

A school drop-out might be a community hero. Is it my job to make him a problem?

Author

Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke

PhD.-Candidate

Innland Norway University of Applied Science

Ingrid.bardsdatter.bakke@inn.no

Type of contribution

Paper

Keywords

Rural career, CMS, upper secondary drop-out, contextual influence, perceived need for education

Relation to the conference theme

The presentation relates to the conference theme by addressing the issue of how context affects the adaptation and delivery of the CMS framework in Norway, with a special focus on differences between urban and rural students in the last year of compulsory school.

General Objectives, theoretical framework and research questions

The project in this paper is a part of my PhD-project which I am currently working on at the Innland Norway University of Applied Science.

The overarching project's research question is: "Making career choices in 10th grade – how do Norwegian teenagers experience this?"

The aim of this project is to explore how Norwegian adolescents experience their career choices at the age of 15 or 16, of whether to go for vocational training or further academic education. The Norwegian education system is presently employing internationally recognized theories of career guidance to assist the adolescents with their choice, but there are well-known problems with transferring theories between contexts, like between countries. The rationale behind the present study is that a better understanding of the Norwegian adolescents' experience of their situation might advance the applicability of the tools and practices from theory.

The sub-project presented in this paper is based on an emerging theme from the first part of my study, where I have been collecting data through interviews with 10th graders and their career counsellors/teachers. I have visited different locations in Norway, and purposefully sampled schools in both urban and rural communities, and the aim of the interviews was to tap into the 10th graders differing experiences related to differences in local opportunity structures and education available in their communities.

Especially, this paper is based on a case study of one of these communities pointing to an issue that have received little attention in the debate concerning a national system for career guidance and the related debate on CMS as the vehicle for career learning in schools. The issue in question is that the teenagers in rural communities are being taught by their parents, teachers and their general context that education is the key to a future as stably and securely employed, whether it is in a trade

following vocational education and training (VET) or in an academic profession. This is a general theme throughout society today. While at the same time, in their communities they see many examples of people that quite successfully are making a living out of combining several sources of income like farming, short-term or part-time work in the local industries and public sector, and entrepreneurial activities, all of this in many cases without having completed upper secondary and thus having no formal qualifications. These multifariously skilled people are versatile, flexible, highly respected for their skills and rarely out of work, and the 10th graders see them as positive role models.

This puts the 10th graders in the peculiar position of being in the middle of an educational revolution, while at the same time witnessing that education is not necessary. This gives a new perspective to both the debate on how to implement and use CMS in Norwegian schools, the national framework for career guidance and the debate on how to reduce drop-out from upper secondary, something that is considered a major problem in the Norwegian upper secondary today.

One definition of CMS is: 'Career competences are competences for self-understanding and self-development; for exploring life and the worlds of learning and work; and for dealing with life, learning and work in periods of change and transition. Career competences involve being aware, not only of what you do, but also what you could do, and of how individuals are formed by their daily activities and their actions while simultaneously affecting their own opportunities for the future' (Thomsen, 2014, p. 5). According to this definition one could assume that career competences imply learning from the environment what possibilities are there and how to succeed, and when CMS can be seen as a program encouraging lifelong learning by putting heavy stakes on for instance education, the question is: How do we handle the fact that these 10th graders are learning that education is not necessary?

How shall the career community, i.e. career counsellors, teachers, researchers and policymakers, understand and incorporate the 10th graders experiential knowledge of how things *actually* work in the process of shaping and adapting the career management skills framework for Norwegian context? Should we, as the title implies, make a problem out of these success-stories of those managing the transition to work without education, or should we try to learn from them?

Research methodology

The overall study adopts a cross-disciplinary approach to methodology. The main question is "how do Norwegian adolescents experience making a career choice in 10th grade"? This corresponds to the first part of the study, where I will collect and analyze data qualitatively. The second question in the study asks if it is possible to identify a need for more or different career guidance through the concept of Locus of control, and for this part of the study, I plan to employ quantitative methods to search for connections between the findings from the qualitative dataset and the Locus of control-concept (Rotter, 1966).

I am now in the first phase of the study, and am in the process of doing data collection through interviews with 10th graders and their counsellors/teachers. I combine the individual interviews with a translated version of Levinson's "Wellness form" (Levenson, 1973). I plan to employ the Grounded Theory method to analyze the material for the purpose of developing an explanatory theory to account for similarities and differences in the 10th graders experience of making career choices. For the paper presented here, I will do a case study of the interviews made in the end of February 2017 from one particular location, where the above mentioned issue was prevalent.

Intent of Publications

For the overall PhD-project, I intend to publish three publications: one chapter in a Norwegian anthology (currently in review), and two articles in addition to an extended abstract for my thesis.

The book chapter which is the first publication, focuses on the history of Norwegian work culture as context for our time's focus on career guidance, counselling and learning, where the aim is to explore how the value base of the Norwegian working culture, coined *collectivistic individualism* by Hernes and Hippe (2007), might influence the framing of career competence skills in Norway.

According to plan, the second publication will focus on the qualitative part of the study, and the third article on the quantitative part of the project.

Expected Outcomes/results

The aim of the overall study is to make a contribution to the development of CMS as a national theoretical framework for career education and counselling in Norway, and specifically for this case study the aim is to generate knowledge on Norwegian rural context.

I expect the outcome of this case study to show that rural 10th graders in Norway might experience multiple challenges when trying to make sense of the world of education and work based on their experiences and what they can see and deduce for themselves. The outcome might provide a basis for debating whether or not the experiential knowledge of the 10th graders could be a basis for formulating a set of career competence skills, perhaps especially relevant for rural teenagers in Norway.

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