LOCALITY AND THE PREVENTION OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

Supporting young people´s transitions to upper secondary school in a highly decentralised education system

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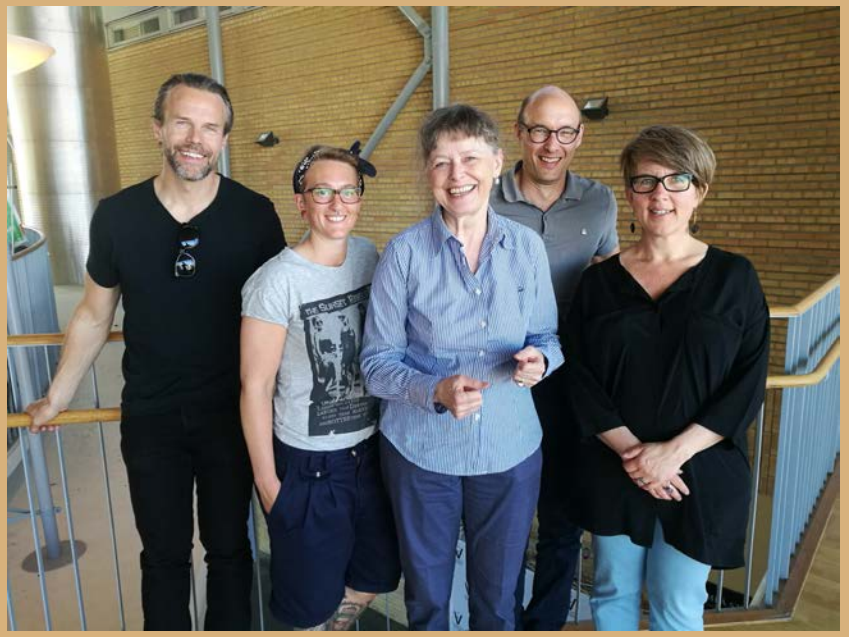

Research team, project" Moving on. *Youth attending an introduction program and their career support in varying local contexts* (funded by the Swedish Research Council 2018-2022)

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A BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE?

- Lacking upper secondary education (USE) has become increasingly detrimental to young people´s future life-courses
- Internationally: a range of programmes and measures intended to minimize early school leaving (ESL).
- Sweden: Introduction programme (IP) at upper secondary level, consisting of 4(5) tracks. Aim: make students eligible to regular 3-year vocational or academic program, and/or prepare for work. The largest track: language preparation (LI). *Few if any direct international counterparts to the Swedish IP*
- IP is little regulated; the teaching should be individually adapted
- In 2018/19, IP catered for 15% of all students at upper secondary level – but large local variations.
- Only 20% of the students succeed to finalise a 3-year USE program within 5 years after starting at IP. A large proportion proceeds to adult education

WHAT WE AIMED FOR IN THIS SUB-STUDY AND HOW WE WENT THROUGH WITH IT

We wanted to explore and understand how local preconditions of a highly decentralised policy context frame and interact with **local school actors´ efforts to support transitions to education and work** among young people with incomplete lower secondary education

Central questions concerned the organisation and practices of the IP, how varying local structural and institutional conditions relate to the students´ transitions, and how one can understand differences between local contexts in these respects.

Methods and sources:

I. A questionnaire to career counsellors and school/program leaders at IP in (a) all commuter municipalities close to the 3 largest cities, (b) all small cities/towns (15-40.000 inhabitants), all rural municipalities. We covered 87% of all municipalities offering IP in these 3 groups.

II. Public statistics (Statistics Sweden, Swedish National Agency of Education, database KOLADA run by the Swedish Association of Municipalities and Regions)

III. Descriptive statistics analysis, thematic analysis of open survey questions

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Lipsky (2010): teachers, career counsellors and school leaders are regarded as **street level bureaucrats** who have to make pragmatic micro-choices in a situation of too scarce resources in relation to the aims/demands.

Lidström (2002): municipal and school actors make conscious choices and decisions concerning education under the influence of local structural preconditions (incentives) in terms of **local problems and local resources**

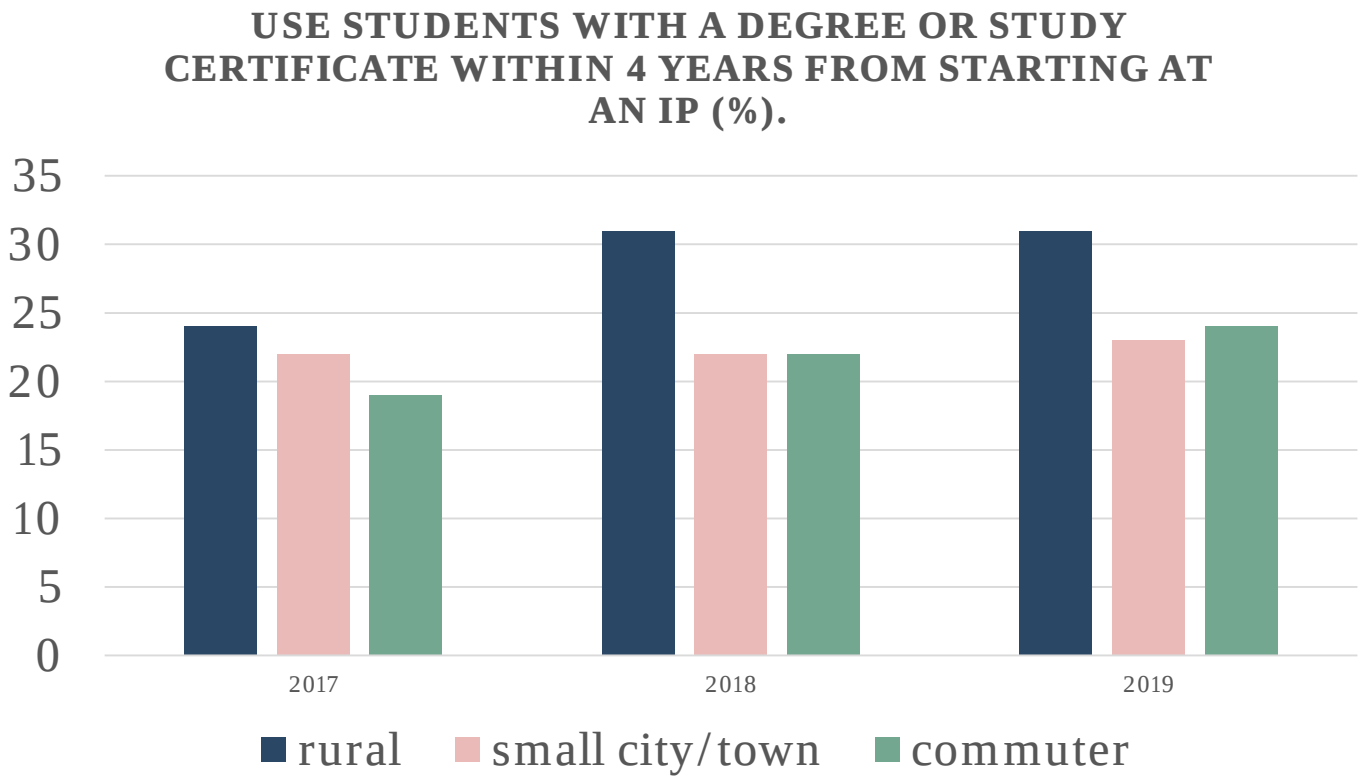
WE FOUND…

…that the **local structural and institutional problems and resources** vary considerably between the three local contexts.

- **The commuting municipalities** tend to have the most favourable structural conditions (e.g. employment, average incomes, educational level), and, together with the small cities/towns, the best institutional preconditions (e.g. access to qualified teachers and counsellors). The commuting municipalities have the highest proportion of students eligible for national upper secondary education.
- **The rural municipalities** tend to have the largest structural problems and least of institutional resources. They have the lowest proportion of students eligible for national upper secondary education.

… few if any systematic differences with regard to the inner work of the IP in the three groups of municipalities.

BUT – unexpectedly - higher completion rates in the rural municipalities



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Possible explanations

(to be investigated further in the project)

According to the answers from counsellors and school/program leaders, rural municipalities/schools on average report **more frequently** than the others

- support from leaders,
- clear division of responsibilities ,

And **less frequently**

- spatial division between IP and the rest of USE

Another possible explanation to be investigated:

Do school and other actors of the rural municipalities *regard the IP students as assets more than problems* than is the case in the other local contexts?

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