Alternative learning pathways for Early School Leavers in Sweden: A qualitative study of second chance learning and vocational training

Early School Leaving (ESL) has not received much academic attention in Sweden until recently, but with the rise of knowledge based economies/societies it is becoming clear that more focus has to be directed towards this phenomena if Sweden is to be able to continue to position itself as an including, non-discriminatory welfare state.

Education is a key component in striving for equality and social inclusion, and this has become all the more evident because of the competition on the labour market today. In Sweden, as also elsewhere in Europe, it is becoming increasingly difficult to enter the labour market without holding an ISCED 3 qualification and as a result of this, those who fail to complete their upper secondary school education risk facing social and economic exclusion.

In this paper we will present results of individual and focus group interviews with young people participating in programs offering second chance educational measures and work-based vocational training courses, and staffs at these programs. The study also use policy documents to explore the design of these measures in comparison with regular upper secondary school education, while also looking at how they are perceived by students and teachers.

The preliminary findings demonstrate that teachers at these institutions find certain discrepancies between the design and aim of the measures and how policy makers sometimes perceive them. Students tend to be rather positive about the measures, and although teachers often feel that they struggle to find the time and resources to adapt the measure to the needs of such a heterogeneous group of students, the measures seems to be quite successful in terms of helping ESL:ers to attain an ISCED 3 qualification and improving their chances to establish themselves on the labour market.

References:


Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (2013), “Preventing early school leaving”