Educating inclusion? Aspects of exclusion within the inclusive policy concept of Lifelong Learning

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ABSTRACT In the last decade social inclusion together with lifelong learning have emerged as strong policy-leading concepts within the European Union. In order to enhance social inclusion, extensive investments in lifelong learning have been made. At the same time, the discourse of lifelong learning has become more individualized and market-oriented. Research shows how the individual learner has difficulties in managing the situation, as an increasing amount of responsibility in fulfilling the goals of the European Commission is placed upon the learning subject, rather than the state. The basic aim of the study is to discern what different approaches of inclusion/exclusion are to be found within discourses about lifelong learning in educational research accessible in the database ERIC. This article takes its theoretical point of departure in the Foucauldian notion of governmentality, focusing on how power operates in processes of objectification and subjection in order to increase the capacity of the population. Based upon the articles examined, I argue that both social inclusion and lifelong learning as positive and unproblematic policy-concepts need to be questioned and further problemized. Instead of looking at lifelong learning as one formal and normal solution for all, the result emphasizes the need for variety and diversity in policy-directives and increased sensitivity to the complex situation of those identified as the others.

Introduction

Lifelong learning has become a strong and inclusive policy-concept within the European Union (EU). By supporting education and learning opportunities the EU is supposed to become a strong and competitive knowledge-based economy. By broadening the understanding of learning, a wide range of needs is supposed to be met, among others the challenge of exclusion.

Education and training systems have an important role in helping to sustain democratic societies in Europe. All citizens should have equal access to education and training. Member States need to take care of the needs of vulnerable groups, particularly people with disabilities and people with learning difficulties as well as those living in rural/remote areas or having problems in reconciling their work and family commitments. It cannot be accepted that substantial proportions of people drop out of learning prematurely, and miss essential basic skills and qualifications to participate actively in society, without accepting also the loss to society and the economy as a whole which their unfulfilled potential represents. (European council of ministers, 2002, p. 30)

To ensure such a development in becoming the most competitive region in the world before 2010, as declared by the European Union in Lisbon march 2000, a new framework for coordination around social protection and inclusion policies has been established. The new framework created in 2006 was presented in “Working together,
working better: proposals for a new framework for the open co-ordination of social protection and inclusion policies”. In order to coordinate national policy settings for social protection and social inclusion the Open method of Coordination (OMC) is used, in the Lisbon strategy defined as “means of spreading best practice and achieving greater convergence towards the main EU goals… a fully decentralised approach using variable forms of partnerships and designed to help Member States to develop their own policies progressively” (cited in European Council of Ministers, 2002, p. 10). Member states are encouraged to communicate and share experiences working with questions such as reducing poverty and exclusion of disadvantaged groups (European commission, 2006a). The commission has formulated 12 overarching objectives for the coordination of social protection and inclusion policies, emphasizing social cohesion, equality between men and women, a mutual interaction between sustainable values and the Lisbon objectives of increased economic growth (European commission, 2006a). In order to achieve the objectives, lifelong learning is set out as a main solution (European Commission, 2006b). Lifelong learning is communicated as an overall framework in meeting the challenges presented to us by globalisation and increased trans-national competition. But, at the same time as lifelong learning increasingly becomes a part of an economical-political agenda research shows how the individual learner has difficulties in managing the situation (Biesta, 2005). Within the policy-concept lifelong learning, responsibility to fulfil national and even trans-national goals has moved away from being foremost a matter for the state, to lie heavily on the shoulders of the individual learner (Ball, 2004; Fejes, 2005). Questions could be raised as to what extent lifelong learning can be regarded as a valid solution to the problem of exclusion in order to enhance a more inclusive Europe. In this article the taken-for-granted ideas concerning lifelong learning and its supposedly positive effects on social inclusion will be problemized from a Foucauldian perspective.

How the study was carried out

The aim of this review is to look at what different approaches of inclusion/exclusion are to be found in research on lifelong learning. To see whether the assumption that lifelong learning enhances social inclusion is embraced or questioned within the research community. I seek to answer the question how is inclusion/exclusion talked about in research on lifelong learning? What different approaches are to be found?

Peer-reviewed articles available through Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) published 1966-2007 have been searched. ERIC is sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education and currently indexes more than 600 journals. The choice of database could itself be argued to exclude important contributions because of the strong Anglo-American dominance in what is accessible. Other extensive databases could have been taken into account, for example Academic Search Elite/Ebsco. Still, this is a demarcation I have made though my intention is to get an overview of the field. Abstracts have been read of all articles where lifelong learning and inclusion and/or exclusion are mentioned in title, keyword and/or abstract. Seven articles did mention lifelong learning together with both inclusion and exclusion in title and/or abstract and could therefore be assumed to contain the most elaborate uptakes; these articles were read as a whole.

The articles were divided into three major categories as presented in this text. One in which an overall picture of the result is given, where the articles mentioning lifelong learning
and either inclusion or exclusion are examined. In the other two categories articles mentioning lifelong learning together with both inclusion and exclusion are analysed using the Foucauldian toolbox, and finally some conclusions have been reached.

As mentioned above the study takes its theoretical point of departure in the work of Foucault, foremost the concept of governmentality, understood as the immaterial way in which power operates in all human relations, shaping the way people think and behave towards improvement regarding human effectiveness. Focus is not placed upon where power originates from, but rather on its manifestations and how it constitutes human relations.

The focus is not on social, economic and political circumstances that shape thought (for example, of our narrations of lifelong learning), instead the focus is on how thought (of lifelong learning) operates within the taken-for-granted ways that we do things (Fejes & Nicoll, 2008, p. 7).

The interest lies on how individuals are made objects as well as how the subjection of these objects is accomplished through various techniques. It is a process of power being exercised in human relations where “regimes of truth” are established. Within these regimes specific ways to interpret and talk about the world are made possible and desirable while others, more or less implicitly, are made impossible. (Foucault, 1980) Governmentality is not only concerned with how power operates in general but also how power is exercised through the governing of the others as well as the self in a way that enhances individual and societal productivity (Edwards, 2008). Governmentality could be described from this perspective as a form of state reasoning, which includes techniques for shaping human conduct (Foucault, 1991).

**Overall content in the articles**

When taking on a meta-perspective, making educational research the objective of my research, I deliberately place myself in a difficult position, being one of the agents within the field under examination. From my point of departure I look at the material in a certain way and from a specific theoretic standpoint as outlined above. By using the work of Foucault as my point of departure some aspects of the phenomena discussed become visible while others remain invisible. A complex phenomenon such as the idea of lifelong learning needs to be tackled from many different angles. By acknowledging this situation and the social aspects of scientific results and having discussed these results in different research fora I feel confident that this text can be regarded as a valid contribution to the field of lifelong learning and inclusion/exclusion.

Searching for *lifelong learning* and *exclusion* in journal articles 1966-2007 resulted in 25 articles. Among them seven mentioned both *exclusion* and *inclusion* in title, keyword and/or abstract. They are excluded from this section but will be discussed in more detail later on in the text. The distribution of articles per year has been quite sparse. The first article was published in 1989 and the second in 1994 and after that about two or three articles per year. The most positive articles dealing with lifelong learning and its possibility of preventing exclusion are to be found during 1996, the same year the EU declared as a *European year of lifelong learning*. Three articles were published that year, all with a positive agenda and faith in the possibilities of combating exclusion by investing in lifelong learning. When searching for *lifelong learning* and *inclusion* 42 articles were found. As mentioned above, seven articles used both *inclusion* and *exclusion* in title and/or abstract and are therefore excluded from this section. The number of articles mentioning lifelong learning and inclusion in title, keyword and/or abstract are somewhat higher than those mentioning lifelong learning and exclusion.
The first article was published in 1980, the second in 1986, the third in 1996 and from 1997 and onwards the rate of published articles has been quite stable at three or four per year. The only exception was found in 2007 with nine published articles.

The condition of the learning society

Two overall themes were found. One focuses on the question of societal development emphasizing the negative effects of the learning society, and the other discusses excluding factors and practices.

The conditions offered by the learning society stand out as a fundamental issue regarding the relationship between lifelong learning and inclusion. Jarvis (2006) argues that there has been a rhetorical shift away from human experiences on behalf of scientific rationality and issues related to the labour market. Because of this, extensive parts of human reality have become invisible in talk about lifelong learning. This becomes visible for example when promoting education for elderly, where the question of employability is still the prevailing one (Cole, 2000). Elliot (2000) stresses the importance of looking for more sustainable values in building a learning society than those offered in policy rhetoric and its focus on the labour market. Field (1998, p. 6) argues that fundamental pedagogical questions such as “(1) what kind of learning? (2) who learns and who benefits? and (3) what are the consequences?” still remain unanswered in the current debate on lifelong learning. As long as these questions are not taken into consideration, the logic of the market will continue to set the agenda. Appleby and Bathmaker (2006) agree, referring to an English examination. The result of the examination concluded that as many as seven million adults in England were not “functionally literate”. To fight this discouraging number a programme called “Skills for life” was adopted in order to enhance social inclusion. But as time went on the demands of the labour market were increasingly accentuated even in this project on behalf of the original idea of inclusion. Grummel (2007) claims that the neo-liberal agenda of lifelong learning itself prevents equality of opportunity and social inclusion. Although the empiric material of this review has a strong Anglo-Saxon influence Drodge and Shiroma (2004) argue that the tendencies are worldwide. National education policies all over the world are influenced by international policy-dominants, with increased homogeneity as a result. By comparing educational policies in England and Brazil Drodge and Shiroma (2004) show an increased alignment between policy documents in the two countries. Like many others, England and Brazil draw on international agencies when developing policies of their own.

Excluding factors and practices

When talking about excluding factors and practices arguments are to be found on different levels, structural and organisational as well as individual. Gouthro (2007) points out the importance of acknowledging structural inequalities. She argues from a critical feminist point of view, that inequalities embedded in societal structures create disadvantages for women who want to engage in education. When planning learning activities democratic considerations have to be made. She also emphasizes the importance of acknowledging women’s specific learning experiences. By bringing them into the light, a more gender-inclusive approach to lifelong learning can be developed. Another consideration that has to be made according to Gouthro is the understanding of gender. For far too long, gender has been understood as an empty category to relate to. Instead Gouthro wants gender to be embedded as a complex variable in the broader discussion of social inclusion with implications at
different levels. Clegg and McNulty (2002) argue in the same direction. The female reality has to be made the point of departure when planning lifelong learning activities for women they state.

Another topic in this section that concerned quite a few authors was the problem of access to education for disabled children and adults. Swain (2006) talks about how students with disabilities are struggling for their rights and the special support they need. As a pragmatic contribution in this direction White, Casebolt and Hull (2004) see working with the physical education environment as an important factor in order to enhance inclusion for these groups. Furthermore they argue that in order to improve the conditions for disabled children to evolve in lifelong-learning activities, efforts have to be made already in teacher’s training. Professional knowledge about the special needs of these children has to be improved. In order to fulfil the goals of being a school for all, teachers need to be better prepared in order to meet the special needs of these groups (Golder, Norwich & Bayliss, 2005).

At an individual level different factors and practices are talked about as excluding. Sharon and van Acker (2007) highlight romance, gender and social class as important excluding factors relating to a study performed in Australia. Especially for women from lower socio-economic backgrounds, romance and marriage could be argued to have a negative impact on their access to learning opportunities. They are already at an early age “trapped” in the household, with an overall responsibility for the family. This gives them little or no chance to engage in formal learning activities. Language is another excluding factor, building invisible walls between people and communities. Webb (2006) writes about the importance of practising language, especially for immigrants. For them, language is one of the most important key-factors in becoming part of a community. Other excluding factors mentioned are single parenthood, homelessness, rural location, care of the elderly, disability, criminal record and refugee status.

Information and communication technology is frequently used in policy rhetoric as a means to promote participation. Selwyn et al. (2004) show that there is no linear relationship between access to new technology and participation. Their result indicates that the use of this technology is steered by the same excluding determinants as discussed above. According to Selwyn et al., (2004) the amount of engagement in formal educational activities can to a large extent be determined by five overarching variables, class, gender, age, area of residence and educational background.

**Education as standardization**

From now on the result presented and discussed below is limited to the seven articles (Morrice, 2007; Shildrick & McDonald, 2007; Fejes, 2006; Edwards & McKenzie, 2005; Alexiadou, 2002; Selwyn et al., 2001; Edwards et al., 2001) where lifelong learning, together with both inclusion and exclusion are mentioned in title, keyword and/or abstract. Among these articles, five were published in the *International journal of lifelong education* and two in *Journal of education policy*. The articles have been sorted thematically under constructed headings. The first theme discussed is about education as standardization.

Edwards et al. (2001) question the notion of diversity within policy thinking on social inclusion when making it a question of integration “*Does social integration require homogeneity of cultures, values and beliefs?*” (p. 423) they ask. By using a language of integration, questions are raised about “*Integration of what and who is being integrated by whom*” (p. 424). Lifelong learning is conceived in a philosophy of identity where all humans are supposed to share common goals and motives.
What we wish to argue is that inclusion is primarily positioned within a philosophy of identity that denies difference. Within this stance inclusion and exclusion are described as binary opposites, in which the latter can be transcended to achieve the former. (Edwards et al., 2001, p. 423)

Within this theoretical framework there has to be a centre, a common goal for all humans to aim for and a common solution in order to reach it, in contemporary society called lifelong learning. The question is no longer if but rather how to integrate? Social inclusion has become equivalent to overcoming deficiency and deviancy. The notion of inclusion then is abandoned in favour of a more integrative approach thinking in terms of them and us. Fejes (2006) also discusses this issue referring to policy-development in Sweden. By looking at policy-documents from the Swedish Ministry of Education 1924-2004 he sees a historical development where the notion of the educable subject has been constructed.

There has been a shift from governing through society to governing through the actions of the individuals. In this shift, the idea of the adult educable subject has travelled and been constituted in different ways /…/ Today, the educable subject is being created as a lifelong learner. (Fejes 2006, p. 711)

Education is set out as a norm, something everyone should be involved in, something natural and normal. By making lifelong learning a narrative about normal life, other ways of living are labelled abnormal due to the logic of the learning society (Edwards et al., 2001; Fejes, 2006). The Swedish government sets out the driving force for the subject to engage in this normal behaviour by pointing out some crucial risks. If you do not embrace the idea of lifelong learning, your country runs the risk of losing its position as a welfare state in the forefront and you yourself may become unemployed. This rationality leaves the subject with very few options. In striving to foster active citizens and to enhance national competitiveness, those identified as the others, need to attend lifelong learning activities. Fejes (2006) ends by emphasizing the importance of questioning such a narrative. The way in which the Swedish government communicates lifelong learning as a way to ensure competitiveness harmonizes well with the policy-rhetoric of the EU. It could be argued that one true way to interpret contemporary society is accepted and embraced at structural, organizational as well as individual levels. In other words, the same mental map governs on different levels, from the policy document to the self-directed, lifelong-learning process of each “educable adult”. A complex network of power-relations operates establishing a regime of truth. Within this regime power operates discursively and relationally affecting the everyday life of the subject. A taken-for-granted assumption that everyone wants to participate in the life offered through lifelong learning as declared in the policy documents are constructed. Edwards et al. (2001) point to the fact that other “truths” also need to be taken into consideration.”/…/ we need to understand that non-exclusion is not the same as inclusion, and that we must avoid taking away the freedom of those who choose not to be included” (Edwards et al., 2001, p. 426)

Lifelong-learning policies for refugees in the United Kingdom supporting social inclusion exhibit the same illusion, talking about refugees as a homogenous group. "Government lifelong learning policy for refugees has been based on a one-size fits all model which fails to consider the diverse range and backgrounds of refugees /…/” (Morrice, 2007, p.157). In such an ideological framework skills and knowledge are being lost in a mainstream educational system. Gouthro (2007) writes that the situation is very much the same when it comes to the lack of female-specific knowledge and experiences while developing lifelong-learning activities for women. In doing so lifelong learning becomes part of the dividing practice that contributes to the reproduction of a dichotomy between the adaptable and the non-adaptable subject, where the latter is identified as being part of the others, those outside the norm.
Identifying the others

The others are equivalent to those who are unable to attain the normative educational standard set by the knowledge society. Edwards and Mackenzie (2005) discuss at a general level about participation, suggesting that by creating centres and places for interaction and deliberation people can meet and encourage each other in a more participatory direction. The individual learning trajectory is developed inter-subjectively they state. Their thinking derives from the assumption that in an interactive environment identities are shaped and reconstructed and enriched with increased social capital. Although this positive link between social capital and active citizenship is widely recognized the relationship between the two is not necessarily as linear as outlined above. Shildrick and MacDonald (2007) challenge the relatively unproblematic picture delivered by Edwards and Mackenzie by further problemizing the notion of social background. When studying youth trajectories in one of England’s poorest neighbourhoods Shildrick and MacDonald (2007, p. 594) found a less optimistic connection between education and work opportunities. “Informal, collective knowledge about the right way of becoming and being a working-class young adult did much to govern the shape of school-to-work careers”. The options presented to these young adults were heavily affected by socio-historical values and beliefs that might be understood as their habitus using the language of Bourdieu. For example, these values steered their thinking about what kind of work men and women could or should do in a stereotype way. Even though many dropped out of school in favour of low-paid work such as catering, cleaning and child-care some did engage in education and learning opportunities later in life. And this is where the result becomes even more discouraging regarding the goals posted by the European commission (2006) where lifelong learning is communicated as the solution for combating social exclusion. From their findings Shildrick and MacDonald (2007) describe what looks like a dead end. Most of the youths did not see post-compulsory education as an option; instead some of them got engaged in youth training that did not result in any stable job offer. Young adults were hired as a cheap workforce sliding between unstable jobs and unemployment. There was no sign of them being able to leave a life on the fringe.

There was no indication that young adults worked their way through low level employment to higher positions. This was a key finding of our Poor Transitions follow up study. Informants did the same sort of jobs at 17 and 27 years. (Shildrick & MacDonald (2007, p. 598)

The most important factor in getting a job, the informants said, was social network and informal contacts. These young men and women are the ones in need of salvation or normalization according to the reasoning of the knowledge society.

Looking at the situation for refugees entering the United Kingdom the situation is at first somewhat different. Among the refugees there is a lot of qualification and motivation that the working-class youths lacked. But in the end the result is just the same, they are to a large extent obliged to take low-skilled work, often far below their capacity. Morrice (2007) argues that one of the crucial factors promoting inclusion of refugees is the one-sided investment in formal education, thus missing the importance of informal education and the possibilities of developing a functional social capital. Power also operates within the formal educational systems steering the refugee in a certain direction when it comes to the labour market. Morrice takes the low levels of English-language education for refugees as an example. Courses initiated by the government often stop at level two, which at best prepare the refuge for low-skilled and low-paid work. Further language studies would have been necessary for trying to get more qualified work or attendance in higher education. Morrice stresses the
importance of a wider understanding of social exclusion also including informal and tacit knowledge for successful assimilation.

Lifelong learning policies stemming from a more holistic understanding of social exclusion would recognise that for refugees to become integrated, effective competent members of UK society involves the process of assimilation into social networks, developing cultural understanding and knowing rules of social engagement. Often it is through informal and non-formal learning opportunities that these implicit rules, norms and tacit knowledge are picked up and developed. (Morrice 2007, p. 159)

In order to achieve this crucial social capital the lifelong learner needs to engage with people who posses a greater capital than himself or at least a different capital, otherwise it just becomes more of the same low-quality capital. By associating with people foremost from the same group or from the same neighbourhood the needed transgression of capital will not happen. Instead the state as well as they themselves think of them as the others, those who could not live up to expectations. A subject is created in need of improvement.

Other groups of people, considered as excluded, are those living outside the cities, far away from learning centres and schools. Their need to be included in the learning society is supposed to be met by expanding the educational infrastructure, which is equivalent to investing in information and communication technology. On the policy level optimism is widespread, the new technology is thought to enhance freedom for the individual learner. In other words, governments supply citizens with the needed technology and infrastructure to ensure their competitiveness in the global arena (Selwyn et al., 2001). There is nevertheless little empirical evidence that ICT itself will ensure inclusion, especially because of its reliance on pre-existing structures of formal education.

Perhaps the most telling factor in the long-term effectiveness of this “new” agenda of lifelong learning is its reliance on mostly pre-existing structures of education. Despite the high-profile positioning of distributed learning centres in innovative locations such as football stadia and pubs, the fact remains that the vast majority of community access to ICT will be provided through learning centres housed in existing educational institutions such as schools, colleges and libraries. Moreover, the majority of commissioned online content and learning resources will be supplied by existing and established educational providers. Whereas this fashioning of the “new” system of lifelong learning around “old” structures will ensure an initial stability it may not go far in overcoming many of the existing problems regarding participation in lifelong learning. (Selwyn et al., 2001, p. 270)

Although lifelong learning is outlined as a narrative about life in general it has difficulties in leaving the domain of formal education. Despite efforts made in policy documents to embrace non-formal and informal learning aspects of learning formal education still remains the dominant discourse.

Conclusions

In this article, I have described the different approaches to lifelong learning and inclusion and/or exclusion that are to be found in educational research available through the database ERIC 1966-2007. The rate of published articles increased from 1997 and onwards, the same year that New Labour made social exclusion a policy priority (Alexiadou, 2002). This convergence between research focus within the scientific field and policy agenda touches the complex issue of academic independence and scientific autonomy and confirms what has
been described as an increased hybridization between society and science (Nowotny et al., 2007).

According to the research reports examined, lifelong learning and social inclusion, as posed in EU policy rhetoric are seriously questioned in educational research. While presented as rather unproblematic and positive concepts in policy texts, educational research opens up a more critical and elaborate understanding. The multitude of educational reforms produced during the last decade and the complexity they consist of makes policy analysis an increasingly important field of educational research. Policy documents themselves are complex products Ball says. *Education policy itself is clearly, as I have tried to indicate, full of contradiction and attempts, however misconceived, to save itself from itself* (Ball, 2004, p. 15).

Quite a lot of critique is directed towards the emergence of a learning society lacking in human knowledge and experience. Too much focus is placed upon questions such as flexibility, adaptability and employability thus losing the human perspective. Lifelong learning is talked about as being part of excluding practices, rather than the solution to these as often proclaimed in policy rhetoric.

**Optimizing the population**

One of the fundamental themes posed in the articles examined is homogeneity. Policy documents talks about lifelong learning for all, understood not just as formal education activities; but also as a way to live in order to meet the overall challenges from globalisation, emphasizing adaptability, flexibility and employability. When trying to explain future needs and risks governments communicate the idea of the educable adult as norm. Only by acting responsibly by becoming a lifelong learner can individuals and nations handle the future, making the implicit statement that this driving force is common property. The population is viewed as an entity continuously in need of improvement. *The others* identified as those in need of lifelong learning have to be integrated “*We could say that the population is constructed as an entity that is to be governed and improved; it is a question of the fitness of the population*” (Fejes, 2006, p. 708). What Foucault describes as a regime of truth is being developed. When accepting something as the right and normal behaviour, something else is by definition considered abnormal. Lindblad (2005, p. 44) puts it like this: “*The exclusion and inclusion joined (i.e., inclusion/exclusion) is embedded in principles of reason (the distinctions, differentiations and categories of knowledge) as divisions that simultaneously create an inside and an outside.*” In this case those outside are equivalent to those who need to be integrated into the normative group who have already accepted the lifelong-learning narrative. The stigmatisation of *the others* as abnormal becomes a powerful technique affecting the process of subjection. By adopting a dichotomist vocabulary using words like normal/abnormal and natural/unnatural, individual behaviour becomes strongly affected. Not necessarily in any obvious way but in the way people talk, choose and act as active subjects. Governementality has very little to do with the explicit power exercised by governments, its focus is instead placed upon the way power works in the social order in general, shaping the conduct of the population towards increased competitiveness. Here policy documents play an important role in the knowledge-production of “truths”. In today’s policy documents the lifelong learner is brought forward as norm. Someone who constantly evolves in education takes on a flexible attitude to life in general and is able to adapt to a changing environment. This is the desirable kind of citizen, able to handle the future labour market as communicated in policy rhetoric. Hence policy documents become important factors synchronizing human
action and thinking towards a more productive direction. The state becomes a supportive instance empowering the individual in his/her personal striving for normalization.

Against this background the articles examined emphasize the need to leave rhetoric locked up in thinking about them and us. Other values of life than those presented by international and national agencies must be considered legitimate; individuals have to have the possibility to say no. In a newly published book on Foucault and lifelong learning Zackrisson and Assarsson (2008) draw the same conclusion but at the same time they are problemize individual choice. Taking the example of a classroom situation the student always has the possibility to exercise resistance they say. However, in real life this is by no means unproblematic, several obstacles will follow such a standpoint thereby governing the subject.

Teachers are not in total control of the situation as participants have a crucial role in the interplay. However, those who strive for identities other than those constructed and allocated to them by the teacher are likely to be positioned as failures and as unwilling to undertake necessary change. (Zackrisson & Assarsson 2008, p. 121)

The possibility of defiance is always present although the real options for negotiation can be heavily reduced. “It is not possible to question this idea; those who do are created as “the others” who are in need of a remedy” (Fejes, 2006, p. 711). Lifelong learning becomes a moral issue in order to foster responsible citizens instead of being one possible interpretation of life among others.

Lifelong learning as a moral obligation

During the last decade there has been a rhetorical shift, from talking about the social state to talking about the enabling state. Governing is exercised through the actions of individuals rather than by governments. When talking about lifelong learning in terms of moral responsibility focus is placed upon the lifelong learner rather than the content to be learnt. Lifelong learning not merely becomes a narrative about education or even lifelong education but rather a narrative about life itself where true life becomes synonymous to lifelong and lifewide education. This is what makes the discourse so strong. It is never an isolated question about engagement in some kind of educational activity, formal or non-formal, it is a question about being alive or not. Edwards (2008) comes to the same conclusion when talking about the moral aspects of lifelong learning.

Despite this, discussions about the informal aspects of lifelong learning are rare in the articles examined, except for some discussions on female-specific knowledge achieved outside the formal education system being lost when planning lifelong-learning activities.

A topic that did occur in quite a few articles was how to get disadvantaged groups included and the socio-economic problems connected to it. How poor neighbourhoods conserve their inhabitants and reproduce bad circumstances. The articles read in this study reveal a twofold exclusion regarding these vulnerable groups. First of all marginalized groups consider themselves as being outside much of what the learning society offers; it is none of their business. Many of the youths in these areas have no real possibility of leaving a life on the fringe and this becomes powerful knowledge that operates in the process of subjection, guiding their everyday decisions about what is possible or not. When accepting being
marginalized according to the reasoning of the learning society, they are considered immoral and not fulfilling their obligations as responsible citizens. This becomes visible in their objectification by the state as *the others*, those in need of lifelong learning which creates a second exclusion.

Although power operates through self – regulative behaviour and individuals really are trying to live up to the norms communicated to them and become moral individuals, several obstacles are identified along the road such as gender, class, unemployment, homelessness, early marriage and others. Here somewhat of a circulatory reasoning reveals itself when the obstacle supposed to be fought is the one hindering the same. Structures of inequality seem to reproduce themselves leaving those diagnosed as excluded with few or no options to work their way up. Still, talking about lifelong learning for all will always contain a troublesome contradiction. There will always be people making the “wrong” political decision and there will always be those who try to fight the power emanating from policy rhetoric operating at different levels of society. And there will always be those who remain outside no matter how hard they try to act as morally responsible individuals.

Finally I want to mention two areas that emanate as important fields of research for the future after examination of the research reports. First of all the silent homogeneousness within the European union has to be further problemized along with a more dynamic understanding of the complex link between social inclusion and lifelong learning as *the* way to salvation. Here different kinds of policy-analysis can serve as important tools. The second area in need of further research is the taken-for-granted ideas embedded in European policy affecting our everyday lives and the understanding of who we are. Here the work of Foucault offers an interesting point of departure. Foucault describes the challenge of today as follows “Maybe the target today is not to discover who we are, but to refuse what we are” (Foucault, 1982, p. 216).

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