

The Danish VET system and processes of peripheralization

AAG 2015

Karin Topsø Larsen

University of Aalborg & Centre for Regional and Tourism Research



AALBORG UNIVERSITET



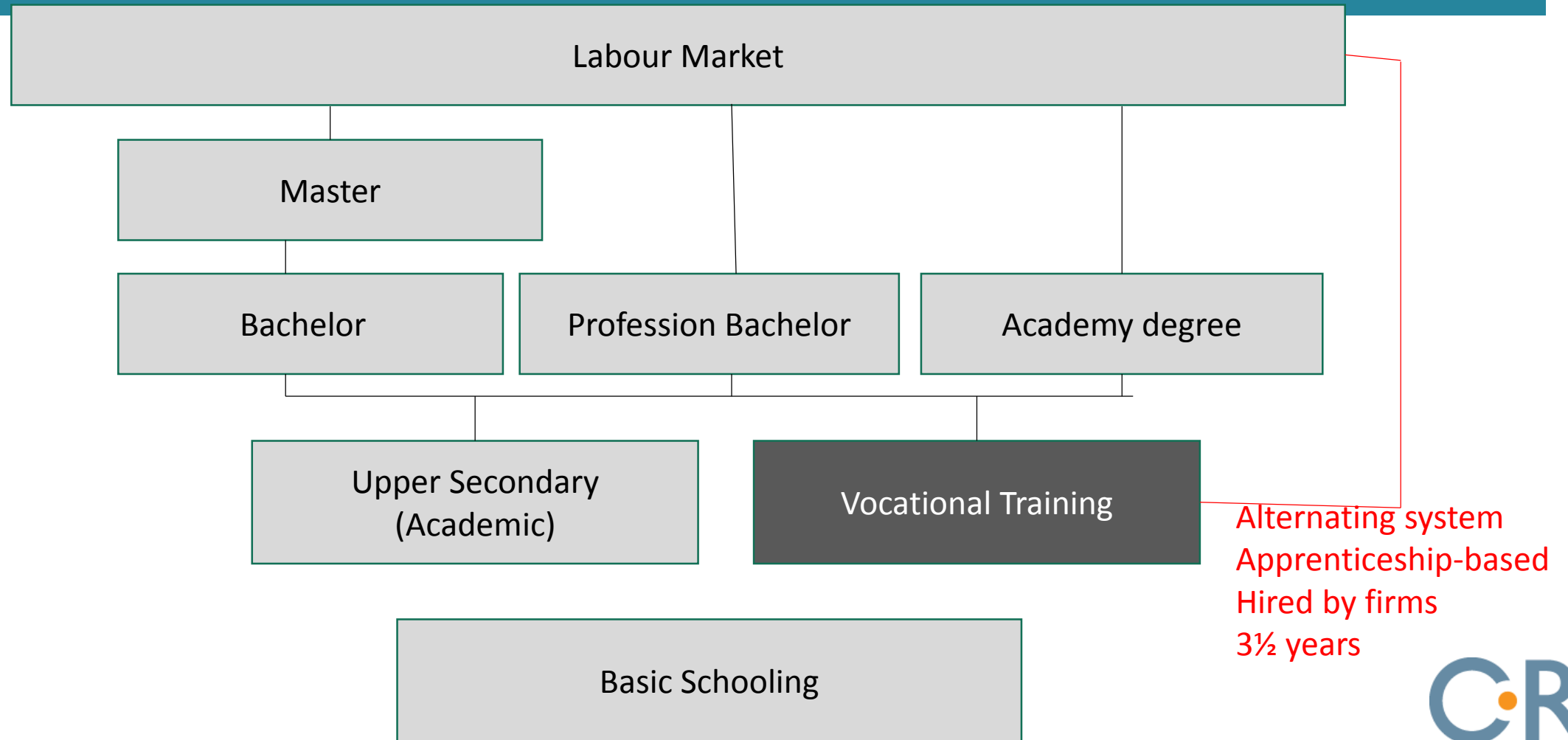
Introduction

The role of the Vocational education system for local development in peripheral areas – special focus on youth education and future place of residence choices, since out-migration of youth is a prevalent characteristic of peripheral areas.

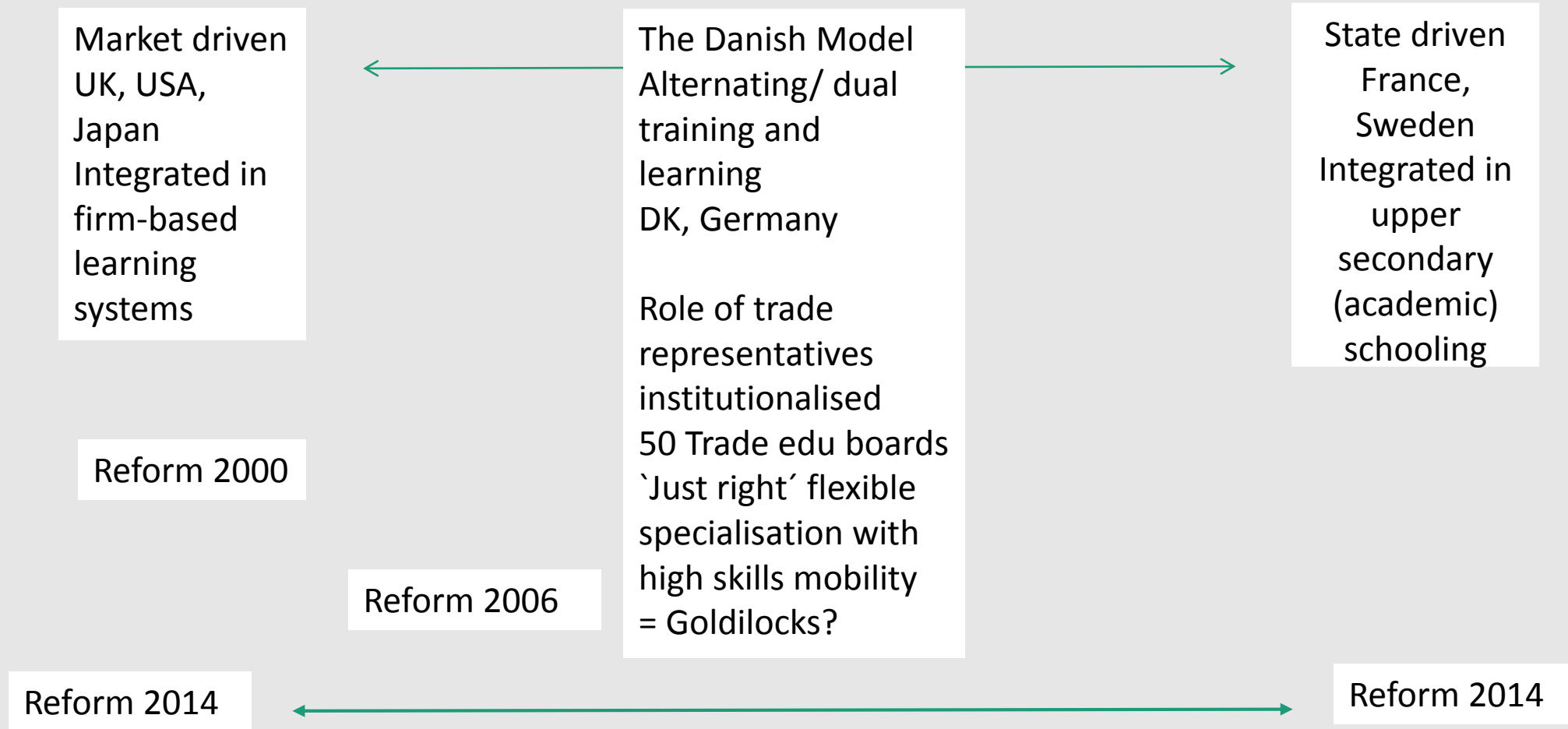
In line with Thiem: education systems and institutions as site for understanding and theory building on (in my case) processes of peripheralization



Context: What is the VET system?



VET – tensions in the Danish model or Goldilocks?



VET Reform 2014

“Denmark needs...talented young people, who can think creatively as well as practically to help maintain and create new jobs within manufacturing, construction and the service industries”

Political recognition that the baby has been thrown out with the ‘dirty manufacturing’ bath water so to speak.

Create an entirely new type of Youth education within the VET: academic level schooling + full firm-based apprenticeship = 4½ yrs. (EUX)

Implement grade prerequisites for VET

Essentially move students from academic upper secondary school system to VET.

Move “weak” students out of VET/education system (and into skills upgrading through un-employment skills building system)

Why the VET and peripheries?

- 40-46 % of employed residents in peripheral municipalities have a VET as highest level of education
- Employment forecasts predict lack of VET-trained in the short term (0-5 years) as well as long term (- 2030). Deficit will effect peripheral labour markets first
- Due to aging amongst present labour force – not increased labour demand
- Higher percentage of youth from peripheral areas complete a VET than in urban areas (38% /22%)
- Majority of VET-educated stay in the municipalities where they grew up (males 50/50) (females 55/45) / Vast majority of upper secondary/academically–educated move to urban areas (males + females: 12/88).

Summarised: the VET education system is an important and central contributor to supplying local labour markets in peripheral areas with a highly-qualified and employable labour force with a skills base that is well-integrated with local labour market and economic structures.



My approach & methods

- Point of departure in theories on processes of peripheralization literature
- Mixed methods analysis
 - Policy development 2000-2014 (spatial lens on previous studies + document analysis of Reform 2014 legislature + interviews with VET institutional leaders concerning).
 - Register-data analysis of migration and education patterns of youth from peripheral areas of Denmark who choose VET + youth interviews

Work in progress!



Research Questions

- On which dimensions can we perceive that the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system contributes to processes of peripheralization or de-peripheralization in Denmark today? What are the underlying causes?
- Which development perspectives does the VET Reform 2014 indicate seen from perspective of peripheralization processes?
- Tentative: What can changes in the VET system on different scales teach us about processes of peripheralization?



Towards a comprehensive approach to processes of Peripheralization

- Relational: peripheralization and centralisation are complementary notions within a socio-spatial system
- Process-centred: research is concerned with the `rise and fall` of spaces, not with the static consequences of remoteness
- **Multidimensional: comprised of economic, social, political and discursive dimensions**
- Multi-scalar: discerned at and between different spatial scales ranging from the global to the sub-local
- Temporal: the role of a periphery may change over time, and a de-peripheralization or re-centralization may take place.

Kühn & Bernt (2012); Kühn (2015)



Economic dimensions of processes of peripheralization

1. Patterns of **youth outmigration – access to local skills base**
 2. Education programme **content**: in fitting with current rural economies?
 - Residual economies based on industrial production paradigm (Techo-economic paradigm: Lorentzen 2009/ Perez)*
 - Status quo, not de-peripheralization nor enhancing peripheralization
2. Re-instatement of manufacturing and the learning that happens through the production process (not just highly educated and research that is favourable for innovation (Clark 2014, FOR A 2008). Spatial effect of VET Reform 2014 ?
- Developments toward “advanced functions of the vocationally-skilled”
- New EUX favours large education institutions and large firms with apprenticeship agreements = an urban education?
- Is there going to be a VET A-team? (EUX) and a (further) downgrading of the ‘regular’ VET?



Governance dimensions: exogenous: the national education system (Lack of access to/ power to effect policyming)

	Upper Sec Academic	VET
National goals for application	70 %	30 %
Youth cohort application rates	82 %	18 %
Student prerequisites	Yes (reform)	No (reform)
Stop milestones	Truancy	Basic – main programme + lack of apprenticeship position
Dropout rates	13 %	30 – 46 % (apprenticeship)
Number of places, where education is offered	123	57
Number of students in 2012	118.666	124.069/ 82.216
Student allocation	Regional Councils	Market-based
Teacher qualifications & prep time	Masters degree: 1,4 – 1 hrs.	Trades background + bachelor : 1-1 hrs.
Social and geographical allocation grants	Yes	Yes

National education policyming favours academic upper secondary education system - which is also source of out-migration

Governance dimensions: endogenous to the VET

‘The Danish Model’ under threat: focus on national level and defensive approach to upholding the rights of labour market partners to govern labour market relations and rights.

Little concern for regional development issues.

Rigidity in approach to definition of trades (upholding 108 different edu programmes)

Weak regional partners

Regional Growth Councils & growth strategies do have strategies and access to EU structural funding schemes. But ‘small’ development projects do not have capacity to turn around overriding economic trends. New local education program offers are not (economically) sustainable.

Lack of apprenticeship positions

Social responsibility of local employers is unknown: lack of spatial research into ‘the geography of apprenticeship placements’. Some indications that this is a positive factor, i.e. higher social responsibility outside cities.

Institutional structure

Favours large, more generic trade programmes: local education programme offers are becoming less diverse



Socio-spatial dimensions

- Segregated networks between the upper secondary academic students (orientated toward education, youth cultures) and the VET (orientated toward work life, trade identification).
- Future networks and connectivities between localities

(><Copus)

Hansen 2014

Faber 2014

Discursive dimensions

- Discourse at national scale on necessity of streamlining the entire Danish education system to create academically schooled higher educated workforce, has legitimized the systematic devaluation of the VET system vis-a-vis the upper secondary academic system.
- Kühn called for research on the role of different actors on processes of peripheralization: role of researchers – particularly uncritical economic geographers, who have pushed discourse on the role of the `talented` (i.e. those with higher educations) and urban knowledge agglomeration.
- Faber 2014/ Bjerring (forthcoming)



`Conclusions' & perspectives

Need to consider the special role of VET for sustainable development in peripheral areas, instead of a solely national lens, within a discourse where `globalization' and over-focussing on the highly skilled drive national education agendas.

Potential perspective in the re-instatement of the vocationally-educated as important actors in innovation processes, but need governance with local lens.

How can the study of the changes in the VET system function as site for further theorizing on processes of peripheralization?

Too early at this stage, but promising

The multidimensional approach – economic, political, social and discursive come from different research fields and approaches – trying to understand processes of peripheralization from an education systemic perspective – toward a more inter-dimensional approach could be a way forward

Kühn: who are the actors? How can we treat the nebulous concept of `power'?

