



Western Norway
University of
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Transition from 10th grade to vocational education and training

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PhD thesis: Youth and educational choices

Students` experiences of educational choices and transitions

- › This presentation reports from a qualitative study of 15-year old students` transition from lower to upper secondary school, vocational programmes in Norway
- › The presentation will focus on some of the main findings concerning students` reasoned justification of their choice of vocational education
- › Main research question: What characterizes students` educational choices and transitions between lower and upper secondary school, VET- programmes?
- › What characterizes students` in 10th grade experiences of transition from lower to upper secondary school, VET?
- › VET-students` experiences with first year in VET and making choices for 2nd year in VET
- › Formative assessment in practice placement at workplaces, as ground for further education

Research tradition

- › Drop out in upper secondary education
- › Negative focus on VET (30 % drop out rate)
- › Research in the field of educational choices have shown great interest in underlying causes for young peoples` various pathways into and through upper secondary school
- › Socio-economic background is often discussed as a main predictor of education, and identity formation is often used as a analytic concept in such studies

Research tradition

- › Counselling – information, reflection, decision
 - Often based on students` awareness of their own abilities, interests, thoughts about future education and profession, motivation and abilities to realize plans
- › Through 10 years in school – following the stream, suddenly make a very important choice
- › Youth – socialization, identity formation and a need for experimenting (and change plans)
- › Late modernity (Giddens)
 - Self reflectiveness (marginalization – risk)
 - Individualization

Background and aim for the study

- › However, few studies have looked into students` experiences of transition and educational choices
- › The present study has therefore aimed at giving voice to students` own perceptions of choice and transition processes
- › Analyze within a pedagogical framework

Why choose vocational education and training (VET)?



Theoretical framework

Individualization (Giddens, 2006)

Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995)

- › Interest development (Hidi & Renninger, 2006)

Methods

- › Qualitative study
 - › Open questionnaire (N = 33)
 - › Interviews (N = 6)
 - › Analyzed according to Kvale`s models for interpretation of qualitative data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), and was grounded in a phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2007).
- 10th grade, 3 schools,
rural county in Norway

Reasons for choosing VET (10th graders)

Variables:

- › Interests
- › Motivation
- › Guidance and counselling
- › Information (from peers, family, school, teachers etc)



Findings: Why choose VET?

- › Self-efficacy in practical skills and doing practical tasks

I want to use my hands...

- › Wish for a practical occupation and practical work

- › Experiences with mastering practical tasks is related to identity formation, self-efficacy and being inventive/ creative

I am a practical type...

- › Labour market, payment (boys)

- › Working environment, social environment (girls)



Findings: Why choose VET?

- › Need for something else, something different

... no more theory...

- › The students experienced subjects in school as theoretical, both content and methods (cognitive learning)
- › The students want other learning methods (practical) and a another content

VET is practical, specialization in general studies is theoretical

Findings: Why choose VET?

- › Some students did not know what to choose, but knew for certain they did not want to go the theoretical line

They have no specific VET-interest, but there is no other alternative

- › Choosing VET is a negative choice
 - uncertainty about future education and profession and about themselves

Findings: Development of VET-interests

- › The main basis for development of vocational interests in 10th grade is self-regulated leisure activities (i.e. babysitting, caring for animals, mending engines, cooking)
- › Practical and aesthetic learning methods in school and visits at workplaces also functioned as basis for developing vocational interests



Findings: Development of VET-interests

- › Students do not relate subjects in lower secondary school to VET
- › They do not see maths, language and science i.e. as important and relevant for their VET-education
- › Students with high academic self-efficacy saw this as means to go into their first choice of VET-programme
- › Students with high self-efficacy in practical work tasks relates these skills to VET

Obstacles

› School achievement (+/-)

› Uncertainty

Since I don't know what my dream is, I don't know what to do to realize it...

› Lack of information

› Geography, distance

School and parents` role in the transition process

- › Visit upper secondary schools observation and conversation with students
- › Placement practice at workplaces situated learning, authentic learning, being included
- › Information and counselling
- › Parents – giving support, dialogues significant other

Challenges

- › Development of VET-interests in school – the main challenge
 - through subject content
 - through teaching methods and learning activities
- › Subjects in school are decontextualized, theorized and made abstract
- › Makes choosing VET more difficult for uncertain students and they might start in VET with «false» expectations
- › Time span
 - short and long time span
 - uncertain students have shorter time span

Challenges

- › The main findings emphasizes that school is not the most important arena for development of interests and motivation for VET, and there is a gap between students` need for mapping and developing VET-interests and what school actually offers of such opportunities.
- › Educational choices takes place in the tension between youth as objects of investment for the society (through education) and the discourse of free choice based on interests made by self-reflective individuals

Challenges

- › Education at risk?
 - lack of subjective relevance and meaning in what school offers
 - uncertainty of interest and motivation
- › Development of VET-interests and motivation in school as part of subject content and learning activities
- › School an arena for identity formation and development
- › Need to include and appreciate other learning contexts than the traditional classroom
 - workplaces, leisure activities

Further research

- › Boundary crossing as concept for describing these processes
- › Transition studies
- › Assessment in VET

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