levels, the existing educational guidance will be improved, and the government will establish a independent educational measure for counsellors

- *improved 10th level in primary school:* The last level will be targeted directly towards further education by establishing *individual education plan*, which involves the student, the parents and the school

- *modified admission system in higher education*

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[7] See also the danish national reports from other EU- projects – *Leonardo* and *Misleading Projects*. The present presentation is to a great extent inspired by these reports, by Moerch & Moerch 1998 and 2000
[8] Det tvaerministerielle Ungdomsudvalg 2000: *Regeringens ungdomspolitik – status og perspektiver*.
[9] Det tvaerministerielle Ungdomsudvalg 2000: *Regeringens ungdomspolitik – status og perspektiver*
[10] It seems that the initiatives have had som effect, at least has the drop-out rate declined from 25% in 1995 (vocational education) to app. 16% in 1998.
[11] In addition: Monitoring of quality and evaluation, and a new institute of evaluation has been established to strengthen the quality and coherence of the Danish educational system.

- *a higher degree of flexibility in the youth education:* The possibilities of transferring educational merits from one education measures to another will be improved.

- *a structural reform of the vocational measures:* A radical reform of the vocational measures has been completed. The purpose is to ensure education for strong as well as weaker students. The basic plan is to start individualised educational courses with many opportunities of differentiated levels due to different needs and wants.

III.   Education as transition strategy - the school system

One of the basic aspects of the Danish model of youth social and work integration is that education is essential. For this reason the school and the educational system are constantly discussed and changed, and the Danish educational system has undertaken many changes in recent years. Especially the secondary education is the object of current changes and new initiatives. To get an over all picture, we may look at two central developmental changes.
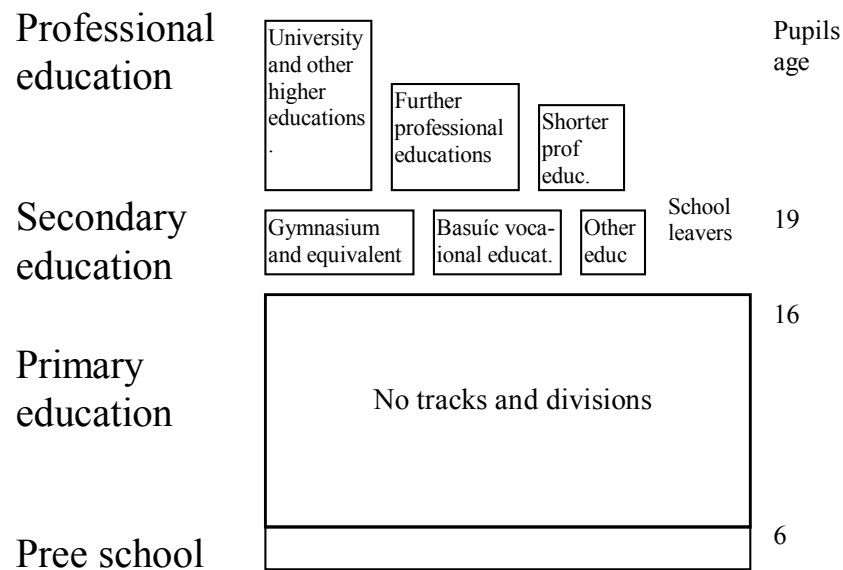
The first took place from the start of the 1970thies. Its focus was at primary school education and its perspectives or ideology was formulated as "equality through education". This process established a common 9 or 10 year education to all, based on the principle of "keeping the children together" in the same school-class for the whole time. Its perspective was to ensure that all young people were given the same learning possibilities, and that young people in this way were given the same possibilities for further education.

The second development began in the start of the 1990thies. It was named *"education to all".* It is motivated by the general idea that modern society has become an "educational society", and that life opportunities therefore are based on education. So, to develop both society and the individual everyone should have more education.

Education is the keyword, both in relation to the development of competence and qualification, and as a way to make it possible for the individual to become an active participant and citizen in society.

The program "Education to all" has been the driving force behind both the development and forming of different tracks in secondary education and behind the development of new educational possibilities for young people who have left school and education "to early".

The basic model of the Danish school and educational system is:

				Pupils age
Professional education	University and other higher educations.	Further professional educations	Shorter prof educ.	
Secondary education	Gymnasium and equivalent	Basuíc voca-ional educat.	Other educ	School leavers 19
Primary education	No tracks and divisions			16
Pree school				6

It is of particular interest to look at how the youngsters are divided - or not divided - in the Danish educational system. There exist no graduation in all of compulsory education, and up to the level of universities, no entrance restriction at all. Due to the special ideology of the Danish educational system, the youngsters have the opportunity of "making their own trajectory" or placing themselves in the system following only their fields of interest.

The primary education is 9 to 10 years. The 10th year is optional for further education, but recommended for pupils who leave school after primary school or pupils who need more time to make the decision of what to choose as the next step.

Today secondary education consists of Gymnasium and equivalent:

- *Gymnasium:* traditional three-year secondary and

- *HF* - gymnasium of two years, originally aimed at adult people who hadn´t finished the gymnasium, but wanted to go back to furhter education. Today used also by persons straight ofut of compulsory.

- Besides these more traditional ways of secondary education is *HTX* (technical education), *HHX* (Technical Trade school), *EGU* (Basic vocational education), *HG* (Commercial school) - and also, there is a broad variation of vocational schools for different occupations, such as school for nurses, sailors, farmers, pedagogues, policemen.

The most popular secondary education is "Gymnasium" (or HF - Higher preparation-examination). They are both first step in a trajectory which gives admittance to higher education and universities, and they are seen as the succesful school-leaving exam. Also HTX (Higher techincal examination) and HHX (Higher trade examination) may give admission to higher education, but they are mostly the first step in the direction of a "non-academic" vocational education.

The use of the educational system - in general

The development of the population's level of education can be calculated via educational profiles which show a whole youth generation way through the education system and in this way captures changes in the structure of education. The development from 1980 −1998 shows these main tendencies:

- *The level of education has generally increased dramatically since 1980:* In 1980 only 25.5% of a youth cohort completed a further education qualification whilst the respective figure for 1998 is 40%. The statistics show that 80% of the Danish population have at least a "youth education", and this means that the level of education is high compared to other countries in that only Germany has a higher level (comparable figures from EU countries show an average of 59%). Only 20% of the adult Danish population have only a primary school education as their highest completed education (1997).[12] It seems likely that by 2010, 50% of a cohort will complete further education[13]

- *There is an increasing tendency for young people to continue in education after basic school/primary education:* Of the cohort that in 1998 left the primary school[14] it is expected that 95 % will at some point go further in the educational system. 53% will begin a Sixth Form education and 41% a business/vocational education. Today, 96% of the girls and 94% of the boys continue in the education system. And the majority of these will continue further: 95% of those with a Sixth Form background and 91% of those with a vocational qualification are expected to continue in the education system. In addition an increase in applications to further education establishments can be seen[15]

- *Girls have overtaken boys in relation to level of education:* 29% of girls complete a relatively long education compared with 14% of boys (1980: 19% and 11.5%). The growth in girls education has occurred to a large degree in the relatively long education, with teachers, pedagogues, and nurses as the largest groups but girls also take to a greater degree the longer examples of further education: 5% in 1980 to 13% in 1998. The boys share increased from 6.5% to 11.5%.

- *Girls and boys choose different education:* A greater proportion of girls choose a Sixth Form education compared with boys who to a larger degree choose a vocational education

Gender, class and ethnicity

The Danish educational system is democratic in the sense that all young people have the same opportunities for having education, but of course the educational system may indirectly create differences due to competition and ways of functioning according to individual background and

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[12] Undervisningsministeriet: *Tal der taler 2000*

[13] Undervisningsministeriet: *De unges vej gennen uddannelsessystemet - Uddannelsesprofiler 2000*

[14] And almost 100% complete the primary school.

[15] Undervisningsministeriet: *Tal der taler 2000*

individual engagement. But also some differentiation in choosing education may exist according to the individual background such as gender, class and ethnicity.

- *Gender:* Gender seems to have only a slight importance. Females tend to educate themselves more, and in gymnasium as well as universities there is a small majority of women. This picture changes when we look at the higher academic education and Ph.D'level; Here is a majority of men, and surveys are pointing at basic factors such as motherhood as the most obvious reason.

- *Class:* The issue of social class is still influential in the education system. Though the Danish educational system is planned as an "class -free" system by the way of giving all influence to school education, family background may still be seen as important in educational careers. Earlier studies show that at universities 60% of the students come from families having an academic or middle long professional education. These figures seem to be only slowly changing. 12,5% of the pupils (or their parents) in the primary school have choosed a private school instead of the public primary school.[16]

- *Ethnicity:* Basically the difference between Danish youth and immigrant youth[17] according to education in the age of 15-20 seems to be very small, the level of education does not differ that much. 86% of the immigrant youth continues in the education system after the primary school, and almost 90% of this group continue a further education after secondary education.[18] An aspect of the education of immigrant youth seems to be that they trend to choose trade-school as their main vocational education, and the drop-out rate is higher. However, to understand the migrant situation in education it seems necessary to look for both social class and social cultural background.

IV.   The Labour Market as arena for transition

A basic characteristic of the Danish society today is a situation with almost no youth unemployment. This is due to very good economic conjunctures, but mostly due to the all-encompassing educational system, which allows no inactivity.

Figures from 1999 show that only *3.7% of 16-24 year olds are registered as unemployed* and the figures have fallen drastically in the last 10 years (from 11% in 1990, and 12% in 1993).[19] Unemployment for the total labour force is 5.7%.[20] The level of youth unemployment shows no big differences between young women and young men (4,0% for females, and 3,7% for males between 16-24 years. In contrast there is a large difference between respective groups of young people

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[16] 12,5% is the same as app. 80.000 pupils. This is the figure for the hole country, the percentage is probably much higher in Copenhagen, and especially in the richer area of Copenhagen.

[17] The expression "immigrant youth" covers immigrants/descendants from "third countries" (countries otuside EU, North-America and the nordic countries).

[18] Indenrigsministeriet 2001

[19] Danmarks Statistik: *Statistisk tiarsoversikt 2000*

[20] The total labour force includes people who are occupied, and those who have been occupied for a certain period; to get registered as unemployed it´s a condition that you already have been in an occupation. Due to this method of calculation, young people without any workexperience, students without part-time jobs etc. are not to be registrered as unemployed (cf. guidelines fraom ILO – International Labour Organisation).

generally, and immigrant youth – in total 8,8% of the immigrant youth population are registered as unemployed.[21]

For people below 25 years it´s quit difficult to become "unemployed", both because of the way the statistics are collected, and because of the general guidelines for youth unemployment. In the Danish model young people should not be characterised as employed or unemployed - they are to be in education. According to the Danish legislation unemployed people below 25 years are to be activated, and educational measures should be preferred over job-training measures. *The Danish policy is focused on solving the youth unemployment through education.* No actual labour market programmes has been established following the Luxembourg Guidelines, instead a vast amount of education-oriented programmes has been established. [22] Some with the purpose of motivation the youngster for further education, others with labour market integration as the sole purpose.

The background for these legislation and policy of unemployment, was the labour market situation throughout the seventies and eighties. In the beginning of this period the Danish labour market did adjust itself and ensured employment. Becoming unemployed merely meant to be put "on hold" with a very high degree of public compensation, sometimes up until 80% of a normal salary. As the years went by, alarming tendencies showed up - and it became obvious that Denmark had a new problem with what was named long term unemployment, where the qualifications of some unemployed became obsolete because the needs of the labour market developed much too fast for the unemployed to be able to follow. Unemployment became a prolonged social de-route, where the lesser qualified quickly became non-employable and unsuited to the modern labour market. In 1993 a Labour Market Reform was established, and two overall targets were presented: The labour market was to be made more flexible, and the labour force was to be motivated into education. This meant launching the life-long learning programme of adult training and restructuring almost all of the educational system to ensure that the youngsters became qualified.

For the youth population, these new ideas became reality in the beginning of the nineties, where both sides of the new plan started to work together. The low figures for youth unemployment must be interpreted on basis on this new policy and legislation.

V.   Youth unemployment - a problem of education

As pointed out earlier, the Danish policy is focused on solving the youth unemployment through education. The Danish unemployment measures have two main targets: *to ensure the flexibility of the labour force*, and to *ensure educational competencies for all groups in society*.

Youngsters in the age 18-25 were pointed as the target group for the Labour Market Reform in 1993, and several measures were initiated for this group in particular:

- *To ensure flexibility of the labour force,* normal unemployment rules were revoked for this group. Instead, strict regulations were made, and in reality it became almost impossible to be young and unemployed.[23] "The Youth Effort" was launched: When youngsters have been

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[21] In percent of the total labour force in this section of the population.

[22] ...and when attending one of these programmes, the youngster is considered as "being in occupation" - and no longer qualified for the statistics of unemployeed.

[23] For instance, youngsters are activated as soon as possible. This may only take a few days.

unemployed for 6 out of 9 months, they are forced into vocational training in the special UJF-courses[24] for 18 months. They will not receive Education Benefit, but instead receive half of the normal unemployment benefit (which is app. twice as much as the Education Benefit). This new benefit (half of the normal unemployment benefit) was made standard for the entire group to make sure that youngsters do not avoid educational measures because of financial reasons.

- *To ensure educational competencies to all youngsters*, a large number of initiatives were launched:

  - *The reform of the vocational education:* The entire vocational training system is set to be restructured to enhance mobility and flexibility inside the system.[25] The vocational education and training system is represented in every region of Denmark and offers a broad variety of crafts and courses. Besides offering the basic trades, also service courses and mercantile education is placed here. The reform simplifies the structure by establishing 7 basic entrances to the vocational schools. After choosing one out of seven entrances, a basic course is to be completed. This is a two year period based on school education. After this the student choose a main course, which is based on both school education and practical training in an apprenticeship with a firm (three years in total). Here the student will specialise. The entire structure will function because of the individual educational plan. Before even entering the school, the student will establish an education plan and a book of qualifications. These two things will guide the student and help him or her to keep track of the educational progress. To enhance the flexibility of the system the possibility to transfer merits from one educational measure to another i strengthened. Other secondary courses can supplement the educational course.

  - *"Bridge-Building":* An initiative in the educational system is trying to build bridges between the last part of compulsory and the second educational measures. It is now possible to participate in the ordinary education in secondary schools - mostly intended for vocational, technical and mercantile schools - for a week to get an impression of your future potential educational plans.

  - *Specific programmes* - with *educational* or with *job-training measures*: A number of specific programmes was started, and according to their main aims it's possible to divide them into to groups; programmes with educational measures, and programmes with job training measures:

  The educational measures:

  The educational measures contain both educational and motivating measures. An example is The Free Youth Education, which at the one hand motivate the youngster and at the other hand also offer real competence. Here young people can build their own education from all kinds of measures and receive standard Education Benefit. The education started in 1995, and is characterised by key words such as "responsibility", "voluntarily" and "focus on developing the individual".

  Another central measure in youth education is intended to only motivate young people to start further vocational education is the production-schools. These schools offer no official competencies, but try to reach those youngsters who have fundamental problems in the ordinary school-system and therefor consider to leave the educational system completely to get a job

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[24] UJF: Uddannelse- og Jobkvalifiserende Forløb (Educational- and Workqualifying Course)
[25] The Reform of the Vocational Education was completed in 2000

without further education. Another aspect of this is the Folk High Schools, were courses of typically drama, arts, media and personal development can be taken. This is to be paid for privately, and is used by many youngsters to spend some time while waiting for admission into the right educational measure.

Job-training measures:

The job-training measures are few, and most of them are directed towards the educational system instead of the labour market. The Youth Effort does contain programmes aiming on labour market integration. An important part of the Youth Effort, is The Job and Education-courses (UJF), where 6 months of unemployment releases an obligation to participate in special vocational training courses for 18 moths at a reduced unemployment benefit. Also traditional job training in private or public working places exists, but are mostly used for youngsters who have qualifying education - others are sent back into the educational system. All the job-training measures are subordinate to the educational measures, as the legislation clearly states that educational measures is to preferred to job-training.

VI.   Summary - transition through education and labour market

The Danish society has an agenda for the youth population, which has been directed more towards education than employment. The strategy is more education-oriented than employment-oriented, and unemployment is mainly seen as a result of lack of education. Qualifications and competencies are the modern keywords in the Danish society, where being unemployed is increasingly difficult, if not impossible, if you are under 25 years of age. Everything pushes youngsters towards the education system. New measures have been induced to try and reach those who have dropped out of schools or are generally tired of the education system. These new measures are based on *voluntary participation, independence and self-determination*. The orientation towards the labour market is slim if even existing, and the political variable for success is simple participation and completion.

In Denmark the individualisation of trajectories has been developed to a high extent. The labour market has been dynamic, and together with a decent level of state support and a flexibilisation and diversification of education, training and employment pathways young adults find a broad range of opportunities to shape their transition according to individual choice.

Flexibility and individualisation are the new key-concepts the Danish education system. First and foremost in the case of the special intitiatives for disadvantaged groups ("drop-outs" and unemployed). But the trend is also visible within the traditional/general educational system, both in regard to form and content. These intentions aims at considering both the interests, aspirations and the abilities of the individual child. But this trend is supplemented by an increased demand for responsibility and purposefulness of the pupil. For instance, an individual educationplan must be designed, in corporation with teachers and parents, already in the 6. grade (age 12 – 13 years).

The Danish educational system is changing from educational differentiation towards qualified differentiation. This offers better opportunities to the individuals inside the education system but does not necessarily change the inequality in labour market possibilities. This is due to the fact that

the overall education system still differentiates education to the respective parts of the labour market. In other words, the different trajectories, which are created in the schools system, do not point to broad labour market competencies but to different segments of the labour market. It remains unclear whether the different trajectories are going to open new opportunities for the future or whether they are to become misleading ones. Especially it seems as if new trajectories differentiates young people. For some youngsters the democratic perspective helps to make a way to "nucleus of qualified occupation", but not to all.

Young people in Denmark are expected to stay in the education system rather than entering the labour market. Therefor the Danish policies deserve the term "activation policies" as they lay a strong emphasis on creating conditions favourable for individual motivation. However, also the utilisation of this system requires competencies and resources that are not distributed equally among Danish young people. Those with good perspectives, often use attractive options intended to motivate those with less successful learning biographies.[26]

The Danish labour market as well as the education system is in a process of liberalisation. During the last decade, new legislation has been induced on youth unemployment and long-term unemployment to try to lower the structural unemployment, which during the end of the eighties and the start of the nineties had risen to an unacceptable level. At the same time, the education system has been brought actively into the struggle against youth unemployment with new measures of education based on the youngsters who are unqualified and out of a job. The results seem in one hand to be good, youth unemployment has dropped substantially and the percentage of youngsters with qualifying education is increasing every year. Other experience point in other directions - not all young people are able to complete the special programmes or other educational occupations. This shows a basic contradiction of the modern Danish youth-situation. At the one hand youth life becomes educational youth life and as such it is open to more and more young people. At the other hand, this seems to generate a group of young people who are not able to get a firm grasp of their educational lives, and they are in risk of becoming "losers" in modern youth life. The question may be if modern educational youth life could be seen as not only broadening education and in this way changing the traditional pattern of social inequality by offering "education to all", but also as creating unintentionally marginalisation at the same time. Some youngsters develop "misleading trajectories" inside the over all educational system or youth life.

Provocatively spoken: More and more young people are *included* into the educational system, and thereby they are placed in a situation with an increased risk to get *excluded*.

To overcome this problem maybe the very strict transitional perspective on youth and education should be changed. In many respects both youth life and adult life is in a change. Adult life more and more takes the shape of youth life. Life long learning, demands for creativity in jobs, personal development, etc. all point to changes in adult life. Adult life and youth life looks more and more alike. Post modern demands are present all over. People have to change throughout life. But they do it inside their practical social contexts and social networks. So, instead of a transition perspective maybe we should talk about a situation of "framented contextualisation". This concept points to the open structure which exists where the same challenges e.g. according to formel an informel learning exist, but in different social contexts and social networks.

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[26] At least this is some of the experiences from the different special programmes mentioned earlier.

VII. Youth participation as citizens - participation in the traditional democratic structures

Looking at young peoples actual democratic participation, and personal and mutual possibilities for shaping and influencing their own lives in the modern Danish society, it seems like some changes are taking place. There appears to be a growing gab between the motivation for participating in the traditional democratic procedures, and the involvement in ones own transition / life projects. It is difficult to tell whether Youth of today is more or less involved and motivated for participating in forming their own lives than Youth of earlier generations, but it seems rather obvious that the valuation of relevant channels for gaining influence have changed.

National politics

In Denmark all citizens have the right to vote at the age of 18. Denmark has a tradition for a large election turnout, though it has been declining a bit over the last decades. In 1968 the poll was 89.3 percent and in the nineties it has dropped to 84.4 percent. Some observers worry about the fact that apparently the youngest eligible voters (18-24 years of age at the time of the election) are the most reluctant to vote. And even though the young people's poll can not be described as alarmingly low, there is a trend[27].

Young people are generally more reluctant to join political parties as actual members, and they are accordingly much less faithful voters, more often making up their minds about who to vote for during the campaign or in the polling booth, than older generations.

Generally there is a visible tendency among young people towards voting for more liberal-conservative-rightwing parties, especially among young men.[28]

Local politics - Experimental Youth municipalities

As part of the governmental Youth political programme of 1997, a number of municipalities (17 out of Denmark's 279) were chosen to function as experimental "Youth municipalities". In the project special attention was devoted to local youth issues which in various ways related to the 10 aims of the governmental programme, already mentioned in this report (Section II). The experiment was to last for a period of 3 years, 1998 – 2000, and a final evaluation report is expected in October 2001. A central focus has been to accumulate experiences and knowledge of young peoples participation and involvement in local political and cultural development. Status as "Youth-municipality" included the right to apply for a fond of DKK 45 million, of which most were earmarked to actual projects[29].

In short the interim report concludes that the majority of the experimental projects and activities were characterised by:
- Strengthening the established local authorities' focus on the ability of handling Youth problems

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[27] Andersen, J. 2001
[28] Andersen, J. 2001
[29] Kjogx & Smistrup 2001

- Development of better possibilities/opportunities - within the established local system, and according to established norms – of dialogue with youth representatives, for mutual insight and understanding.
- Mostly rather few young people were actively participating ("expert-youngsters"), and often the majority were passive users if anything at all (p. 26)

The extent to which young people were given influence in the different Youth-municipalities varied, as did the fields of influence and the offered ways of participation.
One may distinguish two approaches or principles of organising and involving young people in the experiment: A *project-oriented* approach and a *Political-administrative* approach[30].

The project-oriented approach intent to involve young people in developing new activities and leisure-cultural options in the local community. A general experience is, that this form of organisation has generated lots of experimental activities, and has had a broader appeal to the single-case, direct democracy oriented youth.

Cultural projects generate more immediate dynamics and noticeable results, as young people generally demand. Furthermore it is rather easy to join and drop out of a time-limited project, which is dependent on the interests of the participants, there spare time etc. In some cases however it seems difficult to tell the difference between these Youth municipality-financed-projects and the various projects designed by e.g. the local Youth clubs or after school learning, except perhaps for the larger scale money involved. This form is characterised by a somehow unstabel organisation, a weaker rooting in the political-economical administration and projects are thus easyer to end and bury[31].

The strengths and weaknesses of the administrative approach were different. The aim was typically to maintain and anchor existing initiatives in the more official and traditional political end of the scale. Some of the Youth-municipalities, which functioned in this form, established a kind of local Youth council more or less as a reflection of the established city council. Young people were here to work as elected representatives for the total local youth, and had different assignments e.g. administration of youth founds to projects of young people, day-to-day administration of clubhouses, representation in various settings, and generally all issues concerning young peoples living conditions were submitted to the council. Under this form young people are given a formal influence in the ongoing debate about youth politics. On the other hand this form of involvement often degenerates into adult management and bureaucracy, and easily excludes everybody but the " political Youth elite"[32].

Generally the overall Youth municipality experiments were anchored in the local cultural / leisure department. This political-administrative placement signals a typical trend in the many endeavours to delegate influence and mandate to young people in Denmark. At first glance it seems regrettable primarily trusting young people to participate in shaping their spare time activities, but giving it some thoughts it might be the most realistic area to "start in", considering the intention of reaching as far and broad as possible.

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[30] Kjogx & Smistrup 2001, Bach 2001
[31] Ibid
[32] Ibid

At this point the evaluation interviews conducted with the young participants have not been analysed or published. Some trends seems obvious, though:

- Time limited cultural projects, including options for personal development and balanced self-determination attracts the greatest number of young people.
- There is a noticeable need for committed, respectful adults in most projects - to help keeping the spirit high during inevitable "waiting-periods" etc..
- Too much bureaucracy and time-stealing democratic procedures are capable of killing even the best of ideas and engagement.
- An outspoken demand for almost immediate action; ideas must materialize in specific "meaningfull" tasks, and small successes along the path are crusial[33].

VIII. Youth participation in institutions

The Education system

As mentioned before, Danish Youth politics to a large extent *is* education politics. And within this field the necessity for youth participation has been recognised for quite some time. Children and young people are mend to be taught and trained in the democratic modes of operations. In extension of the governmental youth political programme of 1997, the participatory rights and options of students and pupils has been focused and examined on several occasions. More "traditional" means / ways of student participation coexist with new (and promising?) initiatives of strengthening the influence of the individual student in his or her personal educational path/ trajectory.

In the following attention will be focused on some central and general aspects and principles of the common primary school and the various Youth-educations. Some variations in the regulations of the various institutions exist, which won't be mentioned here.

Traditional channels of influence within the educational system

Most important among the traditional possibilities for participation and democratic influence, the *student/pupils councils* must be mentioned. Since 1998 it has actually been statutory for the Danish primary-schools to provide the possibilities for setting up such committees, though it is recognised that the pupils cannot be forced to nominate and elect members.

Since the 1960'thies nation-wide *pupil or student-movements*, consisting of representatives for the local student-councils, have also played a certain role as spokesmen for the overall political interests of students and pupils. As such they have also arranged demonstrations, protest marches against financial cut downs etc.

These organs have had various competencies, mostly advice giving or consultative status. Lately it has been legislative statutory that the local students councils should be involved in questions and decisions regarding pupils health and security while attending school[34].

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[33] Ibid
[34] Undervisningsministeriet 1999

As regard to the Universities and the other higher academic education, students are represented on various levels in the governing body. Everyday-corporation and dialogue unfolds in the local departments student-staff committee, and students councils are consulted in questions regarding curriculum etc.When curriculum and the like are revised, students are typically invited to participate. However when ministerial decisions about major issues - regarding financing, admission regulation, take in numbers etc. - are made, some argue there is a growing tendency toward neglecting and overruling both students and scientific teaching staff.

Apparently the students interests in the day-to-day council work has lately been decreasing, as has indeed the frequency and size of protest marches etc. The only broad participatory and political activity which function is "Operation day-work" which is a one day project each year where students in gymnasium earn a day's salary by working (in firms or privately) which is then donated to third world support[35].

Outstanding though not exclusively responsible for this "de-political" trend in the pupils / students movements is the neo-liberal influence in the education system. At the one hand a legendary minister of education Bertel Haarder from the liberal rightwing party initiated this development. During his time in power for most of the eighties, he managed to bring about a number of substantial changes within the education system as well as in the administration. As a replacement of the traditional social democratic policy regarding educational matters, were public backing was desired and attempted assured by forming broad agreements across the house of Parliament and by involving all relevant students organisations and teachers ditto, Bertel Haarder introduced a neo-liberal policy. This included strategic management, appointing expert-panels (by the minister), and excluding pupils / students organisations. This policy and governmental strategy has to a large extent been carried on by the social democratic led government for the last 8 years.

At the other hand the social democratic educational policy from "equality through education" and to "education to all" in its attempt to give opportunities for all students across social class barriers, at the same time have created a focus at the individual student (responsibility for own learning) and an individual competition in the educational system.

These developments might add to the understanding of the declining interest both in the ordinary democratic participation and in demonstrations and protest marches on the students side. These public appearances no longer have significant potentials for influencing the minister, especially not when he /she is getting clever at using the media for influencing the public view[36].

New initiatives regarding personal influence in the school system

In various ways a number of new initiatives aim at strengthening the influence of pupils and students on their own transition. These manifest themselves in many different levels. Fundamentally they grow from the neo liberal turn in educational politics of the last two decades, and might best be understood from a "individualisation-perspective".

The most basic political declaration of intent is to

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[35] Nielsen, K.H. 2001
[36] Ibid

- *Focus on the single, individual pupil,*
  including graded teaching etc. This principle is taken further by the decision that each pupil attending primary-school, must be supported in planning a future perspective and an
- *individual education plan*
  in the 6. grade (12-13 years of age (first draft – to be revised once a year throughout primary). These plans must be grounded and motivated in the interests, aspirations and abilities of the individual child. And will by virtue of a strengthened concentration on
- *academic, vocational and personal guidance and councelling*
  be adjusted to reality and to the enlarged field of Youth education:
- *the multiple paths or trajectories.*
  As mentioned before, the governmental youth political ambition is to have 95% of all young people to complete some sort of youth education. In the course of the last decade, several new alternatives have been established. Likewise the spectrum of optional subjects has widened. (In addition see section II).

In spite of this the average young person's choice is far from being completely free in the duration of the educational transition. Especially admission to the most popular university studies is restricted. Typically top-grades and high-level courses in a number of specific subjects are needed. Some youngsters in their late teens come to realise a rather limited optional range in educational matters, due to "choices" made several years earlier. Thus the enlarged freedom of choice is supplemented by a demand for purposefulness and clarification from a pretty young age.

At the political-economical level, some changes in management also takes this individualisation of influence further, though in a slightly different way. From middle of the 1980-this the financial appropriations of the single educational institutions have been regulated according to their productivity. The various institutions therefore have to compete among themselves for attracting most students, thus delegating some kind of power and influence to the individual young person as a *consumer* of educational options.

In a similar marketed spirit, a number of managerial reforms were carried out in the 1980's, in order to maximise the sympathetic attitude of the educational institutions towards the business community. New school boards were introduced in primary-schools and high schools, counting parent members to ensure the representation of the local business community on the schools governing body (+ 2 teachers and 2 representatives of the pupils, all eligible voters)[37].

The trend in modern Danish educational politics seems to be to strengthen the single students influence on his own individual path of education, and simultaneously to adjust the educational system into a form similar to private trade market conditions.

Trade Unions

Acknowledging that gaining a first foothold in the labour market, just across the fence, is part of a successful transition, it might be interesting to make a quick view of young peoples attitudes towards trade union membership.

In Denmark the trade unions have historically played a major /important role in politics (close bonds between the social democratic party and some trade unions), and this role has been

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[37] Undervisningsministeriet 1999

legitimised by the very high frequency of membership and organisation. In several unions a department reserved young members exist, handling what is considered the special interests of this group. Within recent years a wide range of trade unions have become aware of the fact that especially young members pay their dues with little pleasure. – On top harbouring expectations and demands which the unions are not quite used to or capable of honouring. The per cent of organised workers remain generally high in Denmark (84%), but among the youngest – especially unskilled – workers, this percent is dropping: in 1994 just 71% of all unskilled workers 20-25 years of age were members, compared to 91% of the total of unskilled working-men[38].

It seems as if the trend of individualisation is also visible regarding the young member's expectations to the trade unions. Several surveys indicate that young people to some extent find the core awareness of the trade unions antiquated and of minor relevance. Opposite to their older colleges, young union members don't give priority to solidarity, employment security and equal wages. Alternatively they want the unions to offer courses of education and training (preferably for the single member), fight for work time flexibility, individual developmental possibilities and the right to negotiate individual contracts.[39]

IX.   Youth participation in non-formal educational contexts

Leisure and Culture

The non-institutionalised - and therefor most informal - free time arena of young people is rather difficult to describe in general terms. However it is an expanding field and apparently of growing importance – also regarding the question of shaping ones individual trajectory, influencing ones own transition.

In a modern society where transitions are becoming more indirect and "yoyo-ized", and the dynamic labour market call for a wide range of personal competencies, a persons social network and familiarity with modes of manoeuvring in lots of different social contexts is of great importance. As well as the ability of "keeping up" and "beeing on the beat".

Obviously this social networking takes place both in and across the different arenas and is inspired and reinforced by a skilled passing in and out of the various contexts. – Choosing the right friends is not just crucial for staying out of criminal activities, it might also have a considerably door-opening effect. And actually this somehow is a developing trend in Denmark. At least as an acknowledged, legitimate outspoken fact. For quite some time "nepotism" has been unwelcome and has taken place kind of clandestinely. It was considered a way of securing and reserving privileges, influence etc. according to the traditional structure of social classes. Furthermore most people publicly prefered to be employed exclusively according to qualifications, not due to being someones friend or relative. Today networks are concieved of as a sort of legitimate instrument within the labour market, and it is interesting to see whether these new structures will render the question of social background superfluous, or perhaps establish a future mechanism of social exclusion.

The more or less institutionalized leisure arena of youth life in Denmark is composed by

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[38] Nielsen, J.C & F.M.Sommer 2001
[39] Ibid

- Sports, political, christen and cultural -organizations of various kinds
- Youth clubs and Youth schools

Youth Organisations

Regarding the many (often) ideologically based volunteer organisations, traditionally characterised by a high degree of participatory possibilities, the picture is also one of change.

In Denmark organisations are traditionally rather integrated and engaged in the political process, and have moreover functioned as a kind of training arenas for democratic competence.
The National Youth Council of Denmark (Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd; DUF) sum up how membership of an organisation appears to contribute to the development of democratic competency of the individual child:
- Training in formal structures and democratic play-rules
- Support of democratic values
- Understanding of the mutuality of rights and responsibility[40].

It appears however, that young people's perception of organisation memberships appeal and relevancy is changing.

Over all the interest for joining bigger ideologically based organisations is decreasing. Most striking as regard to the political, Christen and environmental organisations, while the minor cultural organisations – theatre, music etc. – on the other hand experience an increase in members.
Interestingly some of the immigrant, Muslim Youth organisations experience a growing number of members and a growing youth activity.

According to DUF, the biggest problem of young people seems to be to accept democratic decisions for good and for worse. Young people have a hard time accepting the responsibility of assisting in bringing decisions, which they do not agree with or favour in their life. Three trends can be listed:
- It is increasingly difficult to make young people stick to a commitment, e.g. voluntary leadership in an organisation. Some organisations are fighting a real leadership crisis these years. Regularly youngsters prefer limited commitments in short-term projects
- The demands for quality are rising, and the competing commercial leisure activities seems much more appealing,
- As a fairly new thing, the basic aim or idea of the organisations is no longer reason enough to get involved. More important is the potential personal competencies to be gained by membership and involvement[41].

Some organisations are pt. considering whether to change the democratic structures and the daily management in order to motivate the youth to participate. A more project-oriented form might be an option. To day young people seem eager to commit themselves for short term limited activities with a high degree of self-determination. The organisations' reluctance to such a development has an

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[40] Stavnsager, H. & C. Jantzen 2001
[41] Ibid

ideological as well as an economical component. The traditional common values might be put under pressure. And the way the official grants work, the number of members regulate the subsidy[42].

At this place we need to add that allthough these tendencies are more underlined in the case of young people, they are actually visible for the total danish population. Motives for membership might slowly be changing from ideology to personal utility value. In spite (or because?)of this Danes remain the most organised population of the world, and it is common to be member of several organisations simultanously.

Youthclubs

The above mentioned developmental trends are more or less similar to those in the field of Youth clubs. Traditionally attention has been focused on participatory possibilities, and the young members of youth clubs have had broad influence and self-determination in regard to the daily activities as well as the way the clubs are being run.

However the clubs popularity seems to be declining. And these too have to function on the terms of the market, the "taximeter scheme" ruling the educational institutions works here as well. This leads to a competing environment among the various clubs and affects the young people's inclination to become steady members of a specific club. They rather prefer attending these clubs that currently feature the most attractive activity offer. In this way several variables have an effect on the development towards what is called a "bargain / optional pedagogy" in some youth clubs. Though many young people in this way withdraw from participating in a more continuos mode, they actually do commit themselves. The modern young person apparently finds it more relevant to engage himself in a series of limited projects and activities. And those projects enjoying greatest popularity are very often characterised by delegating wide influence to its participants. In this way young people are actively evaluating and choosing where and why to invest their time and energy, and thereby influencing their own path, but at the same time they only choose activities which seems immediately fun and entertaining [43].

X.   Disengaged young people

At this place we will not go into much detail about participatory possibilities for the group of disengaged young people. By being – more or less – disengaged, of course the options for influencing ones own trajectory is narrowed tremendously.

This very heterogeneous "group" of "drop-outs" etc. has been the focus of much attention, especially as a result of the education-to-all ambition. And the latest decade's widening of vocational youth education grows from the recognition that this ambition is unattainable unless especially this group is given options different from and more flexible than the "common" educational paths[44].

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[42] Ibid
[43] Moerch, S. & S. Laursen 1998
[44] Nielsen, M.B. et.al 1999

A central intent is to "focus on the individual" in the attempt to re-engage these young persons in educational trajectories. It is thought to be especially important to honour the need for being in power, having some kind of say and influence upon the way one is re-engaged. This is actually a field where the new lines of thinking in current Danish youth politic is visual. By switching the ambition from being one of leading young people "back on track" to something like assisting them in "projecting or designing their own personal trajectory", the individualised approach is very much outspoken and used in attempt to support an "individualised social integration"

Among the various means to reach the aim of integration, personal counselling and guidance are top-priority and combined with the initiative "free education". A thorough personal scheme is to be designed for each young person, at the optimum paying respect to both wishes, interests, abilities etc. of the individual and the conditions of the labour-market.

These fine visions might however do appear pretty theoretical to some specific young persons. Now and again the actual educational options are rather limited and not too attractive. And supplementary to these intentions, the youth politics also consist of a demand to start some sort of education or training within 3 months if being unemployed and younger than 25 years of age. Resisting formulating an educational scheme or refusing to enter a training programme results in having owns social benefit taken away. The importance of choice and self-determination is focused, and it is not an option to be reluctant to choose.

It is difficult to measure the effects of these new trends of individualisation in regard to actual labour-market integration of the disengaged group. But there is some evidence that especially the personal counselling is highly valued, and also reports of a motivating effect of experiencing influence[45].

XI.   Conclusion

The historical context for these developmental trends is generally termed *late modernity*, and in the case of Denmark it seems important that this includes a current transformation of the welfare state. The change from welfare to workfare do exist in Denmark, but the idea of becoming employable is maybe more open to individual choice and negotiations than in other countries.

Several analyses emphasise the fact that modern young people are born in a society characterised by a number of given *individual* citizens rights and options, which earlier generations had to fight *collectively* to gain.

Regarding the traditional core elements of the concept of citizenship several different qualitative surveys are available. Some of these attempt to shed light on the attitudes of young people towards democratic participation. In these analyses, the increased or "changed" individualisation is a key concept. Apparently young people conceive of democracy in ways different from the interpretation of older generations. "To young people democracy, democratic acts and behaviour seems to be closely connected to personal responsibility – to take a stand to something. Democracy has become a personal affair, an inner process, a private discussion about what is right and fair and desirable,

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[45] Ibid

conducted in solidarity. The most far-reaching consequences would be to formulate private individual rules and follow those. As it is said in a research report: "Among other things majority votes are not considered to be fair democratic forms of decisions, but rather like an assault on the personal freedom"[46]. These findings could be interpreted as a rational response to modern societal conditions, where competencies of finding and grasping the potentials of massively varied situations, and developing adaptive capabilities, generates the most promising prospects.

According to this line of thinking, young people might perceive e.g. membership of a political party as a threat to their identity, and generally resist to "get in (any) line"[47].

The developmental task for all citizens in Danish democracy is thus far from a task of becoming individualised. This personal status is more or less a given and is furthermore a precondition for participating in society – including completing an education and managing a job. In this perspective it comes as no surprise that the interest for gaining influence both turn towards different areas and take different forms than earlier.

Modern individualisation
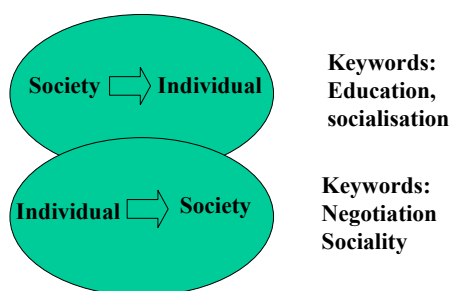
We may say that a traditional challenge of social integration, the socialisation model of individualisation and democratic development of the individual, have been more or less taken over by a new mode of social integration. In the new mode of social integration individualisation seems to be the prerequisite for social integration, and not the result. Therefore the "socialisation" goal is not to develop the democratic individual, the citizen, but to negotiate the individual social responsibility. This situation creates new issues and challenges in the understanding of modern democratic development and participation[48].

Thus the (only) option is to meet the young people in the individualised reality they inhabit, and support and promote their engagement in and influence on shaping and creating their own successful trajectories. The obvious challenge being one of facilitating mutual participation and qualified guidance, in order to assist the individual youngster in avoiding to private or subjectivist tracks, and instead develop into an integrative path of value to both the individual and the community.

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[46] Simonsen, B. 2001
[47] Simonsen, B 2000
[48] Andersen, H. & S. Mørch 2000 (f.ex).

Some issues, challenges or questions seems to arise from this situation:

- *Representative* vs. *Individualized democracy*?
- *Liberalisation* vs. *Sociality*?
- *Collective participation* vs.(?) *Individual influence*?
- *Counselling* as an individualised approach to development of integrative, success generating trajectories?
- The future meaning and importance of (informal) *networks*?

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