Building bridges from VET to higher education - experiences from Denmark

1. Introduction: transitions to HE in Denmark
2. What is the problem: blind alleys and bridges?
3. Why so difficult to improve progression from VET to higher education?

Christian Helms Jørgensen
Roskilde University, Denmark
The future of VET - Learning from the Nordic Countries. www.Nord-VET.dk
Enrolment in higher education in Denmark has doubled - Has this also benefitted students from VET?

Source: [http://www.statistikbanken.dk/statbank5a/default.asp?w=1366](http://www.statistikbanken.dk/statbank5a/default.asp?w=1366)
Share of a youth cohort entering the main programmes
of higher secondary education 1950 - 2005

As some students shift program, they count twice and the numbers add up to more than one.

Data from Dk Statistics and Min.of Educ 1998

HQ project May 2011
Share of a youth cohort entering the main programmes of higher secondary education 1950 - 2005

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Data from Dk Statistics and Min.of Educ 1998

An increasing share attains qualifications that give access to higher education

The relative status of VET decreases: - a 'blind alley'

Christian Helms Jørgensen • Department of Psychology and Educational Studies• Roskilde University
Share of students whose parents have completed higher education - the two tracks compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gymnasiums</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational - Dual System</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tracking results in a social selection of students according to the educational background of their parents

Source: Pilegaard Jensen & Larsen 2011 in Helms Jørgensen: frafald i eud (dropout in VET)
Since the 1970ies attempts to build bridges from VET to higher education

- Policies for integration of general and vocational tracks in 1970s failed.
- Employers and craft unions allied to preserve their control of dual system.
- Tracking was maintained - and linkage measures added
- Linkage policies from 1980s on not successful:
  - 'Academization' of HE programs: increasing requirements for access to sub-
    Bachelor higher education
  - The vocational gymnasiums from 1980ies have recruited the academically
    strong students who might have gone to the dual system of VET
  - Very few have used the opportunities for taking additional study oriented
    subjects at higher levels in VET (an option from 2000).

- so what is the results?
Transitions in the Danish educational system

Higher education

Master
Bachelor
Short

General education: Gymnasium
'classic' Gymnasium
Vocational Gymnasiums

Dual system of vocational education
12 main entrances
109 programmes

Labour market

VET: a blind alley on the road to HE

Final rates of completion 25 years after leaving basic school

Percentages of a youth cohort in 2006 hybrid qualifications

Source UNI-C 2008
## Rates of progression to HE until 5 years after graduation from VET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VET: Child care</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>12,6%</td>
<td>3,2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET: Business/Retail</td>
<td>4,5%</td>
<td>8,5%</td>
<td>11,0%</td>
<td>10,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET: Building</td>
<td>9,0%</td>
<td>7,1%</td>
<td>4,8%</td>
<td>3,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET: Metal &amp; Mechanical</td>
<td>6,3%</td>
<td>4,5%</td>
<td>3,4%</td>
<td>1,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET: Media &amp; Grafic</td>
<td>2,9%</td>
<td>4,6%</td>
<td>2,4%</td>
<td>3,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET: Technic &amp; Manufacture</td>
<td>12,3%</td>
<td>7,5%</td>
<td>4,9%</td>
<td>4,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET: Social services</td>
<td>2,7%</td>
<td>3,7%</td>
<td>2,7%</td>
<td>2,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET: Food &amp; Restaurant</td>
<td>4,5%</td>
<td>3,0%</td>
<td>2,6%</td>
<td>2,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET: Transport</td>
<td>7,1%</td>
<td>3,8%</td>
<td>2,2%</td>
<td>4,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET: Health</td>
<td>2,6%</td>
<td>2,7%</td>
<td>3,0%</td>
<td>3,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2918</td>
<td>3259</td>
<td>3053</td>
<td>2104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total progression rate</td>
<td>7,7%</td>
<td>7,9%</td>
<td>7,7%</td>
<td>6,4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Growth**

**Decline**
Why this low rate of progression from Dual VET to higher education?

• The dual system successfully transfers students out of the educational system and bring them into employment.

• When VET students enter into employment they acquire good earnings and establish family - and have financial responsibilities.

• Successful policies for vocational enhancement: Dual VET offer programmes at a high level (e.g. data-technician 5½ years)

• Compressed wage structure: same level for skilled workers and many graduates with Bachelor degree (nurses, teachers in basic school).

• Skilled workers have good opportunities for work based careers in the craft based production - supported by a comprehensive public system of vocational further training.
Strengths and weaknesses of the dual system

- The transition to employment is integrated in the work based training
- Low youth unemployment and inclusion of non-academic youth
- High rates of employment on relevant level of skills
- An alternative pathway besides not just below the academic.
These advantages are also weaknesses:

• Transfers students out of the educational system
• Diverts young people from higher education
• Appear as 'blind alley' in the educational system
• The social partners prefer a vocational enhancement strategy to a unification or hybridisation strategy
• The social partners give priority to employability over opportunities for progression to higher education
• This result in low permeability from dual VET to higher education
Political initiatives for improving access from VET to HE

- Falling esteem of VET: VET is by many young people considered a blind alley that doesn't give access to higher education.

- The educational choices of 16-17 years olds often have life long consequences:

  - When choosing the dual system, they are diverted from higher education, and only 5% of a cohort progress from VET to higher education.

  - The large companies consider higher education graduates with a background in the dual system attractive employees.
Position of the eux programme in the Danish educational system

Final rates of completion 25 years after leaving basic school
Percentages of a youth cohort in 2006 hybrid qualifications

Source UNI-C 2008

Christian Helms Jørgensen • Department of Psychology and Educational Studies • Roskilde University
The new hybrid program eux in comparison with the existing programmes

The dual system

1. year
School
Workplace

2. year
School
Workplace

3. year
School
Workplace

4. year
School
Workplace

Access to the labour market

Eux - the new hybrid programme

School
Basic course

Workplace training

School
Workplace training

School
Workplace

Access to labour market and higher education

The length of the school based and work based periods may vary between the programmes

The technical Gymnasium

School
Basic course

School 1.year

School 2. year

School 3. year

Access to higher education
Preliminary results of the new 'bridge' from VET to HE

- Has succeeded in obtaining high enrolment
- Very demanding programme: 'two in one' - in the time of one
- Difficult to include long work based training placement in programme
- Might end up reducing the esteem of the ordinary VET programmes - contrary to the political intentions of increasing the esteem of VET.

Thank you for your attention!