

Editorial

Dear readers,

We are glad to present you the second newsletter of the GOETE research project. GOETE aims at analysing how educational trajectories of young people are regulated as a result of complex interactions in different European education systems. The study “Governance of educational trajectories in Europe” (GOETE) investigates how access of children and young people to different stages of education is enabled or restricted, how coping with educational demands is being facilitated through formal and informal support and how it is being negotiated between different actors what kind of education actually is relevant for society at large as well as subjectively for the learners.

This GOETE newsletter brings an update on the progress in our research, and articulates some reflections on policy issues on European and national policy discussions as well as links to relevant policy developments at EU level. If you want to subscribe to the GOETE newsletter please [click here](#).

With best regards from the GOETE coordination team

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(1) GOETE Project News

Recent activities in the GOETE project

The GOETE project has completed its first year. In this first year much effort has been put in the preparation of the comparative research. In this preparatory phase, eight country reports on institutional, socio-economic and cultural contexts of educational trajectories were produced. These reports are based on statistical data and extant educational research from the different national contexts. The findings served to prepare the empirical field work inasmuch as national specific differences came to the fore and could be accounted for in the design and instrument construction phase of the various work packages. The results of this research phase – a state of the art report on structures and problems of educational trajectories in Europe – will be made available soon via the GOETE website.

The first phase also included the production of a glossary with key concepts aimed at providing a shared conceptual framework for the GOETE project across national and disciplinary boundaries. The glossary can be accessed online (www.goete.eu/glossary).

Besides, the GOETE consortium has worked during this first year of the project in the design, construction, and implementation of research instruments for the empirical field work:

- The construction of the research *sample* with regard to the research regions, school types and students involved: In each country three urban areas were chosen representing a range of different socio-economic, political and institutional contexts. For the student and parent survey in each of these regions schools in deprived, affluent and average neighbourhoods were selected while the survey on school principals involved all schools in this area. The qualitative case studies will take place in one disadvantaged school per region.
- The development of *questionnaires* for the surveys with students, parents and school principals involved the challenge of allowing for a standardised operationalisation of the GOETE objectives, sensitivity for contextual specificities as well as for comparability across countries. Questionnaires have also been translated and pre-tested in the eight countries.

- *Access to schools* proved difficult in many countries. On the one hand, varying legislation and procedure related to ethical issues required lengthy permission processes with the national/regional/local authorities. On the other hand, many schools were reluctant to participate due to an increasing involvement in and workload through educational research they are being confronted with.
- The design of the *comparative analysis of teacher training* was developed implying a collection of contextual information on the institutional regulation of teacher training as well as guidelines for expert interviews and document analysis.
- The design of the *qualitative case studies* required a discussion process about the appropriate balance between openness and structure. It has been agreed that rather addressing only schools the focus of the qualitative studies lies on “educational social spaces” around single schools. Rather than pre-defining interview partners beforehand, this will be achieved by sampling according to a snowballing process inside and outside the selected schools as the empirical process continues.
- Finally, the preparation and planning of *expert interviews* and *discourse analysis* with regard to high level governance analysis have been initiated.

The field work is expected to be completed by end of 2011. During this period national and comparative briefing papers on the surveys with students, parents and school principals as well as on emerging issues on teacher training in Europe will document the work progress.

The GOETE Consortium Meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia, July 2010

A key event of the first project year was the second consortium meeting held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, from 1st to 3rd of July, 2010. Representatives of all partner teams attended making up for more than 40 participants.



Meeting in Ljubljana

The meeting was opened by the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Prof. Dr. Janesz Krek. In his introduction he presented the Slovenian White Paper on Education, a comprehensive process aimed at modernising the national education system based on comparative analysis. The subsequent discussion proved the high relevance of the GOETE research perspective for contemporary processes of policy making in the field of education.



Presentation by Prof. Dr. Janesz Krek

After this introductory session, country reports were presented providing all consortium members with a fresh overview over the contextual similarities and differences within the GOETE project. This was followed by sessions in the plenary as well as in smaller working groups on the different empirical working packages (surveys, analysis of teacher training, case studies). In particular, the sampling process, methodological issues and draft questionnaires were discussed. Especially, during the working groups on survey questionnaires the consortium revealed a high capacity of working together and of reconciling the need of standardisation with openness for contextual difference.

This process was framed by the presentation and discussion of an operationalization matrix designed to incorporate all WPs in a cross-cutting perspective. This process proved to be highly relevant in order to prevent the single empirical work packages from developing particular agendas making later triangulation difficult.

The meeting was preceded by a meeting of the Young Researchers Group in which the young researchers involved in the GOETE project presented their own research projects (e.g. PhD theses), discussed common issues as well as their interconnections with GOETE.

The GOETE case study working group meeting in Amsterdam, December 2010

Delegates from all participating GOETE partners involved in the qualitative case studies came together the 3rd and 4th of December 2010 in Amsterdam (the Netherlands) to discuss the current development and urgent issues regarding sampling and methodology of the qualitative case studies.



Bibliotheek of Amsterdam

After the presentation of all cases selected so far in the respective countries, the team had a more general discussion on “what is a case” to determine a multi-level analysis framework. This included both a discussion on the boundaries of cases but also how and where to find them. These issues were crucial for other decisions regarding sampling (of students, parents, teachers, principals and experts) and methodology (of possible observations, student interviews, documentaries/videos and transcription guidelines) in the next steps. Besides, a further main focus of the meeting was to develop guidelines for interviews and focus group discussions also in view of the later comparative analysis process.

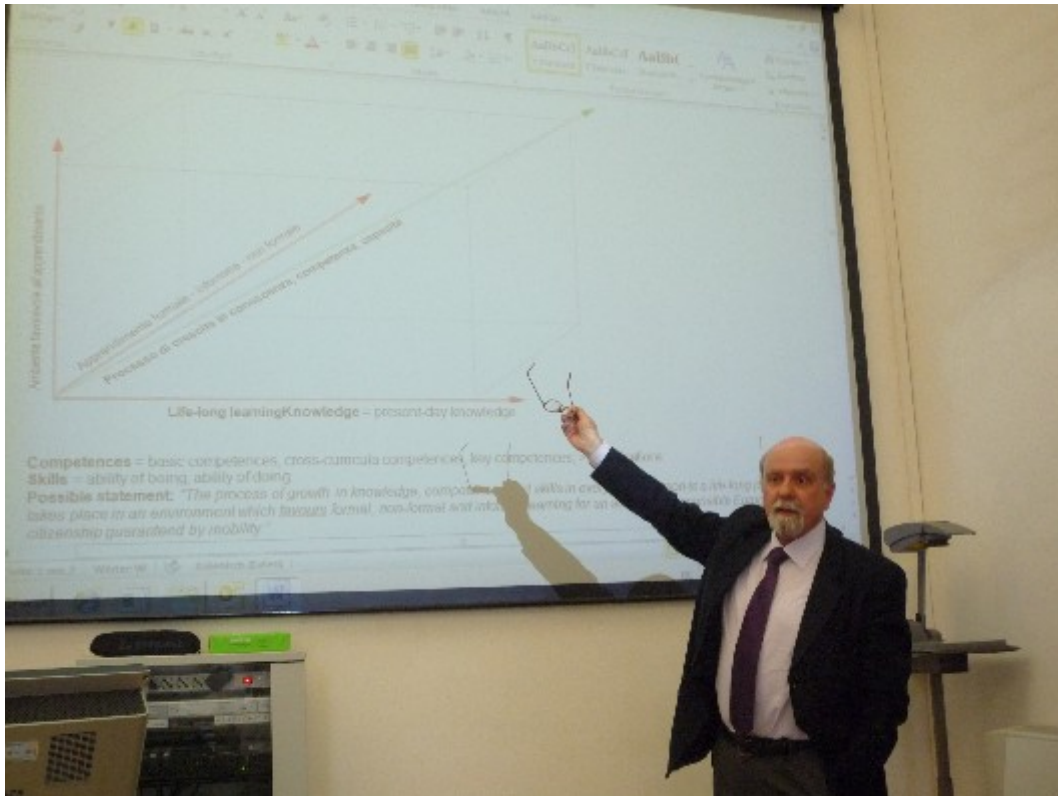
The GOETE Consortium Meeting in Bologna, Italy, February 2011

From 20th to 23rd February 2011, the third consortium meeting has been held in Bologna (Italy). Again, the young researchers group met one day earlier among themselves. This time the key issue was methodology of comparative analysis. The main meeting itself was opened by the Dean of the Faculty of Education of the University of Bologna, Prof. Dr. Roberto Farné who welcomed the project consortium and – together with the Bologna GOETE unit – secured optimal working conditions for the three days meeting.



Members of the GOETE Team in front of the University of Bologna

The agenda was structured by three parts: the first one was a presentation and debate of a first product of the project, the state of art report which is intended to contextualise the project in current research trends while also drawing together contextual information from the countries and national education systems involved in the project; the second one included assessment of the progress of the empirical work, i.e. the comparative analysis of teacher training curricula, the individual survey with students and parents, the institutional survey with school principals and the case studies; the third was the planning of the last empirical work package: the analysis of high level governance and of current educational discourses in the eight countries.



Presentation by Prof. Dr. Roberto Farné

While it is still too early to report first results, a striking pre-finding was the fact that in a series of countries (especially in France, Germany and the UK) researchers found it very difficult in entering and involving schools. Many school principals tend to refuse participating in research due to feeling overburdened by too much research going on in schools and taking their time in a situation in which increasing monitoring and assessment imply increasing pressure. This situation has created a slight delay with regard to data collection in some of the countries. Nevertheless, data collection is expected to be completed by the time of the next meeting which is scheduled, 30 June to 3 July in Turku (Finland) (except for the expert interviews conducted with regard to the high level governance analysis work package).

(2) Reflection: EU Education Policy: Europe 2020: Possible Implications for GOETE by Roger Dale, Bristol, United Kingdom

With its perspective towards educational governance, the GOETE project refers primarily to local and national education policies. However, new trends in educational governance imply an increasing relevance of transnational developments. This applies especially for the EU level. The EU's new policy agenda "Europe 2020" and its more or less directly associated initiatives, carry quite a large range of implications for the GOETE project. This note is intended to clarify the aims and possible implications of those initiatives.

Europe 2020 is the successor to the Lisbon Agenda, as the guiding light for the EU's overall strategy. Its target is achieving 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth', and one of its main goals is to raise education levels to satisfy demands for new and higher skills. As the Education Commissioner puts it, 'Education is an essential lever for achieving the objectives of Europe 2020. Two of the strategy's three priorities, smart growth, based on knowledge and innovation, and an inclusive high- employment society, as well as three of its seven flagship initiatives (Innovation Union, Youth on the Move, and An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs) depend critically on education and training'.

- **"Innovation Union"** is to improve framework conditions and access to finance for research and innovation so as to ensure that innovative ideas can be turned into products and services that create growth and jobs.
- **"Youth on the move"** is to enhance the performance of education systems and to facilitate the entry of young people to the labour market.
- **"An agenda for new skills and jobs"** is to modernise labour markets and empower people by developing their of skills throughout the lifecycle with a view to increase labour participation and better match labour supply and demand, including through labour mobility.

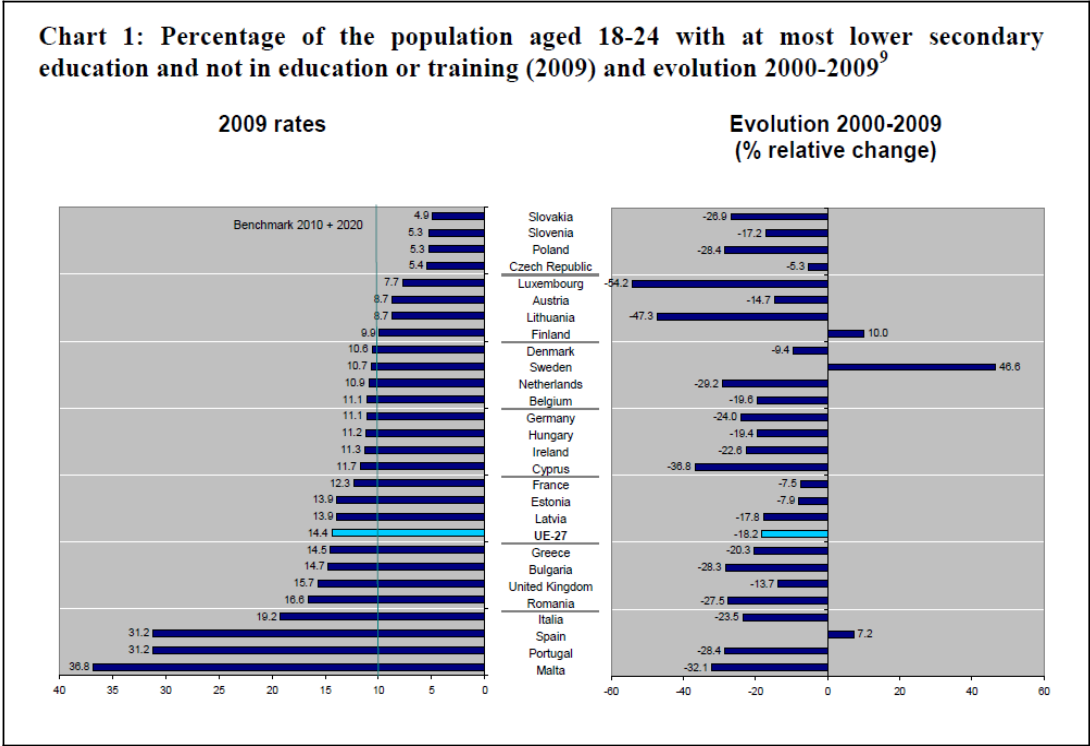
Of these, **Youth on the move** (YOTM) has the clearest likely implications for GOETE. The basis of the argument for the importance of YOTM is that young people make up around 20% of the population of Europe, and that more than 20% of those young people are currently unemployed. Furthermore, 40% of employees in the EU under 25 years old are on temporary contracts.

YOTM is the first single EU-level strategy embracing both education and employment; it has four main lines of Action:

- Contribute to building and modernising lifelong learning systems so as to develop the key skills, competencies, and learning outcomes of individuals, in line with labour market needs. This includes supporting learning through non-formal and informal educational activities.
- Promote the performance and attractiveness of Europe's higher education to ensure it is competitive and well-placed internationally. This includes fostering innovation and encouraging student and researcher mobility.
- Encourage the transnational mobility of young people for learning, employability, and social and personal development, so as to support the aspiration that by 2020 all young people in Europe should have the possibility to spend a part of their educational pathway abroad.
- Improve the employment situation of young people by launching a Youth employment framework outlining policies priorities for action at national and EU level. It makes a distinction between 'Learning mobility' – studying or training abroad to gain new skills and experience; and 'Employment mobility' – moving abroad for work, on a short or longer-term basis (which is a right of all European citizens). Though learning mobility may be more familiar, the intention is to broaden the range of those eligible to include potentially all young people and not just those in tertiary education. In terms of the first, it is argued that experience gained in another country allows people to improve their language skills and develop other capacities, such as dealing with other cultures, which are valuable for their own personal development and future employability. In terms of the second, it is argued that experience of a job in another European country can help young workers gain a foothold in the labour market by finding a job more easily, while improving their skills, employability and future employment horizons. At a more general level, job mobility also helps make labour markets in Europe more adaptable, creating more job opportunities and better matching people with jobs. Another action envisaged is improved recognition for skills gained outside formal education.

YOTM may also be seen as part of a new ***cross-sectoral framework for EU cooperation in the youth field*** from 2010 until 2018, whose overall objectives are to create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market and to promote their active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity, through collaboration across a range of policy sectors: education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, participation, voluntary activities, social inclusion, youth and the world, creativity and culture.

Another major area that may concern GOETE is **Early School Leaving**. Reducing the level of ESL across the Union to below 10% (it is currently around 14%) is one of the five key targets of EU 2020, and this has very recently been the subject of a proposal for an Action Plan and a Council Recommendation to all Member states (the strongest mechanism the EU has) based on a Commission Communication titled ‘**Tackling early school leaving: A key contribution to the Europe 2020 Agenda**’. The following chart shows the development of the share of early school leavers for 2009 and the relative change in percentage between 2000 and 2009.



Source: EC 2011

Together, these targets may be expected to raise the profile of ESL and the relationships of transitions within educational trajectories as well as between education and the labour market with it. The Communication contains a number of explicit references to how transitions may be associated with ESL, and further implications for GOETE are evident throughout it. Transitions between schools and between different educational levels identified as particularly difficult for pupils at risk of dropping out, along with mismatches between education and training curricula and labour market needs; targeted support for pupils to cope with emotional, social or educational difficulties; the need to respond to the different learning styles of pupils and to help teachers to address the variable needs of mixed ability groups of students; and the need for personalised and flexible learning for those who prefer 'learning by doing'. The action plan envisages policy measures on three levels: *prevention*, *intervention* and *compensation*. We may expect there to be experimentation and innovative approaches to reduce early school leaving, and increased monitoring of the transition from

school to work. Here, too, there is recognition of the need for inter-agency and cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination. Obviously the GOETE research perspectives towards access, coping and relevance of education are highly relevant in this respect.

Finally, we are faced with the possible introduction of '**a benchmark of employability**' among school leavers. The Council Conclusions on a Strategic Framework for European cooperation in Education and Training for the next decade ("ET 2020") of May 2009 stated that: "Given the importance of enhancing employability through education and training in order to meet current and future labour market challenges, the Commission is invited to submit to the Council a proposal for a possible European benchmark in this area by the end of 2010."

The definition adopted by Perez et al is that "Employability is the combination of factors which enable individuals to progress towards or get into employment, to stay in employment and to progress during their career." And they suggest that from the education and training perspective, such factors include learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and their relevance to the labour market, as well as learning incentives and learning opportunities.

However, the preliminary work they present is based on existing data sets, both quantitative and qualitative, and almost entirely focused on what happens after initial transition. The GOETE project therefore has the potential both of enhancing and complementing the knowledge base of such policies.

Selected Sources and Links for Further Information

- EC (European Commission) (2011a): Youth on the Move website. Online at: >><http://europa.eu/youthonthemove/><< [last Feb. 15, 2011].
- EC (European Commission) (2011b): ESL Proposal for Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving. Online at: >>http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc/earlyrec_en.pdf<< [last Feb. 15, 2011].
- EC (European Commission) (2011c): Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Tackling Early School Leaving: A Key Contribution to the Europe 2020 Agenda. Online at: >>http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc/earlycom_en.pdf<< [last Feb. 15, 2011].
- EC (European Commission) (2011d): Commission Staff Working Paper: Reducing Early School Leaving. Accompanying Document to the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving. Online at: >>http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc/earlywp_en.pdf<< [last Feb. 15, 2011].
- Elena Arjona Perez, Kornelia Kozovska and Christelle Garrouste (2010): '*Towards a benchmark on the contribution of Education and Training to Employability: a discussion note*'. Luxembourg: European Commission Joint Research Centre.

(3) National Education Policy in Focus: Organisation of Schooling in Germany: one-sided view of a complex discussion by Thorsten Bohl, Tuebingen, Germany

International discussions about educational structures/the organisation of schooling have a long tradition in Europe; in spite of this, there is no operationally defined and cross-nationally valid terminology available to describe the organisation/structure of education systems. Comprehensive schools mean different things in different countries; and indeed all education systems are to a lesser or greater degree selective. Nevertheless, these two terms – comprehensive and selective – are useful and widely used concepts in policy discussions about the structure of education systems. *Comprehensive systems* are either understood (for instance, in the UK) as a school system offering all kinds of secondary education programmes to the children of a particular district in one and the same school building. Also, comprehensive systems may denote a basic non-differentiated eight or nine-year long education program – as for instance in Finland – catering to all children. Conversely, *selective systems* may be understood in terms of admission requirements, tracking to different programmes, ability grouping, or screening procedures along the different phases (typically, non-promotion, retention/repetition of grades, and drop outs/transference to special education, etc.), as for example in the German education system.

In the GOETE countries the timing of the *transition from primary to secondary education* varies substantially, which can be viewed as one element of the degree of selectivity and stratification: Slovenia and Finland have no transition at all; in Poland and the United Kingdom transition takes place after 6 and 7 years of schooling respectively; the Dutch system only switches from primary to secondary programs after 8 years; in Italy and France after 5 years, and finally, in Germany transition takes place after 4 years (depending on the region, after 6 years) of schooling.

The educational research and policy debates of the past years – in particular in the aftermath of the PISA studies – have, among other things, recurrently pointed to the relationship among organization of schooling and student performance. For instance, there is evidence that in systems that track pupils very early (e.g., Germany) the level of performance depends heavily on ethnic, socio-economic status of the family of origin (OECD 2001; 2008). This issue lies at the heart of the discussion on how to tackle educational inequalities and ensure all pupils have equal opportunities.

In the aftermath of World War II, American and British allies attempted to introduce comprehensive school systems in Germany and were faced with insurmountable resistance from the part of German establishment. The reconstructed (West) German education system adopted the structures of the pre-war period of the Weimar Republic. The system in the German Democratic Republic was moulded according to socialist ideology and was structured as a comprehensive, polytechnic system.

All education reforms in West Germany since the 1960s and 1970s included a heated debate and controversy over the advantages and disadvantages of comprehensive or selective structures. During that period, the German Education Council (Deutscher Bildungsrat) acted as a mediating agent among the Ministries of the German Länder (the units of the federal state), which have the actual competency in education policy. It was established as a joint commission for educational planning and operating between 1966 and 1975 by federal and state governments to design needs and development plans for the German education system, to make recommendations on structural issues, to calculate the financial framework and to make recommendations for long-term planning. In 1969, the council recommended the introduction of comprehensive schools (Gesamtschule) as pilot projects; these experiments would make possible to assess upcoming policy-making decisions on structural changes based on scientifically controlled experiments. In western Germany, there were Gesamtschulen in most states since the 1970s. The issue proved, however, to be a party political issue of high brisance, especially after the Social-Democratic Party (SPD) campaigned with comprehensive school systems as the core of their reformist policy platform.

If the first decision of the Council on Education also supported by the CDU-politicians, in the following years it came to a virtual "school fight" between the CDU and SPD. This had to do with the simultaneous shift of power in favour of the federal government and the SPD. Comprehensive schools were made core of their reformist policies, however, when the SPD suggested introducing comprehensive schools nationwide, the Christian Democratic Union, teachers' and parents' associations and the churches organized opposition and the new legislation has been blocked. Controversies were rekindled in the wake of Reunification in 1990, and waxed and waned time and again since then. Debates over the 'right' organisation of schooling remain high in the agenda of education policy makers and stake-holders. Below we document an interview Professor Dr. Thorsten Bohl (University of Tuebingen, Germany), member of the GOETE consortium gave to the magazine 'bildung & wissenschaft'. The interview refers to a document launched by the Federation of Philologists (Philologenverband, PhV) in the region of Baden-Württemberg representing teachers from

grammar schools, i.e. the (elite track within the three-tiered German school system. In its newsletter from April 2010 the Federation claimed that: “educational research does not lead to any convincing evidence for advantages of longer joint learning. Instead, there is much evidence that longer shared schooling leads to considerable disadvantages both for high-performing and under-performing pupils.” The PhV names numerous scientific studies in order to support this thesis.

b&w: Dear Professor Bohl, you are involved in educational research. What was your first impression reading the 15 theses of the Philologists' Federation?

TB: First of all, I appreciate that the findings of empiric educational studies are being discussed in detail, instead of addressing this difficult discussion about school structure from an experience-based or exclusively normative point of view.

b&w: And how do you assess the declaration that no convincing evidence for a longer joint learning has been found?

TB: The problem of the mentioned article of the PhV is not that the wrong studies are quoted or that all of the quoted studies are suspect. On the contrary, the studies, among others, by the Max-Planck-Institute in Berlin are reliable and it is important to consult these studies. However, the PhV's contribution is problematic in three ways: important studies with considerably better results for comprehensive schools have been ignored, the interpretation of several studies is questionable – this becomes even more obvious in the website www.schulstrukturdebatte.de – and, moreover, numerous problems of selective (tracking) school systems have not been mentioned.

b&w: Could you please illustrate?

TB: I will name some examples. First, authors and surveys that reached other results are not mentioned, e. g. the colleague Wößmann from the University of Munich, who emphasizes at another conclusion considering the efficiency of divided school systems, or the "Element-study" in Berlin, which proves advantages of an extended elementary school. 2. The international perspective is ignored completely. If integrated schools were as bad as depicted by the PhV, students' performances in countries where the school structure is comprehensive-school-like would virtually collapse. Obviously,

quite the contrary is the case. 3. While the current state of research concerning the field of students' performances is controversial or at least complicated, it is unambiguous on the field of educational disadvantage: the more divided systems are, the more they intensify educational disadvantage. This is not surprising: with each transition to secondary education, each upgrade or descent, questions of disadvantage become evident. This happens for example when teachers consider in how far parents are able to support their children financially and intellectually in cases where the recommendation is unclear. When they doubt parents' opportunities, they tend to recommend secondary schools with lower academic requirement. 4. The paper fails to give an answer to regional and municipal problems of schooling. Considering the descending numbers of students and the constantly diminishing transition rate to "Hauptschulen" (German secondary schools with the lowest academic requirement), it does not offer any help to mayors in situ. 5. – Which is extremely strange – there are central areas of concern typical for divided systems, not being mentioned at all. I can only refer to them shorthand, such as the scissor effect, didactic environment/setting, the overlapping of "specific" school type performances and the hope of advancing that leads to success at comprehensive schools.

b&w: Comprehensive schools' work is especially criticized by the PhV. Deservedly?

TB: No. Comprehensive schools are contributing to an increasing educational justice. They can play an important integrative part for society. The situation in Nordrhein-Westfalen shows that significantly more students with migration background reach the A-level at comprehensive schools than they do at "Gymnasium", the German secondary school with the highest academic requirement: it is 35 % compared to 14 %. Comprehensive schools enable especially

those students with recommendations for secondary schools with lower academic requirements to keep their hope of advancing: 70% successfully complete the A-level, although only 30 % received a recommendation for the "Gymnasium". Among comprehensive schools, there is a multitude of active schools to be found, which use their scope very intensively. Comprehensive schools are able to react much more flexibly to the plasticity of human development and contribute to more justice in educational careers. Furthermore low-achieving students can benefit from the presence of high-performing students. Exceeding the state of research it has to be considered that quality is strongly defined on the level of individual schools and individual teachers. Concretely: there are very efficient comprehensive schools, but also less efficient ones, as well as there are very efficient or less efficient other types of secondary schools with various academic requirement. And within the individual schools, due to individually organized teaching, a further, maybe different quality takes place in every classroom.

b&w: Are there scientific surveys dealing with the success of a longer joint learning? Which results do they lead to?

TB: It is surprising that the "Element"-survey and the resulting debate are not mentioned at all by the PhV. This survey proves a comparable or even higher efficiency of a longer joint learning, of primary schools up to grade 6, compared to grades 5 and 6 of Gymnasium schools. Even critics of comprehensive systems cannot avoid approving a significant effect of primary schools leading from grade 1 up to grade 6 (instead of grade 4) – not only for underperforming students. The comparison of top-level students shows that they do not always benefit more in Gymnasium schools than they do in primary schools with 6 grades.

b&w: Could you sum up the state of research for us?

TB: Overall, it has to be said that the state of research is not unambiguous. Therefore one has to make the effort of comparing

the findings of single branches and draw conclusions cautiously. This of course is time-consuming and does not lead to spectacular headlines. I would like both sides to designate the weak points of "their" systems. Another example: it has to be honoured that by now most of the Hauptschule (secondary schools with the lowest academic requirement) and probably also Sonderschule (special schools) have a very high pedagogic competence and manage to have their students experience a positive psychosocial development. At the same time it has to be considered, though, that the cognitive level of performance is very low and students with similar capabilities have better chances of development at Realschule (secondary school with medium academic requirements) and Gymnasium (secondary school with high academic requirement). People in favour of comprehensive systems should therefore keep in mind, how underperforming students can be supported in psychosocial fields.

b&w: To go more into detail: Where do you see special problems of the three-tier school system?

TB: The special problems are to find generally in the area of low performance, in educational disadvantage, and in the recurrent question of transition, that is of progression or retention. We spend too much time on the question whether a pupil is at the right place – inevitably, it is the pupils with low performances who often are not. The transition from grade 4 to secondary schools drains resources from all parties concerned: children, parents, teachers; and is impossible to be organized in a just way. The instable tool of marks constantly receives an extremely high significance. Further one has to realize that divided systems always include the development of specific environments, no matter what the individual learning conditions of students are. Schooling and teacher activity for example depend on the teacher training – according to the specific school type – and didactic tradition. This learning environment has a significant impact on the development capabilities of students.

Another issue is the following: I as an educationalist am interested not only in the empiric state of facts, but also in how far a school system can be justified theoretically. All of the theoretic and historic reasons of the three-tier school system are nowadays out dated, as well as its talent-theoretic as its class-specific and profession-specific justification. The aspect of a more effective support in groups that are supposed to be more homogenous is not convincing, either: homogenisation works hardly effectively and only in a very limited measure and the rates of overlap of performances in mathematics, sciences and in reading competences are very high. The three-tier school system obviously has to deal with a theory-rooted problem of legitimacy.

b&w: What do you personally think: How should the school system be organized in order to offer an optimum of learning and developing possibilities to preferably all children?

TB: I imagine a comprehensive school system, in which heterogeneity is dealt with competently on all levels. This is definitely complex and extensive and should contain opportunities to reach degrees of all kinds, including higher education entrance qualification. It should

also contain a high performance expectation, being closely watched and evaluated, a challenging learning environment and a varied school life. A quiet and stimulating atmosphere plays an important role. I deliberately avoid talking of comprehensive schools of the 1970s and 1980s, I am talking of smaller and more efficient school units, in which schooling takes explicitly place in heterogeneous groups, not in "Niveauekursen" (more or less homogeneous classes within a heterogeneous school). It is obvious that such systems would need systemic support, both intern and extern. This can only be the framework, though. The design of processes at schools is crucial. I incidentally do not think that this system can be changed overnight. However, I do not see any problems arising in allowing flexibly comprehensive systems already now – namely where protagonists and decision-makers on the ground are of the opinion that this would be the suitable system in order to cope with existing challenges. The state's job should not be to control the standardization of a school system, but a systematic and support-related evaluation and quality assurance.

b&w: Thank you very much for the interview!

The GOETE Research Consortium



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