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Project supervisor: Niklas Chimirri

Group no.: 19

Students (Full name and student ID no.):

Johan Filrup	53083
Sophia Schatz	52067
Kristoffer Harald Steengaard	50009

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Abstract

The project investigates why alternative schools exist. It argues that the reasons to the existence of alternative schools must be found in the reasons to why some parents choose an alternative education to their kids. Therefore it examines the ideological and philosophical foundation of the schools and their actual values and practices, to find the proclaimed benefits of this kind of education.

The methodological procedure consists in an examination of the influencing philosophies of the schools and interviews of two leaders of alternative schools, one in India and one in Denmark. The project has a theoretical and empirical approach to the research field. It has utilized theory to create concepts which are employed to analyze empirical findings. The project has found that alternative schools are established as an opposition towards public schools. Alternative schools give credence to the development of all humanistic faculties, and focus on creativity, intuition and experience.

Alternative schools seek to promote democratic, solidarity and self-dependent behavior in their students, and thus they hope to change society by starting with the individual. The project has revealed some essential similarities within philosophies of education and human-life across the countries. E.g. that self-awareness brings love to the self and others, that the essential feature of a human is its relationship with others, that learning is to develop the faculties of the self, and that education can alter society.

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Problem area

The school system of a country ought to educate its young citizens in concert with the aims set out by politicians, because they are in charge of the regulations and reforms of education. The education of students in public schools will thus reflect the ideologies of politicians of the country. The school will in this manner be a place where society is sought to be reproduced along with political aims.

The American philosopher Martha Nussbaum has criticized the Indian school system claiming that it may promote undemocratic and prejudicial behavior in the students, which according to Nussbaum, is very inconvenient in a country tormented by religious struggles and class struggles. Instead she advocates that the potential benefits of alternative education, might further empathic, democratic and solidary citizens. We contemplate what it is about alternative schools which make Nussbaum make such a strong claim. Therefore, we have chosen to look into alternative philosophies of education to understand why they, according to Nussbaum, have the potential to make a lasting and positive influence on society and individuals.

Whether it is a school, prison, hospital, museum, library, retirement home or a kindergarten, an institution has its specific purposes, functions, aims and conditions. These may in some way influence the individuals at that institution. A given individual at a given institution, must be there, or participate in the institutional activities, either because of a free will to do so, personal interest, necessity, illness, persuasion, manipulation or force. If it had not been for these, there would be no participants or members and thus no institution. In our project we want to focus on alternative schools, because of Nussbaum's claim and because we find that there must be a good reason to why they exist. We believe that by answering this question we will find their sociological relevance and potential impact on society.

The existence of alternative schools make us contemplate if there are some needs or wishes they support or fulfill, which is not supported in public schools. Why would they exist, if ordinary education could replace their functions? Why would they exist if it was that nobody found a valuable purpose or use in them? Then there would be no need for them to exist, as they rely on voluntary participation. Alternative schools must somehow have a purposeful function, which is either nonexistent elsewhere or quite rare. There must be some kind of social demand of their specific approach to learning, their methodology, world-view etc. which initiated their foundation and keep them running, with new pupils assigning. It is our main focus in this report, to find the basis to why they exist. We seek to investigate what it is that maintain their existence, and thus we ponder why some parents choose to send their children to an alternative school instead of a public school?

Our investigation will include the analysis of particular schools in India and Denmark, which later will be elaborated. Thus we ask in our **research question**:

Why do alternative education in India and Denmark exist and what are the purposes of alternative education?

A central idea of the project is that our investigation and extrapolation of the central ideas of alternative educations will answer our research question. We will not focus on socio-cultural factors, historical events, large data sets or a certain contextual description to answer the RQ. In answering the RQ, we probe into the ideological and philosophical tendencies of alternative schools. Thus we try to understand alternative schools and alternative education philosophies from their own perspectives. We estimate that there must be several reasons to why they exist. What we investigate is the reasons, which their philosophies suggest to why alternative schooling serves a valuable purpose to individuals and maybe society. It is important to know why some individuals prefer alternative schooling, in order to know why the schools exist because if there were no pupils the schools would not exist. Asking numerous students about their preferences has not been possible due to limitations of time. But we find that it is actually more relevant to look into the philosophies which have inspired alternative schools, and the ideas within actual alternative schools, to explain which essential features that make them relevant to many individuals, thus explaining why they exist. The following sub question is thus derived from these contemplations:

1. According to alternative ideas of education, how is the student influenced by alternative education?

In our research we will look into the values, ideas and practices of a movement of Danish alternative schools called “Lilleskoler”, and the alternative schools of India in general but especially a school called Poorna. This is done to answer our research question from a more empirical perspective. We thus have the subquestion:

2. Which values and ideas are essential to the alternative schools we investigate?

We chose to investigate “Lilleskoler” due to the proximity of the object of research, but also because of the affinity which one of our group members had to the schools. Because she had attended one of the “Lilleskoler”, we got into contact with the leader of the Danish association of “Lilleskoler” and arranged

an interview. Therefore our choice of “Lilleskoler” was straightforward as it opened up good possibilities of doing empirical work.

The choice to inquire into the ideologies and practices of alternative schools in India started with an academic interest in the philosophies of Martha Nussbaum, and her claim that alternative schooling can have a vital influence on the population and the democracy of India (Nussbaum, 2007). We found it interesting to look at India to employ a more deeply investigation of the philosophies of education, which Martha Nussbaum claimed to be so vital for society if implemented properly.

The choice of investigating alternative schools in two very different countries was made to see if there were similarities in the thoughts, foundation and methods of the alternative schools. This is interesting to look at because these schools share very limited common history or culture, and are inspired by different thinkers. Their influences are thus very different and we have found no literature that have revealed if the schools in Denmark and India have shared influence on each other’s development, an assumption we find very unlikely. Investigating the thoughts and ideologies of education in two such different places, may reveal some very interesting findings. Therefore we ask in a sub question:

3. What do the alternative schools in India and the alternative schools in Denmark, called “Lilleskoler”, have in common?

Depending on the extent to which one can speak of very close or rather vague similarities or differences in the philosophies of education, one may argue that something in the ways humans think might be the same or might not be the same, whether in Denmark or in India. In other words we can theorize and dig deeper into questions about whether human beings and their beliefs, thoughts and wishes are (mostly) independent of or (mostly) determined by cultural background, ideologies, country, ethnicity, religion etc. Such a conclusion can of course not be validly stated, due to the limitations of this project and epistemological considerations. But depending on our findings we might state that no or few thoughts are the same, or that many thoughts are the same. We might further state that these thoughts resembles each other to a high degree or a small degree, and that these similarities or differences, suggest to us either symmetry, asymmetry or both, in thoughts and ideologies of education, in between countries that are quite unlike and have not shared any particular influence on each other concerning the investigated issue.

The term “alternative school”

The term “alternative” is an eclectic concept. Looking the word and its use in practice, “alternative” indicates that there is at least two things or two possibilities of choices. One of them constitutes what is the most common thing or common choice, and the other (or others) the “alternative” or substitute

for the other. One can for instance mention that an alternative or substitute to smoking a cigarette could be smoking a cigar. In either case one would still be smoking. The former is the most common and the latter is the “alternative”. The same goes on for education, the public school is the most common and every other kind of school poses an alternative choice, in relation to how one would like to be educated. Whether one chooses an alternative school or a mainstream school, one will still be educated. So what is it that makes some people choose the “alternative”, instead of the most common, or the “mainstream”. One can as in the example of cigarette and cigars, argue that the cigar has some attributes which the cigarette does not have and vice versa. According to one’s own personal preferences and maybe a whole list of other things, one chooses between the two. The same goes on for education, which is why we contemplate why some prefer to choose an alternative school.

In this manner we state that an “alternative” school can be any school, which is not state-run. But in order to make it clear which other characteristics that can be used to describe the term “alternative school”, we have found inspiration in the book “Alternative education in India” (Vittachi, 2007). The author has made a list of the commonalities which are evident in most alternative schools in India. Researching literature within the research field, we have found no such definitions of alternative schools in Denmark or of “Lilleskoler” but in the project we will seek to find some of the things which make “Lilleskoler” similar and thus able to categorize as alternative schools.

According to Sarojini Vittachi alternative schools share at least one, but generally more, of the following features; each school has a unique approach to the methods of education, there is an emphasis on respect and equality, the learning is interest based and experiential, interdisciplinary is important, the classes are kept small, the constitution of the class structure can be a mix of students of different age and levels, education often take place outside the classroom, the administration is democratic and anti-hierarchical, evaluation methods are exploratory but generally not based on examinations, the topics and curriculum are uniquely constituted and rates of success is based on different measurable and immeasurable parameters, not benchmarks or examinations (Vittachi, 2007). Vittachi’s defining features of alternative schools have the commonality that a certain degree of independence and uniqueness is attributed to the schools.

Furthermore we can add to this list, that alternative schools are funded differently than state-run schools. In Denmark the schools are partially funded by parents, and partially funded by the state (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14). In India alternative schools are funded mostly through parents (Vittachi, 2007).

Also in Denmark alternative schools have a degree of independence and uniqueness according to Søren Hansen, leader of the Danish association of “Lilleskoler” (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14)

In summary, an alternative school is typically small and rather independent. It is funded differently and has other learning aims and methods than state-run schools.

Brief historical overview of alternative education in India

Up until the early nineteenth century education in India was normally set up to be one school in one village. The students in the schools were from different castes and they studied subjects like literature, philosophy, lexicology, religion and grammar.

Colonization meant a change in power and domination, and indigenous education was therefore replaced to “form a class who interprets between us and the millions we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” (Lord Macaulay, 1835, in Mehrotra, 2007).

The colonizers wanted Indians to forget about their own culture and customs to become westernized. Consequently, the education system and the schools established went into decline, and the focus of learning was no longer that of original thinking and training in practical skills as was the case in the old education system, but on absorbing information.

Alternatives to this new focus in the education system began to emerge in the late nineteenth century and by 1920s and 1930s a number of useful models were created in opposition to the mainstream education.

A crisis in Indian society in the 1960s resulted in difficulties to combat poverty and inequalities.

Movements against the current power structures and education system emerged in the 1970s, with a common focus on democratic values. Alternative educational thinking began to blossom, and from the 1970s onwards the number of alternative schools was increasing in India (Mehrotra, 2007).

Rabindranath Tagore was one of the first to stand up and identify flaws and weaknesses with the mainstream education created by colonial authorities. He did not believe in this mechanical education. He wanted children to experience the world and not only to read about it: “We rob the child of his earth to teach him geography, of language to teach him grammar. (...) Child-nature protests against such calamity with all its powers of suffering, subdued at last into silence by punishment” (Tagore, in Mehrotra, 2007, pp. 29).

Tagore was concerned with the way children in the mainstream schools were taught and maybe more importantly what happened to students when teachers as authorities had the power to control them. The problem happens when the students become inferior objects in school and their lives are being filled with fear. It makes the students feel vulnerable and results in lower self-esteem, making it more difficult to love to learn.

Eventually Tagore set up his own alternative school, which focused on art and aesthetics (Mehrotra, 2007). We will look more into Tagore and his ideologies later on.

Jiddu Krishnamurti was also very concerned with how education affects the lives of students. He believed in an all-round education where the whole of life is being investigated, including the whole human. He too believed that teachers have a responsibility in assuring that students are filled with confidence in order to be able to love life: "Education in the true sense is helping the individual to be mature and free, to flower greatly in love and goodness" (Krishnamurti, in Mehrotra, 2007, pp. 32). Krishnamurti sought to change the educational system by questioning why most of us are afraid to try other ways of schooling or as he puts it: the 'right kind of education'. This, according to him, would result in a change in the norms and values of today's society and ultimately a change in human relationship where violence and starvation are non-present (Mehrotra, 2007). We will focus more on Krishnamurti later on.

Brief historical overview of alternative education in Denmark

According to Søren Hansen, the chairman of the association of "Lilleskoler", the mainstream schools of Denmark have their education paid for when paying taxes. The alternative schools are not entirely funded by the state thus the parents have to pay a certain amount of money in order to have their children to go at an alternative school. The first alternative school in Denmark was established in the 1950's. Today there is a bit more than 500 schools in total. They vary in sizes anywhere from less than 10 students up until 500 plus students. The alternative schools have the same exams as the mainstream schools of Denmark yet they teach their subjects differently than the mainstream schools. They put an emphasis on shaping and creating the individual student instead of creating an individual for the working industry. The alternative schools are more frequent in using music and art as a subject when shaping the individual. The alternative school wishes to educate as well as raise and nurture the kids in their upbringing thus creating independent individuals. (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14)

Methods

Interviewing

In our data collection from “Lilleskolen”, we have employed a semi-structured interview, as we estimated that this would give us the most nuanced answers, due to the generality of our research questions. According to Bryman, the semi-structured interview has advantages, when as in our case; it is the opinions of participants and not a measurement of predetermined key concepts, one are looking for (Bryman, 2012). This is because a literature-review has revealed that the area of investigation is rather unexplored and theories and concepts are rather scarce. Instead of having a structured interview, where our concerns and assumptions about the topic would confine the interviewee, we employ a semi-structured interview. This is done to guide our respondent into the subject, but create possibilities for the respondent to answer openly, and come up with new notions, we as social scientists would not have thought about.

The method allows room for exploration of new issues, to further probe on questions which have not been fully answered and to go off at tangents, but more concretely, it will allow flexibility. In other words, and as Bryman suggests, this kind of methodology will help us to reflect upon what the respondents sees as important and relevant to the issue, not what we as researchers deems relevant (Bryman, 2012). According to Bryman, this interview form enables us to probe deeper into the notions and meanings of one interviewee, and take these opinions and represent them to another interviewee (Bryman, 2012). A semi-structured interview gives us the advantages of addressing the rather specific issues of our topic, while not being exclusionary of new and surprising findings that may be revealed by this method. As Bryman points out, this is pertinent to a study like ours as the focus is “fairly clear”, and we need new knowledge to spur and reveal concepts (Bryman, 2012).

Given that we are three interviewers doing fieldwork, a common interview-guide can following Bryman, assure a certain degree of similarity in the questions posed, which also is why this methodology has been chosen (Bryman, 2012). We will pose the same questions by mail to the Indian schools, as we use in interview guide for our semi-structured interview at “Lilleskolen” in Denmark. Given that the structure and content of the interview guide, and the questions in the mail are identical, the method can following Bryman ensure some similarity and comparability in a multiple case study like our project (Bryman, 2012).

Thus we have chosen a qualitative interview, as we work mostly inductively in the empirical part of our project, where we seek to extrapolate the values of the schools from statements of the active members, in search for a more conceptual analysis or understanding of the topic, which have been derived from “below”. The methodology will give us openness and flexibility in our research process and the accumulation of data, as well as comparability and validity in our analysis.

Interview guide

Our interview guide and our questions have been amalgamated in the best way possible to answer our research question and to avoid the restriction of preconceptions. This has been done through a review of the existing literature on the topic, discussions in the group, and random thoughts generated in the progress of work and contemplations. We have pursued an ideal of open-endedness and have tried to avoid too specific or limited questions. This shall ensure that the variety of answers towards the issues and topics is not foreclosed, and that we as interviewers do not lead the direction of the answers. In concert with Bryman's suggestions about the advantages of open-ended questions, we try to make our questions open to interpretation and a multiplicity of perspectives, whereby we do not foreclose any alternative avenues of investigation (Bryman, 2012). We have sought to formulate our questions in a language which does not exclude any of the interviewees from a full comprehension, but at a level of commonality which hopefully does not preclude any associations. We believe our terminology to be rather uncomplicated and quite familiar to our interviewees, as suggested by Bryman (Bryman, 2012). The order of the questions are listed so that one topic is taken at a time, then being elaborated, maybe further probed on by the interviewer, and before continuing to the next topic, there is given some silence so that the interviewee has the opportunity for further reflection. This order shall assure a natural flow in the conversation and leave room for "follow-up questions", "interpreting questions", "indirect question", "direct questions" and "specifying questions", as coined by Kvale (1996) (in Bryman, 2012).

To understand the ideologies of education concerning Lilleskoler in Denmark, we had a semi-structured interview with an expert on the field, Søren Hansen, who is the chairman of the Danish society of "Lilleskoler". He thoroughly described the historical origin of Lilleskoler and their development and progress in Danish society, and spoke with us for more than one and a half hour. Søren had also been the headmaster of two "Lilleskoler", and he showed to have extensive knowledge about the schools, their activities and ideologies, practical, theoretical and historical knowledge. Before interviewing Søren we had made our interview guide containing the questions we posed, a short description of our intentions with our project and the interview which we presented to Søren and some key points of criteria for a good conduct of doing interview. The suggestions of the conduct of a good interviewer we derived from Steinar Kvale (1996) (in Bryman, 2012).

You can find our interview guide and questions for the interviewee in appendix 2.

During the interview we found out that especially openness towards the subject and the interviewee, were of special importance because one could easily be too presumptuous as an interviewer to the area, as our conceptions and experiences of education were the derived from the mainstream Danish

primary school. It was therefore an advantage that one group member asked most of the questions as she had a great knowledge and respect for the subject through her years attending “Lilleskolen” in Bagsværd.

We did not get to ask all of the questions or follow our interview guide ad hoc, because some of the questions were answered in relation to other questions, as we had a very knowledgeable and talkative expert interviewee who spoke comprehensively about the most important and relevant matters of the subject and our questions. The quality and the richness of the data we derived from Søren, made us trustful towards our questions and method.

In examining the alternative Indian schools we met a dilemma. We hoped to derive our data through online-interviews as these could give us some personal and detailed data which are not derived from books, theories or websites, but from real persons and thus more concrete empiric data. Furthermore we could ask the precise questions which would help us to answer our research question, and probe or ask again if doubt would appear. But as only one school responded to our request of an interview, we sought new possible ways to derive our data from. This was done through an analysis of the websites of the alternative schools, which we wrote to. Hereby we have sought to identify and compare some of the statements at the websites which can be helpful to answer our research question, as the schools have some exhaustive descriptions of values, ideologies of education, perspectives on the children, and statements of students etc.

In relation to this, J. Scott (1990) points out that it is important to be critically aware of why the website exist, and whose interests its existence serves (Bryman, 2012). We shall here notice that the documents and statements of the websites must be written to present their schools positively and assumingly attract parents to submit their children, as this is how the affiliated people must sustain their schools. The portrayals of the schools at their web pages may thus be of a biased and positive nature, and written in an attractive commercial language to attract new students. That is partially why this methodology was chosen as a second priority, as we cannot know the extent to which the data we collect, compare and analyze will be evident in reality. This critical assumption could also be found evident if we did more online-interviews by mail, because the respondent would be able to lie or manipulate facts.

In any case we will benefit much from the book “Alternative education in India”, which have been the most valuable and inspiring book on the subject, and thus derive a broader picture of the subject through this book.

Methodological strategy

We have sought to utilize the most pragmatic way of answering our research question. As we found no books on the field of research of Danish “Lilleskoler”, our method of data collection had to include an interview. We had a general interest in the commonalities of the Danish “Lilleskoler”, whereby it would only make sense to ask one who had a deep insight into the world of “Lilleskoler”, and not a teacher on any particular school. In the latter case we could only get an impression of the particular practices, ideologies and values at a given school, but as we wanted to know the ideological and practical similarities of all “Lilleskoler” we needed an expert on the field. The expert we found, Søren Hansen, is the leader of the Danish association of “Lilleskoler”. We were deeply impressed of the immense knowledge he has of the history, values, practices and ideas of “Lilleskoler”. Our chapter about “Lilleskoler” is thus mostly founded on what Søren told us, and a short text describing the purposes of “Lilleskoler” written by the head of secretary of the association of “Lilleskoler”.

To collect data from the alternative schools in India, we wanted to employ online- interviews, asking teachers or school leaders about their school. Sadly, the schools we wrote to did not answer. We therefore sought to explain the current ideologies of alternative schooling, through the book “Alternative education in India”, which gave us a comprehensive description of our field of research. Again we found out that the literature about alternative schooling is very sparse, whereby the only relevant source we could find to cover our investigation of India’s alternative schools was the book formerly mentioned and the websites of the schools.

Our theoretical use of Krishnamurti’s and Tagore’s philosophies was to find the concepts we could utilize to compare and understand the world of alternative schools, but these philosophers also gave us an understanding of the ideological foundation of many alternative schools in India. Their thoughts have been essential to inspire and develop many schools and they are some of the most influencing educational thinkers of India in the 20th century (Mehrotra, 2007).

Two weeks before we had to finish the project, we got an answer from the Indian school ‘Poorna’. The answers of our questions were not very long, but precise. The statements made by the leader of Poorna about the school, its ideologies and practices, had a striking resemblance to the descriptions of schools in the book “Alternative Schooling in India”. This points towards that the content of the book represents the nature of the schools quite well, and suggests that our main source of data of the alternative schools of India (which is the formerly mentioned book) is a valid alternative to the data we could have derived through interviews.

Our project has used main authors such as Krishnamurti, Tagore, Nussbaum and theories like reform pedagogy as well as books like “Alternative Schooling in India” as a vital part of our project. We found that we have traced many similarities between the authors and theories. One similarity is that they are

all advocates of the practices, purposes and ideologies of alternative education methodologies, which they find can alter society and individuals positively. The number of authors and corresponding similarities between them suggest to us that it would be wrong to claim that the propagation of alternative education ideologies is somewhat rare or of a particular, individual bias. Rather it supports the argument that contemplation and avocation of alternative schooling is a common, evident intellectual activity.

Reflections of theory

The theories and the criticism of mainstream schooling are personal claims it is the philosophy of individuals, whose subjective contemplations form their theories. There are no empirical references or investigations which they could employ to substantiate their personal critique of mainstream schools. This does that the level of theories applied in our project is of a contemplative character rather than having an empirical basis. It is a good point that there is more than one individual who criticize mainstream schooling, but instead several theorists who share a similar critique. This makes the credibility of the critique more appropriate to discuss, because it is a number of prominent philosophers who state something which is quite similar. Contrary, one could also argue that there is a great number of theorists who are proponents of mainstream methods of schooling, who attribute the same value to these methods, as Krishnamurti, Nussbaum and Tagore does to the methods of alternative schools.

Thus we cannot claim that mainstream schools influence the individual negatively, and that alternative schools benefit society and individuals to a much higher degree. This has neither been our intention. Our intention has only been to establish a description and analysis of alternative ideologies of education. This description and analysis has shown to evince a common critique of mainstream schools, and this critique is very one sided because it only shed a negative light on mainstream schooling. But the critique has proven to be a part of the philosophies of alternative education and a part of the alternative educations, which we investigate.

Our theories are utilized to reach two aims, one is to comprehend the philosophies of education which are relevant to our field of research and the other is to create concepts which can guide our analysis, and help us find similarities and differences in the actual practices of alternative schools.

Clarifying terms

Mainstreams schools:

When referring to mainstream schools we simply mean the state run schools. It is the schools that are under authority of the state in Denmark and India.

Alternative schools:

The alternative schools are schools that emphasize the development of the individual student. These schools focus more on creative subjects such as art and music than the mainstream schools. In our case the alternative schools often referred to are the “Poorna school” in India as well as “Lilleskolerne” (which means “the small schools” in Danish) in Denmark. These schools are not entirely funded by the state and their curriculum is not entirely the same as the mainstream schools.

Theory

The theories we employ establish the foundation of our conceptual framework, which is found at the end of this chapter. The chapters about Krishnamurti, Tagore and reform pedagogy is also utilized to give us an understanding of the philosophical foundation of the schools, as they have all been main sources of inspiration to the different schools we investigate. The chapter about Martha Nussbaum is written to examine some critical issues and problems within our field of research.

Martha Nussbaum

Martha Nussbaum is an American philosopher, who in the book “The Clash within - Democracy, Religious violence and India’s future” investigates the conflict stemming from religious struggle in India, through historical knowledge and examination of ideological debates. A main source of inspiration to her is Gandhi and his notion that the greatest threat in a democracy stems from the ability or inability of its people to respect and live in compassion with others who are not a kind to themselves (Nussbaum, 2007).

In relation to the religious violence in India and the dangers posed to its democracy, Nussbaum has also written critically about the Indian education system and aspired to make her claim clear, that alternative ways of education can have an essential influence on India’s society, if implemented more widely. In the following text, we summarize the most important thoughts of Nussbaum in relation to our project.

Following the philosopher Martha Nussbaum, education is the most important thing for India to exist and maintain its plural democracy. The Indian educational program thus plays a great and crucial role in Indian politics.

A much debated publication of national textbooks has led to many political discussions, especially about the strong tendency to favor Hindu religion, and limit the perspectives of other religions. Following Nussbaum these debates have veiled some other critical flaws in the state-run schools in India. She mentions that the most striking ones are; few pedagogical values, illiteracy, absence, a serious lack of facilities, no critical thinking, no engagement, non-pedagogical rote learning, ineffective and corrupt teachers, often doing private teaching instead of attaining his/her classes in the state-run schools, which is very common (Nussbaum, 2007). As Nussbaum puts it “Public education is in a disastrous condition in many, if not most, states” (Nussbaum, 2007, pp. 278).

The Indian primary schools and its school systems in general have according to Nussbaum, a very narrow focus on science and technology, which neglects mental freedom and critical thinking. The latter are aspects of life, learning and society which Nussbaum finds to be fundamental pillars for the health of a democracy (Nussbaum, 2007). She points out that critical thinking is crucial to a pluralistic,

democratic society like India's. She here refers to Socrates' notion of "the examined life"; that one should question everything; oneself, others, the state, and be able to deliver logical arguments for improvement. This will help India in the struggles stemming from different ethnicity, caste, gender relations and religion (Nussbaum, 2007).

It is precisely these attributes and qualities which Nussbaum argues that education shall provide the students with- both for the benefit of the individual and a democratic society. These important values, such as critical thinking, creativity, empathy, understanding of others and individual development, have until now only been established as educational aims in the alternative schools and a few private schools, because society does not consider these qualities valuable for its prosperity and well-being (Nussbaum, 2007).

The new economic patterns are changing India's population, its socialization and its education system. According to Nussbaum, whether in state, school or family relations, a general emphasis, or a "cultural vogue" towards rote learning, science, engineering and technical educations is widely held in India (Nussbaum, 2007). For instance the average Indian family dreams of sending their children to the IIT, the Indian Institute of Technology. There is a growing tendency not only in the school system, but also among parents to neglect humanistic values such as personal development of mind and well-being, in favor of more statistical, and measurable results (Nussbaum, 2007).

Following her critique of the public education in India, the arts and humanities, and thus critical thinking, creativity and freedom is highly undervalued and economic aims have been prioritized to a status which deems all other aims irrelevant (Nussbaum, 2007). But in an uncertain future, and with many cultural clashes, India's society needs a citizenship with (self-) critical thinking, empathy and imaginative freedom to prosper, peacefully and democratic (Nussbaum, 2007). It is these values the alternative schools in India deem valuable and try to strengthen and develop. Arts, creativity, humanism, critical awareness of self and other, development of the mind, imagination, freedom, music, plays and happiness are some of the virtues practiced in the alternative schools according to Nussbaum (Nussbaum, 2007). The virtues are deemed irrelevant by society, but as Nussbaum argues they might be the key to a peaceful and harmonious future in India. This is why she argues, that alternative schooling is of a major importance to India (Nussbaum, 2007).

Krishnamurti

It is the purpose of the following chapter to give a full overview of Krishnamurti's philosophy of education. No individual analysis or conclusions are made. The chapter is a concretization of his theory of education and it only contains a summary of his perspective.

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986) insists that some of the aims of ordinary education are universally evident. He claims that ordinary education all over the world reproduces societies conform aims of success and security. The risk of not achieving security and success brings with it a fear. The conformity of our capitalistic societies, breeds fear as struggle is sought to be avoided. Fear towards new experiences and adventures are thus common, whereby the interest in things and nature is not awakened and the intelligent understanding of life is blocked. What is new is not investigated due to fear of everything else that does not lead to security and success. The fear and conformity harms intellectual capacities, spontaneity, creativity and critical thinking. But fear can be overcome by self-awareness. The challenges of life will always produce harms, but self-awareness can sustain inner happiness and make the self-pliable to the ever changing conflicts. A school must therefore avoid success and security as aims, but instruct the students in self-awareness (Krishnamurti, 1973). Krishnamurti finds that mainstream education produces empty and shallow lives, as the aims are set towards success, efficiency, good jobs and domination over others, or to achieve distinction. We may be very clever and highly educated, but if we have not learned how to integrate and understand our thoughts and feelings in our lives, the education has been of little value, and we will live a life where our actions will be dominated by fear.

As long as education strives towards placing the individual in a pattern of conformity, the individual progress is hindered as the comprehension of the totality of the self is neglected, as Krishnamurti believes that the self is constituted by numerous entities.

It should be the goal of education to integrate these entities of the self, unless one's life will continually meet sorrows and conflict. When one can integrate and understand the entities of the self-one has become intelligent. Following Krishnamurti: "Intelligence is the capacity to perceive the essential, the what is; and to awaken this capacity, in oneself and in others, is education" (Krishnamurti, 1973, pp. 14). Krishnamurti holds that pure intelligence manifests itself in intuition, as this is an awareness where no thoughts are disregarded and we face experience without interruption.

Education shall not only train the mind, as this does not lead to completeness. Education should focus on the most important significance of life, instead of becoming proficient in some sort of knowledge. According to Krishnamurti, love is the significant factor of life which brings joy, understanding of others, unifies the self and its entities, and furthers harmonious communion. But in contrast to this, modern educations produce ambition, which furthers ruthlessness and competition.

If education shall be of value to people, we must discover what is the most important aspect of life, as Krishnamurti argues: "To understand life is to understand ourselves, and that is both the beginning and the end of education" (Krishnamurti, 1973, pp. 14). The understanding of life shall not be partial, but wholly. The self is neglected in mainstream education, as it focuses on externalities, and is thus only giving the individuals partial knowledge.

Education often reproduces conformity, and does not help us to critically evaluate society. This may breed antagonisms and repeat social conflicts. Krishnamurti finds that standardized education may create intellectual students but it neglects the lasting values such as the inner capacities and creative aspects of human life. Thus the student becomes subservient, thoughtless and mechanical in behavior. Individual and social issues are extended by ordinary education.

Krishnamurti does not consider social systems, as a government or school to be mysterious in nature, but can be changed if the awareness of the participants is changed, as the system is constituted by the awareness of the participants. Thus critical awareness and self-awareness should be paramount aspects of schooling as this may alter the individual and society positively.

Krishnamurti regards reading and accumulation of knowledge, as a subtle escape from ourselves, and holds that every escape from ourselves leads to misery. Education focuses on acquiring a technique to assure job opportunities, but this technique, will never help us to creatively, and independently understand ourselves and others. Therefore ordinary schooling emphasizes secondary values but not the most significant factors of life. As Krishnamurti formulates it: "because we have acquired technical knowledge without understanding the total process of life that technology has become a means of destroying ourselves. The man who knows how to split the atom but has no love in his heart becomes a monster" (Krishnamurti, 1974, pp. 19).

The right kind of education is to understand the integrated process of life as a whole, or to experience what is. Ideals of education serve to adjust or transform the individual in relation to the ideals. An ideal thus furthers ignorance of the understanding of the individual as it is, and replaces this notion with the idea of what the individual should be. In this way idealized educational aims, directs attention away from the real, concrete nature of the individual, and subordinates the individual to reach conformity with ideals. Instead education should avoid ideals, and help the individual understand it as he/she is. As Krishnamurti points out: "to be aware of what we are, we must stop struggling after something which we are not" (Krishnamurti, 1973, pp. 22).

Life and its complexity cannot be understood through frameworks, disciplines or theories. A trained mind in factual knowledge, cannot comprehend the variety of life and its subtlety. According to Krishnamurti true intelligence is to experience and understand the wholeness of life as a process, and be able to discern the essential. To discern the essential one must be free. Free from the constant search of security, and the fear resulting from this. One must become self-aware (Krishnamurti, 1973).

Intelligence shall be awakened. This is not done by referring to certain ideals, certain knowledge or through a method. These can only serve to tyrannize the student toward certain attitudes and

opinions, towards classification and shape the student according to some external demands or criteria. Imposing criteria's to how one shall be will only make conflicts as the students are posed with the dilemma that they are not what they should be, and thus ideals hinder self-understanding. Ambitions towards something are thus not made of love for the student, only awareness and respect of his/her personality as it is, are real caring for the student.

The teacher has to stimulate the student to consider what actually is, or things as they are, as this awakens the personal intelligence. According to Krishnamurti only the teacher who is self-aware can do this. The teacher is conditioned both by the past and the present, or maybe a certain ideology, dogma, culture etc. Without the critical understanding of this conditioning, the teacher will not be free, but impose his/her conditioning on the student. The teacher shall help the student to observe, evaluate and guide him/her towards self-understanding. It is a process of examining one's psychological tendencies and personal relationships to the self, the others, ideas and nature. Self-awareness begins when examining one's desires, limits, cultural conditioning, and becoming aware of oneself as one who experience and how one experience. It is this process of integration and self-awareness that will stimulate personal freedom, creativity, goodness, serenity and love. And thus the right education will benefit both individual and society.

The right education shall foster a critical awareness of one's society and its ideologies, but also the teaching and its curriculum, the learning process and books, so the pupils learn to think for themselves without any influence. The student shall not be led by any belief or method, as this will only bring conformity and fear, instead of awakening the understanding. Following Krishnamurti young people are hopeful of better societies, discontent about the current society and this flame should be stirred rather than smothered, if humanity is to proceed towards better conditions. Discontent is a source of inspiration, and a driving force of enquiry, as the enquiry now can serve a normative purpose. Discipline and compulsion, or any kind of control maintained by reward and punishment, will only create subservient, unfree and inactive students. The good practice of education exists with a small herd of students, and if one negatively interrupts education, the teacher shall try to examine the personal issue for the bad behavior, instead of carrying out punishment. The relationship between teacher and student is not one of conformity and obedience, but of mutual affection and respect (Krishnamurti, 1973).

Krishnamurti argues that intellect is of a thoughtful and contemplative character, whereas intelligence is a combination of thought and emotion, or reason and love. Intelligence is manifest in spontaneous perception.

Furthermore wisdom and knowledge are not the same. Knowledge is limited and factual. It only serves its own inherent purpose of knowing or getting a job. Wisdom is both to know and to be able to

empirically observe the new and what one knows. Wisdom is thus knowledge which can guide purposeful action because of its empirical basis. Because it relates to experience and things in the real world, not only in books, it can guide action. Intelligence and wisdom shall thus be educational aims to create whole and independent humans.

Krishnamurti advocates that caring parents shall create small schools, with engaged teachers, facilitating love, freedom, cooperation and individual development. The school shall be kept small so each child will get enough attention from the teacher. It is important that the teachers join the schools voluntarily so their dedication and passion are assured for. Such a school shall be aware of its place in society. No ideology, politician or economic revolution can alter society positively, only the right education can do this (Krishnamurti, 1973).

It is Krishnamurti's message that to change society for the better one shall start with oneself. In general his philosophy emphasizes that schools and societies breed progress of intellect, technique, reason and conformity but neglects emotional intelligence, critical thinking and self-awareness. If society changed its focus and sought to establish a balance between these and thus developed more feeling and caring citizens, we could change our social structure for the better. Krishnamurti argues that the right education can foster self-aware and compassionate people, which can bring an end to class and religious struggles (Krishnamurti, 1973).

Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was the first individual from an Asian country to receive a Nobel Prize in literature, which he did in 1913. He is mostly known to be a great poet, but as he imagined education as the key to sustainable change in society, and there was a need to transform some major problems in Indian society, especially ethno-cultural conflicts, he started to philosophize about education. Some of the problems that he found education could remedy were the conflicts between the traditional and modern parts of society and the insensitivity of his countrymen. He believed that education could strengthen the nation from grassroots movements and help establish universal empathy and communion (Bhattacharya, 2014).

Education following Tagore could create critical and empathic citizens which would transform society towards harmony and unity. He thought that education was the cure for the many communal conflicts in India, stemming from religious fundamentalism, mostly rivalry between Muslims and Hindus, because the critical self-and other awareness, the right education could give, would make people see themselves and others, as humans, not merely as members of a specific religion (Gupta, 2005). He also thought that education could make women less subordinate to men in their marriages, as they would evaluate and criticize their situation more clearly, when devoid of any ideological, cultural or religious

assumptions. This is because Tagore thought that education first and foremost should help the individual to see him/herself as a whole human being in his/her own right, not anything else. Doing this is a process of critical introspection, developing one's personal potential and getting rid of any socio-cultural conditioning (Gupta, 2005)

Like Krishnamurti, Tagore also emphasized the importance of schools to further complete individuals, which would alter society for the better. Both Tagore and Krishnamurti found that educational aims should be twofold, namely individual and societal prosperity.

Tagore's ideas were that the school should be a place where several entities of the self were cultivated towards wholeness. The body, the spirit, the senses, the intellect and the feelings should all be educated. The knowledge of the wholeness of the self should extend to the nature, to the nation and to the world and its people. But most of all the school should be a place where joy and creativity reigned. Tagore thought that joy and creativity could release the self from its own bondages, and thus self-transcendence and freedom were achieved. It is the core of Tagore's educational thinking that education can be a means to extend the self so it can benefit others and establish altruist citizens and a harmonious society, because he believed that the relationship between the self and society is mutual and reciprocal (Gupta, 2005).

Following Tagore the ideal education consisted of different but interconnected strands.

To train the intellect the ideal school should focus on scientific outlook, alertness, independent thinking, rationality and curiosity. Tagore held that the child learns as much with the body and senses as the intellect and spirit, therefore physical exercise and training of the senses was very important. He also sought to combine the body and the mind in educational practices.

The spirit was to be stimulated through ethics, intuition, spirituality and the awareness of the omnipotent universal spirit. Tagore's ultimate aim of education; universal communion and harmony, was to be established through self-extension whereby the cultivation of the empathic and sympathetic feelings and abilities of students were paramount.

Furthermore Tagore's poetic relationship to nature also affected his view on education, as he found it important to stimulate the awareness of the omnipotent spirit within nature. Tagore believed that man were best of when in unity with nature. He therefore advocated education to take place in nature. His own schools, Santiniketan and Sriniketan, were placed in a beautiful natural scenery in solitude of civilization (Gupta, 2005).

The educated student can use his knowledge both for his own purpose but also for others. The light of wisdom and love which have been shed on the individual, he/she can shed on others too. It is this altruist attitude towards others which Tagore wishes that schools will try to cultivate in students and he denotes as self-extension. It is altruism and not self-centered egotism which bring happiness to the individual (Bhattacharya, 2014). According to Tagore the deepest within one's self and identity is that

which binds one to other human beings. It is the surplus of emotions towards other human, our alliance, which is the most central aspect of the human character, and thus the most important an education can promote. In Tagore's vision school should be about life and the acquisition of knowledge should have a purpose beyond it (Gupta, 2005).

According to Tagore, ordinary schooling resembles a prison or a factory. It facilitates mechanical thinking, dull students and ignores the personal, human potential. He holds that there is a gap between theory and practical experience in ordinary schools. The teaching of the schools does not help one outside the school. It has no essential benefits to a meaningful living, other than assuring a job.

Contrary, education shall be of relevance to the quality of the students' lives and close to the students' lives outside school. Education shall guide and inform the student to live harmoniously and happily in his/her society (Gupta, 2005).

To bring joy and creativity in the school, Tagore advocated the school to maintain recent festivals, but daily to practice dances, plays, theatre, music, painting and all sorts of artistic articulations. It was important for him that the schools were not secluded to others, but that all could participate in its activities, and prosper of its knowledge (Bhattacharya, 2014).

Reform pedagogy

Through our research and interviews we found that the thoughts of education and upbringing from the reform pedagogical movement were of paramount importance to the Danish "Lilleskoler".

According to Søren Erhard Hansen, the chairman of the Danish "Lilleskoler", "Lilleskoler" have their pedagogical roots and main source of inspiration in the reform pedagogical movement (Hansen, pers.comm., 17.12.14). The following chapter is thus written to understand the founding values and philosophies of these alternative schools and to analyze the most significant aspects of the alternative schools adhering to this movement. The employed source is the book "Reformpædagogikkens rødder" ('the roots of reform pedagogy'), where Steen Høyrup as editor, has collected a number of prominent Danish reform pedagogues, stating their point-of-view of what has been essential to reform pedagogy since its birth and their own practices of the discipline (Høyrup, 1996).

Reform pedagogy has its historical roots in the culture radical ('kulturradikale') period during the 1930's in Denmark. Back then the pedagogical philosophy centered around the importance of the playing of small children, a philosophy which inspired more open, unpredictable and exciting learning processes. It was the desire to learn freely and to reflect upon one's life, which was perceived to be the impetuses of learning.

Some of the pedagogical philosophers whose thoughts have served as a lasting source of inspiration to the tradition of reform pedagogy are especially C. Freinet, Paulo Freire and John Dewey. Thinkers who have also inspired the many co-authors of the book "Reformpædagogikkens rødder" (Høyrup 1996). According to Kirsten Reisby the core of the philosophy of reform pedagogy were formed during the Danish culture radical period. It is still manifest today and can be formulated as the goal to emancipate the individual human being through the development of the natural human potentials (Reisby, 1996). The potential and values of each individual are subjective. Thus learning should strive to make the human independent, self-determined and free. It shall make him/her able to commit to those values which he/she favors and live in harmonious compassion with others. The process of emancipation does not solely rest on the development of personal potentials but also a release from pressure and restraints of the dominant ideologies and structures of society. This development and emancipation requires freedom. The school shall therefore be a place where freedom as the cornerstone will emancipate the intrinsic individual and social capabilities of each person. Thus the ideal school must emphasize empathy, freedom and communion, to form critical, strong, independent, and compassionate, democratic citizens. The concept of political education is paramount to reform pedagogy as each individual shall be educated to act in solidarity and take responsibility for a more just society (Reisby, 1996).

In the tradition of reformatory pedagogics emancipation brings the individual in closer harmony and intimacy with others, while still being free to be who he/she really is (Reisby, 1996). Giving the individual the possibility to be free to develop the highest number of capabilities and interest within itself, will in theory make the individual open to the subjective desires, interest and capabilities of self and others and accept the strong and weak side of him/her and others. To be able to accept others one must be able to accept oneself first (Kærså & Kærså, 1996).

From its beginning, the main interest of reform pedagogy has been the child and its learning processes (Reisby, 1996). The German reformation pedagogue Gläser (1920) points out that the child has a right to have its personality approved and appreciated. Like an adult the child shall be taken seriously and its development of its full capacities and personality is a right. (Gläser, J, in Reformpædagogikkens rødder, 1996) It is a central tenet within reform pedagogy that the childhood has its own value, and is not merely a period of transition towards maturity (Nørgaard, 1996). The child has innate capacities which are best developed in a positive interplay with adults, but the ideal learning process is where the child independently acquires skills and knowledge, from its own experiences (Nørgaard, 1996). Safety is fundamental to the child. Feeling safe comes from acknowledgement and acceptance. Without these the child will not develop properly as its energy will be consumed by the effort to gain acknowledgement and acceptance (Kærså & Kærså, 1996). As childhood is a distinguished level of

human development, certain things are possible and impossible for the child. Feelings of guilt and low self-esteem will follow, when the child is incapable of meeting demands. Therefore the teacher has to be empathic, and avoid demanding of children what is not in concert with their nature. The ideal teacher is passionate, self-analytical and able to establish curiosity, awareness of experiences, inquisitiveness and ability of expression in the children (Kærså & Kærså, 1996, pp. 30-31) a warm, social and inclusive school with empathic teachers will stimulate safety and trust, which are essential to learning, freedom and development (Kærså & Kærså, 1996).

Among its students, it is the task of the school to maintain equality and positive perceptions of the self and others, while it is the task of the teacher to differentiate the learning process to reach each individual according to his/her personality, skills, knowledge etc. The teacher shall be able to create equal relationships and communication between him/her and the students. It is further demanded of the teacher that he/she has to have faith in the potentials of the students, and has a critical attitude towards society but also a hope that civilization may change in a positive direction (Nørgaard, 1996). The school shall preach no variety or generalization of what a good life is, but shall help their students to build their own life project, with its personal values, beliefs and wishes. It is a responsibility for the school and its teachers to help its students towards their version of a good life, because the affiliates of an individual will always influence that individual. It is thus a matter of making a positive influence. The school shall therefore promote recognition and intimacy and its staff and students shall be respectful of others and take time to create meaningful communication (Holst et al., 1996). Furthermore the school is a local center of culture, where teachers, principals, students and parents can feel connected to each other and the community around the school. For instance by solidaric participation in activities, events etc.

Intelligence is not stimulated by accumulating subject knowledge. Instead of giving students the answers, they shall themselves seek those answers. It is this process of discovery where creativity, curiosity and intelligence manifest itself, here one experiences. It is also in the process of discovery of a truth or an answer that learning becomes purposeful. By solving an issue independently, the individual gains self-esteem and the benefit of learning becomes palpable as a goal is reached. The process of discovery and understanding is manifold. Art, plays, music, rhythmic, physical movement, painting, storytelling, fantasy, poetry or writing etc, can all be means to experience comprehension and give expression to this comprehension. Experience and expression are key words, as it is through these that we learn according to the philosophy of reform pedagogy (Kærså & Kærså, 1996). It is vital for the motivation and a versatile personal development that the child actively participates in its own learning, and with others. The child has to be a co-creator of its own learning process (Johansen, 1996).

The educational aims of the ideal reform pedagogical school can be summarized as; cognition or acknowledgment, self-comprehension, positive development of identity, social intelligence, emotionality, intellectuality, physical activity and the development of living-strategies (Johansen, 1996).

Reform pedagogy maintains that it is a common misunderstanding that children only learn when in classes or when reading. The child learns without a teacher or adult. The child learns outside the classroom. Children are whether playing, reading, socializing, walking alone or whatever, always in some way, learning themselves something. Learning is thus not something which shall be forced, but comes constant and naturally.

It is the free choice of the child to teach itself something, the teacher shall be perceived as a facilitator or medium of knowledge, rather than the one responsible for a child's learning. In short; Children teach themselves something of interest all the time (Vejleskov, 1996).

When playing, one forgets the self, becomes deeply immersed and enjoys the activity. When playing with others one can add the feeling of communion. The things you encounter when playing and learning simultaneously are something which you can remember and it has a lasting effect on your life because it evokes feelings of joy when recalled.

Human beings like to remember the good and happy things. Whenever education can combine learning with playful activities it shall opt to do so, because this kind of learning has a lasting value (Vejleskov, 1996).

To summarize the most important aspects of reform pedagogy, it emphasizes the development of individual and intellectual capabilities, in contrast to mere rote learning and acquisition of knowledge. It sees art, playing and creativity as amplifiers of learning, and focus on human-wellbeing, both socially and individually. It seeks to build solidary and democratic citizens, which are self-confident, caring and aware of their responsibility to alter society positively.

The core pedagogical deeds can be summarized as intuition, creativity, caring and guidance.

The aim of the ideal school is triple, it shall deliver learning, democratic citizens, and individual development (Johansen, 1996).

Conceptual framework

The following concepts are derived through an analysis and synthesis of similarities in our theoretical chapter. The similarities reflect the things which Krishnamurti, Tagore, Nussbaum and the Danish reform pedagogy share concerning alternative ideologies of education. In finding the concepts, we have sought to point out the most essential theoretical similarities and transformed them into concepts. The process can be described as a common creative work, where discussions, ideas and

reflectivity lead us to agree upon what to point out and how we could describe those concepts. In our chapter of analysis we will use these theoretical concepts to evaluate and analyze the similarities and differences among alternative schools in India and 'Lilleskolerne' in Denmark.

We found, that the concepts we focus on can be gathered under one major category namely, 'holistic education'. Within holistic education is "the whole human" which is described through different concepts as shown below. The concepts below summarize the most characteristic practices, ideals, means, goals and values of education, which the philosophies of our theoretical chapter have in common.

Holistic education

The holistic approach to education is an important aspect within the development of a whole personality. The general line of thought is that all aspects within and outside the individual shall be taken into the considerations of education; culture, identity, intellect, emotions, body, experiences etc. Individual and society cannot be evaluated independently; it shall be examined as a unity. All humans are influenced by others and their surroundings and vice versa. The 'ideal' education therefore perceives the individual in its context and tries to give the students the greatest number of possibilities to create a good relationship to the self, others, affiliates and society. The education of a whole human is an integration of his/her life world. It shall emphasize a critical approach to the restraints of society and build altruist, caring, solidary and democratic individuals.

The holistic education has a dual aim; to create individual and social harmony. The investigated philosophies of alternative schooling share a normative foundation: to change society by starting with the development of a democratic, critical and whole human.

Mainstream schools are not perceived to be holistic. They are portrayed in very similar ways in the texts of our theoretical chapter. It is generally claimed that mainstream schools share a partial look on the human. The claim is that they only stimulate the capabilities of the intellect, that they neglect all primary aspects of learning in their emphasis of subject knowledge and that their sole aim is to educate the students towards employability.

The whole human

The concepts covers the development and integration of mind, body and heart, self and others, which leads to wholeness. The school shall stimulate intellectual, social and emotional capabilities.

Additionally, to create "whole humans", the school shall relate its subjects and teachings to the life which is external to the school. The individual shall be educated in things which it can use outside school. Therefore, the school shall focus on the individual's capability to create positive relations to the self, others and the surrounding society.

There are different advantages, perspectives and ideas within the concept of “the whole human”, which we try to categorize and summarize beneath. Generally these are all educational aims and means, which the ideal alternative school should employ to educate its students in the best possible way. When merged, the totality of these concepts constitutes the conception of “the whole human”.

Fearlessness

Tagore, Krishnamurti and reform pedagogy emphasize the importance of minimizing the role of fear. Before one can learn, one must get rid of fear, as fear will impede creativity, intuition and guide interests and activity towards comfort seeking. Thus things which may stress the individual such as authorities, examinations and competition shall not exist in the ideal school

Self-esteem

In order to gain a high self-esteem the student needs to have confidence and be able to trust in him- or herself. He or she needs to accept the self in order to accept others, which is an important part of becoming a whole human. Self-esteem is thereby both the basis for learning the best possible way and also the foundation of the whole human.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness is a process where the different skills, emotions, wishes, limits and interests of the self becomes clear to the individual, whereby he/she can integrate these to a full personality. This is a continual process which will make the individual, strong, intelligent, critical, empathic and solidary. The process involves a critical introspection and acceptance of the self which emancipates the individual from its socio-cultural ideologies. Self-awareness establishes the platform through which one can guide the direction of one’s life and interests of knowledge. When one can accept, love and recognize the self, one can accept, love and recognize others. This is human nature as we first and foremost are social beings.

Individuality

A main point within the chosen philosophies of education is the freedom that the students should have when going to school. Students shall have great freedom when choosing what subjects to study and these subjects shall ideally be taught in various ways. The students’ learning process shall be based on their own interests and not on a strict curriculum.

Experiential learning

The chosen philosophies of education share the claim that the ideal school shall shape the students individually through experiential learning such as music, arts and all sorts of creative subjects and activities. The alternative schools shall put an emphasis on these alternative subjects in order to create curiosity and creativity within each student. The schools shall take time to outdoor activity and playing in order to propel the creativity, intuition and curiosity of students. In this respect, nature plays an important role for especially Tagore and Krishnamurti who advocate schools to use nature, and experiential learning in general, as an integral part of becoming a whole human. They believe that intelligence is stimulated and manifested in the intuitive experience of phenomena, whereby one learns from experiences.

Close relatedness

According to Krishnamurti and Tagore, the 'ideal' school shall generally focus on having close relations between students and teachers and between parents and the school, and parents shall have a big influence.

The schools and classes shall be kept small in order for the teacher to be able to reach each individual according to his/her capabilities and interests.

Differences of Indian philosophers and the Danish reform pedagogy

The aforementioned process of finding similarities also revealed some differences which are only found in the education ideologies of some of the authors. In the following we mention some of the themes which through our analysis, have turned out to be difficult to conceptualize as certain commonalities.

Spirituality

It is an important aspect for Krishnamurti and Tagore. Spirituality is about the belief in an omnipresent spirit that highly influences their thinking.

The individual has to recognize the spirit in nature and itself to become fully aware of its own essential nature and relationship to the omnipresent spirit, also mentioned as god. Spirituality is a vital part of finding one's purpose in life, and becoming self-aware, serene and happy.

Universal harmony

Both Krishnamurti and Tagore emphasize universal harmony as the ultimate goal of education. They think that students shall be able to make critical investigations of cultural presumptions, debate peacefully and thus accept the otherness of people. The individual shall be prepared to live in harmony

in a multicultural society. This perspective is not as evidently in the Danish reform pedagogy. One could argue that this is because ethno-cultural and religious conflicts are more present in India than Denmark.

We have found that the Indian philosophers and the Danish reform pedagogy, share many important ideas concerning the ideal education, as are evident in the conceptual framework. In general reform pedagogy, Krishnamurti, Tagore and Nussbaum all share the idea of the political and humanistic education, emphasizing that self-awareness, critical thinking and learning positive ways of expression will lead to acceptance and understanding of others, and further solidary debates and peaceful solutions of conflicts.

Analysis

Alternative education

According to Venkatraman, alternative schools emerge when people disagree with or are dissatisfied with how the mainstream schools are educating the students, and believe there is “too much study, and too little play” (Venkatraman, 2009, pp. 26). In India, mainstream schools focus on rote learning and academics with the goal of making the students ‘fit’ into society. From the students they demand obedience and to not question the authorities, being teachers and administration. The emphasis is on filling the students with information with the ultimate goal of achieving high grades in examinations (Venkatraman, 2009).

Among other sources, we employ the book “Alternative schooling in India” and its many co-authors to describe some general tendencies of alternative education in the following passage:

Alternative schools are alternatives to the way of teaching and learning as mentioned by Venkatraman, and go against the ultimate goal of children being able to ‘make it’ in our society today through e.g. wealth and getting a good job. As Søren Hansen, the leader of an alternative school in Denmark said under an interview: “The school is for children – not for politicians” (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14). Alternative schools do not understand children as empty and their job being to fill out the hole with codified knowledge only found in books. They are aware of the fact that children learn all the time about everything. They generally believe in a child-focused education where the whole human is being educated and the interest is the center and focus of the learning process. They hereby state that the process is much more important than the end result from e.g. examinations (Vittachi, 2007).

Most of the alternative schools in India are started by parents who do not believe the mainstream education is good enough for their children. They believe it fails to educate its students in a way that meets every individual: “Each child is special and deserves special attention; the whole person must be addressed, not simply fragmented parts; fantasy and imagination should be allowed to ripen in a child; and independent thinking filled with idealism should be encouraged in the adolescent” (Venkatraman, 2009). The parents do not believe these things are met in mainstream education, and therefore wish to explore other options like alternative schools. Many of the parents are teachers themselves and therefore have a good understanding of what to expect and deliver in a school. They believe they can do a better job at making the teaching more interesting, hence, get the students more interested in wanting to learn, which will benefit both the student, the teacher and the other students as well (Mehrotra, 2007).

What is alternative about the alternative schools?

The book "Alternative schooling in India" gives a comprehensive definition of what makes Indian alternative schools alternative. This is based on a lot of research of many Indian schools. The main author included ten points that are important when practicing alternative education they are mentioned shortly earlier in the project but are further elaborated in the following.

The first one is about the approach. The whole idea about alternative education is that there is not only one-way of doing things, however, the approach the alternative schools do use should be an individualized, well-thought-of approach. The second dimension important in alternative schooling is respect. Respect for the students, the parents and the teachers are very important skills within alternative education. The schools should not only be for one particular group, but for children with different abilities and from different social layers, creating an interesting mix of students and an interesting educational environment where everyone can learn from each other. The third point is learning. Learning is best achieved through interest-based and experiential teaching, and by minimizing the use of textbooks and lectures. Discipline is number four. This step deals with the importance of mixing the different disciplines. The goal is for the students to receive an all-round interdisciplinary knowledge and to be able to connect subjects across different fields. The fifth dimension is class size. The classes should be small in size. For most schools there are no more than 25-30 students per teacher. Number six is class structure. The class structure is kept experiential and flexible. Many different structures can be tried out by for instance mixing ages and doing classes outside to learn about nature through a hands-on structure. Administration is the seventh point. The administration should be conducted democratically and flexibly with as less hierarchy domination as possible, and instead take decisions collectively. The eighth dimension is about evaluation where the most important thing is not to base success on tests and examinations but investigate other ways to do so. Number nine is affiliation. The book states that the schools should not seek affiliation with the most popular Board because of a wish to be able to mix topics and structures and not necessarily do what conventional Boards prescribe. However, this does not mean a necessity to disclaim government-approved examinations to be able to enter universities. The last dimension is about success rate. This point demonstrates the importance of not measuring success through results from competitions and examinations but rather a focus on the learning process and the whole human (Vittachi, 2007). Defining success in other ways than wealth, status, fame and a good job are at core when going against mainstream education, and the reason why so many alternative schools are emerging.

Alternative schools teach the same things but in very different ways. Instead of memorizing everything from books they have the student's touch, listen and see the very things they study:

"The schools would teach the same lesson on birds, for instance, in a manner that did not require just memorizing the names of birds and their habitats. Instead the child would be encouraged to listen to

the bird, watch it fly, stroke its feathers and develop a love for the bird and its interconnectedness with nature. Such schools, we found, were more focussed on the process of learning rather than solely on the end result” (Vittachi, 2007, pp. 18).

These learning methods, including the ten features mentioned above, are essential to alternative schooling and that which distinguish them from mainstream education. Parents choose alternative schools for their children because of dissatisfaction with the mainstream schools and a belief in the philosophies of the alternative schools, e.g. the definitions above.

Two Indian alternative schools

We will now investigate two alternative schools in India in order to be able to understand how the alternative schools work in practice.

The first school is called ‘Poorna Learning Centre’ and was started in 1993 by the teacher and mother Indira Vijaysimha. She quit her job as a teacher in a mainstream school and took her children out of their mainstream school because of dissatisfaction with the teaching and learning methods. Basically, she thought she could do a better job. So she started homeschooling them. After a while more children joined and she soon had to move to a bigger location to have room enough for the students and her school since it kept growing. ‘Poorna’ is a registered school where children learn about the world in a meaningful way. They experience the world without much thought in set curriculums and timetables as the students work at their own pace and in accordance with their own interests. This is possible because they do not have to study hard only to be able to pass a test or an exam, but are instead encouraged to dig deep on an interest and use a lot of time on the subjects. They collectively discuss and decide how and what to learn with every child being accepted and taken seriously. Their philosophy is as follows: “Poorna aspires to educate children so that they develop academic skills and emotional well-being, thus becoming caring members of society” (www.poorna.in).

They do this by creating an atmosphere free of fear and an environment where there are no set patterns that the children are expected or pressured to conform thus allowing full play and creativity. The classes are kept small in order to maintain child-centered approach and focus on the individual’s development. Discussing the problems openly in groups to be able to understand other’s behavior and how this behavior may affect others is, according to Poorna, the most beneficial way to solve conflicts. Children studying in ‘Poorna’ are expected to actively participate in their learning process and own development, and encouraged to seek guidance when necessary (www.poorna.in).

Once a week a group of students have the duty to cook a meal for the entire school. They have the responsibility to buy all materials needed, to prepare and cook the food, to serve it, and to clean afterwards. According to ‘Poorna’s website, this gives the students important life skills and teaches them to not place people in boxes; everyone is human, whether buying, preparing, cooking, serving,

eating or cleaning. A very meaningful saying to this duty and to Poorna goes like this: “Give fish to a hungry man, you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish, you feed him for a life” (www.poorna.in). Students at ‘Poorna’ are not only learning how to catch a fish, they also learn how to cook it which will help them in their future lives (www.poorna.in). This saying is also a way of teaching the students how to help others help themselves.

‘Poorna Learning Centre’ is an inspirational alternative school, with every aspect of what an alternative school should entail. The teachers focus on each individual and help him or her in their learning process by focusing on the students’ interests and eager to learn. They minimize rote learning and have discussions after every school year about what worked/did not works and what was good/not good, in order to keep students involved and engaged in the school and the decisions, and to keep improving the school.

The second school we will investigate is an alternative school called ‘The School’. This school is part of the Krishnamurti Foundation India (KFI) and therefore focuses on the philosophy of Krishnamurti’s teachings. The principles of the KFI schools stress the importance of exploring not only the world through knowledge but also the individual’s ability and potential to think and behave (Venkatraman, 2009).

The President of the Theosophical Society adopted Krishnamurti in his teenage years. The Theosophical Society is an organization which main purpose is to “investigate the nature of the universe and humanity’s place in it” (www.theosophical.org/faq). Its international headquarters is located in Adyar, India. Earlier, it was situated on a spacious ground with forest nearby. This is where Krishnamurti grew up. He later on decided to use the grand building and the space around it to form a school with close connection to nature and a focus on individuality; and so ‘The School’ was born in 1973.

‘The School’ takes different approaches to learning depending on the age and level of the student. The school is divided in three parts: junior, middle and senior school. In junior school learning is happening at the students’ own pace. The role of the teacher is not to dictate what and how to learn but to help them in the process. The intention of the approaches to learning is for the students to obtain motivation for learning and confidence. In middle school the learning approach is explorative. They explore the world facilitated with keywords such as understanding, exploration, investigation and creativity. The intended outcome of this learning approach is to expand the students’ awareness of the world and of themselves. In senior school the learning approaches from junior and middle school are continued and intensified. In these years there is a lot more focus on social and environmental issues. The desired learning outcome is for the students to explore and challenge themselves by taking initiative and responsibility for their own learning and eventually their own lives (www.theschoolkfi.org).

One thing that is important to 'The School' is to question the world around us such as the acceptance of social norms, the impact of technology and fashion and other influences that are excluding freedom and the ability to act with responsibility in all situations (www.theschoolkfi.org).

Discussions of life-relating themes are held by teachers and students and, according to 'The School', these discussions are "vital to the growth of the child" (www.theschoolkfi.org). When discussing themes like fear, happiness, ambition, collaboration and responsibility, the child is better prepared for situations where these themes can occur and thus closer to becoming a 'whole' human, which is the goal for most of the alternative schools.

As the school states, knowledge, intellect and technology have never been enough to be able to meet all challenges of life. That is why 'The School' focuses on the whole human. In order to do that, students must, according to 'The School', always continue to learn and grow in *mindful relatedness*. Relation is very important to this school, be it relating to people, the nature, ideas or most importantly to one self. This is made possible through an education full of encouragement to enjoy learning and discover own motivations for learning and engagement, and very importantly: without competition, comparison and fear (www.theschoolkfi.org).

Critique of mainstream education in India

We have found that the foundation of alternative schools rest on the fact that many people find that mainstream schools do not educate the students appropriately and thus they prefer alternative schooling. Furthermore Nussbaum made a heavy criticism of the state-run schools in India. Thus we examine this criticism more in depth in the following chapter. This is done to understand why the represented philosophers claim the necessity of an alternative way of schooling, and thus we probe deeper into the question of why alternative schools exist.

Many children have a hard time getting through mainstream school because of expectations and pressure of a certain standard and focus on examinations and competition. Some parents are especially concerned about this because they are realizing how the mainstream education "seems to dullen their children and stifle their creativity and originality" (The PROBE Team, 1999). Some of the problems causing this are for instance the concerns about limited space for individual expression and interest-based learning. Also limited personal contact between teachers and students is making the students feeling less confident, because the teachers are constantly in control and are evaluating the students, which make the students feel even more pressured (Venkatraman, 2009). These concerns call for an alternative to the mainstream education, and only emphasize the importance of awareness about alternative schools.

Asha Sudarshan, a teacher with a Master's degree in education, believes examinations can be dangerous for the development of the child:

"When the whole [examination] process becomes tension-filled, it becomes a ridiculous method of evaluating the child. A lot of anxiety is caused, resulting in loss of memory during exams, leading to frustration and depression. Tremors, fear of not being able to perform, and guilt of disappointing parents can be the causes for severe trauma in some children. This (...) can push an already defeated child (whose self-esteem is low) to the ultimate bottom rung of the ladder. (...) Children get so caught up in this rat race that their lovely childhood is lost" (Sudarshan, 2007, pp. 72).

As Sudarshan describes, these children grow up with low confidence and depression because of performance anxiety and guilt of disappointing parents from the pressure of examinations and comparisons with fellow students, which might result in becoming incomplete humans. Also G. Gautama, a teacher at the alternative school 'The School' (explored earlier on), doubts the necessity of measuring student's performance and potential. He questions for whom it is relevant and necessary: "[F]or the student, the school, or the exam board?" (Gautama, 2007, pp. 67). According to him, what is necessary is for the student to be aware of and understand his or her mistakes but this can be done without any fear factor by simply advising the student on how to study and understand the given subject (Gautama, 2007).

According to Mehrotra, the learning approach in mainstream schools is also called 'factory schooling'. The schools are manufacturing the same products: the same kind of people with the same mind-sets, learned through memory-oriented learning from the same curriculums and textbooks, passing the same exams (Mehrotra, 2007). Helena Norberg-Hodge, the founder and director of the International Society for Ecology and Culture, also criticizes the homogeneity created by mainstream education: "Today, Western schooling is responsible for introducing a human monoculture across the entire world. Essentially the same curriculum is being taught and is training people for jobs, very scarce jobs, but for jobs in an urban consumer culture. The diversities of cultures as well as the diversity of unique human individuals is being destroyed in this way" (Schooling the World, 2010). She is questioning the way "Western" education is creating a world of sameness and is very critical towards the consequences for both the culture and the individual human, which end up losing its diversities, thus what it means to be human: following Vandana Shiva, the founder of The Research Foundation on Science, Technology and Ecology, the consequences of the growth of "Western" education is resulting in creating *incomplete human beings*, which according to Helena Norberg-Hodge, "end up feeling that their own culture, their language, their way of doing things is backward, primitive and shameful" (Schooling the World, 2010). Therefore, according to a local Indian woman, the attention of the children has changed to prioritize material success and on how much money they can make. She explains that because of the "developments" that has happened the old values of "compassion,

kindness and helping one another are slowly dying out” (Schooling the World, 2010). Today, the students are designed to fit into today’s society with its consumerist and competitive values. The schools are authoritarian institutions that train its students into unquestioning obedience, and learn to be very disciplined and easy to govern (Venkatraman, 2009). This is radically different from the features and ideologies set up by alternative schools. They exist exactly because of this mechanical education and are powerfully critiquing this system with a strong wish to change it. According to Manish Jain, the Coordinator of the People’s Institute of Rethinking Education and Development, mainstream education is creating huge social hierarchy and inequity because the institutions are failing millions of innocent students. As Manish Jain states, this is a problem because “those who are branded as failures actually have a wide variety of capacity to think in different ways. And that is all being suppressed and lost and so, people who can only think in a very fragmented, one-dimensional kind of way, those people are getting rewarded” (Schooling the World, 2010). In mainstream schools the teachers are imposing the students to strive for high grades to be able to live a good life in the “modern” “Western” world and rely on material success. Manish Jain is problematizing the fact that millions of students are being labelled as failures, so many will not have the opportunity to live the luxurious life they had hoped for. Instead they end up never feeling good enough and always striving for something better, which indeed must have the consequence of not being the whole human, which is at core in the alternative schools and for them is the whole purpose of education and the way to obtain the “good” life (Schooling the World, 2010).

Alternative schools emerge because many parents and teachers are not satisfied with mainstream schools and their focus on rote learning and measuring success through tests and examinations, which, according to Asha Sudarshan, lead to fear, low self-esteem and the students end up losing their childhood and become incomplete humans. The resources are spent on the process and not on the end result, making the education interest-based, child-focused and aiming at the students becoming whole humans.

The two alternative schools mentioned, ‘Poorna’ and ‘The School’ are examples of schools with a holistic approach. They both focus on the importance of learning at the students’ own pace and of the development of the individual. They aim at creating an environment where students are closely related to teachers and parents, and thereby minimizing fear and increasing motivation for learning. Both schools also find it important to have discussions about e.g. life-based themes like fear, ambition and responsibilities. ‘Poorna Education Centre’ uses the discussions for solving conflicts and to improve the school while ‘The School’ believes these discussions are vital for the students to be prepared for their future lives and help them become a whole human. The whole human is achievable through always being in a state of learning while feeling related to people, nature, ideas and one self.

This relatedness is made possible through encouragement to enjoy learning while no competition, comparison and fear are present. G. Gautama believes that in order to minimize fear, the teachers should make the students aware of and understand the mistakes instead of measuring their knowledge through tests.

Mainstream education is creating a world of homogeneity with the same kind of curriculums and examinations. Helena Norberg-Hodge states that the diversities of cultures and individuals are being destroyed. This results in creating incomplete human beings because they suddenly see their own culture as primitive and backward. Old values and knowledge are dying because of a focus on material success and students are formed to live in a world with focus on consumerist values. The problems occur because millions of students are labelled as failures and are not able to live up to their parents' or their own hopes and expectations. As Manish Jain suggests it would be appropriate and important to appreciate other ways of thinking and also reward people who are able to think creatively.

“Lilleskoler” in Denmark

To evaluate the practical issues and ideologies of “Lilleskoler” we employ the main points of the interview with Søren Erhard Hansen, the chairman of the Danish association of “Lilleskoler”, and statements from the webpage of the Danish association of “Lilleskoler”. This is due to practical considerations, because the literature about Danish “Lilleskoler” is very sparse.

As mentioned earlier on, the alternative schools in Denmark started emerging in the 1950's after the Second World War. The reason why the alternative schools were created was because the people of Denmark had a new view on the individual and the child after the meaningless killings of the Second World War. As Søren Hansen mentioned in the interview we conducted with him, the Western world experienced a culture shock after the killings during the First- and Second World War and people started questioning what it really is we are teaching the children since they become citizens capable of killing each other (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14). People stopped seeing the child merely as a working force and started focusing on the individual itself and the individual's development and how to shape the individual as a human being. “Lilleskolerne” in Denmark have a major skepticism towards the market oriented way of developing students instead of focusing on developing the child as a whole and try to imply values such as togetherness, immersion etc. (www.lilleskolerne.dk).

Unlike the mainstream schools in Denmark “Lilleskolerne” are not a 100 % state funded but only 85 % funded by the state. The remaining 15 % are funded by the parents of the children at the schools (Werler, et. al., 2007).

The relationship between parents and “Lilleskolerne” is also different from the mainstream schools. “Lilleskolerne” share an emphasis to establish close relationships between parents and school. This

means they have several meetings throughout each year and there is a representative from the parents to supervise classes (Ibid, 2007).

In recent years "Lilleskolerne" have become increasingly popular. Søren Hansen thinks this has to do with the parents caring about their children and the wish for their child to develop as an individual. They want their child to be caring and develop a full personality. Yet he also mentioned that the municipalities have changed dramatically in recent years and even more so with the new schools reform for state run schools. According to Søren Hansen, "Lilleskolerne" are constantly growing and trying to evolve alongside today's culture and worldview. Their strategy for doing so is with the help of the parents and the communication between the teacher, parent and child. The major subject at the moment within schooling and the wellbeing of the child is anxiety of whether or not they make the right decision and get good grades, yet as Søren Hansen states that is exactly what "Lilleskolerne" are caring about. They are caring about the wellbeing of the child and developing the child as a whole, not labeling or examining it.

"Lilleskolerne" in Denmark have a larger amount of creative lessons and subjects such as music and art and they also do a larger amount of social events such as field trips and travelling to foreign countries within each class. Once again these creative subjects and activities are implemented in order to nurture the whole individual and learning processes that has a point of departure in the individual's development (www.lilleskolerne.dk).

Søren Hansen talks about how "Lilleskolerne" try to create a whole individual where they are constantly thinking about the values they implement in the child and think about the child's needs. This is opposite to most of the values of mainstream schools that are creating students on the basis of what the market needs. As he puts it: "The idea that inside this individual there is something called a child that is something different than a working force." Another perfect example of his view of the result of the mainstream school's values is the following: "You will get a robot out of it". Both quotes support the argument that unlike the mainstream schools that educate their students for the market and the working force, "Lilleskolerne" are teaching their children humanistic values and concern with the child's needs and development as an individual instead of their future job.

At "Lilleskolerne" music is seen to stimulate education, learning, happiness, creativity and the development of personal capabilities such as cooperation and expression. It is generally held at "Lilleskoler" that creativity furthers the accumulation and skills within subject knowledge. Because the philosophy of "Lilleskoler" views self-esteem as a socially negotiated thing, it is central to them that the individual feel that other appreciates his/hers social contributions. Playing music together with others, one becomes aware of one's social importance and contributions. Music gives identity to both students and the school as a whole (www.lilleskolerne.dk).

Søren Hansen stated that the concept of the musical is a broad category which is used to describe those subjects which stimulate curiosity, passion and engagement such as art, theatre and music making. At "Lilleskoler" all subjects have a creative potential. For instance math can be utilized in creative fashions. But the concept of the musical is subjects which awaken feelings of desire and fascination. For instance when hearing music, one may feel the urge to dance, create music or let thoughts drift away and become immersed into the music. Or when painting one may also become immersed, passionate and fascinated. (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14)

It is important that teachers at a "Lilleskole" have capacities within what is often referred to, and popularly coined "human relations", in order to help and guide the children. The children have to learn about their own nature and their emotions. They shall be able to know how they feel, and know when they can take care of themselves or need to consult a teacher or an adult. Søren Hansen noticed that in the beginning of the culture radical period and the initial focus on child-centered learning, there was a shared idea that the parents' work of nurture, upbringing and care of children should extend to the school. The central idea of this attitude is that one has a responsibility of one's own well-being, one has to be able to carry the weight of one's emotional life and otherwise it will put a burden on others (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14). The school shall therefore not take this responsibility from the individual, but help it to cope with this responsibility of learning oneself how to feel good. Therefore the awareness of self and emotions, and how to solve subjective, emotional issues individually is fundamental aims of an education at a "Lilleskole". The schools thus aim to give the children something which they can use their entire life (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14).

In "Lilleskoler" children learn to defend and fight for their democratic rights, they shall learn that it is not something which one shall take for granted, and that it is a right and ability which is worth ensuring, although it takes an effort. They spend time on debating and discussing as it is important for "Lilleskoler" to maintain a democratic foundation. Furthermore, Søren Hansen spoke about instances of real protests concerning decision making at "Lilleskoler" (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14). Following Søren Hansen, "Lilleskoler" contribute with something of importance to society. They are an expression of a kind of culture, which goes against the current norms of neoliberalism and the state-regulated spheres of society. They express a social bottom-up culture. By this he means that the foundation and maintenance of "Lilleskoler" is a social movement which tries to impose its own rules and goals, instead of being subordinated to the state, its regulations, practices and rules. Thus "Lilleskoler" are an expression of a kind of freedom, which is seldom today (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14).

Søren Hansen further mentioned that “Lilleskoler” are a movement which directly polarizes itself against the ideology of the competitive state, and the schools share a utopian hope of a better society (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14).

He holds that a school is a political and ideological institution, which is a mirror of the society, its ideologies, democracy and politics. According to Søren Hansen a public school has two rather political elements; it seeks to give a democratic education and a version of how society understands itself. But the “Lilleskoler” have three political elements; their version of a democratic education, their version of how society understands itself, and lastly an utopian element, which is not found in the public schools (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14). Thus we see that “Lilleskoler” clearly establish themselves as a progressive movement, which is critical towards how society is currently constituted and try to give their students the best opportunities to become democratic citizens which can cope with the psychological pressure within society (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14).

The schools believe that inside each human being is something which purpose is to grow, something essential coming from inside, which it is the responsibility of the school to take care of and nurture (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14).

Practices, values and ideas in alternative schools - similarities and differences

In the theory chapter we found a conceptual framework based on the ideas of Krishnamurti, Tagore, Nussbaum and reform pedagogy. Its purpose is to guide us through concepts and notions which we also find in the alternative schools and in the interviews we conducted of the alternative schools. The theoretical concepts portray some significant aspects and philosophies of the ideal alternative schools but are the concepts the same and present in the reality of alternative schools?

Our starting point for investigating alternative schools is based on different, and similar, understandings or shared sets of educational practices and ideologies, with concrete examples of single schools. We believe that this synthesis and analysis of actual school practices and theoretical concepts, will help us give a more versatile and thorough answer to our research question and sub questions.

The overall concept which covers all the concepts is holistic education. The alternative schools have an ideology that is based on holistic education. It is the whole purpose of the alternative schools we investigated. Both a strong emphasis on an opposition to mainstream schools and a strong focus on preparing the students to meet life’s challenges and to learn about themselves (www.holistic-education.net). The teachers need to be attentive to both the emotional needs of the students and of their intellectual development. As the interviewed founder of the alternative school in India ‘Poorna’

states, if these elements are not met, then the school is not based on a holistic education since its foundation is to nurture the whole human (Vijaysimha, pers. comm., 08.12.14).

In both Denmark and India, we see that the initial prerequisite for the foundation of alternative schools is a group of parents who are dissatisfied with the mainstream schools. Therefore, they try to establish an alternative school in their local surroundings. As Søren Hansen mentioned in the interview, it is the dissatisfaction with the contemporary ideological content of the mainstream schools and the need of a different ideological content of education which spurs the creation of alternative schools (Hansen, pers. comm., 17.11.14). Both in India and around “Lilleskoler”, one finds that some parents are concerned for the treatment their kids will get in a mainstream school. Especially that their personal interests, development and well-being will be neglected in the mainstream schools. Parents are attracted to the holistic approach of the alternative schools and the belief that an alternative school will not forget or neglect their child, but put the development and well-being of the child as the highest priority.

Most of the alternative schools share a focus on the whole human. The concept is more explicitly expressed in the alternative schools where many of them use the concept to define their philosophy of teaching and learning.

The fact that many parents choose alternative schools because they are concerned that a mainstream school cannot embrace and support the development of a full personality shows that the concept of the whole human is present in reality. The critique of mainstream schools is not only theoretically constructed or a concept of philosophy but it is a real social concern among parents in the respective countries. According to ‘Poorna’s founder the whole human includes the heart, head and hands of a person: “The heart should tell us what must be done, the head must tell us how, and the hands must do” (Vijaysimha, pers. comm., 08.12.14). This philosophy is very central to alternative schools and requires a focus on the individual student.

According to our sources, both “Lilleskoler” and most alternative schools of India realize the concept of “individuality”. It is the progress of the individual and its interest that learning shall revolve around and adjust to, not goals as getting a job or achieving the “right” level of knowledge of a subject. There is therefore created a great room for freedom. The childhood is an important and particular stage of life which has its own inherent purposes and meanings. In “Lilleskoler” and the alternative schools in India the goals of education is not external to childhood, but the learning focus on the process instead of the end result. This corresponds very well with Krishnamurti’s statement that education shall not have any preconceived ideals which the individual shall attain, as this will only distract the individual from what his/hers essential, individual nature really is like (Krishnamurti, 1973).

Fearlessness is of great concern for alternative schools both in Denmark and India. It is emphasized multiple times by alternative schools that fear prevents the students to achieve confidence and to develop a trust in themselves and in their surrounding environment. Fear can be the result of pressure from the parents and performance anxiety. In general fear makes it more difficult to learn. The alternative school is to be a harmonious place where trust and solidarity are core values. Søren Hansen states that teachers in “Lilleskolerne” are supposed to listen to the children to create a mutual trust and give them competences to be able to deal with life, and thus prevent fearlessness. According to ‘Poorna’s’ website, the school creates a fearless environment with every opportunity to enhance self-esteem and where students become caring members of society.

Self-awareness is a concept which mostly Krishnamurti emphasized as central to the ideal school. We have found that the concept of self-awareness are applied and implemented, though with some differences, in the alternative schools of India and at “Lilleskoler.” The practical use of the concept is in “Lilleskolerne” deployed to make the individual know how to solve problems independently or how to consult an adult or teacher. It is important that the child learns when it is feeling okay and when it is not and in the last case how to feel better. Self-awareness is thus vital to the practices of “Lilleskolerne”, mostly as a means to assure well-being among its students. Also alternative schools in India believe self-awareness is important. They especially emphasize the importance of the students’ awareness of their own learning process and development in order to nurture the whole human and being able to trust themselves and live the life where they will find harmony and a sense of belonging. Practically, this is made possible because the students have a say in their education. Discussions about the students themselves and of the schools make the students aware of their own opinions which amplify their self-awareness.

In both countries the alternative schools recognize the concept of self-esteem, as an integral part of their way of education. In order to learn, pupils shall be happy about themselves or get rid of any fear, which impedes learning. It is generalizable among the schools that self-esteem comes from respect and acceptance, but that it is also something which the teacher shall accentuate in the individual. The individual has to learn him-/her how to feel “good”. It is the responsibility of education to help in the abilities of knowing oneself, expressing oneself and feeling confident, so he/she can use these abilities throughout life.

Experiential learning has a core value to the alternative schools. According to Indira Vijayasimha (founder of ‘Poorna’), they experiment with the teaching and try different creative methods that corresponds with the students’ wishes. One important thing to mention is the fact that experiential learning attracts a wish to minimize tests and examinations in India. In Denmark “Lilleskolerne” do have exams in the later classes, but with the great emphasis on creative and musical subjects, the focus is not on the results from tests and exams. The investigated alternative schools share the philosophy

that the best learning aspires to give the child the abilities to inspire and teach itself. When the child leaves school it will have a useful tool to learn new things of interest or new things at a workplace. According to alternative schools, it is the nature of the mind and the nature of children to constantly learn something of interest. In the schools it is encouraged that the students should focus on their own interests as this learning process will increase the love for learning and will nurture the students' self-esteem and thus the whole human. Søren Hansen explained this by reference to the ideal teacher or pedagogue. He/she does not prioritize nurture and care of the child above everything else, but instead nurture and care for the child's learning process shall be his/her first priority. It is the task of the alternative schools to give the child the greatest means to learn and teach itself, not to present the widest range of knowledge to the child.

In general we have found that the concept of close relatedness applies to most alternative schools in India and "Lilleskoler". The class and school size of both Indian alternative schools and "Lilleskoler" are kept small to make sure that the teacher can reach each student individually, at his/her level and interests. As freedom and interest-based learning is essential to the schools, it is necessary that the teacher has a limited number of students in class as he/she otherwise is unable to help and guide all students. The schools try to establish intimate relationships among its parents, teachers, staff and children. Arrangements, events, festivals, music and theater performances are often employed to show what the students have learned and to create relatedness to the school. It is important to the schools that no individual is overlooked and that the individual has an experience of harmony in the community of parents, teachers and affiliates of the school.

Many alternative schools in India try to enhance the school as a cultural center that shall integrate the community around the school in its activities, and that the education of students aims to influence the neighborhood or village positively. It is our impression that this is not so important for "Lilleskoler" in Denmark, but that close relatedness is evident within the active participation of parents in the school and in the connectedness of students, teachers and school as a unity.

Discussion

A holistic education will benefit both the individual and a democratic society, according to Nussbaum. She argues that society does not acknowledge the importance of implementing elements in education that nurtures the whole human such as creativity, confidence and self-awareness, and that these are only evident in alternative schools. Also the alternative schools we investigated have a foundation built on holistic education. The two Indian alternative schools, 'Poorna Education Centre' and 'The School' focus their approach on letting the students learn in their own pace and focusing on an interest since according to the alternative schools that makes it easier to learn. What is essential to a holistic approach is a focus on the individual.

Individuality presupposes freedom of choice. According to Krishnamurti, the individual shall not be influenced by external factors, especially by education. He or she shall do what is most appropriate for him or her. Following this argument, education shall not try to implement certain values or knowledges on the students, but nurture the nature of the individual. Helena Norberg-Hodge, criticizes the way mainstream "Western" schools implement a certain set of curriculum which is teaching the same thing, creating the same kind of people, the so-called 'factory schooling'. Ultimately, she argues, the unique elements that make human 'individuals' are being destroyed when mainstreaming education. Also reform pedagogy points to the importance of developing the individual human being, and that that individual should be independent and free from restrictions of the dominant ideologies of society. The Danish alternative schools "Lilleskoler", which are inspired by the reform pedagogy, also put an emphasis on the development of the individual. They try not to implement certain values in the students and instead focus on their needs and individual potential. It is a striking equal ideology, an opposition to the 'mainstream', which is found in these countries we have investigated in, so far from each other and yet many similarities concerning the 'ideal' education.

In order to be able to develop as an individual it is important to be able to understand oneself, as Krishnamurti argues, self-awareness creates inner happiness and when not present it ends up destroying ourselves. This is why he believes that schools and teachers ought to not focus on efficiency and security as aims but ought to help and instruct the students observe and evaluate themselves and their desires and limitations. This practice is also found in the alternative schools. In India, the students enhance their understanding of themselves and others through weekly discussions, and at "Lilleskoler" the students are made comfortable to seek help and to learn how to solve problems independently, and also through discussions with fellow students and teachers. Self-awareness is in this context important to assure wellbeing, and the teachers play a great role in establishing self-awareness in the students.

This is also evident in the teacher G. Gautama's argument where he states that teachers ought to advise the students in order for them to understand their own mistakes in a given subject. However,

according to both Gautama and Krishnamurti, this can only be done if no pressure from parents or teachers is present, which would create an individual dominated by fear and performance anxiety. Therefore, in order to become an individual with self-awareness fearlessness is important. According to Krishnamurti, fear is developed because of concerns about not living up to capitalistic societies' goals of achieving security and success. Thus, interests important to the individual but which are not leading to security or success are not explored, which, according to Krishnamurti, ultimately harms intellectual capacities, creativity and critical thinking. These concerns are also to be found in education. As stated earlier, fear makes it more difficult to learn. According to the alternative schools, fear must be prevented in order to create an environment where students can trust teachers, fellow students and themselves, which would give the students the opportunity to enhance their self-esteem and confidence.

The alternative schools in Denmark and India argue that nurturing the students' self-esteem is essential to learn in the best possible way. Søren Hansen explained in the interview that the biggest problem in school today is anxiety. The children do not believe they are good enough or get good enough grades. As Søren stated, this is exactly what the alternative schools care about, about helping the students into a state of wellbeing. According to reform pedagogy, in order for the child to achieve high self-esteem it needs to feel safe and accepted. Therefore, the teacher should be full of empathy and encouraging the students to learn at their own pace. The reform pedagogy also argues for a playful and creative learning environment. As they state, through experiential learning the student is more likely to remember the things being taught. Experiential learning is about learning in a creative way that will benefit the individual, e.g. subjects like music, theatre, rhythmic, art etc., which are subjects very important to "Lilleskoler".

An important element in experiential learning is alternative learning approaches. It is for reform pedagogy important for instance to spend time outside the classroom to learn. Especially Tagore advocated this. He believed it to be very important for humans to be one with nature and learn in and from nature. He argued that in nature one's creativity and ability to innovate would increase and this would make it easier to learn.

All of the ten definitions of alternative schools in India described in the theory section can be seen as experimental learning processes. The approach is supposed to be creative, respect is supposed to be present both for teachers and students, learning is supposed to focus on the students and their interests, disciplines are supposed to be mixed and experimented with, class size is supposed to be small in order to care for each individual, class structure is supposed to be experiential and flexible, administration is supposed to be democratic, evaluation is supposed to not happen only through tests, affiliation is supposed to be optional, and success rate is not supposed to be measured by tests and examinations. All of these elements are part of experimental approaches to learning and according to

the book "Alternative schooling in India" are supposed to be present in alternative schools. Most of these goals were met in the alternative schools we investigated. The most important things for them were to minimize the measurement of success through tests and to teach accordance to the students' interests since that will enhance their self-esteem.

All the alternative schools we investigated share a focus on close relatedness. According to the book "Alternative schooling in India", if there is no close relationship between teachers and students and the teachers are instead an authority they fear, then it will result in the students losing their confidence and trust in themselves. Therefore, personal contact and close relationship among teachers and students is important. The three schools investigated all have small classes and a close collaboration between parents, teachers and students. Krishnamurti also advocates a close relationship of mutual affection and respect between teachers and students, and collaboration with parents. He encourages partnership instead of authority.

The whole human

All of the described elements that are present in the alternative schools and advocated by Krishnamurti, Tagore and reform pedagogy are part of what a whole human would contain. The whole human should be an individual free from restrictions and capable of making his or her own decisions. The whole human should be self-aware in order to understand him-/her and others. However, the whole human can only understand oneself fully when fear from achieving security and success is prevented, and mutual trust between teachers and students is paramount. The whole human should also contain a high level of self-esteem because that makes it easier to learn. To nurture the whole human experiential learning is a significant factor. Learning in different ways while actively experiencing the process is developing the creative and innovative sides of humans, which the whole human also ought to contain. The whole human should also be nurtured with close relations. Education wise teachers, parents and students ought to have mutual respect and close relatedness. All three alternative schools investigated claim to nurture the whole human. The two schools in India explicit state that they use the term to form their philosophy of teaching. "Lilleskolen" state that they focus on the development of the individual and shaping of the individual into a human being, while using creative subjects and experiential learning, which for us, is how to nurture the whole human. Both Krishnamurti and Tagore argue for the importance of nurturing the whole human. Krishnamurti argues that education should teach students the understanding of life as a whole, and free them from fear and the constant search of security and success. Tagore argues that education should help the individual to see him-/herself as a whole human being to develop one's personal potential, without being expected or pressured to conform certain patterns set by society. Tagore also argues that the wholeness include the body, the spirit, the senses, the intellect and the feelings. This corresponds very

well to what the founder of the school 'Poorna' states. As explained earlier, she argues that the whole human should include the heart, head and hands of a person.

The “alternative” critique of mainstream education

In mainstream education there are many things conflicting with the whole human. The emphasis is laid on filling the students with information as if they were empty and did not know anything beforehand. The main point of mainstream education is doing well in tests and exams and getting a good job with security and success. As explained earlier, the teacher Asha Sudarshan strongly criticizes this way of educating. She believes that examinations are absurd ways of evaluating the students since they are feeling anxious, frightened and pressured to perform well, which might lead to memory loss and frustrations, and not doing the best he or she can actually do. According to Sudarshan, depression, guilt of disappointing parents and decreased self-esteem are possible results of this kind of evaluation. Manish Jain also critiques the way mainstream education evaluates students. As already explained, he states that millions of students are actually labelled as failures because they do not do well in examinations. Instead, he argues, society should acknowledge those people who might not do well in exams but who are able to think in different ways and might have other more creative and innovative skills. This is exactly what alternative schools do, whether in India or at “Lilleskoler”. They appreciate and acknowledge that people learn at different steps, and learn different things because of individual interests.

Krishnamurti, Nussbaum and Tagore all have strong critiques towards mainstream education: Nussbaum argues that mainstream education is neglecting important elements found in healthy democracies such as critical thinking, empathy and self-awareness. These holistic elements, she argues, is beneficial both for the individual and for society. However, these elements, she argues, are not only neglected by mainstream schools, but also by parents who do not see the importance of the individuality and instead focus on measurable results pressuring their children to achieve high results in tests and examinations.

Krishnamurti also criticizes mainstream education. He argues that the ideal education should not be seen as only training the mind and produce ambition leading to competition. It should also train the soul and nurture the whole human. When education does not also train the soul, individuality and creativity gets lost and the education becomes a mechanical behavior with focus on factory schooling, which we explained earlier on.

Also Tagore criticizes the mechanical behavior of mainstream schools arguing that it resembles a prison or a factory designing dull students with the same mechanical thinking. He argues that this kind of education has no beneficial or meaningful elements other than getting a job, which is of purely consumerist desires when standing alone.

Instead, he believed that joy and creativity could break the individual free from its own and society's bondages, and establish whole citizens and a harmonious society. Krishnamurti believed that education ought to also focus on emotional intelligence, critical thinking and self-awareness, since that would, according to him; produce compassionate citizens and a better society. Since creativity, emotional intelligence and self-awareness are focal points in alternative education it is possible to argue that Krishnamurti and Tagore were advocating what we call alternative schools. Also Nussbaum believed that experiential learning is key to a peaceful and harmonious future and therefore argues for the importance of alternative schools.

Critical evaluation

Our approach has been limited to the investigation of a small number of alternative schools in only two countries. A far more comprehensive study would involve many interviews and investigation of more schools in many different places, depending on the aims of course. In this manner the scientist could more easily point towards a generalization in findings and thus establish a more valid foundation to build claims and theorization on.

We could have placed greater emphasis on context and historical development to understand our field of research and answer our research question. This was not done as we thought that an investigation of the theoretical and practical philosophy of alternative education could give us the best answers to our research question, although, if we had more time and space the issue would be more nuanced bringing in context and history.

The results of our project has shown that many similarities can be drawn around influencing philosophies and thinkers, but also in particular practices and beliefs held at actual alternative schools. Drawing from the notions of social constructivism science is itself a social construction (Delanty, 2003). We are aware of the fact that the results and the concepts we have arrived at are epistemologically our social construction as a group. It is our analysis and interpretation of theories and statements, and we can never get rid of our personal motives, biases and individual interpretations as social scientists. Especially around the conceptual framework of our project, one can state that a personal bias is hard to avoid, as we amalgamated the concepts through personal analysis of different philosophers and the academic tradition of reform pedagogy. It is clear that other researchers might have chosen different theoretical authors and constructed concepts in a whole other way than we did, because it is subjective where and how one finds similarities or differences, and what one sees as relevant.

Following Hacking (2002), the features of social facts are changing in relation to discourses and dominant beliefs held in society, whereby people change the way they perceive of a given thing, and social facts can thus change with history and context (in Delanty, 2003). We thus become aware that

our findings are interpretations of how others have interpreted a socially constructed thing as education. Therefore, we are not able to know whether our findings relates to some essential features in human nature, or whether they are social constructs, which most likely will be molded as discourses, context, beliefs, history, change etc.

Concerning our finding that alternative schools are founded by parents who are dissatisfied with the mainstream schools, social constructivist philosophy make us aware that this is a group of people who have reflected upon the things we take for granted in society. For instance, that a public school will educate children properly. Instead, social constructivism following Hacking (2002) points towards that this conception or social fact might be obliterated if there is no need for it to exist, or if its harmful to some (in Delanty, 2003). This is exactly what the parents who send their children to alternative schools have done; obliterated a socially constructed belief which otherwise is taken for granted.

Perspectivation

It will be beneficial to make more research on the ideologies of alternative schooling to see differences and similarities within human thought across cultures and nations. We have found that investigation of alternative schooling relates to philosophical issues such as human nature, the ideal society, the purposes of learning, the good life etc. Examining alternative schools, the scientist will become familiar with the ideologies, beliefs, thoughts and wishes of the particular schools and the influencing thinkers and academic traditions. Through an investigation of alternative philosophies of education a social scientist will get to know of new utopias of society, wishes, ontology of human nature, ontology of learning and ontology of children etc. Making cross-cultural studies, on a wider scale, involving more countries than our project, one might find some very interesting similarities or differences in thoughts and ideologies about human nature. The most intriguing about such a study would be to take very different places and compare their philosophies of the ideal education, to inquire into the question whether human beings do share or do not share essential features in their thoughts about their own nature, which are independent of background or culture.

Conclusion

In the following we will state the main points from the project, in relation to our research- and sub questions. In this project, we have investigated why the alternative schools in Denmark and in India exist, what they have in common, which values and ideas that is central to them and how they see their contribution to the development of students.

Alternative schools exist because some parents, philosophers, academics and teachers hold that mainstream education neglects individual development and wishes, which alternative schools prioritize. An alternative school can offer another ideological content, which are preferred by some. The schools share a holistic approach to education, striving to develop all capabilities of the students. Their foundational ideologies are opposed to mainstream education and share a common critique of society, and a hope to change the latter. The schools are typically small, rather independent and unique.

The learning processes are creative, intuitive, interest-based and experiential as it is their philosophy that these stimulate emotional and intellectual capabilities and sharpen all faculties of intelligence. The purposes of alternative education are individual development and democratic education. Through self-awareness and recognition the individual will come to love and accept itself, whereby it will also love and accept others. Thus in the end society will be more harmonious.

Alternative education shall first and foremost make the students free, happy, solidary, strong and confident. It shall not decide the aims before the individual. Goals of education should help to realize a positive childhood, not focus on processes and goals external to childhood.

The things taught at school has to be relevant in the other spheres of the life of students, so that the individual is taught something which it can use in the present but also in the entire life.

We have found that some general features of humanism and some practical and philosophical aspects of education resemble each other in the alternative schools of India and Denmark, and their philosophical foundations. As alternative education and its philosophies deal with subjects such as human life and its purposes, society and learning, we have found similarities which suggest that humans with different cultures, ideologies and backgrounds share many thoughts in relation to some existential questions of life. The similarities we found are evident in our conceptual framework and its application in the examination of concrete schools in the analysis chapter.

Summarizing the aims, beliefs and hopes, the central arguments of alternative schools and their philosophies would be, that if society is to change, the schools might be the right place to start.

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