

**Abstract, Conference “Transitions, career learning and career management skills. Multi-disciplinary and critical perspectives”, October 19-20, 2017, Stockholm University**

**Type of contribution:** Paper

**Title of proposal:** Autonomy and the conditions for recognition in career guidance counseling practice

**Relation to the conference theme (up to 50 words):** This paper discuss and examines the ethical rightness of contemporary career guidance practice, which is a pedagogical enterprise at the core of career learning in Swedish schools, and its conclusions is of immediate relevance for the issue of school-to-work transition for youth of migrant descent.

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**3 – 5 keywords:** career guidance, independence, recognition, autonomy, migration.

**General description on research questions, objectives and theoretical framework (up to 600 words):** This paper aims to discuss the conditions for recognition in career guidance and counselling. The notion of autonomy, as it is expressed in Swedish career guidance policy and practice, constitutes the vantage point for the discussion. The research questions are the following: A) in which ways are the ideal of autonomy expressed in Swedish career counselling policy and practice? B) Considering the significance in autonomy in guidance counseling, which are the conditions for reaching the goal of recognition, when it comes to career guidance for youth of migrant descent? C) Which different perspectives in this matter (i.e. the conditions for recognition) could be derived from the theories of recognition put forth by Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor, and the literature on RPL (recognition of prior learning), respectively?

The focus on autonomy derives from my own research (Hertzberg 2015a, b, c; under utgivning), where I have described analyzed the formal and informal desired learning outcomes of Swedish career guidance counselling. These desired and expected outcomes contains a request to identify oneself as an individual with interests, preferences and volitions, which must be acknowledged and clarified. They also contain a request to acknowledge that these interests, preferences and volitions should determine their educational and vocational choosing. The

counsellors in my studies sought to infuse a specific attitude among their students, allegedly productive for the task of choosing an education or vocation, and pointed out some specific competencies central for the enactment of the same task. These desired outcomes concerned the fostering of autonomy. A certain form of agency was requested, where dreams and personal inclinations should be taken seriously, goals should be pictured, and individual freedom and future possibilities should be recognized. At the core of this tendency there is an emphasis on individual responsibility and deliberation, and independent choosing. Thus, this specific understanding of autonomy in career guidance is derived from my own research and provides the point of departure for the discussion of the paper.

As implicated above, the theoretical framework of this contribution consists of the theories of recognition explicated in the writings of Axel Honneth (1997) and Charles Taylor (1994; e.g. McQueen 2017), but also of literature on RPL – the recognition of prior learning – practices (i.e. Andersson & Harris 2006, Andersson & Osman 2008).

**Methods/methodology (up to 400 words):** The article is abductive in character, consists of a move from data to an argument. The data referred to are qualitative in character, and consists mainly of in-depth interviews from two different research projects (Bunar 2010, Hertzberg 2010).

**Expected outcomes/results (up to 300 words):** The article aims at examining the conditions for the pursuit of recognition in career guidance, with a focus on the ideal of autonomy and independent choosing. It also discusses the implications of different perspectives on the pursuit of recognition. Thus, it examines the ethical rightness of career guidance policy and practice, and thereby provides a foundation for a discussion concerning the development of an inclusive, recognizing guidance practice.

**Intent of publication:** yes

## References

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