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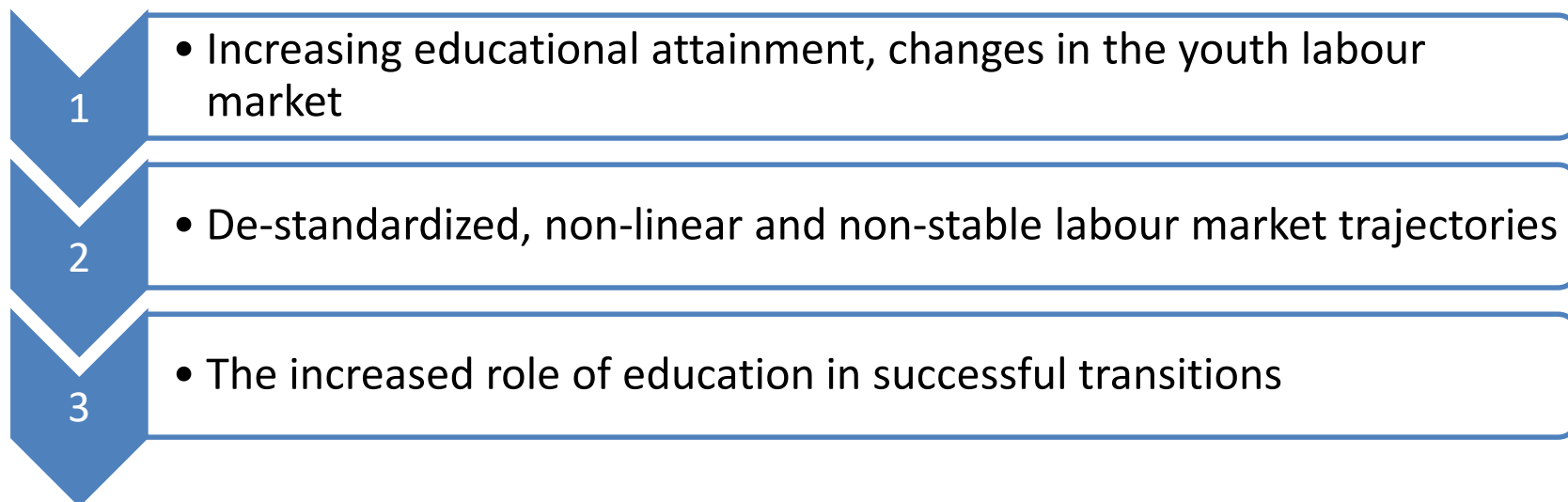
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Policies of school-to-work transitions and VET in Sweden, Denmark and Finland

**Christian Helms Jørgensen, Tero Järvinen and
Lisbeth Lundahl**

NERA 2017, Copenhagen, Denmark, 23-25 March

Background: changes in school-to-work transitions



The weakening labour market and societal status of low-educated young people and young adults



Early school leavers and NEETs as special target groups of European and Nordic youth and labour market policies



Establishment of national and local transition policies

Lack of comparative studies

Why to compare Nordic countries?

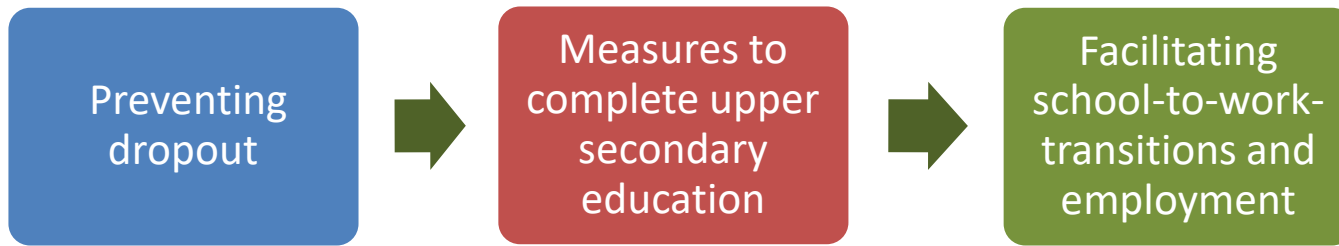
- 1. While sharing similar histories of welfare and educational policies, it seems that Nordic countries have embarked on different routes in this respect
- 2. While in many studies similarities between Nordic countries, in terms of youth transitions and educational equality have been found (e.g. Iannelli & Smyth 2008; Eurofound 2014); previous studies have also revealed differences within the Nordic countries in many aspects of education (e.g. Lundahl 2012; Bäckman et al. 2015; Yoon & Järvinen 2016).



Is it still justified to speak of a common Nordic regime of youth transitions, as suggested by Walther (2006)?

The objective and method of the study

- The objective of the study is to compare Swedish, Danish and Finnish school-to-work transition policies with special emphasis on NEETs, dropout and VET by utilizing a modified definition of transition policies by Eurofound (2012):



- Policy documents and programmes, statistics, previous studies of the authors

Policy contexts

| | Sweden | Denmark | Finland |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level of marketization | Highly marketized education system concerning both basic and upper secondary education, the significant role of private schools | Moderate marketization: A 'free' training market for apprenticeships, VET under corporatist control and state control of vocational schools. | Low to moderate marketization, local public school markets, almost non-existence of private schools |
| Upper secondary education, VET | Comprehensive post-compulsory education, school-based VET targeted at young people under 20 | Strong tracking and weak connections between general and vocational education, modernised version of apprenticeship training | Non-comprehensive post-compulsory education, high attractiveness of school-based VET targeted also at adults |
| Critical transition points | 1) From lower to upper secondary education, 2) from upper secondary education to work or further education | 1) From lower to upper secondary education, 2) from the initial school-based course in the VET-system to an apprenticeship in a company | 1) From lower to upper secondary education, 2) from VET to employment |

Comparison Preventing dropout

- Special needs education offered in- or outside ordinary schools
- Bridges from lower to upper secondary education:
 - Preparatory and introductory programmes (Fi: 2%, Se: 28%)
 - Extra tenth grade in compulsory school (Fi, Dk)
 - Strengthening of educational guidance
- Special training programmes to re-integrate dropouts (Fi, Dk)

Comparison Completion of education

- Shifting policy measures to reduce dropout (Se, Dk)
- ‘Second chances’ offered in adult education
- Validation of prior learning (Fi, Dk)
- *Activation*: Active labour market policies
 - Supporting employability has priority over social benefits
 - Tightening of the conditions for receiving benefits
- Activation in education increase the risk of dropout Fi, Dk

Comparison supporting transition to employment

- Emphasis on employability in upper secondary education
- Inclusion of more work-based training/internships in VET
- *'Youth guarantees'* in Se, Fi focus on employment/internships
- *'Educational guarantee'* in Dk focus on training placements
- Supporting transitions to employment in (Dk) or after VET (Fi, Se)
- The *'guarantees'* have limited effects for most disadvantaged youth

Conclusion

- The concepts 'Nordic, universalistic transition regime' partly misleading,
- Steps from *welfare* towards workfare regimes
- Shift from priority on *citizenship* to *employability*
- Emphasis on choice and institutional individualisation of pathways
- Responsibilisation of young people – also for transition failures!
- Increasing use of coercive measures and punishments

Conclusion

- Differences between the three Nordic transition regimes
- State-led and school-based VET-systems (Fi, Se):
 - strong institutional support for the completion of USED,
 - high risks in the transition to employment.
- Corporatist work-based VET-system (Dk)
 - high risks of dropping out of USED,
 - strong institutional support for the transition to employment.

Thanks for your attention