

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

## **Paper presentation**

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### **Title of proposal**

## **Career trajectories of youth without complete compulsory exam and provision of guidance - Adolescents ambitions and local support in different regions**

### **Information on how the contribution is related to the conference theme**

We are applying for funding for a research project that aims to strengthen the knowledge base of educational and work based trajectories for students without admission grades for upper secondary education. The aim of this presentation is to present the design and discuss how it is possible to support the research plan and involve Nordic collaborators.

### **keywords**

career learning, transitions, youth at risk

### **General description on research questions, objectives and theoretical framework**

Students without a complete upper secondary exam are a vulnerable group in current societies, sometimes referred to as knowledge societies. Individuals without exam are more at risk to be unemployed and the time in between occupations seems to be more durable than for equal groups with upper secondary or university exams. Thus we want to study how support for career learning is organized and how career choices develop for this particular group of students. In Sweden this group is oriented towards the introductory programme (IP) with five different orientations, which is aimed to prepare the students for a national programme. It is known through statistics that how different schools and different regions succeed in preparing students at IP for a national programme varies. In addition different regions history, material base, infrastructure (transport and distance the further education) influence organization of career support and what is valued as important knowledge as well as the adolescents horizons of action.

Previous research and governmental reports has acknowledged that the regional and local support for students without compulsory education exam is crucial in terms of the effect on

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their life chances. Both when it comes to career and civic life (Lovén 2015; Skolinspektionen 2013; SOU 2017:9). Support provided in school as career learning (in a wide understanding) can be crucial to widening the horizon of action, support motivation for studies and to overcome obstacles in career paths through education and to employment (jfr Dansk Clearinghouse 2011; Hooley 2014, Wilson 2010). The need to improve support for adolescent in their career choices has lately been stressed at political level and in several Swedish Government Official Reports.

As mentioned how schools succeed to prepare students at IP for a national programme varies between regions and can differ as much as ten percentage points (Bevelander & Lundh 2007; Skolverket 2015). How municipalities organize the five different orientations within the introductory programme also varies extensively (Henning Loeb & Lumsden Wass 2015). How much resources that is put into career learning activities and what counts as important are related to how those activities are prioritized of local authorities, the local labour market and what is valued by the individual career counselor. (Lundahl & Nilsson 2009; Rosvall & Öhrn 2014; Sundelin 2015). Research on how local differences contributes to develop young adults’ identities and horizons of action is sparse both in Sweden (Öhrn 2016) and in international research (Farrugia 2014). When researching marginalized youth the gaze is usually turned to (sub-)urban areas and the problems associated with those areas, stigmatization and high proportions of immigrants.

The project aims at developing understanding of local processes, content and structures that promotes or works as obstacles in trajectories between educational stages or future establishment at the labour market. This is accomplished through (i) mapping and critical analyses of activities related to career learning that involves adolescents without complete exam in compulsory school in different regions, (ii) critical analysis of students experiences of those activities, (iii) analysis of relations of (i) and (ii).

Central for the studies theoretical understanding of processes of career learning is Hodgkinson and Sparkes (1997) career ship theory that involves Bourdieu’s agent-structure perspective and also Strauss (1962) concepts of turning points. In addition what is seen as possibilities and obstacles of individuals career development is analysed through the relation to *place*, and its representation of specific historical, material and social conditions. The constitution of place is formed through its local, regional but also global conditions. In the theories of Massey (1994) local place is understood in how it is constructed locally as well as in relation to the regional and the global.

## Methods/methodology

To get a deep understanding of how activities are organized and what constitutes youths in different regions horizons of action we will use different methods and sources of information, i.e. method and informant triangulation (Denzin 1989). Sources of information

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will be observations of career development activities directed to students without a full compulsory school exam, interviews with those students, school staff including study- and career counselors, local politicians and surveys directed to gate keepers within the organization of local career learning and development.

The selection of students will be both students at the stage of finishing compulsory school without a full exam and students that has entered an IP at upper secondary school level. The latter and the activities related to their career development will be followed through three years in order to be able to analyze the processes of promotion of or obstacles of transfer to a national programme.

Those practices and informants will be studied in three different regions, urban, commuting and rural. The selection will be based on information of a survey conducted in the first phase of the study mapping activities and organization. One important factor will also be the amount of immigrant youth in the region. This since the IP orientation “Language introduction”, foremost including immigrant youth in need of improving their Swedish and/or their English, is the largest orientation within IP. This group is considered important to include in the research since this group holds certain kinds of complexities, including marginalization by ethnic background, which is currently important to understand in the context of “new” flows of individuals across borders.

### **Expected outcomes/results** (up to 300 words)

To complete compulsory education in Sweden without a full exam and in addition might be a young immigrant could involve several difficulties. Possibilities and obstacles can differ between regions. Different regions has different sources of education and employment and it might be difficult to match local education or employment with the experience and interest of the individual. The hope of this study is to develop knowledge that can be used in order to do well informed activities in order to support individual students that is known to be at risk. Hopefully more knowledge of individual and regional differences can make activities adapted to those circumstances and less centralized.

### **Intent of publication**

International journal with focus on research methods

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