



AT VÆRE INTERNATIONAL STUDERENDE VED ARTS BEING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AT ARTS

INDBLIK I INTERNATIONALE STUDERENDES OPLEVELSER AF AT STUDERE
VED AARHUS UNIVERSITET

INSIGHT INTO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' STUDY EXPERIENCES AT
AARHUS UNIVERSITY



AARHUS UNIVERSITET

Charlotte Albrechtsen (red.)

At være international studerende ved Arts

Indblik i internationale studerendes oplevelser af at studere ved Aarhus Universitet

Being an International Student at Arts

Insight into international students' study experiences at Aarhus University

Skrifter ved Center for Undervisningsudvikling og Digitale Medier nr. 1

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- Insight into international students' study experiences at Aarhus University

Forfatter:

Charlotte Albrechtsen (red.)

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FORORD

Af Charlotte Albrechtsen

Denne publikation giver stemme til internationale studerende. Med egne ord fortæller de om deres oplevelser, erfaringer, ønsker, behov og udfordringer som internationale kandidatstuderende ved Arts, Aarhus Universitet (AU).

Ordene optræder i tre rapporter om internationale studerende ved fakultetet, som udspringer af tre forskellige projekter til udvikling af studiemiljøet på Arts. De tre projekter var blot få ud af et større antal studiemiljøudviklende projekter, der alle blev gennemført i efterårsemestret 2011. De pågældende projekter hed "Fokusgruppeinterviews med internationale og danske kandidatstuderende på Institut for Antropologi, Arkæologi og Lingvistik", "Webbase-ret guide til internationale studerende angående korrekt kildehåndtering" og "Semesterforløb om studiekultur og studieteknik for internationale full degree-studerende". Projekternes sigte præsenteres nærmere i de enkelte rapporter i denne publikation. Projektbeskrivelser og afrapporteringer af projekterne kan desuden ses på adressen <http://medarbejdere.au.dk/strategi/uddannelse/studiemiljoe/arts/>.

Baggrunden for studiemiljøudviklingsprojekterne var en undersøgelse af studiemiljøet på AU foretaget i 2011. I det følgende opsummerer vi konklusioner fra studiemiljøundersøgelsen, som vedrører internationale studerende. Konklusionerne ligger ikke nødvendigvis direkte til grund for de projekter, vores rapporter har rod i, men de sætter ikke desto mindre en fælles kontekst for rapporterne.

Da studiemiljøundersøgelse blev udarbejdet, var 169 internationale studerende i gang med fuldtidsstudier på Arts. Studiemiljøundersøgelsen viser blandt andet, at de internationale studerende ikke trives helt så godt som deres danske medstuderende. Der er en forskel på 13

procentpoint mellem andelen af henholdsvis danske og internationale studerende, der føler sig godt tilpas på deres studier på Arts. På tværs af hovedområderne angiver flere internationale studerende i åbne svar, at de "fandt mødet med det danske uddannelsessystem og danske studerende vanskeligt, og at de nogle gange følte sig forskelsbehandlet" (s. 50), samt at danske studerende er tilbageholdende med at lukke dem ind i arbejdsgrupper, læsegrupper og sociale sammenhænge. Desuden oplever internationale studerende ved AU ifølge Studiemiljø2011 et betydeligt fravær af engelsksproget information om administration og sociale forhold, og de finder, at underviseres og medstuderendes engelskniveau er meget varieret.

Mens studiemiljøundersøgelsen er blevet til på et kvantitativt grundlag, bygger vores rapporter på kvalitative data.

"Integration of international students at Aarhus University" er titlen på den første – og engelsksprogede – rapport, som er skrevet af cand.mag. Martin Damgaard Larsen, p.t. Moesgaard Museum (tidligere ved det daværende Institut for Antropologi, Arkæologi og Lingvistik), stud.mag. Mette Lind Kusk og stud.mag. Astrid Dahl, begge ved Institut for Kultur og Samfund. Rapporten formidler resultater fra tre fokusgruppeinterviews med en blanding af internationale og danske studerende ved Arts, AU. Rapporten dækker emnerne studiestart, studiemiljø (akademisk og socialt), bolig og praktiske forhold, mentorer og gruppearbejde. En gennemgående konklusion er, at internationale studerende ønsker at have mere kontakt med danske studerende. Rapportens forfattere peger på, at der ligger en udfordring i at skærpe såvel danske som internationale studerendes opmærksomhed på hinanden som sociale og faglige ressourcer – altså som kulturelt forskellige individer med ophav i mangfoldige samfunds-, uddannelses- og videnstraditioner.

Rapporten "Internationale studerendes møde med den danske akademiske kultur med fokus på studiekompetencer" er forfattet af ph.d. og cand.mag. Charlotte Albrechtsen og cand. bibl. Gina Bay fra henholdsvis Arts' Center for Undervisningsudvikling og Digitale Medier og Biblioteket for Business and Social Sciences. Med afsæt i fire fokusgrupper med internationale studerende ved Arts om studiekultur og selvstændighed drager rapportens forfattere den hovedkonklusion, at de behov og udfordringer, som internationale studerende har i forhold til studiemiljø og studiekompetencer, i stor udstrækning er identiske med behov og udfordringer, som danske studerende oplever. De opfordrer derfor til varsomhed i forhold til at udskille internationale studerende som en gruppe med særskilte behov i relation til studiemiljø og studiekompetencer. Tiltag, man måtte ønske at iværksætte for at forbedre studiemiljøet eller opbygge studerendes studiekompetencer, kan med fordel rettes mod både danske og internationale studerende.

Sidste indlæg, "If I were the King or Queen of Aarhus University...", er skrevet af cand.phil. og MSc Hanne Buhl, Center for Undervisning og Digitale Medier, Arts. Hun forestod i november

2011 afholdelsen af to studiekompenceworkshops for AU's full degree-studerende i regi af Internationalt Center, og indlægget beskriver oplevelser og erfaringer herfra. Ved de to workshops blev deltagerne – under overskriften "If I were the King or Queen of Aarhus University ..." – inviteret til at bidrage med gode ideer til, hvordan universitetet kan forbedre studiebetingelserne for internationale studerende. Det indbragte i alt 26 gode råd, som sammen med de indhøstede erfaringer giver god inspiration til det videre arbejde med ikke blot at forbedre studievilkårene for de internationale studerende, men også at inddrage dem som ressourcer og værdifulde bidragydere i den fortsatte udvikling af AU som et interkulturelt universitet.

Vi håber, at alle, der arbejder med internationale studerende enten fagligt eller administrativt, kan have glæde af den indsigt i internationale studerendes oplevelser og tanker, som publikationen giver.

NOTER:

i) Undersøgelsen er formidlet i rapporten *Studiemiljø2011 – Undersøgelse af studiemiljøet ved Aarhus Universitet* af Torben K. Jensen et al.

PREFACE

By Charlotte Albrechtsen

This publication gives space to the voices of international students. In their own words, they tell us about their experiences, wishes, needs and challenges as international students at the Faculty of Arts at Aarhus University. The students' words appear in three reports on international students at the faculty originating from three different projects aimed at developing the faculty's study environment: 'Focus group interviews with international and Danish MA students at the Department of Anthropology, Archaeology, and Linguistics', 'Web-based guide for international students about the correct use of sources', and 'Semester workshops on academic culture and study skills for international full degree students'. The aims of the individual project are described in detail in the reports in this publication. In addition, the full project descriptions and reports are available in Danish at <http://medarbejdere.au.dk/strategi/uddannelse/studiemiljoe/arts/>. The three projects represent a very small part of the many projects initiated to develop the study environment, all of which were carried out in the autumn semester of 2011.

The study environment development projects were initiated as a response to a survey of the study environment at Aarhus University conducted in 2011. Below is a summary of some of the survey's main conclusions regarding international students. Although there is no direct link between these conclusions and the projects on which our reports are based, we hope that they will serve to create a picture of the wider context in which the projects took place.

When the study environment survey was made, 169 international students were engaged in full-time studies at the Faculty of Arts. One finding of the survey was that international students were not quite as happy as their fellow Danish students. There was a difference of 13 percentage points between the share of Danish and international students, respectively,

who felt comfortable studying at the faculty. Across the faculties, a number of international students wrote in open replies that they 'found their encounter with the Danish educational system and with Danish students difficult and that, sometimes, they felt discriminated against' (p. 50) (editor's translation). Furthermore, some students commented that Danish students seemed reluctant to include them in study groups and social activities. According to the report based on the survey, *Studiemiljø2011*, international students at Aarhus University also felt they lacked information in English about administrative and social matters, and they found that the English skills of their teachers and fellow students varied greatly.

While *Studiemiljø2011* is a quantitative study, the reports presented in this publication are based on qualitative data. 'Integration of international students at Aarhus University' is the title of the first report, which was written by anthropologist Martin Damgaard Larsen, MSc, currently at Moesgaard Museum (previously at the Department of Culture and Society), and Mette Lind Kusk and Astrid Dahl, both MSc students of Anthropology. This report summarizes the results from three focus group interviews with a mix of international and Danish students at the Faculty of Arts. The report covers themes such as the start of studies, the academic and social study environment, accommodations and practical matters, mentors and group work. One general conclusion is that international students would like to have more contact with Danish students. The authors of the report draw attention to the challenge that we face of increasing both Danish and international students' awareness of each other as rich social and academic resources representing diverse cultural, social, educational, and knowledge traditions.

The Danish report 'Internationale studerendes møde med den danske akademiske kultur med fokus på studiekompetencer' ('International students' encounter with Danish academic culture, with a focus on study skills') was written by Charlotte Albrechtsen, PhD, MA, from the Centre for Teaching Development and Digital Media at the Faculty of Arts, and Gina Bay, MLISc, from Aarhus University Libraries. Based on four focus group interviews with international students at Arts about the Danish academic culture and critical thinking, the authors of this report draw the conclusion that the needs and challenges of international students in relation to the study environment and to study skills are largely identical to the needs and challenges of Danish students. Therefore, they recommend carefully considering before segregating international students as a special needs group as regards the study environment and study skills. Any initiatives to improve the study environment or enhance the students' study skills could with advantage be aimed at both Danish and international students.

The last entry, 'If I were the King or Queen of Aarhus University...' was written by Hanne Buhl, MA, MSc, from the Centre for Teaching Development and Digital Media at the Faculty of Arts. In November 2011, she facilitated two study skills workshops aimed at international full degree students at Aarhus University, and here she describes some of the learning and other

experiences she had in the process. Under the heading "If I were the King or Queen of Aarhus University ...", the participants in the two workshops were asked to contribute good ideas as to how the university can improve the academic environment for international students. This resulted in a total of 26 Post-Its with good advice, which along with the acquired experiences provide some useful inspiration for future initiatives, not only to improve the academic environment for international students but also to include them as resources and valuable contributors to the ongoing development of Aarhus University as an intercultural university.

It is our hope that the insights into some of the thoughts and experiences of international students presented in this publication may be of use to people who work with international students both in academic and administrative contexts.

FOOTNOTES

i) The survey is described in the Danish report *Studiemiljø2011 – Undersøgelse af studiemiljøet ved Aarhus Universitet* (Study Environment 2011 – A Study of the Study Environment at Aarhus University) by Torben K. Jensen et al.

INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT AARHUS UNIVERSITY

RÉSUMÉ OF THREE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS (FALL 2011)

By Martin Damgaard Larsen, Mette Lind Kusk and Astrid Dahl

Through a small qualitative study consisting of three semi-structured focus group interviews lasting 3-4 hours, we have aimed at gaining some understanding of the integration of international students at Aarhus University (AU). All together, five full degree students from Master's degree programmes in Anthropology (Global Studies & Development and General Anthropology), Human Security, and Global Journalism participated. Nine exchange students from the departments of English, Psychology, Economy, History and Area Studies (with various courses in other departments) also participated in the interviews. The participants come from nine different countries: USA, Germany, Ghana, Denmark, Nepal, Czech Republic, Italy, Mexico, and China.

All participants have firsthand experience with being international students and/or studying in an international environment. During the interview, we focused on three main topics, namely 'Study Start', 'Academic Study Environment', and 'Social Study Environment'. These topics are of course overlapping, and following the data we gained from talking about these topics we have divided the insights from the interviews into six parts concerning: Study Start, Academic Study Environment, Social Study Environment, Accommodation/Practical Issues, Mentors, and Group Work.

During the interviews we had three small exercises where the students were asked to give their opinion about a certain topic before we started the discussion. This was both done to see if the written statements would correspond to the discussion we had afterwards, and

to enhance the social interaction between the participants in the group. We have used the written statements to verify the points made during the interview, but the statements have corresponded with the points made during the discussion.

A very general point made during our interviews was the students' wish to have more contact with Danish students. This is clear in all the different topics we have discussed. Many reflect on the challenge of getting to know the Danes, and they consider the problem from different perspectives. The challenge of getting to know local students has also been present for Danish students participating in our interviews who have taken a semester abroad. In the following we present our findings from the interviews. Each section will start off with a small introduction followed by our main points within the topic. These are supported by quotes taken directly from the transcribed interviews.

STUDY START

Before conducting the interviews we had decided to focus on the study start because we believed it to be very relevant for the students' following study life at AU. This has proven to be true, and the study start has been highlighted as very well organized and relevant by some, while others have experienced parts of the introduction week to be irrelevant. Others again have missed out on the introduction week involuntarily which has caused many challenges and created a somewhat chaotic beginning of their study life at AU. Many students find the idea of social events with both Danish and international students participating in the introduction week very attractive. This is also the case for full degree students, both Danish and international, who would like to have more social activities.

Exchange student: "About the introduction days, I saw some of the Danish students in the beginning and they were doing so many funny things, playing games in the park or stuff and I was wondering why we don't do things together. (...) Just maybe a day together."

Exchange student: "We didn't have contact with Danes during the introduction week and we didn't learn anything about Danish culture. Anyways, we will meet internationals, so maybe meeting Danish people from the beginning would have been a different start (...) definitely a combination of intro for Danes and internationals would be good."

The social activities for international students has been appreciated as well.

Exchange student: "It was helpful for me to meet other exchange students, because more or less all the students we see now, we met them in introduction week."

The Faculty Day has been very useful for some.

Exchange student: "It really helped me, the department day (Faculty Day), I belonged to the social science department, Economy. At the beginning we met and had sandwiches, after we went to the auditoriums, had a lot of information about exams, where to go, student groups, how to sign up for the internet, we signed up right away, we were shown around."

The material sent to the students before arriving to Aarhus is received in very different ways. A lot of students have been happy about the very detailed and concrete contents and descriptions that makes it possible to prepare very well for the new study environment. However, alternative information material is requested, e.g. more video tutorials.

Exchange student: "I think the guide was really helpful and you could prepare yourself properly for cpr., residence permit, when you did it at home, it was very easy."

Exchange student: "I needed more cultural events. I felt it was like treating us like high school kids, we only had basic information, and maybe we can handle a bit more".

Exchange student: "I think in the information package, it [a guide to First Class and the ECTS system] could be there because there was not so much in this 'package' - I had expected a bigger package, but it is basically just a letter stating 'we know that you are coming'."

But for some there are too many words. Therefore, it has been suggested to also communicate the contents of the material through e.g. videos with former international students on the AU website.

Exchange students: "A lot of you have been raised in the education system and a lot of the international students come from different backgrounds so it is difficult for some of us to understand that there is no actual way of grasping it because you guys are more like 'here's a piece of paper, read, this is how we do it' where I think that most international students don't learn in that way, they have to learn visually by contact, and you guys do a lot of 'here I sent you an e-mail'."

"Yeah, maybe put that on a video. Or maybe have the introduction online. Or just invite us when there is food."

Exchange student: "I read the guide word by word, it has so many details! You can bring your pillows... I find it good for international student. But it is word by word!"

Full degree student: "Maybe it is not possible for you to read everything in detail, you have a lot of stuff to do, so maybe we can have some PowerPoint slides, or somebody to

tell you, so you don't have to read it all."

It has been suggested to have more cultural contents in the introduction week, for example about Danish history or the present political situation. Such an activity could be made 'optional', so only those who are interested will go.

Exchange student: "Maybe more culture, like you said."

Exchange Student: "Something more about Denmark in general. Maybe a little bit of history or something like that. It could be like electoral so not everybody had to go there because not everybody is interested in that. But it would be nice to have the possibility to hear something about that, I think."

Exchange student: I thought it was a lot of fun, but that's all...maybe this is how International Centre understands the international students, to socialize and have fun, I would have liked an introduction to Denmark, especially for example about the election."

The full degree students from non-Western countries were very frustrated about their study start, or rather lack thereof. Their visas were delayed and therefore they missed out on the entire introduction (both the general introduction week for international students and the specialized introduction on the department). It is suggested to have a later, second round introduction.

Full degree student: "Unfortunately I missed the introduction week, I had some problem with immigration service back in Ghana (...) It was so frustrating! But the International Centre was so helpful, I called them several times, and any time I called they were really helpful."

Full degree student: "When I came late I wished there would have been an opportunity for me to have it [the introduction] again, but there wasn't. Of course I know everything is planned, but I think that such introduction could be held a month later for those who come late because of reasons not in their control. I kept on asking my colleagues because I didn't know anything..."

Full degree student: "I arrive (to Denmark) in 26th of September but the class had already started in the 1st of September."

During the introduction week for international students, they have a presentation about what is typical Danish and 'how the Danes are'. It has been suggested that Danish students get similar presentations focusing on the relationship between Danish and international stu-

dents. Several international students would like to share their experiences from their home countries and the educational systems there with their Danish colleagues. This could take the form of a café night with different presentations.

Full degree student: "It is difficult to work together, we only do it in a Danish way, we only have one international student and she is in my group, and because I don't know how she normally works, it is difficult - but an introduction to how other people study around the world would be nice."

Full degree student: "I think one interesting thing we could do to create an international atmosphere is to give us a platform where we could for instance talk about our cultures and countries. Maybe part of the department's program, some time to talk about our backgrounds, it doesn't only have to be coming together to eat or drink something, but also a platform for learning other things apart from the academic - I have always wished for a platform where I could share something about Ghana with my class, but nothing of that sort came."

ACADEMIC STUDY ENVIRONMENT

Coming to a new place with different academic traditions can be a huge challenge. In general, many students have been frustrated with the unfamiliar way of studying, and a more thorough introduction to e.g. group work, writing essays, and doing oral presentations is asked for. The information about exams is not always see-through for international students, since many aspects of writing papers and doing presentations is tacit knowledge and therefore it is taken for granted by teachers and students here.

For many students the big amount of readings and the few classes is new to them. Still it is seen as a positive challenge.

Exchange student: "I only go to school twice a week, they [my friends from back home] were so shocked, at home I have university every day, I spend 8 hours, but I don't do anything besides that at home and here you study a lot... This is a huge difference here!"

Exchange student: "My expectations in the academics have definitely been fulfilled, I expected longer classes, but I realized you don't really need 4 hours in class to learn a lot, so academically it has been really good."

Exchange student: "At the beginning we had some problems with this way of participating, we are used to the teacher speaking and us taking notes."

Full degree student: "Yes, reading and writings. It is quite hard. I want to do something else besides work but it is very difficult to get time to one's own interests."

Exchange student: "I found the motivation because of the people, the students. Watching the other Danish students kind of inspires you. When you see others doing reading and when you see others doing, like actually doing reading. You guys actually use the library here. Here they read the chapter and actually know what they are talking about and that motivates me to engaging a little bit more. It makes me more competitive in a sense."

Exchange student: "There are so few classes. I have only five classes (or seminars). And I have to work harder than in Germany. It is a lot of independent work."

Information about exams is often given very late in the semester, and many students would like to have this sooner since the exam preparation is different than what they are used to in their home universities.

Exchange student: "We had a lecture the last time about how to write papers, for all international students."

Exchange student: "We have been asking. A lot of the students have been asking about the exams and we have been panicking. We are like "we don't know what to do we don't know what to do". And they stuck us in a lot of classes that many of us didn't want or, we couldn't pick anything else so they were just taking us to classes just to."

Different departments have different procedures for exams, classes, intranet, and so on which can be confusing for exchange students taking courses from different departments.

Exchange student: "Maybe with First Class. I never had contact with platforms like that. so I know it is a very small thing, but it could be helpful to have a guide, a page written about how it works."

It is highlighted how a diverse group of students in class can contribute to nuanced discussions.

Exchange student: "we are talking about western & eastern Europe, and maybe only Danish or European students will have their own perspective to the question, but when we have Asian students the perspective will be broad, we have new perspectives on the questions, and our teacher is really interested in hearing our perspectives."

Exchange student: "The teacher really made an effort to integrate us. That was amazing,

cause it works. He would ask for examples from Spain and Mexico about bilingualism and how we experience it for example. It really helps because he asks and try to combine those examples with Danish and English examples. It did work, we work together, and I know people from that class.”

Some students have missed an introduction on how to do oral presentations.

Full degree student: “The first time I had to make a presentation, I didn’t know how to do it and I had no training before. So I had to do it with a guy, and he had to start teaching me how to go about it. And he appeared to do everything, so I felt, I didn’t like it but I couldn’t help it because I didn’t know so much about how to do it... (...) I think an introduction to the study culture could really help us to go about it”.

SOCIAL STUDY ENVIRONMENT

The social study environment is very important for the students’ experience of studying at AU. Furthermore, if the social relations are lacking it effects the study life as well. Many students find it challenging to get in contact with the Danes, and in general there is a wish to have more contact with Danish students.

For many students, both Danish and international, a better introduction of the people in their class is needed. This is believed to make group work and participation in class easier.

Full degree student: “The students could organize social events, not only the teacher, because they are not so much part of the social life, we could talk about it in class, I would be looking forward to that. Because after I finished the course, there were people I still didn’t know their names, and I felt it was not good.”

Full degree student: “We have a Facebook group and everybody in class joined and some would suggest we go to the centre of the city or something, we have a lot of things like that. Sometimes time is limited, but everyone can see it and a shy person can also participate...”

Danish full degree student: “When people know each other a little bit, it is easier to say something.”

Exchange student: “Yeah I thought at least in the first weeks they would say: ‘Hi, oh you are an international student, you are new here’ or something. But nothing happened except from my German class. These people want to talk to me because I’m German.”

Social initiatives from the Danish students or teachers in class has been viewed as a very positive element.

Exchange student: "I have a course with 15 exchange students, and the only Danish guy in class has said, we should have a 'julefrokost', it is really nice!"

Exchange student: "At the beginning of one class we had a special class where the teacher organised it, baked a cake and invited us in the evening, it was a very good not being in the class but being with your class mates."

All students would like some social events in the beginning of the semester for the people in the same class, so you from day one will start to know you class mates. As it is now, most social events are made for international students only or for Bachelor's students.

Exchange student: "Oh yeah, and I wanted to talk about the international night here from the student center. And I know there are a lot of international students going there but I guess it is a pity because it is soo for the internationals. And I know that the Danes are allowed to come but no one comes. There should be more coming together with your friends."

Exchange student: "It is kind of nice but the international people are meeting anyway so we don't have to do an international night. Of course it is interesting because there are a lot of activity but we could do that with other people too instead of calling it international night. So I don't go there. And it is even hard when you are an international student and you say you go to international night, then people are like 'Yeah, I don't care about you'.

Exchange student: "Ehm, I usually hang out with other international students, because as I have mentioned before, I think it is quite difficult to get closer to the Danes."

Many international students experience to be overlooked or not talked to in class, if they join a class where the majority are Danish students who already know each other.

Exchange student: "I left one class because I was the only exchange student there... I didn't feel very comfortable, the students knew each other very well, they had had introduction together, drinking a lot. It was in English, but during the break... you can start and talk to people, they will reply, but still you feel like, if they just do because they are polite... As the only international I didn't feel comfortable."

Full degree student: "If there are many internationals in class, it may not be a problem, but if there are only one or two internationals in a program, then these two become

foreigners - will become the odd ones out”

Exchange student: “Sometimes they don’t really know we are there, because when we start working in groups, they start speaking in Danish. In my classes, usually it is only two or three internationals and the rest are Danes. The Danes might not be aware of us, because we don’t speak that much in class...”

Exchange student: “There is no social life in class. In the class I just listen to the teacher and during the break I just sit there and wait for the break to be over. Yeah, they don’t really socialize. And even if I try to speak to them, they don’t answer. They are like ‘go away’.”

During the breaks many international students experience discomfort when the Danish students start speaking in Danish.

Full degree student: “I think one bad experience is being around people speaking a language you don’t understand, it makes you feel very very foreign (...). In class, when it’s break time, everyone speaks in Danish - you feel you have to get back to your desk, open a book and start reading, because you are not welcome in a conversation because they don’t speak the language you speak.”

Full degree student: “When we talk about academic problems, it’s in English, but at rest or when we have food, the Danish comes again!”

Danish full degree student: “I really notice how students comment something to the teacher, it is always in Danish and I think it is weird, because when you are in this environment you don’t understand any of it, so you don’t know if they just talk about ‘is the light turned on?’ or ‘is this text understood correctly?’. We always switch into Danish except from the students in her [the international student’s] group.”

A way to handle this can be to ask about the conversation and use it as an ice-breaker:

Exchange student: “When I stand and speak with someone and they switch into Danish, I ask what they talk about because I don’t understand it and then they just say, ah! And I say, I understood this and this, and then they explain me the rest.”

Full degree student: “No matter how bad your Danish is, people appreciate that you try to say something in Danish - so if you try, Danes become happy.”

It is often difficult for people to get in touch with Danes outside the university.

Danish full degree student: people talk to you, but they can't hang out with you the entire weekend, they have plans and that's one major obstacle that is hard to come by. People who live here have family, friends, and more things they need to do and less things they want to see in the city, they are not as social as exchange students. Because exchange students are extremely social, the most open people in the world.

The Friday bars are highlighted as a very good place to meet the Danish students.

Living with Danish students is often emphasized as very positive since it makes it possible to have dinner nights, hang out informally etc. Students living alone or in a apartment shared with only one other student have in general felt more isolated.

Full degree student: "We do so many things in my dormitory - I like to have people around me who can just flow with me, we have dinner together. Especially now when everyone from my class are abroad doing fieldwork, I tend to be with the guys from my dormitory."

Exchange student: "I live in Skjoldhøj (a large residential area for students), too, not even in the big house, but very isolated, I live with only one Turkish girl. We have two heaters, no oven, not really a kitchen, and therefore I don't get to socialize with Danes at all. I was quite disappointed..."

It has been suggested to make a 'speed-dating event', where international and Danish students can meet each other e.g. based on which language they would like to learn, or other interests.

Exchange student: "I have had a partner from the German department and so we are meeting for language exchange. It is actually organized from the German department. We had an orientation meeting and afterwards we found each other. It was much like speed dating. They told us to go together two persons and if we like each other we can meet. And we were like, 'okay'. It was fun. And then we should be meeting every week or so."

In Moesgaard a cozy, warm place to sit and have coffee and talk informally after classes is wanted.

Danish full degree student: "I think there is some social thing missing in the university in a way that could be part of everyday life. In Moesgaard there is no small café or place where you can sit and have a good time, talk about school and life and what you want to do, exchange ideas... You just go there, have classes, and go back home. It is sad, and there could be more things at the university like that..."

ACCOMMODATION/PRACTICAL THINGS

In situations where accommodation is lacking, it is a huge issue that causes a lot of worries. It is mainly a problem for full degree students who are not secured accommodation when they arrive. There are many views on what would be the best accommodation, but in general students wish to live with several students and a mix of Danes and internationals.

Full degree students find it VERY difficult to find their own accommodation, especially when their visa often is late for

one week to one and a half month. The students who did not know anyone in Aarhus prior to their arrival have used an unreasonable amount of money on hostels.

Full degree student: "When I came my accommodation was a problem. I don't know how it can be solved, because it is very frustrating! When you come from Ghana and I didn't get a place, I applied but I had no room when I came, so I had to be with my friend (...) when I arrived, it was the Ghanaian community in Aarhus who helped me find a place to be and have my address before I could get my CPR. (...) If you don't know anybody, how would it be like...A friend of mine from Ethiopia, he spent so much money in the first two weeks."

Many find it difficult to get by economically in Aarhus and the Student House, where a lot of international activities are, is too expensive.

Exchange student: "There is a difference between Erasmus students and other international students, it is also an economical difference that maybe is not really understood."

Exchange student: "Everything is just so expensive here. And it can be really expensive to go to a coffee shop. Because you feel you have to buy something to stay there."

Many have been sorry to be placed in a residence that is placed too far from the center.

Exchange student: "I feel isolated because I live far from the city. Just to go and have dinner together in your kitchen makes you integrated more."

In general, students have been pleased with living in dorm halls with both Danish and international students.

Full degree student: "It all depends on the people you're living with. I am now in a place where my colleagues are so friendly, we do things. I am quite social and most of the guys

are as well, we watch football...”

Exchange student: “I live by myself. I wish that I would have lived in a dorm.”

Full degree student: “Yes I live in dormitory. It is fortunate that I do. We are cooking and people love to see my cooking. It is all new for me. And we talk to each other in the kitchen. It is the right place to come into communication with other people. Otherwise it can be lonely.”

However, to be the only international student can be difficult.

Full degree student: “About living conditions, I am the only international in my dormitory, sometimes it feels uncomfortable, when people cook or have dinner, they say hello to me in English, but then everyone speaks in Danish, and I don’t understand anything.”

There is expressed a need for better information about practical things such as Ikea (also for those who do not participate in intro-week).

Exchange student: “Yeah I wanted to go but I was not able to go and find friends. It is very difficult to find extra time.”

There is expressed a need for more information about student organizations and spare time activities.

Exchange student: “More cultural stuff like go to concerts or theaters but I don’t speak Danish. Maybe those kinds of things.”

Exchange student: “At the study start fair there were very different stands but it was mostly aimed at the Danish students. So when I came there and asked: ‘So, what do you have for me?’ they were like ‘Oh, nothing, really, because you are not from Denmark’.”

MENTORS

The student mentors play an important role for the way the international students experience their beginning in Aarhus, because they are the first people they meet upon arrival. The students have very different experiences with their mentors; some have had a very good experience and felt very welcomed by their mentor, while others have never met their mentor.

It has been a problem that some have never met their mentor.

Exchange student: "I guess the mentors was supposed to introduce us but some never met them."

Many find it problematic that they don't know what they can expect from their mentor which has led to misunderstandings and disappointments. It is suggested that the international students receive an overview of the mentors' assignments so the international students know which assignments are mandatory and that social things is a possibility but is not mandatory.

Full degree student: "When I came I didn't know what the mentor was supposed to do for me. I knew I had a mentor, it was written, showing your class rooms, but it was not stated clearly this is what your mentor is supposed to do, so if he or she didn't do it, I can't know (...) We international students should know what our mentors should do for us."

Danish full degree student: "If you are a mentor, in the beginning you should help, but if you want to be friends, that is not an obligation, so I think that is why it is so awkward."

The students who had really positive experiences with their mentor highlight how important their mentor has been for their stay here in Denmark, both socially and academically. Also, if the relationship to the mentor has been good, it is often the mentor the students turn to with questions.

Exchange student: "My mentor, she is really great, and when she can't help I ask teachers and coordinators."

Exchange student: "It was a huge help with the student mentor making contact before study start - a great way to prepare yourself before going abroad, I asked her about everything!"

Exchange student: "My mentor took the initiative. My mentor was very extroverted for a Dane. She is very outgoing and very bubbly."

Exchange student: "I just ask my mentor because. She already studied in the English department, so she knows quite a lot."

Some students have experienced their mentor to be directly rude and not wanting to say 'hi' in class, respond to suggestions to meet etc. It is suggested that there should be an evaluation on the mentors so 'bad' mentors won't get hired again.

Exchange student: "I have only seen my mentor the day I arrived here. Then we asked for something, and she said that she would not (...) we are in the same class, and we don't

speak.”

Some suggest that mentors should not get paid in order to make sure they do not just become mentor because of the money. Others, again, feel that the pay is not that big and cannot be the only motivational factor - but a relevant question is how we can secure that the mentors are engaged?

GROUP WORK

Group work is often a big part of studying at AU, and it combines both the social and the academic study life. Many international students are not used to this way of working, but often it is appreciated when it functions. However, often it is a challenge to become part of a group for only one semester (for exchange students) if the teacher does not situate them in groups. Also, language, cultural and academic backgrounds can be a challenge but also a great contribution to the group work.

Many students claim that it is difficult to get included in an already existing study group.

Exchange student: “The groups were already created during intro week, so in the first week the teacher asked us if we were in a study group, and we didn’t know what it was, and then he told us to join a group and we didn’t know, who are the groups, the teacher didn’t help with the situation (...) This is not working at all!”

Exchange student: “they didn’t assign me to a group, so I had to find one myself. I did, but then the people from the group didn’t contact me, so I always asked: ‘Are we meeting?’ And then they just stopped writing me altogether, and I was : ‘Alright, you do the work, I will sit at home.’ But for the final assignment, I don’t know what I am going to do”.

Many have had positive experiences when the teacher divides the students into study groups. The teacher’s role, when it comes to group work, is highlighted. In general it works best if the teacher takes some of the responsibility of the groups.

Full degree student: “I think it’s the teacher’s responsibility. I also go to three other classes, and here teacher just divided the groups. the teacher should make the students feel comfortable.”

Exchange student: “When our teacher divided the groups she counted 1,2,3, so that people sitting next to each other didn’t become a group. The groups became very diverse, and it made the seminar become more comfortable for everyone.”

Danish full degree student: "I think many times it is good to just place people in groups, so they don't just choose somebody they like... On the other hand study groups are going to be there for a long time, maybe it is nice that you work with people who have the same expectations or level of dedication."

Full degree student: "I found out in Nepal that I was put in a group. I was excited to be in a group. 'Yeah I'm in a group' and without even being in Denmark or in the class. It was quite funny. And it creates a kind of sense of belonging. And again in the practically to integrate with other people, teachers, especially in the beginnings, can play a big role."

Many want to have more nationalities in the same group, including Danish students.

Full degree student: "I was placed in a group with three or four different nationalities, and I really learned many things (...) We all learned how you make arguments from different backgrounds, and I think it really helped in so many ways. If it happens you are an international student with only Danes, the feedback might be one-way, but if we all have different backgrounds we tend to learn from everyone."

If there are only a few international students in class, it is suggested that they are in separate groups.

Full degree student: "When we formed groups, unfortunately me and the other international, we were in the same group, and I thought it was not how it was supposed to be. Because some groups were only Danish... So I think with only three international students, at least we should be in different groups, to help us to learn..."

Many find the responsibility that exists in group work as something positive. But at the same time it is a new way of working for many of the international students, and they wish there would be a more thorough introduction to group work

Exchange student: "About group work, it is so different, we don't have anything like that, I am not used to groups and preparing a lot at home. So an introduction from the department about the way of studying would be good - it is probably difficult for local students to work with us, because 'maybe she is kind of lazy'... (...) here we are in a study group, and the others really depend on my knowledge, so I should prepare."

The language has been challenging for students who has been in a group with only Danish students. This is because the Danish students start to speak Danish when discussing something difficult.

Danish full degree student: "It [the text] was so difficult, and because of that it was difficult to have the dialogue in English, when we didn't even understand it ourselves. In that way, we really tried to understand and we translated as soon as we understood. It is just easier to have that discussion in your own language, when it is very difficult."

The advantage of groups with different academics and cultural backgrounds is highlighted. It is here that many international students feel that they have something concrete to contribute with.

Exchange student: "Our last topic is about the BRIC countries, and because we have Chinese, Indian and Brazilian students, we can talk about our own country and what it is really like (...) Diversity is really helpful when you discuss these topics instead of imagining or pretending to know something."

Danish full degree student: "I think the good thing about having a mixed group, somehow you get to know yourself more, as a Danish student in the culture you don't notice the things that foreign students do, asking questions about the way things are. It makes you think about your own culture and why we do things in a certain way."

Exchange student: "A girl told me that she hadn't seen this before because she is like the fish in the tank. And I said the same (...) And I don't think it is very theoretical, it is just experiences based on opinions. It obviously can be important and benefit both of us."

Many have gotten to know their fellow students through group work and the social aspect of group work is highlighted as something very positive. Many have met with their group in non-study related environments.

Exchange student: "I really like my colleagues from my study group because we are meeting every Monday morning, very early, and always someone brings a cake, and we go in Friday bars together. It is the best thing here and probably the easiest thing here, to find friends, Danish people are quite really really drunk and so friendly!"

Full degree student: "I had my first 'julefrokost' with my study group, that was a nice experience, and the Danish Christmas lunch, we met in a girl from my group's house, she made food."

Exchange student: "Actually I would have liked to have that, some group work because I would have met some of the other persons here. And I'm used to having a study group so at least for preparation and presentations and so you get to know at least some of the persons you talk to in class. That's a social element."

NOTES

For an online presentation of the results, see: <http://prezi.com/mefnln10oh5e/au-international-study-environment-smu-2011/>

INTERNATIONALE STUDERENDES MØDE MED DEN DANSKE AKADE- MISKE KULTUR MED FOKUS PÅ STUDIEKOMPETENCER

Af Charlotte Albrechtsen og Gina Bay

RESUMÉ

På baggrund af en række fokusgrupper med internationale studerende ved Arts, Aarhus Universitet, om studiekultur og selvstændighed, drager vi den hovedkonklusion, at internationale studerende ikke er unikke, hvad angår deres oplevelser, behov og udfordringer i forhold til studiemiljø og studiekompetencer. De behov og udfordringer, fokusgruppedeltagerne formulerer på området, er i stor udstrækning identiske med dem, som danske studerende oplever. Derfor bør man være varsom med at udskille internationale studerende som en gruppe med særskilte behov i den forbindelse. Tiltag, man måtte ønske at iværksætte for at forbedre studiemiljøet eller opbygge studerendes studiekompetencer, kan med fordel rettes mod både danske og internationale studerende.

De ovennævnte behov og udfordringer, vi mødte hos deltagerne i vores fokusgrupper, udsprang af

- usikkerhed om, hvor meget man som studerende må henvende sig med spørgsmål til sin underviser, også uden for undervisningen
- intet eller dårligt fungerende gruppearbejde
- usikkerhed om egne studiemæssige præstationer og om baggrunden for karaktergivning
- manglende diskussioner af, hvorfor korrekt kildebrug er vigtig i akademiske sammenhænge
- tvivl om forholdet mellem kildebrug og selvstændighed
- tvivl om forholdet mellem selvstændighed og subjektivitet.

BAGGRUND FOR RAPPORTEN

Rapporten er blevet til på baggrund af materiale fra fire fokusgrupper med internationale studerende afholdt ultimo 2011.¹ Fokusgrupperne skulle give os større indsigt i internationale studerendes oplevelser, behov og ønsker i forbindelse med undervisning i studiekompetencer. Anledningen var to projekter til udvikling af studiemiljøet på Arts, Aarhus Universitet (AU), som blev gennemført i efteråret 2011.

Indsigter fra fokusgrupperne skulle i første omgang bruges i arbejdet med udvikling af materiale til webressourcen Study Metro (<http://studiemetro.au.dk/en>)², idet vi ønskede at udforme indhold, der er målrettet internationale studerendes behov.

TIDLIGERE UNDERSØGELSE: RECEPTION AF STOP PLAGIARISM OG STUDY METRO

Fokusgruppeundersøgelsen var informeret af en tidligere interviewundersøgelse med internationale studerende, der havde fokus på bl.a. receptionen af webressourcerne Study Metro og Stop Plagiarism (<http://en.stopplagiat.nu>)³.

Denne undersøgelse viste, måske ikke overraskende, at der er stor diversitet i gruppen af internationale studerende ved Aarhus Universitet i form af meget store forskelle i uddannelsesmæssig og kulturel baggrund. Hver af de interviewede studerende havde sit eget helt unikke fokus i forhold til at komme og studere i et nyt land. Der viste sig dog nogle mønstre i de studerendes tilgang til den nye danske studiekultur, som vi beskriver i det følgende.

"IT'S VERY HARD TO ADAPT TO THE SYSTEM HERE" – FØLELSEN AF FREMMEDHED

Studerende fra fx Uganda og Armenien gav udtryk for, at deres uddannelsesbaggrund var meget anderledes end den, de mødte i Danmark. I deres hidtidige studieliv havde de haft fokus på at reproducere undervisere og kilder. De var meget bevidste om udfordringerne i at tilegne sig den nye danske studiekultur, og syntes, det var svært. De havde samtidig svært ved at afkode de to websites om studiekompetencer, Stop Plagiarism og Study Metro. Både i deres opbygning og deres terminologi virkede websitene fremmedartede.

"DISCUSSING THE DANISH SYSTEM" – BEVIDSTHED OM AT VÆRE INTERNATIONAL STUDERENDE

Studerende fra fx Bulgarien, Portugal, Litauen, Myanmar, Kina og New Zealand gav udtryk for en høj grad af bevidsthed om det at være international studerende. Og en integreret del af det er at arbejde selvstændigt og systematisk med at forholde sig til den nye studiekultur. Visse elementer i den danske studiekultur er nye, men det virker ikke uoverkommeligt at tilegne sig de nye praksisser. Det giver sig bl.a. udslag i, at de kunne forholde sig til Stop Plagiarism og Study Metro, både hvad angår form og indhold.

"THE MARK DOESN'T TRANSFER, YOU JUST HAVE TO PASS" – PRAGMATISKE STUDERENDE

Nogle internationale studerende i receptionsundersøgelsen havde en pragmatisk tilgang til det at studere i en ny studiekultur. I denne undersøgelse var det primært udvekslingsstuderende fra fx Sydkorea, Australien og Østrig. Denne gruppe var bevidst om evt. forskelle mellem den hjemlige og den nye studiekultur, men klarede sig med eksisterende strategier hjemmefra. De ønskede bare at bestå eksamener, ikke at excellere. Her sås Stop Plagiarism og Study Metro som lidt perifere ressourcer, der evt. kunne bruges som tjeklister.

"I DON'T LIVE THE PROBLEM" – DE STUDERENDES SELVBILLEDE SOM AFSPEJLET I STUDY METRO OG STOP PLAGIARISM

Overordnet set foretrak de studerende i undersøgelsen webressourcen Study Metro frem for Stop Plagiarism. Flere havde svært ved at genkende sig selv i den konstruktion af en lærende som Stop Plagiarism tilbyder. Eksempelvis udtalte en portugisisk studerende: "It's funny how you have a website: Stop Plagiarism. Is it because it is a really big issue here?" Så hvor Stop Plagiarism kan ses som et udtryk for at problematisere internationale studerendes studiekompetencer, anlagde den portugisiske studerende et "omvendt" blik på det danske institutionelle fokus på plagiering. Hun fortalte uddybende, at hun normalt ikke ville opsøge et website om plagiat, "because I don't live the problem." Andre gav udtryk for et forbehold over overhovedet at have en hjemmeside om plagiat, der opfattedes snævert som "copy & paste" (=snyd). En bulgarsk studerende brugte følgende ord:

[P]lagiarism is whether you copy and paste [...] I don't really think that it [Stop plagiarism] is gonna be that popular as the Study Metro because I think that it is only for first year, second year students that they really care about plagiarism. If I for example didn't have to come to the interview-stuff I wouldn't look closely into the website just because I know what plagiarism is and I know that I should not plagiarize.

Flere af deltagerne i receptionsundersøgelsen syntes, det var underligt, at vi i Danmark har så stort et fokus på plagiering, men samtidig gav flere af de samme interviewpersoner udtryk for, at de fandt det svært at integrere kilder på en korrekt måde i deres tekster. Det sidste så de dog i en helt anden kontekst end plagieringsproblematikken.

Mindst to vigtige pointer tager vi med os til den aktuelle undersøgelse:

- Diversiteten i gruppen af internationale studerende gør, at de ikke kan kategoriseres som én særlig gruppe studerende.
- De studerendes selvforståelse som lærende og studerende gør, at undervisningsmateriale om kildehåndtering ikke bør placeres i en kontekst, hvor plagiat er rammen. Plagiat opfattes groft sagt som "copy & paste" og som noget, man som seriøs studerende ikke

begiver sig ud i.

AKTUEL UNDERSØGELSE: FOKUSGRUPPER MED INTERNATIONALE STUDERENDE MED FOKUS PÅ STUDIEKOMPETENCER

Ud over at informere den aktuelle fokusgruppeundersøgelse bidrog den viden, der skitseres ovenfor, til at motivere brugen af fokusgruppeinterviews som metode. Fokusgruppeinterviewformen skulle bringe de deltagende internationale studerendes mangeartede baggrunde, erfaringer og kompetencer i spil med henblik på at berige og målrette undervisningsmateriale om studiekompetencer til Study Metro.

Fokusgruppeinterviewene havde skriftlige produkter og skriveprocessen som hovedtema. Da vi i den første undersøgelse havde set, at deltagerne fandt det svært at integrere kilder korrekt i akademiske tekster, og at de samtidig havde svært ved at se sig selv som brugere af et website om plagiat, ville vi afprøve nyt materiale om kildehåndtering tiltænkt Study Metro. Det foregik blandt andet i form af øvelser, hvor de studerende bidrog med deres egne refleksioner over det at skrive akademiske opgaver og at håndtere kilder.

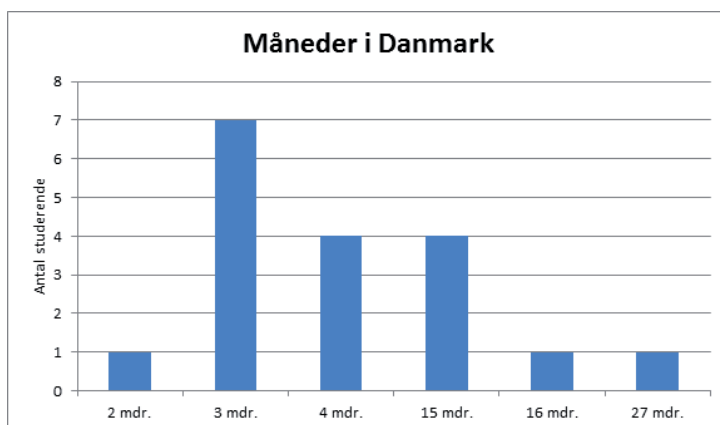
DELTAGERE I UNDERSØGELSEN

I alt deltog 18 internationale studerende i fokusgruppeundersøgelsen. Skemaet viser, hvor mange deltagere, der var i de enkelte grupper, og hvor de kom fra.

Fokusgruppe 1	Fokusgruppe 2	Fokusgruppe 3	Fokusgruppe 4
Italien	Spanien	Finland	Rumænien
Columbia	Tyskland	Rumænien	Rumænien
Tyskland	Holland	Rusland	Portugal
Tyskland	Tyskland		Rumænien
Rumænien	Irland		Cameroon

På baggrund af erfaringerne fra den tidligere interviewundersøgelse, hvor vi så en stor diversitet i gruppen af internationale studerende, søgte vi at få forskellige akademiske kulturer repræsenteret i den aktuelle undersøgelse. Det er kun delvist lykkedes, idet der er en overvægt af europæiske studerende. Dog er det studerende fra forskellige hjørner af Europa.

Alle studerende på nær én var full degree-studerende. 12 var kvinder og 6 mænd. De læste henholdsvis International Studies (5), European Studies (4), Journalism/Erasmus Mundus (5), International and Global History (3) og Economics and Business Administration (1). Største-parten havde været i Danmark mellem 3 og 15 måneder – se diagrammet herunder.



Deltagerne var primært rekrutteret af en studentermedhjælper ved Center for Undervisningsudvikling og Digitale Medier ved Arts, AU, der selv er international studerende ved Arts, og som benyttede sit eget netværk til rekruttering.

En del af deltagerne kendte hinanden i forvejen, hvilket gav en god og tryk stemning i fokusgrupperne. Samtidig var det tydeligt, at der var nogle allerede etablerede roller og gruppedynamikker i de to første fokusgrupper. I de to sidste fokusgrupper var deltagerne i højere grad blandet, da flere af dem var rekrutteret i forbindelse med et fagligt arrangement for internationale studerende arrangeret af Internationalt Center, AU. Her fremstod enkelte deltagere som mere fagligt usikre. Det skabte en diversitet på det punkt blandt deltagerne.

FREMGANGSMÅDE OG INDHOLD

Fokusgruppeinterviewene bestod af fire dele. Først en indledende del, hvor deltagerne via en række åbne spørgsmål diskuterede deres hidtidige erfaringer med skriftlige opgaver. Dernæst havde vi to sæt udsagn fra internationale studerende fra den første undersøgelse, som vi bad deltagerne forholde sig til. Det første sæt udsagn gik på oplevelser med at komme til et nyt uddannelsessystem. Det næste sæt gik på at integrere kilder i akademiske opgaver. I tredje del præsenterede vi de studerende for øvelser, hvor de bl.a. skulle vurdere konkrete eksempler på mere eller mindre korrekt kildehåndtering. Som den fjerde og sidste del bad vi deltagerne om feedback og input til Study Metros nye side på det sociale netværk Facebook.

ANALYSE AF UDSAGN

Et slående træk ved de udsagn, deltagerne kom med i de fire fokusgrupper, var, at de tit var meget følelsesladede. Deltagerne gav udtryk for følelser som angst, begejstring, stress og usikkerhed i relation til emner som problemformulering, gruppearbejde og citering.

Desuden gav vores spørgsmål og diskussionen af dem i mange tilfælde anledning til, at fokusgruppedeltagerne formulerede dilemmaer og paradokser i tilknytning til de behandlede

emner. Vi var forberedt på, at de mange deltagere indbyrdes ville give udtryk for forskellige erfaringer og holdninger til emnerne med baggrund i de akademiske kulturer, de er skolet i på deres hjem-universiteter. Men vi oplevede, at deltagerne gik skridtet videre og udpegede tvetydigheder og på den måde selv udførte en form for for-analyse af deres udsagn i relation til de behandlede emner.

Vores analyse af deltagernes udsagn tager dels udgangspunkt i deres angivelser af de følelser, som de forskellige emner vækker hos dem, og gengiver dels de tvetydigheder, deltagerne udpegede. Vi har for overskuelighedens skyld inddelt deres udsagn i to overordnede tematiske klynger. Den ene temaklynge kalder vi studiekultur, studiemiljø, og studierelationer, og den anden klynge kalder vi selvstændighed og kildebrug i forbindelse med opgaveskrivning.

- Studiekultur, studiemiljø og studierelationer
 - » Om kontakt til underviserne
 - » Om gruppearbejde
 - » Om karaktergivning
- Selvstændighed og kildebrug i forbindelse med opgaveskrivning
 - » Om kildebrug vs. plagiat
 - » Om at citere for lidt eller for meget
 - » Om selvstændighed vs. subjektivitet

Herunder præsenterer vi de to tematiske klynger med hver deres undertemaer. Ved citater af fokusgruppedeltagerne er det i parentes angivet, hvilken fokusgruppe citatet stammer fra (f1, f2, f3 eller f4). Vi angiver desuden den talendes hjemland i parentes.

STUDIEKULTUR, STUDIEMILJØ OG STUDIERELATIONER

Fokusgruppedeltagernes udtalelser om emnerne studiekultur, studiemiljø og studierelationer afspejler frem for alt, at den danske akademiske kultur er ny og mere eller mindre fremmed for dem. Det har de tilfælles. Derudover udgør de en heterogen gruppe med rødder i en række forskellige akademiske og uddannelsesmæssige kulturer. Nogle har erfaring med flere akademiske kulturer, fordi de har studeret i et tredje land ud over deres hjemland og Danmark.

Med "den danske akademiske kultur" mener vi en kultur, der er særegen for universiteterne her i landet og som omfatter uskrevne regler for adfærd, omgangsformer og forskellige praksisser. Den akademiske kultur er rodfastet i den bredere danske uddannelseskultur med traditioner for fx gruppearbejde, elevindflydelse og uformelle tiltaleformer mellem lærere og elever. At give en nærmere karakteristik af den danske akademiske kultur (der i øvrigt

kan variere fra universitet til universitet) ligger uden for rapportens fokus. Dog kan et citat fra fokusgruppe nr. 4 indkredse lidt af kulturen. I citatet anlægger en deltager fra Cameroon blikket fra en udenforstående på den akademiske kultur på Aarhus Universitet:

On my first day [...] there were only 14 students in class. I was quite confused, and thought they might be teachers? They were very few – maybe some were absent from class? [...] Here I also discovered that there is free democracy in class – anything you have to say, you say – there is no penalty for someone who is giving the wrong answer. That is new to me, too. And meeting very friendly lecturers. You interact, you smile, you laugh. And calling the teacher by his first name. If I don't put Miss [at home] it's wrong. It's not only morally wrong – it's a crime. And also the electronic system. New to me! Like getting information and responding to information – electronically. And the advanced facilities – well structured libraries with a variety of books. (Cameroon, f4)

"AFRAID TO BOTHER THE TEACHERS" – OM KONTAKT TIL UNDERVISERNE

I citatet ovenfor nævner den afrikanske studerende, at underviserne er meget venlige, og at man tiltaler dem med deres fornavn. At kontakten med underviserne er nem og ubesværet, er et forhold, mange af fokusgruppedeltagerne fremhæver. Fx denne deltager i fokusgruppe 1: "It's so easy and comfortable to approach the professors. I love it." (Colombia, f1)

Samtidig påpeger nogle et dilemma, som er forbundet hermed: Underviserne er nemme at komme i kontakt med, men kan man spørge for meget? Irriterer man dem? Dilemmaet skal formentlig ses i lyset af, at underviseren også er den, der på et tidspunkt skal bedømme deres eksamen. De studerende kan have den opfattelse, at et godt forhold til underviseren er befordrende for deres eksamenskarakter.

En fokusgruppedeltager siger:

Sometimes I'm still afraid that I am asking too many questions. The teachers get messages from ten international students who are asking them maybe stupid questions [...] every student is afraid to irritate the professor. I don't think it is good for improving the relationship. (Rusland, f3)

Udtalelsen kan muligvis forklares ved, at den pågældende studerende har rod i en akademisk kultur, hvor omgangsformerne er mere autoritære end i den danske akademiske kultur. Eller at den studerende er bange for at virke dum over for den lærer, der i sidste ende skal bedømme hendes arbejde. Det er tænkeligt, at vedkommende ikke har kendskab til den danske lærer/censor-konstruktion, der beskytter den studerende mod, at hans eller hendes personlige forhold til underviseren skal være udslagsgivende i karaktergivningen – vel at mærke ved

de eksamener, som afholdes med censur. En tredje mulighed, der ikke udelukker de to første, er, at vedkommende bare ikke vil være uhøflig eller overbelaste en flink underviser.

"I NEVER REALLY GOT INTO IT" – OM GRUPPEARBEJDE

På trods af, at emnet gruppearbejde ikke indgår i vores spørgeguide og dermed ikke er noget, vi systematisk spørger til i fokusgrupperne, dukker emnet op i alle fokusgrupper, og deltagerne vil gerne tale om det. Vi fornemmer, det er et emne, der ligger dem på sinde.

Gruppearbejde er en integreret del af den danske uddannelseskultur, men indgår ikke nødvendigvis på samme måde i de uddannelseskulturer, som fokusgruppemedlemmerne kommer fra. Derfor kan det være nyt for mange at deltage i gruppearbejde. At kunne udføre udbytterigt gruppearbejde kræver kompetencer i forhold til samarbejde og samtale, som mange studerende først skal tilegne sig; det gælder måske også flere af de internationale studerende, der deltog i fokusgrupperne.

Langt de fleste udsagn om emnet beskriver, at gruppearbejde er en stor udfordring for deltagerne, forstået på den måde, at de færreste overhovedet kommer med i en læsegruppe. Dem, som gør, har svært ved at få gruppearbejdet til at fungere. "In my case group work never happened" (Tyskland, f1), udtaler en fokusgruppedeltager. "I found out that in Denmark students meet in groups, but I never really got into it" (Tyskland, f1), supplerer en anden. Fælles for de to udtalelser er, at fraværet af gruppearbejde bliver beskrevet på individuelt niveau. Det er den enkelte studerende, der ikke bliver en del af det faglige og sociale fællesskab, en læsegruppe udgør. Andre udsagn konstruerer det manglende gruppearbejde som en kollektiv udfordring:

In general we are reluctant to get help or go into collaboration with other students. I don't know why. For reasons unknown we don't trust – we don't feel like – we don't use it – we have a list – I've never participated. (Spanien, f2)

'Vi' henviser i citatet herover formentlig udelukkende til internationale studerende, da den talende læser på et fag, hvor næsten alle studerende er internationale. Personen hævder ikke at vide, hvorfor de studerende ikke samarbejder. Alligevel er vedkommende i stand til at begrunde fraværet af gruppearbejde, og det sker med to følelser på kollektivets vegne: manglende tillid ("we don't trust") og manglende lyst ("we don't feel like").

En fokusgruppedeltager, der har deltaget i en læsegruppe, fortæller, at gruppen havde svært ved at få samarbejdet til at fungere:

We've done it three times in our house. It was nice in the beginning because everybody was motivated, but then we started to split up the literature and then half the people

didn't do what they were supposed to, and then at some point you realize: If you do it this way no one is going to learn anything. So it just stopped. (Holland, f2)

Ifølge den talende var det manglende engagement og forpligtelse fra halvdelen af læsegruppemedlemmernes side, der gjorde, at gruppen ikke fungerede og derfor blev opløst.

Kun en enkelt blandt alle fokusgruppedeltagerne, en studerende fra ASB, fortæller om vel-fungerende gruppearbejde. Det drejer sig om gruppearbejde, der havde et tydeligt formål, nemlig udarbejdelsen af en opgave:

The most different thing here is that you have to write the papers in a group! Everybody have to come to a common point. Sometimes it's a little bit hard, but interesting and productive, when you have four minds. The problems get solved in a bigger way and we are more efficient that way. (Rumænien, f4)

"GRADING IS A BIT UNPREDICTABLE" – OM KARAKTERGIVNING OG KARAKTERER

Karaktergivning er heller ikke et emne, vi spørger eksplicit til. Men ligesom emnet gruppearbejde dukker det alligevel op.

Adskillige fokusgruppedeltagere giver udtryk for at opleve stor usikkerhed i forbindelse med karaktergivning. Flere peger på, at de får så lidt respons fra undervisere i løbet af semestret, at de ikke har nogen anelse om, hvordan de klarer sig fagligt. Først når de – i overensstemmelse med traditionen i det danske uddannelsessystem – får karakter(er) for den eller de eksamener, der afslutter semestret, får de indsigt i deres egen faglige formåen.

En udtrykker det sådan: "We don't hand anything in the entire semester. The grade only depends on your final paper. It's stressful and scary, really" (Colombia, f1). En anden fokusgruppedeltager tilføjer, at "[t]he grading is a bit unpredictable [...] I got the best grade, 12, but don't know why" (Finland, f3). Han peger på, at kriterierne for karaktergivningen er uklare for ham. En tredje siger: "At home we're all about the grades. Here I have no idea during the semester about how I'm doing" (Colombia, f1). Det sidste citat indikerer et fravær af fokus på karakterer blandt studerende i Danmark modsat i den studerendes hjemland. Det samme giver endnu en interviewperson udtryk for: "People don't like to talk about grades here" (Italien, f1).

Der tegner sig et billede af, at karakterer er tabu på danske universiteter – eller i hvert fald på Aarhus Universitet. Hvorfor, har en af interviewpersonerne et bud på: "Bad grades are embarrassing," mener hun (Tyskland, f1). I vedkommendes tolkning eksisterer der et konkurrencepræget miljø blandt de studerende, der gør dårlige karakterer pinlige for den enkelte.

Andre deltagere i samme fokusgruppe erklærer sig enige og kæder det konkurrenceprægede miljø sammen med de studerendes tilbageholdenhed med at vise hinanden deres arbejde. "Student feedback depends on how competitive people are," (Tyskland, f1) siger en, mens en anden studerende fortæller at "[n]o one approaches me. Feedback just doesn't happen" (Tyskland, f1). To af deltagerne i fokusgruppen fortæller dog, at de har udvekslet opgaver med medstuderende. Den ene fandt det "useful", mens den anden mener, at "it didn't really work".

Fokusgruppe 2 og 3 understreger billedet af, at internationale studerende slet ikke eller kun sjældent får og giver – men faktisk gerne vil have – peer feedback på hinandens opgaver: "We don't do peer review on our essays – it is not organized in class – although it would be nice (Spanien, f2). "No, we don't read each other's assignments. And I find that a bit frustrating because I like the tasks in general, but they don't give us any feedback" (Finland, f3).

Feedback fra underviserne får fokusgruppedeltagerne i varierende grad, og de er som regel glade for den, som denne studerende i fokusgruppe 3:

We had a teacher in 1st semester and he was really helpful. [...] And he gave us feedback and – so he told us about the structure, how to put quotes and that was really helpful to me, that gave me an idea of what other people want from me. (Rusland, f3)

Omkring emnet karakterer og karaktergivning opstår følgende paradoks: Den manglende løbende respons på de studerendes arbejde fører til et karaktertabu, der muligvis yderligere øger fraværet af manglende respons ved at skabe en tilbageholdenhed i forhold til feedbackgivning mellem de studerende. Resultatet er som nævnt usikkerhed og stress blandt de internationale studerende, der deltog i fokusgrupperne.

SELVSTÆNDIGHED OG KILDEBRUG I FORBINDELSE MED OPGAVESKRIVNING

På Arts bliver de studerende ofte bedt om at skrive opgaver med udgangspunkt i problemformuleringer, de selv formulerer.

For nogle af fokusgruppedeltagerne er det nyt og svært selv at skulle lave problemformuleringer, og de fortæller, at de har et stort behov for vejledning og ønsker sig detaljerede retningslinjer som grundlag for arbejdet med opgaverne. Andre er knap så fremmede over for at skrive selvstændige opgaver og føler ikke, at de har et udækket behov for understøttelse i forhold til opgaveskrivningen. Det sidste gælder især studerende fra Nordeuropa. To citater fra fokusgrupperne illustrerer spændvidden, hvad angår deltagernes oplevelse af deres eget behov for vejledning i opgaveskrivning:

“We are extraordinarily spoiled, actually,” mener en studerende fra Tyskland i fokusgruppe 2 om emnet. Han tilføjer, at han selv og hans medstuderende næsten får for megen information og for mange instruktioner i emnet, fordi “a lot of us are used to the format – but we are students from all over the world, so that’s probably why” (Tyskland, f2). En studerende fra Rusland har det anderledes: “I think it’s very nice when you have a written guideline – a very, very precise one – not like general phrases, but giving examples, that would be great – just to be sure that – that is what it is meant to be” (Rusland, f3).

De internationale studerende, som deltog i vores fokusgrupper, formulerede to modsatrettede krav, som de skal honorere i deres universitetsopgaver: På den ene side et krav om selvstændighed og måske ligefrem originalitet og på den anden side en række håndfaste formelle krav til kildedokumentation, tegnantal og afleveringsfrister. Heraf er kravene til tegnantal og afleveringsfrister nye for de fleste. For eksempel for denne fokusgruppedeltager: “For me the familiar part was how to write a paper – the different thing was the deadline, you have to hand it in before a deadline [...]” (Finland, f3).

Selvstændighedskravet møder de hos deres undervisere, mens de formelle krav stilles af institutionen, nærmere bestemt studieadministrationen. En fokusgruppedeltager formulerer kravet til selvstændighed i brug af teorier og begreber således:

Our lecturers here – what they want us to do, is be creative. Like in our first essay a fellow student of us even tried to explain political theory of globalization with mass equation, so he came up with this term and applied it to theory and he got quite a good grade, so we are kind of pushed in terms of creativity. (Tyskland, f2)

En anden fokusgruppedeltager supplerer:

[...] you know that the lecturer actually doesn’t really want you to retell a story that he has read many times and you have read many times. He actually wants something new. (Rusland, f3)

“[P]EOPLE HERE ARE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT PLAGIARISM” – OM KILDEBRUG OG PLAGIAT

Et formelt krav, institutionen selv giver megen opmærksomhed, er kravet til korrekt brug af kilder. Eller snarere kravet om ikke at plagiere. Den tidligere omtalte receptionsundersøgelse pegede på, at mange internationale studerende oplever et stort institutionelt fokus på plagering i Danmark. Et lignende forhold gør sig gældende i den aktuelle undersøgelse. “[P]eople here are very concerned about this plagiarism,” (Rusland, f3) som en fokusgruppedeltager udtrykker det. En anden deltager nævner, at han har modtaget en e-mail fra sin studiekoor-

dinator, der advarer om eksamenssnyd:

Actually we got this email from the coordinator and the email had the headliner: 'CHEATING IN AN EXAM!' with big capital letters, and it was like: 'OH – did I do that?!' But it was just some information about it. But it just seemed ... raising this issue ... And then you get actually kind of paranoid! (Finland, f3)

Headeren i mailen sender et meget kraftigt budskab og opleves nærmest som en personlig anklage af den studerende. Men det reelle indhold af mailen modsvarer slet ikke det kraftige signal i headeren. Og den studerende lader til at være ret uforstående over for, hvorfor han overhovedet får denne mail. Han får ikke nogen eksplicit forklaring på, hvad hensigten med mailen er, og han bruger et ret stærkt udtryk for den følelse, mailen efterlader ham med: paranoia.

I fokusgruppe 1 genfortæller en deltager en historie om en gruppe spanske studerende, der plagierede et opslag i den kollaborative onlineencyklopædi Wikipedia i deres opgave, og bag efter slettede det pågældende opslag. Pointen med historien er, at det, de spanske studerende foretog sig, var dybt ulovligt.

Fælles for både e-mailen og "vandrehistorien" er, at den information om plagiat, som de studerende modtager, er mere præget af patos end af logos. Med sproglige virkemidler som store bogstaver og fortællinger appelleres til modtagernes følelser og stemninger, formentlig med sigte på at opnå en afskrækkende effekt. Logos-appeller i form af saglige argumenter, der taler til modtagernes logik og fornuft, er derimod fraværende. Efter at have hørt beskrivelsen af e-mailen spurgte vi, om underviserne forklarer, hvorfor korrekt kildehåndtering er så vigtig. Hertil svarer den finske studerende: "That would be the thing that I would love to learn about". (Finland, f3)

I fokusgruppe 1 kommer en udtalelse, der etablerer et modpunkt til det institutionelle fokus på plagiat: "The professor will never check my use of sources," (Tyskland, f1) siger en deltager.

Den talende har ikke nødvendigvis ret i, at underviserne ikke interesserer sig for de studerendes kildebrug i opgaverne. Men hvis det er den oplevelse, han som studerende sidder tilbage med, lader det til, at der mangler en eksplicitering af, hvorfor korrekt omgang med kilderne er så vigtig. Oplevelsen af underviserens manglende interesse (eller manglende eksplicitering af en sådan interesse) for de studerendes faktiske brug af kilder fremstår som paradoksalt set i lyset af det kraftige institutionelle fokus på emnet.

"THE FEAR OF OVER-QUOTING" – OM AT CITERE FOR LIDT ELLER FOR MEGET

I forlængelse af diskussionen af korrekt kildebrug – og hvorvidt underviserne egentlig interesserer sig herfor – ligger et dilemma, der går på omfanget af ens kildebrug og grænsen mellem ens egne tanker og tanker, man finder gengivet i kilder. En fokusgruppedeltager udtaler:

If you, like, think you have an original thought and, and then put it down without a quotation, and then kind of it's from something you have never read and never seen before, but your lecturer knows it and he is accusing you of plagiarizing, then – what to do then? You can't say, like, I don't know that, but this is probably every student's common fear. (Tyskland, f2)

Den talende bruger i citatet ovenfor ord som "anklage" og "frygt", hvilket viser vedkommendes følelsesmæssige engagement i emnet. En deltager i fokusgruppe 3 udtrykker samme frygt: "It seems scary – what if it is my thought, but if someone has already said it – I don't know!" (Rusland, f3)

Årsagen til den frygt, de to citater udtrykker, er en helt basal tvivl, som også trænede akademikere kan have: Hvornår kan man tillade sig at sige, at noget er ens egne idéer og tanker? Hvordan kan man vide, at det ikke allerede er blevet sagt af en anden? Underviseren/bedømmere ses som den alvidende autoritet, der kan anklage den studerende for at plagiere. Specielt i det første citat ses underviseren som autoriteten, der kan "anklage" den studerende for at plagiere frem for en dialogpartner, som man kan diskutere tvivlen med. Igen kan det have med den studerendes uddannelsesmæssige baggrund at gøre: at den studerende er vant til mere autoritære omgangsformer studerende og underviser imellem. Men en oplevelse af et stort institutionelt fokus på plagiering kan muligvis også være med til at forstærke denne følelse af "frygt" eller "paranoia" (som var det ord, den finske studerende brugte i afsnittet ovenfor) – ikke mindst, når information om plagiat antager en patosladet form.

I fokusgruppe 3 fortæller en studerende om et konkret tvivlsspørgsmål:

[W]hen can you claim something to be your own thoughts? [...] [A]ctually, when I had it in one of my papers I was, like, thinking: This was something I thought myself, but now when I re-read I saw it was in a text as well. Should I put a quote there just to be safe? Because I hadn't read that part before. The researcher actually looked up the same thing as me and was confused if I should put a quote. And then I did. Just to be safe. (Finland, f3)

Her er den finske studerende gået i dialog med underviseren og er nået frem til at lave en reference for at være på den sikre side. Dette kan muligvis forklares med, at finske studerende er mere vant til at gå i direkte dialog med deres undervisere end f.eks. tyske og russiske studerende.

En anden refleksion om brug af kilder peger på en "omvendt" tvivl: "I kind of had a problem with the fear of over-quoting – because it was hard to get the balance." (Tyskland, f2). Her udtrykker den studerende en frygt for at citere for meget. At citere tilstrækkeligt, men ikke for meget er en hårfin balance, der blandt andet hænger sammen med begrænsninger på, hvor mange tegn en opgave må indeholde.

Flere fokusgruppemedtagere fortæller, at de begrænser deres kildehenvisninger for på den måde at spare tegn. For de fleste af dem er de strenge regler til antallet af tegn i deres opgaver noget, de møder for første gang i Danmark. Og i opgavens tegnøkonomi tildeler de kildehenvisninger en anden status end brødteksten. Kildehenvisninger er for fokusgruppemedtagerne elastiske elementer i teksten; noget, der kan skrues op eller ned for efter behov. Samtidig tildeles de som tekstelementer lavere status end selve brødteksten.

We have to use a short reference – as short as we can – because it counts in our unit for the whole papers, and if they think that you have not made your paper so analytical – and that you have many words for the references, then she could think that – you could have done better if you had used the words for something better. (Rumænien, f3)

Citatet ovenfor viser, at det formelle krav til tegnantal har indflydelse på den studerendes brug af kilder i sin opgave. Fokusgruppemedtageren ser ydermere mange eller omfattende kildehenvisninger som et tegn på, at opgaven er mindre analytisk – og dermed ikke lever op til selvstændighedskravet. Samme modsætningsforhold mellem selvstændighedskravet og kravet til kildedokumentation etablerer en anden fokusgruppemedtager. Det sidste kan hæmme den selvstændige, akademiske udfoldelse, mener han:

I just feel really stuck in thinking of what others have said about this subject before, because many times I could end up with something in my head – what I think about this – and write really much about it, but then I have to find support, so it somehow obstructs me. (Finland, f3)

Fokusgruppemedtagerne oplever kravet til kildedokumentation og kravet til en selvstændig, analytisk tilgang til materialet som modsætninger. Kravet til selvstændighed opleves som havende forrang over krav til kildedokumentation, viser vores analyse af fokusgruppemedtagernes udsagn.

"I WOULD NEVER DARE TO USE 'I'" – OM SELVSTÆNDIGHED VS. SUBJEKTIVITET

Nogle af de mest følelsesladede diskussioner i de fire fokusgrupper havde vi omkring anvendelsen af ordet 'jeg' i akademiske opgaver. Specielt i fokusgruppe 1 kunne vi høre, at det var en allerede eksisterende diskussion, som denne gruppe studerende løbende havde indbyrdes.

En studerende udtalte: "I've heard that you can't say 'I'" (Colombia, f1). En anden gav udtryk for, at hun som bachelorstuderende ikke er "værdig" til at bruge 'jeg':

I would never use 'I'. Seriously! If you're a bachelor or a master's student, who are you to argue your own personal opinion against some academic. We just say: 'From what we see it's - ' (Irland, f2).

Brugen af passive former lader til at være den løsning, de fleste tyr til: "I would never dare to use 'I', so I always end up using passive constructions: 'As it will be shown'" (Tyskland, f2).

Citaterne viser, at fokusgruppedeltagerne er tilbageholdende med at bruge ordet 'jeg' i deres opgaver, og at den tilbageholdenhed kan skyldes, at de er usikre på, hvilken position dette 'jeg' udtaler sig fra. Er det et personligt, måske ligefrem privat, 'jeg' knyttet til den enkelte?

Den følelsesladede og engagerende diskussion af emnet skyldes muligvis, at brugen af ordet 'jeg' rummer et dilemma, som knytter an til et humanistisk videnskabelighedsbegreb: På den ene side vil de studerende undgå at risikere at blive kritiseret for at være subjektive, for det er ikke videnskabeligt at være subjektiv, ved de. På den anden side skal de som studerende leve op til akademiske krav om selvstændighed, som deres undervisere formulerer.

To fokusgruppedeltagere formulerer tilsammen dilemmaet sådan: "What they want from us is original thoughts" (Tyskland, f2), "Yeah but you can't do that without being personal!" (Holland, f2)

I fokusgruppe 1 uddyber en studerende ovenstående pointe, idet hun peger på, at 'jeg'et er nødvendigt til at vise, hvor man selv står i sin argumentation: "It is a question of style. It is a matter of argumentation – It should be clear where 'you' come in." (Tyskland, f1)

OPSAMLING OG PERSPEKTIVER

Herunder opsamler vi de dilemmaer, paradokser og tvetydigheder, som blev formuleret i fokusgrupperne, og som vi har behandlet i analysen ovenfor. Vi giver også forslag til, hvordan nogle af de udfordringer og tvivlsspørgsmål, som de internationale studerende oplever, kan overvindes.

Når vi ser på de delkonklusioner, vi har formuleret undervejs i rapporten, slår det os, hvor meget de behov og udfordringer, som vi møder hos internationale studerende i form af fokusgruppedeltagerne, ligner de behov og udfordringer, som danske studerende oplever ifølge undersøgelsen Studiemiljø2011 – Aarhus Universitet.⁴ Det uddyber vi nærmere i det følgende.

STUDIEKULTUR, STUDIEMILJØ OG STUDIERELATIONER

Hvad kontakten til underviserne angår, er fokusgruppedeltagerne i tvivl om, hvorvidt deres mange spørgsmål kan irritere de ellers så imødekommende undervisere. En tvivl, man også sagtens kunne forestille sig danske studerende have. Frygten for at irritere underviserne skyldes formentlig delvist undervisernes funktion som bedømmere ved eksamen. Tvivlen vil måske kunne afhjælpes eller mindskes ved at give tydelig information om lærer/censor-konstruktionen, som er en integreret del af den danske uddannelseskultur, og ved at give de studerende retningslinjer for, hvor meget og hvordan de kan kontakte deres underviser. Det sidste kræver tydelig klasserumsledelse, hvor underviserne sætter rammerne for samarbejdet mellem parterne.

Gruppearbejde er en stor udfordring for fokusgruppedeltagerne. De færreste kommer med i en læsegruppe, og dem, som gør, har svært ved at få gruppearbejdet til at fungere. Det er problematisk, fordi den manglende deltagelse i gruppearbejde kan medvirke til at isolere de internationale studerende fagligt og socialt, ikke mindst i forhold til deres danske medstuderende. At billedet blandt de 18 internationale studerende, der deltog i vores fokusgrupper, er næsten entydigt, tyder på, at vi har at gøre med et udbredt problem.

Problemet findes også hos danske studerende, viser undersøgelsen af studiemiljøet på Aarhus Universitet i 2011. Om studerende på Arts kan man i Studiemiljø2011 læse, at "mange kandidatstuderende, sidefagsstuderende og studerende, hvis læsegruppe er faldet fra hinanden, efterspørger hjælp til at etablere nye læsegrupper" (s. 15).

Vi ser to tiltag, der kan fremme de studerendes deltagelse i og udbytte af gruppearbejde: For det første skal gruppedannelsen og gruppearbejdet støttes på undervisningshold ved at underviseren som en del af sin klasserumsledelse giver retningslinjer for samarbejdet mellem de studerende. For det andet kan man tilbyde aktiviteter og værktøjer, der understøtter de studerendes opbygning af de særlige studiekompetencer, der skal til for at kunne deltage i vellykket gruppearbejde: aktiv lytning, refleksion over den enkeltes rolle i gruppen og over gruppens arbejdsformer og -processer, tilrettelæggelse af arbejdsprocesser, formulering og opretholdelse af en social kontrakt osv.

Om karaktergivning fortæller fokusgruppedeltagerne, at manglende løbende respons fra underviserne på deres faglige præstationer undervejs i semestret gør dem meget usikre på, hvordan de klarer sig fagligt. En kalder situationen "stressful and scary". Stresssymptomer er langt fra ukendte blandt danske studerende. Ifølge studiemiljøundersøgelsen fra 2011 oplever hver tiende af alle studerende stærke stresssymptomer i hverdagen. I eksamensperioder er det hver tredje. På Arts nævnes de få undervisningstimer og den sparsomme feedback som specifikke stressfremkaldende årsager (Studiemiljø 2011 – Arts, s. 62), og færre end halvdelen af de studerende her oplever, at der er gode muligheder for vejledning og feed-

back fra undervisere. Også deltagerne i vores fokusgrupper udtrykker et behov for mere feedback i løbet af semestret.

Feedback kan komme fra underviserne selv, og den kan komme fra andre studerende gennem student peer feedback. Feedback imellem de studerende forekommer kun sjældent ifølge fokusgruppedeltagerne, muligvis på grund af et miljø, hvor de studerende er tilbageholdende med at dele og tale om deres studiemæssige præstationer. Ved at rammesætte og facilitere feedbacken kan underviserne spille en rolle i forhold til at fremme student peer feedback, hvilket måske på lang sigt kan medvirke til at skabe mere åbenhed mellem de studerende.

Desuden viser fokusgrupperne et behov hos deltagerne for at få ekspliciteret kriterierne for karaktergivning, så den enkelte studerende forstår, hvorfor vedkommende får en bestemt karakter. At danske studerende kan have samme behov, viser et citat fra studiemiljøundersøgelsen:

Jeg har ALDRIG fået respons/evaluering på en eksamensopgave – ergo kan jeg i princippet have lavet den/de samme fejl igen og igen de sidste 4½ år – en tilstand, der producerer og reproducerer usikkerhed og stress, da man trods gode karakterer ingen fornemmelse har for hvorfor? (Studiemiljø 2011 – Arts, s. 62)

SELVSTÆNDIGHED OG KILDEBRUG I FORBINDELSE MED OPGAVESKRIVNING

Fokusgruppedeltagerne er meget vel klar over, at de ikke må plagiere – et budskab, de tydeligvis hører ofte. Nogle stresses ved at blive tildelt rollen som tilbøjelig til at plagiere. Om internationale studerende i højere grad end danske studerende anses for plagiat-tilbøjelige, ved vi ikke med sikkerhed, men vi har en mistanke om, at det forholder sig sådan.

Til trods for den mistro til deres evne til at håndtere kilder korrekt, som fokusgruppedeltagerne oplever, virker det ikke til, at de er blevet sat grundigt ind i, hvorfor plagiering skal undgås – eller at deres undervisere interesserer sig meget for den faktiske kildebrug i de studerendes opgaver. Måske giver det sidste forhold fokusgruppedeltagerne det indtryk, at kildehenvisninger har lavstatus i opgavens tegnøkonomi og står i modsætning til en selvstændig tilgang til opgaveskrivningen.

De internationale studerende, vi talte med i fokusgrupperne, ville formentlig have gavn af en konstruktiv diskussion af begrebet videnskabelighed, der betoner, at dokumentation og selvstændighed ikke er modsætninger, men begge aspekter af videnskabelig praksis. En diskussion, danske studerende også bør inddrages i. Samtidig vil en åben og fortløbende dialog om god kildebrug sandsynligvis være mere frugtbar end implicitte anklager om plagiat eller snyd.

En diskussion af videnskabelighedsbegrebet kunne også omfatte brugen af ordet 'jeg', som fokusgruppedeltagerne udtrykker forskellige holdninger til og formulerer et dilemma i relation til. Et dilemma, undervisere også tit støder på hos danske studerende: Kan man skrive 'jeg' og samtidig være akademisk? Og hvordan kan man demonstrere sin selvstændige stilningtagen og egne udlægninger uden at skrive 'jeg'? De studerendes forvirring kunne sandsynligvis mindskes, hvis det blev mere tydeligt for dem, at en selvstændig og analytisk tilgang kommer til syne i specifikke sproghandlinger (redegøre for, analysere, sammenligne, diskutere, anvende osv.) og igennem solide argumenter, ikke nødvendigvis i fraværet af ordet 'jeg'.

Dertil kommer det iboende problem ved at forstå brugen af 'jeg' som subjektiv. Mange studerende antager, at det blotte fravær af brugen af 'jeg' er en garant for objektivitet og for, at man har ramt den akademiske genre. Det er et paradoks, at de studerende tror, at de ved at undgå at skrive 'jeg' er mere objektive og redelige, når fraværet af 'jeg' kan resultere i, at det bliver uklart, hvem udsagn i opgaven skal tilskrives. En diskussion om brugen af ordet 'jeg' i opgaver kan muligvis være et konstruktivt omdrejningspunkt for at reflektere over videnskabelighed, redelighed, kildebrug, transparens og selvstændighed – snarere end at forsøge at skabe disse refleksioner inden for rammen plagiat, som afviser frem for at invitere de studerende.

PERSPEKTIVER

De sammenfaldende behov og udfordringer hos de to grupper studerende, som er skitseret i det ovenstående, betyder, at internationale studerende ikke nødvendigvis bør opfattes som en særlig gruppe. Med det mener vi, at man frem for særlige studiemiljøforbedrende eller kompetenceopbyggende tiltag rettet mod internationale studerende kunne overveje at udvide de tiltag, man i forvejen har på området til danske studerende, så de også inkluderer internationale studerende. Og vice versa, naturligvis. Det kunne fx gøres ved at holde workshops på både dansk og engelsk eller ved at tilbyde webmateriale på begge sprog.

Et yderligere argument for at undgå tiltag, der alene retter sig mod internationale studerende, er, at de internationale studerende, vi har talt med, som gruppe betragtet er ganske heterogen. Der er betydelig variation i de behov og udfordringer, de giver udtryk for. Nogle føler næsten, at de modtager for megen information om opgaveskrivning i en dansk kontekst, mens andre efterlyser mere og mere detaljeret information. Med andre ord vil ikke alle have brug for samme grad eller type af understøttelse, og derfor vil det være en fordel at kunne tilbyde en bredere vifte af understøttende tilbud. Det kan ske ved at åbne de tiltag, der er rettet mod danske studerende, for internationale studerende.

Endelig lægger vores konklusion op til at betragte internationale studerende som "canaries in the coalmine" med en betegnelse fra Ryan & Carroll (2005). Internationale studerende

kan pege på aspekter ved den danske akademiske kultur, som de oplever som særligt vanskelige. Vanskeligheder, som måske også danske studerende oplever, men som de internationale studerende som udenforstående måske lettere kan få øje på som særlige forhold og udfordringer ved den specifikke, danske akademiske kultur. I den optik bliver internationale studerende en ressource, der kan hjælpe os med at pege på, hvor studerende generelt kan have svært ved at begå sig i den danske universitetsverden.

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Jensen, T.W. & Bay, G. ICT Demonstration: Study skills and plagiarism: developing on-line learning resources in a multicultural context. 2011. Abstract fra Earli 2011, Exeter, Storbritannien.

Ryan, J. & Carroll, J. Teaching international students: improving learning for all. Routledge, 2005.

NOTER

1) De fire fokusgrupper blev afholdt den 29/11, 30/11 og 1/12 2011. Hver fokusgruppe varede 1½-2 timer med en pause undervejs. Der blev optaget lydfiler af alle fokusgrupper.

2) Study Metro understøtter internationale universitetsstuderende i Danmark i at opbygge studiekompetencer. Den er målrettet internationale studerende ved Arts, Aarhus Universitet, men ressourcen er offentligt tilgængelig, og alle er velkomne til at bruge den.

3) Websitet Stop Plagiarism blev lanceret i 2010 med henblik på at lære internationale studerende om, hvordan man undgår at plagiere ud fra den antagelse, at internationale studerende er en særlig gruppe, der kan have svært ved at anvende og præsentere kilder korrekt. Selve interviewundersøgelsen bestod af semi-strukturerede individuelle interviews med 11 internationale studerende fra 11 forskellige lande og blev foretaget i maj-juni 2011. Et paper udarbejdet af Jensen & Bay på baggrund af interviewundersøgelsen blev præsenteret på konferencen European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) i 2011.

4) Undersøgelsen, der var baseret på et spørgeskema, omfattede både danske og internationale studerende, dog med en betydelig overvægt af førstnævnte. Danske studerende bidrog med 90 procent af besvarelsene, mens internationale studerende leverede de resterende 10 procent.

“IF I WERE THE KING OR QUEEN OF AARHUS UNIVERSITY...”

Af Hanne Buhl

I november 2011 forestod jeg afholdelsen af to studiekompetenceworkshops for Aarhus Universitets (AU) full degree-studerende i regi af Internationalt Center (IC)¹. Det skete på foranledning af Charlotte Skov Kristensen fra Internationalt Center, som havde søgt og fået bevilget SMU-midler til formålet.

Det blev en lidt hektisk og samtidig meget spændende og udbytterig proces, som bød på megen læring på mange niveauer. Deltagerne i de to workshops lærte et og andet – i hvert fald at dømme efter de efterfølgende evalueringer – men jeg tror måske, at vi som arrangører lærte mere. Selv lærte jeg i hvert fald rigtig meget, og jeg har i det følgende opsummeret nogle af de vigtigste pointer. Det handler bl.a. om følgende:

- De internationale studerende har svært ved at finde ud af, hvad de forventes at præstere, og hvor det faglige niveau er.
- De er ofte meget usikre på eksamen, ikke mindst den mundtlige eksamensform, som mange aldrig har mødt før, og de er uforberedte på det stemningsskift, de oplever ved eksamen.
- Mange går glip af den rammesætning, der finder sted på de enkelte kurser i begyndelsen af semesteret, fordi de er socialt og kulturelt 'jetlagged' på forskellige måder og derfor ude af stand til at kapere de informationer, de får.
- Det er ofte vanskeligt for de internationale studerende at navigere i processen omkring dannelse af studiegrupper.
- Det er et stort problem, at der ofte kommunikeres på dansk i forbindelse med de engelsksprogede uddannelser, så de internationale studerende går glip af vigtige informationer og føler sig isoleret.
- De internationale studerende ønsker en større integration med danske studerende, både fagligt og socialt.

EKSAMEN, EKSAMEN, EKSAMEN

Min egen læringskurve var i dette projekt stejl helt fra starten, da jeg i en samtale med en meget reflekteret studerende, som bl.a. udmærkede sig ved både at være studentermedhjælp på Internationalt Center og international full degree-studerende på AU, fik klar og tydelig besked om, at de to workshops, i betragtning af det fremskredne tidspunkt på semesteret, skulle fokusere på eksamen, eksamen, eksamen, hvis de skulle blive en succes.

Studentermedhjælperen forklarede mig, at eksamen på AU for mange internationale studerende er en svær nød at knække. De har svært ved at danne sig et klart billede af, hvad der forventes af dem. De hører i vage vendinger, at det er noget med at være 'selvstændig og kritisk', men hvad det helt konkret betyder, står hen i det uvisse.

Især mundtlig eksamen bekymrer dem. Mange af dem har aldrig deltaget i en mundtlig eksamen før, og de finder hele konceptet skræmmende. Desuden oplever mange i forbindelse med deres første eksamen på AU et 'stemningsskift', som kommer bag på dem og virker forvirrende. Bedst som de så småt har vænnet sig til det uformelle studiemiljø og den meget uformelle omgangstone mellem undervisere og studerende i Danmark – og tror, at de har knækket koden – så kommer de til eksamen og oplever, at den ellers så venlige og imødekommende underviser er vendt på en tallerken og nu er formel og ordknap – ja, næsten ikke til at kende igen.

"Skiftet var så uventet – det var der ingen, der havde forberedt os på", fortalte studentermedhjælpen fra IC om sin første mundtlige eksamen i Danmark.

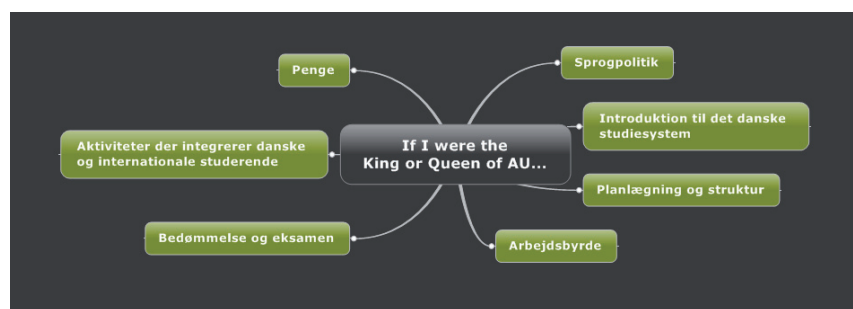
Det gik op for mig, at vi har en måske noget overset informationsopgave i forhold til vores internationale full degree-studerende om den formelle kontekst, som hersker ved eksamen i Danmark, og at den bl.a. udspringer af, at vi har en høj grad af retssikkerhed ved eksamen. Bedømmelsesgrundlag og procedurer er ekspliciteret i studieordningens tekst, og den studerende kan klage, hvis hun oplever, at regler og procedurer ikke er blevet fulgt. Vi danskere er måske tilbøjelige til at tage det for givet og glemme, at mange af vores internationale studerende kommer fra samfund, hvor man ikke nødvendigvis kan forvente retssikkerhed og god forvaltningsskik, hvorfor stemningsskiftet ved det grønne bord fra hverdagens flinke underviser til eksamenens formelle bedømmer kan virke meget overvældende og næsten skræmmende for studerende, hvis de ikke er forberedt på det.

Jeg besluttede at tage mod det gode råd og planlagde i samarbejde med Charlotte Skov Kristensen de to workshops med fokus på eksamensforberedelse og på selve aflæggelsen af eksamen.

IF I WERE THE KING OR QUEEN OF AARHUS UNIVERSITY...

Min indledende dialog med IC's internationale studentermedhjælp havde skærpet min opmærksomhed på, at vi med fordel i meget højere grad kunne inkludere de internationale studerendes egne stemmer i snakken om internationale studerendes vilkår på AU. Jeg indledte derfor de to workshops med at invitere deltagerne til – under overskriften *If I were the King or Queen of Aarhus University...* – at bidrage med gode ideer til, hvordan AU kan forbedre studiebetingelserne for internationale studerende.

Resultatet var 26 små tekster, som kan grupperes i følgende emner:



Jeg har i det følgende indsat forskellige af de studerendes udsagn, hvor jeg har fundet det relevant. Alle emner er repræsenteret, undtagen Penge. Emnet Penge blev aktuelt, til trods for at jeg meget omhyggeligt sørgede for at understrege, at forhold som økonomi og bolig lå uden for vores indflydelsesramme. Alligevel var der to udsagn, som omhandlede penge, eller snarere manglen på penge, som er et svært vilkår for mange internationale studerende.

DIVERSITET, DIALOG OG GENTAGELSE

Målgruppen for de to workshops var bred – invitationen blev udsendt til alle full degree-studerende på AU – på tværs af alle fire fakulteter. Den endelige deltagerliste viste, at hovedparten af deltagerne kom fra Arts og Business and Social Sciences, men der var også enkelte deltagere fra Science and Technology.

Det er klart, at det er vanskeligt at sammensætte en workshop om eksamen for så bred en målgruppe med et program, hvor alt er lige relevant for alle, men vi forsøgte at komme alle deltagere i møde ved at skabe mulighed for dialog undervejs. Vi startede bl.a. begge workshops med en runde for at høre, hvad deltagerne hver især ønskede at få ud af workshoppen, og hvilke spørgsmål, der lå dem mest på sinde. Undervejs noterede vi alle spørgsmål på en tavle, så vi kunne referere til dem løbende under de forskellige oplæg og sikre, at alle spørgsmål blev besvaret.

"HOW DO I GET AN A?"

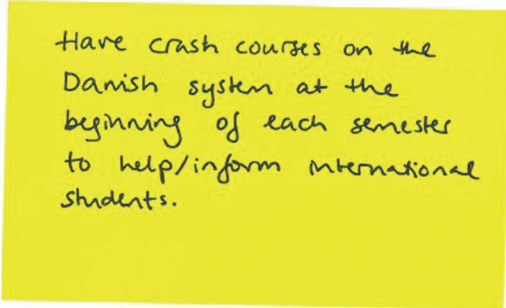
Den indledende runde tydeliggjorde, at der var fremherskende usikkerhed om, hvad man forventes at præstere til eksamen, hvad der lægges vægt på ved bedømmelsen, og hvor og hvordan man kan finde ud af det. Der var også generelt, som jeg var blevet stillet i udsigt, stor bekymring ift. mundtlig eksamen.

Der var et udtalt ønske fra mange om at 'gøre det godt' – "How do I get an A?", og mange var forvirrede over den mere kvalitative karakter, som eksamensbedømmelser har i Danmark. Da vi henviste til studieordningen som det styrende dokument i denne sammenhæng, viste det sig, at mange af deltagerne ikke kendte deres studieordning. De vidste ikke, hvor den er at finde, og flere af dem vidste slet ikke, at den overhovedet findes.

INFORMATIONSPARATHED?

Det blev desuden klart, at de internationale studerende ofte ikke får et særligt stort udbytte af den gennemgang af eksamenskrav og forventninger, som mange undervisere indleder deres kurser med, og det er der flere grunde til. Det er bl.a. et stort problem, at mange internationale studerende slet ikke kommer ind i Danmark i tide til at deltage i denne første undervisningsgang. Blandt dem, som godt nok er fysisk til stede ved semesterstart, er flere boligløse, ligesom mange lider af kulturelt og socialt 'jetlag' i en grad, som gør dem ude af stand til at rumme og forstå gennemgangen af forventninger og krav til eksamen første undervisningsgang.

De har desuden så tidligt i deres studieforløb endnu ikke opbygget tilstrækkelig stor kontekstforståelse til at kunne forstå, hvad der bliver talt om. De har derfor behov for dialog snarere end envejskommunikation og for, at samme information gentages flere gange i løbet af semesteret, eftersom de forstår mere og mere, efterhånden som de opbygger den fornødne kontekst at forstå ind i. De har desuden behov for tilgængelige og relevante guidelines om at skrive opgaver og i det hele taget om det at gå til eksamen.

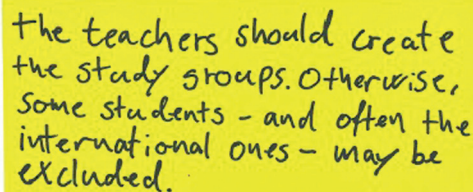


Have crash courses on the Danish system at the beginning of each semester to help/inform international students.

KAOTISK STUDIESTART

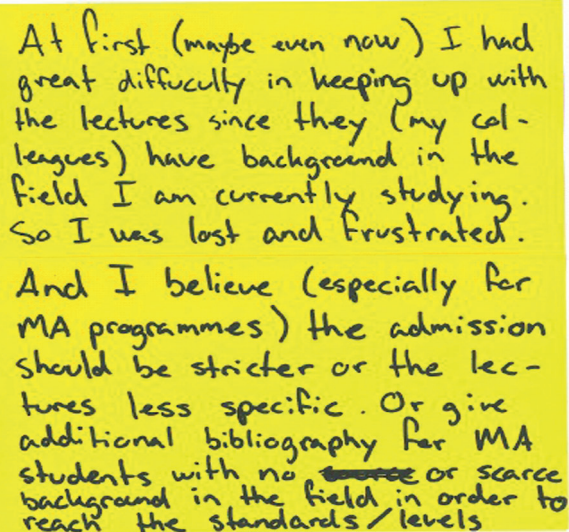
Mange internationale studerende har som nævnt en meget kaotisk studiestart. AU påtager sig ikke at formidle bolig til full degree-studerende, og mange er simpelthen hjemløse de første (mange) uger efter studiestart. Samtidig er de ofte overvældet over omkostningsniveauet i Danmark; ikke mindst overraskes de over kravet om, hvad der for mange af dem er et voldsomt stort indskud for at få en bolig.

De har desuden svært ved at overskue AU's intranet, i form af eksempelvis FirstClass eller Aula, hvorfor det er vanskeligt for dem at finde ud af, hvordan de skal forberede sig til undervisningen, ligesom de har svært ved at navigere i kulturen omkring dannelse og brug af studiegrupper, som er præget af tavs viden og implicite forventninger.



the teachers should create the study groups. Otherwise, some students - and often the international ones - may be excluded.

Endvidere kommer mange fra bacheloruddannelser forankret i andre uddannelsestraditioner end dem, vi er rundet af i Danmark, og de får ikke nogen introduktion til vores måde at tænke academia på – det forventes de selv at finde vej i.



At first (maybe even now) I had great difficulty in keeping up with the lectures since they (my colleagues) have background in the field I am currently studying. So I was lost and frustrated. And I believe (especially for MA programmes) the admission should be stricter or the lectures less specific. Or give additional bibliography for MA students with no ~~background~~ or scarce background in the field in order to reach the standards/levels

The reading is too much (I don't know if you can do anything about it), but I don't have time for anything besides school, so it would have been nice to offer a course/workshop that helps us

Schedule our time, because the purpose of an academic study can't be to demoralize students and frustrate them with either not having a life or getting bad grades.

Jeg har ikke indtryk af, at de internationale studerendes situation omkring studiestart er tænkt ind i tilrettelæggelsen af ret mange studieordninger. Nogle internationale kandidatuddannelser har eksempelvis første eksamen allerede midt i 1. semester, hvilket ikke er hensigtsmæssigt i dette perspektiv. Der er behov for, at man på de enkelte uddannelser i løbet af de første måneder på 1. semester sikrer, at de internationale studerende får mulighed for at oparbejde en forståelse af den uddannelseskontekst, de er landet i.

De internationale studerende skal understøttes i at udvikle de studiekompetencer, som en dansk kandidatuddannelse forudsætter. Samtidig har de på linje med de danske studerende behov for at blive understøttet i at skabe og udvikle deres personlige og sociale relationer, som er en nødvendig forudsætning for effektiv læring.

Selv efterspørger de bl.a. mere varierede – og løbende – eksamens- og bedømmelsesformer i stedet for en enkelt stor afsluttende eksamen i slutningen af det enkelte forløb:

SHOULD HAVE MORE FORMS
TO EVALUATE A STUDENT'S
PROGRAMME. MAYBE PRESEN-
TATIONS, PAPERS, GROUP WORK,
MID-TERM EXAMS INSTEAD OF
100 % OF THE GRADE FOR
ONLY THE FINAL EXAM.

SPROGPOLITIK – ELLER MANGEL PÅ SAMME

If I were the ruler of AU
I would BAN speaking Danish
in English taught courses.
Sometimes, more often than is
nice, teaching assistants or even

teachers speak Danish in
English taught courses,
ignoring the international
students and making them
feel uncomfortable.

Det er et meget stort problem for internationale studerende, at medstuderende og undervisere slår over i dansk, så snart den formelle undervisningssituation forlades. Det betyder, at de internationale studerende går glip af meget relevant information, som udveksles – på dansk – i pausen, på vej ind og ud af undervisningslokalerne og på gangen hen til kantinen. Det betyder også, at de undertiden føler sig ensomme og udelukket af fællesskabet, hvilket kan virke stress-fremkaldende og bestemt ikke er befordrende for deres læring.

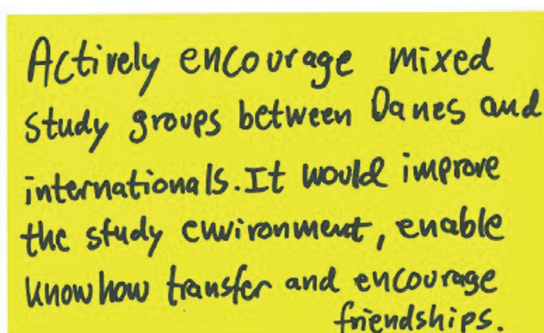
Everyone should respect the
official language: English.
Announcements should be
bilingual (Danish and English)

SÅ HVAD GØR VI?

Der er nok at tage fat på, og der er allerede mange gode kræfter, som arbejder med at forbedre vilkårene for internationale studerende på Aarhus Universitet.

Jeg vil foreslå, at vi i dette arbejde i højere grad prøver at tænke i ikke kun at kompetenceudvikle de internationale studerende, men også os selv. Vi skal, både som organisation og som enkeltpersoner, øve os i at håndtere diversitet, så vi ikke undervejs øger kløften mellem 'dem og os' og måske uden at ville det kommer til at fastholde de internationale studerende i en position som nogle, der skal hjælpes. Vi skal i stedet tænke i helheder, forskelligheder og integration af alle.

Der findes utvivlsomt allerede mange gode initiativer af denne type rundt omkring i de faglige miljøer, og vi skal arbejde med at skabe endnu flere relevante fora, hvor vi kan lære af hinandens best practices ift. at håndtere den tværkulturelle virkelighed, vi lever.



Actively encourage mixed study groups between Danes and internationals. It would improve the study environment, enable knowhow transfer and encourage friendships.

Jeg kunne eksempelvis foreslå et organisatorisk udviklingsprojekt, som inddrager både danske og internationale studerende som ressourcer i en proces rettet mod at skabe et bedre tværkulturelt studiemiljø for alle.

NOTER

1) Min baggrund herfor var bl.a. tre års virke som vejledningskoordinator og international koordinator på et institut med engelsksprogede kandidatuddannelser og min efterfølgende tilknytning til Center for Undervisningsudvikling og Digitale Medier, hvor jeg primært arbejder med udvikling af studiekompetencer. De to workshops blev afviklet i samarbejde med Gina Bay fra BSS Biblioteker, Michael Udby fra BSS Studieadministration Information og Vejledning, Gry Sandholm Jensen og Anni Pedersen fra Center for Undervisningsudvikling og Digitale Medier og Mette Lind Kusk, som dengang var ansat som studenterstudievejleder på det gamle Institut for Antropologi, Arkæologi og Lingvistik med særligt fokus på det internationale område.

