



The future of Career Education in Nordic countries and self-governing areas



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The future of Career Education in Nordic countries and self-governing areas



he workshop series *The future of career education in the Nordic countries and self-governing areas* aims to **map and compare the similarities and differences between careers education programmes in grades 7-10.**

Definition of Career education: 'a systematic attempt to support pupils' career development through various educational strategies'

(Niles & Harris-Bowlsby, 2009).



All results reported in a open access special collection (7 articles) in the Nordic Journal for transitions, career and guidance



<https://njtcg.org/collections/nordiccareered>



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COLLECTION

Career Education in the Nordic Countries

Career education, as educational activities, aimed at supporting students' career development, is implemented in all Nordic countries through various strategies. However, there are disparities in its implementation and practice. Some countries provide many activities but do not refer to career education as a uniting principle. While previous analysis shows that Nordic countries are leading in developing valued career education activities, national evaluations reveal that less than half of schools offer systematic career education. This special issue examines career education in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, as well as cross-national perspectives including Greenland and Faroe Islands, to gain new insights into strengths and weaknesses. It explores career education policies, curriculum, work experience programs, and more in the contexts of the Nordic education systems.



Collection Nordic CareerEd



COLLECTION

Career Education in the Nordic Countries

Einarsdottir, S., Thomsen, R., Hansen, J.D., Berg, E., Ruusuvirta-Uuksulainen, O., Jensen, I. and Kjærgaard, R., 2023. **Career Education in the Nordic Countries: A Comparison of National Legislation and Compulsory School Curricula**. Nordic Journal of Transitions, Careers and Guidance, 4(1), p.97–112.DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16993/njtcg.64>

Kettunen, J., Skovhus, R., Røise, P., Rosvall, P.-Å., Einarsdóttir, A. and Eshaghbeigi-Hosseini, M., 2023. **Work Experience Placements in Lower Secondary Education in Nordic Countries**. Nordic Journal of Transitions, Careers and Guidance, 4(1), p.29–42.DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16993/njtcg.60>

Rosvall, P.-Å. and Eshaghbeigi-Hosseini, M., 2023. **An Examination of Career Education and Guidance in Sweden**. Nordic Journal of Transitions, Careers and Guidance, 4(1), p.57–70.DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16993/njtcg.69>

Thomsen, R., Tybjerg, G. and Skovhus, R.B. (2024). **Career Education in the final years of Compulsory School in Denmark**, Nordic Journal of Transitions, Careers and Guidance, 5(1), p. 15–30. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.16993/njtcg.84>.

Eshaghbeigi-Hosseini, M. (2024). **A Cross-National Analysis of the (Re)actualization of Work Experience Placement as a Career Education Activity in Sweden and Denmark**, Nordic Journal of Transitions, Careers and Guidance, 5(1), p. 94–106. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.16993/njtcg.74>.

Kettunen, J. (2024). **Finnish Lower Secondary Career Education Through a Systems Lens**, Nordic Journal of Transitions, Careers and Guidance, 5(1), p. 73–85. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.16993/njtcg.85>.

Career Education in the Nordic Countries: A Comparison of National Legislation and Compulsory School Curricula

- National legislation
 - National curriculum
 - Organisation and roles
 - Quality and evaluation
-
- "On being a boundary person", policy-lending and policy borrowing. *Ronald Sultana*



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CAREER EDUCATION IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES



- Aim to map career education activities in compulsory schools in Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden
- Compare the state of career education across the Nordic region.
- The rationale for doing so is to spark further discussion and support development in practice and research in each country and thus contribute to international knowledge and research on career education.
- Analysis of each nation's laws and curriculum resulted in a broad framework for comparison which consists of four general parts: *1. National legislation*, *2. National curriculum*, *3. Organization and Roles*, and *4. Quality and evaluation*.

Study

	DENMARK	FAROE ISLANDS	FINLAND	GREENLAND	NORWAY	ICELAND	SWEDEN
National legislation							
Legal entitlement to career guidance	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Professional qualifications of career guidance	required	short course required	regulated	none	municipalities decide	regulated licensed	required
Teachers' qualifications for career education	optional courses offered	none	integrated into teacher's subject area	none	optional courses offered	none	none
National curriculum							
Career education in general curriculum	mandatory topic	mandatory topic	mandatory subject	topic within another subject	mandatory subject?	mentioned as topic	integrated into other subjects
Specific curriculum for career education	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	no
Timetabled lessons allocated	no	no	yes: 76 hours	no	yes: 110 hours	no	no
Work experience placement	student right	mandatory	mandatory	optional	optional	not stated	student right
Taster courses	mandatory	optional	yes	no	optional	no	no

	DENMARK	FAROE ISLANDS	FINLAND	GREENLAND	NORWAY	ICELAND	SWEDEN
Organisation and roles							
Separate or integrated	optional	optional	both	optional	separate	optional	integrated
School administrators	responsible and leading	responsible	responsible	responsible	responsible	responsible	responsible
Teachers	CE courses and subjects	subjects	subjects	personal development subject	CE courses	some subjects	subjects
Guidance counsellors	CE courses and guidance, cooperation	CE courses and guidance	CE courses and guidance, cooperation, and coordination	guidance	CE courses and guidance	guidance and optional CE courses and modules	guidance
Quality and evaluation							
National quality framework	no	no	yes	no	yes	no	no
Evaluation initiated nationally	ad hoc	no	self-evaluations and surveys	no	systematic student evaluations and ad hoc	no	no

Results

1. All counties guarantee students the right to career guidance by law and require a certain level of professionalization for delivering that guidance.
2. National curricula differ extensively in how they frame career education as a systematic educational strategy.
3. Career counselors play a role in supporting career learning alongside teachers in all the Nordic countries, but neither group's role is well defined.
4. Quality processes are rarely in place, but ad hoc evaluations have been conducted, mainly in the larger countries.
5. The study and the comparative framework can be used to guide policy, practice, and further research on career education in the Nordic countries and beyond.

Highlights for discussion

- The experiential dimension was emphasised across the Nordic countries. Many countries prioritise and organise that students get experience from working life. (see also Kettunen, J., Skovhus, R., Røise, P., Rosvall, P.-A., Einarsdóttir, A. and Eshaghbeigi-Hosseini, M., 2023)
- If not timetabled, career education is often challenging for schools to implement in a busy schedule
- **It may be somewhat unclear what students should learn and what the goal of career education is.**
- There are differences in the organisation of career education for example who is responsible for the delivery; study counsellors and/or teachers in the school or career practitioners who are located outside the school.
- **There is a difference among Nordic countries between the level of education and the level of competence of the career practitioners/career education teachers**
- A challenge for some countries is that what is determined politically does not always correspond to what is going on in practice. This means that what should ideally be implemented does not happen, which makes it difficult to examine whether career education as a subject in school has an impact on students' career considerations (see also Thomsen, Tybjerg and Skovhus 2024)

Career Education in Compulsory Education in Denmark - a critical review

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Career Education

“Career education is a systematic attempt to support pupils’ career development through various educational strategies, including providing information about different occupations, incorporating career-related concepts in the academic curriculum, offering various work-site based experiences, and offering career planning courses”

(Niles & Harris-Bowlsby, 2009)

Country paper

Please collect and add the following documents to the designated google folders*

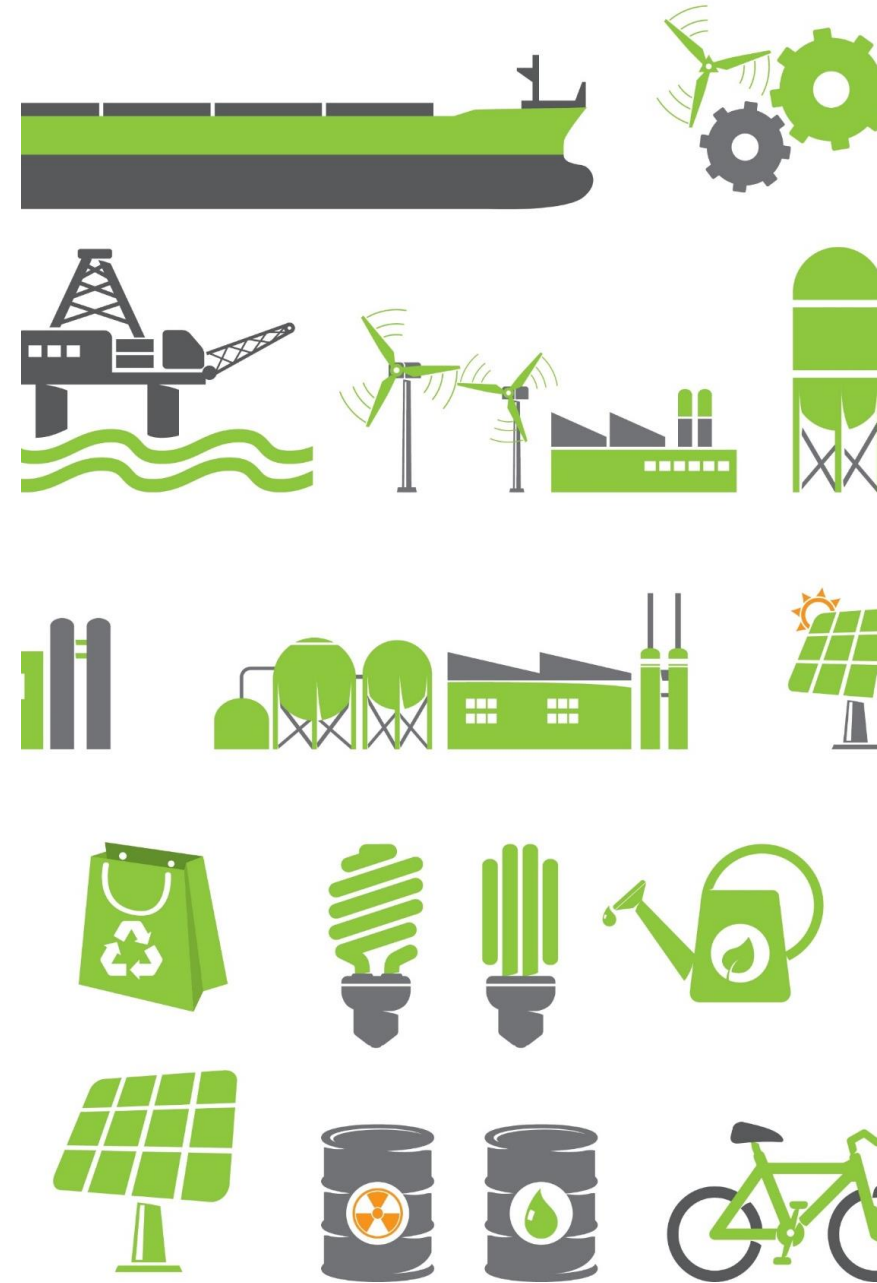
1. National guidelines (policies, legislation) on career education in compulsory school
2. National curriculum on career education
3. Other national documents relevant to career education in compulsory school
4. Research (ph.d. and peer reviewed articles)

*Please look for translations in English/Swedish of documents if available. You can check with your Euroguidance center.

Based on the documents write a short description about state of affairs in your country/region in English (3 to 5 pages) and make a powerpoint presentation

Result of the mapping of career education in compulsory school in Denmark

- Education and work - mandatory topic
- Collective, group, and individual career guidance
- Introduction to the education system and on-line resources
- Introductory and taster courses for upper-secondary programmes
- Work experience placement (WEP)
- Introduction to the application process for enrolment in a vocational or academic upper secondary programme, including the study choice portfolio



Education and work

Mandatory topic for grades 1.-10. grade

No specific number of lessons allocated, and no specific financial support, e.g., hiring a bus for excursions, etc.

The stated objectives involve pupils ...

- ... gaining the necessary competencies to make career choices based on their own preferences and abilities, understanding the importance of lifelong learning and comprehensive knowledge regarding educational and vocational options...

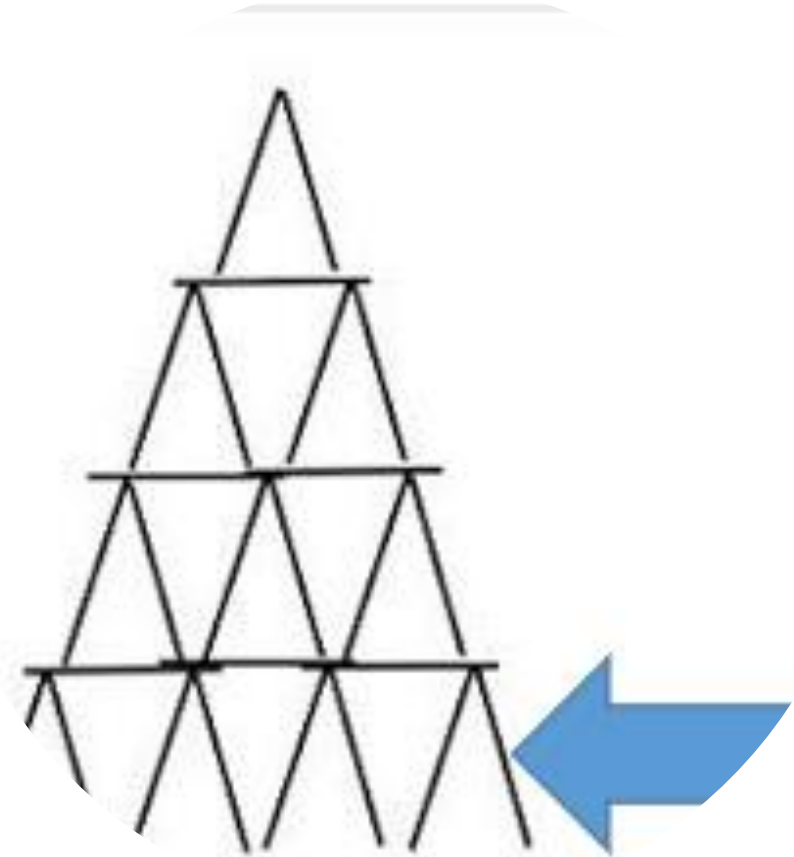
The choice-making process is the main focus of the curriculum

Research and evaluations show major differences in how the topic: Education and work are prioritized and organized at the municipal level and between individual schools.



Education and work – a foundation ...

- Legislation states that: Education and work provides the foundation for career guidance provided from grade 8 to 10. The legislation and syllabus TEXT appear to provide a solid foundation
- Guidance is supposed to build on the knowledge and skills that pupils have acquired
- Research shows that: The implementation of education and work is fragile and disjointed -> substantial inequality in access to career learning opportunities.
- Shakier and more unstable foundation IN PRACTICE than the legislation and syllabus TEXT might suggest.



Collective, group, and individual career guidance

- All pupils receive collective career guidance (grades 7–10) from a guidance counsellor employed at The municipal youth guidance units
- Collective guidance can involve guidance in smaller groups.
- Only pupils 'not ready for upper secondary education' have access to individual guidance in addition to the collective career guidance (since 2014 and lifted again in 2023).

Introduction to the education system and on-line resources

- Introduction to different vocational or academic upper secondary programmes
- Introduction to the national digital guidance portal (ug.dk) and to the digital career guidance service (eGuidance)
- Information meetings for pupils and their parents

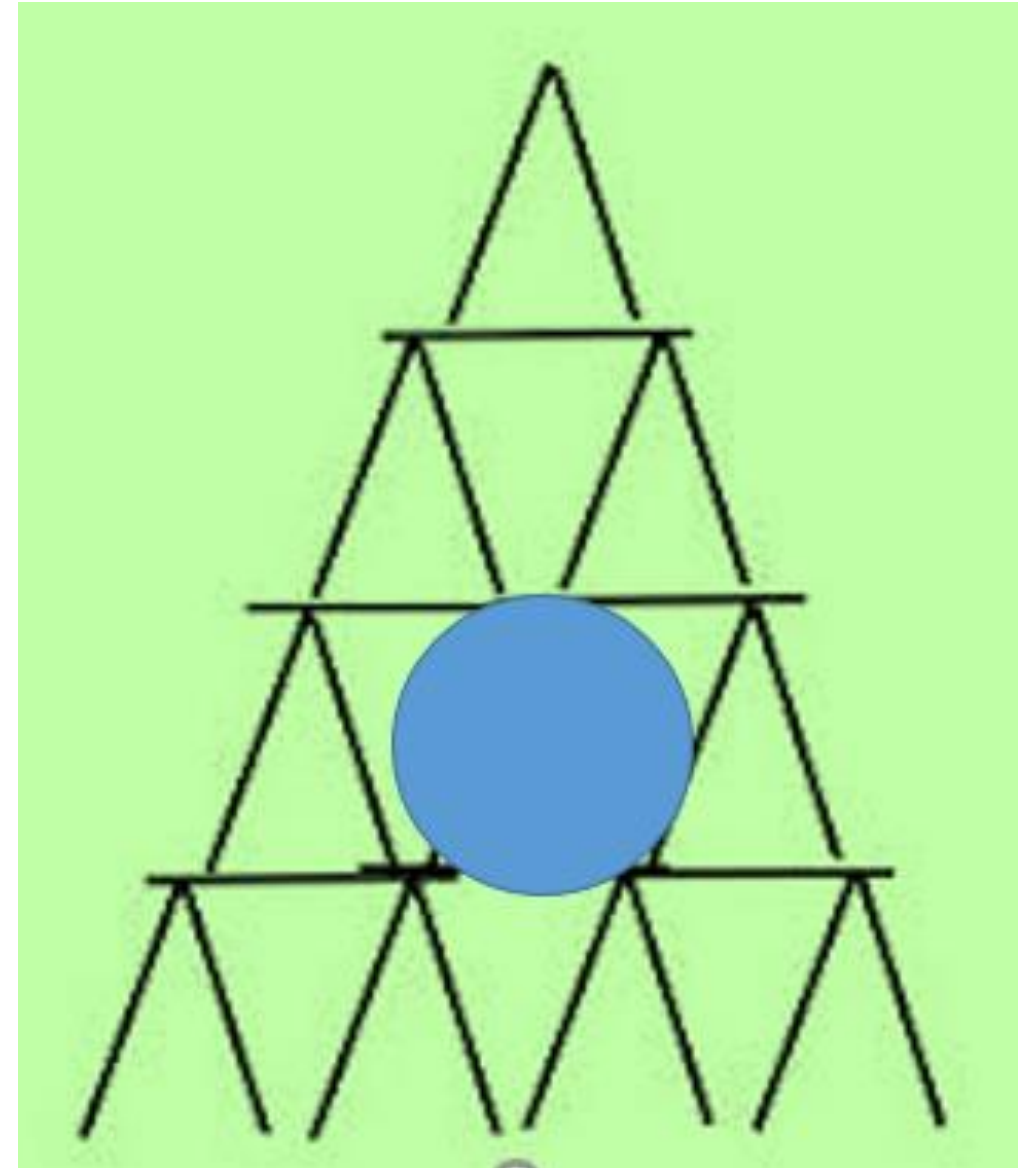


Introductory and taster courses for upper secondary programmes

Introductory and taster courses -> visit upper secondary programmes.

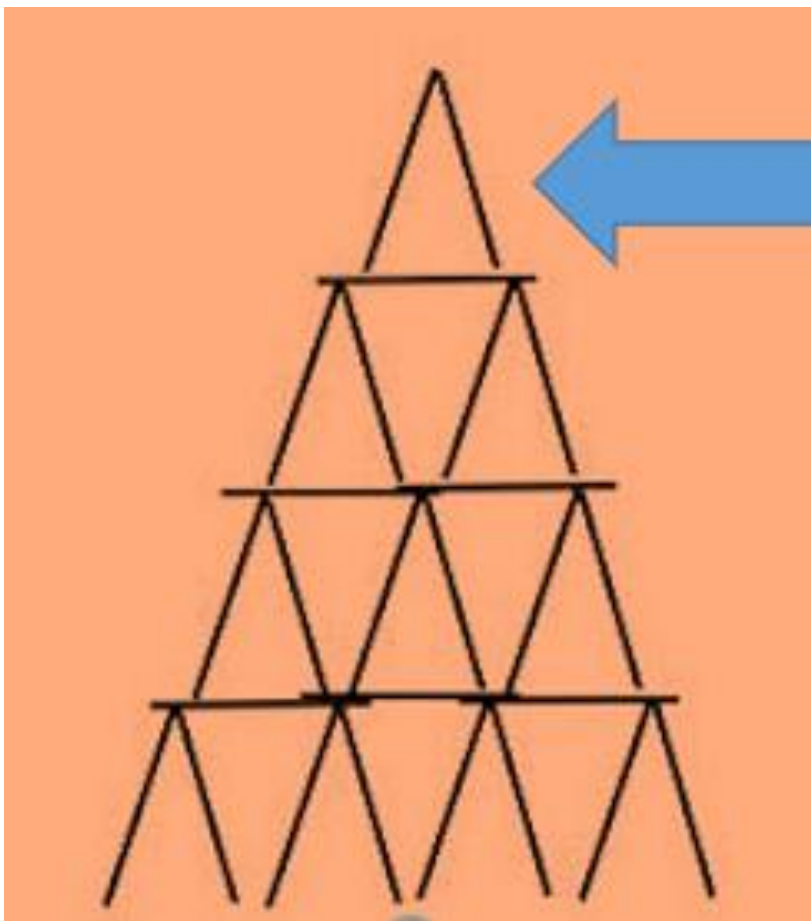
Purpose (legislation)

- experience different study environments and both practical and theoretical elements of educational and training programmes
 - familiarize pupils with some of the fields of work to which the different programmes can provide access
 - challenge and qualify pupils' choice of upper secondary programme.
-
- Financed through the taximeter system -> is offered systematically
 - ... a triangle in the horizontal middle layer - more solid and independently cohesive than the other activities due to the financial support.



Work experience placement (WEP)

- Not mandatory for schools to arrange
- Pupils are entitled to one-week WEP in both grades 8, 9, 10 – if self-arranged
- Aim: WEP can support a broadening of horizons in terms of education and work, develop greater awareness of different possibilities, and help in choosing a path forward.
- Research: Pupils report significant outcomes, but since WEP is not systematically embedded in schools at the national level, far from all pupils participate in WEP.



Introduction to the application process for enrolment in a vocational or academic upper secondary programme, including the study choice portfolio

- Pupils should receive an introduction to the process of applying to a vocational or academic programme at the upper secondary level.
- As part of the application process: Pupils should compile a personal study choice portfolio during grades 8–10, describing how they have benefitted from the guidance activities in which they have participated.
- Schools must ensure that pupils in grades 8–10 work systematically with the study choice portfolio.
- The final layer at the top of the pyramid, completing the house of cards. On paper, it is here that all the various career education activities come together in a coherent process for pupils to reflect upon.
- In practice, the study choice portfolio is vulnerable
 - It rests on the trust that the activities are carried out and that the students are systematically supported to reflect on the benefit of the activities along the way and note it in the study choice portfolio.
 - So, the credibility and usefulness of the portfolio as a tool in the transition to upper secondary education is dependent on all other components in the pyramid – the supporting layers.



Discussion

- The mapping revealed a plethora of well-described and, on paper, neatly aligned activities
- The House of cards metaphor characterizes the instabilities and weaknesses of career education in Denmark, albeit with certain highly stable elements (Introductory and taster courses)
- Studies have shown that the many activities intended to support pupils' career development and transitions are often conducted in isolation -> many pupils struggle to see the relevance of such activities.
- There is a risk that pupils, parents and teachers find the activities irrelevant and therefore don't prioritise them.
- The technocratic focus on rhetorically linking activities together does not support that the system works in practice: E.g. due to the often lack of cooperation between municipal career guidance centres and the schools, the unallocated hours for teaching the topic education and work.
- The activities seem to each have their individual aims. In some cases, the aim does not seem to extend beyond providing the activity. In such cases, when pupils question the relevance and meaningfulness of the activity, the only justification offered is that it is mandatory. The overall purpose of the activities is missing.

